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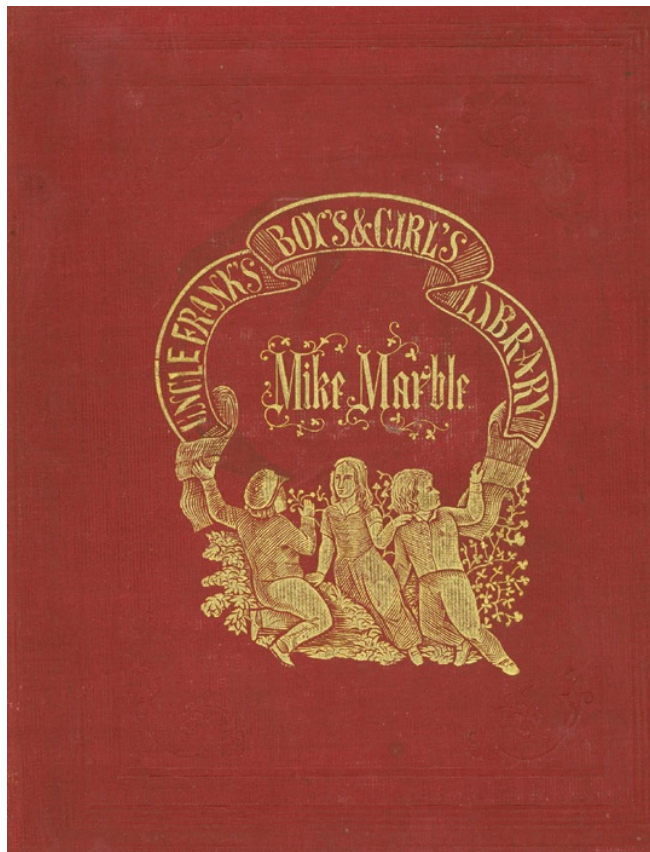
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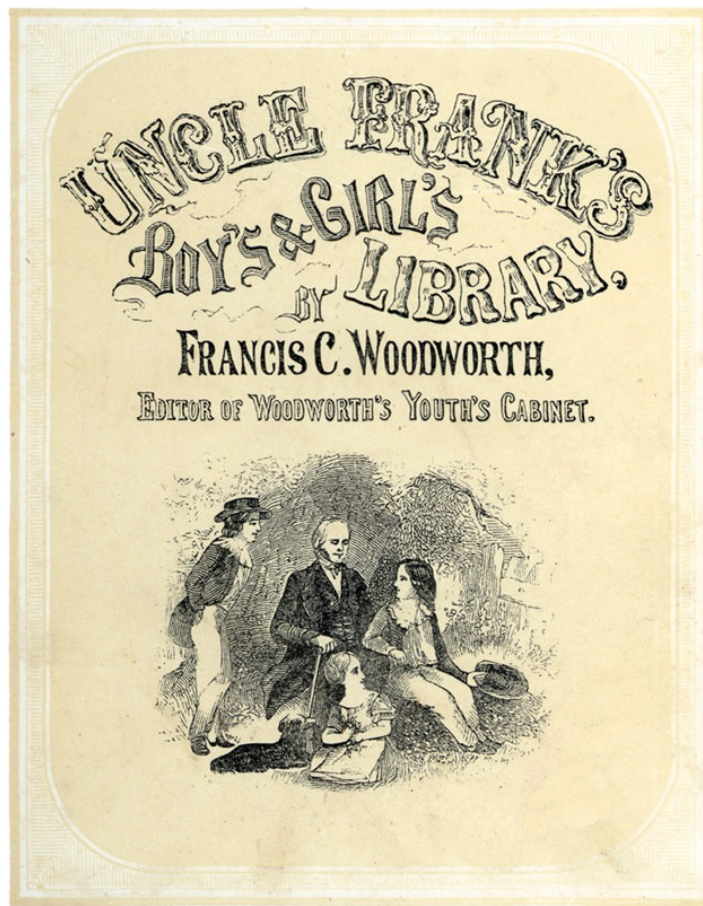
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MIKE'S CROCHETS IN WAR-TIME.



**MIKE MARBLE:
HIS CROTCHETS AND ODDITIES.**

With Tinted Illustrations.

BY

UNCLE FRANK,

**AUTHOR OF "A PEEP AT OUR NEIGHBORS," "THE PEDDLER'S BOY,"
"THE DIVING BELL," "WILLOW LANE STORIES," ETC.**

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[v]

CONTENTS.

	Page
CHAPTER I.	
ABOUT CROTCHETS	7
CHAPTER II.	
CROTCHETY FOLKS	15
CHAPTER III.	
LIGHTS AND SHADOWS	27
CHAPTER IV.	
CHIPS FROM BIRCH WOODS	35
CHAPTER V.	
A PAIR OF THIEVES	54
CHAPTER VI.	
PAYING HIM OFF	68
CHAPTER VII.	
MIKE'S CROTCHETS IN WAR-TIME	92
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE BUMBLE-BEES' NEST	109
CHAPTER IX.	
HOW A BARN WAS BUILT	127
CHAPTER X.	

[vi]

CHAPTER XI.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

MIKE'S CROTCHETS IN WAR-TIME	(Frontispiece)
VIGNETTE TITLE-PAGE	1
THE BOY IN THE WOODS	48
OLD IRONSIDES AND THE CHILDREN	63
A CRYING SPELL	77
PAYING FOR MISCHIEF	124
MIKE MARBLE AND THE BEGGAR	135
MIKE MARBLE IN HIS OLD AGE	147

[7]

MIKE MARBLE.

CHAP. I.

ToC

ABOUT CROTCHETS.

Don't be frightened, reader, at what you see on the title-page of this book, or at the head which I have given to my first chapter. Don't let the idea creep into your head, that I am going to give you a dull and sleepy essay on music. It is not the *crotchets* which you find in the singing-book, that I intend to talk about; I leave them to those who know more about them than I do. There is a man of my acquaintance, whom I could hunt up without much trouble, and who, if you should ever choose to give him a chance, would talk you deaf, and write you blind, about this sort of crotchets, together with all the members of that noisy family—breves, semibreves, minims, and what not! I'll refer you to him, for all the mysteries of the *gamut*. Whenever you want to learn them, I assure you he would like no better fun than to teach them to you. I'll not interfere with his trade.

[8]

[9]

My business is with another family of crotchets. Webster—Noah Webster, the man who made the spelling-book, out of which Uncle Frank learned to say, or rather to drawl his letters—gives, in his large dictionary, as one of the definitions of the word *crotchet*, this: "a peculiar turn of mind, a whim, a fancy." Here you have just that kind of crotchet that I am going to deal with. Mr. Webster could not have hit my crotchet more exactly, if he had taken aim at it on purpose. It is a *peculiar turn of mind*, or, if you prefer it, a *whim*, or a *fancy*, that I shall talk about, for an hour or so, perhaps longer. Indeed, I am not perfectly sure but I shall find a whole flock of whims and fancies, because, you know, "birds of a feather flock together," and, in that case, I shall give you a peep at a score or two of whims and fancies.

[10]

Now, who knows but these crotchets will be worth hearing about? People write large, thick volumes, on drier topics than whims and fancies—that is, to my way of thinking—and I suppose their books are read. Certainly they expect to have them read, or they would not make them. Then why may not my book on crotchets find readers?

[11]

If I were to write a book on *warts* and *corns*, don't you think the book would get read? I do. I have not the least doubt of it. Suppose, now, it were published in the newspapers, that *Messrs. Phillips, Sampson & Company*, one of the largest and most respectable publishing houses in the

Union, are about to issue a volume, entitled *Freaks of the Wart Family*, from the pen of Uncle Frank, a man who, first and last, has printed a good deal of sense, together with some nonsense, and who, in this volume, has succeeded in stringing together some of the strangest things that ever saw the light. Suppose that some newspaper should give that item of news, don't you think folks would get the book, when it was published? and don't you think they would read it, or, at all events, skim it over, to see what kind of stuff Uncle Frank had been emptying out of his brain? I think so.

