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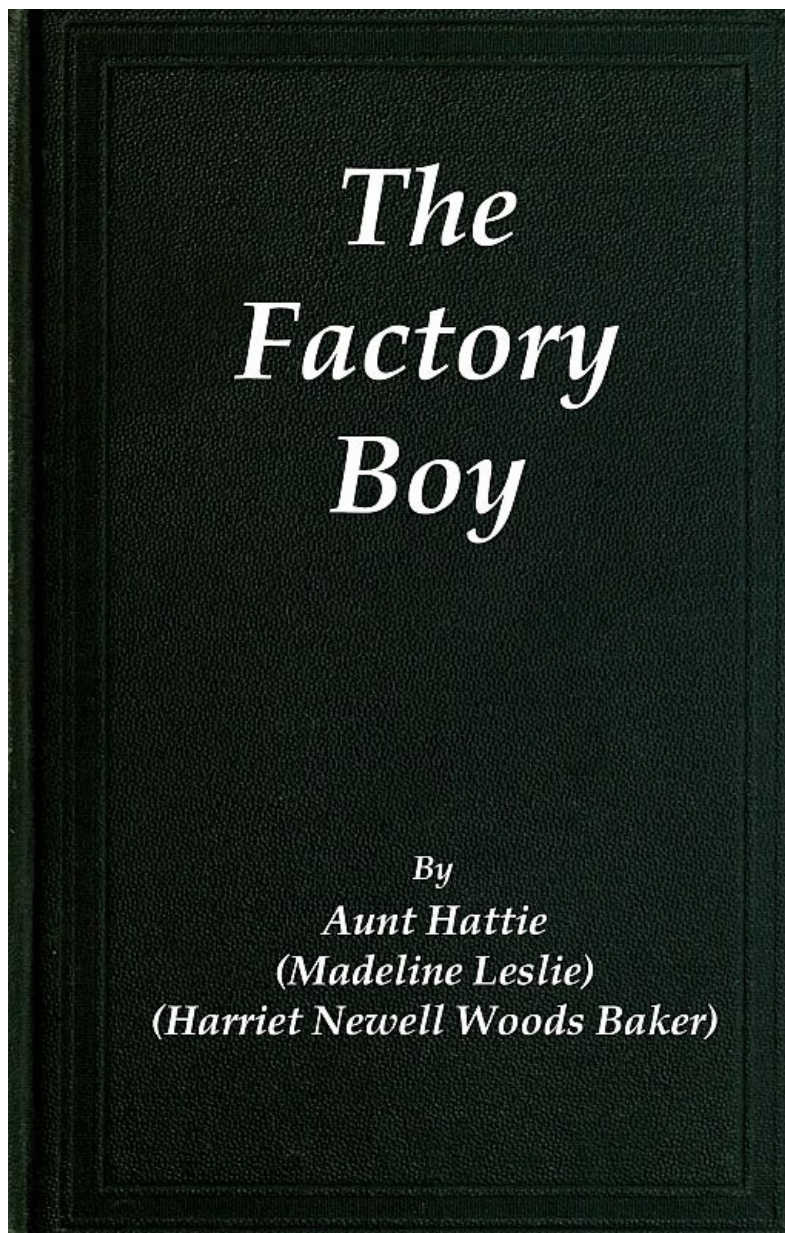
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FACTORY BOY ***



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for Girls.

SERIES I.

- VOL. I. THE SHEEP AND LAMBS.
" II. LILY'S BIRTHDAY.
" III. LITTLE MISS FRET.
" IV. MAGGIE AND THE MICE.
" V. THE LOST KITTY.
" VI. IDA'S NEW SHOES.

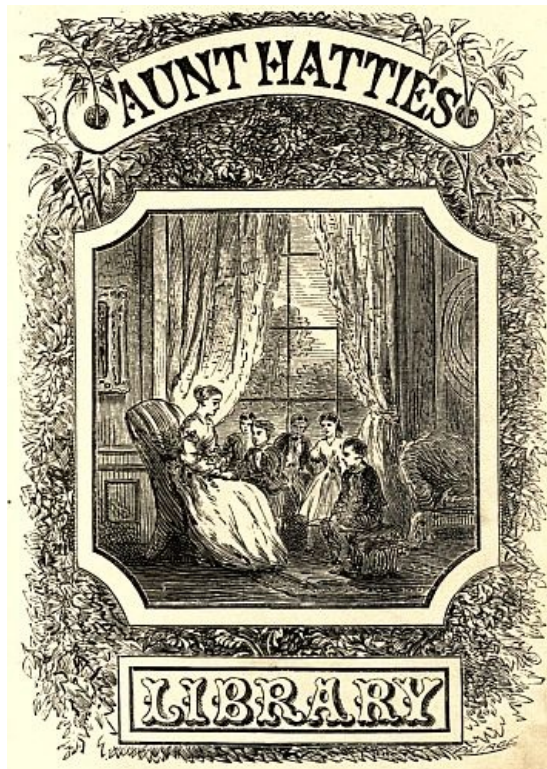
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for Boys.

