

3. THE FACTORS THAT BRING ABOUT NAT'S CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, I analyze the factors of Nat's character development. This analysis is divided into two sub-chapters. First I reveal Nat's previous characters in his past life, which occur before Nat's encounter with his teachers and friends. After that, I analyze the factors that lead Nat to experience character development at Plumfield.

3.1. Nat's Previous Characters

In the beginning of the novel, the author shows Nathaniel Blake as an orphan, living only with his indifferent father in a dirty cellar. His father is a single parent whose only friend is also as irresponsible as he. Both are drunkards and enslave Nat to earn money to fulfill their needs of alcoholic drinks. Mr. Blake treats Nat not as a father to his son, but as a boss to his subordinate. Experiencing such oppression, Nat could not do anything since he is only a kid. He passively and submissively undergoes the harsh treatment done by his father, which somehow plays an important factor in shaping his way of thinking. Nat's harsh past life is shown in the following quotation:

You see, I used to go round fiddling with my father, and another man 'till he died. It was horrid; so cold in the winter, and hot in summer. And I got tired; they were crossed sometimes; and I didn't have enough to eat. But I did love my little fiddle, and I miss it. Nicolo took it away when father died, and wouldn't have me any longer, 'cause I was sick' (p. 12)

Nat's life with his father before he stays at Plumfield is very miserable. It is seen clearly in how poorly he and his father live. Earning money as a fiddler is not sufficient to buy enough food to eat. Additionally, Nat's father does not give a nice and good impression to him. Nat's father has failed in appreciating and loving Nat as his child. His father treats him as if he is his property. His father is not a good parent since he treats his son as a "money machine" to fulfill his addiction on alcoholic drink. Nat has to obey and be submissive to him for his father is the "person in charge" (Barnes, 1997, chap. 3) of his life. With his father Nat never

experiences cheer in his daily life. His father does not give him what he needs as a child. Life seems unkind to Nat since he is the object of his drunkard father's bossy and abusive behavior. Nevertheless, Nat is an obedient son - even too obedient - so he can find peace in his miserable and unhappy life with his father. Based on Nat's social condition, I think Nat has a greater possibility to become a delinquent, who runs away from his father and joins the street offender. However he can manage his life and keeps away from criminal activities.

According to Strommen, Mc.Kinney & Fitzgerald, children who are abused are likely to learn behavior patterns such as inability to communicate effectively, fear of authority, avoidance of social interaction, and low self-esteem; their social and intellectual development are often delayed (1983, p. 178). Raised without affection and with abuses, Nat grows into an over-submissive, over-dependent, and over-obedient son, in other words psychologically Nat does not grow up completely.

As Mr. Blake is far from being a good father, the things that his old father teaches Nat cannot be considered as good things. Nat is taught by his father to be a street musician or cynically called a tramp that gets the daily income from people's mercy (p. 12). Working as a poor street musician, Nat's daily life is only around the street. Since Nat's father does not want Nat to be better, cleverer than him, he lets Nat grow up as a boy who has no self-confidence. Nat's lack of self-confidence is clearly shown later when he stays at Plumfield and has to mingle with his new acquaintances.

Nevertheless, when Nat's father dies, Nat's life becomes worse since nobody is there to take care of him. Fortunately, the generous Mr. Laurence finds Nat. Owing to Mr. Laurence's (Uncle Teddy) kindness; Nat begins his new life at Plumfield, a school for the blessed little lads.

This poor lad is an orphan now, sick and friendless. He has been a street musician; and I found him in a cellar, mourning for his dead father and his lost violin. I think there is something in him; we may give this little man a lift. When he is ready I'll see if he is a genius or only a boy with a talent which may earn his bread for him (p. 12).

As a human, Nat has two sides of characters, good and bad, although those two are not always in balance. Although Nat's previous character is considered bad; since he is over submissive, over dependent and over obedient, he still has a conscience, which is a monitor that prevents Nat from doing wrong, as though there were some inner system that warns him against forbidden acts. His conscience keeps from falling into criminal activities and in staying on the right path. While bad economic condition and poverty may lead someone to act recklessly, such as committing suicide and violating the law for stomach's sake, Nat can keep himself clean from crime, no matter how hard his life is.

