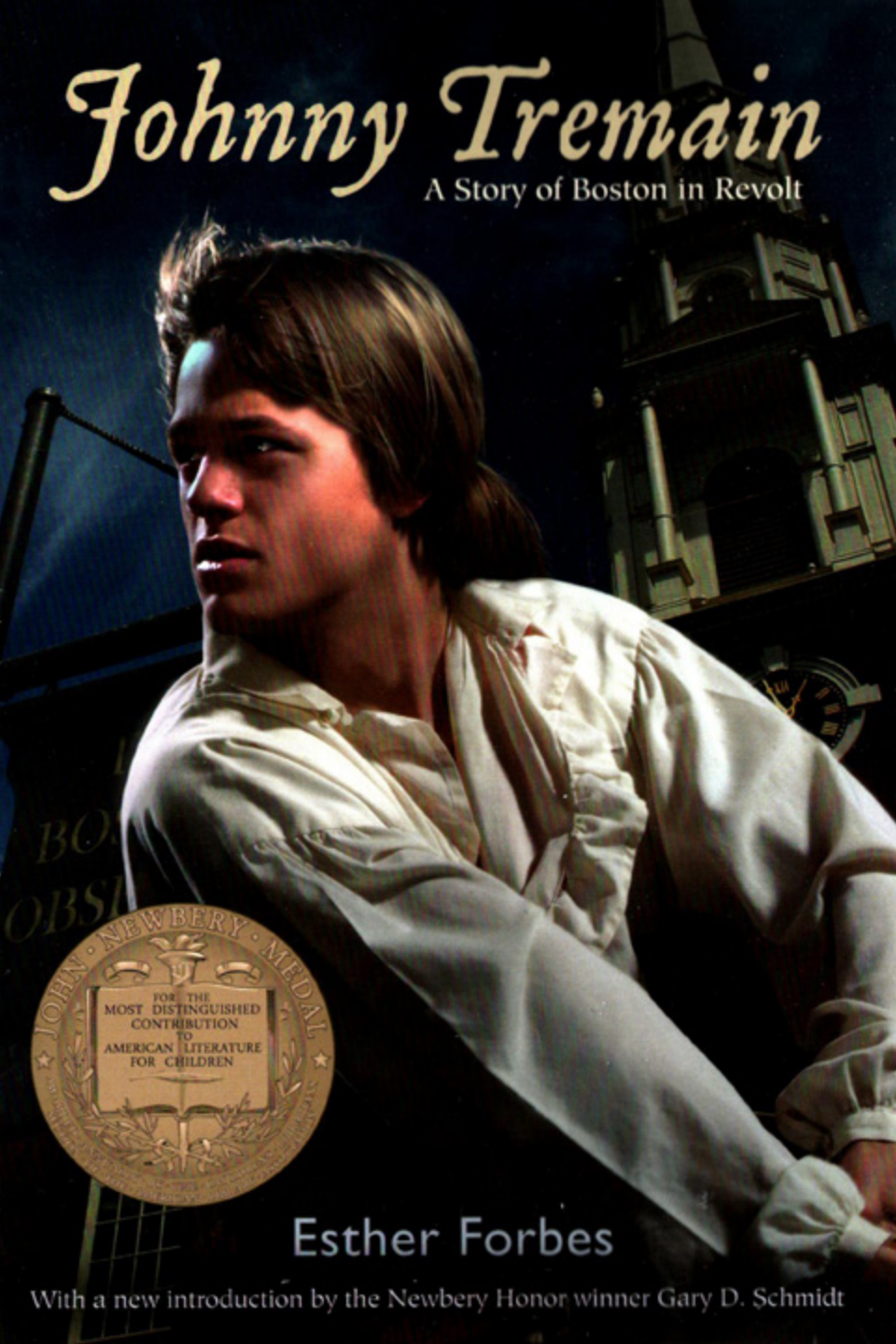
Johnny Tremain

A Story of Boston in Revolt



Esther Forbes

With a new introduction by the Newbery Honor winner Gary D. Schmidt

Johnny Tremain

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Written by ESTHER FORBES

Illustrated by LYND WARD

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT
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To Pamela, Emily, John and Molly Taylor

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Introduction by Gary D. Schmidt

On the day that *Johnny Tremain* was first published, the United States was midway through World War II—though at the time, no one knew how much longer the war would go on. Germany had conquered Europe and Great Britain was tottering. American forces were fighting fierce battles in North Africa, but they hadn't even a toehold on the European front. In the Pacific, the war seemed to be going badly. Every tiny island was a battleground, and a costly, deadly one at that. Despite President Roosevelt's radio assurances, Americans realized that the costs of this worldwide fight for freedom were going to be very high, and would touch every family.

In the middle of that comes the most unlikely book—unlikely because it is astounding that it was ever written or published. Esther Forbes was a historian, not a novelist—certainly not a novelist for young readers. In the year that *Johnny Tremain* was published—1943—she had won the Pulitzer Prize for *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* (1942), but that was a historical work for an adult audience. Now she was using what she had learned in that book to try her hand at a story about a young boy growing up in Boston during the Revolutionary War. And she was going to base it all on a single, small, true incident in which a boy delivered a message about British movements to Paul Revere—a slight enough beginning, to be sure.

