

## The Inglenook.

### Boy Wanted.

"There, I guess that ought to bring one early to-morrow morning," said Mr. Jonathan Peabody, as he finished tacking the card on his store door, and stepped back to view his work.

"Boys is plentiful enough, but they are so triflin'". Then, I've made up my mind I'll have to get one this year; my old legs can't do all the running," he added, as he closed and locked the door for the night.

Uncle Jonathan, as everybody called him, had sold papers from that little store for twenty years. The building was frame, and only one story, and contained two rooms—his shop and the back one, which he used for a general living-room.

It stood on a vacant lot, on an otherwise crowded business street. As far as the eye could reach on both sides towered buildings of brick and stone; but this little plot of ground belonged to an estate in litigation, and could neither be leased nor sold, until the youngest member of a large family of heirs became of age. So, with permission, or without it, Uncle Jonathan had moved in. Every one loved him, and he had been allowed to remain year after year, until he and his little frame dwelling had become an essential part of the busy thoroughfare.

He must have laid by a tidy sum, for he had only himself to care for. No one had ever heard him speak of having any relatives. Some said he was a miser, but he did not look it, with his clear blue eyes shining with kindness, and his ruddy honest face framed in a halo of silvery hair. The children all knew better, for no one else was so generous with candy and rosy checked apples, or so ready to comfort their little woes.

The shop contained two long counters, one on each side; they were covered with an attractive array of illustrated papers and gayly colored magazines. In holiday times there was a tempting line of Christmas and New Year's cards. Along the walls hung pictures, with a printed slip attached to each, bearing the information that "This beautiful engraving can be had with one year's subscription to The Fireside," etc.

With the new year Uncle Jonathan had determined to get a boy to help him about the shop and deliver papers. If he was smart and reliable, he would pay him two dollars a week to begin with; then if he proved satisfactory he would keep him all the time; so he had printed the aforementioned card, and prepared to await results. It was a quarter past six when he repaired to the back room to arrange the evening meal. Everything was clean and cheerful there; a rag carpet upon the floor, a round table in the center, covered with a bright red cloth, and a lamp with a rosy shade, that cast a mellow light upon all the surrounding objects.

Uncle Jonathan bustled back and forth from the cupboard to the stove, and from the stove to the table, all the time talking to Thomas, a large grey cat, who purred sociably and rubbed against his legs in a most sympathetic manner. First he laid a square of linen on one side of the table, then he took from the cupboard an old-fashioned blue and white plate, cup and saucer; be-

side them he laid a bone-handled knife and fork. He lifted the cover of a pot of boiling water and took down a can of yellow meal, letting it sift through his fingers into the pot, all the time stirring it briskly and keeping up a steady conversation with Thomas, who sat watching his movements with widening yellow eyes. Suddenly he paused and listened. "Thomas did you hear a knock?" he asked. "We never open the shop after we've closed it for the night; every one knows that. Still, Thomas, we must see who it is." So after pushing the bubbling, seething pudding to the back of the stove, he took up the lamp and followed sedately by Thomas, passed through the store to the front door.

"Who's there?" he called, for it was a cold night, and he did not want to open the door unnecessarily. It was a child's voice replied, but so faintly that the words could not be understood. Children always appealed to Uncle Jonathan's heart, so he set down the lamp and made haste to open the door.

The air was cold and keen as a knife, and threatened to blow out the light, so that the door could only be open a small crack—a most inhospitable way to talk to a child. "Come inside; come inside, quickly, my dear, and tell me what you want," he called, while he widened the crack large enough to admit a little girl, with a large bundle in her arms.

"Please, sir," said the child, "you want a boy?"

"Yes, so I do. Do you know of one?"

She did not reply at once, but commenced tugging at the bundle she held in her arms. It was a heavy gray shawl, and when she found the head of a fractious pin and pulled it out, the shawl fell away from the tumbled head and rosy cheeks of a baby boy, of perhaps three years of age.

