

Jemmy Stubbins, or the Nailer Boy eBook

Jemmy Stubbins, or the Nailer Boy

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ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE LAW OF KINDNESS,

Edited by Elihu Burritt.

JEMMY STUBBINS,

OR

The nailer boy.

1850.

[Illustration]

To the Boys and Girls in America,

Who took the "Little Nailer" of the father-land from his smithy, and sent him to School for two years I dedicate this little Book, as an offering of my affection, and as a souvenir of that loving act of benevolent sympathy.

Elihu Burritt.

Worcester, Mass., March 20, 1850.

JEMMY STUBBINS, OR THE NAILER BOY.

Before I left America in 1846, in order to gratify the wish that had long occupied my heart, of visiting the motherland, I formed for myself a plan of procedure to which I



hoped to be able rigidly to adhere. I determined that my visit to England should bring me face to face with the people; that I should converse with the artizan in his workshop, and lifting the lowly door-latches of the poor, should become intimately acquainted with their life—with their manners, and it might be, with their hopes and sorrows.

* * * * *

Tuesday, July 21st, 1846.—After a quiet cosy breakfast, served up on a little round table for myself alone, I sat down to test the practicability of the plan I had formed at home for my peregrinations in England:—*viz.*, to write until one, P.M., then to take my staff and travel on, eight or ten miles, to another convenient stopping-place for the night. As much depended upon the success of the experiment, I was determined to carry the point against the predictions of my friends. So at it I went, *con amore*. The house was as quiet as if a profound Sabbath was resting upon it, and the windows of my airy chamber looked through the foliage of grave elms down upon a green valley. I got on swimmingly; and after a frugal dinner at the little round table, I buckled on my knapsack with a feeling of self-gratulation in view of the literary part of my day's work. Having paid my bill, and given the lady a copy of my corn-meal receipts, I resumed my walk toward W——.



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I was suddenly diverted from my contemplation of this magnificent scenery, by a fall of heavy rain drops, as the prelude of an impending shower. Seeing a gate open, and hearing a familiar clicking behind the hedge, I stepped through into a little blacksmith's shop, about as large an American smoke-house for curing bacon. The first object that my eyes rested on, was a full-grown man nine years of age, and nearly three feet high, perched upon a stone of half that height, to raise his breast to the level of his father's anvil, at which he was at work, with all the vigor of his little short arms, making nails. I say, a *full-grown* man; for I fear he can never grow any larger, physically or mentally. As I put my hand on his shoulders in a familiar way, to make myself at home with him, and to remove the timidity with which my sudden appearance seemed to inspire him, by a pleasant word or two of greeting, his flesh felt case-hardened into all the induration of toiling manhood, and as unsusceptible of growth as the anvil block. Fixed manhood had set in upon him in the greenness of his youth; and there he was, by his father's side, a stunted, premature *man* with his childhood cut off; with no space to grow in between the cradle and the anvil-block; chased, as soon as he could stand on his little legs, from the hearth-stone to the forge-stone, by iron necessity, that would not let him stop long enough to pick up a letter of the English alphabet on the way. O, Lord John Russell! think of this. Of this Englishman's son, placed by his mother, scarcely weaned, on a high, cold stone, barefooted, before the anvil; there to harden, sear, and blister his young hands by heating and hammering ragged nailrods, for the sustenance those breasts can no longer supply! Lord John! look at those nails, as they lie hissing on the block. Know you their meaning, use and language? Please your lordship, let me tell you—I have made nails many a day and many a night—*they are iron exclamation points*, which this unlettered, dwarfed boy is unconsciously arraying against you, against the British government, and the government of British literature, for cutting him off without a letter of the English alphabet, when printing is done by steam; for incarcerating him for no sin on his parents' side, but poverty, in a dark, six-by-eight prison of hard labor, a *youthless* being—think of it!—an infant hardened, almost in its mother's arms, into a man, by toil that bows the sturdiest of the world's laborers who come to manhood through the intervening years of childhood!