SERIES II.

- VOL. I. THE APPLE BOYS.
" II. THE CHEST OF TOOLS.
" III. THE FACTORY BOY.
" IV. FRANKIE'S DOG TONY.
" V. THE GOLDEN RULE.
" VI. LYING JIM.

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The Factory Boy.

BY AUNT HATTIE,

AUTHOR OF THE "BROOKSIDE SERIES," ETC.

"Trust in the Lord and do good, . . . and verily thou shalt be fed."
DAVID.

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BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY HENRY A. YOUNG & CO.,
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REV. A. R. BAKER,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the District of
Massachusetts.

ROCKWELL & ROLLINS, STEREOTYPERS,
122 Washington Street.

To

[vii]

NELLIE, ROLAND COTTON, ANNIE, AND FULLER APPLETON,

CHILDREN OF MY BELOVED NEPHEW,

THE REV. JOHN COTTON SMITH, D.D.,

THESE SMALL VOLUMES ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

WITH THE EARNEST PRAYER

THAT THEIR LIVES MAY PROVE THEM TO BE LAMBS IN THE FOLD

OF THE GREAT AND GOOD

Shepherd of Israel.

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THE FACTORY BOY.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SILVER DOLLAR.



AKE a cup of porridge, Johnny, dear. It's too cold to go to work without something warm."

Johnny looked in the bowl which stood on the hearth, near a few smouldering brands, and shook his head as he answered,—"I'm not very hungry, mother. There's only enough for you and Ella." Then without another word he hurried away, for the factory bell was ringing; and he knew that he must not be late. [12]

Poor little Johnny! How he shivered as he shuffled along that frosty December morning! He could not pick up his feet, as the boys say, and run; for his shoes were much too large for him, and the heels were so worn that it was only by shuffling that he could keep them on his feet. He had scarce a quarter of a mile to go; but cold and hungry as the child was, it seemed a long way to him. He could not help wishing he were a baby like Ella, and could lie in bed all day, with his dead father's coat thrown over him to keep him warm. [13]

It was early yet; and few people were stirring except the men, women, and children who were hurrying to enter the factory before the bell ceased to toll. Johnny hurried, too, for he remembered the scolding he had received the day before for being five minutes too late, and was just crossing the railroad track when his toe hit against something, which he stooped to pick up. [14]

It was a silver dollar; but he did not know it. He had never seen one. He thought it was a temperance medal, like what he had seen strung around the boys' necks.

His eyes shone with pleasure; he had often wished for a medal, and he determined that when he reached the factory he would thread a piece of yarn through the hole and wear it outside his jacket. [15]

The place where Johnny worked was a stocking factory. His part was to wind the skeins of yarn upon the long spools, from which the men and large boys wove it into stockings.

He had forgotten about his hunger now, and was tying a knot in the string he had put through the dollar, when a young woman came toward him. [16]

"What are you doing?" she asked.

He held up the medal, saying, eagerly, "I found it."

"It's a dollar, a silver dollar, Johnny."

"Oh, goody!" cried the boy; "now I can have some new shoes. I thought it was a Father Matthew's medal; but I'd rather have a dollar. Oh, I'm so glad!"

The woman looked in his pale face, and couldn't help saying, as she did so,— [17]

"Are you hungry, child?"

"Not very."

"What did you have for breakfast?"

His lips quivered, but he knew by her kind face that she was a friend; and he told her the whole story of his mother's long sickness; and how they had grown poorer and poorer, until there was nothing now but what he earned.

"I knew Ella would be hungrier than I," he said, looking the woman full in the face with his clear blue eyes; "and so I didn't take the porridge." [18]

"Wait a minute; you sha'n't go to work so," was all she said; and then she was off through the door, down the long steps in a hurry.

He pulled his stool close to the small wheel, on which was a large skein of fine yarn, and began to turn it with his foot, when the woman came back, bringing a small basket.

"Here, Johnny, eat this and this," giving him a buttered biscuit and a piece of cold meat; "and carry the rest home. There is enough for you, your mother, and Ella, to have a good dinner." [19]

Poor Johnny was dumb with astonishment. He could scarcely realize that all this was for him; but as the woman waited to see him eat, he pulled the hard silver dollar from his pocket and held it out to her.

"No! no!" she exclaimed; "give it to your mother. She'll know what to do with it, I dare say." [20]

That was a happy day for Johnny; almost the happiest he had ever known. He had begun it by giving up his own comfort for that of his mother and sister, and by-and-by God sent him friends to care for him.

KIND FRIENDS.



