

L A M E J E M M Y.



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65, *Paternoster-Row.*

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FRONTISPIECE.



See Page 7.

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1841.

J. E. M. J. E. M. Y.

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“JEM! thou should’st be ashamed of thyself, great idle lad,” cried Molly Garnet to her son, “sitting there doing nothing, when everybody else is working and striving! There!” said she, throwing him a crust of bread, “take that!—That’s all the dinner thee’ll get to-day, I reckon, unless thee’ll do something to get one for thyself.” And as she



threw the bread to him, she gave him a smart blow on the shoulder.

Jem's tears came fast into his eyes. He said nothing; but, rising up from the bench on which he was seated, he took his crutches and hobbled out of the cottage.

He was lame of both his feet, and could only walk with two crutches. He crossed the road, and went through the great meadow, and sat down beside the stream which ran at the bottom of it. Here he wept in silence; for the blow his mother had given him, even more than her severe words, had almost broken his heart. At length he exclaimed, "I cannot be a carter, nor a ploughman, nor a bricklayer, nor a sawyer, nor a blacksmith, nor a joiner, I am so very lame! I wish it had pleased God to make me whole, like other boys!"

As he sat in this manner, full of sad and despairing thoughts, he was twisting round in his fingers a small

twig of osier; and, looking down upon it as it lay on the bank, he suddenly thought, "Could I make baskets?" And then he added to himself, "If I could make baskets, I would take mother the money."

How much may follow from a very small beginning! Jem was determined to conquer all difficulties, and to succeed; and this disposition it was which enabled him to succeed, and which ensured him friends, as you will soon hear. He tried and tried for many days; and most boys would have despaired of success long before Jem despaired. "I am determined I will make a basket!" he said: he even went to L—, which was five

miles off, that he might stand before the shop of a man who made baskets, and watch his method of setting to work.

The next day, and the next, and the next, he was early and late at the edge of the stream at work with his osiers. Everybody wondered why he went so much to the bottom of the great meadow; but no one asked him. His mother only said, "He's after one of his whims, I reckon. It is a good job to get rid of him for a bit, for he's always in the way."

At last, without having said anything about it to anybody, Jem had made himself, by extreme patience



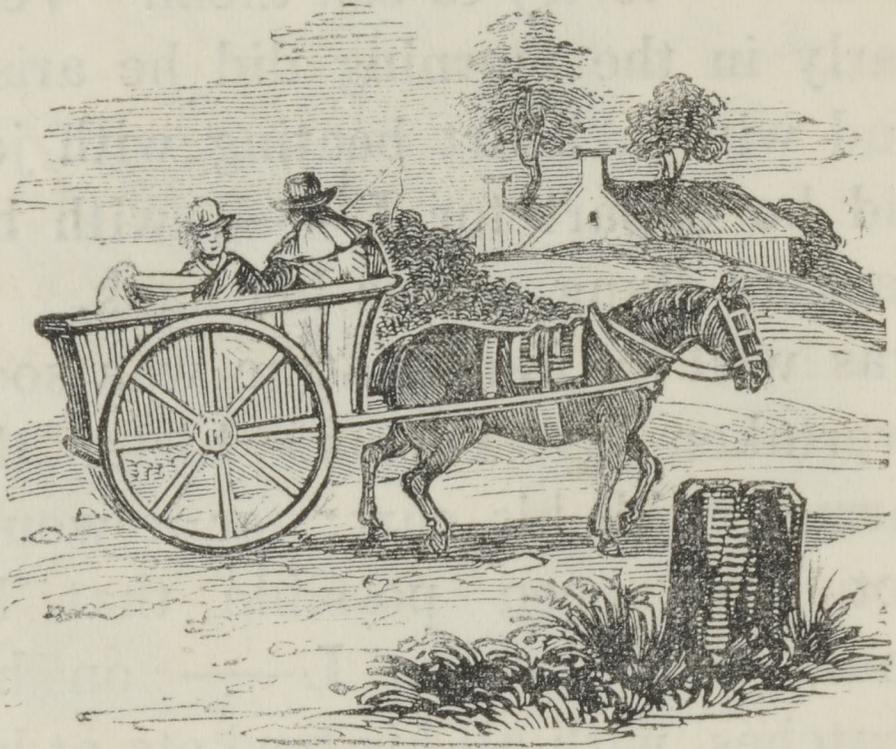
and perseverance, a tolerable basket-maker. He had six small baskets, or hampers, finished, and ready for sale, hid up in a thick elder tree by the brook.

