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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK QUEER STORIES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS ***

Queer Stories For Boys and Girls

BY

EDWARD EGGLESTON

AUTHOR OF "THE HOOSIER SCHOOLMASTER," "THE HOOSIER SCHOOL-BOY," ETC.

NEW YORK
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PREFACE.

The stories here reprinted include nearly all of those which I have written for children in a vein that entitles them to rank as "QUEER STORIES," that is, stories not entirely realistic in their setting but appealing to the fancy, which is so marked a trait of the minds of boys and girls. "Bobby and the Key-hole" appeared eight or nine years ago in *St. Nicholas*, and has never before been printed in book form. The others were written earlier for juvenile periodicals of wide repute in their time—periodicals that have now gone the way of almost all young people's magazines, to the land of forgetfulness. Although I recall with pleasure the fact that these little tales enjoyed a

considerable popularity when they first appeared, I might just as well as not have called them "The Unlucky Stories." In two or three forms some of the stories that form this collection have appeared in book covers in years past, but always to meet with disaster that was no fault of theirs. Two little books that contained a part of the stories herein reprinted were burned up—plates, cuts and all—in the Chicago fire of 1871. Another book, with some of these stories in it, was issued by a publisher in Boston, who almost immediately failed, leaving the plates in pawn. These fell into the hands of a man who issued a surreptitious edition, and then into the possession of another, to whom at length I was forced to pay a round sum for the plates, in order to extricate my unfortunate tales from the hands of freebooters. This is therefore the first fair and square issue in book form that these stories have had. For this they have been revised by the author, and printed from plates wholly new by the liberality of the present publisher.

E. E.

OWLS' NEST, Lake George, 1884.

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Queer Stories.

BOBBY AND THE KEY-HOLE.

A Hoosier Fairy Tale.

You think that folks in fine clothes are the only folks that ever see fairies, and that poor folks can't afford them. But in the days of the real old-fashioned "Green Jacket and White Owl's Feather" fairies, it was the poor boy carrying fagots to the cabin of his widowed mother who saw wonders of all sorts wrought by the little people; and it was the poor girl who had a fairy godmother. It must be confessed that the mystery-working, dewdrop-dancing, wand-waving, pumpkin-metamorphosing little rascals have been spoiled of late years by being admitted into fine houses. Having their pictures painted by artists, their praises sung by poets, their adventures told in gilt-edge books, and, above all, getting into the delicious leaves of St. NICHOLAS, has made them "stuck up," so that it is not the poor girl in the cinders, nor the boy with a bundle

of fagots now, but girls who wear button boots and tie-back skirts, and boys with fancy waists and striped stockings that are befriended by fairies, whom they do not need.

But away off from the cities there still lives a race of unflattered fairies who are not snobbish, and who love little girls and boys in pinafores and ragged jackets. These spirits are not very handsome, and so the artists do not draw their pictures, and they do not get into gilt-edge Christmas books. Dear, ugly, good fairies! I hope they will not be spoiled by my telling you something about them.

Little Bobby Towpate saw some of them; and it's about Bobby, and the fairies he saw, that I want to speak. Bobby was the thirteenth child in a rather large family—there were three younger than he. He lived in a log cabin on the banks of a stream, the right name of which is "Indian Kentucky Creek." I suppose it was named "Indian Kentucky" because it is not in Kentucky, but in Indiana; and as for Indians, they have been gone many a day. The people always call it "The Injun Kaintuck." They tuck up the name to make it shorter.

Bobby was only four years and three-quarters old, but he had been in pantaloons for three years and a half, for the people in the Indian Kaintuck put their little boys into breeches as soon as they can walk—perhaps a little before. And such breeches! The little white-headed fellows look like dwarf grandfathers, thirteen hundred years of age. They go toddling about like old men who have grown little again, and forgotten everything they ever knew.

But Bobby Towpate was not ugly. Under his white hair, which "looked every way for Sunday," were blue eyes and ruddy cheeks, and a mouth as pretty as it was solemn. The comical little fellow wore an unbleached cotton shirt, and tattered pantaloons, with home-made suspenders or "gallowses." The pantaloons had always been old, I think, for they were made out of a pair of his father's—his "daddy's," as he would have told you—and nobody ever knew his father to have a new pair, so they must have been old from the beginning. For in the Indian Kaintuck country nothing ever seems to be new. Bobby Towpate himself was born looking about a thousand years old, and had aged some centuries already. As for hat, he wore one of his daddy's old hats when he wore any, and it would have answered well for an umbrella if it had not been ragged.

Bobby's play-ground was anywhere along the creek in the woods. There were so many children that there was nobody to look after him; so he just kept a careful eye on himself, and that made it all right. As he was not a very energetic child, there was no danger of his running into mischief. Indeed, he never ran at all. He was given to sitting down on the ground and listening to the crazy singing of the loons—birds whose favorite amusement consists in trying to see which can make the most hideous noise. Then, too, he would watch the stake-drivers flying along the creek, with their long, ugly necks sticking out in front of them, and their long, ugly legs sticking out behind them, and their long, ugly wings sticking out on each side of them. They never seemed to have any bodies at all. People call them stake-drivers because their musical voices sound like the driving of a stake: "Ke-whack! ke-whack!" They also call them "Fly-up-the-creeks," and plenty of ugly names besides.

It was one sleepy summer afternoon that Bobby sat on the root of a beech-tree, watching a stake-driver who stood in the water as if looking for his dinner of tadpoles, when what should the homely bird do but walk right out on the land and up to Bobby. Bobby then saw that it was not a stake-driver, but a long-legged, long-necked, short-bodied gentleman, in a black bob-tail coat. And yet his long, straight nose did look like a stake-driver's beak, to be sure. He was one of the stake-driver fairies, who live in the dark and lonesome places along the creeks in the Hoosier country. They make the noise that you hear, "Ke-whack! ke-whack!" It may be the driving of stakes for the protection of the nests of their friends the cat-fish.

"Good-morning, Bobby, ke-whack!" said the long, slim gentleman, nodding his head. He said ke-whack after his words because that is the polite thing to do among the stake-driver fairies.

"My name haint Bobby Ke-whack, nur nothin'," answered Bobby. The people on Indian Kaintuck say "nor nothin'," without meaning anything by it. "My name haint on'y jeth Bob, an' nothin' elth."

But the slender Mr. Fly-up-the-creek only nodded and said ke-whack two or three times, by way of clearing his throat.

"Maybe you'd like to see the folks underground, ke-whack," he added presently. "If you would, I can show you the door and how to unlock it. It's right under the next cliff, ke-whack! If you get the door open, you may go in and find the Sleepy-headed People, the Invisible People, and all the rest, ke-whack!"

"Ke-whack!" said Bob, mimicking, and grinning till he showed his row of white milk-teeth. But the gentleman stake-driver must have been offended, for he walked away into the water and disappeared among the willows, saying, "Ke-whack! ke-whack!" in an indignant way at every step.

When once the stake-driver fairy had gone, Bob was troubled. He was lonesome. He had always been lonesome, because the family was so large. There is never any company for a body where there are so many. Now Bob wished that "Ole Ke-whack," as he called him, had not walked

off into the willows in such a huff. He would like to see who lived under the ground, you know. After a while, he thought he would go and look for the door under the cliff. Bobby called it "clift," after the manner of the people on the Indian Kaintuck.

Once under the cliff, he was a long time searching around for a door. At last he found a something that looked like a door in the rock. He looked to see if there was a latch-string, for the houses in the Indian Kaintuck are opened with latch-strings. But he could not find one. Then he said to himself (for Bobby, being a lonesome boy, talked to himself a great deal) words like these:

"Ole Ke-whack thed he knowed wharabout the key mout be. The time I went down to Madison, to market with mammy, I theed a feller dretht up to kill come along and open hith door with a iron thing. That mout be a key. Wonder ef I can't find it mythelf! There, I come acrost the hole what it goeth into."

He had no trouble in "coming acrost" the key itself, for he found it lying on the ground. He took it up, looked at it curiously, and said: "Thith thing muth be a key." So he tried to put it into the key-hole, but an unexpected difficulty met him. Every time he tried to put in the key, the key-hole, which before was in easy reach, ran up so far that he could not get to it. He picked up some loose stones and piled them up against the door, and stood on them on his tiptoes, but still the key-hole shot up out of his reach. At last he got down exhausted, and sat down on the pile of stones he had made, with his back to the door. On looking round, he saw that the key-hole was back in its old place, and within a few inches of his head. He turned round suddenly and made a dive at it, with the key held in both hands, but the key-hole shot up like a rocket, until it was just out of his reach.

After trying to trap this key-hole in every way he could, he sat down on a stone and looked at it a minute, and then said very slowly: "Well, I never! That beats me all holler! What a funny thing a key-hole muth be."

At last he noticed another key-hole in the rock, not far away, and concluded to try the key in that. The key went in without trouble, and Bob turned it round several times, until the iron key had turned to brass in his hands.

"The blamed thing ith turnin' yaller!" cried little Towpate. You must excuse Bob's language. You might have talked in the same way if you had been so lucky as to be born on the Indian Kaintuck.

Seeing that he could not open anything by turning the key round in this key-hole, since there was no door here, he thought he would now try what luck he might have with the "yaller" key in opening the door. The key-hole might admit a brass key. But what was his amazement to find on trying, that the key-hole which had run upward from an iron key, now ran down toward the bottom of the door. He pulled away the stones and stooped down till his head was near the ground, but the key-hole disappeared off the bottom of the door. When he gave up the chase it returned as before. Bobby worked himself into a great heat trying to catch it, but it was of no use.

Then he sat down again and stared at the door, and again he said slowly: "Well, I never, in all my born'd days! That beats me all holler! What a thing a keyhole ith! But that feller in town didn't have no trouble."

After thinking a while he looked at the key, and came to the conclusion that, as the key-hole went up from an iron key, and down from a brass one, that if he had one half-way between, he should have no trouble. "Thith key ith too *awful* yaller," he said. "I'll put it back and turn it half-way back, and then we'll thee."

So he stuck it into the key-hole and tried to turn it in the opposite direction to the way he had turned it before. But it would not turn to the left at all. So he let go and stood off looking at it a while, when, to his surprise, the key began turning to the right of its own accord. And as it turned it grew whiter, until it was a key of pure silver.

"Purty good for you, ole hoss," said Bob, as he pulled out the bright silver key. "We'll thee if you're any better'n the black one and the yaller one."

But neither would the silver one open the door; for the key-hole was as much afraid of it as of the brass one and the iron one. Only now it neither went up nor down, but first toward one side of the door and then toward the other, according to the way in which the key approached it. Bobby, after a while, went at it straight from the front, whereupon the key-hole divided into two parts—the one half running off the door to the right, the other to the left.

"Well, that'th ahead of my time," said Bob. But he was by this time so much amused by the changes in the key and the antics of the nimble key-hole, that he did not care much whether the door opened or not. He waited until he had seen the truant key-hole take its place again, and then he took the silver key back to the other key-hole. As soon as he approached it the key leaped out of his hand, took its place in the key-hole, and began to turn swiftly round. When it stopped the silver had become gold.

"Yaller again, by hokey," said Bob. And he took the gold key and went back, wondering what the key-hole would do now. But there was now no key-hole. It had disappeared entirely.

Bob stood off and looked at the place where it had been, let his jaw drop a little in surprise and disappointment, and came out slowly with this: "Well, I never, in all my born'd days!"

He thought best now to take the key back and have it changed once more. But the other key-hole was gone too. Not knowing what to do, he returned to the door and put the key up where the nimble key-hole had been, whereupon it reappeared, the gold key inserted itself, and the door opened of its own accord.

Bob eagerly tried to enter, but there stood somebody in the door, blocking the passage.

"Hello!" said Bob. "You here, Ole Ke-whack? How did you get in? By the back door, I 'low."

"Put my yellow waistcoat back where you got it, ke-whack!" said the stake-driver, shivering. "It's cold in here, and how shall I go to the party without it, ke-whack!"

"Your yaller wescut?" said Bob. "I haint got no wescut, ke-whack or no ke-whack."

"You must put that away!" said the fly-up-the-creek, pecking his long nose at the gold key. "Ke-whack! ke-whack!"

"Oh!" said Towpate, "why didn't you say so?" Then he tossed the gold key down on the ground, where he had found the iron one, but the key stood straight up, waving itself to and fro, while Bobby came out with his drawling: "Well, I never!"

"Pick it up! Pick it up! Ke-whack! You've pitched my yellow waistcoat into the dirt, ke-whack, ke-whack!"

"Oh! You call that a wescut, do you. Well, I never!" And Bobby picked up the key, and since he could think of no place else to put it, he put it into the key-hole, upon which it unwound itself to the left till it was silver. Bobby, seeing that the key had ceased to move, pulled it out and turned toward the open door to see the stake-driver wearing a yellow vest, which he was examining with care, saying, "Ke-whack, ke-whack," as he did so. "I knew you'd get spots on it, ke-whack, throwing it on the ground that way."

Poor Bobby was too much mystified by this confusion between the gold key and the yellow vest, or "wescut," as they call it on the Indian Kaintuck, to say anything.

"Now, my white coat, put that back, ke-whack," said the fly-up-the-creek fairy. "I can't go to the party in my shirt sleeves, ke-whack."

"I haint got your coat, Ole Daddy Longlegs," said Bobby, "'less you mean this key."

On this suspicion he put the key back, upon which it again unwound itself to the left and became brass. As soon as Bobby had pulled out the brass key and turned round, he saw that the fairy was clad in a white coat, which, with his stunning yellow vest, made him cut quite a figure.

"Now, my yellow cap," said the stake-driver, adding a cheerful ke-whack or two, and Bobby guessed that he was to put the brass key in the key-hole, whereupon it was immediately turned round by some unseen power until it became iron, and then thrown out on the ground where Bobby Towpate had found it at first. Sure enough, the fairy now wore a yellow cap, and, quick as thought, he stepped out to where the key was lying, and struck it twice with his nose, whereupon it changed to a pair of three-toed boots, which he quickly drew on. Then he turned and bowed to Bobby, and said:

"Ke-whack! You've ironed my coat and vest, and brushed my cap and blacked my boots. Good-day, ke-whack, I'm going to the party. You can go in if you want to."

Bobby stood for some time, looking after him as he flew away along the creek, crying "ke-whack, ke-whack, ke-whack!" And Bobby said once again: "Well, I never, in all my born'd days," and then added, "Haint Daddy Longlegs peart? Thinks he's *some* in his yaller wescut, I 'low."

When once the fly-up-the-creek had gone out of sight and out of hearing, Bobby started on his search for the Sleepy-headed People. He travelled along a sort of underground gallery or cave, until he came to a round basin-like place. Here he found people who looked like fat little boys and girls, rather than men and women. They were lolling round in a ring, while one of the number read drowsily from a big book which was lying on a bowlder in the middle of this Sleepy-hollow. All seemed to be looking and listening intently. But as soon as those who sat facing Bobby caught sight of him, they gave a long yawn and fell into a deep sleep. One after another they looked at him, and one after another the little round, lazy fellows gaped, until it seemed their heads would split open, then fell over and slept soundly, snoring like little pigs. Bobby stood still with astonishment. He did not even find breath to say, "Well, I never!" For presently every one of the listeners had gone off to sleep. The reader, whose back was toward the new-comer, did not see him. He was the only one left awake, and Bobby looked to see him drop over at any moment. But the little fat man read right along in a drawling, sleepy mumble, something about the Athenians until Bob cried out: "Hello, Ole Puddin'-bag, everybody'th gone to thleep; you'd jeth as well hole up yer readin' a while."

The little man rolled his eyes round upon Bob, and said: "Oh, my! I'm gone off again!" And then he stretched his fat cheeks in an awful yawn.

"Hey! You'll never get that mouth of your'n shet, ef you don't be mighty keerful," cried Bob; but the fellow was fast asleep before he could get the words out.

"Well now, that'th a purty lookin' crowd, haint it?" said Bob, looking round upon the sleepers.

Just at that moment they began to wake up, one after another, but as soon as they saw Bob, they sighed and said: "He's so curious," or, "He's so interesting," or something of the sort, and fell away into a deep slumber again. At last Bob undertook to wake some of them up by hallooing, but the more noise he made, the more soundly they slept. Then he gave over shaking them and shouting at them, and sat down. As soon as he was quiet they began to wake up again.

"Hello!" cried Bob, when he saw two or three of them open their eyes.

"If you'd only keep still till I get awake," said one of them, and then they all went to sleep again.

By keeping quite still he got them pretty well waked up. Then they all fell to counting their toes, to keep from becoming too much interested in Bobby, for just so sure as they get interested or excited, the Sleepy-headed People fall asleep. Presently the reader awoke, and began to mumble a lot of stuff out of the big book, about Epaminondas, and Sesostris, and Cyaxeres, and Clearchus, and the rest, and they all grew a little more wakeful. When he came to an account of a battle, Bobby began to be interested a little in the story, but all the others yawned and cried out, "Read across, read across!" and the reader straightway read clear across the page, mixing the two columns into hopeless nonsense, so as to destroy the interest. Then they all waked up again.

"I know a better thtory than that air!" said Bobby, growing tired of the long mumbling reading of the dull book.

"Do you? Tell it," said the reader.

So Bobby began to tell them some of his adventures, upon which they all grew interested and fell asleep.

"Don't tell any more like that," said the little reader, when he awoke.

"What'th the matter weth it? Heap better thtory than that big book that you're a mumblin' over, Mr. Puddin'."

"We don't like interesting stories," said the sleepy reader. "They put us to sleep. This is the best book in the world. It's Rollin's Ancient History, and it hasn't got but a few interesting spots in the whole of it. Those we keep sewed up, so that we can't read them. The rest is all so nice and dull, that it keeps us awake all day."

Bobby stared, but said nothing.

"Can you sing?" said one of the plump little old women.

"Yeth, I can sing Dandy Jim."

"Let's have it. I do love singing; it soothes me and keeps me awake."

Thus entreated, little Bobby stood up and sang one verse of a negro song he had heard, which ran:

"When de preacher took his tex'
He look so berry much perplex'
Fur nothin' come acrost his mine
But Dandy Jim from Caroline!"

Bobby shut his eyes tight, and threw his head back and sang through his nose, as he had seen big folks do. He put the whole of his little soul into these impressive words. When he had finished and opened his eyes to discover what effect his vocal exertions had produced, his audience was of course fast asleep.

"Well, I never!" said Bob.

"The tune's too awful lively," said the little old woman, when she woke up. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Now, hear me sing." And she began, in a slow, solemn movement, the most drawling tune you ever heard, and they all joined in the same fashion:

"Poor old Pidy,
She died last Friday:
Poor old creetur,
The turkey-buzzards——"

But before they could finish the line, while they were yet hanging to the tails of the turkey-buzzards, so to speak, Bobby burst out with:

"La! that'th the toon the old cow died on. I wouldn't thing that."

"You wouldn't, hey?" said the woman, getting angry.

"No, I wouldn't, little dumplin'."

Whereupon the little woman got so furious that she Went fast asleep, and the reader, growing interested and falling into a doze, tumbled off his chair on his head, but as his head was quite soft and puttyish, it did him no particular harm, except that the fall made him sleep more soundly than ever.

When they had waked up again, Bobby thought it time to move on, but as soon as he offered to move, the Sleepy-heads surrounded him and began to sing a drawling song, which made Bobby sleepy. He soon found that they meant to make him one of themselves, and this was not at all to his taste. He struggled to get away, but something held him about the feet. What should he do?

Suddenly a bright thought came to his relief. The Sleepy-heads were now all standing in a ring around him. He began to tell a story at the top of his voice:

"My gran'pappy, he fit weth a red Injun. An' the Injun he chopped my gran'pappy's finger off weth his tomahawk, and—"

But at this point all the little people got intensely excited over Bobby's gran'pappy's fight, and so, of course, fell asleep and fell forward into a pile on top of Bobby, who had an awful time getting out from under the heap. Just as he emerged, the people began to wake up and to lay hold of his feet, but Bobby screamed out:

___"And my gran'pappy, he up weth his hatchet and he split the nasty ole red Injun's head open ___"

They were all fast asleep again.

Bobby now ran off toward the door, not caring to go any further underground at present, though he knew there were other wonders beyond. He reached the door at last, but it was closed. There was no key-hole even.

After looking around a long time he found the Fly-up-the-creek fairy, not far from the door, sitting by a fire, with a large, old owl sitting over against him.

"Give me the key to the door, Ole Ke-whack!" said Bobby.

"Oh, no! I will not give you my clothes, ke-whack! Do you think I would give you my party clothes? If you hadn't sung so loud, the door wouldn't have shut. You scared it. Now I can't give you my fine clothes, and so you'll have to stay here, ke-whack!"

Poor Bobby sat down by the fire, not knowing what to do. "I don't want to stay here, Ke-whack!" he whimpered.

"Tell him about the Sleepy-headed People," said the owl to Bobby, solemnly.

"Shut up, old man, or I'll bite your head off!" said the Fly-up-the creek to the owl.

"Do as I say," said the owl. "If you stay here, you'll turn to an owl or a bat. Be quick. The Sleepy-heads are his cousins—he doesn't like to hear about them."

"Don't mind a word the old man says, ke-whack!"

"Give me the key, then," said Bobby.

"Do as I say," said the owl.

The Fly-up-the-creek uttered an angry "ke-whack" and tried to bite off the owl's head, but the "old man" hopped out of his way. Bobby began to tell the story of his adventures among the Sleepy-heads, and the stake-driver kept crying, "Ke-whack! ke-whack!" to drown his words; but as Bobby's shrill voice rose higher the stake-driver's voice became weaker and weaker. Bobby was so amazed that he stopped.

"Go on!" groaned the owl, "or you'll never get out, or I either."

So Bobby kept up his talk until the stake-driver was lying senseless on the floor.

"Put the key in the lock, quick," cried the owl.

"Where is the key?"