The boy's father was at work with his back toward me, when I entered. At my first word of salutation to the lad, he turned around and accosted me a little bashfully, as if unaccustomed to the sight of strangers in that place, or reluctant to let them into the scene and secret of his poverty. I sat down upon one end of his nail-bench, and told him I was an American blacksmith by trade, and that I had come in to see



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how he got on in the world; whether he was earning pretty good wages at his business, so that he could live comfortably, and send his children to school. As I said this, I glanced inquiringly toward the boy, who was looking steadily at me from his stone stool by the anvil. Two or three little crock-faced girls, from two to five years of age, had stolen in timidly, and a couple of young, frightened eyes were peering over the door-sill at me. The poor Englishman—he was as much an Englishman as the Duke of Wellington—looked at his bushy-headed, barefooted children, and said softly, with a melancholy shake of the head, that the times were rather hard with him. It troubled his heart, and many hours of the night he had been kept awake by the thought of it, that he could not send his children to school, nor teach them himself to read. They were good children, he said, with a moist yearning in his eyes; they were all the wealth he had, and he loved them the more, the harder he had to work for them. The poorest part of the poverty that was on him, was that he could not give his children the letters. They were good children, for all the crock of the shop was on their faces, and their fingers were bent like eagle's claws with handling nails. He had been a poor man all his days, and he knew his children would be poor all their days, and poorer than he, if the nail business should continue to grow worse. If he could only give them the letters, it would make them the like of rich; for then they could read the Testament. He could read the Testament a little, for he had learned the letters by the forge-light. It was a good book, was the Testament; and he was sure it was made for nailers and such like. It helped him wonderfully when the loaf was small on his table, He had but little time to read it when the sun was up, and it took him loner to read a little, for he learned the letters when he was old. But he laid it beside his dish at dinner time, and fed his heart with it, while his children were eating the bread that fell to his share. And when he had spelt out a line of the shortest words, he read them aloud, and his eldest boy—the one on the block there—could say several whole verses he had learned in this way. It was a great comfort to him, to think that James could take into his heart so many verses of the Testament which he could not read. He intended to teach all his children in this way. It was all he could do for them; and this he had to do at meal-times; for all the other hours he had to be at the anvil. The nailing business was growing harder, he was growing old, and his family large. *He had to work from four o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock at night, to earn eighteen-pence.* His wages averaged only about *seven shillings a week*; and there were five of them in the family to live on what they could earn. It was hard to make up the loss of an hour. Not one of their hands, however little, could be spared. Jemmy was going on nine years of age, and a helpful lad he was; and the poor man looked at him doatingly. Jemmy could work off a thousand nails a day, of the smallest size. The rent of their little shop, tenement and garden, was five pounds a year; and a few pennies earned by the youngest of them were of great account.



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But, continued the blacksmith, speaking cheerily, I am not the one that ought to complain. Many is the man that has a harder lot of it than I, among the nailers along this hill and in the valley. My neighbor in the next door could tell you something about labor you never have heard the like of in your country. He is an older man than I, and there are seven of them in his family; and, for all that, he has no boy like Jemmy here to help him. Some of his little girls are sickly, and their mother is not over strong, and it all comes on him. He is an oldish man, as I was saying, yet he not only works eighteen hours every day at his forge, but *every Friday in the year he works all night long*, and never lays off his clothes till late of Saturday night. A good neighbor is John Stubbins, and the only man just in our neighborhood who can read the newspaper. It is not often he gets a newspaper; for it is not the like of us that can have newspapers and bread too at the same time in our houses. But now and then he begs an old one, partly torn, at the baker's, and reads it to us of a Sunday night. So once in two or three weeks, we hear something of what is going on in the world—something about Corn Laws, and the Duke of Wellington, and Oregon, and India, and Ireland, and other parts of England. We heard tell a while ago that the poor people would not have to make so many nails for a loaf of bread much longer, because Sir Robert Peel and some other men were going to take off the port-locks and other taxes, and let us buy bread of them that could sell it the cheapest. When we heard this talked of, without knowing the truth of it, John Stubbins took a penny and went to the White Hart and bought a drink of beer, and then the landlady let him look into the newspaper which she keeps for her customers. When he came back, he told us a good deal of what was going on, and said he was sure the times would be better one of these days.

Here he was interrupted by John Stubbins himself, who, hearing some strange voices mingling in earnest conversation in the other end of the building, came round to see who was there. With the entrance of this John Stubbins, I must turn over another leaf of my journal.

* * * * *

SECOND VISIT TO THE LITTLE NAILER.

The interest created in the United States by the above account of my first meeting with Josiah, encouraged me to propose that the children of America should, by a subscription of a half dime each, contribute as much money as would clothe and educate him for a year. The proposition met with a cordial response, and one hundred dollars were soon collected for this purpose.