Well, warts and corns are to the body what whims and crotchets are to the mind. The body has freaks—the mind has freaks. Warts don't exactly *belong* to the body. That is, there could be a very good sort of a body, without a single wart on it; and indeed, if you please, a man would be a more perfect man, if there were no warts about him, from head to foot. So of crotchets. I don't pretend that a person has any thing to boast of, because his head is full of crotchets. Perhaps he would be better without them. *Perhaps* he would. But warts and crotchets are both found among mankind. Both are freaks of nature, so to speak; of course, both are worth examining. One thing at a time, though. Let us turn our attention, at present, to *crotchets*.

CHAP. II.

CROTCHETY FOLKS.

A crotchety person, according to this same Noah Webster, whom I have quoted before, is one who has whims or crotchets in the brain. Now a word about these crotchety folks.

I'll tell you what it is, my friend. The older I grow, the more I feel inclined to let every man and woman, every boy and girl, act out himself, or herself. "That is a singular fellow," we often hear it said. "He's as odd as Dick's hat-band. I don't know what to think of him. He seems to be a good sort of a man. But he *is* odd. His head is as full of crotchets as it can hold."

When I hear a person talk in this style, I feel like saying, "Stop a moment, my dear sir. He's 'a good sort of a man—*but*,' you say. That shows you are not precisely satisfied with his goodness; and pray, what is the matter with it? Why don't you like it, sir? What particular fault have you to find with it? Come, out with it now."

Press a man, who is talking in this way about a crotchety neighbor, right up to the point, and you will generally find that the reason he does not like him is because he has a different way of saying and doing things from his own.

Now I believe that some folks are odd because they cannot help it. True, there are a great many who are odd, just for the sake of being odd. They are ambitious to be known as singular people. We will let them pass. They certainly work hard to earn the name they love to be known by; and perhaps we ought not to try to rob them of it, or to say any thing very severe about their taste. We will let them pass.

But there are a multitude of other people who are odd, and whose oddities cannot be accounted for in the same way. They are odd, because they were born so. They are odd, because they cannot help being odd. If they should try, with all their might, to do as most of their neighbors do, they would make perfect dunces of themselves; for every body, old or young, makes a dunce of himself, and nothing else, whenever he undertakes to be what he is not—whenever he undertakes to be somebody else. He is not very well acquainted with the race he belongs to, who, as he goes through the world, does not get this truth hammered into him.

Why, at this very moment, I can think of at least a dozen odd people, whom I am in the habit of meeting every day, and who, I verily believe, could no more help their oddities and crotchets than some of their neighbors could help having warts come out on their hands. The crotchets are natural and unavoidable in one case—the warts are natural and unavoidable in the other.

These are my notions about crotchety people, in general, and I have thrown them out, as one throws out feather beds from the garret windows, when the house is on fire—so that the articles that are to be thrown afterward may find a good soft spot to alight on, and not get damaged by their fall.

The truth is, I am going to introduce to you an old gentleman, who had a large head, tolerably well filled with crotchets; and as it is such a common thing for people to raise a hue and cry against every body who has any oddities about him, I thought I would put you on your guard a little, by a word of apology for that entire race of people, who are odd because they cannot be any thing else.

This old gentleman, who, by the way, was a great friend of the little folks, is *Mike Marble*. I introduce him to you as an *old* gentleman. But, although he was old, when I first saw him, I must

not forget that he was young once—as young as any of my readers—and that he played his part as a boy, as well as his part as a man. There are a good many anecdotes afloat about him and his odd way of doing things, before he grew up to manhood. My grandfather knew him when he was a lad at school. I believe he and Mike were nearly of the same age.

That grandfather of mine, now I think of it, was a great story-teller. I have sometimes nearly half made up my mind, while casting about me, to find some new mine of stories for my young readers, that I would put my thinking cap on, and see if I could not recollect a budget of my grandfather's stories, large enough to fill a book. I am not sure but I will do so one of these days; and, if I do, I shall print the budget, depend upon it. [23]

My grandfather and Mike Marble were as dear to each other as if they had been brothers. They lived not far apart, and went to school together. For some of Mike's crotchets I am indebted to this old friend of his. Others I picked up, here and there, among old people that knew him, and others still I got from a personal acquaintance with him in his old age. [24]

You will excuse me, if I call him *Mike* sometimes. He was always so called, when he was a boy, I believe. And while you are excusing me for calling him *Mike*—you see I take you to be very kind and obliging—you will please excuse me, also, if I happen to prefix the title of *Uncle* to that nickname; for he was known, far and near, as *Uncle Mike* in his later days.

It is true that *Michael* was his name correctly and honestly spelled out. But it is equally true that *Michael* was a name to which he seldom had to answer. At school, and among his playmates, it was always *Mike*. I really believe, from what I have heard my grandfather say, that not half the boys and girls in his neighborhood could have been convinced, by any common arguments, that his name was *Michael*. Indeed, I remember having heard that once, when a schoolmate called the fellow by the long name, just to see how it would seem, he and the other boy both burst right out into a perfect roar of laughter over the sound of it. "For pity's sake," said he, when he got over his laughing fit, "don't call me by that hard name again, as long as I live;" and, as he seemed to be quite in earnest, none of the boys ever addressed him by any other name than *Mike*, after that. [25] [26]

CHAP. III.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

"But who is *Mike Marble*? where does he live? what sort of a man is he? what kind of oddities has he got?" [27]

My little friend, your questions come out so fast, and there is such a long string of them, that they make me think of the way a whole pack of fire crackers go off, when you touch a coal to one of them, and throw the whole into the street. I am going to tell you ever so many things about this same *Mike Marble*. Before I get through with him, you will get very well acquainted with him, I think. But *Uncle Frank*, you know, has got some oddities himself. When he has got any thing to do, he, too, has his own way of doing it. [28]

Some people, I suppose, if they were treating you to a few chapters in the history of this singular man, would weave the threads together in a different manner from mine. They would begin, very likely, by telling where the chap was born, who were his father and mother, how many brothers and sisters he had, what their names were, whether he had any uncles and aunts, and if he had, what kind of uncles and aunts they were, and all that sort of thing. And they would describe *Mike's* appearance exactly—tell you whether he had black eyes or blue, gray eyes or brown, red eyes or green. But I don't see much use in that. [29]

Indeed, I am not sure but I shall keep you ignorant as to how he looked, and let you learn what there is worth learning in his character—for character is the great thing, after all, you know—by the stories I shall tell of him. I might, it is true, take every branch, and leaf, and bud, and flower, of his character, and pick it all to pieces, and show you, in this way, what he was made of. But you would get tired of all that. So I'll take another course. I'll tell you what he said and did—what he said and did at different times, at different periods in his life, and in different circumstances. Don't you think this is the best way to make you acquainted with him? I do; for, if you find out what a person says, and does, and thinks, you find out what he is. [30] [31]

One or two things, however, I must say about this *Mike Marble*, by way of general introduction.

He was born at a very interesting period—about nine years before the breaking out of the American Revolution. He was quite an old man before he went to his final rest. Indeed, it is but a few years since I saw his weather-beaten face, all lighted up with smiles. Unlike many other men, when they get to be old, he never made a practice of carping at every thing he saw about him, because it was not exactly in the style of 1776. He believed that there was wisdom among our [32]

grandfathers and grandmothers, but that there is wisdom, also, among their grand-children.

I have told you that he had some oddities. I have hinted, too, in a sort of whisper, that I do not consider a man an absolute Pagan, because he happens to be a little odd. Something more than this I could say of Uncle Mike, odd as he was; but I guess you will find out what I think of him, before I get through. Suffice it to say, that, while I didn't like him *because* he was odd, I did like him, *in spite* of his oddities. He was a fine old man. As the world goes, he was a most excellent man. He had his faults, a plenty of them; though I have sometimes thought

[33]

"That e'en his failings lean'd to virtue's side."

