

**JACOB
ABBOTT**



**ROLLO'S
EXPERIMENTS**

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



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One afternoon, Rollo saw his father coming out into the garden, with a little saw and a knife, and a small pot of paint in his hands.

“Father,” said he, “are you going to prune your trees now?”

“Yes,” said his father.

“Then, shall I go and get my wheelbarrow?”

“Yes,” replied his father, again.

So Rollo ran off after his wheelbarrow. It had been arranged, between him and his father that morning, that they should work in the garden an hour or two in the afternoon, and that Rollo should pick up all the cuttings from the trees, and wheel them away, and then, when they were dry, make a bonfire with them.

Rollo found his wheelbarrow in its proper place, and trundled it along into the garden.

“Father,” said he, “what trees are you going to prune first?”

“O, I am going to begin at the back side of the garden, and prune them all, advancing regularly to the front.”

“What is the saw for?” said Rollo.

“To saw off the large branches, that I can’t cut off easily with a knife.”

“But I should not think you would want to saw off any large branches, for so you will lose all the apples that would grow on them next year.”

“Why, sometimes, the branches are dead, and then they would do no good, but only be in the way.”

“But do they do any hurt?” said Rollo.

“Why, they look badly.”

“But, I mean, would they do any actual hurt to the tree?”

“Why, I don’t know,” said his father; “perhaps they would not. At any rate, if I cut them off pretty close to the living part of the tree, the bark will then gradually extend out over the little stump that I leave, and finally cover it over, and take it all in, as it were.”

By this time, Rollo and his father had reached the back side of the garden, and his father showed him the place where he had cut off a limb the year before, and he saw how the fresh young bark had protruded itself all around it, and was spreading in towards the centre so as to cover it over. Rollo then saw that it was better that all old dead limbs should be cut off.

“That’s curious,” said Rollo.

“Yes, very curious,” said his father. “A tree will take in, and cover up, almost any thing that is fastened to the wood, in the same manner.”

“Will it?” said Rollo.

“Yes,” said his father. “If you drive a nail into a tree, the bark will, after a time, cover it over entirely. Sometimes people find things in old trees, which were put upon them when they were young.”

“How big things?” said Rollo.

“O, I don’t know exactly how big. The tree will make an effort to enclose any thing small or large. Only, if it is very

large, it will take a great while to enclose it, and it might be so large that it never could enclose it.”

“Well, father, how large must it be so that the tree never could enclose it?”

“O, I don’t know, exactly. Once I saw a tree that was growing very near a rock. After a time it came in contact with it, and it grew and pressed against it, until the rock crowded into the wood. Then the bark began to protrude in every direction along the rock, as if it was making an effort to spread out and take the rock all in. But I don’t think it will ever succeed; for the rock was part of a ledge in a pretty large hill.”

“What a silly tree!” said Rollo.

“Father, I believe I will try the experiment some time,” continued Rollo, after a pause.

“Very well,” said his father.

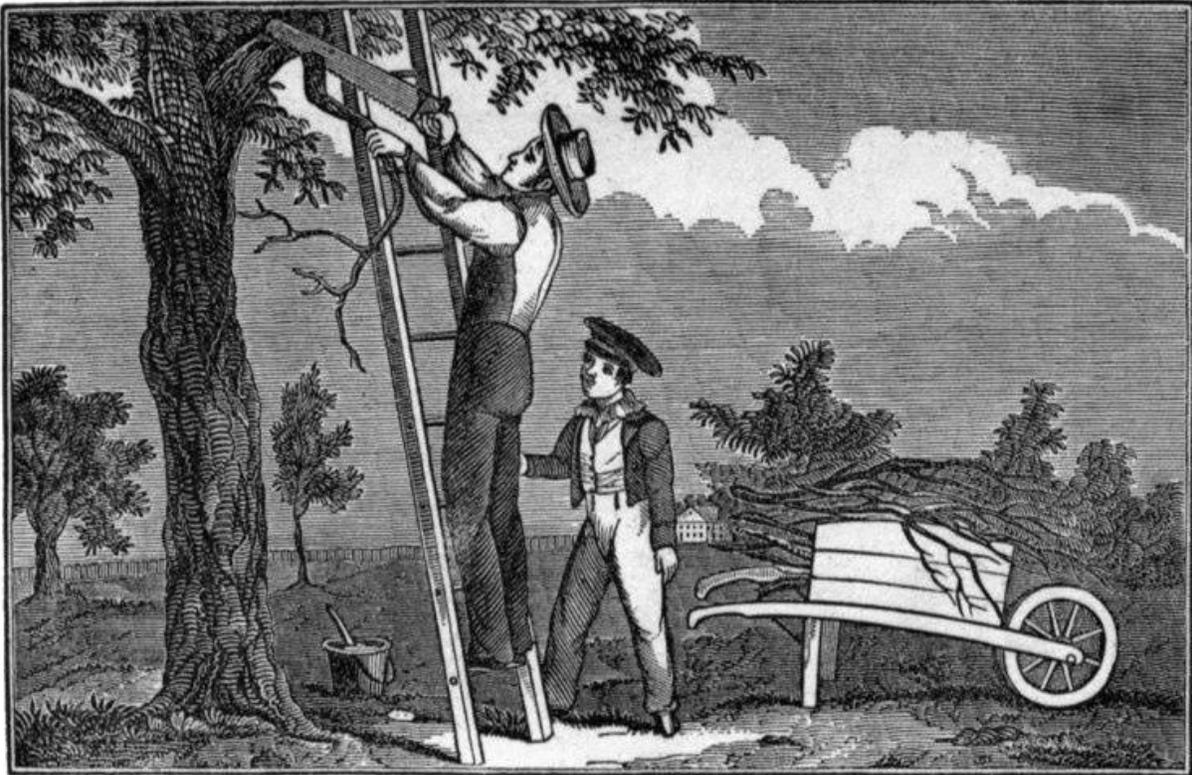
“What shall I put into the tree?” asked Rollo.

