

**A BOY ON A FARM:
AT WORK
AND AT PLAY**

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A Boy on a Farm: At Work and at Play by Jacob Abbott & Clifton Johson & Dr. Lyman Abbott

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JACOB ABBOTT & CLIFTON JOHSON & DR. LYMAN ABBOTT

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AT WORK AND AT PLAY

BY
JACOB ABBOTT

EDITED BY
CLIFTON JOHNSON

With an Introduction
by
DR. LYMAN ABBOTT

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Boy on Farm
W. P. I

PREFACE

FEW books are remembered with greater affection by persons who were children in the middle of the last century than those written by Jacob Abbott. No American writer for young people of that time approached him in influence and popularity. His stories were very quiet; there was never anything of the wild and adventurous about them; they were the simple happenings of ordinary, everyday life. This was humble fare, perhaps, from the modern standpoint, yet the narratives held the interest of the unspoiled reader by reason of their truthfulness to the average experience, the attractiveness of the characters portrayed, and because of the gentle humor which brightened the author's pages.

The educational effect of Jacob Abbott's stories, both mental and moral, was very great. They taught industry, honesty, and all the manly virtues, and they had a distinctly refining and elevating effect on those into whose hands they fell. The insistence, however, with which these virtues were

proclaimed and emphasized, constitutes a weakness in the books as we view them now. The moralizings are too intrusive and too long drawn out, and they seem hardly necessary; for the stories convey their own easily perceived lessons. These ethical discussions and explanations are for the most part eliminated in the present edition, and it is believed, as thus revised, the stories will hold the interest of young readers and continue to do excellent work in training youthful instincts naturally and healthfully.

Two of Jacob Abbott's books are here included—"Rollo at Work" and "Rollo at Play." The author in his preface to the original volumes states that while they are intended primarily for entertainment he hopes they will aid "in cultivating the thinking powers, in promoting progress in reading, and in cultivating the amiable and gentle qualities of the heart."

I think they have marked capacity for all these things and it is with this thought in mind that I have edited them.

CLIFTON JOHNSON.

INTRODUCTION

ALL good men love children, but my father not only loved, he respected them. This respect which he had for children was, I think, the secret of his power over them, which was quite as remarkable as his literary success in writing for them. In a true sense it might be said that he treated children as his equals, not through any device or from any scheme, but spontaneously and naturally.

He never deceived children, never tricked them with cunning devices, never lied to them. This may seem small praise, yet men—and for that matter women—who never lie to children are, I am afraid, a rather small minority. A promise to a child was quite as sacred in his eyes as a promise to a grown person. He would as soon have thought of defaulting on a promissory note as defaulting on a promise to a child. He trusted the judgment of children, took counsel with them, not in a false pretence but in reality, and in all the matters which concerned them and their world was largely governed by their judgments. He threw responsibility upon them, great responsibility, and

they knew it. The audacity of his confidence surprises me even now as I look back upon it. I entered college before I was fourteen. My father not only let me choose the college for myself, but made me decide for myself whether I would go to college. When the time for entrance examination approached, he called me to him, told me that if I went into business as an errand boy he would lay up for me every year what the college life would cost him, so that at eighteen I should have a capital of two thousand dollars and interest. Thus I not only had to decide that I would go to college, but also had to decide that I was willing to give up two thousand dollars for a college education, and two thousand dollars was a large sum to my boyish mind. But, as a result, I took college life with great seriousness, quite resolved to get the two thousand dollars' value out of the education. This act was quite characteristic of my father. Though he was my wisest counselor, I cannot remember that he ever gave me a definite and specific piece of advice; he put questions before me with great clearness, summed up the *pros* and *cons* like a judge upon the bench, and then left me to be the final arbiter.

This respect which he showed to children inspired them with respect for themselves and for one another. It gave dignity to the children who came under his influence. That influence was a masterful one. I should misrepresent him if I gave the impression that he exercised no authority. On the contrary, his authority was supreme and final; he gave few commands, but he required prompt, implicit and unquestioning obedience to those which he did give. I have known children to disobey him, but I never knew one to rebel against him. I do not know what would have happened in case of a rebellion. I think no child ever thought of it as possible. I never knew him to strike a blow. I do not recall that he ever sent a child to his room, or supperless to bed, or set him to write in his copy book, or to learn tasks, or resorted to any other of the similar expedients, necessary perhaps in school, and frequent in most families. In general he simply administered natural penalties. If a child lied or broke his promises, he was distrusted. If he was careless or negligent, the things which were given to other children to play with were withheld from him. If he quarreled, he was taken away from his playmates, but