

While this conversation was going on, the boys had noticed some traveller winding his slow and muddy way up the road toward where they were standing. As he came nearer, they discovered him to be a small boy, not much larger than either Joe or Tony; and just as Uncle Benny had finished his elucidation of the fence against fortune, the traveller reached the spot where the group were conversing, and with instinctive good sense stepped out of the mud upon the pile of rails which had served as standing-ground for the others. He was a short, thick-set fellow, warily clad, of quick movement, keen, intelligent look, and a piercing black eye, having in it all the business of a juvenile Shylock. Bidding good afternoon to the group, and scraping from his thick boots as much of the mud as he could, he proceeded to business without further loss of time. Lifting the cover from the basket on his arm, he displayed its flashing contents before the eyes of Joe and Tony, asking them if they didn't want a knife, a comb, a tooth-brush, a burning-glass, a cake of pomatum, or something else of an almost endless list of articles, which he ran over with a volubility exceeding anything they had ever experienced.

The little fellow was a pedlar. He plied his vocation with a glibness and pertinacity that confounded the two modest farmer's boys he was addressing. Long intercourse with the great public had given him a perfect self-possession, from which the boys fairly shrunk back with girlish timidity. There was nothing impudent or obtrusive in his manner, but a quiet, persevering self-reliance that could not fail to command attention from any audience, and which, to the rustics he was addressing, was particularly imposing. To Uncle Benny the scene was quite a study. He looked and listened in silence. He was struck with the cool, independent manner of the young peddler, his excessive volubility, and the tact with which he held up to Joe and Tony the particular articles most likely to attract their attention. He seemed to know intuitively what each boy coveted the most. Tony's great longing had been for a pocket-knife, and Joe's for a jack-knife. The boy very soon discovered this, and, having both in his basket, crowded the articles on his customers with an urgency that nothing but the low condition of their funds could resist. After declining a dozen times to purchase, Tony was forced to exclaim, "But we have no money. I never had a shilling in my life."

The pedler-boy seemed struck with conviction of the truth of Tony's declaration, and that he was only wasting time in endeavoring to sell where there was no money to pay with. He accordingly replaced the articles in his basket, shut down the lid, and, with unaltered civility, was bidding the

company good-by, when Uncle Benny broke the silence for the first time.

"What is your name, my lad?" he inquired.

"John Hancock, sir," was the reply.

"I have heard that name before," rejoined Uncle Benny. "You were not at the signing of the Declaration of Independence?"

"No, sir, replied the courageous little fellow, "I wish I had been,—but my name was there."

This was succeeded by a colloquy between them, ending with Uncle Benny's purchasing, at a dollar apiece, the coveted knives, and presenting them to the delighted boys. Then, addressing the pedler, he inquired, "Why do you follow the business of peddling?"

"Because I make money by it," he quickly replied.

"But have you no friends to help you, and give you employment at home?" continued the old man.

"Got no friends, sir," he responded. "Father and mother both dead, and I had to help myself, so I turned newsboy in the city, and then made money enough to set up in peddling, and now I am making more."

Uncle Benny was convinced that he was talking with a future millionaire. But while admiring the boy's bravery, his heart overflowed with pity for his loneliness and destitution, and with a yearning anxiety for his welfare. Laying his hand on his shoulder, he said: "God bless you and preserve you, my boy! Be industrious as you have been; be sober, honest and truthful. Fear God above all things, keep his commandments, and, though you have no earthly parent, he will be to you a heavenly one."

The friendless little fellow looked up into the old man's benevolent face with an expression of surprise and sadness,—surprise at the winning kindness of his manner, as if he had seldom met with it from others, and sadness, as if the soft voices of parental love had been recalled to his yet living memory. Then, thanking them with great warmth, he bade the company good-by, and, with his basket under his arm, continued his tiresome journey over the muddy highway to the next farmhouse.

"There!" said the old man, addressing Tony, "did you hear what he said? Father and mother both dead, and I had to help myself! Why, its yourself over again. Take a lesson from the story of that boy, Tony!"

HEARTH AND HOME GLEANINGS.

If anything testifies to the patience of the Lord it is his forbearance in our wanton abuse of the bodies he has so wonderfully made.