



The Family Circle.

"FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED
FREELY GIVE."

"Shall I take and take and never give?"
It was not in the lily to answer "Yea;"
So it drank the dew and sunlight and rain;
And gave out its fragrance day by day.

"Shall I take and take and never give?"
The robin chirped, "No, that would be
wrong."
So he picked at the cherries and flew away,
And poured out his soul in a beautiful song.

"Shall I take and take and never give?"
The bee in the clover buzzed, "No, ah no."
So he gathered the honey and filled his cell,
But 'twas not for himself that he labored so.

"Shall I take and take and never give?"
What answer will you make, my little one?
Like the blossom, the bird, and the bee, do
you say,
"I will not live for myself alone?"

Let the same little hands that are ready to
take
The things which our Father so freely has
given,
Be ever as ready to do a kind deed,
Till love to each other makes earth seem like
heaven.

—J. H. Ashfield, in *The Child's Paper*.

THE LOAD OF WOOD.

BY J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

The boys were talking about the kind of
business they would choose, when Uncle Asa
came into the room. As Uncle Asa had
tried several kinds, and been prosperous in
all, they appealed to him for advice.

"What I want to know is this," said
Charley, in the course of the discussion which
followed; "you have bought and sold a
good many things, but what has turned out
to be the most profitable?"

Uncle Asa considered a moment, while a
curious smile passed over his pleasant rosy
face.

"Well, if I were to name any one thing,
which I have handled, and which has in the
long run proved most to my advantage—
well," said the old gentleman, nodding
decidedly, "I think I must say, a load of
wood."

"A load of wood?" chorused the boys.
They had expected he would say wool, or
wheat, or hardware, or indigo; and they
couldn't believe his reply was quite serious.

"But it is!" said Uncle Asa. "A load of
wood, and not a large load, either; not
nearly so large as it looked. It was really
the beginning of my fortunes, and I am
sure I owe more to it than to anything else
I ever dealt in."

"Tell you about it? Of course I will, if
you wish it; and perhaps it will help to start
you in the right direction."

"It was when I was a boy—about your
age, Charley; I think I was sixteen that fall.
The summer work was well over; the winter
school had not yet begun; and my cousin
Medad and I were considering how we should
earn a little pocket-money. My father heard
us talking over some boyish schemes, and
said to us—

"I can give you an idea better than that.
There's the oak that blew over last spring,
in the mill-pasture. You may cut it up, and
have all you can make out of it."

"But there's work in that," I said.

"Yes; so there is in almost any honest
job people are willing to pay money for.
But it isn't so hard as you think," said my
father. "One stroke at a time; so many
strokes an hour; so many hours a day.
That's the way great things are accomplished.
It isn't much of a tree; you'll wish there
was more of it before you get through."

"Well," Uncle Asa continued, "we under-
took the job, and we did wish there was more
of it. With a cross-cut saw and beetle and
wedges, then with a hand-saw and an axe, we
reduced that tree to stove-wood in a very
short time; and had fun out of it too. Boys
have only to be interested in their work, you
know, to find it pleasant.

"We saw profit in every stick, and had as
much talk about the way we would dispose
of the wood, and what we would do with the
money, as if we had been young millionaires
discussing some great project.

"There's a good deal in the way you pile
wood, to sell it," Medad said. "There's Jake
Meeker—he says he can take nine cords of
wood and pile it over and make ten of it,
easy as nothing."

"Yes," I replied; "and my father says he
can throw his hat through some of Jake's
wood-piles—such great holes! He don't
really make ten cords of it that way."

"Yes, he does," Medad insisted. "There's
holes through every wood-pile; and you mea-
sure so much for a cord, whether they're big
or little."

"But that's cord-wood," I said. "You
can't pile stove-wood so as to make so much
more of it."

"We'll see about that," Medad replied,
with a laugh. "We're going to make the
most of our job, ain't we?"

"Of course," I said; and waited with a
good deal of curiosity to see how he would
manage.

"He showed me in a day or two. We
had an old one-horse waggon; we harnessed
Dolly to it, and backed it up to our wood-
pile. Then we began to lay the sticks loosely
in the box, so as to make them take up as
much room as possible.

"But they did not fill up so fast as we had
expected; for we knew that if we piled them
too loosely, they would be apt to shake down
together on the way to the village; and so
cause our load to shrink before we sold it."

"Medad looked at the wood in the box
when it was half-filled, and then at that
which remained on the ground, and shook
his head dubiously. 'Twon't do!' he said.
'We ought to make three loads of it; but
at this rate we sha'n't make two. I've an
idea!'

"What? I said, wondering how he would
get out of the difficulty.

"Throw it all out again; I'll show ye!"
"I didn't like that notion; but he insisted,
and the wood was all unloaded, but a few
sticks in the bottom of the waggon-box.

