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Author: John R. Bolles

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE STORY OF THE TWO BULLS ***

THE STORY OF THE TWO BULLS

WITH ORIGINAL ENGRAVINGS

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1856

THE STORY OF THE TWO BULLS

In former times, my story tells,
There lived one Deacon R.,
And not the worst man in the world,
Nor best was he, by far.

His fields were rich, his acres broad,
And cattle were his pride;
Oxen and sheep, and horses, too,
And what you please, beside.

His brindle cow, the highest prize
Won at the county fair,
For taper limbs and rounded form,
And short and shining hair.

Old Bonny Gray, a noble steed
Of sure, majestic pace,
Before the deacon purchased him,
Was famous at a race.

This story he would sometimes tell,

And at the end would say,
"Alas! such sports are far from right;
But Bonny won the day!"

Still, more than all, the spotted bull
Had filled the deacon's mind;
His back so straight, his breast so broad,
So perfect of his kind.

And when 'twas said that Moses Grimes,
A justice of the peace,
Had got the likeliest bull in town,
The deacon had no ease.

So off he rode to see the squire,
And put this question straight:
"Say, don't you want another bull,
And don't yours want a mate?"

The squire, perceiving at a glance
All that the man was after,
"Just forty pounds will buy my bull,"
Quoth he, with ready laughter.

And when the beast was brought to view,
And carefully surveyed,
Of deepest red, its every point
Of excellence displayed.

"I'll take him at your price," said he—
"Please drive him down to-morrow,
And you shall have the money, sir,
If I the cash can borrow."

So saying, turned he on his steed,
The nimble-footed Bonny;
To-morrow came, and came the bull—
The deacon paid the money.

The sun was hid behind the hills—
The next day would be Sunday;
"You'll put him in the barn," said he,
"And leave him there till Monday."

The deacon was a man of peace,
For so he claimed, albeit
When there was war among the beasts,
He always liked to see it.

"How will the bulls together look,
And which will prove the stronger?
'Twere sin to wish the time to pass—
'Twould only make it longer."

Such thoughts as these, on Sabbath morn,
Like birds of evil token,
Flew round and round the deacon's mind—
Its holy peace was broken.

Beyond the hills the steeple rose,
Distant a mile or two.
Our deacon's house and barns and bulls
Were well concealed from view.

"Be ready all, to meeting go;
Perhaps I may not come—
A curious fluttering near my heart
Calls me to stay at home."

As thus he spake, his careful wife
Replied with anxious tone,
"I'll stay with you; 'twere dangerous
To leave you all alone."

"No," answered he—"go, every one;
I've had the same before,
And, with a little medicine,

No doubt 'twill soon be o'er.

"Run, Peter, run for Bonny Gray,
Nor tarry till you find him;
I've often heard his own or say
He'd carry all behind him."

The carriage stands before the door;
They enter—one, two, three;
The deacon says, "There's room for more—
Enough for Parson G."

The parson was a portly man—
The deacon loved to joke;
But afterwards, as it befell,
Was sorry that he spoke.

They move to join the gathering throng
Within the house of prayer.
Now ceased the bell its solemn peal—
The deacon was not there.

Where was he, then? Perhaps you'll say
In easy chair reclining,
The glimmer of his spectacles,
Upon his Bible shining.

Ah, no! See you that earnest man,
With air so bold and free,
Driving a spotted, warlike bull?—
That very man is he.

Left to himself, the deacon grave
Tarried not long within,
And, thinking of his sturdy beasts,
Forgot his medicine.

"I hope the meeting will be full,
And I shall not be missed,"
Softly he breathed, and, looking round,
He murmured, "All is whist!"

Thus on he drove that spotted bull,
And near the gateway placed him,
And when the other one came out,
It happened so, he faced him.



"When Greek meets Greek," the deacon said,

"Then comes the tug of war;"
But such another tug, I ween,
The deacon never saw.

Like sudden thunderbolts they met,
The spotted and the red.
Those bulls will never fight again—
The spotted one is dead.

All gored and prostrate in his blood,
He lies upon the ground,
While the unsated red one toward
The deacon made a bound.

Down from the bars where he was perched.
Aghast, the good man sprung,
And if you'd seen him go it, *then*,
You'd said that he was young.

Still after him with fury
The bull did rush and roar,
And was very near the deacon
When he reached the outer door.



