

## THE CARPENTER'S APPRENTICES.

BY SYLVESTER COBB, JR.

Widow Roland stood with her hand on the head of her boy. He was a bright-eyed, robust, healthy-looking fellow, with a face of marked intelligence, and a genial, good-natured expression of countenance. He had a bundle in his hand, and close by was a small trunk, all lashed up ready for travel.

'Mark,' spoke the widow, 'you are the only child I have in the world—the only being I have left to whom my hopeful love can cling.'

The boy drew more closely to his mother, but did not speak. He hid his face, that she might not see the tears that came to his eyes.

'Thus far, my son,' the widow resumed, keeping down her own tears, 'I have done for you the best that I could. I have taught you what I thought was right, and have been more than repaid by your loving kindness towards me. But now you are going to leave me. It is hard for us to part, but it is for your best good. You must begin to prepare for the business of life, and work out your own support, since the means of supporting us both are not within my reach.—Before I bound you to Mr. Hammond, I assured myself that he was an excellent man—a man upright, kind-hearted, and strictly moral. So you will not fail to find a good example in your master. Now, Mark, I have one very important question to ask of you. Do you know what kind of a man you wish to be when you grow up?'

'Yes, mother,' the boy replied.

'And what is it?'

'A good man.'

'And you would be respected, and beloved, and honored by all who know you?' added the mother.

'Yes—yes.'

'Then my child, let this be the rule of your life until that time: If you are ever tempted to take a step not in the ordinary course of your duty, stop and ask yourself this simple question—*Will it help to make me what I wish to be?*—And then you may ask—Would my mother advise me to do it? I would not have you mean and penurious, but still there is a proper care to be exercised over whatever sums of money may come into your possession. Remember that there are two kinds of pleasure—there is a pleasure which fades away with the excitement which produces it, and there is a pleasure which conduces to our lasting good, and thus remains with us beyond the mere hour of its birth. Do you understand me, my son?'

'Yes, mother.'

'Then I shall not fear for my boy.'

In a little while the stage rolled up and stopped before the door, and the stout driver put on the trunk and bound it in its place. Mark Roland kissed his mother, received her blessing, heard one short prayer from her lips, and then hurried into the stage and hid his face away in his hands. Late in the afternoon he reached a large village, and was set down at the door of a fine house. He wondered if he was to live in such a dwelling. It was handsomer and larger than any house in the town from whence he had come, and he was beginning to fear that he should never feel at home in such a place, when his meditations were cut short by the appearance of a middle-aged man, who had just come out upon the piazza, and asked if this was Mark Roland.

Mark recognized Mr. Hammond, as he had seen him at his mother's house once, and he replied that he was the boy. His trunk was carried into the house, and he was then conducted into the dining-room, where the family were just ready to sit down to supper. He was introduced to Mrs. Hammond and to the larger children, and also to two other apprentices who were about his own age. He could eat but little, so he had more time to look about him and observe the countenances of those with whom he was to live. He liked the looks of Mrs. Hammond, and he felt sure that she must be kind and affectionate. And then there was a little girl, whom the hostess called Caddy, but whose real name he found to be Caroline, that he thought he would like very much. She was younger than he was, and a great deal smaller, but she looked good and kind, and pleasant, and he wondered if she would ever learn to love him as his own sweet sister loved him before she died.

He cast many furtive glances at Mr. Hammond, but he could not tell exactly what to make of him. The man had a very sober look, and at times seemed to be stern; but yet there was nothing unpleasant in his look, and when he spoke, his voice was very kind and considerate in its tones.

When it came bed-time, Mark found that he was to sleep in a room with the other two apprentices. Their names were James Prout and Thomas Wilson. They seemed to be good natured boys, and our hero thought he should like them very well. But he could not talk much that night for he thought of his mother—he had never been away from her a night before, and he could think of nothing else. Before he slept, however, he remembered all the instructions he had received, and he pledged himself that he would live up to them—he would be a good man if he lived.

Mr. Hammond's shop was a very large one, and quite a number of hands worked in it. He was the only house-carpenter of any consequence in the place, and he had as much business as he could attend to. Mark soon learned how to use the common tools, and at the end of a week he had the satisfaction of hearing his master praise him for his application and good behavior. As soon as he got over his homesickness, he became very happy in his new home. Mrs. Hammond treated him as though he were a child of her own, and Caddy was not long in loving him as he had hoped she would. He did not then realize how much of this was owing to his own gentleness and faithfulness, though he did know that he had resolved from the first to be all that a faithful boy should be.

