

Our Young Folks.

JACK.

BY ALDNEY DAYRE.

I.

"I don't know about sending such a hardened little chap as he is."

"That is the kind that need to go."

"But what if nobody'll take him?"

"Then I'll bring him back."

So said the Superintendent of one of the earliest companies of children sent out by the Fresh Air Fund, and so it came that Jack joined the eager little crowd drawn from alley and slum of the great city.

"He is a tough one," said the Superintendent to himself, watching Jack as he half carelessly, half-wilfully, tripped up one or two smaller boys in the rush which came when they were leaving the steamboat in order to take the cars.

"He don't look like the right sort," said one or two farmers.

"If they were the right sort, they wouldn't need our help," said a pleasant-faced woman who sat in a spring wagon. "Put him in here, please. Come, my boy, will you go home with me?"

Jack climbed into the wagon, but made little answer to the kindly attempts to draw him into conversation. His eyes were never raised toward her as he rode along in dogged silence, and Mrs. Lynn began to conclude that she had taken hold of a very hard case indeed.

But it was quickly seen that there were some things which Jack loved. Before night he had made friends with horses, cows, chickens, ducks, geese, and cats, and lying under a tree in rapt admiration of a pert jay which chattered above him, had almost succeeded in coaxing it to alight on his finger.

"Come with me, and I'll show you something more," said Mrs. Lynn, the next morning after breakfast. She put a pail of salt into his hand, and they walked up a little glen, then up a steep hill, when she called:

"Nan, nan, nan, nan, nan—come, nan, come, nan; come, my prettice; come, come, my prettice."

A quiet little patter was heard, and down along the path which led higher up Jack saw coming a line of soft-looking white things.

"What's their names?" he cried, in great interest.

"Sheep. There are a great many more up over the top of the hill, but they don't know me very well, so they don't come. We must go further."

Higher up they went to where a sunny pasture sloped more gently down the other side, and there were hundreds of the pratty creatures nipping the short grass or lying under the trees. They looked at the strangers with shy, gentle eyes, but gathered near as Mrs. Lynn repeated her call.

Jack laughed and whooped and rolled on the ground in the excess of his delight at first frightening them away. But he was soon in among them, winning them by his coaxing tones to taste the salt he held out to them. The boy's face seemed transformed as Mrs. Lynn got her first full glance at his eyes, and wondered at them. They were large and clear and soft as he laid his hand lovingly on the heads of some half-grown lambs, and presently tenderly lifted one which seemed a little lame.

"You may take that one to the house, if you like," said Mrs. Lynn, "and I will bind up its poor foot."

He did so, and when he carried it back to the flock he remained all day, only going to the house when called to dinner by the sound of the conch-shell. And every day afterward the most of his time was spent on the breezy hill-side, perhaps taking in the beauties of valley and stream and woodland which lay below, but finding his fill of enjoyment in the sheep. He was little seen at the house,

seeming not to care for any human society, but he took long walks at his will, from which he once brought home a bird with a broken wing, and again a stray starved kitten, both of which he carefully tended.

Jack's voice came ringing down the hill.

"Hiho! hiho! hiho! hiho-o-o-o-o-o! my beautiful Come, Daisy-face, come, Cloud-white, come, my Tripsy-toes and Hippetyhop and Hobbledehoy. Hills, hills, ho! my Hop-and-skip and old Jump-the-fence! Come with your patter patter and yer wiggle-waggle, my beauties, oh! Where be you, Flax and Flinders and Foam? Come here, my jolly boys, and kick up yer heels on the grass in the no-o-o-o-ring."

Jack stayed a month among his fleecy darlings, and when the time came for saying good-by to them, nobody was near to hear him say it. He allowed Mrs. Lynn to shake his hand as he stepped on board the train which was to bear him back to his home, or rather to his homelessness, but with little response to her kind farewells.

She had tried so faithfully to impress him with the idea that there are plenty in this wide world whose hearts the dear Lord has filled with tenderest pity and love toward those whose paths seem laid in shadowed places, that she felt keenly disappointed in fearing she might have entirely failed. However, she remembered with comfort that, just as the last car was passing the platform from which she watched it, she had indistinctly caught sight of a boy's face whose softened eyes seemed filled with tears as he strained his eyes to gain a last glance at her, and she believed in her heart it was Jack's face.

