

GOLDING'S DUNCE.

BY FLORENCE B. HALLOWELL.

It was only the last of June, but the weather was as warm as if it had been mid-summer, and the sun poured down hotly upon everything, scorching and withering the grass, and drying up the little streams in the pastures. The six cows in Farmer Golding's big clover field had gathered under a large oak tree, and chewing the cud contentedly, their large, soft eyes half closed, seemed wholly indifferent to the movements of a small, but sturdy boy, who, despite the intense heat, was busily engaged with some very inferior tools, in making a groove in a board. He whistled while he worked, occasionally pausing to talk to himself.

"I wish I had a better saw," he muttered, "I'd show 'em all work they wouldn't laugh at, if I am a dunce. And sister would be willing to use some of my inventions. I believe she'll like this churn arrangement if she'll only try it—"

He stopped short, and raising his head, listened intently. Faintly from over the fields came the sound of a bell. It was the bell of the district schoolhouse half a mile away. A worried, half-frightened look crossed the boy's face; he sprang to his feet, brushed the sawdust and shavings from his clothes, and gathering up his tools, turned with a reluctant air toward the large house which stood, surrounded by trees, a short distance away.

Within the kitchen his sister, a tall, gaunt woman, many years older than himself, moved rapidly from the kitchen table to the kitchen fire, for there were many to cook for, and no hands but her own to do it all. Her expression was hard and bitter; her every movement bespoke a spirit of rebellion and discontent. The only creature on earth for whom she seemed to care at all was her brother Steve, a bright, handsome boy, who, however, made small returns for the affection lavished upon him, preferring the society of any one else to that of the sister who idolized him.

Mahala was not proud of Nathan, and had been the first to nickname him "Golding's Dunce," a name by which he was known everywhere now. She had no patience with him or his many labor-saving inventions. She laughed at his sausage chopper worked by dog power, at his dish washer, warranted to wash every dish in the house in ten minutes, and sneered at his peculiar mop, which wrung itself when a crank was turned. She would have worked her fingers to the bone sooner than use anything he made to save her in any way.

His chief fault in Mahala's eyes was his lack of book knowledge. While Steve every year passed a creditable examination in a dozen different studies, Nathan proved woefully behind in everything save philosophy and mathematics. For these two studies he had a positive love, but others which his brother learned so glibly, only distressed him.

It seemed to Nathan sometimes that his sister grieved that he had been born, for do what he would, he could never please her. And yet, strange as it may seem, he loved her dearly, and suffered acutely under her taunts and sneers.

He entered the kitchen now shrinkingly, in the full expectation of a scolding, for which he had not long to wait.

"Not gone to school yet?" cried Mahala, looking up from the stove. "At your everlasting tinkering again, I suppose. Another day wasted!"

"I forgot," answered Nathan, "but the bell has only just rung, sister."

"Just rung! Yes, for recess; it's half past ten. I declare, you're enough to aggravate a saint, Nathan. You'll never be anything but a discredit to us all. You'll be 'Golding's Dunce' to the end of the chapter. There! don't stand there like a dumb thing. You make me nervous. Take that bucket and fetch some water."

His father appreciated Nathan as no one else did, and prophesied a bright future for him, encouraging him to fresh efforts by every means in his power. He had no education, this kind-hearted old man, save that derived from experience in his narrow sphere, but his judgment was sound, and he was not blind to his younger son's talent.

"You may not think it, but I tell you the boy's got stuff in him," he said to his daughter one day, as he picked up Nathan's self-wringing mop.

"Mighty poor stuff it is, too!" was the

answer, given with a jerk of the head that spoke volumes.

"He'll show you some time that it ain't as poor as you think," said the farmer. "He's got a master head for contrivin' has Nathan. You'll live to see him come out miles ahead o' Steve."

"Will he?" laughed Mahala, bitterly. "You'll live to see him miles behind Steve, in my opinion. He'll tinker his whole life away on little wheels and spouts."

But in spite of his sister's unbelief in his ability to accomplish anything of value. Nathan's love for machinery was so strong that he continued to devote himself to the study of it whenever he had a chance, and many were the ingenious contrivances he made to lighten his father's labors, feeling amply repaid if he received nothing more than a smile or a kindly word in return. But his greatest ambition was to do something that would win for him his sister's praise. He really hungered for a part of the love she lavished so generously on the unappreciative Steve.

Time passed, and Nathan began to spend every spare hour in the large printing establishment of Boone Brothers, situated in the country town two miles away. Steam power had a strange fascination for him, and he hovered tenderly about the big engine in the press room, learning to love it at last as if it had been a living thing. And he was never weary of studying its complicated machinery, soon understanding it so well that Boone Brothers asked him to take charge of it, offering him two dollars a week.

