

❁ ❁ The Story Page. ❁ ❁

Johnny's Trip to the City.

It was at the school recess that the brilliant idea first came to Johnny Kirkwell. The day was cold, the first cold snap of the winter, and only eight children had come to school. Six of the eight were boys. The two girls lived so near the school-house that, when they had been bundled up with their fathers' stockings drawn over their boots, and their mothers' veils muffling well their noses and cheeks, they could run over to school without being nipped by Jack Frost, even in this biting mood.

Of course, Johnny Kirkwell was one of the six boys. He was a little fellow with chubby cheeks and red hair, one of the boys who generally know what they want, and then generally set out to get it, instead of worrying because somebody else doesn't give it to them. At recess nobody wished to go out in the cold, so the children sat round the stove and talked about their Christmas hopes.

"What would you do if you had all the money in the world?" asked Daisy Phillips of her seatmate, Harriet Bowman.

"I don't know," said Harriet vaguely. "What would you?"

"I'd buy every single scholar in this school a bicycle and a wax doll—girls, I mean, of course—and a solid gold watch and chain."

"You couldn't buy me the thing I want most," said Johnny, when the murmur of admiration at Daisy's generosity had subsided. "I can't ever, ever have it, either," he added, mournfully, and then went on, "I want my little sister all well. Then mother would be happy and everything."

"Maybe money might give that," suggested Daisy, eagerly. Don't you know a famous doctor has come all the way from Venice, or Vienna, or some geography place; and he cured a little girl just like Bessie. Mamma read me about it last night."

Johnny's eyes grew big with wonder, as he heard the marvelous story. "But Bessie never walked," he exclaimed, "not in all her life. That would be a fairy story." But Daisy persisted; and the teacher confirmed it, though she looked at Johnny sorrowfully, knowing the busy doctor could never visit their little village. And how could Johnny's poor mother, who worked so hard for her children, ever take Bessie to him?

Johnny was so excited that he begged the teacher to let him run home and tell his mother about it, and she let him go with an ache in her heart. "If there were any certainty about it," she thought to herself, as she struck the bell to call the children to order. "Poor little Bessie!"

Johnny ran home, and burst into the house with the wonderful news; but it was no news to the mother. "We can't think of it, dear," she said. "I have been dreaming of it day and night ever since I heard of the doctor, but I can't see what we can do. If your father were only alive," but here the tears came, and she could not go on. She drew Johnny closer, and kissed the eager face, uplifted to hers. Then she crossed the room to Bessie, who was playing with some blocks on the bed. "Mother's two comforts, that is what you are. Perhaps Johnny, we can do better next summer, and take Bessie down to the hospital, at least; and then the doctor can see her."

She tried to speak cheerfully, but Johnny could not part the thought from his mind. He talked the matter over with Daisy, later. Then he took her advice, and wrote a letter to the great doctor.

Dear Great Doctor, I am Johnny Kirkwell, and I live in Lyman Falls. Sister Bessie cannot walk. Will you please come up here and see her? I will begin to earn the money to pay you as soon as warm weather comes. I am pretty big. I earned three dollars and sixty-three cents last summer.

Your friend,

Johnny Kirkwell.

P. S.—It seems as if I should die if you don't come to cure Bessie.

Daisy gave him a stamp, and he sent the letter to the place mentioned in the paper; but that seemed very far away. He waited four whole days, but no answer came; and the newspapers told the village people that the time was drawing near when the great doctor would visit the city.

Johnny looked at the money in his bank. Only forty-eight cents were left of all he had earned, and he gave a disgusted look at his new boots, which had taken so large a share of it. That night when he had kissed his mother and sister good-night, and gone up to his room, he did not undress as usual. At three o'clock he left the house, creeping carefully down the stairs, tramped two miles in the cold, bleak morning, bought a ticket for forty-five cents that took him to the junction, and found out that a train for the big city would come along in less than half an hour. He left a little note pinned to his pillow, which read:

"Dear Mother, I've gone to the city. I've got to see that doctor. Don't worry."

