

LITERATURE, &c.

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From Hogg's Instructor.

FILL DO IT.

OR, LITTLE JACK WELDEN AND HIS BASKET.

Poor little Jack! he turned his eyes towards the acclivity, and then looked down at his basket, and a long and deep sigh burst from his heaving bosom. Jack was a tiny boy, not over ten years of age, and nature had not cast his flame in the mould of Hercules, yet there he stood at the foot of a steep ascent with nearly fifty pounds weight avoirdupois of merchandise in a basket, which he must needs, by some means or other, convey to its destination. 'Well now, if I were a man as strong as Sam Reid the carman, how easily I could mount up with that,' thought Jack; 'or if it were only as light as a bird's wing, how much sooner would Judge Rackett have it in his store box! Never mind, however, home it must go, and I'm the boy that must take it; so here goes.' Jack lifted his burden stoutly from the ground, and a look of high resolve shone upon his handsome ingenious face, as he slowly moved up the hill. He staggered on right manfully although the blood mounted to his cheeks and the perspiration burst from his temples; but ever and anon, despite of his courage and indomitable will, he was constrained to drop his basket from his arm, and to stand and gaze wistfully at it many times during his toilsome ascent.

'Hillo, little Jack Welden, you're in a fix, I guess,' cried Tom Mill, the flour-store boy, as he drove past poor Jack with his handsome little van and poney. 'Hillo there,' he shouted, flourishing his whip, 'why don't you come along?'

'Because I've got to carry this basket,' cried Jack, with a smile, 'and it is a heavy one, I tell you.'

'I dare say it is,' cried the flour-store boy, as he cracked his whip and laughed. 'I can't wait for you however—good day, Jack,' and away he rattled up the street, leaving poor Jack to gaze wistfully after him, and to wish that he drove a poney too. Jack had a brave little heart, and although his body was weak, he had a sturdy, hardy determination. 'I'll have it up, though I should fall down on the way; and the heroic and indomitable child kept moving slowly but surely upward on his toilsome but ever shortening path.'

'Well, I guess, Jack Welden, you have a fine time of it,' said a youth of about fourteen years of age, who approached the little porter, and eyed him superciliously, while he folded his hands behind his back in an easy way, and rocked backward and forward upon his heels and toes. 'You have been half an hour sunning yourself in the promenade.'

'Guess I have, and much against my will,' said little Jack smiling; 'and I can tell you Fred Townsley, that if you were as small as I and tackled to this basket, you would find it hard to get along also.'

'You are a pretty one to get along in this world, too,' pursued Fred, half contemptuously; 'you, like a foolish fellow, carry all your loads yourself, but I have better plan—I bribe the little loafers at Bradsleys wharf with cherry-stones and corn stalks, and they carry my baskets for me.'

'But I can't get either cherry-stones or corn-stalks,' replied Jack, 'and besides, Mr Greerson tells me not to keep company with loafers; so here goes for another lift, Fred, unless you give me a hand,' and Jack raised his load and moved on a few paces more.

'If you will carry hurdens, you must carry them,' replied Fred, with a sneer. 'Hiram Townsley, my uncle, who is sheriff's man, tells me that I must keep my coat on if I wish to live an easy life and make rich, and I mean to do so, master Jack.'

'And my mother tells me to be honest and to work manfully for my bread,' said Jack, with a toss of the head, 'and I mean to do so, I tell you master Fred.'

Jack Welden was a member of that very interesting and beautiful fraternity, to whom God has said he will be a father, and Jack's mother had no one to lean upon as a husband save the great and universal parent. Some people who are inclined to smile at the credulous simple folk, who rely on the unseen arm of the invisible Jehovah, would have done well to have commended an hour with this gentle widow, and to have beheld her bending over little, blue-eyed, sunny-haired Jack, and his fair younger brothers and sisters, as they knelt around her knee and lisped their little prayers; and if they wished to behold juvenile heroism and manhood, and to know how God inspires those who trust in him, they should have heard little Jack's prayers, and then seen the effusion of hope, and courage, and glory, and pride, that lighted up his mother's face as she kissed the sleeping brow of her orphan boy. Jack Welden had gone to work when merely a child, because his little brothers and sisters needed bread; and young as he was, Jack felt something like parental pride supporting his weakly frame, and nursing his noble little heart as he thought upon his position, even though the basket dragged him down, and made him tremble like a leaf in every limb.

'Mr Greerson will have much profit by a small apprentice like you,' continued Fred, in a provoking tone, as he strolled along by the side of his juvenile friend, with his hands still clasped behind his back. 'You will go his messages as sharp and slick as a streak of lightning.'