"It is no use trying to get the matter rightened," said Farmer Lynn to his wife, speaking in great vexation. "This man Green's a tricky knave. Ever since the day his sheep broke into my field and got mixed up with my flock the fellow has been claiming some twenty or so of my best Atwoods and Cotswolds, and now he's going to law to make me give them up."

"Well, if you're right, won't that be best for you?"

"Not with such a man as that. He's ready to swear the sheep are his, and there's the trouble. I'm morally sure I know my sheep, but when it comes to being pinned right down to swear to each one among so many, I can't do it."

She shook her head.

"No, you couldn't: sheep are too much alike, and you would run the risk of making a mistake. When is the trial to be?"

"Next Thursday week."

For the next few days Mrs. Lynn went about with a very sober face. She took two or three rides to the village, actually had an interview with Mr. Lynn's lawyer, wrote several letters, and one day the entire neighborhood was alarmed by a messenger inquiring his way with a telegram for Mrs. Lynn, it being the first thing of such an exciting nature that had ever happened in the township.

But after that everything went on very quietly until the morning of the day set for the trial.

"Well," said Mr. Lynn, "I s'pose Green'll be out here this afternoon to swear my sheep are his. The lawyers are coming too."

The afternoon came, and with it came Green, the lawyers, and half the township besides.

They came, looked over the ground, saw the two flocks feeding in adjoining fields, and how the fence breaking, they had become mingled. Then little remained but for Mr. Green to declare which of his own sheep had remained in Mr. Lynn's flock.

But Mr. Lynn strongly protested against the wrong being done him, as a number of his choicest animals were picked out and put over the fence. His lawyer was restless, and seemed anxious to delay the proceedings, at length saying:

"I am looking for another witness."

"It won't do much good, I fancy," said Green, with a triumphant laugh.

Mrs. Lynn drove rapidly up in her spring wagon, and her husband looked eagerly to see who was with her.

"Jack!" he exclaimed. "But what good can he do, I'd like to know?"

Mr. Green's laugh took on a scornful tone as he saw the now witness.

"Hol hol Mr. Bright, is this your witness? A heavy weight, I must say. Who do you s'pose is going to take the testimony of a little scapegrace ragamuffin like that, hey? And against me!"

"I am not going to ask the boy to testify. I am going to let the sheep testify for themselves. Now, gentlemen, Mrs. Lynn believes that their sheep know the voice of this boy, and will come at his call, and it is my purpose to submit their testimony to the decision of the court. Mr. Green's sheep have only been lately pastured here. Now, my boy, stand on this fence, and let's see if the sheep will claim the honor of your acquaintance."

Jack leaped upon the fence which divided the two fields, and ran a little way along it. For a moment there was a huskiness in his throat and a dimness in his eyes, as he turned to the pasture in which he had spent the only happy hours of his life had ever known. He gave one look at his peaceful, white-fleeced pets, and then turning his face the other way, his voice rang out clear and distinct on the crisp air:

"Hiho, hiho, hiho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o, my beautiful Come, Daisy-face, come, Cloud-white, come, my Tripsy-toes, and Hippetyhop, and Hobbledehoy, come, Jack and Jill, and Clover and Buttercup. Hills, hills, hills, ho-o-o-o-o-o, my Hop, Skip, and Jump, come with yer patterin' and yer wiggle-waggle tail, my woolly backs! Where be you, my jolly boys, kickin' up yer heels in the wind? Come, Snip, and Snap, and Snorum and Flax, and Flinders and Foam."

At the first sound of his voice a few white heads were raised among the grazing flock in Mr. Lynn's field; then more, and then a commotion stirred the quiet creatures. Bleating, they ran to the fence where Jack stood, and crowded about him, almost clambering over each other in their efforts to reach him. But little heed was paid to them, for all were watching Mr. Green's sheep. There was a stir among them, too, for nine-tenths of the flock, alarmed by the unknown voice cutting so sharply through the still air, had turned and fled, and were huddling in a white mass in a distant corner, while about twenty had bleated their recognition of a friend, and hurrying up with a run and jump, were also gathering close about him. And Jack had sprung down among them, and with arms around the neck, and face buried in the fleecy back of one of his special favorites, was sobbing as if his heart were breaking.

