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LITTLE GRANDFATHER.



LITTLE PRUDY'S FLYAWAY SERIES.
LITTLE GRANDFATHER.

BY

SOPHIE MAY,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE PRUDY STORIES," "DOTTY DIMPLE STORIES," "THE DOCTOR'S DAUGHTER." ETC.

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TO
LITTLE MARY TOBEY.

LITTLE PRUDY'S FLYAWAY SERIES.

TO BE COMPLETED IN SIX VOLS.

1. LITTLE FOLKS ASTRAY.

2. PRUDY KEEPING HOUSE.
3. AUNT MADGE'S STORY.
4. LITTLE GRANDMOTHER.
5. LITTLE GRANDFATHER.
6. (In preparation.)

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LITTLE GRANDFATHER.

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CHAPTER I.

THE PARLINS.

He did look so funny when they first put him into "pocket-clothes!" His green "breeches" were so tight that they made you think of two pods of marrow-fat peas, only they were topped off with a pair of "rocco" shoes, as red as bell-peppers. He had silver buckles on his shoes, and brass buttons on his green jacket, which was fastened at the back. He had a white collar about his neck as large as a small cape, and finished off around the edge with a ruffle. His mother had snipped his dark locks so they needn't look so much like a girl's; and then with his brown fur hat on, which his grandfather Cheever had sent from Boston, he looked in the glass and smiled at himself.

[Pg 10]

Do you wonder he smiled?

He had bright black eyes, red cheeks, and a rich, dark skin. He was a handsome little creature; but when he was tanned, his brother Stephen called him a "Pawnee Indian," which was a heavy joke, and sank deeper into Willy's tender soul than Stephen suspected.

After he had viewed himself in the mirror, dressed in his new suit, he ran to his best comforter, his mother, and said, with a quivering lip,—

"Isn't I *most* white, mamma?"

[Pg 11]

His mother caught him to her breast and hugged him, brown fur hat and all, and told him he mustn't mind Steenie's jokes; he was not an Indian, and Molly Molasses—the squaw who came

around with baskets to sell—would never carry him off.

He was three years old at this time, and so full of high spirits and health, that he was rather a troublesome child to manage. Mrs. Parlin sometimes remarked, with a sigh and a smile,—

"I don't know what I *shall* do with our Willy!"

If she had said, "I don't know what I should do without him," it would have been nearer the truth; for never did mother dote more on a child. He was the youngest, and two little children next older—a son and a daughter—had been called to their heavenly home before he was born. People said Mrs. Parlin was in a fair way to spoil Willy, and her husband was so afraid of it, that he felt it his duty to be very stern with the boy. [Pg 12]

Seth, the oldest son, helped his father in this, and seemed to be constantly watching to see what Willy would do that was wrong.

Stephen, two years younger than Seth, was not so severe, and hardly ever scolded, but had a very "hectoring disposition," and loved dearly to tease his little brother.

Love, the only sister, and the eldest of the family, was almost as soothing and affectionate to Willy as Mrs. Parlin herself. She was tall, fair, and slender, like a lily, and you could hardly believe it possible that she would ever grow to be such a very large woman as her mother, or that Mrs. Parlin had once been thin and delicate, like Love. [Pg 13]

There was another, besides these two, who petted Willy; and that was "Liddy," the housemaid. Lydia was a Quaker woman, and every "First Day" and "Fifth Day"—that is, Sunday and Thursday—she went off to a meeting, which was held over the river, three miles away, in a yellow "meeting-house" without any steeple. It was not always convenient to spare Lydia on "Fifth Day," for, Mr. Parlin kept a country hotel, or, as it was called in those days, a "tavern," and there was plenty of work to be done; but no matter how much company came, "Liddy" would leave her pies half rolled out on the board, or her goose half stuffed, and walk off to the Quaker settlement to meeting. But when she came back, she went steadily to work again, and was such a good, honest, pious woman, that nobody thought of finding any fault with her. [Pg 14]

She was all the "regular help" Mrs. Parlin had; but Mrs. Knowles did the washing, and often Siller Noonin came in to help Lydia with an extra baking.

Caleb Cushing—or, as the country people called him, "Kellup"—was the man of all work, who took care of the sheep and cattle, and must always be ready to "put up" the horses of any traveller who happened to stop at the house.

Mr. and Mrs. Parlin, the four children, and Caleb and Lydia, made up the household, with the addition of great shaggy Fowler, the dog, and speckled Molly, the cat, with double fore-paws. [Pg 15]

Grandfather Cheever, with his hair done up in a queue, came sometimes from Boston, and made a long visit; but you could hardly say he belonged to the family.

Now, my story is to be about Willy, and I would like to describe him; but how can I, when I have heard such various accounts of the child? I suppose, if you had questioned the family about him, you would have heard a different story from every one. His father would have shaken his head, and said, Willy was a "singular child; there was no *regulation* to him." Seth would have told you he was "impudent." Stephen would have called him "a cry-baby," and Caleb, "the laziest little chap he ever came across;" though "grandf'ther Cheever" thought him "very bright and stirring." Love would have said, "He is *so* affectionate!" which his father very much doubted. Lydia might possibly have called him a "rogue," because he would spy out her doughnuts and pies, no matter where she hid them away for safe keeping. [Pg 16]

But I know very well how his *mother* would have answered your question about Willy. She would have said, "Don't talk of his faults; he is my own little darling."

And then she would have opened her arms wide, and taken him right in: that is the way it is with mothers.

Thus you see our Willy was not the same to everybody; and no child ever is. To those who loved him he was "sweet as summer;" but not so to those who loved him not.

I suspect Willy was rather contrarily made up; something like a mince pie, perhaps. Let us see. [Pg 17]

Short and crusty, now and then; rich, in good intentions; sweet, when he had his own way; sour, when you crossed him; well-spiced, with bright little speeches. All these qualities made up Willy's "points;" and you know a mince pie is good for nothing without points.

Some people brought out one of these "points," and some another. Seth expected him to be as sharp as cider vinegar; and so I am afraid he was, whenever Seth corrected him. But his mother looked for sweet qualities in her little darling, and was never disappointed.

Willy slept in the bedroom, in a trundle-bed which had held every one of the children, from the oldest to the youngest. After he had said his prayers, Mrs. Parlin tucked him up nice and warm, and even while she stood looking at his rosy cheeks, with the rich fringes of his eyelids resting on them, he often dropped off into dreamland. She had a way of watching him in his sleep, and blessing him without any words, only saying in her heart,— [Pg 18]

"Dear God, let me keep this last precious treasure! But if that may not be, O, lay it up for me in heaven."

Willy was afraid to go to bed alone, which is hardly to be wondered at; for he had a strange and dreadful habit of walking in his sleep. Such habits are not as common now as they were in old times, I believe. Whether Willy's walks had anything to do with the cider and doughnuts, which were sometimes given him in the evening, unknown to his mother, I cannot say; but Mrs. Parlin was never sure, when she "tucked" him into his trundle-bed, that he would spend the night there. Quite as likely he would go wandering about the house; and one cold winter, when he was a little more than seven years old, he got up regularly every night, and walked fast asleep into the bar-room, which was always full of men, and took his seat by the fireplace.

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This was such a constant habit, that the men expected to see him about half past eight o'clock, just as much as they expected to see the cider and apples which "Kellup" brought out of the cellar.

In those days cider was almost as freely drunk as water, and so, I grieve to say, was New England rum and brandy; and you must not suppose Mr. Parlin was a bad man because he allowed such drinking in his bar-room. There were no pledges signed in those days, but he was a perfectly temperate man, and a church member; he would have thought it very strange indeed if any one had told him he was doing wrong to sell liquor to his neighbors.

[Pg 20]

And now, having introduced Master Willy and the rest of the family as well as I can, I will go on to tell you a few of Willy's adventures, some of which occurred while he was asleep, and some while he was awake.

CHAPTER II.

[Pg 21]

WALKING IN SLEEP.

About seven o'clock, one cold evening, Willy was in the bar-room, sitting on Caleb's knee, and holding a private conversation with him, while he nibbled a cookie.

"Don't you think it's the beautifulest bossy ever you saw?"

"Well, middlin' handsome," replied Caleb, mischievously; "middlin' handsome."

"O, Caleb, when it's got a white place in its forehead shaped so!" said Willy, biting his cookie into something like the form of a star.

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"Well, yes; you see he'd be quite a decent-looking calf, if it wasn't for that white streak, now," said Caleb, in a tone of regret.

"If it *wasn't* for that white streak! Why, Caleb Cushing!—when 'twas put there to purpose to be kissed! Love said so."

"Well, everybody to their fancy," returned Caleb, dryly. "I never had any notion for kissing cattle, myself."

"She isn't a cattle, Cale Cushing. She's my bossy."

"Yours, do you say? Then you'd better take care of him, Willy. He walked up to the kitchen door to-day, to see if he could find anything there to lay his hands on."

"Hands? He hasn't any hands, Caleb! But you ought to take care of her, any way, till I grow a man; father spect's you to. And then, when she gets to be a ox—" [Pg 23]

"Well, what are you going to do when she gets to be a ox?"

Willy looked puzzled. He had never thought of that before.

"Have him killed—shan't you, sonny? He'll make very nice eating."

Willy stood upright on Caleb's knee, in horror and amaze.

"My bossy killed? I'll send anybody to jail that kills that bossy."

"Then perhaps you'd better trade him off now to Squire Lyman. Didn't the squire offer to swap his baby for him?"

"Yes; and so I would if that baby was a boy," said Willy, thoughtfully; "but she's only a girl— couldn't help me bring in chips, you know. Guess I don't want a girl-baby." [Pg 24]

Caleb laughed at this very quietly, but his whole frame was shaking; and Willy turned round and looked him in the eye with strong displeasure.

"What you laughing at, Cale Cushing? You mustn't make fun of my bossy. I'll tell you what I'll do with her. I'll keep her to haul hay with."

"Did you ever see one ox hauling hay alone, Willy?"

"No; but I'll have a little cart, and then she can."

"But the trouble is, Willy, your ox might feel lonesome."

"Well, I'll buy one ox more, and then he won't be lonesome."

[Pg 25]

"Ah! but, Willy, oxen cost money."

"Sif I didn't know that! How much money do they cost, Caleb?"

"Sometimes more, sometimes less. Pretty high this winter, for hay is plenty. There was a man along from the west'ard, and, Willy, what think he offered your pa for that brindled yoke of his?"

"Three dollars?"

"Seventy-five dollars; and your pa wouldn't let 'em go under ninety! Think of that," added Caleb, dropping his voice, and appearing to talk to the beech-wood fire, which was crackling in the big fireplace. "Think of that! Ninety dollars! Enough to buy a small farm! Just what I should have got in the logging-swamp, winter before last, if Dascom hadn't cheated me out of it."

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"What did you say, Caleb?"

"O, I was just talking to myself," replied Caleb, rather bitterly. "It wasn't anything little boys should hear. I was only thinking how easy money comes to some folks, and how hard it comes to others. You see I worked a whole winter once, and never got a cent of pay; and I couldn't help feeling it when your pa put that ninety dollars away in his drawer."

"You didn't want my father's money—did you, Caleb Cushing?"

"No, child; only I knew if I'd had justice done me, I should have had ninety dollars myself. It was mine by good rights, and I hadn't ought to be cheated out of it."

Willy looked up astonished. What did Caleb mean by saying it was "his by good rights"?—his father's money. For he had not heard all Caleb's remarks, and what he had heard he had entirely misunderstood.

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"Willy!" called his mother's voice from the sitting-room; but the little fellow, was too excited to hear.

"Do you mean my father's money, Caleb, that he keeps in his drawer?"

"Yes, yes, child; laid inside of a book," replied Caleb, carelessly.

"What! and you want it?—my father's money?"

"Yes, yes," laughed Caleb; "off to bed, child. Don't you hear your mother calling?"

Willy slipped down from the man's knee, and walked out of the room in deep thought. Why Caleb should want his father's money, and say he had a right to it, was more than he could understand; and he went to sleep with his little brain in a whirl.

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Very soon tired and chilly teamsters began to pour into the bar-room, and rub their hands before the roaring fire. Caleb, who had quite forgotten his unlucky conversation with Master Willy, put fresh wood on the andirons, and brushed the hearth with a strip broom. Presently Mr. Parlin himself appeared in the doorway, bearing a huge pitcher of cider, which sparkled in a jolly way, as if it were glad to leave its hogshead prison in the dark cellar, and come up into such lively company.

"Well, neighbors, this is a cold evening," said Mr. Parlin, setting the pitcher down on the counter, and looking round with a hospitable smile. "Caleb, fetch out the loggerhead."

[Pg 29]

Caleb drew from the left ear of the fireplace a long iron bar, and thrust it into the hot coals. That was the loggerhead, and you will soon see what it was used for.

While it was still heating, Dr. Hilton took from one corner of the room a child's arm-chair, and set it down at a comfortable distance from the fireplace.

"We'll have it all ready for Bubby, when he makes us his visit," said he, laughing.

Some one always placed the chair there for Willy, and it was usually Dr. Hilton.

When the loggerhead was red hot, Caleb drew it out of the coals, and plunged it into the cold cider, which immediately began to bubble and hiss. Then he poured the sparkling liquid into mugs for the thirsty teamsters to drink; and while he was still holding the pitcher high in air, that the cider might come down with a good "bead," the door slowly opened, and in glided Willy, in his yellow flannel night-dress.

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The men smiled and nodded at one another, but said nothing, as the child crossed the floor, seated himself in the little red chair, and began to rock. He rocked with such careless grace, and held his little feet before the blaze so naturally, that you would have thought he came into the room merely to warm his toes and to hear the men talk. You would never have supposed he was asleep unless you had looked at his eyes. They were wide open, it is true, but fixed, like a doll's eyes. If you had held a lighted candle before them, I suppose they would not have winked.



The Little Sleep-walker.—Page 31.

In fact, Willy was fast asleep and dreaming; and all the difference between him and other sleepers was, that he acted out his dreams. [Pg 31]

"Queer what ails that child! Must be trouble on the brain, and he ought to be bled," said Dr. Hilton, with the wise roll of the eye he always gave when he talked of diseases.

Nobody answered, for the doctor had said the same thing fifty times before.

Still little Willy kept on rocking and dreaming, as unconscious as a yellow lily swinging on its stem.

Everybody had a story to tell, which everybody else laughed at, while the fire joined in the uproar right merrily. Still Willy slept on.

Presently a glare of light at the windows startled the company. [Pg 32]

"Must be a fire somewhere!" said one of the men.

"Only the moon rising," said another.

"That's no place to look for the moon," said Mr. Parlin, seizing his hat and cloak.

"Fire! Fire!" shouted Mr. Riggs, running to the door in a panic.

"I'll warrant it's nothing but a chimney burning out," remarked Caleb, coolly; and when all the rest had gone to learn what it meant, he chose to stay behind.

There was nobody left in the bar-room now but himself and the sleeping Willy.

"Guess I'll take a look at the drawer, and see that the money is all right," said careful Caleb, stepping inside the bar, which had a long wooden grate, and looked somewhat like an enormous bird-cage, with the roof off. "Mr. Parlin is a very careless man," said Caleb, drawing a key from its hiding-place in an account-book; "he's dreadful free and easy about money. I don't know what he'd do without me to look out for him." [Pg 33]

So saying, Caleb turned the key in the lock, and opened the drawer. There were rolls of bank bills lying in it, and handfuls of gold and silver.

"With so many coming and going in this house, it's a wonder Mr. Parlin ain't robbed every night of his life," said Caleb, reckoning over the bills very fast, for he was in the habit of counting money.