Actually, what happens to Nat is the reflection of the traditional model of a family structure and power sharing which is believed by the society in general. In the traditional family structure, father serves as the head of the family and the family members should obey him. This pattern has existed in the society for a long time and it has shaped the society's way of thinking as well as individuals' (Gilbert and Gubar, 1985, p.168). In Nat's case, the powerful figure in his family is his father. He makes every decision and does everything that he wishes. On the other hand, Nat conforms to the traditional role as a child, and acts as an obedient son. As a result, when his father abuses him, both physically and psychologically, he passively accepts the treatment as if it is his father's right to do so. And his character is molded since he was a child. Nat's words, "father's beating taught me to keep my temper," (p. 35) is always Nat's excuse to stay calm. Nat's passive action shows that he is a submissive boy who accepts whatever condition he is in.

Another of Nat's character is docile. While young boys are usually very active, fond of physical exercises and a little bit rebellious, Nat is not so. Mr. Bhaer, the teacher at Plumfield, "took care of the shy feeble boy" (p. 38). Mr. Bhaer finds his new pupil as "docile and affectionate" as a "girl," or in other words, as a boy Nat's masculinity is not too prominent. Mr. Bhaer takes fancy call when speaking of Nat to Mrs. Jo as his "daughter". And Mrs. Jo Bhaer, who likes manly boys, "enacts Nat lovingly as she did Daisy-her niece" (p. 38).

Nat's docile actions might have originated in his life with his father, for he must obey and act submissively toward him with no complaint. As Nat finds security in his calm manner in mending a relationship with other people, so he

takes a safe way in his relationship with other new people in Plumfield using the same way. From his docile actions, I can conclude that Nat has the "fear of rejection syndrome" (Gray, 1999, p. 282). He is nervous in his relation with other people due to his feeling of inferiority. The serene and docile Nat is often terrified when he faces a new situation and new people, as shown in this quotation, "Bashful Nat quaked at the thought of meeting many strange boys, but Mrs. Bhaer held out her hand to him, and Rob said patronizingly "Don't be 'fraid, I'll take of you" (p.11).

So I conclude this subchapter with summarizing that Nat's character traits before he stays at Plumfield are submissive, obedient and docile due to his father's abusive and harsh treatments. From this point I can start to discuss how he changes and analyze the factors of his character development.

3.2 The Factors of Nat's Character Development

The warm atmosphere and generosity of Plumfield resident mixed with the strong will to be a better person brings about changes in his character. In Plumfield Nat has many chances and motivation which he gets from his friends and teachers to develop and mold him into a new person in emotion, intelligence and spirituality. Socialization plays an important role in one's life since it "strongly influences what kind of individuals we become, how we feel about such things as being males or females, and, indeed, whether we become human at all" (Gelles and Levine, 1999). To obtain a deep understanding of Nat's character development, I consider it is essential to analyze the factors that makes him develop. These factors are friendship, love, education, music, and religion.

As a character, Nat also faces some conflicts that drive him to adjust with his new environment. Nat faces both inner and outer conflicts. Firstly, he has to cope with his inner conflict because he psychologically feels worthless because he was once a tramp and uneducated. Later his conflict is getting bigger because he used to tell lies and is accused as a thief and later on expelled from the friendship bonds in Plumfield residence. Here I discuss about the conflicts that Nat faces in a systematical order, the beginning, the development of the conflict until it reaches climax, and then the end.

3.2.1. Friendship

Reading *Little men*, it is obvious that Nat undergoes processes in shaping his character through the friendship he gets in Plumfield. From the beginning until the end of the novel Nat is going through various events serving as learning experiences that give him a broader understanding to the world and shape him into a good boy. Through the events, he comes to self-realization on his self-value, which is being just the way he is, and his learning on how to have good relationships with other people.

