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Johnny Appleseed

Josephine Scribner Gates

Once there was a man who was very, very poor. He had been a farmer, and no one grew finer crops than he did. But somehow he lost his farm, and he was left all alone.

He had always wanted to do something grand, something that would make many people happy. But what could he do? He had no money. All he had was a small boat.

One day, as he trudged along, he saw some old sacks lying under a tree. He looked at them, and a splendid thought came to him. It was a thought that seemed to have wings, as if it had come flying from far away. It was a beautiful thought, and it seemed to sing a little song in his heart as he picked up the sacks, put them in his boat, jumped in himself, and floated away.

He rowed down the river, watching the shore with keen eyes. When he saw an apple orchard, he tied up his boat, hurried to the nearby houses, and asked for work.

He chopped wood, carried water, and did all sorts of odd jobs. In payment he asked for food, and what else do you suppose?

The people were so surprised they could hardly believe him. He asked if he might have the seeds from the apples lying on the ground under the trees. Only the seeds!

Of course they gladly gave him such a simple thing. And as he cut up the fruit, the neighborhood children swarmed around him.

From one place to another he went, always adding to his store of seeds. Some generous farmers gave him cuttings of peach, pear, and plum trees, too, and grape vines.

Day after day, day after day, he cut up the fruit while the children sat at his feet and listened to thrilling tales of his travels. He told them of wide rivers and deep forests, of wolves that crept out at night to watch him by his campfire, and of beautiful deer bounding across his path. He sang funny songs for the children and taught them all sorts of games.



When it was time to move on, they begged him to stay. They had never had so much fun! But on he went. When his bags were full and he had plenty of food, he set off to carry out his splendid thought. It was a grand thing he was going to do.

The little boat went on and on, until there were no more houses to be seen. Splendid forests lined the banks. Then he stopped, for this was just what he was looking for: a place far from any town.

He landed and walked about with a bag of seeds. Whenever he came to an open spot in the forest, he planted seeds and cuttings of trees and vines. Then he wove a brush fence around them to keep the deer away, hurried back to his boat, and drifted on.

In many, many places he landed and planted seeds, and we owe many of the orchards of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys to this man.

Years later, when settlers came looking for a place to live, they chose these very spots. To their great surprise, they found trees loaded with fruit.

The man's name was John Chapman, but everyone called him Johnny Appleseed.

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