Was it all right? Was the ox money there? When the "man from the west'ard" paid it to Mr. Parlin, Caleb saw Mr. Parlin spread it between the leaves of a little singing-book and lay it in the drawer. Did Caleb find it there now? And if he did, did he *leave* it there? [Pg 34]

Little boys, what do you suppose? You see he had been cheated out of ninety dollars, and was very angry about it; and now he had the best chance in the world to help himself to another ninety dollars, and make up his loss. Do you think he would do it? Mr. Parlin *was* very careless about money; quite likely he would never miss this. Was that what Caleb was thinking about, as he knit his brows so hard?

True, Caleb professed to fear God, but perhaps he did not fear Him; perhaps he had been living a

lie all this time—who knows?

After he had staid inside the bar a little while, he came out, and looking carefully at Willy, to make sure he was still asleep, stole out doors and joined the teamsters. They had only reached the top of the hill, and hardly any one had noticed that Caleb had not been with them all the while. The fire was only Mr. Chase's chimney burning out; but it was so late by this time that the men did not go back to Mr. Parlin's bar-room.

[Pg 35]

Next morning Caleb went over to Cross Lots to see about selling a load of potatoes, and soon after he left there was a great excitement in the house. Mr. Parlin had found, on going to his money-drawer, that he had lost ninety dollars.

"Strange!" said he; "I remember it was there all safe at six o'clock; for I saw it with my own eyes. It was spread in an old singing-book; and the singing-book is gone too."

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"Could anybody have taken it?" said Love. "Who was here last night?"

"O, I never leave a man alone in the bar-room," replied her father; "at any rate I didn't last night."

"Caleb would attend to that," said Mrs. Parlin; "he is more particular than you are, I think."

Willy looked up, with his black eyes full of questions.

"Was it that money you had for the oxen, papa? Caleb telled me all about it last night. He said you ought to not keep it; you ought to give it to him; he wanted it."

Mr. Parlin shook his head at Willy. "You mustn't make up such stories as that, my son."

"I guess he dreamed it," said sister Love.

[Pg 37]

"O, I didn't, I didn't; Caleb said so," cried Willy; "he said so last night."

Caleb was gone an unusually long time; and when Dr. Hilton returned from Harlow he said he left him at the bank in that town depositing some money.

That seemed strange, for Caleb had been so unfortunate that no one supposed he had any money to put in the bank.

"If it was anybody but Caleb, I should almost suspect he took that ninety dollars," said Seth, after a while.

"Don't—don't think it," exclaimed his mother; "we know Caleb too well for that."

"O, no, no, no!" cried little Willy. "Caleb is going to give me some rabbits. Caleb carries me pickaback; do you s'pose he'd steal?"

[Pg 38]

They all laughed at that; it was a little boy's reasoning.

When Caleb came home that night, and was asked why he had been gone so long, he blushed, and, as Seth thought, looked guilty. He did not say he had put any money in the bank, and did not even mention having been at Harlow at all. Nobody could think why he should make such a secret of going to Harlow, for Caleb was a great talker, and usually told all his affairs to everybody.

"Father has lost ninety dollars, Caleb," said Seth, looking him straight in the eye; "who do you suppose has got it?"

"Where? When?" cried Caleb; and then, when he had heard the story, he turned quite pale, and declared he was "'palled." When Caleb was greatly amazed, he said he was "'palled."

[Pg 39]

It was very uncomfortable at Mr. Parlin's for a few days. Nobody liked to believe that Caleb had taken the money, but it did really seem very much like it. Mrs. Parlin said she could not and would not believe it, and she even shed tears when she saw her husband and sons treat Caleb so coldly.

Poor Caleb! Whether he was guilty or not, he was certainly very unhappy.

"Willy," said he, "what made you tell your father I said I wanted his money? I never made such a speech in my life?"

"O, yes, you did, Caleb! Certain true you did! And I a sitting on your knee. But you wouldn't steal, Cale Cushing, and I telled my papa you wouldn't."

"Willy," said Caleb, sadly, "I don't think you mean to tell a lie, but what you are talking about I don't know. I never stole so much as a pin in my life; yet all the same I must go away from this place. I can't stay where everybody is pointing the finger at me."

[Pg 40]

"Who pointed a finger at you, Caleb? I didn't see 'em."

Caleb smiled a broken-hearted smile, kissed Willy over and over again, and went away that night, no one knew whither. He said to himself,—

"Honor gone, all's gone;
Better never have been born."

Was he guilty? Who could tell? Was he innocent? Then you may be sure God would make it clear some time. Caleb would only have to wait.

CHAPTER III.

[Pg 41]

THE TRUNDLE-BED.

They were all very sorry to have Caleb go away, for he had lived in the family a great many years, and was always good-natured and obliging.

"But since he has turned out to be a thief, of course we don't want him here," said Seth.

"How can you speak so, my son?" said his mother, reprovingly. "You do not really know any harm of Caleb. Remember what the Bible says, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'"

"Why, mother, who judged Caleb? Who ever accused him of stealing? I should think he judged himself—shouldn't you? When a man runs away as he did, it looks very much as if he was guilty." [Pg 42]

"O, no," said gentle Love, who was knitting "double mittens" in the corner; "that isn't a sure sign at all. I dare say he went away because he was unhappy. How would *you* like to live with people that don't trust you? Why, Seth, you couldn't bear it, I'm sure."

"I wish Caleb didn't go off," said Willy; "he was a-going to give me a rabbit."

"Well," said Stephen, in a teasing tone, "he wouldn't have gone off if it hadn't been for you, Master Willy! You said he wanted father's money, you know, and that was what put us to thinking."

"O, yes, he telled me he wanted it," cried the little fellow stoutly. [Pg 43]

"Willy, Willy, you should be more careful in repeating other people's words," said Mrs. Parlin, looking up from the jacket she was making. "Little boys like you are so apt to make mistakes, that they ought to say, 'Perhaps,' or, 'I think so,' and never be too sure."

"Then I'm not sure; but *perhaps* I know, and I *guess* I think so real hard."

"That's right, little Pawnee Indian," laughed Stephen. "Indians like you always stick fast to an idea when they once get hold of it."

"I'm not an Indian," said Willy, ready to cry; "and I never said Caleb stealed; 'twas you said so; you know you did."

It grew very cold that winter, about "Christmas-tide," and one night the wind howled and shrieked, while up in the sky the moon and stars seemed to shiver and shine like so many icicles. Willy had been put to bed at the usual time, and nicely tucked in, and it was nearly half past eight, the time for him to begin his wanderings. Lydia sat by the kitchen fireplace, comforting herself with hot ginger tea. [Pg 44]

"It would be too bad for that little creetur to get out of bed such a night as this," thought she; "I'm going in to see if he has enough clothes on. Who knows but his dear little nose is about *fruz* off by this time?"

So she stole into the bedroom, which opened out of the kitchen, took a peep at her beloved Willy, made sure his nose was safe, and turned down the coverlet to see if his hands were warm.

"Poor, sweet little lamb! Not much cold now; but thee will be cold; this room is just like a barn." [Pg 45]

Then, as "Liddy" went back to the kitchen, she wondered if it might not be the cold weather that made Willy have what she called his "walking-spells."

"For he is so much worse in winter than he is in summer," thought she. "Any way, I'm going to try, and see if I can't put a stop to it to-night; and then, if the *expeeriment* works, I'll try it again."

What "expeeriment"? You will soon see. There had been a quantity of charcoal put on the kitchen fire to broil some steak for travellers; so the kind-hearted Liddy bustled about on tiptoe, filled a shallow pan with some of the coals, "piping hot," and placed it very near the trundle-bed, on Mrs. Parlin's foot-stove. [Pg 46]

Alas for Liddy's ignorance! she was always rather foolish in her fondness for Willy; but didn't she know any better than to put a dish of red coals so near him in a small room, and then go out and shut the door? She often said she didn't "see any use in all this book-larning," and wondered Mrs. Parlin should be so anxious to have her children go to school. In her whole life Liddy had never attended school more than six months; and as for chemistry and philosophy she knew nothing about them except that they are hard words to spell. She did not dream that there was a deadly gas rising every moment from that charcoal, and that her darling Willy was breathing it into his lungs. She may have heard of the word "gas," but if she had she supposed it was some sort of "airy nothing" not worth mentioning. [Pg 47]

Of course *you* know that if she had hated Willy, and wished to murder him, she could hardly have

chosen a surer way than this; but poor Liddy went back to the kitchen with a smiling face, feeling well pleased with her "*experiment*," and began to chop a hash of beef, pork, and all sorts of vegetables, for to-morrow's breakfast.

After a little while Willy began to toss about uneasily; but he did not come out of the room and Liddy was delighted. She had said she meant to put a stop to that; and so, indeed, she had,—for this time at least. The dear child had not strength enough to get out of bed, and moaned as if a heavy hand were clutching at his throat. In fact he was suffocating. It is frightful to think of! Was nobody coming to save him?

The chilly teamsters had some time ago crowded into the bar-room with frost on their hair and whiskers; but the frost was fast turning to steam as they drank the cider which John, the new hired man, heated with the red-hot loggerhead. Dr. Hilton had set out the little red chair, and somebody would have wondered why Willy did not come in, if the men had not all been so busy telling stories that they did not have time to think of anything else.

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It was now nearly nine, and Mrs. Parlin and Love were in the sitting-room sewing by the light of two tallow candles.

"Isn't it the coldest night we've had this year, mother?"

"Yes, dear, I think it is. You know what the old ditty says,—

'When the days begin to lengthen,
The cold begins to strengthen.'

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"I do wish dear little Willy would stay in his bed, nicely 'happed' in" (*happed* is the Scotch word for "tucked"), "but I suppose he is just as well off by the bar-room fire. It's lucky he doesn't take a fancy to wander anywhere else, and we can always tell where he is."

"But, mother, I haven't heard him pass through the south entry,—have you? I always know when he goes into the bar-room by the quick little click of the latch."

"So do I," replied her mother; "but now I think of it, I haven't heard him to-night. I can't help hoping he is going to lie still."

There was nothing more said for a little while. They were both very busy finishing off a homespun suit for Willy. How should they suspect that a strange stupor was fast stealing over their little darling? Who was going to tell them that even now he was entering the valley of the shadow of death? *Who?* I cannot answer that question; I only know that just then Mrs. Parlin, who was going to bed in about fifteen minutes, and did not like to leave her work yet, suddenly dropped the jacket, which was almost done, and said,—

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"Love, I guess I'll go in and look at that child. He may have tossed the clothes off and got a little chilly."

Then she arose from her chair slowly,—she was so large that she always moved slowly,—took one of the candles, and went into the kitchen.

As she opened the bedroom door—Well, I cannot tell you; you will have to imagine that white, white face, pressed close to the pillow, that limp little figure, stretched under the coverlet, in awful stillness.

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"O God, is it too late?" thought Mrs. Parlin. She saw the charcoal; she understood it all in an instant.

"Lydia, come quick!"

A low moan fell on her ear as she bent to listen. Thank Heaven, it was not too late! Willy could yet be saved!

Happy mother, receiving her precious one as if from the dead! Bewildered Willy, coming back to life with no remembrance of the dark river which he had almost forded, without a thought of the pearly gates he had almost entered!

Conscience-stricken "Liddy!" How she suffered when she found what she had done! Not that she made a scene by screaming and tearing her hair, as some ignorant people are apt to do at such a time. No; Liddy was a Quaker, and the Quaker blood is very quiet. She only pressed her hands together hard, and said to Mrs. Parlin,—

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"Thee knows I never *meant* any harm to that sweet child."

CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 53]

THE OX-MONEY.

Perhaps the shock had some effect upon Willy's habits, for after this he did not walk in his sleep for some time.

But one night, as the teamsters were drinking their cider, and talking about the well-beloved "Kellup," wondering why he should take it into his head to steal,—“as honest a man, they had always thought, as ever trod shoe-leather,”—the bar-room door softly opened, and in glided Willy, in his flannel night-dress.

The men were really glad to see him, and nodded at one another, smiling, but, as usual, made no remark about the child. They knew he could not hear, but it seemed as if he could, and they were a little careful what they said before him.

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"Yes," said Mr. Parlin, going on to speak of Caleb, "I considered him an honest, God-fearing man, and trusted him as I would one of my own sons. If there was any other way to account for that money, I should be glad, I assure you,—as glad as any of you."

"Where has Kellup gone to?" asked Mr. Griggs.

"Gone to Bangor, they say."

All this while Willy had not seated himself in his little chair, but was walking towards the bar. After muttering to himself a little while, he went in and took from the shelf the old account-book. Mr. Parlin looked at the teamsters, and put his finger on his lips as a hint for them to keep still, and see what the child would do.

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Willy felt in the account-book for the key, then glided along to the money-drawer and opened it.

"There, now, it isn't here," said he, after he had fumbled about for a while with his chubby fingers; "the book isn't here that had the ox-money in it. Caleb mustn't have that money; it belongs to my father."

The men grew very much interested, and began to creep up a little nearer, in order to catch every word.

"Money all gone," sighed Willy; and then, appearing to think for a moment, added, "O, yes; but I know where I put it!"

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Breathless with surprise, Mr. Parlin and his guests watched the child as he pattered with bare feet across the floor to the west side of the room, climbed upon a high stool, and opening the "vial cupboard," took out from a chink in the wall, behind the bottles, a little old singing-book.

It was only the danger of startling Willy too suddenly that prevented the amazed father from snatching the book out of his hand.

"Yes, the ox-money is here," said Willy, patting the notes, which lay between the leaves.

How *do* you suppose he could see them, with his eyes fixed and vacant?

Then he seemed to be considering for a space what to do; but at last put the singing-book back again in the chink behind the bottles, clambered down from the stool, and taking his favorite seat in the red chair, began to warm his little cold feet before the fire.

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"Well, that beats all!" exclaimed Dr. Hilton, before any one else could get breath to speak.

Mr. Parlin went at once to the cupboard, and took down the singing-book.

"The money is safe and sound," said he, as he looked it over,—“safe and sound; and Caleb Cushing is an honest man, thank the Lord!"

"Three cheers for Caleb!" said Dr. Hilton.

"Three cheers for Kellup!" cried one of the teamsters.

And quite forgetting the sleeping child, the rest of the teamsters took up the toast, and shouted,

[Pg 58]

"Three cheers for Kellup Cushing! Hoo-ra-a-ay!"

Of course that waked Willy, and frightened him dreadfully. Imagine yourself going to sleep in bed, and waking up in a chair in another room, in a great noise. It was the first time the little fellow had ever been roused from one of his "walking-spells," and they had to carry him away to his mother to be comforted.

He did not know that night what had happened; but next morning they told him that Caleb did not steal the money, and that papa had written a letter to beg him to come back.

"And how think we found out that Caleb didn't steal?" asked Stephen.

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Of course Willy had not the least idea.

"Because you stole the money yourself!" replied the hectoring Stephen.

"O, what a story!" exclaimed Willy, angrily. "'S if I'd steal!"

"Ah, but you did, little man! I'll leave it to father if you didn't!"

Willy stamped and kicked. He had a high temper when it was aroused, and his sister Love had to come and quiet him.

"You took the money in your sleep," said she. "You didn't mean to do it; you are not a thief, dear; and we love you just as well as we did before."

They all thought Willy must have had a dream about Caleb and the ox-money, or he would never have gone and taken the singing-book out of the drawer; but from that day to this he has never been able to remember the dream. [Pg 60]

Caleb cried for joy when he received the letter, and fell on his knees,—so he afterwards told grandpa Cheever,—and thanked his heavenly Father for bringing him out of the greatest trial he had ever had in his life. He was very glad to go back to Mr. Parlin's, and everybody there received him like a prince. King George the Third, coming in his own ship from England, would not have been treated half so well; for the Parlins despised him,—poor crazy monarch,—whereas they now thought Caleb was the very pink of perfection. Even Seth begged pardon for his hasty judgment. Mrs. Parlin gave him "election cake," for supper, and some of her very best ginger preserves, and said she did not see how they could make up for the pain of mind he had suffered. [Pg 61]

Caleb confessed that he *had* felt "kind o' bad; but it wasn't worth speaking of now."