Basically, Nat is a serene and docile boy, he likes to withdraw from new environments. When he first comes to Plumfield, he looks terrified with a simple question asked by Tommy, "Are you a new boy?" "Don't know yet" said Nat, trembling all his body" (*Little men*, p.8). Moreover, with his life background as an abused boy, he does not have enough self-confidence to face a new situation and new people, as shown in this quotation, "Bashful Nat quaked at the thought of meeting many strange boys, but Mrs. Bhaer held out her hand to him, and Rob said patronizingly "Don't be 'fraid, I'll take of you" (p.11). Later on, Demi helps Nat get his first religious lesson. Even Mrs. Bhaer gives her compliment to his nephew, "Demi is unconsciously helping the poor boy better than I can; I will not spoil it by a single word" (p.33). It is true that Demi is a kind and generous kid, so he could easily make a new friend with the new strange boy, Nat.

Slowly but sure Nat can open his heart from avoiding social interaction due to the friendship offered by his peers at Plumfield. One day Tommy tells him that Demi, the nephew of Mr. Bhaer likes him. The affirmation makes Nat delighted. "Did he?" and Nat smiled with pleasure, for Demi's regard seemed to be valued by all the boys" (p.27). Tommy is Nat's first close friend and Tommy tries his best to make his new friend feel comfortable at Plumfield, which is shown by his share on hunting eggs for Nat's saving (p.27). Although it is only a small share, but Nat feels it is a luxurious gift since it is given with the contents of valuable relationship, called friendship.

A healthy relationship has its ups and down, in other words, it has happy times and conflicts. Although Plumfield students are well educated, not all the

children are innocent and funny. Under the influence of Dan, Nat's tramp friend, who comes later after Nat, the boys learn to swear, to smoke, to drink, and to gamble. This naughtiness seems unceaseable, until Tommy Bangs accidentally sets his bed on fire because he is made drunk by Dan. The fire spreads fast and damages the left wing of the house (p. 66). Nat is the one who is most shocked due to that accident because it is Nat who once begs to Mrs. Bhaer to accept Dan in Plumfield in the hope that they may enjoy the marvelous Plumfield together. As the consequence of the accident, although the children try to keep Dan, he is dropped out from Plumfield for his over limit naughtiness and he has to leave his docile friend, Nat.

Nat's character has changed as time goes on, because now he can accept himself as he is and easily expresses his feeling, he plainly says what he feels, which he never does before when he lives with his father. Therefore, when Dan has to move to Mr. Page's school due to his naughtiness, Nat cries in sorrow.

"Oh! Sir, where is he going?" cried Nat.

"To a pleasant place up in the country, where I sometimes send boys when they don't do well here. Mr. Page is a kind man, and Dan will be happy there if he chooses to do his best."

"Will he ever come back?" asked Nat.

"That's depends on himself; I hope so."

"I wonder if you'll like it," began Jack

"Shan't stay if I don't," said Dan, coolly

"Oh, don't! Stay with Mr. Page awhile, and then come back here; do, Dan," pleaded Nat, much affected at the whole affair (p.67).

Nat considers Dan as his guardian because Dan has always protected Nat as street boys. For that reason, Nat feels he owes Dan a lot and wants Dan to be together at his side to enjoy a pleasant life at Plumfield. However, Dan is a real tramp and hard to be tamed, the only way for him is to go to Mr. Page school. Therefore, Nat has to say goodbye to his beloved friend and hopes the best for him.

Without Dan, Nat has to pass the days in loneliness. However, this feeling is not for long as most of Plumfield residence like Nat, "Demi and Nat will be

good but Tommy will do something bad," (p.85) says Nan as adoration when she invites the boys to her teatime. The Bhaers feel glad because Nat's emotion is getting better, "I am glad to find out this state of his; if Nat should turn out a musician, I should have caused to be proud of this years' work" (p.97). Through the friendship offered by his peers at Plumfield, Nat could develop into a better boy since now he has friends to share his happy and sad times. One thing that makes Nat feel worthy with his existence at Plumfield is that he could help poor, idiotic Billy to find his peace through the music Nat plays. "Help one another," (*Little men*, p. 171) is a favorite Plumfield motto, and Nat learns that much sweetness is added to life by trying to live up to it.

3.2.2. Education/ Intelligence

Nat's feeling of being unworthy may be based on the reality that all of his friends at Plumfield are descendants of righteous persons, sons of happy families, and all of them are well educated while he himself is just the son of a worthless father. In addition, he is the product of a broken family that makes him lack of self-confidence. When his friend, Tommy eagerly talks about the bookworm, Demi, the smart nephew of the Bhaers, Nat feels uncomfortable and inferior because Nat is unintelligent and illiterate. The topic about reading ability cuts his sensitive heart.

