

THE CHILDREN'S RECORD.

THE BOY WITH A FUTURE.

IT was a cold morning. The people in the village were almost frozen, and at the little red cottage in the hollow, where the wind had free sweep across acres of meadow land and hillside, it was a great deal worse.

But when Ben Preston jumped out of bed to build the fire for his mother, it was not the cold which worried him most; it was because he knew that in the cupboard there was only scanty provision.

The ladies who brought sewing to his mother could not come out to the hollow in such weather, nor could she cross these heavy drifts to go to them.

"Well," says Ben to himself, as he danced about to keep his feet from freezing while the fire burned up, "I don't see any way but to take the support of the family on myself for a few days. I can't do much, but maybe I can help a bit. I'll try, that's what!" And he drew himself up looking very manly and strong.

When the little breakfast was eaten it was nothing but corn cakes with butter, and milk to drink—as they had a cow—Ben carried in a load of wood and a pail of water, and then began to button up his coat.

"Not going out, Ben?" asked his mother.

"Yes, mother; I'm going to look for a job in the village."

"But, Ben, you'll be almost frozen."

"Think not mother. I am as strong as a young horse, and it's a fine morning for sweeping sidewalks and crossings, you know. I'll just shoulder my shovel and see if I can't bring home something to fill up that cupboard."

"You're a good boy, Ben," said the widow, with a deep sigh and a smile at his bright face.

"Ought to be; got a good mother, you know," responded Ben. And then putting on his hat he darted into the shed for his snow shovel and was off, plunging through the drifts as if it were first-rate fun.

He had no overcoat and his hands were hardly covered with the old mittens; but he

put first one hand, then the other, in his pocket to warm them, and trudged along with a cherry whistle, never minding the cold.

When he got to the village he stopped first at Dr. Hutchin's big house. The doctor was just opening his shutters, and Ben hailed him: "Good morning, doctor, don't you want you're walk cleared of?"

"Well, I might," responded the doctor. "Think your heavy enough for the job?"

"Just try me," said Ben, beginning to dig away at the piled up snow.

"All right, sonny. Make a good job of it and I'll give you a quarter." And with that the doctor went into the house. Ben worked and tugged, and in half an hour he had that sidewalk well shovelled off. Then he wrapped at the door and received his quarter from the doctor's wife.

"Well, that's a beginning," said he, and he trudged on, stopping where he saw a good chance for a job, and in most cases getting it.

Two or three times he was hailed by boys going down to the dam to skate, and asked to go with them; but his only answer was to shake his head and pitch into the drifts with renewed energy.

When noon came he had a dollar and a quarter.

"Pretty good for one-half day," said he. "Guess we can live while the snow lasts, if mother don't sew any."

He ran around the corner to Balzer's grocery and bought a loaf of bread, half a pound of cheese, some tea, sugar, and several other little necessaries, and still had a little left. He borrowed a basket from Mr. Balzer, put his packages into it, dashed out, and stepped into the butcher's to buy a juicy steak. Then he took the road to the hollow again. And I tell you his mother's bright face, when he ran into the house with his well-laden basket, well repaid him for the cold morning's work.

"What should I do without my brave boy?" she exclaimed, as he told her his little story. Ben laughed, and said: "Oh, that is nothing." He was very proud of her praise.

That boy has a future.—*ScL*

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