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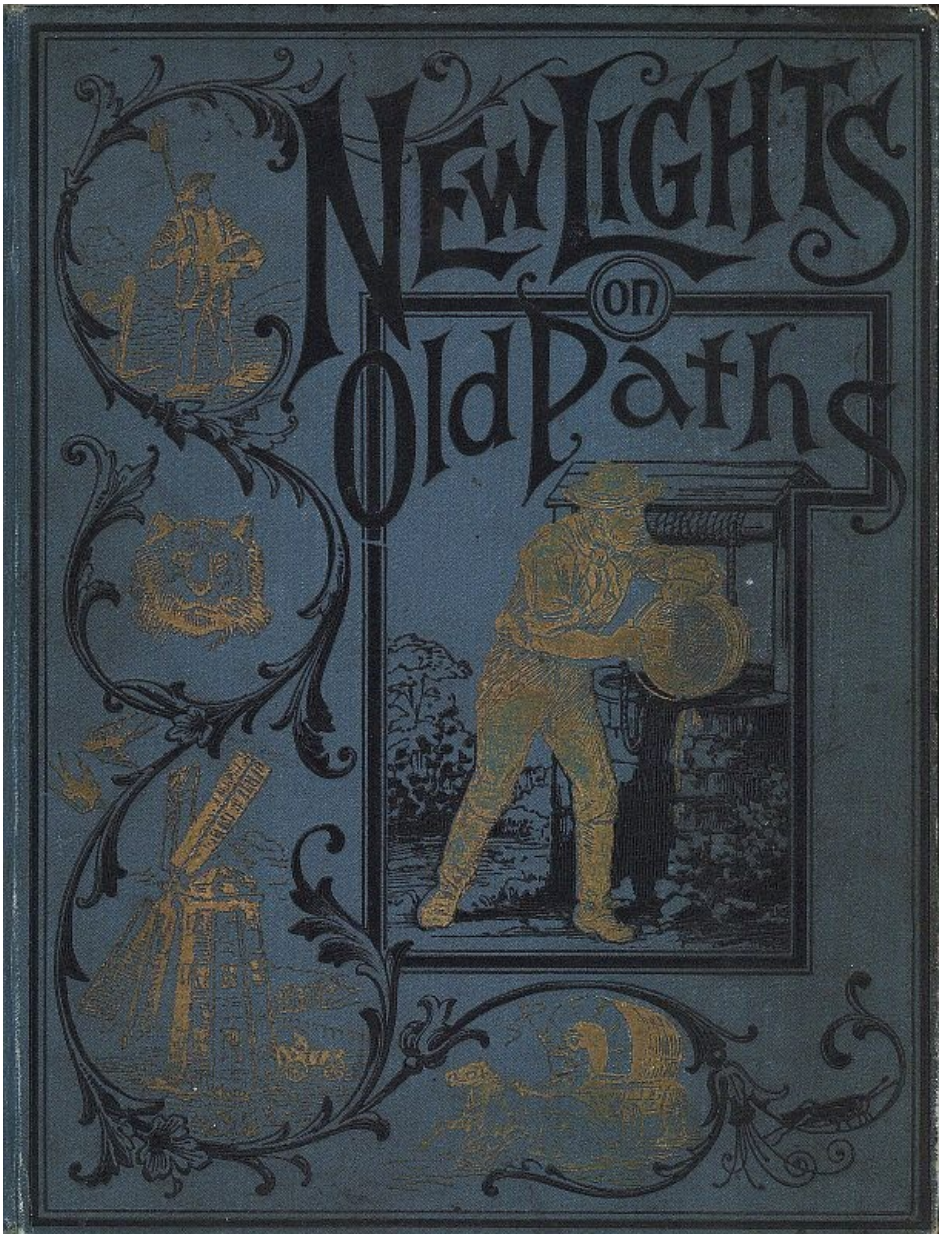

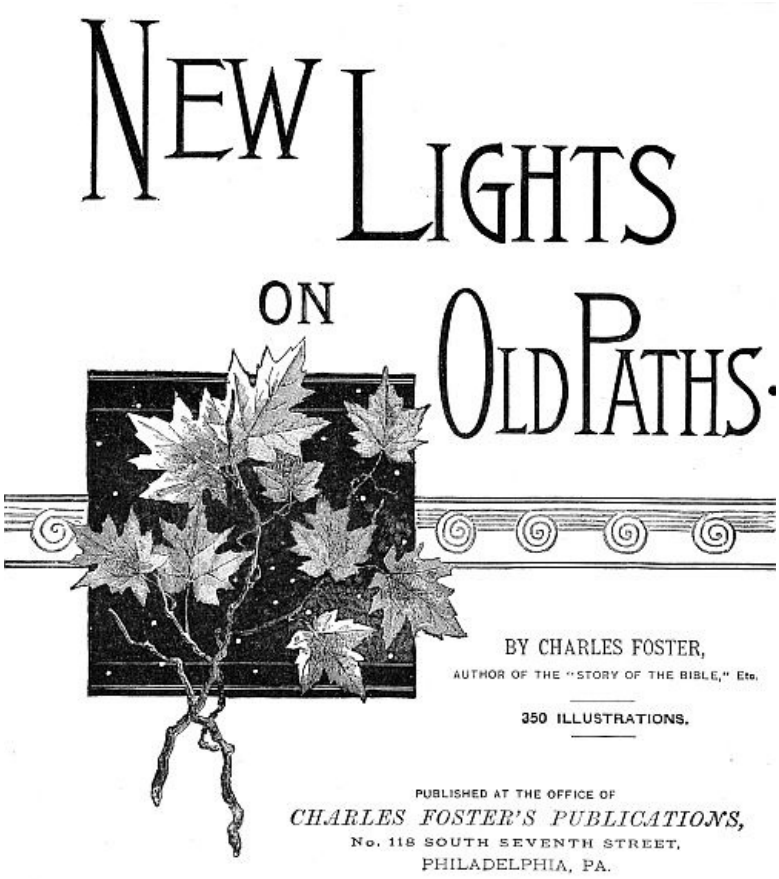

New Lights on Old Paths

BY CHARLES FOSTER,
AUTHOR OF THE "STORY OF THE BIBLE," Etc.

350 ILLUSTRATIONS.

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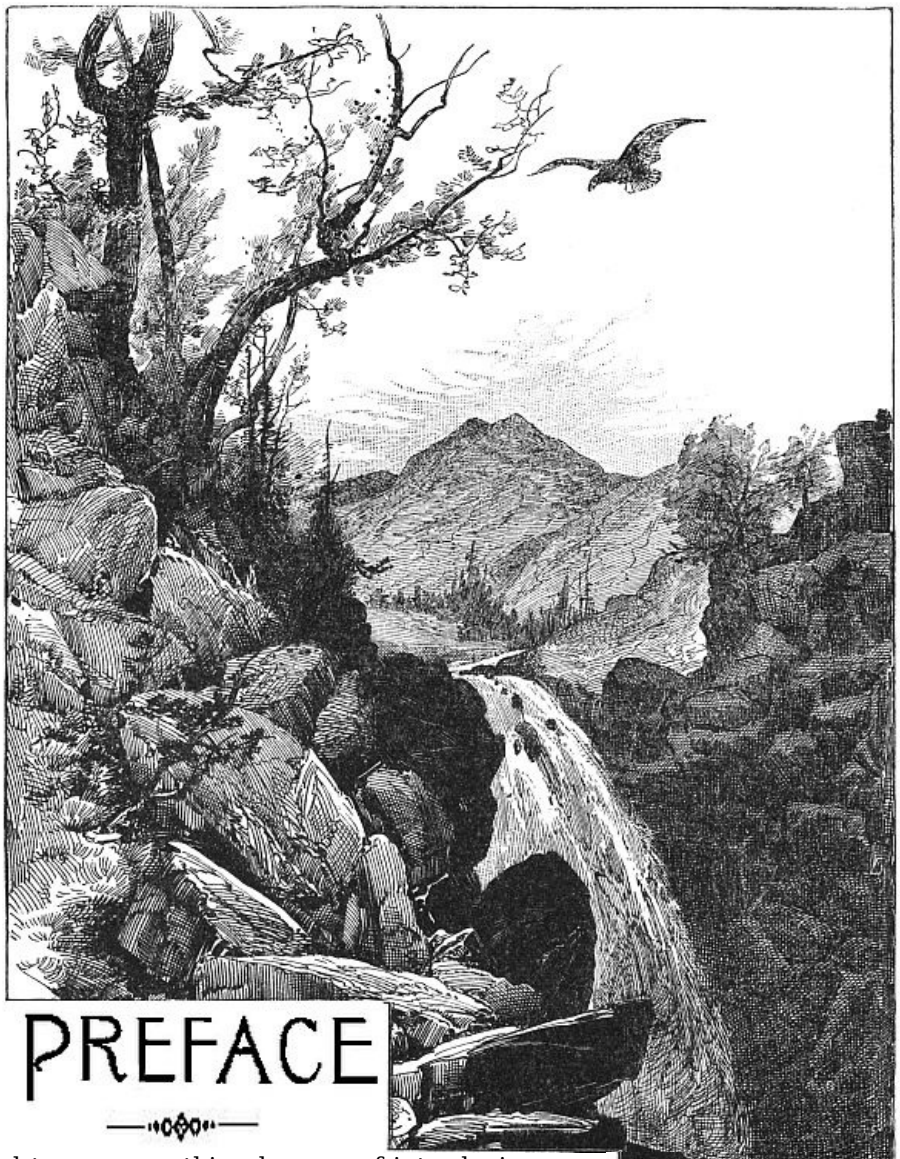

PREFACE

THE author is expected to say something by way of introducing, or apologizing for, his book. What is its object? Why did he write it, when there are already so many more than are wanted? In reply to these questions he would say (what is evident, indeed, without saying) that nobody adds another to the long list who does not believe that—on *his* subject, at least—there is room for one book more. And he proves the sincerity of his belief by making the venture.

The writer of this volume does not claim to present in it a single new truth. In the sphere of morals, of which it treats, he believes there is no such thing. It is not new truths that we need, but the application of old ones to our daily life and practice. Any device that may assist in securing so desirable a result is of value; in the hope that these Fables may not be wholly useless to this end he hazards their publication. As their title indicates, they will be found to vary widely in subject and mode of treatment.

One word about the illustrations: these all, without exception, were drawn for the book. Much time, labor, and expense have been bestowed upon the effort to make them appropriate and entertaining. The illustrations of a story may be compared to the music of a song. We can bear with some defect in the verse if the music awakens the sentiment the verse was intended to express. So the author hopes that the excellence and originality of many of these designs will in some measure make amends for whatever deficiencies the reader may discover in the text.

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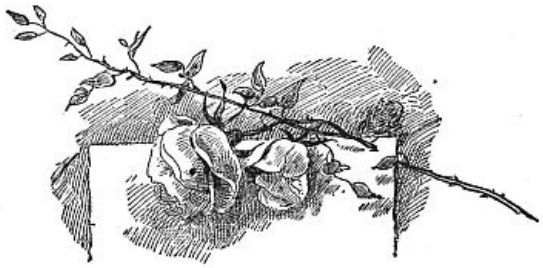

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THE INNKEEPER.

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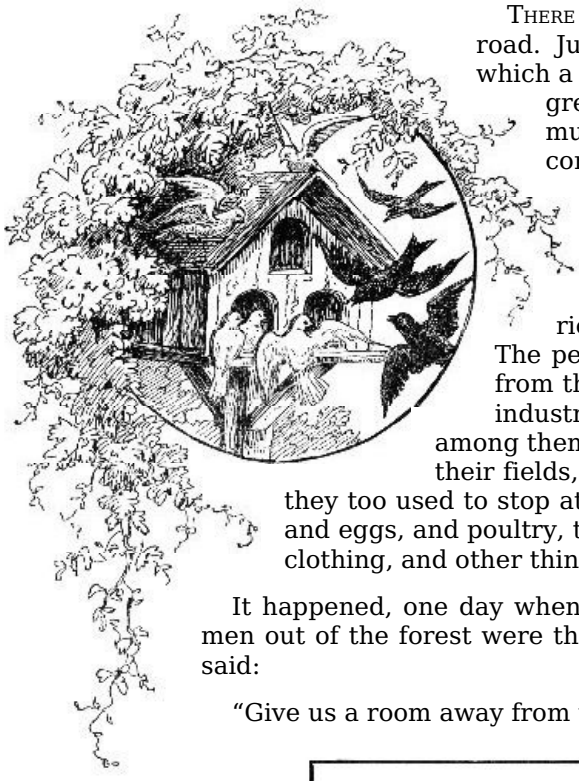

There was once a man who kept an inn on a country road. Just back of his house stretched a dark forest in which a number of bad men lived. Some of these men were great fighters, some were robbers, some had even murdered people. And they were all in the habit of coming to the inn. They were very glad to have some place where they could meet together and talk over the wicked things they had done, and lay plans for more that they wanted to do.

In that same country, but farther off, there was a rich plain which was covered with beautiful farms. The people who lived on these farms were very different from those who lived in the forest. They were honest and industrious; they had ministers and schoolmasters living among them; on every weekday they might be seen working in their fields, and on every Sunday going to their churches. And they too used to stop at the inn as they went to the city to sell the butter, and eggs, and poultry, they had raised, and to buy the tea, and coffee, and clothing, and other things, that they needed.

[14]

It happened, one day when these good men stopped at the inn, that the bad men out of the forest were there. Then the good men went to the landlord, and said:

"Give us a room away from these men where we cannot hear their evil talk."

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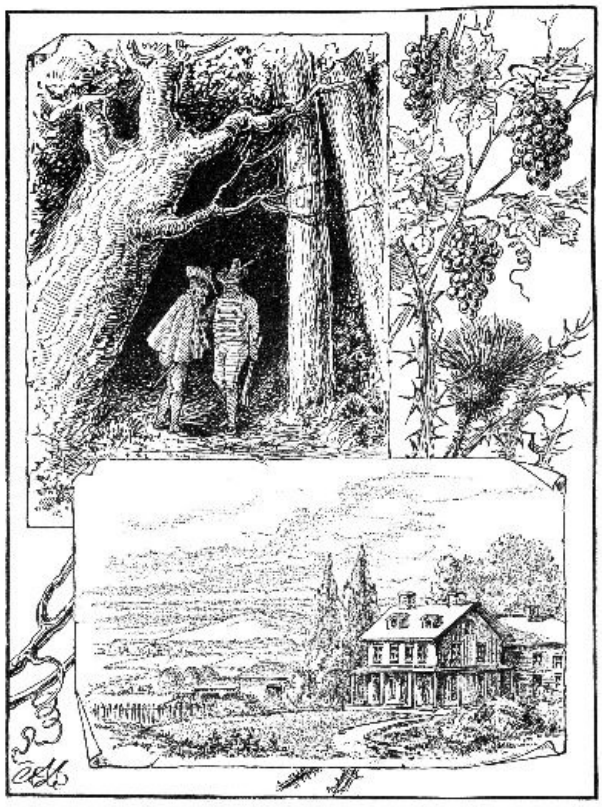

So the landlord put them in his parlor on the opposite side of the house; but though the doors were shut tight, the noise came through, and was so loud that the men in the parlor could hardly hear themselves speak. Then they said to one another:

"What shall we do to get beyond the reach of these horrid sounds? Truly, we can do nothing else but leave the place."

So they went out and harnessed up their horses and drove off.

The next time they stopped at the inn the bad men were there again. Then the farm-people called the landlord, and said to him:

"We want to stay and take dinner here. Bring us therefore to a room much farther away from these men than the parlor where you put us before."

[17]
[18]

So the landlord took them up stairs into the best room on his second floor, and gave them the key of the door, that they might lock themselves in and stay as long as they wanted. But the bad men had seen them going up, and presently they seized the great clubs that they always carried, and hurried up after them.

“Let us in!” they cried.

But without waiting for any answer they broke down the door and rushed at the men who were sitting around the table, until they had to run for their lives.

That night, after everybody had gone to bed and the landlord had locked up the inn, as he sat alone by the fire, he said to himself: [19] [20]

“I must do one thing or the other. I must turn away either the good men or the bad men, for it is plain they cannot both come to my house. Which shall it be?”

After thinking a while longer he said:

“I admit that the people from the forest buy a good deal more out of my bar-room—wine,

brandy, and whiskey—but then they get drunk and break my furniture, and often refuse to pay for what they have had; so that, in truth, I do not make any great profit out of them, after all—not near enough to make up for the bad example they set my children and the bad name they give my house. But the people from the farms, though they do not buy any brandy, or whiskey, buy a good deal more of bread and meat, and they always pay for what they get. By the end of the year I am sure that I make more out of them than I do out of the others. Then they are kind to my family, and they make my house respectable and give it a good name. I am resolved what to do, and which to turn away. These shall stay, and the others shall go; and to-morrow I will tell them."

So, after making up his mind, he went to bed and slept all night.

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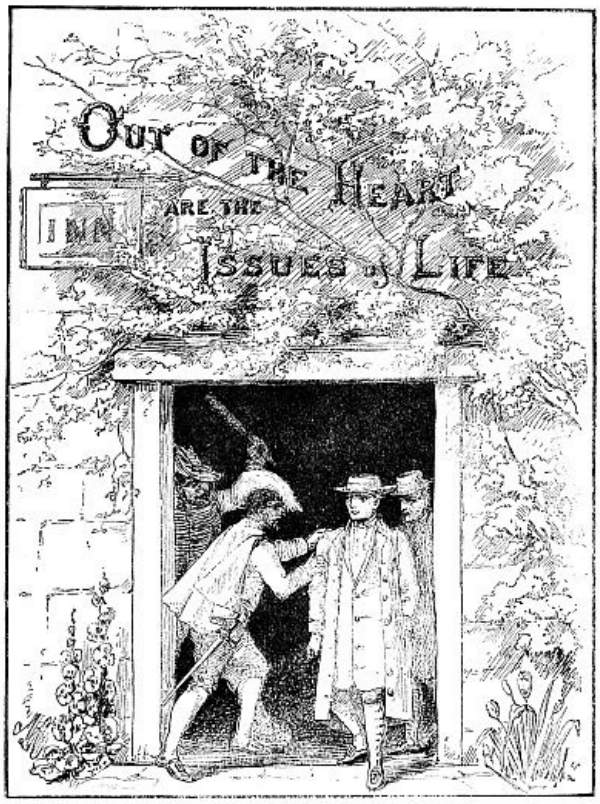
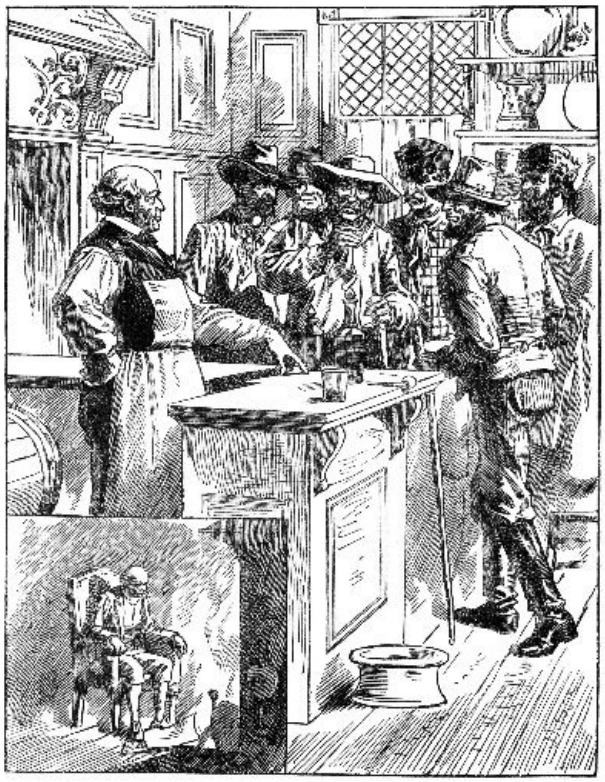


Early the next morning he opened his house. As soon as the door was unlocked in came the men from the forest, and they kept on coming till the bar-room was full. Then, while they were making a great noise, talking very loud, and calling for drink, the landlord rapped on the top of the bar and cried: [22]

"Silence, and listen to me! You men have been coming here and doing as you pleased, until you seem to think the house belongs to you, and that you can turn people out of it whenever you like. But I am the one who has to pay the rent, and I think it is for me to say who shall come and who shall go. And now I say that I want you to go and never come back."

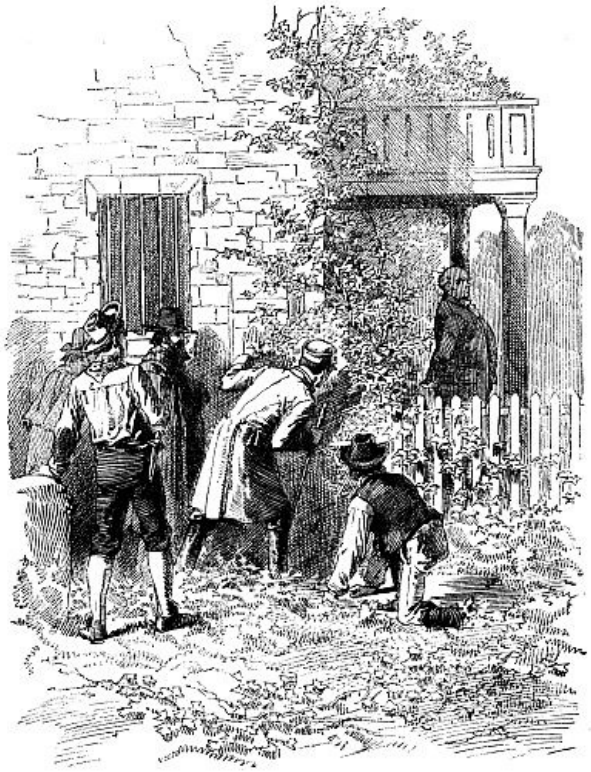
[23]



As soon as the landlord had spoken in this firm way the men out of the forest—who, in spite of their boasting, were great cowards—began to steal off one by one, until they were all gone; at which the landlord was glad, for he thought he had gotten rid of them altogether. But in this he was mistaken, for in a few days they were back again, standing about the doors and watching for a chance to get in. [24]

To keep them out the landlord shut up all but the front door, and tried to keep his eye on that. But so impudent had the men grown that they began to climb into the windows when no one was looking. Then the landlord sent for the blacksmith and had iron bars put across every window. But after he had done this the men even got up on the roof in some way, and came down the chimney like so many sweeps; at which the landlord told his hired man to build a hot fire, and to keep it blazing no matter how much wood it burned.

[25]



But it was not possible to close every door, and window, and chimney, and keep them always shut. There was the side door, that opened into the flower-garden, where sometimes persons wanted to walk; and there was the back door, out of which the cook must go to the woodpile many times every day. Some of the windows opened on beautiful prospects, where the boarders liked to sit and look out. So that, do what he would, the landlord often found places left open. [26]

[27]

And, beside this, the men out of the forest had lately changed their plan. They came now [28] dressed up like the farm-people, and sometimes the landlord could hardly tell one from the other. In short, they were too clever for him; and so, in spite of all he could do, they got in, and every day he would meet some of them sneaking about the house, or hidden in some closet or corner, or under a bed.

While things were in this sad state he was sitting one night before the fire by himself, just as he sat on the night that he made up his mind to order the bad men out of his house. But how differently he felt now from what he felt then! Then he thought he could have everything his own way, but now he had done his utmost, and, instead of getting better, things were getting worse and worse. He was very much discouraged and low-spirited.

Then he began to think of some of the wrong things that he had done himself. He had been too friendly with these bad men, and not as kind as he should have been to some [29] good men that he knew. Especially he remembered how unkindly he had treated one good man. It happened in this way.

When he first came to the inn, after renting it, he found a watchman there. The owner of the inn had sent him to watch it, and keep it safe. When the landlord came, this watchman did not go away, but stayed on. The owner had told him to stay and watch the house; for, although the owner had rented it, the house still belonged to him.

So the watchman stayed and tried to make himself useful to the landlord. But the landlord paid no attention to him; in truth, he often treated him rudely, until one day, when the watchman was warning him against these very men out of the forest, the landlord told him he could take care of his house himself, and that he did not want his help any further.

Since that time the poor man had been staying about the inn wherever he could find a place. Sometimes he slept down in the cellar, sometimes out in the wood-house; and when he got anything to eat, it was always after the servants were done, and only such food as was left from their table. And now the landlord remembered all this. While he sat thinking about it before the fire, there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said the landlord; and the door opened, and in walked this same watchman. He did [30] not say a word, but stood still, looking right at the landlord.

"Watchman," said the landlord, "I have treated you very unkindly, and I am sorry for it. Are you willing to forgive me and be watchman again?"

"I am," said the watchman, "if you will promise to pay attention when I warn you of danger."

"I promise," said the landlord; "I will do anything to get out of the trouble I am in."

"Very well, then," replied the watchman; "it is a bargain between us. But now go to bed and get some rest, for you need it."

So the landlord went to bed, and because his worry of mind had worn him down a good deal he soon fell asleep.

Early the next morning, before any one else was awake, the watchman was up and at work. The first thing he did was to build up the little room, or watch-box, that used to stand in front of the house. It was placed there on purpose for him when the house was first built, but because it had not been taken care of it had long since tumbled down. But now the watchman built it up again, setting in windows all around it, so that as he stood there, he could look out on every side. As soon as he had built up his watch-box he fixed the cord, or bell-rope, that reached from there into the landlord’s chamber.

[31]

And no sooner was this done than, seeing one of the forest-people coming toward the house, he pulled the cord and rang the bell. At this the landlord awoke. He knew what it meant. He did not need any one to tell him, for he used to hear that bell long ago, although he then paid no attention to it. But now he jumped up and dressed quickly, and ran to the door just in time to shut out one of the very worst of the men from the forest. [32]

After that the bell went on ringing every day, and the landlord was kept busy shutting doors and windows. It must be confessed that he got tired of hearing it sometimes; but he was so much happier, he ate so much better and slept so much sounder than he did before, that, even when it put him to a good deal of trouble, he was always careful to obey the bell.

All this time the good farm-people were made welcome at the inn. The door was always wide open to them, and the best of food was put on their table. As they never went into the bar-room to buy anything to drink, and as they disliked very much to see drunkards about, the landlord concluded to take away his bar and make the inn a temperance house. Being pleased at this, the farm-people came oftener and stayed longer than ever before, until the landlord found himself growing rich on the money they paid him. Then he painted his house inside and out, and added some new rooms to it, and made it more comfortable every year. [33] [34]

When the forest-people found that the watchman was always looking out for them, and that the landlord always paid attention to his bell—and when they saw, too, that the company in the house was such as would make them feel ashamed, even if they should get in there—they did not try to get in as often as they used, and so the bell did not ring nearly so often. Then the landlord had time to walk in his garden and to sit down in the shade of his favorite tree, which he had not been able to do for long years before.

And so things went on from year to year. The landlord never ceased to mind the bell, and gradually, as he grew older, it rang more and more seldom, until, during his last sickness, while he was shut up in his chamber, growing weaker and weaker every day, it stopped ringing altogether. And this was not because the watchman (whose name was Conscience) was unwilling to disturb him, but because the forest-people (that is, wicked thoughts and bad desires) did not trouble him any further.

So the old man lay in peace and quietness until he died. Then his son took the inn and carried it on. It is true that the men out of the forest knew as soon as the old man was dead, and thinking that now, as there was a new master, they might perhaps be able to get in, they came and tried again and again. And the son had to fight his own battles with them like his father. But he kept the watchman in his house, and minded the bell; and in the end he gained the victory, as his father had done before him.

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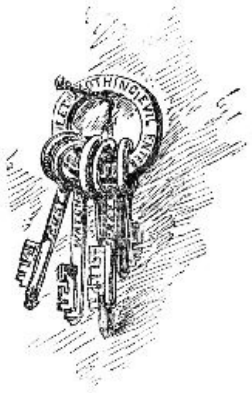


THE BROOK AND THE WATER-WHEEL.

THE water-wheel in a grist-mill went round and round, by day and by night, without stopping. Said the brook one day, as it passed over the wheel:

“Are you not tired of being always at work, and of doing the same thing to-day that you did yesterday? When I have done my work in making you turn, I glide on and take my pleasure in flowing through the fields and the woods.”

“But my pleasure,” replied the wheel, “is in continuing to work, and go round and round, grinding up the corn.”

“Yesterday,” continued the brook, “as I flowed through the meadow, I heard some people who [38] were wandering there say how beautiful I was, and what sweet music I made as I rippled over the stones.”

“And no doubt they said what was true,” replied the wheel, “but it could never be said of me. How would I look rolling through the meadow? I would not be admired by others, nor would I enjoy it myself.”

“You are to be admired for your humility,” said the brook, “in being contented with so dismal a place.”

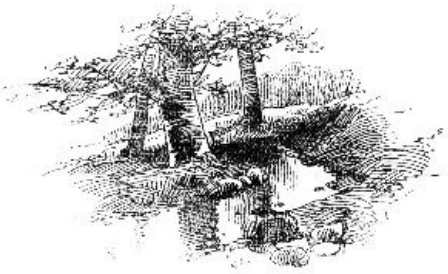
“Not at all,” replied the wheel, “for when this place was given me, I was given also a liking for it.”

“But do you not long for the sunlight and the breeze and a sight of the birds and the flowers?”

“No more than you do for this dim chamber under the mill. Here I was made to dwell, and here I am satisfied to be. I greet you tumbling in from the mountain-side over my head, and I bid you adieu as you flow out joyously under my feet; but I do not long to follow you. The summer’s heat does not parch me here, nor the winter’s frost stop me from turning. Ever in this dim twilight I revolve and listen to the sound of the grinding. I delight to hear the farmer drive his team to the

mill door loaded with grain, and afterward haul it away when I have made it into flour for his wife and children to eat. I am content to stay here and labor—not by constraint nor for duty's sake alone, but because the place accords with my nature, and therefore it is my choice." [39] [40]

We often err in judging the lot of others by our own feelings and preferences, forgetting that, from differences in taste or training, what would be pain to us may be pleasure to them.



THE COURT-HOUSE STEEPLE.

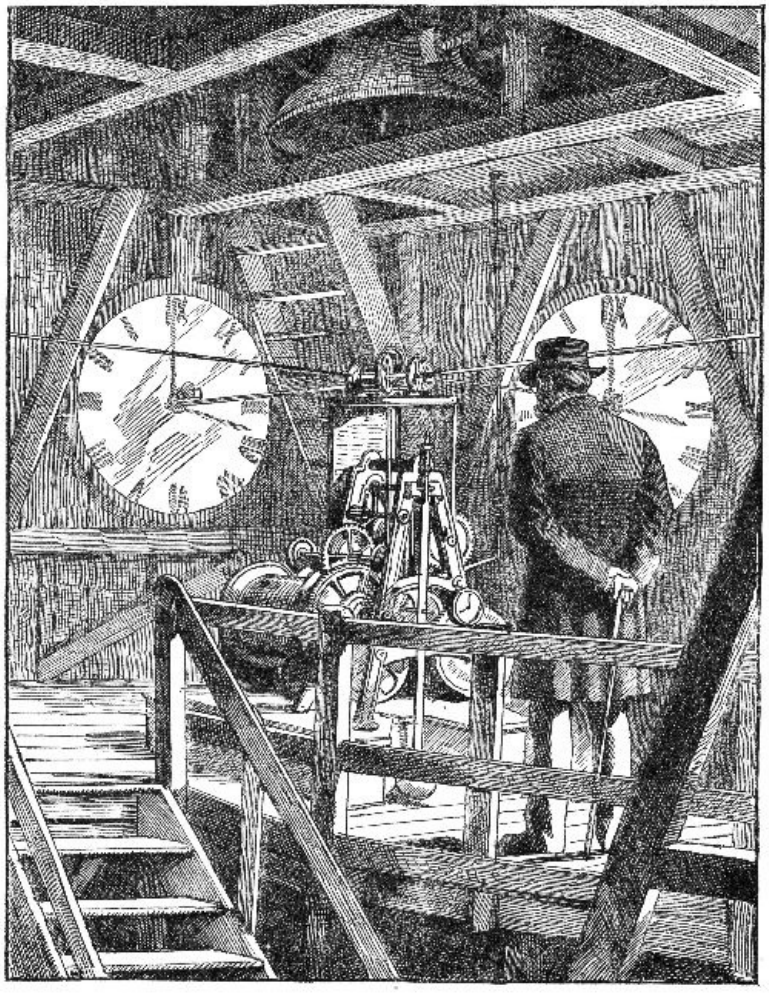
THE steeple on a country court-house was built to hold a clock. But when a year or more had passed after it was finished, and no clock appeared, it began to complain that the promise made to it had not been kept.

“I expected to be of some consequence in the village,” it said, “but with these ugly round holes in my side left boarded up, I am of no more account than if I did not exist.” [42]

The town council, having heard of what it said, met together to talk over the matter, when they had to admit that the complaint was just; so an extra effort was made to raise the money needed, and, this being successful, the clock was ordered, and in due time put in its place.

And now the steeple’s ambition was fully gratified. The clock kept good time and was the standard for the whole village. The farmers went to their work by it, and the children to school; the people also who drove in from the country might be seen, as they passed the court-house, leaning forward, with upturned faces, to get the correct hour.

Week after week passed, and month after month, and still the steeple was gazed at by old and young a hundred times a day. But after a good many months had rolled round, notwithstanding all this attention, it began to be conscious of a change within itself.



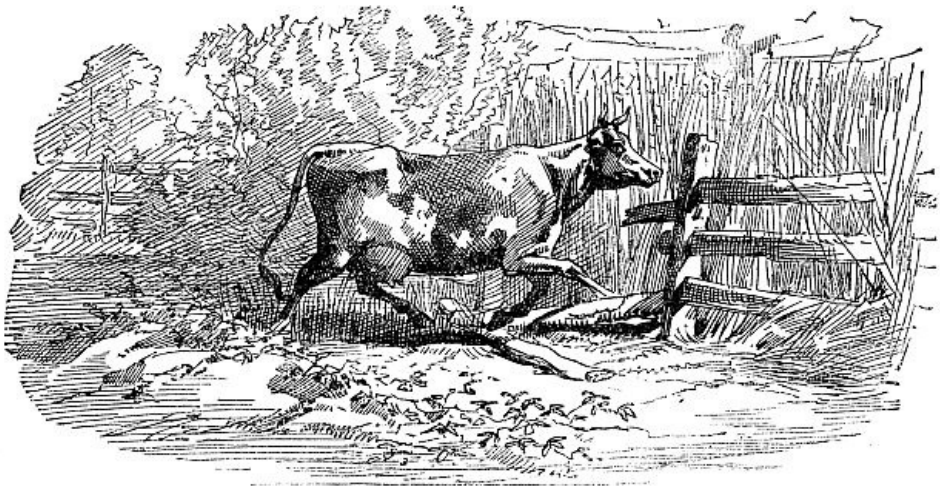
“It is true I have got what I asked for,” it said, “and my proudest wishes have been fulfilled; but, after all, what have I gained by it or how am I any better off? I am just as much exposed to the winter’s cold and the summer’s heat, to the risk of storm and lightning and fire, as ever. And, as for being looked at—which I once thought so much of—I’m tired of it, and could wish myself [43] back to what I was before, instead of being forced to listen to the click of these wheels and the [44] banging of that great iron hammer by night and by day. I believe I’d rather be the empty steeple on the church, across the street.”

At length its complainings reached the ears of one of the council, who, though an old man, climbed up the steeple’s winding stair and listened patiently to what it had to say. When it had finished, he answered:

“My friend, I think I can put my finger on the cause of your discontent. You were very anxious to have the clock, you remember, but perhaps you never recognized the reason, which was only a desire to increase your own importance. You thought that all the watches and all the little clocks in town would be regulated and ruled over by you. Your motive was wholly selfish, and, as a consequence, when you got what you wanted, it failed to satisfy.

