

Louise Woods Baker

from her

Mother

April 14. 1863.









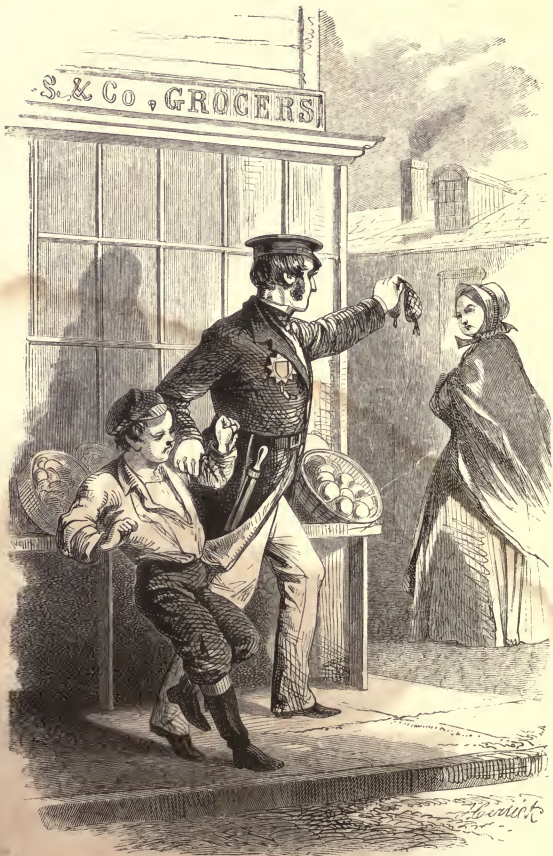
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BUSTER AND BABY JIM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE BLUE FLAG," ETC.

"WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE."



PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.

He who would see the originals of Buster and Baby Jim, need but explore the lanes and alleys of any large city. There are thousands of such children to be rescued.

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BUSTER AND BABY JIM.

CHAPTER I.

THE BROTHERS.

THERE is a sunny street-corner in one of our cities, which was once the favorite lounging-place for the idle boys of all that neighborhood. In fair weather or foul, a knot of little fellows was sure to be collected there, buzzing away like bees, if they were not gathering honey. They talked and laughed and cracked their jokes, and seemed in truth a "merrie companie;" yet when the careful mothers who lived hard by sent out their sons on errands, they were sure to say, "Do n't stop at the corner," or, "Go

round the other way, so that you need not pass that corner."

It was not that the group of boys of which we have spoken could not boast some well-dressed lads among them, that they were condemned; no, it was not on account of their torn, shabby clothing, that they were such undesirable associates. Wise heads knew that such idle loungers were on the road to wickedness, if they had not already been guilty of crime. Passers-by might now and then hear an oath from their young lips, and the Sunday morning bells did not send them to the pleasant Sabbath-school, or bid them join happy families on their way to church. Two of God's commandments at least they were breaking; they could not be companions which any good mother would wish for her son.

Among the most unfailing frequenters of "the corner" were two brothers, who

were known among their friends as "Buster" and "Baby Jim;" what their real names were no one knew, and on this point they were as ignorant as every body else. Ever since they could remember they had been wanderers in the streets of the great city, living by begging, pilfering, or by the doubtful charities of people far gone in wickedness. Just now they had some new acquaintances who seemed to take a great fancy to them. Buster and Baby Jim had found a house where they could always get a comfortable meal, and where rough men gave them a hearty welcome and seemed to take a special pleasure in counting the boys "one of them." Sundry hints had been thrown out as to teaching the brothers how to make a handsome living, and "Baby Jim" was led to believe there was a very easy way for him to lay up stores of money, and ride in his own carriage one

of these days. The little chap could not help thinking that this would be much more agreeable than his present diversion of "hanging on behind" in imminent danger of the coachman's whip, though it might not be quite as exciting.

Through the day the boys were at the street corner, lounging and chatting, but in the evening they were going through a course of lessons preparatory to the very profitable branch of business on which they were expected to enter.

Poor young things; without father or mother, ignorant and penniless, what was to prevent them from starting upon a career of crime, to end in prison or on the scaffold? They had no true friend to warn them; no faithful, loving friend to call them to the ways of pleasantness and peace, and teach them the joy of honest labor and the manly satisfaction of earning their own bread.

As it was, the weeks went by, and Baby Jim's small face grew more keen, eager, and cunning in its expression; while Buster's every limb and feature spoke of the future ruffian, daily increasing in strength and daring.

There was scarcely a year's difference between the ages of the boys. They knew that, though strangers could hardly believe it. They well remembered when it was their delight to stand side by side under the projecting shop windows, not an inch's difference in their height, though Buster even then claimed authority as the elder brother.

Exposure and hard usage had stunted little Jim; but his thin wiry figure seemed made of springs of steel, and was more than a match in strength for many a taller, sturdier form; yet with Buster he never presumed to contend. Truly Buster was too formidable an adversary

for any of the boys lightly to engage him in battle. The big, burly lad was a kind of king among his associates, laying down the law, and sustaining his authority like many another monarch, by the irresistible argument of brute force.

Poor, tempted, sinful street-vagrants as were Buster and Baby Jim, there yet lingered in their hearts one feeling which made them akin, though afar off, to saints and angels, and even proved them lost and wandering children of the God of love.

A true, deep affection for each other had somehow sprung up and been fostered in the midst of the hardening, miserable life they had led. Sharers of the same pangs of hunger and cold, alike neglected by all the world, they had grown doubly dear to each other through sympathy in suffering and loneliness.

Baby Jim lost his keen, old look when

his eye fell admiringly on his brother, and the innocence of infancy and the softness of a woman would for the moment hover in his face, beautifying and purifying it as it spoke out the real love that was stirring within.

It was when Buster's arm was thrown protectingly round his little companion, and only then, that one could catch a glimpse of the better side of his nature. At such times the defiant, swaggering young bully would for the moment show that union of strength and tenderness, of power and forbearance, which gives to a bold and manly character a peculiar charm.

It was perhaps as much to their true affection for each other that the brothers owed their influence among their associates, as to Buster's strength or the acknowledged shrewdness of Baby Jim.

What is true, noble, and good must

ever have its power over the most abandoned of men. While the poor straggling vagrants of the street corner mockingly gave to big Buster and little Jim the name of "the Twins," each young heart in secret yielded its tribute of admiration and approval to the faithful love of the brothers.

CHAPTER II.

"BUTTER AND EGGS."

ALL that is learned in the world is not gathered from books. A man or boy who will keep his eyes and ears open, will find out much that was never put in print. Many of the lads at the street corner could at the best but spell out a sign, or slowly read the headings in great letters on an "extra;" yet there was a kind of knowledge afloat among them which had for them its own use, not always of the most innocent kind.

The passers-by did not need to tell these observing boys who they were, or what was their business. A lawyer, a doctor, a merchant, a clerk, or a mechanic was as well known by them at a glance, as if he had his occupation put

on the band of his hat, like the porters of city hotels. They could distinguish the up-town from the down-town people, and the "west-enders" from "east-enders." Plain clothing could not hide from them the comfortable, easy look of one who has always had his wants gratified without exertion; nor could the gayest finery shut their eyes to the empty purses of the foolish women who spent their all to make a fine show upon the public street. A countryman might try to look as much at ease as he pleased, and deck himself in new attire from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet; they knew where he came from, without the help of hob-nailed shoes or homespun to tell the story.

— "Butter and eggs," said Buster to Baby Jim one day.

Jim followed the direction of his brother's finger, and saw a stout, cheerful-





looking woman coming slowly towards the group among which he was standing.

"Yes," said Jim, nodding assent. "First visit to the city. Full purse; pocket on the left side drops heavy." The subject of these remarks was quite unconscious of any thing in her appearance suggestive either of the dairy or the farm-yard, but of neither would she have dreamed of being ashamed. She did not look like a person to be ashamed of any thing she said or did, at home or abroad. Her full face, with its rosy cheeks and wide-open blue eyes, was beaming with truth and kindness. She felt no mortification about her style of dress truly, though a foolish city belle would rather have stayed at home from church every Sunday for a month, than have worn that odd gray linen cottage bonnet, or that mouseline de laine, so perfect a reflection of the flower-garden in June.

Our stranger was perhaps a little proud of her appearance, complacent at least, but not so far as to despise others less fortunate than herself. Her eye softened as it fell on the group of ragged boys, and her hand instinctively sought the left-hand pocket, where, as Jim had rightly judged, her funds were reposing.

