MC2289

POOR DOCUMENT

OUR YOUNG FOLKS PAGE

Pessimistic Annie Lee

"Everything goes wrong ways,"
Said little Annie Lee.
"Things I love best to eat
Are always denied to me.

"There're candy, cake and pudding,
I love them all so much!
Mince pie, and cheese and crackers,
Which at night I mustn't touch.

"Today I learn my lessons,
But tomorrow there are more;
And so I've got to study
Just as I did before.

"Al winter long I go to school,
And study hard each day;
When I would rather run about
And spend the time in play.

"Snow and frost do always come
Th' wrong season of th' year;
Instead of coming when it's hot,
They come when it's cold and drear.

"I'd like a world to be just right,
With summer every day;
And not a thing to do but laugh
And eat good things and play."

HELENA DAVIS.

It was known that Pat never bought any coal; yet he always had a fine fire in his shack. When asked to explain it he replied, with a knowing wink:

"Bedad, Oi live clost to the railroad tracks, an' Oi jest moike faces at the engineers an' firemen as they pass me house. They keep me supplied with coal in small-sized chunks—the best in the world."

A little boy of five years of age was making his first journey on the cars. When night came his mother put him to sleep in the upper berth. During the night the train stopped at a well-known station and the mother getting up to look after her little son, found him wide awake. "Do you know where you are, darling?" she asked.

"Yes, mamma; I'm in the top drawer," he answered.

THE DANGERS OF THE "BIG WOODS"

By Maud Walker.

Charley, Alf and Stella, brothers and sister, decided to spend a part of one Saturday in the "Big Woods," as the heavy timber on and about the river was called.

High hills stretched themselves from the very banks of the wide and everrestless stream running far into the prairie land beyond. A great section of this wooded hill-land was unoccupied, thus remaining wild and solemn. The "Big Woods" was seldom visited save by its owner, who came to chop wood in the fall, or by an occasional hunter who had obtained permission from the owner to do some shooting there.

It was very late in March when Alf, Charley and Stella made their first visit to the "Big Woods." The day was fine, not a sign of winter remaining to catch at their toes and fingers, ears and noses. Their parents had gone to town on business which would keep them till noon of the next day, for the journey consumed half a day even when the roads were in the most excellent condition. As soon as the father and mother had disappeared round the nearest hill en route to town the children began their preparations to start on their exploring expedition. They filled a basket with plenty of food and a quart bottle of milk. Alf carried the basket and his air gun, thinking that it was just as well to be armed. Charley took upon his back a bundle of extra wraps, thinking it wise to prepare against a possible March norther Stella carried a huge umbrella, declaring they might have a warm, spring downpour. Then, locking the doors securely, putting feed and water out for the chickens, and seeing that the cow and horse troughs were filled with water and the mangers with hay, they set off towards the place of mystery five miles distant—the "Big Woods."

As they went along they began to conjecture about what their surprises might be. Stella half whispered her fear of "wild beasts or strange creatures of the forest." Alf said he'd not be surprised to meet a bear—perhaps a few tigers, too. If so, he'd try his air gun on them. Charley thought they might run upon a strange people living in the most primitive manner in the dugouts in the hillsides and subsisting on herbs and nuts.

So, on they went, covering the five miles in much less time than it usually takes a pedestrian to walk that distance. All of a sudden they found themselves within the confines of the "Big Woods," the ground damp and shadowy and the sky hidden from sight by the thousands of interwoven branches overhead. It was truly a most noble forest. Here and there appeared a clearing where the owner had cut out hundreds of trees to be shipped away in the shape of firewood. The explorers were deeply interested as they followed a half-obliterated path leading down over a cliff to the very water's edge. The river, ever swollen, seemed to menace them as they stood above it and peered into its murky depths.

"Ugh! it looks fiendish," declared Stella. "Let's go up the hill yonder. This water seems to say, 'I'll grasp you and hold you and carry you away to the sea.' I don't like it."

"I declare, it has clouded overhead!" cried Alf, trying to get a glimpse of the sky through the interlaced tree tops.

"No; it's just the darkness of the wood" said Stella, hopefully.

"And I think it's the last snow of the season coming to tell us good-bye," laughed Charley, buttoning up his top coat closely about his neck.