"Bless my stars," exclaimed Uncle Jonathan; "it's a baby."

"Yes, sir," said the girl; "but it's a boy. Don't you think he'll do?"

Then Uncle Jonathan laughed; how he did laugh and shake and chuckle, while the children watched him with great round serious eyes.

"Please, sir, you said you wanted a boy." The child's voice was so sad and reproachful that Uncle Jonathan immediately stopped laughing.

"I did, I did, my dear, but one big enough to help me in the store. Now, if you were a boy, you could carry papers you see. But a baby—" Again he broke into a hearty peal of laughter, in which the baby joined, clapping his hands.

"That's right. You see the funny side, don't you, my little man; and sister mustn't cry," as he saw two big tears steaming down the girl's cheeks.

"I tell you what we'll do. Come into the other room, and we'll all have supper together and talk it over; the pudding is done."

The magic word "pudding" dried the tears, and while Uncle Jonathan busied himself putting on an extra plate, cup and saucer, and a pewter mug, which he took from the top shelf of the cupboard, the child removed her own ragged jacket and hood, and released the baby from his imprison-

ment in the gray shawl.

"What is your name?" asked Uncle Jonathan.

"Mary McDonald, sir, and baby's name is Roderick."

"Scotch. That's good honest stock, is it not, Thomas?"

Thomas was making the most friendly overtures to the baby, who in turn viewed him with round eyes of delight and wonderment, and made frantic grabs at the waving tail; but with Thomas was wary, and managed to keep just out of reach of his baby-ship's fingers.

"Where is—where is your mother?" Uncle Jonathan asked this question hesitatingly, for the children did not show much evidence of a mother's care.

"Mother died two weeks ago." Mary's voice broke in sobs, "and father went away when Roddy was a little baby. And, oh, sir—it seemed as though the warmth of the room and Uncle Jonathan's kindly manner had suddenly given her confidence. "I am too little to sew as mother did—you see, I am only eleven this winter, sir—and I can't earn any money. Roddy must have a home, and when I saw you wanted a boy, I thought Roddy might do, so I brought him. He is such a good little fellow, and he hardly ever cries—if you will just let me come and see him sometimes."

By this time the tears were rolling fast down the child's excited face, and something dropped with a big splash into the pewter cup, which Uncle Jonathan had taken up to fill with milk.

"Come, come," he said, "drying his throat vigorously, "we are forgetting all about our supper. Come Roddy, little man, if you are going to be Uncle Jonathan's boy, you must sit on his knee and drink milk from this nice cup. It's Thomas' milk, but Thomas won't care. He'll hunt a nice fat little mouse with a long tail for his supper."

Ah, it was a merry supper! The golden pudding and the creamy milk were the most delicious the children had ever eaten; and the room was so warm and bright and they were all so happy; even Thomas forgot to be dignified and flew about the room in a mad chase after his tail, to the children's delight.

Well, they had no one in the world, and Uncle Jonathan had no one in the world, so it is not strange that the old customers were surprised next morning by a quiet, bright-faced little girl behind the counter, and that a yellow-haired, red-cheeked baby toddled about the store and made friends with every one. "Some of your friends turned up at last?" they asked, and Uncle Jonathan nodded his head, with a face beaming with such happiness that they all congratulated him, and went out feeling as though something good had come into their own lives.—Harriet E. Hawley, in Ex.

### Honest Polly.

A matron was one day teaching a little colored girl on her plantation how to spell, says the Memphis Scimitar. She used a pictorial primer, in which each word was accompanied by an illustration.

Polly gibbly spelled "o-x ox," and "b-o-x box" and the teacher thought she was making "right rapid progress," perhaps even too rapid.

So she put her hand over the picture, and then asked: "Polly, what does o-x spell?"

"Ox," Polly answered nimbly.

"How do you know that it spells ox?"

Polly was as honest as the day.

"Seed his tail," she responded.