“Now, as for taking the clock down again, that is out of the question. It was put here for the benefit of all, and here it must stay. Nevertheless, if you will take an old man’s advice, I think your troubles will soon come to an end. Instead of thinking only of yourself, your own comfort, and your own consequence, think of other people. Remember the good you have the power to do them, and for their sakes be willing to do it. Then you will find that the possessions which yield [45] no satisfaction while hoarded up only for self, impart a real joy when shared with others in the uses of charity.”

[46]



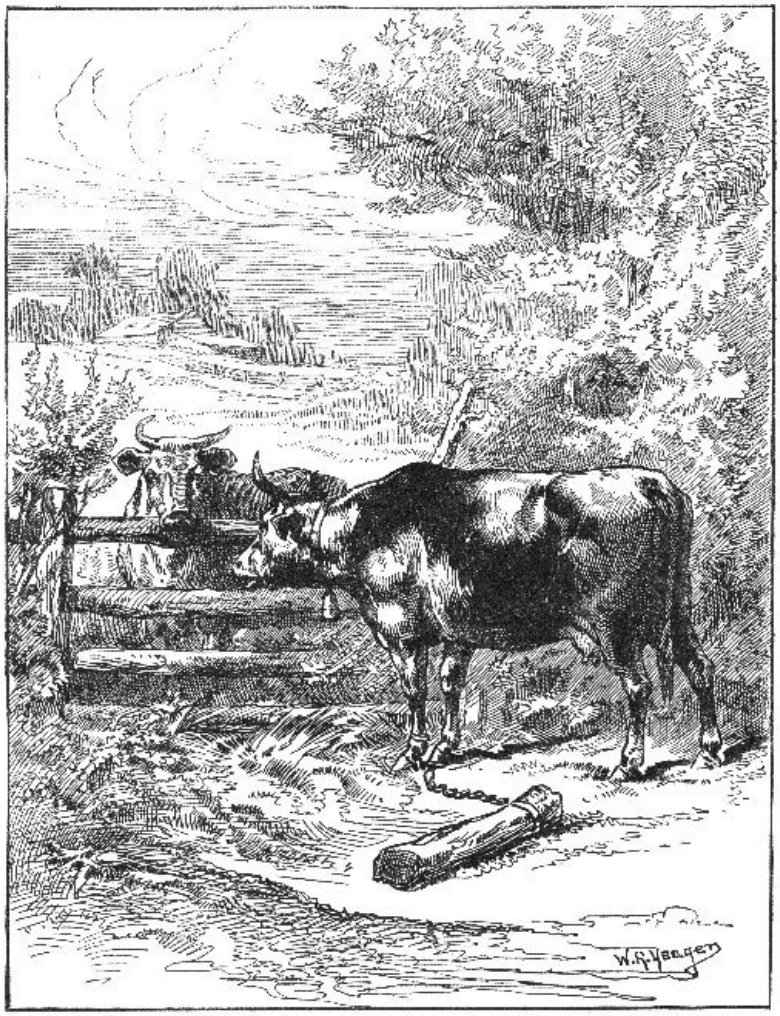
CROOKED HORN AND OLD BRINDLE.

A COW that had a crooked horn learned to open gates and let down bars with it, and, as her master took no pains to keep her at home, she roamed the roads unrestrained. One day, in passing a neighbor's meadow, she saw an old brindled cow inside hobbled by a rope and clog of wood fastened to one leg.

"Who put that on you?" asked Crooked Horn.

"My master," replied Brindle.

[47]



"What for?"

[48]

"To keep me from jumping fences."

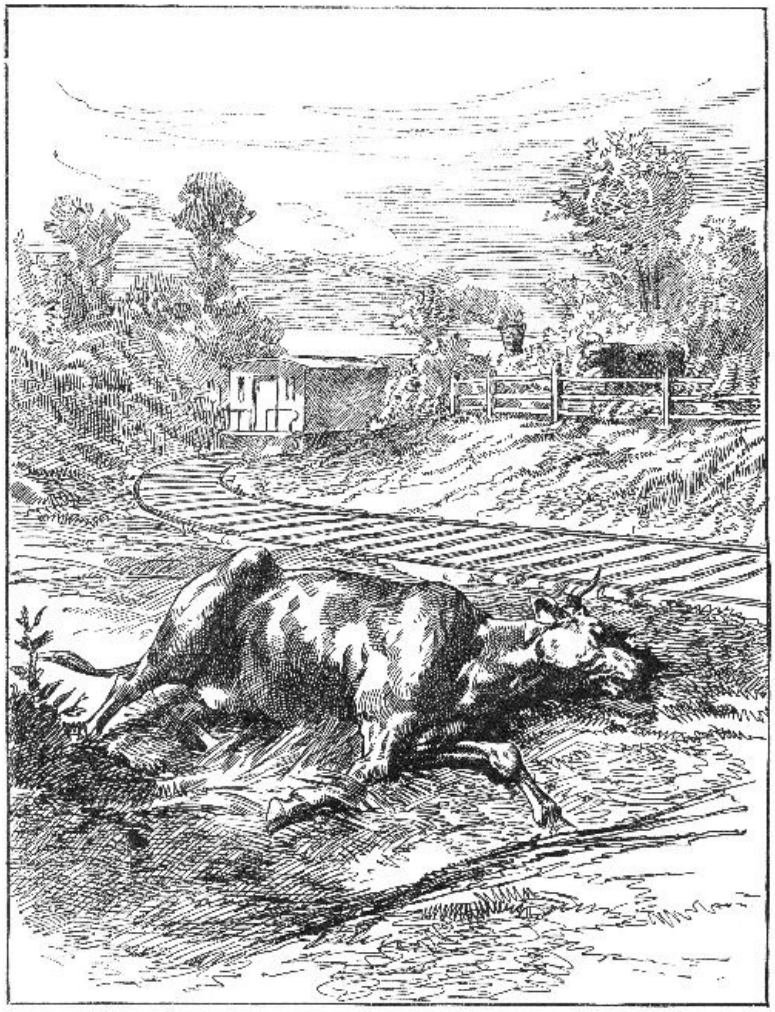
"I'm glad he's not my master. Why don't you leave him and take to the woods?"

"Well, he's kind to me in other ways. He gives me a warm bed, and plenty to eat, in the winter, and beside, I have a notion that I've got myself to blame."

"Nonsense! I'm allowed to jump all the fences I like. Whenever I see a good dinner through the bars, over I go, no matter whom it belongs to."

“I wish I could do so,” said Brindle.

“But you can’t,” cried Crooked Horn. “I’m on my way now into yonder clover-field, over across the railroad.”



Saying which, she kicked up her heels and galloped away. But just as she reached the track an express train dashed past, and old Brindle saw the engine toss her boastful acquaintance into the air as a mad bull tosses a dog. Another moment, and poor Crooked Horn lay in the ditch mangled and dead.

“Oh,” cried Brindle, shuddering and looking down affectionately at the rope and block of wood, “how glad I am now that my master hobbled me!”

If we only knew how much worse ills our troubles save us from, we would often welcome them, instead of trying to free ourselves from them. [49] [50]

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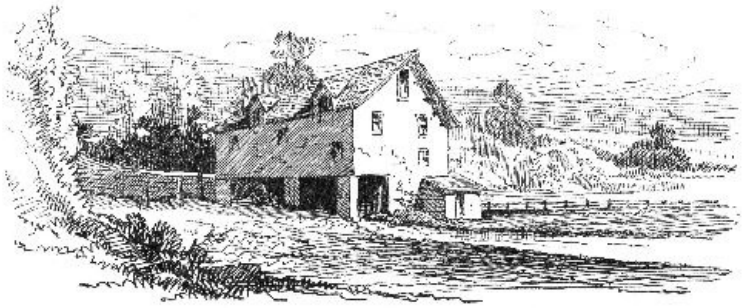
[51]



THE MILLER’S TENTH.

A YOUNG miller who had succeeded to his father’s business, made flour for the people of his native village, and also for the farmers of the country around, receiving for his pay, or toll, one-tenth of the grain that he ground. He measured this out in a round box—called a “toll-dish”—which contained just one-tenth of a bushel.

Among his customers was an old farmer who, having his farm all paid for and well stocked, with some money out at interest beside, was looked upon by his neighbors as a rich man. He used to come about once a fortnight to the mill, bringing four or five bags of wheat to be ground.

One day, after the old man had left, as the miller began pouring his wheat into the hopper, the [52] thought occurred to him that if he should take a little more than a tenth the farmer would never miss it.

“Other millers do it,” said he, “and so might I as well. Beside, I will make it up to him by extra care in grinding his flour.”

So, after he had taken out the tenth that he was entitled to, he filled the toll-dish twice again and emptied the contents into a barrel of his own wheat that stood near.

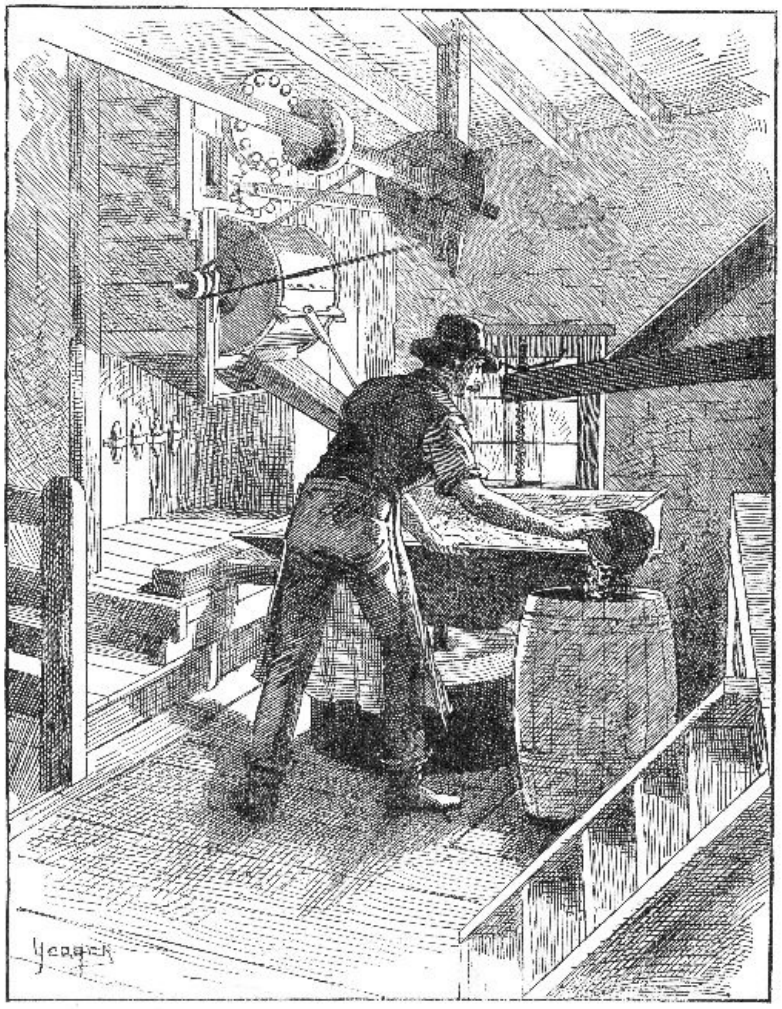
But the miller did not feel altogether satisfied with what he had done. The thought of it disquieted him more than once. Yet he could not quite persuade himself to put the wheat back.

“I think I’m fairly entitled to something more,” he said, “from such a rich man.”

Then a bright thought struck him. There was in the mill some corn that belonged to a widow. She had wheeled it there in a barrow—poor woman!—with her own hands, and left it to be ground into meal.

“I’ll take something less than my full toll from her,” he said, “and so will make matters square by remembering the poor.”

This seemed for a time to overcome his scruples, and, having made a beginning, he gradually increased the extra toll that he took from the rich farmer, but soon discontinued making any [53] allowance on his poor customer’s grist. [54]



But, though the miller had made a correct calculation concerning the farmer—viz., that he would not miss what was unjustly taken from him—he had made a wrong estimate of his own conscience. He found by thus testing it that it was not of the sort to heal while he kept on wounding it afresh, or to accept as true what he knew to be false. It was rather of the kind that we find it so inconvenient to have when we want to do wrong and still be as comfortable as if we were doing right.

The miller was in the habit of going to the village church on a Sunday, where he sat in the pew with his wife and little children, taking part in the service and listening to the minister’s sermon. But now, whenever the eighth commandment was repeated, or so much as alluded to, he grew restless and uneasy and anxious for the service to be over.

On week-days the stage-driver, as he passed the mill door, threw out a newspaper that the miller subscribed for, and it had long been his favorite pastime, as the great water-wheel was revolving and the millstones were grinding, to sit among the bags of grain in his flour-besprinkled clothes and read his paper through and through. But of late he found himself avoiding all [55]
paragraphs headed: “Defalcation,” “Embezzlement,” “Breach of Trust,” “Conscience Fund.” [56]

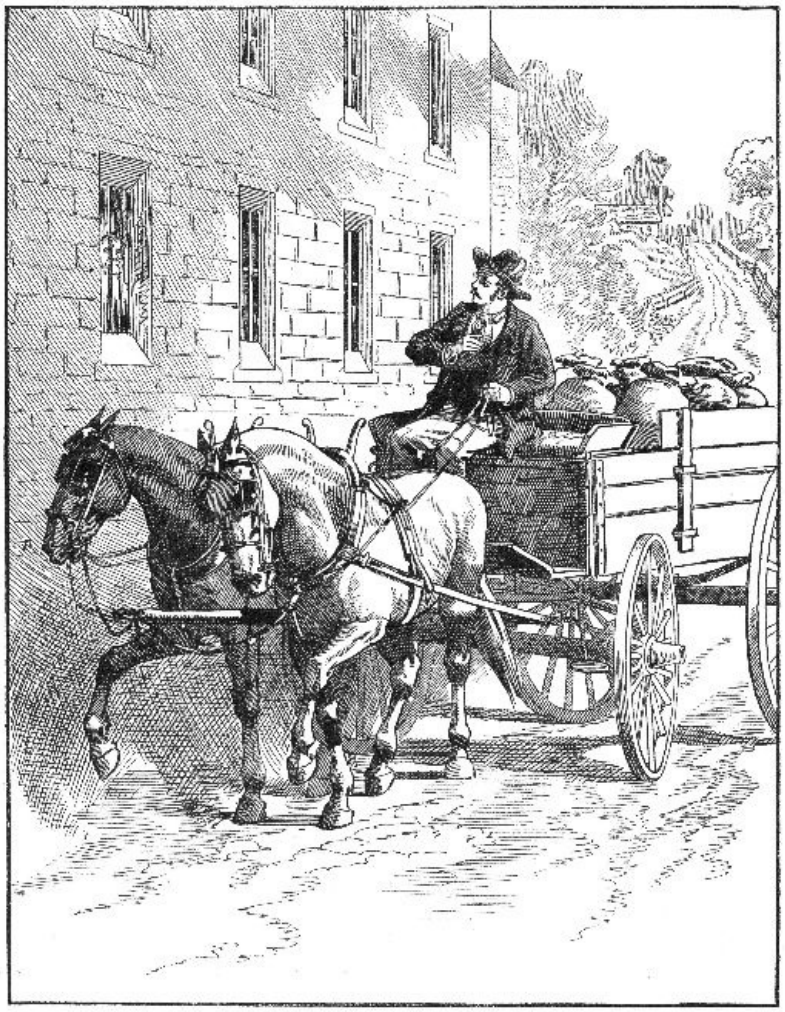
Now and then he stumbled on an account that was published there of some honest debtor who as soon as he was able paid up his back debts, or of some repentant thief who made restitution of the things he had stolen. This was unpleasant reading to the miller.

In the village there lived a man who had done just the reverse of these things, and in consequence bore a bad name. The miller disliked to meet this man. Occasionally he had to go on business to the county-town, and on his way passed the jail. Peering through the bars he often saw the evil countenances of the prisoners.

“What are they in there for, I wonder?” he said to himself. “The truth is I deserve to be there with them.”

And this finding of a rebuke in whatever he came across went on until everything about him seemed to join in a dreadful chorus, accusing him of his crime.

But at last the load on his conscience became too heavy, and he could bear it no longer. But what should he do to get rid of it? To confess his guilt would crush him to the earth. There was but one thing more dreadful, and that was to go on hiding it. But was there no way of escaping an [57]
open confession? Ah! happy thought! This would not be necessary. The farmer was still [58]
confidingly bringing his grain every two weeks to the mill.



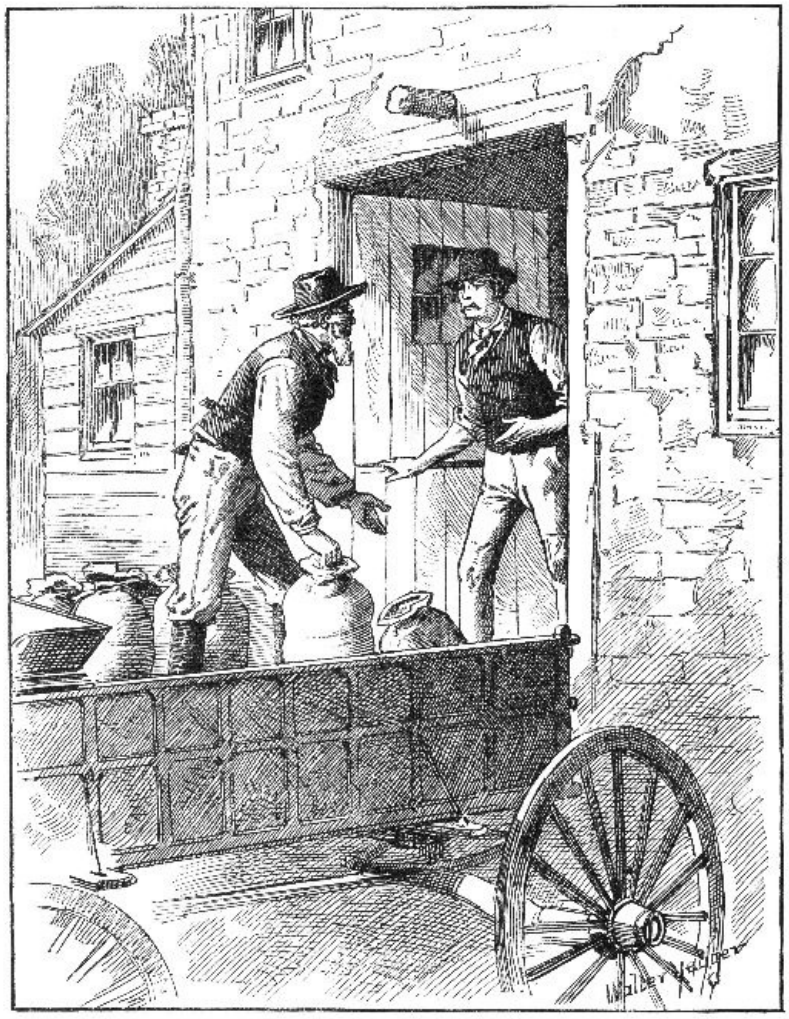
“I will go over my accounts,” said the miller, “and add up to the last pound all I have ever taken from him, and this I will return gradually, from time to time, with his flour, in quantities that will not be noticed; so I shall pay my debt and clear my conscience without being even suspected of wrong.”

Having made this resolve, he longed to put it in practice, and could hardly wait for the next appearance of the farmer’s wagon. In a few days, however, it drove up to the mill door as usual. The miller with a glad heart (which he was careful to conceal) carried the bags it was loaded with into the mill, and bade the farmer a cheerful “Good-bye” as he drove away.

“Now,” he said, “I will take out of this grinding a part of my toll, lest, if I should take none, the difference may be noticed and some inquiry made.”

So he filled the toll-dish three times instead of six, as he was entitled to, and ground up the rest of the wheat.

But while he was thus carrying out, in secret, his plan at the mill, he little suspected how matters stood at the farmhouse. The farmer’s wife, who was a more shrewd observer than himself in such things as came directly under her charge, had noticed for some time past that the returns from the mill seemed short in weight, and at length she confided her suspicions to her husband. [59] [60]



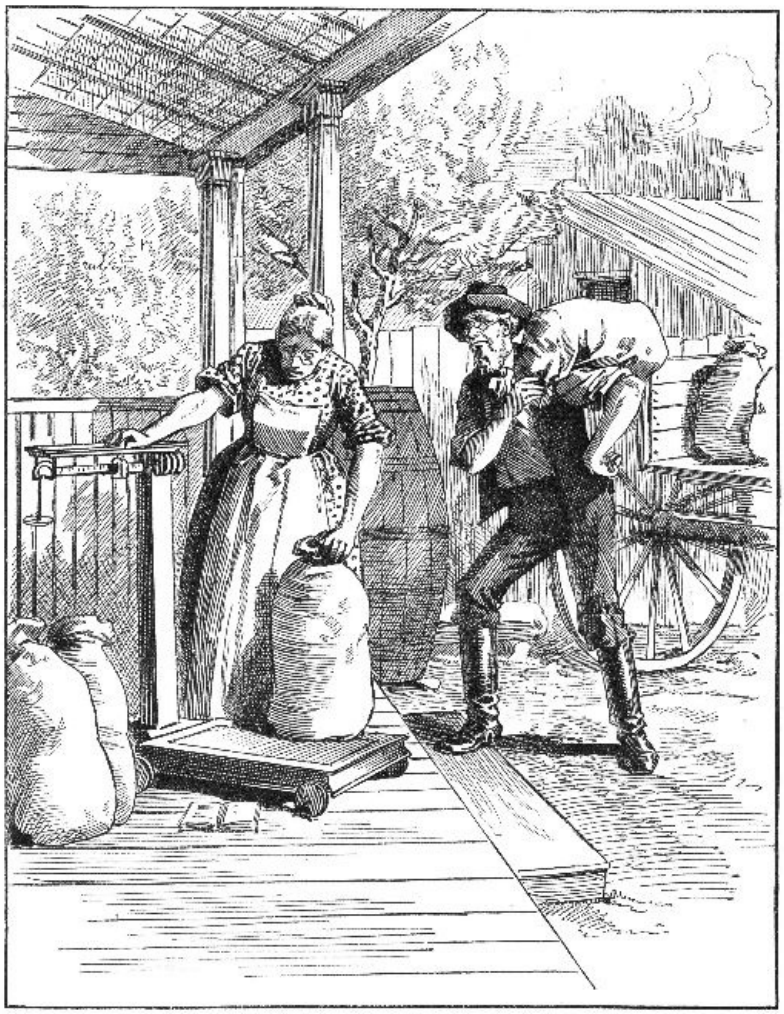
“Nonsense!” said he. “I’ve known the miller all his life, and his father before him: his father had a conscience, and so has he.”

“Well,” replied his wife, “there’s one way of testing it that neither you nor anybody else can object to. I weighed what we last sent him; now we’ll weigh what he sends back to us.”

As the farmer could find no fault with this proposal, he called it a bargain, and the next day went to the mill for the grinding. The miller received him gladly and hastened to carry out his grist to the wagon. As he drove homeward the farmer said to himself:

“How strange that wife should speak so about the flour! But women do sometimes take up such queer notions. I’ll be bound, now, that she will be waiting, when I get home, to have the bags put on the scales as soon as they are unloaded.”

He was not wrong. As he drove through the gate around to the side porch his wife appeared in her great white apron, hardly able to keep quiet until the wagon was backed up, and as the bags were taken out of it they were laid, one by one, on the scales that stood near. [61]
[62]



“How does it come out, wife?” cried the farmer as she set down the pounds contained in the last bag.

But she kept on going over the figures again and again without answering, at which the old man put on his spectacles and hastily footed them up.

“Didn’t I tell you so?” he exclaimed, with a reproachful look for her and a triumphant one for himself. “Why, instead of cheating us, he has cheated himself! What a pity it is for a woman to be suspicious!”

“Don’t brag too soon,” said his wife, piqued at his words; “you’d better put that off till we’ve weighed another grinding.”

The hungry mouths on the farm soon demanded a fresh supply of flour, and before many weeks had passed another load of wheat, after being weighed with extra care, was hauled to the mill. The miller, in the mean time having found some relief to his conscience by the little he had already done, was more eager than ever to carry out his plan and remove his burden altogether.

“It is certain,” he said, “they have not noticed anything unusual in the last grist. I might just as well hurry matters up a little. This time I’ll take out no toll at all, and after this will begin adding some of my own flour.”

Putting off other farmers who had brought their grain before him, the miller ground the old [63] man’s wheat first, out of its turn, and sent him word it was ready. His wife, still smarting under the charge of being unjustly suspicious, hurried him away after it, and waited his return even more anxiously than she had for the former load. It came in due time, and was promptly laid on the scales as the other had been. But if she was surprised before, she was dumb with wonder now, and her husband—who, in truth, thought there was no better woman—seeing her embarrassment, was considerate enough to do no more than join in expressing his astonishment at the unlooked-for result. The flour was quietly put away in the store-room, and other matters requiring attention about the farmhouse were looked after.

That evening, just before bedtime, as they sat together in their old-fashioned comfortable kitchen, the farmer said to his wife:

“I’ve been thinking about that last grist. There must be something the matter with our young miller’s scales, and you know that we don’t want to take without paying for it what belongs to him. I mean to go over to the mill to-morrow on purpose to look into it.”

“That’s exactly what I want you to do,” replied his wife, seriously. “Short of weight more than once I know the grinding was, and over-weight twice we both know it was; the thing keeps [64] worrying my mind, and troubling me.”

The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, the farmer harnessed up his horses and drove to the mill. The miller, who was standing in the door, looked surprised to see him when there was neither wheat to bring nor flour to haul away. And not only surprised: there came a look of apprehension over his face, for there is always a lurking fear of evil in the heart that is conscious of hiding some wrong.

“I don’t believe you can guess what I’ve come over about,” cried the farmer as he got down from the wagon.

The miller said nothing.

“Did you weigh the last grinding?” asked the old man.

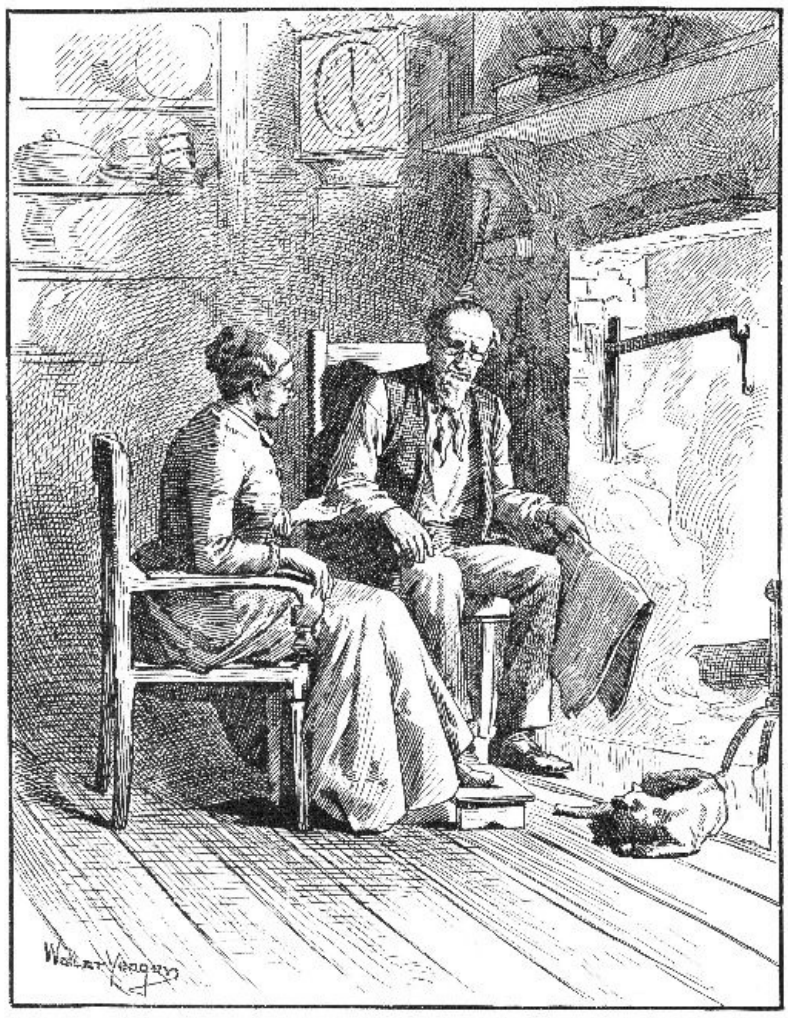
“Yes.”

“And the one before that?”

“Yes.”

“And don’t you know they weighed too much? But perhaps you wanted to make us a present,” he continued, good-humoredly, “or maybe, as winter is coming on, you thought we stood in need.”

The miller’s face grew scarlet. He attempted to speak, but his voice stuck in his throat and he could not utter a word. Perceiving at a glance that he was in trouble, the farmer’s manner changed. [65] [66]



“Tell me all about it,” he said. “I was your father’s friend, and am yours.”

Then the miller took the old man into the mill, and, shutting the door, told him, in a trembling voice, the whole sad story.

“I’ve found out,” he said, “that the wrong way is a hard way, and I’m in that way yet, but I long to get out of it. I’d give this mill—yes, and all that is in it—were that needful to make me feel myself once more an honest man. I have set it all aside. Those bags over there contain every pound I have ever taken. But I shall never know a happy moment till I see them hauled away from here and put into your barn.”

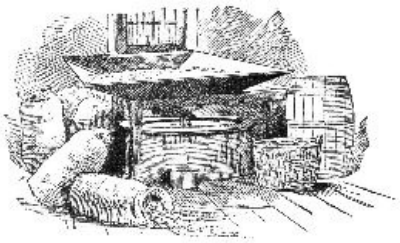
“My dear young friend,” said the farmer, drawing his sleeve across his eyes, “I care nothing for the flour, yet it is mine, and it is right I should take it. Carry it out yourself and load it on the wagon, and I’ll soon put it where you want it to be. I believe you have been taught, by the best of teachers, such a lesson as you’ll never forget. And be assured that after it I will never fear to trust you. Take my word for it, too, that no one but wife—and she can keep a secret—shall ever

hear of this.”

[67]

The next Sunday the miller went to church, and, whatever else he might dread to hear about, it was not the eighth commandment. And the following week, and for many a week afterward, he read his newspaper as he did in former times—all through, skipping nothing, from beginning to end. [68]

The way out of the path of uprightness is smooth and easy; the way back to it, rough and difficult. The one is ever open to the erring, but the other is never closed against the penitent.



THE LARK AND THE WHIPPOORWILL.

A LARK had nearly fallen asleep in the dusk of the evening, when a whippoorwill began calling loudly to its mate, that was lodged in another part of the wood:

“Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!”

“Why do you disturb me,” asked the lark, “here at the close of the day, when I am so tired and just ready to take my rest?”

“I will try to be quiet, then,” replied the whippoorwill.

So, with a great effort, the bird kept still. Occasionally, when its mate called from a distance, its bill *would* open and a faint note, “Whip! Whip!” escape. But a look at the lark, with its head under its wing, was enough to quiet it again. And so all night long it hopped about in silence hunting its food. [70]

At last the rosy dawn appeared, and it flew down to its humble perch near the ground and made ready to go to sleep for the day. But just then the lark suddenly burst forth with a loud song, and started up in its flight toward the sky.

“Stop! stop!” cried the whippoorwill. “How is this? You made me keep silence when you wanted to sleep, and now, when it is my turn, you make more noise than I did.”

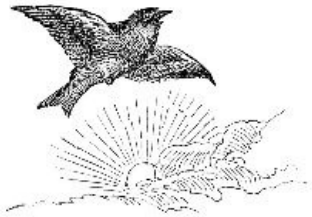
“It is my nature,” cried the lark, “in the early morning to shout out my glad song.”

“And it is mine,” replied the whippoorwill, “in the quiet twilight to call to my loving mate.”

“I suppose what you say is true,” said the lark, “but I am sure that I can’t help singing. Why do you not sing in the daytime, as I do? That is the proper time.”

“Nay,” replied the whippoorwill; “as you are made to wake and sing in the daytime, I am made to wake and sing in the night. Now, as we can neither of us have the woods alone, let us try and put up with one another’s songs, and so each of us enjoy its lot.” [71] [72]

As long as we live we shall find something to put up with in other people. It will be easier to do this if we remember that they in like manner have to put up with something in us.



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[73]

THE GATE AND GATE-POST.

A GATE and the post that it latched to could not get along peacefully together. The gate swagged somewhat, and the post, instead of leaning back a little to accommodate it, seemed purposely to lean forward. As a consequence, there was difficulty whenever they met. The gate accused the post of getting in the way, and the post charged the gate with striking against it. Things remained in this unhappy condition for a long while, and very often the gate might be [74] seen swinging back and forth in the wind, unable to latch itself, while the post showed ugly scars on either side, which were growing uglier and deeper every day. Neither seemed willing to yield, or even to make the first movement toward a reconciliation.

At length, on a gusty morning, after a squall had banged the gate against the post with unusual violence, the latter said:

“You needn’t think I’m going to give in. That last blow did you as much damage as it did me.”

“I don’t want you to give in,” replied the gate; “all I ask is that you lean back a little, so that I can swing free and fasten my latch as I used to do.”

“It’s your own fault that you cannot do so still,” said the post; “you began to swag and bear down on me, and then, of course, I began to butt against you.”

“Well, now,” replied the gate, “though I don’t agree to all you say, I am willing to admit this much—that there may be faults on both sides. But here we are together, and here we’ve got to stay. I can’t go off to look for another post, and you can’t go and hunt up another gate. Why can’t we try and get along as we did at first? I’m sure we were a great deal more comfortable then.”

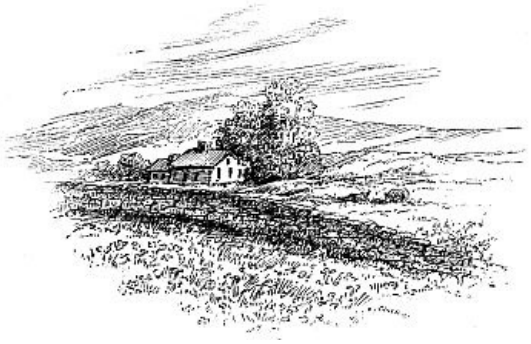
[75]

"Agreed," said the post; "I'm as tired of it as you are. Let us from this time do all we can to keep out of each other's way." [76]

As this conversation took place in the early spring, when the ground was freezing and thawing almost every day, the two had the best possible chance of carrying out their good resolutions; and by the help of wind and rain, with an honest purpose on both sides, their efforts at last were crowned with success. Then all was pleasant and serene again. The gate swung free, the latch caught on the post without fail, and they upheld and supported each other, without either one trespassing on the other's rights.

But after this tranquil state of things had lasted for some time, one day the latch, in passing, left a slight scratch on the post's fresh paint. At once there was scolding and faultfinding on both sides. It was only a scratch, to be sure, and neither seemed disposed to make it any more; but, on the other hand, neither would recede enough to make it any less. And so, after they had overcome far greater difficulties, and proved that peace and harmony were attainable, they sacrificed them both because they could not overlook a very small offence. The consequence was that discord reappeared between them. When I last saw them, they were still giving each other [77] (not at all times, but every now and then, when the wind was from a certain quarter) this irritating little scratch. I suppose it is thus with them still, and probably will be so to the end.

After surmounting great and serious difficulties in the way of our happiness, we often allow insignificant ones to keep us back from its possession.



THE WEEDY FARM.

A POOR but industrious man who rented a farm that was badly overgrown with weeds set his heart on getting rid of them. To do this he worked early and late. By the dawn of day he might be seen ploughing his fields, and because his own team (two rather sorry-looking horses) were not strong enough to turn up the deep soil he hired a pair of oxen and ploughed with them.

