

In the Ward.

BY MARY L. CUMMINS.

These verses were suggested by something that occurred in the children's ward of an hospital lately. A lady put back a child's hair, saying: "How long has she been here?" The indignant "nurse on the little face answered before the nurse said, "That's a boy!"

"Thought I was a gurl!
Yes, she did, that lady there;
When she passed by my wheel-chair
Stopped, an' rumbled up my hair,
Thought I was a gurl!"

"Thought I was a gurl!
Just 'cause I'm a-sittin' here
Feelin' weak, an' mighty queer
In this loose old hospital gear,
Thought I was a gurl!"

"Thought I was a gurl!
Cause my leg was broke in two,
An' it ain't all pie, that's true,
Bein' made as good as new,
Thought I was a gurl!"

"Thought I was a gurl!
An' it hurted worse than all
The settin', splint'rin', or fall,
Mado me feel so kinder small,
Thought I was a gurl!"

"Thought I was a gurl!
But if all the gurls would grow
More like nurse, who helps me so,
I could stand them, p'rhaps—but, sho'!
Not to be a gurl!"

A BOY OF TO-DAY

BY

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAKING OF A HERO.

Scarcely had Heman settled himself for the night behind Cripps' tent, than a dark figure was seen stealing around there, and the "Proprietor's" voice called,

"You boy!"
"Hello!" said Heman, crawling out of the empty van.

"Boy, you ain't in the right place. Me and the lady's mother have been talking you over. You're a decent lad, not fit for show life, and it will make a scoundrel of you, like as not. We don't ask how you come into it. Mebbe you thought it was high and mighty, all kings and queens and play. Or, mebbe you got mad at something, ran away from home, and took the first thing you could find."

"No, I didn't. Uncle 'Rias and I needed 'bout fifty dollars to build our shop, and I was out of work, so he let me come."

"Well, you won't get no fifty dollars outen this, I tell you."

"Cripps promised me sixteen dollars a month and found."

"Hoo! He was guying of you. He'll never give it. Couldn't do it if he wanted to; he don't take it in."

"I was only going to stop three months, but I've made up my mind to leave now. I've been with him a month Monday, he has to pay me and I'll go. Aunt D'rexy made me promise to come right back if he turned out swearing, drinking, cheating, and all that, and he has turned out all of it. I'm just sick of the dirt, the noise, the lowness of the thing! I was ashamed to-night when that lady looked at me as belonging to it! I'd have gone before, only I hadn't a cent, and I couldn't beg my way home."

"You'd better beg it, or crawl it on your hands and knees, than stay in such a show. I wonder at your uncle! What's he like?"

"First-rate," said Heman, "only he always lived in the country, and didn't know; and he's lost his leg lately and can't walk. We lost the farm, too—all he troubles came at once."

"Mighty bad that, but losing decency and turning out a rascal will be a power worse. You light out Monday. Cripps won't pay you, he'll try and keep your things, rather. I know him."

"He won't try that game on me very long," said Heman sturdily.

Early on Monday morning Heman informed Cripps that he wanted his sixteen dollars, and was going home. As had been predicted, Cripps flew in a rage, cursed, swore, threatened, held the big bag and its contents, and refused to pay a cent. He stood in the booth door laughing and triumphing as Heman walked off. Heman, however, had read the newspapers at home, and had heard

the talk of sensible people. He walked up into the centre of the town and asked for the office of a magistrate.

The gentleman was at leisure, for it was early, and Heman told his story in a frank boyish way, the home troubler, his foolish desire to see the world, the glamour of the show, the bargain, the miserable disappointment, Cripps' refusal to pay wages, the holding of his small belongings.

Said the magistrate: "We'll see about that. As for going home you're right. You've made a grand mistake; let it suffice you. Face about. Get home, and never again think that you can do better in a wandering life than in a decent home, no matter how poor it is. I'll make out a writ and summon Cripps at once. You sit here, it won't take long to bring him. I know him of old."

Cripps was still hilarious at "getting the better of that boy," when a constable appeared with a potent strip of paper requiring the presence of Cripps at the magistrate's office to answer the charge of nefariously withholding wages and property from one Heman Leslie. Cripps' jaw fell. Go he must. He went. The other booth folk now did the laughing. The case was soon heard. Heman had as witness to the bargain the Scientific Manipulator, who testified unwillingly, in fear of Cripps; he also stated that the pay promised was too large, and beyond Cripps' ability to pay.

Finally the magistrate condemned Cripps, under penalty of having his license revoked, to pay Heman ten dollars, and to give him his bag of clothing. To assure this, the constable was directed to walk back to the booth with the pair, and see to the payment and the delivery of the property.

Having thus triumphed openly, Heman was very curt and lofty, and looked his advantage at the raging Cripps. The "proprietor" followed him a little way from the booth and thus addressed him:

"I'm glad you're going, boy, and don't you ever get into such a place as this again if you have any respect for yourself, which I think you have. There's no train going out your way betwixt now and eight this evening. My advisement to you is to get out of town as quick as you can. You've got what you wanted, now go. Cripps is the kind of a man who would as lief waylay you, or sand-bag you as not. He'd like to get that money back. Better get out."