ONALD MILES was the name of the Superintendent of the stocking factory. He had just married a young wife, and brought her to live in one of the new houses near the mill. She was a Christian woman, who tried to follow her Master, and do good wherever she had opportunity. She took a class in the Sabbath school, and told her husband she meant to have some scholars from the factory. Two or three times she had noticed Johnny running up the steps, and thought, "that boy is too small for such work." You can imagine, then, how she felt when she heard his simple story. [22]

In the evening Johnny and his mother were eagerly talking over the various events and scenes of the day when Mrs. Miles opened the door and presented herself before them. [23]

"I feel sure," she had said to her husband, "that the child told me the truth. His eyes were too honest to deceive; but still I mean to go this very day and see for myself. Why, they have nothing to eat and are on the very verge of starvation!"

"I wish, Johnny," Mrs. Talbot was saying, "that the dollar was ours; and then you should have a pair of shoes; but it is not, and we must contrive some way to find the owner." [24]

The room was very poor, but clean as hands could make it. On the floor in the corner was a straw bed, between the windows, a long chest, and near the fire three small wooden stools standing before an old rickety table.

Mrs. Miles soon convinced the poor woman that she was a friend; and, before the visit was ended, she found that though one was very poor, and the other comparatively rich, there was one tie which bound them together,—they both loved Christ, and looked forward to living with him forever in heaven. [25]

When she rose to go she said to Johnny,—

"I'll take the dollar with me, and ask my husband what shall be done to find the owner, and I'll see about the work for you right away. Why," she added, with a smile, "I can earn a dollar a day closing socks; and I never was called smart with my needle; so keep up good courage. Better days are coming for us." [26]

"But I've tried a great many times to get work," answered the poor woman, shaking her head. "They always told me there was none."

Mrs. Miles gave her head a little toss, as much as to say, "No one need tell me that story." Then she laughed as she exclaimed,—

"Well, if I can't get work for you, I'll bring you mine. You need it more than I do. Now don't cry, —it will hurt your eyes; but say your prayers and go to bed. I'll be sure to come again soon." [27]

When she shut the door, Mrs. Talbot began to cry; but these were happy tears, which brought relief to her overburdened heart. Then she said to Johnny,—

"Let us kneel down and thank God for sending us such a friend."

"O mother!" exclaimed the boy, when they arose from prayer; "wasn't that bread and butter nice? I never tasted anything so good."

"Yes, dear; and when your father was alive we had bread and butter every day." [28]

The next morning, when the little boy went to his work, he looked all about for his kind friend; but he did not see her until he had been dismissed for dinner. He was passing along the sidewalk, when he heard a tap on the window of a house close by, and, looking up, he saw Mrs. Miles beckoning to him. She had a bundle rolled up in a towel, which she told him to give his mother, and tell her she would have company in the evening. [29]

And true enough, just as Ella was safely in bed, there was a knock at the humble door, and Mrs. Miles walked in, followed by her husband.

Johnny had never seen this gentleman except in the factory; and then he looked very grave as he talked with the men or with merchants who came from the city. Now it was very different. His young wife had told him a pitiful story about the widow; and he came prepared to help her. [30]

"So you were lucky to-day, Johnny, and found a dollar," he began, taking the silver piece from his pocket. "I have made inquiries for you, and can find no one who claims it; so I think you may keep it with a good conscience."

Johnny's eager face expressed his thanks.

"What would you like to buy with it?"

"A pair of shoes, sir."

"Well, come on to the shoe-store."

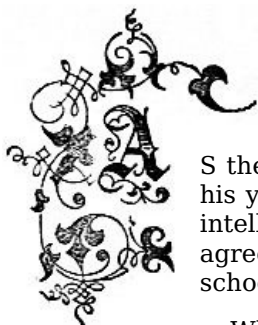
"Yes," said the lady, with a smile; "and while you are gone, I'll give Mrs. Talbot a lesson in closing the seams of the stockings."

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CHAPTER III.

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THE NEW BOOTS.



As they walked together toward the store, Mr. Miles became as much interested in his young companion as his wife could have wished. The child discovered so much intelligence, and had evidently been so well trained, that the superintendent fully agreed with Mrs. Miles, that it was a pity he should not have a chance to go to school.

When they reached the store, the gentleman said, laughing,—

"Show us your best goods, now; we want a pair of stout brogans, such as you can warrant will turn water."

"For him?" asked the merchant, nodding his head toward Johnny.

"Yes, for him. You see he needs them badly enough."

"Boots would be better."

"Ah, yes."

Mr. Miles's eyes began to twinkle. He had a happy thought; and so he put Johnny's silver dollar, which he had been twirling by the string, into his vest pocket, and began to examine carefully one pair after another of the boots laid out for him on the counter.

"This is a good pair," he said, at last. "What is the price?"

"Three dollars. I'll warrant those; they are custom made; but they were too small for the child whose mother ordered them. I should have charged her five if they'd suited."

"Yes, I see they're first-rate boots,—what, in the hose line, I should call 'A, number one.' Now I'll tell you what I propose. This little fellow is the son of a widow, who, when my wife found her, had literally not one mouthful of food. Just think of such destitution if you can!—a good Christian, too; but the death of her husband and her own long sickness have exhausted everything. I propose to give half the price, and let you give the other."