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At the time I first threw out the proposition in regard to the education of the little Nailer, I hardly believed that they could so abolish space and dry up the ocean intervening between them and such a young sufferer, as they have done. Bless your hearts, children, I reckoned you would have a merry time of it about Christmas, and have your pockets filled with all sorts of nice things, that would come by way of affectionate remembrance from grand-papa down to the fourth cousin; and you would bring to mind lots of boys and girls that had no one to give them a picture-book as large as a cent, and who couldn't read it if they had one. I thought this would be a good time to put in a word for "The Little Nailer;" and so I threw out the thought, very hopefully, that you should all contribute something from your Christmas presents and make the little fellow a Christmas gift of a year's schooling. I suggested this idea between doubt and hope. I did not know how it would strike you. I did not know but some of you might think that the great ocean was too wide to be crossed by your little charities; that others might say, "He is only an *English* boy—he doesn't belong to our family circle—let him alone," And so I waited anxiously to hear from you; for I was sure you would talk it over among yourselves in the "School-room," and on the way home, and by the fireside. Well, after waiting a few weeks, the English steamer came in from Boston, and brought me a letter from Ezekiel; and the happiest thing in it was, that the boys and girls of "Our School Room" had made no more of the Atlantic Ocean than if it had been a mud-puddle, which they could step across to give a helping hand to a lad who was down and couldn't get up alone. It made my heart get up in my mouth and try to talk instead of my tongue, when I read to some of my friends here what you had done for the little Nailer; when I told them to read for themselves and see that your sympathies knew nothing about any geography, any more than if the science of natural divisions had never been discovered, or if oceans, seas, rivers or mountains, or any such terms as *American*, *English* or *African*, were not to be found in the Dictionary. The letter stated that ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY half-dimes had already come in, from children all over the country, to pay the schoolmaster for teaching the little English nailer to read in the Testament, and to write a legible hand. Nor was this all.—Ezekiel said that there was no telling how many more half-dimes would come in; for not only had the children of our own "School-Room" taken up the matter, but those of other school-rooms, especially away down in Maine, were determined to have some share in fitting out the nailer-boy with an education sufficient to make a man of him, if he will use it aright. I saw it clear that the little fellow was to be put to school; that his hammer was to lie silent on the anvil for the space of one cold winter; and that the young folks in America would foot the bill. And I was determined that this should be a Christmas gift to him, that he and his young American benefactors might enjoy it together. So two days before Christmas, I started from Birmingham on foot to carry the present to him.



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It was a bright, frosty morning, and, after a walk of twelve miles, I came in sight of the little brick cottage of the nailer by the wayside. I approached it with mingled emotions of solicitude. Perhaps it had been vacated by the poor man and his family, and some other nailer had taken his place. Perhaps the hand that spares neither rich nor poor had been there, and I should miss the boy at the anvil. I stopped once or twice to listen. The windows were open, but all was still. There was no clicking of hammers, nor blowing of bellows, to indicate that the nailer family were still its occupants. I began to fear that they were gone, and my imagination ran rapidly over a hundred casualties and changes which might have come upon them. The same gate was open that invited me to enter last summer; and as I passed through it, I met a woman who said the nailer was at dinner in the family apartment of the building. She went in before me, and the next moment I was in the midst of the circle of my old acquaintance, who had just risen from the table and were sitting around the fire. My sudden appearance in their midst seemed to cause as much pleasure as surprise. The father arose and welcomed me with the heartfelt expressions of good-will. Little Josiah, the hero of my story, came forward timidly with a sunny token of recognition brightening up his black, sharp eyes. The mother, a tidy, interesting looking woman in a clean, white cap, added her welcome; and I sat down with them, with Josiah standing between my knees, and told them my story—how some children in America had interested themselves in their boy—how they had thought of him on their way to school, and talked of him on their way home, and in the parlor, and the kitchen and the cottage;—how they had contributed their pennies, which they had saved or earned, to send Josiah to school to learn to read the Testament; and how I had come to bring them, and to ask if the boy could be spared from the anvil. I glanced around upon the group of children, whose eager eyes indicated that they partially comprehended my errand, and then at a couple of sides of bacon suspended over my head. The nailer's eyes followed my own, and as they reciprocally rested on the bacon, he commenced his reply from that end of the subject. He said it was true that many were worse off than he, and many were the comforts he had, that thousands of the poor knew nothing of. Here he glanced affectionately at his children; but my eyes brought him back to the bacon, and so he went on, apparently under a new impression of his resources of comfort. He said he had to sell some of his goods to buy the pig when very small, and had "*luggled*" along with some difficulty to feed and fatten him into a respectable size. Yes, he was a pretty clever pig; nor was that all—the nailing business had become better, by a half-penny a thousand, than when I was with them in the summer; and Josiah could now earn ninepence a day. He wanted to send