'Yes, when they are less weighty than this I do pretty much,' replied Jack, good naturedly; 'but it is not much help you give a poor fellow with a heavy load, Fred; and he wiped his brow with his cap.'

'Let every one bear his own burden,' replied Fred, shrewdly; 'one has enough to do to carry himself through this world; so get along Jack as you best can.'

'And so I must said Jack laughing, 'but I will always help other boys if I can.'

'You will, will you, my little lad?' said a gentleman, suddenly stopping, and eyeing the juvenile companions, with a kindly yet scrutinising glance; and how will you help little boys?'

'If I see any one as sore tired as I am, and tackled with a great basket like mine, I shan't stand with my hands behind like Fred Townsley,' said Jack, readily.

'I shall help the boy, papa,' cried a beautiful rosy girl whom the wayfarer held by the hand, and she caught the handle of Jack's basket with infantile readiness, and vainly strove to move it.

'You have the will, my little Phemy, but your tiny body is too weak to aid that good will, said the smiling father, as he tapped his little darling on the cheek with his finger, while she clung to his leg, threw back her curly head and laughing up in his beaming face, shouted, 'Ah, if I were as big as nurse, how quick I should help him.'

'And why don't you give your friend a hand to the top of the ascent?' said Mr Melgrove to Fred, who had begun to whittle a piece of cane, and to whistle an air to himself.

'Because I don't draw his pay on Saturday,' said Fred, with a knowing chuckle. 'Work for nothing soon makes a man weak and wearied.'

'So young and yet so full of worldly wisdom,' thought Mr Melgrove, as he first gazed upon the keen cunning features of Fred Townsley, and then upon the open transparent countenance of Jack. 'Well, even in early boyhood we see the reflection of the man.'

Fred Townsley was what might be termed a sharp boy; if Jack and he had been competitors for a place dependent upon the recommendation of handsome limbs and a well brushed jacket, the former would have been incontinent rejected and the latter preferred; but a physiognomist would have been almost tempted to kiss the round smooth cheeks, the soft blue eyes, the golden curled hair, and the ripe full lips of little Jack Welden; while the more sinister and acute countenance of Fred Townsley would have made him cautious and suspicious of the boy.

'Come then, my little man,' said Mr Melgrove, smiling, 'if nobody else will help you up this steep way I will. He is a stout fellow indeed, who climbs the path of life without requiring to lean upon somebody, and without needing help once in his pilgrimage. Many a one who holds his head very high up, and who thinks himself something among men, was once as sore put to it to bear his basket upwards as you are; and who knows what providence may have in store for you my little weary wanderer, on life's troubled, toilsome way.'

Mr Melgrove lifted the basket as if it had been a good feather, for he was a strong and full-grown man, and he bore it along with easy agile steps, while little Jack trotted at his side.

'Come give me your hand, while papa carries your basket,' cried Phemy, as she caught hold of little Jack, and hopped from foot to foot and shouted, 'What a fine carrier of a basket my papa is!'

'Well, now, my boy,' said Mr Melgrove, laying down the basket, and patting Jack on the cheek, 'Will this do now? Do you think that you can get along?'

'Oh, yes, indeed,' cried Jack, his heart overflowing with gratitude. 'Yes, indeed, this will do. I am on the level now; I see Judge Rackett's house, and I shall be there presently. Oh, if ever you have a basket too heavy for you to carry, see if I do not give you a hand!' and Jack lifted his burden like a little hero, and staggered on with a light heart, for he was near his journey's end.

'Ha's a pretty boy, that, papa,' said the innocent little child of Mr Melgrove, as she caught her father's finger, and daced onward by his side.

'Do you think so, Phemy?' said the kind-hearted parent, smiling; 'Would you like to have him for a brother?'

'Well, I should like very much if he was, and I would love him nearly as well as I love you, and I should let him have my little car in which to place his basket when he was tired,' replied the innocent girl, as she rubbed her fair brow upon her parent's hand.

'I think he will be a good man yet, that little boy, my Phemy,' said the father, in reply to his prattling child, 'and he will have a car of his own.'

'And I am sure that he will give your little girl a seat in it, if he should meet her coming from the woods with her lap full of wild grapes and flowers, and tired with running after the blue and red butterflies.'