Afterward he went over the ground with his harrow, from one side of the field to the other, and again across it from end to end. He did this to break up the hard clods and throw out the roots of the weeds, that the sun might scorch and kill them. Then he sowed the ground thickly with good [79] seed, so that if any of the roots were left they might be crowded out by the grain. He kept on patiently working in this way until he had gone over every part of his farm.

And his labor was not in vain, for in the fields where the corn and the oats and the rye were growing the weeds almost disappeared. Nevertheless, as soon as it came in turn for a field to rest and lie fallow for a season, they were sure to show themselves again. And in the pasture-land, that was never ploughed, they sprang up plentifully among the grass and the clover.

In vain the farmer took out his scythe, searching for the places where they grew, and cutting them down with his own hands. There were some places that he did not reach, and some where the roots were hidden from sight; so that every summer they continued to mar the prospect around him. And, as time went on, instead of getting used to them, it seemed as if he worried over them more and more.

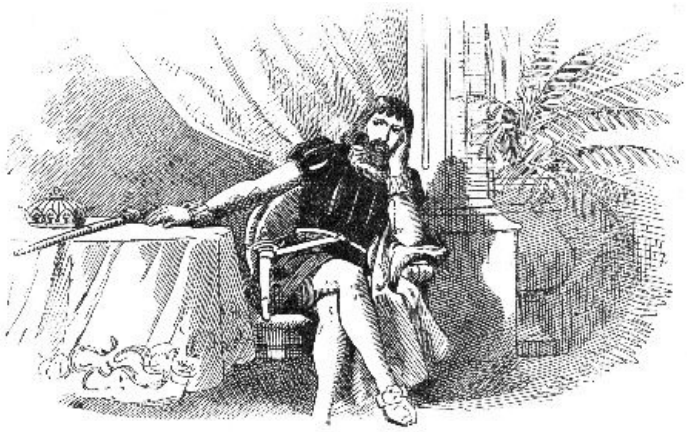
At length, after he had been worrying thus from year to year, he went out one gloomy autumn afternoon to walk alone, and, seeing patches of the hated weeds here and there all over his farm, he grew very despondent. He turned, and came back with a heavy step to his cottage. His wife, [80] having gotten through the rest of her work, was sitting by the window mending his well-worn coat.

“You know,” said he as soon as he came in the door, “how I’ve tried to get rid of these weeds. I’ve worked early and late, in season and out of season, and yet there’s not a field that has not got some of them in it. And down in the low-lying land back of the meeting-house—I’ve just been there—it seems to me they’re thicker than ever. I’m discouraged. I feel like throwing up my lease and giving up the farm, and fighting against them no longer.”

“Well, now,” said his wife as she threaded her needle and sewed away at his patched coat, “I think you’re looking only on one side. You haven’t worked all these years for nothing. You’ve had pretty good crops, I think, and it seems to *me*, the way I look at it, that this is a very good farm, after all, the way farms go. As for getting rid of the weeds, they were here when you came. It’s a weedy country. I don’t believe you’ll ever be able to get them clean out of the land. But then you’ve succeeded in keeping them under. I reckon that if we work hard, with the help of a kind Providence this farm will do till we get a better. For you know we hope to move to a better country some of these days, and to get new land that hasn’t any weeds in it.”

“I declare, wife,” said the farmer, brightening up, “I do believe there’s something in what you tell me. I never looked at it so before. I’ve been looking at the weeds, and nothing else. We ought to look at the crops too, no doubt since they’ve been given us in spite of the weeds. We must put up with something, I reckon, wherever we go; so I think we’ll just do as you say, and stay where we are, trying nevertheless, to get the weeds out, harder and harder. I’m glad I came straight to you. You always were a good, sensible wife, and now I admire you more, and set greater store by you than ever.” [81] [82]

We must not despair because evil is still present with us, but rather take courage from whatever growth in good our past lives may show.



THE KING SEEKING CONTENT.

A CERTAIN king who was weary of the cares of his high office determined to seek among his subjects for a perfectly contented man, and, when he found him, to exchange his throne for that man’s place, whatever it might be. “For,” he said, “peace of mind is worth more than even royal honors and dignities.”

So he disguised himself in a way that no one would know him, and went forth on his search through the streets of the city. And first he came into the house of a man who by long years of [85] labor had heaped up great riches, and now, having withdrawn from all business affairs, was [86] living in ease and luxury. But in a little while the king saw that this life, so different from that he was accustomed to, had become irksome and tedious, and that in his heart he wished himself back at buying and selling again. He looked out of his front window and said:

“Oh that I were only in the place of my opposite neighbor, whom I see going out early to business every morning!”

Leaving this man’s house, the king found an entrance into that of the neighbor whom he envied, who was still engrossed in trade as the other had formerly been. Already rich, he was adding to his wealth year by year; but in doing this he had to labor so hard, and to carry so heavy a load of care, that no time or space for enjoyment was left him.

“I am living but a slave’s life,” he said. “Would that I were well out of it, like my neighbor across the way, whom I see driving out in his carriage every afternoon!”

Passing out of this street, where many rich merchants lived, the king went into another, near by, and entered the house of a man whom he himself had appointed to a responsible post under his own government.

[87]

"Without the weight of anxiety which oppresses me," said the king, "yet with honors sufficient, and an ample provision for all his wants, shall I not here find a happy man?" [88]

But it was not long before the king heard him, one day when he thought he was alone, muttering to himself:

"Why did I ever accept this post, or choose this service for my calling, only to bear the envy of those below me, and the scorn of those above? How much better off and more independent would I have been engaged in some business of my own, like my well-to-do friends around the corner!"

"I will seek for my object in a lower sphere of life and occupation," said the king; and, passing into an obscure back street, he went into the shop of a mechanic who was working at his bench with saw and plane as a carpenter.

"Below the level of ambition and above that of want," continued the king, "surely here I shall find the object of my search."

So he entered into conversation with the man, talked with him about his trade, admired his handiwork, and said:

"Whatever else you lack, my friend, I am sure that here in perfect independence you enjoy content."

"Content at this trade!" exclaimed the man. "I would rather have been brought up to any other. What with low wages and high lumber, there is nothing left when your work is done. I don't know who you may be; but if you're thinking of going into this business, let me warn you against it. For my part, I don't see why some people have it so hard and others so easy. There's a couple of rich men that I work for over in the main street, that have both of them made big fortunes since I came into this miserable little shop. And around the corner from them is another man I do odd jobs for—one of the king's officers; he has I don't know how many servants to wait on him, and plenty of money. Yes, and even the king himself, if a poor man may look so high—there he is with nothing to do but enjoy himself and rule over the rest of us. What justice is there in all this? Everybody has all he wants, and is happy, but me." [89]

Discouraged at his repeated failures, the king turned away from the crowded city and went into the country. There, as he walked along a quiet road by himself, he came to a little cottage with a bench beside the door. In front of it was a flower-bed filled with pinks and lady-slippers; in the rear, a small plot of ground that appeared to have been just digged. A shovel and a hoe were

lying there, evidently left only for the dinner-hour. The door of the cottage was open, and a laboring-man well on in years was seen within at his noonday meal. [90]

The king, in the guise of a wayfarer, stopped before the gate, and was at once asked to enter and be seated at the table. Accepting the invitation, he sat down and partook of the humble repast. As soon as it was finished the two betook themselves to the bench beside the door. Said the king:

“You have a hard time, I fear, my friend. This is but a little plot from which to get your living.”

“But you’ve no idea,” replied the man, “how much this ground yields. It is planted in potatoes, and a finer crop you never saw. I’m just digging them, and shall have enough to last me on till spring, with some to sell—yes, and a few to give a poor neighbor, beside.”

“But is that all you have to depend upon?” asked the king.

“Oh no,” replied the man; “I go out to day’s work on the farms around, and, beside being able to pay for some new clothes, I’ve put by a barrel of flour for the winter; it stands over in that far corner. And you see my woodpile stretching along the fence yonder. I’ve had to work hard for these things, but they are all that I need, and I am content.”

“‘Content’!” cried the king, as though he could not believe his own ears. “But have you no other wants beside these?” [91] [92]

“I might have,” said the man. “There are plenty that offer me their company, but I refuse to entertain them.”

“Are you, then, quite satisfied?”

“Not with myself, but I am with my lot.”

At this the king was silent, for he saw that his companion was speaking the truth, though he could not comprehend it.

“But understand me,” continued the man. “It is not because I have no trials to bear that I am content, for I have my share of them. Here is the rheumatism in this arm, which often will not let me sleep, and sometimes keeps me from work for days together. And then, what is harder still, my landlord is not always kind, or even just.”

“Why, is not this cottage your own?” said the king.

“Oh no,” replied the man; “I’m not so rich as that. And yet, as I was going to say, taking it all in all, I have in my lot a bigger proportion of good than most people, and a better chance to be what I ought to be. And to this end I can see how even my trials are a help.”

The king, rising from the table, bade his humble friend adieu and went his way, but pursued his search no farther.

“I have found content in another,” he said, “and learned, too, how to get it for myself. It is to accept not only my good things, but also my evil things, as a precious part of my portion. I will go back to my throne esteeming even it in this light, and so, instead of trying to cast them off, shall be happier in bearing the burdens which it lays upon me.” [93]

Were we able to look into the secret thoughts of those whom we envy, we should often find that what we covet in their lot, is borne by them as a trial and a cross.

THE LEARNED OWL.

AN owl that had long separated himself from his companions that he might devote his nights to study and become learned, employed himself afterward in trying to impart his learning to the other owls. Having called them together, he discoursed about different animals and reptiles and fishes which they had never heard of before; but he found that, while a few seemed anxious for instruction and listened patiently, the most of his hearers made some excuse for flying away while he was still talking, so that by the end of his discourse scarcely a half dozen of them remained.

As he was ambitious to be considered an interesting as well as instructive speaker, he was greatly discouraged at this result, and at once retired to the woods, into a thick clump of [95] hemlocks whose dark shadows never admitted a ray of the sun, and there, all alone, he thought [96] over the matter, trying to decide what was best to be done.

He remained for several days thus engaged, when suddenly, as if the whole difficulty were solved, he gave a cheerful hoot, and flying forth, summoned all the owls to a meeting in the apple-orchard near by at twelve o'clock the following night. When the time arrived, but a small audience appeared in the trees immediately around him, though many were on those farther off—as we might say, on the back seats—from which, in case they grew weary, they could retire unseen.

"I've come this time," he began, "not to talk about animals or reptiles or fishes, but about owls."

At once he could see an awakening of interest in the birds that were near him. Then he went on to tell all he knew about owls—their ancestors who had lived long ago, the different kinds that are living now, the big owls and the little owls, their habits, their dispositions, their pleasures, and their pains, not, of course, omitting courtship and marriage. Very soon he saw the birds that

had lodged on the distant trees flying nearer, and as he went on they came one by one into the very tree where he stood, until all the owls that lived in the neighboring woods were gathered close around him; nor were they willing to leave while he continued his discourse. And after that, all he had to do was to vary somewhat his treatment of the same theme to secure a punctual and full attendance. [97]

This fable proves that owls, like men, prefer to hear about things in which they feel the interest of kindred. The speaker or the book that can awaken our human sympathies is the one, as we know, that commands the largest audience and the closest attention.

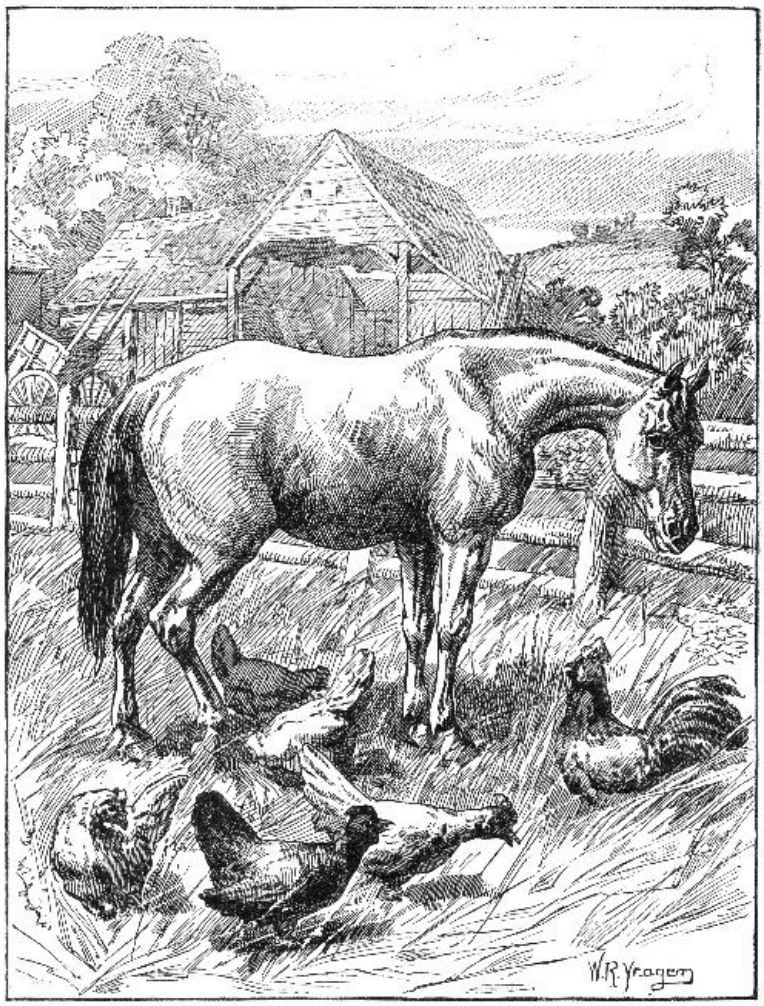
THE HORSE AND THE GRASSHOPPERS.

A HORSE, while feeding in a meadow, frightened the grasshoppers at his feet, so that they flew up thickly on every side. Some chickens, discovering this, gathered around and accompanied him, eagerly devouring the insects. The horse did not notice them for a time and continued to move slowly along, thus providing them with an abundant supply. But, at length spying them at their repast, he suddenly raised his head, saying:

"How are you going to pay me back for all this trouble I am taking for you?"

At which one of the chickens replied:

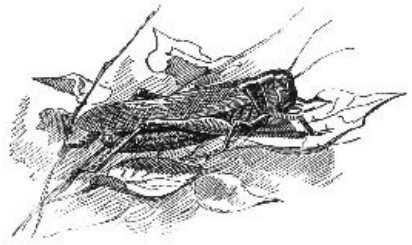
"You don't eat grasshoppers yourself, neither are you going out of your way to stir them up for us. Why, then, should we pay you at all?" [99] [100]

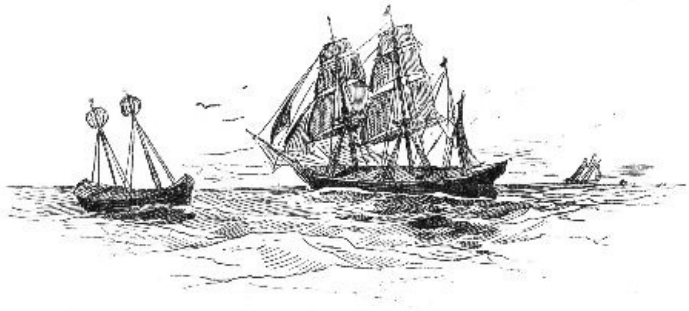


The horse, not able to answer this question, began sullenly to feed again, when the chicken continued:

"If you had done us this favor willingly and kindly, we would have eaten the grasshoppers and returned you our thanks; but, as you do it against your will, we will eat them just the same, and return you nothing."

In serving our own interests we sometimes, without intending it, serve the interest of others. It is better to do this graciously and make them our friends than to do it grudgingly and make them our enemies.





THE BARK AND THE LIGHTSHIP.

A BARK on her outward voyage passed the lightship moored on a shoal that lay in the track of vessels near the coast. Said the bark as she sailed by:

“Here you are still, held fast by your chain, for ever tossing and uncomfortable, but making no headway, or profits, either.”

“True,” replied the lightship. “Yet this is my appointed work. I am no idler.”

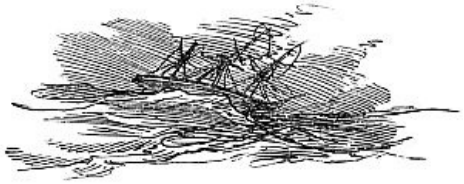
Long months rolled around; the bark had crossed the ocean, and was on her homeward voyage. She neared the land in stormy weather. Night came on, and the lead, though it was kept going, failed to show just where she was drifting. Then anxious fears arose, and were growing each moment more intense, when suddenly a bright flash gleamed through the darkness. It was [102] the lightship, giving warning of the shoal and pointing out the deeper channel.

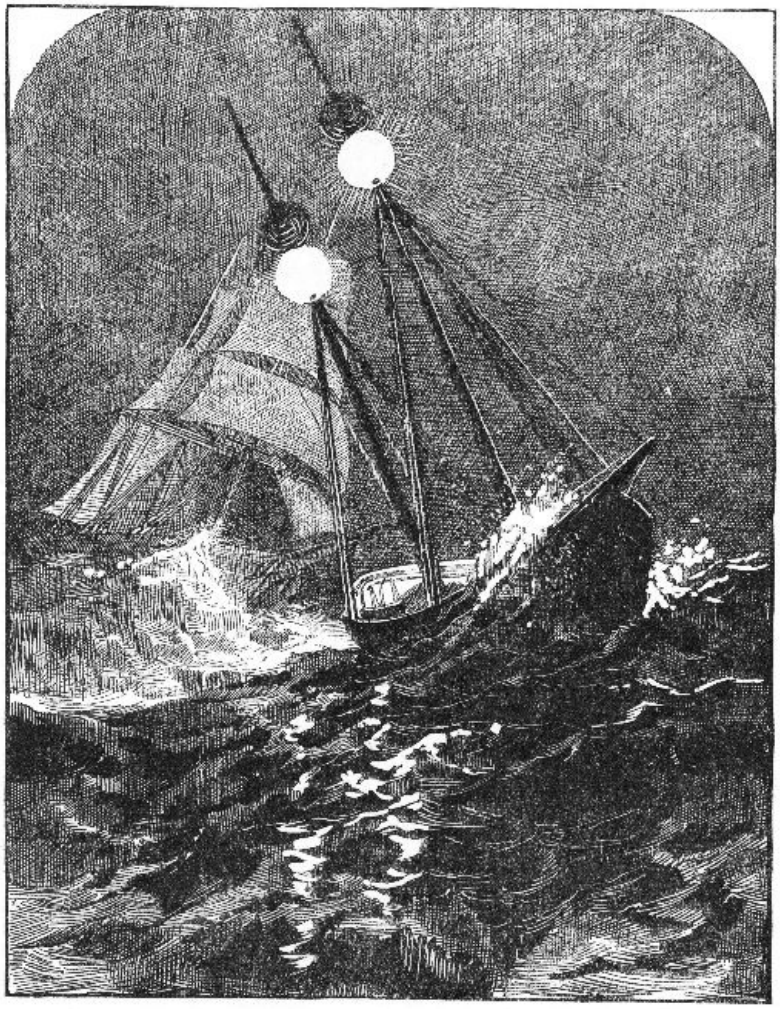
Once more the vessels lay side by side.

“You have saved me,” cried the bark, “and the rich cargo that I carry. Now I understand why you seek not selfish profits, and most gladly, out of gratitude, will I share mine with you.”

“Oh no,” replied the lightship; “you have sailed over perilous seas to gain them, and they justly belong to you. That is your calling; and the greater your gains, the better am I pleased. But my calling is to lie here and do what good I can. For this I receive wages sufficient for my need, and with them I am content.”

While some men devote their lives to business and accumulate fortunes—properly and honestly, it may be—others devote theirs to the good of their fellow-men, knowing they will receive in return a bare living, and nothing more.





THE UNHONORED SERVANT.

A CERTAIN king was accustomed from time to time to appoint the members of his household, some of them to be rulers over provinces, some over cities, and some to fill private positions of honor and profit. It was considered not only a reward of obedience, but a special mark of his confidence and approval, to receive such appointment.

After many had been thus promoted, one remained in the palace who seemed to be overlooked and neglected. It was evident that this was not from any fault of his own, or from any want of regard on the part of the king, for all could see that he was loyal and upright and enjoyed the [105] king's favor; yet others who had come later into the palace were chosen before him. [106]

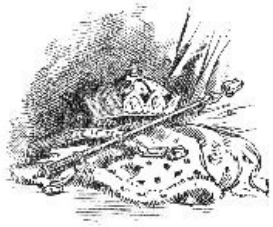
At length one of the king's counsellors ventured to ask him the reason of this, saying:

"This man for many years has obeyed you with all faithfulness and devotion, yet others are sent forth to fill stations of honor, while he remains here in his place as a servant. Why is this?"

The king answered:

"I keep him thus, not as a mark of my displeasure or of his want of desert, but because he is the one whom I cannot part with, even to bestow honors and riches upon him, but must have ever near me. Neither will he be a loser by it in the end."

A place in the heart is better than a gift from the hand, and he whom the King will reward may well wait patiently.



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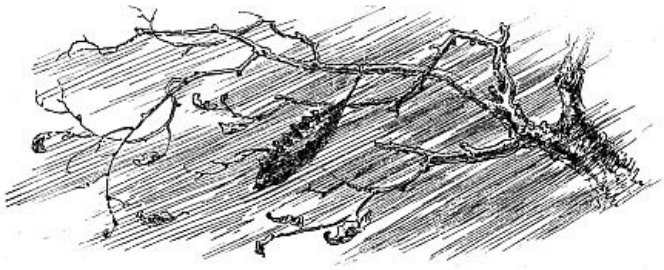


WINGS.

ONCE a caterpillar, as it fed on a tree, was given the power of speech. It said:

"What wonderful eyes I have! I can see the whole of this leaf at one time—not only the part I am feeding on, but its whole length and breadth."

"Let me tell you," replied the tree, "there are eyes that can see not only one leaf, but all the leaves on a tree—yes, and on a whole woods—at a glance."

"It may be so," said the caterpillar, "and then it is only doing what I do, though on a larger scale.—And what wonderful feet I have!" continued the caterpillar. "I can creep from the ground up to your topmost bough, between the rising and the setting of the sun."

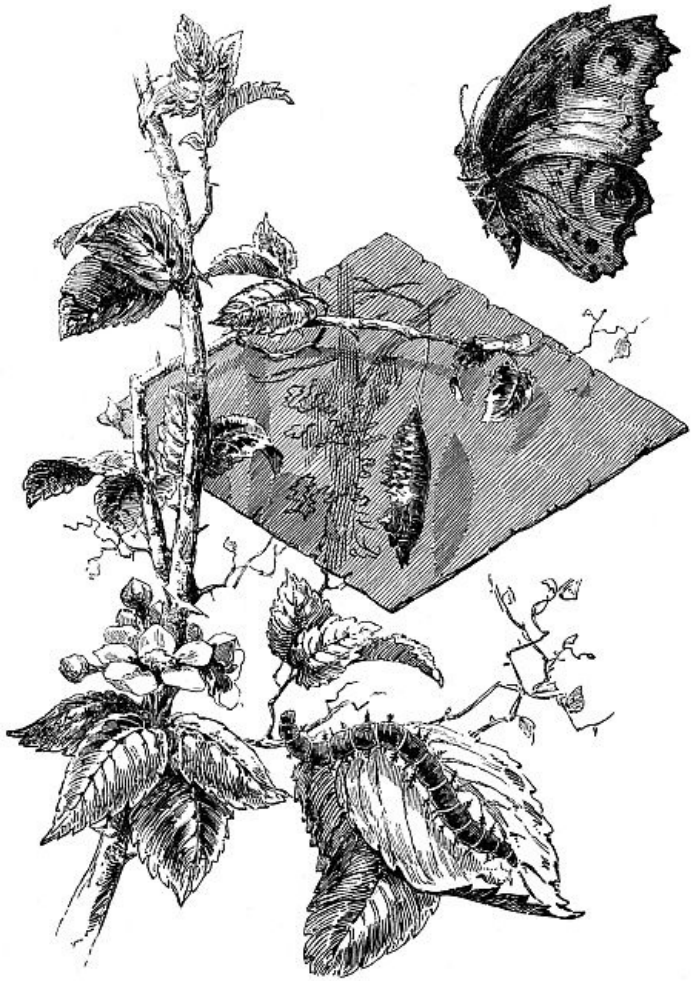
"And I can tell you," replied the tree, "there are feet that can pass over a space equal to that in [108] a moment, and in one short hour can go farther than you in all the days of your life."

"It may be so," said the caterpillar, "and then it is only doing what I do, though on a larger scale."

"But this is not all I have to tell you," continued the tree. "There are beings that can dart from the ground up to my highest branch without so much as touching me with their feet, and that can pass swiftly from tree to tree, borne through the air on wings."

"That is impossible," said the caterpillar. "There may be stronger eyes that can see farther even than mine, and quicker feet that can travel faster; but, as for wings to fly through the air with, that cannot be. You are talking of things you know nothing about, or else are only trying to deceive me. After such an absurd statement, I will not listen to you any more, or believe anything you say."

The summer passed, and autumn came with its cloudy days and chilly nights. The leaves of the tree shrivelled up and dropped to the ground, and one frosty morning the caterpillar was found suspended from a naked twig by a thread of its own spinning, shut up in its cocoon. And there it slept, unconscious from day to day, and month to month, through the long winter. The fierce storm could not weaken its hold, or shake it loose, as it hung secure, tossed to and fro by the [109] blast. [110]



But at length spring approached. The buds began to swell and the young leaves to appear. The blossoms on the fruit trees opened, and the birds sang among them. And one morning the imprisoned caterpillar revived in its narrow cell, and, rending its walls asunder, came forth and basked in the sunshine. But what are these at its side gently expanding and unfolding? It spreads them forth, and, loosening its hold upon the twig, floats away on the breeze. It mounts up, it flies, it lodges on a lofty bough, and flies from one to another again and again.

“Was it I,” it says, astonished, “that declared there were no beings with wings, and that to pass from place to place through the air was impossible? Now am I made to see that it was not the tree, but myself, who spoke about things I knew nothing of; now am I made to feel the denseness of my own ignorance. If this, which is so unlooked for and so far beyond the reach of my understanding, has been done to me, I will wait and see what yet remains to be done, nor ever again limit the power that created me at first, and still goes on perfecting its own work.”

He who can speak most wisely within the circuit of his knowledge if he venture beyond it utters foolishness.

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[111]

STANDPOINTS.

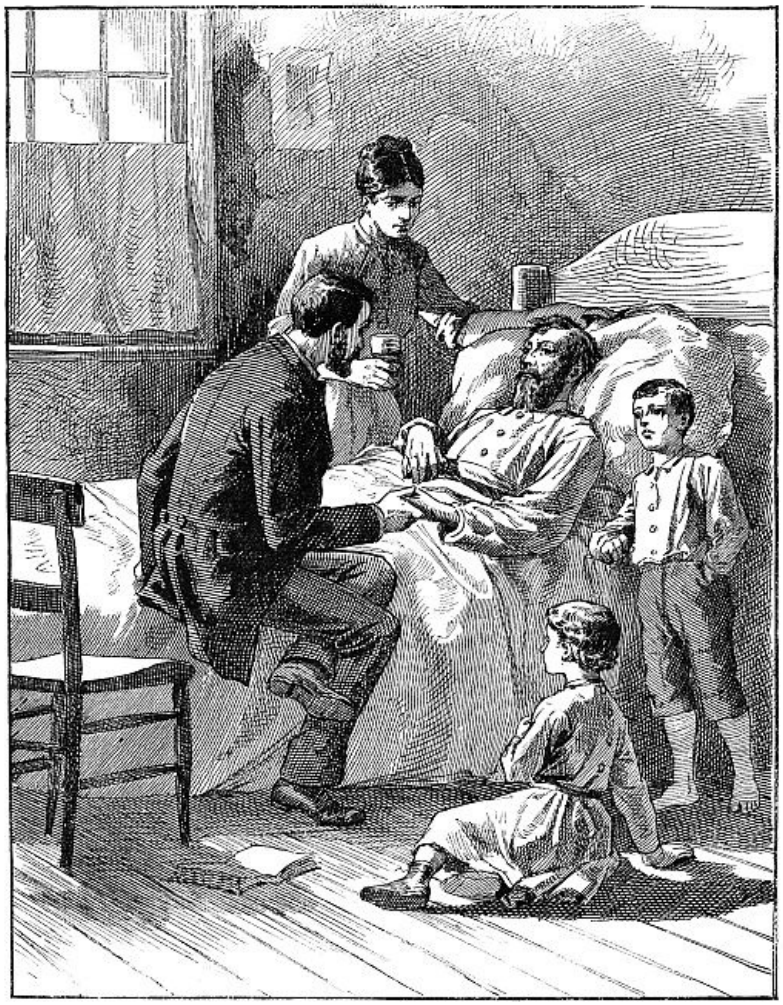
A POOR man who supported his family by daily labor used to deal with the two storekeepers of his native village. Of one he bought flour and meat; of the other, materials for his own and his children's clothing. Being a good workman and honest as well as industrious, he was accustomed to settle his accounts at both stores every Saturday night.

All went on well and to the satisfaction of both buyer and seller as long as health lasted. But at length sickness came, and Saturday brought the laborer no wages. Still, he hoped for the return [112] of strength by another week, and then to be at work again. But strength did not return. Week after week passed, and it seemed farther away than ever. The storekeepers' accounts remained unsettled. The matter was becoming a serious one for them. What should they do?

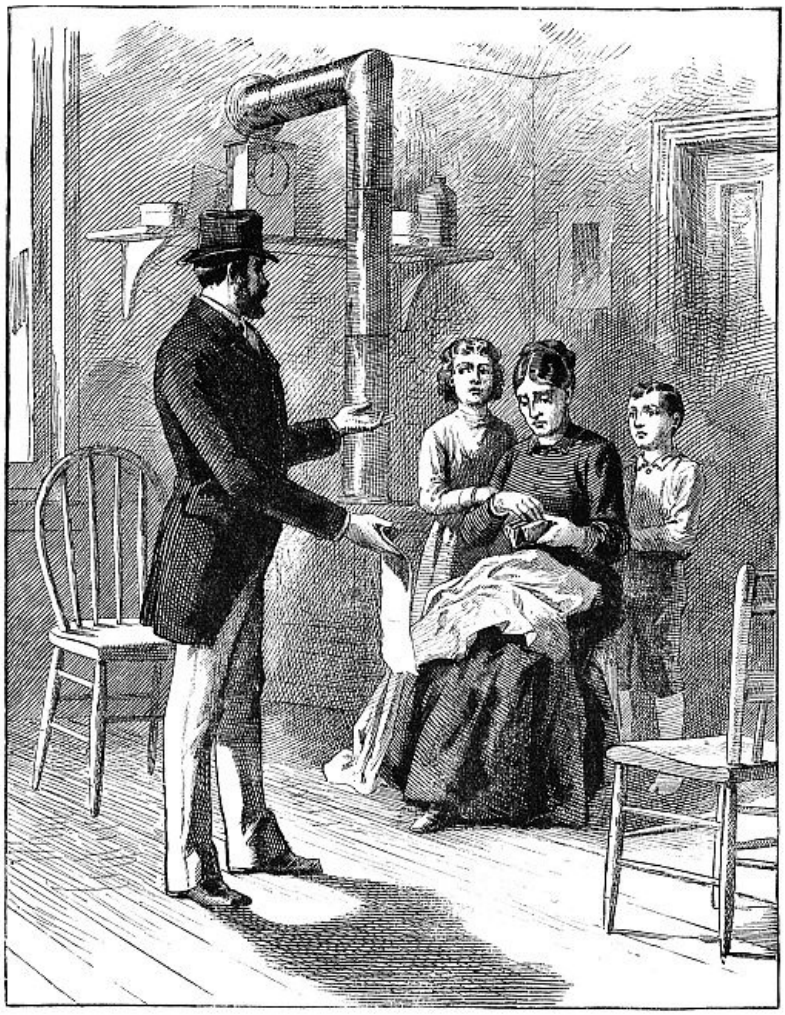
At this point one of them opened his ledger, went over every item set down there, and, after footing up the total amount, calculated the interest on it to the last cent. Then he sat thinking about what he could do with the money if he only had it in hand; and this was the standpoint from which *he* looked at the debt.

The other storekeeper also went over his ledger and footed up the amount. But after doing so he shut the book up again, and, putting on his hat, went to see the man who owed him the money. Entering his humble cottage, he sat down at his bedside and looked into his honest, suffering face, and on his wife and children in poverty around him; and here was the standpoint from which *this* storekeeper looked at the debt.

The sick man died, and his family was left penniless. The storekeeper who had visited him, still looking at the debt, as it were, from the lowly bedside, thought it was right to cross it off his books and forgive it altogether. The other storekeeper, viewing it from his counting-room only, [113] thought it right to get the money if he could. Had he not furnished all the articles that were [114] charged for? Had not the man's family taken them and used them? The money was his, and he meant to have it. So he held the dead man's wife and children responsible, and, though they had a hard time to earn their daily bread, he made it harder by demanding something each month till the last cent was paid.



Time rolled on, and the years that gather, an ever-increasing load, upon poor and rich alike, began to bow the forms of the two storekeepers. Old age overtook them, and finally the hour when each in turn must leave store and ledger to know them no more. Then it was found that he who had remitted the poor man’s debt had left to his family a moderate competency, with a good many accounts in his ledger balanced by the one word written over against them, “Forgiven.”



The other storekeeper had left his family rich, with scarcely an account that had ever been due him unpaid, and the few that were, remained so only because neither force nor persuasion could bring the money. But in the village where they had lived and died it was noticed, long after both storekeepers and their ways of doing business were forgotten, that the smaller inheritance increased in the hands of those who received it, while the larger one, in the hands receiving it, seemed mysteriously to melt away. [115] [116]

According to the standpoint from which we look at a thing will be our views of right and wrong respecting it; but we are accountable for the choice of that standpoint.

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[117]

THE MAN WITH A MENAGERIE.

A MAN who kept a menagerie had trouble with several of the wild beasts, which, although they were confined in strong cages, sometimes became excited and made violent efforts to escape. There was one in particular—a tiger—that caused him special concern. By continued watchfulness and careful treatment, however, the animal was at length brought into a quiet and submissive state, seeming to be asleep most of the time. Nevertheless, knowing his savage nature, his owner was diligent in examining the different parts of his cage—the iron bars in front, and the bolts in the rear—every day.

But, after doing this for many weeks without a recurrence of any cause for alarm, the man [118] dismissed his fears and began to forget there had ever been any cause for them. Then, insensibly to himself, he relaxed his vigilance, until the matter passed out of his mind and he thought no more about the tiger than he did about the antelope, the deer, or any other harmless specimens in his collection.

This state of things had lasted without any mishap for a long time, when one day, while passing through his menagerie, as he came in front of the tiger’s cage he made a misstep; his foot slipped, and he fell. Like a flash—as soon as he saw him fall—the tiger sprang to his feet and dashed with savage fury against the bars in front of him, which, not being properly secured, parted and allowed him to pass between them.

As he lighted on the ground all the weak and defenceless animals around him were panic-stricken, uttering cries of terror. And truly it looked for the moment as though he might slay both them and their fallen master unrestrained. To make it worse, his keeper, who alone had any control over him, was absent, but fortunately not beyond the sound of the tumult. This man hastened to the rescue, and by skill in soothing as well as courage in quelling succeeded after a time in getting the brute back to his den.