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all his children to school; if they could not read, they would be poor, even if they should come to own parks and carriages, he could not bear to see them growing up with no books in their hands. He worked long at the anvil as it was; and he was willing to work longer and harder to pay the schoolmaster for teaching his children to read. Josiah was now ten years old; he had been a faithful boy; he had made nails ever since he could hold a hammer; and it was for this that he desired the more to send him to school. It had troubled him much all along that the boy was working so long and so well at the anvil, without having any of his wages to pay the schoolmaster for teaching him something that would make him rich in his poverty when he came to be a man; and he had tried to make up this to him in a little way, by reading to him easy verses from the Testament, many of which he had learned by heart. Besides this, he had bought a little picture-reading-book, since I was with them last, and Josiah could master many easy words in it; for he had learned almost all the letters. But he knew this was a slow way of getting on, although he feared it was the best he could do for him. He knew not how he could manage to spare him for the winter. He had no other boy; there was a baby in the cradle only a fortnight old, which made him five children under ten years of age, to be fed, warmed and clothed through the winter months. Here he fell into a calculation of this kind—he could now earn nine shillings, or about two dollars and twenty cents, a week. His coal cost him three shillings a week, and his house-rent two; leaving him but *four* shillings a week for a family of seven persons to live upon. Josiah's clothes were well nigh gone; they were indeed ragged; there was nothing left to sew patches to; and all he had in the world was on him, except a smock frock which he put on over them on the Sabbath.

These considerations gave a thoughtful tone to the nailer's voice as they came upon his mind, and a thoughtful air came over the family group when he had finished, and they all looked straightly into the fire as much as to say, "It cannot be done." So I began at the bacon to soften down these obstacles—there were nearly 150 pounds of it, besides a spare-rib hanging from another joist—and suggested how much better off they were than ten thousands of poor people in the world. Could they ever spare Josiah better than during this winter? He would learn faster now than when he was older, and when they could not spare him so well. Nor was this all; if they could get on without him for a few months, he might not only learn to read without spelling, but he could teach his three little sisters to read during the winter nights, and the baby, too, as soon as it could talk; so that sending him to school now, would be like sending all his children to the same school. Yes, it might be more than this. Let him go for a few months, and when he came back



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to the anvil, he might work all day, and in the evening he might get together all the nailer children that lived within a mile, and teach them how to read and write. There was the little Wesleyan chapel within a rod of their own door, lying useless except on Sundays. It would be just the place for an evening school for fifty or even a hundred little children, whose parents were too poor to send them to the day-schools of the town. And wouldn't they like to look in and see Josiah with his primer in hand teaching their neighbors' children to read in this way; with his clean smock-frock on, setting copies in the writing-books of the little nailers? Josiah, who was standing between my knees, looking sharply into the fire with his picture book in his hand, turned suddenly around at this idea and fixed his eyes inquiringly upon my own. The thought vibrated through all the fine-strung sympathies of parental affection. The mother leaned forward to part away the black hair from the boy's forehead, and said softly to his father, that she would take the lad's place at the anvil, if they should want his wages while at school. This was the crisis of my errand; and, in my imagination, I tried to catch the eyes of the children in "Our School Room" in America, as I went on to say, that they would not be willing to have Josiah go to school in his old worn out clothes, to be laughed at or shunned by well-dressed school-mates; nor that he should stay at home for want of decent and comfortable clothes. I knew what they would say, if they were with me; and so I offered to fit him out at the tailor's shop with a good comfortable suit, as a part of the Christmas present from his young friends on the other side of the ocean. The little ones were too timid to crow, but they looked as if they would when I was gone; and the nailer and his wife almost cried for joy at what the children of a far-off land had done for their son. For myself, I only regretted that I could not share at the moment with those young friends all the pleasure I felt in carrying out their wish and deed of beneficence. I hope it is not the last time that I shall be associated with them in these little adventures of benevolence.

