



THE BAREFOOT BOY.

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BY J. G. WHITTIER.

Blessings on thee, little man,
Barefoot boy, with cheek of tan !
With thy turned-up pantaloons,
And thy merry whistled tunes ;
With thy red lip, redder still
Kissed with strawberries on the hill ;
With the sunshine on thy face,
Through thy torn brim's jaunty grace ;
From my heart I give thee joy,—
I was once a barefoot boy !
Let the million-dollared ride !
Barefoot, trudging at his side,
Thou hast more than he can buy
In the reach of ear and eye,—
Outward sunshine, inward joy :
Blessings on thee, barefoot boy !

O for boyhood's painless play,
Sleep that wakes in laughing day,
Health that mocks the doctor's rules,
Knowledge never learned of schools,
Of the wild bee's morning chase,
Of the wild flower's time and place,
Flight of fowl and habitude
Of the tenants of the wood ;
How the tortoise bears his shell,
How the wood-chuck digs his cell,
And the ground-mole sinks his well ;
How the robin feeds her young,
How the oriole's nest is hung ;
Where the whitest lilies blow,

Where the freshest berries grow,
Where the groundnut trails its vine,
Where the wood-grape's clusters shine ;
Of the black wasp's cunning way,
Mason of his walls of clay,
And the architectural plans
Of gray hornet artisans !—
For, eschewing books and tasks,
Nature answers all he asks ;
Hand in hand with her he walks,
Face to face with her he talks,
Part and parcel of her joy—
Blessings on the barefoot boy !

O for festal dainties spread,
Like my bowl of milk and bread,—
Pewter spoon and bowl of wood,
On the door-stone gray and rude !
O'er me like a regal tent,
Cloudy-ribbed, the sunset bent,
Purple-curtained, fringed with gold,
Looped in many a wind-swung fold ;
While for music came the play
Of the pied frog's orchestra ;
And, to light the noisy choir,
Lit the fly his lamp of fire.
I was monarch : pomp and joy
Waited on the barefoot boy !

Cheerily, then, my little man,
Live and laugh as boyhood can !
Though the flinty slopes be hard,
Stubble-speared the new-mown sward,
Every morn shall lead thee through

Fresh baptisms of the dew ;
Every evening from thy feet
Shall the cool wind kiss the heat :
All too soon these feet must hide
In the prison cells of pride,
Lose the freedom of the sod,
Like a colt's for work be shod,
Made to tread the mills of toil,
Up and down in ceaseless moil ;
Happy if their track be found
Never on forbidden ground ;
Happy if they sink not in
Quick and treacherous sands of sin.
Ah ! that thou couldst know thy joy
Ere it passes, barefoot boy !

THE YOUNG PHILOSOPHER.

That is what we sometimes call our Rob,
for he is a boy who thinks a good deal.
Whatever he sees that he does not understand he tries hard to study out for himself, and he manages to solve some problems which would seem almost too difficult for such a little fellow.

Rob is the owner of a foot-rule and yard-stick, and he takes great pleasure in measuring garden walks, fences, and many other things about the place. He will often guess at the distance from one point to another, and then measure it to see how near he came. He had some difficulty when he tried to find out the length of his own shadow, for sometimes it was quite short, and at other times very long. Presently, however, he discovered it was long in the morning, grew shorter till noon, then grew longer all the afternoon till sunset, when it would disappear. He also learned that twice each day (once in the morning and once in the afternoon) the shadow was exactly of the same length as himself.

There is a beautiful tree near our house, which runs up tall and slim. Rob used to say that it almost touched the sky. He often longed to know its real height, but could see no way of measuring it. One morning he noticed the long shadow of this tree plainly marked on the smooth, green lawn. Just then a new thought came to him. Why not find out the height of the tree by the length of its shadow ? He drove a stake into the ground, and found that its shadow was now longer than the stake. But he knew that shadows were growing shorter at this hour of the day, so he waited and watched. In about an hour the stake and its shadow were of the same length. Then Rob ran to measure the shadow of the tree. He found it to be thirty-one feet, and he felt sure that this was the height of the poplar. He was delighted with his discovery. He talked about it a great deal, and said some day he should try to measure the distance up to the moon !

Little children can best please Jesus by pleasing father and mother.