

DAN.

A Story For Boys.

By MARY D. BRINE.

CONTINUED.

"I just tell you I ain't goin' away till I see the lady, an' you can't make me. I can scratch jus' like wild cats, I can, an' you better let me alone!"

"Beadad, then, I believe ye," groaned Bridget, who hated boys, and considered "the little Injun" the worst of the village lot.

"You see, it's this way," continued Dan, straightening his shirt, which in the affray had become twisted about his little figure in a most disreputable way—"you see, it's this way: Miss Howe she thinks I've been an' stole, an' I'm goin' to tell her I didn't do no such thing, so now! That I'll go 'way till I tell her that? no ma'am!"

and down in the chair sat Dan again with his "resolution air," and his head held high as possible.

"The land!" cried Bridget, "ain't ye the spunky by, now? Thinks ye stole, does she? Arrah, thin, she's not alone, me by, in that thinkin'!"

He drew his arm across his eyes and kept swallowing and swallowing, until finally he got rid of the lump. Then he said: "I ain't let myself cry before, 'cause I was too mad to do it, but mammy she cried, ma'am, oh, she cried real hard: for if anything goes wrong with me it hurts her, you see, 'cause I'm all she has, an' she loves me, though I'm naughty an' need a lickin' lots of times. But—I ain't a thief, ma'am, an' I don't lie. I somehow wasn't born with them kind of things in me no more's my mammy was, 'n' I don't s'pose my dad was, either, 'cause I've always heard mammy say he was a good man."

Mrs. Howe smiled and laid her hand on the boy's head gently. "Then we are friends again, Dan? You'll forget all my unkindness?"

"Oh, ye, ma'am! I never had no memory for mean things that's been done to me. I can't seem to have time to hold on to 'em."

and figure, and was able to judge from observation instead of hearsay, she was surprised to find herself becoming interested in the boy and getting ready to array herself on his side instead of standing on the side of his foes.

So, presently she said, holding out her hand to the little boy, meanwhile: "Dan, I believe I have done you a wrong. I had no right, as you remind me, to judge you without proof of your fault, and though circumstances were against you, I did wrong to judge so hastily. Will you forgive me, my little boy?"

Now, indeed, the tears fell fast over the boy's brown cheeks, and he made no effort to hold them in check. But just as the sun will suddenly burst out from behind a sullen black cloud during a summer shower, so did Dan's face beam with the smile which was like the rainbow after the storm, and Mrs. Howe was surprised to discover what a very pretty boy he was, after all.

He put his small brown hand into the dainty white one held out to him and tried to speak, but such a lump came popping into his throat that not a word would come.

He drew his arm across his eyes and kept swallowing and swallowing, until finally he got rid of the lump. Then he said: "I ain't let myself cry before, 'cause I was too mad to do it, but mammy she cried, ma'am, oh, she cried real hard: for if anything goes wrong with me it hurts her, you see, 'cause I'm all she has, an' she loves me, though I'm naughty an' need a lickin' lots of times. But—I ain't a thief, ma'am, an' I don't lie. I somehow wasn't born with them kind of things in me no more's my mammy was, 'n' I don't s'pose my dad was, either, 'cause I've always heard mammy say he was a good man."

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Well, now run along and tell your mother how sorry I am for troubling her and you so much, and tell her she shall have all the work she wants from me, if she'll dry her eyes and forget my note. No doubt the bill was blown by the wind out of sight somewhere; at any rate, I know Dan Carman didn't take it."

"Thank you very much, ma'am!" said the boy, and he turned towards the door.

kind of feller after all, mammy! Well, if you think so, then of course Miss Howe, who don't know me so well, ain't to blame if she calls me a thief!"

His mother opened her arms and gathered the boy in close to her breast. "Oh, darlin', darlin', darlin'!" she cried, "I don't believe you're a bad streak about my boy! Whatever ailed me, but the fearful worryment of that note, I can't think, that I could think you guilty for a single moment, my own boy, with your father's own true eyes lookin' at me all the time!"

Dan gave her a regular "bear hug" for reply, and then, and not till then, did he remember the bright, shining silver-piece in his pocket, and all the happy morning's experience he had expected to tell her as soon as he had left Miss Viola. How much had happened since then! It flushed his cheeks just to recall his feelings when finding poor mammy so tearful over Mrs. Howe's note. However, that thing was done with now, and at last Dan could sit down and tell his cheerful story, and show his big earnings for an hour or two of idleness.

Dan continued to pose for his dear Miss Viola for an hour or two each day, until at last the picture was finished, and there were two little "Dans" before her, as much alike as two peas in a pod.

"Oh, I wish mammy could only just see it!" cried the boy as he stood before the easel and gazed at the clever work of the young artist, and felt in his pocket the last of the five shining silver-pieces he had been paid for his posing.

"So she shall, my boy," was Viola's reply. "If she has time to spare this afternoon she can come to the house and ask for me, and I will certainly let her have a look at her painted boy."

Dan was delighted, and ran off to tell his mother of the treat in store for her.

Bennie was pleased because Miss Viola and Dan were pleased. His loyal little heart always reflected the happiness of those whom he liked, even though the thing itself did not specially concern him. He had become "great cronies" with Dan since their introduction by Miss Viola, and at his desire his mother had so far overcome her prejudice against the little half-breed that she had actually given her weekly wash to Mrs. Carmen, and expressed entire satisfaction at her work, too. So you see Dan's chance encounter with the young artist on that morning by the roadside had really opened a new era in his life, and he had been a happy boy ever since.

Well, that afternoon—the day of the "art exhibition," as Viola laughingly called it—the large canvas was placed on its easel on the broad piazza of the house where Viola lived, and quite a number of the neighbors had called to look at and admire it. Dan had never been the subject of so much attention before, and even now it was the painted Dan who had the largest share of interest, while the real boy hung sheepishly behind Bennie, and blushed whenever he was told to "look up," and allow the likeness to be traced.

quite like "somebody" amongst the village boys, in spite of his Indian blood, and if Bill and his circle of select followers were inclined to "tackle the Injun" at times, they were very careful to do that kind of thing far out of sight of the main street of the village, and then only when sure that the little boy was not prepared to defend himself. But we must return to Dolly.

"Oh, Dan, I finded somethin' under my tree!"

Dan leaped over the gate—too much trouble to open it, I suppose—and took a bird's nest from Dolly's hands. "A dear little house all made of straw, Dolly, an' full of pretty white eggs. The birdies built it, an' they'll be so sorry when they come flyin' back to find no little nest."

"Tate out de stoneses. I want 'em to play wiv."

"They ain't stoneses, they's eggs!" exclaimed Dan, laughing. "They're goin' to have wings some day, an' then they won't keep so still in the nest."

Dolly peered over and looked with solemn eyes into the nest, and then Dan asked if he should put it back in the tree, exclaiming how the eggs one day open their walls and let the wee birds come forth into the sunshine. He told it all in his boyish way, and made things quite clear to the little one's intelligence, so that from that moment she looked upon a bird's nest as a sacred thing to be most tenderly cared for and respected.

And yet, only think, just a few short weeks ago Dan's own brown hand would have carelessly stoned a stone at a nest or bird, and with no intention of cruelty, he would have made balls of the pretty eggs the mother-birds love so dearly. Ah, dear little Dan! and happy Miss Viola, to have done so much towards making him a good boy!

Over the road erelong went Dan, whistling merrily so that mammy could hear and know that he was near at hand, and out from the roadside bush sprang Bill, whom Dan had not seen for a long time.

"Now I've got you, little Injun!" he yelled, as he caught Dan by the arm and swung him about.



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