

JIM'S TEMPTATION.

"I'll have to get a boy to take the berries into the city while Hugh's sick," said Farmer Dobbs to his wife one hot day. "I can't leave, you know; too much work on hand."

"Whom will you get?" Mrs. Dobbs asked. "The Nelson boys have to help their father, and so do the Edsons. I don't know a boy around that isn't busy, unless it's Jim Burns. Would you trust him?"

Farmer Dobbs wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Well," said he at length, "the long and short of the matter is, I've got to get somebody. If I can't get anybody else, I'll give Jim a trial, that is, if he wants the job."

"He'll want it fast enough, I'll warrant," commented Mrs. Dobbs, "for his folks are poor as Job's turkey."

"Jim's face lighted up at the proposal, which he accepted with joy, but when Farmer Dobbs added good-naturedly (with the best intentions, but without tact), "I can trust you, can't I, Jim?" his face flushed hotly and his eyes flashed.

"You can answer that better than I can," he answered.

"Don't get mad, Jim; I'll trust you to carry the berries. Peter Story is going to the city to-day, and he'll ride along and kind o' lead the way—you know—the first time."

Jim was a proud and happy boy that morning. He felt that he had taken a long stride to be driving Farmer Dobbs' bay team into the city. He could not remember ever being so happy before. He and Peter Story talked together of various things, and soon were good friends. It was a pleasant drive along the country road, but the city was still more attractive to Jim's country eyes. An organ grinder with a monkey prancing and dancing, to the great amusement of a troop of children, first attracted him. At the next corner, the "little German band" was playing wonderful music, and there was a crowd around the little Germans.

"I'd like to stop," said Peter Story.

"So would I," responded Jim, longingly, "but Mr. Dobbs wouldn't like it. He said: 'Jim, go right on and deliver the berries as soon as you can,' and so I'll do as he says."

Following the directions of Peter Story, Jim turned at the next corner, finding himself in a pleasant avenue with pretty homes on each side.

"Now," said Peter Story, "your route is down the right side at every house for two blocks and up on the left side at every house. Good-by."

The delivery of the berries was not hard work, for at each house Jim had only to ring his bell and a servant or some member of the household came out for the berries. Some paid, others had a running bill, but every box of berries was delivered full measure, and Jim started for home.

Day after day, for ten days, rain or sunshine, pleasant or scorching, Jim delivered the berries to every customer. Then a day came when the last customer, an old lady, deaf and nearly blind, did not take the quart saved for her. A little colored girl came out to say, apologetically:

"Ole missie had a present ob five quarts dis mornin', so she won't want none of you's ter-day."

The old lady's home was the last one of the row, so Jim made no effort to sell the remaining quart of berries; in fact, his orders had been to sell only to regular customers.

He drove on out of the city, his thoughts dwelling longingly upon that quart of berries. When he reached the country road, he took out the box and looked at the berries, even sniffing—for a brief time—the delicious fragrance. Then he put it back carefully under cover. He had not touched one berry during his engagement, although he was as fond of the delicious fruit as most are, and had none at home. But the longing for the fruit at the present time was not for himself, but for his sick mother, whom he loved devotedly. The farmers and their wives did not know much about the Burns family. They had lived somewhere "back in the mountain," not a very definite location, but it was enough to give the boys in the vicinity of the city to distinguish Jim as "Jim Wayback." It was rumored that Jim's father had not been what he should have been, and that one bitterly cold night, when on his way home, he had lain down "dead drunk" and had been found dead. Whether this was so or not, the Burns family kept very much to themselves. Their home—a little old house—was built against a hill. An old hermit—a distant relative of the Burns family—had willed it to Jim. It was all the property they owned in the world and worth very little, but Jim liked it because it boasted of a "view." Blue sky and running brook, green meadows and fair farm lands could all be seen from the door of the small, brown house against the hill.

Mrs. Burns was a prematurely faded and weary-looking woman. You would have said she was at least 50 years old, but she had only reached her 30th year. What can you expect of a drunkard's wife in the way of