But there was more that made the book unlikely. As a writer, Forbes faced enormous struggles. She had to work her way through dyslexia, a condition that made it extremely difficult to draft any writing. She rarely spelled a word the same way twice. Her punctuation was a series of dashes—and that's it. And her temperament would have driven most editors to tears: she refused to accept suggested changes to her story, she refused to clean up the manuscript with proper punctuation, and she refused to even bother with standard spelling.

And if that weren't enough, she decided to put the most important words in the book—the words that would sum up the book's entire meaning—in the mouth of a character who is clearly a lunatic.

Here are those words: "that a man can stand up."

Half a dozen words. Each only a single syllable.

But perhaps it was these very things that made the book almost inevitable, and that made Esther Forbes the one person to write it. It was her years of work on *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* that gave her the historian's eye that was so necessary. Only someone so immersed in the world of Revolutionary Boston could guide a reader through the narrow streets, under the signs of various shops, to the wharves where the boys went swimming, down to the Common where the blueberry bushes were thick and as high as a cow's belly and the British soldiers were drilling, out along the Neck where Redcoats guarded the way to Charleston.

But it was her novelist's eye that Esther Forbes used as well, to enliven a character like Johnny, who begins as an arrogant, almost obnoxious apprentice so skilled that he runs his master's household, so clever that he dominates the other apprentices, so sure of himself that he has his entire life planned out: he will become a wealthy

silversmith, with a household of his own, and fat, rich merchants like John Hancock will come to him, begging for his work. But this is not the way it is to be. Instead, Johnny finds himself turning his back on his trade—because he has no choice—and then on his aristocratic heritage—because he does have a choice—and choosing instead to become one of this new breed of men whose fight is deeper and wider than even they know, whose fight is not only for themselves, but for all humanity. He will become an American.

He will fight so that a man—any person, anywhere—can stand up.

For Forbes is writing about 1775. And she is writing about the fictional character Johnny Tremain. And her history and her story drive us through her novel at a pace as fast as Johnny's horse, Goblin.

But Esther Forbes is writing with another purpose, too.

She is addressing a nation of young readers who are looking about at their nation at war. They know soldiers and sailors and pilots from their cities and neighborhoods, their churches and synagogues, their schools and town business—their families—who have died in the fight against the world's darkest cruelty and oppression. Up and down their streets they see the stars hung in the windows, showing that from this household, a boy is away at war, fighting for America. And Esther Forbes wants to say, This is why we are fighting. This is what it means to stand against evil. So she has Johnny remember the words of James Otis: "so a man can stand up." And she has Doctor Warren respond, "Yes. And some of us would die—so other men can stand up on their feet like men. A great many are going to die for that. They have in the past. They will a hundred years from now—two hundred. God grant there will always be men good enough."

The words are stirring, for they look forward to the Civil War,

and now to World War II, when Americans are called upon to fight so that all people, in this country and abroad, can stand up. And so the book ends on a somber but incredibly hopeful tone, as Johnny understands that many "would die, but not the thing they died for."

This is what Esther Forbes wanted to convey to her first readers—and to readers of *Johnny Tremain* in future years, when the country is again called upon to fight "so a man can stand up."

But—and this is a big but—she does not make things easy, because in real life, things are rarely easy. It is not the case that the British are all oppressive, wicked men who want to take vengeance on the Americans. The occupation of Boston is a gentle one; until the end of the book, the American cause is hardly challenged. A number of the British soldiers are on the side of the American revolutionaries; all the Redcoat Pumpkin wants is to change his uniform for a farmer's smock and go find some land he can work. There are so many soldiers like Pumpkin that the British are hard-pressed to keep their soldiers in Boston. And Johnny actually likes Lieutenant Stranger, who saves his horse, and who practices riding and jumping with him on the Common.

And not all the Americans are noble. Sam Adams will use anything to fight for his cause, even means that he knows are underhanded. The Sons of Liberty have no trouble dismissing James Otis, even though he is one of their founding members. They can be bullies, too; Johnny witnesses the awful things that are done to one Tory victim. And many of the townsfolk of Boston seem more concerned with the profit of their business than the great cause that is swirling around them.

Johnny's commitment is, more than anything else, to an idea: that every person has the right to be free. For him, this is more important than business, than his trade as a silversmith, than friend-

ships. When he thinks of Doctor Warren operating on his maimed hand to cut the scar tissue and free the movement of his thumb, he thinks only that now he will be able to fight for the cause. His commitment to fighting for freedom is even more important than the grief he feels when his closest friend is shot dead on Lexington Green during the first day of fighting. That is something he will think about another time. Right now, there is this work to be done.