"Oh, I can't afford that! Why, I've taken off two dollars already."

"Look here, now," urged Mr. Miles; "I'm going to start a subscription for the benefit of the widow. It would make your heart ache to see how very destitute she is of everything. I want your name down, of course; I must have it. So here goes,—'Allen Manning, one dollar and a half.' There, you'll be glad whenever you think of having made a child happy and comfortable."

"Well, if you say so, I suppose I must."

"Thank you. Now I want your wife to join with mine and just make the widow's hovel a little more tenantable. They'll work together finely, I know. Mrs. Miles says she is sure a little nourishing food will do more for the poor soul than a shop-full of medicine. You see, the poor creature thinks herself in a decline."

Mr. Manning tied up the bundle and handed it to Johnny; and then the two started off for home, the boy having looked the thanks his trembling lips refused to utter.



Mr. Mills going with Johnny to buy Shoes

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"Now, Johnny," said Mr. Miles, "here's your medal; wear it around your neck as long as you are a truthful boy. When you tell your first lie, bring it to me."

"I don't dare to tell lies, sir; mother says God hates liars; but 'those that speak the truth are his delight.'"

"That's true doctrine; and here we are."

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Mrs. Miles opened the door when she heard her husband's voice, and said, in a pleasant tone, and manner,—

"She learned the stitch in half the time I did."

The proud husband tapped her glowing cheek. I am sure he was thinking what a darling little wife he had. And when Johnny eagerly related the story of the boots, I know she thought,—

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"That is so like Donald; he has such a noble heart."

"And I have the medal,—I mean the dollar, too, mother. I'm to keep it till I tell a lie."

"Which I hope will never happen, dear. But did you thank our good, generous friends? I have no words to express my gratitude."

"Never mind for words, Mrs. Talbot. Good-night."

CHAPTER IV.

[41]

A SAD STORY.



It was, indeed, time that help should come to the poor widow, for a cough had fastened itself on her lungs, which would soon have ended her life. The room was damp and chilly, and her clothing quite too scant for winter. Mrs. Miles would not wait till she had earned money to buy wood and clothing and food.

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"They would all freeze and starve," she told the people where she went begging. "I want to get something to save their lives; and then, when she is comfortable, the woman can earn enough to support her family."

In two weeks you would never have known the room; the glass was mended, and now the sun shone in. There was a pretty, old-fashioned bedstead, four nicely painted chairs, a table with leaves, a tiny mirror, a patch spread, and the cunningest little cooking-stove, which kept the room beautifully warm. At least, Johnny thought so when he came dancing home from his work.

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Besides all this, Mrs. Miles had procured from an old lady some healing syrup, which had nearly cured the troublesome cough; and Mrs. Talbot could sew now very well, without that terrible pain in her side.

She told her dear friend one day, that if she could only forget her past trouble, she should be quite happy,—happier than she had ever expected to be again.

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"You must tell me about your troubles," Mrs. Miles said. And one afternoon, when Johnny was at work in the factory, and Ella was taking her nap, Mrs. Talbot began,—

"I was married when I was only seventeen, and went with my husband to the western part of New York State. He was a carpenter, and could get good wages, which supported us in great comfort. Johnny was almost seven years old when Dexter, that is, my husband, told me he wanted to bring home one of his workmen to live with us. The man had no home, and, as he did not think it right to spend his evenings in a tavern, he was very lonely. His name was Robert Hardy, and he gave very little trouble. He grew to be fond of Johnny, and spent many leisure hours in amusing him and making him playthings.

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"But one day he came home sick; and for two weeks he never left his bed. Dexter and I took all the care of him. When he grew better, he went away to his mother. He sat by the fire thinking. I expected he would thank us; but he did not. He held Dexter's hand like a vise; and he tried to say good-by to me; but his voice failed. I have never seen him since. I feel sure he was grateful. The doctor had told him our care saved his life.

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"The very night he left, Dexter grew delirious; he had stayed at home with a cold for a week. The doctor came again, and said he had taken the fever.

"Oh, those were dreadful days! He grew worse and worse, and I—it breaks my heart when I think that I had nursed a stranger, and couldn't nurse my own husband—I was lying on a bed in the same room; and my little Ella lay beside me. Every moan of Dexter's went through my heart;

and when he died, all hope and joy died with him. I cared for nothing. I remember but little of those long, weary months which followed. I should have died but for the kindness of my neighbors.

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"The Rector visited me; but I scarcely understood what he said. When Dexter died, there were three hundred dollars laid by in the bank. Fifty of it went for his funeral expenses and my mourning; and the rest went little by little, till I had not a shilling left. Then Johnny was taken sick. I hoped he would die; I hoped we all should die; but I began to think that I was not prepared to follow my husband to heaven. He loved his Saviour, and I did not.

