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THE BOY WHO HAD NO FRIENDS

> A NEW ENGLAND TALE. By the Author of "Sundries."

> > CHAPTER I:

"Well, I swan to man!" energetically exclaimed Deacon Abijah Underwood, "if there isn't Peltiah Perkin's brindle cow, coming straight an end, like all possessed! And there's that young scapegrace, Jonce Smiley, clinging to her back like a monkey in the caravan to the Shetland pony! Why, the little rascal will certainly be thrown and

break his dumb neck!" "Never you fear," said the Deacon's wife—"that's not the way his neck will be broke and he'll never be drowned neither, I can tell you."

The subject of this pleasant prophecy shot by the deacon's house on his queer conveyance, to use his own expression, "like a streak of chalk," unmindful of all the uncharitable predictions which were shouted as he passed, by more than one kind well-wisher. The fact was, he was used to such things, and any other language would have been to him a scrap of the unknown tongue. When Peltiah's cow reached the homestead, Jonathan, or as he was usually nicknamed, Jonce, slipped off like a cat, and took to his heels with a warning instinct of the danger of Peltiah's cart-whip-for he was used to hard knocks, too, as well as to hard words. He was an unlucky little Ishmaelite, always in disfavor with somebody for cause, and often without cause when any mischief was discovered, the origin of it was invariably imputed to Jonce. If the bars of any body's cornfield were left down, or thrown down by unruly cattle, it was Jonce who bore the blame-if the wind shook off the parson's fruit, it must have been Jonce who pelted down the apples—if the cows came home dry, Jonce had been surreptitiously milking them-if the legal lookers for eggs made a return non est, Jonce had the credit of having been poaching. Was any body's dog lame? Jonce had stoned him. Did any body's cat disappear? Jonce had cer-tainly drowned her. Shivered glass, crawls on fences, mud on house doors, tolen melons, tricks on travelers, and all and singular the boyish pranks within a ten miles' circuit, were as a matter of course, all accredited to "that

dumb Jonce Smiley."
This was decidedly convenient for all the other boys in the neighborhood. In vain did poor Jonathan protest his innocence-he was only whipped for lying, in addition to the original count; and if he persisted in his denial, he received commonly a blow or two for his hardy and unreasonable impertinence, in refusing to acknowledge what everybody knew must be his work; and poor Jonce not unfrequently saw the real culprit among the edified spectators of his castigation. Under such a state of affairs, as other boys could not be expected to feel Jonce's aches, and as of creation understand so well how to they found it not at all disagreeable to visit upon one another. The little coube whipped by proxy, we are not to wonder that the more Jonce wa ped, the more offences multiplied against the peace and good order of the village of Hardscrabble, and the com-monwealth of Massachusetts. No matter if he could prove an alibi-that did not mend the case at all. No matter if another boy was caught in the very act of transgression—the real sinner was passed over, and his parent or guardian took the first opportunity to catch and cuff Jonce Smiley, for "putting his boy up to such mischief!" But the little rogue, far from perish-

ing, seemed but to thrive under such discipline. He could scrabble out of a horse trough, or creep from under a pump, and shake himself dry, sooner than any duck in New England. As to kicks, he knew the length and momentum of every leg in the township, and could slide just one inch beyond the reach of the sole of any man's shoe, with almost unerring exactness. He knew whose hand was horny, and whose not, having auricularly tasted of every palm in the parish, more than once; and he had a most capital way of defeating the women's wrath, by shocking their knuckles with his elbows, when they tried to rain their up and down blows upon the back of his neck. Broomsticks he could dodge so scientifically that not one whack in twenty intended ones would reach him. Indeed he rather like the excitement of playing dodge with all he met, and grew in time, almost to consider his position one of enviable distinction, and agree-able pastime, rather than of uncomfortable mishap. He considered those days blanks, at the end of which he was obliged to lie down to sleep without a bruise, or scratch, or other memorial

of exciting adventure. Our hero had few such days in his experience. If nobody else cuffed him, his mother's good night was usually rapped upon his knowledge-box, with her knuckles, and this was about the only punition that Jonathan cared anything about. He could not, as a dutiful son, accidentally kick her ankles with his heels, or plant his foot upon her toes, as was his wont when other women administered such discipline to hem, and his only method, when the maternal blessing visited his ears was to hold his breath, and bear it. This was rather irksome, but he found consolation in inwardly vowing that he would one day be a man, in spite of his mother and all her abettors. He felt that she was cruel, and, except that she fed him, as she did her cat, (only not so kindly,) that she was any thing but a parent to him; but he had reason enough, young as he was, to make ex-cuses to himself for her conduct. He knew that she was every day beset with complaints about his unruly and wick-ed behavior; he knew that when people come in to complain of his alleged misdeeds, even on occasions when h had been peaceably under his mother's eye all day, that she was assured, and, what was worse still, convinced, that he only stayed at home to escape suspicion, while he did his mischief by deputy. So he said, "let her thump, if it does her any good; she'll be sorry it, one of these days.