To Nathan, who had never earned a cent in his life, this sum seemed very large, particularly as, in his opinion, the work was so light. He hastened home to tell the good news, and was considerably taken aback by Mahala's reception of it.

"Two dollars!" she exclaimed. "Is that all? Why, they pay their errand boy three, and he's only eleven years old! Two dollars won't pay me for the bread you eat."

Nathan looked at her a moment in silence. Then he turned and walked out off the house. Going to the barn, he climbed up into the loft, and lying down on the hay, burst into a perfect torrent of tears. He did not hear a step on the stairs. If he had, he might have looked up and seen his sister, who, troubled by the look on his face as he turned from her, had followed him, and stood looking at him several moments, wondering at his display of grief. A sensation which was almost pity, rose in her heart as she stood there.

Nathan, with his father's consent, took the place which Boone Brothers offered him, and soon made himself almost indispensable. His wages were raised to three dollars, and this sum he handed to his sister regularly every Saturday night. She never made any remark as she took the money, but once Nathan thought he saw her lip quiver.

"I wish you'd buy yourself a new dress, sister," he said one day.

"Out of your three dollars?" she asked. "You must think dresses come cheap. But perhaps you want me to buy a calico?"

"No," answered Nathan. "I'd like to see you with a dress on, such as Mrs. Boone wears to church. It's black, and shiny, and soft-looking."

"Satin," said Mahala, "and cost three dollars a yard, if it cost a cent. Don't be silly."

"I mean to get you one some day," said Nathan, "You just wait and see."

"I'll have to wait till the world turns into cheese, and money grows on bushes, I expect," said Mahala. "I shall not put off getting an alpaca, because of your promise, that's sure."

One day the establishment of Boone Brothers was closed, owing to a funeral in the family. Nathan, having nothing to do of any importance, and having long wanted to investigate the big engine in the woollen factory, seized this opportunity for a visit to the engineer, with whom he had a slight acquaintance.

He found some commotion at the factory. The engineer was lying drunk in a wagon near the office door, and Mr. Sprague, the proprietor of the mills, was giving orders for his removal to his home.

"Drunken, worthless creature!" he said, "I'd discharge him this instant, if I could only get another engineer as good. And a really reliable one is out of the question, of course—not to be even dreamed of. Schaler is about the best I've ever had, I believe. They're a bad lot, in my opinion. And now

I suppose I'll have to see to the engine myself the rest of the day, though I don't know a thing about it. Peters," to a man who was engaged in clearing the office counter of sundry rubbish, "go in and turn some water into the boiler, it must be kept full."

With these words he seated himself at his desk, and began to look over some woollen samples which lay waiting his inspection. Peters dropped the brush he was using, and passed into the engine room. After a little hesitation, Nathan followed him, wondering if he understood engine work.

As he pushed open the door of the room a sound struck on his ear that chilled his blood, and for a moment almost paralyzed him with horror—the sound of a hoarse, angry rumbling from the great boiler, the hiss of escaping steam. He knew at once that the water was entirely out, the boiler perfectly dry, and that if the cold water valve was turned on, an explosion was certain. It would be like touching a match to a powder magazine. No time was to be lost. Peters, a stupid, thick-headed fellow, was already touching the valve. One instant only did Nathan pause; the next, he darted forward and dealt the man a blow that sent him reeling backward.

"Pull the fire!" he cried in a clear, ringing voice that reached Mr. Sprague in his office. "Quick, I'll open the escape valve."

It was the work of an instant only to turn the escape valve, and the steam rushed out, in a great volume, filling the room completely in a moment. Faint and dizzy from the knowledge of the terrible danger that had been passed, Nathan staggered back and would have fallen to the floor had not Mr. Sprague, who had entered just in time, caught him in his arms.

"Brave boy!" he said tremulously, as he dragged Nathan into the office, "how can I ever reward you for this?"

"Wasn't it lucky I came in when I did," said Nathan. "I was just in time."

"Lucky!" said Mr. Sprague. "That is not the word. It was providential. By your courage and promptness you saved the lives of nearly a hundred innocent people. An explosion of that great boiler would have blown half the building to pieces."

"I'll have to ask Peters' pardon for knocking him over," said Nathan, "but there was really no other way to stop him. I had no time to explain things."

"Explain! I guess not," said Mr. Sprague.

"Won't you let me attend to the engine the rest of the day?" asked Nathan. "I understand every screw in it."