"So I think," said the constable. "It's no good provoking quarrels. You were in the right, and you've got your rights. Don't hang 'round here all day. You're stout, keep the line of the railroad and walk ahead. More you walk less ticket you'll need to buy. Now I think of it, the hand-car of the section repair men is on the track, and will be running five or six miles up the road soon. My brother's boss of the gang. Come along, and I'll ask him to let you ride with him that far."

Heman thanked both his advisers, and went with the constable in search of the hand-car. He had in his pocket three dimes which he had earned helping show people during the week, these he laid out in a loaf of bread, some cheese, and a slice of ham, for luncheon. The section-boss gave him a six-mile ride up the track, and about noon, Heman, with his back to show life and his face toward home, walked gaily along the track. How foolish his leaving home seemed; how wicked his unrest, why had he not trusted God better; why not wait with patience when one cannot find work for every day? There is always something one can do, even if one cannot always get paid. Surely he had sinned in leaving a Christian home to go with a godless man like Cripps. Aunt D'rexy was right as usual.

Whistling and singing he went his way; now and then he rested; he ate some of his bread and cheese and found himself considering if he could get home with ten dollars intact. No; for to walk would take most of the autumn, and home, not the highways, was the place for him.

As the afternoon wore on his bag grew heavy. About four o'clock he overtook a chicken-merchant in trouble; a box had fallen from his cart, broken open, and the chickens had escaped. Heman, knowing the ways of both chickens and boxes, helped to catch the one and mend the other. The man then invited him to ride as far as his house, and take supper.

At six he was on his way again after a three-mile ride and a good meal. As it grew dusk and he wondered where to go, he saw an enormous iron pipe some three feet in diameter, lately laid in what was evidently in heavy rains the bed of a stream. The short pipe served to safely carry the water under the embankment of the railroad, but was newly laid, and the season being very dry, no water had entered it. A sudden vision

of the pipe as a cosy sleeping-place rushed upon Heman. Not a house was in sight; he was tired; darkness drew on. Full of delight in his plan he hastily cut a quantity of tall weeds to pile at one end of the pipe for a wind screen; then he trimmed off branches from cedars and junipers growing near the road, enough for a fragrant bed inside the cylinder; his carpet sack served for a pillow; he gathered fuel for a fire at the mouth of his bedroom, and heated several large stones against which, as he lay down, he put his stocking feet. He slept without a stir or a dream. In the morning he went to a pool up the runlet and took a good wash; then he brushed his hair and clothes, polished his shoes with mullein leaves, lit a fire and made a breakfast of toasted bread and ham. This one delightful day he would give to walking, the next he would board a train and hurry home.

At noon he asked a woman living near the road to allow him to cut wood for her for the sake of a dinner. This secured him a good meal. At three o'clock, hearing a train coming up behind him, he seated himself on a bench to watch it pass. It was a long train. It was just past Heman, when he saw the great side-door of one of the central cars swing open, as if opened from within; it gave way, and a white avalanche of sheep came tumbling out, some rolling, some leaping, some going head first, some lying as they fell, some dashing wildly about. The train did not slacken speed, but Heman saw some of the men come from the caboose, run along the car-tops, climb down to the open car, and apparently secure it. Presently the train was out of sight, and Heman was alone on the track, no house or person in view, and a group of thirty protesting, complaining sheep, making loud cries.

Heman was very fond of sheep, and had handled them all his life. He ran to these unfortunates, calling them with familiar sounds. He found one large one dead, one with a broken leg, two or three seeming to have sprained shoulders, and several with gashes cut by falling on stones. The sheep had tumbled over the embankment into the cut, which was steep on the railroad side, but sloped up, green and inviting on the other side to a high fence. A large pile of worn-out ties was near, ready for burning. Heman with these ties built a fence from the embankment to the rail fence; this enclosed a grassy place and a little stream in the bottom of the cut. Then he carried the sheep with the broken leg to a soft grassy fence-corner, whittled out some splints, and tearing a big gingham handkerchief into bandages set and bound the leg. The cut sheep were then seen to; he trimmed away the wool, washed the cuts and dressed them with some famous salve of Aunt Espey's, a box of which she had put into his bag. The sprained shoulders were rubbed, and the sheep generally patted and called together. Then Heman built a fourth side for his fold, and arranged for a fire just outside of it. He concluded that he must stay and see to these sheep, which would no doubt be sent for next day. In his zeal he cut and pulled armfuls of green things growing along the cut, and provided his proteges with a supper. He made his own supper of the last food he had with him. Night having come, he built a little broth as a shelter for himself, and was thinking what a fine sleep he would have, when he heard from afar the howling of a dog. That meant a deal to Heman. If he fell asleep a dog would very likely come and worry the sheep—some would be killed. It would be easy enough with a good club, or torch, to keep the dogs off to begin with—not so easy to drive them off once they had tasted blood. Evidently if Heman meant to do the fair thing by those sheep he must keep awake all night on guard! That was hard lines for a sleepy boy, but with only a few tiny naps taken leaning against the fence, Heman kept his watch. Morning found him cold, hungry, and tired. The chill was remedied by a fire; then, oh, joy! a boy of twelve or thirteen came along. Heman told his tale without mentioning how he himself came to be there, and offered the boy the dead sheep, which was perfectly fit for food as it had broken its neck. "I'll help you carry it as far as I can toward your home if you'll go and get me a breakfast," said Heman. "I'm nearly starved. The sheep's skin will be worth considerable."