"His fine clothes. Take them off, quick! Cap first!"

Bobby began with the cap, then stripped off the coat and vest and boots.

"Put them in the keyhole, quick!" said the owl, for the stake-driver was reviving.

"Where is the key-hole?"

"There! there!" cried the owl, pointing to the fire. By this time the Fly-up-the-creek had already begun to reach out for his clothes, which Bobby hastily threw into the fire. The fire went out, the great door near by swung open, and the big-eyed owl, followed by Bobby, walked out, saying, "I'm free at last."

Somehow, in the daylight, he was not any longer an owl, but an old man in gray clothes, who hobbled off down the road.

And Bobby looked after him until he saw the stake-driver, shorn of his fine clothes, sweep over his head and go flying up the creek again. Then he turned toward his father's cabin, saying:

"Well, I never! Ef that haint the beatinest thing I ever did see in all my born'd days."

And I think it was.

MR. BLAKE'S WALKING-STICK.

I.

THE WALKING-STICK WALKS.

Some men carry canes. Some men make the canes carry them. I never could tell just what Mr. Blake carried his cane for. I am sure it did not often feel his weight. For he was neither old, nor rich, nor lazy.

He was a tall, straight man, who walked as if he loved to walk, with a cheerful tread that was good to see. I am sure he didn't carry the cane for show. It was not one of those little sickly yellow things, that some men nurse as tenderly as they might a lapdog. It was a great black stick of solid ebony, with a box-wood head, and I think Mr. Blake carried it for company. And it had a face, like that of an old man, carved on one side of the box-wood head. Mr. Blake kept it ringing in a hearty way upon the pavement as he walked, and the boys would look up from their marbles when they heard it, and say: "There comes Mr. Blake, the minister!" And I think that nearly every invalid and poor person in Thornton knew the cheerful voice of the minister's stout ebony stick.

It was a clear, crisp, sunshiny morning in December. The leaves were all gone, and the long lines of white frame houses that were hid away in the thick trees during the summer, showed themselves standing in straight rows now that the trees were bare. And Purser, Pond & Co.'s great factory on the brook in the valley below was plainly to be seen, with its long rows of windows shining and shimmering in the brilliant sun, and its brick chimney reached up like the Tower of Babel, and poured out a steady stream of dense, black smoke.

It was just such a shining winter morning. Mr. Blake and his walking-stick were just starting out for a walk together. "It's a fine morning," thought the minister, as he shut the parsonage gate. And when he struck the cane sharply on the stones it answered him cheerily: "It's a fine morning!" The cane always agreed with Mr. Blake. So they were able to walk together, according to Scripture, because they were agreed.

Just as he came round the corner the minister found a party of boys waiting for him. They had already heard the cane remarking that it was a fine morning before Mr. Blake came in sight.

"Good-morning! Mr. Blake," said the three boys.

"Good-morning, my boys; I'm glad to see you," said the minister, and he clapped "Old Ebony" down on the sidewalk, and it said "I am glad to see you."

"Mr. Blake!" said Fred White, scratching his brown head and looking a little puzzled. "Mr. Blake, if it ain't any harm—if you don't mind, you know, telling a fellow,—a boy, I mean—" Just here he stopped talking; for though he kept on scratching vigorously, no more words would come; and comical Sammy Bantam, who stood alongside, whispered, "Keep a-scratching, Fred; the old cow will give down after a while!"

Then Fred laughed, and the other boys, and the minister laughed, and the cane could do nothing but stamp its foot in amusement.

"Well, Fred," said the minister, "what is it? Speak out." But Fred couldn't speak now for laughing, and Sammy had to do the talking himself. He was a stumpy boy, who had stopped off

short; and you couldn't guess his age, because his face was so much older than his body.

"You see, Mr. Blake," said Sammy, "we boys wanted to know—if there wasn't any harm in your telling—why, we wanted to know what kind of a thing we are going to have on Christmas at our Sunday-school."

"Well, boys, I don't know any more about it yet than you do. The teachers will talk it over at their next meeting. They have already settled some things, but I have not heard what."

"I hope it will be something good to eat," said Tommy Puffer. Tommy's body looked for all the world like a pudding-bag. It was an india-rubber pudding-bag, though. I shouldn't like to say that Tommy was a glutton. But I am sure that no boy of his age could put out of sight, in the same space of time, so many dough-nuts, ginger-snaps, tea-cakes, apple-dumplings, pumpkin-pies, jelly-tarts, puddings, ice-creams, raisins, nuts, and other things of the sort. Other people stared at him in wonder. He was never too full to take anything that was offered him, and at parties his weak and foolish mother was always getting all she could to stuff Tommy with. So when Tommy said he hoped it would be something nice to eat, and rolled his soft lips about, as though he had a cream-tart in his mouth, all the boys laughed, and Mr. Blake smiled. I think even the cane would have smiled if it had thought it polite.

"I hope it'll be something pleasant," said Fred Welch.

"So do I," said stumpy little Tommy Bantam.

"So do I, boys," said Mr. Blake, as he turned away; and all the way down the block Old Ebony kept calling back, "So do I, boys! so do I!"

Mr. Blake and his friend the cane kept on down the street, until they stood in front of a building that was called "The Yellow Row." It was a long, two-story frame building, that had once been inhabited by genteel people. Why they ever built it in that shape, or why they daubed it with yellow paint, is more than I can tell. But it had gone out of fashion, and now it was, as the boys expressed it, "seedy." Old hats and old clothes filled many of the places once filled by glass. Into one room of this row Mr. Blake entered, saying:

"How are you, Aunt Parm'ly?"

"Howd'y, Mr. Blake, howd'y! I know'd you was a-comin', honey, fer I hheard the sound of yer cane afore you come in. I'm mis'able these yer days, thank you. I'se got a headache, an' a backache, and a toothache in de boot."

I suppose the poor old colored woman meant to say that she had a toothache "to boot."

"You see, Mr. Blake, Jane's got a little sumpin to do now, and we can git bread enough, thank the Lord, but as fer coal, that's the hardest of all. We has to buy it by the bucketful, and that's mighty high at fifteen cents a bucket. An' pears like we couldn't never git nothin' ahead on account of my roomatiz. Where de coal's to come from dis ere winter I don't know, cep de good Lord sends it down out of the sky; and I reckon stone-coal don't never come dat dar road."

After some more talk, Mr. Blake went in to see Peter Sitles, the blind broom-maker.

"I hheard yer stick, preacher Blake," said Sitles. "That air stick o' yourn's better'n a whole rigimint of doctors fer the blues. An' I've been a-havin' on the blues powerful bad, Mr. Blake, these yer last few days. I remembered what you was a-saying the last time you was here, about trustin' of the good Lord. But I've had a purty consid'able heartache under my jacket fer all that. Now, there's that Ben of mine," and here Sitles pointed to a restless little fellow of nine years old, whose pants had been patched and pieced until they had more colors than Joseph's coat. He was barefoot, ragged, and looked hungry, as some poor children always do. Their minds seem hungrier than their bodies. He was rocking a baby in an old cradle. "There's Ben," continued the blind man, "he's as peart a boy as you ever see, preacher Blake, ef I do say it as hadn't orter say it. Bennie hain't got no clothes. I can't beg. But Ben orter be in school." Here Peter Sitles choked a little.

"How's broom-making Peter?" said the minister.

"Well, you see, it's the machines as is a-spoiling us. The machines makes brooms cheap, and what can a blind feller like me do agin the machines with nothing but my fingers? 'Tain't no sort o' use to butt my head agin the machines, when I ain't got no eyes nother. It's like a goat trying it on a locomotive. Ef I could only eddicate Peter and the other two, I'd be satisfied. You see, I never had no book-larnin' myself, and I can't talk proper no more'n a cow can climb a tree."

"But, Mr. Sitles, how much would a broom-machine cost you?" asked the minister.

"More'n it's any use to think on. It'll cost seventy dollars, and if it cost seventy cents 'twould be jest exactly seventy cents more'n I could afford to pay. For the money my ole woman gits fer washin' don't go noways at all towards feedin' the four children, let alone buying me a machine."

The minister looked at his cane, but it did not answer him. Something must be done. The

minister was sure of that. Perhaps the walking-stick was, too. But what?

That was the question.

The minister told Sitles good-by, and started to make other visits. And on the way the cane kept crying out, "Something *must* be done—something MUST be done—something MUST be done," making the *must* ring out sharper every time. When Mr. Blake and the walking-stick got to the market-house, just as they turned off from Milk Street into the busier Main Street, the cane changed its tune and begun to say, "But what—but *what*—but WHAT—but WHAT," until it said it so sharply that the minister's head ached, and he put Old Ebony under his arm, so that it couldn't talk any more. It was a way he had of hushing it up when he wanted to think.

II.

LONG-HEADED WILLIE.

"De biskits is cold, and de steaks is cold as—as—ice, and dinner's spiled!" said Curlypate, a girl about three years old, as Mr. Blake came in from his forenoon of visiting. She tried to look very much vexed and "put out," but there was always either a smile or a cry hidden away in her dimpled cheek.

"Pshaw! Curlypate," said Mr. Blake as he put down his cane, "you don't scold worth a cent!" And he lifted her up and kissed her.

And then Mamma Blake smiled, and they all sat down to the table. While they ate, Mr. Blake told about his morning visits, and spoke of Parm'ly without coal, and Peter Sitles with no broom-machine, and described little Ben Sitles' hungry face, and told how he had visited the widow Martin, who had no sewing-machine, and who had to receive help from the overseer of the poor. The overseer told her that she must bind out her daughter, twelve years old, and her boy of ten, if she expected to have any help; and the mother's heart was just about broken at the thought of losing her children.

Now, while all this was taking place, Willie Blake, the minister's son, a boy about thirteen years of age, sat by the big porcelain water-pitcher, listening to all that was said. His deep blue eyes looked past the pitcher at his father, then at his mother, taking in all their descriptions of poverty with a wondrous pitifulness. But he did not say much. What went on in his long head I do not know, for his was one of those heads that projected forward and backward, and the top of which overhung the base, for all the world like a load of hay. Now and then his mother looked at him, as if she would like to see through and read his thoughts. But I think she didn't see anything but the straight, silken, fine, flossy hair, silvery white, touched a little bit—only a little—as he turned it in looking from one to the other, with a tinge of what people call a golden, but what is really a sort of a pleasant straw color. He usually talked, and asked questions, and laughed like other boys; but now he seemed to be swallowing the words of his father and mother more rapidly even than he did his dinner; for, like most boys, he ate as if it were a great waste of time to eat. But when he was done he did not hurry off as eagerly as usual to reading or to play. He sat and listened.

"What makes you look so sober, Willie?" asked Helen, his sister.

"What you thinkin', Willie?" said Curlypate, peering through the pitcher handle at him.

"Willie," broke in his father, "mamma and I are going to a wedding out at Sugar Hill——"

"Sugar Hill; O my!" broke in Curlypate.

"Out at Sugar Hill," continued Mr. Blake, stroking the Curlypate, "and as I have some calls to make, we shall not be back till bedtime. I am sorry to keep you from your play this Saturday afternoon, but we have no other housekeeper but you and Helen. See that the children get their suppers early, and be careful about fire."

I believe to "be careful about fire" is the last command that every parent gives to children on leaving them alone.

Now I know that people who write stories are very careful nowadays not to make their boys too good. I suppose that I ought to represent Willie as "taking on" a good deal when he found that he couldn't play all Saturday afternoon, as he had expected. But I shall not. For one thing, at least, in my story, is true; that is, Willie. If I tell you that he is good you may believe it. I have seen him.

He only said, "Yes, sir."

Mrs. Blake did not keep a girl. The minister did not get a small fortune of a salary. So it happened that Willie knew pretty well how to keep house. He was a good brave boy, never ashamed to help his mother in a right manly way. He could wash dishes and milk the cow, and

often, when mamma had a sick-headache, had he gotten a good breakfast, never forgetting tea and toast for the invalid.

So Sancho, the Canadian pony, was harnessed to the minister's rusty buggy, and Mr. and Mrs. Blake got in and told the children good-by. Then Sancho started off, and had gone about ten steps, when he was suddenly reined up with a "Whoa!"

"Willie!" said Mr. Blake.

"Sir."

"Be careful about fire."

"Yes, sir."

And then old blackey-brown Sancho moved on in a gentle trot, and Willie and Helen and Richard went into the house, where Curlypate had already gone, and where they found her on tiptoe, with her short little fingers in the sugar-bowl, trying in vain to find a lump that would not go to pieces in the vigorous squeeze that she gave in her desire to make sure of it.

So Willie washed the dishes, while Helen wiped them, and Richard put them away, and they had a merry time, though Willie had to soothe several rising disputes between Helen and Richard. Then a glorious lot of wood was gotten in, and Helen came near sweeping a hole in the carpet in her eager desire to "surprise mamma." Curlypate went in the parlor and piled things up in a wonderful way, declaring that she, too, was going to "*susprise* mamma." And doubtless mamma would have felt no little surprise if she could have seen the parlor after Curlypate "put it to rights."

Later in the evening the cow was milked, and a plain supper of bread and milk eaten. Then Richard and Curlypate were put away for the night. And presently Helen, who was bravely determined to keep Willie company, found her head trying to drop off her shoulders, and so she had to give up to the "sand man," and go to bed.

III.

THE WALKING-STICK A TALKING STICK.

Willie was now all by himself. He put on more wood, and drew the rocking-chair up by the fire, and lay back in it. It was very still; he could hear every mouse that moved. The stillness seemed to settle clear down to his heart. Presently a wagon went clattering by. Then, as the sound died away in the distance, it seemed stiller than ever. Willie tried to sleep; but he couldn't. He kept listening; and after all he was listening to nothing; nothing but that awful clock, that would keep up such a tick-tick, tick-tick, tick-tick. The curtains were down, and Willie didn't dare to raise them, or to peep out. He could *feel* how dark it was out doors.

But presently he forgot the stillness. He fell to thinking of what his father had said at dinner. He thought of poor old rheumatic Parm'ly, and her single bucket of coal at a time. He thought of the blind broom-maker who needed a broom-machine, and of the poor widow whose children must be taken away because the mother had no sewing-machine. All of these thoughts made the night seem dark, and they made Willie's heart heavy. But the thoughts kept him company.

Then he wished he was rich, and he thought if he were as rich as Captain Purser, who owned the mill, he would give away sewing-machines to all poor widows who needed them. But pshaw! what was the use of wishing? His threadbare pantaloons told him how far off he was from being rich.

But he would go to the Polytechnic; he would become a civil engineer. He would make a fortune some day when he became celebrated. Then he would give Widow Martin a sewing-machine. This was the nice castle in the air that Willie built. But just as he put on the last stone a single thought knocked it down.

What would become of the widow and her children while he was learning to be an engineer and making a fortune afterward? And where would he get the money to go to the Polytechnic? This last question Willie had asked every day for a year or two past.

Unable to solve this problem, his head grew tired, and he lay down on the lounge, saying to himself, "Something must be done!"

"Something must be done!" Willie was sure somebody spoke. He looked around. There was nobody in the room.

"Something *must* be done!" This time he saw in the corner of the room, barely visible in the shadow, his father's cane. The voice seemed to come from that corner.

"Something **MUST** be done!" Yes, it was the cane. He could see its head, and the face on one

side was toward him. How bright its eyes were! It did not occur to Willie just then that there was anything surprising in the fact that the walking-stick had all at once become a talking stick.

"Something MUST be done!" said the cane, lifting its one foot up and bringing it down with emphasis at the word must. Willie felt pleased that the little old man—I mean the walking-stick—should come to his help.

"I tell you what," said Old Ebony, hopping out of his shady corner; "I tell you what," it said, and then stopped as if to reflect; then finished by saying, "It's a shame!"

Willie was about to ask the cane to what he referred, but he thought best to wait till Old Ebony got ready to tell of his own accord. But the walking-stick did not think best to answer immediately, but took entirely a new and surprising track. It actually went to quoting Scripture!

"My eyes are dim," said the cane, "and I never had much learning; canes weren't sent to school when I was young. Won't you read the thirty-fifth verse of the twentieth chapter of Acts."

Willie turned to the stand and saw the Bible open at that verse. He did not feel surprised. It seemed natural enough to him. He read the verse, not aloud, but to himself, for Old Ebony seemed to hear his thoughts. He read:

"Ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"Now," said the walking-stick, stepping or hopping up toward the lounge and leaning thoughtfully over the head of it, "Now, I say that it is a shame that when the birthday of that Lord Jesus, who said it is more blessed to give than to receive, comes round, all of you Sunday-school scholars are thinking only of what you are going to get."

Willie was about to say that they gave as well as received on Christmas, and that his class had already raised the money to buy a Bible Dictionary for their teacher. But Old Ebony seemed to guess his thought, and he only said, "And that's another shame!"

Willie couldn't see how this could be, and he thought the walking-stick was using very strong language indeed. I think myself the cane spoke too sharply, for I don't think the harm lies in giving to and receiving from our friends, but in neglecting the poor. But you don't care what I think, you want to know what the cane said.

"I'm pretty well acquainted with Scripture," said Old Ebony, "having spent fourteen years in company with a minister. Now won't you please read the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the fourteenth chapter of—"

But before the cane could finish the sentence, Willie heard some one opening the door. It was his father. He looked round in bewilderment. The oil in the lamp had burned out, and it was dark. The fire was low, and the room chilly.

"Heigh-ho, Willie, my son," said Mr. Blake, "where's your light, and where's your fire. This is a cold reception. What have you been doing?"

"Listening to the cane talk," he replied; and thinking what a foolish answer that was, he put on some more coal, while his mother, who was lighting the lamp, said he must have been dreaming. The walking-stick stood in its corner, face to the wall, as if it had never been a talking stick.

IV.

MR. BLAKE AGREES WITH THE WALKING-STICK.

Early on Sunday morning Willie awoke and began to think about Sitles, and to wish he had money to buy him a broom-machine. And then he thought of widow Martin. But all his thinking would do no good. Then he thought of what Old Ebony had said, and he wished he could know what that text was that the cane was just going to quote.

"It was," said Willie, "the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the fourteenth chapter of something. I'll see."

So he began with the beginning of the Bible, and looked first at Genesis xiv. 12, 13. But it was about the time when Abraham had heard of the capture of Lot and mustered his army to recapture him. He thought a minute.

"That can't be what it is," said Willie, "I'll look at Exodus."

In Exodus it was about standing still at the Red Sea and waiting for God's salvation. It might mean that God would deliver the poor. But that was not just what the cane was talking about. It was about giving gifts to friends. So he went on to Leviticus. But it was about the wave-offering, and the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering. That was not it, and so he went from book to book

until he had reached the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the fourteenth chapter of the book of Judges. He was just reading in that place about Samson's riddle, when his mamma called him to breakfast.

He was afraid to say anything about it at the table for fear of being laughed at. But he was full of what the walking-stick said. And at family worship his father read the twentieth chapter of Acts. When he came to the part about its being more blessed to give than to receive, Willie said, "That's what the cane said."

"What did you say?" asked his father.

"I was only thinking out loud," said Willie.

"Don't think out loud while I am reading," said Mr. Blake.

Willie did not find time to look any further for the other verses. He wished his father had happened on them instead of the first text which the cane quoted.

In church he kept thinking all the time about the cane. "Now what could it mean by the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the fourteenth chapter? There isn't anything in the Bible against giving away presents to one's friends. It was only a dream anyhow, and maybe there's nothing in it."

But he forgot the services, I am sorry to say, in his thoughts. At last Mr. Blake arose to read his text. Willie looked at him, but thought of what the cane said. But what was it that attracted his attention so quickly?

"The twelfth and thirteenth verses——"

"Twelfth and thirteenth!" said Willie to himself.

"Of the fourteenth chapter," said the minister.

"Fourteenth chapter!" said Willie, almost aloud.

"Of Luke."

Willie was all ears, while Mr. Blake read: "Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind."

"That's it!" he said, half aloud, but his mother jogged him.

Willie had never listened to a sermon as he did to that. He stopped two or three times to wonder whether the cane had been actually about to repeat his father's text to him, or whether he had not heard his father repeat it at some time, and had dreamed about it.

I am not going to tell you much about Mr. Blake's sermon. It was a sermon that he and the walking-stick had prepared while they were going round among the poor. I think Mr. Blake did not strike his cane down on the sidewalk for nothing. Most of that sermon must have been hammered out in that way, when he and the walking-stick were saying, "Something must be done!" For that was just what that sermon said. It told about the wrong of forgetting, on the birthday of Christ, to do anything for the poor. It made everybody think. But Mr. Blake did not know how much of that sermon went into Willie Blake's long head, as he sat there with his white full forehead turned up to his father.

V.

THE FATHER PREACHES AND THE SON PRACTISES.

That afternoon Willie was at Sunday-school long before the time. He had a plan.

"I'll tell you what, boys," said he, "let's not give Mr. Marble anything this year; and let's ask him not to give us anything. Let's get him to put the money he would use for us with the money we should spend on a present for him, and give it to buy coal for old Aunt Parm'ly."

"I mean to spend all my money on soft gum-drops and tarts," said Tommy Puffer; "they're splendid!" and with that he began, as usual, to roll his soft lips together in a half-chewing, half-sucking manner, as if he had a half dozen cream-tarts under his tongue, and two dozen gum-drops in his cheeks.

"Tommy," said stumpy little Sammy Bantam, "it's a good thing you didn't live in Egypt, Tommy, in the days of Joseph."

"Why?" asked Tommy.

"Because," said Sammy, looking around the room absently, as if he hardly knew what he was going to say, "because, you see"—and then he opened a book and began to read, as if he had forgotten to finish the sentence.

"Well, why?" demanded Tommy, sharply.

"Well, because if Joseph had had to feed you during the seven years of plenty, there wouldn't have been a morsel left for the years of famine!"

The boys laughed as boys will at a good shot, and Tommy reddened a little and said, regretfully, that he guessed the Egyptians hadn't any doughnuts.