Some of them did, I know. He had his faults, nevertheless. I confess that. He always had them, no doubt. Faults are common things among mankind and womankind. But, with your consent, we will trip lightly over all that part of our hero's history which is shaded with blemishes.

[34]



[35]

CHAP. IV.

ToC

CHIPS FROM BIRCH WOODS.

One of the worst things I ever heard of in the history of Mike, according to the best of my recollection, was the way he served Billy Birch's dog. You must know something about this Billy Birch. *Burt* was his real name. But it was changed into Birch by his neighbors, for a reason which I will give you by and bye.

Mr. Burt was a pretty good sort of a man, in his own estimation, but not greatly or generally beloved by his neighbors. He was a church-going man, and had a knack, somehow or other, of getting along decently with the forms—the outside garments, so to speak—of religion. It was really astonishing how glibly he would *talk* about religion. But as to the practical part of it, he did not succeed as well. That was up-hill work for the old man.

[36]

He found it exceedingly difficult to keep himself "unspotted from the world." Some of his nearest neighbors thought they could count a great many worldly spots upon him. I don't know how that was, as I never was acquainted with the man, and ought not to judge him too harshly. Indeed, Uncle Frank must endeavor to keep in mind, that with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again. But from all the shreds and patches of his history that have come down to the present day, Mr. Birch does seem to have been a selfish man, and a great deal too fond of money.

[37]

My young friend, it is one of the most difficult things in this world, to act up to the spirit of the golden rule of our Lord, and do to others as we would have them do to us, when we are as full as we can hold of selfishness. You may lay that thought up in your memory.

[38]

Billy Birch found that truth out. What did he care how many newly-planted hills of corn and rows of peas his hens might scratch up, provided the corn was not his corn, and the peas were not his peas, and provided he did not have to suffer for the scratching? Not a mill. He would sit, smoking his pipe—for he was a great smoker—in the old, straight-backed oak chair on the stoop, as cool as a cucumber, while the biggest rooster on his premises, the lord of the whole barn-yard, was leading a regiment of hens and petty roosters in a crusade upon Squire Chapman's corn-field across the way; and if the Squire or one of his boys came over to inform him what havoc the hens were making, and to ask him what to do with the troublesome creatures, the old man would

[39]

perhaps take his pipe out of his mouth, and, after slowly puffing out a cloud of smoke, would say, "Why, drive them out, to be sure!"

[40]

What did he care, if his old mare—who, by the way, was a very nervous sort of a mare, and could not stay long in one spot—what did he care, if the old creature did jump over the six-rail fence around the good parson's field of clover, and eat what she wanted, and trample down, in her nervous way of doing things, a good share of the rest of the clover? Why, it didn't hurt *him* any. The old miser! It wasn't *his* field of clover that Katy trampled down. And besides, didn't he pay his minister's tax? and didn't the minister and his family live in better style than he and his family could afford to live in?

[41]

Katy loved clover. *He* wasn't to blame for that, and he didn't know that Katy was to blame. It was a very natural taste, that of his old mare. And why didn't the parson, he should like to know, build his fence higher, if he didn't want his clover eaten up by other people's horses?

What was it to Billy Birch, if his dog did kill a neighbor's sheep, now and then? What did he care, what should he care? If they were his own sheep, that would alter the case. But Cæsar never killed his master's sheep. Wasn't that kind in Cæsar? And as to this sheep-biting habit of his, why it is the *nature* of dogs to kill sheep. Cæsar *must* kill somebody's sheep; and if he hadn't picked out a good fat one from this flock, it would have been somebody else's flock. What is the use in making such a fuss about a sheep or two? The loss of one sheep won't break any body. What can't be cured, must be endured. People must take care of their sheep, if they don't want them to be killed.

[42]

[43]

That is the way this selfish, narrow-minded farmer reasoned and talked. You can see, plainly enough, that he was not the sort of man to be very much respected in the neighborhood. He was not respected. In fact, there was not, in all the parish, a more generally unpopular man than Billy Birch.

The boys, I have heard, bore him a grudge of long standing. It related to the huckleberries and hazel nuts in the old man's birch woods. There were bushels of huckleberries, and almost as many hazel nuts, in those woods. But would you have thought of such a thing? Mr. Birch forbade the boys picking any of his huckleberries or hazel nuts. Ever so many huckleberries decayed on the bushes every year, or were left to be harvested by the birds, because Mr. Birch's family could not pick them all themselves, and he was so tight that he would not let any body else pick them. He was like the dog in the manger, you see. He could not eat the hay himself, and he would not let any body else eat it.

[44]

[45]

But the meanest thing that I ever heard of his doing, was this: In these same woods—the woods where the huckleberries and hazel nuts grew—there were great multitudes of birch trees, of different species and among the rest, some of that species which goes by the name, among children, of *black birch*. I need not tell any of my country readers about this kind of birch. They know it well enough. They have eaten birch bark, many a time; and, for ought I know, some of them have felt a tingling sensation in the region of the back and legs, brought about by the use of birch twigs in the hands of some schoolmaster.

[46]

Well, Moses Ramble was crossing Billy Birch's woods one day in the spring of the year. For awhile, he whistled along, as merry-hearted as the blue birds that had just returned from their southern tour, and who were chirping on the branches over his head, breaking off, now and then, a few sprigs of birch, from the trees along his path. By and bye, he sat down on the fence, to rest himself, still going on with his whistling, at intervals, when his mouth was not too much occupied with the birch to interfere with the music.

[47]



THE BOY IN THE WOODS.

ToList

While the merry young fellow was sitting here, feeling at peace with all the world, and not dreaming but all the world was at peace with him, he heard a slight rustling behind him, and, looking over his shoulder, whom should he see but Billy Birch himself, leaning against a chestnut tree, and looking as if he were angry enough to bite in two a hoe handle.

[49]

What on earth the man was doing there, history does not inform us, though it used to be more than hinted among the younger citizens in that neighborhood, that he was prowling about in those woods as a spy on the movements of the boys. They said he was just the man for such business.

[50]

Moses did not like the appearance of the face that was lowering on him; and, although he was innocent of the slightest intention of doing any harm on the man's premises, he thought it would be safer for him to walk off than it would be to stay there. So he leaped from the fence, and began, leisurely, to walk home.

[51]

"Stop, you young heathen!" said Billy Birch.

The little fellow did stop, and stood as still as the old chestnut tree, against which the lord of those woods was leaning.

"What are you *munching* there, sir?"

Moses, having no suspicion at all that he had been doing any harm to the estate of the old man, replied, frankly and plainly, that he was eating birch.

"Aha!" said the farmer, "you are, eh? I'll teach you to eat my birch. I'll give you as much birch as you will want for a fortnight!"

[52]

And he took the twig which Moses was gnawing out of his hands, and whipped him with it, until he made the poor fellow cry out with pain and mortification.

"There, you thief!" he said, after flogging him to his heart's content, "that will teach you to steal my birch, I guess."

From that day the selfish farmer began to be called *Birch*, in that section of the country; and it was not many months before his name was almost as effectually changed as if he had applied to the legislature of the state to have that body change it for him.

[53]

[54]

CHAP. V.

ToC

A PAIR OF THIEVES.

About that dog of Billy Birch. Have I not promised to tell you something about him, and the accident that happened to him, which accident Mike Marble might have prevented, if he had made the attempt? I have a good mind to tell you about these matters, at any rate, whether I have made such a promise or not.

