

His First Love.

His first love? Yes, I knew her very well—
 Yes, she was young and beautiful, like you;
 With cheeks rose-flushed, and lovely eyes that fell
 If people praised her over much, but true
 And fearless, flashing out as blue eyes can
 At any cruelty to beast or man.
 Her voice? 'Twas very gentle, sweet and low,
 With tones to hush a tired child to sleep;
 In every cadence clear, its silvery flow
 Beside a sick bed has a charm so deep
 Its spell could banish creeping waves of pain,
 Bring easeful quiet to the fevered brain.
 Her hands? Well, dear, they were not quite so small
 As those that trifle with your dainty laces;
 A little browned, perhaps, they had such call
 To carry sunshine into shady places;
 Less delicate than yours, and yet I doubt
 If one who loved her ever found it out.
 Her feet? Sure never steps so swift and steady
 Went straight as arrow flying to a goal;
 If duty summoned her, the ever ready
 To minister to any ailing soul.
 Dear feet that followed where the Master led,
 And set their prints where first he'd left his tread!

His first love? Oh, you do begin to see
 That he might love her dearly, and that yet
 His manhood's love to you might guerdon be,
 Upon your woman's brow, its coronet.
 Dear girl, accept the gift. There is no other
 First love so holy as she gained—his mother.

J. Cole, the Boy Hero

BY
 EMMA GELLIBRAND.

Honored Madam,
 "Which I have seen in the paper a page boy wanted, and begs to say J. Cole is over there, and I can clean plate, wash my brother's under a butler and learn me, and I can wate, and no how to clean winders and boots. J. Cole opens you will let me cum. I asks 8 and all found. if you do my washin I will take seven. J. Cole will serve you well and open to giv satisfaxshun. I can cum to-morrer. "J. Cole.
 "P.S.—He is not verry torl but growin. My bruther is a verry good hite. I am sharp and can rede and rite and can hadd figgers, if you like."

CHAPTER I.

I had advertised for a page-boy, and having puzzled through some dozens of answers, more or less illegible and impossible to understand, had come to the last one of the packet, of which the above is an exact copy.
 The epistle was enclosed in a clumsy envelope, evidently home-made, with the aid of scissors and gum, and was written on a half sheet of letter-paper, in a large hand, with many blots and smears, on pencilled lines.
 There was something quaint and straightforward in the letter, in spite of the utter ignorance of grammar and spelling, and while I smiled at the evident pride in the "bruther" who was a "verry good hite," and the offer to take less wages if "I would do his washin," I found myself wondering what sort of wait upon the sea of life was this not very tall person, over thirteen, who "would serve me well."
 I had many letters to answer and several appointments to make, and had scarcely made up my mind whether or not to trouble to write to my accomplished correspondent, who was "sharp, and could rede and rite, and hadd figgers," when a shadow falling on the ground by me as I sat by the open window, I looked up, and saw, standing opposite my chair, a boy. The very smallest boy, with the very largest blue eyes I ever saw. The clothes on his little limbs were evidently meant for somebody almost double his size, but they were clean and tidy.
 In one hand he held a bundle, tied in a red handkerchief, and in the other a