Mr. Bright danced about like a school-boy, awning his hat, and pitched it high in the air.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah for boys and sheep! They're the best witnesses I ever want. Mr. Lynn's case is the soundest one I ever carried before a court."

"Witnesses!" growled Green. "Are you such idiots as to think this will amount to anything in law?"

It did amount to something in law, however, as Mr. Green found out when the Judge's decision was given.

As soon as the men were gone, Mrs. Lynn bent over Jack, whose head was still bowed.

"Jack, my boy, don't cry so. Don't you know you have friends all around you?"

"Yes. Look at 'em." He looked about with a smile.

"Yes, the sheep, and plenty more, if you'll have them. Oh, Jack, we're all your friends. The loving Shepherd I told you of has sent us to try to do you good. He wants you to follow him just as the sheep come at the sound of your voice, because they love you and you love them."

Do you want to stay here and take care of them?"

"Stay here, with you and the sheep!" Jack's eyes, beaming with joy and gratitude, frankly met hers.

"I think we've found the soft place at last," said Mrs. Lynn to herself, as she went home, leaving him on the sunny hill-side.—*Harper's Young People.*

Corresponding With Strangers.

No young girl should engage in a correspondence which she is unwilling that her mother should know about. No good comes from corresponding with a stranger, and much evil may follow. It is not rare to see advertisements for a wife or for a husband. These, usually by persons well advanced in life, are sufficiently disgusting but when young girls of sixteen or eighteen, advertise for correspondents of opposite sex, with a view to matrimony, it is revolting to all right feeling persons. A paper published in Chicago, devoted to matrimonial matters, has two pages filled with advertisements of those of both sexes, who wish correspondents, a most melancholy display. Many of the advertisements are most thoughtless, and show that the girls have no idea of the importance of the subject they approach with so much frivolity. One girl writes: "A blooming Miss of 'sweet sixteen,' with long black hair and blue eyes, wishes to correspond with an unlimited number of gents. Object, mutual improvement, and may be—Will reply to all who enclose stamp or photo." There is plainly room for "improvement," for any girl who speaks of gentlemen as "gents," but why "an unlimited number?" Another reads: Two young school girls cultured and refined, both brunettes, would like a few gentlemen correspondents. Emma is sixteen, and Geneva nineteen." The appearance of that advertisement shows that people have very different ideas about "refinement." The whole thing is wrong, it has not a singler redeeming feature and it is melancholy to think that there are so many young girls, as the paper shows, who are lacking in that modesty and that nice sense of propriety, which should be the crowning graces of girlhood.

Curious Facts About Silk-Worms.

A writer in *Land and Water* says the ideas of the ancients upon the subject of the origin of silk were rather vague, some supposing it to be the entrails of a spider which fattened for years upon paste, at length burst, bringing forth its silken treasure; others that it was spun by a hideous horned grub in hard mass of clay—ideas which were not dispelled till the sixth century when the first silkworms reached Constantinople, introduced and cultivated, like many other benefits by the wandering monks. From thence they were soon imported into Italy, which for a long period remained the headquarters of the European silk trade, until Henry IV. of France, seeing that mulberry trees were as plentiful in his southern provinces as in Italy, introduced silk worm culture with great success. Kirby mentions the following interesting extract from the *Courier de Lyon*, 1840, as showing the extraordinary quantity of silk there annually consumed at that period: "Raw silk annually consumed there, 1,000,000 of kilograms, equal to 2,205,714 pounds English, on which the waste in manufacturing is 5 per cent. As four cocoons produce one gram (grain) of silk, 4,000,000,000 of cocoons are annually consumed, making the number of caterpillars reared (including the average allowance for caterpillars dying, bad cocoons, and those kept for eggs), 4,292,400,000. The length of the silk of one cocoon averages 500 meters (1,526 feet English), so that the length of the total quantity of silk spun at Lyons is 5,500,000,000,000 (or six and a half trillions) of English feet, equal to fourteen times the mean radius of the earth's orbit, or 5,494 times the radius of the moon's orbit, or 52,505 times the equatorial circumference of the earth or 200,000 times the circumference of the moon."