

Circumstantial Evidence.

Mr. Pritchard lifted him out of the wagon, and sat him down on the door step. What a little fellow he was, and what a wondering pleased look there was in his eyes! He had on coarse shoes, a check apron, and his pretty brown hair was cropped close under the shabby cap. It was almost too cold a day for such a little boy to be out without a coat. Mrs. Pritchard took him by the hand to lead him in, and the little hand clung confidingly to hers.

"What's your name, dear?" she asked pleasantly.

"Tommy Bobbitt," he answered, readily. "Am I going to stay here?"

"Folks all dead," said Mr. Pritchard. Mother went a month or so back. I told them over to the county house. We don't know what kind of stock he is yet; and if I find any mean, dishonest tricks in him, back he goes. We don't want to adopt a boy, and set him, and have him sting us like a serpent in our old age."

"Oh! I know Tommy will be a nice little boy," said the wife, kindly.

The Pritchards were farming people, and well-to-do. They had never had a child of their own and, after much consideration, had decided to adopt a boy when a suitable one could be found.

Word reached them that a child four years old had recently been left upon the town; and Mr. Pritchard, on driving over to see about it, had brought the little fellow out to trial.

Nobody knew how dreary and forlorn a life it had been in the county house for a little four years old boy, suddenly left friendless. He had wandered, shivering, in the yard, sometimes picking up here and there a red leaf to play with, had hung around in a big, cheerless room, where a few decrepit old women sat because in the men's room there was a loush, half-witted fellow who frightened him. Nights he slept with a dreadful boy, years older than himself, who said things to scare him, and who pulled all the bed-clothes away and kicked in his sleep. And nobody knew how his heart had ached for a dear mother, who, though very poor and unfortunate, had sheltered him to the last.

But now, in his warm, new home he had brightened into a rosy, pretty boy. He had new shoes and stockings, and Mrs. Pritchard made him a little coat, with a motherly instinct growing in her heart with every stitch. He learned the different rooms, and ran about them fearlessly, he made funny little speeches, he jumped and laughed like other happy boys, and climbed boldly on Farmer Pritchard's knee, when that good man sat down to take his ease after supper.

"He's got meat in him," the farmer said, nodding approvingly; "but I don't know whether he's honest yet. That's the thing, to my mind."

Tommy had been there a week—had one week of sunshine—when the black cloud came down upon him.

Farmer Pritchard had a cough, which was apt to trouble him at night, and on the bureau, near the head of his bed, he kept a few gum-drops which he could reach out for and get to soothe his throat, when the coughing came. One forenoon, chancing to go into the bedroom his eye fell upon the little paper bag, and he saw there was not a single gum-drop there.

"That rogue Tommy has been here," he said to himself. "I know there were five or six when I went to bed last night; and for a wonder, I did not have to take a single one. Tommy! Tommy! Look here! Have you been getting my gum-drops?"

Tommy, who was playing in the doorway looked up brightly, and said: "No, I did not get any."

"Did you take them, Lucy?" asked the farmer, turning to his wife.

Mrs. Pritchard had not touched them, and her heart sank as she said so; for who was there left to do it but little Tommy? Her husband's face grew grave. "Tommy," he said, you need not be afraid to tell the truth. Didn't you take the gum-drops?"

"No, I didn't," replied Tommy readily.

"Oh! yes you did, Tommy. Now tell the truth."

"No, I didn't."

"This is bad, very bad, indeed," said Mr. Pritchard sternly. "This is what I have been afraid of."

"Oh, Tommy! pleaded Mrs. Pritchard. "If you took them to do so."

"If he took them!" repeated her husband. "Why, it is as clear as daylight. He has been running in and out of the room all the morning."

But Tommy still denied the deed, though the farmer commanded and his wife implored. But Mr. Pritchard's face grew ominous.

"I'll give you till noon to tell the truth," he said, "and then, if you don't confess—why, I'll have nothing to do with a boy who lies. We'll ride back to the poor-house this very afternoon."

"Oh, Joseph!" said Mrs. Pritchard, following her husband into the entry. "He is so little! Give him one more trial."

"Lucy," he said, firmly, "when a youngster can tell a falsehood like that with so calm a face, he is ready to tell them by the dozen. I tell you it's in the blood, I'll have nothing to do with a boy that lies. Perhaps the fear of going back will bring him back to his senses."

He went out to his work; and Mrs. Pritchard returned to Tommy, and talked with him a long while, very kindly and persuasively, but all to no effect. He replied as she asked him, that he had not touched the gum-drops. At last she gave it up, and with sad misgivings resumed her occupations; while Tommy went to playing with the cat on the floor.

At noon, Farmer Pritchard came into the house and they had dinner. After dinner he called Tommy to him.

"Tommy," he asked, "did you take the gum-drops?"

"No, I didn't," said Tommy.

"Very well," said the farmer, "my horse is harnessed. Lucy, put the boy's cap on. I will carry him back to the poor-house, because he will not tell me the truth."

"Why, I don't want to go back," said Tommy, very soberly.

But still he denied taking the gum-drops. Mr. Pritchard told his wife to

get the boy ready. She cried as she brought out his little warm coat and cap and put them on him. But Tommy did not cry. He comprehended that an injustice was done to him, and he knitted his baby brow and held his little lips tight. The horse was brought around, and Mr. Pritchard came in for the boy. I think he believed up to the last moment that Tommy would confess; but the little fellow stood steadfast.