"Well, suppose we return to the edge of the wood," suggested Stella, growing apprehensive as the darkness settled down and the wind began to sing plaintively through the heavy tree tops. "Somehow, it seems lonely and—and—scarey in here."

They turned about, as they all supposed retracing their steps, but in reality going still deeper into the wood. Soon they felt a few stray drops of rain, huge and cold, coming through the forest top. Their root—while it shut out light—was a poor one against the rain. As the drops increased in number and threatened to give them a wetting, the children decided to seek a spot beneath a group of small, closely-grown trees covered by a network of vines, and there wait till the rain was over. They were not long in finding such a spot, and, bidding Stella take refuge therein, with the umbrella raised over her also, Charley and Alf set about gathering some dead limbs and bark for a fire. Soon they had quite a pile, and Alf, being supplied with a box of matches, they got a fine blaze in no time. They built the fire on the dry side of a huge tree which stood a few feet from their sheltered nook. As the flames fought their way against the rain, which persisted in finding it out, though it was protected in a measure by the huge tree, the boys nestled under the umbrella with their sister, all declaring themselves to be quite comfortable. Then the basket was opened and they ate a hearty luncheon, feeling doubly thankful for the quart of sweet milk they had so thoughtfully brought along, for so far as they knew they might be many miles from drinking water.

But the rain seemed in no notion of stopping. Rather did it become of a more settled nature, coming down steadily, as though it meant an all-night's session. Alf and Charley got their rain capes out of the bundle, put them on and went out for more wood. They did not stop till they had a huge pile at hand, enough to keep fire all night, if necessary. They also gathered long strips of silken-lined bark, spreading it within their nook for a floor turning the dry side up, of course. A very comfortable seat of bark was fixed for Stella, who now put on her extra wraps.

Thus they waited the pleasure of the rain, but before an hour had passed they became rather uneasy in mind. The day must be far advanced, for every indication was that it was late afternoon. And still it rained and rained. Though the children were so nicely sheltered, and warmed the thought of remaining there all night was most terrifying indeed. Then the wild animals and creatures of the "Big Woods" would stalk forth. Horrors!

Thinking of all this Alf suggested that he or Charley go on an exploring trip and find just how far they were from the edge of the wood. If the distance was not too great they might make the start for home, for it was foolish to remain there and let the night come down. Then they could not go, for they would be unable to see their way out. As a precaution from getting lost from the "camp," as they called their shelter beside the fire, Alf advised that he who went out reconnoitering should carry a pocket full of small stones—such as they could pick up all around them—and drop them in a straight row along the path pursued. Then the three took a vote on the question and it was decided that all should go, for if they were near the road home it would be only a waste of time for one to go and return. But they gathered up a basket full of stones to drop along the way, knowing that should they find themselves too far within the wood they could return to their very welcome shelter and fire.

They set through the heavy and darkening forest, believing themselves on the path leading straight towards their own home, Stella walked beneath the umbrlla, but Charley and Alf, well protected by their rainproof capes, did not share it. They dropped stones along their path till the basket was empty. Then, looking about for more, they could find none.

"Oh. well," said Charley, "we don't want to go back again, for there's just as good shelter anywhere hereabouts; and a fire can be had if we want it in one place as well as another. But since we've started, I vote we don't stop till we are through the woods."

"Second that," said Alf. "How do you feel about it, Stella?"

"I'm for getting home as fast as feet can carry us," declared that little miss. "And, what's more, I've had enough of the Big Woods. There may not be any wild animals and people here, but it is the darkest, most lonely and scarey place I was ever in. Home is good enough for me. Let big men who don't love their homes do the exploring of unknown forests."

Alf and Charley laughed at their sister's pessimistic view of the situation, but tried to cheer her up by telling her all explorers must suffer hardships.

So, they went on and on. By and by the rain ceased and they could see through the tree taps a few glistening stars in the heavens. They knew now that they had lost their way, for had they gone as they came they would have been out of the woods hours ago. But they reasoned that since they knew nothing of directions in the "Big Woods" it would be worse than folly to return to its depths. Surely, they must get out of it soon, for at its widest place it did not cover more than three miles, though it was some ten miles in length.

After an interminable time the timber became less heavy and thick, and the children felt that they were descending a long hill, which it had taken them such a time to climb, walking, as they did, through dead twigs, leaves and rotting bark. Then, almost before they realized it, they were under the clear, cold night sky, without anything to interfere with their view.

