

took down another that had been heating all the evening, and was again ready for business.

But there was something beside butter in the drawer of the cart. There was a partition in the drawer, and in the smaller side glistened nickels, dimes and quarters.

"Yes, I'll hang around," said the man on the curb, decisively.

"Hullo," cried out a malicious-faced boy, popping up suddenly from somewhere, and evidently having nothing to jingle, and so taking its worth in mockery. "You feel grand, don't you? You feel too good to work, don't you?"

"No, I don't," said John, quietly, brushing up his corn into a neater heap.

"Ya'as, yer do. Yer wouldn't black shoes n'r sell papies: you'd feel too good, wouldn't yer?"

"I don't feel too good to do any honest work," replied John, holding out a few corns to the mocker, who took the corns eagerly but with a shame-faced air, but only half mollified.

"Yer set up to be a gentleman, anyhow."

"Yes, I set up to be a gentleman. A fellow can be a gentleman, no matter what his work is."

The boy stared, twisted on his heel, snuffled, munched his corn, and when he had gone a short distance called over his shoulder, "I'll be around agin some time when I have a nickel."

Hot-corn John apparently immediately forgot the existence of the malicious boy in attending to a new customer, but the man on the curb noticed that he began to have lapses of thoughtfulness. A boy who jumped off one of the trolleys, who was very shabbily dressed and evidently a stranger, got an overflowing bag of corn richly salted and buttered. "Pooh," said the man on the curb, looking vexed and jerking his elbows up and down discontentedly, "he was absented-minded that time, that's all."

Then a fussy little old woman came along, and asked if the corn was fresh, and told John to be sure and give her good measure, and picked up all the corns that dropped at the side of the measure, and asked if he couldn't let her have the corn a little cheaper, times were so hard and there were five children. And John put in an extra bag in the same way, handed them to her with a fine bow, and told her they were for the babies, with his compliments.

Then the man on the curb groaned. After all, Hot-corn John was not like the rest of them. He shuffled about uneasily as if to go on when an auto, coming decently down the street all according to law, suddenly went crazy and made a bee-line for a little Irish lassie crossing the street with a milk can in her hands.

John dashed into the street and pulled lassie and can out of harm's way, and lingered to soothe her fright, and looked to see that no further harm was coming from the crazy auto.

Something had haappened at last.

The man on the curb slowly walked to the front of the hot-corn cart; everybody was gaping at the auto. He took John's place, filling a bag with corn. Nobody noticed. When he set the bag down with one hand, he pulled open the drawer with the other: nobody was looking. In an instant he could seize two handfuls and walk off, and who would be the wiser? He must be quick about it, too, if he was going to do it; for John and the other people would be back directly.

But somehow the man's hands kept on measuring corn and when a customer held out a nickle, he took it, and handed out the bag of corn and placed the nickel beside the salt jar. Then he stuffed his mouth with the corn and ate it greedily.

Two other customers came along, and then John came up in a great hurry and looked anxiously at his cart, and then suspiciously at the stranger standing in his place. "Much obliged to you," he said, and glanced at the three nickels beside the salt-shaker.

"I could have gone off with all your cash, easy," said the man.

"So you could," said John. "What's this," taking up the nickels.

"I made three sales," said the man.

John filled a bag with corn and handed it to the man. He gave it an eager look and put it in his pocket.

"Any little folks at your house?" asked John.

"Three," said the man with a choke in his voice.

John quickly filled three bags with corn, and then another for the mother, he said. "I am greatly obliged to you for looking after my cart," he said. "And if you want a favor any time, come around."

The man was eating out of one of the bags of corn now like a famished man. "You don't know of any one who wants a man for any sort of work, do you?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," said John. "That woman over there wants a man to take her auto home, and she wants a man to take care of it. She says her man is careless and she will never go out with him again. But mabe you don't know anything about autos."

The man gulped hard and said, "A little—I owned one once."

John stared, but said quickly: "There's luck for you then. She treats her hired men prime. I know her. And she pays well. Hurry up, and tell her Hot-Corn John sent you, and, when she looks this way, I will nod and point to you. I don't want to leave my cart again."

"Guess I have made a hole in the profits this evening," said John, as he gathered up his change; but he whistled as though he was happy about it, and, when he really found it all there, he was happier still.

A little later the man who had stood on the curb flashed by in the auto and nodded brightly to John. "It's all because Hot-Corn John is not like the rest of them," he said.

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