



Ben and Me

The doorbell rang. It was the little guy from next door.

"I'm here to make some money," he said.

"Well, Hi Ben."

"I'll shovel your driveway for \$2.00!"

"Will you?" (*It was obviously too reasonable, but I couldn't say "No."*)

It was a cold night, heavy snow all day. His folks were not home yet and he had gotten an idea which sent him out the door not caring about the temperature.

"Ben, do you have a hat?"

"Yup." (*Not on his head.*)

"And a scarf?"

"Yup. I'll be all right."

"Well. Tell you what — you're going to get sick like that! You go home, get a hat and scarf, and then we'll talk business."

Two minutes later the door bell again. There stood Ben, all of 48 inches tall and 10 years old.

"Okay Ben. What time do you eat?"

"Six o'clock."

"I want you to shovel only half the driveway. It's longer than yours, you know. Do just enough

for us to get a car out."

Ben assured me that he does very good 'side to side.' I said, "I know! I've seen your work." (*Two days in a row, before the plow arrived, the street circle had been cleared, that is, one half of the 'street' in front of his house and the house next door. That was Ben's work!*)

We had wondered what could have created this strange phenomenon? I offered him the money right away, BUT immediately he rejected it. His statement, "No thanks. I don't do that 'til I'm done. I need an incentive." (*I suppressed the smile and an urge to laugh. He was so earnest.*)

Ben went to work. After 15 minutes, I checked his progress. No half job for Ben. He was doing the full width of the double drive, shoving and lifting. Previously I had inquired as to what kind of shovel he had, thinking he may need to borrow my plastic one.

Proudly, "Nope. I have my own! Its steel!" (*and heavier, I thought to myself.*)

Another 15 minutes, and his parents are still not home. It had become dark. The most I could see of him was the silhou-

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Helen Keller

ette of a very small figure, clouded by a puff of snow above the banks.

"Oh no! He is going to try to clear the snowplow row at the end."

This little blaze of determination has got to be stopped! I called to him to come to the door. His hat and shoulders covered with snow.

"Ben! Nice work. Step in here. Pat wants to meet you."

"No, I can't do that!"

"You can't come in?"

"No ma'am. I can't do that," he said, taking a step backwards.

Needless to say, we respected that. Pat gave him 5 one dollar bills which he did not examine. She told him the bunch contained a bonus for good work.

He answered, "Thank you! Anything for the elders of the neighborhood."

We smiled with him, and then he thought maybe that didn't sound like a compliment, so he added, "But you two don't look like elders." (*It was the nicest compliment we'd had in ages.*)



He said, "Well, thank you and have a good evening."

Pat and I talked about our encounter with the new neighbor

boy at various times through the evening enjoying the goodness of it all.

Helen Keller once said, "It is

not possible for civilization to flow backwards while there is youth in the world."

"Ben and Me" by Anita Swansen, OSM.