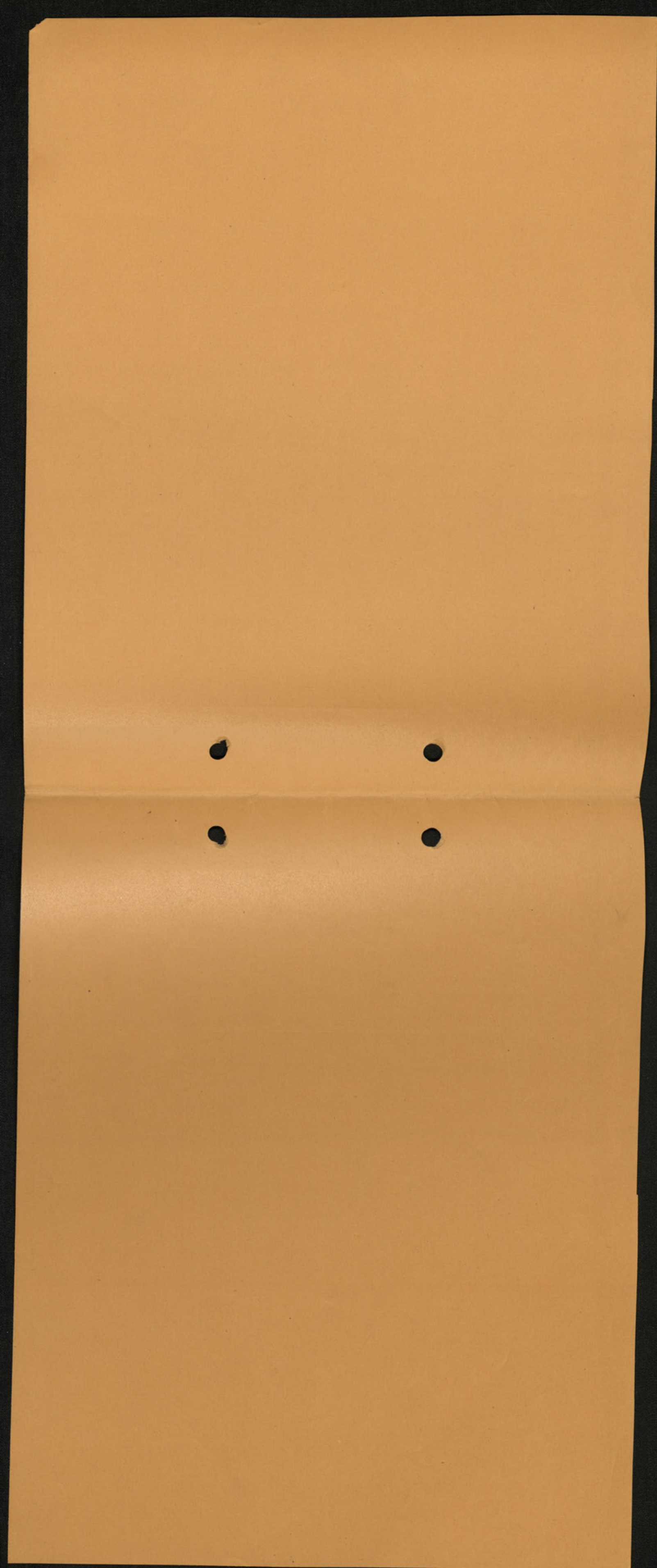


A mite of a black boy or
the "Little Lurp"

Stories for children

original manuscript.

Vol 6, No 26



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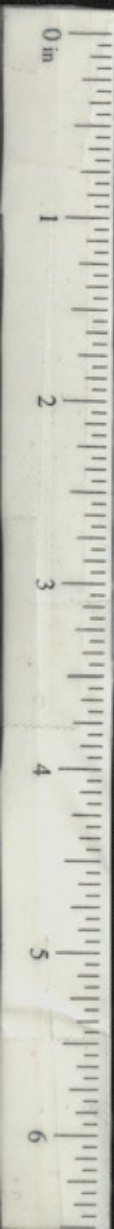
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A mix of a black boy - or the "little snip".

Wonderful Development.

~~One day~~ During the fall of 1861 while the army of General McClellan was encamped along the Potomac, ~~as some~~ my camp occupied a position in front of the Fairfax Seminary - it was named ^{by General E. V. Sumner who had but} ~~so he had never seen elsewhere~~ ^{recently come from San Francisco,} "Camp California".

As some soldiers were one day returning ~~to the camp~~ from a visit to Alexandria, a queer little black boy who ^{at first} escaped their notice, followed them to the camp. It was near night when he was first ^{seen} ~~discovered~~ among the tents and as there was no one present to find, claim or recognize him the discoverers of this peculiar specimen of ^{humanity} ~~of~~ ^{have done} ~~as they would with a~~ ^{kid or lamb} ~~stray horse or mule~~ for which they had no immediate use, they



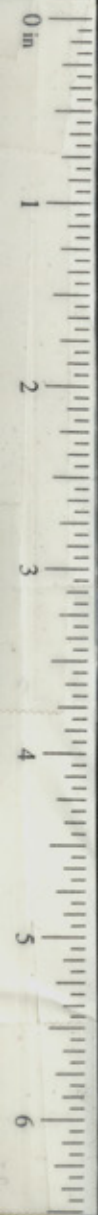
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~~brave~~ girl ¹⁸ ~~to~~ my ~~to~~ head of master.
The ^{modest} ~~had~~ ^{to his eye} could not have been more
than ~~four~~ ^{six} years of age.

