

THE MAN OF THE HOUSE.

BY PANSY.

IT was Saturday night, just after the great clock in the church-tower had struck six, that Mr. Barrows gave Reuben the key to the little house, with permission to look in and see that every thing was all right.

He stood on the little stone door-step and looked about him a few minutes, key in hand. It seemed so new and business-like to be standing before a door which belonged to a house that he had rented, and into which he was to move his family so soon; for now he felt sure that his mother would come. He had dreamed often and often of the time when he would rent a house and move his family, but even his wildest waking dreams had put the time a few years ahead. Yet here he stood all ready to do it.

"What a nice place this would be to keep a cow!" he said to himself, looking around on the bit of a yard with a neat shed at the back, looking wise and manly, and trying not to notice that his heart was beating like a sledge-hammer. "I wonder if we can't manage one of these days to have a cow! I wonder what Beth would say to that! Whole tumblersful of milk! I wonder what Beth will say to every thing!"

And he drew a little sigh. It began to seem a long time to wait from now until Monday before telling Beth about things.

The night was cold, so he decided very soon that it was foolish to stand outside, when he might as well go in. How nicely the key fitted in the lock! He threw the door open and stepped into the bit of a hall. There was a neat oil-cloth on the floor. He stopped and looked at it in surprise. He had not noticed it when he was there before.

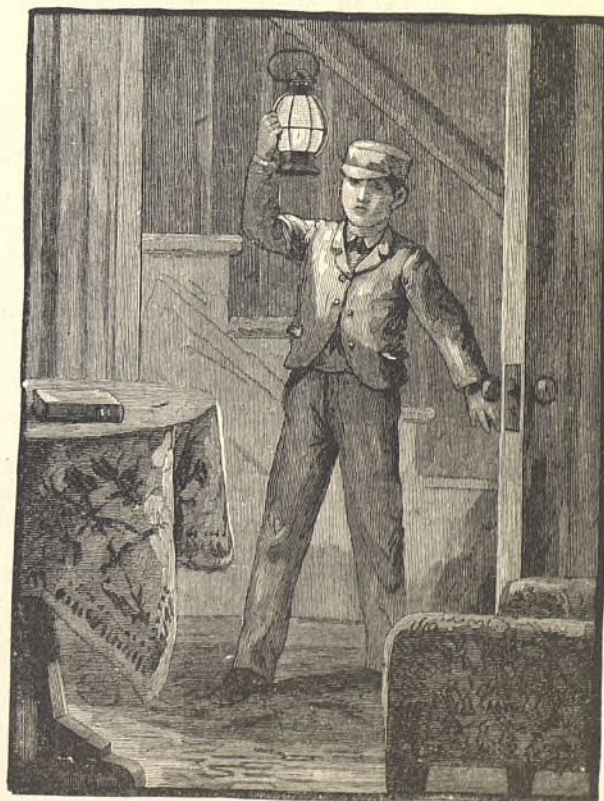
"Maybe it goes with the house," he said aloud. "I hope it does. How nice it looks! Mother couldn't afford any now. I don't see where the money to move is coming from. That's what bothers me."

This he said just as he was opening the parlor door. For the next few minutes he said not a word. If you could have seen his face, you would have wanted a picture of it to take home with you and keep. He swung his lantern aloft, to get from it all possible light on the scene, and stood still. On the floor was a red-and-brown carpet, small bright leaves growing on a woodsy ground, looking to him, somehow, like the stories of the woods that he and Beth had read together.

Soft the carpet was. He lifted one foot carefully and set it down on a bright autumn leaf, then drew it back. He could not have that leaf stepped on. There were curtains at the windows, some warm, bright color, making him think of sunshine. There was a little round stove over by the mantel, and a fire burning in it. The room was warm. There was a round table drawn out in the centre of the room, and some chairs around it, as though people had just been sitting there, and had gone away for a few minutes. There was even a little old-fashioned cushioned lounge.