Mind now, reader, that, in telling this story, I don't mean to have it understood that I think Mike did right. I'll grant that he did wrong. But I mention the fact to show what sort of mischief Mike was up to, and what sort of blemishes those were, which I confess he had in his character; for, as I think I said before, this trick was about as bad a thing as I ever heard of his being guilty of. [55]

Cæsar got to be a great hero in the sheep-killing business—a perfect Nimrod of a dog. It sometimes happens, I fancy, that soldiers who spend more of their time in war, actually shooting people and cutting their throats, after a while, get to liking the trade, and take pleasure in slaughtering human beings, just as a carpenter or a printer might take pleasure in *his* trade. Well, it got to be somewhat so with Cæsar, it would seem; for it often came to pass that two or three sheep would be killed in one night, when, of course, a single fat one would supply his appetite bountifully for several days, at least. He must have liked the business, or he would have contented himself with killing only a sufficient number of sheep to keep him in food. [56]

The neighbors who suffered from Cæsar's favorite amusement, complained, now and then, to his master. But it did no good. "They must keep their sheep out of the way," the selfish man would say. "Cæsar is a capital family dog. I don't know what I should do without him—he is so faithful." That was as much satisfaction as they could ever get. Billy Birch would not shut up his dog at night, and as for killing him, that was out of the question. He would rather lose his best horse than Cæsar. True, the neighbors might have sued the owner of the dog, and have got the value of their lost sheep in that way. But they were generally peaceable folks, and had a great dread of going to law, especially with one of their own neighbors. The result was, that Cæsar's business prospered more and more every day. [57]

It was in the full tide of his success as a sheep-killer, that he came, one day, into Mr. Marble's door yard, and took his station near the wood pile. Mike saw him, and knew well enough what he came for. His father had just been slaughtering an ox, and some of the dainty pieces of the animal were lying on the wood pile, the scent of which had brought Cæsar to the spot. No doubt, having feasted on mutton so long, he had got a little sick of it, and thought he would make a dinner on beef. He was a dainty fellow, you perceive. [58]

I don't know what put it into Mike's head to play the trick he did on Cæsar. But he had no sooner seen him smelling around among the refuse pieces of the ox's carcass, than he determined to punish him, if possible, for his notorious crimes. So, without saying a word to any body, he gathered up all the choice bits which had tempted the dog to the yard, and placed them within a few feet of the heels of Mr. Marble's old chaise horse, who was standing there, hitched to a gate post, waiting patiently for somebody to come and harness him. [59]

Now this horse, who was called *Old Ironsides*, was as famous for his kicking habits as Cæsar was for his sheep-killing. He seemed to take up kicking as a sort of amusement, to while away his leisure hours. It was a wonder that Mr. Marble kept him; for he had kicked the old chaise to pieces several times; and as to his stable, he made nothing of kicking off all the boards within reach of his heels, every few nights, just for the fun of the thing, and to show what mighty deeds he could do with his heels. [60]

It is no more than an act of simple justice to Old Ironsides, however, to say, that he was as gentle as a lamb to the children of his master. They could do any thing with him. Often, when he was standing at the door, or in his stable, they would go close to him, and pat him on his neck, and play with him, as if he were one of their own number; and the old fellow would take all their fun good-humoredly. Among all his sins in the kicking line—and he had a great many, first and last, to answer for—he never kicked either of the children. They all loved him, in fact; and many is the dainty morsel he received from their hands. [61]

Well, to go on with the story of Mike's piece of mischief. The dog, as he had expected, trotted along after the pieces of meat, and commenced eating, without any suspicions of harm, right under the *battery* of the old horse. There he remained for some moments, as Mike says, taking as much comfort eating his dinner, as if he were dining on one of his father's sheep. [62]

[63]



OLD IRONSIDES AND THE CHILDREN.

ToList

Old Ironsides took no notice of the dog. Indeed, he rather appeared half asleep. He often shut his eyes, by the way, as he was standing at a post, and dosed, and nodded, much after the fashion of some men, when they set out to listen to a sermon on Sunday. All the time, however, Mike had a crotchet in his head.

[65]

[66]

"Halloo, old fellow!" he shouted, "what are you about there?"

In an instant Old Ironsides was wide awake, and, seeing at a glance what was going on behind, he pricked up his ears, uttered one brief snort, and away went his heels like lightning. Poor Cæsar! When he touched this planet again—for Old Ironsides had sent him up towards the moon, much farther than I should want to go, in that style—he was a lost dog. Old Ironsides, who proved to be as great a hero, in his way, as Cæsar was, had killed him. The great enemy of sheepdom had ceased to breathe.

[67]



"PAYING HIM OFF;"**OR, AN ODD WAY OF SHOWING REVENGE.**

Jacob Grumley, who was sometimes nicknamed *Grumble*, on account of a habit he had of finding fault with every thing and every body, went to the same school with Mike Marble. Now Mike was as remarkable for his cheerful and amiable disposition, as Jacob was for his ill nature. In half of the cases where the latter would get angry, and storm, and rage, and fret, and foam, like a hyena, or a Bengal tiger, the other would remain as cool as a cucumber, or, perhaps, burst out into a hearty laugh. [69]

One day, when several of the schoolboys, including Michael and Jacob, were playing ball on the fine lawn in front of the school house, a dispute occurred between the young grumbler and another boy, and Mike ventured to suggest to Jacob, as kindly as he could, that he was in the wrong.

"You little meddlesome dunce!" said Jacob, all in a blaze of anger, "I'll teach you to mind your own business, and let other people's quarrels alone." And, suiting his action to his words, he struck Mike in the face so hard that the blood ran from his nose in a stream. [70]

Well, what do you think Mike did, then? I know what some boys would have done, if they had been in his place. They would have struck Jacob, at any cost. That is the way they would have taken their revenge. That is the way, indeed, that Mike's school-fellows advised him to take his revenge. Half a dozen of them, at least, surrounded him, and urged him to flog Jacob. [71]

"I'd pay him off for it," said one.

"The rascal!" said another. "I'd make him smart for it."

"And we'll all stand by you," said one, "if you'll flog him."

"Mike wasn't a bit to blame, either," added another. "If I were in his place, if I wouldn't make Jake see stars, then—"

The remainder of the speech was lost to every body but the speaker, as all the boys, by this time, were talking at once. It is a wonder to me that they did not take the matter altogether into their own hands, and give Jake the flogging which they thought he so richly deserved; for Michael was a great favorite among them, and they could not bear to see him abused. But I believe they contented themselves with letting off ever so many vials of wrath, in the shape of words; and Jake Grumble, finding how matters stood, walked sulkily away. [72]

"Now, Mike, what are you going to do?" asked one of the boys.

"Do about what?" asked the injured boy. [73]

"About the bloody nose that Jake gave you," was the reply.

"I'm going to see if I can't stop its bleeding," said Mike.

"No, I don't mean that," said the other. "I mean what are you going to do to Jake?"

"Oh," said Mike, "I guess I'll pay him off, one of these days."

"And why not now?" the boy asked.

"I've got as much on my hands as I can attend to, just now," said Mike.

How do you suppose Jake felt, that day, after his cruel treatment of one of his playmates? What do you suppose were his feelings, when he found out what all the boys thought of his conduct; and when he had time to reflect upon the folly and wickedness of what he had done? Perhaps you can guess pretty well how he felt. Possibly you have yourself wronged some one of your playmates, and recollect how you felt about it, when you had a chance to get away somewhere, alone, to think over your conduct. If so, you can give a pretty rational guess as to the kind of feelings that were at work in Jake's bosom, on his way home from school that day. [74] [75]

He did not go home in company with the rest of the boys and girls who went in the same direction. He was in the habit of doing so. But he felt so much ashamed on account of what he had done, that he could not bear to see the faces of any of the children.

Instead of taking the public road that led directly to his father's house, he went through the gate that led into Deacon Stark's pasture, and followed the cart-path through the woods. It was a great deal farther that way. But he went through the woods so as to get clear of his playmates. One of the deacon's hired men saw the boy, leaning against the fence, just at the edge of the woods. Poor fellow! he was crying, as if his heart would break. So the man said. Jake got the worst of it, in that affair. Don't you think he did? [76]

But I have not got through with the story yet, and I must go on with it.



