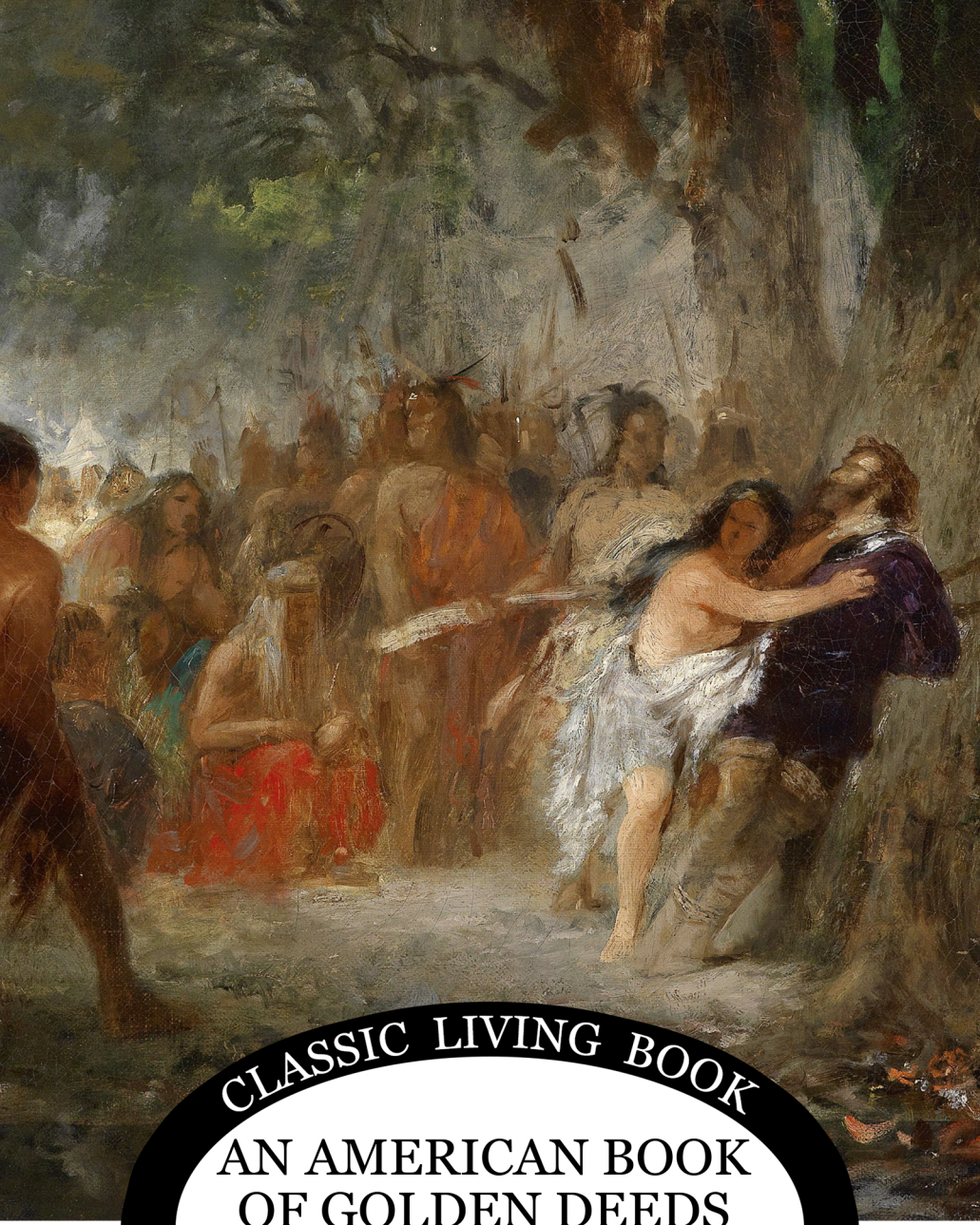

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

AN AMERICAN BOOK OF GOLDEN DEEDS

James Baldwin

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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by

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I.
"PARTNERS"

Little Mackie, as his friends called him, was an inmate of the Hospital for Crippled Children. He was a small boy and his years were few, yet his face was already drawn and seamed with lines of suffering. One of his feet was twisted and the other almost useless; yet he could hobble around very nimbly on his crutches, and he took great pleasure in helping other boys who were worse off than himself.

His particular friend and crony was Dannie O'Connell, whose cot adjoined his own. Dannie was a helpless little fellow, with legs that were no better than none and a back so weak that he could not sit up without props. Many were the hours which little Mackie spent at Dannie's bedside, and many were the words of encouragement and hope that he poured into the ears of the helpless child.