"Out of the woods," cried Stella and Alf, in one breath. "Yes, thank goodness," responded Charley. "But where?"

"At least not in that place so full of danger," said Stella. "Why, brothers, look yonder at those lights. Isn't that town?"

And sure enough lying some two or three miles away, in a pretty valley, was the town their parents had started to that morning. Its many lights made it plain. The children with one mind set out with redoubled vigor toward those welcome lights. They had gone through the entire length of the "Big Woods," the distance of some ten miles. Pretty good travelling for little ones all under 15.

There was some surprise a little later at the hotel of the town when three small and weary travellers trooped into the office, where the night clerk was waiting up for the arrival of the 11 o'clock train. Ten minutes later a tap at the door of the room occupied by the children's parents wakened them from their sleep.

"Who's there?" asked a man's voice from the interior of the room.

"Charley, Alf and Stella, please, papa," answered a boyish voice from the hall. Then the door fairly flew open and in another instant Stella was in her mother's arms and all sorts of questions were being asked of the wayfarers.

It was not till after midnight that the party, consisting of the parents and three children, broke up, the two boys and their father having taken another room across the hall, while Stella remained to share her mother's bed.

"Mercy, mamma, this beats being under an umbrella in the Big Woods," sighed Stella, as she sunk to rest in the warm bed. And across the hall the boys were saying. "Gee, it's great exploring new territory, but it would be better to do so in warm, dry weather."

"And a compass would not be amiss," laughed their father. "Well, I'd advise you boys to go it alone next time. Girls are hardly fit for such hardships."

"Oh, Stella is a little brick" declared Alf. "She kept up courage and strength remarkably well. Nothing the matter with Stella, daddy."

And then Alf and Charley fell asleep to dream of great forests and jungles full of wild animals, with rain pouring like a waterfall all about them. And the scene of their fancy was the "Big Woods. scene of their fancy was the "Big Woods."

FIND THE NIHILIST

But freedom is dearer than Life
And policemen can't kill it by fear.
A nihilist, waiting to throw
A bomb, is hidden quite near.

In Russia, the land of the Czar,
Policemen are ever about.
Following the nihilists' clue
And trying to frighten them out.

The basket was opened and they ate a hearty luncheon.

SMILING TOM

BY WILLIAM WALLACE, JR.

Nearly everyone knew him as "smiling Tom." He was always bright and smiling. Not that he had more than his share of the good things of life. Indeed, he had more than his share of the hard things of life, inasmuch as his father was dead and his mother was in such frail health that he was obliged to work to help a shelter over their heads and food in the cupboard. Of course, his mother did all that she could toward earning the living She took in plain sewing, but the prices she got for her work were scandalously small. Besides, there were whole weeks when she did not earn enough to pay the rent, and other weeks when she was too ill to work. So the average of her earnings was small.

Tom was only 12 years old and had worked since he was 10. A part of the time he went to school during the winter, but as soon as their summer and fall hoardings were expended he was obliged to step into the harness again. Then he would study at home in the evenings, his gentle mother assisting him all that she could, her own education being rather meager.

In the winter "Smiling Tom" lost the position he had held as office boy to a doctor. The doctor had decided to move from the town, and "Smiling Tom" found himself without employment during zero weather, when it took so much coal to keep their poor, shabby house of two rooms at all livable. In vain did he search for another place. But never once did the smile leave his face nor hope cease to cheer his heart. After a day of vain searching for work he would run home, dash into the house with "Hello, momsey! Here's your Tom. Like a bad penny, he will turn up." Then, smiling, he would kiss his mother's thin cheek and say: Nothing today, momsey. But tomorrow—then I'll get something worth waiting for."

One evening when Tom ran into the house—smiling as always—his mother said wearily: "Dear child, I haven't a bite for supper. We had the last morsel of food for dinner. I had hoped Mrs. Dash would come for her wrappers that have been ready for the last fitting these past two days. I meant to ask her for a part of the money down. I suppose the bad weather keeps her in."

"I expected things would be so," said Tom. Then he smilingly drew from the bosom of his overcoat a big paper bag, which he emptied on the table. There was a small steak, a loaf of bread, some butter and a great rosy apple, which he held up, saying: 'This is for you, momsey. You like apples so much, and when I saw this fellow in the window I just whipped in and got it."