Whatever might have been her kindly intention, she was not allowed to carry it out. There was a stir among the boys as she approached, and Jim exclaimed, "Now for it. Who'll get to the next corner first?"

At this challenge the whole party set off at full speed, rushing past the stranger as if borne on the wings of the wind. Unceremoniously crowded and nudged by the rude little crew, the good woman could hardly keep her place on the sidewalk, and the glance she sent after them expressed any thing but approval of their

proceedings. Gathering up her dress, she stepped quickly on, making meanwhile mental comparisons between the manners of the city and the country, in which the region of butter and eggs had the decided preference.

At the appointed corner the runners stopped. A smile went round the group as Jim held up a well-filled purse, which in the confusion he had managed to take from the pocket of the country woman.

Buster struck it from his hand to the pavement, exclaiming, "Police! Run for your lives!"

Jim and his companions disappeared down an alley as if made invisible by a spell, while Buster stopped, picked up the purse, and proceeded to examine the contents, as if he felt himself in perfect security. The strong hand of a policeman was laid upon his shoulder, and

there was an exclamation in his ear: "I saw it all. No lies, youngster; I know your tricks."

Buster had acted on the impulse of the moment, prompted by the desire to save his brother; and now, when he found himself a prisoner, his courage for a moment forsook him. He knew that his boasted strength was as nothing compared with the powerful figure of the policeman. Swift and stinging were the thoughts that rushed through his mind as he was hurried rapidly along by his captor. Already in imagination the grim cold walls of a prison were closing around him; already he was cut off from freedom and sunshine, and gazing sadly at the small barred window whose glimmer of light cast the only brightness on his dark lot.

Buster was but a lad, scarce twelve years old, and big tears forced them-

selves into his eyes as this gloomy picture presented itself to his mind.

The policeman, eager to overtake the countrywoman, lost no time in examining the face or studying the feelings of the culprit. Buster's tears were unnoticed, and the hardened, sullen look which he had summoned to conceal his fears was all that met the eye of the officer when at length he paused beside the object of his pursuit.

"Is this your purse, madam?" asked the policeman.

The woman put her hand in her pocket, and then exclaimed, "That it is. I must have dropped it. I believe I did take out my handkerchief a piece back."

The little group was here joined by a gentleman, whose eager inquiries were soon answered by a full account of the affair from the policeman, in which he left no doubt of Buster's guilt. The

stranger was not yet forty years old, but he had all the dignity and wisdom of age, united with the fresh, loving sympathies of youth. A thorough Christian in heart and life, like his divine Master, he gave to the sinful and unfortunate his most tender interest.

His glance was full of yearning pity as it fell on Buster's young face. The boy looked up suddenly as the stranger took his hand and said, "I am sorry for all this, my little fellow. Perhaps it may not prove so bad as it seems. Suppose you tell me the truth about it."

"I did n't steal the purse," said Buster, for the first time breaking silence.

"Just as likely as not I dropped it. I'm not used to having money about me much," said the woman, now becoming uneasy and anxious to be through with the disagreeable scene. "Let the boy go. I'm to be off in the cars in less

than an hour, and can't stand here talking. Look here, my lad, you are young to be walking in bad ways. May the Lord take care of you and keep you out of sin."

There was real earnestness in the woman's manner, and as she walked quickly away, Buster felt as if he were losing a friend.

"You don't get off so," said the officer. "I know you, and you've got to stand your trial this time. It may keep your neck from the gallows to hide in the jug a while now; so come along with me, and put on a pleasanter face, if you can."

The rough, coarse manner of the policeman won from Buster no reply but a look of blustering defiance, while from the stranger's glance he turned away, as if unable to answer its tender pity.

CHAPTER III.

A RIDE.

WE will not follow Buster through the scenes of his trial. He could not be proved guilty of stealing the purse; but he was unable to show that he had any home or lawful way of life, and it was made plain that the men with whom he was known to associate were of the most suspicious kind. He was at the best in training for a course of guilt, and the strong arm of the law was put forth to save the community from one villain more endangering its peace and safety.

Buster was not to be sent to the gloomy prison whose outer walls he had so often surveyed. The stranger, who had followed him, had gained permission to take charge of the young culprit.

Buster soon found himself in a rail-road car. He was a prisoner, that was plain, for the stranger kept a kind but firm hold of his wrist until the train started, and resumed it at every stopping-place. There was no present chance of escape, and Buster, with the natural elasticity of youth, began to make the best of the circumstances in which he found himself.

Along the banks of a wide river the swift cars were rapidly flying. The city with its din and bustle was soon left far behind them, and greenness and beauty took the place of brick walls and paved streets. For the first time in his life Buster was in the open country. There was something imposing to him in the wide stretch of the landscape, the blue mountains lining the distant horizon, the noble river tracing its shining way mid hills and meadows, and over all the blue,

majestic arch of the clear summer sky. A singular sense of littleness and loneliness stole over the heart of the boy. He felt within him nothing akin to this purity and beauty; and more welcome to him than would have been a footing in some narrow filthy lane of the city, than the sight of nature in its imposing grandeur.

In the excitement that had attended Buster's capture and trial, he had thought but little of his brother; but now, as a lonely yearning crept over him, his little companion came naturally to his mind. "Where was Baby Jim? Would he ever know what had become of Buster?"

The boy's face softened as he dwelt on this theme, and when the stranger turned to look at him, he was surprised at the expression that had taken the place of his hitherto prevailing look of sullen determination.

“What are you thinking of, my lad? You said you had no home, and did not know who your parents were, or I should fancy you were thinking of your mother.”

The gentleman's voice and manner were very kind, and Buster instinctively answered, “I didn't say I had n't any brother.”

“So you have a brother. You need not be afraid to talk to me now. Nothing you say will go against you or him. I think you love your brother, from the way you looked when you were thinking of him just now,” said the stranger.

“We've been together always, him and me. He's a little un, but knowin. I'm a'most twice as big, but we are near about the same age,” said Buster. “It's kind o' queer to me not to have him along. It's a lonely place out here, mister; no houses nor nothin.”

The conversation thus begun was kept up, until Buster grew so much at his ease that his companion easily won from him the story of Baby Jim's theft, and Buster's impulsive thrusting himself into danger in his stead.

This confession prompted the stranger to two silent prayers. He knew not whither the young thief had fled, but he could follow him with a petition, and beg the God of love to check him in his career of crime, and call him to the paths of virtue and peace. To Buster his heart warmed, and earnestly he prayed that the kind natural feelings lingering in the boy's rough nature might be cherished, and that, sanctified by the Spirit of God, he might yet reflect the likeness of Him who bore our punishment, and was the sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sin of the world.

A sudden checking of the train an-

nounced its approach to another stopping-place.

"We get out here," said Buster's companion; and he led the boy from the car.

A small wagon was in waiting. Apparently they were expected. Side by side they took their places, and then the driver started off the horse at an easy trot.

"Where be you goin to take me?" said Buster, his curiosity at length finding vent in words.

"There," said the stranger. "We are going there."

On the top of a high hill stood a large stone building, firm and substantial, rising, story upon story, until the upper windows looked out far, far over the broad landscape on every side.

"This is to be, for a time at least, your home," continued Buster's guide.

The boy was silent. Those stone walls

might hide many a dark cell; perhaps there was one in store for him. Yet the word "home" had a cheerful sound; a home the poor lad never had known; he would not banish the pleasant vision that its bare mention had conjured up; he would patiently wait until his fate should be made known to him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STONE BUILDING.

BUSTER'S heart beat fast as he mounted the stone steps that led to the great building that had been pointed out to him.

The door was unlocked, and he entered with his companion.

Through a wide clean hall he passed into a neat, comfortable parlor, with its rocking-chairs, piano, and every mark of comfort.

"You may sit here a few moments," said his companion. "I will return for you shortly."

Buster sat down alone in the large room; then rose, walked round it, astonished to find himself on a carpeted floor

and surrounded by so many signs of plenty.

He had hardly completed his survey when his conductor returned. Sitting down by him, the stranger said, "Buster, my boy, you have had enough of a poor, miserable, wicked life. I do n't want you to grow up to sin and shame. I have brought you here to be taught to do right, and to learn to lead an honest, useful, Christian life. There are more than three hundred boys in this building. Some of them, like you, have never had any home, and some have been brought up in wicked homes, where they have never learned any thing good. When they come here, we wash them and put on them clean clothes, and tell them we want them to leave all their dirt and wickedness behind them. My boy, you have heard of the great God who made you. He formed your body by his

wonderful power, and he can make your bad heart pure. He can help you to leave off swearing, lying, stealing, Sabbath-breaking, anger, and every wicked way. I want you to kneel down as I do, and I will ask him to help you and make you better, for the sake of his dear Son."