bunch of wild flowers that bore signs of having travelled far in the heat of the sun, their blossoms hanging down, dusty and fading, and their petals dropping one by one on the ground.
 "Who are you, my child?" I asked, "and what do you want?"
 At my question the boy placed his flowers on my table, and, pulling off his cap, made a queer movement with his feet, as though he were trying to step backwards with both at once, and said, in a voice so deep that it quite startled me, so strangely did it seem to belong to the size of the clothes, and not the wearer—
 "Please 'm, it's J. Cole: and I've come to live with yer. I've brought all my clothes, and everthink."
 For a moment I felt a little bewildered, so impossible did it seem that the small specimen of humanity before me was actually intending to enter anybody's service; he looked so childish and wistful, and yet with a certain honesty of purpose shining out of those big, wide-open eyes that interested me in him, and made me want to know more of him.
 "You are very small to go into service," I said, "and I am afraid you could not do the work I should require; besides, you should have waited to hear from me, and then have come to see me, if I wanted you to do so."
 "Yes, I know I'm not very big," said the boy, nervously fidgeting with his bundle; "leastways not in hite, but my arms is that long, they'll reach ever so 'igh above my 'ed, and as for bein' strong, you should jest see me lift my father's big market basket when it's loaded with 'taters, or wotever is for market, and I hope you'll not be angry because I come to-day; but Dick—that's my bruther Dick—he says, 'You foller my advice, Joe,' he says, 'and go arter this 'ere place, and don't let no grass grow under your feet; I knows what it is goin arter places, there's such lots a fitin' after 'em that if you lets so much as a hour go afore yer looks 'em up, there's them as slips in fust gets it, and wen yer goes to the door they opens it and sez, 'It ain't no use, boy, we're sooted,' and then where are yer, I'd like to know? So,' sez he, 'Joe, you look sharp and go, and maybe you'll get it.' So I come, mum, and please, that's all."
 "But about your character, my boy," I said. "You must have somebody to speak for you, and say you are honest, and what you are able to do. I always want a good character with my servants—the last page-boy I had brought three years' good character from his former situation."
 "Lor!" said Joe, with a serious look, "did he stay three years in a place afore he came to you? Wotever did he leave them people for, where he was so comfortable? If I stay with you three years, you won't catch me a 'gavin' yer, and goin' somewheres else. Wot a muff that chap was!"
 I explained that it did not always depend on whether a servant wanted to stay or not, but whether it suited the employers to keep him.
 "Praps he did somethin', and they gi' 'im the sack," murmured Joe; "he was a flat!"
 "But about this character of yours," I said; "if I decide to give you a trial, although I am almost sure you are too small, and won't do, where am I to go for your character? Will the people where your brother lives speak for you?"
 "Oh, yes!" cried the little fellow, his cheeks flushing; "I know Dick'll ask 'em to give me a carcter. Miss Edith, I often cleaned 'er boots. Once she came 'ome in the mud, and was agoin' out agin directly; and they was lace-ups, and a orful bother to do up even; and she come into the stable-ard with 'er dog, and sez: 'Dick, will you chain Tiger up, and this little boy may clean my boots if he likes, on my feet?' So I cleaned 'em, and she giv' me sixpence; and after that, when the boots come down in the mornin', I got Dick always to let me clean them little boots, and I kep 'em clean in the insides, like the lady's maid she told me not to put my 'ands inside 'em if they was black. Miss Edith, she'll giv' me a carcter, if Dick asks 'er."
 Just then the visitor's bell rang, and I sent my would-be page into the kitchen to wait until I could speak to him again, and told him to ask the cook to give him something to eat.
 "Here are your flowers," I said, "take them with you."
 He looked at me, and then, as if ashamed of having offered them, gathered them up in his hands, and with the corner of the red handkerchief wiped some few leaves and dust-marks off my table, then saying in a low voice—"I didn't know you 'ad beauties of yer own, like them in the glass pots, but I'll giv' 'em to the cook." So saying, he went away into the kitchen, and my visitors

came in, and by-and-bye some more friends arrived.
 The weather was very warm, and we sat chattering and enjoying the shade of the trees by the open French window. Presently, somebody being thirsty, I suggested lemonade and ice, and I offered strawberries and (if possible) cream, though my mind misgave me as to the latter delicacy, for we had several times been obliged to do without some of our luxuries if they entailed "fetching," as we had no boy to run errands quickly on an emergency and be useful. However, I rang the bell, and when the house-maid, whose temper, since she had been what is curiously termed in servants'-hall language, "single-handed," was most trying, entered, I said, "Make some lemonade, Mary, and ask cook to gather some strawberries quickly, and bring them, with some cream."
 Mary looked at me as who should say, "Well, I'm sure I and who's to do it all? You'll have to wait a bit." And I knew we should have to wait, and therefore resigned myself to do so patiently, keeping up the ball of gossip, and wondering if a little music later on would, perhaps, while away the time.
 Much to my amazement, in less than a quarter of an hour Mary entered with the tray, all being prepared, and directly I looked at the strawberry bowl I detected a novel feature in the table decoration. A practised hand had evidently been at work; but whose? Mary was far too matter-of-fact a person. Food, plates, knives, and forks, glasses, and a cruet-stand were all she over thought necessary; and even for a centre vase of flowers I had to ask, and often to insist, during the time she was single-handed.
 But here was my strawberry-bowl, a pretty one, even when unadorned, with its pure white porcelain stem, entwined with a wreath of blue convolvulus, and then a spray of white, the petals just peeping over the edge of the bowl, and resting near the luscious red fruit; the cream-jug, also white, had twining flowers of blue, and round the lemonade-jug, of glass, was a wreath of yellow blossoms.
 "How exquisite!" exclaimed we all. "What fairy could have bestowed such a treat to our eyes and delight to our sense of the beautiful?"
 I supposed some friend of the cook's or Mary's had been taking lessons in the art of decoration, and had given us a specimen.
 Soon after, my friends having gone, I thought of J. Cole waiting to be dismissed, and sent for him.
 Cook came in, and with a proliminary "Ahem!" which I knew of old meant, "I have an idea of my own, and I mean to get it carried out," said, "Oh, if you please 'm, if I might be so bold, did you think serious of engagin' the boy that's waitin' in the kitchen?"
 "Why do you ask, cook?" I said.
 "Well, ma'am," she replied, trying to hide a laugh, "of course it's not for me to presume,—but if I might say a word for him, I think he's the verry handiest and the sharpest one we've ever had in the house, and we've had a many, as you know. Why, if you'd only have seen him when Mary came in in her tantrums at 'avin' to get the tray single-handed, and begun a-grumblin' and a-bangin' things about, as is her way, being of a quick temper, though, as I tells her, too slow a-movin' of herself. As I were a-sayin', you should have seen that boy. If he didn't up and leave his break-and-butter and mug of milk, as he was a-enjoyin' of as 'arty as you like, and, 'Look 'ere,' says he, 'giv' me the jug. I'll make some fine drink with lemons. I see Dick do it often up at his place. Giv' me the squeezer. Wait till I washes my 'ands. I won't be a minnit.' Then in he rushes into the scullery, washes his hands, runs back again in a jiffy. 'Got any snow-sugar? I mean all done fine like snow.' I gave it to him; and sure enough, his little hands moved that quick, he had made the lemonade before Mary would have squeezed a lemon. 'Where do yer buy the cream?' he says next. 'I'll run and get it while you picks the strawberries.' Perhaps it wasn't right, me a-trustin' him, being a stranger, but he was that quick I couldn't say no. Up he takes the jug, and was off; and when I come in from the garden with the strawberries, if he hadn't been and put all them flowers on the things. He begs my pardon for interfering like, and says, 'I 'ope you'll excuse me a-doin' of it, but the woman at the milk-shop said I might 'av 'em; and I see the butler where Dick lives wind the flowers about like that, and 'av' 'elped 'im often; and, please, I paid for the cream, because I got two bob of my own, Dick giv' me on my birthday. Oh, I do 'ope, Mrs. Cook,' he says, 'that the lady'll take me; I'll serve 'er well, I will, indeed'—and then he begins to cry and tremble, poor little chap, for he'd been