Willie did not forget his main purpose, but carried the point in his own class. He still had time to speak to some of the boys and girls in other classes. Everybody liked to do what Willie asked; there was something sweet and strong in his blue eyes, eyes that "did not seem to have any bottom, they were so deep," one of the girls said. Soon there was an excitement in the school, and about the door; girls and boys talking and discussing, but as soon as any opposition came up Willie's half-coaxing but decided way bore it down. I think he was much helped by Sammy's wit, which was all on his side. It was agreed, finally, that whatever scholars meant to give to teachers, or teachers to scholars, should go to the poor.

The teachers caught the enthusiasm, and were very much in favor of the project, for in the whole movement they saw the fruit of their own teaching.

The superintendent had been detained, and was surprised to find the school standing in knots about the room. He soon called them to order, and expressed his regrets that they should get into such disorder. There was a smile on all faces, and he saw that there was something more in the apparent disorder than he thought. After school it was fixed that each class should find its own case of poverty. The young men's and the young women's Bible classes undertook to supply Siles with a broom-machine, a class of girls took Aunt Parm'ly under their wing, other classes knew of other cases of need, and so each class had its hands full. But Willie could not get any class to see that Widow Martin had a sewing-machine. That was left for his own; and how should a class of eight boys do it?

VI.

SIXTY-FIVE DOLLARS.

Willie took the boys into the parsonage. They figured on it. There were sixty-five dollars to be raised to buy the machine. The seven boys were together, for Tommy Puffer had gone home. He said he didn't feel like staying, and Sammy Bantam thought he must be a little hungry.

Willie attacked the problem—sixty-five dollars. Toward that amount they had three dollars and a half that they had intended to spend on a present for Mr. Marble. That left just sixty-one dollars and fifty cents to be raised. Willie ran across the street and brought Mr. Marble. He said he had made up his mind to give the boys a book apiece, and that each book would cost a dollar. It was rather more than he could well afford; but as he had intended to give eight dollars for their presents, and as he was pleased with their unselfish behavior, he would make it ten.

"Good!" said Charley Somerset, who always saw the bright side of things, "that makes it all, except fifty-one dollars and a half."

"Yes," said Sammy Bantam, "and you're eleven feet high, lacking a couple of yards!"

Willie next called his father in, and inquired how much his Christmas present was to cost.

"Three and a half," said his father.

"That's a lot! Will you give me the money instead?"

"Yes; but I meant to give you a Life of George Stephenson, and some other books on engineering."

This made Willie think a moment; but seeing the walking-stick in the corner, he said: "Mrs. Martin must have a machine, and that three and a half makes seventeen dollars. How to get the other forty-eight is the question."

Mr. Blake and Mr. Marble both agreed that the boys could not raise so much money, and should not undertake it. But Willie said there was nobody to do it, and he guessed it would come somehow. The other boys, when they came to church that evening, told Willie that their presents were commuted for money also; so they had twenty-five dollars toward the amount. But that was the end of it, and there were forty dollars yet to come!

Willie lay awake that night, thinking. Mr. Marble's class could not raise the money. All the other classes had given all they could. And the teachers would each give in their classes. And

they had raised all they could spare besides to buy nuts and candy! Good! That was just it; they would do without candy!

At school the next morning, Willie's white head was bobbing about eagerly. He made every boy and girl sign a petition, asking the Sunday-school teachers not to give them any nuts or candy. They all signed except Tommy Puffer. He said it was real mean not to have any candy. They might just as well not have any Sunday-school, or any Christmas either. But seeing a naughty twinkle in Sammy Bantam's eye, he waddled away, while Sammy fired a shot after him, by remarking that, if Tommy had been one of the shepherds in Bethlehem, he wouldn't have listened to the angels till he had inquired if they had any lemon-drops in their pockets!

That night the extra Teachers' Meeting was held, and in walked white-headed Willie with stunted Sammy Bantam at his heels to keep him in countenance. When their petition was presented, Miss Belden, who sat near Willie, said, "Well done! Willie."

"But I protest," said Mrs. Puffer—who was of about as handsome a figure as her son—"I protest against such an outrage on the children. My Tommy's been a-feeling bad about it all day. It'll break his heart if he don't get some candy."

Willie was shy, but for a moment he forgot it, and, turning his intelligent blue eyes on Mrs. Puffer, he said—

"It will break Mrs. Martin's heart if her children are taken away from her."

"Well," said Mrs. Puffer, "I always did hear that the preacher's boy was the worst in the parish, and I won't take any impudence. My son will join the Mission School, where they aren't too stingy to give him a bit of candy!" And Mrs. Puffer left, and everybody was pleased.

Willie got the money; but the teachers had counted on making up their festival mostly with cakes and other dainties, contributed by families. So that the candy money was only sixteen dollars, and Willie was yet a long way off from having the amount he needed. Twenty-four dollars were yet wanting.

VII.

THE WIDOW AND THE FATHERLESS.

The husband of Widow Martin had been killed by a railroad accident. The family were very poor. Mrs. Martin could sew, and she could have sustained her family if she had had a machine. But fingers are not worth much against iron wheels. And so, while others had machines, Mrs. Martin could not make much without one. She had been obliged to ask help from the overseer of the poor.

Mr. Lampeer, the overseer, was a hard man. He had not skill enough to detect impostors, and so he had come to believe that everybody who was poor was rascally. He had but one eye, and he turned his head round in a curious way to look at you out of it. That dreadful one eye always seemed to be going to shoot. His voice had not a chord of tenderness in it, but was in every way harsh and hard. It was said that he had been a school-master once. I pity the scholars.

Widow Martin lived—if you could call it living—in a tumble-down-looking house, that would not have stood many earthquakes. She had tried diligently to support her family and keep them together; but the wolf stood always at the door. Sewing by hand did not bring in quite money enough to buy bread and clothes for four well children, and pay the expenses of poor little Harry's sickness; for all through the summer and fall Harry had been sick. At last the food was gone, and there was nothing to buy fuel with. Mrs. Martin had to go to the overseer of the poor.

She was a little, shy, hard-working woman, this Mrs. Martin; so when she took her seat among the paupers of every sort in Mr. Lampeer's office, and waited her turn, it was with a trembling heart. She watched the hard man, who didn't mean to be so hard, but who couldn't tell the difference between a good face and a counterfeit; she watched him as he went through with the different cases, and her heart beat every minute more and more violently. When he came to her he broke out with—

"What's *your* name?" in a voice that sounded for all the world as if he were accusing her of robbing a safe.

"Sarah Martin," said the widow, trembling with terror, and growing red and white in turns. Mr. Lampeer, who was on the lookout for any sign of guiltiness, was now sure that Mrs. Martin could not be honest.

"Where do you live?" This was spoken with a half sneer.

"In Slab Alley," whispered the widow, for her voice was scared out of her.

"How many children have you got?"

Mrs. Martin gave him the list of her five, with their ages, telling him of little Harry, who was six years old and an invalid.

"Your oldest is twelve, and a girl. I have a place for her, and, I think, for the boy, too. You must bind them out. Mr. Slicker, the landlord of the Farmers' Hotel, will take the girl, and I think James Sweeny will take the boy to run errands about the livery stable. I'll send you some provisions and coal to-day; but you must let the children go. I'll come to your house in a few days. Don't object; I won't hear a word. If you're as poor as you let on to be, you'll be glad enough to get your young ones into places where they'll get enough to eat. That's all—not a word, now." And he turned to the next applicant, leaving the widow to go home with her heart cold.

Let Susie go to Slicker's tavern! What kind of a house would it be without her? Who would attend to the house while she sewed? And what would become of her girl in such a place? And then to send George, who had to wait on Harry—to send him away forever was to shut out all hope of ever being in better circumstances. Then she could not sew, and the children could never help her. God pity the people that fall into the hands of public charity!

The next few days wore heavily on with the widow. What to do she did not know. At night she scarcely slept at all. When she did drop into a sleep, she dreamed that her children were starving, and woke in fright. Then she slept again, and dreamed that a one-eyed robber had gotten in at the window, and was carrying off Susie and George. At last morning came. The last of the food was eaten for breakfast, and Widow Martin sat down to wait. Her mind was in a horrible state of doubt. To starve to death together, or to give up her children! That was the question which many a poor mother's heart has had to decide. Mrs. Martin soon became so nervous she could not sew. She could not keep back the tears, and when Susie and George put their arms about her neck and asked what was the matter, it made the matter worse. It was the day before Christmas. The sleigh-bells jingled merrily. Even in Slab Alley one could hear sounds of joy at the approaching festivities. But there was no joy in Widow Martin's house or heart. The dinner-hour had come and passed. The little children were hungry. And yet Mrs. Martin had not made up her mind.

At the appointed time Lampeer came. He took out the two indentures with which the mother was to sign away all right to her two eldest children. It was in vain that the widow told him that if she lost them she could do no work for her own support, and must be forever a pauper. Lampeer had an idea that no poor person had a right to love children. Parental love was, in his eyes, or his eye, an expensive luxury that none but the rich should indulge in.

"Mrs. Martin," he said, "you may either sign these indentures, by which your girl will get a good place as a nurse and errand-girl for the tavern-keeper's wife, and your boy will have plenty to eat and get to be a good hostler, or you and your young ones may starve!" With that he took his hat and opened the door.

"Stop!" said Mrs. Martin. "I must have medicine and food, or Harry will not live till Sunday. I will sign."

The papers were again spread out. The poor-master jerked the folds out of them impatiently, in a way that seemed to say, "You keep me an unconscionable long time about a very small matter."

When the papers were spread out, Mrs. Martin's two oldest children, who began to understand what was going on, cried bitterly. Mrs. Martin took the pen and was about to sign. But it was necessary to have two witnesses, and so Lampeer took his hat and called a neighbor-woman, for the second witness.

Mrs. Martin delayed the signature as long as she could. But seeing no other help, she took up the pen. She thought of Abraham with the knife in his hand. She hoped that an angel would call out of heaven to her relief. But as there was no voice from heaven, she dipped the pen in the ink.

Just then some one happened to knock at the door, and the poor woman's nerves were so weak that she let the pen fall, and sank into a chair. Lampeer, who stood near the door, opened it with an impatient jerk, and—did the angel of deliverance enter?

It was only Willie Blake and Sammy Bantam.

VIII.

SHARPS AND BETWEENES.

Let us go back. We left Willie awhile ago puzzling over that twenty-four dollars. After many hours of thought and talk with Sammy about how they should manage it, two gentlemen gave them nine dollars, and so there was but fifteen more to be raised. But that fifteen seemed harder to get than the fifty they had already gotten. At last Willie thought of something. They would try

the sewing-machine man. Mr. Sharps would throw off fifteen dollars.

But they did not know Mr. Sharps. Though he made more than fifteen dollars on the machine, he hated to throw anything off. He was always glad to put on. Sammy described him by saying that "Mr. Sharps was not for-giving but he was for-getting."

They talked; they told the story; they begged. Mr. Sharps really could not afford to throw off a cent. He was poor. Taxes were high. He gave a great deal. (I do not know what he called a great deal. He had been to church three times in a year, and twice he had put a penny in the plate. I suppose Mr. Sharps thought that a great deal. And so it was, for him, poor fellow.) And then the butcher had raised the price of meat; and he had to pay twenty-three dollars for a bonnet for his daughter. Really, he was too poor. So the boys went away down-hearted.

But Sammy went straight to an uncle of his, who was one of the editors of the *Thornton Daily Bugle*. After a private talk with him he started back to Mr. Sharps. Willie followed Sammy this time. What Sammy had in his head Willie could not make out.

"I'll fix him!" That was the only word Sammy uttered on the way back.

"Now, Mr. Sharps," he began, "my uncle's name is Josiah Penn. Maybe you know him. He's one of the editors of the *Thornton Daily Bugle*. I've been talking with him. If you let me have a Feeler and Stilson sewing-machine for fifty dollars, I will have a good notice put in the *Daily Bugle*."

Mr. Sharps whistles a minute. He thought he could not do it. No, he was too poor.

"Well, then, Willie," said Sammy, "we'll go across the street and try the agent of the Hillrocks and Nibbs machine. I think Mr. Betweens will take my offer."

"O!" said Mr. Sharps, "you don't want that machine. It's only a single thread, and it will ravel, and—well—you don't want that."

"Indeed, my mother says there isn't a pin to choose between them," said Sammy; "and I can give Mr. Betweens just as good a notice as I could give you."

"Very well; take the machine for fifty dollars. I do it just out of pity for the widow, you know. I never could stand by and see suffering and not relieve it. You won't forget about that notice in the *Daily Bugle*, though, will you?"

No, Sammy wouldn't forget.

It was now the day before Christmas, and the boys thought they had better get the machine down there.

So they found Billy Horton, who belonged to their class, and who drove an express wagon, and told him about it. He undertook to take it down. But first, he drove around the town and picked up all the boys of the class, that they might share in the pleasure.

Meantime, a gentleman who had heard of Willie's efforts, gave him a five-dollar bill for Widow Martin. This Willie invested in provisions, which he instructed the grocer to send to the widow.

He and Sammy hurried down to Widow Martin's and got there, as I told you in the last chapter, just as she was about to sign away all right, title, and interest in two of her children; to sign them away at the command of the hard Mr. Lampeer, who was very much irritated that he should be interrupted just at the moment when he was about to carry the point; for he loved to carry a point better than to eat his breakfast.

IX.

THE ANGEL STAYS THE HAND.

When the boys came in, they told the widow that they wished to speak with little sick Harry. They talked to Harry awhile, without noticing what was going on in the other part of the room.

Presently Willie felt his arm pulled. Looking round, he saw Susie's tearful face. "Please don't let mother give me and George away." Somehow all the children in school had the habit of coming to this long-headed Willie for help, and to him Susie came.

That word of Susie's awakened Willie. Up to that moment he had not thought what Mr. Lampeer was there for. Now he saw Mrs. Martin holding the pen with trembling hand, and making motions in the air preparatory to writing her name. Most people not used to writing, write in the air before they touch the paper. When Willie saw this, he flew across the room and thrust his hand upon the place where the name ought to be, saying,—

"Don't do that, Mrs. Martin! Don't give away your children!"

Poor woman! the pen dropped from her hand as the knife had dropped from Abraham's. She grasped Willie's arm, saying,—

"How can I help it? Do tell me!"

But Lampeer had grasped the other arm, and broke out with—

"You rogue, what do you mean?"

Willie's fine blue eyes turned quickly into Lampeer's one muddy eye.

"Let go!" he said, very quietly but very determinedly; "don't strike me, or my father will take the law on you."

Lampeer let go.

Just then the groceries came, and a minute later, Billy Horton's wagon drove up with the machine, and all the other boys, who came in and shook hands with the poor but delighted mother and her children. I cannot tell you any more about that scene. I only know that Lampeer went out angry and muttering.

X.

TOMMY PUFFER.

Willie was happy that night. He went down to the festival at the Mission. There was Tommy Puffer's soft, oyster-like body among the scholars of the Mission. He was waiting for something good. His mouth and eyes were watering. He looked triumphantly at the boys from the other school. They wouldn't get anything so nice. The superintendent announced that no boy's name would be called for a paper bag of "refreshments" but those who had been present two Sundays. And so poor starving Tommy Puffer had to carry his pudding-bag of a body home again without a chance to give it an extra stuffing.

XI.

AN ODD PARTY.

I cannot tell you about the giving of the broom-machine to the blind broom-maker; of the ton of coal to Aunt Parm'ly, and of all the other things that happened on Christmas Day when the presents were given. I must leave these things out. As for Aunt Parm'ly, she said she did not know, but dat dare coal seemed like it come from de sky.

But there was an ample feast yet for the boys at the Sunday-school, for many biscuits, and cakes, and pies had been baked. But every time Willie looked at the walking-stick he thought of "the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind." And so he and Sammy Bantam soon set the whole school, teachers and all, a-fire with the idea of inviting in the inmates of the county poor-house. It was not half so hard to persuade the members of the school, to do this as it was to coax them to the first move; for when people have found out how good it is to do good, they like to do good again.

Such a company it was! There was old crazy Newberry, who had a game-bag slung about his neck, and who imagined that the little pebbles in it were of priceless value. Old Dorothy, who was nearly eighty, and who, thanks to the meanness of the authorities, had not tasted any delicacy, not so much as a cup of tea, since she had been in the almshouse; and there were half-idiots, and whole idiots, and sick people, and crippled people, armless people and legless people, blind people and deaf. Such an assortment of men, women, and little children, you cannot often find. They were fed with the good things provided for the Sunday-school children, much to the disgust of Tommy Puffer and his mother. For Tommy was bent on getting something to eat here.

There were plenty of people who claimed the credit of suggesting this way of spending the Christmas. Willie did not say anything about it, for he remembered what Christ had said about blowing a trumpet before you. But I think Sammy Bantam trumpeted Willie's fame enough.

It would be hard to tell who enjoyed the Christmas the most. But I think the givers found it more blessed than the receivers. What talk Mr. Blake heard in his rounds I cannot tell. If you want to know, you must ask the Old Ebony.

THE CHAIRS IN COUNCIL.

It was a quiet autumn afternoon. I was stretched on a lounge, with a pile of newspapers for a pillow. I do not know that I succeeded in getting any information *into* my head by putting newspapers *under* it. But on this particular afternoon I was attacked by a disease of the eyes, or rather of the eyelids. They would droop. I don't know by what learned name the doctors call this disease, but, as I could not read with my eyes closing every second or two, I just tucked my newspapers away under my head and rested my eyelids awhile.

I remember that there was a hen cackling in the barn, and a big bumble-bee buzzing and bumbling around in a consequential way among the roses under the window, and I could hear the voices of the children in the front yard playing with their dishes.

I don't know how long I had lain thus. But I remember that the cackling hen and the bumbling bee and the laughing children seemed to get farther and farther away, the sounds becoming less and less distinct. All at once the sewing chair that sat alongside of me, with a pile of magazines on it, began to rock, and as it rocked it moved off from me. I felt surprised, and at first thought of taking hold of it, but my arm seemed so *tired* that I couldn't move it. And the chair rocked itself across the floor, and through the door into the sitting-room. And as I looked after it, I saw my old library chair hobble into the sitting-room, also. Then came the well-cushioned easy chair, puffing and panting good naturedly, as it rolled smoothly along on castors. I was just wondering what all this meant, when the parlor door opened, and there marched in a procession of parlor chairs, behind which gathered the plainer cane-seat ones of the dining-room. Next came a solemn line of black, wooden kitchen chairs. Then I heard a commotion above, and the staid bedroom seats made a fearful racket as they came down the steps.

"Are we all in now?" said the easy chair, blandly.

A faint noise was heard on the steps, and presently in came an old arm chair that had belonged to my grandmother. It had lain in the garret covered with spider webs for years, and indeed it was quite infirm in the joints, and must have had a hard time getting down two flights of stairs.

I now tried to move, determined to go and see what was the matter with the furniture, but the *tired* feeling crept all over me and I lay still.

"Well," said the easy chair, who seemed to be president, "we are ready for business."

There was a confused murmur, and the next I knew one of the damask satin parlor chairs was speaking in a very polished and dignified way about the grievances of parlor chairs in general.

"It's too bad," said he, "to be always shut up in a close room except when there's company. There are no better-looking chairs than we are. We belong to a superior class of beings, and it is trying to one's nerves to lead so secluded a life when one wants to be generally admired. These cane-seat chairs, and those low, black, wooden fellows——"

"I trust there will be no personalities," said the easy chair. "The kitchen chairs are wooden, but that is not their fault; and as to their being black, that's a mere matter of paint, a mere matter of paint;" and the easy chair shook his cushioned sides as if he thought this last remark a piece of exquisite pleasantry.

"I say," continued Damask Satin, Esq., "I say that these common-place fellows are constantly admitted to the society of the family, and we, genteel as we are, have to live secluded. But for that matter I should rather be shut up always than be forced into association with these common cane-seat and those low, vulgar, wooden——"

"Order!" said the easy chair; "I must call Mr. Satin to order."

"Why, sir," said one of the cane-seats, "the insolence of that parlor fellow is insufferable! He's good for nothing but show. Nobody likes to use him. He wasn't made for any useful purpose. Talk about a thing being trying to his nerves! Let him have the children make a steamboat of him as they do of me! Let him have some awkward fellow rack his joints by sitting on him and leaning back against the wall. Then let him talk about nerves! It's hard enough, sir, to have to be used in that fashion without being compelled to associate, as we have to, with those low, wooden fellows, and then have to listen to the abuse of that pampered, good-for-nothing dandy in damask satin, that——"

"I trust," said the easy chair, "that the debate will not proceed in this way. I am sorry that so much discontent is manifested. The life of a chair is certainly not altogether unpleasant; at least I have not found it so."

"Sir," said one of the kitchen chairs, "I know I am wooden, but I was made so; and I know I am black, but, as you observed awhile ago, that is a question of paint."

"A mere question of paint," said the easy chair again, evidently delighted to have his witticism quoted.

"But, sir," continued the wooden chair, "when I was new I was not to be laughed at. If I was black, I was varnished brightly and glistened beautifully when the chair-maker set me and my brothers, here, out in a row in the sun. And then, sir, we each had a large yellow rose on our foreheads, and I assure you we were beautiful in our own way, sir, in our way. But, sir, you talk about the life of a chair not being altogether unpleasant. Perhaps not, for an easy chair, so nicely cushioned as you are. Every time our owner sits down in your arms she says, 'Well, this is just the most comfortable seat in the world!' But nobody ever praises me. If a neighbor drops in and takes me or one of my fellows, the mistress just says, 'Don't take that uncomfortable chair,' and immediately offers one of these cane-seats. That's the way we're insulted, sir; and when anybody wants a chair to stand on, the mistress says, 'Take a wooden one.' Just see the marks of Johnny's boot nails on me now, and that scratch, caused by Bridget's using me and one of my fellows to put the washtub on!"