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"I tried to pray. The Rector's wife prayed with me, and led me to Jesus. I learned to trust in him; but I was wholly inexperienced, and knew not how to earn a living for myself and my little ones. I thought if I could only get home to my parents that I should be happy; but I had nothing left to pay my expenses.

[50]

"One by one my pieces of furniture were sold, and I was dependent on charity for my daily food. At last they raised the money to pay my fare, and, with all I had in the world packed in Dexter's chest, I left the place where I had experienced the greatest joy and the greatest sorrow I had ever known.

"When I reached home I found my father helpless from a paralytic stroke, and mother worn out with care of him. One of my friends owned this old house, and offered me the use of it. He said, as it was near the factory, we could get work. I might have done something, but I took cold and was unable to sit up. Afterward, when I inquired again and again at the factory, I was told that they had already more applicants than they could supply.

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"At last Johnny got a place there; but his wages were small, and—and—unless you had found us, I think we should really have starved."

[52]

CHAPTER V.

[53]

GOING TO SCHOOL.



PRING came at last; and then what delight Ella felt in being allowed to run out of doors, and play on the new, fresh grass with the pussy Mrs. Miles had given her!

Johnny was still in the factory; and Mrs. Talbot worked away at the hose, making a very comfortable living. She could smile now at Ella's cunning ways, and laugh with Johnny at the news he brought from the mill, after his day's work was done.

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He was in Mrs. Miles's class in Sabbath school,—her best scholar, she said. He had won a prize already for obtaining two new scholars; and what do you think it was? Why, a new Bible with clasps; and very proud he was of it, too. Every Sabbath he learned his verses in it,—putting in the red ribbon-mark with great care.

[55]

In the evening, Johnny read to his mother while she sewed, and now he was learning to write.

Mrs. Talbot made a copy on the slate, and he wrote underneath, trying to make every line better than the last.

One day he came running home from his work, his face looking very bright and happy.

"Mother! mother!" he called out; "I'm going to school! I'm not going to work any more,—I mean not all day. Mrs. Miles has settled it! And O mother! I'm to go there this evening for a big bundle of clothes. She's made me a jacket out of a coat of her husband's, and that was what she wanted my other jacket for. Oh! oh! I'm so glad!"

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"That is news!" exclaimed Mrs. Talbot.

"I'm to be advanced," he added; "she says so, and paid by the hour; and I shall earn just as much working between schools as I do now. O mother! isn't Mrs. Miles splendid?"

[57]

In the evening, Johnny went for the bundle; and the lady accompanied him home to see how the new clothes fitted.

"It's my first trial," she said, laughing; "and I'm very proud to think that I've succeeded so well."

Johnny turned round and round, as directed, to show first the back, then the shoulders and front.

"I find I have a natural gift at tailoring," cried Mrs. Miles. "I shall throw up making hose, and

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devote myself to my new calling. Just see that sleeve, now! It looks as well as if it were bought from a fashionable store."

"I don't know how to thank you," murmured the widow, laughing through her tears. "I should have tried to cut them over, of course; but I'm afraid I should have made a bungling piece of work of it."

"Well, then, if you confess so much, I will tell you that I have a right to be proud; for the times that jacket has been ripped and sewed, and ripped and basted and pressed, are beyond calculation. I made a study of Mr. Miles's wedding-coat, at last, particularly the sleeves, and then I found out what my trouble was. But the victory was worth all the pains; so I don't count the four days I spent on it lost time." [59]

"I mean to be very careful of my new clothes," said Johnny, who had been listening in open-mouthed wonder. [60]

They both laughed at his grave tone; and then Mr. Miles came for his wife; and they talked about the Sabbath school.

"I want you, Mrs. Talbot, to do my wife a favor," said the gentleman, trying to look serious. "She is desirous of having an infant class in the Sabbath school, and wants you for the teacher. Ella, she says, is old enough to go with you."

"Me!" exclaimed the widow, in great astonishment. "Me! Why, I am not competent to teach any one." [61]

"Neither am I," urged Mrs. Miles; "but I do love my Saviour; and I want the boys and girls around me to love him; so I try to tell them what a good Being he is, and what he has done for us. Can't you do that?"

With a deepened color the widow answered,—

"At least, I will try."

"I knew you would; and if you will only tell them the 'sweet story of old,' as I heard you telling it to Johnny one of the first visits I made you, and while I was waiting in the entry for you to answer my knock, it is all I will ask. Ever since that time I have only been waiting for summer so that the little ones, Ella among the rest, can go out." [62]



Johnny with a new Scholar for the Sabbath-school.

Series II, vol. iii, p. 63.

"She tells me beautiful stories about Daniel in the lion's den," exclaimed Johnny; "and about Joseph in prison. I can read them, too, in my new Bible."

"There is a small vestry which seems made on purpose for your school," suggested Mr. Miles.

"Where we hope to see you next Sabbath," added the lady.

"I will do the best I can," was the humble reply; "and I am sure I shall love the work."

CHAPTER VI.

JOHNNY A FAVORITE.