Then was the owner glad, breathing freely once more. Yet for hours afterward his face [119] remained pale and his hand trembled. [120]

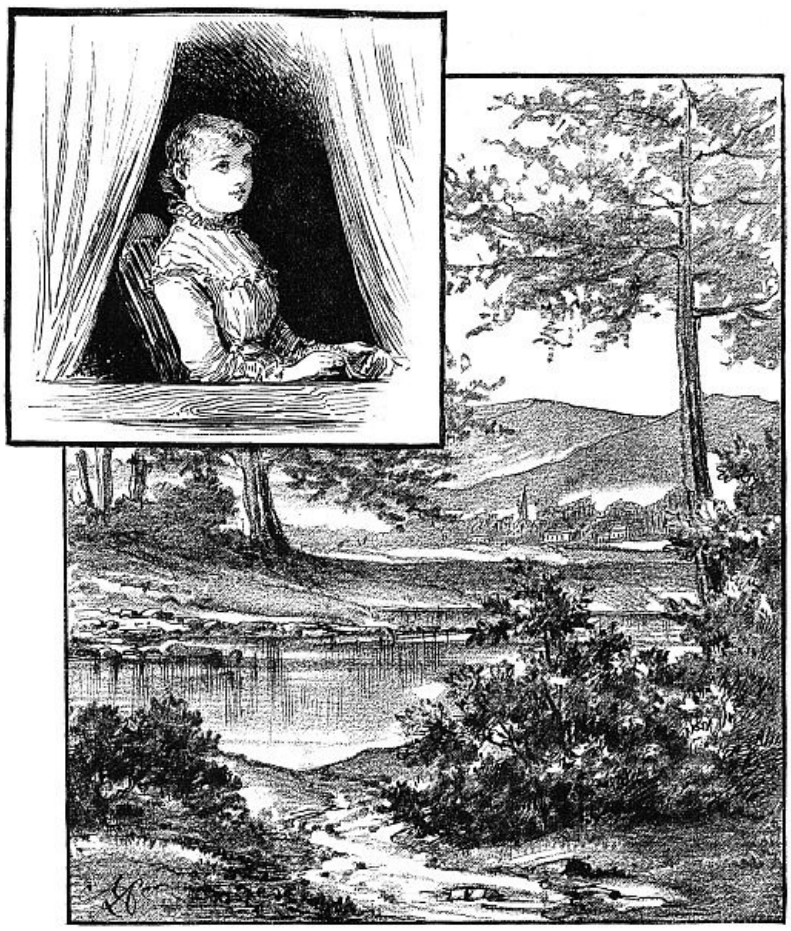
“I am thankful,” he said, “for this great deliverance. Never shall I forget it, nor lessen my watchfulness over this furious beast’s cage; for no matter how silent it seems, or how little danger appears to be within, I know only too well that the tiger is there still.”

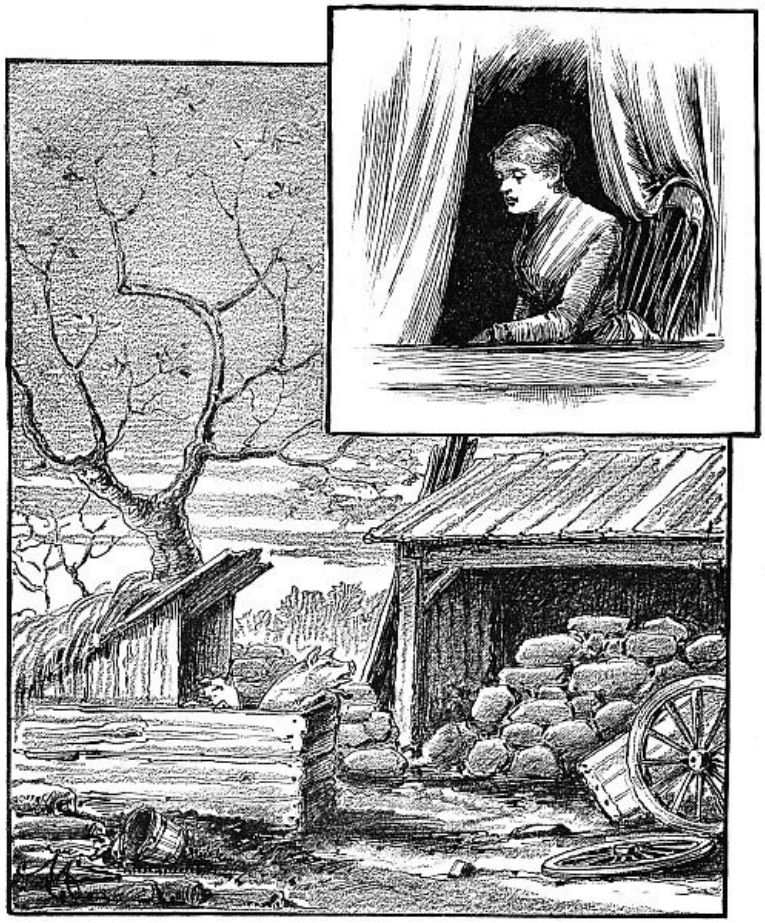
Our evil passions may lie dormant until we almost think they have ceased to exist, and yet, if not sleeplessly guarded, may rise up and gain the mastery over us at any time.

TWO OUTLOOKS.

TWO persons live in the same house, which has both a front and a back view. The front view is over a quiet lake, with green fields and mountains beyond—beautiful always, in summer, in autumn, in winter. The back view is hemmed in by old broken-down walls, ruinous outbuildings and a pigsty.

One of the inmates of the house takes her work and sits habitually by the front window. Her face is bright and beaming, and the neighbors often hear her sing.

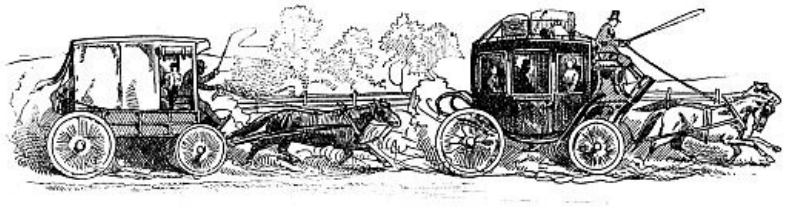




The other inmate sits constantly looking out of the back window. The gloomy prospect depresses and sours her; and when she does open her lips, it is generally to complain. Yet neither of these persons is forced to gaze thus on the prospect which so affects her. Each sits by the window she has chosen for herself. [122] [123] [124]

Now, we all live in houses with front windows and back windows. At which of them do we choose, for the most of our time, to sit?

[125]



JOB NICKEL.

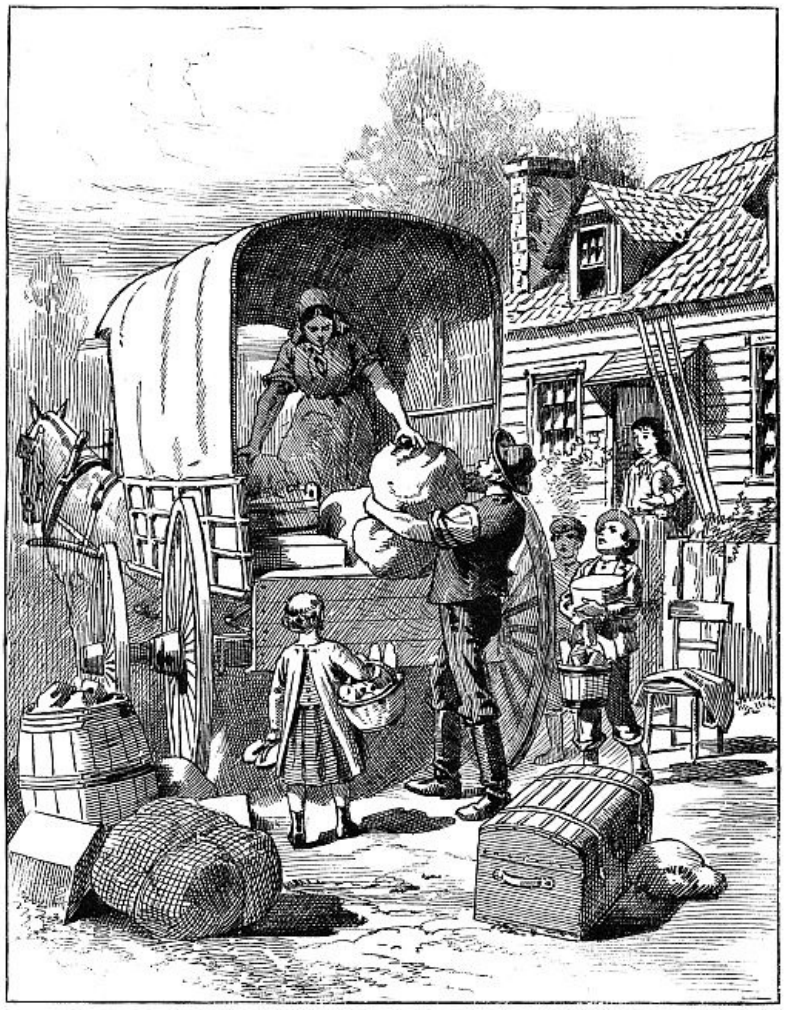
A MAN by the name of Job Nickel, who was about emigrating to a new home, bought a stout horse and strong wagon—the best his means would afford—and, packing his family into it, with such household goods as could be carried beside, started on his journey. He had not gone far when he was overtaken by another family travelling in the same direction, but driving a pair of fine horses to a handsome carriage. The difference in outfit, however, did not prevent the occupants of the carriage from making acquaintance with the family in the wagon. They first looked at them smilingly, then nodded, and presently got into conversation.

As their destination was the same and it was pleasanter to travel in company than alone, Job gave his horse a sharp cut, to keep up with his new friends; and the travellers kept together until night, when, coming to a green spot with a spring of pure water upon it, they encamped there, as is the custom with emigrants on the road. [126]

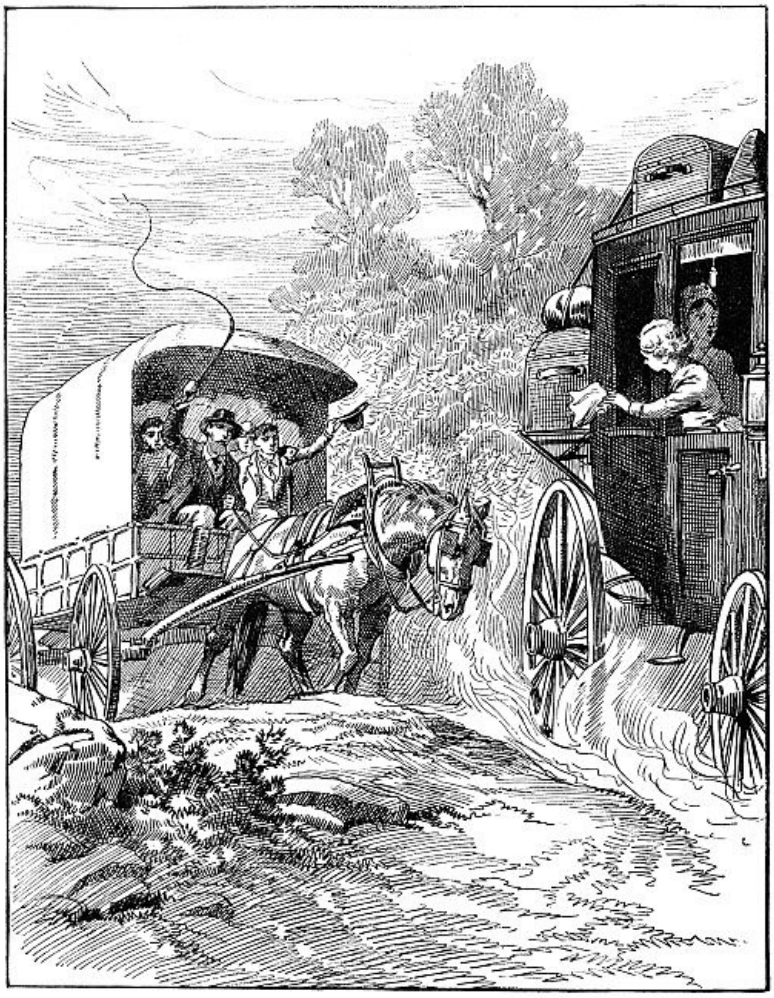
The next morning, before harnessing up, the occupants of the carriage begged Job to let his eldest daughter—a bright little girl of twelve—ride with them. The child's mother and Job himself were pleased at this attention, and after fishing out her best dress from the bottom of a chest, and hastily putting it on, the invitation was accepted. But when they started for the day, the pair travelled so much faster than the one horse that the carriage soon left the wagon behind; sometimes it was visible a good way ahead, and sometimes was quite out of sight. Yet, as his little girl was in it, Job felt bound to keep as near it as he could, though this required, especially in going-up hill, the constant urging of his horse and not unfrequent use of the whip.

While hurrying along the road in this way Job came up with a neighbor who, like himself, drove only one horse. But so anxious was Job to get on that he passed his old friend without speaking. It must be admitted, too, that Job felt with his new acquaintance, if he could only keep up with them, he was travelling in more distinguished company. Thus the second day passed, and the travellers again encamped together, Job, after taking the harness off his own horse, helping to unharness the pair.

The next morning his friends consented to let the little girl return to her parents in the wagon provided her brother be allowed to take her place. So the girl went back, very much dissatisfied, [127] and the boy succeeded her. And thus the two vehicles continued in company day after day. [128] Sometimes the boy was in the carriage, and sometimes the girl; and once one of the children from the carriage came and rode in the wagon. Meanwhile, the intimacy between the families constantly increased, no account being taken of their differing circumstances. While these things were going on, both Job and his wife could not help secretly thinking that, as their children happened to be of like ages, this intimacy might some day become closer still; yet neither one (as they felt in their hearts ashamed of it) mentioned this thought to the other.



But all this time, notwithstanding his apparent friendship, the owner of the carriage never once slackened his pace to accommodate Job. As a consequence, the work of keeping up with him became harder than ever. Job had now to lash his horse at almost every step, by doing which he was just able to follow close at the tail of the carriage. But in dry weather he was always in a cloud of dust, and in wet weather was being splashed with the mud thrown up by the wheels in front of him; so that, wet or dry, he was equally miserable.



But the worst was yet to come. After Job had been thus laboriously working his way for about half the distance he was to travel, one morning, on going out early to feed his horse, the animal was found still lying down; and when Job tried to rouse him, he refused to get up—alas! with good reason: he could not. And within an hour the poor overworked beast was dead. [129] [130]

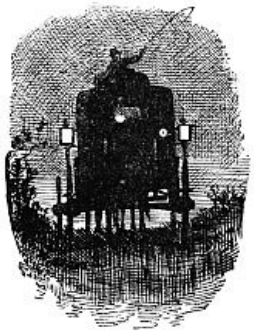
By this time the sun had risen, and the carriage was all ready to start; but before doing so the family that travelled in it came over to where Job stood, showing great pity for him. They were loud in their expressions of sorrow, but the father said, as he had promised to be at a point beyond by a certain hour, he would have to go on. Just then another carriage, containing some of his acquaintance, came along, and he cracked his whip and was soon out of sight. As he drove off Job saw for the first time the man's name—S. Silver. It was printed upon the end of a trunk which they had taken from the inside and put on the top of the carriage.

"Ah!" exclaimed Job, "now I know who he is. His first name is Sterling. He had a bank in the county-town next to ours, and a sad fool has poor Job Nickel been in trying all this while to keep up with Sterling Silver! I deserve all I have got.—Well, wife," he continued, "here we are with our horse dead, our grand acquaintances gone, and plenty of time to reflect on our folly."

As he spoke his old friend with the one horse, whom Job had passed on the road without noticing, came trudging comfortably by. Job turned toward him ready to speak, but the man did not notice him. As he disappeared Job looked around at his wife, and, seeing her wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron, he said: [131] [132]

“Happily, my dear, we’ve got a small sum left in the bottom of the chest, with which we’ll try to buy another horse—the best we can get for it. But after this we’ll go along at our own gait, no matter who goes before or follows after us.”

He who is dissatisfied and unthankful in his own proper sphere, by trying to climb higher sinks lower than ever before.



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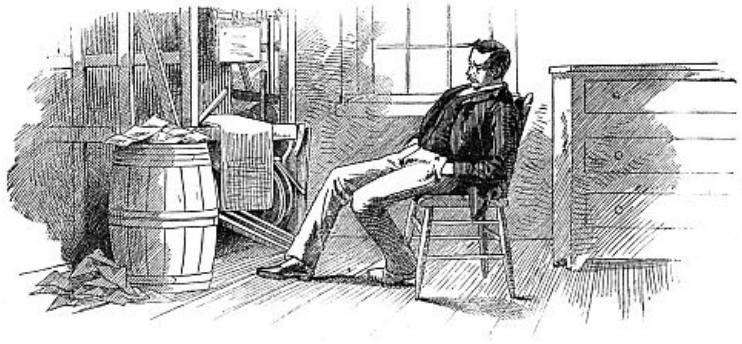


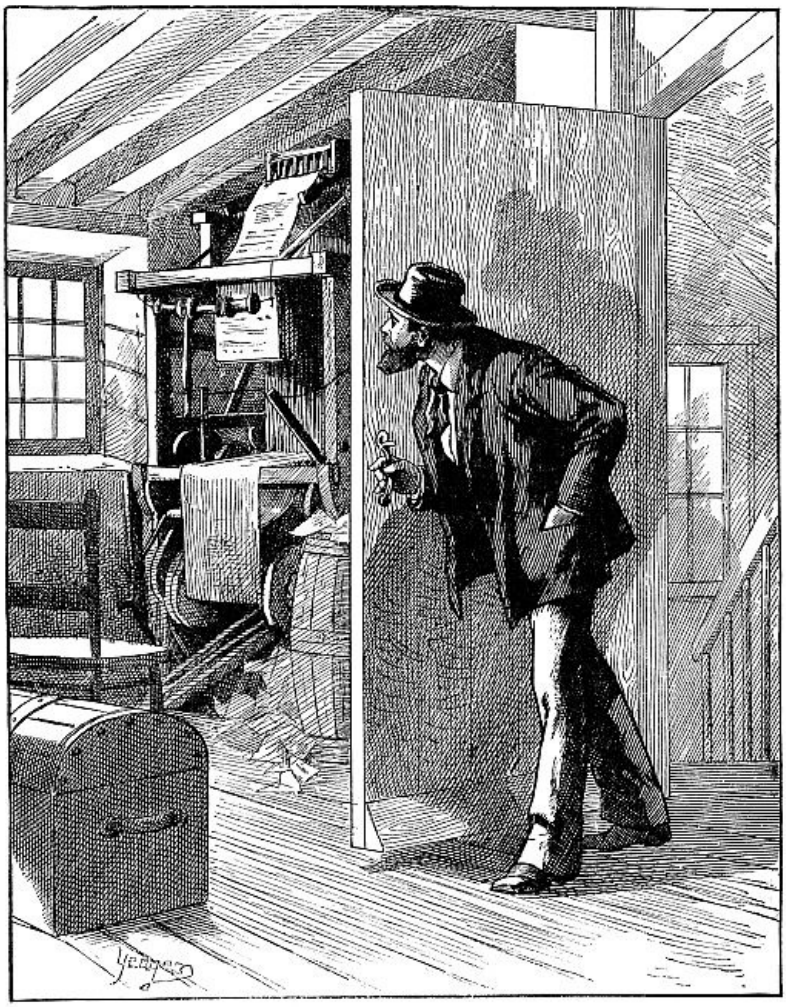
THE UNUSED LOOM.

A MAN who had inherited a plain but comfortable house with a lot of ground around it went there to live. He found, on looking through the house, that, beside the furniture it contained suitable to his daily wants, there was in one of the upper rooms a curiously-made loom. It was a complicated machine, and he could see at a glance a valuable one; but he could see also that it would require his best skill as well as a good deal of hard work to keep it in motion. Not caring to put these forth just then, instead of attempting to run it, he let it stand.

As he had to earn his living, however, and was not, in truth, a lazy man, he employed himself in other ways, tilling his ground and, when he had that in perfect order for the time being, hiring himself out to do farm-work for his neighbors. But he was, at best, a poor hand at this sort of [134] work, an ordinary day-laborer easily outstripping him; so that, although he managed to live, by the end of the year, if he was not actually behindhand, he was sure to have nothing over.

But while he worked in the soil he never forgot his loom. And sometimes when the work was harder and money scarcer than usual he would go up to the room where it was stored, and open the door and stand looking at it. Yet as soon as he realized afresh the labor both of mind and body required to run it, he shut to the door again and went back to day’s work with his pick and shovel.

But at length his pressing needs and a deepening conviction that he could better his condition induced him to undertake what he had shrunk from so long; he began clearing away from his loom the dust and dirt that had accumulated about it, determined to persevere until he had put it in perfect running order. And, having once begun the work, he found at each step of its progress that his interest increased, and that the strength and skill required were forthcoming as occasion demanded.



Finally, every part being ready, he put in the warp and the shuttle, and set it in motion. Then he himself was surprised at the result. The fabric it wove was both serviceable and beautiful, and [135] there was at once a demand for all he could make. The people of the village where he lived, and [136] of the neighborhood for miles around, flocked to his house to secure it; and he felt for the first time, though after many precious years had been wasted, that he was engaged in the work he was best qualified for. And while serving others he was also benefiting himself; for, instead of making but a bare living, as before, he was able now to lay up a considerable sum from his earnings every year.

We may possess valuable talents without profiting by them. Talent furnishes the machinery; application, the power to drive it. It is only by putting the two together that we shall secure the prize within our reach.

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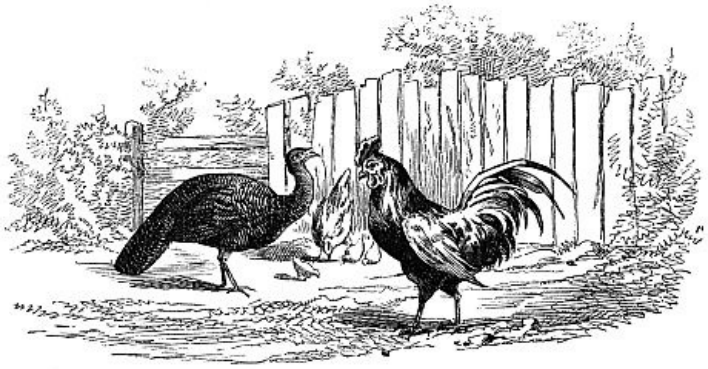
[137]



CROWING.

EARLY one morning, while the fowls were waiting around the kitchen door for their breakfast, a spring chicken attempted to crow, but succeeded only in uttering a feeble squawk.

A young cock, hearing this, stood up and crowed loud and clear, saying to the other:

“You’d better be still till you can crow like that.”

To which a guinea-hen that was restlessly flitting about replied with a shrill, high voice:

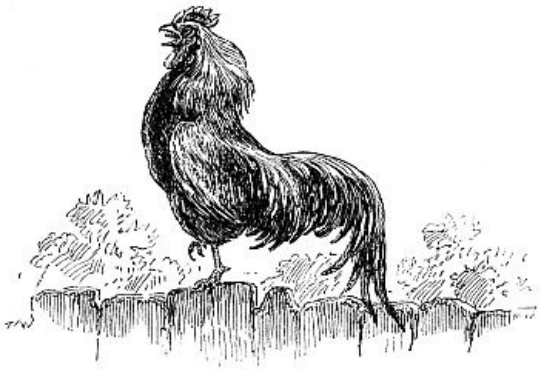
“It was only the spring before last when you did no better yourself!”

[138]

“Impossible!” said the cock. “It must be some other chicken you are thinking of.” [139]

“Not so,” replied the guinea. “I remember you ever since you were hatched—while you were a little chick sleeping under your mother’s wing, when you grew bigger and first flew up to the roost, and how like this spring chicken’s your crowing was then, only with this difference: you were so conceited that the whole barnyard was laughing at you. All this is forgotten now, luckily for you. But take my advice: be tender of the failings of others, lest your own be recalled and displayed in full light.”

Let us not refuse to pardon in others what we, through others’ kindness, have been pardoned for ourselves.



[140]

PETER CRISP’S SPECTACLES.

PETER CRISP had something the matter with his eyes; he needed spectacles to help him see. But this was no uncommon misfortune: hundreds of people who do ten good hours’ work every day, use spectacles, and cannot get along without them. No; the trouble in Peter’s case was not in having to wear spectacles, but in the particular kind of spectacles that he wore. They seemed to have the strange quality of undergoing a change of color at certain times; so that everything seen through them underwent a corresponding change.

[141]

At one time they took on a dark color—almost black. And, as this made everything look dark and gloomy, he was made to feel accordingly. [142]

“I could iron these collars better myself,” he exclaimed one morning as he was dressing, after putting on these glasses. And a few moments later: “Not a single pin in this cushion, as usual!” And presently again: “Who *has* taken away my comb and brush?” though both of these useful articles were lying within his reach, and just where he himself had left them.

Had any of the children chanced to come into the room about that time, it would have been an unlucky visit for them.

[143]

When he sat down to breakfast, it was with a frown upon his brow, and a deep wrinkle between his eyes, caused, apparently, by the weight of the spectacles. [144]

"Bridget never did make a good cup of coffee in her life," he remarked.—"My dear," he continued, turning to his wife, "I do wish you would take the trouble to go down once—*only* once—and show her how."

[145]

Mrs. Crisp ventured to answer in a meek voice that she went down every morning. Peter had no reply—especially no thanks—to offer for this; but he took another sip, puckered up his lips as though he had swallowed a dose of medicine, and pushed the cup away from him. [146]

[147]

After this cheerful breakfast he put on his hat to go to the store (for Peter was a business-man); but when he had gone as far as the front door, he came back with a quick step to the foot of the stairs, and there stood calling out in a loud voice that he really felt ashamed at the condition of the steps and the sidewalk. No others in the neighborhood, he declared, looked so shabby. [148]

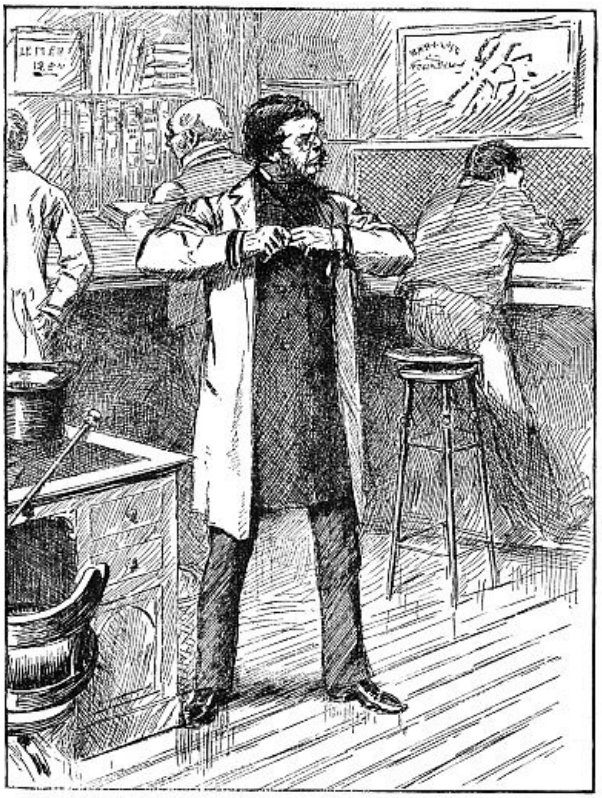
[149]

In the street a few minutes afterward he was joined by a fellow business man, and as they walked down town together Peter was as gay and lively as any one could have wished him to be. The two talked with each other about the fine weather and their prosperous trade, and even touched on their happy families. And when they spied a bachelor-friend in the distance, Peter grew merry at his expense, and expressed pity for him as a poor fellow who had no home! [150]

[151]

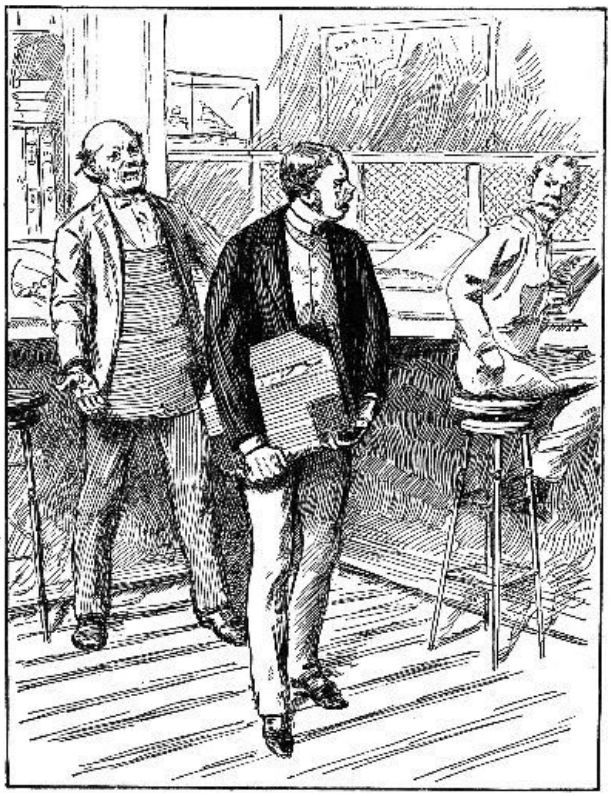
But when, a little later, he entered his counting-room alone, it was plain he had the dark glasses on still. Not a man about the establishment worked as he should do, he said. It used to be different when he was a boy. Then he turned and went out of the house with a look of disgust. [152]

[153]



As soon as he was gone the bookkeeper scolded the clerk, the clerk scolded the boy, and the boy went out to the front door and abused the porter. And after that, throughout the day, everything seemed to go wrong with Peter himself and all who were about him; yet surely the fault was his own. [154]

[155]



A few mornings after this it seemed as though Peter’s glasses had undergone another change. [156] They appeared now to be of a blue color. He was in a milder frame, but low in spirits. He was sorry to see the nursery carpet wearing out, for he did not know where another would come from. At breakfast he watched the children taking butter, and took hardly any himself. He begged Mrs. Crisp to put less sugar in his coffee. The frown was gone from his brow but a most dejected look had taken its place. Spying a hole in the toe of his boy’s shoe, he drew a long breath; and, [157] hearing that the dressmaker was engaged to come the next week for his daughters, he sighed [158] aloud. On his way down town, walking alone (for he avoided company), he looked as if he had lost a near relation, and at the store all day seemed to feel like a man who was just on the eve of failing in business, though there was, in truth, no danger of his doing any such thing.

There was one more change that Peter’s glasses used to undergo. The color which they then assumed could never be exactly made out, but it seemed to be more of a smoky hue than anything else. This did not come upon them so often as either of the others, but when it did it had a very singular effect. The glasses then seemed to befog Peter rather than help him see. For after putting them on when he got up of a morning, he would dress without speaking a word. At breakfast he would say nothing, and make it plain that he did not want anybody else to. Consequently, the whole family, little and big, would sit and munch their food in silence. Then he

would rise up from the table and walk out of the house as if he were dumb. And although it was a relief when he had gone, and made matters something better, a chilling influence remained behind him the whole day.

Peter had been wearing these glasses a good many years, when, as he was meditating alone [159] one evening, he thought to himself that things never looked very cheerful in his eyes and he was [160] never very happy, and it occurred to him that perhaps his spectacles had something to do with it. Then he remembered that a neighbor of his, one Samuel Seabright, who also wore glasses and often used to complain of them, now seemed to have gotten over his trouble and always to have a pleasant face on. Meeting Samuel the next morning, he said:

“Neighbor, if it is not making too free, may I ask what was the matter with your spectacles when I used to hear you find fault with them so often?”

“Certainly you may,” replied Samuel, “for I have not the least objection to tell you. They used to get strange shades and colors over them; so that nothing looked natural or as it ought to look, and of course this affected my spirits.”

“Is it possible?” said Peter. “And have they got perfectly clear and transparent now?”

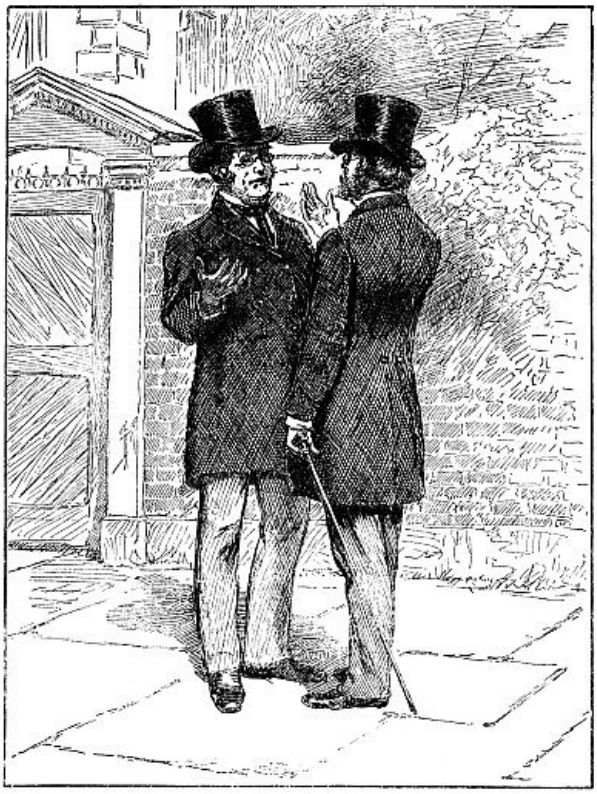
“Clear as crystal; so that everything looks just right, and they give me no trouble at all.”

“And would you mind telling me how you got them so?”

“I went to the doctor’s, and did exactly as he directed.”

“And can you tell me where that doctor lives?”

[161]



“Of course I can. You remember that large stone building with a beautiful stained-glass window at one end of it, and a high tower on top, with a chime of bells in the tower?” [162]

“Oh yes; I pass it every day.”

“Well, the doctor lives next door to that.”

That very day Peter stopped at the doctor’s house and rang the bell, and was shown into his office. The doctor himself was there, and after looking into Peter’s eyes began to ask him questions.

“Do you walk much in the open air?” said he.

“Yes, every day,” replied Peter, “but it is mostly in going down to my store and back again. Though sometimes of an afternoon my wife and I stroll out together.”

“What streets do you generally walk in?”

“Only the best-kept and most respectable streets.”

“Are you in the habit of visiting much?”

“A good deal.”

“I suppose, then, you are kept up late at night sometimes?”

“I can’t help it. You see, my relations, almost all of them—I may say all that I keep up any acquaintance with—are rich people. Now, last night I was at my uncle’s house. He had just finished papering his parlor with the most beautiful paper I ever saw. Then he had newly covered [163] his furniture with satin damask, and bought carpets and curtains to match, and he kept me [164] looking at these things ever so long.”

“Are you often kept up in this way?”

“Yes, quite often. The night before that I went to my cousin’s. He gave a very handsome dinner. There were fifteen courses set on the table. I am sure his dinner cost enough to feed a plain family of moderate size, for half a year. But nobody was there except the most select and fashionable people. To tell you the truth, doctor, these are pretty much the only kind of people I visit. They live in fine houses, with large rooms that are well ventilated and well lighted, and I don’t see how my eyes, or my spectacles, either, can get any harm while I am there. Indeed, I am longing all the time for the day when I can live in such a house myself, instead of the little pinched-up dwelling I have to stay in now.”

“Well, I have formed my opinion about your case,” said the doctor, “and am ready to say what you should do. But I must tell you beforehand that it will be different from what you expect, and probably from what you would choose.”

“Oh, as for that,” replied Peter, “I am not at all particular; you will find me willing to do whatever you say.”

[165]

“The first thing I want is that you should stop walking in those broad, sunny, handsome streets, and walk through the narrower and poorer streets, where there is not such a glare of light.” [166]

“I wouldn’t like to walk in them, for I don’t care to be seen in any but the most respectable streets.”

“Well, then there is no use of my prescribing for you any further.”