The black chair subsided with the look of an injured individual, and the high chair commenced to complain, but was interrupted by the sewing chair, who thought that "females had some rights." She was silenced, however, by my grandmother's old chair, who leaned on the table while she spoke. The old lady complained of the neglect of old age by the younger generation.

Just at this moment, as the meeting was getting into a hubbub, and bade fair to dissolve as unceremoniously as some ward political meetings do, my staid old library chair began to talk, looking very learned at the same time.

"Mr. President," said he, "I regret the turn affairs have taken. The race of chairs is a very honorable one. A chair is an insignia of honor, as I might prove by many eminent authorities. When human beings wish to call some one to the presidency of a meeting, they move that the Hon. Jonathan Wire-worker be called to *the chair*. And then they call him the *chair*-man. Now it is an honor to be a chair, whether it be a parlor chair, bottomed with damask satin, or a hair-seat chair, or a cane-seat chair, a high chair, or a baby's rocking chair, or a superannuated chair in a garret, or an easy chair, or a wooden-bottomed chair, or a learned library chair, like myself. I tell you, sir, it is an honor to be a chair. I am proud of the fact that I am a chair. [Cries of hear! hear!!]

"And now, sir, we are each adapted to our station. What kind of a kitchen chair would one of these high-headed, damask satin parlor gentlemen make? How would they stand washtubs and boot heels? And what sort of a looking parlor chair would my friend, Mr. Wooden Bottom, be? Even if he were new, and covered with black varnish, and had a yellow rose on his forehead, how would he look among the pictures, and on the nice parlor carpet?"

"Now let us each stick to our several stations, and not degrade ourselves by learning the evil and discontented habits of human beings, each one of whom thinks his lot the hardest."

I felt a little provoked at this last remark, and was going to get up and dissolve the meeting, but the library chair said something about what a glorious thing it was to be a chair, and then they all applauded, damask satins, wooden bottoms, and all; and then everything was in a whirl, and I rubbed my eyes, and the sewing chair sat just as it was at first, with the pile of magazines on it, and I peeped into the parlor, and the damask satins were in their places as stiff as ever. How they all got back in their places so quickly I couldn't tell. I went into the dining-room and found Allegra perched on the high chair, lashing two of the cane-seat ones that were thrown down for horses.

And I rubbed my eyes again,—I must have slept.

WHAT THE TEA-KETTLE SAID.

About the time the chairs had a talk together, I believe I told you. Well, ever since that time I have been afflicted, now and then, with that same disease of the eyes, inclining them to close. In fact, I am rather of the opinion that the affliction must be one of the ear, too, for I hear some curious things while the spell is on. Either that, or else something has "gotten into" the furniture about my house. It beats all, the time I had the other day. It was a cold, wet October day, the wind whistled through the key-holes and shook the sash violently, while the rain drizzled wretchedly against the glass.

As there happened to be no fire anywhere else, I took a seat in the kitchen. There I sat in the heat of the cooking-stove, and reading, or trying to read Rollin's "Ancient History." But the book was dull, and the day was dull, and it really seemed to me that I was duller than anything else. Hannibal and Themistocles, Spain and Carthage, and Rome seemed to me the dullest things in the world. I wondered how people that were so dull had managed to live, and how so stupid a fellow as Monsieur Rollin ever contrived to write so big and dull a book. It did seem very dull in the rain, too, to keep pattering away at the glass in that stupid fashion.

And so I leaned back in my chair, and watched Bridget fill the tea-kettle and set it over the

fire.

"Good!" said I; "Bridget, there's no music on a dull day like the cheery singing of the tea-kettle."

And Bidy laughed, as she went out, and I leaned back again, and closed my eyes. All at once I heard a keen, piping voice, saying,

"Hum—hum! Simmer! We'll soon have things a-going."

The sound seemed to come up out of the tea-kettle spout. I was so surprised that I rubbed my eyes and looked around. There was the tea-kettle, but I could hear no sound from it. Closing my eyes again, I heard it begin,

"Simmer, simmer, hum, hum, now we'll have things a-going. Hot fire, this! Simmer, simmer, hum, hum, simmer. There's nothing like contentment," it went on. "But it's a little hard to sit here and simmer, simmer, simmer forever. But I keep on singing, and I am happy. There's my sister, the tea-pot. Bridget always keeps her bright. She goes into the best society, sits by the side of the china cups on the tea-tray that has flowers painted on it; vain little thing is my sister tea-pot! Dreadful proud of her graceful waist. Thinks her crooked nose is prettier than my straight one. She *is* handsome, and I am glad of it. I feel proud of her when I see her sitting among the china. But, la, me! of what account would she be if I didn't help her? I'd like to know how they'd make tea without hot water! What would she be good for, any how, if I didn't do the drudgery for her? This fire would ruin her complexion!

"Whew! this is hot work."

The tea-kettle's voice had grown higher and higher, until she was almost shrieking by this time, and so she went on.

"But then, I don't mean to be proud or envious. I mean to keep cheerful. But I do get tired of staying in the kitchen, always among the pots. I'm a good singer, but the world don't seem to appreciate my voice, and 'Chicken Little' says that I sing through my nose.

"But I wish I could travel a little. There are my cousins, the family of steam boilers. They won't acknowledge their relationship to me any more. But what is that huge locomotive, with such a horrid voice, that goes puffing and screeching past here every morning? What is he but a great, big, black tea-kettle on wheels! I wish I was on wheels, and then I could travel, too. But this old stove won't budge, no matter how high I get the steam.

"And they do say the tea-kettle family is much older than the steam boiler family. But wouldn't I like to travel! I wonder if I couldn't start off this old stove. Bridget's out, and the master's asleep, and——"

I was just going to tell the kettle I was wide awake, but I didn't feel like talking, and so the kettle went on.

"Yes, I have a good mind to try it. Wouldn't it be a brilliant thing, if I could move the old cooking stove? Wouldn't Bridget stare, when she came back, if she should see the 'Home Companion' running off down the railroad track?

"Whew! I believe I'll burst. Bridget's jammed the lid down so tight I can't breathe!

"But I'm going to try to be a locomotive. Here goes."

Here the kettle stopped singing, and the steam poured out the spout and pushed up the lid, and the kettle hissed and rattled and rattled and hissed so that I really was afraid it would run off with the stove. But all its puffing was in vain. And so, as the fire began to go down, the kettle commenced to sing again.

"Well, what a fool I was!

"I'm only a tea-kettle; I never shall be anything else; and so there's the end of it. It's my business to stay here and do my duty in the kitchen. I suppose an industrious, cheerful tea-kettle is just as useful in its place as a steam engine; yes, and just as happy, too. And if I must stay in this kitchen among the pots the rest of my days, I mean to do my share to make it the cheerfulest kitchen in all the country."

Here the voice of the tea-kettle died down to a plaintive simmer, simmer, and I heard Sunbeam say, "He's asleep." She always thinks I'm asleep when I rest my eyes.

"Tea is ready," said three of them, at once.

CROOKED JACK.

Jack Grip was a queer fellow. Queer because he never got enough money, and yet never seemed to know the right use of money. His family had the bare comforts of life, but his wife was a drudge, and his children had neither books nor pictures, nor any of those other things so necessary to the right education of children. Jack was yet young, but he was in great danger of becoming a miser. The truth was, he had made up his mind to get rich. It took him some time to make up his mind to be dishonest, but he was in a hurry to be rich, and lately he had been what his neighbors called "slippery" in his dealings. Poor Jack! he was selling his conscience for gold, but gold could never buy it back.

On a certain night in November, the night that my story begins, Jack was not at ease. His accounts showed that he had made money. He was getting rich very fast, but something troubled him. Shall I tell you what it was?

Just next to Jack's farm was a perfect beauty of a little place, on which lived the Widow Lundy. Her husband had bought the farm, and borrowed money of Jack Grip to pay for it. It was about half paid for when poor Lundy was killed by a falling tree. There was some money due him, and he had a little property besides, so that the widow sent word to Mr. Grip that if he would only wait till she could get her means together, she would pay up the remainder. But times were hard, and Jack saw a chance to make two thousand dollars by forcing the sale of the farm and buying it himself. It just fitted on to his lower field. It went hard to turn the widow out, but Jack Grip made up his mind that he would be rich. He tried to make it seem right, but he couldn't. He had forced the sale; he had bought the place for two thousand less than it was worth.

The widow was to move the next morning. She had little left, and it was a sad night in the small brown house. Poor little Jane, only ten years old, cried herself to sleep, to think she must leave her home, and Harry was to go to live with an aunt until his mother found some way of making a living.

Poor Jack could not sleep and dare not pray. He kept thinking of something in the Bible about "devouring widows' houses." He could not forget the face of an old Quaker who had met him on the road that day and said: "Friend Jack, thy ways are crooked before the Lord!" "Maybe they are," said Jack, "but my money is as straight as anybody's, and my farm is a good deal nearer straight than it was before I bought the Lundy place." Jack could not sleep, however, for thinking of the old Quaker and his solemn words. He tried to think that his possessions were straight anyhow. When he did sleep, he dreamed he was the young ruler that gave up Christ for the sake of his money; then he was the rich man in torment. At last he opened his eyes, and though the sun was shining in at the windows, he thought things looked curious. The chairs were crooked, so was the bedstead. The window was crooked, the whole house seemed to be crooked. Jack got up, and found he was old and crooked himself. The cat and dog on the crooked hearth were crooked. There was nobody in the house but Jack. He took his crooked stick, and went out through the crooked door, down the crooked walk, among the crooked trees, along the wall into the crooked cemetery, where were crooked graves with the names of his wife and children over them. As crooked Jack, with his crooked stick, followed by his crooked dog, took his crooked way back, he met the old Quaker, who said again: "Friend Jack, thy ways are very crooked." He went in at a crooked gate, and up the crooked walk among the crooked trees, in at the crooked door, and sat down on the crooked chair by the crooked hearth. The crooked dog lay down by him, and the crooked cat mewed. He opened his crooked money-box and the gold coins were all crooked. "Here I am," said Jack, "a crooked old man in a crooked old house, with no friends but this crooked old dog and crooked old cat. What is all my crooked money worth? What crooked ways I took to get it."

Crooked old Jack felt sick and lay down upon his crooked old bed. Somehow, his crooked old money-box got upon his breast and seemed to smother him. Then his crooked account-books piled themselves upon him, and it seemed impossible for him to breathe. He tried to call out, but his voice died to a whisper, and the only answer he received was a low growl from the crooked old dog. Then the crooked old cat mewed.

Just then Jack Grip awoke, and found that all this was a crooked dream; but the perspiration stood in beads on his brow, and though it was broad daylight, and his wife and children were about him, Jack thought things were indeed crooked. In the first place, Jack was sure that his farm was crooked, for his new addition was little better than stolen. His home was crooked, for he had not made it a pleasant home. His children were crooked, for he was not educating them right. And then, at bottom, he knew that his own heart was the crookedest thing of all. The Lundys were all packed ready to start that morning. Bitter were their tears. But a messenger from Mr. Grip brought them a deed to their farm, and a note, saying that, as some amend for the trouble he had given them, Mrs. Lundy would please accept the amount still due on the farm as a present.

There are many crooked people in the world; some in one way, some in another. When you get to be a crooked old man, or a crooked old woman, will your life look crooked to you as crooked Jack's did to him?

THE FUNNY LITTLE OLD WOMAN.

Little Tilda Tulip had two lips as pretty as any little girl might want. But Tilda Tulip tilted her two lips into a pout, on a moment's notice. If any thing went wrong—and things had a way of going wrong with her—if any thing went at all wrong, she would go wrong, too, as if it would do any good to do wrong. Some people are always trying to mend crooked things by getting crooked themselves. There are some little girls, and not a few big ones, that seem to think the quickest way of straightening a seam that is puckered is to pucker a face that is straight.

Sometimes her friends would ask what she would do if her face were to freeze in frowns, but her Uncle John used to say that she was always too hot to freeze. One evening she came to Uncle John with the usual frown, showing him her new brocade doll dress. She had put it away carelessly, and it was all in "beggars' presses."

"Just see, Uncle John," she whined; "dear me! I never get any thing nice that it isn't spoiled somehow or other. Isn't that too bad? This dress has been wrinkled for a week, and now it will never come smooth at all."

"That's bad, surely," said Uncle John, "but there is something more than that. I know something of yours that is finer than that brocade silk, that is all in 'beggars' presses.'"

"Why, no, Uncle John, I haven't any thing so fine as this, you know, and now this is all puckered and wrinkled and kinkled, and what will I do?"

"Give me your hand," said Uncle John. "Do you see that skin? There is no silk so fine as that. These chubby cheeks are covered with a skin that is finer. But you have kept this skin puckered about your eyes and your forehead and the corner of your mouth, you have kept it puckered and wrinkled and kinkled as you say, till I am afraid it will never be straight. I don't think a hot iron would smoothe it. Do you?"

Now Uncle John spoke very kindly, indeed. There were no wrinkles in his voice. Some people have wrinkles in their words. But notwithstanding her uncle's kindness, naughty little Tilda Tulip went off in a pout, and declared that Uncle John was "real mean. He never feels sorry for a body when they are in trouble." And so she wrinkled her voice into a whine, and wrinkled and puckered her face up most frightfully.

At last, tired of teasing and talking and troubling, Tilda Tulip tumbled into her trundle-bed and was tucked tightly in. Everybody was glad when she went to sleep. Everybody dreaded the time when she should wake up. She was a good girl when she was asleep.

She dreamed. It was a funny dream. I think she must have remembered what Uncle John said, for she thought she saw a funny little old house, by a funny little old hill, near a funny little old bridge. Out of this house came a funny little old woman, with a funny little old bonnet, carrying a funny little old bag on her back, and with a funny little old cane in her hand. Her face was wrinkled and cross—wrinkled all over, and she stooped dreadfully. But she tossed her funny little old bag on to the back of a funny little old donkey, and climbed up herself. Then she was cross with the funny little old bag, and mad with the funny little old donkey, and she beat him with a funny little old stick, and scolded and scolded with a funny little old cracked, quivering, peevish, hateful voice.

And so Tilda followed her as she rode, and all the rude boys along the road cried out, "There goes the funny little old woman and her donkey!" And a beautiful lady came along, and when she met the funny little old woman, she sat down on a stone and wept, and said, "O Miriam, my daughter!" But the funny little old woman only beat her donkey and scolded more than ever. And Tilda wondered why the beautiful woman called the funny little old woman her daughter. And Tilda dreamed that many days passed, and that every day the funny little old woman rode on the funny little old donkey to the city. And every day the beautiful woman wept and said, "O Miriam, my daughter!" One day Tilda approached the beautiful woman and spoke to her.

"Why do you call that funny, hateful, little old woman your daughter?"

"Because she is my daughter."

"But she is so much older than you are."

"Why," said the beautiful woman, "don't you know the history of the funny little old woman that rides her donkey to town every day? She is my daughter. She is not old; but she was a cross child. She fretted and pouted, and scolded and screamed. She frowned till her brow began to wrinkle. I do not know whether a fairy enchanted her or not, but when she became angry there was one wrinkle that could not be removed. The next time she was mad, another wrinkle remained. When she found that the wrinkles would not come out she became mad at that, and of course, every time she got into a passion there came other wrinkles. Then, too, her temper grew worse. Her once beautiful voice began to sound like a cracked tin horn. The wrinkles soon covered her face; then they grew crosswise; you see it is all in beggars' presses. She got old; she shrivelled up; she stooped over. She became so cross that she spends most of her time in that funny little old house, to keep away from the rest of us. She must have something to do, and so

she gets angry at the stones and breaks them up. She then carries them to the city and throws them into the river. She must have something to beat, and so we let her have this poor donkey, whose skin is thick. She beats him, and thus people are saved from her ravings. I do not know whether she will ever come to her senses or not. O Miriam, my daughter!"

At last Tilda dreamed that the funny, wrinkled, cross, little old woman, got down one day off her donkey, poured the stones out of the bag, and came and sat down by the beautiful lady. Then the funny little old woman cried. She put her head in the lap of the beautiful lady, and said, "O mother, how shall I get these wrinkles away!"

And the beautiful lady kissed her and said, "Ah! my daughter, if you will but cast out the bitterness from your heart, as you poured the stones from the bag, I shall not care for the wrinkles?"

The next day Tilda saw the funny little old woman feeding and petting the donkey. Then she saw her carrying food to a poor widow. And every time the funny little old woman did a kind act there was one wrinkle less on her face. And then she went into a hospital, and she was so kind to the sick that they all loved the funny little old woman. And still the wrinkles grew fewer, and the form grew straighter, and the face grew fresher, until all the people in the hospital said, "Our funny little old woman is really getting younger." And younger and still younger she became, until the beautiful lady kissed her beautiful Miriam again, and the music came back into her voice once more. And Tilda Tulip thought in her dream that Miriam looked like herself, and that the beautiful lady seemed like her own mother. And then she waked up and found it morning, for she had dreamed all this long dream in one night.

And when she was about to fly into a passion with her stockings, in dressing, the thought of the funny little old woman and her face in beggars' presses kept her from it. When she was dressed she told uncle Jack all about the dream, and he smiled.

"Suppose you try the plan that the funny little old woman did, and see if you can't get rid of some of your wrinkles," he said to Tilda.

WIDOW WIGGINS' WONDERFUL CAT.

Widow Wiggins was a wee, wiry, weird woman, with a wonderful cat—a very wonderful cat, indeed! The neighbors all said it was bewitched. Perhaps it was; I don't know; but a very wonderful cat it was. It had a strange way of knowing, when people were talking, whether what they said was right or wrong. If people said what they ought not to say, wee Widow Wiggins' wonderful cat would mew. Perhaps the cat had lived so long with the wee, wiry, weird widow woman, who was one of the best in the world, that it had gotten her dislike to things that were wrong. But the wee widow's neighbors were afraid of that cat. When Mrs. Vine, a very vile, vinegar-tongued, vixenish virago, abused her neighbors to the wee, wiry, weird, widow woman, the Widow Wiggins' wonderful cat would mew. And so the vile, vixenish virago wished the cat was dead. And when slender, slim, slippery Sly Slick, Esq., tried to persuade the widow to swindle her neighbor, the cat mewed furiously. And so it came that Mr. Slick did not like the wee widow's wonderful cat. In fact, he said it was a nuisance. And Tilda Tattle, the tiresome-tongued, town tale-bearer, could not abide the cat, because it mewed all the time she was tattling.

And so it happened that good Deacon Pettibone, and his wife, who was even better than the deacon, were about the only visitors the wee, weird Widow Wiggins had. As the deacon never said any harm of anybody, and as the deacon's wife never thought any harm, and as the wee widow woman never felt any harm, the cat would lie stretched out on the hearth all day while these three good people talked.

But though the deacon was good, and his wife was better, yet the deacon's oldest son was not the boy he ought to have been. Somehow or other, as it will happen sometimes, he listened to everybody but his father and his mother. Bad company led him astray. At first the deacon did not suspect him; but when he showed signs of having been drinking, the deacon was very severe. I am afraid there was not enough of kindness in the father's severity. At any rate, after awhile, Tom was told that if he repeated the offence he must go from home. Tom had got to be a hard boy. The deacon felt greatly provoked. But when a boy shows that he is not able to overcome temptation while he is at home, I am not sure that he will be any better if he is sent by himself. I don't think that helps it. But Tom was bad, and so he had no right to complain. He yielded to temptation, and was sent away, his father telling him that he should never come back again. Deacon Pettibone thought he was doing right, but I am afraid he was angry.

Well, when Tom got away he did not get any better. He went down faster. At last his health broke down. He thought of home as he walked around hardly able to stand up. But the deacon would not ask him back, nor would he encourage him even by a kind look to ask to be taken back again. The deacon's wife tried to persuade him. She cried. But the deacon said he must not break his word. His wife told him that a rash word ought to be broken where it did others harm. The

deacon's wife grew sick, and the vile, vinegar-tongued, vixenish virago said that the deacon was an old brute. The tattling, tiresome-tongued, town tale-bearer talked about a good many things that she *might* say, if she wanted to, and she did say that the deacon and his wife did not get on like angels. But the wee, wiry, weird Widow Wiggins watched wearily by the bedside of the sick Mrs. Pettibone. And still Deacon Pettibone refused to break his word, though he was breaking his wife's heart, and breaking God's command, and ruining his son.

At last the sick mother, longing for her son, thought of a plan by which to bring her husband to reason.

"Fetch your cat over the next time you come," she said to the wee, wiry, widow woman.

And so when the wee, weird Widow Wiggins came again, the wonderful cat followed her and lay down by the stove. Soon after the deacon came in, looking very sad but very stern.

"Did you see Tom?" asked his wife.

"No, I didn't," said the deacon, "and I don't want to."

"Mew!" said the cat.

The deacon noticed the cat, and got a little red in the face; but he went on talking.

"I tell you what, wife, Tom has made his bed and he must lie on it, that's all!"

"Mew! mew! mew!"

"I can't break my word anyhow; I said he shouldn't come back, and he shan't; so now there's no use in pining yourself to death over a scapegrace."

"Mew! mew! mew! m-e-e-o-w!" shrieked the cat, with every bristle on end, and her claws scratching the floor.

"Mrs. Wiggins, I wish you would keep that miserable cat at home," said the deacon; and so the wee widow woman took up the wonderful cat and carried it home.

But the poor deacon couldn't rest. That night he thought he could hear that cat mewing at him all the time. He remembered that he had not seen Tom for some days. What if he was dying? It was a long night. The deacon at last got to thinking of the touching and wonderful Parable of the Prodigal. And then in the stillness he thought he could hear something in his heart mewing at him.

At last daylight came, and he hastened to find Tom in a wretched garret racked with disease. He brought him home tenderly, and Tom got well both in his body and in his soul.

The Chicken Little Stories.