"We're partners, Dannie," he would say. "When I get bigger I'll be a bootblack down on the Square, and you and me'll go halvers in the profits."

"But what could I do?" queried Dannie. "I couldn't help with the business. Why, I can't even hold myself up."

"Oh, you'll be lots better by that time," answered the ever hopeful Mackie. "I'll get you a high chair with wheels under it, so that I can trundle you around. And I'll get a little candy stand at the corner for you to 'tend to. I'll shine 'em up for the fine gentlemen that come that way,

and you'll sell candy to the ladies. They'll all want to trade with you when they see you sitting there in your high chair."

"I think it will be very nice," sighed Dannie; and he lay gazing up toward the ceiling and trying to forget his troubles.

"Of course it will be nice," said Mackie; "and don't you forget that we'll be partners."

One night when all the children were in their cots an alarm was sounded. What could it mean? Soon the cry of fire was heard, and then a great rushing and hurrying in the halls and on the stairways. Little Mackie jumped up and seized his crutches, and all the other boys in the ward began to cry out in alarm. But their nurse soothed them and told them that they need not be afraid, for she was quite sure that the fire was in a distant part of the building, and would soon be put out.

Little Mackie lay down again, but he kept his eyes wide open. "Hey, Dannie, partner," he whispered, very softly, "don't be scared. I'm watching out for you, and nurse says there's no danger."

The noise outside grew louder, and there was more of it. Mackie could hear the people running. He could hear the children screaming in the other wards. Soon he saw the red light of the flames shining through the narrow window above the door. Then he smelled the smoke and saw it coming into the room through every crevice and crack. The nurse turned pale with fear and did not seem to know what to do.

Then three men rushed in—firemen with big hats on their heads and waterproof capes on their shoulders. Each

took two children in his arms and with the fainting nurse hurried away through the strangling smoke.

"Be brave! We'll be back for you in a minute," said one of them as he ran past Dannie and Mackie.

The two "partners" were left alone in the room. Mackie could hear the crackling and roaring of the flames. He could even see them creeping along the floor and licking up the carpet in the lower hallway. He could feel their hot breath. In another minute they would reach the wooden stairs, and then how could any one ever come up to save the children that were still in the wards?

"Run, Mackie!" cried Dannie, trying in vain to sit up. "I guess they forgot to come back. Run, Mackie, and don't wait for me."

"No, I don't run, so long as you're my partner," said Mackie.

He was leaning on his crutches by the side of Dannie's cot.

"Put your arms round my neck, Dannie. That's how. Now hold on, tight! Snuggle your face down over my shoulder. That's right; now we'll go. Hold fast, and don't swallow any more smoke than you can help, Dannie."

Clack! clack! clack! Through the smothering smoke the little crutches clattered out of the room and into the burning hallway. And Dannie, with his arms clasped around his partner's neck, and his shriveled legs dangling helplessly behind, was borne half-fainting through the fearful din.

Clack! clack! clack! Mackie was so short and his head was so near to the floor that he escaped the thickest part of the smoke, which rolled in clouds toward the ceiling. He hurried to the stairway, keeping his face bent down-

ward and his eyes half closed. He did not dare to speak to Dannie, for he had no breath to spare.

Outside of the building there were many busy hands and many anxious faces.

"Have all the children been saved?" asked one of the managers of the hospital.

"Oh, sir, not all," was the sad answer. "There were a few in the upper wards who could not be saved, the fire spread so rapidly. And there are still two little boys in the lower ward whom it is impossible to reach."

"Surely these boys ought to be rescued," cried the manager. "Won't some one try to reach them?"

"Sir," answered a helper who had already carried ten children out of the flaming building, "it is too late. The stairways are all blazing and the ward itself is full of fire."

In fact, the flames could now be seen bursting out of every window.

Clack! clack! clack!

What sound was that on the marble steps before the smoke-filled door of the doomed hospital? It was not a loud noise, but those who stood nearest heard it quite plainly amid all the other sounds, the snapping of the burning wood, the roaring of the flames, the falling of heavy timbers.

Then right out from beneath the cloud of smoke came little Mackie, bearing Dannie upon his shoulders. Helping hands were stretched forth to receive him, and the brave lad fell fainting in the arms of a big policeman.