After this, when Willy told any improbable story, and insisted that it was true, as children often will, his mother had only to remark,—

"Remember Caleb! You said he wanted your father's money. Is this story any more reasonable than that?" and Willy would blush, and stammer out,—

"Well, *perhaps* it isn't true, mamma. I won't tell it for certain; but I *think* so, you know!"

I believe this was the only time that Willy ever did anything in his sleep that is worth recording. The rest of his adventures occurred when he was wide awake; so, you see, if he did wrong there was not so much excuse for him. [Pg 62]

CHAPTER V.

 [Pg 63]

THE BOY THAT WORE HOME THE MEDAL.

The school-house was deep red, and shamed the Boston pinks, which could not blush to the least advantage near it. It stood on a sand-bank, with a rich crop of thistles on three sides, and an oak tree in one corner. There were plenty of beautiful places in town; but the people of Perseverance, District Number Three, had chosen this spot for their school-house, because it was not good for anything else.

It was the middle of September, but the summer term was still in session, because school had not begun that year until after haying. It was Saturday noon, and the fourth class was spelling. The children were all toeing a chalk-mark in the floor, but Willy Parlin scowled and moved about uneasily. [Pg 64]

"Order there," said Miss Judkins, pounding the desk with her ruler. "What makes you throw your head back so, William Parlin?"

"'Cause there's somebody trying to tell me the word, and I don't want anybody to tell me," answered Willy, with another toss of his dark locks.

Fred Chase was sitting on a bench behind the class, with an open spelling-book before him, and was the "somebody" who had been whispering the word to Willy; but Willy was naturally as open as the day, and despised anything sly. More than that, he knew his lesson perfectly. [Pg 65]

Miss Judkins asked no more questions, for she was well aware that Fred Chase was constantly doing just such things. She smiled as she looked at Willy's noble face, and was well pleased soon after to hear him spell a word which had been missed by three boys above him, and march straight up to the head. She always liked to have Willy "Captain," for deep down in her heart he was her favorite scholar. There were only a few more words to be spelled; then Willy called out "Captain," the next boy said "Number One," the third "Number Two," and so on down the whole twenty; and after that the school was dismissed for the week. [Pg 66]

The "mistress" put on her blue gingham "calash,"—a big drawn bonnet shaped like a chaise-top,—and as she was leaving the house she whispered to Willy, "Don't forget what I told you to say to your mother."

"No, marm; you told me to say you'd asked Mrs. Lyman *if it was so*, and Mrs. Lyman said, '*Yes, it is too true.*'"

"That is it, exactly, dear," replied Miss Judkins, smiling. "And be sure you don't lose your medal."

She said that just for fun, and it was such a capital joke that Willy's eyes twinkled. Lose the quarter of a dollar dangling from his neck by a red string!—the medal which told as plainly as

words can speak, that he had left off that day at the head of his class!

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As it was Saturday, he was to keep the medal till Monday morning—a great privilege, and one he had enjoyed two or three times before. But there was this drawback; he had to slip the medal under his jacket, out of sight, on Sunday. It was the more to be regretted, as he sat in one of the "amen pews," not far from the pulpit; and if the medal might only hang outside his jacket, where it ought, Elder Lovejoy would certainly catch sight of it when he turned round, and looked through his spectacles, saying, "And now, seventhly, my dear hearers."

Willy would sit, to-morrow, swelling with secret pride, and wishing Elder Lovejoy's eyes were sharp enough to pierce through his jacket. But then, as he told his mother, he "liked the feeling of the medal, even if it *was* covered up." I suppose there was some satisfaction in knowing he was more of a boy than people took him to be.

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"Wonder what it is that Mrs. Lyman says is too true," thought Willy, taking a piece of chalk out of his pocket, and drawing a profile of Miss Judkins on the door-sill, while that young lady tripped along the road, brushing the golden-rod and sweet-fern with the skirt of her dress.

"Now stop that, Gid Noonin," said he, as a large boy came up behind him, and tickled him under the arms. "Stop that!" repeated he, making chalk figures, as he spoke, in the ample nose of Miss Judkins.

"7ber 18001," scrawled he, slowly and carefully. "7ber" was short for September; and Gideon could find no fault with that, for people often wrote it so; but he could not help laughing at the extra cipher in the year 1801.

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"Give me that chalk," chuckled he; and then he wrote, in bold characters, "7ber the 15th, 1801."

Willy dropped his head. He had not learned to write; but did he want to be taught by that great Gid Noonin, the stupidest boy in school? Why, he had gone above Gid long ago, just by spelling "exact." Gideon spelt it e, g, z! Did you ever hear of anything so silly? And he a fellow twelve years old! Willy was just eight, but he hoped he could spell! If you doubted it, there was the medal!

Gideon was not only a poor scholar,—he was regarded as a bad boy, and many mothers warned their little sons not to play with him.

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"Look here, Billy, what you up to this afternoon? Going anywhere?"

"Only up to the store, I guess. Why?"

"O, nothing partic'lar. Just asked for fun."

"Well, give back that piece of chalk," said Willy, "for it isn't mine. Steve keeps it in his pocket to rub his shoe-buckles with."

Gideon laughed, but would not return the chalk till he had whitened Willy's jacket with it and the top of his hat. He never seemed to mean any harm, but just to be running over with good-natured, silly mischief.

Willy ran home whistling; but when he saw his father standing in the front entry, his tune grew a little slower, and then stopped. Mr. Parlin was rather stern with his children, and did not like to have them make much noise in the house.

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"Well, my son, so you have brought home the medal again. That's right,—that's right."

Willy took off his hat when his father spoke to him, and answered, "Yes, sir," with a respectful bow.

There were two or three men standing in the doorway which led into the bar-room.

"How d'ye do, my fine little lad?" said one of the men; "and what is your name?"

Now, this was a question which Deacon Turner had asked over and over again, and Willy was rather tired of answering it. He thought the deacon might remember after being told so many times.

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"My name is just the same as it was the other day when you asked me, sir," said he.

This pert speech called forth a laugh from all but Mr. Parlin, who frowned at the child, and exclaimed,—

"You are an ill-mannered little boy, sir. Go to your mother, and don't let me see you here again till you can come back with a civil tongue in your head."

Tears sprang to Willy's eyes. He really had not intended any rudeness, and was ashamed of being reprov'd before strangers. He walked off quite stiffly, wishing he was "a growed-up man, so there wouldn't anybody dare send him out to his mother."

But when he reached the kitchen, he found it so attractive there that he soon forgot his disgrace. A roast of beef was sizzling before the fire on a string, and Siller Noonin was taking a steaming plum pudding out of the Dutch oven, while Mrs. Parlin stood near the "broad dresser," as it was called, cutting bread.

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"O, mother, mother! the mistress told me to tell you she asked Mrs. Lyman what you asked her to, and she told *her* to ask *me* to tell *you* it was too true.—Now, *what* is too true, mother?"

"It is too true that you are right in my way, you dear little plague," said Mrs. Parlin, stopping, in the very act of cutting bread, to hug the rosy-cheeked boy. She was a "business woman," and had many cares on her mind, but always found time to kiss and pet her children more than most people did, and much more than Siller Noonin thought was really necessary.

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"But, then," as Siller said, "their father never makes anything of them at all; so I suppose their mother feels obliged to do more than her part of the kissing."

"Mother, mother! what is it that is too true? How can anything be too true?" asked Willy, dancing across the hearth, and almost upsetting the dripping-pan in which Liddy had just made the gravy.

"You shall hear, by and by, all it is best for you to know," replied Mrs. Parlin. And after dinner was served, and Siller had gone home, she told him that Siller's nephew, Gideon Noonin, had been a very naughty boy—worse than people generally supposed him to be.

She did not like to repeat the whole of the sad story,—how he had stolen money from Mr. Griggs, the toll-gatherer, and how poor Mr. Noonin, the father, had paid it back by selling some sheep, and begged Mr. Griggs not to send his bad son to jail. She did not wish Willy to know all this; but she told him she was more than ever convinced that Gideon was a wicked boy.

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"I don't know what makes you little children all like him so well," said she. "He may be funny and good-natured, but he is not a suitable playmate for anybody, especially for a small boy like you. Remember the old proverb, 'Eggs should not dance with stones.'"

Willy looked deeply interested while his mother was talking, and said he would never speak to Gideon except to answer questions.

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"But he does ask so many questions! I tell you, mamma, he's always taking hold of you, and asking if you don't want to go somewhere, or do something. And then he makes you go right along and do it, 'cause he's so big. Why he's twice as big as me, mother; but he can't spell worth a cent."

A little while after this, Willy ran off, whistling, to buy some mackerel and codfish at Daddy Wiggins's store. Before he reached the store, he heard a voice up in the air calling out to him,—

"Hullo, Billy Button! what you crying about down there?"

Willy stopped whistling, and looked up to see where the voice came from. Gideon Noonin was sitting on the bough of a great maple tree, eating gingerbread. The sight of his face filled Willy with strange feelings. What a naughty, dreadful face it was, with the purple scar across the left cheek! Willy had never admired that scar, but now he thought it was horrible. His mother was right: Gid must be a very bad boy.

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At the same time Gid's eyes danced in the most enticing manner, and laughing gleefully he threw down a great ragged piece of gingerbread, which Willy knew, from past experience, must be remarkably nice. It was glazed on the top as smooth as satin, and had caraway seeds in it, and another kind of spice of an unknown name. Willy intended to obey his mother, and beware of Gideon; but who had ever told him to beware of Gideon's gingerbread? Gid might be bad, but surely the gingerbread wasn't! Moreover, if nobody ate it, it would get stepped on in the road, and wasted. So to save it Willy opened his mouth and began to nibble. No harm in that—was there?

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"Wan't to go swimming, Billy?"

Willy was walking along as fast as he could, but of course he must answer a civil question.

"No. Don't know how to swim."

"Who s'posed you did—a little fellow like you?" said Gid, in a warm-hearted tone, as he dropped nimbly down from the tree, and alighted on his head. "Come 'long o' me, and I'll show you how."

Willy's eyes sparkled,—he didn't know it, but they did,—and he drew in his breath with a "Whew!" Not that he had the least idea of going with Gid; but the very thought of it was perfectly bewitching. How often he had teased his two brothers to teach him to swim! and they wouldn't. He was always too young, and they never could stop. They thought he was a baby; but Gid didn't think so. Ah, Gid knew better than that.

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CHAPTER VI.

[Pg 80]

THE BOY THAT MEANT TO MIND HIS MOTHER.

"Come on, Billy Button."

"O, Gid Noonin, I can't."

"Why not? Got the cramp?"

"Look here, Gid."

"Well, I'm looking."

"Now, Gid Noonin!"

"Yes; that's my name!"

"I shan't go a step!"

"So I wouldn't," returned Gid, coolly. "I only asked you for fun."

"O—h! H'm! Are you going to swim in the brook or the river?"

"Brook, you goosie. Prime place down there by the old willow tree. Don't you wish I'd let you go?" [Pg 81]

"No; for my mother says—"

"O, *does* she, though?"

"My mother says—"

"Lor, now, Billy Button!"

"Hush, Gid; my mother says—"

"A pretty talking woman your mother is!" struck in Gid, squinting his eyes.

What a witty creature Gid was! Willy could hardly keep from laughing.

"Can't you let me speak, Gid Noonin? My mother says she won't—"

"Says she *won't*? That's real wicked kind of talk! I'm ashamed of your mother!"

Willy laughed. Gid did have *such* a way of making up faces!

"Come on, you little girl-baby! Guess I *will* take you, if you won't cry." [Pg 82]

Willy laughed again. It was not at all painful, but extremely funny, to hear Gid call names, for he never did it in a provoking way at all.

"Come along, you little tip end of a top o' my thumb."

"No, *sir*. Shan't go a step!"

Willy was a boy that meant to mind his mother.

"But I s'pose you'll have to go if I take you."

Willy caught himself by the left ear. He felt the need of holding on by something; still he was somehow afraid he should have to go in spite of his ears. Was there ever such a boy as Gid for teasing?

"Why, Gid Noonin, I told you my mother said—" [Pg 83]

"No, you didn't! You haven't told me a thing! You stutter so I can't understand a word."

At the idea of his stuttering, Willy laughed outright; and during that moment of weakness was picked up and set astride of Gid's shoulders.

"You put me down! My mother says I shan't play with you; so there!" cried Willy, struggling manfully, yet a little pleased, I must confess, to think he couldn't possibly help himself.

"Ride away, ride away. Billy shall ride," sang Gid, bouncing his burden up and down.

Willy felt like a dry leaf in an eddy, which is whirled round and round, yet is all the while making faster and faster for the hungry dimple in the middle, where there is no getting out again. [Pg 84]

"O, dear, Gid's such a great big boy, and I'm *only* just eight," thought he, jolting up and down like a bag of meal on horseback. Well, it would be good fun, after all, to go in swimming,—splendid fun, when there was somebody to hold you up, and keep you from drowning. If you could forget that your mother had told you not to play with Gid Noonin!

"If you get the string of that medal wet you'll catch it," said Gid. "Better take it off and put it in your pocket."

"Just a-going to," said Willy. "D'you think I's a fool?"

Well, wasn't it nice! The water feeling so ticklish all over you, and—

Why, no, it wasn't nice at all; it was just frightful! After two or three dives, Gid had snapped his fingers in his face, and gone off and left him. Willy couldn't swim any more than a fish-hook. Where *was* Gid? [Pg 85]

"The water's up to my chin. Come, Gid, quick!"

What would Seth and Stephen say if they knew how he was abused? No—his mother? No—Love,

and Caleb, and Liddy? How they would feel! There wasn't any bottom to this brook, or if there ever had been it had dropped out.

"O, Gid, I can't stand up."

Gid was in plain sight now, on the bank, pretending to skip stones. Gid was like a Chinese juggler; he could make believe do one thing, while he was really doing another.

"Quick! Quick! Quick! I shall dro—ow—own!"

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Gid took his own time; but as he swam slowly back to his trembling little playmate, he was "rolling a sweet morsel under his tongue," which tasted very much like a silver medal—with the string taken out.

"What d'you go off for?" gasped Willy.

"For fun, you outrageous little ninny!" mumbled Gid, tickling Willy under the arms. "I'm going to get you out, now, and dress you, and send you home to your mother."

"Dress me, I guess!"

"Well, you'd better scamper!" said Gid, hurriedly, as they got into their clothes. "Your mother'll have a fit about you."

"My mother? No, she won't. She don't spect the codfish and mackerel till most supper-time. She said I might play, but she wasn't willing I should play with you, though, Gid Noonin," said little Willy, squeezing the water out of his hair.

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"But you did, you little scamp! Now run along home. I can't stop to talk. Got to saw wood."

"Then what made you creep so awful slow when I called to you?" asked Willy, indignantly.

"O, because I've got such a sore throat," wheezed Gideon. "Off with you! Scamper!"

Upon that Gid took to his heels, and left Master Willy staring at him, and wondering what a sore throat had to do with swimming, and what made Gid in such a hurry all in a minute.

"He's a queer fellow—Gid is! Can't spell worth a cent. Should think he'd be ashamed to see a little boy like me wear the medal. Glad I didn't wet it, for the color would have washed out of the string."

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With that Willy put his hand in his pocket.

"Out here and show yourself, sir."

This to the medal.

"What! Why, what's this?"

He felt in the other pocket.

"Why! Why!"

He drew out junks of blue clay, wads of twine, a piece of chalk, a fish-hook, and various other articles more or less wound up in a wad; but no medal.

"Guess there's a hole in my pocket, and the medal fell through."

And without stopping to examine the pocket, he ran back all the way to the brook. Nowhere to be found. Not in the grass on either side of the road; not on the bank.

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Then he remembered to look at his pockets; turned them all three inside out four times. No hole there.