I first read *Johnny Tremain* because of Walt Disney, who made the novel into a film in 1957—the year I was born. It was one of several movies and adventure series that Disney made about early American history—like *The Swamp Fox* (1959–61) and *Daniel Boone* (1964–70) and *Zorro* (1957–59). I probably first saw it on *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color,* which aired on Sunday nights on our black-and-white television set—which didn't show any color, but we tried to imagine. It was thrilling. Johnny was daring, brave, and resourceful—and he rode a horse really well. He disdained a life of aristocratic ease and chose to become not Jonathan Lyte, but Johnny Tremain—an American. He gained the trust of men such as Paul Revere, and dressed like an Indian for the Boston Tea Party, and was there when the lanterns were hung high in the tower of the North Church.

I probably knew that the film wasn't particularly good history: after the tea was thrown into Boston Harbor, the Sons of Liberty probably did not process through the streets of Boston, showing off, playing drums and fifes. And probably they did not carry lanterns to illuminate the Liberty Tree, all the while singing, "It's a tall old tree and a strong old tree." But I can still sing the song, and I remember the sight of the tree glowing in the darkness, and the swelling of pride that I, too, was somehow connected to all of this.

I think Esther Forbes would have approved. She was, after all,

speaking to all generations, hoping that whatever else the American experiment in democracy meant, it meant that the country would rise to challenge evil, that it would praise noble sacrifice, and that it would commit itself always to enable every man, woman, and child to stand up.

I. Up and About

ON ROCKY ISLANDS gulls woke. Time to be about their business. Silently they floated in on the town, but when their icy eyes sighted the first dead fish, first bits of garbage about the ships and wharves, they began to scream and quarrel.

The cocks in Boston back yards had long before cried the coming of day. Now the hens were also awake, scratching, clucking, laying eggs.

Cats in malt houses, granaries, ship holds, mansions, and hovels caught a last mouse, settled down to wash their fur and sleep. Cats did not work by day.

In stables horses shook their halters and whinnied.

In barns cows lowed to be milked.

Boston slowly opened its eyes, stretched, and woke. The sun struck in horizontally from the east, flashing upon weathervanes—brass cocks and arrows, here a glass-eyed Indian, there a copper grasshopper—and the bells in the steeples cling-clanged, telling the people it was time to be up and about.

In hundreds of houses sleepy women woke sleepier children. Get up and to work. Ephraim, get to the pump, fetch Mother water. Ann, get to the barn, milk the cow and drive her to the Common. Start the fire, Silas. Put on a clean shirt, James. Dolly, if you aren't up before I count ten . . .

And so, in a crooked little house at the head of Hancock's Wharf on crowded Fish Street, Mrs. Lapham stood at the foot of a ladder

leading to the attic where her father-in-law's apprentices slept. These boys were luckier than most apprentices. Their master was too feeble to climb ladders; the middle-aged mistress too stout. It was only her bellows that could penetrate to their quarters—not her heavy hands.

'Boys?'

No answer.

'Dove?'

'Coming, ma'am.' Dove turned over for one more snooze.

Frustrated, she shook the ladder she was too heavy to climb. She wished she could shake 'them limbs of Satan.'

'Dusty Miller—let me hear your voice.'

'Here it is,' piped Dusty pertly.

Her voice changed to pleading.

'Johnny—you get them two lazy lug-a-beds up. Get them down here. You pull that worthless Dove right out'er bed. You give Dusty a kick for me. I'm waiting for him to fetch fresh water so's I can get on with breakfast.'

Johnny Tremain was on his feet. He did not bother to answer his mistress. He turned to the fat, pale, almost white-haired boy still wallowing in bed.

'Hear that, Dove?'

'Oh—you' . . . leave me lay, can't you?' Grumbling, he swung his legs out of the bed the three boys shared.

Johnny was already in his leather breeches, pulling on his coarse shirt, tucking in the tails. He was a rather skinny boy, neither large nor small for fourteen. He had a thin, sleep-flushed face, light eyes, a wry mouth, and fair, lank hair. Although two years younger than the swinish Dove, inches shorter, pounds lighter, he knew, and old Mr. Lapham knew, busy Mrs. Lapham and her four daughters and

Dove and Dusty also knew, that Johnny Tremain was boss of the attic, and almost of the house.

Dusty Miller was eleven. It was easy for Johnny to say, 'Look sharp, Dusty,' and little Dusty looked sharp. But Dove (his first name had long ago been forgotten) hated the way the younger apprentice lorded it over him, telling him when to go to bed, when to get up, criticizing his work in the silversmith's shop as though he were already a master smith. Hadn't he been working four years for Mr. Lapham and Johnny only two? Why did the boy have to be so infernally smart with his hands—and his tongue?

'Look here, Johnny, I'm not getting up 'cause you tell me to. I'm getting up 'cause Mrs. Lapham tells me to.'

'All right,' said Johnny blandly, 'just so you're up.'

There was only one window in the attic. Johnny always stood before it as he dressed. He liked this view down the length of Hancock's Wharf. Counting houses, shops, stores, sail lofts, and one great ship after another, home again after their voyaging, content as cows waiting to be milked. He watched the gulls, so fierce and beautiful, fighting and screaming among the ships. Beyond the wharf was the sea and the rocky islands where gulls nested.