SIMON AND THE GARULY.

Chicken Little fixed herself up in her new rocking-chair, set her mouth in a very prim fashion, leaned her head on one side, and began to rock with all her might, jerking her feet from the floor every time.

"I yish," she began, "I yish somebody yould tell some stories yat yould be little for me to hear."

And having made this speech, which was meant as a hint for me, she rocked harder than ever, nearly upsetting herself two or three times.

"What shall it be about?" I said.

"'Bout some naughty boy or 'nother."

She likes to hear of naughty boys, but not of naughty girls. She thinks stories of naughty girls are a little personal. And so, with her chair going and her shining eyes peering out from under her overhanging forehead, I began

Simon was a selfish fellow. He was always willing anybody should divide good things with him, but was never willing, himself, to divide with anybody else. He was never willing to play with others, for fear he would not be treated right. His two brothers and his sister had their playthings together, but Simon would not play with them, for fear he should not get his rights in all things, and so he took his little stock and set up for himself. His brothers and sister, of course, by putting theirs together, had many more than he. Then, too, by working together, they managed to fix up many nice things. But poor Simon had nobody to help him, and nobody to play with him. So he came to feel very bad. He thought everybody was angry with him.

One sunny afternoon, when the other children were laughing and shouting merrily, poor Simon tried in vain to be happy by himself. Something in his throat kept choking him.

("I guess it was the cry that choked him," broke in the Small Chicken. "I had a cry in my throat yesterday. It was bigger than my fist, and most choked me to death, till I let it out.")

Yes, that was what hurt him, and presently he let it out, as you say, and had a good, hard cry. Then gradually he went off into a sort of doze. Soon he felt something strike him on the head.

"Wake up! wake up!"

Simon opened his eyes, and saw a funny, little, old man standing over him, who kept one of his eyes shut all the time, and looked out of the other with the queerest twinkle in the world. He had a knotty stick in his hand, and was tapping Simon over the head with it.

"What do you want?" growled Simon.

With that the old man hit him another sharp blow over the head.

"Get up," he said, "and come with me, and I will show you where I live. I am one of the Garulies."

Simon got to his feet, partly because he was afraid of another blow from the cudgel, and partly because he had a very great desire to know something of the Garulies.

"Come along! come along!" said the queer little man, as he gave Simon another tap.

He took the road through the woods pasture, down under Swallow Hill, and then through the blackberry patch, until they came to the brook known as "Bee Tree Run." Here, just at the foot of a large sycamore, and among its roots, was fastened a curious boat, made of a large turtle shell turned upside down.

"Get in! get in!" squealed the little old Garuly.

"I am too large," said Simon; "that craft will sink if I step in."

In an instant the little man whirled round and hit him three tremendous raps over the head with his cudgel, shouting, or rather *squeaking*,

"Smaller! smaller! smaller!"

The blows made Simon's head ring, but when he recovered himself, he found that the turtle-shell boat appeared a great deal larger than before. Not only that, but every thing about him appeared larger. He soon discovered, however, that he was smaller, and that that was what made other things seem larger. For you know we measure everything by ourselves.

("Mamma doesn't," said the Chicken; "she measures with a yard-stick.")

Well, Simon prided himself on being so big, and it was not pleasant to him to find himself suddenly become so small that a large rooster could have looked down upon him. But he did not say any thing, for fear of old Garuly's stick, but just got into the boat as soon as possible. The old man got in, too, and they were soon floating down the stream. The brook seemed like a river, and the grass upon the banks was like trees, to Simon, now. The old Garuly guided the boat over the rapids, that seemed frightful to Simon, and floated it down to where the cliffs were steep, and presently came to a place where the water runs under a large rock. The old man steered the queer craft into this dark, cave-like place, and shot up to a shelving landing-place.

"Get out!" he squeaked.

Simon did as he was commanded.

"Go in! go in!" cried the Garuly, pointing to a hole in the cliff.

"I am too large," said Simon.

And immediately the old man struck him over the head three times, as before, crying,

"Smaller! smaller! smaller!"

Simon now found himself not more than half as large as he was before. He went in with the

Garuly, who had also grown smaller. Inside there was the daintiest chamber, all full of beautiful shells wrought into tiny articles of furniture. The floor was paved with shining pebbles, and the room was lit up by three fire-flies and two glow-worms.

"How could you make the place so beautiful?" cried Simon.

"The Garulies work together," said the old man, sharply.

The little man told Simon to go in through another door, but Simon was still too large for that, and so the Garuly again pounded him, crying,

"Smaller! smaller! smaller!"

Once in, Simon saw indeed the treasures of the Garuly's household. There were easy-chairs, made of the hulls of hickory-nuts; hammocks, made of the inside bark of the paw-paw; wash-bowls, curiously carved from the hulls of beech-nuts; and beautiful curtains, of the leaves of the silver poplar. The floor was paved with the seeds of the wild grape, and beautifully carpeted with the lichens from the beech and maple trees. The beds were made of a great variety of mosses, woven together with the utmost delicacy of workmanship. There was a bath-tub made of a mussel-shell, cut into beautiful cameo figures.

"How wonderful!" cried Simon, clapping his hands.

"The Garulies work together!" said the old man, more decidedly than before.

Simon noticed that his own voice was beginning to squeak like that of the old Garuly himself. But after seeing the interior of his dwelling, he would not have minded being changed into a Garuly.

The old man was now leading him out through a different entrance. Then along a path they went until they came to a fence, the rails of which seemed to Simon to be larger than logs. They crawled through the fence, and found themselves in a farm-yard. The chickens seemed to be larger than those great creatures that geologists say once lived on the earth, and that were as high as a house. Presently they came to a bee-stand. The bees seemed to Simon to be of immense size, and he was greatly afraid; but the old Garuly spoke to the fierce-looking sentinel bee that stood by the door and shook one of his antennæ in a friendly way.

("His Aunt Annie?" said Chicken Little. "What do you mean?")

"His antennæ are his feelers, the little hair-like things that stand out from his head.")

Now the bees seemed to know the Garuly, and so they let him pass in. But poor Simon had to be pounded down again before he was small enough to go in. When he got in, he saw a world of beauty. Being so small himself, and so near to the bees, he could see how beautiful their eyes were, made up of hundreds of little eyes, with little hairs growing out between them. And then, too, the honey-comb seemed like great, golden wells, full of honey. Each well seemed as large as a barrel. They climbed up along the sides of the combs, and saw some bees feeding the young, some building cells, some bringing in honey, some feeding the queen bee, some clearing out the waste matter, and others standing guard. They all seemed cheerful.

"Bees all work together!" piped the old man. "No bee is selfish. These bees will not live to eat this honey. Bees that work hard in summer only live to be about two months old. This honey is stored for others. But see how happy they all are. How much may be done by those who work together cheerfully."

Out of the hive they went, and back toward the Garuly's house. But the old man turned aside to go to an ant-hill.

"Let's go in here," said the Garuly.

"No, I am too large," said Simon.

"Smaller! smaller! smaller!" cried the Garuly, beating him over the head again, until Simon was not much larger than the ants, and the ants appeared to be as large as ponies. Down the well-like hole they climbed, until they entered the chambers of the ants. Here all were busy, some carrying out earth, others excavating new chambers, others caring for the eggs, others bringing in food, while others were clearing out the road. But no one grumbled, none said that he had the heaviest load.

"See!" cried the Garuly, "the little ants work together. They have all things in common. There is no selfishness and no quarrelling among them."

Just then a wise old ant came up, and hearing the Garuly's remark, he said,

"Did you never hear the

"STORY OF THE SELFISH ANT?"

"There was once a selfish ant who could never be satisfied. He always thought he had the hardest work in the world. If he carried burdens, he complained that those who cared for the eggs had the easiest time; and if he had charge of the eggs, he wished to be changed to some other kind of work. At last he thought he would set up for himself. It was exceedingly hard work for him to dig and find his own food with no help, so that half the summer was gone before he got a place to live in, and a sorry place it was. Before he got any food laid by, the rain filled up his house, and he had to spend another month in digging. And so, with one mishap and another, and no one to help him, the summer was soon almost gone, and he had no store for winter. When the first frost came, the selfish fellow came back, heartbroken and crestfallen, and begged to be taken into the colony again. All winter long he had to eat the bread that others had gathered, and he never afterward grumbled because his work was a little harder than that of others."

"You see," said the Garuly, "that the ants work together. What a shame it is that you should not be able even to play with your brothers and sister!"

And with that the little old man turned his one eye on Simon, and it shone like a coal of fire, and Simon thought he could feel it burning him. Just then an ant came up, who had heard the conversation, and asked the Garuly what it meant.

"He will not even play with his brothers," said the old man, looking fiercer than ever.

"Put him out!" cried the ant. And then a hundred ants cried, "put him out!" and they began tugging at him with all their might. One caught hold of his right foot and another of his left, one took him by the arm and another by the head, and as they were nearly as big as he was, they were about to carry him off bodily, when Simon suddenly awoke, and started up, to find that instead of the ants tugging at him, it was the other children, who had come to awaken him, for fear he would catch cold sleeping in the night air, and to find that what he thought was the one fiery eye of the Garuly, was the full moon shining through the trees.

"There," said the Wee Chick, "that spoils the story. I don't want it to be a dream. What made 'em yake him up so twick?"

"Was he better afterward?" said Fairy.

"Yes, for the very next day he moved to the same playhouse with the rest of the children, and whenever he was selfish he would look around to see if the old Garuly was looking at him out of one eye."

THE JOBLILIES.

We have oak trees and green grass at our house, what many children in crowded cities do not get. Three little girls love to play in the green grass, with some pet chickens, and a white, pink-eyed rabbit for companions. Now, you must know that I am quite as fond of the oaks and the grass and the blue sky as Sunbeam, or Fairy, or the brown-faced Little Chick. And so it happens, when the day is hot, and the lazy breezes will not keep the house cool, that I just move my chair and table out by the lilac-bush that grows under the twin oaks, and then I think I can write better. And there I sit and watch the trains coming and going to and from the great, bustling city, only a dozen miles away, or listen to the singing of the robins while I write.

I was sitting thus one dull, hot afternoon, trying to write; but it was a lazy day; the robins had forgotten to sing, the little sparrows that live up in the oaks had stopped twittering, and the very honey bees were humming drowsily, when Chicken Little came up with a wreath of white clover around her head, and begged for a story. The older children wanted one, also, and so I had to tell one. To tell the truth, I was a little lazy myself, and so I willingly sat down in the grass among the children and began.

"Shall I tell about a lazy girl about as big as Chicken Little?" I asked.

"No, sir," she said; "tell about a lazy boy that was as big as Sunbeam."

Sunbeam laughed at this, and nodded her head for me to go on.

And so I began thus: "Little Lazy Larkin laughed and leaped, or longed and lounged the livelong day, and loved not labor, but liked leisure."

"Ha! ha!" cried the Wee Chick; "that sounds so funny!"

"It's got so many l's, that's the reason," said Fairy.

"Tell it right," said Sunbeam.

"Well, then," I said, "Larkin was an indolent juvenile, fond of mirthfulness and cachinatory and saltatory exercises—"

"I don't know what you mean!" said Fairy, just ready to get angry.

"Sech awful big words!" cried the Little Pullet; "they is as big—as big as punkins!"

"I guess that's what they call hifalutin," said Sunbeam; "now do tell it right."

And so I told it "right."

Larkin was an idle fellow, and was so utterly good-for-nothing, that he came to be called "Lazy Larkin." It is a dreadful thing to get a bad name when you are young. It sticks to you like a sand burr. Larkin would neither work nor study. He did not even like good, hearty play, for any great length of time, but was very fond of the play that boys call *mumble-the-peg*, because, as he said, you could sit down to play it. He fished a little, but if the fish did not bite at the first place, he sat down; he would not move, but just sat and waited for them to come to him.

He had gone out to Bass Lake to fish, one day, in company with some other boys, but they had put him out of the boat because he was too lazy to row when his turn came. The others were rowing about, trolling for pickerel, and he sat down on a point of land called "Duck Point," and went to fishing. As the fish would not bite, he sat looking at them in the clear water, and wishing that he was a fish—they had such a lazy time of it, lying there in the sun, or paddling idly around through the water. He saw a large pickerel lying perfectly still over a certain spot near the shore. When other fish came near the pickerel, it darted out and drove them off, and then paddled back to the same place again. Larkin dropped his bait near by, but the fish paid no attention to it, and, indeed, seemed to have nothing to do but to lie still in the same place.

"I wish I were a pickerel," said the lazy fellow; "I wouldn't have to carry in wood or pull weeds out of the garden, or feed the chickens, or get the multiplication table, or—or—do anything else;" and he gave one vast yawn, stretching his mouth so wide, and keeping it open so long, that it really seemed as if he never would get it together again. When it did shut, his eyes shut with it, for the fellow was too lazy to hold them open.

"Ha! ha! lazy fellow! lazy fellow!"

Larkin heard some one say this, and raised up his head to see who it was. Not finding any one about, he thought he must have been dreaming. So he just gave one more yawn, opening his mouth like the lid of an old tin coffee-pot, and keeping it open nearly a minute. Then he stretched himself upon the grass again.

"Ha! ha! lazy fellow! lazy fellow!"

This time there seemed to be half a dozen voices, but Larkin felt too lazy to look up.

"Ha! ha! very lazy fellow!"

Larkin just got one eye open a little, and looked around to see where the sound came from. After a while, he saw a dozen or more very odd, queer-looking creatures, sitting on the broad, round leaves of the water-lilies, that floated on the surface of the lake. These little people had white caps, for all the world like the white lily blossoms that were bobbing up and down around them. In fact, it took Larkin some time to make out clearly that they were not lilies. But finally he saw their faces peeping out, and noticed that they had no hands, but only fins instead. Then he noticed that their coats were beautifully mottled, like the sides of the pickerel, and their feet flattened out, like a fish's tail. Soon he saw that others of the same kind were coming up, all dripping, from the water, and taking their places on the leaves; and as each new-comer arrived, the others kept saying,

"Ha! ha! lazy fellow! very lazy fellow!"

And then the others would look at him, and shake their speckled sides with laughter, and say, "Lazy fellow! ha! ha!"

Poor Larkin was used to being laughed at, but it was provoking to be laughed at by these queer-looking folk, sitting on the lilies in the water. Soon he saw that there were nearly a hundred of them gathered.

"Come on, Joblilies!" cried one of them, who carried a long fish-bone, and seemed to be leader; "let's make a Joblily of him."

Upon that the whole swarm of them came ashore. The leader stuck his fish-bone in Larkin, and made him cry out. Then they all set up another laugh, and another cry of "lazy fellow!"

"Bring me three grains of silver-white sand from the middle of the lake," said the leader; and two of them jumped into the water and disappeared.

"Now fetch three blades of dry grass from the lining of the kingfisher's nest," he said; and immediately two others were gone.

When the four returned, the leader dropped the grains of sand in Larkin's eyes, saying,

"Three grains of silver sand,
From the Joblily's hand!
Where shall the Joblily lie,
When the young owl learns to fly?"

Then they all jumped upon him and stamped, but Larkin could not move hand or foot. In fact, he found that his hands were flattening out, like fins. The leader then put the three blades of grass in Larkin's mouth, and said,

"Eat a dry blade! eat a dry blade!
From the nest that the kingfisher made!
What will the Joblilies do,
When the old owl cries tu-who?"

And then the whole party set up such a cry of "tu-who! tu-who!" that Larkin was frightened beyond measure; and they caught him and rolled him over rapidly, until he found himself falling with a great splash into the water. On rising to the surface, he saw that he was changed into a Joblily himself.

Then the whole party broke out singing,

"When the sun shines the Joblilies roam;
When the storm comes we play with the foam;
When the owl hoots Joblilies fly home!"

When they had sung this, they all went under the water; and the leader, giving Larkin a thrust with his fish-bone, cried out, "Come along!" and Lazy Larkin had nothing to do but to swim after them. Once under the water, the scene was exceedingly beautiful. The great umbrella-like leaves of the lilies made spots of shadow in the water and on the pebbles of the bottom, while the streaks of sunshine that came down between flecked everything with patches of glorious light, just as you have seen the hills and valleys made glorious by alternate patches of light and shade, produced by the shadows of the clouds. And the tall lily stems, in the soft light, appeared to be pillars, while the great variety of water weed, that wound about them in strange festoons, was glorious beyond description. There were beautiful bass turning their sides up to the sun, and darting about through these strange, weird scenes, seeming to enjoy their glorious abode.

"You have an easy time of it, no doubt," said Larkin, to one of these fish.

"Easy time of it, indeed! I have rather a happy time of it, because I have plenty to do; but you are a strange Joblily if you do not know that I have anything but an easy time of it. Chasing minnows, jumping three feet out of water after a butterfly, catching wigglers and mosquitoes, and keeping a sharp lookout for unlucky grasshoppers that may chance to fall in my way; all these are not easy. I tell you, there is no family of our social position that has more trouble to earn a living than the bass family."

"Come along," said the Joblily, giving another punch with his fish-bone; and Larkin travelled on.

Presently they came to a log with something growing on it.

"What beautiful moss!"

"Moss, indeed!" said one of the Joblilies; "that is a colony of small animals, all fast to one stem."

"They have an easy time of it, I suppose," said Lazy Larkin; "they don't have to travel, for they cannot move."

"True, but these beautiful, transparent moss animals have to get their living by catching creatures so small that you cannot see them. They have great numbers of little fingers or feelers that are going all the time."

Larkin touched one, and it immediately drew itself in,—really *swallowed itself*, for these little things take this way of saving themselves from harm.

And so Larkin swam on, and found that it was a busy world beneath the lake. He saw mussels slowly crawling through the sand; he found that the pickerel, which he had supposed idle, was really standing guard over her nest, and fanning the water with her fins all day long, that a current of fresh water might be supplied to her eggs. And all the time the Joblilies kept singing—

"Work! work!
Never shirk!
There is work for you,

Work for all to do!
Happy they who do it,
They that shirk shall rue it!"

And after their long swim around the lake, the Joblilies came back to Duck Point again, and climbed out on the lily leaves. No sooner had Larkin seated himself with the rest than he heard a great owl cry, "Tu-whit! tu-whoo!"

Immediately the Joblilies leaped into the air, and the whole hundred of them dashed into the water like so many bull-frogs, crying, as they came down,

"What will the Joblily do,
When the great owl cries tu-whoo?"

Larkin looked around suddenly to see whither they had gone, but could discover no trace of them. A moment after, he found himself sitting under the same tree that he was under when the Joblilies came for him. The boys had gone, and he was forced to walk home alone. He thought carefully over his trip with the Joblilies, and, I am glad to say, gradually learned to be more industrious, though it took him a long while to overcome his lazy habits, and still longer to get rid of the name of Lazy Larkin. But he remembered the jingle of the Joblilies, and I trust you will not forget it:

"Work! work!
Never shirk!
There is work for you,
Work for all to do!
Happy they who do it,
They that shirk shall rue it!"

THE PICKANINNY.

It was rather a warm day in autumn. Aunt Cheerie had given the sewing-machine and the piano a holiday, and was sitting in the woodshed, paring apples for preserves. Wherever Aunt Cheerie was, the children were sure to be; and so there was Sunbeam, knife in hand, and Fairy, cutting a paring something less than half an inch thick, while the dear little Chicken was wiping apples for the others to pare, and little Tow-head, baby-brother, was trying to upset the peach-box, in which were a couple of pet chickens, that were hatched out too late, and that had to be kept in-doors to secure them from Jack Frost. For you must know that at "The Nest" Sunbeam is called the "Old Hen." That is, she has charge of the chickens. They know her so well that, when she feeds them, they fly up on her shoulders and eat out of her hands. And if there is any unfortunate one, it is well cared for. One poor, little wayward pullet wandered into our neighbor's garden. She was very naughty, doubtless, but she got severely punished; for our neighbor thinks a great deal of his garden, and not much of chickens, unless they are fricasseed. He shot at our little runaway pullet, and the poor thing came home dragging a broken and useless leg. Now, if any chicken ever had good care, our little "Lamey" has. After weary weeks of suffering in hot weather, it is at last able to walk on both feet, though the broken leg is sadly crooked. The children do not object to having the other chickens killed for the table, but little Lamey's life is insured.

But how did I get to talking about chickens? I was going to say that when I came home, and found the folks paring apples, I went out in the shed, too, and sat down by the Little Chick.

And Chicken Little jerked her head and looked mischievously out of her bright eyes, and said: "See how nice we is peelin' apples. We's makin' peserves, we is; 'cause they is good to eat, they is. And you mus' tell me a story, you mus', 'cause I'm a-helpin' Aunt Cheerie, I am."

For you must know that the Small Chick is not very polite, and doesn't say "please," when she can help it.

"Lend us a hand at the apples, too," said Aunt Cheerie.

"No, I can't tell stories and pare apples, too."

"Does you need your fingers to tell stories wid, like the dumbers that we heard talk without saying anything?"

Chicken Small had been to an exhibition of Professor Gillett's deaf and dumb pupils.

"Well, no," I said; "but you see, Chicken, I never could make my tongue and my fingers go at the same time."

"I should think you had never done much with your fingers, then," said Aunt Cheerie; "for I

never knew your tongue to be still, except when you were asleep."

I felt a little anxious to change the subject, and so began the story at once.

"Little Sukey Gray——"

"What a funny name!" cried the Fairy.

Yes, and a funny girl was Sukey Gray. She had yellow hair that was tied up in an old-fashioned knot, behind, though she was only eleven years old; for you must know that Sukey lived in a part of the country where chignons and top-knots of the latest style were unknown. Now Sukey's way of doing up her hair in a great knot, behind, with an old-fashioned tuck comb, was not pretty. But Susan Gray lived in what was called the "White-Oak Flats;" a region sometimes called the "Hoop-Pole Country." It was not the most enlightened place in the world, for there was no school, except for a short time in winter, and the people were very superstitious, believing that if they carried a hoe through the house, or broke a looking-glass, somebody "would die before long," and thinking that a screech-owl's scream and the howling of a dog were warnings; and that potatoes must be planted in the "dark of the moon," because they grew underground, and corn in the "light of the moon," because it grew above ground; and that hogs must be killed in the increase of the moon, to keep the pork from frying away to gravy!