Buster mechanically knelt down, but kept his eyes open and fixed upon his companion's face.

Very earnest was the short, simple prayer that he heard offered for him, and love and sincerity were marked on the countenance of the speaker. "You a'n't a sham, anyhow," said Buster, as the gentleman rose from his knees.

After a moment of silence, he said, "Go now, my boy, with the man you will find standing at the door. He will see that you are properly washed and dressed, and after that I will show you your new home."

“A’n’t I going to be shut up? You would n’t come it over me?” said Buster.

“You will not be shut up here, if you do as you are told, and behave yourself properly. I have not brought you here to punish you, but to try to make you better,” was the reply.

“That’s a queer dodge,” said Buster; “a first-rate one though,” and with a cheerful step he left the room.

More than an hour passed before Buster returned, so completely transformed that Baby Jim would hardly have recognized him. His thick hair had been cropped close to his head, and his browned, begrimed face had been washed until it fairly shone in its cleanliness. Buster moved but awkwardly in his new suit of plain stout clothing, but he looked approvingly at himself as he approached the gentleman whom he now considered quite as an old friend.

“Now a’n’t I a beater!” he exclaimed, as he surveyed himself from top to toe.

“You do look greatly improved; I should hardly know you myself. See to it that you leave your badness behind you with those old clothes. Now give me your hand, and I’ll show you your way over the building.”

“Here is the dining-room,” said the gentleman, opening the door to a large hall where several long lines of tables were ranged in regular order. Great slices of bread were piled in pans that were placed along through the centre of the tables, and by each boy’s plate stood a bowl of good sweet milk. “Here is where you will eat your supper presently. Do you think you can relish it, Buster?”

“Now that beats every thing. Do them boys all eat here? My!” exclaimed Buster, lost in astonishment and admi-

ration. "Wont I lay in though, when I get a chance."

We will not follow Buster and his guide as they passed through chapel and school-room, bathing-room and work-room, until they reached the large sleeping apartment, when the gentleman again paused to unlock the door. The stranger used his bunch of keys to open every door; this alone gave to Buster the idea of confinement. This was just what was needed to make him feel that though kindly cared for, he was still to be under wise control.

The door of the large dormitory was thrown wide open. Cool breezes came in through the windows, and from white scoured floor to white ceiling the air was pure and sweet as if it was fresh from the mountain-side. Everywhere small white beds were standing in long rows across the room. "These are the beds.

for the boys. Here is to be your place, number 373. That's to be your number. I shall hope to hear every thing good of 373," said Buster's companion.

Buster looked curiously at the bed, and slowly turned down the spread, examining every article of the covering; then he exclaimed, "You do n't mean I am to sleep in there! why, I sha'n't never want to get up. My! but it's soft." Buster sat down suddenly on the edge of the bed, and looking up into the face of his friend, he said, "What makes you do so? What makes you get us boys and serve us so, instead of lickin us all to pieces, or shuttin us up in the jug, or just kickin us and lettin us go?"

"Buster," began the stranger, "listen to me and I will answer your question truly." The boy's attention was caught, and his heart softened. He listened—listened with tears in his eyes, as he

heard the story of the Saviour's love, how He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and had bidden his true followers to go and do likewise.

"And you do it. You go into it strong," said Buster as his companion ceased speaking. Rough and unsuitable as seemed his comment, he yet had felt and understood what had been said to him.

"You will try, my boy, to learn to be better, wont you?" said the gentleman.

"I wish Baby Jim was in that 'ere bed, long side o' mine. Then I could turn in, and feel about right," said Buster, following out his own train of thought.

"When you go to bed every night, kneel down by that bed, and say, 'God bless me, and help me to be a good boy, for Christ's sake. God bless my brother Jim, and help him to be a good boy;' and may-be it will all come out right before

you expect it. The great God who sees you and me, sees your little brother, and can watch over him and keep him from evil."

"I was n't thinkin about keepin him from evil; he takes to that most too natural. I wish I had him though, there in that bed, and I'd tell him I'd thrash the skin off from him if he did n't mind just what you say; for I hold to it, you are the right kind of a man, just uncommon different from any I ever come across before. Eh, do you think it's about time for them boys to be layin in with the bread and milk? I'm ready."

Buster folded his hands that evening with more than three hundred boys, while the blessing of God was asked on the simple bountiful meal before them. Very heartily prayed his friend that poor Buster might be fed with the bread from heaven, and lay hold on eternal life.

CHAPTER V.

THE HON. MR. B——.

IT was hard for Buster to accommodate himself to the regular life of his new abode. To eat and sleep, go out and come in, study and play, lie down and rise up, work and stop working, by the clock, were new things indeed, after the wandering habits into which the poor boy had fallen. Yet to all this he became by degrees accustomed, and even this outward training took from him somewhat of the wild, reckless air which had marked him before. In the work-room and in the class, Buster showed any thing but stupidity, and yet the friend who had placed him in this kindly asylum was still anxiously watching for some more satisfactory signs of improve-

ment. In vain he inquired, week after week, for good news about Buster. The boy often proved turbulent and unmanageable, and more than once he had undergone the severest punishments in use at the institution. Buster was, through the force of circumstances, slightly altered; but it was plain that he needed but to be exposed again to temptation, to fall back into all his evil practices.

Buster had been for several months at the asylum, when the boys were one day summoned to the chapel at an unusual hour. In they marched to the sound of music, keeping time, and stepping as truly as well-trained soldiers. Leading one of the long files came Buster, his head erect and his great black eyes wandering hither and thither as if asking what was the provocation for this extraordinary assembly.

The boys were hardly seated when the

superintendent introduced to them the Hon. Mr. B—— of Ohio. At a given signal they all rose and politely acknowledged the introduction.

Mr. B—— was a splendid specimen of Christian manhood. His tall and strongly built figure at once attracted Buster's attention and won his unqualified approval; nor could the boy help owning to himself that the face of the stranger was as attractive as his well-knit form.

The many voices of the children blended in a cheerful hymn of praise, and as Mr. B—— listened to the holy words they so sweetly sang, the unbidden tears clouded his eyes. Rank upon rank, line upon line, rose the heads of the singers. In thought Mr. B—— wandered to the scenes of vice and misery from which these poor children had been rescued, and angels' work indeed it seemed to him to have gathered these neglected

outcasts and taught them even with the lips to praise the God of heaven. In a kind of touching recitative rose those beautiful words of commendation which the Lord is said to address to those on his right hand at the day of judgment. When the children came to the closing sentence, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Mr. B—— could almost imagine the Saviour bodily present among them and speaking himself the sacred words that came from the lips of the singers.

A Saviour near at hand he seemed; and when Mr. B—— rose to call upon him in prayer, he spoke to him as One in the midst of them, yearning with his almighty heart of love fully to take to his bosom these the least of his flock, yet precious above all price in his eyes.

When the prayer was over, Mr. B——

knew that he was expected to make an address to the children. In many public places and before many critical audiences had his eloquent voice been heard, yet now there was a sense of choking in his throat, and a growing feeling of inability to say what he wished to the young hearers before him. Like the Syrophenician woman, he humbly prayed in silence, "Lord, help me." He felt that the message must come from God, if it should be blessed to do the work for which he was yearning.

The superintendent glanced at Mr. B——, and saw by the working of his fine face that just now he was too much moved to give vent to his feelings in words.

"Boys," began the superintendent, "let me tell you that the gentleman who is to speak to you to-day has spoken to thousands of men, of grown men, and

they have listened with delighted attention. In the State he comes from, he is looked up to more than if he were the governor. I like to show him to you as a Christian gentleman, one to whom God has given health, talent, and wealth, and he delights to use them all to work for his heavenly Master. Boys, listen to Mr. B——. It may never fall to your lot to hear such a man again.”

Mr. B—— stepped out beyond the desk which stood upon the raised platform where he had been sitting. With his powerful figure in full sight, and his strongly-marked kindly face looking lovingly upon them, he began.