With a heart full of courage, Johnny boarded the express

train. "I'm just borrowing a ride," he explained to himself. "I'll pay it back when I get bigger." But the conductor did not like the idea, and told him he must get off at the next station. That was exactly what Johnny had expected; but he knew the stops were not frequent, and that he would be carried a long way. He explained as politely as possible, and the conductor was not so gruff as at first; but he spoke decidedly.

"Best wait at the station for a while," he added. "Then they'll be telegraphing after you, and orders will come to let you back without a ticket."

"Go back? Not yet!" as Johnny held up his head as he stepped from the train. There is no telling how the little fellow would have come out if a man who had heard him tell his story to the conductor had not stepped off directly behind him.

"See here, my boy," he said. "You are pretty plucky. I wonder if my boy would dare do such a trick. Now look here. I'm a drummer, and I've got to do business in this town; but, if you've a mind to wait until the half-past eleven train for me here, I'll let you ride on my mileage book as far as I am going. Maybe I ought to send you home; but blessed if I don't believe you'll do what you set out for, anyhow."

Johnny's thanks were hearty; and, when he had eaten the two doughnuts he had brought from home, he felt that the world contains plenty of kind people, no matter where one goes to find them. He thought so still more when the man proved better than his word, and, before leaving him late in the afternoon, introduced him to a gentleman on the train, saying—

"I'll pay his fare down to the city if you will start him right after he gets there."

The second gentleman was a tall, dignified man, who questioned him closely, but kindly, and asked especially about Bessie. Just before they reached the city, Johnny's courage was at its lowest ebb; and it was then that the gentleman braced him up by saying—

"It is possible you may do something for Bessie, after all. I'll put you on a car that will take you to the Children's Hospital, and give them this card." Here he scribbled a few lines on it. "They'll put you up for the night somewhere, and I'll see you myself in the morning. Don't think any more about it to-night, and don't talk to anybody. They are all busy there. Tell them you are to wait there for me."

Johnny was so tired and sleepy that he really could hardly remember afterward how he reached the hospital, presented his card, was given a bowl of bread and milk, and shown a sofa where he might curl up for the night.

In the meantime there was great excitement at the village when it was discovered that Johnny had gone to the city to find the doctor. His mother went to see the teacher and the minister, and the teacher and the minister went to see the leading men of the place.

"Johnny is a brick," said Squire Fairbanks. "He's quite right about it, too. Of course, Bessie ought to be cured; and if that foreigner of a doctor can cure her, let him!"

"Yes, but Johnny will be run over in the city. Johnny will never get home alive," wailed the school teacher.

"Telegraph for Johnny," said the minister; and everybody hurried to the telegraph station. They found that he had been put off a train at the first station beyond the junction; but nobody knew anything about him after that, because he had kept with his new friends and had his fare paid regularly, and of course no one recognized him as the friendless little fellow whom the conductor had ordered to go home.

When the little procession went past the post-office on their way back to tell Johnny's mother and to talk the matter over, the postmaster's boy ran out with a letter from Johnny. Then they hurried faster than ever. Johnny's mother took it carefully and opened it with a hair-pin while everybody stood waiting; and Daisy shouted: "Oh, it's from the doctor. I know it's from the doctor."

Yes, it was from the doctor's secretary, a brief little note, bidding Master Johnny Kirkwell, Esq., to be at the Children's Hospital in the city with his small sister on Saturday, at which time the doctor would take pleasure in examining her case and, if he did not operate himself, he would at least advise concerning the treatment.

In the excitement everybody seemed to forget that Johnny was lost until his mother began to cry again. Then the minister took matters in his own hands. "Here," he said decidedly, "you get yourself and Bessie ready; and we'll go straight to the city, you and I. Squire Fairbanks says he'll stand back of anything I decide to do about it. We'll take Bessie right down to the city, and catch Johnny at the same time. Don't you worry about him. He's all right, I'm sure of it."