“Oh, if it comes to that, I’ll do it; for I want to get my eyes well more than anything else.”

“The next thing is that you should stop occasionally and rest while you are walking there, and call at some of the houses in those streets.”

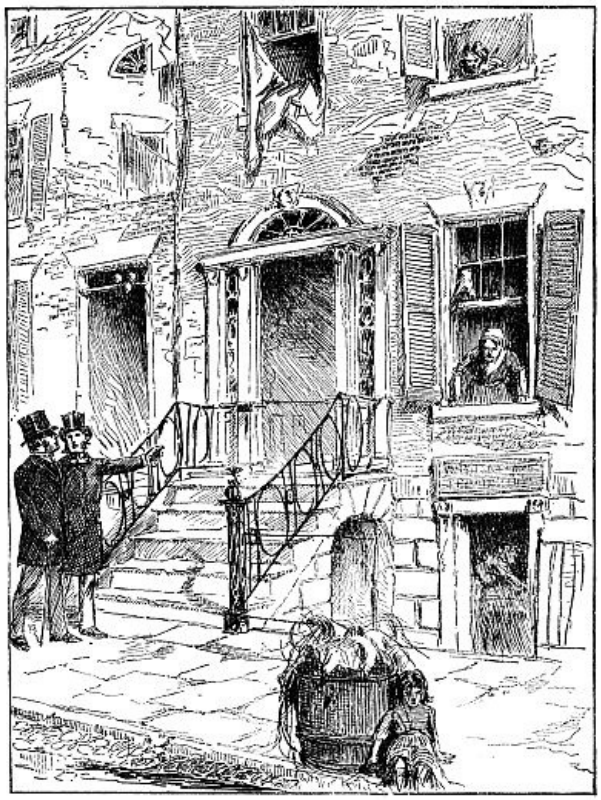
“Why, doctor, I can’t see how that could possibly do me any good. As I have told you already, the houses where I visit are among the finest in town, well ventilated and heated, and some of them are just getting in the new electric—”

“Very well,” interrupted the doctor; “it is for you to say whether you will do as I prescribe or not.”

“I suppose I will have to do it, then, though I have never visited such places in all my life.”

“Stop here to-morrow afternoon, after business-hours,” continued the doctor, “and, as you are not used to such calls, I will go with you to make a beginning.”

[167]

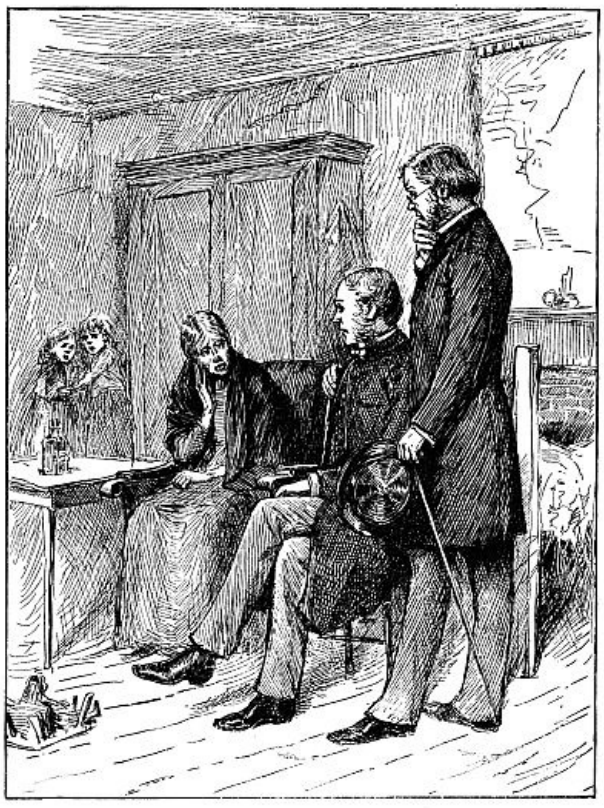


The next day Peter’s glasses gave him more trouble than usual, and he was at the doctor’s office punctually by the time appointed. The doctor did not keep him waiting, but put on his hat and led him a considerable distance, to quite another part of the town from that in which he was in the habit of walking. It had once been a fashionable part, but was deserted long ago by the richer class, and was now tenanted by only the poorest people. The houses had a decayed, tumble-down look; the front doors (once so jealously guarded) were standing wide open, the halls scarred and bare-looking, every room being occupied by an entire family. [168]

Going into one of these houses, the doctor led Peter up to the third story. There he knocked at a door.

“Come in,” said a faint voice.

Entering, they saw a poor woman sitting in an armchair. She was moving her head from side to side in the effort to get her breath. A bottle of medicine stood on a rickety table near by. The bedstead at her side, covered over with a counterpane, was evidently without a mattress, or anything else save the canvas sacking, to lie on. Two little girls, pale and scantily clad, shrank back to a corner as the visitors entered.



The doctor sat down beside the poor sufferer, and after inquiring about her sickness led her on gently to tell something of her past history—how in her youth, in her father's house, she had [169] every want supplied; how she had married with bright prospects, and for a time been happy, until [170] her husband, fallen through drink from one depth of poverty to another, had at last left her and her little ones to starve, except for the kindness of those who took pity on them.

"Yet God has taken care of me," she said, "in all my troubles, and I know he will keep on doing so. Yesterday I awoke in the morning and sat up on the edge of my bed, and cried, for I did not know where a mouthful of food was to come from for me and my children. But before night I had plenty."

Peter looked from her face to the doctor's while she was speaking. He knew that the doctor was familiar with such scenes, yet he saw him put his finger up to his eye and draw it across the lids to prevent a tear from falling.

Coming out of this house and walking a little way, the doctor turned into a narrow alley that led back from the main street. Here he entered a house that was shut in from the air and the light by high walls on every side. In a lower room of this house was a man, tall and of large frame, once evidently very strong, but now pale and weak, looking as if he were hardly able to stand. Five young children, in various degrees of raggedness, and the man's wife were with him.

[171]

Peter looked around the room. The walls had been so often covered with whitewash that it [172] stood out in layers and ridges upon them, except in some spots where the plaster had fallen off, leaving the lath bare underneath. Peter could not help thinking of the beautiful paper in his rich uncle's house.

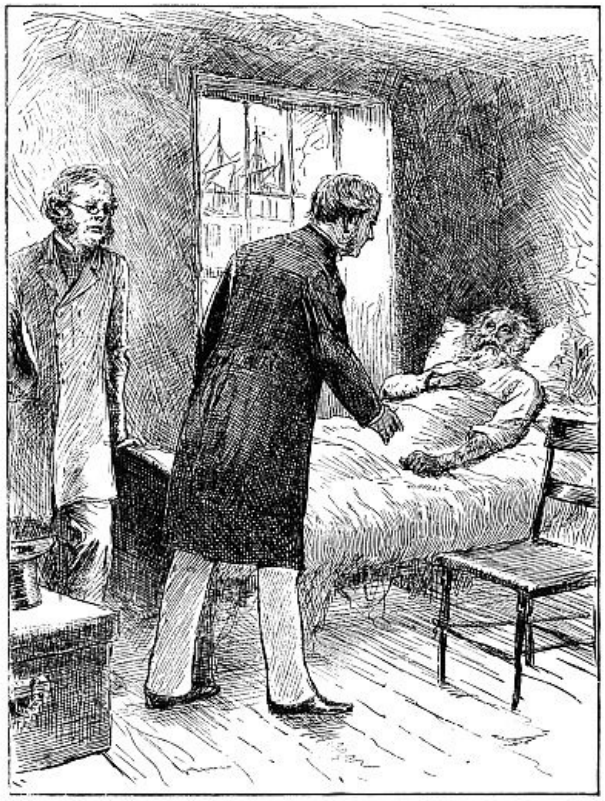
The doctor asked how they had got along since he last saw them. It was but poorly, they said. The father had been able to work only a few days—two or three in a week—and the mother had to make up for the rest. Beside doing the work at home, she went out washing and scrubbing almost every day.

"But it is hard on us," she said; "he needs good food, and we can't get it. I do all I can, but it's not a great deal, for it pulls me down so. I feel tired all the time—when I go to bed at night, and when I get up in the morning."

As she spoke Peter thought that her thin, worn face told her story even more pitifully than her words did.

It was quite late when they got through this visit, but the doctor walked with Peter all the way to his home, talking with him about his own ailment and telling him what he ought to do. "For," he said, "the trouble with your eyes is a serious one which comes from something worse than poor spectacles, and is often more deeply seated even than the eye itself."

[173]



As they parted he said: [174]

“I want you to be at my office again at the same hour to-morrow afternoon.”

Peter was there at the time named, and the doctor took him in still another direction, to a street near the water. Here, entering a narrow but very high house, the doctor led him up a dark winding stair. It was so dark that Peter had to grope his way, for he could not see a step before him. They came at last to the garret, which the doctor entered without knocking. The windows of this room opened toward the river, and the masts of ships were visible rising above the roofs of the houses that stood between. A seaman’s chest, a chair and a broken, propped-up bedstead were all the furniture the room contained.

On the bed lay an old white-haired man. He had been a sailor, and his seamed and rugged face still told of his hard life upon the deck, and on the mast, amid wind and storm.

“What is the matter with him?” asked Peter, in a low voice.

“Nothing but old age,” replied the doctor.

“And what has he to live upon?” continued Peter.

“Only the wages of his weak and sickly boy,” said the doctor, “who leaves him in the morning to go to his work, and returns at night when his day’s work is done. The long hours between he [175] spends here alone.”

The old man put his hand upon his breast, saying that he felt pain and a smothering feeling there.

“And what do you do, my old friend,” asked Peter, “while you are lying here all by yourself, if you want anything? Suppose you want a drink?”

“I do without it,” replied the old man.

The doctor leaned over the bed and talked kindly to him, comforting him, and then placed a piece of money in his trembling hand.

As he and Peter came down the winding stair together the doctor said in a low voice, “It is not likely he will suffer long.”

When they regained the street, the doctor told Peter there was yet another visit they could pay that same afternoon if they quickened their steps; and he led the way to a neighborhood not far off, where some great cotton-mills stood. Here, in a small house, and living in one little room, were two old women who were sisters. A tiny stove stood in the room with about a double handful of coal burning in it. A bucket partly filled with coal (which they bought by the bucket only) stood beside it. A single strip of rag carpet lay along the middle of the well-scrubbed floor.

[176]

In a tin cup over the fire a small quantity of meal was boiling, and in a bowl on the table was a little milk. A few pieces of bread were lying near it. (His cousin's elegant dinner here recurred to Peter's mind.) [177]

One of the old women was bedridden, but was now sitting up in her bed; and both were at work unwinding great skeins of yarn, parting the different colors and winding these up again into separate balls. This was for one of the mills in the neighborhood. Both of the old bodies were cheerful, and showed great pleasure when the doctor came in. The well one bustled about and set out a chair for him, and another for Peter. The doctor sat down and talked with them, and listened to all they had to say.

"Sister has been a good deal better for the past week," said the well one, "and the mills are busy, and we have plenty of work."

"But your rent?" asked the doctor. "It comes due soon, doesn't it?"

"We have it all made up," said the old woman, triumphantly. "It is in yonder bureau-drawer, ready now. God has been very good to us. We don't want any help this time."

It was nearly dark when the doctor and Peter came out of the little house. As they were about to part, the doctor said:

"To-morrow I will take you to another quarter and introduce you to some of my friends there." [178]

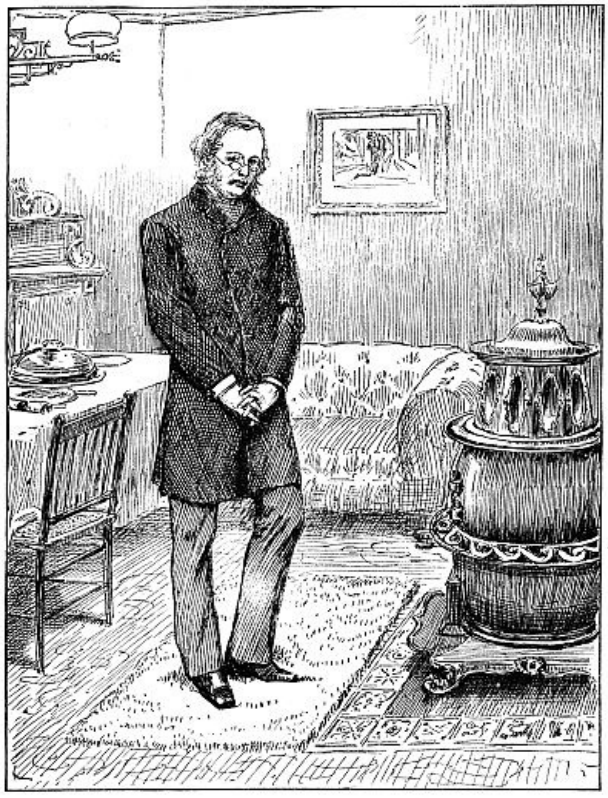
"I believe, my kind friend," replied Peter, in a subdued voice, "that this will be needless. Your wise treatment has reached the seat of the disease. I feel my sight growing clearer every hour."

Then, hastily bidding his companion "Good-bye," Peter turned toward his home. He walked with a brisk step, feeling, somehow or other, as if he could hardly get there soon enough. As he entered the door he heard the merry voices of his children up stairs. He went into the dining-room. No one was there, but the fire was burning brightly in the stove, and a plentiful evening meal was already spread upon the table. Peter stood for a moment silent and alone. The sofa, the chairs, all the objects around him—-not luxurious and elegant, but comfortable and abundant—-looked different from what they used to look. The place seemed filled with blessings.

"And is it possible," he exclaimed, "my eyes have been so blinded that I have never before been able to see them?"

Just then his wife came into the room. He went to her, took her hand tenderly in his, and told her where he had been, what he had seen, and how differently he felt.

"But," said she, with a loving smile and an arch look, "how about those badly-ironed collars that we heard of the other morning, and the dusty steps, and the weak coffee?" [179] [180]



“Oh,” he cried, “how could I ever let such trifles trouble me?”

“And then,” she continued, “the nursery carpet that is wearing out, and the boy’s shoes, and the girls’ dresses?”

“As for them,” he said, “we will hope to get more when they are gone. But with even half our present comforts and indulgences, and with you, my dearest, and our precious children about me, I trust I may feel too rich ever again to utter one complaining word.”

So the dark shadows were driven away from Peter Crisp’s spectacles, and he and all his family ever after led a happier life, because he had found what he never possessed before—A THANKFUL HEART.


W. J. Shephard del.

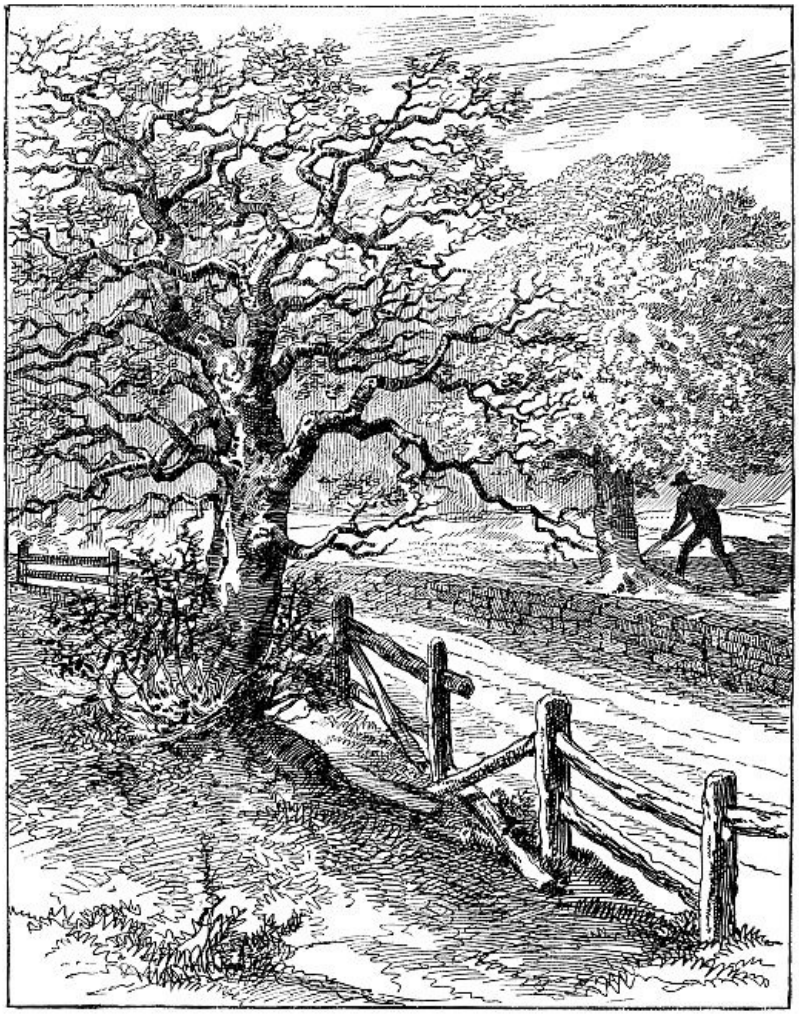
THE TWO APPLE TREES.

TWO apple trees that stood on opposite sides of the road, being both of them neglected by their owners, used to sympathize with each other's misfortunes.

"Just look at the suckers that are allowed to spring up about my roots!" said one.

"And see the great nests of caterpillars that remain undisturbed among my branches!" said the other.

But after a while the farm on which one of the trees stood was sold, and it soon became evident that its new owner was a very different farmer from the old one. He began straightening up his fences, whitewashing his buildings, and putting things to rights all over his farm. His fields [183] were ploughed, his garden planted, his fruit trees attended to—among the rest, the apple tree [184] that stood near the road. Its dead wood was cut out, the caterpillars it had complained of were cleared away, and the ground about its roots was loosened and enriched.



As a consequence, when spring arrived, it was covered with blossoms, and later in the summer loaded down with fruit.

But while all this was going on it had noticed a strange alteration in its opposite neighbor. Formerly the two trees used to talk together every day, but now very little passed between them. The one across the road seemed unwilling to talk and grew more and more silent, until, when autumn came and the great red apples were being gathered from the branches of its old acquaintance, it would scarcely return an answer when spoken to. The other bore this for a time,

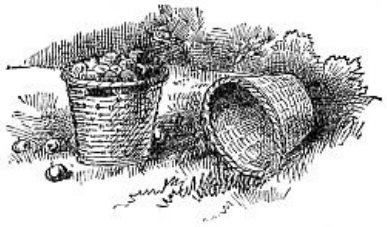
but at length could bear it no longer, and then spoke out plainly, as follows:

“You will hardly answer me when I speak to you. What a change is this in an old friend! Yet I have done nothing to make you dislike me. I am left to imagine only one cause for it, and that is jealousy, and regret, at my greater good fortune.”

“You wrong me,” replied the fruitless tree—“not in charging me with unkind treatment, which I acknowledge, but in the motive you have imputed it to. It is not because I am sorry for your good fortune, but because I am ashamed of my own unhappy condition, that I am so silent. I would not strip from you one green leaf or have you to bear one apple less, but in looking at your prosperous state I am made more conscious of my own poverty, and realize what a poor barren stock I am.” [185]

“Pardon me,” said the other. “Instead of being angry I am sorry for you, and hope with all my heart that by next spring you may fall into better hands, and by autumn be more heavily loaded down with fruit than myself.”

An appearance of ill-will does not always prove its existence. We should be sure of the motive before judging the act.

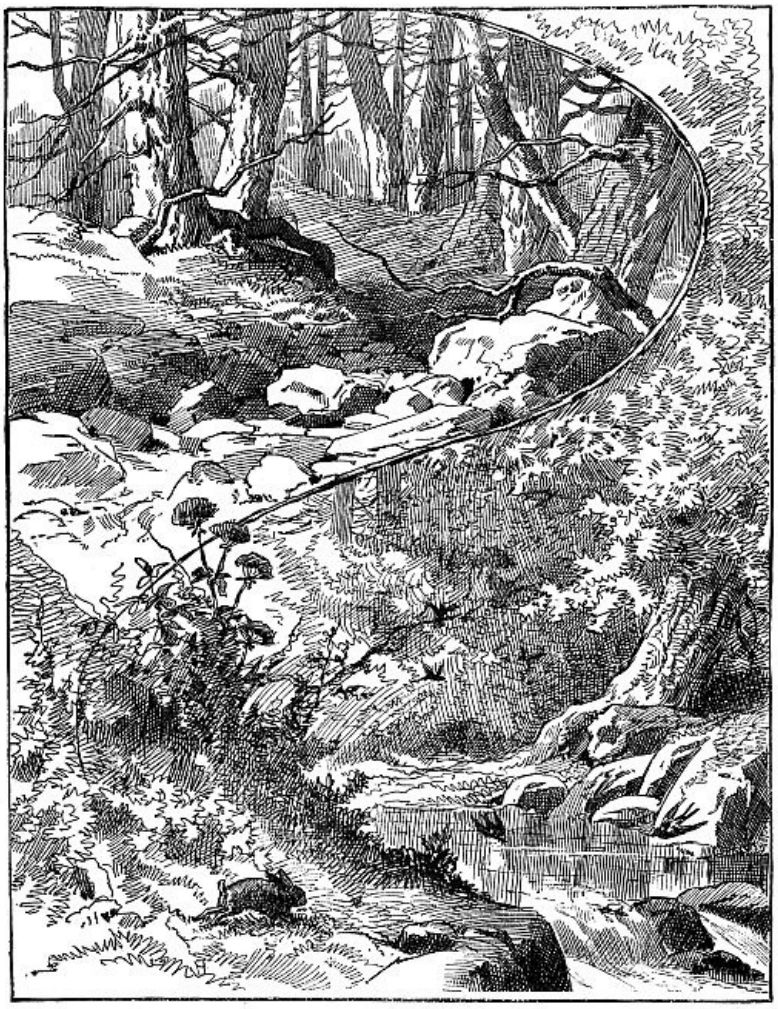


THE SPRING IN THE WOODS.

A SPRING of pure water bubbled up from the ground in the midst of a wood, but the trees, after sheltering it for a season, began to complain of it as an intruder.

“You take up too much of our room,” they said, “where more trees might grow. Then, our underbrush, that we depend on for the future, is trampled down and spoiled by the animals that come trooping every day to your side. You have no right to occupy our space, and we warn you to be gone.”

Hearing this, the spring sent word down to its hidden source, deep in the ground, bidding its streams seek another outlet in a grove near by. Soon afterward its waters began to disappear [187] from the wood, sinking lower and lower, until, instead of the glassy mirror in which the trees [188] used to see their branches reflected, only a dusty hollow remained. Nor was this all. Hot and dry weather came on soon after, and the trees, missing the moisture about their roots, many of them lost their freshness and verdure, and some of them died.



Meanwhile, the spring reappeared in the grove, with waters more abundant than ever, and the trees there grew thicker and greener, and bushes and wild flowers sprang up on every side. There, too, the birds and the beasts, deserting the woods where they had formerly gone, thronged to drink and rest in its shade.

Because we fear a little trouble and expense, or, it may be, the humbling of our pride, we let those pass by our doors who would profit us in the best things and perhaps prove to be angels entertained unawares.

THE DISTANT VIEW.

A MAN who came as a stranger into a country neighborhood bought a cottage there which stood on rising ground. Before his porch, and gently declining from it, was a velvet-like green sward, and farther off a thick growth of trees on every side. These quite surrounded him, and gave him from his cottage door a limited but beautiful prospect. A neighbor who came to pay him a friendly visit, on seeing it, said:

"You are here in a little world of your own, with every object that is disagreeable to look at shut out."

[190] But the man himself was not satisfied. Beyond the woods, on one side, was a river, and beyond the river far-spreading green fields. He wanted to bring these within sight. There was no way of doing this except by cutting down some of his trees. So, regardless of what others might think or say, he took his axe on his shoulder one morning, and went to the spot where the trees stood that interrupted the desired view.

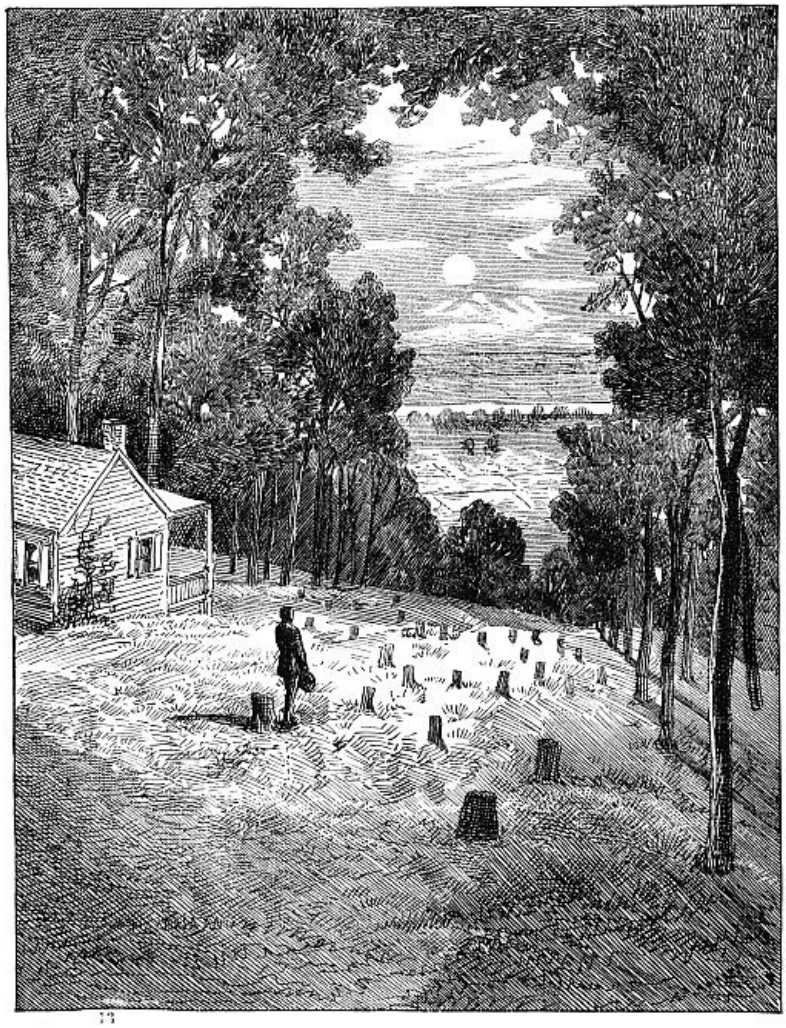
Upon examining them, he found they were among the handsomest on his place. There was a chestnut already in tassel, an elm with spreading top and fringed trunk, a sugar-maple that he knew would turn to crimson and gold in the autumn, and beside it a tall evergreen. But he did not hesitate. The end to be gained would more than compensate for his loss, and he went to work with a strong arm and determined will, and soon laid the trees low.

When the distant landscape burst upon his sight, he felt amply rewarded for the sacrifice he had made. After this he was careful to keep the avenue which he had cleared always open, coming down there again with his axe whenever a young tree or a branch of an old one, or even a bush or shrub, interfered with the view.

And now it seemed as though he never wearied of looking at the river and the green fields beyond. Every morning, before going to his work, he stood a few moments gazing at them. Again, at the close of the day, on returning to his cottage, he looked at them in the soft sunset light. [191] When working in his garden or about his lawn, they were in sight all the time. And on Sundays, or [192] whenever he had a few hours' rest, he would take his favorite seat before the door that looked out toward that view.

Of course there were cloudy days when the view was interrupted, but even then he used to gaze in that direction, knowing that the scene he loved was there. And so he continued to do year after year. And though you may hardly believe it when I tell you, yet it is true, that as the years rolled on there came a changed expression upon his face—as if he saw something which others could not see—which never again left it.

After this had become so evident (though unknown to himself) that his friends and neighbors observed it, one of them made bold to ask him whether there was anything more than a love of Nature that so attracted him to the river and the green fields.



Then for the first time he opened his heart to another, and said:

“You know, my friend, that I came to this country a stranger, but you do not know that I came also an outcast, disinherited justly, and banished from my Father’s house. That house stands across yonder river, and through all these years I have been catching glimpses of it, and hoping some day to return there. This reveals to you the reason for what seems so strange in my life since I came here. And now I know that I shall return thither. I am but a sojourner here, and am longing to see my Father’s face—yes, and the face of my Elder Brother, who it is that has brought about (at His own cost) a reconciliation between us.” [193] [194]

THE TWO VINES.

A MAN came out into his garden one spring morning to prune his grape-vine. Wherever its branches were growing too freely, or in a wrong direction, he cut them off. Then he bound them to a low wooden frame he had placed there, so that they might grow only in the direction he intended. Now, as the day was warm and the sap was beginning to flow, the branches bled, as the vine-dressers say, in the places where he had pruned them.

It happened that just outside of the garden wall a wild vine was growing, having twined itself around a tall forest-tree that stood there. When this wild vine saw what was done to the vine in the garden, it cried: [196] [197]

“I pity you, wounded and bleeding, and not allowed to grow aloft, as your nature demands.”

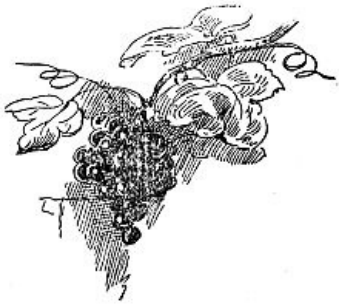
“It is not because he delights in wounding me,” replied the other, “that my master has done this. I was once a wild vine too, but he took me up tenderly, and planted me in his garden, and has watered and cared for me ever since. I am willing to submit myself to his hands.”

Not many weeks after this rich blossoms burst forth on both vines, giving to each an equal promise of fruit. Before long the blossoms dropped off and the embryo fruit appeared. As the summer advanced *these were tried*. Such as were destined to ripen lived on through the heat and the drought, and such as were destined to perish fell to the ground.

At length autumn came. The wild vine had climbed up to the topmost boughs of the forest-tree

and was waving its unfettered branches in the air, but on those branches were found only a few withered grapes. But the vine in the garden, tied down to its low frame, was loaded with purple clusters; and the gardener came, and gathered them into baskets, and carried them to his home. Afterward he returned to his vine and bound straw around it, to protect it from the winter's cold. [198] But going through the forest with his axe in his hand, seeking for fuel, he cut down the wild vine and cast it on the heap for the winter's burning.

He who believes that a loving, and all-powerful Hand is ordering his lot should see a token of future blessings in the visits of adversity.



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[199]

THE OLD CHESTNUT AND THE YOUNG OAK.

AN old chestnut tree that had been condemned to the axe a generation ago, being overlooked by the woodman from year to year, still stood in its place among the trees of the forest, and on the return of spring feebly put forth a few leaves at the end of its branches.

A strong young oak that stood near, seeing this, said to it proudly:

“What is such a fag-end of life worth, any way? Why not give up the struggle and die?”

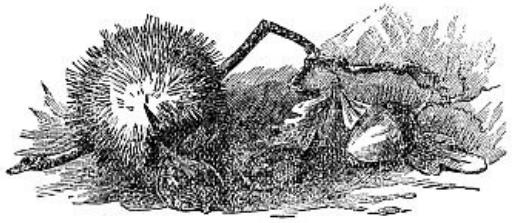
[200]

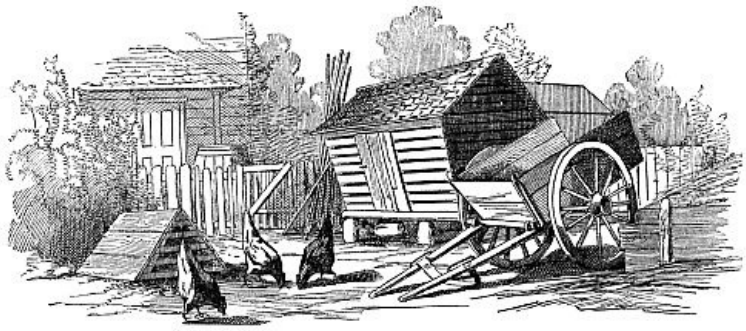
“It is not for us to die when we choose,” replied the chestnut, “but to cherish what of life is left to us.” [201]

A century rolled round. The chestnut had fallen and gone to dust, but now the oak had grown old. A yawning cleft down its trunk showed where the lightning had blasted it long years before. Its once mighty branches were decayed, and broken off by winter storms; only here and there a tuft of green remained amid the vast ruin. Viewing these sadly one day, it said:

“I am made to look back a hundred years! It is my turn now to be asked why I do not give up the struggle and die. Ah! how little I knew what my own lot was to be when I mocked another with the question!”

Let us not add to the burden which old age will lay upon us hereafter by want of sympathy for those who are bearing this burden now.

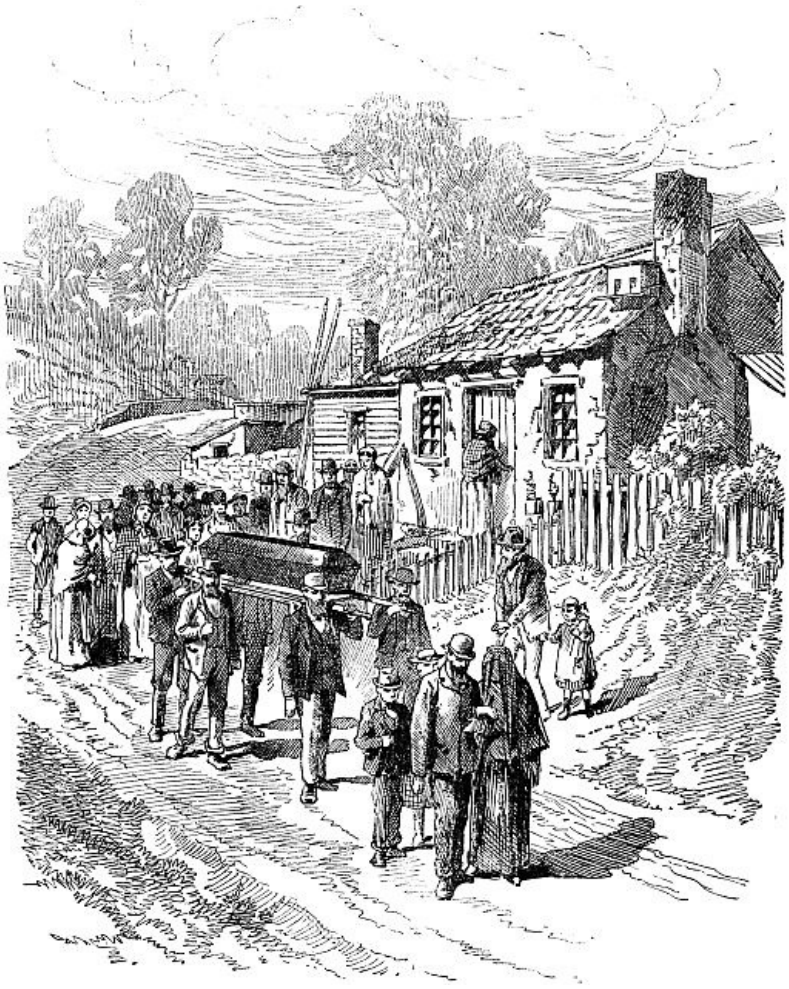




CORN-CRIBS.

A POOR man having died and left his widow with little children to support, a neighbor of hers—who was known by the name of Kris, and who was almost as poor as herself—borrowed a horse and cart to go around among the farmers he was acquainted with, and beg some corn for her.

“All of them,” he said, “knew her husband and hired him now and then to do day’s work; I’ll go and see what they will give.”



He came to the first farmer, who listened to his story and without saying a word went to his corn-crib, filled his bushel-measure heaping full, and emptied it into the cart. Kris thanked him warmly for this, but the man, not seeming to notice what he said, returned to his crib, heaped up the measure once more, and emptied it also into the cart. Then for the first time he spoke, saying: [203] [204]

“I can give to so worthy an object with a clear conscience. When she wants more, come again.”