The next day was market-day, and he wished to take his baskets

to L—— to try to sell them. Very early in the morning did he arise, and with a heart beating with joy did he depart for L——, with his baskets slung across his back. It was well for Jem that he was soon overtaken by Thomas Lister the farmer, with his cart; for it would not have been possible that he could have got to L—— on his crutches, with all his baskets at his back. Why, Jemmy, art going to town, lad?"

"Ay, Sir," said Jemmy.

"Why, bless thee, lad! thou'lt never do that on thy wooden stumps, I reckon? Come, get up into th' cart." Jem was very glad to be



seated in the cart, for he was already beginning to be tired. He placed his baskets beside him. "What! art going to sell these here baskets, Jemmy?"

"If I can, Sir," said Jem, sorrowfully, trying to twist the basket

back into proper shape which Thomas had pulled quite crooked.

“I reckon that won’t be so easy, Jem,” said Thomas, laughing. “Why, they’ll not stand on their bottom, nor top, nor side, nor no way! Howsomever,” added he, good-naturedly, “there’s many fools in th’ world, they say; so I hope thou’lt find one, Jemmy: and, any way, I’ll give thee a lift home in th’ cart, and thy wiskets too, if thee’ll come to the Red Lion at five o’clock.”

When Jem got into the market-place with his baskets, he felt quite bewildered, and did not know what to do. The noise and the confusion



were so great he thought he should have been pushed down. The only quiet spot he could find was just by the church-steps; and here he placed himself. He untied his baskets, and ranged them one below the other on the end of the steps, and stood beside them with

his crutches, leaning against the wall of the churchyard.

It was a very busy scene, and hundreds of persons passed close by him, but nobody bought any of his baskets. One or two women took them up to look at them; and one lady said kindly to him, "You have got some nice baskets here. Poor boy! did you make them yourself?" But she passed on, and was buying other things.

At length, Jem grew very hungry, and very sad. He looked at the church-clock to see how soon he must go to the Red Lion to meet Thomas Lister's cart. He then looked down at his baskets,

and the tears rolled down his cheeks. At this moment, a benevolent gentleman stood beside him, looked kindly at him, stooped down to him, and took him by the hand. "Poor boy!" he said, "you have not sold any of your baskets: and they are your own making?"

"Yes, Sir," answered Jem. "I am fit for nothing else," added he, looking at his feet.

"Alas, my poor child!" said the clergyman; "but it is the will of God." He then enquired who had taught him to make baskets.

"Nobody, Sir; I have been trying for a month, Sir, every day. These

are my first, and they are not very good; but I hope I shall do better by and by."

"No doubt you will, if you take pains, my boy," replied the clergyman. "What do you ask apiece for your baskets?"

"O, Sir," said Jem, "I do not ask any price: anything you please, Sir."

So the clergyman said that he would take five of them; and he put a halfcrown into Jemmy's hand. "There is sixpence apiece for them; and you must take them to the great house up the passage there, and ring at the bell, and ask for



Master Frank, and say that I sent the five baskets for his five sisters.” The clergyman then asked Jem his name, and where he lived, and set it down in a little book which he took from his pocket. He then bade him good-morning, and was soon out of sight.

Jem looked at his halfcrown with great delight; and, having put it in his pocket, he put the baskets one into another, and carried them to the door of the great house up the flagged passage. He rang at the great bell, and a smart footman opened the door. He seemed in a great hurry, and said, "O! we don't want any of them sort of things;" when Jemmy shouted out, just as the man was shutting the door, "I want Master Frank, Sir!"

"O, that's a different thing! Step in on to the mat, my lad: if you want Master Frank, I will call him."

Jemmy was frightened at being in such a great house: but when

Master Frank came to him, he spoke in so kind a manner, just like his father, that Jem felt happy in a moment. "And what do you want with me, my little friend?" said he.

"The gentleman who left this house a few minutes ago, Sir, bought these five baskets; and he told me to bring them here, and ask for you, Sir, and say that they were for your five sisters, Sir."