“You might put in a cent,” said his father, “and then, if it should get fairly enclosed, I presume the tree will keep it safe for you a good many years.”

Rollo determined to do it. “Then,” said he, “I shall never be out of money, and that will be excellent.” His father told him that he must make a small cleft in the bark and wood, with a chisel and mallet, and then drive the cent in, edgewise, a little way.

So Rollo got his chisel and mallet, and inserted the cent according to his father’s directions, and by that time there were a good many branches and twigs on the ground, which his father had taken off from the trees, and so he began to pick them up, and put them into his wheelbarrow.

They went on working together for some time, and talking while they worked. Rollo was continually asking his father questions, and his father sometimes answered them, and sometimes did not, but was silent and thoughtful, as if he was thinking of something else. But whether he got answers or not, Rollo went on talking.



“Father,” said Rollo, at length, after a short pause, during which he had been busily at work putting twigs into his wheelbarrow, “Henry has got a very interesting book.”

His father did not answer.

“/ think it is a very interesting book indeed. Should not you like to read it, father?”

His father was just then reaching up very high to saw off a pretty large limb, and he paid no attention to what Rollo was saying. So Rollo went on talking half to himself—

“One story is about Aladdin and his lamp. If he rubbed his lamp, he could have whatever he wished; something would come, I have forgotten what its name was, and bring him whatever he asked for.”

Just then, down came the great branch which his father had been sawing off, falling from its place on the tree to the ground.

Rollo looked at it a moment, and then, when his father began sawing again, he said,

“Should not you like such a lamp, father?”

“Such a lamp as what, my son?” said his father.

“Why, such a one as Aladdin’s.”

“Aladdin’s! why, what do you know of Aladdin’s lamp?”

“Why, I read about it in Henry’s story book,” said Rollo. “I just told you, father.”

“Did you?” said his father. “Won’t you just hand me up the paint brush?”

“Well, father,” said Rollo, as he handed him the brush, “don’t you wish you had an Aladdin’s lamp?”

“No, not particularly,” said his father.

“O father!” exclaimed Rollo, with surprise, “I am sure I do. Don’t you wish I had such a lamp, father?”

“No,” said his father.

“Why, father, I really think I could do some good with it. For instance, I could just rub my lamp, and then have all your trees pruned for you, at once, without any further trouble.”

“But that would not be worth while; for you might have a much larger and better garden than this made at once, with

thousands of trees, bearing delicious fruit; and ponds, and waterfalls, and beautiful groves.”

“O, so I could,” said Rollo.

“And, then, how soon do you think you should get tired of it, and want another?”

“O, perhaps, I should want another pretty soon; but then I could have another, you know.”

“Yes, and how long do you think you could find happiness, in calling beautiful gardens into existence, one after another?”

“O, I don’t know;—a good while.”

“A day?”

“O, yes, father.”

“A week?”

“Why, perhaps, I should be tired in a week.”

“Then all your power of receiving enjoyment from gardens would be run out and exhausted in a week; whereas mine, without any Aladdin’s lamp, lasts me year after year, pleasantly increasing all the time without ever reaching satiety.”

“What is satiety, father?”

“The feeling we experience when we have had so much of a good thing that we are completely tired and sick of it. If I should give a little child as much honey as he could eat, or let him play all the time, or buy him a vast collection of pictures, he would soon get tired of these things.”

“O father, I never should get tired of looking at pictures.”

“I think you would,” said his father.

Here the conversation stopped a few minutes, while Rollo went to wheel away a load of his sticks. Before he returned,