Johnny's mother gasped. It seemed too good to be true, so far as Bessie was concerned; but how could she be happy when she didn't know where Johnny was? The minister promised to telegraph to the Children's Hospital, so that she should know before she started whether he arrived there safely or not; and, sure enough, when they took the

train the next morning, the answer had come, reaching them before Johnny had waked up from his night's sleep on the old sofa.

The next day was full of surprises for Johnny. His new friend was one of the trustees of the hospital, and for his sake he was treated with special friendliness. In the afternoon he had a drive with one of the little patients and a nurse; and, when the train came in at night, who should appear but his mother and the minister, who carried Bessie as carefully as if he had been used to it all his life! Johnny could not believe his eyes when he saw them, nor his ears, when they read him the great doctor's letter.

The minister took them to his cousin's house, where they stayed until the doctor's arrival; that is, all but Bessie, who was made comfortable at the hospital. And did the great doctor cure Bessie? Yes, we all hope so. She cannot walk yet, for her leg is still in a clumsy plaster cast; but the doctor was sure he had been successful. And all the other doctors at the hospital told Johnny that he is a little hero, and that next summer, when his sister has found out what her legs are for, he must work hard and save all his money to become a great doctor himself. Johnny thinks he will; and, when Johnny thinks he will do a thing, he generally does it.—Clara Sherman, in The Christian Register.

A Rise in Values.

BY ZELIA M. WATTERS.

Rob thrust his book in his pocket as he approached the field where his brother was ploughing. Then, with an air of irritation, he drew it out again, and carried it in his hand.

"He thinks I'm lazy and worthless because I like to study. But let him—I'll show him some day. No one but a dolt would have such an opinion of brains."

The boys on the Thorp farm had been separated almost from their cradle by the differences in their tastes. Rob learned to read when he was three, and loved his books with a devotion equaled only by his love for the wild creatures of the wood and field.

Ralph was a typical farmer. He loved the farm, and seemed to grasp the details of the work without effort. His ambition was to be a country gentleman.

"I lord of broad acres, and himself beside." He had perfect health and great physical strength, and rather despised his brother of his lesser power of endurance.

Both were well-bred, good-natured lads, and should have had more patience with each other, but a slight coldness, which had begun several years back, was growing greater. The parents, fortunately, were broad enough to see good in both boys, so the home was a happy one.

When Rob reached home he went to his room and spent an hour arranging his specimens, copying his notes and making drawings. Then the supper-bell rang and he went downstairs. It was a pleasant hour, that which was spent at the table. The boys were encouraged to talk of their concerns, the father always had a good joke to tell, and the mother some interesting story she had read and saved for this time. The hour after supper was the distasteful one to Rob. The boys had to do the evening chores together, and as Rob was the slower, there was plenty of opportunity for Ralph to grumble.

"Come on, now," said Ralph, as he took the milk-pails, and started out of the door, "see if you can get your share done for once."

"Well, I won't ask any help from you," said Rob, shortly. As usual, Rob was not through in time, but he indignantly refused Ralph's offer of assistance.

"Tell mother I'm going down to the old orchard to look for moths," he called, as Ralph started to the house. "I'll not be in very early."

Ralph found his parents talking to a stranger. After he was introduced he sat down and listened, and then opened his eyes in amazement. The stranger was a college professor who had been called upon to examine some papers on nature study in a magazine contest. The paper that took first prize was of such unusual merit, and showed such sympathetic interest and close study, that he wished to see the writer. Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe listened in pleased surprise. Rob had not told anyone that he intended to enter a contest. Ralph began to feel distinctly uncomfortable.

Rob had achieved a great success, and in the very thing that Ralph had called rubbish. He wished he had not expressed his opinion so often, and in such forcible language. He comprehended that there were things of worth in the world removed from his own line of thought and action. And this is a wholesome revelation to any one.

"I will go and tell Rob," he said rising. He wanted to be the first to tell him the good news.

"Yes, do," said his mother, "he may be out half the night, if some one doesn't go after him."

As he opened the door to go a sharp flash of lightning startled him. One of the sudden storms of spring had gathered while they had been talking. Already the trees