As Sukey had always lived in the White-Oak Flats, she did not know that they were dreary, for she was always happy, doing her work cheerfully. But one of Susan's cousins, who lived a hundred miles away, had made her a visit. This cousin, like Sukey, lived in the country, but she had plenty of books and had read many curious and wonderful things, with which she was accustomed to delight Sukey.

But when Cousin Annie was gone, Sukey found the Flats a dreary place. She wished there were some pagodas, such as they have in India, or that there were some cannibals living near her. She thought if she were rich, she would buy an omnibus, with four "blaze-faced" sorrel horses, to drive for her own amusement. She got tired of the pumpkins and cabbages, and longed for grizzly bears and red Indians. She hated to wash dishes and feed the chickens, but thought she would like to be a slave on a coffee plantation in Ceylon.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed, "I wish I was out of the Hoop-Pole Country. There is nothing beautiful or curious in these flats. I am tired of great yellow sunflowers and hollyhocks and pumpkin blossoms. I wish I could see something curious or beautiful."

Now, isn't it strange that any little girl should talk so, with plenty of birds and trees and sunshine? But so it is with most of us. We generally refuse to enjoy what is in our reach, and long for something that we cannot get. Just as Chicken Little, here, always wants milk when there is none, and always asks for tea when you offer her milk.

"Well, 'cause I'm firsty, that's the reason," said the Chicken.

Now, when Sukey said this, she was up in the loft, or second story, if you could call it story, of her father's house. She sat on a bench, looking out of the gable window at the old stick chimney, made by building a square *cob-house* arrangement of sticks of wood, tapering toward the top, and plastering it with clay. The top of the chimney was surrounded by a barrel with both ends open, through which the smoke climbed lazily up into the air. Near by stood an oak-tree, in which a jay-bird was screaming and dancing in a jerky way. Sukey then looked away into the blue sky, and the clouds seemed to become pagodas, and palm-trees, and golden ships floating drowsily away. All at once she heard somebody say, in a queer, birdlike voice—

"Pray, look this way, little Sukey Gray. May I make bold to say you are looking grum to-day? You neither laugh nor play; now what's the reason, pray?"

Sukey started up to see where this funny jingle came from. There, in the oak-tree, where the jay-bird had stood a few minutes before, was a queer-looking little chap, in blue coat and pants, with a top-knot cap and a rather sharp nose. He looked a little like a jay-bird, but had a most comical face and blinky eyes, and brought his words out in short jerks, making them rhyme in an odd sort of jingle. And all the time he was dancing and laughing and turning rapid somersaults, as if the little blue coat could hardly hold so much fun.

"Well, now," broke out Sukey, "you are the only curious thing in all the Hoop Pole Country. I've been wishing for something odd or strange, and I am glad you have come, for there is nothing beautiful or curious in all the White-Oak Flats."

"Why, Sukey Gray! What's that you say? You must be blind as a pumpkin rind, or a leather-winged bat; this White-Oak Flat is just the place to look the beautiful right in the face. Now come with me, and we will see that the little bee, or this great oak tree, or the bright, blue skies, are beautiful things, if we open our eyes."

All the while the little fellow was getting off this queer speech, he was swinging and tumbling along up the great limb that reached out toward the window at which Sukey sat. By the time he had finished it, he was standing on the window-sill, where he had alighted after a giddy somersault. He laughed heartily—so heartily that Sukey laughed, too, though she could not tell

why. Then he took off his cap, and said,

"A pickaninny, at your service, Sukey Gray! Will you take a walk with me to-day? Now jump, while you may!" and he took hold of her two hands and jumped, and she jumped after him, feeling as light as a feather.

They alighted on the branch of the oak-tree. He immediately began to pull lichens off the bark, and show Sukey how curious they were. He showed her how curiously one kind of lichen grew upon another, omitting its own stalk and leaves, and making use of those of the other. Then he laughed at her, because he had found curious things within ten feet of her window.

Next he took her to her own rosebush, and showed her how the limbs were swelled in some places. Then breaking off the twig, he placed it against a tree, and began to pound it with his fist. But his little arm was not strong, and he had to strike it several times before he could break it open. When it did fly open, Sukey started back at seeing it full of plant-lice, or aphides.

"Now," said the pickaninny, "in this little house what curious things! These little aphides have no wings. But their great-great-grandfathers, and their great-great-grandmothers had. Their mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers had none, and their children will have none, and their grandchildren will have none, and their great-grandchildren will have none; but their great-great-grandchildren will have wings again, for every ninth generation can fly."

"How curious!" said Sukey.

Then the pickaninny found a swamp blackbird's nest, and showed her how strangely it was made; then they climbed down the chimney of the school-house, and he showed her how the chimney swallow glued her nest together; and he coaxed a katydid to fiddle with his wings, that she might see that. At last they entered the pumpkin patch.

"Well," said Sukey, "there's nothing curious here. I know all about pumpkins."

With that the pickaninny commenced to jump up and down on one, but he was so light that he could not break it. He kept jumping higher and higher; now he was bouncing up ten feet in the air, then fifteen, then twenty, until at last he leaped up as high as the top of the oak-tree, and coming down, he struck his heels through the pumpkin. Sukey laughed till the tears ran off her chin. The pickaninny thrust his arm in and took out a seed. Then breaking that open, he showed Susan that the inside of a pumpkin seed was two white leaves, the first leaves of the young pumpkin vine. And so an hour passed while the pickaninny showed her many curious things, of which I have not time to tell you.

At last he said, "Now, Sukey Gray, pray let me fly away!"

"I shall not keep you if you want to go," said Susan.

"Then pluck the mistletoe, and let me go."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I cannot go until you pluck the mistletoe."

Sukey pulled a piece of mistletoe from the limb where they were standing, and he bowed and said,

"Now, Sukey Gray, good-day. Don't waste your sighs, but use your eyes."

With that he leaped into the air. Susy looked up, but there was only the bluejay, crying, "Jay! jay! jay!" in a peevish way, and herself looking out the window.

"What a wonderful country the White-Oak Flats must be," she said. And the more she used her eyes, the more she was satisfied that the Hoop-Pole Country was the most wonderful in the world.

THE GREAT PANJANDRUM HIMSELF.

Chicken Little was a picture, sitting on the floor by the window, with a stereoscope—"the thing 'at you look fru," she calls it—in her hand, and the pictures scattered about her.

Now some of the children think that I have been "making up" Chicken Little, and that there is no such a being. A few weeks ago, after I had been talking to a great church full of people, there came up to me a very sweet little girl.

"Do you write stories in *The Little Corporal*?" she asked.

When I told her I did, she looked up, and asked, earnestly, "Well, is there any real, live Chicken Little?"

Now there may be others of the great army of *The Little Corporal* that want to know whether there is any "real, live Chicken Little." I tell you there is. If you could see her merry mischievous face; if you could see her when she stands up on my shoulders like a monkey; if you had heard her, yesterday, explain that God could see in the stove when all the doors were shut; if you could see how she always manages to do what you don't want her to do, and then find a good excuse for it afterward; you would think there was a live, real "Chicken Little." If you could have seen the old, funny twinkle in her eye, when I found her with the stereoscope, you would have thought she was a real, live Chicken, sure enough.

"Now, then, you've got to tell me a story," she said.

"*Got to* don't tell stories."

"Well, p'ease tell me one, then."

"Yes," said Sunbeam, peeping in, "about the Great Panjandrum himself."

"Ah! you little mink," I said, "how did you get hold of my secret?"

"Why, I knew it all the time."

Now, you see, the case was this; I did not know that the children understood where the names of the Garuly and the Joblily, and the Pickaninny came from. But Sunbeam, who dips a little here and there into a great many books, and who never forgets anything she hears, had somehow gotten hold of my secret. It was this. There was a man who could repeat whatever he read once. One of his friends undertook to write something that he could not remember. So he wrote nonsense, and the man with the long memory failed to remember it. The nonsense, which I read when I was a boy, is, if I remember it rightly, as follows:

"She went into the garden to cut a cabbage leaf to make an apple pie; and a great she-bear coming down the street thrust his head into the shop. 'What, no soap?' So he died, and she very imprudently married the barber. And there were present the Garulies, and the Joblilies, and the Pickaninnies, and the Great Panjandrum himself, with his little, round button-at-the-top; and they all fell to playing the game of 'Catch-as-catch-can,' till the gunpowder ran out at the heels of their boots."

Now you see where the Garulies and the Joblilies and the Pickaninnies came from. And that's why the children thought the next story should be about the Great Panjandrum. And so I began:

I was wandering, one day, in the Land of Nod, in that part of it known as the state of Dreams, and in the county of Sleep, and in Doze township, not far from the village of Shuteyetown, in Sleepy Hollow, where stands the Church of the Seven Sleepers, on the corner of Snoring Lane and Sluggard Avenue, near Slumber Hall, owned by the Independent Association of Sleepy-headed Nincompoops.

"What a place!" said Fairy.

Well, as I was going to say, I was walking through Sleepy Hollow, when I met some children.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"We want to find a four-leaved clover and a beetle with one eye," said one of them; "for if we can find them, we shall be able to get into the Great Panjandrum's place, and there we can learn whether there is a bag of gold at the end of the rainbow or not."

Now, I was seized with a great desire to see the illustrious Panjandrum for myself, and to know what he had to say of that wonderful bag of gold that was to be found at the place where the rainbow touched the ground. And so I fell to work with the happy boys and girls, looking for a one-eyed beetle and a four-leaved clover. The clover was soon found, but it was a long time before we got the beetle. At last we came to a log on which two of that sort of beetles that children call "pinch-bugs" were fighting. Whether they were prize-fighters, engaged in a combat for one thousand dollars a side, or whether they were fighting a duel about some affair of honor, I do not know; but I did notice that they fought most brutally, scratching away savagely on each other's hard shells, without doing a great deal of damage, however. But one of them had lost one eye in the fight, and so we seized him and made off, leaving the other to snap his tongs together in anger because he had nobody to pinch. It must be a dreadful thing to want to hurt somebody and have nobody to hurt.

When we had gone some distance, we came to a gate that had a very curious sign over it. It read, "THE GREAT PANJANDRUM HIMSELF." There was a Garuly with a club standing by the gate, and a Pickaninny, in a blue coat with a long tail, hopping around on top of it. We showed the one-eyed beetle and the four-leaved clover, and the Garuly immediately hit the gate a ringing blow with his club, and shouted, "Beetle! beetle! beetle!" in a wonderfully sharp and squeaking voice, while the Pickaninny on top jerked a little bell rope, and sung out "Clover." Then we could see through the

gate a Joblily lifting his head up out of a pond, inside the enclosure.

"How many eyes?" he asked.

"One," said the Garuly.

"How many leaves?" he said, again.

"Four," returned the Pickaninny.

"Then let them in that they may see the Great Panjandrum himself, and learn whether there be a bag of gold at the end of the rainbow." Saying this the Joblily went under the water and the gate opened.

We passed three gates, that were opened in the same manner, and found ourselves in front of a queer old house, with seventy-seven gables and ever so many doors, and over every door was written, "THE GREAT PANJANDRUM HIMSELF." There was a great bustle about the place, dried-up Garulies running around, dandy-looking Pickaninnies hopping about, and Joblilies swimming in the lake. We asked what it all meant, and were told that "she was going to marry the barber;" and then they all tittered, and we could not for the life of us tell what this pother meant. When we told a Garuly that we wanted to see the Great Panjandrum himself, and to find out whether there was a bag of gold at the end of the rainbow, he took our one-eyed beetle, and gave the four-leaved clover to a Pickaninny. Together they took them into the house, and a Joblily came out in a moment to tell us that the Great Panjandrum was having his little round button-at-the-top brushed up, and that if we chose we could wait for him in the museum.

The museum was a queer place. It was just inside the seventy-seventh gable of the house. There was an old Garuly who acted as showman. We first stopped before a cage that contained a crazy mouse. "This," said the showman, "is the mouse that ran up the clock. Just as he got up there, the clock struck one, and though the poor fellow ran back again, he has never been right since. This long slender cow, that you see, has a great taste for music. She is the one that jumped over the moon when the cat played the fiddle. The cat has never been allowed to play since. This is the little dog that laughed on that occasion. He was so much amused that he has never been able to get his face straight since. In this pot you see some of the cold plum porridge, with the eating of which the man in the South burnt his mouth. Here is a portrait of the man in the moon, when he came down too soon to inquire the way to Norwich. In one of the other gables of this house I can show you Mother Goose's cap frill. And here is the arrow with which Cock Robin was cruelly murdered by the sparrow. This is the original and genuine arrow; all others are humbugs. This is the bone that Mother Hubbard went to look for, but failed to find. Here are the skates on which the

"Three boys went a-skating
All on a summer's day,
They all fell in,
And the rest ran away."

And here is the skin of the wolf that Little Red Ridinghood met in the woods."

I was just going to inquire of him which was the true version of that story, whether the wolf really ate Little Red Ridinghood up, or whether she ate the wolf; but before I got a chance, a Joblily came in to say that the Great Panjandrum himself was coming, and soon the queerest little, old, round, fat man came in, puffing like a porpoise, and rolling from side to side as he walked. His hair looked like sea grass, and was partly covered by a queer concern, nothing less than the celebrated "little round button-at-the-top."

"And so you want to see whether there is really a bag of gold at the end of the rainbow, do you? Well, I'll show you, though I haven't much time, for he died last week, and she very imprudently intends to marry the barber."

This is what the Panjandrum said, and we never could tell who "she" was, nor, indeed, whom he meant by the barber.

"Pickaninnies, open the wonderful Pantoscopticon, and let them see."

The wonderful Pantoscopticon was brought out, and we were allowed to look in it.

There were holes enough for us all to see, and we beheld several rainbows in one sky. On one of them was marked "Get and keep," on another "Eat, drink, and be merry," besides some that were too far away for me to read. There was one that had an inscription in unknown letters that shone with their own light. Though I could not read the words, they reminded me somehow of the Latin sentence which I once read over the gate of a park belonging to the richest duke in England, which says, that goodness is the only true nobility, or something of the sort.

All the time we were looking the Great Panjandrum Himself, with his little round button-at-the-top on his head, was turning a crank in the side of the wonderful Pantoscopticon, which had a hopper on the top of it like that of an old-fashioned coffee-mill. As he turned he kept puffing out:

"If you want to find out whether there is any gold at the end of the rainbow, please walk up the ladder, get into the hopper, and be ground down to a proper size." He hissed out the word size, drawing it as long as his breath would hold.

I didn't know what his words meant until a lady with a red parasol went round behind the Pantoscopticon and climbed to the top. After looking down at the rattling wheels of the machinery a moment, she jumped into the hopper, just as the Panjandrum came round again to the word "s—i—z—e." I looked into the machine and had the satisfaction to see this lady come out, not in pieces as I expected, but looking just as she did when she went in, except that she was reduced to rather less than an inch in height. Her parasol was a mere rose-leaf for size—about as big as a silver three-cent piece. A gentleman with a white hat, whom I had seen walking through the museum with this lady, and who seemed to be her husband, stood looking into the peep-holes when she came out. He cried:

"Hold on, Amanda, and I'll go with you to see about the rainbows and the pot of gold."

But the little lady with the red parasol didn't seem to hear him, she only walked ahead eagerly toward the rainbows. The gentleman with the white hat rushed up the stairs and leaped into the hopper without a moment's pause, and the Great Panjandrum Himself, seeing that the man was in a hurry, turned the crank twice as fast as before. The gentleman was caught in the wheels and sent a-whirling. When he came to the bottom, properly reduced, the speed of the machinery was such that he was thrown out with a shock and his white hat, about the size of a doll's thimble, fell off, so that he had to pick it up, crying out as he did so:

"Hold on, Amanda, and I'll go with you."

The little lady with the red parasol seemed to hear him this time, for she turned her head long enough to say something, but she kept walking briskly forward, either because she couldn't help it, or more likely for fear somebody else would get the pot of gold which, as everybody knows, lies at the end of a rainbow. However, by running, the little inch-long gentleman caught up with the seven-eighths of an inch lady, and the two went along together to find the pot of gold.

Still the Great Panjandrum kept toiling at the crank, while others plunged into the hopper and came out "ground down to a proper size," as the Great Panjan kept saying. Presently some of the children who had come in with me jumped into the hopper and came out about half an inch in length. The others followed, and I went up to the top and looked at the whirling wheels, fearing to make the leap. But at last I became fascinated and could not take away my eyes. I did not care about the pot of gold, nor about the rainbows, nor did I exactly like the idea of being "ground down to a proper size." But I looked at the wheels until I became dizzy, and at length fell into the whirl and was pitched and turned about in the most frightful way until I came out at the bottom. I felt as big as ever, but when I looked up and saw the eyes of the people staring at me through the peep-holes and found that these eyes were nearly as large across as I was tall, I knew that I must have been ground down. I ran after the children and went on for a long time, trying to find the ends of the rainbows. There were many suns in the sky and many rainbows, but no pots of gold, nor would the ends of the rainbows wait for us.

At length we came to the one written over with unknown letters that shone with their own light. This one stood still, having one end resting in a low-lying valley and the other end on top of a high mountain, which was very steep and difficult to climb. At the lower end we found an earthen pot sealed up, which the gentleman in the white hat proceeded to open. To the disappointment of the lady with the red parasol and all of us, there was not a piece of gold in it—only a paper on which was written,

"THE GOLD IS AT THE HIGHEST END OF THE RAINBOW."

We looked up the mountain-side, but all of us by this time felt too weary and lazy to scramble up the cliffs, and among the thorns to find a pot of gold. Besides we were hungry, and not a little uneasy as to how we should get back our proper size. A ground-down Pickaninny who had joined us proposed to hop over along the arch of the rainbow and see whether there was any gold on the mountain-top. Being very light he easily ran up the bow, while we, anxious to get out, did not even wait for him to come back, but hurried down the long road toward the peep-holes and the grinding-machine. I say the long road, for it seemed miles to us little people. I suppose we had travelled twice the length of a good-sized house from the starting-point, and that is a long journey for legs so short.

All the way we wondered how we should get out, and whether we should ever regain our proper stature. When we came to the grinding place the mill was still. We accosted an old Garuly who was wandering about.

"How do we get out?" I said.

"Why, by getting the Great Panjandrum Himself to set the thing a-going the other way," he squeaked.

Then he walked to a speaking-tube and shouted:

"O Great Pan, grind 'em upward."

All this time I could see the eyes of ladies and gentlemen looking at us through the peep-holes, and their eyes were about as big as wagon-wheels to my sight. I felt mean to be stared at by such gigantic goggle-eyed creatures.

The Panjandrum did not start the wheels at once because he was looking around for his little round button-at-the-top without which he cannot do anything. At length when the wheels were set a-going, the man in the white hat and the lady with the red parasol went up, and I was just about to climb up the pipe myself, to get out of the glare of the people's eyes, when one of the children cried out:

"O sir! we'll never get home. We can't reach the tube."

So I took hold of them one after another and pushed them up the spout until the wheels running backward caught them. Whenever a boy or girl slipped out of my hands I would soon after see two more of those hateful big eyes looking at me through the peep-holes. All the time I was afraid the Panjandrum Himself would quit turning or that his little round button-at-the-top would blow off before I could get out. And just as I thrust the last boy up the spout the wheels began to slacken.

"Quick," cried the Garuly, "the Great Pan has let go of the machine. Your last chance for to-day is to get through on the headway."

I climbed in, immediately, but I could feel the works gradually stopping. Slowly my head and my body came out at the top, but the wheels stopped stock-still before my left foot could be drawn out. It was only by slipping my foot out of my boot that I escaped.

Just as I got out there came along the Pickaninny that had gone over on the rainbow. He had come back some other way known to Pickaninnies and had in his arms a pot just like the one we had seen. But this one was full, and he set it down for us to look at. There were doubloons of Spain, there were pistoles, guineas, Arabian pieces, Jewish money, coins of Alexander the Great, and I know not what besides.

While we were examining these, a Garuly came in to say that the she-bear had brought the soap, and that the barber was waiting. The Great Panjandrum, in a state of flustration, hurried past us, and we, not knowing what else to do, stood looking at each other. Just then a Joblily went by with a cabbage leaf.

"What is that?" asked one of the little girls of our party.

"A cabbage leaf to make an apple pie," he replied, without looking around.

Presently a Pickaninny came along with a small keg in his hands.

"What is that?" asked the same curious little girl.

"Gunpowder for the heels of their boots," he answered, and went on.

And a spark of fire from one of the seventy-seven chimneys fell into the keg, and there was a frightful explosion.

But I don't think it was the Panjandrum's house that got blown up, but we ourselves, for we found ourselves outside in the woods going home from Shuteyestown. I for one resolved that the next time I came to the rainbow with one foot in the valley and the other in the mountain. I should climb to the upper end of it.

Stories Told on a Cellar-door.

THE STORY OF A FLUTTER-WHEEL.

What queer places boys have of assembling. Sometimes in one place, sometimes in another. Hay-mows, river-banks, threshing-floors, these were the old places of resort for country boys. And nothing was so sweet to me, when I was a boy, as the newly cut clover-hay where I sat with two or three companions, watching the barn swallows chattering their incomprehensible gabble and gossip from the doors of their mud houses in the rafters. And what stories we told and what talks we had. In the city who does not remember the old-fashioned cellar-door, sloping down to the ground? These were always places of resort.