"Well, I never!—Look here, you Oze Wiggins; did you pick up anything in the grass?"

"Noffin' but a toadstool," replied little Ozem, innocently; and Willy wondered if he wasn't a half-fool to make such an answer as that.

"Where can that medal be?" said he, with a dry sob.

He did not once suspect that Gideon Noonin had taken it.

"I'll go home and tell my mother. O, dear! O, dear!"

He was still at the tender age when little boys believe their mammas can help them out of any kind of trouble. True, he had been naughty and disobedient; but if he said he was sorry, wouldn't her arms open to take him in? He was sorry now,—no doubt of that,—and was running home with all speed, when the sight of his father in the distance reminded him of his errand, and he rushed back to the store for the codfish and mackerel.

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"What makes your hair so wet, bubbly?" asked Daddy Wiggins, rolling the fish in brown paper. "Haven't been in swimming—have you?"

"Don' know," stammered Willy, darting out of the store.

If his hair was wet it wouldn't do to go home till it was dry; for his father would find out that he

had been in the brook, and the next thing in order would be a whipping. It was hard enough to lose the medal; Willy thought a whipping would be more than he could bear, for it was always given with a horsewhip out in the barn; and the unlucky boy could never help envying the cows, as they looked on, chewing their cud with such an air of content and unconcern. Cows never were punished, nor sheep either. Good times they had—that's a fact. *Sheep* wouldn't mind a real heavy horse-whipping, they were done up so in wool; but when a little boy had to take off his jacket, why, there wasn't much over his skin to keep off the smart. Ugh! how it did hurt!

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There was another advantage in being a sheep, or a cow, or a hen; animals of that sort never lost anything—didn't have medals to lose.

"And this wasn't mine," groaned Willy. "What'll the mistress do to me? Don' know; blister both hands, I s'pose!"

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Willy had intended to play ball with the little boys, but it was not to be thought of now. Putting his fish behind a tree, he ran to the brook again and poked with a stick as far as he could reach; then waded in up to his knees, for the medal might have rolled out of his pocket.

"No, it couldn't; for my breeches were tucked in up there between two rocks."

Suddenly he recollected Gideon's going back to the bank.

"That wicked, mean boy!" almost screamed Willy. "He stole my medal! I'll go right off and tell mother!"

Mrs. Parlin had on her afternoon cap, and was sitting alone in the well-sanded "fore-room," doing the mending, and singing,—

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"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,"—

when Willy, with his pantaloons tucked up to his knees, and his head dripping with water, rushed wildly into the room.

"My medal's gone! Gid Noonin stole it!"

"My son! What do you mean?"

"Yes, ma'am; Gid Noonin stole it! Made me go in swimming, and then he stole it!"

"Gideon Noonin?" said Mrs. Parlin, with a meaning glance. "That boy? *Made* you go swimming, my son?"

Willy hung his head.

"Yes, ma'am! Marched me off down to the brook pickaback,—he did!"

"Poor, little baby!" said Mrs. Parlin, in the soft, pitiful tone she would have used to an infant. "Poor little baby!"

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Willy's head sank lower yet, and the blush of shame crept into his cheeks.

"Why, mother, he's as strong's a moose; he could most lift *you*!"

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

"Well, but I—"

"You consented in your heart, Willy, or Gideon could not have made you go swimming."

What a very bright woman! Willy was amazed. How could she guess that while riding on Gid's back he had been a *little* glad to think he could not help it? He had hardly known himself that he was glad, it was such a wee speck of a feeling, and so covered up with other feelings.

"But I tried not to go, mother. I tell you I squirmed awf'ly!"

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"Well, you didn't try hard enough in the first place, Willy. Come here, and sit in my lap, and let us talk it over.—Do you know, my son, if you *had* tried hard enough, the Lord would have helped you?"

Willy raised his eyes wonderingly. Had God been looking on all the while, just ready to be spoken to? He had not thought of that.

"O, mamma," said he solemnly, "I will mind, next time, see 'f I don't. But there's that medal; why, what'll I do?"

"If Gideon will not return it, you must pay Miss Judkins a quarter of a dollar."

"With a hole in," sighed Willy. "Why, I've only got two cents in this world."

"O, well," said Mrs. Parlin, hopefully, "perhaps you can hire out to papa, and earn the rest."

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"O, if he'll *only* let me! Won't you please ask him, mamma?" cried Willy, filled with a new hope. "Ask him, and get Love to ask him, too. I shouldn't dare do it, you know."

CHAPTER VII

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THE BOY THAT CHEATED.

The next Monday Seth happened to go into the shed-chamber for a piece of leather to mend an old harness, and met Willy coming down the stairs with a basket full of old iron.

"Stop a minute, Willy. What have you got there?"

Willy would have obeyed at once, if it had not been for that lordly tone and air of Seth's, which always made him feel contrary.

"Stop, I say!" repeated Seth. "What have you got there?"

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"Old iron."

"Old iron? Did mother send you after it?"

"No."

"Well, then, go carry it right back."

Willy did not stir.

"Old iron is worth money, little boy."

"Yes; I know that."

"And what business have you with it?"

"Going to sell it."

"What? Without asking mother, you naughty boy?"

Willy set the heavy basket on the next lower stair.

"So you went up stairs for that iron without leave? What a wicked boy!"

Willy set the basket on another stair.

"Bellows' nose, old tea-kettle, rusty nails," said Seth, examining the basket.

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"Willy Parlin, do you know this is stealing."

"Tisn't, neither!"

"But I tell you it is! Just as much stealing as if you took money out of father's wallet."

"I don't steal," said Willy, setting the basket on another stair.

Seth was growing exasperated.

"If you don't intend to mind me, Willy Parlin, and carry back that iron, I shall have to go and tell father."

"Then you'll be a tell-tale, Mr. Seth."

"Do you think I'll have my little brother grow up a thief?"

"I wasn't a thief; but you're a tell-tale. You said, yesterday, little boys mustn't tattle, and I guess big boys mustn't tattle, neither," chuckled the aggravating Willy, dragging his basket of iron into the kitchen.

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"Mother," said Seth, as Mrs. Parlin passed through the shed with a pan of sour milk, "there's got to be something done with Willy; he has taken to stealing."

Mrs. Parlin set the pan upon a bench, and sank down on the meat-block, too weak to stand.

"I caught him just now, mother, lugging off a great basket full of old iron; and if you don't go right in and stop him, he'll take it up to the store to sell."

"Is that all?" exclaimed Mrs. Parlin, drawing a deep breath. "Why, how you frightened me! His father gave him leave to collect what old iron he could find, and sell it to make up for the medal he lost the other day."

"Well there, mother, I'm glad to hear it—that's a fact! But why didn't the little rogue tell me? I declare, he deserves a good whipping for imposing upon me so."

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"He ought to have told you; but perhaps you spoke harshly to him, my son. You know Willy can't bear that."

"I don't think I was very harsh, mother. You wouldn't have me see the child doing wrong, and not correct him—would you?"

"His father and I are the ones to correct him," replied Mrs. Parlin. "Willy has too many masters

and mistresses. Next time you see him doing what you think is wrong, let me know it, but don't scold him!"

Mrs. Parlin had said this before, but it was something Seth never could remember.

Willy sold the iron, returned a bright new quarter to Miss Judkins, and felt happy again, especially as there were ten cents left, which his father kindly allowed him to keep. [Pg 102]

Gideon Noonin never confessed his crime, and after this Willy was very careful to keep away from him. But there was another boy, nearer his own age, who had quite as bad an influence over him—Fred Chase. He afterwards became a worthless young man, and made his mother so wretched that Siller Noonin said, "Poor Mrs. Chase, she has everything heart can wish, except a bottle to put her tears in."

Fred was a well-mannered, pretty little fellow, and no one thought ill of him, because he was so sly with his mischief. He did harm to Willy by making him think he had a very hard time. His work was to bring in a bushel basket of chips every morning, and fill the "fore-room" wood-box. Of course the "back-log" and "back-stick," and "fore-stick" were all too heavy for his little arms, and Caleb attended to those. Freddy had nothing whatever to do, and pretended to pity Willy. [Pg 103]

"They 'pose upon you," said he. "I never'd stand it."

Until Freddy told him he was imposed upon, Willy had never suspected it; but, after that, he saw he had nearly all the work to do, and that Seth and Stephen did not help as much as they might. The more he reflected upon the subject, the more unhappy he grew, and the more he lingered over his wood and chips.

"Did you ever hear of the little boy and the two pails of water?" said his mother. [Pg 104]

"O, what about him, mamma? Do tell me."

"Why, the boy was told to draw two pails of water from the well; but instead of drawing them he sat down and dreaded it, till he pined away, and pined away, and finally died."

Willy ran out with his basket, and never asked again to hear the story of the boy and the two pails. But the wood-pile seemed to be lying on top of his heart, crushing him, till he was relieved by a bright idea.

Why not stand some sticks upright in the bottom of the box, and then lay the rest of the wood on top of them? It would look just the same as usual; but *what* a help!

The box was in the entry, and the "fore-room" door shut; he could cheat as well as not. [Pg 105]

"Now I'll have lots of time to play!"

"What, you here yet, Willy?" said his mother, opening the door. She thought he had been an unusually long while filling the box; and so he had. It was new business, doing it in this way, and it took time.

"I supposed you had gone, darling, for I didn't hear you whistle."

Willy whistled faintly, as he laid on the last stick. How lucky his mother hadn't opened the door sooner!

"That's a nice big box full, my son. You please your mother this morning. Come here and kiss me."

Willy went, and then Mrs. Parlin, who was a fine singer, and knew a great many ballads, sang, smiling,— [Pg 106]

"Ho! why dost thou shiver and shake,
Gaffer Gray?
And why doth thy nose look so blue?"

She often sang that when he came into the house cold, and then he would sing in reply, with a voice almost as sweet as her own,—

"'Tis the weather that's cold,
'Tis I'm grown very old,
And my doublet is not very new,
Well-a-day!"

But he was not in a musical mood this morning: he felt in a hurry to be off; and giving his mother a hasty kiss, he bounded away without his shingle-covered spelling-book, and had to come back after it.

Foolish Willy! Did he think his mamma would not find out the deep-laid plot, which had cost him so much labor? Children have no idea how bright their parents are! It was a very cold day in December, and as Mrs. Parlin kept up a roaring fire, she came before noon to the upright sticks standing in the wood-box, as straight as soldiers on a march. She sighed a little, and smiled a little, but said not a word, for she was a wise woman, was Mrs. Parlin. [Pg 107]

"Well, Willy boy," said she, when he came home from school, and had had his supper of brown

bread, baked apples, and milk, "come, let us have a sing."

There was nothing Willy and his mother enjoyed better than a "sing," she holding him in her lap and rocking him the while. He put his whole soul into the music, miscalling the Scotch words sometimes so charmingly that it was a real delight to hear him. People often stopped at the threshold, I am told, or at the open window in summer, to listen to the clear childish voice in such ballads as,—

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"Fy! let us a' to the wedding,
For they will be liltin' there;
For Jock's to be married to Maggie,
The lass wi' the gowden hair."

To-night it was "Colin's Come to Town;" and Willy's tones rang sweet and high,—

"His very step has music in't,
As he comes up the stair."

"Did you ever hear the beat of that little chap for singing?" said Caleb, in the bar-room, to Dr. Hilton and Mr. Griggs.

Since that sad affair of the ox-money Caleb had loved Willy better than ever, though it would be hard to tell why; perhaps because the child had been so glad to see him come back again.

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"Bless him!" said Love, bringing the brass warming-pan into the "fore-room," to fill it with coals at the fireplace. "Why, mother, I never hear the name 'Willy,' but it makes me think of music. It sounds as sweet as if you said 'nightingale.'"

Mrs. Parlin answered by folding the singing-bird closer to her heart.

"And do you know what the word 'Mother' makes me think of?—Of a great large woman, always just ready to hug somebody."

Mrs. Parlin laughed.

"Yes, indeed it does. And it doesn't seem as if a small woman is really fit to be called mother. There's Dorcas Lyman: when she says 'Mother' to that little woman, it sounds so queer to me; for Mrs. Lyman isn't big enough, you know."

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"*Course* she isn't; not half big enough," said Willy. "I could 'most lift her with my little finger. But, then, that baby—she's got a real nice baby; wish she'd give Patty to me."

Love smiled, and walked off, with her long-handled warming-pan, to heat a traveller's bed in the icy north chamber.

Willy's heart was full of tenderness for his mother, whom he kept kissing fondly. Now was a good time to speak of the upright, deceitful sticks of wood, perhaps; but Mrs. Parlin did not do it. She began the Evening Hymn, and Willy sang with her:—

"Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,
Beneath thine own almighty wings.

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"Forgive me, Lord, for thy dear Son,
The ills which I this day have done,
That with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be."

"Now, Willy," said Mrs. Parlin, pausing, "let us think a while, and try to remember what we have done to-day that is wrong. You think, and I will think, too."

He looked up, and she knew by the cloud in his eyes that his conscience was troubled.

"Well, I'll think. But *you* haven't done anything wrong, mamma?"

"O, yes, dear; many things."

"Well, so've I, too. Want me to tell what?"

"Not unless you choose, my child. Only be sure you tell God."

They were silent a few moments.

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"There, that's the *last* time I'll ever stand the sticks up on end in the wood-box," burst forth Willy.

"I thought so," said his mother, kissing him.

So she had known about it all the while!

But not another word did she say; and they went on with the hymn:—

"Teach me to live, that I may dread

The grave as little as my bed.
Teach me to die, that so I may
Triumphing rise at the last day."

CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 113]

"THE NEVER-GIVE-UPS."

"Now Christmas is come,
Let us beat up the drum,
And call our neighbors together;
And when they appear,
Let us make them good cheer,
As will keep out the wind and the weather."

This is what the old song says; but it is not the way the people of the new colonies celebrated Christmas. Indeed, they thought it wrong to observe it at all,—because their forefathers had come away from England almost on purpose to get rid of the forms and ceremonies which hindered their worship in the church over there.

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The Parlins, however, saw no harm in celebrating the day of our Saviour's birth, and Mrs. Parlin, who was an Episcopalian, always instructed Love and the boys to trim the house with evergreens, and put cedar crosses in the windows.

Willy was glad whenever his grandfather Cheever happened to be visiting them at "Christmas-tide," for then he was sure of a present. Mr. Cheever was an Englishman of the old school, and prayed for King George. He wore what were called "small clothes,"—that is, short breeches, which came only to the knee, and were fastened there with a buckle,—silk stockings, and a fine ruffled shirt. His hair was braided into a long queue behind, which served Willy for a pair of reins, when he went riding on the dear old gentleman's back.

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I am not sure that Mr. Parlin was always glad to see grandpa Cheever, for they differed entirely in politics, and that was a worse thing then than it is now, if you can believe it. Mr. Parlin loved George Washington, and grandpa said he was "only an upstart." Grandpa loved King George, and Mr. Parlin said he was "only a crazy man."

But Willy adored his grandfather, especially at holiday times; for besides presents, they were sure to have games in the big dining-room, such as blindfold, or "Wood-man blind," bob-apple, and snap-dragon.

Then they always had a log brought in with great ceremony, called the Yule log, the largest one that could be found in the shed; and when Seth and Stephen came staggering in with it, grandpa Cheever, and Mrs. Parlin, and Love, and Willy all struck up,—

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"Come, bring with a noise,
My merry, merry boys,
The Christmas log to the firing,
While my good dame, she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your hearts' desiring."

The "good dame," I suppose, was Mrs. Parlin; and she gave them to drink, it is true, but nothing stronger than metheglin, or egg nog, or flip. It seems to me I can almost see her standing by the table, pouring it out with a gracious smile. She was a handsome, queenly-looking woman, they say, though rather too large round the waist you might think.

