

NOTHING LIKE BLACK ON WHITE:

— BY —

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My starting character will be Jack Barten, returning from school, with his books and slate strapped and hung on his back; nearing the house, Jack quickens his pace, and, by way of shortening the distance, clears the gate at a bound, then into the house with a whistle. He stops short, perhaps for want of breath. "My! but the house is quiet! where are the folks gone to? Is tea over, Aunt Hatt?" he said, peering into a small room, where sat an elderly lady, dressed in grey lustre, sewing and reading by turns.

"First question, first answered," replied Aunt Hatt. "The house is always quiet when the folks are out. Taint the walls that make the noise; Ned and Posie are feeding their pets. Your mother has gone to Uncle William's. So now, put away your books and go down to your tea."

Jack soon obeyed this order by sliding down the bannisters instead of going down step by step.

"Cook! cook! Aunt Hatt, I can't see the cooking apparatus, is she gone too?"

"No, Jack. Mary is putting out the clothes. Just look in the oven and you'll find some nice baked apples and meal cake. The tea-pot is on the stove, so hunt up and tend yourself. See that you give Jack enough to eat."

In a little while Jack came up stairs not quite so fast as he went down.

"That job's over, Aunt Hatt."

"That's right, Jack, and now, have you any news to tell me?"

"No; not anything that you would care to hear. Oh! Aunt, do you know, I saw a boy drunk down at the mills. Would you like to see me drunk, Aunt?"

"No, Jack, I would'nt. What boy was it?"

"It was young George Langford; his father is dead. You know the woman that washes here sometimes? Well, she is his aunt."

"But tell me, Jack, how did he get drunk?"

"Why, see here, there is a man boards with them, and he is foreman over the men at the works. George's uncle has something to do with it too. So when pay-day comes they treat the men, and, of course, Georgie has to be there whether he is wanted or not. His father had some cash sunk in that brewery, and they get so much a year for it."

"But, Jack, surely they don't give him a treat like the men?"