He was lifted into the wagon. Such a little boy he looked, as they drove away. The wind blew cold, and he had to hold on to his cap. Nothing was said as they drove along, though Farmer Pritchard really felt a little sorry that he had gone so far.

But Tommy had no hope to bear him. He only knew that all the happy life of the past few days was over—snatched from him suddenly. He thought of the cold forlorn house to which he was returning, and shuddered. The helpless old women, the feeing boys, the nights of terror—all these he thought of, when, with pale face and blue lips, he was taken from the wagon and sent up to the house. Farmer Pritchard watched him as he went up the steps, a slow, forlorn little boy. He went in. The matron came out for an explanation. It was given, and the farmer drove away.

He drove home. It was not a pleasant ride. He missed his little companion; but he reasoned, obdurately within himself that he had done all for the best. His wife met him tenderly at the door. The kitchen looked lonely, as they went into it together. A top lay in one corner, a primer was on the foot-stool. Mrs. Pritchard put them out of sight.

The farmer laid a fresh lot of gum-drops on his bureau at night, and thought grimly that these were safe. He retired early, but his sleep was broken.

Mrs. Pritchard could not sleep at all. The tears stole through her closed eyelids, long after the candle was put out, and the house still. She was thinking of the poor little boy, even then, perhaps, cowering in his cold bed with terror.

Suddenly a curious, small sound attracted her attention. It was repeated again and again, and now and then there was a tiny rustle of paper. The sound came from the bureau. She listened intently, and her heart beat with excitement. She knew that sound well.

"Joseph!" she whispered, "Joseph!"

"What, Lucy," said her husband, in a voice that sounded as if he, too, had been lying awake.

"Do you hear that noise, Joseph?—It's mine!"

"I know it. What of it?"

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"Good gracious, Lucy!" groaned Farmer Pritchard upon his pillow. It flashed upon him instantly. He, and not Tommy, was the sinner. The noise stopped. The little deprecators were frightened, but soon began again. And a rare feast they made of it.

It seemed as if that night would never end. The farmer heard every hour the clock struck, and at five he got up and made a fire in the kitchen. His wife arose at the same time, and began to get breakfast.

"I won't wait for breakfast," he said. "You can have it hot and ready when we get back. I'll harness up and start now, so as to get over by dawn."

In a few minutes the wheels rolled noiselessly over the frozen ground out on the road, and away drove Mr. Pritchard in the morning starlight.

Mrs. Pritchard brought out the top and the primer again, and made the kitchen look its very cheerfulness. She baked potatoes, and broiled a chicken, and made fritters. She laid Tommy's plate and fork in their place and set up his chair. The sun had risen, and the bright beams fell across the table. She went to the door and looked up the street.

Yes, they are coming! they drove into the yard, and stopped at the door, and wondering, smiling little Tommy was lifted down into Mrs. Pritchard's eager arms. She held him very tight.

"Oh! my lamb! my blessing!" she murmured, woman-like.

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General Business.

NOTICE.

THE SUBSCRIBER intends to visit MIRAMICHI and Surroundings, on his ANNUAL VISITS, to attend to the Castrating of Horses.

Parties living in remote places had better leave word with their friends, and their orders will be attended to by

H. J. MACGOWAN.

Moncton, 24th April, 1882.

TO RENT.

THE Cottage recently occupied by Mr. A. H. Gillis, on the corner of St. John and Church Streets, Chatham. It contains eleven rooms, which are thoroughly finished, and there is also a good front porch.

For terms and other particulars apply to Mrs. Desmond, Newcastle, or Roger Flanagan, Chatham.

DENTISTRY.

D. R. D. A. BAXTER, DENTIST, will be in Chatham, on and after the first day of June, for short time.

These working hours will be announced next week.

R. FLANAGAN,

ST. JOHN STREET, CHATHAM.

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL

Dry Goods, Groceries and

Provisions, Hardware,

Hats, Caps,

Ready-Made Clothing.

Customers will find our Stock complete, comprising many articles, it is impossible here to enumerate, and all sold at moderate prices.

Manchester,

Robertson,

& Allison,

IMPORTERS OF

DRY GOODS,

AND

MILLINERY

OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.

MANUFACTURERS OF

SHIRTS OF ALL KINDS.

27 & 29 KING STREET, SAINT JOHN

Co-Partnership Notice.

ISAAC HARRIS hereby gives notice that he has admitted his son, AARON HARRIS, as a Partner in his business, which will be henceforth continued under the name and style of

I. HARRIS & SON.

Chatham, N. B., March 28th, 1882.

TEA! TEA!

Duties Removed!

We are now selling

Good Tea at 35 Cts.,

AND

CHOICE TEA AT 40 CENTS

PER POUND.

Wholesale, at Bottom Prices.

I. HARRIS & SON.

TAILORING,

Ready-made Clothing, Hats,

ETC., ETC.

Gentlemen requiring Suits, or separate Garments, or anything else in the Tailoring line, can have their orders, which are hereby respectfully solicited, promptly attended to by the Subscriber at his shop.

Canadian Tweeds

English Coatings, Broadcloths,

Doestings, etc.,

is now on inspection, for which orders are solicited.

Gentlemen's and Youths' Garments are also made to order from materials furnished by themselves.

Just received a splendid assortment of Ready-made Clothing, also an excellent assortment of

GENTLEMEN'S HATS,

CHEAP FOR CASH.