running about a lot, and never eaten or drank what I gave him, because he wanted to help, and it was hot in the kitchen, I suppose, and he felt faint like, but there he is, crying; and just now, when the bell rung, which was too great big boys after the place, he says, 'Oh, please, say 'We're sooted,' and ask the lady if I may stay,' so I've taken the liberty, madam," said Cook, "for somehow I like that little chap, and there's a deal in him, I do believe."
 So saying, Cook retired, and, in a moment, J. Cole was standing in her place, the blue eyes beaming over with tears, and an eager anxiety as to what his fate would be making his poor little hands clutch at his coat sleeves, and his feet shuffle about so nervously that I had not the courage to grieve him by refusal.
 "Well, Joseph," I said, "I have decided to give you a month's trial. I shall write to the gentleman who employs your brother, and if he speaks well of you, you may stay."
 "And may I stay now, please?" he said. "May I stay before you gets any answer to your letter to say I'm all right? I think you'd better let me; there ain't no boy; and Mrs. Cook and Mary 'll 'av a lot to do. I can stay in the stable, if you don't like to let me be in the house, afore you writes the letter."
 "No, Joe," I replied, "you may not be a good, honest boy, but I think you are, and you shall stay here. Now, go back to Mrs. Wilson, and finish your milk, and eat something more, if you can, then have a good rest and a wash; they will show you where you are to sleep, and at dinner, this evening, I shall see if you can wait at table."
 "Thank you very kindly," said the boy, his whole face beaming with delight, "and I'll be sure and do everythink I can for you." Then he went quickly out of the room, for I could see he was quite overcome, now that the uncertainty was over.
 Alone once more, I reasoned with myself, and felt I was doing an unwise thing. Just at that time my husband was away on business for some months, and I had no one to advise me, and no one to say me nay either. My conscience told me my husband would say, "We cannot tell who this boy is, where he has lived, or who are his associates; he may be connected with a gang of thieves for what we know to the contrary. Wait, and have proper references before trusting him in the house."
 And he would be right to say so to me, but not every one listens to conscience when it points the opposite way to inclination. Well, J. Cole remained, and when I entered the dining-room, to my solitary dinner, he was there, with a face shining from soap and water, his curls evidently soaped, too, to make them go tidily on his forehead. The former page having left his livery jacket and trousers, Mary had let Joe dress in them, at his earnest request.
 She told me afterwards that he had sewn up the clothes in the neatest manner wherever they could be made smaller, and the effect of the jacket, which he had stuffed out in the chest with hay, as we discovered by the perfume, was very droll. He had a great love of bright colours, and the trousers being large, showed bright red socks; the jacket sleeves being much too short for the long arms, of which he was so proud, allowed the wristbands of a vivid blue flannel shirt to be seen.
 I was alone, so could put up with this droll figure at my elbow, but the seriousness of his face was such a contrast to the comicality of the rest of him, that I found myself beginning to smile every now and then, but directly I saw the serious eyes on me, I felt obliged to become grave at once.
 (To be continued.)

THE JEWEL-WEED A MINIATURE CANNON.

The most curious of all the ways of spreading the seeds is that adopted by the jewel-weed. This is a handsome plant, often seen in shady places along brooks. It owes its name to the dew that in early morning hangs in glistening drops, like small round diamonds, along the scalloped edges of the leaves. Late in summer—in August and September—the jewel-weed is covered with pretty flowers, something like snapdragon blossoms, orange-red spotted with brown. Later on, when the seeds are ripe, the lightest touch will make the pods that hold them burst open suddenly, and scatter them far and wide, like shot from a tiny cannon. For this reason the European jewel-weed is known as Nollme-tangere, which is Latin for "Touch me not." The garden balsam, or lady's-slipper, a relative of the jewel-weed, has the same sort of elastically-opening pods.