"But son, where did you get the money for all these things?' 'asked his mother. "Have you got a position?"

"Well, not exactly," answered Tom evasively. "But I'll get one tomorrow or next day sure. I must—must have one, you know." And again Tom smiled and looked as though worry was a stranger to him. But could anyone have tramped the streets with him day after day and looked into his poor, despairing little heart one must have seen much sadness there, despite the smile on the fair young face.

"But—where—how—did you get these things for supper?" asked his mother.

"Well, momsey, as I have no secrets from you I'll tell you how and where. I went to Mr. Johnson's grocery store and asked him if he did not have some sort of odd job for me so that I could get enough things for our supper. He at once put me in the cellar to sort over potatoes. I worked all afternoon there, and when I was through the potatoes—10 bushels—were nice and clean of withered and decaying ones. Mr. Johnson went down and inspected the job and was much pleased. He came up and told me I had earned 50 cents. So I got these things from his store and 15 cents in money. I spent two pennies of the change for your apple. We've still got 13 cents for breakfast tomorrow. Before noon I must have a steady job."

I cannot tell you of the love and pride, mixed with fondest pity, that throbbed in the breast of that poor mother. She said very little, but she acted, oh, so much. "Smiling Tom" understood, and while the smile was on his honest young face tears dropped from his blinking eyes.

The next morning Tom again began his work-hunting crusade. He went as a last resort into the office of a crabbed old lawyer who was notorious for his evil tongue, so full of abuse for those in his employ. He was called "Old Jones, the crank." "Smiling Tom" tapped respectfully at the door of Jones' private office. Then he walked in, removing his cap and bowing. Old Jones was sitting at his desk writing. He looked up with a frown at the youthful intruder.

"What do you want?" rudely asked Jones, frowning his displeasure.

"Work sir," explained Tom, smiling.

"Well, who told you to come here for it?" again queried the sour old man. "I'm not an employment agency."

"I know sir," admitted Tom. "But I've been almost everywhere else and failed, so I thought I'd try here, sir. I hope I didn't disturb you," still smiling, and his fair young face full of innocence and good will.

"Well, you are disturbing me," scowled the old man. "Besides, if I had work for a boy I'd get one that's had experience. I don't want a greenhorn in my office. A boy that gets with me must have had experience."

'But how could you have become a successful lawyer if everybody had said they would not give you work till you were experienced?" asked Tom, with his cheerful manner. "You were a boy once—like me—and could not have known as much then. You had to learn, sir, didn't you?"

Tom's question was well meant, with no suggestion of impertinence, and old Jones, the cross-grained, understood the boy's mind. Instead of ordering Tom from the office he sat knitting his brows a minute in silence. Then he asked, brusquely: "What can you do?"

"I can't do very much now," admitted Tom, "but I can learn to do most anything that anyone else can do, sir. All I want is a chance to show you that I'm in earnest. I am only a boy, but I've got to fill a man's place now, for my father is dead and left me to occupy his place. I must earn the living. That's the way the matter stands, sir. Though the smile never left Tom's face, there was the faintest suggestion of a tremor in his eager voice, a tremor that was not lost on the ears of the learned lawyer.

"Well, come back this afternoon at 2 o'clock. And come to work, too. No idle bones loaf 'round my office. Remember that, young man. I am through with the interview."

"Thank you, sir, and good-morning," smiled Tom, bowing as he withdrew from the mighty presence of "old Jones, the crank."

That afternoon Tom was on time to the minute. He performed every errand assigned him quickly and thoroughly. Old Jones looked surprised several times that afternoon. He had at last found the boy he had been wanting for so long. But he kept his pleasure to himself, for he was not one to speak words of praise.

So the week wore away and Jones found Tom of the greatest value to him. He was quick in his work, orderly, reliable and always in a happy frame of mind. On the morning of the last day of his first week in old Jones' office something happened which marked it a red-letter day for Tom A client with as sour make-up as old Jones' own came in to rake the lawyer over the coals for losing a lawsuit for him the day previous. He fumed and swore about, calling Jones several very undignified names. Jones, his own temper letting loose, rose roaring to the occasion. At last the dispute had almost reached the point of blows, when Tom, coming from the outer office, laid a restraining hand on his employer's arm, saying, in a calm voice, his face smiling and serene: "Remember, Mr. Jones, that you've an important case under way, and you can't afford to let this man's ungentlemanly conduct work on your nerves. You need all your wits for this case you are studying on. Allow me to show this man out, sir."