Tom Miller was the minister's son, and there was a party of boys who met regularly on Parson Miller's cellar-door. Mrs. Miller used herself to listen to the stories they told, as she sat by the window above them, though they were unconscious of her presence. They were boys full of life and ambition, but they were a good set of boys on the whole, and it was not till lessons were learned and work done that they met thus on the cellar-door. They belonged to the same class in school, and besides were "cronies" in all respects. There was Tom Miller, the minister's son, who intended to be a minister himself, and Jimmy Jackson, the shoemaker's boy, as full of fun and playfulness as a kitten, and poor Will Sampson, who stammered, and Harry Wilson, the son of a wealthy banker, and a brave boy too, and John Harlan, the widow's son, pale and slender, the pet of all, and great, stout Hans Schlegal, who bade fair to be a great scholar. These half dozen were nearly always on the cellar-door for half an hour on Friday evenings, when they happened to have a little more leisure than on other evenings.

"I say, boys," said Hans, "I've got an idea."

"How strange it must seem to you," said Tom Miller; whereupon they all laughed, good-natured Hans with the rest.

"Do let's hear it," said Harry; "there has not been an idea in this crowd for a month."

"Well," said Hans, "let's every fellow tell a story here on the cellar door, turn about, on Friday evenings."

"All except m-m-me," stammered Sampson, who was always laughing at his own defect; "I c-c-couldn't g-g-get through be-be-fore midnight."

"Well," said Miller, "we'll make Will Sampson chairman, to keep us in order."

They all agreed to this, and Sampson moved up to the top of the cellar-door and said: "G-g-gentlemen, th-th-this is th-th-the proudest m-m-moment of my life. I'm president of the C-c-cellar-d-d-door C-club! M-m-many thanks! Harry Wilson will tell the first st-st-story."

"Agreed!" said the boys. After thinking a minute, Harry began.

HARRY WILSON'S STORY.

I will tell you a story that my father told me. In a village in Pennsylvania, on the banks of the Schuylkill River, there lived a wealthy man.

"Once upon a time," said Jimmy Jackson.

"B-be st-still! Come to order th-th-there, Jackson," stammered the chairman, and the story went on.

Yes, once upon a time, there lived a wealthy man who had two sons. The father was very anxious to make great men of them, or at least, educated men. I think, or rather my father thinks, that their father used to dream that one of these boys would grow to be President, and that the other would be a member of Congress, at any rate. But while his younger son grew to be a good student, the other one was a good, honest, industrious, and intelligent boy, who did not much like books. His father intended to make him a lawyer, and he got on well enough in Arithmetic and Geography, but Grammar came hard, and when he got into Latin he blundered dreadfully. He studied to please his parents, and from a sense of duty, but it mortified him greatly to think that he could not succeed as the other boys did. For you know it is hard to succeed at anything unless your heart is in it. And so one night he sat down and cried to think he must always be a dolt. His mother found him weeping and tried to comfort him. She walked out in the dusky evening with him and talked. But poor David, for that was his name, was broken-hearted. He had tried with all his might to get interested in "Hic, hæc, hoc," but it was of no use. He said there was something lacking in his head. "And I'll never amount to anything, never! Brother Joe gets his lesson in a few minutes, and I can't get mine at all."

His mother did not know what to say. But she only said that there was some use for everybody. She knew that David was not wanting in intelligence. In practical affairs he showed more shrewdness than his brother. But his father had set his heart on making him a scholar. That very day the teacher had said to his father that it was no use.

"Your father," she said, "intends to take you from school, and it is a great disappointment to him. But we know that you have done your best, and you must not be disheartened. If you were lazy, we should feel a great deal worse."

Just then they came to the orchard brook. Here she saw in the dim light something moving in the water.

"What is that, David?" she said.

"That's my flutter-wheel, and I feel like breaking it to pieces."

"Why?"

"Well, you see, all the boys made little water-mills to be run by the force of the stream. We call them 'flutter-wheels.' But I made one so curious that it beat them all," he said.

"Show it to me, Davie," she said. And David explained it to her, forgetting all about his unhappiness in the pleasure of showing the little cog-wheels, and the under-shot wheel that drove it.

"And why did you want to break it up?" she asked.

"Because, mother, Sam Peters said that I should never be good for anything but to make flutter-wheels, and it is true, I am afraid."

"If you were a poor man's son, Davie, you might be a good mechanic," said his mother.

That night Davie resolved to be a mechanic. "I won't be a good-for-nothing man in the world. If I can't be a learned professor, I may be a good carpenter or a blacksmith. If I learn to make a good horseshoe, I'll be worth something." So the next morning he asked his father's leave to enter a machine-shop. His father said he might, and with all the school-boys laughing at him, he took his tin-pail with his lunch in it, and went into the shop each morning. And now he began to love books, too. He gathered a library of works on mechanics. Everything relating to machinery he studied. He took up mathematics and succeeded. After a while he rose to a good position in the shop. And he became at last a great railroad engineer. He built that great bridge at Blankville.

"Why," said John Harlan, "I thought your Uncle David built that."

"So he did," said Harry. "My uncle was the boy that could not learn Latin."

"I suppose," said Tom Miller, "that God has use for us all, boys. Perhaps Jimmy's father was as much intended to make shoes as mine to preach. What a mistake it must be to get into the wrong place, though."

"Come, you're getting too awfully solemn, Tom," said Jimmy Jackson; "you'll put a fellow to sleep before he has time to go to bed." And Jackson pretended to snore.

"The m-m-meeting's adjourned," said the president. "Jimmy Jackson will be the sp-speaker at the n-next m-m-meeting of the Cellar-d-door S-society."

THE WOOD-CHOPPER'S CHILDREN.

The next Friday evening found all the members of the Cellar-door Club in their places. Will Sampson, the stammering "chairman," was at the top, full of life and fun as ever. Jimmie Jackson, running over with mischief, was by him, then came Tom Miller and John Harlan, while Hans Schlegel and Harry Wilson sat at the bottom. After a half-hour spent in general talk about school and plays, and such miscellaneous topics as every gathering of boys knows how to discuss, the "chairman" called out,

"Come t-to order! Th-th-the C-cellar-d-d-door Society is c-called to order. G-g-gentlemen, the Hon. J-Jeems Jackson is the speaker f-for the evening. I h-have the pl-pleasure of introducing him to you."

"No, you don't!" said the shoemaker's son; "don't put it on so thick. If you want me to tell my yarn along with the rest of you, why, I'm ready, but if you call it a speech, you scare me out of my shoes, just like the man that tried to make a speech in the legislature, but couldn't get any farther than 'Mr. Speaker, I am in favor of cartwheels and temperance.' Or, like a boy I knew, who tried to declaim the speech beginning: 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears!' and who got so badly confused on the first line that he said, 'I'd like to borrow your ears!'"

This raised a laugh at the expense of Harry Wilson, who had broken down on that line, though he did not make it as bad as Jimmy represented it.

"G-g-go on with your story!" stammered the chairman, and Jackson proceeded.

JIMMY JACKSON'S STORY.

There lived in a country a long way off—it don't matter where—a poor wood-chopper whose name was—let's see—well, we will call him Bertram. It wasn't the fashion to have two names in those days, you know; people couldn't afford it. He had a son, whose name was Rudolph, and a daughter, Theresa. The boy was twelve and the girl was eleven years old. The wood-chopper earned but a scanty subsistence—that means an awfully poor living, I believe—and the children soon learned to help him. Rudolph and Theresa were hard-working and cheerful, and as they had

never been rich, they did not know what it was to be poor. That is, they thought they had plenty, because they never had any more; and had no time to sit down and see how nice it would be to have a fine house, and be drawn in an elegant carriage. But one day a tree fell on poor Bertram, and he was carried home with a broken arm and leg. I suppose if he had been rich enough to send for a great surgeon that lived in the city, only two leagues away, he would have recovered without much trouble, but poor men have to do without such attentions, and so Bertram's arm and leg, which were fixed by a country "bone-setter," were so crooked that he could not work. And now the burden fell heavily on the wife, who had to gather berries and nuts in the forests, which she loaded on the donkey, and carried away to the city to sell. But the poor woman was never very strong, and this extra tax was fast breaking her down.

The children did what they could, but it was not much. After working hard all day, they amused themselves in the evening by manufacturing little articles out of nutshells. Rudolph had a sharp knife which had been given him for showing a gentleman the way out of the forest. But the circumstances of the family had become so distressing that they had given up their evening employments, creeping sadly away to bed after a frugal supper.

One day, as they were gathering nuts in the forest, Rudolph said, "Sister, I fear that mother is breaking down. What can we do to help her? The winter is coming on, and times will be harder than ever."

"I'll tell you what, Rudolph," answered Theresa; "why can't we do something with your little nut-baskets and nut-boats? I've heard say that the little city children, who wear fine clothes and have plenty of money, are very fond of such things. Let us send all you have by mother to-morrow."

And so on the next morning the mother's basket took the whole stock. When evening came the children walked a quarter of a league down to the crossing of the brook to meet her, and hear the fate of their venture. But the poor woman could only tell them that the work was admired, but that she had not succeeded in selling any of it. That night they went to bed more than ever disheartened. The next day, their mother carried their trinkets to town again, and when she returned they were delighted to know that some of them had sold for a few pence, and that a lady had sent an order for some mosses to make a moss-basket with.

"We'll make the basket ourselves," exclaimed Rudolph, and the next day they gathered the mosses, and Rudolph and his sister worked nearly all night framing a basket of twigs, and fitting in the different colored mosses. What was their delight when they learned that the lady had paid a good price for the basket.

It was still up-hill work to live. Sometimes the trinkets sold and sometimes they did not. But Rudolph kept whittling away, and his sister soon became a good whittler, too. Besides, she often sewed little pin-cushions in the nut shells, and did other things by which her little brown fingers were quite as useful as Rudolph's. But often they were discouraged by complete failure to sell.

There was a fair to take place some time later, and Rudolph and Theresa worked hard making swinging baskets and nut-shell boats for the fair. And as the poor mother was fairly broken down, and could not go to the city, they had not to pick berries, but could spend all their time making their little articles. They even made little faces out of the nut shells. At last came the day of the fair; and, alas! the poor mother was still sick, while the father was not able to move out of his chair for rheumatism. This was a sad disappointment, but Rudolph had often been to the city with his mother, and he resolved to take Theresa and go himself. As the food was out, the parents could not refuse, and the two children climbed up on the donkey and set out. It was a wearisome and anxious day to the parents. At last, when evening came, there came no returning children. But an hour after dark the donkey stopped before the door, and Rudolph and his sister came joyfully in to tell the day's adventures. Very happy were the parents to learn of their complete success. And now the children went regularly to the weekly markets or fairs, and had a stall of their own. Their constant whittling made them more and more skilful, and their trinkets were soon much sought after. They were able to buy a little gold and silver, and soon learned to inlay their nut-shell snuff-boxes and wooden jewel-cases, so as to make them very beautiful. And as the wood-chopper grew better he was able to do the rougher work of preparing the wood for them. And the money they realized was more than the wood-chopper was ever able to make in his best days. After a while some wood-carver's tools helped Rudolph to do still more curious work. And he now has a shop in town. Theresa prepares his drawings and patterns for him, and does the staining and moss-work, and the firm is always known as THE WOOD-CHOPPER'S CHILDREN. If anybody wants a moral to the story they can furnish it themselves.

"I suppose the moral is, that EVERYBODY CAN DO SOMETHING IF HE TRIES," said Miller.

"I s-s-suppose it's b-b-bed-time," said the chairman, and the boys adjourned.

On the third Friday evening the boys came together in some uncertainty in regard to who was to be the story-teller. But Will Sampson, the stammering president of the club, had taken care to notify John Harlan, the widow's son, that he was to tell the story. If there was any general favorite it was John; for while his poverty excited the sympathy of all, his manliness and generosity of heart made everybody his friend, and so, when Sampson got the boys quiet, he announced: "G-g-gentlemen of the order of the c-c-cellar-door, the story-teller for th-the evening is our friend Harlan. P-p-please c-come forward to the t-top, Mr. Harlan."

"I say, Hurrah for Harlan!" said Harry Wilson, and the boys gave a cheer.

"Give us a good one, John," said mischievous Jimmy Jackson.

"Order!" said the chairman. "Mr. Harlan has the fl-floor,—the c-c-cellar-door, I mean. Be q-quiet, J-J-Jackson, or I'll reprimand you severely."

"I'm perfectly quiet," said Jackson. "Haven't spoken a word for an hour."

JOHN HARLAN'S STORY.

Well, boys, I don't know that I can do better than tell you the story of one of my mother's old school-mates. His name was Samuel Tomkins——

"Couldn't you give your hero a prettier name?" said Jackson; but the president said "order," and the story went on.

He lived in one of the counties bordering on the Ohio River. It was a rough log cabin in which his early life was passed. He learned to walk on an uneven puncheon floor; the walls were "chinked" with buckeye sticks, and the cracks daubed with clay, and a barrel, with both ends knocked out, finished off the chimney. His father had emigrated from Pennsylvania, and was what they call in that country a "poor manager." He never got on well, but eked out a living by doing day's works, and hunting and fishing. But Samuel's mother was a woman of education, and had just given him a good start, when she died. He was then but eight years of age. A few months later his father died of a congestive chill, and little Sammy was thrown on the world. He was indentured to old Squire Higgins. The Squire was a hard master; and in those days a bound boy was not much better off than a slave, any how. Up early in the morning "doing chores," running all day, and bringing the cows from the pasture in the evening, he was kept always busy. The terms of his indenture obligated the Squire to send him to school three months in the winter; and it was a delightful time to him when he took his seat on the backless benches of the old log school-house, with its one window, and that a long, low one, and its wide old fireplace. He learned to "read, write, and cypher" very fast. And in the summer time, when he was employed in throwing clods off the corn after the plough, he had only to go once across the field while the plough went twice. By hurrying, he could get considerable time to wait at each alternate row. This time he spent in studying. He hid away his book in the fence-corner, and by concealing himself a few minutes in the weeds while he waited for the plough, he could manage to learn something in a day.

After he grew larger the Squire failed to send him to school. When asked about it, he said, "Wal, I 'low he knows a good deal more'n I do now, an' 'taint no sort o' use to learn so much. Spiles a boy to fill him chock full." But Sammy was bent on learning, any how; and in the long winter mornings, before day, he used to study hard at such books as he could get.

"I never seed sich a chap," old Mrs. Higgins would say. "He got a invite to a party last week, and my old man tole him as how he mout go; but, d'ye b'lieve it? he jist sot right down thar, in that air chimney-corner, and didn't do nothin' but stedly an' stedly all the whole blessed time, while all the other youngsters wuz a frolickin'. It beats me all holler."

But the next winter poor Sam had a hard time of it. The new school-master, who was hired because he was cheap, knew very little; and when Sam got into trouble with his "sums," and asked the school-master about them, he answered, "Wal, now, Sam, I hain't cyphered no furdern 'reduction,' and I can't tell you. But they's a preacher over in Johnsonville a-preachin' and a-teachin' school. He is a reg'lar college feller, and I reckon he knows single and double rule of three, and all the rest."

Sam coaxed the Squire to let him have old "Blaze-face," the blind mare, to ride to Johnsonville, three miles off, the next morning, if he would promise to be back "on time to begin shuckin' corn bright and airy." And before six o'clock he hitched old Blaze in front of "Preacher Brown's" door. When he knocked, Mr. Brown was making a fire in the stove, and he was not a little surprised to see a boy by the door in patched blue-jeans pantaloons that were too short, and a well-worn "round-about" that was too tight. He looked at the boy's old arithmetic and slate in surprise.

"If you please, sir," said Sam, "I'm Squire Higgins' bound boy. I want to learn somethin', but I can't go to school; and if I could, 'twouldn't amount to much, because the master don't know as much as I do, even. I got stalled on a sum in cube root, an' I come down here to get you to help me out, for I'm bound to know how to do everything there is in the old book; and I've got to be back to begin work in an hour."

The minister shook him by the hand, and sat down cheerfully, and soon put daylight through the "sum." Then Sam got up, and feeling down in the bottom of his pocket, he took out a quarter of a dollar. "Would that pay you, sir? It's all I've got, and all I will get in a year, I guess. I hope it's enough."

"Keep it! keep it!" said Mr. Brown, brushing away the tears; "God bless you, my boy, we don't charge for such work as that. I'd like to lend you this History of England to read. And come over any evening, and I'll help you, my brave fellow."

One evening in every week the bound boy rode old Blaze over to the minister's house, and rode back after eleven o'clock, for he and the parson came to be great friends. The next year Mr. Brown threatened the old Squire with the law for his violation of his part of the terms of the indenture, and forced him to release Sam, who was eighteen now, from any further service. He dug his way through college, and is now Professor of Mathematics in — University. The old Squire, when he hears of Professor Tomkins' success, always chuckles, and says, "You don't say, now! Wal, he used to feed my hogs."

"We'll adj-j-journ with three cheers for Harlan," said Sampson. And they gave them.

"Oh, don't go yet," said Tom Miller; and so another half-hour was passed in general talk.

THE PROFLIGATE PRINCE.

Friday evening next after the one on which John Harlan told his story, it rained; so the club did not meet. But they came together on the following Friday evening, and it was decided that Hans Schlegel should tell the story.

"Come, Schlegel," said Harlan, "you must know a good many, for you are always studying big German books. Tell us one of the stories that those old German fellows, with jaw-breaking names, have to tell."

"Yes," said Jackson, "tell us about Herr Johannes Wilhelm Frederich Von Schmitzswartsschriekelversamanarbeitfrelinghuysen!"

Jimmy's good-natured raillery raised a hearty giggle, and Hans joined in it with great gusto.

"I think," said Harry Wilson, "Schlegel can make a better story than any of those old fellows, whose names take away your breath when you pronounce them. Tell us one of your own, Hans."

"D-d-d-do just as you p-p-please, Sch-sch—" but the stammering chairman fairly broke down in trying to pronounce the name, and the boys all had another laugh.

"Really, gentlemen," said Schlegel, "I should be delighted to please you, but as you have asked me to tell you a story that I've read in German, and to tell you one of my own make, and to do just as I please, I fear I shall be like the man who tried first to ride, and then to carry his donkey to please the crowd. But, I think I can fulfil all three requests. I read a story in Krummacher some time ago, and I have partly forgotten it. Now, if I tell you this story, partly translating from the German as I remember it, and partly filling up the story myself, I shall do just as I please, and gratify you all."

"Good," said Jackson; "takes Schlegel to make a nice distinction. Go on with the story."

THE STORY.

Hazael was the name of the son of an oriental prince. He was carefully educated by command of his father, and grew up in the valley of the wise men. What that is, I cannot tell you, for Herr Krummacher did not deign to tell me. At last, when he came to be a young man, his father thought best to have him travel, that he might know something of other people besides his own. For people who stay at home always are apt to think everything strange that differs from what they have been accustomed to. Thus it is that English-speaking people, where knowledge is limited, think that German names are uncouth, when it is only the narrowness of their own culture that makes them seem so.

Now, in the country in which Hazael lived, they didn't send young men to Europe, as we do, to complete their education by travelling at lightning speed over two or three countries, and then coming back to talk of their travels. But in that country, they sent them to Persia to live awhile, that they might study the manners and customs of the people. So Hazael came into Persia. He was allowed every liberty, but his old tutor, Serujah, followed him without his knowledge, and watched his course.

When Hazael reached the great city, he was dazzled with its splendors. The signs of wealth,

the excitements of pleasure, and the influence of companions were too much for him. He saw the crowds of pleasure-seekers, he was intoxicated with music, he was charmed with the beauty and conversation of giddy women. He forgot all the lessons of Serujah. He forgot all his noble resolutions. Days and nights were spent in pleasure and dissipation. In vain Serujah looked for any signs of amendment. He was a "fast" young man, *fast* because he was going down hill.

One day, as he wandered in the pleasure gardens of Ispahan with his dissolute companions, he beheld his old master, Serujah, dressed as a pilgrim, with staff in hand, hurrying past him.

"Whence come you, and whither do you journey?" cried out the young prince to Serujah.

"I do not know where I am going," answered Serujah.

"What!" said Hazael, in astonishment, "have you left home and gone on a pilgrimage, and yet do not know where you are going?"

"Oh, yes," said Serujah, "I just go here and there, taking the road that seems to be the pleasantest, or that suits my fancy."

"But where will you come to at this rate? Where will such travelling lead you?" asked Hazael.

"I do not know. That matters not to me," said the wise man.

Then Hazael turned to his companion and said, "See! this man was once full of wisdom. He was the guide of my youth. But his reason has departed, and now, poor lunatic, he is wandering over the earth not knowing where he is going. How has the wise man become a fool!"

Serujah came up to the young prince, and taking his knapsack from his back, threw it upon the ground.

"You have spoken rightly," he said. "Hazael, I once led you, and you followed me. Now, I follow where you lead. I have lost my road, and forgotten where I am going. So have you. You set me the example. You are wandering round without purpose. Which is the greater fool, you or I? I have forgotten my destination. You have forgotten your high duties as a prince, and your manhood."

Thus spoke the wise man, and Hazael saw his folly.

"That story is solemn enough for Sunday-school," said Jimmy Jackson. "But it isn't bad. Sharp old fellow that Jerushy or Serujy, or whatever his name was. But I don't believe it's true. When a fellow gets a-going to the bad you can't turn him around so easy as that."

THE YOUNG SOAP-BOILER.

It was a mild evening in the early fall, when the boys got together for the next story, which of course fell to the lot of Tom Miller, the minister's son, whom the boys familiarly called "The Dominie." No boy in the cellar-door club was more obliging to his friends, more forgiving to those who injured him, than "The Dominie," and none was more generally loved. But Tom had some strong opinions of his own. He was a believer in "the dignity of work," and when he wanted a little spending money, would take a saw and cut wood on the sidewalk, without any regard to some of the fellows, who called him wood-sawyer. He was given to helping his mother, and did not mind having the boys catch him in the kitchen when his mother was without "help." If anybody laughed at him he only replied, "There is nothing I am more proud of than that I am not afraid to be useful." This independence, this utter contempt for the sneers of others when he was right, made the boys look for something a little peculiar when Tom should come to his story.