A CRYING SPELL.

ToList

Time passed on—days, weeks, and even months, came and went—but Mike did not "pay off" the boy who had so unjustly abused him. His companions urged him to do it, until they got out of patience, and concluded to give the matter up. [78] [79]

As for Jake, it was as much as he could do to look Mike in the face. He avoided him, as much as possible, and seemed to be unhappy whenever he came near him. But Mike, on his part, treated the boy who had injured him just as if nothing had happened.

I have often noticed, that where there has been any difficulty between two persons, the one who was at fault is more apt to cherish unkind feelings than the one who was innocent. It was so in this case. Jacob treated Michael as if it were Michael rather than himself, who had been in the wrong. He never spoke to him, when he could help it; and when he did say any thing to him, he spoke peevishly, and pressed the words between his teeth, as if he had the lockjaw. [80]

One day, during that interesting season of the year when the farmers are busy making hay, Jake had occasion to pass through Mr. Marble's meadow, with his fishing rod, on his way to the "deep hole," where, as every body in the neighborhood knew, multitudes of sun fish and perch were always to be found, ready for a nice bit of an angle-worm. [81]

Jake, being a little thirsty—for it was a very warm day—went up to the tree under which Mr. Marble kept the refreshments for his hired men, and took up the wooden bottle to drink. There was nothing wrong, perhaps, in the liberty he took, though I think it would have been quite as well, if he had asked Mr. Marble's consent in the first place. But we will let that pass. Jake had a different way of doing things. [82]

As I said, he took up the bottle to drink. But the moment he did so, Ranter, Mr. Marble's old dog, who lay under the tree, where he had been stationed to keep watch, thinking his master's property was in danger, flew at the boy, and caught him by the arm. Poor Jake! he yelled lustily, you may be sure. But it did no good. Ranter held him in his jaws, as tight as if he were a woodchuck or a rabbit, instead of a school-boy. [83]

Mike was spreading hay, at the time, some twenty yards off, or more and hearing the boy crying for help, and looking in the direction from which the voice came, he saw Jake fast in the clutches of the dog. In an instant he shouted, as loud as he could scream, "Here, Ranter! here, Ranter!" and in another instant, Ranter let go of the poor boy, and bounded away towards his young master.

Jake, as you may suppose, and as Mike found, when he went to him, was very badly bitten. The blood ran from his arm quite as freely as it did from Mike's nose, some time before that. [84]

"Did Ranter hurt you much?" asked Mike, kindly.

"Very badly, I'm afraid," said Jake, almost frantic with pain and fright.

Mike said he was sorry, and expressed his wonder that Ranter could be so cruel. Then he ran and called his father, who was busy in another part of the meadow, when the accident happened, and who did not hear Jake's call for help. Mr. Marble had the boy taken to his house, where his [85]

wound was nicely dressed, and where the utmost care was taken of him by the whole family, among whom Mike was the foremost. It was two or three days before it was thought prudent to remove the sufferer to his father's house; and during that time there was no one, not even Jacob's own mother, who was more kind and attentive to him than Mike Marble.

The time came when the wounded boy was able to go home. An hour or two before the wagon was to come for him, he was sitting in an easy chair, with the wounded arm lying on a pillow, and Mike, as usual, was at his side. There happened to be no one else in the chamber besides the two boys. [86]

"Mike," said the other, "I want to say something to you."

"What is it?" asked Mike.

"I don't know how to say it," was the answer.

And there was a pause. Jacob had undertaken a task which was entirely new to him, and he did not know how to begin it. At length he tried again:

"Mike," said he, "I struck you once—it was a good while ago—do you remember it?" [87]

"Yes," Mike said.

"Well, I am sorry I struck you," said Jacob, and burst into tears.

"I knew you were sorry," said Mike, "and I have forgiven you, long ago."

"Do you forgive me?" asked Jacob, earnestly.

"I do, from my heart," said Mike.

Then followed another flood of tears. This time it was a good while before Jacob could speak, so as to be understood, and when he did speak, it was only to say,

"Oh, Mike, you are *so* kind! You seem like a brother to me." [88]

Jacob's father came into the room just at this moment, and nothing more was said by either of the boys on the subject which so deeply affected Jacob. But Mike saw, plainly enough, that the heart of the boy who had injured him was melted, and he was satisfied.

How warmly Jacob pressed Mike's hand, when he bade him "good bye," and started for home.

Not long after that, Mike met one of the boys who had urged him so strongly to return the blow that Jacob gave him. [89]

"Well," said Mike, "I've done it."

"Done what?" asked the other boy.

"Paid him off," said Mike.

"What, Jake Grumble?"

"Yes."

"Good. Tell me all about it."

And Mike did tell him all about it.

"Well, I do say for it, Mike," said the other boy, after listening to the whole story, "you are just the queerest fellow that I ever saw or heard of."

"But don't you think that was about the best way to pay him off, after all?" asked Mike. [90]

"Well," said the other boy, after a moment's pause, "I declare I don't know but it was, when I come to think of it."

And don't *you* think it was the best way to pay him off, reader? I do, and I should be glad if every body would learn to pay such debts in very much the same way. It may be a very queer mode of taking revenge. But it seems to me quite a sensible one; and I am sure it is a thousand times better than the mode that people so often choose. If I am not greatly mistaken, indeed, it is just the mode that is recommended in the word of God, which says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink; for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." [91]

CHAP. VII.

MIKE'S CROTCHETS IN WAR-TIME.

You have heard a great deal about the Revolutionary War. You have heard what hardships our forefathers went through, while they were fighting the battles of liberty. But I doubt if you can

form, in your own mind, any thing like a true picture of what those brave men suffered. Why, many of them had to go barefoot, for whole weeks at a time, right in the heart of winter. They could hardly get food to eat; and many and many a time, if it had not been for the thought that they were engaged in a good cause, and that God was on their side, they must have been discouraged, and given up all as lost. But they did not give up. They stood firm at their post, until they either fell before their enemies, or perished by fatigue and exposure.

[93]

When the tidings came to the neighborhood where Mike Marble lived, that Washington's noble band were suffering every thing but death at Valley Forge, every man and woman, that could boast of any thing in the shape of a heart, were moved with pity. And they were not the people to let their kind feelings go off in fog and smoke. They were not blustering people. They believed in *acting*, as well as in *talking*. When they had heard the sad news, the next question was, "Can we do any thing?" That question was soon answered. The next was, "*What* can we do?" Well, it was pretty soon found out that all could do something—that some could do one thing, and some another; but that every family in the parish could do something.

[94]

[95]

So they went to work. The mothers and daughters went to knitting stockings, and making under garments for the soldiers. Every chest of drawers, and wardrobe, and closet in the house was ransacked, to find bed-quilts and blankets for the army. And the fathers and sons, they went to work, with a right good will, to get shoes, and hats, and coats, and other articles of wearing apparel, so as to have them ready at the time the agent from the commander-in-chief should pass through the place.

[96]

The younger branches of the families in that neighborhood, too, caught the spirit of their fathers and mothers. I must tell you a story about the agency of the little folks in furnishing supplies for the army.

Mike Marble asked his father, one day, if he might call a meeting of the boys and girls at his house, to talk over war matters. The old man laughed, and said he might, if he chose. "But what do you children expect to do for the army, Mike?" he added. "What can you do, I should like to know?"

[97]

"I don't know, father," was the reply, "but I guess we can all do something; I'm pretty sure I can, for one."

Well, the meeting was called. The schoolmaster gave out notice, one afternoon, that all the boys and girls were invited to Mr. Marcus Marble's house, the next Wednesday, at "early candlelight," and, to quote the precise language of Mike's invitation—for he had it all written out, and the schoolmaster read it word for word—that business of importance would be brought before the meeting, which would be made known at that time.