Old Jones, the crabbed, was at first dumbfounded. He stopped in his tirade to hear what Tom was saying, and after he heard he stood open-mouthed, staring down into the smiling blue eyes of his office boy. Just what he might have done under the circumstances cannot be explained, for before he had recovered his voice his angry client, resenting Tom's request to show him to the door, railed forth: "How dare a sniffling kid—a freckle-nosed office menial—offer to show me to the door! Why—"

But he didn't finish the sentence. His turning so angrily on Tom was the point needed to make Jones act in a different manner than he otherwise might have done. Taking the surprised client by the shoulders, he whisked him out of the private office before that individual knew what was doing. Then, as he shut the door on him, he turned to Tom, saying: "Yes, Tom, show that man the outer door."

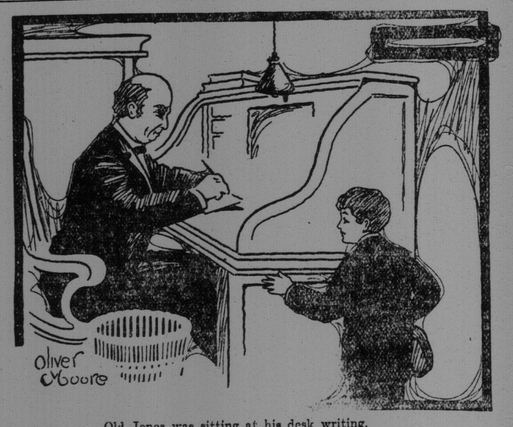
But Tom was not needed to perform that errand. The client, swearing all sorts of vengeance, hurried away without the courtesy of the office boy. Tom, smiling, returned to the private office of his employer, resuming his work without a word of what had just occurred.

For awhile Jones sat watching the boy from under his shaggy brows. Then he called him to come near. "Say, young chap, you're made of the finest metal I ever saw. You will make a cool-headed, reasoning man—one who will know himself under all circumstances. You are worth a great deal to me—if it is for nothing more than that cheerful smile of yours." And Jones, the crank, really smiled as he put out his hand to Tom. "Your cool head saved me a deal of extra trouble just now. You were right; I must put all my energies to work on this most important new case. Small fry like that foolish,hot-headed old greenhorn must not be allowed to ruffle my temper and take my mind from work. This evening you'll get your wages in an envelope. Say nothing to me about the sum you find there. I pay you for your work, your good horse sense and your—smile. There, go on filing those documents. I have some letters for you to take to the office.

Tom did not answer, but went about his duties, which kept him so busy that quitting-time arrived before he realized the hour. As he put on overcoat and hat to go old Jones, the crank, held out an envelope to him. Tom did not open it till he reached home. Then, sitting beside his mother, he tore the paper wrapper open. There were three five-dollar bills, one marked with "For your services as office boy," a second with "For your level-headedness and advice,' 'and the third "For your smile, which sweetens the sour side of my hardened life."

With tears in her eyes, the mother kissed her boy. "You are all and more than Mr. Jones has found you to be. You are a mother's pride and joy. Praise be to the Almighty for sending me such a son."

And "Smiling Tom' 'put his arms about his mother lovingly. He was supremely happy now.



Old Jones was sitting at his desk writing.

THE GENUS MOLLYCODDLE

As he comes across the street
You will know him by his toddle;
He is shaky on his feet
And he has a funny waddle;
You will mark him by his dress
And his very slanting noddle,
And you will not fail to guess
He's a blooming mollycoddle.

—Cleveland Leader.

THE DIFFERENCE.

The Bartender—What is the difference, major, between you and one of these artesian well-drilling machines?

Major Bracer—Yo' hold me there, suh!

The Bartender—Why, major, the machine bores and bores until it strikes water, while you bore and bore until you strike liquor!—Broadway Magazine.

FEAST BY INCHES.

Master Cidric Scharff presented us with a hen egg for our breakfast Tuesday morning. It was 6 1-4 inches in circumference one way and 8 1-4 the other. The editor one way and 8 1-4 the other. The editor's whole family partook in the feast.—Monument (Ore) Enterprise.