Reuben did not know it was old-fashioned, but he knew it was beautiful. Not a word did he say. He went on tiptoe through the room into the pretty kitchen. How pretty it was! The floor had been painted; he saw that at a glance. He saw every thing at a glance. A stove set up and glowing, shining with blacking outside and coals inside. The little cupboard stood open, and there were dishes ranged in rows, as if people had just eaten supper, and washed and set away the dishes. How quietly and yet how brightly the fire burned in the stove! Reuben thought of the one at home that always smoked and sulked and glowered.

"Well!" he said at last. "Well, if this isn't the queerest way to clean!" Then he tried to whistle. He had always whistled before when any thing surprised him; but something was the matter with his throat. He choked and coughed, and tried to make a clear sound come; then he actually sat down on one of the neat chairs, of which there were several in the room, and cried. What was he crying about? He couldn't



HE SWUNG HIS LANTERN ALOFT, AND STOOD STILL.

have told you if you had been there and asked; in fact, I suppose if you had been there, he wouldn't have cried; but his heart was so full of astonishment and delight, and some other queer feeling of which he did not know the name, that the tears would not stay back.

"Reuben Watson Stone, you're just a simpleton,

that's what you are!" he told himself at last, very much amazed over the tears. Then without more ado he went up-stairs. What could it all mean? He began to feel afraid that some dreadful mistake had been made, and some other family not belonging to him had moved in. Here was more carpet on the floor, and a bedstead set up, and curtains at the windows, and a little rocking-chair, and a pretty oval table.



"I WILL PROMISE TO THINK ABOUT IT."

"Look here," said the boy at last, setting down his lantern on one chair and himself on another, "wake up, can't you? I say, old fellow, you must be dreaming. This isn't your house! Where did all these things come from, and who are they for? *You* don't own any of them. What are you going to do about it? This is just the queerest world, anyhow, that ever was heard of; there is never any telling what will happen next. I only wish Beth could see the flowers on this carpet! She would pick 'em as sure as the world." Then suddenly remembering the wonderful fact that Beth would see them very soon, that queer lump began to come into his throat again, and he started up suddenly and seized his lantern and hurried away. He didn't know what to make of himself, but he meant not to cry again.

"Well," said Mr. Barrows as he appeared at last in the kitchen where Reuben was putting away his lantern, "been over to the new house have you? Has the cleaning been done to your mind?"

"Cleaning!" repeated Reuben. "I never heard of stoves and carpets and things being *cleaned* into a house before. Mr. Barrows, I don't know, I can't think—" and there he stopped, and that ridiculous lump began to swell and swell in his throat again.

How was he ever going to be able to talk with that coming up to choke him?

"All right," said Mr. Barrows smiling, "you needn't think any thing about it; I'll guess all you were going to say."

"But sir," said Reuben, "I meant, I didn't mean, you know, sir—"

"Of course," said Mr. Barrows, "I know all about it. You didn't mean anybody should help you support your family. You didn't expect any help, and you're quite right. You'll be able to do it nicely, I haven't a doubt; but see here, my boy. Never be afraid to take a little hearty lifting from your friends, when they can do it as well as not and like to, and it will make things easier for your mother. Nothing very wonderful has been done. The carpet was some that we had; didn't want to use it, and it might as well go down there and make things homelike. The stove in the kitchen is second-hand. We needed a larger one, so we turned it out; it wouldn't bring much of any thing for old iron, and yet it is a pretty good stove, and will save your mother paying for the moving of hers. As for the stove in the parlor, it is out of use this winter and may as well stand there as anywhere. And the furniture is a present to your sister Beth from my little girl. My boy, you have done for me this week what all the stoves and carpets and furniture in all the world can never pay, and I didn't help furnish your new house for *pay*, but just because I wanted to. You can tell your mother you earned every cent of it and more too; for I put it in there because she had a good, brave, trustworthy boy."

What was Reuben to say? He had never felt so stupid in his life. At last he made a bold dash:

"I don't know how to thank you," he said, looking up with frank, earnest eyes into Mr. Barrows' face. "I never learned how to thank folks, but I'm just as grateful as I can be, and I'll do the best I can."

"All right," Mr. Barrows said. It was a favorite sentence of his. "When I have learned how to thank you for taking care of my Gracie, perhaps you will have learned how to thank me for a stove and a few things. You see we are hardly even, my boy."