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WISH you could have seen Johnny the first morning he started for school. His face was as clean as soap and water could make it; his hair was nicely parted on his broad forehead; his eyes shone like stars; and his mouth was wreathed with smiles. He wore the new suit Mrs. Miles had given him, and a clean linen collar around his neck. In one hand he carried a little pail full of dinner; and under his other arm, his spelling-book, reader, and slate. He was to call at Mrs. Miles's for a pencil; and so, after bidding his mother good-by and hearing her call after him, "Be a good lad, Johnny, and don't let any idle boys turn you from your book," he hurried away to be in season to choose a seat. [65]

This was the first day of the term, and the earliest scholars had the best chance. [66]

Mrs. Miles met him at the door with the long slate-pencil nicely sharpened in her hand; and, having looked at him from head to foot, she said, approvingly,—

"You are just right, Johnny, and I'm proud of you." Then she kissed his glowing cheek, and he ran down the steps.

I suppose you would like to know where the silver dollar was all this time. Why, round Johnny's neck, to be sure! You know he was to wear it till he told a lie; and, as he had never departed from the truth, it was still there, fastened to a nice ribbon that his mother had bought for it. [67]

At school, Johnny liked his teacher and the boys; and they liked Johnny. In school he was as grave as a judge, studying his lessons with all his might; but at recess there was not a merrier boy among the whole set. Playing ball or catcher were new games to him, who had always been obliged to work so hard, and he enjoyed every moment of the time given to them. [68]

Then he was always fair at his plays, and ready to oblige his companions. By-and-by it used to be said,—

"Don't cheat, now! Be fair, like Johnny Talbot."

This pleased Johnny's friends more than all the rest. To be sure they liked to have him a good scholar,—to have him popular among his school-mates; but it was best of all to know that he tried to do what God would approve. [69]

At home he was just the same boy that he was when I first began to tell you about him, and was as ready to give up his pleasure to his mother and Ella as he had been to give up his scant breakfast of Indian porridge, when he knew there was not enough for all.

As you may imagine, Johnny was a very busy child. He rose almost as soon as he could see, and reached the farm where his mother and Mrs. Miles bought their milk, before the farmer was ready for him. Then he was back with his two pails, and off for the factory for a couple of hours. [70]

He was very happy here, for all the men and women smiled upon him, so he whistled away at his work, though the noise of the machinery prevented any one but himself hearing his music.

When the town-clock struck eight he was off for home, where he had only just time to eat his breakfast, wash and dress for school, before it was the hour to start. [71]

After school, he changed his clothes again, and had three more hours for work before dark.

So the summer passed happily away. Sometimes, indeed, when the boys were starting off for nuts; or when he heard them on the common, flying their kites, he used to wish, just for one moment, that he were rich, so that he could have time to go with them; but he did not cherish such thoughts. He knew that God had been very kind to him, and that his heavenly Father had ordered all things for his best good. His mother had explained to him that it was for Joseph's future advancement that God allowed him to be put into prison, and that this great and good Being is always watchful over those who love and trust him. [72]

At home, though Johnny had little leisure, yet he contrived to please Ella so much that she longed for his presence, and would run forth to meet him, her apron full of grass and flowers, which she had gathered for dear Johnny. [73]

CHAPTER VII.

[74]

JOHNNY'S TRUST.



Y the industry of Johnny, and the wages of his kind mother, the family at the cottage had passed a very comfortable summer; but now work was scarce, and the widow looked forward with some dread to the cold weather.



She well knew that more than one third of the women who worked for the factory had received no hose for several weeks; and that it was only through her friend's exertions that Mr. Miles sent it regularly to her.

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Then, although her earnings had provided them with abundance of good plain food, yet this sum, even if continued, would not supply fuel and warm clothes. Nor was there anything to pay for mending the roof, where the rain dripped in during every shower.

It was on a dreary November evening that Mrs. Talbot talked with her son while Ella, untroubled by anxiety or care, lay soundly sleeping in the bed at the farther corner of the room.

[76]

With a sigh, the widow told her boy she feared trouble was before them.

"Everything seems dark," she went on; "I can't see where help to carry us through the winter is coming from. We can't live in this house much longer unless it has new shingles on the roof; and I know that is a very costly job. Then we all need warm clothes. I'm afraid, Johnny, you'll have to leave school and work harder than you have ever worked before;" and she sighed again.

[77]

Johnny's chin trembled. "I can't work in the mill, mother," he began, trying to keep back a sob. "One of the men told me to-day there were no orders from the merchants, and they would have to stop."

The widow covered her pale face with her hands. "We shall starve, then," she cried out, in a voice of agony. "Oh, if your father were only alive!"

[78]

She leaned on the table and wept bitterly.

"Mother," faltered Johnny, drawing his coat-sleeve across his eyes; "mother, you told me our heavenly Father loves us better than any earthly father. Won't he help us if we pray to him? Don't cry so, mother; I think he knows about it, and perhaps he'll take care of us, as he did when we were starving before."