"Yes; Demi likes quiet chaps, and I guess he and you will get on if you care about reading as he does."

Poor Nat's flush of pleasure deepened to a painful scarlet at those last words, and he stammered out:

"I can't read very well; I never had anytime; I was always fiddling round, you know."

"I don't love it myself, but I can do it well enough when I want to," said Tommy, after a surprised look, which said plainly as words, "A boy twelve years old and can't read!" (p.27)

The above quotation clearly shows that Nat is disturbed by his incapability of reading. He is troubled more with Tommy's surprised look, which is a kind of silent mocking, "A boy twelve years old and can't read!" (*Little men*, p. 27). It

makes his confidence fall into the lowest degree and it hurts his sensitive feeling, just like he is stabbed on the back. Nat is tired of being the ugly duckling; always ignored previously by his father and later by the people he just met. For once in his life, he wants to be in the same level as his friends are. Therefore, he tells Tommy that his business in earning money for his father makes him have no time to study. Still, all he gets is just the feeling of being looked down, which is shown through Tommy's surprised look for his illiteracy. Therefore, when he gets the chance to be loved and cared, he does not dare to lose it by saying the truth of his inability. Nat is too afraid of losing his new "paradise" that is Plumfield, where his existence is acknowledged.

For this reason, Nat always finds a way to help himself out of an uneasy situation, unfortunately his way is not a good solution since it breaks the unwritten rule of the Bhaers, which is the rule of honesty. Being honest in a relationship is at times extremely difficult for Nat. therefore, he chooses to lie.

One fault of Nat's gave the Bhaers much anxiety, although they saw how it had been strengthened by fear and ignorance; Nat sometimes told lies, Not very black one, seldom getting deeper than grey, and often the mildest of white fibs; but that did not matter, a lie is a lie. And although we all tell many polite untruths in this queer world of ours, it is not right and everybody knows (p.38).

Nat thinks that by telling lies, he can hide his his past life and give a positive impression to his friends. His lies give him a phony secure feeling while there is always an element of risk involved in lying. Nat realizes that he cannot help to deceive since his new friendship is at stake and Nat is too afraid of losing it. Being the only unintelligent pupil gives him worry of losing his clever companions in Plumfield where he finds happiness and feels worthy for the very first time in his life. Like everybody else, Nat needs to be loved by others, particularly by his companions; his friends at Plumfield. Therefore, Nat thinks that it is better to keep his mouth shut about the truth of his past life.

"I know it, and I don't mean to, but it's so much easier to get along if you ain't very fussy about being exactly true. I used to tell 'em because I was afraid of Father and Nicolo, and now I do sometimes because the boy laugh

at me. I know it's bad, but I forget," and Nat looked much depressed by his sins (p.39).

Actually Nat knows that he has done wrong. His fear of being humiliated for his past life as an uneducated tramp has led Nat to transgress in order to avoid embarrassment. That is why he hides his past life by telling lies to others.

Later on, Nat experiences the change in his intelligence. In his development stage, Nat pours all of his efforts to be a better person.

With much congenial work, encouragement, and hope, Nat found life getting easier and happier every day, and made such progress in his music lessons that his teacher forgave his slowness in some other things, knowing very well that where the heart is the mind works best. The only punishment the boy ever needed for neglect of more important lessons was to hang up the fiddle and the bow for a day. The fear of losing his bosom friend entirely made him go at his books with a will; and having proved that he could master the lessons, what was the use of saying "I can't?" (p.38).

The quotation above describes that Nat is very talented in music, especially in playing fiddle, an ability he has in his entire life. But now he sees music as leisure, not as a burden like once he experienced during his life on the street. However, Nat realizes that playing fiddle is not a way to get out of his gloomy past, since to master something means he must develop his cognitive skill. "But I must work hard, or I can't catch up with others. They know heaps, and I don't know anything," (p.35) is Nat's statement when he is almost in despair due to hearing the boys at Plumfield recite their grammar, history, and geography with amazing ease and accuracy. In order to boost his eagerness to study, Mr. Bhaer gives him uplifting words:

Yes; for one thing, you can keep your temper, and Jack, who is quick at numbers, cannot; that is an excellent lesson, and I think you have learned it well. Then, you can play the violin, and not one of the lads can, though they want to do it very much. But, best of all, Nat, you really care to learn something, and that is half the battle. It seems hard at first, you will feel discouraged, but plod away, and things will get easier as you go on (p.35).