Reuben went away with red cheeks. Of course he was glad that he had used his wits and been able to rescue Gracie Barrows; but he told himself as he made ready for bed, that anybody would have done that, who knew enough; but there were lots and lots of people who wouldn't have put all those nice things in the little house for his mother. And I suppose that was true.

The next day Reuben went to church in a new fashion. His church-going had been very fitful. He had sometimes climbed into the gallery of the great building where he went to Sunday-school, in order to hear the organ play and see the well-dressed people, but he always felt out of place and uncomfortable. Very few people sat up there, and those few looked forlorn and friendless. Nobody spoke to him or looked at him, and he gave very little attention to what was going on after the organ was still. The minister may have preached very good sermons; Reuben did not know. He was busy deciding how he would dress mother and Beth when he became rich, and which pew in the church he would hire, and whether he would drive to church in his carriage. All these plans and many more had Reuben, and church was the place in which they grew faster than anywhere else. But on this Sabbath he felt like somebody else. In the first place, he had a new overcoat.

"I wonder if Bennie's coat would fit him!" Mrs. Barrows had said at the breakfast-table; and her husband with a startled look on his face, had said that he shouldn't be surprised if it would; at least it might be tried if she said so.

After breakfast it was brought; a gray coat, long and heavy, with many pockets and many handsome buttons. It fitted to a charm. "It was my little boy's," Mrs. Barrows said, her eyes looking tender and sad. "We bought it for him only a few months before he went away; I have never wanted anybody to wear it, but if

it hadn't been for you, perhaps we should have had no little girl in the house this morning. My Bennie was a good boy. I think I'll give you his coat."

All this made the lump come into Reuben's throat again, and swell larger than ever; but he resolved then and there he would never soil Bennie's overcoat by thinking a mean thought under it. It covered his worn and patched jacket to a nicety, covered even the patch on his pantaloons, and with his shoes blacked and his hair combed, he felt, somehow, as though the good times of his dreams had begun to come, and he must attend to what was now going on, instead of looking for any more. New things were pouring in on him so fast, they needed all his present attention. So he sat up straight in the end of the Barrows' pew beside the gentleman, and though it was pretty warm, kept his overcoat on, tightly buttoned to his throat, and listened, as well as he could, to the sermon. But it was in the afternoon Sabbath-school that he did his best listening.

The class he was in was very unlike any that he had ever known about; at least the teacher was. In the first place she was a young and pretty lady. Reuben had a fondness for well-dressed people. He did not know it, at least did not realize it, but he liked to look at them. He admired his teacher very much. The only other teacher with whom he was acquainted, had been a man who read questions at him from a book, questions that he did not understand, and did not care about. This one did not seem to him to be talking about a Sabbath-school lesson at all.

"I wonder if any of you boys know how to manage a boat?" she began, and some of them did, or thought they did, and others of them had questions to ask, and before he knew it, Reuben grew very much interested, and forgot all about the lesson.

"What do you think you would do in a storm?" she asked the boy who knew how to manage a boat. And that started talk afresh, and one told what he would do, and another criticized it, and at last when Reuben was appealed to, he had to own that he knew just nothing at all about boats.

"Well, in any danger," said the teacher. "Suppose you are in some place where you know there is danger; you have done the very best you know, and yet you feel sure you are in great danger, and know of no way to help yourselves; what would you do next?"

"Why, there wouldn't be any thing to do," declared one boy, "only to stand still and let it come."

"Or run away from it," said another.

"Suppose you couldn't run away from it?" said the teacher; "suppose it would run away with you?"

"I'd find a way out somehow," said another.

"But we are supposing that you had tried all your ways out, and were *not* out, only felt yourselves getting deeper and deeper into trouble, what then? Think, all of you. Is there one in the class who has ever been in a great trouble, out of which he could not help himself?"

Quick as thought did Reuben's mind go back to that wild ride with Spunk and his drunken master over dark and dangerous roads, with the flying express train chasing them. He had kept pretty still until then, an eager listener, with little to say, but at the memory of his danger and his escape, he drew a long half-shuddering sigh and said almost before he knew it: "I tell you what it is, I've been there."

The boys turned and looked at him, and the teacher smiled on him and questioned: "In danger, my boy?"