"G-g-gentlemen! this c-c-cellar-door society will come to order. Tom Miller, the dominie——"

"The wood-sawyer?" said Jackson, good-naturedly.

"Y-yes, the w-wood-sawyer, the f-fearless reformer, the b-b-believer in hard work, the bravest member of the c-c-cellar-door cl-club, has the slanting floor, the cellar-door itself, and I hope he will st-st-stand by his colors, and give us a story that has the meanest kind of work in it, made honorable by d-d-dig-dignity of character." I think Sampson stammered a little on "dig-dig" just for the fun. But the boys all agreed to his request and so they heard

TOM MILLER'S STORY.

My story, boys, shall be what you ask. I shall call it "The Young Soap-Boiler," for I suppose you'll admit that boiling soap is about as unpleasant work as there is.

"Touched bottom that time," interposed Harry Wilson.

Well, the boy that I'm going to tell about was Dudley Crawford. With a cheery eye and voice, a quick eye, a quicker hand and a fleet foot, he was a great favorite on the play-ground. If there was a weak boy, whom the others imposed upon, Dudley was always his fast friend, and the mean fellows who make up for their cowardice toward boys of their size by "picking" at little fellows or green boys, had always a wholesome fear of Dudley, though I do not think he ever struck one of them. But his fearless, honest eye cowed them, and I am sure he would have struck hard if it had been necessary to protect the poor little fellows who kept under his wing. The boys called them "Dud's chickens."

There was one boy in the school, Walter Whittaker, who had a special desire to be on good terms with Dudley. Walter's father had gotten rich during the war, and Walter had a special fondness for being genteel. He wore gloves, and kept his boots brighter than there was any occasion for. He was not much of a scholar, though older than Dudley. But he was fond of calling young Crawford his friend, because Dudley's father was a rich and talented lawyer.

At last, there came a financial crash that sent all of Mr. Crawford's half-million of dollars to the winds. He was in feeble health when it came, and the loss of his property hastened his death. The very same "panic" left Whittaker poor also. But the two boys took it very differently. Whittaker looked as crestfallen as if he had committed a crime. Dudley mourned the loss of his father, but held up his head bravely under the sudden poverty. Whittaker looked around for a "situation." But the times were hard, and situations were not to be had. Every clerk that could be dispensed with was sent away, and besides, merchants do not like to employ a fellow who wears gloves and looks afraid of soiling his hands. Dudley had his mother to support, and looked about bravely for work. But no work was to be had. He tried everything, as it seemed, until at last he asked stern old Mr. Bluff, who owned half a dozen factories of different kinds.

"You want work, do you, young man? I s'pose you want to keep books or suthin' o' that sort. I never saw such a lot o' fellers askin' for work and afraid to dirty their fingers."

"I'll do any honest work by which I can earn my bread, without being dependent on friends."

"Any honest work, will you? I'll make you back out of that air. I'll bet you won't begin where I did."

"Try me, sir, and see."

"Well, then, I'll give you good wages to go into my soap factory next Monday morning. Ha! ha! that's honest work; but fellers of your cloth don't do that sort of honest work."

"I will, sir."

Mr. Bluff was utterly surprised, but he gave Dudley the situation, saying that he reckoned the smell of soap-grease would send him out.

Dudley hardly knew what to make of his own boldness. But he only told his mother that he had a situation with Mr. Bluff, and that he did not know the precise nature of his duties. He was not ashamed of his work, but afraid of giving her pain.

Monday morning he went early to the soap factory, stopping at the tailor's on the way, and getting a pair of blue overalls that he had ordered. It must be confessed that the smell of the factory disgusted him at first, but he soon became interested. He saw that brains were used in soap-making. He became more and more interested as he saw how accurate some of the chemical processes were. He soon learned to cut the great blocks of hard soap with wires; he watched with eager interest the use of coloring matters in making the mottled soaps, and he soon became so skilful that surly Mr. Bluff promoted him to some of the less unpleasant parts of the work.

But there was much talk about it at first. Some of the young ladies who had been useless all their lives, and who had come to think that uselessness was necessary to respectability, were "surprised that Dudley Crawford should follow so low a trade." But those very people never once thought it disgraceful in Walter Whittaker to be a genteel loafer, living off his father's hard-earned salary, and pretending that he was looking for a situation. And I will not be too hard on Whittaker. I think if he could have had a situation in which he could do nothing, and be paid well for it, he would have been delighted. But he shunned Dudley. Partly because he was afraid of compromising his own respectability, and partly because he had sense enough to see that Dudley's honest eyes looked through him, and saw what a humbug he was.

After a year Dudley's father's estate was settled, and owing to an unexpected rise in some of the property, it was found that the debts would all be paid, and a small balance be left for the family. It was but a small amount, but it enabled Dudley to lay aside his blue overalls, and return to the old school again. Dr. Parmlee, the principal, was delighted to have such a good pupil back again. Whittaker came back about the same time, and the very first day he whispered to some of the boys that Dudley smelled of soap-grease. The boys laughed thoughtlessly, as boys are apt to do, and passed the poor joke round. Dudley maintained the respect of the school in general, but there was a small clique, who never knew their lessons, but who prided themselves on being genteel dunces. These folks used to talk about the soap-grease, even in Dr. Parmlee's presence; but the Doctor quietly retorted that if Crawford's hands smelled of soap-grease, that was better than to have soap-grease inside his head and pomatum on the outside. They were a little more

modest after this, but they could not forbear allusions that kept Dudley under fire. His mother, who was very proud of her son's independence, could not but feel sorry that he was subject to such persecutions. "Ah, mother," he would say, "the thing that I am proudest of in my life is, that I spent a year in Bluff's soap factory. Don't think that I am annoyed at the barkings of lap-dogs."

At last came the day of graduation. Dudley led the class. There was a great crowd of fine people. The last speech of all on the programme was "Honest Work Honorable—Dudley Crawford." With a characteristic manliness he stood up bravely for work. So fine were his arguments, so undaunted his bearing, that the audience were carried away. Dr. Parmlee took off his spectacles to wipe his eyes. Dudley's mother could not conceal her pleasure. "Franklin's hands had printers' ink on them," he said, "but they were shaken by princes and savans—the lightning did not despise them. Garibaldi's fingers were soiled with candle-grease, but they have moulded a free nation. Stephenson's fingers were black with coal, and soiled with machine oil of a fireman's work, but they pointed out highways to commerce and revolutionized civilization. There are those" (Whittaker and his set looked crestfallen here) "who will gladly take the hand of worthless loafers, or of genteel villains" (here certain ladies looked down), "but who would not have dared shake hands with Franklin, the printer, with Garibaldi, the tallow-chandler, with Stephenson, the stoker. But before God and right-thinking men there are no soiled hands but guilty hands or idle ones."

When he sat down, others beside his mother shed tears, and good Dr. Parmlee shook his pupil's hand in sight of the audience, but the applause was so great that nobody could hear what he said. And the next day a note came from the chief editor of a leading paper, saying that one who believed enough in labor to carry out his principles in his life, would make an earnest advocate of them. He therefore tendered Mr. Crawford a place on the editorial staff of his paper.

"P-pretty well done, Dominie," stammered Will Sampson.

THE SHOEMAKER'S SECRET.

All things have an end. Among other things that had an end was the fine summer weather. Many other things came to an end with it. Grass, flowers, and leaves came to an end. Chirping of katydids came to an end, and chattering of swallows and songs of robins. And with the summer ended the Cellar-door Club, like all other out-door things that could not stand the frost. The boys understood that their last meeting had come. But Will Sampson, the stammering chairman, was to tell his story, and though the cold evening made them button up their coats, they determined to have one more good time together. And so with many a merry joke they took their places for what Jimmy Jackson called the "inclined plane of social enjoyment." Tom Miller got up under the window and called the meeting to order, announcing that Mr. Sampson would tell the story for the evening.

"I d-don't know about th-that," said Will. "You s-s-see, b-boys, if I tell it I shall have to d-do it b-by fits and starts. If you w-want a s-story told straight ahead, g-g-get somebody whose tongue w-will w-wag when they want it to. If you want a y-yarn j-j-jerked out, I am your man."

"We will take it jerked or any other way you choose, Will," said Miller. I want to say just here that patience and self-control would have cured Sampson of his stammerings. There is no excuse for anybody going through the world with such a defect, when there are so many instances of the victory of a strong and patient resolution over it. I shall give the story here as if he had spoken it smoothly.

WILL SAMPSON'S STORY.

In a country a long way off—I don't care to tell you the name of it for fear I should make some mistake in regard to its geography or history or manners, and besides don't think it's anybody's business just where a story happened—in a country a long way off—perhaps that country never existed except in somebody's head, who knows? Besides, a country that is in your head is just as good as one that is on the map. At least it's as good for a story. Well, in this country there was a village known as the village of shoemakers, because nearly all the people made shoes. Peg, peg, peg, could be heard from one end of it to the other, from morning till night. It was a perfect shower of hammers. Into this town came one day a peasant lad of twelve years of age, with a blue blouse and a queer red flannel cap. He had travelled many a weary mile, and he asked at every shop that he might learn the shoemakers' trade. At last he was taken into the shop of a hard master, who was accustomed to beat his boys severely. But when the master went out, the new boy in the red flannel cap did not throw bits of leather about as the rest did, but attended to his work and said nothing, even when the leather was thrown at his own red cap. And somehow he always got more work done than the rest. And the master never beat Hugo, the boy in the red flannel cap. The other boys said it was because of the charm that he wore round his neck. For Hugo wore an old copper coin suspended like a school-boy's medal. The master paid a little something for extra work, and for some reason, the boys said on account of his charm, Hugo

always had more than the rest. He did not spend it, but once a year a man with a red flannel cap like Hugo's appeared and received all the boy's pay for overwork, and then went away. The boys made up their minds that Hugo had some sort of witchcraft in his copper coin. After some years his apprenticeship expired, and Hugo became a journeyman, working in the same quiet way and doing more work than any other man in the village, though he did not work any faster. Meantime several of his brothers, each with the same quiet way, had appeared, and sat down to work in the same shop. Each of them wore the red flannel cap with a tassel, and each of them had a copper coin about his neck. Hugo had disappeared for a few days once, and had brought back a wife. His brothers lived in his house. Soon he set up a shop. As the other shoemakers were afraid of his charm, he had neither apprentice nor journeyman except his brothers. Fortunately there were no less than ten of them, all with red flannel caps and blue blouses, and wearing copper coins about their necks. But Hugo's shop turned out more than any other. The dealers over the border, when there was an order to be quickly filled, always said, "Send to Hugo, he wears a charm."

At last there came a war. The king of the country in which the "village of shoemakers" was, sent a herald into the town, who proclaimed that if the village would furnish a certain number of shoes for the army by a given day, the young men should be exempt from conscription; but that if the village failed, every man in the town, young and old, should be marched off into the army. There was a great cry, for the task appeared to be an impossible one. Whether it was a superstitious reverence for Hugo's charm, or that in trouble they naturally depended on him, certain it is that the crowd by common consent gathered before the shop-door of the silent shoemaker in the blue blouse and red flannel cap. For so busy had Hugo been that he had not heard the herald's proclamation.

"Neighbors," said Hugo, "this is a great waste of time. We have a very few days to do a great work, and here is one hour wasted already. Every journeyman and apprentice is here idle. Let every one of them return to their benches and go to work. Let the masters step into my little house here to consult." The journeymen hastened off, the masters divided the work between them, and Hugo was put in charge of the whole village as one great shop. He did not allow a man to be seen on the street. He set the women at work doing such work as they could. He did not allow a shop to close until far into the night. But as the last day given by the king drew near, the masters were about to give up, for it was found that every shop was falling behind its proportion. But Hugo sternly told them to hold their men in their places. When the last night came, he did not allow a man to sleep. When morning came he made the women count the shoes from each shop, but kept the men at work. As the accounts were made up, it was found that each shop fell behind. The men quit work in despair at last, and women were crying in the streets. Hugo's shop came last. It was found that he and his brothers had made just enough over their share to make up the deficiency. The whole village hailed him as their deliverer, and everybody said that it was because of his charm.

When the war was over the king came to the village to thank the shoemakers for their aid. All but Hugo appeared before him. When he heard of Hugo's conduct he sent for him. "They tell me," said the king, "that you are the man who had the required number of shoes done. They say that you and your ten brothers wear charms. Tell me your secret."

Hugo, holding his red flannel cap in his hand, began: "Sire, when I was a lad my father had many children. I left my mountain home, and came here to earn something to help support them. These my ten brothers came after me. When each one left, our good mother hung a copper coin about his neck, and said, 'Remember that you are going to a town where there is much idleness among the shoemakers, masters and men. Whenever you are tempted to be idle or to be discouraged, remember what I tell you, KEEP PEGGING AWAY!' Behold, sire, the charm by which we have succeeded, by which we saved the village from your wrath, and your land from destruction."

And after that there might have been seen in the king's employ, in various affairs of importance, ten men in blue blouses and red flannel caps, wearing each a copper coin about his neck.

When Sampson had stammered his way through this story, the boys agreed to meet for the winter in Tom Miller's house.

Modern Fables.

FLAT TAIL, THE BEAVER.

A colony of beavers selected a beautiful spot on a clear stream, called Silver Creek, to build themselves a habitation. Without waiting for any orders, and without any wrangling about whose place was the best, they gnawed down some young trees and laid the foundation for a dam. With that skill for which they are so remarkable, they built it so that it would protect them from cold, from water, and from their foes. When it was completed, they were delighted with it, and paddled round joyously in the pond above, expressing their pleasure to each other in true beaver style.

In this colony there was one young beaver, by the name of Flat Tail. His father, whose name was Mud Dauber, had been a celebrated beaver, who, having very superior teeth, could gnaw through trees with great rapidity. Old Mud Dauber had distinguished himself chiefly, however, by saving the dam on three separate occasions in time of flood. He had done this by his courage and prudence, always beginning to work as soon as he saw the danger coming, without waiting till the damage had become too great to repair.

But his son, this young fellow Flat Tail, was a sorry fellow. As long as old Mud Dauber lived, he did pretty well, but as soon as his father died Flat Tail set up for somebody great. Whenever any one questioned his pretensions, he always replied:

"I am Mud Dauber's son. I belong to the best blood in the colony."

He utterly refused to gnaw or build. He was meant for something better, he said.

And so one day in autumn, when the beavers were going out in search of food for winter use, as Flat Tail was good for nothing else, they set him to mind the dam. After they had started, Flat Tail's uncle, old Mr. Webfoot, turned back and told his nephew to be very watchful, as there had been a great rain on the head-waters of Silver Creek, and he was afraid there would be a flood.

"Be very careful," said Webfoot, "about the small leaks."

"Pshaw," said Flat Tail, "who are you talking to? I am Mud Dauber's son, and do you think I need your advice?"

After they had gone the stream began to rise. Little sticks and leaves were eddying round in the pool above. Soon the water came up faster, to the great delight of the conceited young beaver, who was pleased with the opportunity to show the rest what kind of stuff he was made of. And though he disliked work, he now began to strengthen the dam in the middle where the water looked the most threatening. But just at this point the dam was the strongest, and, in fact, the least in danger. Near the shore there was a place where the water was already finding its way through. A friendly kingfisher who sat on a neighboring tree warned him that the water was coming through, but always too conceited to accept of counsel, he answered:

"Oh, that's only a small leak, and near the shore. What does a kingfisher know about a beaver dam anyway! You needn't advise me! I am the great Mud Dauber's son. I shall fight the stream bravely, right here in the worst of the flood."

But Flat Tail soon found that the water in the pond was falling. Looking round for the cause, he saw that the small leak had broken away a large portion of the dam, and that the torrent was rushing through it wildly. Poor Flat Tail now worked like a hero, throwing himself wildly into the water only to be carried away below and forced to walk up again on the shore. His efforts were of no avail, and had not the rest of the Silver Creek beaver family come along at that time, their home and their winter's stock of provisions would alike have been destroyed. Next day there was much beaver laughter over Flat Tail's repairs on the strong part of the dam, and the name that before had been a credit to him was turned into a reproach, for from that day the beavers called him, in derision, "Mud Dauber's son, the best blood in the colony."

Don't neglect a danger because it is small; don't boast of what your father did; and don't be too conceited to receive good advice.

THE MOCKING-BIRD'S SINGING-SCHOOL.

A lady brought a mocking-bird from New Orleans to her home in the North. At first all the birds in the neighborhood looked upon it with contempt. The chill northern air made the poor bird homesick, and for a few days he declined to sing for anybody.

"Well, I do declare," screamed out Miss Guinea-fowl, "to see the care our mistress takes of that homely bird. It don't seem to be able to sing a note. I can make more music than that myself. Indeed, my voice is quite operatic. Pot-rack! pot-rack! pot-rack!" and the empty-headed Miss Guinea-fowl nearly cracked her own throat, and the ears of everybody else, with her screams. And the great vain peacock spread his sparkling tail-feathers in the sun, and looked with annihilating scorn on the dull plumage of the poor mocking-bird. "Daddy Longlegs," the Shanghai rooster, crowed louder than ever, with one eye on the poor jaded bird, and said: "What a

contemptible little thing you are, to be sure!" Gander White, Esq., the portly barn-yard alderman, hissed at him, and even Duck Waddler, the tadpole catcher, called him a quack.

But wise old Dr. Parrot, in the next cage, said: "Wait and see. There's more under a brown coat than some people think."

There came a day at last when the sun shone out warm. Daddy Longlegs crowed hoarsely his delight, the peacock tried his musical powers by shouting Ne-onk! ne-onk! and Duck Waddler quacked away more ridiculously than ever. Just then the mocking-bird ruffled his brown neck-feathers and began to sing. All the melody of all the song-birds of the South seemed to be bottled up in that one little bosom. Even Miss Guinea-fowl had sense enough to stop her hideous operatic "pot-rack," to listen to the wonderful sweetness of the stranger's song. Becoming cheered with his own singing, the bird began to mimic the hoarse crowing with which Daddy Longlegs wakened him in the morning. This set the barn-yard in a roar, and the peacock shouted his applause in a loud "ne-onk!" Alas! for him, the mocking-bird mimicked his hideous cry, then quacked like the duck, and even Miss Guinea-fowl found that he could "pot-rack" better than she could.

The Shanghai remarked to the peacock that this young Louisianian was a remarkable acquisition to the community; Gander White thought he ought to be elected to the city council, and Miss Guinea-fowl remarked that she had always thought there was something in the young man. Dr. Parrot laughed quietly at this last remark.

The very next day the mocking-bird was asked to take up a singing-school. The whole barn-yard was in the notion of improving the popular capacity to sing. And Daddy Longlegs came near breaking his neck in his hurry to get up on a barrel-head to advocate a measure that he saw was likely to be popular.

But it did not come to anything. The only song that the rooster could ever sing was the one in Mother Goose, about the dame losing her shoe and the master his fiddle-stick, at which Professor Mocking-bird couldn't help smiling. Mr. Peacock, the gentleman of leisure, could do nothing more than his frightful "ne-onk!" which made everybody shiver more than a saw-file would. Gander White said he himself had a good ear for music, but a poor voice, while the Hon. Turkey Pompous said he had a fine bass voice, but no ear for tune. Dr. Parrot was heard to say "Humbug!" when the whole company turned to him for an explanation. He was at that moment taking his morning gymnastic exercise, by swinging himself from perch to perch, holding on by his beak. When he got through, he straightened up and said:

"In the first place, you all made sport of a stranger about whom you knew nothing. I spent many years of my life with a learned doctor of divinity, and I often heard him speak severely of the sin of rash judgments. But when you found that our new friend could sing, you all desired to sing like him. Now, he was made to sing, and each of the rest of us to do something else. You, Mr. Gander White, are good to make feather beds and pillows; Hon. Turkey Pompous is good for the next Thanksgiving day; and you, Mr. Peacock Strutwell, are good for nothing but to grow tail-feathers to make fly-brushes of. But we all have our use. If we will all do our best to be as useful as we can in our own proper sphere, we will do better. There is our neighbor, Miss Sophie Jones, who has wasted two hours a day for the last ten years, trying to learn music, when nature did not give her musical talent, while Peter Thompson, across the street, means to starve to death, trying to be a lawyer, without any talent for it. Let us keep in our own proper spheres."

The company hoped he would say more, but Dr. Parrot here began to exercise again, in order to keep his digestion good, and the rest dispersed.

THE BOBOLINK AND THE OWL.

Having eaten his breakfast of beech-nuts, a bobolink thought he would show himself neighborly; so he hopped over to an old gloomy oak tree, where there sat a hooting owl, and after bowing his head gracefully, and waving his tail in the most friendly manner, he began chirruping cheerily, somewhat in this fashion:

"Good-morning, Mr. Owl! what a fine bright morning we have."

"Fine!" groaned the owl, "fine, indeed! I don't see how you can call it fine with that fierce sun glaring in one's eyes."

The bobolink was quite disconcerted by this outburst, but after jumping about nervously from twig to twig for a while, he began again:

"What a beautiful meadow that is which you can see from your south window! How sweet the flowers look! Really you have a pleasant view, if your house is a little gloomy."

"Beautiful! did you say? Pleasant! What sort of taste you must have! I haven't been able to look out of that window since May. The color of the grass is too bright, and the flowers are very painful. I don't mind that view so much in November, but this morning I must find a shadier place, where the light won't disturb my morning nap."

And so, with a complaining "Hoo! hoo! hoo-ah!" he flapped his melancholy wings and flitted away into the depths of a swamp.

And a waggish old squirrel, who had heard the conversation, asked the bobolink how he could expect any one to like beautiful things who looked out of such great staring eyes.

The pleasantness of our surroundings depends far more upon the eyes we see with, than upon the objects about us.

THE END.

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