Everybody carries a basket in this world, and everybody either climbs a steep ascent with it, or moves along a smooth and flowery way. Some, from childhood's sunny hour, have no heavier burden to bear than an elegant corbeille of beautiful blooming flowers. The children of fortune go tripping over the rosy path of life, light as the humming birds of Cashmere, and jocund as the sylphs of Samarcand. They bear their baskets full of ornamental glories, with which to deck their feet and gem their crowns, and they wave them, like

censers, around their bosoms, and scatter the incense of summer over their sunny robes. These are not the sturdy basket bearers, however; for when the flowers of fortune wither, and the path of life becomes a little rugged, the very emptiness of the corbeille becomes a burden, and the joltings of the footway a pain. Passive elements in the circumstances of society; they float with its tide like flowers cast upon the stream, they can neither change its current or purify its waters by independent efforts or personal exertions. Their baskets were woven and stored for them before they began to lift them, and they deem that they do well, if, like the unprofitable steward, they preserve the one talent which they have been lent. Not so your Jack Welden; the heavy burden and the steep hill only awaken the hidden strength and gallant determination of their natures. Patient and industrious as the fabled Ocnus, they ply their laborious vocations day by day, winning strength of mind, and adding to the world's wealth as well as their own.

Jack Welden bore his basket cheerfully and hopefully through life. As he grew up to man's estate, and his strong mind and strong frame became inured to the burdens and duties of his vocation, they became lighter and lighter every day, and his path became more and more tolerable. He never forgot the purpose of his fresh generous youth, and was ever ready to help the weary wayfarer along with his load. He saw Fred Townsley grow rich and proud by a strict adherence to the sheriff's man's philosophy; and although Jack never became proud, he became wealthy also, but by a different process from Fred. Jack retained the generous warmth of his soul, and preserved the overflowing wealth of his kindly sympathies, which were richer than all his treasures of gold. Fred gained gold too, but all he gained; through twenty years of life he had thought, and struggled and planned, and lied to boot, and all that he could reckon up as recompense for his envious and heart burnings, was a long roll of bank entries.

The widow Welden, no longer constrained to labor, now read her large printed Bible through golden framed spectacles, in Jack's handsome parlour; and if she could have been happier with her feet upon cushions of down, and if she could have been more comfortable by having her spectacles set in diamonds, Jack would have gone for many long miles, and spent many glittering coins to have accomplished her happiness. His brothers and sisters were treading an easier path than Jack had trod, and their burdens had been light because of the heavy one which he had borne; and now the happiest hour of the strong and thoughtful man's life, was when his mother leaned upon his arm, and he, bearing her little basket, went forth with her to visit the poor and the needy.

The sunbeams were rolling themselves up in the bright ed clouds of a summer's evening, and were sinking slowly away below the western horizon; golden islands floated in celestial glory through the great blue ocean of heaven, and white incumbent mountains towered in airy majesty on the rim of the desert sky. An old man, adown whose thin cheeks hung the hoary locks of age, and over whose countenance had passed the hand of grief and care, lay with his elbows resting on a table, his cheeks sunk in his hands, and his eyes fixed wistfully on the fading glories of the waning summer's day. He looked from his parlour window, around which clustered Michigan roses, grapes, and the gorgeous wysteria; but although the flowers tapped gently on the glass, as if to attract his notice, he still lay and gazed with fixed attention upon the setting sun. Presently a young woman came and seated herself beside the aged man. Her tiny steps, like the footfalls of a fairy, were so light and graceful that he had not heard their motion, and it was only when she had twined her arms round his neck, and kissed his thoughtful brow, that the father knew that his heart's best treasure, his daughter, was by his side.

'How lovely it is, my own dear papa!' she exclaimed in a tone of silvery sweetness. 'How sweet it is to gaze upon this closing day! Hear how the thrush pours out his farewell to the sun, from the acacia, whose foliage the lingering rays are kissing, and which they seem loth to leave. See how the dragon-moths come whizzing from the curtained mulberry, and the gold fishes leap among the water lilies to catch the sportive midges! Look to the convolvulus, how it slowly folds up its chalice, and the sunflower, how it contracts its petals. Everything seems going to rest amidst the smiling of a beautiful heaven, and on the bosom of a grateful, genial earth. Ah, my father, why is man alone in jubilant nature so unhappy?'

As if in answer to her question, a stranger was at this moment announced, and the rose and hurriedly retired as he entered, in obedience to a look from her father. The visitor was a tall dark man in the prime and vigour of life; he waved his hand with an easy familiar air as he closed the door behind him, and without the least ceremony seated himself beside his host. The old man rose, and his manner was constrained and distant; he bowed to his visitor with an air of one ill at ease, and then, as if the effort was too much for him, he sunk down upon his seat saying, 'you have been punctual, Mr Townsley.'

'I have been remarkable for punctuality' was the reply. 'I attribute my success in life to that quality,' continued the visitor, as he glanced his keen eyes round the room, with a vulgar inquisitive stare, and then pulling up his collar, he exclaimed, in a quick, startling tone of voice. 'Well, what is her decision?'