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At school poor Jonce was always at "foot of the class," though he actually knew more than any of his mates. There was no kind prompting voice at his ear, when he hesitated, there was no waiting for him to collect his thoughts when a question was put to him—habit had taught the pedagogue to call out "Jonathan"—"the next!" almost in the same breath. And in school he was not less the foot-ball and scapegrace than he was out; for the merit of all misdemeanors was, as a matter of course, his peculiar perquisite. In the play-ground, if the agreeable diversion of pelting any one with snow-balls, turf, or stones was sug-gested, Jonathan was the victim: at foot-ball his shins received more kicks than the ball, in cricket he was avoided as one of the unlucky, for he was always out; at marbles he lost his "toys" whether by the rules of the game he won or lost; and "come now, that's not fair play!" put him down invariably, whether he was right or wrong. All voices were against him. In short, he had no friends.

No friends! We are wrong. There was among the girls a child as much rsecuted by her sex, as Jonathan by his, but in a different manner. Poor little Margaret Smith was an orphan and a charity girl; a child taken from the almshouse, to do double the labor of a well-paid domestic, and receive therefor such of the cast off clothes of the children of the family as could not be tortured into decent appearance any longer. She was sent to school certain months in the year; for her indentures secured that to her. The really generous heart of little Jonce was moved toward this sister in misfortune; and the assistance which she dared not ask of any of her own sex, our hero volunteered. He made her lessons intelligible to her, loaned her books, and chatted with her when from companionship from their mates both were exiled, he by active abuse, and she by that silent and cruel contempt which the fair half visit upon one another. The little couple were mutual confidents, and while nathan honestly conf fatory misdoings (for he did occasionally thus indulge) to Margaret, he stoutly denied those of which he was not guilty, and she implicitly believed Can we wonder that boy as he him. was, Jonce loved his only friend, or that she reciprocated the attachment, while, as yet neither had read romance, or spoken of love, except for bread and butter. And little Margery, aside from the sympathy in situation and circumstance which knits even older hearts, was a child to love. A mild blue eye, added to the pensive cast of a counte-nance which had thus early been schooled into the expression of patient sorrow, and she had natural advantages of which even her hard lot could not deprive her. Quick of apprehension, as she was slow to anger, she was apt and patient beyond her years, and capable of giving her little mate in misfortune excellent advice and assistance out of school, in return for the aid which he contrived to give her

in her studies. She was the bondmaid of Deacon Abijah Underwood, whose ejaculations open this chapter, and she was not an unmoved eye-witness of Jonce's mad prank, and an ear-witness of the remarks made upon his approach by her master and mistress. She knew that this frolic would cost poor Jonce a taste of discipline. if not for the ride, certainly as an additional count in the very next complaint which should be made against him; a thing quite likely occur within the very next half hour; for poor Jonce's position as scapegoat, as we have already remarked, kept him in continual demand when village spite required to be visited upon

Deacon Abijah Underwood was a dea-

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con of the old school, and held many offices in the state, as well as in the church at Hardscrabble. He was keeper of the village inn, and of the village pound, postmaster, head of the over-seers of the poor, and town-clerk. With seers of the poor, and town-cierk. With his business of innholder, he united that of "merchant" or "storekeeper," having on hand articles of all descriptions, from a German flute to a penny whistle-from a stick of tape coat pattern of broadcloth, and a prime assortment of satinetts, and pepper-and-salt cassimeres, three threads to the inch. The reader, if he has any reverence, has doubtless by this time perceived that Deacon Abijah Underwood was the man of his age and his country, so far as the village of Hardscrabble was considered. It was also currently believed in Hardscrabble that Deacon Underwood was a man of no small influence and consequence even in Boston-the political, commercial, and literary Jerusalem of New England; an impression which the Deacor himself was at some little pains to fos

