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"CHARCOAL NOAH."

"Hilloa, there, bub! What in crea-

tion are you sniverlin' so for?" Though the voice of the speaker had a sharp, rasping tone, it was not altogether unkindly in its accent, and the twelve-year-old boy, to whom it was addressed, stopped short in his headlong course, hastily brushing one of his ragged sleeves across his tear-dimmed eyes as he faced the other.

He had a thin, pinched face, and his elight figure was clothed in a wellworn suit of about three sizes too large for him, so that he presented anything but a comely appearance. He was following the wheel-path leading across lots from Denby main road to the village, when he was suddenly accosted by him who had steppped from the bushes overhanging the pathway.

The latter was a most unpromisinglooking man, past the prime of life. His short, squatty figure was attired in a suit that was glazed with dirt wherever it was not rent with holes or patches in a bungling way, evidently the work of his own clumsy fingers. "Charcoal Noah" everybody called him as far as he was known, and the thick layers of dust from the grimy kiln showed that he well deserved the

"I say, bub, what's the matter?" he asked, for though the boy had dried his tears he had not answered his first

"The squire has set me adrift and I ain't nowhere to go," replied the boy, with trembling lips.

"Air you the young un he got to th' poor farm-Curley, I b'lieve they call .

"An' now arter summerin' you an' gettin' his fall's work done he thought more in keepin' with his stingy nater to turn you off than to winter you. An' as true as I live, to-day is the 20th of November, an' we air bounden sure to hev winter set in afore moon change."

"It was all on account of Romanzo, sir; he lied about me and made his father think I had done wrong when he was to blame. I tried to do my

"Nobody can't suit ol' Squire Harden. Why, bub, I ought to know th' ol' skinflint, root an' branch, seein' all th' coal I hev burnt an' carted fer him. I suppose you ain't got menny fr'inds to go back to?"

"I haven't a relative or a friend in the whole world!" exclaimed the boy, peginning to cry again. "That's a lie!" cried the old charcoal

burner bluntly-"at least while ol' Noah Danvers lives. Come over to my sod palace an' share a livin' with me. You're welcome as long as you'll stay." The boy, who, until we know a better name for him, we must call Curley, had often heard of the old charcoal burner as a strange, eccentric outcast from society, but he was not loath to

After going a short distance they came into a clearing in the growth of gray birches, where a dark cloud of neath him yield, and he sunk downsmoke and the smell of burning sod | ward into the burning pit, with a and wood betokened the vicinity of a shrick of terror upon his lips. charcoal kiln. Near by was the queer odd-shaped abode of Charcoal Noah. This last looked like the roof of a small building with the eaves coming enveloped in a cloud of fire and smoke to the ground. The sides of this A- t and cinders the last uttered a cry of shaped structure were made of inner dismay. surface of upright sticks covered on the outside with a heavy coating of sods. One end had been left open, and this faced the side of a perpendicular ledge at the base of which a fire was burning cheerfully. Though the only couch the occupant knew was a pile of straw, the sod dwelling was more comfortable than it appeared at first sight. In such a habitation as this Charcoal Noah had passed more than twenty years of his life, tending his kilns and growing much grimer and blacker each succeeding season, until it was no wonder he was almost like a piece of charcoal himself.

Friendless and homeless, Curley was only too glad to accept of the old man's rude hospitality, and he began to do such work for him as he could, which service was gladly received by the

So a week passed, and though there was every indication of the near approach of snow, and wintery weather, the old charcoal burner declared he must prepare and burn two kilns more before he quit.

As the wood had got to be chopped for the purpose, this meant considerable of a job, which would take nearly two weeks of time. Now, after a kiln has been built and set on fire, though is has to be continually watched, night and day, the old burner had generally intended to cut his wood for the following one during his intervals of waiting on the first. The weather, however, had prevented him from doing this for the preceding days, so Curley's helpful watching came in very handy for him, as, after a little showing the lattter managed to tend the kiln almost entirely days. Then during the night watches he took his turns in the lonely vigils, climbing the sides of the smoking kiln whenever it was necessary and "stamping in" the sods, 48 had to be done as fast as the wood underneath was charred by the fire so as

to settle away. One afternoon there was a visitor to the "bush," a Mr. Preston, who bought coal and had come over to look at some housed near the klin. He was accompanied by Romanzo Harden, who had come to show him the way, and his own son, about the other's age.

"Whew!" exclaimed Romanzo, at sight of Curley, "if here isn't that poorhouse boy who ran away from father last week, and he has looked everywhere for him. Won't father wallop him as soon as he can lay hand on him, and I shan't forget to tell

Though Curley heard the words plainly, he made no reply, wishing at the same time Noah would come up "Thought you did a smart thing, run-

ning away from us, didn't you, you lazybones? "I didn't run away," replied Curley. "Your father said he didn't want me

any longer." "Oh, such a story! But perhaps you like burning charcoal better. It is such nice, clean work! And look, Will, see what a fine house they live

in. Let's take a peep inside." Knowing Romanzo's meddlesome nature, Curley followed him and his companion to the sod hut, to get there just as the first was about to pull their straw bed to pieces.