"Yes'm."

"And did you know what to do?"

"Some things I knew and did them; but there came a time that there wasn't any thing left to do only hold on, and that I did with all my might, but it didn't seem to be doing any good."

"And then what?"

"And then," said Reuben in a slow, grave tone, his face paling over the memory of it all, "I told God about it."

"Ahd did he answer?"

"Yes'm," said Reuben simply.

The boys looked at him respectfully. His face was flushed now, and he looked down to the floor. He wasn't used to being talked with about such things.

"I am very glad," said the teacher brightly. "You are better able, perhaps, than any of the rest of us, to understand how Peter felt when he got out on that water trying to walk on it, and found that he couldn't; found himself sinking. It wasn't until then that he called out to the Lord. I wonder, Reuben, if you waited until you had done for yourself every thing that you could think of before you called to him."

"Yes'm," said Reuben, going swiftly back over his experience. "I did just that."

"People are apt to," she said. "Peter did so too."

By this time every boy in the class wanted to know about Peter. Reuben had been placed in one of those trying classes where not a boy studied his lesson; and of course he hadn't. He never dreamed of such a thing; so they were all ignorant together, but all eager to hear. Then began the story of the night-ride on the lake, with hard rowing and contrary wind, and one walking on the water, of whom the sailors were afraid at first, and to whom Peter tried to go and almost failed. It was a new story to Reuben; in fact, almost all Bible stories were new to him. He was very much interested, forgot that he was a stranger, and asked questions with such eagerness that the teacher found it a pleasure to teach.

But out of all this came something strange.

When the last hymn was sung, and the prayer was offered, and the scholars were crowding out, this new teacher laid a small gloved hand on Reuben's shoulder, and said in a voice that he never forgot: "I'm glad to see that you are a Christian, my boy."

Then was Reuben startled indeed. The blood rushed over his face away to his forehead, and he turned and gazed on her with astonished eyes.

"Ma'am?" he said at last, not knowing what he ought to say.

"I am glad that you love the Lord Jesus and look to him for help, and have found him able and ready to help you."

"Oh, but," he said in great confusion, "that is a mistake. I don't know much about him, and I don't belong to him at all."

"Is it so?"

And Reuben felt his cheeks grow hotter over the sound of disappointed surprise in her voice.

"I'm so sorry. I thought since you knew where to go in trouble, you surely must be one who followed him. Don't you think you ought to be a Christian, my boy?"

"I don't know what a Christian is."

He looked full in her face and spoke the words gravely enough. He knew almost nothing about these things, and had wondered over them a good deal, especially since he had known Miss Hunter.

"A Christian is one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and tries to do as he says."

"I don't know much about what he says, and as to loving him, I never thought of it."

Reuben was always honest, so now he spoke his exact thoughts.

"One thing he says is that everybody ought to make up their minds to obey his directions, all the time."

"That might'n be easy to do."

"No, sometimes it isn't; in fact it can't be done at

all, without his help, but he is always ready with that. And the beauty of it is, the only safe way, and the only happy way, is the one that he points out."

"Then I shouldn't think it would be hard to mind him."

"Not after we once decide the thing. Will you decide it now, Reuben?"

Reuben was startled. What a plain question this was! And the lady looked right at him with bright earnest eyes and waited for his answer.

"I don't know," he said at last, looking down.

"Are not you a boy who always tries hard to do just as he says he will?"

"Yes'm." He didn't hesitate a minute over this answer. He felt so sure of his promises. In fact, he prided himself on doing just that.

"I thought so. I wish you would promise to do this thing."

"But I can't, you see; maybe it is a promise that I couldn't keep; and I don't want to make any such."

"No; but you can certainly keep this if you choose. Won't you be willing to take my word for that?"

No, Reuben wouldn't. He did not say so, but he looked down, and looked troubled, and seemed not at all ready to answer, and the lady waited.

"Well," she said at last, "will you promise this: That you will think about it all the rest of this day; that as much as you can you will keep from all other thoughts, and just give your mind to this?"

"To what?"

"To deciding whether you will take Jesus Christ for your master, and obey him in every little and great thing all the rest of your life."