[98]

When the hour of "early candlelight" arrived, and, indeed, before the hour of late daylight had closed, there was a crowd of boys and girls assembled in Mr. Marble's kitchen, to talk over matters and things about the war. They appointed a chairman, (if chairman he could be called, who had numbered less than a dozen summers,) the object of the meeting was stated, and they went as orderly to work in their deliberations, as if they had been playing statesmen for half a century. Only one grown person—Mr. Marble—was admitted into the kitchen, and he was there only as a listener. He did not take any part in the proceedings.

[99]

My grandfather was the chairman of the evening, and the principal orator was Mike Marble. His speech at the time was not reported, nor have I any notes of it at hand. But my grandfather used to say it was one of the most eloquent addresses he ever heard in his life. I can easily believe it. One half of what is necessary in an orator is *to feel* what he says. If he feels, it is not so much, matter in what shape the words come from his mouth. I am a firm believer in a good style. People who speak in public ought to use chaste and elegant language. But a good style, and ever so good a delivery, are worth but little, unless the speaker has a soul, and unless he can make his hearers feel because he feels.

[100]

Mike was in earnest. It looked a little like boy's play, to be sure, to see that group of children there, talking about great principles. But it was something more than play. Mike was in earnest, and his words, as he was describing the sufferings of the army at Valley Forge, came warm and flowing from his heart. If the character of a speech can be judged of from the effect it has, certainly the one from Mike Marble deserves a high rank; for he carried all the boys and girls along with him. Other speeches were made; but Mike was the Webster of the evening.

[101]

Well, what do you think that little band of patriots resolved to do? I doubt whether you can guess. The first thing they did was to find out how much cash each one had laid aside, to be used for spending money on such occasions as Thanksgiving, and Christmas, and Training day.

[102]

"For my part," said Mike, "I would rather never spend another cent for sugar plums in my life, than to have the soldiers go barefoot on the snow. I tell you what it is, fellow-countrymen—(Mr. Marble was observed by the chairman to bite his lips, to keep in a good round laugh, when those words, *fellow-countrymen*, came out)—I tell you what it is, the things that are wanted now are boots, and shoes, and stockings, and jackets—and not gingerbread, and sugar plums, and spruce beer, and gimcracks of that kind."

[103]

When the little patriots came to count up their money, they found it amounted to more than ten dollars. And it was none of your paltry continental stuff. It was all made up of good hard silver and copper.

The next thing they did was to appoint a treasurer, to take charge of the money, and to see that it was paid over to Washington's agent, who was to be instructed to pay it all out in shoes. And

[104]

that was not all these young statesmen did. They resolved that they would give to the army every cent of all the spending money they might get, as long as the war lasted. Didn't they do their work pretty well, my little lad? I think they did. They did what they could. La Fayette and Washington did no more. You will smile when I tell you one thing which was proposed that evening. One of the boys thought it would be a good plan to turn over to the poor soldiers all the stockings and shoes belonging to the assembly. He thought they could get along better walking on the snow with their bare feet, than the troops could. But some one, with a little more forethought than this generous-hearted speaker, suggested that the soldiers at Valley Forge would find it difficult to get on such stockings and shoes as the Blue Hill boys had to bestow. So that scheme failed. But it shows what stuff those lads were made of. It shows what kind, generous, noble, self-denying hearts beat in their bosoms.

[105]

I declare to you I am more than ever proud of my native land, when I think what our ancestors did, in old times, to obtain our freedom for us. God grant that we may know how to value our blessings, that we may ever be thankful for them, and that we may not abuse the liberty that has been given to us. I do not want my young readers to grow up, with their hearts full of the spirit of war. I love peace more than war. War I know to be a terrible thing. Seldom, very seldom would I go to war—never, unless for some great principle, such as that for which our forefathers contended. No, I do not wish to have you get your heads and hearts full of the war spirit. But I do want you to be patriots. I want you to love your country; to be willing to make sacrifices for it; to look upon it as the brightest and dearest spot on earth. Our liberty cost a great deal—a great deal of money, of hardship, of suffering, and, what is more valuable than all, a great deal of blood. It cost too much to be lightly valued—too much to be trifled with. Take care that you never get into the habit which some, who are much older than you, have fallen into, of looking upon the union of these states as a matter, after all has been said and done, of not much consequence. I tell you the bonds which bind us together is a sacred one; and, next to the tie which binds us together in families, ought to be, to you and to me, the dearest tie on earth.

[106]

[107]

[108]

CHAP. VIII.

[109]

ToC

THE BUMBLE-BEES' NEST.

All the boys and girls who live in the country, and probably a large share of those who live in the city, know the bumble-bee. We had a little different name for him in our neighborhood. *Bumble-bee* was, however, the only name the family was known by, in Willow Lane, and I think it quite possible that such a corruption, (if it is a corruption, and the wise ones tell us it is, though I should like to see them beat the notion into the head of any one of the hundred children who went to our school,) is very common in New England.

[110]

The nests of these insects, you may not be aware, are made in the ground. These nests are frequently found in meadows, about the time the grass is mowed; and it not unfrequently happens that the mower disturbs one of these nests with his scythe, in which case, the first information the poor man obtains of the existence of the nest is from a score or two of the bumble-bees themselves—(we'll call them *bumble-bees*, for the sake of peace, though I must confess I feel a great partiality for the name by which I knew the rogues when I used to be familiar with their nests)—the bumble-bees themselves, who fly into his face, before he has time to retreat, and sting him until they get tired of the sport.

[111]

In these nests, there is usually more or less honey. Sometimes there is half a pint, or more. This honey is very palatable; and it is not an uncommon thing for children to brave the danger of being stung by the bees, for the sake of capturing a nest and getting possession of its treasures. For myself, I never was ambitious of getting renown by such means as besieging a bumble-bee's nest.

[112]

I'll tell you what I did perform, though, once on a time, which was closely connected with the race of insects I am speaking of. It is a common tradition among country boys, that white-faced bumble-bees never sting, and that you can take them in your hands with perfect safety. This tradition may have truth at the bottom of it, or it may not. I cannot tell, and I shall not stop to debate the question now. It is certain that there is an insect, very much resembling the bumble-bee, and of about the same size, who, nevertheless, is a very different fellow. This is the chap that bores holes into dry wood, as nicely as you can bore with a gimlet, on which account he is sometimes called the borer. This insect does not sting. No thanks to him, though, for not stinging. He has no instrument to sting with. For aught I know, he may have ever so good a *will* to sting; but he has no *power* to do so, any more than a grasshopper or a butterfly.

[113]

[114]

Well, I wanted to show some of the boys, one day, how smart I was. I had an idea that I could teach them something, and at the same time get the credit for a little bit of bravery.

"Do you see that saucy chap there," I asked, "on that clover blossom?"

"Yes," said one of the boys, "it is a bumble-bee." This time I must be permitted to say the spelling of the word, because the boys in pronouncing it, give the sound of the *b*, and I, as a historian, must report their conversation faithfully. [115]

"Well." I said, "what will you give me, if I'll take this fellow in my hand."

It was intimated that nothing could be expected from the boys, but that the bumble-bee would be likely to give me something which I would remember, until "the cows came home." I don't know what period in the future that intended to point to, but I know that was a common expression among us all—one which we used, I suppose, without stopping to think what it meant, or how it got into use. [116]

"I dare do it," I said. I was as bold as a lion.

"You had better not," said the boys.

I did it, though. I caught the bumble-bee, and held him fast in my hand. But if ever a poor fellow got handsomely and foolishly stung, I was that unfortunate youth; and the worst of it was, that while I was dancing about, and wringing my hand, and crying, on account of the pain, my companions were doing quite another thing: they were holding a laughing concert, at my expense. [117]

It is hardly necessary to add, that my white-faced bumble-bee turned out to be an enemy in disguise. After that event, I made a closer examination of the faces of this class of insects, and became satisfied that there was one tribe of bumble-bees who wore a face of a pale yellow color, resembling somewhat the genuine borer, but who, for all that, could sting as well as any of their race with black faces.

