

STEPHEN FOSTER

And his Little Dog Tray



BY OPAL WHEELER

Illustrated by Mary Greenwalt

Zeezok
publishing
Elyria, OH

STEPHEN FOSTER AND HIS LITTLE DOG TRAY

written by Opal Wheeler and illustrated by Mary Greenwalt.

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Children's Books, a division of Penguin Young Readers Group, a
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978-1-933573-18-2

Published by:
Zeezok Publishing
PO Box 1960
Elyria, OH 44036

www.Zeezok.com
1-800-749-1681

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CHAPTER ONE



THE BRIGHT FOURTH of July sun smiled down upon the beautiful old oaks of Foster's Grove where the good town folk of Lawrenceville and the soldiers from the arsenal near by had gathered to celebrate the birthday of America.

There, in the cooling shade beneath the wide-spreading branches, bands from the village played merrily around the long tables that were piled high with good things, and at last all was ready for the special birthday dinner.

William Foster sat at one end of the rough log table with his happy children, waiting to lead the celebration. Suddenly from the arsenal across the rolling green, the cannon boomed a salute, and while the soldiers stood at attention, the bands began to play "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Father Foster smiled at his children, all lustily singing, "Oh say, can you see by the dawn's early light." The ground trembled again as the cannon boomed a second salute, and when all was quiet, William Foster began to speak.

"My friends, this is a joyful time for us all. Just fifty years ago today, America was born."

“Long live America!” “The land of the free!” cried the people again and again, and when the cheering stopped, William Foster went on.

The older children listened proudly to their tall father, while Dunning and little Morrison hungrily sniffed the meats roasting near by and hoped that the speeches would not be too long so that the dinner could begin.

At last the talking stopped, and while the bands played “Yankee Doodle,” the feast began. The older children sang between mouthfuls, for this was one of their favorite songs, while Dunning and Morrison swung their short legs under the table in time to the music.

Just as the celebration was ended, there was a crackling in the bushes and Father Foster turned to see Lieve, his little colored servant, looking at him with her large brown eyes.

“Marse Foster,” she whispered, her dark eyes shining, “the little one is here!” and turning swiftly, she darted away through the trees.

William Foster smiled at his children.

“There is a fine surprise awaiting us at home, and I think that it is time we went to see it.”

Leading the way through the woods, Father Foster and

the children hurriedly climbed the hill and walked along the low fence under the locust trees to the beautiful White Cottage that overlooked the winding Allegheny River.

Soon they were in a small room, looking with delight at the tiny new baby, sound asleep in his little crib. Mother Foster smiled at her happy family.



“What shall we call him, Mother?” whispered the children excitedly.

“Your aunt would like him to be named Jefferson Adams,” she answered softly.

“Jefferson Adams!” exclaimed Father Foster. “But I have already named him. He shall be called Stephen Collins Foster.”

The little baby stirred in his small wooden bed and Anne Eliza put her fingers to her lips. Quietly the children tiptoed after her from the room.