At length there came a holiday. There was nothing in particular going on in that village, but then it was a holiday, and the apprentices were allowed to have it to themselves to spend as they pleased, and their employer gave them half a dollar each to use as they might think proper.

'Well, Mark,' said James Prout, as soon as they had done breakfast, 'what ye goin' to do to-day?'

'Why,' returned Mark, 'I thought I should take a walk down by the river this morning, and then come home and go to work.'

'What!' cried Tom Wilson, in surprise, 'work on 'Lection day? Didn't the old man give ye any money?'

'Yes.'

'And arn't ye going to spend it?'

'Not now,' replied Mark. 'It's the first money he has given me—and I'll keep it for some good purpose.'

'Pooh! What do you mean by this?' asked James. 'You are goin' to commence early to be a miser.'

'No, no—not that, James. I didn't mean to save this for the mere gratification of having money, but for the purpose of having something on hand in case I may need it. In fact, Jim, you and I, both of us, hope to be men one of these days, and we may want to go into business, and have a good home of our own, and we must have money to do this with. No, I have got to begin to save at some time, and I know of no place so good to begin at as the very beginning of the opportunity.'

'That's all very well to talk of, but it won't go down,' said Thomas. 'Come—we'll go to the tavern and see what's up there, and then go over to the bowling-saloon. We'll have a good time. Come.'

'No,' returned Mark. 'I have no desire to go to either of the places, for I am sure it would do me no good, and I should take no pleasure.'

The other apprentices both laughed, and James told him he ought to have been a minister instead of a carpenter.

'A carpenter ought to be a good, upright, virtuous man, and, as far as manhood is concerned, a minister can be no more,' said Mark, rather promptly.

The boys laughed again, but not quite so forcibly this time, and then went away.

Now it so happened that this conversation had taken place in the sink-room, and, as Mrs. Hammond was in an adjoining pantry at work washing the breakfast dishes, she overheard the whole of it, and it was perfectly natural that she should go and tell her husband about it.

In the meantime, Mark walked away down by the river, where the spring flowers grew in wild luxuriance, and here he sat down by the water's edge, and reflected upon the occurrences of the morning. He threw a chip into the river, and as he saw it sail away, a lesson was suggested to his mind. How like a human being was that tiny chip, and how like human life the water. The current was fortune and it must bear a man down to the great ocean if he once gives up to the tide. Was it well to go to the ocean? If you would be well, then take the current, and sail away.

Mark was perfectly satisfied with the course he had pursued, and by and by he arose from his seat, and plucked a lot of the sweet flowers that grew around him, which he made into two bouquets, and then he went home. One of the bouquets he gave to Mrs. Hammond and the other to Caddy. They thanked him very kindly. Caddy gave him a kiss, and he thought that his mistress regarded him with more tenderness than usual. With a light heart he went to the shop, where he found his master.

'What—at work to-day?' asked Mr. Hammond.

'Yes, sir,' replied Mark, 'I would rather work here than spend my time doing nothing.'

'Well, well,' rejoined the carpenter, with a look and tone of gratification, 'I am glad you feel so, for I have work that I want done, and for what you do to-day I will pay you. I want the rails got out for the doors of Mr. Richardson's house. If I gave you the dimensions, do you think you could saw them out and plane them?'

Mark said he would like to try, and he was allowed to do so; and by the middle of the afternoon he had them all done and had earned a dollar. Mr. Hammond complimented him very highly upon the manner in which the work was done, and told him that he should soon have an opportunity to earn something for himself.

After an early supper, Caddy came running out into the yard, and asked Mark if he would not like to go and ride. 'Papa says he would like to have you go—there are two seats in the carriage, you know, and papa and mamma can have one, and you and I can have the other.'

At first the boy hesitated; but when he understood that it was his master's wish that he should go, he assented. The carriage was a very easy one, and it was very pleasant to ride by Caddy's side. They rode through a beautiful wood, and around through a fine village which Mark had never before seen, and got home about nine o'clock.

'Well,' said Mr. Hammond, as Mark started for his chamber, don't you feel as well as you would if you had gone off and spent your money and your time for trifling amusement?'

'O—I feel a great deal better, sir,' replied the boy.

'I am glad it is so,' added his master. And there the conversation ended.

When the three apprentices had been with their employer a year, he told them that, when his work was so that it could be done, they might have their stents set for them, and he would pay them for all the over work they could do. They were very much pleased with this, and for some time they were able to earn from one to two dollars a week.

'What do you do with your money, Mark?' asked James Prout, as the three apprentices came out from supper together one evening.

'I am laying it up,' was the answer.