[79]

"Johnny! Johnny! I've been wicked. I've been doubting him all day. Yes, my child, he is good, merciful, and true to his promises, even to poor, weak creatures like me. We will pray, and we will trust. I feel happier already. I have been carrying my burden of care when he says we may cast it on him. Come, Johnny, we will pray."

They kneeled together by the firelight; and the woman, with a full heart, thanked her heavenly Father for her precious boy,—that his faith had not wavered when she so wickedly doubted his power or his willingness to help them. She thanked him again for his former care of them, and she urged his gracious promise, "I will be the widow's God, and a father to the fatherless."

[80]

She arose and took her seat with almost a smile.

"All my anxiety has gone," she said, in a cheerful tone; "I know my heavenly Father is able and willing to help us. Johnny, my precious boy, how could I murmur when you and Ella are spared?"

[81]

"I prayed in my heart all the way home," faltered the boy; "I didn't know what we should do; but I kept saying to myself,—

"God knows all about it,—just as he did about Joseph in prison."

His mother drew him to her side, and kissed his forehead.

"Now you must go to bed," she said. "Though we trust God for the future, we must do all we can to help ourselves. I have work for another week; and you must be off early to yours. When this fails, I feel sure that we shall be provided for somehow."

[82]

Johnny lay quiet on his couch, and his mother thought him asleep. She read chapter after chapter of God's holy word, comforting herself in his gracious promises, when she was startled by hearing her boy say,—

[83]

"Mother, there's my silver dollar, you know. That will buy a good deal."

"Yes, dear."

Her voice trembled. She knew how much he prized that dollar, and how often Mr. Miles had asked to see it, "to be sure," he said, "that it was not lost or forfeited." She resolved that not until everything else had been sacrificed should that dollar be parted with.

Two days later Johnny ran home with the joyful announcement,—

[84]

"Mrs. Miles has come home! I've seen her. She beckoned me to go in, and, O mother! what do you think she showed me? The cunningest little baby I ever saw. She wants you to come right over, and she—"

Mrs. Talbot interrupted him by saying,—

"That is good news! I'll go at once, and take Ella, so that I can stay and help her. Rake up the fire as quickly as you can, and put on Ella's hood."

"I felt a little troubled for you," exclaimed the lady, when, after a cordial embrace, she had heard a confession of the widow's fears; "but I am sure all will come out right and bright. That

[85]

dear Johnny! I hope my boy will be just like him;" and here she gave the baby a good squeeze.

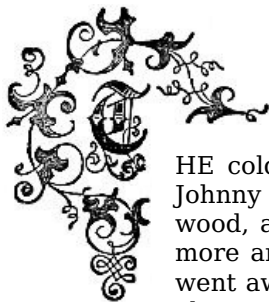
"If the mill is shut, as I suppose it must be, we shall go to my father's for the winter. It will be a trial to all of us; but we will trust it is for the best. My husband told me that he should know certainly at the end of another week. If no orders come in before that time, they can't keep on." [86]

Mrs. Talbot took the baby and began to caress it to hide her troubled face; but presently said, with a smile,—

"How thankful we ought to be that there is One who orders all events in our lives, and that this Being is he who calls himself our Father."

CHAPTER VIII. [87]

JOHNNY'S NEW FATHER.



HE cold weather came on early this year. As he ran shivering home from school, Johnny saw, at almost every house, the preparations for winter. Here was a pile of wood, and there a large heap of coal, suggestive of warmth and comfort. Two days more and the important question about the factory would be decided. If Mrs. Miles went away, it would be very desolate. God only knew how they should be able to get along. [88]

He thought of all this one night as he was returning from the factory, and to comfort himself began humming his favorite tune,—

"I have a Father in the promised land."

As he came in sight of the cottage, he wondered at the bright light which reflected from the windows; but he wondered still more at the scene presented within. [89]

Their one table was set in the middle of the floor, and spread with such abundance as he had never seen there. His mother was hurrying to and fro, and intent on the cakes she was frying, while at the same time she talked with a well-dressed man who sat near the fire holding Ella in his lap.

"I haven't forgotten your favorite dish," she said, with an arch smile. "You liked rye fritters best, while Dexter preferred buckwheats." [90]

"Ah, there is Johnny!" exclaimed the stranger, holding out his hand. "Don't you remember me?"

It was, indeed, an old friend,—the man who had been watched and nursed by Mrs. Talbot and her husband, and from whom she had never since heard. He had spent a week in searching for her, he said; and now he meant to take care of her and the children.

After supper, he rocked Ella to sleep, and then begged to hold her awhile; for, he said, "I have something to tell you." [91]

"You know I had not fully recovered when I went away," he began. "I tried to thank you, but I couldn't; my heart was too full. I heard of Dexter's death, and felt that I had lost a brother. The next thing I did was to make a resolution to be a brother to you and yours. I worked hard and saved every penny. Not that I thought money could pay you for your care of me; but I felt that you might need help. [92]

"There," he added, holding out a package, "is the first I earned. I laid it aside for you."