Perhaps I have made too long a story of my second visit to the nailer's cottage. I will merely add, that it was agreed that I should proceed into the town, a distance of a mile and a half, to make arrangements for the boy's schooling, and be joined there by him and his father. So, bidding adieu to the remainder of the family, I continued my walk into the town, of Bromsgrove, and soon found a kind-hearted school teacher who agreed to take the lad and do his best to forward his education. Having met several gentlemen in the course of my inquiries, they became interested in the case, and went with me to the inn, where the lad and his father were waiting for me. Thence we all proceeded to a clothing shop, where the little nailer was soon fitted with a warm and decent suit. One of the company, a Baptist minister, to whose congregation the Schoolmaster belonged, promised to call in and see the boy occasionally, and to let me know how he gets on. I hope Josiah will soon be able to speak for himself to the children in "Our School Room." On Monday after Christmas, he made his first entry into any school-room, for the object of learning to read.

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A BUDGET FROM THE LITTLE NAILER.

They have come! the long expected letters from “Jemmy Stubbing,” or the Nailer Boy. I am sure they will be a treat to all the children that meet in our School-room. I hope all the benches will be full whilst Josiah’s letters are read. And what a nice thing it was in the children in America, to take that little fellow out of the cinders and soot of the blacksmith’s shop, and send him to school for two years!

Now many a little boy and girl of our school-room circle has contributed half a dime towards Josiah’s education. I would ask that little boy or girl what he or she would sell out all right and title to the pleasure and consequence of that act for? What would you take in money down for your share in the work of expanding that little fellow’s mind, and filling it with such new ideas as he expresses in his letters? What a new world he has lived in since he returned from school to his little wayside smithy, the roof of which can hardly be seen over the hedge! Think of it—but you cannot think of it as it is, unless you could see that nailer’s shop and cottage. But think of what he was, when you took him from the anvil and sent him to school. Then he could not tell a letter of the alphabet, and never would have read a verse in the Bible, if it had not been for your half dimes. Now see with what delight he searches the scriptures, and marks and commits to memory choice verses in that Holy Book. He has taught his father to read it too, and is teaching his sisters, and the children of the neighbors to read it, and all good books. A great many young boys and girls in England have heard what you did for him, and some of them are beginning to write to him, and he answers them, and gives them good advice. The last steamer from England brought us a nice lot of letters from him, some directed to you, some to me, and one or two to others, I will read them to you in the order in which they are written.

BROMSGROVE LICKEY, Dec. 4, 1849.

My Dear Sir:

I thought that when I wrote to you again I should have a few subscribers for the Citizen. I will tell you the reason why I have not got them; they are most all primitive methodists. They have been trying to scheme them a chapel for this last twelve months. They are having tea parties and missionary meetings every two or three weeks, so they have put me off a little longer. I had a good deal on my mind through reading the Citizen. I opened my bible at the forty-first chapter of Isaiah and at the sixth and seventh verses. There I read the following words: ‘They helped everyone his neighbor, and every one said to his brother, be of good courage; so the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, it is ready for the sodering, and he fastened it



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with nails.' I thought about Mr. Burritt's sparks. He has got a few in England and France and America. I thought about the Russians, if they would but examine this chapter as well as I have, I think they would make away with their arms, for the Lord says, them that war against thee, they shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought. How dare they go to war against their Maker. I dare not. I have another word or two to say to my young friends in America. The boys and girls in England, they are forced to work very hard all the week till about middle day on the Saturday, and then they get a little time to play while their parents go and sell their work. They frequently come for me but I am very often forced to deny them. I tell them that I have some reading and writing to do. Reading and writing must be seen to. If that apostle Paul had neglected his reading and writing, that jailor would have never, perhaps, seen need to have cried out, 'what must I do to be saved,' or if Mr. Burritt had neglected his reading and writing very likely I should never have been able to read or write. Though you are in America and I am in England if we put our heads to work we dont know what we may do some day. It does me good to read that there are so many ladies engaged in the work. I have been asked several times what was the price of the Citizen, but I have not found that out yet. I dont know how you count your money. I dont know how much a cent is. The first three newspapers that I had, I paid five pence each for; but now I get them for twopence each. I keep at my old employment. I did not know that there was any other country besides England till I had the Citizen. While I am hammering away with my two hammers my mind is flying all over America and Africa and South Carolina and California and Francisco and France and Ireland Scotland and Wales, and then it comes back to Devonshire, then to Mrs. Prideaux, and then to them ladies at Bristol, and then to Mr. Fry at London, and what a good man he is in the cause.

I remain your humble servant wish to be a fellow laborer, heart and hand.

JOSIAH BANNER.

