

## APPLESEED JOHN.

Old Johnny was bent well-nigh double  
With years of toil and care and trouble,  
But his large old heart oft felt the need  
Of doing for others some kindly deed.

"But what can I do?" old Johnny said;  
"I, who work so hard for daily bread?  
It takes heaps of money to do so much good,  
I am far too poor to do as I would."

The old man sat thinking deeply a while,  
Then over his features gleamed a smile;  
While he clapped his hands with a childish glee,  
And said to himself: "There's a way for me!"

So he went to work with might and main,  
But told to none the plan in his brain.  
He took stale apples in payment for chores,  
And carefully cut from them all the cores.

When he filled his bag, he wandered away,  
And no man saw him for many a day.  
With the well-stuffed bag o'er his shoulder flung,  
He marched along and whistled or sung.

He seemed to roam with no object in view,  
Like one who has nothing on earth to do;  
But, rambling thus o'er prairies wide,  
He paused sometimes and his bag untied.

His sharp-pointed cane deep holes would bore,  
And in every hole he placed a core;  
He covered them well, and left them there,  
In keeping with sunshine, rain, and air.

Sometimes for days he waded through grass,  
And saw never a living creature pass;  
Though oft, when sinking to sleep in the dark,  
He heard owls hoot and prairie dogs bark.

But sometimes butterflies perched on his thumbs,  
And birds swarmed round him to pick up his crumbs.  
They knew he carried no arrow or gun,  
And never did mischief to any one:

For he was tender to all dumb things  
That crept on the earth or soared on wings;  
He stepped aside lest a worm should die,  
And never had heart to hurt a fly.

Sometimes an Indian, of sturdy limb,  
Came striding along and walked with him.  
Whichever had food, shared with the other,  
As if he had met a hungry brother.

When the Indian saw how the bag was filled,  
And noticed the holes that the white man drilled,  
He thought to himself 'twas a silly plan  
To be planting seed for some future man.

Sometimes a log-cabin came in view,  
Where John was sure to find jobs to do,  
By which he gained stores of bread and meat,  
And welcome rest for his weary feet.

He killed potatoes and lood the corn,  
And mended shoes that were somewhat worn;  
He taught the babies to use their legs,  
And helped the boys to hunt for eggs.

He was so hearty at work or play  
That every one urged a longer stay;  
But he replied: "I have something to do,  
And I must go on to carry it through."

The boys, who were sure to follow him round,  
Soon found what it was he put in the ground;  
So, as time passed, and he traveled on,  
All the folks called him "Apple-seed John."

When he used up the whole of his store,  
He went to cities and worked for more;  
Then off he marched to the wilds again,  
And planted seeds in prairie and glen.

In cities some said the man was crazy,  
Others said, No; he was only lazy.  
But he took no notice of jibes and jeers;  
He knew he was working for future years.

He knew that trees would soon abound  
Where once a tree could never be found;  
That a flickering play of light and shade  
Would make dancing shadows on the glade.

That blossoming boughs would form fall bowers,  
And sprinkle the earth with rosy showers;  
And the little seeds his hands had spread  
Would form ripe apples when he was dead.

So he kept on traveling, far and wide,  
Till his old limbs failed him and he died.  
He said, at last: "'Tis a comfort to feel  
I've done good in the world, though not a great deal."

Weary travelers, journeying West,  
In the shade of his trees find pleasant rest;  
And often they start with glad surprise  
At the rosy fruit that around them lies.

And if they inquire whence came such trees,  
Where not a bough once swayed in the breeze,  
The reply still comes, as they travel on,  
"These trees were planted by Appleseed John."

—LYDIA MARIA CHILD.