

It will seem strange to a lad to take on him new cares and duties; to stand at the head where once he had only to listen and obey; but yet it seems to be the only thing to do. The home must be kept, the heart-broken mother must be comforted, the children must be guided and trained, and somebody must take father's place; and so, many plans and schemes of pleasure and enjoyment must be put away. The boy must be a man before his time. He must think while others are thoughtless; he must save while others are spending; he must be sober while others are light-hearted; and while they are doing as they please, he must have many a thought of mother, and brothers, and sisters.

The boy who takes father's place must learn to take care of himself. He cannot do everything that father did, he must not try. He must not lift or strain, and in an hour do himself more damage than can be remedied in a lifetime. He must not lose his life trying to save something from loss or spoiling. He must not think that he is a man, nor undertake to do a man's work. He must not be rash nor too independent, but he must be patient, quiet, and willing to learn; and if so, he will find many who will be glad to advise him and teach him and help him.

The boy who takes father's place must not forget father's friends. The Wise Man says: "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not." Prov. xxvii. 10. And if a son shows himself worthy of their friendship he will find that nothing which he has inherited from his father is more valuable than the life-long friends the father left behind him. Let him go to them frequently, and if he goes to them for counsel in times of perplexity, he will find that he can also go to them for help in times of trouble and of need. His father's friends will not forget him.

There are many things for the boy to think of who must take father's place. He must think of mother, with her heavy heart and her constant burden, and talk and counsel with her as his truest and most faithful friend. He must think of brothers and sisters, and be tender, long-suffering, and patient with them; he must think of obligations that must be met, and father's honor that must be cared for; and he must try to do in every way the things that are right in the sight of God, that his father's God may be his God and guide for evermore.

There will be many a trial, many a sorrow, many a disappointment for the boy that takes his father's place; and yet if he is faithful to his trust he will have many a blessing at the hand of God; for He who is "a Father of the fatherless" will care for and watch over those who trust in him, and who have no earthly father.

The boy who takes his father's place needs to know his father's God. He needs to read his father's Bible, and to kneel as his father knelt at the throne of grace; to keep up the family altar, and ask God's blessing on the daily bread; and he will find thus strength and help which he can find nowhere else. And the Lord who has said, "Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me," will never fail to help him in time of need, if he will but put his trust and confidence in him.

Let those who yet know a father's love, thank God for the mercy that is continued to them, but let every boy as he grows up beneath a father's care, be watchful to learn, diligent to labor, and prompt to obey; let him remember that sometime he too may be called to take father's place; and see to it that he prepare himself for the duties that may lie before him, when God in his providence shall lay new burdens upon him, and call him to serious responsibilities.

Many a lad has been called upon to do this; and though at first the burden seemed heavy, almost too heavy to be borne, yet by the bearing of it he has gained wisdom and strength and experience which in after years have made him stronger and abler and more manly than he ever could have been had he not been called in boyhood to take a father's place. Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, Johnson, Garfield, Hayes, and Cleveland were not the only sons of widows who have risen to high estate in this and other lands.

And the reward is coming by and by, when the children shall remember him, and say, "He was a father to me;" when the mother, leaning on his arm shall go down to the end of life's journey, and shall bless with her dying breath her faithful boy; and when at last he shall meet father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters in the brightness of the great Beyond, and shall hear from the Saviour's lips the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." —H. L. H., in *Little Christian*.