“My lads, your superintendent has spoken in my praise. Let us grant that what he has said is true, true as far as the world knows any thing of me; yet in my closet I must bow the knee and cry like you, ‘God be merciful to me a sin-

ner.' Boys, I will tell you a story. I knew a child once, a poor, wandering, homeless child, who had no mother to rock him on her knee, no father to earn him daily bread. His little tender hands soon learned to steal, his baby lips could speak an oath and laugh while he was speaking. What wonder that he grew in wickedness as he gained in years? I will not tell you how he went from step to step, till his young heart was hardened in sin. Perhaps some of you may know too well the evil path he trod. That path ended, as it must surely end, in *misery*. He found himself shut up within damp, gloomy prison walls. No pleasant sunshine to cheer him now; no friendly voice to bid him take courage. Two long years he was to spend in dreary confinement. He bowed his head upon his hands and cried as if his heart would break. There were no rough compan-

ions round him now to laugh at his bitter tears. There was no gentle hand to wipe those tears away. Alone, alone in his guilty misery sat the wicked orphan-boy. So the wretched days and weeks came and went. One morning there was a visitor in his lonely cell. A kind motherly face was bending over the poor hardened boy. He would not answer her gentle words; he would not look into her loving eyes. Yet she came again and again. Sickness seized upon the weak frame of the prisoner. She nursed him as tenderly as if he had been one of the sweet children of her own comfortable home. She made him love her; he could not help it; and when by and by she talked to him of the precious Saviour who had sent her to his side, he learned to love that Saviour too.

“One long year passed, and then another, and at last the prisoner was free

once more. He might go where he would, and find for himself a home. Did he turn back to the wretched alleys he knew? Did he seek the old sinners who had led him astray before? No; he had his Bible in his hand and his God overhead. There was no such path for him now. Straight for the open country he went. On, on he walked, till the city was far behind him. He used his right hand for honest labor by day, by night he continued his journey. In the wide West he found a resting-place. No one knew him there. There he began his new life. God had forgiven him for Christ's sake, and he could cheerfully bear poverty and hard work, knowing that he had a sure home in heaven.

“God blessed that poor lad, and gave him friends and a home and wealth, and even some share of this world's honors. He stands before you now, and thanks

his heavenly Father for all his mercies. I have been telling you my own life, my boys. I know what it is to be poor and homeless and tempted and wicked. These are strong enemies, but God is stronger. He can help you, if you will but fight on the right side. God can cleanse you and strengthen you and bring you off conquerors. He will forgive you for the sake of his dear Son who died on the cross for you. He will help you to lead a new life. You will have a hard struggle for it, but you will win if you fight bravely. The coward gains no battle. He who is afraid to begin, will never end with honor. My dear boys, let this day be, at least for one of you, the most important day you have ever known. Go in secret to the great God of heaven. Ask him, for his Son's sake, to blot out all your sins, and help you to live a new and better life.

“May the Holy Spirit bless to you these words of mine; and when you shall have triumphed over sin and shame, may you take poor wandering children by the hand, and lead them to the feet of Jesus. Let us pray.”

As sincerely, humbly, earnestly, and trustfully as when he first knelt at the feet of Jesus, Mr. B—— now sought forgiveness for himself and the children in whose name he spoke. One young heart, at least, went with him. For the first time, Buster prayed, “God be merciful to me a sinner. Cleanse thou me, and I shall be clean.” Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

To Buster it now seemed possible that even for such as he there was an upward path. God helping him, from this day forward he would leave his evil deeds behind him, and strive to be a true servant of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

PARTING.

WE have seen the beginning of a Christian life, the tiny grain of mustard-seed taking root in poor Buster's heart. This was the commencement of a good work, but it was truly only the commencement. Mr. B—— had rightly said the struggle was a hard one. Old habits and old temptations would rise again when they seemed almost conquered, and new faults sprung up where others had been subdued. Yet Buster persevered.

Two years Buster continued at the Asylum, before his kind friends dared to trust him away from their watchful eyes and timely counsel. At length there was a new party of boys starting for the West, to find homes among the farmers

of the fast growing states. Buster's name was on the list. As Buster he still was known, but in solemn baptism he had taken the Christian name of Paul. He chose to be called after the great apostle, who, though counting himself the chief of sinners, had yet through the grace of God become among the chief of saints.

Again Buster was to take a journey, far, far longer than the ride in the swift cars that had brought him to his late home. What a change had been wrought in him since, rough, wicked, and reckless, he entered those sheltering walls. The friend who had then been his guide was now with him to bid him farewell.

Buster took the hand that was stretched out to him, and grasping it in both of his, he exclaimed, "God will bless you, sir. I can't thank you. I don't know how to say what I feel. I owe every thing to you. I'll try to do you credit.

May-be you'll hear of me one of these days."

"I trust I shall see you at the right hand of God, rejoicing among the redeemed," said his companion with great earnestness. "Be watchful and humble, my lad. Hold fast to your Bible. Be faithful in prayer. Resist the very beginnings of evil, the angry look, the profane word, the touching of the slightest trifle that is not your own. God bless you, and bring you off conqueror."

"Thank you," said Buster, humbly. "But Oh, sir, you will keep a watch for *him*? May-be he'll turn up yet. Remember, blue eyes, and curly brown hair, small and slender, and an old, smart look in his face. That's he, that's Baby Jim."

What was it that unnerved the great strong boy? His hands trembled as they gave that final grasp at parting. Ah, the

Christian brother but yearned the more tenderly for the companion of his childhood, and longed to know him snatched from those evil paths whose end is death.

“I will pray for him, and watch for him, my boy. Trust him to the Lord, and labor to be a brother who shall be a fit guide and example for him when we shall have found him.”

Buster heard the parting words, and answered, “Aye, aye, that’s what I will.” Then with another “good-by,” he sprang into the cars that were to bear him away to the scene of his future life.

CHAPTER VII.

A WESTERN FARMER.

AMONG the thirty lads who were starting for the West, there was not one more full of hope than was the tall stout boy whom we have known as Buster. As mile after mile was left behind him, he breathed more and more freely. Separated from the scenes of his early guilt, he felt it to be more and more possible for him to lead the life he desired.

Where would his lot fall? What home would be his? To these questions Buster could give no answer; but he found vent for the feelings of his heart by singing in a low voice the hymn,

“Father, whate’er of earthly bliss
Thy sovereign will denies,
Accepted at thy throne of grace,
Let this petition rise.

“Give me a calm, a thankful heart,
From every murmur free ;
The blessings of thy grace impart,
And let me live to thee.

“Let the sweet hope that I am thine
My life and death attend ;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey’s end.”

Buster’s hymn attracted no attention amid the Babel of sounds made by the excited, rejoicing boys. The kind friend who had charge of them did not check the natural outburst of their feelings, but sat among them enjoying the various ways in which they chose to manifest their glee.

Somewhat sobered down by the long journey, the boys at length reached their first stopping-place, at a small town in the centre of a rich farming country. They were expected, that was plain ; for many rough wagons were tied along the principal street, while their owners join-

ed the deputation of the citizens who were at the dépôt to give the young strangers a welcome.

On the large public square an agricultural fair had lately been held, and the seats provided for the ladies were still standing. On these the boys were placed, while an abundant luncheon was passed round for their refreshment. Then followed some singing by the children, and a speech from the gentleman who had them in charge. He simply stated the plan of the institution from which they had come, and offered to the farmers assembled an opportunity of sharing in the Christlike work of redeeming these poor wanderers from a life of want and crime, and training them in honest homes. Wherever they went, they were to be received as members of the family. They were to be encouraged to show by their conduct what they were, forgetting

whence they came and what they had been.

While the gentleman was speaking, many scrutinizing eyes were fixed upon the eager faces of the boys. Up and down before the rising seats walked a small short man, with his head on one side as he looked systematically at every boy, allowing to each his fair time to make an agreeable impression. It was evident that the good man was seeking a new member for his household, and meant to be careful in the selection. The process seemed to be an exciting one, for he soon took off his homespun coat and threw it over his arm, and pushed his felt hat back on his head, so that his wide forehead might have the full benefit of the breeze. There was shrewdness in his small clear blue eyes and long, sharp nose; but the quizzical, kindly expression about the mouth was

sufficient to reassure the stranger who might at first be afraid to find him close at a bargain. He soon became a great favorite among the boys, and cries of "Take me," "I'm the chap for you," sounded out from the lines as he pursued his methodical examination.

Before Buster the little farmer at length made a decided stand. "Would I suit you? Do you think you could close hands with me?" he said confidentially.

Buster reached his big hand over the heads of the little boys below him, and gave the inquirer a hearty grasp as he replied, "First-rate."

"All settled," said the farmer, going back to the crowd and listening as faithfully to the concluding remarks of the speaker as if he intended to report them for the county newspaper. A report of the speech he knew he would have to

give to one person at least, and that a party whom he was far more anxious to please than the uncertain public, who might applaud to-day and decry to-morrow.