The widow's face flushed as she saw written on a corner of the wrapper, "Two hundred dollars."

"I found a good place and succeeded well. Every day I repeated the prayer Johnny taught me on my sick-bed, and God answered it. I saw my need of a Saviour, and gladly accepted the one offered me in the Bible. I wrote again and again to you, sending my letters to our old place; but I had no reply. At last I grew too anxious to wait longer, and, settling my business, I set out to find you. I wish I had started a year ago." [93]

"God's time is the best time," murmured the widow, her eyes full of tears.

Then Mr. Hardy bade Johnny bring the Bible, and they had reading and prayers together.

Early as the widow rose the next morning, their guest was up before her, and on the roof examining the building. In the course of the day the leak was stopped, the broken steps mended, and a new lock put on the door. [94]

Toward night he went out, but soon returned with a wagon containing a barrel of flour, two casks of potatoes, beside sundry small parcels. An hour later the wagon came again with a neat bedstead, mattress, and two stout blankets, and a whole web of cotton cloth for sheets.

[95]

Mrs. Talbot clasped her hands on her breast, saying to herself, "The Lord has, indeed, appeared for me." When she tried, with a broken voice; to thank Mr. Hardy, he only smiled as he said,—

"Wait a little. You'll find I'm selfish after all."

They had a long talk that evening, after the children were asleep, which accounted perhaps for the pretty pink in the widow's cheek, when Johnny saw her the next morning.

[96]

"Come here, my boy," said Mr. Hardy, drawing a stool to his side; "I loved your father. He was one of the best men I ever knew. But as he is gone, your mother last night consented that I should be a father to you and Ella. Will you be my true and loving son?"

He opened his arms, and Johnny was clasped to his breast.

"I will try to be a good son," he whispered.

As Mr. Hardy urged there was no use in delay, the next Sabbath morning they went to the Rector's house and were married, Mr. Miles giving the bride away.

[97]

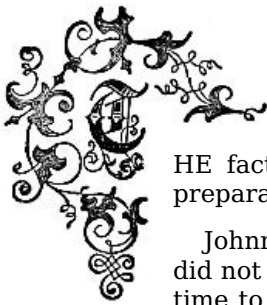
When Mr. Hardy examined the cottage, he did it with the resolution to repair it, if it proved worth the expense. But he found many of the timbers rotten, and the sills sunken into the ground. He thought it better, therefore, to put up a new house, for which he had abundant means. He hired an old barn, and fitted it up for a shop, and then, when not otherwise engaged, labored diligently at getting out the frame, doors, and windows for his new building.

[98]

CHAPTER IX.

[99]

THE NEW HOUSE.



HE factory was closed, but only for a few weeks. Just as Mr. Miles was making preparation to leave, orders came in, which obliged him to employ all their old hands.

Johnny did not leave school, but worked two hours in the morning, as before. He did not work at night, because his new father insisted that every boy must have some time to play; and then, when Mr. Hardy began to have more work than he could do, Johnny must get kindlings for his mother, or run of errands for her.

[100]

In the spring the new house was finished; a plain, neat building, with a pretty portico over the front door. Johnny and his mother often talked about their old trials, and always remembered with pleasure that in the hour of their sorest need, they did not forget to trust in the great and good God.

[101]

Would you like to know what kind of a house it was to be? I will try to describe it as Mr. Hardy did to Johnny and his mother one evening, with Ella sitting on his knee.

"There," he said, drawing a plan on Johnny's slate, "is the front door, which leads into the entry. Out of this on one side is a room, which we will call the Sunday-room; because I shall, by and by, have an organ in there, and we will sing psalm tunes on Sunday."

[102]

Johnny gave a scream of delight, and Ella asked, "May I sing, too?"

"Certainly, my dear. Now here on the other side is the room where we shall live and take our meals. Behind the front entry is a large closet, into which I mean to put lockers and drawers, so that your mother can keep her dishes nicely arranged, as they used to be in her old home. I remember," he added, with a smiling glance at his wife, "how cosily the room used to look when Dexter and I came home from our work, and how I thought I should be the happiest man living if I had somebody to care for me as you did for Dexter."

[103]

"Besides, there will be a kitchen and a shed beyond, where you will have a chance to cut and pile wood. Ella must have some work, too, and so here goes the chicken-house, where she will have to feed the biddies, and find the nice white eggs. Upstairs, Johnny, there will be four chambers, beside a tiny room over the front entry."

[104]

"Mother is crying!" exclaimed Ella, springing to the floor.

"It seems like a dream, a happy dream," said Mrs. Hardy, softly. "Only a few weeks ago, and we were so destitute, and knew not where to turn for help!"

"But we prayed to God, mother, and he heard us. I guess that's why he sent Mr. Hardy here, don't you?"

Transcriber's Note: Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

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