I have often admired Mrs. Stowe's
description of "Topsy". ~~Reaching~~ Abating
a few years & substituting boy for
girl and ~~the~~ you have a fair
portraiture of our nite. Mrs. Stowe says:
"She ~~the~~ ^{Topsy} was one of the blackest of her
race. Her round shining eyes, glittering
as glass beads, moved with quick
and restless glances over everything in
the room. Her mouth half open
with astonishment at the wonders,
& & & displayed a white & brilliant
set of teeth & &."

The expression of her face was
an odd mixture of shrewdness and
cunning over which was oddly
drawn, like a kind of veil, an expression
of the most doleful gravity & solemnity.
She was dressed in a single filthy ragged
garment, made of bagging. Altogether
there was something odd & goblin-like



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about her appearance, — something, as
Miss Ophelia afterwards said, "so heathenish" as
to inspire that good lady with utter dismay;
and turning to St. Clare she said, "Augustine!
what in the world have you brought that
thing here for?"

Imagine just such ^{another} black specimen —
with the bright eyes, hair curled tight over
his round head, ~~the whitest~~ ^{the whitest} ~~little~~ ^{little}, ~~an odd~~

a curious undefinable expression of face,
so restless as not to keep still ^{ever} a moment —

a single tattered ^{dirty} gray garment hanging
to his shoulders — with plenty of evidence
that he had never been subjected to water,

comb or brush. And you have a
picture of little ~~Tommie~~ "Tom." as he
~~appeared~~ ^{turned up} in my tent that first night.

"What's your name my lad?" "Tomie!" ^{Sah!}

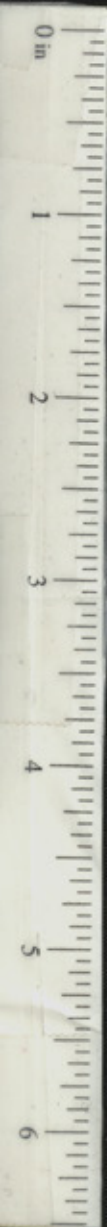
"Tomie what?" "Oh, ~~oh~~ ^{dest} Tomie!"

"Where's your papa?" "Papas' gone!"

Where's your mamma? "Oh — Mamma, — Mamma,

~~the~~ stop (probably strap or slap) Tomie. x x

Meanwhile his mite-ship began to chase
a dog that appeared near the open front of
the tent, and to clap his hands & scream



with delight as the dog scampered away
a few yards & then turned & barked at the
youngster, as he ^{any day} ~~could~~ ^{half a good would} have done as
a bristling cat. ~~of which he was half~~
~~afraid.~~

We could find ^{out} nothing from the lad & our
inquiries afterward in the town were
of no avail. The child never cried from
homesickness and seemed well fed and completely happy
provided he was not punished for his ^{quaint & mischievous} pranks.
~~which were full of mischief.~~

I sent for Abraham Henry Johnson
our ^{negro} cook.

Johnson was one of those black men of
the old time. He was very black & shiny.

Brought up in a Virginia family of
standing, he ^{omitted polite manners} never ~~forgot his breeding~~.

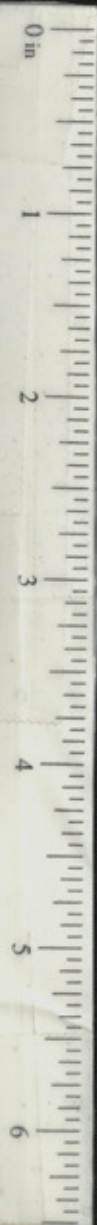
He had somehow learned to read & write.

He used excellent language in conversation.

And our messmates always said of him:

"Johnson never forgets himself - he is
a natural gentleman." He was also a ^{strong} ~~man~~ ^{gentle} ~~man~~.

"Well, Johnson", I said. "This is a queer little
fellow, take him & see what you can
do with him. I will get him a suit of



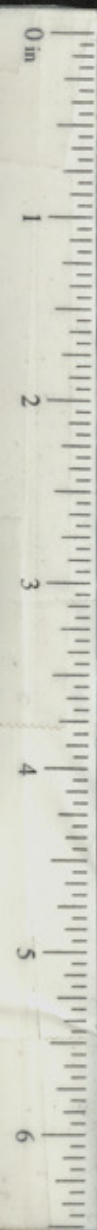
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clothes tomorrow in Alexandria & set on foot some inquiries about him. Meantime wash him up, give him his supper & a place to sleep."

"Yes sir, It shall be done as the General directs. I fear it will require a quantity of soap, sir.!"

Johnson gave a grave smile as he took the little fellow by the hand & led him off.