“My Mrs. Jillard,” as he was wont to call his wife, would demand a circumstantial account of that day’s proceedings, he was sure, and he meant to be prepared upon at least one department in which he would be examined.

No objection being made to Mr. Jillard’s selection by the gentleman in charge of the boys, the worthy farmer seemed inclined to carry off his prize at once.

“Then we may as well be moving,” he exclaimed, taking Buster protectively by the arm. Buster was a full half head taller than his new acquaintance, and would have been a dangerous enemy for him in a pitched battle; and the big boy could hardly help smiling at the tender,

careful way in which he was taken in hand.

Mr. Jillard had proposed the move, and yet he lingered and kept fumbling meditatively in his coat pocket. It was plain that he felt he was making a bargain in which the advantage was too much on his side, and yet he did not know how to mend the matter. At length he broke out, "It seems as if I ought to do something. I do n't like to pay money. That looks ugly, as if I bought the boy. But see here; may n't I give you something to go to clothing and feeding some poor little chap that's just picked out of the gutter, and is n't fit to be let loose on honest folks? Hicks Jillard would like to have that ten dollar note put to that account. Will that be all right?"

Mr. Jillard's contribution was cheerfully received, and he had the promise

of a letter describing the boy for whose benefit it should be used.

“Now for it,” said the farmer; and starting off at a round rate, he soon made Buster realize that he would have to be a fast walker if he kept up with him.

At a post where two quiet farm-horses were tied, Mr. Jillard stopped. “Were you ever on a horse, boy? What’s your name?”

“Never, but I should n’t mind trying,” said Buster, his eyes sparkling.

“What’s your name?” repeated the questioner.

“Buster I’ve always been called; but I was baptized Paul just before I left home,” said the boy.

“Baptized; I like that,” said Mr. Jillard. “A good beginning. Hold to it, and don’t go backwards. Breaking is dangerous in boys as well as horses.

Paul Jillard, that's your name. Can you write?"

"Yes, sir," said Buster promptly.

"Then write Paul Jillard in your books. Do n't cut P. J. now everywhere, as if you owned all the world and wanted to put your mark on it. I don't hold to that. Knives have their uses; but this cutting of letters round is putting good tools to a bad job. Yes, Paul Jillard is your name, but I shall call you Buster, because you are used to it; my Mrs. Jillard may do as she pleases. Now get up on to that horse as quick as you can. She'll be expecting us."

Buster made several vain attempts to mount from the ground, while Mr. Jillard looked on laughing till his eyes were full of tears. "There, now, why can't you do as I do?" said the farmer, hopping lightly to the back of the other tall horse.

Buster watched the operation closely,

and managed to follow at once with a tolerable imitation.

"Here, so," said Mr. Jillard, telling Buster how to hold the reins. "Sit steady. Don't be afraid."

With no further preface or preparation, Mr. Jillard started off his horse at a round trot, and its "match" briskly kept it company. Buster had his own qualms as he felt himself fairly borne along without the exercise of his own will; but he was determined to acquit himself bravely, and did not once call out for quarter during the five minutes in which the unmerciful trotting was kept up.

"Now we'll take it slower," said Mr. Jillard, slackening his own pace. "You'll feel easier for finding you can ride fast without falling off. We've ten miles before us, so we mustn't tire out too much at the start."

By the time the ten miles were over, Buster felt as if he and Mr. Jillard were old acquaintances. All dread of meeting the farmer's wife had been overcome by various remarks concerning her which the proud husband had let fall during the ride. In his heart Buster already thanked God that the lines had fallen unto him "in pleasant places."

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. JILLARD.

MR. JILLARD'S farm had no fanciful name. It had never been called Wood-land, after the primeval forest that towered just beyond the wheat-fields, nor Clear-springs, for the bright water that welled up on every hill-side and danced its way to the valleys below. Mr. Jillard was content to talk about "our house," without having the great red wooden building photographed to put at the head of his letters or to frame and hang in his clean parlor.

It was just sunset when Buster's first ride on horseback was over, and his "gallant steed" walked quietly into a barn-yard and held up his head at his accustomed post. Buster would have

found dismounting a stiff and awkward business, if Mr. Jillard had not come to him, saying, "I'll help you to-day; next time you must get down as spry as I do."

Just as Buster stood fairly on the ground, his attention was fixed by a figure which came round the corner of the barn. Mrs. Jillard had been milking, and in each hand she held a full bucket, which showed her abundant success. Thus doubly balanced, she could move but slowly, a gait which well suited her tall, comely figure. Her round face was pink with the flush of health, and the kindly dimples were dotting her cheeks as she exclaimed,

"Home again, Hicks. You are a punctual fellow. And this is the boy. You are right welcome, my lad. Here, take the buckets, Hicks, and let me shake him by the hand."

Buster stood aghast as that kind honest face beamed full upon him. He too well remembered it. The scene at the street corner rushed back upon his memory. The cry, "Butter and eggs," the race, the arrest, all, all were present to him.

"Bashful, I suppose. 'Poor boy,'" said Mrs. Jillard to her husband, as Buster hung down his head and did not offer to take the outstretched hand.

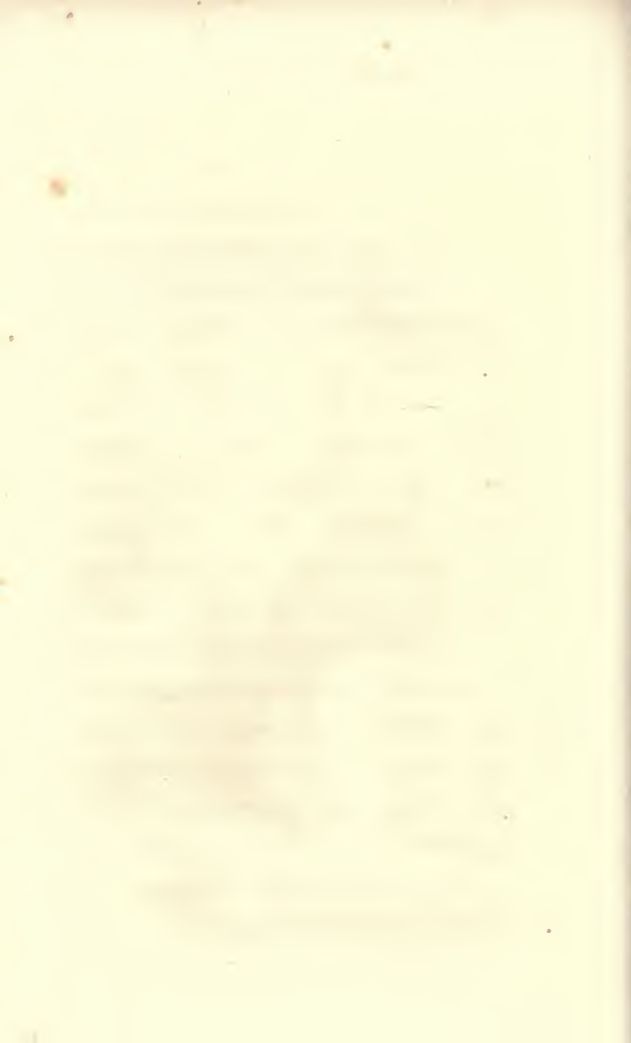
"There 's no accounting for boys," said the farmer in a low voice. "Why, we've been just like chums all along the way. I never saw anybody either that didn't take to you before. I believe he's tired all to pieces, and just feels it getting off the horse. Supper 'll make him all right."

Neither supper nor Mrs. Jillard's kind efforts to draw him into conversation could bring all right with poor Buster.



W. H. Innersley

Benick, Del.



He was glad when he was sent off to his sleeping quarters, to get rid of his supposed fatigue and consequent shyness.

“This is to be your room, Buster,” said Mrs. Jillard, as she opened the door into a small chamber, the very picture of neatness and comfort. “Stay in it as much as you please, when you are not at work; but leave your boots at the door; that will keep the floor clean, you see. Good-night, my boy. Do n’t forget your prayers. May God bless you in your new home.”

Poor Buster! every added word of kindness was as a dagger sending another pang to his bleeding heart.