'You never spend a cent with us,' said Thomas Wilson.

'Because I have no occasion to spend any,' replied Mark.

'But you'd enjoy a good time as well as any of us, if you'd only think so.'

'I do enjoy good times.'

'How, I'd like to know?'

'Why, in hoping that I may be a man one of these days, and be able to do some good in the world.'

'Fol-de-rol-de-diddle-dum!' cried James.—'What a pattern you'll make if you grow up.'

'(He'll make a pattern you'll wish you had copied,' said a voice from the woodshed, but the boys did not hear it.)

'Come,' added Tom, 'go down to the saloon with us, and let's have a game of ten-pins. What's the use of being so mean with your money?'

'I am not mean with it,' replied Mark, rather warmly, for it was not the first time they had made the fling at him. 'Tell me when you have spent a single penny that was not for your own amusement.' When have you laid out a single copper for the good or pleasure of anybody beside yourselves? Tell me that.'

'Well,' returned James, after considerable hesitation, for the question was a knock-down blow to him, 'we do spend it for our own amusement, and that's more than you can say.'

'No, no,' rejoined Mark; 'I can just say that, though I might better use the word happiness than amusement. If I thought I should find more happiness in some other course, I should most certainly pursue it. I would not ask you to spend a penny for my pleasure, nor would I urge you to do any thing which I did not think was for your good. You have asked me to go with you to the saloon; now I ask you to go with me to the shop. I am going to earn half a dollar to-night.'

Tom and Jim laughed at him, and then went off, while he went to the shop and rolled up his sleeves, and set about his work.

Mr. Hammond went into the house and told his wife what he had heard, and then he remarked:

'I am going to give that boy one final trial, and if he proves true in that, he shall have all the care and confidence I could give a son.'

He put on his hat and went out, and when he stopped it was before a small, mean hut, at the outskirts of the village, in which lived an old woman named Polly Brun. Mr. Hammond opened the door and went in and found Polly snug by her sheet-iron stove, steeping some herb tea.

'Ah, Polly, how d'you do?' said the visitor.

'God bless ye, Mr. Hammond, I'm jes' so as I was when I seed ye last.'

'Then you're no worse,' added the carpenter, taking a seat upon an old chest.

'No sir,' replied the old woman. While God gives me such noble, generous friends as you are, I can't get much worse and live—heaven knows what poor Polly would a'done the long winter that's passed if it hadn't been for you, sir.'

'I am glad you are grateful, Polly, for that's a part of the reward I get for doing such things.—But I have come on business now. Just listen to me; I have three apprentices—you know them?'

'Yes, sir—I have seen them often.'

'Well—I want to try them. They all know you, and they all know that you are poor and worthy. They know that you have suffered great misfortunes, and that you are a fit object of charity. Now, will you contrive it for me? Will you try them on the first opportunity, and let me know the result?'

Polly promised that she would, and Mr. Hammond then took his leave.

A few days after this Polly Brun met James Prout and Thomas Wilson in the street. They had done work and were on their way to find amusement for the evening. She stopped them and begged for charity. She told her sufferings and her wants, and said that any sum no matter how small, would help her.

You must go to somebody that's got more money than we have,' said James.

'But a few pence,' urged the woman.

'We haven't got it to spare, so don't trouble us.'

'Even the money ye paid for them segars ye're smokin' would help me more than ye can imagine,' pursued Polly.

'And it will help us too,' retorted Tom; and then, with a laugh, he pulled his companion away, and they went off.

Shortly afterwards Polly met Mark Roland on his way to the shop. She stopped him as she had done the others, and told him the same story of suffering and want.

'Really, ma'am,' returned the youth, 'I haven't got much money, but I should like to help you. I know you are poor and need help. Would a—do-lar help you?'

'The Lord bless ye, I couldn't have asked so much from you, my dear lad.'

'Then you shall have a dollar,' said Mark happily. 'Just you wait here a minute.'

He ran to the house, and when he returned he had two silver half dollars in his hand, which he gave her, remarking as he did so—

'If I should die, as all your children have died, and my mother should become poor and helpless, I should hope that she might find friends.'

'She would, she would,' cried the old woman moved to tears by the boy's words—'God won't suffer the mother of such a son to be forsaken.'

Mark felt a new kind of happiness as he went at work that evening, and as he reflected upon the event which had transpired, he felt that he had done right, and that his mother would be happy if she knew it.

And while Mark was at work, old Polly went into the carpenter's house and told her story.—Mr. Hammond listened to her till she finished, and then he said—

'The boy is true as I had hoped he would be. I can truly say—He has been tried, and is not found wanting.'