Mr. Bhaer encourages his docile pupil to try his best and Nat grabs the challenge by saying, "I do want to learn, and I will try. I never went to school, but I couldn't help it; and if the fellows don't laugh at me, I guess I'll get on first rate-you and the lady are so good to me" (p.35). Nat has a belief that in acquiring a new skill the more he practices, the more capable he becomes. This kind of philosophy makes him feel easy in practicing what he believes that there is a good deal in to give and to take, trial in error in his relationship with his teachers and friends.

3.2.3. Love

The changes in Nat's character also involve the change in his emotion. From the very first time of his arrival, the warm atmosphere of Plumfield has made Nat feels comfortable and secure because of the Bhaers' and the pupils' hospitable welcome. Subsequently, through the day-to-day hospitality Nat feels accepted and loved (p.35). As the secure feeling goes deeper in Nat's heart, he easily settles himself in a comfortable way to please his soul.

Now Nat's second parents are the Bhaers. Parental love is a necessity for the development of a conscience. But love is not enough. To develop a strong conscience in their children, loving parents must use their love as a way of controlling their child, giving it when he is good and withdrawing it when he is bad (Smith, 1961: 522). A child's guilty conscience seems to be an expression of fear that he has offended his parents and that they will no longer love him.

Mr. Bhaer intends to cure Nat from his bad habit of telling lies because he believes that only the truth can help people to feel secure, only the truth can bring people the necessary trust needed for long-lasting relationships. And it is only the truth, although it is sometimes painful that can create a safe environment of unity and growth. To cure Nat's habit of telling lies, Mr. Bhaer uses his own way. He tells Nat that when he himself was a boy, he had a problem with fibbing, too. "Then said (my) dear old grandmother, 'I shall help you to remember' . . . (and) with that she drew out my tongue and snipped the end with her scissors till the blood ran" (p.39). According to Mr. Bhaer, this was all for the best, because, as his tongue was sore for days, his words came very slowly and he had time to

think. Nat thinks that he will get a physical punishment because of his bad habit of telling lies. Actually Nat is too afraid that his tongue is going to be snipped, yet he does wish to stop fibbing from that moment on. However, Mr. Bhaer does not like to give a physical punishment to his pupils, he prefers a psychological way of punishment.

"See now, when you tell a lie I will not punish you, but you shall punish me."

"How?" asked Nat, startled at the idea.

"You shall ferule me in the good-old-fashioned way. I seldom do it myself, but it may make you remember better to give me pain than to feel it yourself."

"Strike you? Oh, I couldn't!" cried Nat.

"Then mind that tripping tongue of thine. I have no wish to be hurt, but I would gladly bear much pain to cure this fault."(p.39)

It is obvious that Nat realizes that to tell a lie is really wrong. For some time Nat can keep his promise to stop fibbing, but one day he is caught telling a lie. Therefore, to keep true to his word, Mr. Bhaer commands the boy to give him six strokes that reddened the hand (p.40). Nat himself feels depressed of hurting the good teacher, who "took fatherly care of the shy feeble boy who had barely escaped with his life from the rough sea" (p.38).

Nat really regrets for what he has done. After the sixth stroke, Nat throws the rule across the room, and hugs the kind hand in both his own, lays his face down on it and sobs in a passion of love, shame and penitence: "I will remember! Oh, I will!" (p.40). This amazing scene is witnessed by Tommy, who comes back to the group "excited and sober". Nat's friends feel uncomfortable with that punishment since it really hurts Nat and Mr. Bhaer, but they can understand that the shame of performing such an unjust action toward Mr. Bhaer makes Nat sense his own fault. From that time on, Nat tries his very best to always tell the truth, and finds much help, not only from the deepest little prayers he prays to God in heaven but also in the patient care of his friends and teachers, whose kindness helps him to overcome the coming obstacles.