He knew to the fraction of a moment how long it would take the two other boys to get into their clothes. Swinging about, he leaped for the head of the ladder, hardly looking where he went. One of Dove's big feet got there first. Johnny stumbled, caught himself, and swung silently about at Dove.

'Gosh, Johnny. I'm sorry,' snickered Dove.

'Sorry, eh? . . . you're going to be a lot sorrier . . .'

'I just didn't notice . . .'

'You do that again and I'll beat you up again. You overgrown pig-of-a-louse. You . . .' He went on from there. Mr. Lapham was

strict about his boys swearing, but Johnny could get along very well without. Whatever a 'pig-of-a-louse' was, it did describe the whitish, flaccid, parasitic Dove.

Little Dusty froze as the older boys quarreled. He knew Johnny could beat up Dove any time he chose. He worshiped Johnny and did not like Dove, but he and Dove were bound together by their common servitude to Johnny's autocratic rule. Half of Dusty sympathized with one boy, half of him with the other, in this quarrel. It seemed to him that everybody liked Johnny. Old Mr. Lapham because he was so clever at his work. Mrs. Lapham because he was reliable. The four Lapham girls because he sassed them so—and then grinned. Most of the boys in the other shops around Hancock's Wharf liked Johnny, although some of them fought him on sight. Only Dove hated him. Sometimes he would get Dusty in a corner, tell him in a hoarse whisper how he was going to get a pair of scissors and cut out Johnny Tremain's heart. But he never dared do more than trip him—and then whine out of it.

'Someday,' said Johnny, his good nature restored, 'I'll kill you, Dove. In the meantime, you have your uses. You get out the buckets and run to North Square and fetch back drinking water.'

The Laphams were on the edge of the sea. Their well was brackish.

'Look here—Mrs. Lapham said Dusty was to go and . . .'

'Get along with you. Don't you go arguing with me.'

Fetching water, sweeping, helping in the kitchen, tending the annealing furnace in the shop were the unskilled work the boys did. Already Johnny was so useful at his bench he could never be spared for such labor. It was over a year since he had carried charcoal or a bucket of water, touched a broom or helped Mrs. Lapham brew ale. His ability made him semi-sacred. He knew his power and reveled

in it. He could have easily made friends with stupid Dove, for Dove was lonely and admired Johnny as well as envied him. Johnny preferred to bully him.

Johnny, followed by his subdued slaves, slipped down the ladder with an easy flop. To his left was Mr. Lapham's bedroom. The door was closed. Old master did not go to work these days until after breakfast. Starting the boys off, getting things going, he left to his bustling daughter-in-law. Johnny knew the old man (whom he liked) was already up and dressed. He took this time every day to read the Bible.

To his right, the only other bedroom was open. It was here Mrs. Lapham slept with her four 'poor fatherless girls,' as she called them. The two biggest and most capable were already in the kitchen helping their mother.

Cilla was sitting on the edge of one of the unmade beds, brushing Isannah's hair. It was wonderful hair, seemingly spun out of gold. It was the most wonderful thing in the whole house. Gently Cilla brushed and brushed, her little oddly shaped face turned away, pretending she did not know that Johnny was there. He knew neither Cilla nor Isannah would politely wish him the conventional 'good morning.' He was lingering for his morning insult.

Cilla never lifted her eyes as she put down her brush and very deliberately picked up a hair ribbon (the Laphams couldn't afford such luxuries, but somehow Cilla always managed to keep her little sister in hair ribbons). Very carefully she began to tie the child's halo of pale curls. She spoke to Isannah in so low a voice it was almost a whisper.

'There goes that *wonderful* Johnny Tremain.'

Isannah took her cue, already so excited she was jumping up and down.

'Johnny worth-his-weight-in-gold Tremain.'

'If you don't think he is wonderful—ask him, Isannah.'

'Oh, just how *wonderful* are you, Johnny?'

Johnny said nothing, stood there and grinned.

The two youngest Laphams were always insulting him, not only about how smart he was, but how smart he thought he was. He didn't care. Every now and then they would say something that irritated him and then together they would shout, 'Johnny's mad.'

As an apprentice he was little more than a slave until he had served his master seven years. He had no wages. The very clothes upon his back belonged to his master, but he did not, as he himself said, 'take much.'

There were only four real rooms in the Lapham house, the two bedrooms on the second floor, the kitchen and the workshop on the first. Johnny paused in the lower entry. In the kitchen he could see his formidable mistress bent double over the hearth. Madge, in time, would look like her mother, but at eighteen she was handsome in a coarse-grained, red-faced, thick-waisted way. Dorcas was sixteen, built like Madge, but not so loud-voiced, nor as roughly good-natured. Poor Dorcas thirsted for elegance. She would rub flour on her face, trying to look pale, like the fashionable ladies she saw on the street. She wore her clothes so tight (hoping to look ethereal), she looked apoplectic. How they all had laughed when her stays burst in the middle of meeting with a loud pop! She did not call her mother 'Ma,' but 'Mother,' or 'Respected Mother'; and in her efforts to avoid the rough, easy speech of her associates on Hancock's Wharf she talked (when she remembered it) in a painfully prissy, proper way.