"O, it was my father: very well, come with them into the garden; they will do famously for weeding-baskets! Come this way: but, dear me! poor fellow! how lame you are!"



“O, Sir, I can go very well, and carry the baskets too,” said Jemmy.

“No, no,” said Master Frank, “let *me* carry the baskets. But you look very cold and hungry:—have you had any dinner?”

“No, Sir,” replied Jemmy, “I have had nothing to eat since five o’clock this morning.

“O, poor fellow! and *I* have had both lunch and dinner. Sit down there, and I will order you something, and I will take the baskets into the garden myself.”

By and by, Frank came back to see whether the poor lame boy had got his bread-and-cheese and buttermilk. When Jemmy saw him, he said, “If you please, Sir, I must go now, for I am to meet the cart which I go home in at five o’clock.”

When Frank heard that Jem lived five miles off, he said, “O, by

all means you must be in time for the cart:" and he ran to open the hall-door for him. "But has my father paid for the baskets?" he added.

"O, yes, Sir, and thank you. Good-day, Sir."

"Good-bye, Jem," said Frank. "I hope I shall see you again soon."

When the clergyman came home, he found Frank and his sisters weeding in the garden with the baskets. "Did you see that lame boy, Frank?"

"Yes, Sir."

“ He seems very ingenious and persevering; he deserves encouragement. Did you take down his name?”

“ No, Sir.”

“ You ought to have recollected that, Frank. But I have set it down, and you must remember to see him again next market-day.”

“ Yes, father, I will; and I have been thinking, as his clothes are very ragged, perhaps mamma and you will allow me to give him my old suit?”

“ O, certainly, my dear boy; and we will do more for him if we find him deserving of it.”

The next market-day poor lame Jem was at the church-steps with six more baskets, which were much better made than the others. "How do you do, Jem?" said the clergyman, as he passed. "How do you do, Jem?" said Master Frank: "do you continue to like basket-making?"

At one o'clock, the butler from the great house fetched Jemmy to have some dinner: and when he had returned to his baskets, he found the kind lady who had spoken to him the Saturday before, standing with her little boy and girl beside the baskets looking at them. They bought two of them; and these were all that Jem sold that

day. Thomas Lister said, as they were going home, "Well, Jem, thee's more lucky with thy wiskets than I reckoned thee would be!"

Thus passed several market-days. And it was on a fine autumnal morning in October, as Jem was sitting by the cottage fire, while his mother was washing at the door, that he heard her exclaim, "Run to the gate, Jem! there's two gentlemen on horseback! But thee's such a snail, I'll go myself."

"It is the clergyman and Master Frank," said Jem, hobbling down the garden after his mother, and making a low bow in his fashion.

“Is your son Jem at home, Mrs. Garnet?” said the clergyman.—
“We have brought him a suit of clothes.”

“Ah! there he is himself: “how do you do, Jem?” shouted Frank.
“Here is the bundle for you!”

“And, Jem,” said the clergyman, dismounting, and going into the cottage, “would you like to be bound apprentice to a basketmaker? for I know a very worthy man who has engaged to take you, if you please; and I will pay the fee for you.”

Molly Garnet courtseyed twenty times, and was loud in her thanks,

and in her expressions of gratitude. But Jem said nothing: he leaned against the wall, and tears rolled down his cheeks. "Jem! you dolt!" cried his mother, "cannot you speak to the gentlemen? He has no manners, Sir. But I will make him go! What are you whimpering there for, you dumb idiot?—I'm ashamed of you!"

"O, never mind, good woman; we know Jem very well: we know that he is not ungrateful, and we know that he will be industrious too."

"Yes, Jem," said Frank, going up to him and taking his hand; "and, do you know, it is all fixed,

if you are agreeable to it. You are to live altogether with William Brown, and to go to our Sunday-school, and be in my class. William Brown is the teacher of our Sunday-school, and he is a very good man; and he says he knows you already, and that you are a very sharp fellow: and, I will answer for it, you will soon be a good basketmaker, and, by and by, perhaps be the teacher in our Sunday-school too!—Who knows? So come next Monday in your new clothes, and papa will settle you in your new home, where, I am sure, you will be as happy as possible; for Mary Brown was my nurse, and she is a kind good body, and keeps a clean, tidy house.”

So this was the way in which lame Jemmy became a basketmaker and a schoolmaster.

THE END.

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