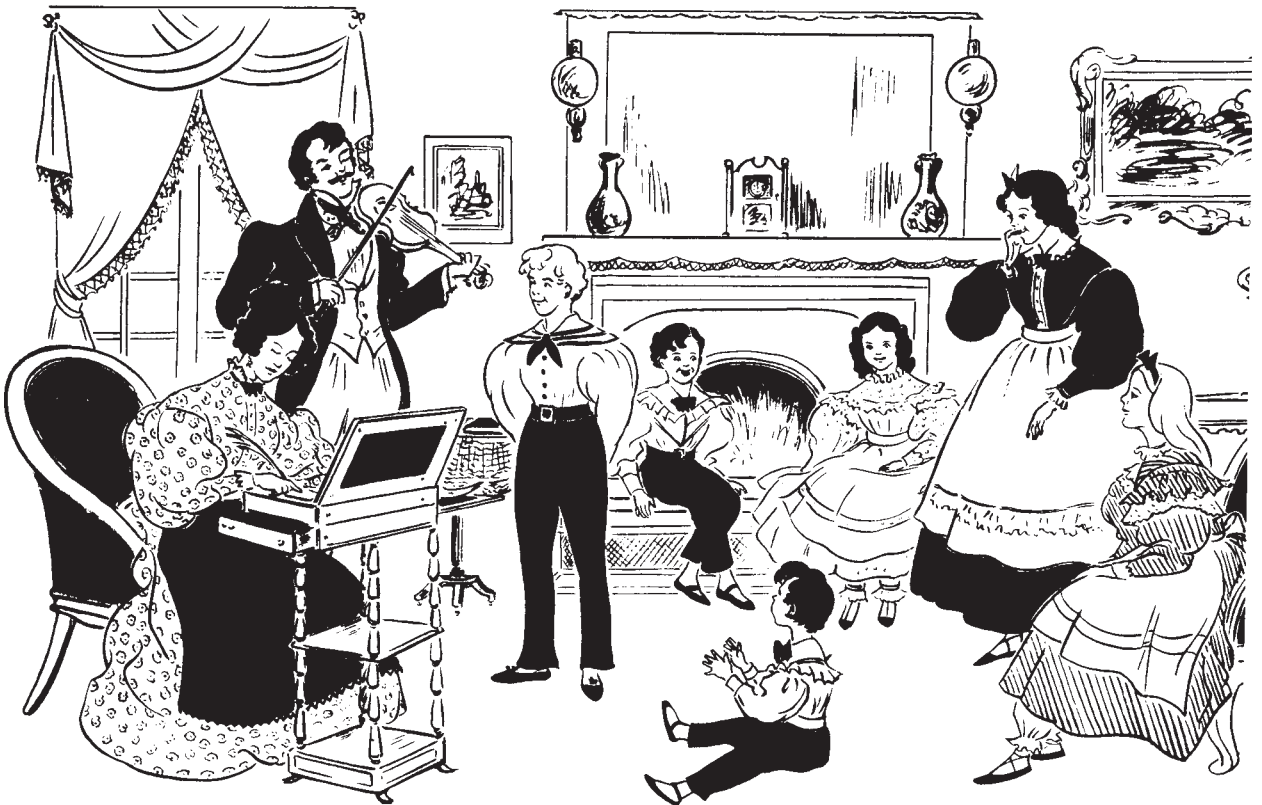
The little baby grew rapidly and early one showery April day, when all the air was filled with spring, he was bundled warmly in soft blankets and carefully carried to Trinity Church where he was christened Stephen Collins Foster. But from the very beginning he was called just Stephy.

Everyone in the Foster household loved the small, dark-haired little boy who was so sunny and sweet-natured from morning until night. But he was happiest of all when evening came and Father Foster took his violin to play the few simple pieces that he knew.

Little Stephy sat on the floor, his large, soft brown eyes shining with joy. His brothers and sisters were gathered

around him, eagerly watching their little brother as he listened to the music.

When at last his father put down his bow, Stephy called, “More! More!” and would not be satisfied until Father Foster had played the simple tunes over again.





“And now, children, it is getting late,” said Mother Foster. “Come, we will all have prayers together,” and taking little Stephy on her lap, Mother Foster, in her low, gentle voice, said prayers over the heads of the children gathered around her.

When little Stephy was tucked into bed, he did not go to sleep at once, for just as Mother Foster returned to the living room to write her newest poems in her notebook, his quick ears caught the sound of the plucking of strings. In a moment he was eagerly listening to the music of Anne Eliza as she sang and played on her guitar. When the last sounds had died away, he closed his eyes and in a moment was sound asleep.

Early the next morning, Stephy ran to the living room and began to search for the instrument that he had heard the night before. He stole quietly about, climbing on chairs and looking on shelves. It must be somewhere!