Mrs. Jillard set the candle down on the small bureau, and withdrew. Buster turned the button which was the only fastening to the door, and then he bowed his head upon his hands, in utter misery. Here, where he had hoped to begin a

new, an honest, and an honored life, his sins had found him out. In the home where he had been so warmly received, he must ever be reminded of his guilty career. It could be no pure and perfect home to him. In the bitterness of his spirit, he longed for those heavenly mansions where sin and sorrow are known no more, and where nothing can be laid to the charge of God's elect, who are for ever clothed in the white robes of the righteousness of Christ. Faint-hearted, he sank down in despair. He could not, through long years, bear the burden of his sin and shame, and the deep cry of his soul was, "Oh that I had wings, like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

Slowly, very slowly, comfort came to Buster. In grateful humility, he was at length enabled to see that it was little, comparatively, that he should here be

even branded as having once belonged to a gang of young villains, while his eternal punishment had been laid upon One who had for his sake been willing to be nailed to the cruel cross. Relying on that Saviour, he would go forward on his pilgrimage, striving to bear patiently his appointed trials.

But would Mrs. Jillard tolerate him under her roof? It was plain she had not yet recognized him. Was he so altered that she might never remember to have seen him before? Would it be just and right to be daily receiving her kindness with such a secret in his heart? It had been specially agreed that no questions should be asked of the boys as to their past lives: why should Mrs. Jillard be an exception?

It was in vain that Buster so reasoned with himself. There was a something within him which prompted him to tell

the whole truth, and abide the consequences. The party which he had accompanied to the West were to remain for some days at the neighboring town, and there would still be an opportunity for Mr. Jillard to make another selection, and for Buster to obtain another situation. Such a *home* it was not likely would be again open to him. Perhaps Mrs. Jillard would not cast him out. He could but try the effect of a plain statement of the truth, and this he determined to do, as soon as the morrow should dawn.

What a privilege it seemed to Buster, that night, to speak to his merciful Saviour, who knew both his sins and his repentance; who, pure himself, could yet love his wandering children with an everlasting love.

Poor Buster saw, ere he slept, that much of human ambition had mingled

with his desire to lead a new, unsullied life. He had hoped to make a great and honorable name in the West; now he should be thankful if as a forgiven penitent, he might have the loving shelter of a retired, kindly, Christian home.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONFESSION.

BUSTER'S sorrowful, anxious thoughts did not prevent him from having sound, refreshing sleep. The glimmer of early dawn recalled him to himself, and to the anticipation of the painful duty before him. Earnestly the poor boy prayed that morning that he might be sustained by the consciousness of the continual presence of the loving Saviour, and so bear whatever measure of deserved humiliation and sorrow might be in store for him.

“What, up already?” said Mr. Jillard, as he heard a stirring in Buster's room as he passed. “That's a good sign. When you are dressed, come down stairs, my lad, and we'll have prayers at once.

Mrs. Jillard has got our breakfast ready, I'll warrant. She's the early bird."

In the large clean kitchen Mr. and Mrs. Jillard were sitting when Buster made his appearance. They were side by side, and together looking over the pages of a great Bible, as if to decide where to begin in their morning reading. "Have you ever read the Bible through, my boy?" said the farmer, as if to call the new inmate into the family counsel.

"No, sir, not all through; but I know the place where it tells a fellow to speak the truth, and that's what I want to do, right straight, no matter what becomes of me." Buster was evidently excited. His shy and awkward manner of the evening before had gone, and a strange haunting memory of something in the past flitted across Mrs. Jillard's mind, as she looked full into his troubled face.

"Speak out, and never fear," said the

kind host. "This is your home, and the very place to tell what's troubling you."

Mr. Jillard spoke warmly, but there was a sad misgiving at his heart that he was going to hear something that would give him a disagreeable surprise.

We will not follow Buster through his short, painful story. He did not hide the fact that though he did not steal the purse, he had been familiar with deeds of the kind, and merely chanced that time not to be the real culprit. The remembrance of the boy he had been was full upon him, and he could not too strongly express his sense of his worthless, guilty condition. "It can't hurt Baby Jim now, ma'am, for me to tell the whole truth out here. He's likely done worse than that by this time, and has, may-be, had no friend to show him better. I've told you all, just what I was when you saw me and I saw you. It is

right you should know. I think you'd find me another fellow now, but you must make your choice. I can go back and join the boys there, and may-be somebody else would choose me; but I know no other place could be like this."

Buster stopped. "Poor boy!" exclaimed honest Mrs. Jillard. "My heart ached for you when I turned my back on you, for I saw they were not going to let you off. It feels tenderer still to you now. Go away from here! Indeed you sha'n't. You shall stay, and be an honest western farmer. It was just thinking of those little fellows I saw when I was in the city that made me tell Hicks, When that lot of boys comes through here you must take one, and we'll do by him as if he were our own, and God will add his blessing. That was what I said, was n't it, Hicks? We'll stand by it, wont we?"

Hicks Jillard had been perfectly silent while all this was going on, but now it was his turn to speak, and he stood up to give his words their full force. "I had a good mother, a real pious, smart woman. She set me right when I first put my two feet on the floor, and told me what was what and which way to walk. She folded my two hands, and made me pray at her knee before even I knew what the good words meant. I had the best kind of a bringing up; but the Lord have mercy upon me! where would I be if, at the judgment-day, the wickedness of my boyhood was to stand against me? Many a wrong thing I did which it cuts me to think of now, I who had the right way just chalked out for me, and nothing to do but let her that loved me lead me along in it. It little becomes me to be hard on *you*, my poor boy. God bless them that took you in

and made you with His help what you are. May we be just a father and mother to you. That's all I have to say. Your name I told you was Paul Jillard. I believe you'll do credit to it yet; and if you should n't, I'll never be sorry I gave you my right hand and called you my son. Here, let me hear if you can say 'father,' and 'mother' too. A'n't she a woman any boy might be proud to call mother?"

Poor Buster almost shrunk away as he said, "I a'n't fit. You are too good to me."

"We a'n't any of us fit. We all have what's too good for us. We ought all to be on our knees thanking God for the least of his mercies to us, and asking him to help us do our duty to one another. Let us pray."

That was a real prayer, a true, faithful speaking to God on the part of every

member of the kneeling group. When Buster rose, it was as if a great load had been rolled from his soul.

When he went off to his work that morning, Mrs. Jillard called out cheerily, "Good-by, my son; look out for your father, and do n't let him drink out of that cool spring when he's overheated."

"Aye, aye, mother," was Buster's reply.

Mother! What a thrilling, lingering, soothing echo that word called up in the heart of the once wandering orphan-boy.

CHAPTER X.

LETTERS.

BUSTER had been three months at the farm, when Mr. Jillard called him to his side one evening, and said, "I got a letter when I was up in town yesterday. May-be you'd like to have me read it to you. It is from the gentleman who brought you boys out here. So sit down there and listen."

Hicks Jillard had not wasted his time at school, and he was not ashamed to read before any body; indeed, it was rather a pleasure to him, he thought he did the thing so well. In a clear voice he began:

"MR. JILLARD:

"DEAR SIR—You may perhaps remember the ten dollars you gave me to use

for purposes connected with our society.” “I wish it had been twenty,” interposed the reader. “I want to tell you how it has lately been appropriated. A few weeks ago, one of our citizens was awakened at night by some one entering his open window, which was at the back of the house. He drew a pistol from under his pillow, and shot at once at the spot from whence the noise proceeded. There was a sound of something falling into the little yard below. The gentleman sprang up, summoned the police from the front window, and then hastily dressing himself, went to the yard. There he found the apparently lifeless figure of a little boy, who had been employed by older villains to climb the light grape-trellis under the window, that he might either steal for them, or give them an entrance into the house. The guilty rascals ran off, leaving the poor little fellow to his

fate; one of them, however, was afterwards taken, and through him the police are on the scent of the whole gang. The boy was badly injured. His right arm had to be amputated, as inflammation set in when he was wounded; and in addition his whole frame was so jarred and bruised by the fall, that he will be a sad cripple for life. He does not sit up at all yet. We have him at the asylum, and are doing all we can to bring about a cure of mind and body. Your kind donation has been applied to his benefit, and I am sure you will feel a special interest in him and give him the help of your prayers. We do not know his name. When asked to tell it, he said he never had any; folks called him just what they liked, and changed it pretty often too. I am glad to hear that Buster is doing so well. We never sent out a boy in whom we had more confidence. Tell him his

last letter was read to all the boys, and they were greatly interested in it. He must let us know from time to time how he is getting on.

“Yours very truly.”

Mr. Jillard had had a very attentive listener, and when he closed, Buster burst forth, “Oh, Mr. Jillard, if that should be Baby Jim! That was what they were getting him ready for; I knew it very well, though they never said it in words. Wont you write and ask just how he looks? I sha’n’t rest till I know certainly about it.”