This feat was as near as I ever got toward the glory of capturing a nest of bumble-bees. I have tasted the honey which came from their nests, though, many a time, and I have seen other boys capture the nests. [118]

Billy Bolton was a great fellow at that kind of sport. Billy lived with Uncle Mike. He did *chores*—to use a word common enough in New England, though, possibly, not an elegant one—on Mr. Marble's farm; that is, he went for the cows and drove them to pasture, fed the pigs and poultry, brought water and chips for the "women folks," and ran of errands.

It was a favorite sport with Billy, in the summer time, to hunt for bumble-bees' nests, and to "take them up," as the process of capturing them was called. Uncle Mike did not like to indulge the boy in this kind of sport. Perhaps he thought it a cruel and unfeeling kind of fun; and I know he had too kind a heart, to see a boy growing up in his family with a taste for cruelty to animals of any kind. At any rate, the danger connected with the sport was enough to condemn it in the mind of Mr. Marble. [119]

He had forbidden Billy and his own children having any thing to do with the sport. Still, it seemed Billy found means to amuse himself, now and then, in a sly way, by taking up a bumble-bees' nest. [120]

One day, Mr. Marble and his men were engaged in the meadow, raking hay and carting it into the barn. Billy was in the meadow, too, at work among the hay, raking after the cart, I presume, as that used to be the task always allotted to me when I was of his age. In a corner of the lot, at some distance from the place where Mr. Marble and his men were at work, there was a large bottle containing water—nothing but water, reader; there was no rum drank on Mr. Marble's farm. Billy was sent after the bottle. He was gone a good while—longer, Mr. Marble thought, than was necessary. The matter was examined, when it turned out that Billy had got into trouble with a nest of bumble-bees. He had discovered a nest of these wretches, it appears; and, the temptation to wage war against them being very strong, he had stopped a moment, just to take up the nest. [121]

Poor fellow! It proved to be a *taking in*, instead of a *taking up*, and the taking in was on the other side. When he saw that the bumble-bees had outwitted him, he snatched up the bottle, which he had thrown down, and which was lying near, and ran, as fast as his legs would let him, towards the place where the men were at work. But the bees flew faster than he could run. It was a comic scene enough to see the fellow running at the top of his speed, and some fifty bumble-bees after him, once in a while giving expression to their feelings, by saluting him, in their peculiar way, in the face and on the neck. Didn't the poor fellow scream? [122]

[123]



PAYING FOR MISCHIEF.

ToList

But this was not the whole of the joke. Indeed, it was hardly the richest part of it. Mr. Marble, who saw what was going on, stood ready with his cart whip; and when Billy made his appearance, with a regiment of bumble-bees about his ears, he commenced beating him with the whip. Away ran the boy, and Mr. Marble chased him some half a dozen rods, and gave him about as many blows with the cart whip. [125]

"There, you young rogue!" said Mr. Marble, as he turned to go back to his work again, "between me and the bumble-bees, I guess you have learned one good lesson thoroughly this afternoon. You will be a wiser boy, I think, after this. You will be a *smarter* one, I'm sure; at least, for a while." [126]

[127]

CHAP. IX.

ToC

HOW A BARN WAS BUILT.

Mike Marble, as I think I have said before, was a kind-hearted man. But he had his own way of doing every thing, and that way was very generally quite unlike most other people's way. No man ever liked better to do any body a good turn. But he had his crotchets about an act of charity, as well as about every thing else.

A neighbor went to him once, to ask him for some money to aid him in building a barn. The old one had burned down, and it was a great loss to him, he said. He hardly knew how he should get along, unless his neighbor loaned him a little money. [128]

But Uncle Mike refused the neighbor's petition. "Money was scarce, very scarce." That was all the answer the unfortunate man could get from Mike Marble.

"This is strange enough," he mused in his own mind, as he walked away from Mr. Marble's door. "Strange enough! so kind-hearted and generous as he always has been, when any body was in distress." [129]

The next day, however, bright and early, Uncle Mike yoked up his oxen, (some three pairs, I believe, including the *steers*, which needed something more than *moral suasion* to keep them straight,) fastened them to the cart, and posted off, with two or three men, to the saw mill. There he and his men loaded the cart with boards and planks. Then he drove straight to the house of the unfortunate neighbor, opened the great gate, without saying a word to any member of the family, went into the door yard with his load, and threw it off within a few yards of the spot [130]

where the old barn stood.

"What on earth does all that mean?" thought the female portion of the family. The farmer and his boys were not at home at the time. Nothing was said, however.

Again Uncle Mike drove over to the mill; again he put on a load of timber; again he threw it off near the site of the old barn. Three loads were discharged there, and then he directed his men to go home with the team. He himself went to one of his neighbors, and asked him if he had any timber of any kind already sawed at Squire Murdock's mill. [131]

"Yes," was the answer, "a little; why?"

"Well, I want some of it, if it's the right kind. What is it?"

"I don't recollect exactly—some white oak joists, I guess, and some inch boards."

"Good. Just what I want."

Suffice it to say, that Mike Marble did not leave his neighbor before he got a promise from him that he would contribute a load or two of his timber to rebuild that barn. Then he went to another neighbor, and another, and did something like the same errand, with very much the same sort of success. He called on a *boss* carpenter, too, and secured his services in framing the barn; and, on his way home, he stopped at Slocum's blacksmith's shop, and got the promise of some nails. [132]

Well, it was not long before the neighbors were all called together to raise Deacon Metcalf's barn, and it was not long after that before the building was ready for use. And how much do you think it cost him? Not a cent—not a single cent, the neighbors managed the thing so well. Even the good things on the supper table, when they had their "raising bee," were sent in by the neighbors. [133]

And the whole scheme, you see, came from the crotchety brain of our friend, Mike Marble. That was his way of building a neighbor's barn, when any help was needed for that purpose.

CHAP. X.

ANOTHER BLOCK OF MARBLE.

This story about the building of the deacon's barn brings to my mind another, pretty closely related to it. Will you hear that, too?

One morning, as Uncle Mike was walking out, he saw a boy sitting down on the door steps of one of his neighbors. Upon a closer inspection of the lad it appeared that he was a poor boy, without any parents, who was wandering about, doing odd jobs, here and there, and getting what people had a mind to pay him for his services.

[134]

[ToC](#)

[135]



MIKE MARBLE AND THE BEGGAR.

ToList

He was not a common vagrant, exactly, and yet he came very near being one. It was not supposed that he was a vicious boy; still it could not be denied that the life he led was tolerably well calculated to make him vicious, and most of the neighbors were afraid to have him about their houses, without keeping a sharp look out on his movements.

[137]

Mr. Marble had heard of the lad, though it so happened that he had never met him until this time.

[138]

"Hallo, there, my boy!" said Uncle Mike, "what are you so busy about?"

"Eating a cold johnny-cake, sir," was the laconic answer.

"And how do you like it?"

"Pretty well, though I guess a little butter wouldn't hurt it."

"Look here, my lad," said Uncle Mike, "what do you do generally for a living?"

"A little of every thing."

"Are you willing to work?"

"Yes, sir, if I can get any thing for it."

[139]

"Will you work for me?"

"I wouldn't mind trying it."

"I am a hard-working man. Will you work like a dog, if I'll let you try?"

"Please, sir, I'd rather work like a boy."

"Good. You shall go home with me."

And he took the boy home with him. The first thing he set him about was weeding the onion bed. It was hard work, as I know from experience. Oh, how it makes a poor fellow's back ache, to stoop down and weed onions for half a day. You must know that you can't use the hoe more than about a quarter of the time. If you could, the work would be comparatively easy and pleasant. But you can't do that. You must bend right down to the task, as if you really loved the onions, and were nursing them, as a fond mother nurses a pet child.