As Kris drove out to the road he said to himself:

“I’ve made a mistake: I ought to have borrowed a wagon instead of a cart. This will be full presently, and I could just as easily have hauled her a two-horse load.”

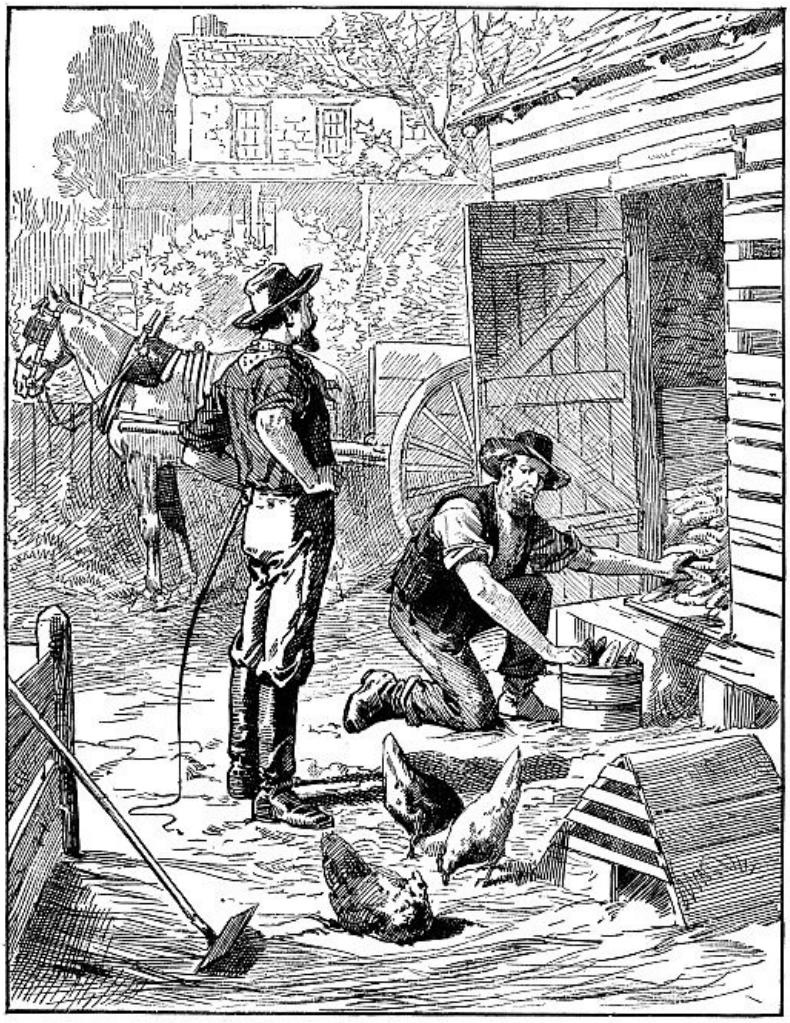
Turning in at the next gate, he told his story to the farmer there, who, as soon as heard it, said:

“Why, if a man’s got any conscience at all, he can’t help giving to such a hard case.”

Saying which, he walked to his corn-crib, but with not quite so brisk a step as the first, and filled his bushel-measure, but not quite so full as the other, and, handing it to Kris, let him carry it out and empty it into the cart himself. Kris thanked him, but noticed that he did not say he was welcome.

About half a mile farther on Kris came to the third farm. As he drove in he met the farmer on the way to his barn. He stopped and listened to what his visitor had to say.

“I thought maybe,” said Kris, closing, “you’d like to give her some corn to help her out through the winter.”



“Of course I would,” replied the farmer. “I hate tramps and beggars, but she’s none of them. I knew her husband well; he gave an honest day’s work for a day’s wages. Besides, it’s a duty to give. I’d do it to ease my conscience if it wasn’t for anything else. Come over to the crib.” [205] [206]

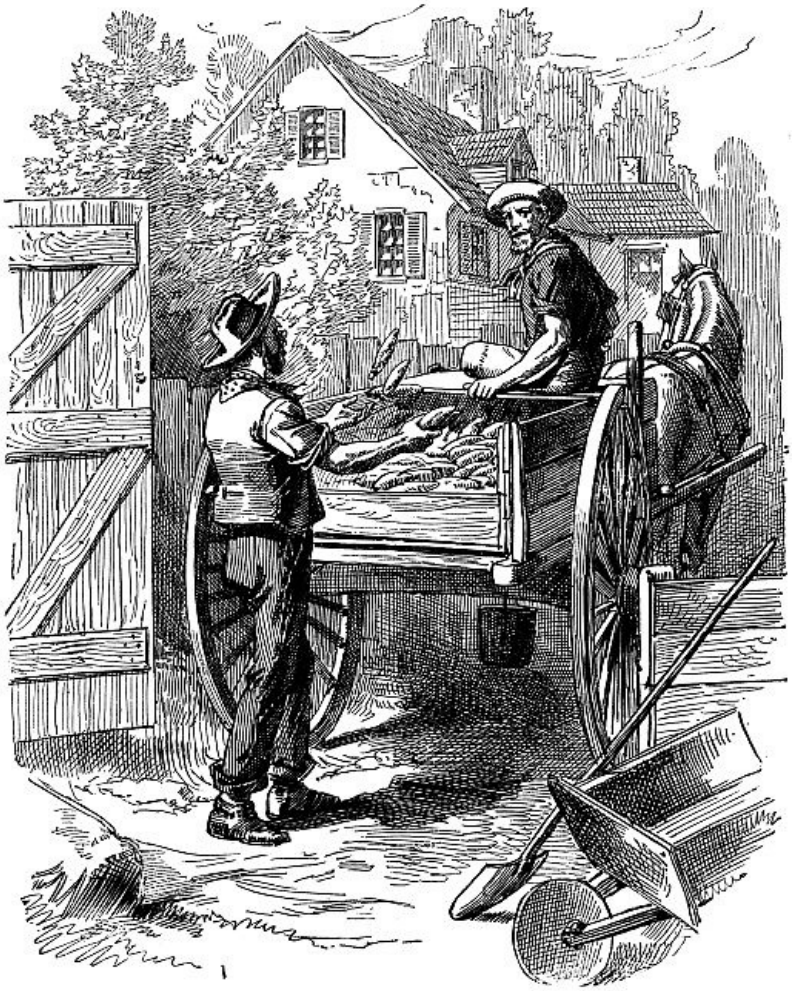
Kris followed him to the door and went in. The bushel-measure was lying there, but the man looked around, as if something were still wanting, and then hurried over to the stable.

“His big scoop is missing,” thought Kris. “He’s going to do the best yet.”

In a moment he was back again carrying a peck-measure in his hand (it looked scant even for a peck); filling which, he handed it to Kris, who, mute with surprise, silently emptied it into the cart.

From this farm Kris drove on to the one beyond. He passed by the farmer’s house—a comfortable stone dwelling—and turned into the barnyard. As he did so he noticed how fat the cattle and the pigs looked. The farmer came out to him, and Kris made his appeal.

“Well,” said the man, “I s’pose I’ll have to help too; and even if I didn’t want to, my conscience would make me. But I should think such a stout-lookin’, able-bodied woman ought to be able to help herself.”



By this time they reached the corn-crib, which Kris noticed was full up to the very top; and the farmer, gathering up a dozen ears in his hands, pitched them into the cart, exclaiming: [207]
[208]

“Whew! what a heap you’ve got there! Mind, Kris, don’t you come for any more.”

Kris drove out of the gate and turned his horse’s head toward home.

“The cart’s too big, after all,” he said. “It’s of no use to go any farther; the next one would want to take away some of what I’ve got. It’s wonderful what a crop of consciences grows in these parts! But I’ve a notion that a good deal of it’s only ‘cheat’ after all, and we might as well call it by the right name.”

Men who can be satisfied without any conscience are very uncomfortable without a base imitation of one to stand in its place.

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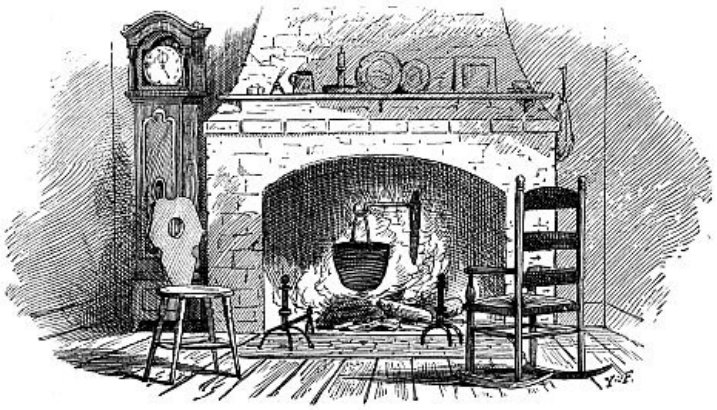


THE OLD CLOCK IN THE NEW HOME.

A CLOCK that had been handed down from generation to generation and brought from the old country homestead to a new city home, as it was being wound up one day, said, impatiently:

“I have been running for a hundred years. Let me rest now. Are not your fathers, whom I served so long, at rest?”

“It shall be as you say,” replied its master, laying aside the key and shutting up the glass door that enclosed its tarnished metal face.

In a few hours the old clock was silent. Its great leaden weights hung suspended near the [210] floor; its broad old-fashioned hands ceased to move, and its pendulum, no longer flashing from right to left through the little round pane of glass in front of it, hung motionless and still.

The day ended; the long night passed, and the morning appeared. The same stirring sounds as on other mornings were ushered in from the streets; the other clocks, within and without, went on striking as usual. The family rose up for the duties of the day, but as they came down to the morning meal each member stopped on the stairs and looked regretfully at the old clock, saying:

“How we miss it! How strange it seems not to hear it going!”

“I lay awake last night,” said the mother, “listening for it to strike.”

And so the second day passed. But toward evening, as the master came in sight, suddenly the old clock cried out:

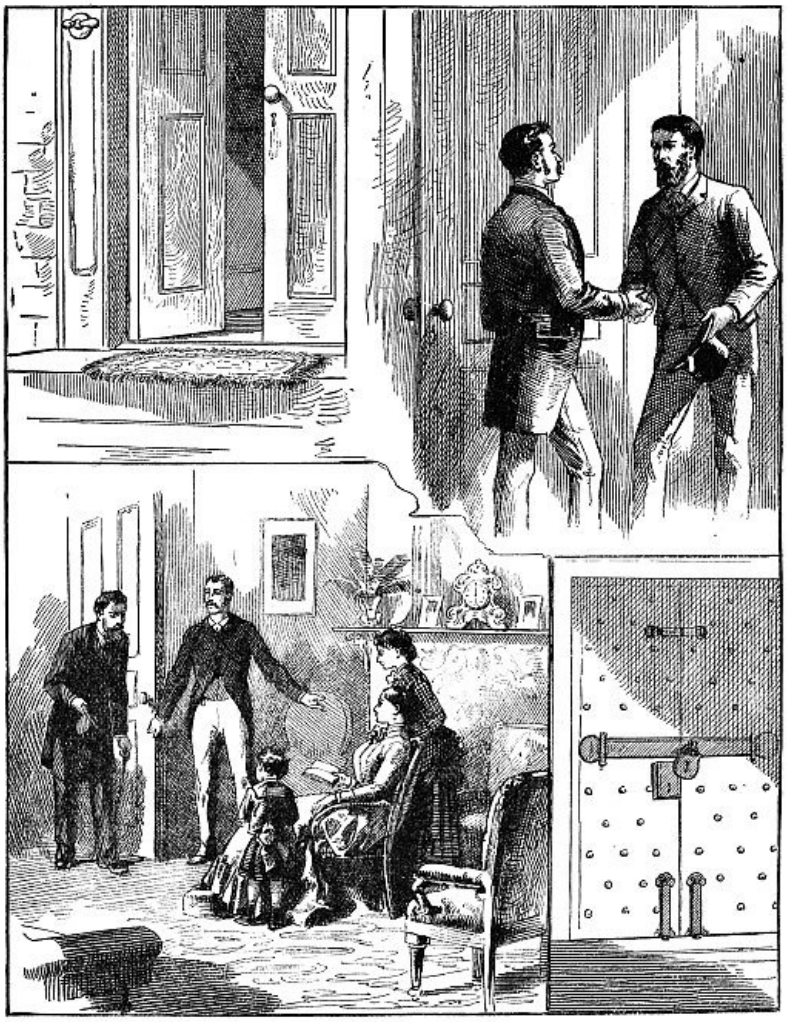
“Come, wind me up and set me going again; and when at last I can go no longer, take me to pieces and sell me for old brass. For I would rather not be at all than to exist without taking part in the busy life that is throbbing around me.”

[211]

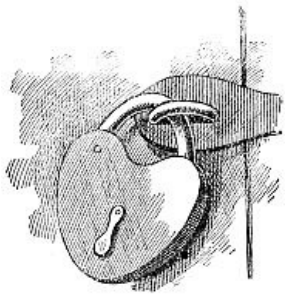
He who abandons his work (thinking to unburden himself) while he still has the strength to perform it, lays down the lighter for the heavier load. [212]

THE GREAT SECRET.

WE keep our hearts shut up, as it were, in a safe, or strong box, many doors deep. The first door opens from the surface, or outside; it is like the door to the vestibule of our house, and is open to all comers. The second door admits to the halls and parlors, as we might say, and is open to our acquaintances generally. The third door gives access to the living-room of the family, wherever that may be; it is opened to relatives and intimate friends. The door next to this admits into the chambers where only the nearest and dearest may come.



But beyond all these is another door, to which none in the house may be likened; in this room are things which may not be shown—our most secret thoughts and desires, the best and the noblest as well as the lowest and the basest. The door to this room is never opened to human eyes. And yet only the eye that can see within it discerns our true character, for here, hidden away from mortal sight, dwells the real man; and as the outward husk and shell are stripped off to come at the kernel and the grain, so all the rest of us will be torn away and cast aside when the final estimate comes to be made.



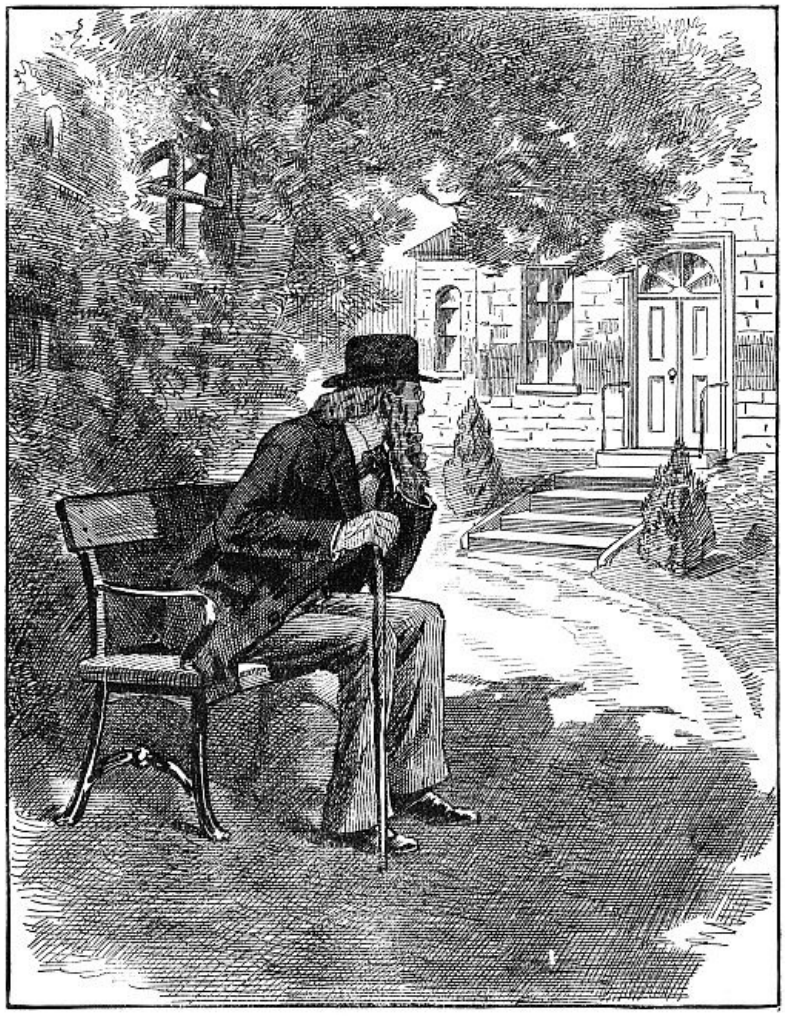
THE HOUSE-BUILDER.

A CERTAIN man who owned a lot of ground determined to build a house on it. There was a good quarry in his lot, but to get the stone out of it required hard labor. This, however, was all that was needed; so he went to work with a good will, and made a prosperous beginning. First he laid the foundation, and then several courses of the superstructure. But the toil was severe, the wall progressed slowly, and the work grew wearisome.

One day, while digging in his quarry, he discovered a new vein of stone, which ran over his [217] neighbor's line, and he picked up a block of it that came easily into his hand. He found that it was [218] more easily worked than his own, and that he could almost save the labor of squaring, and dressing, by using it. The next day he took out some more, until he had taken enough to lay one course of it all around the walls of his house. But this carried him so far into his neighbor's premises that he dared go no farther; he filled up the opening he had made with rubbish and earth, and went to work again on his own land. Months, and even years, passed by; but he worked on faithfully, day by day, and at last his house was finished. Then he furnished it comfortably, and, taking his family with him, moved into it, to stay there for the rest of his days.

Now, while his hands were busy and his mind engaged in building, he never once thought of the course of stone that he had taken from his neighbor. But after all was done, and his long task completed, as he stood one day in front of his house, admiring it, he observed that course. It had settled into a different color from the rest—not so different as to be noticed by others, but enough to make it evident to himself. He found the next day, as he passed through his garden, that he saw it again; and after that it seemed to stand out conspicuously whenever his face was

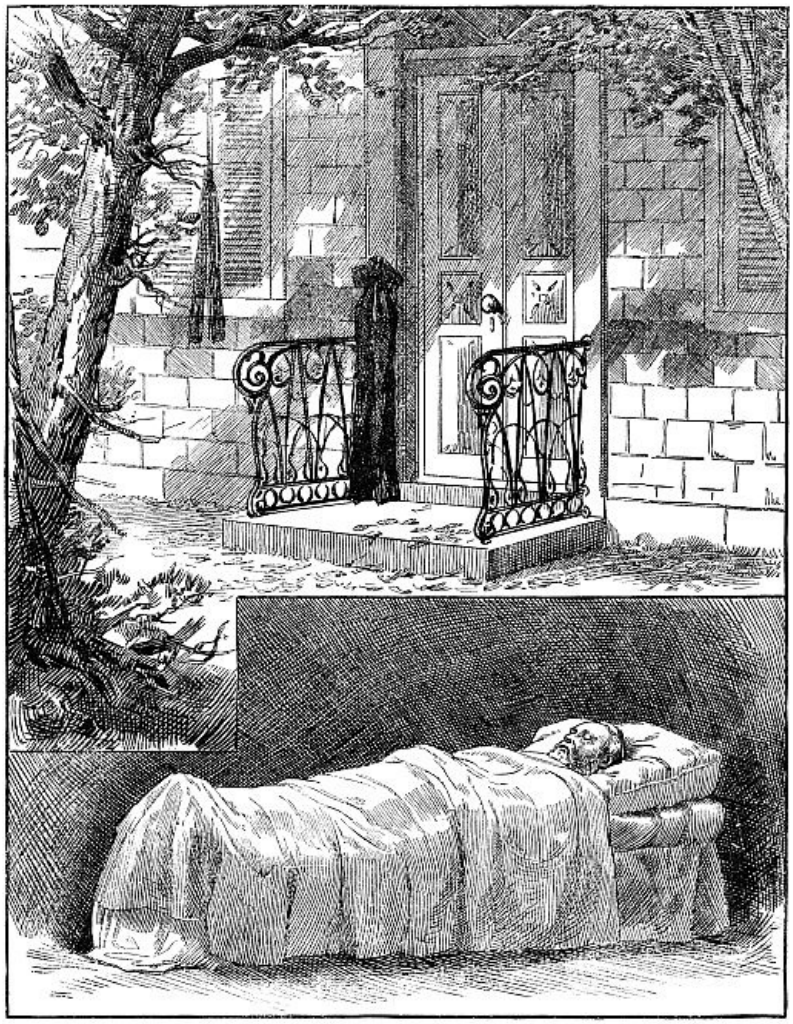
turned toward his home. This began to annoy him. It was only one course, to be sure; there were full fifty courses in the wall between the roof and the foundation. Why did this single one attract his attention before all the rest? His conscience answered the question. It did not rightly belong there; it never had been, and was not now, his own. [219] [220]



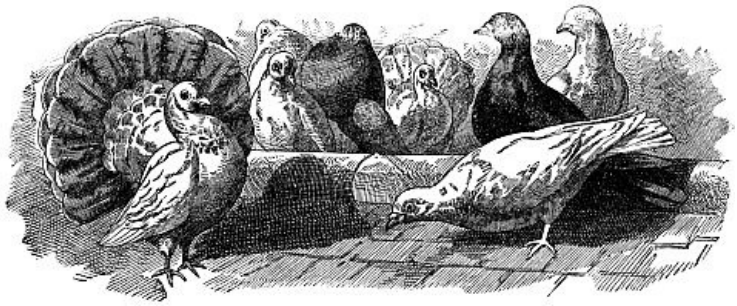
A year passed from the time when his house was finished, then another and another. It was astonishing how quickly they sped. Yet there was not a day in all those years that his eye did not, some time between the rising and the setting of the sun, rest on that course of stone.

At length old age crept on. He had time now to sit still and think of the past, and he did not sleep at night as he used to. But both by day and by night the course of stone was in his mind. Most willingly he would have gone to his neighbor and paid him ten times its value (for he had prospered and grown rich), but in doing so he would have confessed himself a thief and disgraced his family for ever; he could not do this. Or gladly he would have torn it from his walls and placed it back in the quarry from whence he had taken it, but that was impossible. So he lived on, brooding over it until it drove all better and happier thoughts out of his mind, and at last he died, bowed down and crushed, as it were, under its weight.

[221]



There is an interest account, so to speak, running on against every amount, be it small or great, that we have ever gotten dishonestly. And the worst of it is that if it be not settled now we shall find it still standing and accumulating in the long hereafter. [222]



PIGEONS.

SOME pigeons that had their home over a rich man’s stable came to visit a pair that lived near by in a poor man’s barn.

“You’d better come and live with us,” said the rich man’s birds, “for we not only have a beautiful new house with partitions inside for our nests, but we’re fed every day on the best that the farm affords.”

“Who feeds you?” asked the poor man’s birds.

“Our master’s servants, of course.”

“But *our* master,” replied the others, “feeds us himself. We thank you for your invitation, but would rather stay where we are.”

Summer passed and cold weather came on, and one snowy morning the pigeons at the barn were astonished to see their grand neighbors alight near them again. [224]

“We are of the same mind still,” the poor pigeons cried, “and can only repeat what you have heard already. We will not go with you.”

“Ah!” said their rich neighbors, “we have not come, this time, to ask it, but rather to ask whether you haven’t got a corner here in the barn where we may come and stay; for our master has gone away for the winter, and his servants have forgotten us, and we’re likely to starve in our beautiful home.”

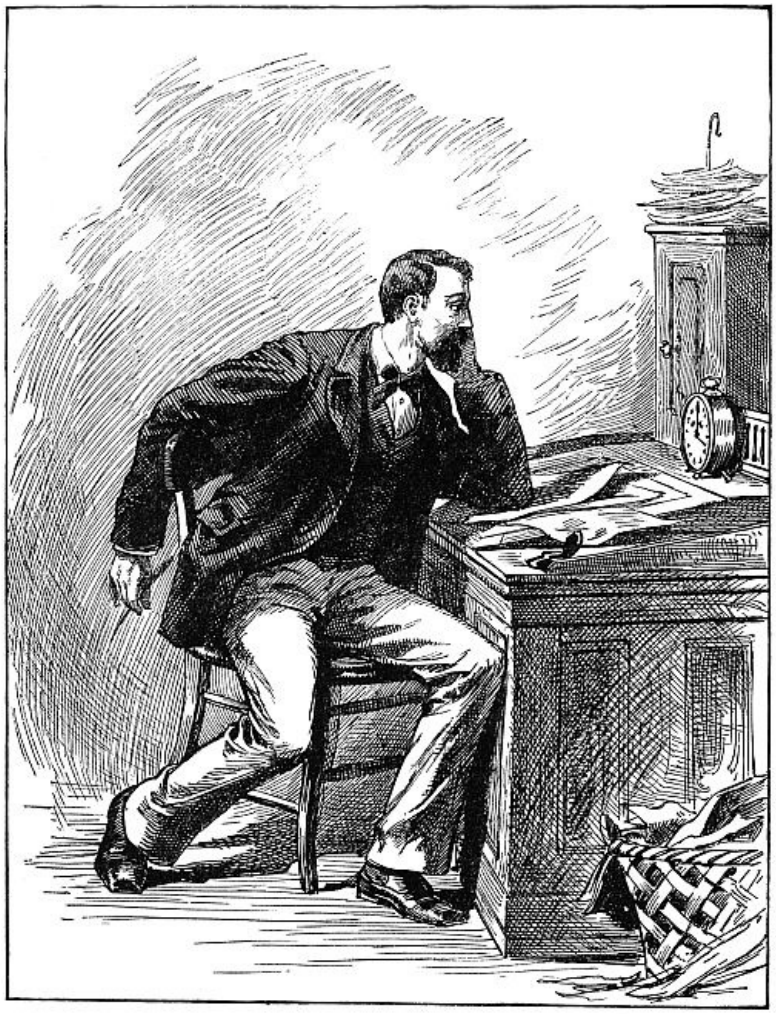
The nearer we get to the source of the good that we need, the more sure we may be of a continued supply of it.

THE CLOCK ON THE DESK.

A LITTLE round nickel-plated clock stood on a certain man’s desk measuring out his hours of work. One day, after he had been wrestling with his thoughts and vainly endeavoring to order them to his bidding, he leaned back in his chair, and, setting them at liberty, let them wander whither they would.

In a few moments, and while he still remained in this idle posture, he was startled at hearing from his clock, instead of its accustomed “Tick-a-tick!” the words, “Keep at it! Keep at it!”

“Do you mean those words for me?” cried the man, and then, before the clock had time to answer, continued: “It is because I am resting a moment you presume thus to rebuke me. Must a man be for ever at work? May he not take time even to look round him, or to yawn or wait for a new idea? Your words are insulting.” [226] [227]



Here, being out of breath, he paused long enough for the clock to reply:

“Indeed, sir, I said nothing. You heard only my heart beat ‘tick-a-tick, tick-a-tick,’ as usual. When this stops, you know as well as I that my life will be ended and my work for you done.”

“Pardon me,” said the man. “Because I deserved a rebuke, I was so quick at finding one. Though you did not utter the words, they fit my case well. I would that you ever might go on

repeating them.”

When we feel conscious of deserving reproof, its arrow lights upon us from many a bow that was drawn only at a venture.

THE WATCH-DOG.

A MASTIFF that had received a severe kick from his master thus soliloquized as he walked slowly and sadly toward his kennel:

“I guard his house by day and by night, securing for him undisturbed rest, but hardly ever getting for myself so much as an hour’s sleep at a time. He never comes near me that I do not show my pleasure by a wag of my tail; and when he speaks to me and pats me on the head, my delight is so great that I can hardly control myself, and behave as a sensible dog ought to behave. And yet, because I happened, by accident, to be in his way, he has thus ill-used and disgraced me! What a shame, when he has the power so easily to make me happy that he abuses it in making me miserable!” [229] [230]

By this time the mastiff had reached his kennel, at the farther end of the garden; but, as he was about entering it, one of his own pups, that had been playing on the grass with a little terrier from the next house, caught sight of him. In a moment both the pup and the terrier let their tails drop and slunk out of sight. The old dog watched them as they disappeared, and after pausing a moment said to himself:

“This ought not to be. The harsh treatment that I have received makes me examine my treatment of others. I am afraid I’m as bad as my master. It is because they are growled at and snarled at so often these pups run away as if their innocent gambols might cost them a cudgelling. My master did not mean it; yet when he kicked me, he did me a favor, for so have my own faults been brought to my view, and from this very hour I mean to correct them.”

Before we judge those who have the rule over us, let us stop and ask,

“What would they say whom we rule over?”

THE OPENED EYES.

A BLIND man whose disposition had been soured by his misfortune refused to credit anything his friends said about the objects that surrounded him. He would not believe that the flowers he smelt were clothed in brilliant colors, or that the birds he heard singing were covered with beautiful feathers. He would not believe there was a regular succession of night and day and light and darkness. He could give no reason for his obstinate unbelief except that he could not imagine any of these things; which, of course, was not to be expected of him, since he had always [232] been blind.

It happened that after a time the man recovered his sight; whatever had obscured it seemed slowly to pass away. At first only a faint glimmer of light was visible. This increased from day to day, until at length the last film disappeared from before his eyes, and he looked out upon the world and saw everything clearly.

Then he was like a person struck dumb and unable to speak with wonder and astonishment. At this his friends followed him as he walked forth unaided, and began to explain to him what he saw.

“Yonder,” they said, pointing up to the sky, “is the great sun that we have so often told you about, though you would not believe us. But for it your eyes would be opened in vain; you would still be in utter darkness.”

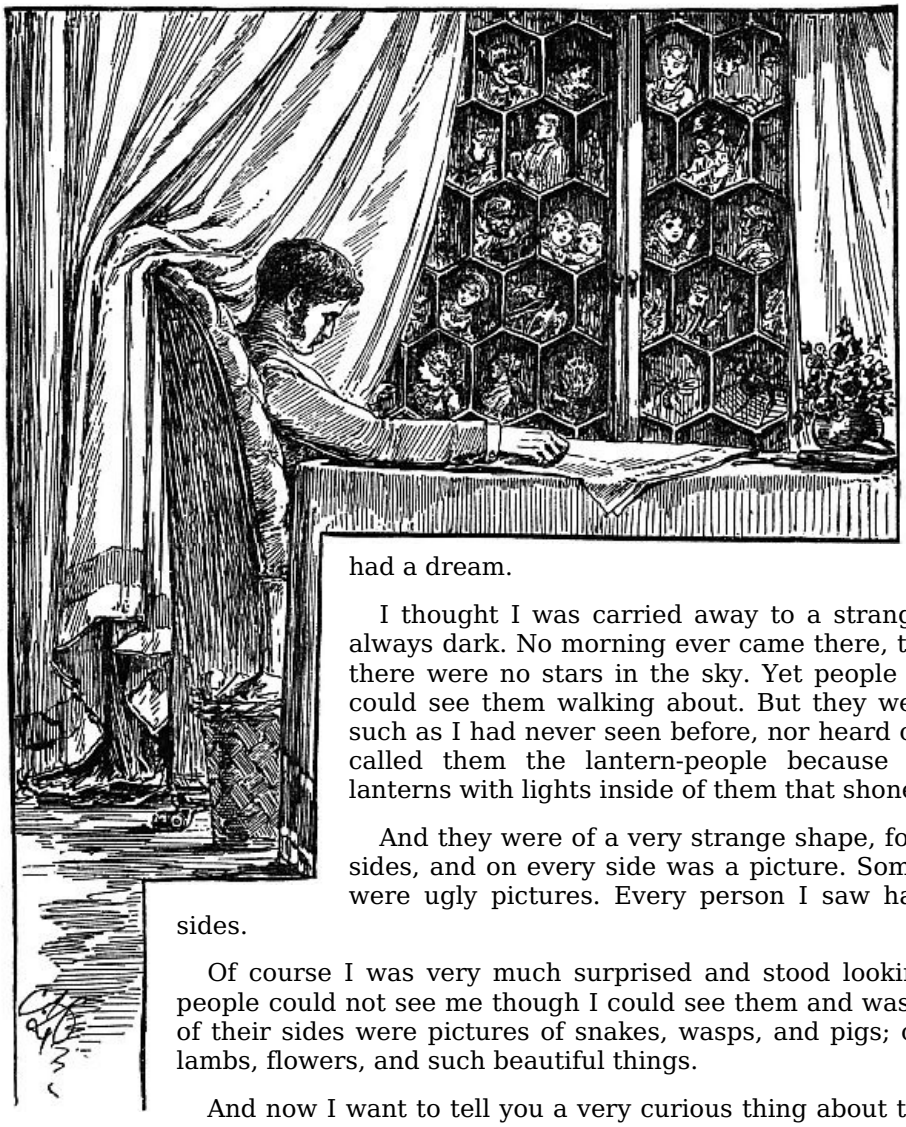
But the man, suddenly regaining his speech, cried out:

“Ah, my friends! I do not need to be told this now. Whereas all your arguments failed to convince me while I was blind, now, though you and all the world should tell me it was not the sun, I would know differently. For I see him myself. He has shined into my eyes—yes, and into my heart; and he is his own best argument. How can I remain in ignorance of him while I am walking in his light?” [233] [234]

One clear view of the truth for ourselves is more convincing than all that others can say to us in its favor.

THE LANTERN-PEOPLE.

[235]



I HAD been thinking how strange a thing it was that I disliked so many people and liked so few. Only to look at some persons seemed enough to put me out of humor and make me feel like saying cross things. But there were others, though not near so many of them, whom I loved to meet and whom I could hardly be cross to if I tried. I had been thinking about this, when I fell asleep and had a dream.

I thought I was carried away to a strange country where it was always dark. No morning ever came there, the sun never shone, and there were no stars in the sky. Yet people were living there, and I could see them walking about. But they were very strange people, [236] such as I had never seen before, nor heard of, nor even thought of. I called them the lantern-people because they looked like great lanterns with lights inside of them that shone through.

And they were of a very strange shape, for they had ever so many sides, and on every side was a picture. Some were pretty and some were ugly pictures. Every person I saw had both pretty and ugly sides.

Of course I was very much surprised and stood looking a long while, for the people could not see me though I could see them and was close to them. On some of their sides were pictures of snakes, wasps, and pigs; on other sides, of doves, lambs, flowers, and such beautiful things.

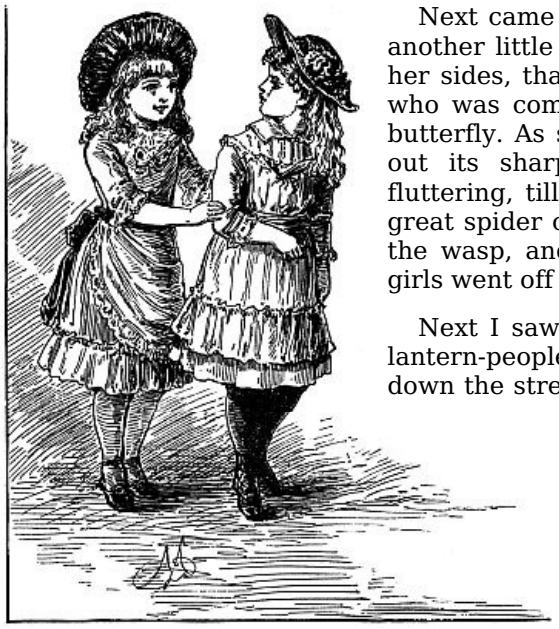
And now I want to tell you a very curious thing about the way the people acted when they met each other. I noticed, when a man met another in the street, he would quickly turn around one of his sides, so that the man he met could see it, and nothing else—that is, nothing but the picture that was on the side turned toward him.