Dannie was scarcely harmed at all, though dreadfully frightened. But Mackie's poor hands were badly scorched and his eyebrows were singed off. His nightshirt was burned through in a dozen places. His bare, crippled feet

were blistered by the fallen coals he had stepped upon. His little body was full of hurts and burns. Kind arms carried him to a place of safety; but for a long time he lay senseless to all that was happening around him.

When at last he awoke to consciousness his first thought was to inquire for Dannie. Then, as he turned painfully in the little bed where they had laid him, he closed his eyes again and said, "Me and Dannie are partners, don't you know?"

II.
A MODEST LAD

JOHN Gregg's home was in Maryland. His father and mother were dead, and he lived on a farm with his married sister.

One afternoon when he was about twelve years old he was sent on an errand to the nearest town. The day was quite warm and he followed the shortest path, which led him after a while to the tracks of the railroad. A great rain had fallen in the morning and every brook and rivulet was full of muddy, rushing water.

As John went merrily tripping along the tracks he came suddenly upon that which made him stop in surprise. At a point where an angry brook went tearing along by the side of the road the embankment had given way. The ties were out of place and one of the rails seemed almost ready to fall into the brook.

"What if a train should come now?" was the boy's first thought.

As if in answer to his question the whistle of an engine was faintly heard far down the road. He knew that it was just time for the Colonial express to pass that place. He knew that it was running at the rate of a mile a minute and that scores of lives were in danger. Without stopping to think, he pulled off his coat and ran swiftly along the tracks to meet the train. He swung his coat wildly above his

head and shouted with all his might. But who could hear his voice above the rumble and roar of the great express?

The engineer saw the lad. He threw on the emergency brakes. The train stopped so quickly that the passengers were thrown out of their seats.

"What's the matter, boy?" cried the engineer, half angrily.

"Wash—out—down there. Track—caved in—thought I'd tell you," gasped the boy, all out of breath.

The engineer leaped from the cab, and running forward a few paces was horrified to see the danger his train had escaped. He hurried back just as the passengers came rushing from the coaches.

"A narrow escape," he said, pointing to the washout. "If it hadn't been for this boy, we'd have been dead men. But where is the boy?"

"Yes, where is the boy?" echoed the passengers. But no boy was to be found.

As soon as John Gregg had answered the engineer's question, he had dodged into the woods and was now hurrying away on his errand.

"Where is the boy who saved the Colonial express and the lives of perhaps a hundred passengers?" was the question which many people asked during the next few days. The officers of the railroad sent out a man to find him.

"It must have been an angel," said some; "for what mere boy would do such a thing and not be running everywhere and boasting about it?"

The engineer's description of the lad was repeated to the farmers in the neighborhood.

"Why, that fits Johnnie Gregg better'n any other boy I know," said one.

"Yes," said another, "and now that you speak of it, I do remember seeing Johnnie go past my house that very afternoon. I rather reckon it must have been Johnnie. He's a bashful lad, and never puts himself forward."

"Where does this Johnnie Gregg live?" asked the railroad man.

"Oh, he lives with his married sister a matter of three miles from here. Follow the main road, and you can't help but find the place. It's the second white house after you pass the third corner."

The man, after getting some further directions, drove on. He found the house without trouble.

"I want to see the boy known as Johnnie Gregg," he said.

Soon a bright-faced lad in knickerbockers came into the room.

"Is your name John Gregg?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you the lad that saved the Colonial express a few weeks ago?"

"I—I told the engineer about the washout."

"Do you know that you saved the lives of a number of passengers besides a great deal of property for the railroad company?"

John blushed and twisted his legs uneasily. "I only told the engineer about it," he answered.

"Well, at any rate," said the man, "you did a noble deed and the officers of the railroad are very grateful to you. I am authorized to say that your name will be placed on the company's pay roll and that you can go through any college you choose at their expense. Don't you think you would like to go to college, Johnnie?"

"I am sure I don't know," he answered. He had never

heard much about colleges; he didn't exactly know what they were like.

"If you would rather learn a trade," said the man, "the company will help you to learn the very best and will pay all the cost. Do you think of any trade you would like?"

Johnnie blushed and fidgeted. He had never given much thought to such things, and the question was hard to answer. At last he said, "I guess I'd rather be a fireman than anything else."

"We'll not hurry you for a decision," said the man. "Your pay will begin with the day you saved the train, and you may have a year to make up your mind as to what you would rather do. Good-by, and God bless you!"

"Good-by, sir!"

III.
THE BOILER CLEANERS

In the engine room of a great machine shop in Indiana, William Phelps and another man are cleaning a boiler.