Mr. Bhaer's willingness to give his hands to be beaten as the punishment of Nat's fault shows how Mr. Bhaer loves Nat very much and he does not want Nat to get the suffering he experiences and hopes that Nat will not transgress anymore. Meanwhile, Nat is regretful and ashamed with what he has done since it is he who does the fault, but it is Mr. Bhaer who has to suffer. Nat really thanks the Bhaers for accepting and caring for him, so that gradually he can manage his problems in a proper way. The love for Nat saves him and in return Nat's love grows stronger. Now he can look back at the life he has undergone and make an analysis of his past life, so he can learn from his past mistakes. This indicates that Nat has a strong will to develop.

Although Nat has repented from lying, once a person is called a liar, people around the liar tend to disbelieve him. Nat has been staying at Plumfield for several months and has well-mingled with the residence when Tommy loses his money. As Nat is the only one who exactly knows where the money is before it is lost, he is accused as the thief. Because Nat does not do the crime, he rejects the accusation. His denial arouses conflicts and results in his friends' anger. They expell Nat from the friendship bonds of the Plumfield residences; they assume that Nat has not yet recovered from his old habit of telling lies.

"I don't wish to hurt you, Nat, but you see I can't afford to lose my money, so I guess we won't be partners any longer"; and with that Tommy rubbed out the sign, "T. Bangs & Co."

"Now you have 'bezzled my property, I shan't sue you and I shan't pitch into you, but I must dissolve the partnership, because I can't trust you, and I don't wish to fail" (p.139).

When striking Mr. Bhaer's hand becomes the first reason of Nat's turning point in life for not telling lies anymore, the wrong accusation the second. Since Nat is a quiet person, his soul is lonely, when he catches up with a problem, he looks absolutely distraught and shattered. Losing Tommy's trust cuts his heart deeply because "Nat had been very proud of the "Co." from which he had hunted eggs diligently, kept his account all straight, and had added a good sum to his income" (p.139) from the sale of his share of stock in trade. Now he feels that his

good name is gone forever and no one in the business world will trust him because of the accusation on him.

When Nat is invited to respond to the accusation in the class, he defends himself though he is not sure whether he will succeed or not in convincing Mr. Bhaer and his classmates about the truth. Apparently, Nat cannot win his defense because everybody seems to oppose him, particularly Ned with his insulting words.

"Don't Ned! Oh, don't! I can't tell you because I don't know, and it's mean of you to keep nagging at me on the sly, when Father Bhaer told you not to plague me. You wouldn't dare to if Dan was round."

"Then you'll be a sneak, as well as a liar and a thief," began Ned, with a jeer, for Nat had borne insult to himself so meekly (p.137).

Some of Nat's classmates try to find another reason to make Nat be punished by pointing out Nat's fault of having no convincing proof, which is a good reason for the people to judge Nat as being guilty. Nat refuses to confess the theft he has not done because he considers that once he confesses, he will not be free from the stigma of a thief and a liar for his whole lifetime. Sadly, Mr. Bhaer is questioning Nat's credibility also, though his little conscience tells him that it is not Nat that takes the money.

I am very sorry, Nat, but evidences are against you, and your old fault makes us more ready to doubt you than we should be if we could trust you as we do some of the boys, who never fib. But mind my child, I do not charge you with this theft; I shall not punish you for it till I am perfectly sure, nor ask anything more about it. I shall leave it for you to settle with your own conscience. If you are guilty, come to me at any hour of the day or night and confess it, and I will forgive and help you to amend (p.135).

Though Nat rejects the accusation, he does not try to find any reason to defend himself anymore. Now he is aware that he is a loser who does not have any chance to speak up to defend himself, so it is useless to try again. The conversation above proves that Nat has to bear the pain of being wronged due to his past lying habit. One thing that he can do now is to look back at the life he has undergone and tries to evaluate his behavior in order to gain a better

understanding of himself so he can learn from his past mistakes of dishonesty. In this hard way Nat learns never to lie again.

There are still people who really love Nat. Mr. Laurence as Nat's helper that puts him in Plumfield, diligently keeps an eye on Nat's progress. He hopes that Nat could make his life at Plumfield become a foundation for Nat's future life (p.12), that is why he tries his best to provide boosts for Nat.

