

Youths' Department.

Aleck's References.

Aleck Cotton's father used to say: "I mean to give my children a good education, and then they will be able to take care of themselves when I am gone. Aleck takes to books like a fish to water, and he must have as good a chance as rich men's sons."

So the good hearted man went on, toiling early and late that his loved ones might be sheltered from hardships, and if he had lived this story would never have been written; but there came a day when there was crape on the door, and the widow Cotton and her orphan children wept over a coffin in the darkened parlor. When the funeral was over Aleck piled away his loved books and looked for a job of work, for, as the eldest child, he knew that his hands would be needed to help earn bread for the little ones. He succeeded in picking up a few odd jobs, but somehow no one seemed to be in need of a boy's permanent services, and he was very much discouraged, when some one told him that a boy was wanted at a downtown bookstore.

Without references he feared that he would stand a poor chance, but he determined to try, and for the purpose of applying for the position, started cheerfully on his journey.

Half way across the common he overtook an old woman bending under the weight of a heavy basket.

"Let me carry your load as far as I go," he said brightly, hoisting the basket on his shoulder. Just then a carriage drove by slowly, and the boy noticed that he was attracting attention, but he kept bravely on at the side of his limping companion, until the basket of ironed clothes was deposited on the steps of a dwelling; then, raising his hat to the grateful creature, with as much deference as if she had been a queen, he quickened his steps to make up for lost time. The boys in the carriage trotted after him briskly until their progress was retarded by Aleck crossing the street, in charge of a little waif, who, liking his face, had appealed to him for help.

Soon the bookstore was reached, but, as Mr. Pressley, the proprietor, was not in, Aleck stepped to the door to wait for him.

A boy who had come upon the same errand as himself, was tormenting a fine, large cat that he found sunning itself on the step.

"Let the poor thing alone," said Aleck, interfering on the cat's behalf.

"Does it belong to you?" asked the other boy.

"No; but you have no right to injure it," was the reply. "It did not hurt you, did it?"

"Attend to your own business, if you please," snarled the boy, as he gave an extra twist to poor pussy's tail.

Aleck stooped down and loosened the cruel fingers, thus allowing the suffering creature to escape, and before the coward had time to use the fist he had doubled up, the owner of the bay ponies rubbed past him and entered the store.

The boys both knew Mr. Pressley, and, without renewing the quarrel, followed him into the store. Aleck allowed the other boy to present his credentials and have a quiet talk with the proprietor before he made known his business.

"What references do you bring?" asked the gentleman, eyeing Aleck closely.

"Not any," answered Aleck. "I have never had a position, for while father was living I was kept at school."

"Very well, so far," said the man, "but something more than scholarship is needed in a book store. You do not expect me to take you without references, I suppose."

"I was afraid I would not stand your test, but I thought I would come and see," replied Aleck, turning to go.

"Hold on, boy, I did not say that I would not employ you. I chanced to see some of your references myself this morning and, without inquiring further, am willing to give you a trial," said Mr. Pressley, returning the other boy's papers to him.

"Saw references?" You must be mis-

taken, sir. I never had any," insisted Aleck.

"I was driving past you a while ago and saw the kindness you bestowed upon an old washerwoman. A little later I was obliged to stop my carriage to allow you to help a child over a dangerous crossing, and, as you are aware, I reached the store just in time to see you rescue my pet cat from the clutches of this boy, who has his pockets stuffed with references which under other circumstances would have secured for him the position at my disposal. I do not want a cruel boy about me."

With glowing cheeks Aleck hurried home to tell his mother the good news, while the other boy, crest-fallen over his failure, crept away to lament the ill-luck that persisted in following him.—*Catholic Columbian.*

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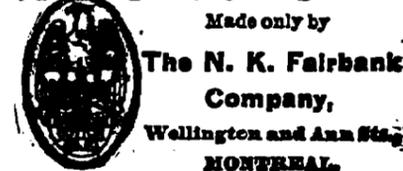
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