Mr. Sprague was only too glad to accept this offer, and when at night Nathan was about to go home, the wealthy mill-owner placed in his hands a fifty-dollar bill.

"Take this," he said. "You well deserve it, for your courage saved me thousands of dollars. And if you will also take the place of Schaler, you can have it at a salary of fifteen dollars a week."

Happy Nathan! He ran home like a deer, so light was his heart. Opening the kitchen door he found his father and sister at tea.

"Sister," he said, trying to speak calmly, "I can give you that satin dress now," and with a beaming face he held out to her the fifty-dollar bill. Never for an instant had the thought of spending one penny of it upon himself, entered his mind.

"Nathan Golding," cried Mahala, in a shrill voice, "where did you get this? I hope you've not opened anybody's till? Oh, if that disgrace has come on us, it will be just too much!"

"I rob a till! O sister!"

It was all Nathan could say, there was such a choking in his throat, such a heavy weight upon his heart. He let the money fall to the table, and running out, took refuge in the barn again. He lay there with his face downward on the hay, great, gasping sobs tearing their way from his breast.

"Nathan!" He heard his name called, but was too sad and hopeless to answer. Some one came up the stairs, and knelt down on the hay beside him.

"Nathan!" He knew then that it was his sister who had come to him. He looked up, his eyes bloodshot, his face white, weary, and stained with tears.

"O Nathan! Nathan! My brother! my dear brother! Forgive me! Forgive your poor sister! She has had so much to make her hard, my boy!"

Nathan's arms were around his sister's neck in a moment, and he was kissing her wan, sorrowful cheek.

"Forgive you!" he cried. "Dear sister, I have nothing to forgive. You never meant anything, I know that. But if you will only let me love you as I would like, sister."

No matter what Mahala Golding answered. Sufficient be it that Nathan's hungry heart was satisfied at last.

Steve had come into the kitchen as Nathan had gone out, and had told the story of his brother's brave deed. He said it was the talk of the town, and that every one was praising Nathan.

For a long time Mahala Golding's heart had been softening toward her younger brother. That rigid exterior was but as the crust of ice that an intense cold has made over a deep stream, while the water still flows swift and strong beneath. The knowledge of the bitter injustice she had done Nathan, the cruel insult she had put upon him in return for his generosity, had broken the ice of that deep stream.

The name of "Golding's Dunce" fell from Nathan at once. No one laughed at him now or recalled his failures in history, geography, or grammar. All united in his praise. He made steady progress onward and upward, and well did he fulfil his father's prophecy of success.

And often would the old man say as he heard of some new invention which was making his son's name famous among machinists, "I told Mahala there was stuff in him. It would be well for the world if there were more dunces like my Nathan."

—The Household.

CLUB RATES.

THE CLUB RATES for the "MESSENGER," when sent to one address, are as follows:—

1 copy,	- - - -	30 cents
10 copies	- - - -	\$ 2 50
25 copies	- - - -	6 00
50 copies	- - - -	11 50
100 copies	- - - -	22 00
1,000 copies	- - - -	200 00

JOHN DOUGALL & SON,
Publishers, Montreal.

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS IN THE UNITED STATES.

Our subscribers throughout the United States who cannot procure the international Post Office orders at their Post Office, can get, instead, a Post Office order, payable at Rouse's Point, N. Y., which will prevent much inconvenience both to ourselves and to subscribers.

MONTREAL DAILY WITNESS, \$3.00 a year post-paid. MONTREAL WEEKLY WITNESS, \$1.00 a year, post-paid. WEEKLY MESSENGER, 50 cents; 5 copies to one address, \$2.00. JOHN DOUGALL & SON, Publishers, Montreal, Que.

BRINGING UP BABIES

by hand is no longer to be dreaded. As every mother can now obtain Lactated Food, they have an article which is as perfectly adapted to the use of their little ones as would be their own nutriment. It is perfectly assimilated, and will prevent and cure all bowel troubles.

DEAF—A very interesting 80-page book on Deafness, Noises in the Head, &c. How relieved. Sent free. Address NICHOLSON, 177 McDougall st., New York.

90 LOVELY SCRAP PICTURES.—Agents' Canvas- ing Outfit Cards and Novelties, with private terms. Also, 25 large Rich Embossed Motto and Verse Chromos. Your name on each for only 10c silver. Address EUREKA CARD CO. Bolton, Que.

EPPS'S
GRATEFUL-COMFORTING
COCOA

THE NORTHERN MESSENGER is printed and published every fortnight at Nos. 321 and 323 St. James street, Montreal, by John Dougall & Son, composed of John Edgpath Dougall, of Montreal, and James Duncan Dougall, of New York.