When Mark went to live with Mr. Hammond, he was fourteen years old. During the first year he had earned but little, but on the second year he laid up seventy-five dollars from the proceeds of his over-work. After this he fared better.—His employer showed him no undue partiality, though the other two apprentices thought he did. They were conversing about it in the shop one noon, when Mr. Hammond happened to come in just as a plain remark dropped from the lips of James Prout.

'What is that, boys?' asked the carpenter.—'Do you say that I am partial to Mark Roland?'

The two apprentices were confused, and seemed loth to speak their opinions, but their employer pressed them, and, finally, James answered—

'You give him better work than you do us, sir.'

'What do you mean by that?' demanded Mr. Hammond.

'Why—he works on better work, and when he gets over-work, he can make more,' replied James.

'Look ye, boys—I am glad I know how you feel, for I can set you right. Answer me this: have I devoted one more moment of time or attention to Mark than I have to you? Now think carefully—look over the time you have been in the shop together, and then answer me. 'Don't you know that I have not?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then listen further: I want two nice four panel doors made for the new store. I will give you the dimensions, and you may get out the stuff and make and finish them, and when they are done you shall have your pay.'

'But,' stammered James, 'we can't make a door.'

'Why not?'

'Because we never learned.'

'Who taught Mark to make it?'

'Don't know, sir.'

'Yes, you do know,' said Mr. Hammond sternly. 'You know that he picked up the information while you were off enjoying yourselves. At first he offered to help the journeymen during his spare time, when they were driven, and they not only accepted his offer, but they did just what he wished them to do—they taught him all they could. One evening he came to me, after working hours and wanted to buy a couple of pine boards. I asked him what he wanted of them, and he told me he only wanted to try and see what he could make of them. I asked no more questions, but made him a present of the boards. Two days after I saw a door standing in the shop, and asked one of the journeymen where it came from, and he told me it was one Mark Roland had made. It was as good and perfect a piece of work as was ever done in this shop, and is now hung in Mr. Snow's parlor. Not a particle of instruction had he ever received from me in that department of the trade. He had gained it all by his own exertions; and if I now give him better work than I do you, it is simply because he can do it, while you cannot. And now, boys, I have one word more to say. While you have behaved with decorum, and kept free from absolute evil, I have not felt called upon to interfere with what you have been pleased to call your pleasures; but I may tell you now that you will both see the time, if you live, when you will wish that you had followed the example of the companion with whom you have found so much fault. The way is still open for you, and I give you my word that you may learn all you can, and that you shall profit by all you learn.'

The two apprentices had something to ponder upon when they were left alone, but they did not profit by it. Like too many others, they not only disliked working when they could avoid it, but they spent their spare time in seeking for those kinds of enjoyment which give the most excitement while they last, and last not when the excitement is passed. They did some over-work, and made considerable money, but it all went for amusement, and they were none the better for it. In the meantime Mark worked on in the path he had marked out. He saw the goal ahead—AN HONORED AND RESPECTED MAN—and he moved steadily and industriously towards it. During the third year of his apprenticeship he earned over one hundred dollars. During the fourth he earned one hundred and fifty, and he was now eighteen years of age. He not only made the best use of the few months of each year allowed him for schooling, but he had gained a taste for knowledge and he applied most of his leisure time to its acquirement.

And so the years rolled around, and when James Prout and Thomas Wilson were one-and-twenty, they had become good carpenters. They had 'learned the trade,' and had learned but little else. They could handle all the tools and fashion all the parts of an ordinary dwelling. They took a few weeks to themselves for recreation and pleasure, and then came back and Mr. Hammond hired them, paying them journeyman's wages. They had no money saved up, nor did they even now seem to lay any plans in that direction.

A few months after this Mark Roland was twenty-one. 'Well, Mark,' said Jim Prout, 'what ye goin' to do now? Let out to the old man, eh?'

'Not exactly,' replied Mark. 'Mr. Hammond said, some time ago, that he should like a partner. His business has increased to such an extent that he wants part of the care and responsibility removed from his shoulders. I am going to make him an offer.'

'Not to be his partner?' cried Tom Wilson, in surprise.

'Why not?' returned our hero. 'Do you not think I have knowledge enough of the business?'

'O—tisn't that,' said Tom. 'We know,' he added, rather reluctantly, 'that you are one of the best workmen in the county.'

'And I understand the whole science of architecture, and can raise a comely and harmonious structure from my own plans and designs,' interposed Mark.

'Yes—I know it,' admitted Tom. 'But the old man wants fifteen hundred dollars for half of the shop and business.'