[140]

"Well, Fred," said the old gentleman, when the dinner horn blew its blast of invitation for the workmen to come in and pay their respects to Mrs. Marble's boiled pork and cabbage, "well, Fred, how do you like weeding onion beds?"

[141]

"Very well, sir," said the boy.

"And would you like to keep at it all the afternoon?"

"I would like to please you, sir. That's what I came here for."

The old man was so much delighted with this answer, that he not only laughed at it all the time

he was at dinner, but he told it all over the neighborhood in less than a week.

"Well, Fred," said he, "I guess you've done enough of that sort of work for one day. I want you to do two or three errands after you have done your dinner."

And he sent the lad to I don't know how many different places, to do all sorts of errands. Among other things he directed him to do, was to go to the store with money, to purchase some little articles for his wife. You see the old man wanted to try the new comer, and see if he was faithful.

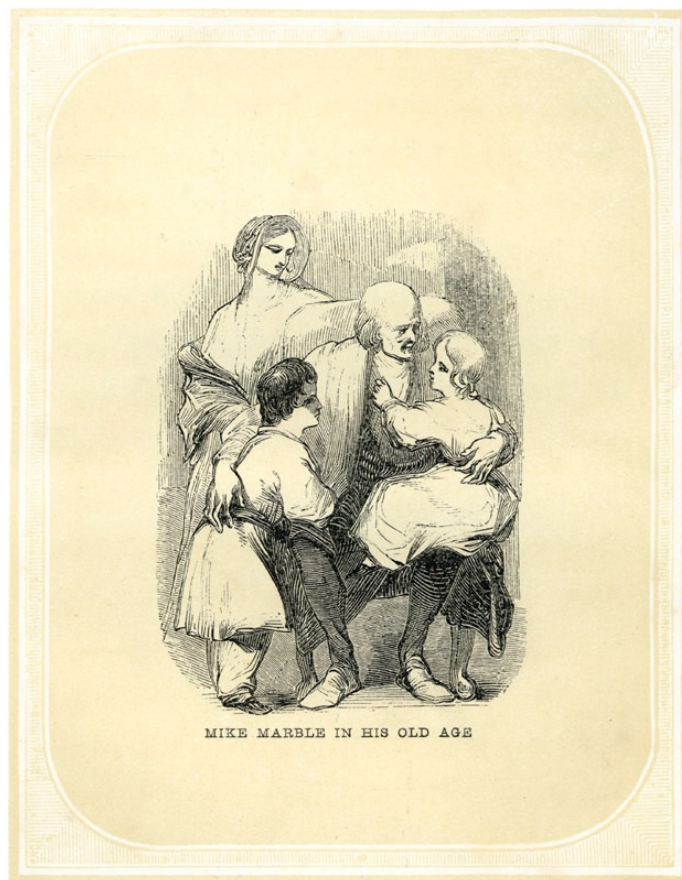
Well, every thing was done properly, and Uncle Mike was satisfied.

The next day, Fred had other tasks given to him. His employer selected those which were hardest and most unpleasant, as he said, "to break the little fellow in." I'll tell you one thing he did. He sent him out to catch the old mare. Now the old mare had a knack of kicking those who came to catch her, when she was not perfectly satisfied with their mode of doing the business; and she did not at all like the sly and timid way in which Fred came up to her, with the bridle concealed behind his back. She was a great lover of fair and open dealing; though, like some others of her race, that I am acquainted with, as well as some who belong to quite a different race, and who have the name of being a good deal wiser, she did not always practice herself the virtues she so highly commended in others.

She waited until the lad had got within a few feet of her, and then she whirled round, before the poor fellow, who was half frightened out of his wits, could have time to get out of her way, and let her heels fly into the air over his head. It was well for the boy that she took her aim so high. If it had been a foot or two lower, the *breaking in* would have been an expensive one to Fred—a very expensive one, indeed.

In such ways as those I have named, and in a great many other ways, which I need not name, Uncle Mike tried the boy, to see what he was made of. He found out, before long, what he was made of. He found out that there was just such stuff in him as he liked. The more he tried him—the more he "broke him in"—the better he was pleased with him.

Well, I'll tell you how that affair with the beggar turned—for I must not make too long a story of it—Uncle Mike brought up the lad. He taught him all the mysteries of farming, and treated him as if he were a member of his own family—one of his own children—until he was twenty-one. Then he told him he was free to go where he chose. He gave him a hundred dollars in money, a yoke of oxen, a fine colt, and, what was of more value than all, his blessing.



MIKE MARBLE IN HIS OLD AGE.

And what do you think became of Fred? He turned out to be not only a good farmer, but a good neighbor, and a good man, every way. That same man, who was once a beggar, and who, but for Uncle Mike's odd way of doing a kind act for him, might have remained a beggar, is now one of the most highly respected men in his parish, with enough property to make him and his family comfortable, as well as some to spare for the comfort of others.

CHAP. XI.

MIKE MARBLE'S LAST DAYS.

I should love to chat about my old friend a good while longer. But perhaps I had better stop, for fear you may get tired of the theme. I must tell you a little about his old age, then I will leave off.

He was one of the happiest old men I ever knew. He was always cheerful. One could never meet him in the street, and look into his pleasant face, without catching something of his cheerfulness. Bad humor is catching, you know, as much as the small pox, or the canker rash, and so is good humor, too. At all events, I remember that once, when I felt ever so much "out of sorts," because things did not go right, I came across Uncle Mike, on my way to school, and a chat of about half a minute completely sweetened my temper.

[151]

There was nothing which Uncle Mike liked better, after his hair—the little hair that time had spared to him—was whitened with age, than to have a group of children about him, coaxing him to tell them stories.

[152]

Dear old man! my heart blesses him now, as my memory recalls the scenes in which he used to take a part. With all his oddities and crotchets, he always had a kind and warm heart beating in his bosom. I don't believe that he ever had an enemy in the world. Every body, it always seemed to me, respected him, and those who knew him most, loved him best.

He possessed an art which is worth more than the finest farm in America. It was the art of being happy himself, and of making others happy. He was never out of humor. Nobody could get him into a passion. I never heard of his having wounded the feelings of a single individual, during all the time that I was acquainted with him.

[153]

Now some people will say, "Oh, it was Mike Marble's way. That was his disposition. He could not help being good-natured. It came natural to him to make friends. It was as easy for him to scatter happiness all around him, as it was to breathe." I don't know about all that. There may have been something—probably there was something—in Mike Marble's natural disposition, which was pleasant and cheerful. But I guess it cost him some effort to live in the sunshine so constantly. There is such a thing, reader—and I hope you will mark these words well—there is such a thing as keeping the heart fresh, and green, and tender, and loving, by one's own effort; and there is such a thing, too, as letting the heart, by neglect and want of culture, become old before its time, and dry, and tough, and crabbed. You can school your affections. Did you know that? I'll tell you how to dry up all the love and kindness you may have. Shut up your heart, as an oyster does its shell. Shut it up, and be selfish. Do so, and you will soon be sick enough of the world, and the world will be sick enough of you. But I would not do that, if I were in your place. I would advise you to try to keep the heart open, by doing all the kind acts you can. But I must end my tale of Mike Marble.

[154]

[155]

Dear old man! He has gone to his rest. His voice long since ceased to be heard on earth. He died as he lived—cheerfully and peacefully. The Saviour, in whom he had trusted, was with him in his dying hour, and I cannot doubt that that good man went to dwell with the angels.

[156]

Reader, may you, like him, live a life of usefulness, and may you take your leave of the world as peacefully, as hopefully, as cheerfully, at

THE END.

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Typographical errors corrected in text:

Page 94: queston replaced with question

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