Johnny thought Madge pretty bad, and Dorcas even worse. But he was philosophical about them. He wouldn't mind having them

for sisters. They certainly were good hard workers—except when Dorcas tried too hard to be elegant.

It had already been decided that when he grew up to be a really great silversmith (as Mr. Lapham said he would), he was to marry Cilla and together they would inherit Grandpa's silver business. Cilla was just his age. This idea seemed only mildly offensive to both of them. Johnny had no particular objections. Smart apprentices were always getting ahead by marrying into their masters' families. He had been flattered when Mrs. Lapham had told him that he might marry one of her girls. Of course, Madge and Dorcas (they were fine, big buxom girls) would make better wives. But didn't he think they were a little old for him? True, Cilla was just a mite spindly—but she was coming along fine. Isannah was so weakly it didn't seem worth making any plans for her maturity. So it was to be Cilla.

Johnny had often heard Mrs. Lapham say that Isannah was hardly worth the bother she was to raise. The little girl, her beautiful brown eyes wide with interest, never seemed to mind these remarks of her mother, but they made Cilla cry. Cilla loved Isannah. She was proud when people stopped her on the street and said, 'Is that little angel your sister?' She did not mind that there were so many things Isannah could not 'keep down'—like pork gravy, mince pies, new beer. If Isannah got wet, she had a cold—if a cold, a fever.

First Johnny, with a customary 'Look sharp,' got the sulky Dove and his buckets headed for North Square. Then he took the key to the shop out of his pocket as though he owned it. Dusty, good and quiet as a mouse, followed him.

'Look sharp, Dusty,' Johnny said. 'Get the annealing furnace going. Get to the coal house. Fetch in charcoal. You'll have to do it by yourself. I want to get this buckle mended before breakfast.'

Already the day's bustle had begun up and down the wharf: A

man was crying fish. Sailors were heave-hoing at their ropes. A woman was yelling that her son had fallen into the water. A parrot said distinctly, 'King Hancock.'

Johnny could smell hemp and spices, tar and salt water, the sun drying fish. He liked his wharf. He sat at his own bench, before him the innumerable tools of his trade. The tools fitted into his strong, thin hands: his hands fitted the tools. Mr. Lapham was always telling him to give God thanks who had seen fit to make him so good an artisan—not to take it out in lording it over the other boys. That was one of the things Johnny 'did not let bother him much.'

Dove came back, his thick lower lip thrust out. The water had slopped over his breeches, down his legs.

'Mrs. Lapham does not want you in the kitchen?'—Johnny did not even look up from his buckle.

'Naw.'

'Well, then, this spoon you finished yesterday afternoon has to be melted down—made over. You beat it to the wrong gauge.'

'Did Mr. Lapham say 'twas wrong?'

'No, but it is. It is supposed to match this spoon. Look at it.'

Dove looked. There was no argument.

'So get out a crucible. 'Soon as Dusty's got the furnace going, you melt it down and try again.'

I'd like to get *you* in a crucible, thought Dove, and melt you down. I'd beat you to the proper gauge . . . Two years younger than me and look at him!

It was Isannah who ran in to tell them that Grandpa was in his chair and breakfast was on the table. The soft brown eyes combined oddly with the flying fair hair. She *did* look rather like a little angel, Johnny thought—just as people were always telling Cilla on the street—and so graceful. She seemed to float about rather than run.

No one, to see her, would ever guess the number of things she couldn't keep down.

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Mr. Lapham, as befitted his venerable years and his dignity as master of the house, sat in an armchair at the head of the table. He was a peaceful, kind, remote old man. Although his daughter-in-law was always nagging him to collect bills, finish work when promised, and discipline his apprentices, nothing she said seemed to touch him. He did not even bother to listen.

His dull, groping eyes lingered kindly over his boys as they trooped in for breakfast.

'Good morning, Dove, Dusty. Good morning, Johnny.'

'Good morning, sir.'

He took his time blessing the meal. He was a deacon at the Cockerel Church and very pious.

Breakfast was good, although no more than a poor artisan could afford—milk and ale, gruel, sausages, and corn bread. Everything was plentiful and well cooked. The kitchen was as clean or cleaner than many of those in the great houses. Every member of the household had a clean shirt or petticoat. Mrs. Lapham was a great manager, but she cared nothing for genteel manners and was the first to laugh at Dorcas's 'If it please you, Mother—just a touch more maple syrup for me.' 'Gimme that there syrup pitcher' was good enough for her.

When the meal was over, Mr. Lapham told Madge to hand him the family Bible.

'Johnny, I'm going to ask you to read to us today.'

Of the three boys, only Johnny read easily and well. His mother had lived long enough to see to that. Dove stumbled shamefully.

Dusty usually had the first chapter of Genesis, so that by reading the same thing over and over he might eventually learn.