At last his sharp eyes spied the case lying on a high table, and standing on tiptoe, he gently tugged and pushed until it was on the floor. Now he could play, too! Pulling back the lid, he softly plucked the strings of the guitar and listened joyously to the sound. He pulled the strings again and slowly began to pick out part of a little melody that he had heard the night before.

Anne Eliza, busily sewing with Mother Foster in a room near by, put down her work at the sound. Who could be playing on her instrument? Quietly she crept to see and eagerly ran back to the sewing room.

“Mother, come quickly! Stephy is playing on my guitar!”

Soon everyone in the household had crept to the living-room door and watched with amazement as the two-year-old boy played on the strings. He tried again and again and when the short tune was just right, his dark eyes glowed and a pleased smile crept over his round chubby face.



“Stephy, my little Stephy!” exclaimed Mother Foster. “You played beautiful music!”

“Ittly pizzani!” he cried, patting the guitar softly.

“His little piano!” echoed the children, crowding around him with loving cries.

Every day from then on Stephy played merrily away on Anne Eliza’s guitar. But he was happier still when his sister Charlotte’s friend came to visit and brought her piano with her so that she might play her pieces while she was away from home.

Little Stephy listened in wonder as Charlotte and her friend took turns at the instrument. He crept closer and closer to the piano until his dark head rested against the shiny case. When she had finished playing, Charlotte looked down to see her little brother sitting there so still.

“Stephy — you shall play, too!”

She lifted him to the high stool and at once he pressed down the keys with his short fingers, chuckling gaily at the sounds.

Stephy seemed to know that the piano would not stay for long, and each morning as soon as his breakfast was over, he ran to the instrument and climbing on the high stool, sat to play until someone took him away.

But these happy days did not last, for one morning some men came to take the piano away. Stephy watched sadly as

they carefully covered the instrument, and when they wheeled it to the door, he ran after it, weeping bitterly.

“Pizzani! Pizzani!” he sobbed.

“Ah, my little Stephy, some day we will have a piano of our own and then you can play as much as you wish,” said Mother Foster gently, taking him by the hand and leading him back into the room.

The children could not bear to see their little brother so unhappy and quickly took out the guitar for him to play. Little Stephy smiled through his tears as he softly plucked the strings, and soon he was happy again as he searched for the right tones of the little melody that he loved to play.

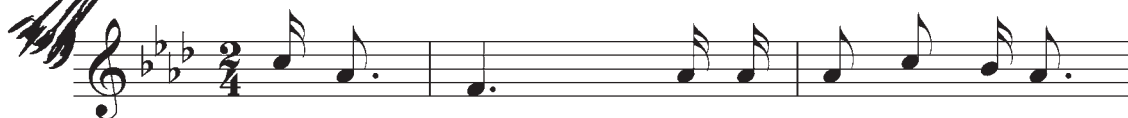
One warm summer morning not long afterward, Stephy’s sharp ears heard Lieve singing. Off he ran to the kitchen, and climbing on a high stool, he listened joyously to the little colored girl as she sang the beautiful old songs of her race.

Rolling her dark eyes and swaying back and forth in time to her singing, Lieve took the gleaming silver from the soapy water to rinse it in another pan. Her beautiful voice rang out through the long sunny kitchen.



GIT ON BOARD, LITTLE CHILDREN

(TRACK 1)



Git on board, lit - tle chil - dren, Git on



board, lit - tle chil - dren, Git on board, lit - tle



chil - dren, Dere's room for man - y a mo'.



1. De Gos - pel train's a com - in', I hear it jus' at han',— I
2. I hear de train a - com - in', She's com - ing roun' de curve,— She's
3. De fare is cheap, an' all can go, De rich an' poor are dere,— No



hear de car wheels rum - blin',— An' roll - in' thro' de lan'.
 loos - ened all her steam an' brakes, An' strain - in' eb - 'ry nerve.
 sec - ond class a - board dis train, No dif - ference in de fare.