Indeed it was not an easy job ^{to transform the child} ~~But~~ When I next saw Tom, ^{his} hair was cropped close to his pate. He had been "scrubbed & scrubbed" as Johnson said. Then Johnson had wrapped him in a light blanket & was trying in his grave style to reason with the boy & make him ^{set on} ~~be~~ still till his clothes should come. I had kept my promise. I brought the clothing & soon Tommie capered off in great glee, clapping his hands & dancing ^{around} ~~dancing~~ on his new gray suit. The soldiers played with him as with a little monkey. He was afraid of nobody & obeyed nobody ^{except} ~~but~~ Henry Johnson. He was commonly



called "that little ^{2d} simple man" or by the more kindly
men "fowlit".

After a week or so, I noticed that he often
helped Johnson at the cooking and
did for him many little chores such as
a ~~little~~ ^{simple} child could do. I believe Johnson

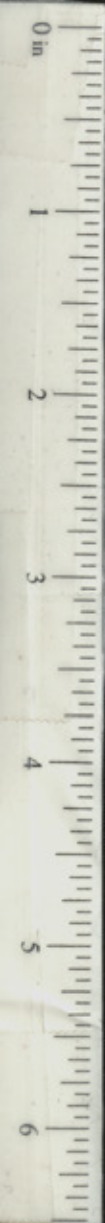
never struck him or was cross to him
but he ^{soon} gained a ^{remarkable} ascendancy over the
lad & ^{perseveringly} taught him.

Still out of Johnson's sight he was
up to all sorts of mischief. He would
pull out the tent pins, nobody could tell
how, & let your tent sag over, pull the
~~cords~~ ^{when you were asleep} & run off
shouting. ^{He would} pick up anything he saw & tuck
it into his pocket, as, your knife, spur,
sleeve button, handkerchief & what not?

Johnson would lead him back with
his plunder & ^{oblige} him ^{to make} return. He
would grin & wink & seemed to have
no ^{possible} moral sense as he comically obeyed
his old friend. x x x

Suddenly we were ordered to march
and I lost sight of the ^{queer little} lad altogether.

He strayed away from us as he had



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strayed from his name. We went
on to pass through the changing
scenes of the four years of terrible war.
We had marched back and forth & forward
through Virginia & Maryland - and after war
transferred ~~to~~ the broader fields of Tennessee
Alabama, Georgia & the Carolinas -
then ^{at least} peace had come ~~at last~~. The
work ^{of reconstruction} for the freed men ^{had} occupied many
many months & years. ~~The~~ Afterward
~~the~~ ^{had been} ~~was~~ dispatched to the Indians
of the South ~~west~~ and had returned
to Washington. ~~It~~ This had filled up a
period of ~~twelve~~ eleven years.

One day a ~~fine~~ ^{neatly} dressed colored
young man ~~of~~ ^{of} seventeen or eighteen
~~day of some~~ ^{year} ~~fifty~~ ^{years} ~~ago~~ ^{approached} me
on the street.

"How do you do, General Howard?"

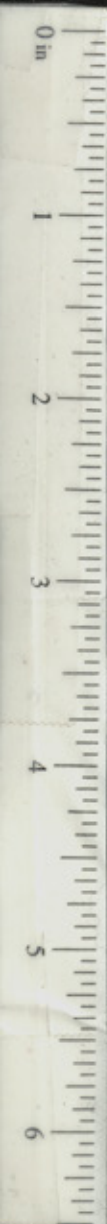
I answered ^{politely} him, but could not recognize him.

He said: "You don't know me!"

"I said no, what is your name?"

"My name is Thomas M—."

"Don't you remember a little boy
at the camp over the river whom you

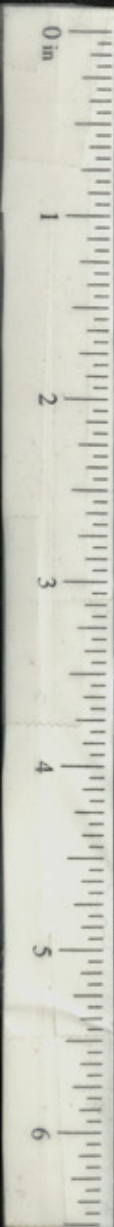


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befriended. Then he related some
of the incidents that identified him
as the same "Sowet" grown to
manhood. He had at this time a good
situation and had been able to get
a fair education. He was a handsome
manly youth full of hope & promise.

I saw him but a few minutes, ^{but} long enough to find that the fidelity of Henry Johnson, who in the ^{middle of the most untoward of} ~~most~~ ^{circumstances}, had never failed to ^{earn} ~~bear~~ himself as ^{a true man &} a sincere follower of Christ, had borne its lawful fruit.

* The ~~poor~~ ^{wise} man has said: "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. x x. He that observeth the wind, shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." The bonds men broken and the bond child ~~has~~ ^{now} become an intelligent free man.

There is no evolution like that of
 taken soon enough, and with caring fidelity,
 souls when properly nurtured & trained.



[Faint, illegible handwriting on lined paper, possibly a letter or document. The text is mostly obscured by ink smudges and bleed-through from the reverse side.]