* * * * *

BROMSGROVE LICKEY, Dec. 28th, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have received your letter with two sovereigns on Dec. 26. I dare say my young friends will look for something very good from me, but nothing very interesting for them at this time. I will tell you the reason. The last week before Christmas I was working late and early all the week, and at the end of the week my foot and hand did ache very much. In that week I received a letter of young Mr. Fry, a little school boy, and a beautiful letter it was. I have read it many a time to the boys and girls and I had to write him one back again that week, and a few days before I had to write one to Mr. Coulton,

Superintendent of the Sunday school at Norwood. For this two or three last years, I have made a practice in going a carol singing



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on Christmas day in the morning and of course they looked for me again. So I started out at five o'clock and came home at nine, and then I went to school. I have never missed going to school on a Sunday for this last three years. I always like to be there to teach or to be taught. Now I have got this present in my hand, it leads me to the Scriptures; and at the fifty eighth chapter of Isaiah and at the second verse: "Now they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of their God." They ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God. Now if all nations would act to one another as America does to me, I think that better day would soon come. When I sat down to write this letter I thought that I would tell my young friends how thankful I was to receive their Christmas present; but my pen is not able to express nor my tongue is not able to confess it. My young friends, when Mr. Burritt came to our house first, we had no Bible, but now we have two. My father could not read it but your kindness has taught me to read it and now I have taught my father to read it, and I am trying to teach my sisters to read it.

I remain your humble servant, wish to be a fellow laborer.

JOSIAH BANNER.

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BROMSGROVE LICKEY, Jan. 18th, 1850.

My Dear Young Friends:—I will write you a few more lines. I have got a very nice cloth coat and trousers, and I have a suit from head to foot. I have had three happy Christmases, but this is the best I ever witnessed before. It is not because I have had much play. I have been so busy in reading letters and writing letters. I have received two a week, for this last three weeks, of the friends of peace. On the morrow after Christmas day I was at work again. When my sisters have called me to my breakfast or dinner, I have been forced to be reading while I have eaten my food. One night I was reading in the Citizen about my young friends. I was reading about that little girl which went without milk at supper time because I should have a suit of clothes. My mother she dropped her head and began to wipe her eyes, but I kept on reading till I come to that little girl which came skipping across the street with a good long list of names which she had been collecting money of. I was forced to put the paper down. I told her that you sent that money to make me comfortable not to make me miserable. My mother she made me promise to pay you all again. I told her you did not want money you only wanted me to be a good boy and write about peace and Brotherhood, and as soon as I can I shall send some money to pay for some Olive Leaves and a good song to put in them. There are some good boys in America as well as girls. They have been very



busy for me. I return you all many sincere thanks for your kindness. I am writing to you with



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pen and paper hoping sometime I shall come and see you all face to face. I shall not come with a sword in my hand nor a gun nor a fine feather in my cap flying about. I shall come with a nice book in my hand or a roll of paper and tell you some good news. It did not take quite all that money to buy my suit, so my sisters have got a little shawl apiece. They have not quite worn out their sixpenny bonnets.

JOSIAH BANNER.

* * * * *

Dear Children:—

I have read these letters to you just as Josiah wrote them. He is now about 12 years old, “working with two hammers, one with his foot, the other with his hand, striking off nails as fast as he can.” But I should like to compare his writing with the writing of any little boys and girls of his age, that meet in our school-room. He has no nice desk to write on; his pens and ink are such as he can get. There were no pen and ink in his father’s house three years ago; for no one could make letters there when you sent Josiah to school. You see his care for his little sisters. It did not take all the two gold sovereigns we sent him first to pay for his suit of clothes; it would have done, if he had determined to buy himself a nicer suit. But he remembered his sisters lovingly, and gave part of his money to buy each of them a shawl; and pretty nice shawls they were, we have not the slightest doubt, and took a considerable part of the money you sent him. He knew you were kind to him, but he did not think you would remember his sisters too, and send them something to make them warm and comfortable through the winter. They have received before this time the two sovereigns, or ten dollars, which you contributed for their New Year’s present. How I wish that all of you who sent in your half dimes for them, could look in upon that nailer’s family circle when they open the letter and see two bright gold sovereigns for the little ones. The baby will crow a little at that, and the mother, who dropped her head and wiped her eyes, as Josiah read to her out of the Citizen about that little girl in Newton, who went without milk so long that he might have a suit of clothes for Christmas, will drop her head again, but she will cry for joy, and there will be hopping up and down for the space of fifteen minutes, I reckon, and Josiah’s black eyes will twinkle with the gladness in his heart; and the neighbor’s children will know it all before the news is two hours old, and then you will have another letter from Josiah; and may be his oldest sister will try her hand at a few marks for you.