"If you'll help me take it to that lane, and watch it while I fetch a wheelbarrow for it, I'll bring you a breakfast. My mother'll take to your doings, sitting up all night to keep sheep! Well, you did right, for there's dreadful sheep-killers round here of dogs."

About ten o'clock another cattle-train came up. Freight and passenger cars, express and accommodation had come and gone, this train evidently had an

errand, it slowed and stopped, and soon the conductor, engineer, and hands were out interviewing Heman—and the sheep.

"We were ordered to pick 'em up, all that was alive. Why, they're all alive, and penned in and taken care of! Who did it?"

Heman explained his presence, stated the case of the dead sheep, and exhibited his surgery on the others. "I'm glad you've come. I ought to be going on," he said, and told of his journey.

"Hullo there," cried the conductor, "come aboard. We'll land you eight miles from Windle to-morrow morning, and you can eat with us. You've saved the company quite a lot of money. I'll give you your board and trip and five dollars, that will suit you."

Heman indicated that that would suit him excellently well. He slept until next morning, except when he was roused to eat.

The conductor, a fatherly man, gave him some good advice about eschewing show life, and working at an honest trade near home. "That Shumanite in the Bible," he said, "showed a power of sense when she said, 'I dwell among my own people.' Kings and courts were not her style of living, her home and her home ways suited her, and if you're lovei-headed, my boy, your home ways will suit you."

Heman found himself, about noon, near the farm of old friends. He was warmly welcomed, ate dinner, changed his shirt, blacked his boots, and put on his best tie. He did not wish to go home in the guise of the prodigal son!

He felt as if he could fly over those two miles after leaving the farm. All three of his family seemed to see him at once. D'rexy, with a cry of glad relief, hugged him close, Aunt Espey seized his hand and called down blessings on him. Uncle 'Rias shouted, slapped his shoulders, and pounded with his crutch. There had not been such a jubilation in the Sinnet household for years.

"Oh, bless the dear Lord that sent you back," said D'rexy. "this is what I've been praying for!"

"They were a vile, bad lot," said Heman, "and I came away."

"It was all my fault, I shouldn't have let you go," said 'Rias.

"We can't build the shop, I've only got fifteen dollars," said Heman.

"Yes, we can build the shop right off; a man that had owed me twenty-five dollars till it was outlawed, came and paid it," said 'Rias, "we'll build the shop next week."

"The minister was scandalized that we let you go," said Aunt Espey, "and he meant to write you to come home at once. We needed you."

"You must have some dinner," cried 'Rias. "It's all my fault."

"I've had dinner, all I want is to talk, to look at you all, to hear you all, to tell you all. Oh, Aunt D'rexy, after the farm this place looked so mean and little, but when I was in that show it looked like heaven or a palace! I haven't had a decent bed, or a decent wash, or clean clothes, or a real nice meal since I left."

Uncle 'Rias beat his head and his breast with his fists, as if he were saying, "for my fault, my fault, my most grievous fault." Then Heman sat between his two aunts, while he told the story of his month in a peripatetic show. He was the hero of the hour.

"Oh, right the minister was," cried 'Rias, "to say we were risking your life and your morals for a little money. Oh, right he was, saying that I was setting money above morals and fair-mindedness toward D'rexy. Well, I've got my lesson. We haven't one of us smiled since you went, boy. Such a ditty as you told us, never heard before, nor did I know that there were such an un-Christian lot of rascals on this earth. Back you are, in a Christian home, if it's humble, and there's no place like it, as the song says."

Beautiful evening that, an evening out of a fairy tale; Heman and 'Rias built the shop in words several times, and then Heman and Aunt D'rexy planned never to part again.

(To be continued)

A Case of Doubt.—"James, did that lady in the waiting room come in her own coach or a trolley-car?" Servant—"Trolley-car, sir!" Doctor—"Thanks! I couldn't tell from her dress whether to prescribe three months at Newport or sulphur and molasses!"

Young Financier.—"What makes you naughty so much of the time, Willie? asked the indulgent father. Why, you see, mamma gives me a penny every time I promise to be good, replied the youngster, and she never asks me to promise to be good until I have been naughty."