Her father was a famous singer, as well as herself; and for my part I should have enjoyed hearing some of their old songs, while the wind went whistling round the house:—

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"Without the door let Sorrow lie,
And if for cold it hap to die,
We'll bury it in a Christmas pie,
And evermore be merry."

Or this one:—

"Rejoice, our Saviour, he was born
On Christmas day in the morning."

But these were family affairs, these Christmas meetings. No one else in Perseverance had anything to do with them, not even Caleb or Lydia.

But the little boys in those days did not live without amusements, you may be sure. Perhaps their choicest and most bewitching sport was training. There had been one great war,—the war of the Revolution,—and as people were looking for another,—which actually came in 1812,—it was

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thought safe for men to be drilled in the practice of marching and carrying fire-arms.

In Perseverance, and many other towns, companies were formed, such as the Light Infantry, or "String Bean Company," the Artillery, and the "Troop." These met pretty often, and marched about the streets to the sound of martial music.

Of course the little boys could not see and hear of all this without a swelling of the heart and a prancing of the feet; for they were rather different from boys of these days! Hard indeed, thought they, if they couldn't form a company too! As for music, what was to hinder them from pounding it out of tin pans and pewter porringers? There is music in everything, if you can only get it out. Chickens' wind-pipes, when well dried, are very melodious, and so are whistles made of willow; and if you are fond of variety, there are always bones to be had, and dinner-horns, and jews-harps.

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Full of zeal for their country, the little boys on both sides of the river met together and formed quite a large company. They had two trials to begin with; firstly, they could not think of a name fine enough for themselves; and secondly, they could not get any sort of uniform to wear. Their mothers could not see the necessity of their having new suits just to play in; and it seemed for some time as if the little patriots would have to march forever in their old every-day clothes.

"But they'll give us some new ones by and by, boys," said Willy. "My mother laughed last night, when I asked again, and that's a certain sure sign."

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"O, I thought we'd given that up," said Fred Chase.

"Look here, boys," exclaimed Willy; "I've thought of a name; it's the 'Never-Give-Ups.' All in favor say 'Ay!'"

"Ay! ay!" piped all the lads; and it was a vote. Perhaps it was a year before the Never-Give-Ups got their uniforms; but at last their mammas saw the subject in a proper light, and stopped their work long enough to dye some homespun suits dark blue, and trim them gorgeously with red.

Willy's regimentals were not home-made; they were cut down from his father's old ones; and he might have been too well pleased with them, only Fred Chase's were better yet, being new, with the first gloss on, just as they had come from a store in the city of Boston.

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Fred was captain of the company. The boys had felt obliged in the very beginning to have it so, on account of a beautiful instrument, given him by his father, called a flageolet. True, Fred could not play on it at all, and had to give it up to Willy; but it belonged to him all the same.

"Something's the matter with my lungs," said Fred, coughing; "and that's why those little holes plague me so; it's too hard work to blow 'em."

The boys looked at one another with wise nods and smiles. They did not like Fred very well; but he was always pushing himself forward: and when a boy has a great deal of self-esteem, and a brave suit of clothes right from Boston, how are you going to help yourselves, pray? So Fred was captain, and Willy only a fifer.

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There was one boy in the ranks who caused some trouble—Jock Winter. Not that Jock quarrelled, or did anything you could find fault with; but he was simple-minded and a hunchback, and some of the boys made fun of him. When Fred became captain he fairly hooted him out of the company. "No fair! no fair!" cried Willy, Joshua Potter, the Lyman twins, and two thirds of the other boys; but the captain had his way in spite of the underground muttering.

Saturday afternoon was the time for training. The Never-Give-Ups met at the old red store kept by Daddy Wiggins, and paraded down the village street, and across the bridge, as far sometimes as the Dug Way, a beautiful spot three or four miles from home. They were a goodly sight to see, —the bright, healthy boys, straight as the "Quaker guns" they carried, and marching off with a firm and manly tread.

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Mothers take a secret pride in their sons, and many loving eyes watched this procession out of town; but the procession didn't know it, for the mothers were very much afraid of flattering the boys. I think myself it would have done the little soldiers no harm to be praised once in a while. Indeed, I wish they might have heard the ladies of the village talking about them, as they met to drink tea at Mrs. Parlin's. She never went out herself, but often invited company to what they called little "tea-junketings."

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"Well," said Mrs. Potter, the doctor's wife, "isn't it enough to do your eyes good to see such a noble set of boys?"

"Yes, it is," said Mrs. Griggs; "and I am not afraid for our country, if they grow up as good men as they now bid fair to be."

Mrs. Chase could not respond to this, for her boy Fred was a great trial; his father indulged him too much, and she had had strong fears that he might take to bad habits. But he was as handsome as any of the boys, and she spoke up quickly:—

"Yes, Mrs. Potter; as you say, they *are* a noble-looking set of boys; and don't they march well?"

"They waste a great deal of time; but then they might be doing worse, and I like to see boys enjoy themselves," said Mrs. Lyman, the greatest worker in town.

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Her twins, George and Silas, ought to have heard that, for they thought their mother did not care to see them do anything but delve.

"Ah, bless their little hearts, we are all as proud of them as we can be," said ruddy, fleshy Mrs. Parlin, brushing back her purple cap-strings as she poured the tea. "My Willy, now, is the very apple of my eye, and the little rogue knows it too."

Yes, Willy did know it, for his mother was not afraid to tell him so. The other boys had love doled out to them like wedding cake, as if it were too rich and precious for common use; but Mrs. Parlin's love was free and plenteous, and Willy lived on it like daily bread. [Pg 126]

Kissing and petting were sure to spoil boys, so Elder Lovejoy's wife thought; and she longed to say so to Mrs. Parlin; but somehow she couldn't; for her little Isaac was not half as good as Willy, though he hadn't been kissed much since he was big enough to go to school.

"Willy's grandpa Cheever has sent him a splendid present," said Mrs. Parlin; "it is a drum. His birthday will come next Wednesday; but when I saw him marching off with Freddy's flageolet under his arm, I really longed to give him the drum to-day."

"I dare say you did," said Mrs. Lyman, warmly. "We mothers enjoy our children's presents more than they enjoy them themselves."

Then she and Mrs. Parlin exchanged a pleasant smile, for they two understood each other remarkably well. [Pg 127]

Willy received his drum on the fifteenth of September, his tenth birthday, and was prouder than General Washington at the surrender of Lord Cornwallis. No more borrowed flageolets for him. He put so much soul into the drumsticks that the noise was perfectly deafening. He called the family to breakfast, dinner, and supper, to the tune of "Hail Columbia," or "Fy! let us a' to the wedding!" and nearly distracted Quaker Liddy by making her roll out her pie-crust to the exact time of "Yankee Doodle."

"I don't see the sense of such a con-tin-oo-al thumping, you little dear," said she.

"That's 'cause you're a Quaker," cried Willy. "But I tell you while my name's Willy Parlin this drum *shall* be heard." [Pg 128]

Poor Liddy stopped her ears.

"What you smiling for, mother?" said Willy. "Are you pleased to think you've got a little boy that can pound music so nice?"

"Not exactly that, my son. I was wondering whether there is room enough out of doors for that drum."

"Why, mother!" exclaimed the little soldier much chagrined. "Why, mother!"

Everybody else had complained of the din; but he thought she, with her fine musical taste, must be delighted. After this pointed slight he did not pound so much in the house, and the animals got more benefit of the noise. Towler enjoyed it hugely; and the cows might have kept step to the pasture every morning, and the hens every night to the roost, if they had had the least ear for music. Siller Noonin, who believed in witches, began to think the boy was "possessed." Love laughed, and said she did not believe that; but she was afraid Willy spoke the truth every day when he said so stoutly,— [Pg 129]

"While my name is Willy Parlin, this drum *shall* be heard."

She wondered if parchment would ever wear out.

He drummed with so much spirit that it had a strong effect on the little training company. They had always liked him much better than Fred, and were glad of an excuse now to make him their captain. A boy who could fife so well, and drum so well, ought to be promoted, they thought—"All in favor say Ay!" [Pg 130]

Poor Fred was dismayed. He had always known he was unpopular; still he had not expected this.

"But how can *I* be captain?" replied Willy, ready to shout with delight. "If I'm captain, who'll beat my drum?"

"Isaac Lovejoy," was the quick reply.

That settled it, and Willy said no more. He was now leader of the company, and Fred Chase was obliged to walk behind him as first lieutenant.

But the moment Willy was promoted, and before they began to march, he "took the stump," and made a stirring speech in favor of Jock Winter.

"Now see here, boys," said he, leaning on his wooden gun, and looking around him persuasively. "'All men are born free and equal.' I s'pose you know that? It's put down so in the Declaration of Independence!" [Pg 131]

"O, yes! Ay! Ay!"

"Well, Jock Winter was born as free and equal as any of us; he wasn't born a hunchback. But see

here: wouldn't you be a hunchback yourself, s'posing your father had let you fall down stairs when you was a baby? I put it to you—now wouldn't you?"

"Ay, ay," responded the boys.

"Well; and s'pose folks made fun of you just for that; how would you like it?"

"Shouldn't like it at all."

"But then Jock's just about half witted," put in Fred, faintly. He knew his power was gone, but he wanted to say something.

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"Well, what if he is half-witted? He thinks more of his country than you do; twice more, and risk it."

"That's so," cried Joshua Potter. "Fred says if there's another war, *he* won't go; he never'll stand up for a mark to be shot at, at eleven dollars a month!"

"O, for shame!" exclaimed the captain.

"Now you hush up," said Fred, reddening. "I was only in fun—of course I was! You needn't say anything, Will Parlin; a boy that has a *Tory drum!*"

"It's a good Whig drum as ever lived!" returned Willy. "But come, now, boys; will we have Jock Winter?"

It was a vote; and the Never-Give-Ups went over the river in a body to invite him. He lived in a log-house with his grandfather, and a negro servant known as Joe Whitehead. Old Mr. Winter was aroused from his afternoon nap by the terrific beating of the drum, and thought the British were coming down upon him.

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"Joe! Joe!" cried he. "Get your scythe, Joe, and mow 'em down as fast as they come!"

When the little boys heard of this, it amused them greatly. Mistaken for the British army, indeed! Well, now, that was something worth while!

A happier soul than little, simple, round-shouldered Jock you never saw, unless it was his poor old grandfather. He could keep step with the best of them; but unfortunately he had no decent clothes. This was a great drawback, but Mrs. Parlin and Mrs. Lyman took pity on the boy, and made him a nice suit.

CHAPTER IX.

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THE MUSTER.

Willy proved to have fine powers as a leader. Like the famous John Gilpin,

"A train-band captain eke was he,
Of credit and renown,"

and the Never-Give-Ups became such an orderly, well-trained company, that some of the rich fathers made them the present of a small cannon.

Do you know what a wonderful change that made in the condition of things? Well, I will tell you. They became at once an Artillery Company! Not poor little infantry any more, but great, brave artillery!

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Every man among them cast aside his Quaker gun with contempt, and wore a cut-and-thrust sword, made out of the sharpest kind of wood. An Artillery Company,—think of that! The boys threw up their caps, and Willy sang,—

"Come, fill up my cup, come, fill up my can;
Come, saddle your horses, and call up your men!
Come, open the west port, and let us gang free,
And it's room for the bonnets of Bonny Dundee!"

There was to be a General Muster that fall, and if you suppose the Perseverance boys had thought of anything else since the Fourth of July, that shows how little you know about musters.

A muster, boys—Well, I never saw a muster, myself; but it must have been something like this:—

A mixture of guns and gingerbread; men and music; horses and hard cider.

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It was very exciting,—I know that. There were plumes dancing, flags waving, cannons firing, men marching, boys screaming, dogs barking; and women looking on in their Sunday bonnets.

The "Sharp-shooters" and the "String Beans" were there from Cross Lots; the Artillery from Harlow; the "Pioneers," in calico frocks, with wooden axes, from Camden; and all the infantry and cavalry from the whole country round about.

Seth Parlin belonged to the cavalry, or "troop," and made a fine figure on horseback. Willy secretly wondered if he would look as well when *he* grew up.

"Saddled and bridled and booted rode he,
A plume at his helmet,
A sword at his knee."

It seemed to be the general impression that the muster would do the country a great deal of good. The little artillery company, called the Never-Give-Ups, were on the ground before any one else, their cheeks painted with clear, cold air, and their hearts bursting with patriotism. As a rule, children were ordered out of the way; but as the little Never-Give-Ups had a cannon, they were allowed to march behind the large companies, provided they would be orderly and make no disturbance. [Pg 137]

"Boys," said Willy, sternly,—for he felt all the importance of the occasion,—"boys, remember, George Washington was the Father of his Country; so you've got to behave."

The boys remembered "the father of his country" for a while, but before the close of the afternoon forgot him entirely. There were several stalls where refreshments were to be had,—such as cakes, apples, molasses taffy, sugar candy, and cider by the mugful, not to mention the liquors, which were quite too fiery for the little Never-Give-Ups. [Pg 138]

At every halt in the march the boys bought something to eat or drink. There had been a barrel of cider brought from Mr. Chase's for their especial use, and Fred sold it out to the boys for four cents a glass. This was a piece of extraordinary meanness in him, for his father had intended the cider as a present to the company. The boys did not know this, however, and paid their money in perfect good faith.

"Hard stuff," said Willy, draining his mug. "I don't like it much." [Pg 139]

"Why, it's tip-top," returned Fred. "My father says it's the best he ever saw."

Mr. Chase had never said anything of the sort. He had merely ordered his colored servant, Pompey, to put a barrel of cider on the wheelbarrow, and take it to the muster-ground. Whether Pompey and Fred had selected this one for its age I cannot tell, but the boys all declared it was "as hard as a stone wall."

Dr. Hilton, who seemed to be everywhere at once, heard them say that, and exclaimed,—

"Then I wouldn't drink any more of it, boys. Hard cider does make anybody dreadful cross. Better let it alone."

I fear the boys did not follow this advice, for certain it is that they grew outrageously cross. The trouble began, I believe, with Abram Noonin, who suddenly declared he wouldn't march another step with Jock Winter. As the marching was all done for the day, Abram might as well have kept quiet. [Pg 140]

"Yes, you shall march with Jock Winter, too," said Captain Willy, exasperated with the throbbing pain in his head—the first he had ever felt in his life. "Pretty doings, if you are going to set up and say, 'I will' and 'I won't!'"

While the captain and the private were shooting sharp words back and forth, and Fred was busy drawing cider, Isaac Lovejoy, the rogue of the company, was very busy with his own mischief.

"Look here, Fred," said Joshua Potter, going up to the stall with a twinkle in his eye; "they don't ask but three cents a mug, round at the other end of the barrel!" [Pg 141]

"What do you mean by that?" cried the young cider merchant, looking up just in time to see Isaac Lovejoy marching off with the pitcher he had been filling from a hole in the barrel made with his jack-knife.

"Stop thief! Stop thief!" cried Fred.

"That's right," said one of the big boys from over the river. "Ike's selling your cider to the men for three cents a glass."

Perhaps this was one of Isaac's jokes, and he intended to give back the money; we will hope so. But, be that as it may, Fred was terribly angry; as angry, mind you, as if he was an honest boy himself, and had a perfect right to all the coppers jingling in his own pockets! [Pg 142]

He ran after Ike, and caught him; and there was a scuffle, in which the pitcher was broken. Mr. Chase came up to inquire into it.

"Tut, tut, Isaac!" said he; "aren't you ashamed? You know that cider was a present to the Never-Give-Ups."

The boys were astonished, and Fred's face crimsoned with shame. As soon as Mr. Chase had gone away, Willy exclaimed, with a sudden burst of wrath,—

"Well, boys, if you are going to stand such a mean lieutenant as that, I won't! If he stays in lieutenant, I won't stay captain—so there!"

"Three cheers for the captain!" cried the boys; and there was another uproar.