Mr. Laurence did not forget him, but sent clothes and books, music and kind messages, and now and then came out to see how his boy was getting on or took him into town to a concert; on which occasions Nat felt himself translated into the seventh heaven of bliss, for he went to Mr. Laurence's great house, saw his pretty wife and little fairy of a daughter, had a good dinner, and was made so comfortable that he talked and dreamed of it for days and nights afterward (p.36).

It seems that Mr. Laurence's effort to provide a better life for Nat is successful.

Mrs. Jo Bhaer used to say that Nat is her best crop. Since living at Plumfield Nat is well nourished, his thin cheeks are now getting plump and ruddy, his bent shoulders are slowly straightened up with healthful work, good food and the absence of that heavy burden, poverty (p.36). Furthermore, Mrs. Bhaer wants Nat always to be happy and to develop himself into a better person.

My child, you have got a father and a mother now, and this is home. Don't think of those sad times any more, and be sure you shall never suffer again, if we can help it. This place is made for all sorts of boys to learn how to help themselves and be useful men, I hope (p. 155).

Through tactful affection given by Plumfield's adults, Nat experiences character development and becomes better in many ways.

3.2.4. Music

Fiddling is a kind of soul refreshment for Nat, the way he expresses his very dear emotion. In his life that his fiddle is his "soul-mate". He once mourns for his fiddle when Nicolo takes it away (p.12). As Mr. and Mrs. Bhaer pour their love to Nat, Nat experiences significant changes in his point of view about his interest in music. In the past music, in this case, playing fiddle is a way to attracts

people's mercy and he does it under pressure, now he sees music as a way to send his love, contentment toward his soul and he does it in joy.

With much congenial work, encouragement, and hope, Nat found life getting easier and happier every day, and made such progress in his music lessons that his teacher forgave his slowness in some other things, knowing very well that where the heart is the mind works best (p.38).

Another proof that music is what he likes best is in this following quotation.

Nat's favorite amusement was working in his garden, and sitting in the willow tree with his violin, for that green nest was a fairy world to him, and there he loved the perch, making music like a happy bird. The lads called him "Old Chirper", because he was always humming, whistling, or fiddling, and they often stopped a minute in their work or play to listen to the soft tunes of the violin, which seemed to lead a little orchestra of summer sounds. (p.79)

Only fiddling that makes Nat feel contented. Nat is not alone in enjoying the peaceful tunes he plays; most of his friends are loyal audience for his little concert in the garden. The music Nat plays give a warm, lovely atmosphere to Plumfield residences. Through music, the most developed ability since his coming at Plumfield, Nat gives his gratitude to the Bhaers.

The Bhaers thought he would play some of the old airs he knew so well, but, to their surprise, they heard a new and lovely melody, so softly, sweetly played, that they could hardly believe it could be Nat.

It was one of those songs without words that touch the heart, and sing of all tender homelike hopes and joys, soothing and cheering those who listen to its simple music. Aunt Meg leaned her head on Demi's shoulder, Grandmother wiped her eyes, and Mrs. Jo looked up at Mr. Laurie, saying, in a choky whisper:

"You composed that?"

"I wanted your boy to do you honour, and thank you in his own way,"

answered Laurie, leaning down to answer her (p. 212).

Here Mr Laurence, proud of Nat's progress, asks Nat to send his love through the new composition that touches every heart,

"After hearing Nat's play tonight, I really think he has genius," said Mrs. Jo Bhaer.

"Too soon to say; talent certainly he has, and there is no doubt that the boy can soon earn his bread by the work he loves. Build him up for another year or so, and then I will take him off your hands, and launch him properly," replied Mr. Laurence.

"That is such a pleasant prospect for poor Nat, who came to me six months ago so friendless and forlorn," answered Mrs. Jo (p.212).

