

HONESTY AND INDUSTRY:

A NARRATIVE FOR THE YOUNG.

SOME years ago, a poor boy about ten years old, entered the warehouse of a rich merchant in Dantzic, named Samuel Richter, and asked the bookkeeper for alms. The man did not raise his head from his hand, but grumbled out, "You will get nothing here, be off!" Weeping bitterly, the boy glided towards the door, at the moment that Richter entered. "What is the matter here?" he asked, turning to the bookkeeper. The man scarcely looked up from his work, but answered "A worthless beggar-boy!"

In the mean time, Richter looked towards the boy, and observed, that when close to the door, he picked up something from the ground. "Ah, my little lad," said he, what is that you picked up?" The weeping boy turned and showed him a needle. "And what will you do with that?" asked the merchant. "My jacket has holes in it," was the answer, "I will sew up the big ones."

Richter was pleased with this reply, and still more with the boy's innocent, handsome face. He said, therefore, in a kind, though serious tone, "But are you not ashamed, you so young and so hearty, to beg? Cannot you work?"

"Ah, my dear sir," replied the boy, "I do not know how. I am too little yet to thrash, or to fell wood. My father died three weeks ago, and my poor mother and my little brothers have eaten nothing these two days. Then I ran out in anguish, and begged for alms. But, alas! a single peasant only gave me a piece of bread yesterday; since then, I have not eaten a morsel."

It is quite customary for those who make a trade of begging to contrive tales like this, and this hardens many hearts against the claims of general want. But the merchant trusted the boy's honest-looking face. He thrust his hand into his pocket, drew forth a piece of money, and said, "There is a shilling; go to the bakers, and with half the money buy bread for yourself, your mother, and your brothers; but bring back the other half to me." The boy took the money and ran joyfully away.

"Well," said the surly bookkeeper, "he will laugh in his sleeve, and never come back again."—"Who knows?" replied Richter. As he spoke, he saw the boy returning, running quickly, with a large loaf of brown bread in one hand, and some money in the other. "There, good sir," he cried, almost breathless, "there is the rest of the money." Then, feeling very hungry, he begged for a knife, to cut off a piece of the bread. The bookkeeper reached him in silence, his pocket-knife. The lad cut off a piece in great haste, and was about to eat it. But suddenly, he bethought himself, laid the bread aside, and folding his hands, uttered a silent prayer, and then fell to his meal with a hearty appetite.

The merchant was moved by the boy's unaffected conduct. He inquired after his family and home, and learned from his simple narrative that his father had lived in a village, about four miles distant from Dantzic, where he owned a small house and farm. But his house had been burned to the ground, and much sickness in his family had compelled him to sell his farm. He had then hired himself out to a rich neighbour; but before three weeks were at an end, he died, broken down by grief and excessive toil. And now his mother, whom sorrow had thrown upon a bed of sickness, was, with her four young children, suffering the bitterest poverty. He, the eldest, had resolved to seek for assistance, and had gone, at first, from village to village, then had struck into the high-road; and, at last, having begged everywhere in vain, had come to Dantzic.

Richter's heart was touched. He had but one child, and this boy appeared to him as a draft at first sight, which Providence had drawn upon him as a test of his gratitude. "Listen, my boy," he began; "have you a wish to learn?"—"Oh, yes! I have, indeed," cried the boy. "I have read the catechism already; and I should know a good deal more, but at home I had always my little brother to carry, for my mother was sick in bed."

The merchant at once formed his resolution. "Well, then, said he, "if you are good, honest, and industrious, I will take care of you. You shall learn, have meat, drink, and clothing, and in time, earn something besides. Then you can support your mother and your brothers." The boy's eyes flashed with joy. But in a moment he cast them again to the ground, and said sadly, "My mother all this while has nothing to eat." At this moment, as if sent by Providence, an inhabitant of the

boy's native village entered Richter's house. The man confirmed the lad's story, and willingly consented to carry the mother tidings of her son William, and some food, and a small sum of money from the merchant. At the same time, Richter directed his bookkeeper to write a letter to the pastor of the village, commending the widow to his care, with an additional sum enclosed for the poor family, and promising further assistance.

As soon as this was done, Richter at once furnished the boy with decent clothes, and at noon led him to his wife, informing her of little William's story, and of the plan which he had formed for him. The good woman readily promised her best assistance in the matter, and she faithfully kept her word.

During the next four years young William attended the schools of the great commercial city. His faithful foster-father then took him into his counting-house, in order to educate him for business. Here, at the desk as well as on the school-form, the ripening youth distinguished himself, not only by his natural capacity, but by the faithful industry with which he exercised it. With all this, he retained his native innocence and simplicity. He regularly sent half his weekly allowance to his mother, until she died, after having survived two of his brothers. She had passed the last years of her life not in want, it is true, but, by the aid of the kind Richter and her faithful son, in a condition above want.

After the death of his beloved mother, there was no dear friend left to William in the world, except his benefactor. Out of love for him, he became an active, zealous merchant. He began by applying the superfluity of his allowance, which he could now dispose of at his pleasure, to a trade in Hamburg guilds. When by care and prudence he had gained between twenty and thirty pounds, he found that in his native village there was a considerable quantity of good hemp and flax, which was to be had at a reasonable price. He asked his foster-father to advance him forty pounds, which Richter did, with great readiness. The business prospered so well, that, in the third year of his clerkship William had acquired the sum of one hundred pounds. Without giving up his trade in flax, he trafficked also in linen goods, and the two combined made him, in a couple of years, about two hundred pounds richer. This happened during the appointed five years of clerkship. At the end of this period William continued to serve his benefactor five years more with industry, skill, and fidelity. Then he took the place of the bookkeeper, who died about that time, and three years after he was taken by Richter as a partner into his business, with a third part of the profits.

But it was not the will of Providence that this pleasant partnership should be of long duration. An insidious disease cast Richter upon a bed of sickness, and kept him for two years confined to his couch. All that love and gratitude could suggest William did to repay his benefactor's kindness. Redoubling his exertions, he became the soul of the whole business, and still he watched long nights at the old man's bedside, with his grieving wife, until, in the sixty-fifth year of his life, Richter closed his eyes in death. Before his decease, he placed the hands of his only daughter, a sweet girl of two-and-twenty years, in those of his beloved foster-son. He had long looked upon them both as his children. They understood him; they loved each other, and in silence, yet affectionately and earnestly, they solemnised their betrothal at the bedside of their dying father.

About ten years after Richter's death, the house of William Berne, "late Samuel Richter," was one of the most respectable in all Dantzic. It owned three large ships, employed in navigating the Baltic and North Seas, and the care of Providence seemed to watch especially over the interests of their worthy owner. He honoured his mother-in-law like a son, and cherished her declining age with the tenderest affection, until, in her seventy-second year, she died in his arms.

As his own marriage proved childless, he took the eldest son of each of his two remaining brothers, now substantial farmers, into his house, and destined them to be his heirs. But, in order to confirm them in their humility, he often showed them the needle which had proved such a source of blessing to him, and bequeathed it, as a perpetual legacy, to the eldest son in the family.

It is but a few years since this child of poverty, honest industry, and sincere gratitude, passed in peace from this world.