And how did Fred feel towards the fearless, out-spoken Willy? Very angry, of course; but, if you will believe me, he respected him more than ever. Pompous boys are often mean-spirited and cowardly; they will browbeat those who are afraid of them; but those who look down on them and despise them, they hold in the highest esteem. Willy had never scrupled to tell Fred just what he thought of his conduct; and for that very reason Fred liked him better than any other boy in town. [Pg 143]

But the Never-Give-Ups were growing decidedly noisy. After they learned that the cider was their own, they must drink more of it, whether they wanted it or not. The consequence was, they soon began to act disgracefully.

"Can't you have peace there, you young scamps?" said one of the big boys from over the river. [Pg 144]

"Yes, we will have peace if we have to fight for it," replied the captain, who had drawn the little hunchback Jock to his side, and was darting glances at Abe Noonin as sharp as a cut-and-thrust sword.

"Mr. Chase," said Dr. Hilton, struck with a new idea, "those boys act as if they were drunk."

"Why, how can they be?" returned Mr. Chase; "they've had nothing to drink but innocent cider."

"Any way," cried the doctor, "they are getting up a regular mob, and we shall have to *quail* it!"

Too true: it was necessary to quell the Never-Give-Ups, that orderly artillery company, the pride of the town! Quell it, and order it off the grounds!

Dire disgrace! Their steps were unsteady and slow; their heads were bowed, but not with grief, for, to say the truth, they did not fully comprehend the situation. [Pg 145]

"The little captain is the furthest gone of any of them," said Dr. Hilton. Indeed, before he reached home he was unable to walk, and Stephen carried him into the house in his arms. Not that Willy had drunk so much as some of the others, but it had affected him more.

Poor Mrs. Parlin! She had to know what was the matter with her boy; and the shock was so great that she went to bed sick, and Mr. Parlin sent for the doctor.

When Willy came to his senses next morning, there was a guilty feeling hanging over him, and his head ached badly. He crept down stairs, and fixed his gaze first on the sanded floor of the kitchen, then on the dresser full of dishes; but to look any one in the face he was ashamed. His mother was not at the table, and they ate almost in silence. [Pg 146]

"Now, young man," said Mr. Parlin, after breakfast, "you may walk out to the barn with me." Willy had a dim idea that he had done something wrong; but exactly what it was he could not imagine. He remembered scolding Abe Noonin for hurting little Jock's feelings; was that what he was to be punished for?

Willy did not know he had been intoxicated. He was sure he did not like that cider, yesterday, and had taken only a little of it. He supposed he had eaten too much, and that was what had made him sick. [Pg 147]

"Off with your jacket, young man!"

Old Dick neighed, Towler growled, the sheep bleated; it seemed as if they were all protesting against Willy's being whipped.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Parlin, after a dozen hearty lashes, "shall I ever hear of your getting drunk again?"

"Why, father! I didn't—O, I didn't! I only took some cider—just two mugfuls!" gasped Willy; "that's all; and you know you always *let* me drink cider."

"Two mugfuls!" groaned Mr. Parlin, distressed at what he considered a wilful lie; and the blows fell heavier and faster, while Willy's face whitened, and his teeth shut together hard. Mr. Parlin had never acted from purer motives; still Willy felt that the punishment was not just, and it only served to call up what the boys termed his "Indian sulks." [Pg 148]

Angry and smarting with pain in mind and body, he walked off that afternoon to the old red store. Fred was sitting under a tree, chewing gum.

"Had to take it, I guess, Billy?"

"Yes, an awful whipping," replied Willy; "did you?"

"Me? Of course not. Do you know how I work it? When father takes down the cowhide, I look him right in the eye, and that scares him out of it. He *darsn't* flog me!"

This was a downright lie. Fred was as great a coward as ever lived, and screamed at sight of a cowhide. He had been whipped for cheating about the cider, but would not tell Willy so.

Willy looked at him with surprise and something like respect. He could never seem to learn that Freddy's word was not to be trusted. [Pg 149]

"Well, I'll do so next time," cried he, his eyes flashing fire.

"Look here," said Fred, crossing his knees, and looking important; "let's run away."

"Why, Fred Chase! 'Twould be wicked!"

"'Twouldn't, either. Things ain't wicked when folks don't catch you at it; and we can go where folks won't catch us, now I promise you."

Willy's heart leaped up with a strange joy. He would not run away, but if Fred had a plan he wanted to hear it.

"Why, where could we go?"

"To sea."

"Poh! our Caleb got flogged going to sea."

[Pg 150]

"O, well, Captain Cutter never flogs. He's a nice man,—lives down to Casco Bay. And of all the oranges that ever you saw, and the guava jelly, and the pine-apples! he's always sending them to mother."

"I never ate a pine-apple."

"Didn't you? Well, come, let's go; Captain Cutter will be real glad to see us; come, to-night; he'll treat us first rate."

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

It seemed as if Willy could hear his mother saying the words.

"You and I are the best kind of friends, Willy. We'd have a real nice time, and come home when we got ready."

Willy did not respond to this. He did not care very much about Fred,—nobody did,—and if he should be persuaded to go with him, it would not be from friendship, most certainly.

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"I wouldn't go off and leave mother; 'twould be real mean: but sometimes I don't like father one bit,—now, that's a fact," burst forth Willy, with a heaving breast. "I told him I didn't like your cider, and didn't take but two mugfuls; but he didn't believe a word I said."

"You're a fool to stand it, Billy."

"I won't stand it again—so there!"

"There, that's real Injun grit," said Fred, approvingly; "stick to it."

"Father thinks children are foolish; he hates to hear 'em talk," pursued Willy; "and then, when you don't talk, he says you're sulky."

"Well, if you go off he won't get a chance to say it again."

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"O, but you see, Fred—"

"Pshaw! you *darsn't!*"

"Now, *you're* not the one to call me a coward, Fred Chase."

"Well, if you *dars*, then come on."

Willy did not answer. He was deliberating; and I wish you to understand that in a case like this "the child that deliberates is lost."

Without listening to any more of the boys' conversation, we will go right on to the next chapter, and see what comes of it.

CHAPTER X.

[Pg 153]

GOING TO SEA.

Seven o'clock was the time appointed to meet, and Willy watched the tall clock in the front entry with a dreadful sinking at the heart. His mother was not at the supper-table and he was glad of that. Ever since muster she had staid in her room, suffering from a bad toothache. As her face was tied up, and she could not talk, Willy was not quite sure how she felt.

"How can I tell whether she has been crying or not? Her eyes are swelled, any way. Perhaps she doesn't care much. She used to love me, but she thinks I act so bad now that it's no use doing anything with me. I can't make her understand it at all."

[Pg 154]

It was a pity he thought of his mother just then, for it was hard enough, before that, swallowing his biscuit.

"She said to me, out in the orchard, one day,—says she, 'Willy, if a boy wants to do wrong, he'll find some way to do it;' and I s'pose she was thinking about me when she said it. S'pose she thinks I'm going to be bad—mother does. Well, then, I ought to go off out of the way; she doesn't

want me here; what does she want of a bad boy? She'll be glad to get rid of me; so'll Love."

You see what a hopeless tangle Willy's mind was in. What ailed his biscuit he could not imagine, but it tasted as dry as ashes.

[Pg 155]

"Why, sonny," said Stephen, "what are you staring at your plate so for? That's honey. Ever see any before?"

"This is the last chance Steve will have to pester me," thought the child; and he almost pitied him.

"Guess he'll feel sorry he's been so hard on a little fellow like me."

As for grown-up Seth, it was certain that *his* conscience would prick, and on the whole Willy was rather glad of it, for Seth had no right to correct him so much. "Only eighteen, and not my father either!"

Willy did not think much about himself, and how he would be likely to feel after he had left this dear old home—the home where every knot-hole in the floor was precious. It would not do to brood over that; and besides, there was sullen anger enough in his heart to crowd out every other feeling.

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There were circles in the wood of the shed-door which he had made with a two-tined fork; and after supper he made some more, while waiting for a chance to pocket a plate of doughnuts. Of course it wasn't wrong to take doughnuts, when it was the last morsel he should ever eat from his mother's cupboard. He had the whole of eighteen cents in his leathern wallet; but that sum might fail before winter, and it was best to take a little food for economy's sake.

At quarter of seven he put on his cap, and was leaving the house, when his father said, severely, —

"Where are you going, young man?"

Mr. Parlin did not mean to be severe, but he usually called Willy a "young man" when he was displeased with him.

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"Going to the post-office, sir, just as I always do."

Willy spoke respectfully,—he had never done otherwise to his father,—and Mr. Parlin little suspected the tempest that was raging in the child's bosom.

"Very well; go! but don't be gone long."

"*Long?* Don't know what he calls long," thought the little boy. "P'raps I'll be gone two years; p'raps I'll be gone ten. Calls me a 'young man' after he has whipped me. Guess I *will* be a young man before I get back! Guess there won't be any more horsewhippings then!"

And, dizzy with anger, he walked fast to the post office, without turning his head.

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Fred was there, anxiously waiting for him. The two boys greeted each other with a meaning look, and soon began to move slowly along towards the guide-board at the turn of the road.

To the people who happened to be looking that way, it seemed natural enough that Willy and Fred should be walking together. If anybody thought twice about the matter, it was Dr. Hilton; and I dare say he supposed they were swapping jack-knives.

As soon as they were fairly out of sight of the village, Fred said, sneeringly,—

"Well, I've been waiting most half an hour—I suppose you know. Began to think you'd sneaked out of it, Bill."

There is an insult in the word 'sneak' that no boy of spirit can bear, and Willy was in no mood to be insulted.

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"Fred Chase," said he, bristling, "I'll give you one minute to take that back."

"O, I didn't mean anything, Billy; only you was so awful slow, you know."

"Slow, Fred Chase! You needn't call *me* slow! Bet you I can turn round three times while you're putting out one foot."

It is plain enough, from the tone of this conversation, that the boys had not started out with that friendly feeling, which two travellers ought to have for each other, who are intending to take a long journey in company. Fred saw it would not do for Willy to be so cross in the very beginning. He had had hard work to get the boy's consent to go, and now, for fear he might turn back, he suddenly became very pleasant.

"Look here, Billy; you can beat me running; I own up to that; but we've got to keep together, you know. Don't you get ahead of me—now will you?"

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"I'll try not to," replied Willy, somewhat softened; "but you do get out of breath as easy as a chicken."

"Most time to begin to run?" said Fred, after they had trudged on for some time at a moderate pace.

"No; there's a man coming this way," replied the sharper-eyed Willy.

"O, yes; I see him now. Who suppose it is?"

"Why, Dr. Potter, of course. Don't you know him by his *shappo brar*?"

The *chapeau bras* was a three-cornered hat, the like of which you and I have never seen, except in very old pictures.

As Dr. Potter met the boys, he shook his ivory-headed cane, and said, playfully, "Good evening, my little men." [Pg 161]

"Good evening, sir."

But it was certainly a bad evening inside their hearts, sulky and dark.

"What if Dr. Potter should tell where he met us?" exclaimed Fred. "Lucky 'twasn't Dr. Hilton.—There, he's out of the way; now let's run."

They were on the road to Cross Lots, a town about five miles from Perseverance. They had not as yet marked out their course very clearly, but thought after they should reach Cross Lots it would be time enough to decide what to do next.

They ran with all their might, but did not make the speed they desired, for they jumped behind the fences whenever they heard a wagon coming, and were obliged to stop often, besides, for Freddy to take breath. By the time they reached Cross Lots—a thriving little town with a saw-mill—it was pretty late; and if it had not been for the bright light of the moon and stars, they might have been a little disheartened. [Pg 162]

They took a seat on a stump near the saw-mill, and prepared to talk over the situation. A lonesome feeling had suddenly come upon them, which caused them to gaze wistfully upon the "happy autumn fields" and the far-off sky.

"Stars look kind o' shiny—don't they?" said Fred, heaving a sigh.

Willy forced a gay tone.

"What s'pose makes 'em keep up such a winking? Like rows of pins, you know,—gold pins; much as a million of 'em, and somebody sticking 'em into a great blue cushion up there, and keeps a-sticking 'em in, but out they come again." [Pg 163]

"I never heard of such a silly idea in my life," sneered Fred. "Pins!—H'm!"

"Why, can't you tell when a fellow's in fun, Fred Chase? Thought I meant real pins—did you? The stars are worlds, and I guess I know it as well as you do."

"Worlds? A likely story, Bill Parlin! Mother has said so lots of times, but you don't stuff such a story down *my* throat."

"Don't believe your mother!" exclaimed Willy, astonished. "Why, I always believe my mother. She never made a mistake in her life."

Fred laughed. [Pg 164]

"She don't know any more'n anybody else, you ninny! only you think so because she makes such a baby of you."

Willy reddened with sudden shame, but retorted sharply,—

"Stop that! You shan't say a word against my mother."

"But you let me talk about your father, though. What's the difference?"

"Lots. You may talk about father as much as you've a mind to," said Willy, scowling; "for he no business to whip me so. He thinks boys are pretty near fools."

"That's just what my father thinks," returned Fred.

Whereupon the two boys were friends again, having got back to their one point of agreement.

"If I had a boy I wouldn't treat him so,—now I tell you," said Willy, clinching his little fists. "I'd let him have a good time when he's young." [Pg 165]

"So'd I!"

"For when he's old he won't want to have a good time."

"That's so."

"And I wouldn't be stingy to him; I'd let him have all the money he could spend."

"So'd I," responded the ungrateful Fred, who had probably had more dollars given him to throw away than any other boy in the county.

"I'd treat a boy real well. I wouldn't make him work as tight as he could put in," pursued Willy, overcome with dreadful recollections.

"Nor I, neither! Guess I wouldn't!"

"Poh! what do you know about it, Fred? Your father's rich, and don't keep a pig!"

"What if he don't? What hurt does a pig do?"

"Why, you have to carry out swill to 'em. Then there's the wood-box, and there's the corn to husk, and the cows to bring up! It makes a fellow ache all over."

"No worse'n errands, Bill! Guess you never came any nearer blistering your feet than I did last summer, time we had so much company. Mother's a case for thinking up errands."

"Well, Fred, we've started to run away."

"Should think it's likely we had."

"I'm going 'cause I can't stand it to be whipped any more; but you don't get whipped, Fred. What are *you* going for?" [Pg 167]

"Why, to seek my fortune," replied Fred, spitting, in a manly fashion, into a clump of smartweed. "Always meant to, you know, soon's I got so I could take care of myself; and now I can cipher as far as *subtraction*, what more does a fellow want?"

"Don't believe you can spell 'phthisic,' though."

As this remark had nothing to do with the case in point, Fred took no notice of it. What if he couldn't spell as well as Willy? He was a year and a half older, and had the charge of this expedition.

"Which way you mean to point, Billy?"

"Why, I thought we were going to sea. That's what you said; and I put a lot of nutcakes in my pocket to eat 'fore we got to the ship." [Pg 168]

"You did? Well, give us some, then, for I'm about starved."

"So'm I, too."

And one would hardly have doubted it, to see them both eat. The doughnuts were sweet and spicy, and cheering to the spirits; the young travellers did not once stop to consider that they might need them more by and by. Children are not, as a general rule, very deeply concerned about the future. Birds of the air may have some idea where to-morrow's dinner is coming from; but these boys neither knew nor cared.

"First rate," remarked Fred, as the last doughnut disappeared. "But I don't know about going to sea. It's plaguy tough work climbing ropes, they say, and I heard of a boy that got whipped so hard he jumped overboard." [Pg 169]

"Let's not go, then," cried Willy.

"Catch me!" said Fred. "I've been thinking of the lumb'ring business. They make money fast as you can wink up there to the Forks."

"Let's go lumbering, then."

"Guess we will, Billy. You see the trees don't cost anything,—they grow wild,—and all you've got to do is to chop 'em down."