Madge and Dorcas never cared even to try to read. Mrs. Lapham could not so much as write her name. 'Book larning,' she declared, 'scalded no pigs.' Cilla was so anxious to learn (and teach Isannah) that whenever Johnny read she leaned over the book and shaped the words to herself as he said them. They sat beside each other at table. To help her Johnny always kept a finger on the lines as he read.

Johnny now opened the book, keeping it between himself and Cilla.

'Where, sir, shall I read?'

Mr. Lapham's selections for his boys were sometimes designed to point out some fault in a member of his household, especially in the reader. Dove was always being asked to read about sluggards and going to ants.

Johnny was told where to begin in Leviticus.

'Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image . . .' (What was old master driving at? Couldn't a silversmith put a dragon's snout on a chocolate pot?)

Soon the surging roll of the words, the pleasure of the sound of his voice coming so clearly out of his mouth, made him stop looking for possible object lessons in the text. Cilla was leaning over him, breathing hard in her efforts to keep up. Mrs. Lapham sat agape. Soon she'd be saying it was just like having a preacher live with them to hear Johnny Tremain read Holy Writ.

'Finish with the nineteenth verse.'

'. . . And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass.'

'Turn to Proverbs eleven, second verse.'

'When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.'

'Proverbs sixteen, eighteenth.'

'Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.'

'Now close the book. Stand up and expound to us all the meaning of God's Word.'

Johnny stood up. His skin was thin and he could feel himself flush. So the old gentleman was after him for his pride again, was he?

'It is all another way of saying—God's way of saying—that pride goeth before a fall.'

'Yes, and why?'

'Because God doesn't like pride.' Johnny sounded sulky.

'Do you think God would like you?'

'Not especially.'

Dusty was the first to snicker.

'What does God like?'

'Humble people,' said Johnny wrathfully. 'He sends punishments to people who are too proud.'

'Now, Johnny, I want you to raise your right hand and repeat after me, "I, Johnny Tremain . . ."'

'I, Johnny Tremain . . .'

'Swear from this day onward . . .'

'Swear from this day onward . . .'

'To walk more humbly and modestly before God and man.'

'To walk more humbly and modestly before God and man.'

'Just because some folks are not so smart' (the old master gave Dove and Dusty a pitying glance), 'it's no reason why other folks should go around rubbing their noses in their own stupidities.'

Either Dove or Dusty kicked Johnny under the table. Madge

and Dorcas were giggling. Mrs. Lapham was already scraping the trenchers clean, getting on with her work. She did not hold much by Grandpa's soul-searchings.

The master, followed by Dove and Dusty, left for the shop.

Johnny heard Cilla give an exaggeratedly pious sigh. He stopped.

'When the meek inherit the earth,' she said, 'I doubt Johnny gets as much as one divot of sod.'

This was too much for Johnny. He turned on the little girls.

'*When* they do!' he stormed. 'Cill, you can just about keep your mouth shut until then.'

'You know you did look pretty funny standing up there, and saying all those humble things Grandpa told you to.'

Isannah was almost jumping out of her pinafore in glee.

'Johnny's mad,' she chanted. 'Johnny's mad.'

'Yes,' murmured Cilla, looking at him critically, 'you're right, baby dear. His ears are red. That always means he's mad.'

'Johnny's ears are red,' squealed Isannah.

Johnny stalked out of the kitchen as stiff-legged as a fighting tom-cat. His ears were scarlet.

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He decided to do nothing that would lay him open to such criticism for at least a morning, but he couldn't help it. First, if he had not jumped on Dusty, the furnace would have gone out. Then he had to explain to his master how badly Dove had done the spoon. Although he tried to sound humble, he was soon behaving perfectly naturally, standing over Mr. Lapham with his notebook in his hand, reading off exactly how those spoons had been ordered.

Mr. Lapham was a fine craftsman. His weakness was that he never wrote down what was ordered or even listened very carefully.

If a patron ordered a sauceboat, he would get a fine one—perhaps a month after it had been promised. Sometimes it weighed a little more, sometimes a little less, than it was supposed to. Sometimes it had splayed feet when a gadroon edge had been asked for. Mrs. Lapham herself had told Johnny he must always be on hand and write down exactly what the order was. This was necessary, but it did seem cheeky to see the fourteen-year-old boy standing there, telling his master what he was supposed to do.

Johnny, having started everybody off on his work (even Mr. Lapham), decided to go to the coal house and see if he should order more charcoal. It was such things Mr. Lapham never thought about until too late.

There were two basketfuls of charcoal and at least half another scattered over the floor. That was the other boys' fault. Johnny himself was too valuable to carry charcoal. He started to yell for Dusty, thought better of it, and went to work arranging the dirty stuff himself.

When *he* was a master craftsman, he wasn't going to buy charcoal by the basket. He was going to own his own willows—say, out in Milton. That would save—say, twopence a basket. In a year—he began to figure. And he wouldn't take just any boy whose father or mother wanted him to be a silversmith. He'd pick and choose. He saw himself sitting at his bench, his shop crowded with boys with mothers, boys with fathers, all begging to be allowed to work for him. He'd not talk to the parents—only to the boys. What church did they go to? King's Chapel? All right. Describe to me at least one piece of silver you see used every Lord's Supper. If they could not answer that, he'd know they hadn't got silver in their blood. But how could he find which boys had nice hands . . . ?