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And now, before I dismiss the School, I want to ask each boy and girl on these benches, who gave a half dime for Josiah's education, if the brightest silver dollar ever coined would buy of either of them that half dime? Would you sell for a dollar your share in his education and happiness, in the joy, hope and expectations which your gifts have brought to life in that poor nailer's cottage? There are some beautiful verses in the Bible which I hope you will write in your copy-books, and remember all your days. "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay." And have you not been paid fifty times over for what you gave Josiah? "It is more blessed to give than to receive," said One who gave the greatest gift that God could give to man. Have you not found it so in regard to your gifts to Josiah? You see how happy you have made him; how blessed it has been to him to receive your presents. But how blessed and happy you must be to make him all this joy and gladness! Ask little Phebe Alcott there, if she has not got her pay ten times over for going without milk so many days that he might have some warm clothes for winter. Ask little Sarah Brown if she has not been repaid well for carrying around her subscription paper for him so many frosty mornings in Worcester. And now, good-night. It has been a long, long time since I met you in the School-room. Many new faces have been added to our circle. Some that I used to see here are gone. But still, the benches are full, and I hope no boy or girl will vacate their seat for the next year.

LITTLE JOHNNY.

BY J.B. SYME.

* * * * *

It was our fortune to be born in the country—far away, at the foot of one of the blue hills of Scotland—in a quaint old fashioned little house—in a quiet little village that seemed shrunken and grey, and grim, and decrepid with age. The drooping ashes, the solemn oaks, and the shady plane-trees, spread their long arms tenderly over the straw-thatched roofs of this lowly hamlet, as if to defend it from the burning sun and reckless storms; and the Ayrshire rose and ivy crept up and clung to its damp and crumbling walls. In the broken parts of the gables, and in the crevices of the ruined chimneys, the dew-fed wall-flower grew in poverty and beauty, and shook the incense from its waving flowers into the bosom of summer. The bearded moss clustered like a thousand little brown pin-cushions upon the old thatch, and older stones; and sometimes the polyanthus and primrose, planted beside it by some child who loved to look at flowers, would close their eyes and lay their dewy checks upon the moss's breast at evening.

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The only links that connected the simple, primitive people of this little hamlet, with the purely ideal was their flowers. They did not know about the participle mysteries that science has discovered in those beautiful children of God, the flowers. They could not, like the poor pariahs to whom the proud Hindoos of India will not speak, converse poetic stories with those daughters of spring and summer; yet, they saw something in their flowers beyond the visible and lowly circumstances of their own every-day life—something that lifted their eyes from the ground to heaven. The marigold, that star of the earth, with its bright, yellow petals, reminded them of the golden stars of heaven; the daisy, with its pure white blossom, bathed in the dew and sunlight of smiling morning, recalled to their minds the stories they had heard in their childhood about the diadems of fairies; and the blue forget-me-nots seemed to twinkle like the blue eyes of the angels. And when winter came, and the fair summer flowers faded away; moralizings on life, on death and eternity, came sighing in their expiring exhalations, over that simple people's souls. It was from being taught, in this way, to love the flowers of the country, that I Cultivated sympathies which pre-disposed me to love city flowers.

When I was first transplanted from my own green, native valley, into the heart of a great city; when my early home was levelled to the ground, and when its flowers were withered, never to bloom any more, I felt as if I had come amongst grim walls to wither too, and had been uprooted from the light and life of my youth that I might die. The birds that wailed around me in their prison cages, seemed to weep for the hawthorn and alder trees that were growing beside the ruins of my old home, and I wept with them, for I, too, was sighing for nature.

As I became familiar with the lanes, and streets, and byways of the city, I began at last to find, that there were flowers, too—flowers beautiful as the roses in the gardens of paradise, and bright as the smile of Abel when he worshipped his God. Day by day, in my little walks, I passed a large square encompassed by a low wall and lofty iron railing, in which several hundreds of boys and girls with rosy cheeks and light hearts, sported, and sang like fairies holding festival. Here were faces lovelier than roses; lips brighter than ripe cherries, and eyes purer than dew; from the day I first beheld those flowers of the city, I ceased to sigh for the country and its flowers. I used to stand and gaze at them with grateful delight, and live over again my own childhood's hours, as I watched their childhood's sports. By and by I knew and became known to several of those children; I gave them kind words, and they returned me beautiful smiles.