"Yes," said Willy, "and we need red shirts for that. I never chopped a tree's I know of. Could, though, if I had a sharp axe. Guess I could, I mean,—I mean if the tree wasn't *too* big!"

"O, we shan't chop 'em ourselves," said Fred, spitting grandly. "Wasn't my father a lumberman once, and got rich by it? But did *he* ever cut down a tree? What's the use? Hire men, you know." [Pg 170]

"O!" exclaimed Willy. But a gleam of common sense striking him next moment, he added, "but the money; where'll we get that?"

"O, we'll get it after a while," replied Fred, vaguely. "My father was a poor boy once. Fact! I've heard him tell about it. Nothing but tow-cloth breeches, and wale-cloth jacket, off there to Groton. And he made butter tubs and potash tubs, sir. And he took his pay in beaver skins. And then he went afoot to Boston, and he rolled a barrel of lime round the Falls, sir. I've heard him tell it five million times. And my aunt Tempy, she rode a-horseback three hundred miles to Concord.—O, poh! there's lots of ways to make money, if you try. And once he took his pay in potash,—my father did; and he sold tobacco. O, there's ways enough to make money if you keep your eyes open; that's what my father says." [Pg 171]

Willy's eyes were open enough, if that were all. At any rate, he was trying his very best to keep them open. Half of his mind was sleepy, and half of it very wide awake indeed. There was something so inspiring in Fred's confident tone. Rather misty his plans might be as yet; but hadn't Willy heard, ever since he could remember, that people were sure to succeed if they were only "up and doing?"

"Come, let's start," said he, rising eagerly, as the bell rang for nine. "If we are going to the Forks we must go to Harlow first; I know that much." [Pg 172]

And turning the corner at the left, the two wise little pilgrims set out upon their travels,—

"Strange countries for to see."

CHAPTER XI.

[Pg 173]

TO THE FORKS.

Willy started upon the run; but Fred, as soon as he could overtake him, and speak for puffing, exclaimed,—

"Now, Will Parlin, what's the use? We've got a good start, and let's take it fair and easy."

This was the most sensible remark Fred had made for the evening. Lazy and good-for-nothing as he was, he had spoken the truth for once. If they were ever to arrive at the Forks, they were likely to do it much sooner by walking than running. Willy did not understand this. Being as lithe as a young deer, he preferred "bounding over the plains" to lagging along with such a slow walker as Fred.

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The town of Harlow was twelve miles away, and it was Fred's opinion that they should reach it in season for an early breakfast.

"I've got two dollars in my pocket," said he, "and I guess we shan't starve *this* fall."

Willy thought of the eighteen cents he had been six weeks in saving, but was ashamed to speak of such a small sum.

"Well, we shan't get to Harlow, or any where else, till day after to-morrow afternoon, if you don't hurry up," said he, impatiently. "You say you can't run, but I should think you might do as much as to march. Now, come,—left, foot out,—while I whistle."

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Fred tried his best, but he was one of the few boys born with "no music in his soul," and he could not keep step.

"What's the matter with you, Fred Chase?"

"Don't know. Guess you haven't got the right tune."

Willy stopped short in "Come, Philander," and turned it into "Hail, Columbia;" but it made no difference. "Roy's Wife," or "Fy! let us a' to the wedding," was as good as anything else. Fred took long steps or short steps, just as it happened, and Willy never had understood, and could not understand now, what did ail Fred's feet; it was very tiresome, indeed.

"Look here: what tune have I been whistling now? See if you know?"

"Why, that's—that's—some kind of a dancing tune. Can't think. O, yes; 'Old Hundred.'"

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"Fred Chase!" thundered Willy; "that's '*Yankee Doodle!*' Anybody that don't know Yankee Doodle *must* be a fool!"

"Why, look here now: I know Yankee Doodle as well as you do, Will Parlin, only you didn't whistle it right!"

At another time Willy would have been quick to laugh at such an absurd remark; but now, tired as he was, it made him downright angry. He stopped whistling, and did not speak again for five minutes. Meanwhile he began to grow very sleepy.

"Wish we were going to battle," said Fred at last, for the sake of breaking the silence. "I'd like to be in a good fight; that is, if they had decent music. I could march to a fife and drum first rate."

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"Could, hey! Then why didn't you ever do it?"

"Do you mean to say I don' know how to march? Know how as well as you do."

"Think's likely," snarled Willy, "for *I* can't march if I have *you* to march with. Can't keep step with anybody that ain't bright!"

"Nor I can't, either, Will Parlin; that's why I can't keep step with you."

"Well, then, go along to the other side of the road—will you? I won't have you here with your hippity-hop, hippity-hop."

"Go to the other side of the road your own self, and see how you like it," retorted Fred. "I won't have *you* here, with your tramp, tramp, tramp."

Was ever anybody so provoking as Fred? Willy had an impulse to give him a hard push; but before he could extend his arm to do it, he had forgotten what they were quarrelling about. That strange sleepiness had drowned every other feeling, and Fred's "tramp, tramp, tramp," spoken in such drawling tones, had fairly caused his eyes to draw together.

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"Guess I'll drop down here side of the road, and rest a minute," said he.

"So'll I," said Fred, always ready for a halt if not for a march.

But it was a cold night. As soon as they had thrown themselves upon the faded grass they began to feel the pinchings of the frost.

"None of your dozing yet a while," said Fred, who, though tired, was not as sleepy as Willy. "We must push along till we get to a barn or something."

[Pg 179]

Willy rose to his feet, promptly.

"Look up here and show us your eyes, Billy. I've just thought of something. How do I know but you're sound asleep this minute? Generally sleep with your eyes open—don't you—and walk round too, just the same?"

Fred said this with a cruel laugh. He knew Willy was very sensitive on the subject of sleep-walking, and he was quite willing to hurt his feelings. Why shouldn't he be? Hadn't Willy hurt *his* feelings by making those cutting remarks in regard to music? As for the Golden Rule, Master Fred was not the boy to trouble himself about that; not in the least.

"I haven't walked in my sleep since I was a small boy," said Willy, trying his best to force back the tears; "and I don't think it's fair to plague me about it now."

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"Well, then, you needn't plague me for not keeping step to your old whistling. If you want to know what the reason is I can't keep step, I'll tell you; it's because my feet are sore. They've been tender ever since I blistered 'em last summer."

Willy was too polite this time, or perhaps too sleepy, to contradict.

It did seem as if the road to Harlow was the longest, and the hills the steepest, ever known.

"Call it twelve miles—it's twenty!" said Fred, beginning to limp.

"Would be twenty-five," said Willy, "if the hills were rolled out smooth."

They trudged on as bravely as they could, but, in spite of the cold, had to stop now and then to rest, and by the time they had gone eight miles it seemed as if they could hold out no longer.

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"I shouldn't be tired if I were in your place," said Fred; "it's my feet, you know."

"Here's a barn," exclaimed Willy, joyfully.

"Hush!" whispered cautious Fred; "don't you see there's a house to it, and it wouldn't do to risk it? Folks would find us out, sure as guns."

A little farther on there was a hayrack at the side of the road, filled with boards; and after a short consultation the boys decided to climb into it, and "camp down a few minutes."

"It won't do to stay long," said Fred, "for it must be 'most sunrise; and we should be in a pretty fix if anybody should go by and catch us."

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It was only one o'clock! The boards were not as soft as feathers, by any means, but the boys thought they wouldn't have minded that if they could only have had a blanket to spread over them. More forlorn than the "babes in the wood," they had not even the prospect that any birds would come and cover them with leaves.

As they stretched themselves upon the boards, Willy thought of his prayer. "Now I lay me down to sleep." Never, since he could remember, had he gone to bed without that. Would it do to say it now? Would God hear him? Ah, but would it do *not* to say it? So he breathed it softly to himself, lest Fred should hear and laugh at him.

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It was so cold that Fred declared he couldn't shut his eyes, and shouldn't dare to, either; but in less than a minute both the boys were fast asleep.

They had slept about three hours, without stirring or even dreaming, when they were suddenly awakened by the glare of a tin lantern shining in their eyes, and a gruff voice calling out,—

"Who's this? How came you here?"

Willy stared at the man without speaking. Was it to-night, or last night, or to-morrow night?

Fred had not yet opened his eyes, and the worthy farmer was obliged to shake him for half a minute before he was fairly aroused.

"Who are you? What are you here for?" repeated he.

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Then the boys sat upright on the boards and looked at each other. They were both covered with a thick coating of frost, as white as if they had been out in a snowstorm. What should they say to the man? It would never do to tell him their real names, for then he would very likely know who their fathers were, and send them straight home. Dear! dear! What a pity they happened to fall asleep! And why need the man have come out there in the night with a lantern?—a man who probably had a bed of his own to sleep in.

"I—I—" said Willy, brushing the frost off his knees; and that is probably as far as he would have

gone with his speech, for his tongue failed him entirely; but Fred, being afraid he might tell the whole truth,—which was a bad habit of Willy's,—gave him a sly poke in the side, as a hint to stop. Willy couldn't and wouldn't make up a wrong story; but Fred could, and there was nothing he enjoyed more.

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"Well, sir," said he, clearing his throat, and looking up at the farmer with a face of baby-like innocence, "I guess you don't know me—do you? My name's Johnny Quirk, and this boy here's my brother, Sammy Quirk."

Willy drew back a little. It seemed as if he himself had been telling a lie. Ah! and wasn't it next thing to it?

"Quirk? Quirk? I don't know any Quirks round in these parts," said the farmer.

"O, we live up yonder," said Fred, pointing with his finger. "We live two miles beyond Harlow, and we were down to Cross Lots to aunt Nancy's, you see, and they sent for us to come home,—mother did. Our father's dreadful sick: they don't expect he'll get well."

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"You don't say so! Poor little creeturs! And here you are out doors, sleeping on the rough boards. Come right along into the house with me, and get warm. What's the matter with your father?"

"Some kind of a fever; and he don't know anything; he's awful sick," replied Fred, running his sleeve across his eyes.

The good farmer's heart was touched. He thought of his own little boys, no older than these, and how sad it would be if they should be left fatherless.

"Come in and get warm," said he. "It's four o'clock, and you shall sleep in a good bed till six, and then I'll wake you up, and give you some breakfast."

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"O, I don't know as we can; we ought to be going," said Fred, wiping his eyes; "father may be dead."

"Yes, but you shall come in," persisted the farmer; "you're all but froze. If 'twas my little boys, I should take it kindly in anybody that made 'em go in and get warm. Besides, you can travel as fast again if you start off kind of comfortable."

A good bed was so refreshing to think of that the boys did not need much urging; but Willy entered the house with downcast eyes and feelings of shame, whereas Fred could look their new friend in the face, and answer all his questions without wincing.

Mr. Johonnet thought himself a shrewd man, but he could not see into the hearts of these young children. He liked the appearance of "Johnny Quirk," an "open-hearted, pretty-spoken little chap, that any father might be proud of;" but "Sammy" did not please him as well; he was not so frank, or so respectful,—seemed really to be a little sulky. There are some boys who pass off finely before strangers, because they are not in the least bashful, and have a knack of putting on any manner they choose; and Fred was one of these. Willy, a far nobler boy, was naturally timid before his betters; but even if he had been as bold as Fred, his conscience would never have let him say and do such untrue things.

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Willy suffered. Although he had told no lies himself, he had stood by and heard them told without correcting them. How much better was that? Still it seemed as if, as things were, he could not very well have helped himself. So much for falling into bad company. "Eggs should not dance with stones."

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"Well; I never'd have come with Fred Chase if father hadn't whipped me 'most to death."

And, soothed with this flimsy excuse, Willy was soon asleep again.

At six o'clock Mr. Johonnet called the little travellers to breakfast. The coffee was very dark-colored, with molasses boiled in it, and there were fried pork, fried potatoes swimming in fat, and clammy "rye and indian bread." None of these dishes were very inviting to the boys, who both had excellent fare at home; and they would have made but a light meal, if it had not been for the pumpkin pie and cheese, which Mr. Johonnet asked his wife to set on the table.

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"Poor children, they must eat," said he; "for they've got to get home to see their sick father."

There were so many questions to be asked, that the boys made quick work of their breakfast and hurried away.

"There, glad we're out of that scrape," said Fred.

"But *didn't* you lie? Why, Fred, how could you lie so?"

"H'm! Did it up handsome—didn't I, though? Wouldn't give a red cent for you. You haven't the least gumption about lying."

Willy shivered and drew away a little. His fine nature was shocked by Fred's coarseness and lack of principle; still, this was the boy he had chosen for an intimate friend!

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"If it hadn't been for me you'd have let the cat out of the bag," chuckled Fred. "You hung your head down as if you'd been stealing a sheep."

It was three miles farther to Harlow, and Fred grumbled all the way about his sore feet.

"See that yellow house through the trees?" said he. "That's my uncle Diah's; wish we could go there and rest."

"But what's the use to wish?" returned Willy. "Look here, Fred; isn't there a ford somewhere near here?"

To be sure there was. They had forgotten that; and sometimes the ford was not fordable, and it was necessary to go round-about in order to cross a ferry. While they were puzzling over this new dilemma, a stage-horn sounded.

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"That's the Harlow driver; he knows us," cried Fred; "let's hide quick."

They concealed themselves behind some aspen trees on the bank, and "peeking" out, could see the stage-coach and its four sleek horses, about an eighth of a mile away, driving down the ferry-hill into the river.

"Good!" said Willy; "there's the ford, and now we know. And the water isn't up to the horses' knees; so *we* can cross well enough."

"Yes, and get our breeches wet," groaned Fred.

"O, that's nothing. Lumbermen don't mind wet breeches," said Willy, cheerily.

"Lumbermen? Who said we were lumbermen? I shan't try it yet a while; my feet are too plaguy sore!"

"Shan't try what?"

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"Well, nothing, I guess," yawned Fred; "lumber nor nothing else."

The stage had passed, by this time, and they were walking towards the ford. When they reached it, Willy, nothing daunted, drew off his stockings and shoes, and began to roll up his pantaloons.

"Look here, Billy; if you see any fun in this business, *I* don't!"

"Fun? O, but we don't spect that, you know," said heroic Willy, stepping into the stream.

"Cold as ice, I know by the way you cringe," said lazy Fred, who had not yet untied his shoes.

"Come on, Fred; who minds the cold?"

"Now wait a minute, Billy. I hadn't got through talking. I'm not going to kill myself for nothing; I want some fun out of it."

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"Do come on and behave yourself," called back Willy; "when we get rich we'll have the fun."

"Well, go and get rich then," cried Fred; "I shan't stir another step! My father's got money enough, and I needn't turn my hand over."

Willy stopped short.

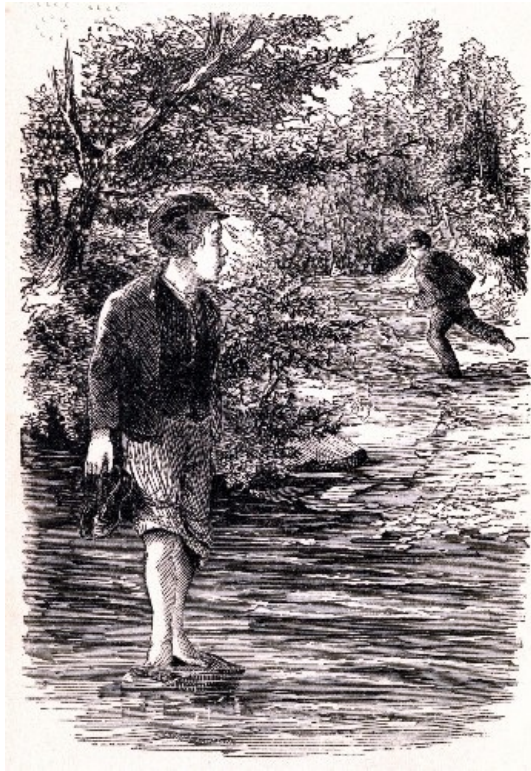
"But you are going to the Forks with me?"