The father's heart seemed to grow suddenly strong at this heartless illusion to his child, and his fine face flushed with offended pride, and his eyes sparkled with indignation as he said, 'I have not spoken to her on the subject, Mr Townsley; that affair belongs exclusively to her—your affairs and mine are mercantile, not matrimonial.'

The dark brow of Townsley lowered portentously, and his eyes became savage in their glare, as he said significantly, 'unless you consent to enter into matrimonial negotiations with me, your mercantile career is very near an ignominious end. I have just to prefer my claims upon you to-morrow and you are gazetted.'

'The Warren will be due from China in a fortnight, and I shall settle all claims upon me, then,' said the aged merchant in a desponding tone.

'It was whispered on 'Change to-day, that two or three ships in the China trade had been lost within this week on the banks of Newfoundland,' replied Townsley, carelessly, 'and we cannot take floating security, you know.'

'Oh, what am I to do?' exclaimed the old man, as he clasped his hands and turned his face upwards.

'You say that your daughter loves you,' said Townsley, in a low, insinuating tone.

'She does, if ever child loved parent.'

'Then, if she does, she will accept my hand if you tell her by so doing she will save you from ruin.'

'I will not,' cried the old man, firmly while a strong feeling of disgust swelled his parental breast. 'Woo her and win her like a man, if you can, and I shall not say nay, but I will not influence her one jot, although to-morrow she and I should go forth to beg our bread. I have been honest, and she is as virtuous as beautiful. God will support and sustain us in our trials.'

'You shall repent of this, sir, before 24 hours have passed,' muttered Townsley, as he hurriedly left the room.

'And who was that, my father, and what was his errand?' exclaimed the maiden, as she hung round the neck of her dejected parent, and watched the workings of his troubled countenance.

'An inexorable creditor, my own dear Phemy,' exclaimed Mr Melgrove, 'and your father is a ruined man.' He told her all, and, girl as she was, her heart rose superior to all the fears and anxieties of the experienced man of business.

'Keep a brave heart, my father,' she would say, smilingly, 'providence will never let our basket be empty—poverty shall never wholly drain our store.' And what could re-create dreams of baskets and stores in the mind of the maiden at that time? was it long treasured sympathies speaking in her heart?

'Another visitor, my Phemy,' said Mr Melgrove in a visible tremor. 'Retire, my child, Townsley has soon begun to publish his difficulties.'

'You are Mr Melgrove, sir,' said a stranger bowing to the merchant, and at the same time looking at him with apparent interest and pleasure.

'I am at a loss to account for this visit, sir,' replied Melgrove, with a sigh.

'I shall account for it presently, my dear sir, if you will allow me,' said the visitor. He hesitated for a few seconds, and then said, 'Pardon me, but no impertinence prompts the question, I assure you. Are your affairs in a dangerous position?'

'The open ingenuousness of your countenance, as much as your honesty of manners, prompts me to answer yes,' said Melgrove.

'I heard as much insinuated not half an hour ago,' replied the stranger, 'and a long cherished feeling of gratitude prompted me to hurry to your home, and to proffer you my assistance.'

'Gratitude!' exclaimed Melgrove in surprise. 'I never saw you before, sir.'

'Yes you did,' said the visitor, smiling. 'Twenty years ago, when I was toiling and sweltering up Mountain street, with a heavy basket, you assisted me to bear it to the top of the steep. I am now John Welden of Greerson & Welden, and if twenty thousand dollars will make the basket which is like to bear you down, run anything easily along, they are at your service. I shall be the happiest man alive, if I can assist in maintaining you on the path of credit.'

On the morrow, Townsley presented his accounts to Mr Melgrove, and, to his chagrin and surprise his demands were met.

The shipping cargo arrived safely in a few days from China, and Melgrove's liabilities were all discharged, but not all those to whom he had owed obligations, for John Welden was often seen wending to his cottage after business hours, where he cultivated flowers with Melgrove's daughter Euphemia, and often stayed in the sweet little garden after the shades of evening had closed, that he might point out the glories of the starry heavens, and the majestic power of God. At last the hand which had voluntarily sought that of little Welden in childhood, was now sought by and freely bestowed upon the prosperous John Welden in manhood. And Melgrove would often sit and smile, as he recalled with his daughter and son-in-law their first meeting.

'You see that there is reason in the fable of the mouse and the lion,' said Welden, laughing.

'Yes, and that bread cast upon the waters in the shape of a simple good deed, may return with thousandfold blessings,' said Melgrove with a smile.