With these he began to build the load, as
he aptly termed it. Instead of laying the
sticks together all one way, he placed a few
on the bottom far apart, and others cross-
wise on those, also very far apart, cob-house
fashion. Then he called upon me for more
wood.

"But, Mede," I objected, "this will never
do."

"Why won't it do?" he demanded.

"It's cheating, isn't it?"

"It's no more cheating than the way
Jake Meeker piles his wood is cheating!
Other folks do so. Only we make our pile
a little more hollow than common."

"I couldn't deny the truth of this argu-
ment. And if others made the most of their
wood by their skill in piling it, why
shouldn't we do the same?"

"Still I hesitated. A man might perhaps
be excused for cheating a little; but we were
preparing to cheat a good deal.

"The principle is the same," Medad said,
when I mentioned my scruples (pretty fel-
lows we were to talk of principles!) "It
ain't cheating exactly; but even if it is, it's
what everybody does, in the way of business.
Ye can't get along without it; mabby ye can
in the next world, but ye can't in this. Who
tells the bad points in anything he wants to
sell? Don't everybody cover them up, and
show the good points, and make the most of
'em? Of course they do. Hand me more
sticks!"

"I wasn't convinced in my heart and con-
science by this plausible speech. But my
cousin, who was a year older than I, had a
great influence over me, and I must confess
that I was a little too anxious to get rich out
of that wood. So I merely said, 'Don't
make the hollows too large, Mede,' and
handed him more sticks.

"I'll look out for that," he said. "Now
you'll see."

"After about half the load had been built
hollow, he put our crookedest and meanest
sticks over it, and then covered the whole
with nice wood closely packed, filling the
waggon, so that, to all appearances, we had
on a fine compact load.

"My father came out and looked at it as
we drove out through the yard, and praised
us for our industry. 'Well, well, boys,' said
he, 'you've got a handsome load of wood, I
must say. I'd buy it of you, but I suppose

it will be just as well for you to take it to
town and see what you can get for it."

"I think it will be better," said Mede,
with a sly wink at me. "What is such a load
as that worth?"

"Stove-wood, like that—white oak—
solid load right through," said my father,
running his eye over the waggon-box, "ought
to bring at least two dollars."

"We're going to get three for it," said
my cousin.

"That's too much," said my father.
"Never, boys, try to get more for a thing
than it is really worth."

"I knew that he always acted upon this
principle himself; and I felt some pangs of
conscience as I thought of the empty spaces
hidden in that load."

"But I'll tell you what you may do,"
he said. "Drive to Deacon Finch's store,
and get him to look at your load. He knows
better than I do what wood like that is
worth in the village, and if he says three
dollars is about right for it, why, my father
added, with a shrewd twinkle, 'get it if you
can!'"

"He knew very well that Deacon Finch
wouldn't say any such thing. And as we
drove out into the road, my cousin laugh-
ingly said that the deacon was the last man
he would ask to examine that load."

"But as we were driving into the village,
we met Deacon Finch in his chaise; and the
temptation to play a sharp game on him was
too much for my cousin. For my own part,
I was feeling pretty sick of the idea of sell-
ing the load in its present shape to anybody;
and I strongly objected to the proposed at-
tempt on so sagacious a man as the deacon."

"It happens just right; don't you see?"
Medad insisted. "He won't get out of his
chaise; and it's a splendid-looking load, as
you look down on it. If he buys it, he will
tell us to drive it to his house; and of course
he won't go to see us unload it."

"So he drove up on the roadside, and
stopped the deacon as he was passing. 'Mr.
Finch,' he said, 'wouldn't you like to buy a
load of first-rate white-oak wood? Just look
at it, if you please.'

"I've wood enough," said the deacon.
"But it's a nice-looking load you've got; and
I guess you won't have any trouble in dis-
posing of it."

"What is such a load as that worth, de-
livered in town?" asked Medad. "We cut it
ourselves."

"How much is there?"

"I don't know; haven't measured it;
just call it a load," said Medad.

"Good as that all the way through?"
queried the deacon.

"About the same," said Medad.

"Well, from a dollar-seventy-five to two-
and-a-quarter; somewhere along there,"
replied the deacon.

"Will you give us two-and-a-quarter for
it?" Medad was quick to enquire.

"I told you I had wood enough. But I
like to encourage boys; I'll look at your
load." And to the terror of one of us, very
sure, Deacon Finch slowly and deliberately
got out of his chaise.

"I don't suppose anything in our looks
caused him to suspect our honesty; for my
cousin did the talking, and I must say I
could not but envy the cool and candid
manner with which he carried on his part of
the interview.

"You are Mr. Prank's boys, ain't you?"
said the deacon, going to the hind end of the
waggon.