[237]

While I stood watching I saw a man coming along who turned almost the whole way around, so [238] as to bring the picture of a dog in front, where it could be most plainly seen. It was a bull-dog—one of the sort that shows its teeth—very ugly and cross-looking. I could not understand why he

should take so much trouble to turn out that ugly picture (for he had prettier ones that I could see) until I saw another man coming toward him, who turned out a picture uglier still. It was of a bear.

As soon as they came close up to one another the pictures seemed to be alive. I was astonished to see their eyes move and their mouths open and shut, seeming to snap at one another. And all I could hear were barkings and growlings until they were gone, the dog and the bear trying to bite each other as far as I could see them.



[239] Next came a little girl. Happening to look behind her, she saw another little girl following her. At once she turned round one of her sides, that had the picture of a wasp on it. But the little girl who was coming after her turned out the picture of a beautiful butterfly. As soon as they met, the wasp began to buzz and dart out its sharp sting, and I saw the butterfly fluttering and fluttering, till presently it was scared away and the picture of a great spider came in its place. Then the spider seemed to dart at the wasp, and the wasp tried to sting the spider; and the little girls went off quarrelling as fiercely as the two men had done.

[240] Next I saw a young woman. She was prettier than any of the lantern-people I had yet seen. I saw her coming from a long way down the street, and she never turned her sides, no matter whom she met, but always kept one picture in front, and that was of a dove. It had a ring of black around its neck and an olive-leaf in its mouth. I thought to myself:

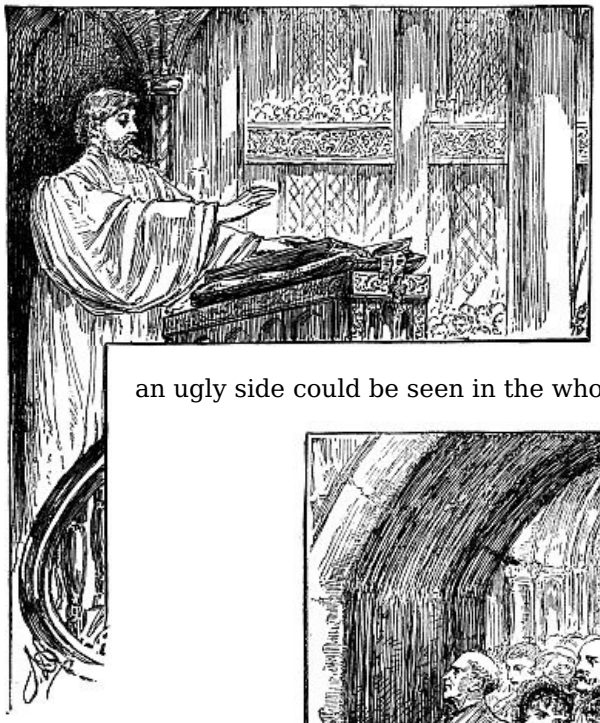
“What a beautiful picture!”

Just then another young woman came up and pushed rudely against her, and I saw this rude one turn out the picture of a snake. And the snake hissed and darted out its forked tongue, but the dove would not go. All it did was to coo softly and flutter with its wings and hold out the olive-leaf.

[241]

[242] When the snake found that it could not frighten the dove away, it began to creep off itself, as if ashamed; and what was my surprise to see, presently, another dove come in its place! And the doves began to coo to each other, and to look pleased and happy, and the two young women took hold of each other’s hands; then they put their arms around each other’s neck and kissed each other and so they passed happily by.

[243]



After this I walked about the streets looking at the strange people I met there, and, seeing a crowd of them going into a building that had wide-open doors, I went in with them. I found it was a church. In a little while the minister stood up in the pulpit and began to preach to them about being kind to one another and loving one another, very much as the ministers do that we hear. I was up in the gallery, and could see all the people as they sat listening to him. As he went on in his sermon I saw how they turned out their good sides, one by one, some quickly, some more slowly, until hardly an ugly side could be seen in the whole congregation. [244]

[245]

But no sooner was the sermon finished, and the blessing pronounced, than there was a shifting round of sides again, some doing this before they left their pews, some as they passed down the aisle, some as they walked down the church-steps; so that most of them came out pretty much the same as they went in. [246]

[247]

After leaving the church, I passed before a large private house where a servant-man was [248] standing at the door. As he could not see me I stole by him softly and went into the house. I found everything very elegant there. Beautiful furniture filled the rooms, and costly paintings covered the walls. But I soon learned that these things were not for use or enjoyment, but only for show.

The family was a fashionable one that had a great deal of company and visited a great deal. The mother, a tall, fine-looking woman, was evidently the ruling spirit among them. Whenever she and her daughters were getting ready for a walk, or a drive, she turned out the picture of a large peacock, and her daughters turned out little peacocks. I followed them into the street, and as they walked along could see the people bowing and smiling to them; but as soon as they had passed, these same people made fun of them.

[249]

In a second house that I entered the family was seated at dinner. Though not so fine a house as the first, nor so expensively furnished, I could tell at a glance it was a far happier home. I looked round to see if I could discover the cause of this difference, and here again my eye rested on the mother, who sat at the head of the table; but what a contrast with the other! The dove was on her breast, and a brood of doves on the breasts of the little ones who were gathered around her. There was cheerful, innocent talk in which all took part, without a word of unkindness for any one, present or absent.

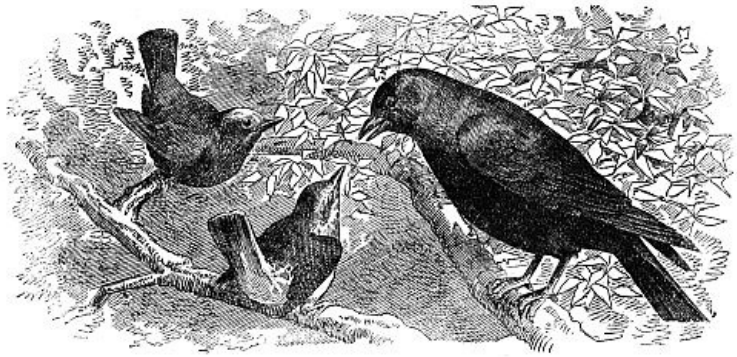
[250]

I stayed about this house for the rest of the day—it was a pleasant place to be in—and when, toward its close, the mother stole apart to a little room alone, I peeped in and saw there a chair, and a table with an open book on it, and a kneeling-cushion, well used, on the floor beside the table. Then I said to myself:

“Perhaps here is the secret of the difference between this and the more elegant home.”

I cannot close this account of what I saw while I was in that strange country without telling of a difference that I noticed between the old and the young people there. The young were constantly changing their sides; the old did not change them nearly so often. It appeared that if they had turned out their ugly sides for the most part during their former lives, they lost the power, as they grew old, to draw them back again. On the other hand, if they had struggled against the bad and kept out the good, the good became fixed there.

My dream seemed to last a long time, and I visited a great many places and saw a great many persons that I have not told about here. But this I noticed everywhere I went—that those who kept out their good sides had the best time of it. They were contented and cheerful themselves, [251] and helped to make others so. The doves, as we have read, brought out other doves, and the [252] flowers brought out other flowers. Whoever turned out these saw them turned out by other people also. And so, with a pleasant prospect without and a kindly spirit within, the good-sided people experienced a happiness which the ugly-sided people never knew.



GRAND RELATIONS.

A BLACKBIRD that wanted to impress on his neighbor the wren a proper sense of his great importance took occasion every now and then to remark that he was related to still larger birds.

"My cousin the crow," he would say, "did so and so," or "invited me to his nest at such a time."

After hearing this over and over again, the wren answered one day,

"When I used to look at you alone and by yourself, you appeared as a very large bird in my eyes; but since I've got to contrasting you with the crow, you seem to have grown smaller even than myself." [254]

Better be satisfied with our own significance than seek to array ourselves in the consequence of other people.

FAIR AND FOUL WEATHER.

A SHOWER having come up suddenly while the chickens were scattered over the barnyard, they ran from every direction to the chicken-house and disappeared, one by one, through a hole near the ground that had been left open for them to enter.

A young cock, however, that happened to be in an adjoining field, took refuge under a tree, where he straightened himself up, letting his tail droop, so that the water would trickle off from it. But when he found that the shower did not pass over, as he expected, he too took to his heels [256] and joined the rest under shelter. And there they all stood, chickens, ducks, and guinea-fowls, dolefully watching the rain.

After waiting for a time, and finding it likely to continue, the cock, shaking out his feathers, said:

“I’m going out to hunt for my dinner.”

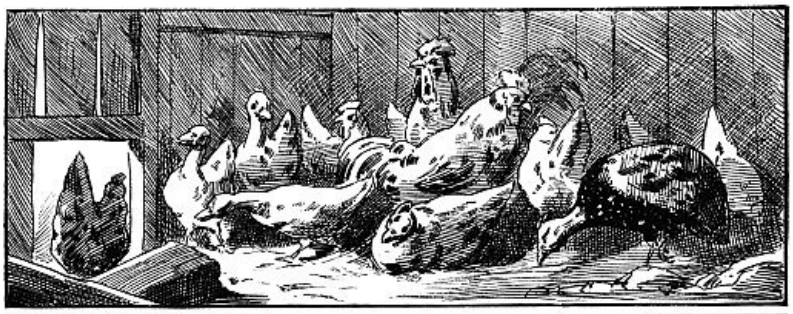
“What! in such a pour as this?” exclaimed an old hen.

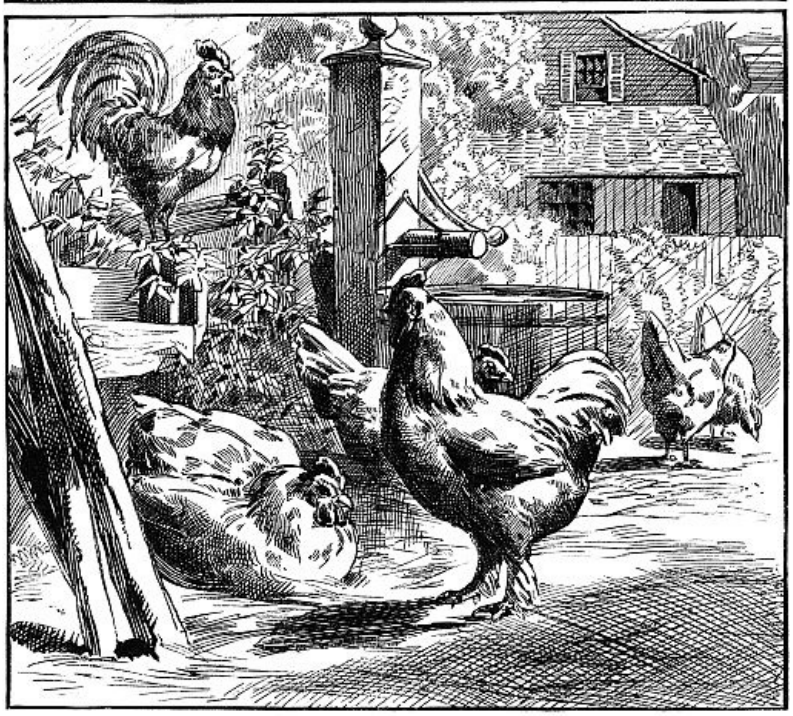
“And what would you have us do?” replied the cock. “We cannot carry umbrellas, like our master and mistress. And, for all we know, it may rain the rest of the week.” So saying, he walked boldly out into the shower.

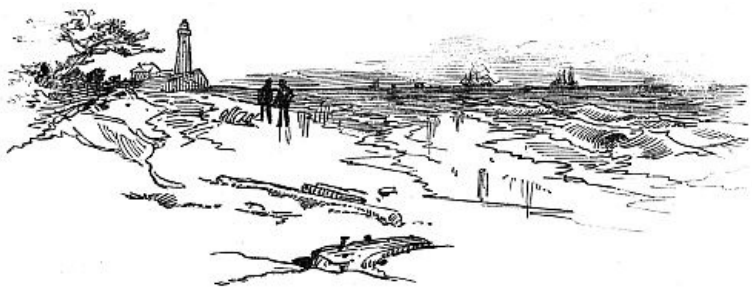
Now, the wet having brought the worms to the surface, he soon picked up a good meal; which the others descrying, they quickly came after him, until the whole flock was scratching about the barnyard, quite contented notwithstanding the rain. Seeing this, the rooster flew up on a fence and crowed. Then, looking slyly at the old hen that had opposed him, he said:

“Which is best—to work only in fair weather, or to keep on scratching whether it rain or shine?”

He will gather most in the end who does not easily give way to discouragement when success is hard to attain.



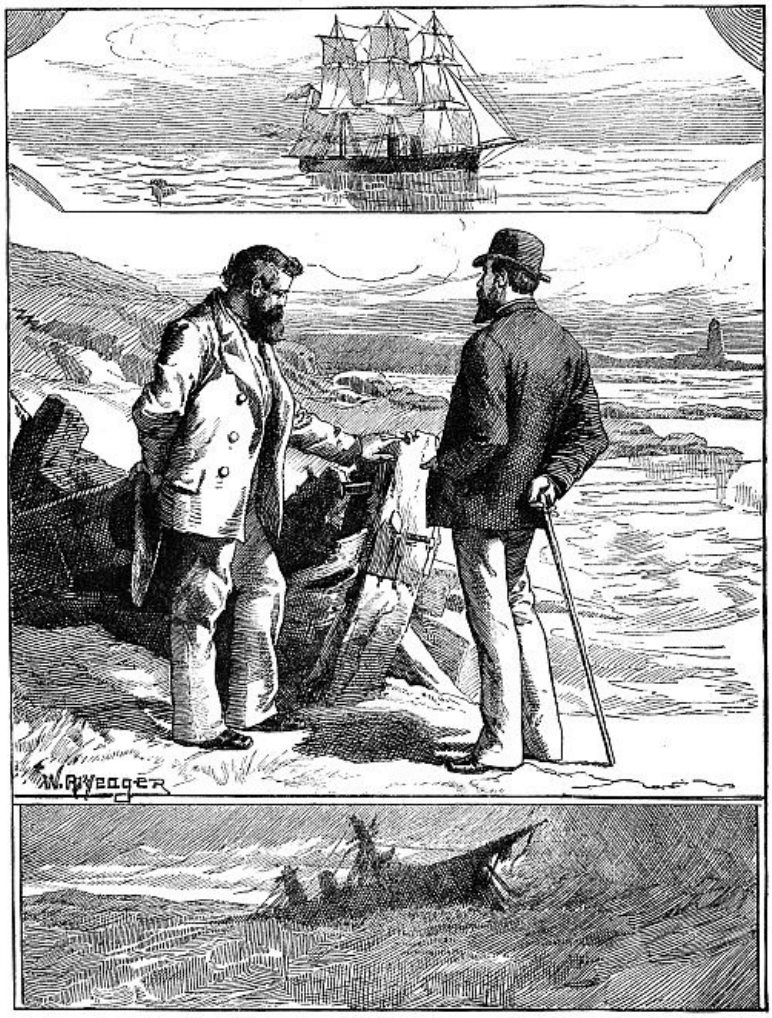




WRECKAGE.

TWO men were walking along the sea-beach together. The sand, as far as the eye could reach, was swept clean and smooth by the falling tide, but here and there at intervals lay fragments of wrecked vessels, some made of heavy timber, some of lighter weight. Now, the men, who were both of them well on in years, lived in a port near by on that same coast, and as they walked they recognized some of these wrecks.

"I remember the night when this came ashore," said one, stopping before a huge piece of keel half buried in the sand. "She was a fine ship, well manned, and the bar on which she struck was laid down plainly on the chart; but her master thought he could come close in, and yet just miss [259] it. But the current caught him, and he was lost." [260]



Then, stopping before another fragment:

"And I recollect this one too: she was a stanch bark, and I saw her heaving up her anchor on a fine morning with the promise of a prosperous voyage; but she tried to go out without a pilot, and she too came ashore. Ah, my friend!" the speaker continued. "As I look up and down this coast, and see so many wrecks whose history I know, a gloom settles over me that makes life seem, as I look back on it, more like a time of clouds and storms than of pleasant, sunny weather."

"There are wrecks enough to sadden us, that is true," replied the other; "but do not let us forget the good ships we have known that sailed the seas for many a long year, and at last came back to lay their old bones down in quiet waters on the flats behind our harbor. Yes, and many another is still ploughing the deep, to return safe in due time, bringing joyful crews and rich cargoes with them."

The evil that sometimes darkens the path before us should not

prevent our seeing the good that is spread above, beneath, and around us on every side.

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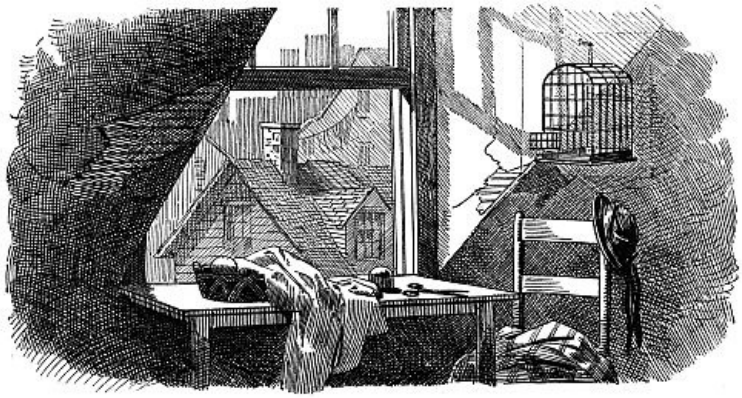
[261]



THE ROBIN.

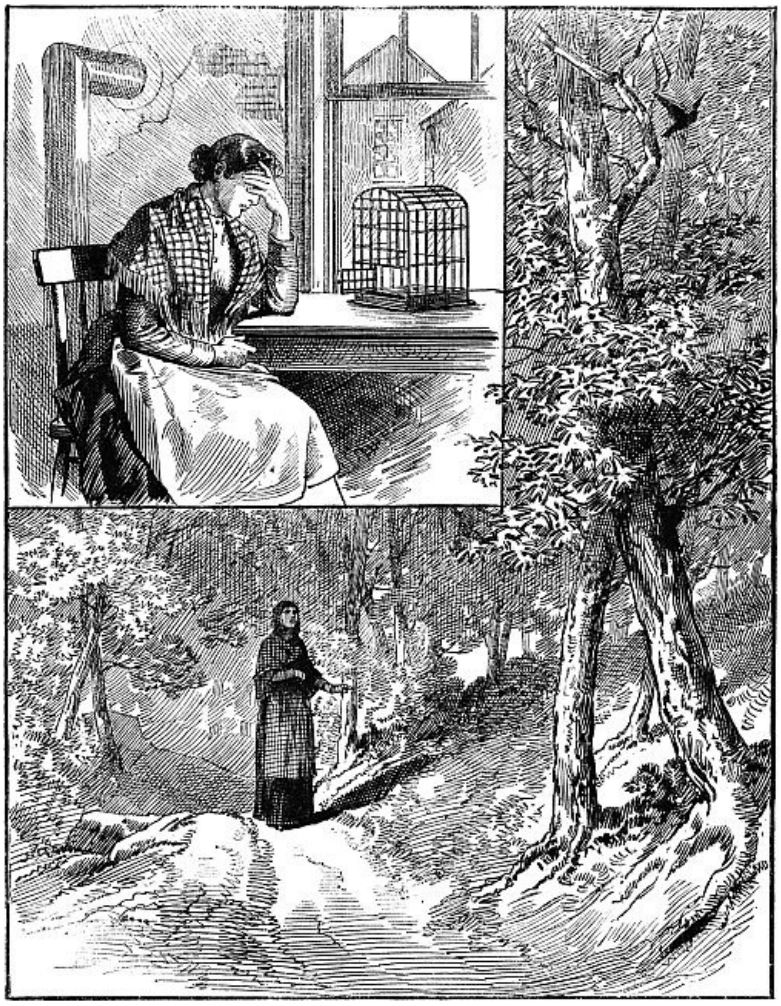
A POOR widow who was all alone in the world earned her living by going out to wash and scrub, day after day. She left her room early in the morning, and did not return to it until night. Then she had but one living thing to keep her company, a pet robin. That it might catch a glimpse of the blue sky, from the narrow alley in which she lived, she used to hang it on a nail quite outside of her window, before she left. On her return she took it down and suspended it [262] again near the head of her bed.

One evening on coming home she found the cage with its door open, and empty. After searching again and again, through every corner and cranny of her room, thinking her bird could not have left her, she was forced to admit it was gone.

Now, those who are surrounded with objects on which to bestow their affections, know not what a loss such an insignificant creature may be to one who has no other familiar thing to love. The poor woman missed her bird when she awoke in the morning, when she went out to her day's work, and when she came back, tired and sad at heart, after her work was over. The cage still hung near her bed; she looked at it and grieved—yes, more than she ought to have done.

While it was thus with her she had, one night, a dream. She thought she was walking through a forest. The air was pure, the shade was cool and delightful, and every leaf around her looked fresh and green. She stood comparing the scene, in her thoughts, with the crowded alley in which she lived, when suddenly the silence was broken by a loud note far above her head. She looked up, and recognized her robin. It was leaping from bough to bough, and its song was not as it used to be, with a note of sadness in it, but glad and full of joy—the song of the prisoner set free. [263]

[264]



She awoke, rose up, took down the cage and put it in a closet out of sight, not forgetting its former inmate, but thinking of it as she had seen it, since its escape, in her dream.

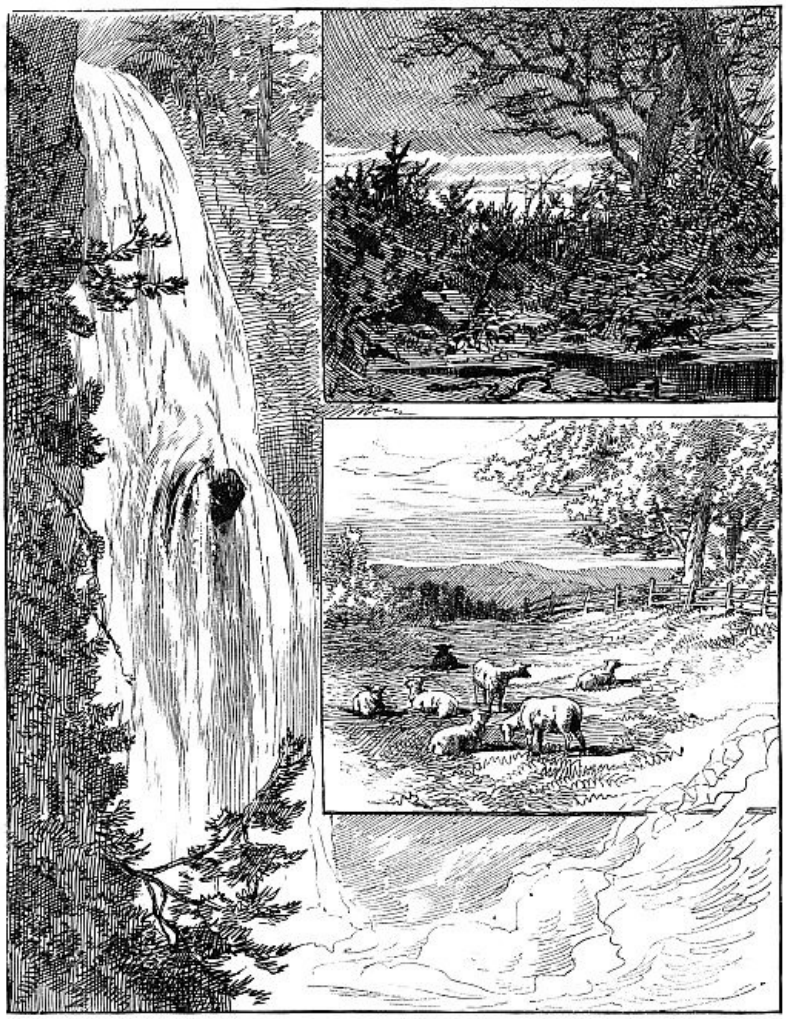
“I am satisfied,” she said, “and would not call it back. Its prison door has been opened; I will wait patiently until mine is opened for me.”

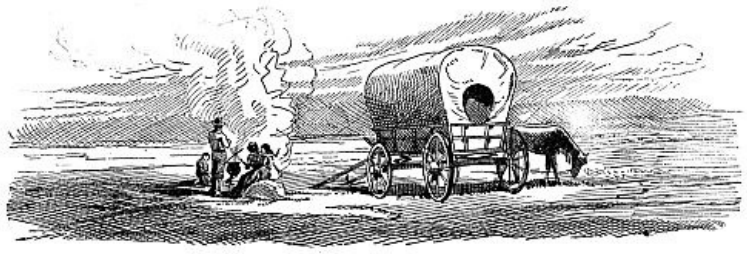
RIDDLES.

THE ground was barren and wet, and covered with stagnant pools. Only rank weeds grew on it, and venomous reptiles crawled through it. But at length the husbandman came and labored over it. He dug trenches and ditches that drained it, and turned a stream of pure water to flow through it. Then he hedged it, and set up a fence around it; and now flocks pasture there, and flowers bloom on every side.

A GARDENER planted some seed in his garden in the early spring, but no sooner had it grown up than the frost nipped it. It sprang up a second time, and a bird flew down and plucked off [266] the tender shoot. Once more it grew, but now, summer having come, the sun scorched it. Nevertheless, because the root remained, it sprang up again and again, until the gardener, rejoicing, gathered in his fruit.

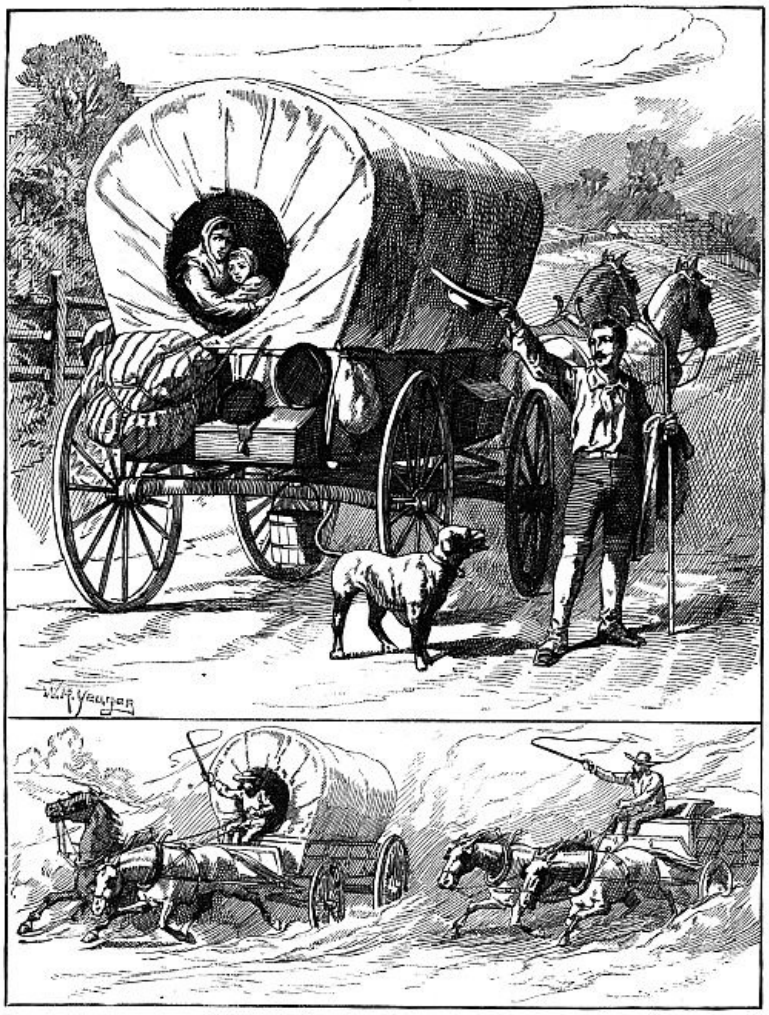
A MOUNTAIN-STREAM ran over the edge of a precipice. In its descent to the valley below it fell upon a point of projecting rock. On this rock clods of earth were continually dropping from the ground it was imbedded in. Sometimes they fell of their own weight, sometimes were loosened by the foot of a wild beast in passing. There was never a day that the rock was not soiled by them. But the stream, in flowing over it, washed away each stain as soon as it appeared; so that to the eye looking from above, it seemed always pure and clean.





THE EMIGRANT'S WAGON.

AN emigrant who started in a new wagon for his far-off Western home seemed to forget, because the wagon was new and strong then, that it would ever wear out. As a consequence, he was very careless in his way of using it, driving as fast down hill as up, and over rough places as smooth. Sometimes he raced with other wagons, and occasionally loaded his own so heavily and drove so recklessly, it was upset.



In spite of all this ill-usage, however, the wagon seemed to remain almost as good as new until it had travelled over about half of its journey, when it began to show the effects of abuse. First some rivets broke, leaving the floor-boards loose; next a spoke in one of the wheels began to rattle; then a tire rolled off. After this, one breakage followed another so rapidly that its owner [269] was often forced to stop for repairs. Neither could he always make these by himself, but was [270] obliged to call on the blacksmith and the wheelwright to help him. As he waited at their shops day after day he could not help thinking of his past folly, and saying to himself:

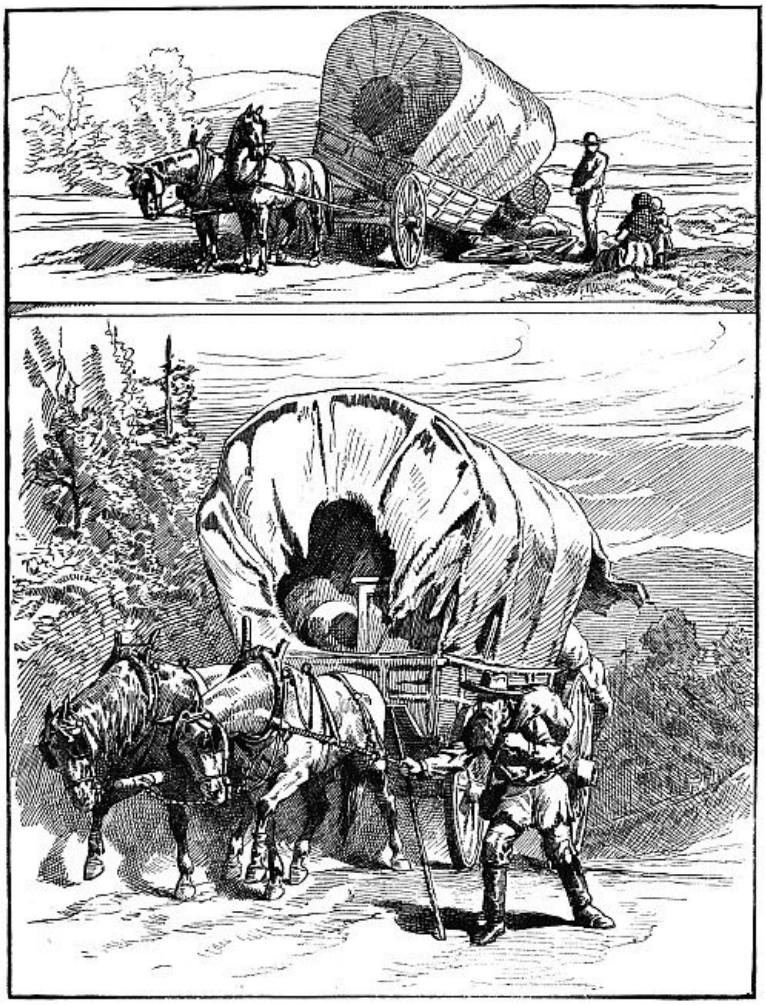
"Oh that I had the first part of the road to go over again!"

But, as this was impossible, it only remained for him to use the utmost care while passing over the portion that was left.

And so he did, creeping along slowly, avoiding every little jolt and rut by the way, and often turning out to let others, who had started after him, pass by. For the farther he went, the weaker his wagon grew, until it fell into such a decrepit state that it was threatening all the time to break down under him, and travelling in it, instead of being a pleasure, as it was at first, became only labor and pain.

But at last, though in miserable plight, he came to his journey's end. It is true that his wagon could not have remained new until then, no matter what care he had taken of it; on the contrary, it must have been well worn, and old, beside, for it had come a great distance and been a long

time in doing it. But if he had used it properly, and as a wagon ought to be used, from the start, without doubt it would have carried him all the way safely and comfortably. [271]
[272]



And then what a different account of his coming would have been written! For, in the first place, he could have given the time to pleasanter things that, as it was, he had to spend in patching up his wagon. Then he could have occasionally helped some poorer and more heavily-loaded emigrant that he came up with along the road. And lastly (beside escaping numerous bruises and pains) he would have been saved many poignant regrets and recollections, which added greatly to the burdens he had to bear during the latter part of his journey.

We are all emigrants, and our bodies are the wagons given us to travel in. If we abuse them in youth, we shall ride uncomfortably for it in our later years.

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[273]

BIG AND LITTLE LANTERNS.

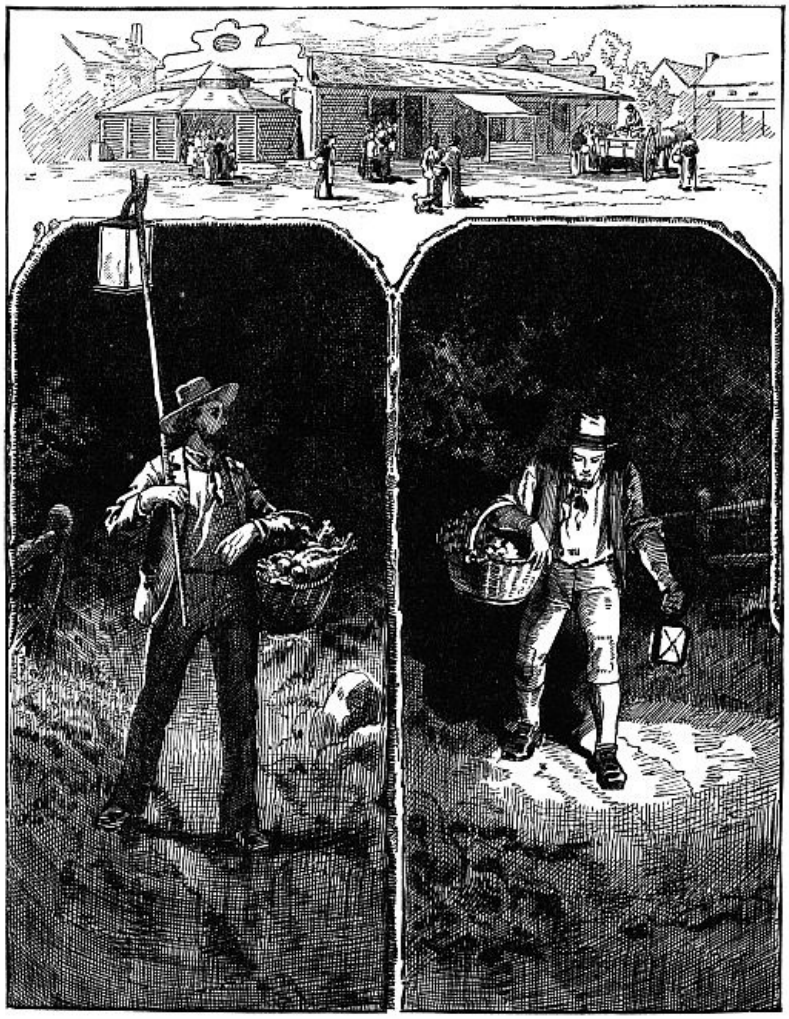
TWO countrymen who were neighbors started out on a dark night for the nearest market-town, each carrying a basket of butter and eggs and garden-produce on his arm. They took different roads, which were, however, of about equal lengths. One of the men—the taller and stronger of the two—carried a large and heavy lantern on a pole high above his head, by means of which he was enabled to see far over the road in front of him; and he set out with long and rapid strides.