The very day after the arrival of Mr. Jillard’s letter, Buster himself had one from the friend who understood better than any one else his deep anxiety for his brother. It was as follows.

“DEAR BUSTER—I believe we have found him. I have been on the watch for him ever since we parted. I think

we have Baby Jim with us, though he will not own to the name. He was badly wounded, as you heard through the letter to Mr. Jillard, and if he ever recovers he will be without his right arm, and crippled otherwise. I wish I could tell you something hopeful about his mind. He seems hardened and indifferent, and all the kindness we have shown does not appear to have moved him at all. Don't be discouraged, my boy; God has so far answered your prayers: persevere, and he may yet give them a perfect fulfilment. You will wonder why I am sure that it is Baby Jim. He corresponds to your description, and when I first called 'Baby Jim' in his presence, he started and was much confused. The poor child seems constantly fearing detection, and afraid to speak out frankly. I told him we once had a boy here named Buster, whom we all loved. You should

have seen his eyes open and glisten, when I spoke of you. Yet he was perfectly silent, and has never asked me a question about you. Perhaps it would be well for you to write to him."

Buster did not need to have it twice suggested to him that he should write to his long lost brother. Again and again he wrote, but received no word from Baby Jim.

Buster heard that he listened in silence while his brother's letters were read to him, keeping his face covered with his only hand so that no one could see the working of his poor pale features, but never offered to send even a message in return. This was a hard time for Buster. He longed to go at once to see Baby Jim, and strive to bring up in his eyes that pleasant old look of other days. He knew the thing was impossible, and did not dare to speak out the yearning

that was daily increasing, until it was almost uncontrollable.

“Our Buster is worth two common boys,” said Mr. Jillard one day, while talking with a neighbor. “I never saw the lad like him for work; so steady too.”

This praise, spoken in his hearing, was very welcome to Buster; it had for him a double value. That evening he said to Mr. Jillard, “Do you really think I am a good worker?”

“Indeed I do,” was the hearty reply.

“May-be I could do the work of two boys, if I were to try. I’d be willing. I’d get up early and keep on after night. If I could do for him and me, and had a place where I could keep him and see him sometimes. The loft in the barn Baby Jim would think plenty good. Nobody need be troubled with him. If we could only get him here.” “Pshaw, Bus-

ter, you'd kill yourself for that boy," said Mr. Jillard. "My Mrs. Jillard would n't rest with a poor cripple sleeping in her barn, while she was on the feather-bed her mother gave her when she was married. Be industrious, my boy, and there's no knowing what you may be able to do when you are a man. We'll see; we'll see."

"When you are a man!" That seemed a dreary distant time to Buster. Who could understand the impatient yearning of his impulsive young spirit?

CHAPTER XI.

THE TEMPTED.

MR. JILLARD had been selling some of his fine cattle. He had been paid in gold. Buster had seen the money counted out on the kitchen-table. He knew where it was locked up for safe keeping. He knew where the key of the corner cupboard was hidden in a tea-cup on a high shelf in the pantry. Sad, sad knowledge for Buster. Why was it that it haunted him after he lay down to sleep? Why did the glimmer of the gold continually glitter before his eyes? He jumped up and thrust his head out into the cool air to calm his fevered brain. He but saw how low was the window, how easy to jump from it and be far away before the morning light. With that bag of

gold, what might he not do for Baby Jim? Once his own master, he would take charge of his little brother, and teach him to lead an honest Christian life.

So whispered the tempter, and Buster listened, listened till in fancy he had the treasure in his hands and was speeding over the fields with his ill-gotten gains. The sins of his youth had risen up to claim Buster as their victim. Would he fall?

Ah, there was One stronger than the great adversary on the side of the tempted boy. There was a power mightier than the force of old habits, or the deceitful allurements of doing evil that good might come. One who had suffered being tempted, was able to succor him when he was tempted. He had a High-priest who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and he therefore dared to come boldly to the throne of grace to find help in his time of need.

Buster turned quickly from the window and threw himself upon his knees. "God be merciful to me a sinner. Christ save me. Help, or I perish," he cried in the anguish of his spirit.

Deep and sincere was his repentance for having allowed his mind to be sullied even for a moment by such guilty thoughts. Now for the first time he realized how great had been his want of faith in feeling that he must take charge of his brother in person, or else all would go wrong. He saw that safer far would be Baby Jim in the keeping of a merciful Saviour, than under the most watchful care of his weak and tempted brother. To that Saviour he now committed him in perfect trust. Having cast his care on Him who is ready to bear all our burdens, Buster lay down to sleep, more calm and hopeful than he had been for many a long day.

CHAPTER XII.

BUSINESS IN TOWN.

BUSTER was roused the next morning at an early hour by an unusual stir in the house. Mrs. Jillard might be heard flying hither and thither, and there was a lumbering sound, as of heavy articles being moved, while the farmer and his wife were deep in earnest conversation.

“Now, Buster, up with you, and be down as quick as you can,” said Mr. Jillard’s voice at the foot of the stairs. “We must be off for town as soon as we can. I have business to do there, and shall want you with me.”

Buster was not to go on horseback this day. Mr. Jillard’s long wagon was put in requisition for the trip, and Bus-

ter was promised the pleasure of driving a pair for the first time in his life. The bag of gold was brought out, and Buster soon concluded that to deposit this treasure in the bank was the object of the trip. Mrs. Jillard favored her good husband with many parting injunctions, such as, "Be careful. Remember you are not a woman." This last caution Buster could not help thinking was particularly inappropriate, when he remembered how easy it had been to rob a certain honest woman on her first trip to the city.

It was no temptation to Buster now to see the bag of gold counted over once more before his eyes. He did not covet one single dollar of it. He was thankful that the miserable suggestions of the conquered enemy were not again presented to his mind. He had placed his little brother in the care of One who can command the riches of the earth for his wise

purposes, and make even kings do his bidding.

Mrs. Jillard at the last moment came staggering under the burden of a monstrous bundle, which she rolled in on the clean straw in the wagon.

Buster wondered much what it could contain, but he asked no questions, sure that Mr. Jillard would only give him a mysterious joking answer. Hicks Jillard did not like to have even his Mrs. Jillard too curious as to his plans and projects.

Straight to the bank drove the farmer, as soon as he entered the town. When the money was deposited, he turned his horses' heads towards the railroad dépot, and then stood anxiously awaiting the arrival of the train.

"Company coming to our house?" Buster ventured to inquire.

"May-be," was the laconic answer.

There was the welcome whistle at last,

then the black locomotive was seen far down the narrow valley through which the road was built. Hicks Jillard jumped into the wagon, untied the bundle and arranged some pillows and bed-quilts to his satisfaction, and then was down again in a moment, so as to be at his place when the train fairly stopped.

Anxiously he passed his eye along the line of cars; at length he seemed to see the object he desired. At a side-door a strong man appeared carrying a crippled boy. Buster needed no prompting now. He sprang to receive the precious burden in his arms, exclaiming, "Baby Jim! I should have known him anywhere."

The poor little fellow dropped his head upon Buster's shoulder, and cried like a baby.

"You know me, don't you? You know Buster? You ha'n't forgot me?" said the big brother in appealing tones.

“All right,” murmured little Jim, clinging the closer to the stout arms that held him.

“Here, lay him in here. I’ve got it all ready,” said Mr. Jillard, moving towards the wagon. “I thought you’d like the job I had for you, Buster.”

That meeting of the brothers had been worth more to Hicks Jillard than the bag of gold he had laid by that morning. He charged his memory to store away a perfect picture of it for Mrs. Jillard.

Baby Jim did not want to lie on that good soft bed. He liked best to be held firmly by the only being in the wide world who had ever loved him. It was not until he was in a sound sleep that his head was gently placed on the pillow, and he was covered up as carefully as if he were the heir apparent of a throne.

Buster had no words in which to thank Mr. Jillard for his kindness, though he

vainly tried to express the deep gratitude he felt.

“Do n’t say a word, boy,” said the honest farmer; “I meant it from the first, but I did n’t dare to tell you, for fear it could n’t be. I was n’t sure he could be moved, or there ’d be any body to bring him. The Asylum folks, however, stick at nothing that’s for the good of the boys. God bless them.”

“You ’ll have a blessing too, sir, that’s sure,” said Buster warmly.

“I hav’ n’t done any thing. It was more Mrs. Jillard. She’s hankered after that little chap ever since she heard about him. She’s an idea that her Dolly’s sweet milk will fetch him up, and straighten him out; and I do n’t know but she thinks his arm will grow right on again, if she once gets the care of him. The nights she talked about it to me, and planned over it! Why, she’s got a

mattress all fixed up for the settee in the kitchen, and she means to have him there all day, where she can look after him, she says. A'n't she a woman, now?"