"Who said I was?"

"Why, you said so, yourself. You were the one that put it in my head."

"O, that was only talk. I didn't mean anything."

Willy turned square round in the water, and glared at Fred, with eyes that seemed to shoot sparks of fire.



Deserted.—Page 195.

"Yes—well, yes, I did kind of mean to, too," cried Fred, shrinking under the gaze; "but I've got awful sick of it." [Pg 195]

"Who called me a *SNEAK*?" exclaimed Willy, his voice shaking with wrath. "Who called me my mamma's cry-baby? Who said he spected I'd back out?"

"But you see, Billy, my feet!"

Willy, whose own feet were nearly freezing, replied by a sniff of contempt. He planted himself on a rock in the middle of the river, and awaited the rest of Fred's speech.

"You know I've got folks living this side, back there a piece—my uncle Diah. That's where I'll go. They'll let me make a visit, and carry me home: they did it last spring."

"And what about *me*, Fred Chase?"

"You? Why, you may go where you're a mind to." [Pg 196]

"What? Me, that you coaxed so to come?"

Fred quailed before the look and the tone.

"Well, I'd take you to uncle Diah's, Willy, only—well—I can't very well, that's all."

Willy suddenly turned his back, and cleared the stream with one bound.

CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 197]

"I HA'E NAEBODY NOW."

Standing on the bank, Willy looked back over his shoulder at Fred, and saw him dart off into a shady cow-path. No doubt he was going to his uncle Diah's. When he was fairly out of sight, and Willy comprehended at last that he had really left him, and did not mean to come back, he sat down on a stone by the wayside, and began to rave.

"The tormentable, mean, naughty boy! I'd be ashamed to treat a *skeeter* the way he's treated me! Did I ever coax a boy to go anywhere with me, and then run off and leave him right in the middle of the river? No, *sir*. Sore feet, hey? Didn't anybody ever have sore feet 'fore now, I wonder? Why, I had chilblains last winter so deep they dug a hole into my heels, and,—well, it's no use to make a great fuss,—I didn't cry but two or three times. Blisters! what's that? Nothing but little puffs of water! Perhaps that wasn't why he stopped, though. Just as likely as not he meant all the time to stop, and come a-purpose to see Mr. Diah. How can you tell? A boy that lies so! There, there, come to think of it, shouldn't wonder if his feet weren't sore a bit! Wish I'd looked at 'em!" [Pg 198]

"Well, he's backed out, Fred Chase has! I should think he'd feel so mean he never'd want to show *his* head anywhere again! 'Fore I'd *sneak out* when I got started! Eh, for shame!" [Pg 199]

Willy tore up a handful of grass, and threw it into the road, and the action served to relieve him a

little.

"Well, what'll I do? now let's think. If a tiger should come right down this ferry-hill, and tear me all to pieces, Fred wouldn't care. 'Course not. All he cares is to get enough to eat, and not make his feet sore. He don't care what comes of me. I've got to think it out for myself, what I'd better do. Got to do it myself, too, all alone, and there won't be anybody to help me. Pretty scrape, I should think! Might have known better'n to come!

"Well; will I be a lumberman and go up to the Forks? Let's see; I don' know the way up there. That makes it bad, 'cause I guess there isn't much of any road to it 'cept spotted trees; that's what I heard once. Most likely I'd get lost. Fred wouldn't care if I did; be glad, I s'pose. But, then, there's bears. Ugh! Pshaw! who's afraid of bears? And then there's mother—O, I didn't mean to think about mother!"

[Pg 200]

Willy sighed, but soon roused himself.

"Well, what'll I do? O, wasn't that a real poor breakfast the woman gave us? Don't see how I swallowed it! Makes me sick to think of it. Didn't taste much like mother's breakfasts! I don't want to go where I'll have to drink molasses in my coffee, and eat fatty potatoes too.

"And who'd take a little boy like me? Folks laugh at little boys—think they don't know a thing. And folks always ask so many questions. They want to know where you come from, and who your father is, and if he's got any cows. And I *won't* lie. And next thing they'd be sending me home. They'd say home was the best place for little boys. H'm! So it is, if you don't have to get whipped!

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"O, my! Didn't I have to take it that last time? Father never hurt so before. Made all the bad come up in my throat, and I can't swallow it down yet. It would be good enough for him if I was dead; for then every time he went out to the barn there'd be that horsewhip hanging up on the nail; and he'd think to himself—'Where's that little boy I used to whip?' And then the tears will come into his eyes, I pretty much know they will. I saw the tears in his eyes once when I was sick. He felt real bad; but when I got well, first thing he did was to whip me again. Whippings don't do any good. All that does any good is when mother talks to me; and that don't do any good, either. She made me learn this verse:—

[Pg 202]

"'And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.'

"There, I know that straight as a book. She prays to God to make me better, but He doesn't do it yet, and I should think she'd get discouraged. 'Heart like a stone,' she said. That made me want to laugh, for I could feel it beating all the time she spoke, and it couldn't if it was a stone! Bad heart, though, or I wouldn't be so bad myself.

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"Well, it's no use to think about badness or goodness now," said Willy, flinging another handful of grass into the road. "*What'll I do?* That's the question.

"You see, now, folks have such a poor opinion of boys," added he, his thoughts spinning round the same circle again. "Most wish I was a girl. O, my stars, what an idea!"

And completely disgusted with himself, he jumped up and turned a somersets.

"Better be whipped three times a day than be a girl!

"But father felt real bad that time I was sick, for I saw him. Not so bad as mother, though. Poor mother! I no business to gone off and left her. What you s'pose she thought last night, when I didn't come back from the post office?"

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This question had tried to rise before, but had always been forced back.

"She waited till nine o'clock, and didn't think much queer. But after that she come out of the bedroom, with her face tied up, and said she, 'Hasn't Willy got home yet?' Then they told her 'No,' and father scowled. And she sat up till ten o'clock, and then do you s'pose anybody went out doors to hunt? She didn't sleep a wink all night. Don't see how folks can lie awake so. I couldn't if I should try; but I'm not a woman, you know, and I don't believe I should care much about my boys, if I was. Would I mend their trousers for 'em, when they tore 'em on a nail, going where I told 'em not to? For, says I, I can't bear the sight of a child that won't mind. But you see, mother—

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"Poor mother, what'll she do without me? She said there wasn't anybody she could take in her arms to hug but just me. Stephen's too big to sit in her lap, and Love's too big; and there wouldn't anybody think of hugging Seth, if he was ever so little.

"Yes, mother wants *me*. I remember that song she sings about the Scotch woman that lost her baby, and she cries a little before she gets through."

The words were set to a plaintive air, and Willy hummed it over to himself,—

"I ha'e naebody now, I ha'e naebody now
To clasp at my bosom at even,
O'er his calm sleep to breathe out a vow,
And pray for the blessing of Heaven."

[Pg 206]

"Poor mother, how that makes her cry! Why, I declare, I'm crying too! Somehow seems's if I

couldn't get along without mother. But there, I won't be a cry-baby! Hush up, Willy Parlin!

"WHAT'LL I DO? Wish I hadn't come. Wish I'd thought more about mother—how she's going to feel.

"What if I should turn right round now, and go home? Why, father'd whip me worse'n ever—*that's* what. Well, who cares? It'll feel better after it's done smarting. Guess I can stand it. Look here, Will Parlin, I'm going."

Bravo, Willy! With both feet he plunged into the river, and waded slowly across. Very slowly, for his mind was not fully made up yet. There was a great deal of thinking to be done first; but he might as well be moving on while he thought. Every now and then rebellious pride, or anger, or shame would get the better of him, and he would wheel round, with the impulse to strike off into the unknown *Somewhere*, where boys lived without whippings. But the thought of his mother always stopped him. [Pg 207]

Was there an invisible cord which stretched from her heart to his—a cord of love, which drew him back to her side? He could see her sorrowful face, he could hear her pleading voice, and the very tremble in it when she sang,—

"I ha'e naebody now, I ha'e naebody now."

"But I'd never go back and take that whipping, if it wasn't for mother!"

He no longer felt obliged to hide from the approach of every human being; and when a pedler, driving a "cart of notions," called out, "Want a lift, little youngster?" he was very glad to accept the offer. To be sure, he only rode two or three miles, but it was a great help. [Pg 208]

It was noon, by that time, "high noon too," and the smell of nice dinners floated out to him from the farm-houses, as he trudged by; but to beg a meal he was ashamed. When he reached Cross Lots it was the middle of the afternoon. He went up to the stump near the mill, where he and Freddy had sat the night before; and, as he seated himself, he thought with a pang of that pocket full of doughnuts, so freely made way with.

He had eighteen cents in his wallet; but what good did it do, when there was no store at hand where a body could buy so much as a sheet of gingerbread? He was starving in the midst of plenty, like that unfortunate man whose touch turned all the food he put in his mouth into gold. [Pg 209]

Beginning to think he would almost be willing to be whipped for the sake of a good supper, he rose and walked on.

When he reached the Noonin farm, a mile and a half from home, the night shadows were beginning to fall, but he could see in the distance a horse and wagon coming that made his heart thump loud. The horse was old Dolly; and what if one of the men in the wagon should be his father?

No, it was only Seth and Stephen; but Seth was almost as much to be dreaded as Mr. Parlin himself. [Pg 210]

"You here, you young rogue?" called out Stephen, in a tone between laughing and scolding, for he would not have Willy suspect how relieved they were at finding him. "You here? And where's Fred?"

"Up to Harlow, to Mr. Diah's," replied Willy, and coolly climbed into the wagon.

"Better wait for an invitation. How do you know we shall let you ride?" said Stephen, turning the horse's head towards home.

"First, we'd like to know what you've got to say for yourself," put in Seth, in that cold, hard tone, which always made Willy feel as if he didn't care how he had acted, and as if he would do just so again.

"I suppose you are aware that you have been a very wicked, deceitful, disobedient boy?" [Pg 211]

Willy made no reply, but lay down on the floor of the wagon, and curled himself up like a caterpillar.

"Don't be too hard on him, Seth," said Stephen, who could not help pitying the poor little fellow in his shame and embarrassment; "I don't believe you meant to run away—now did you, Willy?"

The child was quite touched by this unexpected kindness. So they were not sure he did mean to run away? If he said "No," they would believe him, and then perhaps he wouldn't have to be whipped. But next instant his better self triumphed, and he scorned the lie. Uncurling himself from his caterpillar ball, he stammered,—

"Yes, I did mean to, too."

A little more, and he would have told the whole story. He longed to tell it—how life had seemed a burden on account of his whippings, and how he and Fred had planned to set up in business for themselves, but Fred had backed out. But before he had time to speak, Seth said, sternly,— [Pg 212]

"You saucy child!"

He had taken Willy's quick "Yes, I did mean to, too," for impertinence; whereas it was one of the

bravest speeches the boy ever made, and did him honor.

After this rebuke from Seth, Willy could not very well go on with his confessions; the heart was gone out of him, and he curled up, limp and quiet, like a caterpillar again.

"Meant to run away—did you?" went on Seth, who ought to have known better than to pursue the subject; "to run away like a little dirty vagabond! You've nearly killed mother, I wish you to understand. You'll get a severe thrashing for this. I shall tell father not to show you any mercy." [Pg 213]

"Come, now, don't kick a fellow when he's down," said Stephen. "Willy will be ashamed enough of this."

"Well, he ought to be ashamed! If he'd had a teaspoonful of brains he'd have known better than to cut up such a caper as this. Did you think you could run off so far but that we could find you, child?"

No answer.

"What did you little goslings mean to do with yourselves? Live on acorns? And what did Fred's uncle say when he saw him coming into the house in that shape?" [Pg 214]

No answer.

Stephen looked down at the curled-up bunch on the floor of the wagon, and as it did not move, he gently touched it with his foot.

"Poor little thing," said he, "I guess he's had a pretty hard cruise of it; he's sound asleep."

CHAPTER XIII.

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CONCLUSION.

Mrs. Parlin saw the wagon driving up to the porch door, and came out trembling and too much frightened to speak. She supposed at first that Willy had not come, for she did not see him till Seth and Stephen lifted him out of the wagon, a dead weight between them.

O, her baby—her baby; what had happened to her dear wee Willie?

"There, there, mother, don't be frightened," said Stephen, cheerily; "his tramp has been too much for him; that's all. I guess we'll carry him right up stairs to bed." [Pg 216]

"I—want—some—supper," moaned the little rebel, waking up just as they were laying him on his bed in the pink chamber.

His mother and Love watched him with real pleasure, as he devoured cold meat and bread, all they dared let him have, but not half as much as he craved. Then he fell asleep again, and did not wake till noon of the next day. His mother was bending over him with the tenderest love, just as if he had never given her a moment's trouble in his life. That was just like his dear mother, and it was more than Willy could bear; he threw his arms round her neck, and buried his face in her bosom, completely subdued.

"O, mother, mother, I'll never do so again." [Pg 217]

"My darling, I am sure you never will."

"Where's father?"

"Down stairs in the dining-room, I think."

"Well, I'm ready; will you tell him I'm ready," cried Willy, drawing a quick breath.

"Ready for what, dear?"

"Well, he is going to whip me, I suppose, and I want it over with."

"And how do you feel about it, my son? Don't you think you deserve to be whipped?"

"Yes'm, I do," replied Willy, with a sudden burst of candor; "I don't see how anybody can help whipping a boy that's acted the way I have."

"That's nobly said, my child," exclaimed Mr. Parlin, stepping out of the large clothes-press. "I happened to be in there over-hauling the trunk that has my Freemason clothes in it, and I couldn't but overhear what you've been saying." [Pg 218]

Willy buried his face in the pillow. He was willing his mother should know his inmost thoughts, but he had always been afraid of his father.

"And, Willy, since you take so kindly to the idea of another whipping, I don't know but I shall let you off this time."

Willy opened his eyes very wide.

"I'll tell you why," went on Mr. Parlin. "You didn't deserve the last whipping you had; so that will go to offset this one, which you do deserve."

Willy's eyes sparkled with delight; still there was a look in them of question and surprise. The idea of his ever having a whipping that his father thought he didn't deserve!

[Pg 219]

"You were in a shameful state that night, Willy; I can't call it anything else but *drunk*; but I know now how it happened; there was brandy in the cider."

"Brandy, papa?"

"Yes. Dr. Potter and I examined the barrel yesterday, and the mixture in it was at least one third brandy."

"O, papa, was that why it tasted so bad? I drank one mugful, and didn't like it; and then by and by I drank another mugful; but that was all."

"Yes, Willy; so you told me when I talked with you; and I didn't believe you then; but I believe you now."

"O, father, I'm so glad!" cried Willy, with a look such as he had never before given his father—a beaming look of gratitude and love. I think he was happier at that moment to know that his father trusted him, than to know he would not be punished.

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He little thought then that he should never have another whipping as long as he lived; but so it proved. Not that Mr. Parlin ever changed his mind about the good effects of the rod; but when he saw that Willy was really trying to be a better boy, he had more patience with him.

And Willy was trying. He continued to be rather hasty and headstrong, but the "Indian sulks" gradually melted out of his disposition like ice in a summer river. This exploit of running away had a humbling effect, no doubt; but more than that, as he grew older he learned to understand and love his father better. He found that those dreadful whippings had been given "more in sorrow than in anger,"—given as a help to make him better; and the time came when he thanked his father for them.

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And this is all I have to tell of his younger days. When he was twenty-seven years old, and pretty Patience Lyman was twenty, they were married in Squire Lyman's parlor, by Elder Lovejoy, then a very old man.

After the wedding they rode at once to Willowbrook, where they have both lived to this day; she, the dearest of old ladies, and he, a large, beautiful, white-headed old man, whom no one would now think of calling the *Little Grandfather*.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE GRANDFATHER ***

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