It is night. The machinery is at a standstill. Engineers and firemen have gone home. Besides Phelps and his companion there is not another man in the room.

The boiler which they are cleaning has not been in use for some days. The water has been drawn from it. It is waiting for repairs. But beneath its companions in the adjoining room the fires are still glowing red, and the steam sizzles shrilly from beneath their safety valves.

The two men are inside of the boiler. To get there they have been obliged to creep through a small, round opening on the upper side. This opening is barely large enough to admit the body of a slender man. Through it passes all the air which the cleaners can have while working at this unpleasant task. Beneath it hangs a dimly burning lantern which gives them all the light they are thought to need.

They are busy with their scrubbing brushes and scrapers, removing the lime with which the interior of the boiler has become coated. They are accustomed to the work, and they do not mind the dimness of the light, the heaviness of the air, the cramping discomfort of the place. As for danger, what danger could there be inside of an empty boiler?

Suddenly there is a strange, hissing sound at the farther

end of the boiler. Then a cloud of hot steam begins to fill the space around them.

"What's that?" cries William Phelps, starting quickly up.

Through some sort of accident a valve has been opened in one of the large pipes which connect this boiler with another in the adjoining room. The scalding vapor is pouring through in a steady stream.

William Phelps is nearest to the opening which is the only means of escape. He may save himself if he will act quickly. But, no; he steps aside and cries: "Out with you, Jim! You first!"

Jim's body entirely fills the opening. He wriggles slowly through, almost paralyzed with fear and the pain of the scalding steam. He shouts the alarm. Watchmen in the near-by rooms hear him, and come with helping hands to lift him out.

But where is William Phelps? The boiler is filled with steam. He has only enough strength remaining to push his head through the opening. Then he loses all consciousness.

The men seize hold of his shoulders and pull him out. From his neck to the soles of his feet he is as thoroughly scalded as though he had been dipped in boiling water.

They lay him on the floor. They apply restoratives. They send for a surgeon.

In a little while he opens his eyes.

"Jim," he gasps, "I'm glad you got out safe. It was your right to go first: you have a wife and child. And I—I'm only Bill Phelps."

Jim turns away, weeping.

The next moment the surgeon arrives. "Too late," he says, as he looks at the silent form before him. "No man can live after such a bath as that."

IV.
TOM FLYNN OF VIRGINIA

Did you ever hear of Flynn—Tom Flynn of Virginia? His story is somewhat like that of William Phelps. His heroism was of the same golden quality.

It was in the early mining days in California. Flynn was there—a rough fellow far from home and friends. If there were any qualities of gentleness in his heart, he had hitherto been careful to conceal them.

One day he was at work with another miner deep down in the ground. They had reached their place of labor by passing through a narrow tunnel the roof of which was supported by wooden beams.

Suddenly a noise as of falling rocks alarmed them. They ran to the lower end of the tunnel. The beams at that place were giving way. Already the tunnel was choked up with fallen rubbish.

Nor was this the worst. One of the main beams was just ready to tumble down. They knew that if it fell, the whole roof of the tunnel would fall with it—there would be no escape for them.

They hurriedly threw their shoulders against it just as its last support was beginning to crumble beneath it. They could hold it up and thus prevent the roof from entirely caving in. But of what avail would it be to stand there while there was no hope of other help?

"I think I can hold it up a short time, Jake," said Tom Flynn. "I'll try it while you look for some piece of timber to put under it. Be quick about it, Jake, for it's growing heavier."

The man groped around in the darkness. Among all the fallen rubbish there was not a stick that could be of any use.

Tom Flynn felt the great beam slowly settling down. Other supports were giving way. His own strength was failing.

But he braced himself up manfully and shouted: "Run, Jake! Run for your life. For your wife's sake, run! Don't mind me. I think I can hold this beam till you get out."

Jake ran, stumbling and panting, toward the little point of daylight which he saw glimmering far away at the end of the tunnel. Suddenly he heard a crash behind him, he felt a rushing of air at his back. He struggled forward into the light. He turned and saw that the tunnel was no more.

And Tom Flynn of Virginia? He would have been forgotten long ago had not Bret Harte told of his heroism in a ballad which I have but repeated to you in prose.

V.
PETER WOODLAND

PETER Woodland was a Dane. He had been in this country nine years and was foreman of some workmen who were helping to build the first tunnel under the Hudson River.

This tunnel was more than a mile in length, extending from Jersey City to the opposite shore of Manhattan. It was so deep down that its roof was beneath the bed of the river.