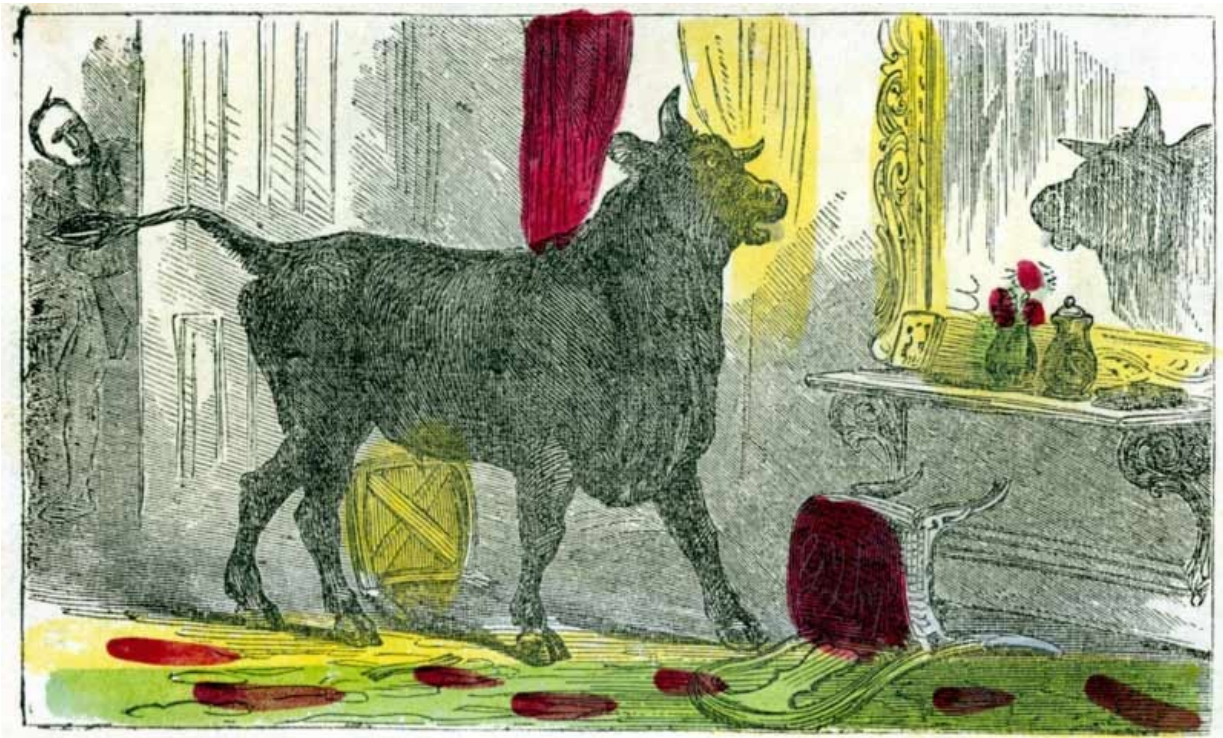
Through kitchen and through parlor fine,
Breathless, the poor man flew,
And lo! the bull is at his heels
And in the parlor too.

A flight of stairs is all that's left
Between him and despair;
He springs to gain the top, and falls,
A sober deacon, there.

But to his ears terrific sounds
Rise from the room below—
Tables and glasses, chairs and all,
Crash, crash, together go!

Upon the wall a mirror hung,
Of massive, gilded frame,
Which had reflected many a squire
And many a worthy dame.

There last, not least, the raging beast
Descried his form at length,
And deemed it was another bull
Coming to try his strength.



He plunged to meet his threatening foe,
But fought himself, alas!
While all around in fragments flew
The shattered looking glass!

"What will come next?" the deacon cries;
"This is too much for one day:
My rifle's loaded, and I'll try
To stop this noise on Sunday."

With trembling hand he seized the gun,
With wary step descended;
He aimed, he fired, he killed the bull,
And thus the battle ended.

To yonder house we turn again,
And to the quiet throng
The preacher now has said, Amen!
Now ends the choral song.

And friendly speech and courtesies
And shake of hands go round,
And each inquires the other's health,
All as in duty bound.

"How is your spouse?" the parson said;
"I see he's not at meeting."
"This morning, sir," the wife replied,
"His heart was strangely beating."

"I hope you'll call and see him soon"
"That I shall gladly do."
"Ride down with us—the carriage waits;
There's room enough for you."

All seated now, with solemn air,
And with a placid smile,
Such words of truth the parson spoke
As might their fears beguile.

Lo! they alight, the gate in sight—
"What's that?" the matron said.
Says Peter, "It's the spotted bull,
And I believe he's dead."

Thus all, amazed, a moment gazed,
And quickly turn about;
In doleful plight, the deacon sighs,

"Murder will surely out!

"Where shall I go? What shall I do?

I'm caught—I am a sinner!

My wife, good soul—my wife has brought

The parson home to dinner!"

And with a little spice of wit,
To which he was inclined,
Though none to spare the deacon had,
He thus relieved his mind:

"I've often heard the preacher say
That good may come of evil;
Still every hour, with all our might,
We must resist the devil.

"If horn and hoof be any proof,
And if the foot be riven,
Surely I am the very man
That with the beast has striven!"

Now hurried steps without are heard,
And earnest voices blend;
"I'm in a vice," the deacon groans—
"When will this torture end?"

Young Peter, being first within,
For he had run ahead,
Loudly exclaims, "Another bull
Lies in the parlor, dead!"



They enter all, with hands upraised
And faces filled with wonder—
There stood confessed the deacon's case,
And all were struck with thunder.

The tale flew quickly round, and woke
Much pity and more laughter;
But not a word the deacon spoke
Of his two bulls thereafter.

Listen! listen to my song,
There is meaning in it;
You may know it sha'nt be long—
Only half a minute.

Have you ever read the tale—
Have you heard the story—
How two bulls together fought
On the field of glory?

And how a famous hero
Thought it was so cunning,
How he became a master
Of the art of running?

And how he was so frightened,
In getting up the stairs;
And how he heard the breaking
Of all his china-wares?

And how his heart was swelling
Up like a pot of yeast;
And how he took a rifle,
And fired it at the beast?

And how the parish preacher
Had heard that he was sick,
And losing not a moment,
Did come to see him quick?

And how the rumor flourished,
'Mongst people young and old,
And how they sighed, and how they laughed
To hear the story told?

If you have read, remember
The moral of this book—
Whoever takes the devil's bait,
Is sure to feel the hook.

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