ter; as in Hardscrabble, as well as in

other places of more note, a man's ex-

otic reputation is a capital assistant to

his home standing.
The Deacon's bar-room was the court of last appeal in Hardscrabble. The Doctor, the Squire, and even the Parson had striven in vain in former years to set up separate and independent jurisdictions in the distinct parts of their several careers in Hardscrabble but the Deacon had succeeded at length in reducing them all three. He was, in fact, the autocrat, and the others were content at last to hold permitted authority as the heads of the three departments of divinity, law, and physic subject to the control of Deacon Abijah who confirmed or disapproved of their decisions as his humor dictated. The Deacon's standing force was public opinion, and an irresistible agent of his will it was too; for all public opinion must be either primarily issued by him, or by him endorsed, before it could become current, or be received as gennine. They say in Hardscrabble was only another phrase for "the Deacon says"—that is all the "they says" which were admitted as valid. The opinion of the public upon the Parson's sermons, upon the Squire's decisions, upon the Doctor's practice, were only so many reissues of the Deacon's judgment; and

to anish the idea of his absolute sway,

it is only necessary to add that he was

the richest man in the township, perhaps in the county.

When as hereinbefore related, Jonce Smiley made his unceremonious entry Into the village of Hardscrabble, on Peltiah Perkins's cow, the Deacon, having heard his wife's opinion that the boy's neck would not be broken by accident, repaired to his bar-room to settle the public opinion upon the matter; for he well knew that such an event as this must necessarily furnish a subject for confab. Peltiah Perkins soon arrived, with others of the immediate neighbors, and the last high erime and misdemeanor of poor Jonce was forthwith entered upon. And the somewhat unusual occurrence of a real traveler, or travelers, added to the interest of the occasion. An emigrant family, on its way to the West, had stopped to give their horse entertainment at the Deacon's pump; and to draw for themselves upon the Deacon's cider-barrel; such a method of "pat ronising" public houses being nothing unfrequent twenty years ago, or even now, in the interior of New England. Bread and cheese for the family, and rain for the horse were drawn from

Peltiah Perkins and all the rest, as a matter of course, walked out, and stood round the vehicle with their hands in their pockets, intently examining the wagon, harness, and horse. They shook the wheels to see if the axels were firm, and the linch-pins in good order -looked at the tires, to see if they were tight, and at the buckle-ho the harness, to ascertain whether the same length was used for this long journey as for former short trips. The age of the horse was "judged upon;" and the family, within the vehicle, were not very modestly eyed to see if they would be likely to stand it, on a long

The boys, faithful copyists of their seniors, also gathered about, and stood just one step behind their parents, the hands of the juniors being also in their pockets, and their attitudes as nearly resembling their elders as constant copying on such occasions could make The women from the houses adjacent also peeped out—some standing in the doorways, and shading their eyes from the noonday sun with one hand; others, particularly the young girls, slipping boldly out into the street. Among these latter was our little friend Margaret.

The greatest, the wisest, and the most prudent men occasionally forget their greatness, their wisdom, and their ce; we are not therefore to wonder that boys sometimes forget their habits of careful management. The stoppage of an emigrant party to dine under the Deacon's elm-tree was a great event to Hardscrabble generally, but a greater event to Jonce Smiley in particular. He thought that in this foreign invasion domestic matters might be forgotten; and ventured, stealthilly at first outcast as he was to stealthily at first, outcast as he was, to join the admiring group about the emi-grant wagon. For the first few mohe was safe enough. At length Peltiah Perkins, who, we sheuld say, might be considered the Deacon's secretary of state, and head of the department of matters and things in gen eral, had made up his mind that the eral, had made up his initial wheel tires were not put on at any wheel tires were not put on at any establishment with which he was acquainted—that the horse was about fifteen years old—that the mother of the prest deal of the family had seen a great deal of trouble, and was not too old to see more that the dog had a cross of the hound—and that on the whole the wagon might be permitted to pass. Having reached these sage conclu his mind was at ease, and he was just turning to report the facts to the con, before he vantured to give them utterance to the world of Hardscrabble generally, when his eye fell upon Jonce

To be Continued

Beyong of rash criticism; the rough and stringent fruit you condemn may be an autumn or a winter pear, and that which you picked up beneath the same bough in August may have been only its worm-eaten windfalls.

What is

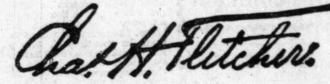
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