'Johnny!' It was Madge's voice that pulled him out of his reverie.

He wiped his black hands on his leather breeches and stepped out into the sunlight of the tiny back yard.

'What is it, my girl?' He often thus arrogantly addressed his master's granddaughters—really his own mistresses.

'Ma sent me. Johnny, it's Mr. Hancock himself. He's in the shop ordering something. Stand by and listen or Grandpa will get it wrong.'

Dorcas next flung herself upon him, too excited to be elegant.

'Johnny, hurry, hurry! It's Mr. Hancock. He's ordering a sugar basin. Can't you go faster? Shake a leg.'

Isannah was jumping about him like a wild thing.

'Help, help!' she shrieked.

But it was Cilla who thought to offer him her clean apron for a towel as he washed off the charcoal at the yard pump.

Oh, but he must hurry! And there was Mrs. Lapham tapping at him from the kitchen window. Slowly he approached the house, the girls chattering about him.

Close to the shop door was a tiny African holding a slender gray horse by the bridle. Johnny noted the Hancock arms on the door of the gig. He felt so good he could not help saying to the black child, 'Mind that horse doesn't trample our flowers.'

There were no flowers in the Laphams' yard.

'Oh, no, sir,' said little Jehu, rolling his eyes. He thought, from the attention this boy was receiving from his escorting ladies, he must be a boy of consequence.

Johnny slipped into the shop so quietly that Mr. Hancock did not even look up. It was he who owned this great wharf, the warehouses, many of the fine ships tied up along it. He owned sail lofts and shops, and also dwelling houses standing at the head of the wharf. He owned the Lapham house. He was the richest man in

New England. Such a wealthy patron might lift the Laphams from poverty to affluence.

Mr. Hancock was comfortably seated in the one armchair which was kept in the shop for patrons. (When I'm master, thought Johnny, there are going to be two armchairs—and I'll sit in one.)

Unobtrusively Johnny got his notebook and pencil. Dove and Dusty were paralyzed into complete inaction. 'Do something,' Johnny muttered to them, determined his master's shop should look busy. Dusty could not take his eyes off the green velvet coat, sprigged white waistcoat, silver buttons and buckles on the great man, but he picked up a soldering iron and nervously dropped it.

'. . . and to be done next Monday—a week from today,' Mr. Hancock was saying. 'I want it as a birthday present to my venerable Aunt Lydia Hancock. This is the creamer of the set. Only this morning a clumsy maid melted the sugar basin. I want you to make me a new one. I want it about so high . . . so broad . . .' Johnny glanced at the delicate, lace-ruffled, gesturing hands, guessed the inches, and wrote it down.

Mr. Lapham was looking down at his own gnarled fingers. He nodded and said nothing. He did not even glance at the cream pitcher as Mr. Hancock set it down on a workbench. Johnny's hard, delicate hands, so curiously strong and mature for his age, reached quickly to touch the beautiful thing. It was almost as much by touch as by sight he judged fine silver. It was indeed old-fashioned, more elaborate than the present mode. The garlands on it were rounded out in repoussé work. Mr. Lapham would have to do the repoussé-ing. Johnny hadn't been taught that. He looked at the handle. A sugar basin would have to have two such handles and they would be larger than the one on the creamer. He'd shape it in wax, make a mold. He had cast hundreds of small things since he had gone to

work for Mr. Lapham, but nothing so intricate and beautiful as the woman with folded wings whose body formed the handle. He thought he had never seen anything quite so enchanting as this pitcher. It must have been the work of one of the great smiths of forty or fifty years ago. Although he had not intended to address Mr. Hancock, he had said, before he thought, 'John Coney, sir?'

Mr. Hancock turned to him. He had a handsome face, a little worn, as though either his health was bad or he did not sleep well.

'Look at the mark, boy.'

Johnny turned it over, expecting to see the familiar rabbit of the great Mr. Coney. Instead, there was a pellet, and 'L,' and a pellet.

'Your master made that creamer—forty years ago. He made the entire set.'

'*You* made it!' He had never guessed there had been a time when Mr. Lapham could do such beautiful work.

At last Mr. Lapham raised his protuberant eyes. 'I remember when your uncle, Mr. Thomas Hancock, sir, ordered that set. "Make it big, and make it handsome," he said, "bigger and handsomer than anything in Boston. As big and handsome as my lady is. Make it as rich as I am."'

John Hancock laughed. 'That is just the way my uncle used to talk.' He was so sure of his own good breeding, he could laugh affectionately at the rich-quick vulgarities of the uncle who had adopted him and from whom he had inherited his fortune.

He stood up—a tall, slender man, who stooped as he stood and walked. The fine clothes seemed a little pathetic. He had a soft voice, and low.

'But you have not as yet said whether or not you can make my sugar basin for me—and have it done by Monday next? Of course

I thought first of you—because you made the original. But there are other silversmiths. Perhaps you would rather not undertake . . .'