"Stop that!" cried Curley, clinching his fists and showing that he was in

"How are you going to help yourself?" demanded Romango insolently.

"If I can't I'll call Noah." Though young Harden was four years older than the youthful coal burner, he showed by his actions that he was somewhat afraid of him, or it may be he feared the appearance of Noah Danvers, for he left the hut at

Mr. Preston was down to the coal sheds, and Romanzo, looking about as if for some mischief he could do, his attention became fixed upon the coal kiln, when he said:

"Let's see you climb it, Raggy."

"I can't go up now." "Afraid, eh? You're a pretty coal burner! But perhaps you're afraid of soiling those nice clothes of yours." "The kiln is too near time for draw-

ing for anyone to go into it," replied Curley, appearing calmer than he real-"Bah! you say that because you're

afraid to. I guess if old Noah knew what a little coward you are he wouldn't keep you long. But perhaps you will go up now, just to show us how spry you are," and catching Curley's cap from his head he flung it to the top of the kiln. The cap was an old one, but it was

all that the poor boy had, and he could not afford to lose it. Stifling the anger and grief that he felt, he said: "I can get it with a pole," and started after one that lay on the ground near

"You are too bad, Romanzo," declared Will Preston, who had no sympathy with him in this disgraceful affair.

"Think so, do you?" cried the other. "Well, while the raggy imp is about it he can get two caps as well as one," and without considering what he was doing, Romanzo seized the new cap belonging to Will, to toss that upon the

crest of the smoking kiln. Without realizing what risk he was taking in his excitement over the prospective loss of his cap, Will rushed up the steep, treacherous side of the kiln, and though he sunk ankle-deep in the dried earth every step, he reached the hollow depression on the top where his cap lay, half covered by the fine dust

and cinders. Then, as he stooped to pick up his can he suddenly felt the footing be-

Curley and Romanzo had witnessed this fearful mishap with looks of horror, and as the unfortunate youth was

Mr. Preston's attention was drawn to the frightful scene by the cries, but he was too far away to rescue his son,, if that were possible, though he started for the kiln at the top of his speed.

Will, feeling the kiln caving in, scrambled to reach a place which would bear his weight, only to sink deeper into the fiery pit, which was liable to break forth into a light blaze at any instant.

But by that time Curley sprung up the side of the kiln, and throwing himself flat upon its side, he reached out his arms to grasp Will's outstretched hands.

The smoke was pouring up around him in dense, black volumes, and the air was filled with sparks which caught upon their clothes and caused them to gasp for breath.

Curley proved his grittiness well, and with all the strength he could muster he pulled Will out from the deadly crater, and together they rolled down the side of the kiln, just as the flames

burst forth with a loud road. Mr. Preston bore them in their halfunconscious state away from the heat of the fire, and at that moment Noah came puffing and panting to the place. Curley and Will soon recovered their consciousness, though they presented a sorry appearance, blackened and

burned as they were. Explanations quickly followed, during which Romanzo stood by trembling from suppressed emotions over the contemptible act he had perpetrated, expecting the punishment he deserved for his misdemeanor. At the same time Mr. Preston was praising Curley heartily for his heroic action, and from that moment the poor orphan had gained a second friend, who was to prove invaluable to him in the years that were to come.

Mr. Preston insisted that Curley should go home with him, and though there were tears in the eyes of the old charcoal-burner at losing his protege so soon, he gave him his blessing and promised to come and see him in the

All this happened many years ago, and kind-hearted Noah Danvers long since joined the silent majority, but Charles Preston, as Curley became known, in his prosperity has not forgotten the old charcoal-burner whose friendship to him laid the foundation for his life's success and happiness.

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BITS OF FUN

All this time the great railway magnate had sat silent, listening.

At last he spoke.

"Young man," he said, "I am not sure I understand you. Please be a little more explicit."

"I am asking you, sir," said the young man, reddening, "for the hand of your daughter." "Oh, is that all?" rejoined the mag-

nate. "Why certainly. If she has no objections, I haven't. I thought you were striking me for a pass."-Chicago

"Remember, Deborah," said Mrs Gumwell, "when dinner is ready you must come to the parlor door and say, 'dinner is served.' That is the way they do in good society.'

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Tribune. "My dear," began the minister's wife, "there's a bonnet down at the

"There you go again," he interruptl; "always thinking of worldly things. "But, my dear, you wrong me," she said, "this bonnet is perfectly heavenly."-Philadelphia Press.

"I am a new woman," she announc-

"Rats," he cried. Whereat there was a flurry, and when the dust settled she was holding

her skirts in her place of refuge on a He had unmasked her. She was

merely the same woman in disguise. North American. "What awful rot Funsmith's jokes

Well, I cannot say that I am able to detect any merit in them, but I notice that you laugh heartily at ev-"Laugh? I've got to laugh! Owe him \$10."—Harlem Life.

First Street Arab-Say, Jimmy, did his nibs, old Squeezem, pay yer fer stoppin his horse an savin his life? Second Street Arab-He wuz goin' to, but I didn't have change for a nickel."-Harper's Bazar.

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