"I am Mr. Prank's son," Medad replied
promptly. "This is my cousin."

"Good wood; well-split; pretty smart
boys!" said the deacon, tumbling over a few
sticks on top. "Gifess I'll take it."

"Shall we deliver it at your house?"
Medad asked, almost too eagerly.

"Wait a minute! What's here?" cried
the deacon thrusting down his hand and
pulling up one of the hidden crooks. "Is
there much like that?" And he began to
dig down straight into one of our choice
hollows.

"See here, if you please!" said Medad,
alarmed, "you needn't take the wood if you
don't like it, but don't spoil our load!"

"Spoil your load!" echoed the deacon,
with indignant scorn, thrusting in his arm
up to his shoulder. "You wouldn't be afraid
of my spoiling an honest load; but what sort
of a load is this? It's a perfect cheat, and
you are a couple of rascals!"

"You needn't take it if you don't want
it!" Medad repeated, more angry than
ashamed, I am sorry to say. "We just put it
that way to make a handsome load of it;

but we don't expect anybody to pay for it
till they've seen it thrown off."

"The deacon did not, evidently, put
much faith in this falsehood; for he reprim-
anded us again sharply as he climbed back
into his chaise.

"I guess he was about right, Mede," I
said, as we watched him drive away. "We
are a couple of rascals!"

"Pshaw! who cares? It's what every-
body does," said Mede, blusteringly; "what
he does himself, everytime he sells goods out
of his store. It takes a rogue to catch a
rogue. We'll look out next time."

"He laughed scornfully when I begged
him to drive home and re-load the wood in
honest fashion. But he was shy of making
the sale where the deacon would be likely to
hear of it."

"We'll go over to the East Village," he
said. "It'll be dusk when we get there;
nobody will know us; and by that time no-
body can look into our load."

"This plan was carried out in spite of my
too feeble objections. I drove the horse,
while Medad went from door to door in the
East Village, offering the wood 'dog-cheap,'
he said, because it was so near night and we
wanted 'to sell out and go home.'

"His idea of 'dog-cheap' was two dollars,
although he tried hard to get three. At
last we found a woman who confessed that
she was out of wood, and must get some
soon, but said she was too poor to buy cord-
wood, and then hire a man to cut it.

"Medad convinced her that it would be
much better for her to buy ours already
cut."

"But I haven't got three dollars in the
world!" she said. "I'm really poor, drefle
poor! If you'll throw off half your load
into my shed, I'll give you a dollar and a
half."

"Can't do that, nohow," said Mede; "for
nobody then will want to buy the other
half. I should think not!" he said to me
aside, with a comical grimace.

"Will you trust me for the other dollar
and a half?" she asked. "I am Mrs. Ober—
Widow Ober; everybody knows me."

"That didn't suit my cousin's views,
either."

"Tell ye what!" he said. "Give me two-
and-a-quarter now, and you shall have the
load; it's too little, but we've got to get
home."

"Two dollars and twenty cents was all she
had; and Mede consented to take that. The
poor woman paid down the money with a
heavy sigh; and we threw the wood into her
shed."

"She offered to hold a lantern for us; but
we were glad enough to dispense with that
luxury. I don't know when she discovered
what a small pile the wood made, which
looked so large in our waggon; certainly not
until after we were gone, for she came to the
door as we backed around, said she was very
much obliged to us, and bid us good-night."

"That's the way to do it!" said my cousin,
on the way home. "We'll sell the other two
loads just at dusk."

"I didn't say much. I was feeling sick.
And when he gave me my share of the
'plunder,' as he called it—and plunder in-
deed it was—it was with a strange sense of
loathing that I put it into my pocket. After
all my anticipations of pleasure in receiving
money fairly earned, that was the miserable
result. Instead of a sweet satisfaction, noth-
ing but remorse and disgust!"

"I found that my cousin did not feel just
right about the transaction, either. If we
had shaved the sharp old deacon," he said,
'twould have been a good joke, though
it was almost too hard on the poor widdier."

"He was, somehow, different from me.
He hardened his heart against all compun-
ctions; which I could not do. I didn't like
to talk about our success, as my father called
it after we got home; and went to bed at
night miserable enough."

"I did not see Medad again until the next
afternoon, when he came over to talk about
taking another load of wood to town."

"If we take any more," I said, "it must be
honestly loaded, or I'll have nothing to do
with it. It was an awfully mean thing we
did yesterday."

"He laughed foolishly, and said he guessed
I was right about it. 'I'm sick of the busi-
ness anyway,' he said. 'Let your father
take the rest, and give us what he thinks it's
worth.'"

"So ended our wood speculation," Uncle
Asa added. "I've quite forgotten what
father gave us; indeed, that was a matter of