

our schoolhouse was with its trees and vines and grass and flowers. I just enjoyed it without thinking. What's the reason things should be so different here? But what can I do — a stranger, not a cent of my own, and rheumatism in my right arm so that I couldn't set a tree, much less dig a hole for one'——

Hugh thought much of it as he became acquainted with his new schoolmates. None of them seemed to take it hard—the bare building and the dusty, barren playground. Few of the houses in the village had trees or grass about them. As is the case in many new villages, the people seemed too busy to concern themselves about such luxuries.

But one day, after reading a letter from one of his Eastern friends, Hugh sprang up with the excitement of a new idea.

'Hurrah! I have it now.'

'What is it?' asked his mother.

'Arbor Day is coming. I'm going to try if I can't stir up something here.'

Very wisely Hugh went first to his teacher. He was a young man who, like the others, had little spare time, but was willing to listen kindly to Hugh.

'I like that sort of thing myself,' said Mr. Marten, 'if only some one would set the thing going. Your enthusiasm would do it,' he said, with a glance of genial sympathy at the boy's glowing face.

Hugh went from one to another in the village, meeting with varying receptions, yet on the whole a general willingness to fall in with his suggestions.

Before the coming of Arbor Day he had enlisted all the boys and as many men as he could, all in good-humored readiness to act under his orders.

On the day before, those who passed the schoolhouse might have had their attention drawn to a large placard displayed thereon. It read:—

'All who are willing to assist in the celebration of Arbor Day are asked to be at the schoolhouse by nine o'clock to-morrow morning. Those who have teams and trucks please bring them. Those who have spades please bring them. Those who have neither please bring their good strong hands and a willing mind. By order of the Committee.'

If there were any committee besides Hugh, no one knew it, but it sounded well. And as men and

boys and horses gathered Hugh was looked to for orders.

A mile from the village lay a hill from which only a part of the timber had been cut. As, after passing the dull stretch of dusty road leading to it, the Arbor Day workers scattered themselves among the trees lovely with the earliest spring foliage, they began to perceive how faithfully Hugh, with a chosen inner circle of friends, had already been at work.

Half-a-dozen good-sized trees had already been dug about, leaving a large mass of earth clinging to the roots. Smaller trees were marked for digging, vines also, and a few bits of underbrush which Hugh had chosen for a thicket in the corner of the yard.

It was a busy crew which worked for some hours under the soft sunlight of the spring day. Enthusiasm grew as the work went on, and with familiarity with Nature's gentle works came loving interest.

'Why haven't we done it before?'

'We'll do it with a will now!'

And they did. When the trucks were loaded with the fine trees, so carefully handled that they would never have reason to miss their native beds, shout after shout arose.

Hugh had prepared a day of surprises. As the procession was ready to move, the village band appeared from behind a clump of trees. Cheers of delight greeted them, and a few moments later a dozen large flags and banners floated above, while every man and boy wore a small one on his hat.

Another surprise came when the bearers of the forest treasures, greeted all along the way by mothers and sisters who had come to meet them, arrived at the schoolhouse. Unknown to the others, Hugh had detailed a force to dig up and grade the yard. The holes for the trees were already dug, and they were set in their places by as many hands as could take hold at once.

Then came the vine bearers, and for a painstaking hour ladders were held against the brick walls while the delicate tendrils were trained—to take off the bareness and the ugliness. The water carriers did their duty and then—came another surprise.

Three or four waggons loaded with sod were driven up. The tree planters, with much fun and laughter, were pushed aside to rest while busy hands laid the green flooring.

Excitement was by this time at its height. Cries and exclamations of delight were heard on all sides as the bare, dull building and its surroundings took on beauty and sweetness with almost the magical swiftness of a fairy tale. It was a wonder of wonders—the tender green spreading itself over all that had been unsightly.

Men and boys were not, however, to do everything. As the last bit of bare dust was hidden, wives, mothers and sisters came with baskets. Seated on the new turf the people enjoyed a royal feast.

The boys were called on for speeches, Hugh leading off with an account of the difficulties which had seemed to stand in the way of his desire to make the schoolhouse a thing of beauty, telling of his applications to different ones in the village and the kindness and sympathy with which he had been almost universally received.

Mr. Marten was called on for the concluding speech. He wisely made it short, very soon arriving at the place where, with an eloquent gesture upward, he directed all eyes into the soft green above their heads.

'I want to express a hope that no one will insult the beauty and dignity of these trees by bringing beneath them anything mean, low, ungenerous, or dishonest; that their shadow may rest only upon all which makes up high and noble character. And in order to do this, these boys and girls, who have helped in making this Arbor Day what it is and what it will always be to this community, must begin by being themselves the examples.'

Deep murmurs of assent, then cheers and more cheers as the people began slowly to disperse.

Outside the transformed ground they lingered still to feast their eyes on the new beauty which had come to find place in their midst.

'A good work for one boy to start.'

'A boy without a cent, and rheumatism in his right arm,' said Mr. Marten with a laugh.

'Three cheers for the schoolhouse!' cried a voice; and they were heartily given.

'We'll have a flag on it next flag-raising day.'

'Three cheers for Hugh Clifford!'

'No. Cheers for the flag!' screamed Hugh, just as mouths were opening.

And to this day no one knows for which the crowning cheers of the day were given.