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There was amongst that host of children one little boy whose face was very fair; whose eyes were very bright, and whose little feet made merry music on the smooth pavement. Girls have a strong intuitive love of the beautiful, and Johnny with his liquid eyes, and dimpled cheeks, and floating ringlets of gold was the favorite of all the girls at school, often wished that I had roses to place upon his brow, and the waters of paradise to sprinkle on his cheeks, that I might preserve their bloom forever. But, alas! city flowers droop and fade and die; and though tears fall, like Hermon's dews, upon the cold green earth where they are sleeping, it will not renew their blooming, nor bring them back from the grave.

I looked amongst the tiny throng one day, and Johnny was not there—I came again and again, and still he was not there. “He has gone away,” said I, “to gladden his grandmother’s bosom—his grandmother, who doubtless lives far away in some little cottage in the country. He will soon come back again.”

And he did come back again, for on a lovely summer day, when the birds and butterflies and children were sporting in the sun, I saw him seated in a little chair, amidst his young companions.

“Shall I soon get well again, to play with them?” said he, lifting his pale face and sad eyes towards his mother’s.

“Yes,” said his mother, with a sad smile and a deep sigh, “you will soon get well again, Johnny.”

Alas no, fond mother; the bloom has gone from his cheek forever, the beauty from his form. Henceforth, if he lives, the thoughtless will laugh at him, as he moves painfully about the streets—the wicked will mock him. In thy heart only, and in the bowers of paradise, shall he now, henceforth and forever live and bloom. Slowly and sadly I saw his pale cheek grow paler, and the lustre fade away from his eyes.

Time wore away, and this stricken flower of the city faded away with it. He could no longer sit and look upon his former playmates; the airs of Autumn were too cool at last for his sensitive, thin, pale, transparent cheek.

I was walking one day, in a pensive mood, along a crowded thoroughfare, where active men jostled each other in the pursuit of business. There was life and hope in their eyes, and vigor in their limbs. It is not on the streets that one is likely to meet the blighted flowers of the city—the drooping and the dying do not wither away there. Within the chambers of silent and sorrowful homes they breathe out their lives, and fade away.

As I walked along, gazing at the tall grim buildings and dark alleys, that were so full of old, historical memories, I was suddenly recalled from a reverie, by a feeble cry; and turning quickly round I saw, in the arms of a robust and rosy lad, the wasted, corpse-like

form of my little friend. I do not know how I recognized him. It was by an intuition of the soul, for not a feature that his countenance bore in his healthful days, was visible.



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I took his trembling little hand in mine, and shaking my head to clear the moisture from my eyes, said I, attempting to smile—"How are you?"

"Quite well," said the dying infant, and he, too, smiled.

I knew that it was an angel that lighted up that smile—that it was the immortal spirit, rising in sublime resignation above the vanity of health and earthly beauty, that beamed in his blighted face.

"I cannot walk now," said Johnny, in a soft, low voice, that his panting chest could scarcely articulate.

I could not speak—and, continued the boy, with a little sigh, and in tremulous tones—"My mother is dead."—But thy Father, from whom the purest and holiest things and thoughts have their being—the Source of all light and life and beauty and goodness, lives to thee Johnny, said I in my heart. Poor little blighted city flower, thought I, as I looked at him through my tears—immortal flower of humanity—purer and lovelier now in thy pain and resignation than when thy cheeks were rosy, and thy laugh was like a song-bird's music; thou shall soon be transplanted to a land where no sorrows, sighs, and pains are known; thy little feeble frame will moulder away beneath the daisy and the weeping snow-drop, but thy purified soul shall bloom in everlasting glory, in the bosom of God.

Oh! you who are strong and full of life, speak gently to the fragile, drooping, blighted flowers of cities, and do not scorn them. They once were beautiful; and now they only linger sadly here, with no mother to cherish them. Kind words and gentle looks are everlasting sunshine to city flowers.

Around the throne of God are white-winged cherubim, whose countenances are purer than transparent snow, and whose voices are sweeter than that of the angel Azazel, who leads the choir of the daughters of Paradise. Those are the souls of little children, who have suffered in their bodies and in their affections, and who have yet complained not. The soul of little Johnny blooms brightly amongst those celestial spirits—a flower of heaven.

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