After several months summer comes and Nat joyfully welcomes summer since he can earn some money by entertaining the visitors in the forest through his fiddle playing. Nat still does his old work of fiddling with the motive to earn money, but now with a different feeling in doing it. Previously, Nat does it under his father's pressure since he has to get some money out of pity for his father and Nicolò. But now Nat does the fiddling joyfully since his playing could make other people such as Billy happy and amused. Soon after he gets the permission from Mr. Bhaer, Nat goes to the woods and does so well in amusing the visitors. When he comes home with two dollars in his pocket, he displays them with intense satisfaction as he tells how much he has enjoyed the afternoon, how kind the young people are, and how they have praised his dance-music and promised to have him again (p.37). As a matter of fact, that summer Nat's ability in playing the violin has increased since Nat exercises it in a jolly atmosphere of happiness. He is happy because now he stays at Plumfield and earns some money for himself.

"It was so much nicer than fiddling in the street, for then I got none of the money, and now I have it all, and a good time besides. I'm in business now as well as Tommy and Jack, and I like it ever so much," said Nat, proudly patting the old pocket-book, and feeling like a millionaire already (p.37).

Mr. Bhaer gives permission to Nat because he always encourages his pupils to gain independence and earn some money to keep as a saving. Mr. Bhaer likes to say "Give a boy a trade, and he is independent. Work is wholesome, and whatever talent these lads possess, be it for poetry or ploughing, it shall be cultivated and made useful to them if possible" (p.37). Nat is very happy because with his own earned money he gets from fiddling most summer days in the forest

he could come home bringing some "goodies" from the feast for Daisy and little Tom. Nat feels glad with his earnings and shares his happiness with his friends, Daisy and Tom. He even vows that he will save up to buy a violin for himself. The Bhaers feel glad with Nat's promise and encourage him to work well and never forget to study.

3.2.5. Religion/ Moral

The change in Nat's character also happens in his religious life. Due to his previous circumstance of life, Nat is not well raised in religious atmosphere. While the basic lesson for every white Anglo-Saxon family is Christianity, Nat does not know about Jesus Christ because his father does not teach him about Christianity. For a man with a grief life like Nat's father, religion is not important, thus he does not emphasize spiritual education for his son. That is why, when Nat has the opportunity to learn deeper about the Good Man, Nat enthusiastically listens and is "drinking in the words of his little friend" (p.34).

Nat's first experience of religious lesson comes in a Sunday night, after the weekly gathering at Plumfield. Nat finds out a beautiful picture of a crowd surrounding a man. Nat feels there must be something peculiar about this picture, "since it had a graceful frame of moss and cones about it, and on a little bracket underneath stood a vase of wild flowers freshly gathered from the spring woods. Nat lay looking at it, dimly feeling what it meant and wishing he knew all about it" (p.32).

"That's my picture," said Demi in his night gown, pausing on his way back from Aunt Jo's chamber.

"What is he doing to the children?" asked Nat.

"That is Christ, the Good Man, and He is blessing the children. Don't you know about Him?" said Demi, wondering.

"Not so much, but I'd like to, He looks so kind," answered Nat, whose chief knowledge of the Good Man consisted in hearing His name taken in vain.

"I'll tell you about it; Aunt Jo won't mind;" and Demi settled himself on the opposite bed, glad to tell his favorite story to so good a listener. (p.33)

Then Demi tells Nat everything he knows about the Good Man. Nat's curiosity makes him carefully listen to Demi's story about Joseph and his bad brother, dear little Moses in the water and about the Good Man. Not only Nat is happy for Demi's kindness in telling him the story but also Mrs. Bhaer who "felt that if a single day of care and kindness had done so much, a year of patient cultivation would surely bring a grateful harvest from this neglected garden" (p.34). Nat's first religious lesson helps him in building his character, for he believes that there is Jesus Christ who continuously loves, blesses, watches, guides, guards and leads him in every single step he makes in his new life. Here religion serves as the blueprints for social behavior. With Jesus in his side, he is not afraid anymore and he becomes more careful in his actions. He does not want to offend and hurt Jesus and his friends with his doings. His character traits have developed to be better.

In short, I can say that the factors that bring about Nat's character development are friendship and education that he gets from his teachers and peers at Plumfield, love and religious awareness from them as well, and also music which fills his heart with happiness. These factors work in harmony resulting in the progress of Nat's character development. From a person who is formerly submissive, lack of self confidence, dependent, docile and even considered as a liar, Nat gradually changes and becomes a better person who is aware of his worth, independent, fond of hard work and religious.