Mr. Lapham was in a study. 'I've got the time, the materials, and the boys to help. I can get right at it. But honestly, sir . . . I don't know. Perhaps I haven't got the skill any more. I've not done anything so fine for thirty years. I'm not what I used to be, and . . .'

Although neither of the two men could see the door leading from the hall into the shop, Johnny could. There was Mrs. Lapham in her morning apron, her face purple with excitement, and all four girls crowded about her listening, gesturing at Johnny. 'Say yes,' all five faces (big and little) mouthed at him. 'Yes . . . yes . . . yes.'

So they had forgotten morning prayers, had they? Wanted him to take charge.

'We can do it, Mr. Hancock.'

'Bless me,' exclaimed the gentleman, not accustomed to apprentices who settled matters while their masters pondered.

'Yes, sir. And you shall have it delivered at your own house a week from today, seven o'clock Monday morning. And it's going to be just exactly right.'

Mr. Lapham looked at Johnny gratefully. 'Certainly, sir. I'm humbly grateful for your august patronage.' He was not a proud man. He was relieved that Johnny had stepped in and settled matters.

Mr. Hancock bowed and turned to go, but none of the boys thought to run ahead and open the door for him, so Mrs. Lapham, apron and all, barged in, her red arms bare to the elbow, her felt slippers flapping at her bare heels, and did (or overdid) the courtesies for them all.

Hardly was the door closed than there was a rap on it. Little

Jehu came mincing in, a glitter of bright colors. He solemnly laid three pieces of silver on the nearest bench and recited his piece.

'My master, Mr. John Hancock, Esquire, bids me leave these coins—one for each of the poor work-boys—hoping they will drink his health and be diligent at their benches.' Then he was gone.

'Hoping they will vote for him—when they are grown up and have enough property.'

'Don't you ever vote for Mr. Hancock, sir?' asked Johnny.

'I never do. I don't hold much with these fellows that are always trying to stir up trouble between us and England. Maybe English rule ain't always perfect, but it's good enough for me. Fellows like Mr. Hancock and Sam Adams, calling themselves patriots and talking too much. Not reading God's Word—like their parents did—which tells us to be humble. But he's my landlord and I don't say much.'

Johnny was not listening. He sat with the pitcher in his hand. To think the poor, humble old fellow *once* had been able to make things like that! Well, he was going to turn the trick again before he died—even if Johnny had to stand over him and make him.

-4-

The sun stood directly overhead, pressing its heat down upon the town as though it held an enormous brass basin. There was not wind enough to take a catboat from Hancock's Wharf to Noddle Island.

In the Lapham shop windows and doors were left open to catch what breeze might come up the wharf, but there wasn't any breeze.

Old Mr. Lapham had worked well in the morning. He said if Johnny could do the handles, he himself could get the basin done

in time, but after dinner he had gone down to the old willow behind the coal house, put a basket over his head, and gone to sleep. Dove and Dusty had, therefore, left to go swimming. Johnny was making out of wax an exact replica of the pitcher handle, only enlarging it. He tried again and again, never quite satisfied with his work, but confident that he could do it.

It was long past dinner hour when he crossed the entry into the kitchen. The fire was out. The table cleared except for his place. Cilla had evidently been left to wait on him whenever he felt like eating. The success of Mr. Hancock's order was so dependent upon him, no one would scold him today because he chose to be an hour late. Johnny took his seat and Cilla put down the slate she had been drawing on. She gave him a piece of cold meat pie, a flat loaf of rye bread, dried apples, and ran down cellar to fetch him a flagon of cold ale. He drank the ale, and then more leisurely began on the pie.

With hardly a word Cilla went back to the settle where Isannah was sprawled and picked up her slate. She drew very well. It would be just about nothing, Johnny thought, to teach that girl to write.

'She's doing it for you, Johnny,' Isannah said at last.

'What are you doing for me, Cil?'

'She's designing you a beautiful mark so when you are man-grown and master smith you can stamp your silver with it.'

'I've five more years to go. No matter how good my work may be, I have to mark it with your grandpa's old pellets and "L's."'

'Johnny's forgotten morning prayers and all those wonderful humble people,' said Cilla. 'Look, I've got your "J" and "T" sort of entwined.'

'Too hard to read. Then, too' (he could not imagine why he came out with this secret), 'when I'm master smith I'm going to use all three of my initials.'

THE YEAR IS 1773; THE SCENE IS BOSTON.

Johnny Tremain is fourteen and apprenticed to a silversmith. He is gifted and clever and lords his talent over the other apprentices—until tragedy strikes. A crucible of molten silver breaks and the silver spills over Johnny's right hand. The hand is so badly burned, it's useless—and now, so is Johnny.

Since he is no longer able to become a silversmith, Johnny's life takes a new path, one that will bring him in touch with Paul Revere, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and other Boston patriots and with all the exciting currents that will lead to the Boston Tea Party and the Battle of Lexington. Johnny's dream of being a silversmith may be dead, but he has discovered a new dream that will make him a part of American history.

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