Day after day, month after month, Peter Woodland and his companions worked in this tunnel. Above them glided tugboats, ferryboats, steamships, and even mighty battleships; and but few people dreamed of the busy men who were toiling silently at the risk of their lives a hundred feet beneath the surface of the great river. The light of the sun never reached these men at their work; the roar and rumble of the city streets never disturbed them.

The work was begun at the Jersey City end. A great shaft or well was sunk straight down to the desired level, and then the tunnel was dug through mud and ooze and solid rocks and treacherous sand. As fast as it was dug, it was walled overhead and on the sides with bricks and stone and plates of steel. The masons kept close behind the diggers, and the wall was never more than a few feet from the farthest end of the excavation.

As the workmen slowly pushed their way out under the river, why did not the mud and rocks above them fall in before the protecting wall could be built? This was prevented in part by roofing the unwalled portion of the tunnel with strong iron plates; but the roof of itself was not sufficient to support the great pressure above.

Every boy knows how air when forced into the tire of a bicycle will expand the rubber tubing and enable it to sustain a very great weight. Similarly, compressed air was forced into the unwalled part of the tunnel, thus helping to support the vast pressure of mud and water and rocks upon the temporary roof. Had it not been for this device the whole thing would have collapsed and the tunnel would have been impossible.

Fitting closely inside of the walled part of the tunnel there was an iron chamber fifteen feet in length. This chamber was called the air lock, and it was moved along as fast as the wall was completed. It was made to fit so closely that no water or air could pass between it and the inner surface of the wall.

At each end of the air lock there was a heavy door, and in the center of each door there was a round pane of very thick glass called a bull's-eye. Both the doors opened toward the unfinished end of the tunnel.

At midnight, every night, Peter Woodland and twenty-seven other men went down into the tunnel to work. They entered by means of a ladder, through the deep shaft in Jersey City. They went on through the finished portion till they came to the air lock. This they entered, the farther or lower door being already closed. When all were in, the upper door was closed and air was forced into the chamber until it was of the same density as the

compressed air in the unfinished portion of the tunnel below. Then the lower door was opened, and the men passed out to their work.

It was not possible for them to work long in such air. After a few hours they would return into the air lock. The compressed air would be drawn off. They would return to their homes for rest, and twenty-eight other men would take their places.

One night Peter Woodland and his men had been at work as usual for nearly four hours. It was about the time for their early morning lunch. A few of the men had already dropped their picks and were starting for their dinner pails. The lower door of the air lock was open.

Suddenly there was an ominous sizzling and a rushing of water between two of the iron plates in the roof.

Peter Woodland sprang forward.

"All hands to stop this leak!" he cried.

But it was too late. The water poured through in a torrent. There was no possible way to stop it. One of the iron plates was misplaced.

Peter Woodland stood upright, trying if he might be able with his two hands to stanch the flow a little.

"Quick, men!" he cried. "Into the air lock, every one of you."

He himself might have been the first to go. But, no; he stepped aside and pushed the others in as fast as they came up.

Seven men had entered; but as the eighth reached the door, the heavy iron plate above it fell upon him. He dropped down as though dead, while the iron plate rested against the door in such a way as to close it within a few inches. Not another man could pass through.

"QUICK, MEN! INTO THE AIR LOCK!"

Peter Woodland and nineteen others were caught as in a trap, and the river was pouring in upon them.

The seven men in the air lock were also entrapped; for the pressure of the air against the upper door was so strong that they could not open it. The water was pouring through the lower doorway over the body of their dead companion.

"Stop up the doorway with your coats!" shouted Peter Woodland.

They had left their coats with their dinner pails in the air lock when they went out to work. These they seized and thrust into the opening of the doorway. They pulled off their shirts and pushed them in also. The flowing of the water into the air lock was checked, although the chamber was now almost half full.

Unless they could open the upper door, their respite would be but short. They would still be drowned like rats in a hole.

Then they heard the voice of Peter Woodland again, "Break the bull's-eye in the upper door! Kick it out!"

The men saw him. The water was already to his chin. The nineteen men behind him were in the same sad plight.

"Break it!" he cried. "It's your only chance. If you're saved, do what you can for the rest of us."

These were his last words.

They broke the bull's-eye. The compressed air escaped. The upper door was easily opened. The seven men rushed out, the water following them as they ran. They gained the great shaft at the entrance. They climbed the ladder in breathless haste. At the top they turned and looked back.

The tunnel was full of water. Of the twenty-eight men who had gone down at midnight, twenty-one would never