

JACK THE CONQUEROR; Or, Difficulties Overcome.

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(From *Children's Friend*)

CHAPTER V.

"Here's another difficulty got over very easily," quoth Master Jack to himself, as he walked home with his two shirts under his arm. "I see a number more, though, before me. Now that I've got two shirts, and am mended up from head to foot, beside having a lump of soap and a comb of my own, why, I ought to have some shoes to my feet.

"Mary and Nellie always wear such nice black shoes and white socks," he continued (Jack had got a habit of talking out loud to himself, perhaps from being so much alone). "I needn't care about having socks yet, for my trousers come down to my heels, so socks wouldn't be much seen, but I'm almost the only boy who goes about with bare feet; yet my shoes at home hurt me so bad, and aunt says I must wear those or none."

Here was a serious difficulty indeed to his efforts to present a respectable appearance. Shoes and boots were expensive things. He had outgrown his only pair before they were worn out, and his aunt declared she would buy him no more till they were. He could get his feet into them, she saw, and this was enough for her; she had no sympathy with the pinches and pain they inflicted on him. "A boy ought not to mind such things," she said; and this was all the comfort Jack got when he complained they hurt him. The consequence was, that he gradually gave up putting them on, caring much less for the occasional pain inflicted by stones and thorns than for the continued misery of tight shoes.

He examined them carefully when he got home. They were in very tolerable condition, but smaller than ever now for his feet, which had expanded in width since they had rejoiced in liberty.

"Difficulty fourth is a puzzler," said Jack, "but I must master him somehow. Suppose I take the shoes to Timothy Crawley, and ask him to stretch them if he can."

Timothy Crawley was the village shoemaker, a man who was said to have more children than wits. He worked hard to maintain them, never spent his money at the public-house, and yet was

greatly under valued by his sharp, bustling, long-tongued wife. Had he been the husband of another woman, Timothy would probably not have had his sense disparagingly spoken of; but he was a man who loved peace and quiet, and had carried this liking to such an extent that he had become regularly henpecked. To him, then, Jack carried the strong, leather-laced boots made by Timothy himself more than half a year ago.

He found him seated as usual in his workshop, with his eldest boy beside him learning his father's trade. He was surrounded with boots of every size, all wait-

for comfort. All he could do was to advise to him get his aunt to let him have a new pair.

"She says I must wear out these first," said Jack sorrowfully;—"that she can't afford to waste such good ones."

"They are good ones, sure enough," said Timothy, who did not forget that he had been the maker of them; but your "aunt must not expect them to grow as your feet do; if she likes you to have another pair, tell her I'll wait her own time for payment, so that it comes in by Christmas."

There was no more to be said. Jack took up his boots, but his melancholy countenance touched

how dearly Timothy paid for his good nature in the shape of a scolding from his wife, who learnt what he had done from her eldest son; for, as we have said, he was in the workshop during the transaction. Her husband, as usual, took refuge in silence, and the storm passed over.

How can Jack's happiness be described as he went away, having achieved this last conquest? He found it very disagreeable, it is true, to walk in shoes, as he had been so long without them. More than once he stopped with the intention of taking them off, and enjoying a good comfortable run in the old way. But he persevered, remembering his shoes would do no good if he could not accustom himself to wearing them. "'Tis another difficulty to master," thought he; and he trudged on, shoes and all.

His aunt was surprised to see what a reformation old Jenny had made in his clothes, and by no means displeased that she had been saved all trouble, for she was a poor hand at her needle. The shirts she seemed to consider an unnecessary article of clothing, but made no objection to the prospect of washing one every week; and as for the shoes, she positively praised Jack for being so sharp as to have got a new pair for an old one out of Timothy. In short, she was well satisfied that the boy should get respectably clothed, provided it cost her neither trouble nor money, though he might go in rags rather than that she should be called upon to expend either the one or the other in his behalf; but she did actually, of her own accord, stitch together the broken straws of his hat, and promised to get him another before long.

CHAPTER VI.

It was only two days later, when Mrs. Naylor was seated at work with her children, there came a tap at the cottage door, which was answered by a summons to enter.

She little expected to see Jack, who walked in some-

what timidly as though he feared he were taking a liberty, yet with a droll mixture of self-confidence, conscious of looking very superior to the Jack they had always seen before. His hair was parted and combed off his forehead. A blue and white shirt-collar appeared above his well-mended clothes, and Mary's own shoes were not blacker than those which he himself wore. In his hand he carried a very pretty, well-arranged nosegay of fern leaves, woodbine, and dog roses.

Mary looked delighted to see him, and her mother welcomed him cordially by saying—



JACK AND THE SHOEMAKERS MISFIT.

ing their turn to be mended, to say nothing of new ones in various stages of progression; for Timothy was a maker of some popularity with the quarrymen.

Jack's heart sank within him, for he feared that with so much to do, Timothy would never condescend to attend to his small affair. But he was mistaken. The worthy shoemaker had a kindly heart beating under that leathern apron of his, and perhaps he was touched by Jack's shoeless condition. He examined the shoes, made him put them on, and at once pronounced them far too small to be stretched sufficiently

Timothy, who had a father's feeling for his own boys, and Jack just the age of one of them. "Stop a moment," said he—"give me your shoe again." And he measured it with a pair standing near little worn. "Try on these; they are some I made for my Tom; but they've turned out a misfit—being a deal too large, his mother says. Now, if they fit you, I've half a mind to let you have them, and I'll do up yours for Tom; they are much of a muchness as to the kind of shoe."

They were a capital fit, which decided the affair in Jack's favor. The boy fortunately never knew