THE OLD TRAMP.

He sat by the roadside on a log lacing his last year's suit with hickory withes, for buttons he had none. He had lost one shoe when he jumped from the freight train which had lately passed, and as it may appear strange that a tramp stealing a ride will abandon it unless assisted in so doing by some brakeman it is best to explain that he intended going west and found himself nicely stowed away in a boiler on a car going east. This was unpleasant, and as he stuck his head through a manhole and realized he was going back over the weary miles of the previous day's tramp he did what many another man and brother has done—jumped.

It was not a successful jump. He turned over endwise a number of times and lit on his head in a swamp. He was pretty firmly planted, and he kicked worse than a towpath mule. He had been in that fix before, and he knew that the kicking would loosen his head in the mud. It did, but somehow it loosened a shoe and sent it flying in the water where he failed to find it, and there he sat on the log tying himself together after he had taken an inventory to learn if he was all there.

Disgusted with railroads he struck for the interior. His prospects were not promising. Locomotion was not good with only one shoe, so he cut a crutch and got along better for the first day as a lame man, wounded in the charge on Vicksburg, in the Thirteenth army corps. This secured him an old shoe at a country store, and a collection was taken up for him. It netted him 7 cents, but he believed it would have been 11 had it not been for a loose lining in the hat of the benevolent individual who took up the collection.

Throwing away the crutch when he got over the hill, he stopped as an ablebodied man for two days at a farm and helped repair fences; then he wandered on westward, sleeping in a barn the first night afterward and losing the tail of his coat the next morning through the united sentiments of a dog's jaw, as the canine remained upon one side of a fence, and the tramp went over on the other.

After that he traveled better; he was lighter; besides the old coattails used to scare him, flapping around in the wind suddenly and unexpectedly, and make him think he was going to be robbed. A tramp generally hasn't got much, but sometimes an old string that keeps his shoe on is as precious in his sight as a woman's new spring bonnet.

The next night he stopped at a large old farmhouse, where he had soon the sympathy of the farmer's wife and was comfortably seated in the kitchen waiting for supper when her husband returned home. He had told her apparently the true and pathetic story of his life. Raised on a farm in Missouri, he had in his early manhood taught school and then clerked in a store, and afterward selling his little patrimony invested the proceeds in a country store, which the bushwhackers of the late war had robbed and burned, then he drifted away and taught school again and did most anything for a living, until at last, a poor, solitary old tramp, there he was in her kitchen asking for food and shelter for the night.

"Come, get out and travel," exclaimed the farmer as he saw the tramp; "you can't stop here."

"Now, John, let him stay; it's dark and looks like rain," said the farmer's wife pleadingly; "he's been as well off once as we are."

"Oh, that's what these tramps all say—all rich, first families in the land, blueblooded stock all of them; can't any of them eat pork and potatoes—raised on chicken. We haven't got anything he'd eat."

"Hush, John; don't talk that way Remember he is a human being, and we ought to 'do unto others as we'd have them do unto us.' We might be homeless some day."

Reluctantly the farmer yielded to his wife's wishes, and after a good supper the old tramp was permitted to sleep in a little room in the back porch, used as a granary or harness room. Suddenly, in the dead hour of night, the household was aroused, and there was terrible excitement.

The house was on fire, all in a blaze around the stairway, burning like a tinder box and rapidly cutting off access to the upper rooms, in which three children was sleeping. Farmers seldom know what to do in case of fire. They go rushing around, all excited, catching up old saddles and rockings chairs and forgetting more valuable things. So it was some moments after the farmer and his wife and one or two farmhands, and the tramp had rushed out in the front yard before the children were missed from the group, and all that time the flames and smoke had been filling the lower rooms and rapidly working upward.

"Oh, my children, my children!" shrieked the poor woman, rushing around frantically. "Save them, John; for God's sake, save them!"

The farmer rushed into the room, and looking hopelessly upward at the burning stairway was driven back by the heat and dropped down in despair with his hands over his face.

"Too late, too late, they are gone!" exclaimed one of the farmhands.

"I'll get 'em out for you, ma'am. What room are they in?" asked the old tramp, with a strange look in his eyes.

"Oh, it's too late! You can never get up there," replied the farmer, standing up in his hopeless despair, while his wife fainted dead away.

"Never mind. I've been in close places before. I'll go."

One of his old shoes dropped off as the tramp rushed in, and then they could see him, as it were, going up through the flames as he hastily climbed the burning stairs, and then he stood at the window.

"Here's your little girl; catch her as I drop her," and he disappeared in the smoke.

"Catch the little boy," he said as he

(Concluded on Fourth page.)