"And to think she lets *me* call her mother! I wish I might be a right son to her," said Buster.

"And so you will. And so will he too. He'll serve her for a daughter in the house, where she can see him all the time and have somebody to talk to. My Mrs. Jillard likes a good listener," said Hicks, with a funny quirk of his mouth.

Buster thought of his moment of temptation the night before, the terrible struggle that had sent him trembling to his knees. Ah, if he had yielded, where now would have been the cheerful prospect that was opening before him? What sorrow and disappointment he would have brought upon the friends who had so kindly sheltered him. How sure

would have been his own utter falling back into wickedness and misery.

With devout thanksgiving, Buster silently praised the God who had watched over him in his hour of peril, and brought him off conqueror, though the enemy of souls had striven to drag him down to eternal death.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

SUFFERING and weakness made Baby Jim seem even smaller and younger to his brother's eyes than when they parted. Rough companions and hard usage had been his lot since then. His life had been risked as of little value, where older villains would not willingly trust their own necks. No ledge along a house was thought too narrow for him to find a footing, no trellis too slender for him to climb. He was told that if he fell, there would be nobody to cry; and if he succeeded, a golden reward was promised him, still promised him, though as yet he had barely daily bread. While Buster was at his side, even grown men would not so have treated Baby Jim. The boy

knew it, and often and longingly had his thoughts turned towards the lost companion of his childhood. Baby Jim had found the way of transgressors hard indeed, with few rays of sunshine to cheer the dreary path.

Now he was to be nursed and petted as if he were some precious thing. He had fallen among God's true children, who count every sufferer as the peculiar charge of Christ, to be loved and cared for as if sent by the Crucified himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," were heart-appreciated words to Mr. and Mrs. Jillard, and they rejoiced that a way was yet left them of ministering to His necessities, who while on earth had not where to lay his sacred head.

All day long Baby Jim would lie quietly on his easy couch, taking a sort of re-

flected comfort from Mrs. Jillard's kind, cheerful face; but when the farmer and Buster came into the kitchen, he claimed a little more attention. He raised himself at once to be taken into Buster's arms, where he chiefly loved to find himself; and it was thus that he took his place at the table, where the tenderest morsels and the fairest fruit were always selected for him.

For Mr. Jillard's quizzical smile and playful greeting, Baby Jim had a quiet twinkle of the eye, that told that the farmer's fun was welcome, though it won no spoken response.

Jim gained slowly but constantly in bodily strength, though as yet he gave no sign of that true, inward progress which was most at his brother's heart. When approached on religious subjects, he was pertinaciously silent, and Buster at length despairingly said to Mr. Jil-

lard, "I don't believe he'll ever come right. I am all discouraged about him." Mr. Jillard's reply was prompt and plain. "You do act, Buster, as if you had to be on the ridge-pole, or else the house would blow down. You've got nothing to do with making Jim a Christian. You've asked the Lord to do it, and are sure he'll hear you; but it will be in His time and way. What more do you want? Here your brother has all day long a Christian woman to watch; where will you find her equal? He sees the working of the thing. Then the Bible is read in his ears every morning, and our prayers are going up for him, where he can't help but hear them. You and I must do what we can by way of making our religion show it is the real thing in us, and that will be sure to tell. I don't mind your now and then trying to persuade him; that is all natural and

right, if you believe you are on the true track; but don't keep at him all the time. Do your duty and trust the Lord. The sun don't dart up like a shooting-star; the wheat don't make the air whiz with its fast growing. The best works go on slowly. I've great hopes for that boy. He's been brought through a great deal, and I believe there's a white robe for him and a place in the many mansions, though we can't see it yet."

Buster profited by Mr. Jillard's plain talking. He remembered the Baby Jim of old—keen and cautious, slow to come to a conclusion; but once fixed, not to be easily turned from his purpose. He could not expect, in one so differently constituted, the same religious experience he had himself passed through. He would pray, and be patient. Yet when Buster felt Baby Jim's clinging arms around him, and saw the small face

looking up lovingly to his, in his heart he yearned to have his brother seek the Saviour's bosom, and look up to the eyes which "closed in death to save him." Such yearnings are in themselves of the nature of the truest prayer, the soul appealing to the present God for the choicest blessings for its dear ones.

Through the long winter Baby Jim was but as a tender house-plant, needing the most unwearied care and attention; but as the breath of spring touched the trees and flowers, he too seemed to revive. His eyes grew brighter, and a new strength awoke in his young frame. When Mrs. Jillard's boasted hyacinths were in blossom on the sunny side of the house, little Jim was able to get out to look at them, and as he lingered on the door-step the very pride of them all was placed in his hands. There he sat looking at the rows of full, pink-tinted blos-

soms, while Mrs. Jillard glanced from him to the flower, her eye falling on them both with equal satisfaction.

"I'm not pretty, like it," said Baby Jim, expressing involuntarily his feeling of wonder that Mrs. Jillard should gaze so lovingly at him.

The poor bent, crippled boy, with his pale, thin, old-looking face, was in truth very unlike the pure sweet flower in its perfection of beauty.

"You dear fellow, it does my heart good to see you out in the fresh air once more," said Mrs. Jillard, and she sat down beside Baby Jim and put her kind motherly arm about him.

Jim leaned against her as he whispered, "I a'n't fit to live here with you, after where I've lived, and what I've seen, and done myself too. I a'n't like this," and he pointed again at the flower.

"It grew up out of the dark, dirty

ground. God made it so sweet and beautiful, and I don't mind if it has an ugly old root all covered up in the earth. -I don't care where my Jimmy has lived. I love him, and I think God is making him one of his own dear children. Is n't it so, Jimmy? Tell your mother."

Baby Jim pressed his one hand against Mrs. Jillard's, and slowly bowed his head two or three times. She kissed him a fond loving kiss as she murmured, "Bless you, dear, God bless you."

Baby Jim rose up slowly, and moved in his unsteady way round the corner of the house. Mrs. Jillard did not follow him. He could go about safely by himself now, though he never strayed far from the kind face that had beamed so cheerily upon him through the long winter.

Mrs. Jillard's clean parlor was rarely opened. The green paper curtains shut

out the light, and within all was neatness and darkness. At the side windows the lilac bushes held their undisturbed reign. They had grown until they nearly reached the roof, and in the centre of the cluster of bushes was a shaded spot which Mrs. Jillard thought only visited by the robins who had their nests in the shrubbery. Other feet however found their way to this hidden retreat, for hither Baby Jim quietly crept. He pushed his way through the outside undergrowth, and then was lost from sight.

“Mother,” said Buster coming quickly up to Mrs. Jillard, who was still busy among her flowers, “Mother, father wants his new knife. He has broken his old one.”

“Go into the parlor and get it, my boy; it is in the little chimney cupboard, on the left-hand side.”

Buster fumbled about in the dark

room, then stepped to the window to give himself more light. Sunshine and joy indeed burst upon him, such joy as angels know in heaven. There in his chosen retreat knelt Baby Jim, his face uplifted with the sweet, loving, tender look in it which Buster knew so well.

From the depths of his softened heart little Jim was thanking the Lord who had mercifully brought him to such a home, and praying that he might be made worthy of the loving care bestowed upon him.

Buster mechanically snatched the knife, and then quickly left the room. In another moment a strong arm was round little Jim, and the brothers knelt side by side. It was Buster's voice that spoke the deep gratitude of his soul as he drew the "lost and found" still closer to his side.

Buster could not linger, duty called

him away. Fast over the fields he was soon speeding with a springing, joyous step, and forth on the air sounded his hymn of praise :

“For good is the Lord, inexpressibly good,
And we are the work of his hand ;
His mercy and truth from eternity stood,
And shall to eternity stand.”

Love, true Christian love had sought the poor wandering wicked brothers, and brought them to the feet of Jesus.

And can the depraved children of the city be so reformed and made useful members of society—of the communion of Christ’s church on earth, and of the redeemed in heaven? The Holy Spirit of power can wash away the darkest stains, and purify the foulest heart. “With God all things are possible.” But has this great and wonderful work ever been accomplished? Go ask the benevolent men who labor for such institutions

as we have described, and hear their cheering reply. Yes, blessed be God, many such wanderers have been reclaimed: some are adorning earthly homes; some, we trust, are shining in heaven.

The eternal mansions are opened wide, the Master's feast is ready. To us comes the message, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor—that my house may be filled."

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