"Yes'm," he said after another minute of hesitation.

"I will promise to think about it."

Then she reached forth her hand and took his little brown one in it for a moment, and smiled and said: "Thank you. I can't help thinking you are a true boy, with good common sense, and I'm not afraid of the way you will decide, if you only think."

"THE FOURTH" IN INDEPENDENCEVILLE.

IT was Fourth of July in Independenceville. The soldiers were grandly dressed and parading on the Green. Drums were beating and banners flying. Handsome generals with glittering epauletts and flashing swords galloped along the ranks, ringing out their commands. Every few minutes boom! boom! thundered the cannon from the very top of one of the hills, and heavy clouds of smoke rolled away in the distance.

Soon a multitude of people gathered on the Green about the platform that had been erected, where fifty or more ladies and gentlemen were seated. Then *America* was sung by a thousand voices. It begins with—"My country, 'tis of thee."

Then came the reading of the "Declaration of Independence." Then another song. Then a young lawyer stood up and pronounced an "Oration." He told all about our Fathers of '76; how they were cruelly taxed, how they threw the tea into Boston harbor, how they fought the battle of Bunker Hill, and many others, and for seven long years suffered almost every thing to be free; and how at last came the great battle of Yorktown, where Lord Cornwallis surrendered; our Fathers gained the day, the war was over, and they were free! And then the "Oration" went over the last war, and spake of the Proclamation of Emancipation that set all our black slaves free.

And every time the speaker used the word "free," the people shouted with a great shout, "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" His speech was an hour long, and it was very full of those "frees," and the people put in

just three times as many shouts or "hurrahs" as there were "frees," and the papers said it was a great speech. And finally they sang *The star-spangled Banner*, and it was over.

No, no! I forget. There was something more. That orator who said so much about "free," a few minutes after his speech went into a saloon and began to drink beer, and by night he was drunk. So were some of the handsome captains that were ready that day to fight for "freedom." Also the man who fired off the cannon in honor of the day, and a good many who sang about "The land of the 'free' and the home of the 'brave.'"

And many that were not drunk, went swearing about the streets; yet they called themselves "freemen."

Among the strangest things of all, there were some boys who had sung so much those patriotic songs that they were hoarse; yet they, too, went here and there about the streets singing offensive songs, and sometimes cursing like the men. Others were chewing filthy tobacco; others still were smoking cigars or cigarettes; others were standing at the bars among drinking men and taking their first glass; others were trying to drag some of their young companions into the saloons with them, and, because they would not go, they were striking and kicking and cursing them. And these last boys were the ones who hurrahed so when the speaker called King George a wicked old "tyrant."

And I noticed others as they got into their wagons and started for home began whipping their poor horses at the top of their speed. And some when they got home began to abuse their mothers and wives and sisters and children, and for several days after were very cross at home, or would find sport throwing fire-crackers into other's faces, or when they would run from them would chase them through the house and throw fiery serpents at them.

And when I thought of that "Independence Day" in Independenceville, I wondered if they ought not to have another "Declaration" and another war, and battles of Bunker Hill and Yorktown, and put down a thousand more King Georges and set free the slaves of Cigarettes and Cigars and Tobacco and Rum and Gambling and—ah! so many, so many boys and girls and men and women who don't live in Independenceville, who serve their master—Satan.

Wouldn't you like to be truly "free?" Jesus only can make you free. Ask him to break your chains and set you at liberty.

"IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID."

BY J. F. W.

HARK! how the waves and the waters are raging,
See what a tumult the tempest hath made;
Yet there appears One, who comes in the darkness,
Hark! "It is I, oh, be not afraid."

So let it be when doubt's tempest shall gather,
And in our sadness we walk in the shade;
May we remember the voice of our Saviour—
Hear him, "Tis I, oh, be not afraid."

Or if in sickness, our bodies enfeebled,
All our life's pathway seems lonely and sad;
Let us look up, for our Saviour is near us,
Saying, "Tis I, oh, be not afraid."

Thus let it be while we wait for His coming,
Trusting his love, and the promise he made;
Oh, may we fear not to go when he calleth,
"For I am with you, oh, be not afraid."