The other man carried a light and small lantern, which he held down close to the ground, by his side, so that he could see no farther than the spot on which to plant his foot, as he moved on more slowly and cautiously, step by step. [274]

Some time during the night the latter reached his destination and quickly sold out his basketful of produce to the early risers of the town; but afterward, on looking around for his neighbor, was surprised to learn that he had not yet appeared. He waited a while, and then, fearing the man had met with some disaster—for the two were friends—started back to find him; and about midway of the road he found him, sure enough, fallen down into a pit that he had not seen, because, instead of looking well to the ground that was close around him, he was, by means of his great lantern, gazing far ahead.

But, though he could not get out, happily none of his bones were broken; and when his friend had torn a rail from a fence near by and thrown it to him, he managed to clamber up the side and escape from his trap. Yet his butter and eggs were spoiled and his lantern damaged, and, as he was badly bruised by the fall, he begged his neighbor to remain with him, saying:

“There is nothing left for me but, by your help, to hobble back to where I started from as best I can.”



And so it came to pass that he who was the better furnished and more confident at the start, came out a good deal worse off at the end. [275] [276]

Not always does he who can see the farthest travel most safely; and a lowly talent well improved may gain more than a lofty one wasted or misapplied.

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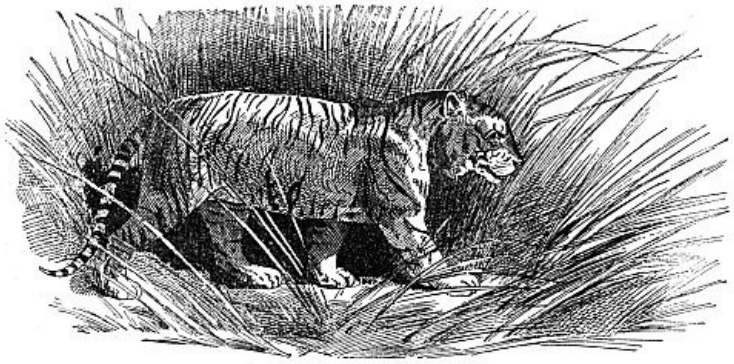


THE CAT AND THE TIGER.

A CAT that was a pet in a farmer’s family, understanding from the talk of the children that a show of wild animals had come to the neighboring village, stole off one morning to see it, and, creeping in under the edge of the great canvas tent, proceeded to walk around the ring and look in at the cages.

She had not gone far when she came opposite to the tiger’s cage, and, looking up, saw there a creature of her own species so powerful, so immense, and withal so beautifully marked, that she was lost in admiration and felt almost ready to bow down and worship it.

[279]

“Great king of our race,” she cried, “I admire, and am willing to obey you!” [280]

But the tiger, insensible to her praise, replied with contempt:

“You poor little mouse-eating creature, do you come here to claim relationship with one so great and strong as I am?”

At this the cat, quickly regaining her composure, answered:

“If your strength is so great that it must be restrained, and causes you to be shut up where it is only a torment to you as you walk up and down before the bars of your cage, then I would rather be as I am, weak and little, but suited to my place in the farmer’s kitchen.”

The qualities which make men great often make them miserable while they see around them those of lowlier station, and humbler abilities,

more happy and useful than themselves.

CHARITY.

A CERTAIN rich man appointed an hour when the poor people of his city had permission to call at his house and ask for charity. When the hour arrived, the man sat in his parlor, while his servant stood at the door to question those who called and report what they said to his master.

The first one who came was a day-laborer. He was willing to dig or to carry, or to work at anything he could find, but he could find nothing. To him the rich man sent a piece of silver.

The second one was a sailor. Only a few weeks before, he had sailed, full of hope, out of the harbor; but his ship was wrecked in a storm, and he saved only the clothes that covered him. To him also was sent a piece of silver.

The one who came next had seen better days; he had owned the little house he lived in, with enough out at interest beside to keep the wolf from its door. But misfortune had robbed him of all, and now he was in want. To him were sent two silver pieces.

After him came a mechanic who long ago had worked for the rich man’s father, and helped to build the beautiful house that his father once lived in. To him the rich man sent a piece of gold.

Then came an old man who was still erect and vigorous, but with silvery locks and flowing beard. In his younger days he had been a merchant. He well remembered the rich man’s father when he was a merchant too, and told of his honor and influence, and spoke feelingly of the favors he had often done him. To him the rich man sent two golden pieces.

When the next person called, the servant came in and told his master that this one seemed to be the most needy of all. He was bowed down with age and leaning upon a staff, and had travelled a long and weary journey from the place where the rich man’s father was born, and used to live before he came to the city and made his fortune.

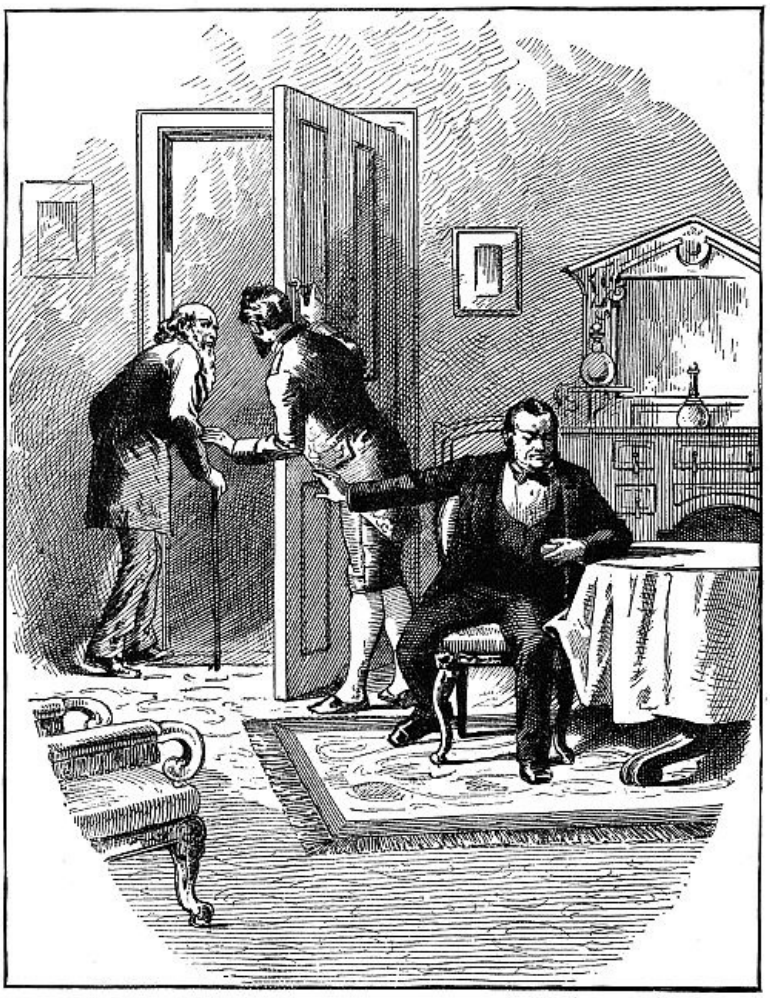
“Your master’s father and I were boys together,” he said, “and, in truth, I was a near relation to him, and so I am to your master. But sickness and misfortune have left me without bread to eat, or a place to lay my head.” [284]

But when the rich man heard this sad story, he looked at his watch, saying:

“The hour is past that I appointed to listen to the poor. Go tell the man he is too late; and when he is gone, shut the door, and bolt it after him.”

If we will analyze our motive in giving, and take from it all that issues of pride, we shall, many a time, be astonished to find how little is left.

[285]



[286]

THE DAY-LABORERS.

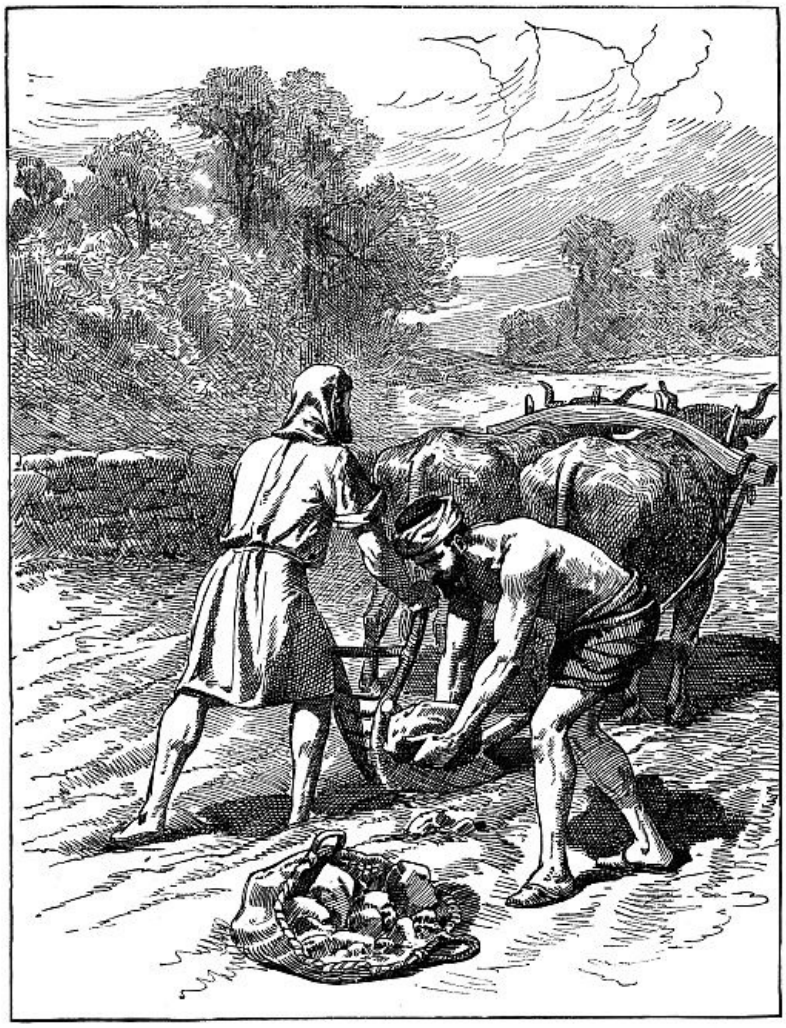
A certain land-owner called two of his hired servants early in the morning and sent them out to work in his field. On the way there one of them said to himself:

“Though I do not care for my master, I care for the wages he will pay me; therefore I will do a good day’s work, not for him, but for myself.”

But the other man said:

“Though I take wages, my master’s profit is dearer to me than my own; therefore the work that I do is not so much for myself as for him.”

[287]



So the men went out into the field to do their master’s bidding. And while they labored there [288]
the sun rose up high above them, and his fierce rays beat down on their heads. Yet they did not rest from their labors, but toiled on until he passed through the heavens and began slowly to descend again. And in the evening, after he had sunk below the horizon, they came and stood before their master to give account of the day.

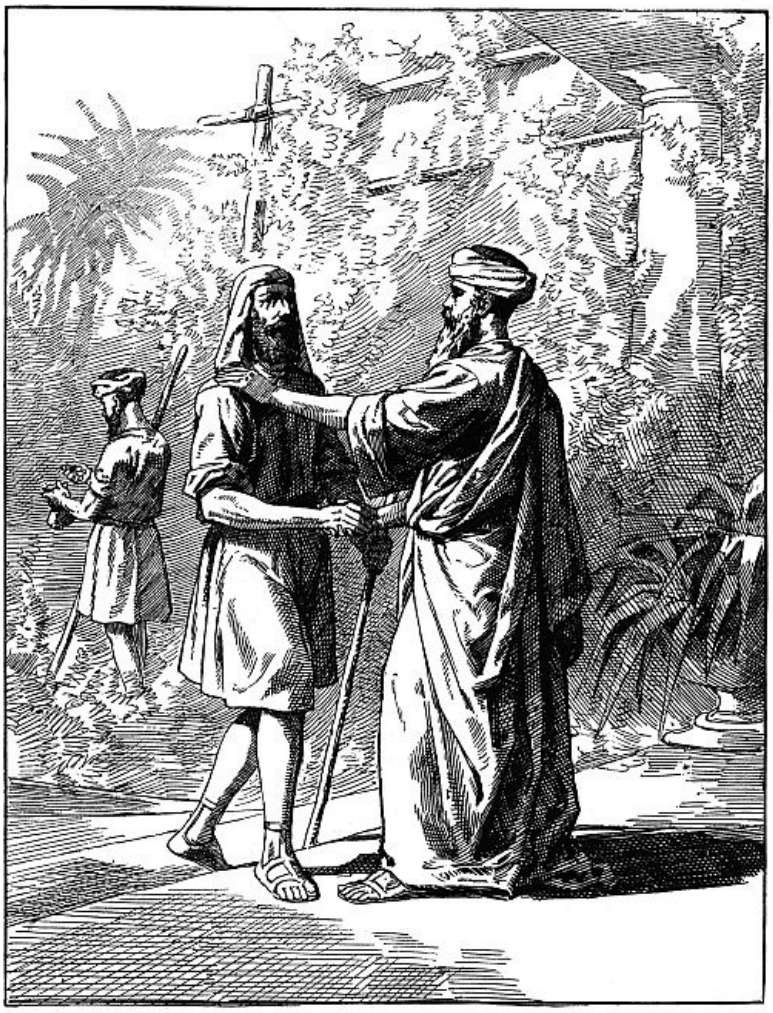
The first one said:

“I have ploughed deep in your field and cast out the heavy stones that were buried there.”

The second one said:

“I have gathered up the stones, and carried them to the edge of the field, and set up a strong fence around it.”

[289]



And as the master looked at their soiled and toil-worn garments and their sunburned arms and hands, he knew that what they told him was true. But when he looked in their faces, on one was the expression of coldness and on the other was the expression of love. Then he gave to each of them his wages, but the one who loved him he called into his house, to be with him and wait on him continually. [290]

The work brings the wages, but the motive the reward.

THE ARTIST’S ANSWER.

A MAN who had accompanied an artist around his studio, admiring his pictures, exclaimed,

“What an easy and privileged life is yours, calling forth and putting into visible shape such beautiful forms from day to day! You give delight to others, it is true, but surely the largest share must remain for yourself.”

Said the artist,

“Name to me some object in nature that you admire.” [292]

“This rose,” replied the other, “which you have placed as a model on your table.”

“We will take that,” said the artist. “Now, what is its history? First, the parent slip was laid in the ground, and at once began its struggle for life. It put forth tender roots, doubtful of the result, but the soil received them kindly, and it lived. Then the tiny stalk appeared above, and at length an embryo bud. But suppose the sun had scorched this bud or the storm destroyed it? They destroyed many another, yet it was spared, and at last opened in full bloom as you see it here.

“Now, if the plant that bore it could speak, what would it say? Something like this: ‘The rose you admire did not spring up uncalled, like a beautiful thought, but is the result of slow development. I could not but labor to bring it forth, for such was the work appointed me. But the throes of effort were needed, and, now that it is perfected, my delight is not in looking at it as a brilliant flower, but as the fruit of my labor, hoping it may fill its place among beautiful things and accomplish that for which it was called into being.’

“So, my friend,” continued the artist, turning to his companion, “if you think that these pictured forms which you delight in were of easy creation, springing up spontaneous like a passing emotion, you have in what the flowers says my answer.” [293]

Each beautiful work costs labor, but how much only he knows whose hands have formed it.

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[294]

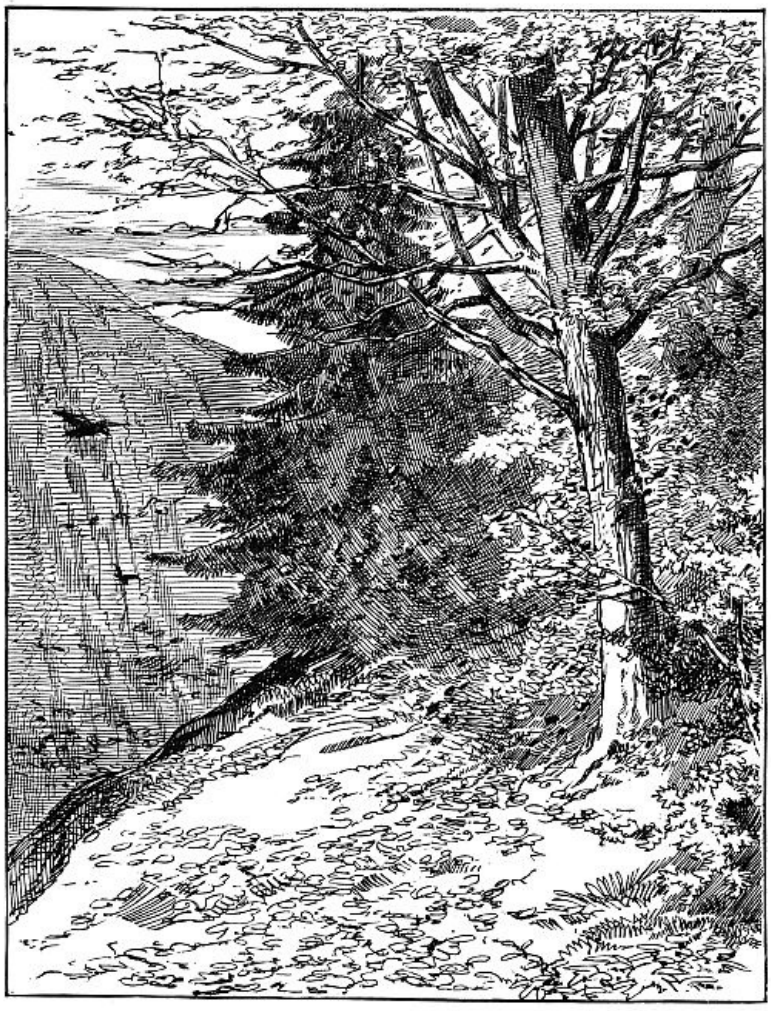
THE HEMLOCK AND THE SUGAR-MAPLE.

A SUGAR-MAPLE tree and a hemlock grew close together, high up on the side of a mountain. All summer they were, alike, covered with green, so that they could hardly be distinguished one from the other. But as autumn approached, the maple put on gayer colors. Branch after branch changed to orange, and crimson, and gold, until the whole tree seemed to be robed in these gorgeous tints. Seeing this, the hemlock said discontentedly to its neighbor:

"Why am I not beautiful like you? While your branches are growing brighter every day, mine do not change at all, unless it be to a duller hue. I am tired of this stale, old-fashioned green."

But the maple made no answer.

[295]



[296] A little while after this there was a change in the weather. Heavy gray clouds covered the sky. A cold rain came on, and the sun was not seen for several days. And now the leaves of the maple began to wither and lose their bright hues, and as the gusts of wind shook them they fell in showers from the branches. Then the maple, looking down upon them, said to the hemlock:

"You envied my beauty, but where is it now? See the remains of it lying scattered over the ground! My branches are being left bare for the long winter's cold, while yours are still clothed with their thick, warm foliage."

He whose good fortune we covet has also, linked with it, some compensating evil which we would not be willing to take off his hands.

BREAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL.

A MAN who was strolling through the country for his own enjoyment came to the top of a hill, where he stopped to admire the view. While he was standing there a laborer with pick and shovel on his shoulder and dinner-basket on his arm passed by. The man spoke to him and the laborer answered civilly, but, hurrying on, was soon out of sight.

After viewing the prospect from the hilltop, the man proceeded on his way until he came to a waterfall on the edge of a wood. Here he rested for a good while watching the stream break into foam and spray as it flowed over the rocks into the deep basin below.

From here he proceeded along the lonely road, wondering what beautiful object would next [298] appear, when presently he saw, spread out before him, a lake of blue water with bushes and wild flowers growing around its edge. It was almost noon by the time he was satisfied with gazing on this charming scene.

Then he started on his ramble again, but had not gone far when he spied the laborer who passed him earlier in the day, digging away with his pick and shovel in a rocky field beside the road. Leaning against the fence, the pleasure-seeker stopped, and said:

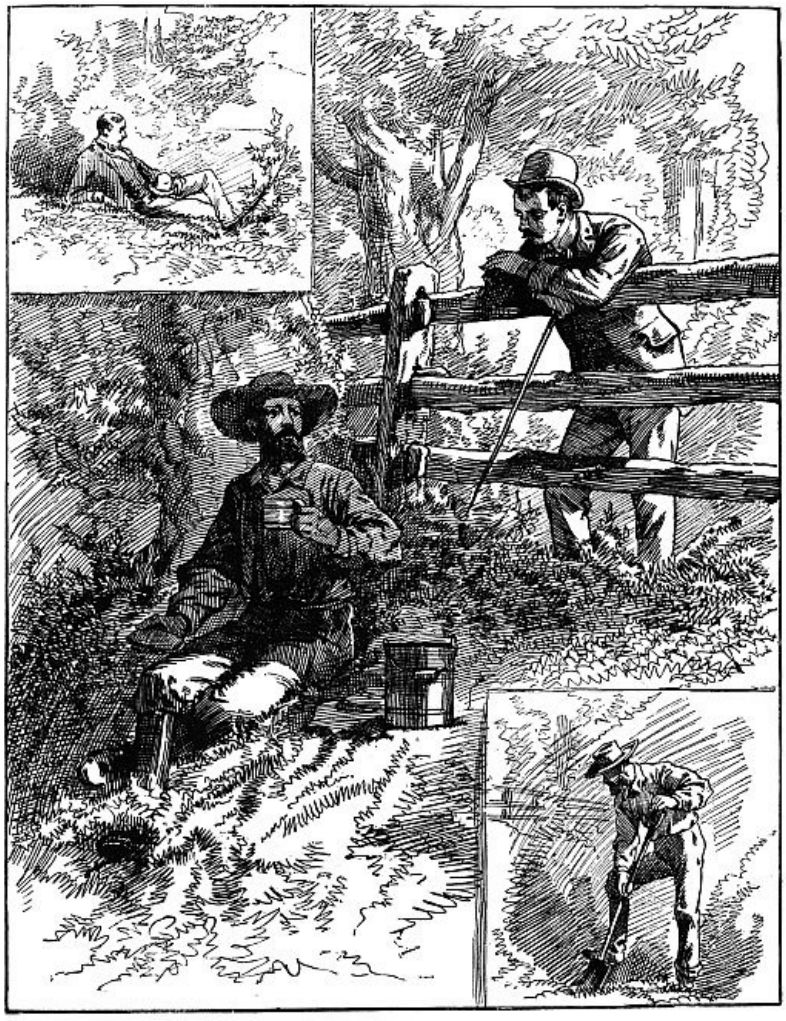
“Rather hard work grubbing at these stones?”

“You are right,” replied the laborer, “but nothing else will bring them out of the ground.”

“This is a pleasant country to look at,” continued the other, “but not to make your living out of, I should think.”

“You’d say so if you tried it. I suppose you’re a stranger about here?”

“Yes; this is my first visit, and I’m just sauntering along feasting on the beautiful view. You people who live in the country don’t half appreciate its charms.”



Here the laborer, looking up at the sky and seeing the sun just over his shoulder, dropped his shovel, and, going to a shady spot beside a spring, where he had deposited his dinner-basket, opened it and began to eat. His new acquaintance looked on until he had seen slice after slice of bread and meat emerge from the clean white napkin and disappear, when he said: [299] [300]

“My friend, would you mind sparing me a bit? This walk has made me hungry.”

“Well, now,” replied the laborer, “you’ve been feasting on the view all the morning, while I’ve been grubbing at the stones. If I give you my dinner, then you’ll have two feasts, and I’ll have none.”

If we cultivate our taste for the beautiful, to the neglect of earning our bread, we cannot expect those who deny themselves this luxury, to supply our needs when we come to want.

THE HARPER.

A HARPER stood before the door of a house and played a number of tunes without seeming to attract the attention of any one within until he played a sad and plaintive air, when an upper window opened and a hand reached out and dropped a coin into the hat that he held beneath.

From this house he went to another, and played the same air; but no notice was taken of him until he changed from it to a more cheerful tune, when a piece of money was again thrown to him.

After this he was careful to note down in a little book that he carried what sort of music pleased the inmates of the different houses in his round; and whenever he selected a new tune, it was always with some special hearers in view, to whom he went and played it as soon as it was learned. In this way he was kept busy from day to day, and by means of his harp earned a good living. [302]

Now, although he played a variety of tunes to please many different hearers, he had strong preferences of his own. There were a few of his pieces that he loved better than all the rest, and at the houses where these were played his music was at its best, because he played it out of his heart.

So, one day, as he was trudging along with his harp on his back, he said to himself:

“A portion of my work is a joy and delight to me, but the rest is labor and toil. Why should I not play that music only that I love, and to those alone who can appreciate it? In it lies not only my chief pleasure, but my real power as well. I am resolved henceforth to adopt this plan.”

So he gave up all but the few tunes in which he himself delighted, and played only at the houses where these had been enjoyed. But in a little while he noticed that he was not welcomed at these houses as he used to be, and the cause (though he was loath to acknowledge it) was not

hidden from him. His favorite airs, by their sameness and constant repetition, had ceased to stir his own heart as they once did; hence his music had lost its fervor, and with this its power over the hearts of others. Then he said to himself: [303] [304]

“The plan which necessity imposed on me was better than my own. Its discords tended to heighten its harmonies. Experience having taught me this, I will now return to that plan.”

So he took up all his old pieces, practising them over again, and playing them, as he used to do, from door to door. And in thus doing (mingling the bitter with the sweet) he soon prospered again.

In a higher state of being we shall be able to sustain the purest joys uninterruptedly. But here, that we may only taste of them, our joy must alternate with sorrow—our pleasure, with pain.

THE UNAPPRECIATED GIFT.

A HUSBANDMAN was at work in his field, earning his living by the sweat of his brow, when there came a man carrying a young tree in his hand, which he planted at one side of the field, saying:

"Give this the space that it needs, let it spread and grow, and wait patiently: in due time its fruit and shade will repay you;" having said which, he departed.

The husbandman heard the man's words, but went on with his labor from day to day without much regarding them. The tree remained where it had been planted, putting out new branches and growing higher and stronger.

But after a time strange doubts and suspicions concerning the tree entered the husbandman's [306] mind. As it took up more ground, he looked on it grudgingly, and said to himself:

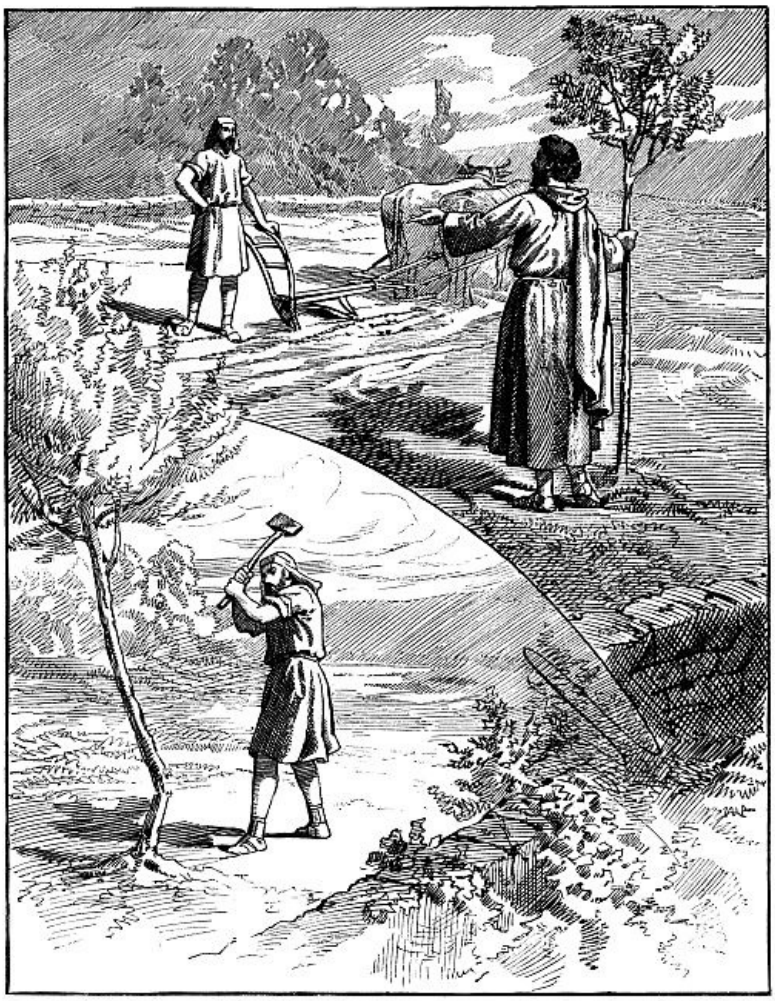
"This is not a fruit tree at all, but a thorn. If I let it stand, it will send up its evil shoots all over my field."

Then, taking his axe in his hand, at one stroke he severed the stalk from the roots.

After this the seasons came and went as they ever had done. The husbandman sowed in the spring and reaped in the harvest. And so he continued to do from year to year, until his labors began to tell upon his strength, and he felt stealing upon him the infirmities of an old man. His field still yielded its crop, but was bare and sunny, without a sheltered spot in which he could sit down and rest.

It happened one day after hours of toil that he sank exhausted, and slept even under the burning rays of the sun. In his sleep he dreamed that he was sitting in the shade. Over him green branches were spread. They were loaded with fruit, which hung so near the ground that he put forth his hand as he sat, and plucked and ate. Birds were also singing in the branches, and a cool breeze passed through them, fanning his brow. He said:

"Surely these have been growing, and their shadows deepening, to cover my head and refresh me in my old age."



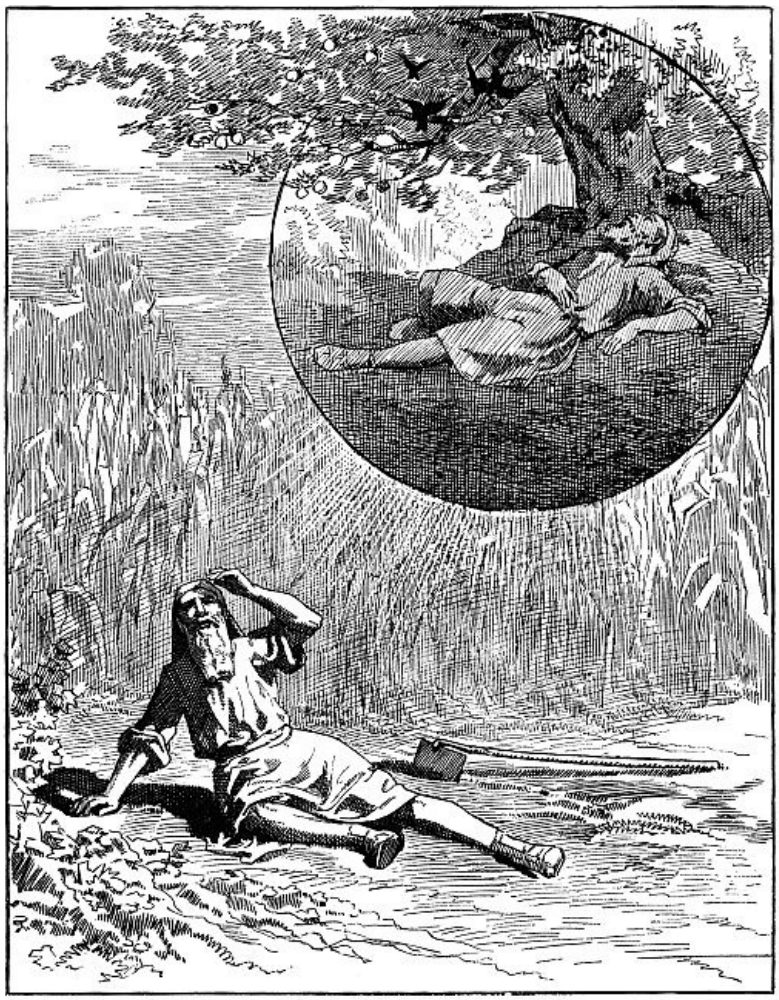
As he spoke suddenly the man who had long ago appeared to him again stood before him, saying: [308]

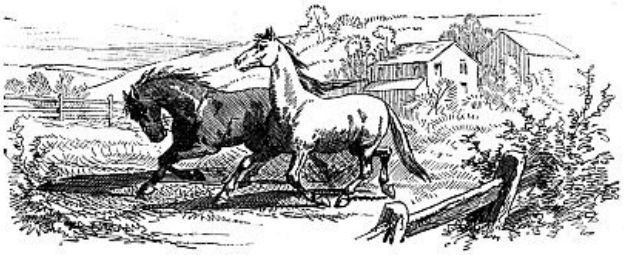
“Such would have been the tree that I planted on this spot had you not, in unbelief and self-will, cut it down.”

The husbandman awoke from his sleep and found it was only a dream, and that he was still lying alone and unsheltered under the burning rays of the sun.

Not recognizing the Sender, we refuse the gift, to bewail our folly when it is too late.

[309]





THE WORN-OUT TEAM.

TWO horses, a bay and a gray, were bred on the same farm. Being nearly of an age and about equal in size, they were mated in harness, and, working well together, were kept as a pair. They went to the plough, the harrow, and the hay-wagon season after season. In this close companionship there grew up something of an attachment between them, although they differed in disposition. The gray was patient and uncomplaining, while the bay, though quite as good a worker, was not of so good a temper.

The seasons came and went. In the spring they toiled together turning up the heavy sod, in the autumn hauling in great loads of hay and grain, until at length, as years passed by, their bulky [311] forms began to shrink and ribs and thigh-bones to appear. More than this, the gray lifted one [312] hind leg higher than formerly, giving a hint of the string-halt, and the bay panted so violently after a short journey as to suggest a thought of the heaves. But they had done their share of work, and the farmer was not the man to sell them off now to some hard fate: they were allowed to stand in the stable or given lighter tasks, while a pair of young horses, that had come on in the mean while, were put to the heavy work about the farm.

One summer day, while the old horses were resting in their stalls, the hay-wagon came in with a load from the field. As it drew near the barn the farmer's son shouted to encourage his young team up the rise that led on to the barn-floor, and the old pair heard them, as they entered, pounding overhead.

"That is what we used to do," said the bay, "until they put the colts in our place."

"We never thought then of getting old and past work," said the gray.

"But we've come to it now."

"Many a heavy load have we hauled up that rise before them."

"Yes, I think of it often," said the bay, "and of something else too: I think of that hard hill over across the bridge. I was not always good to you when we were climbing up that." [313]

"You always pulled your full share, though."

"But I needn't have put back my ears and snapped at you angrily every few steps."

“Let that go; think no more of it,” said the gray.

“And not only the hill do I remember,” continued the bay, “but many a hot day on the road, while you were doing your best, I jerked in the harness and jeered at you because my nose happened to be a few inches ahead.”

“Think of the pleasant trots we had together, instead,” persisted the gray—“the gambols in the clover-field, and the rolls in the sand down beside the creek. As for the rest, they’re past and forgiven; let them be forgotten.”

“You may forgive them,” said the bay, “but I can’t forgive them myself. And now, while I stand here by your side, both of us grown old, they come back and worry me—yes, more than ever the heavy loads did, or even the driver’s whip.”

Youth is the time of anticipation and of sowing the seed; age is the time of recollection and of reaping the fruits of what we have sown.

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[314]

THE WISE FARMER.

A FARMER came into possession of some new land. It consisted of three fields that lay adjoining each other, but on going to examine them he was astonished at the difference in their quality. The first was stony ground; the next, though not stony, was of a thin and light soil; while the third, lying lower and being meadow-land, was covered with rich, dark loam. As a whole, the ground was not what he had expected, and in his disappointment he hardly knew what to do. But after consulting with his wife, who was a prudent adviser, he concluded to do his best with all three fields, and not, on account of its inferior quality, to neglect either one.

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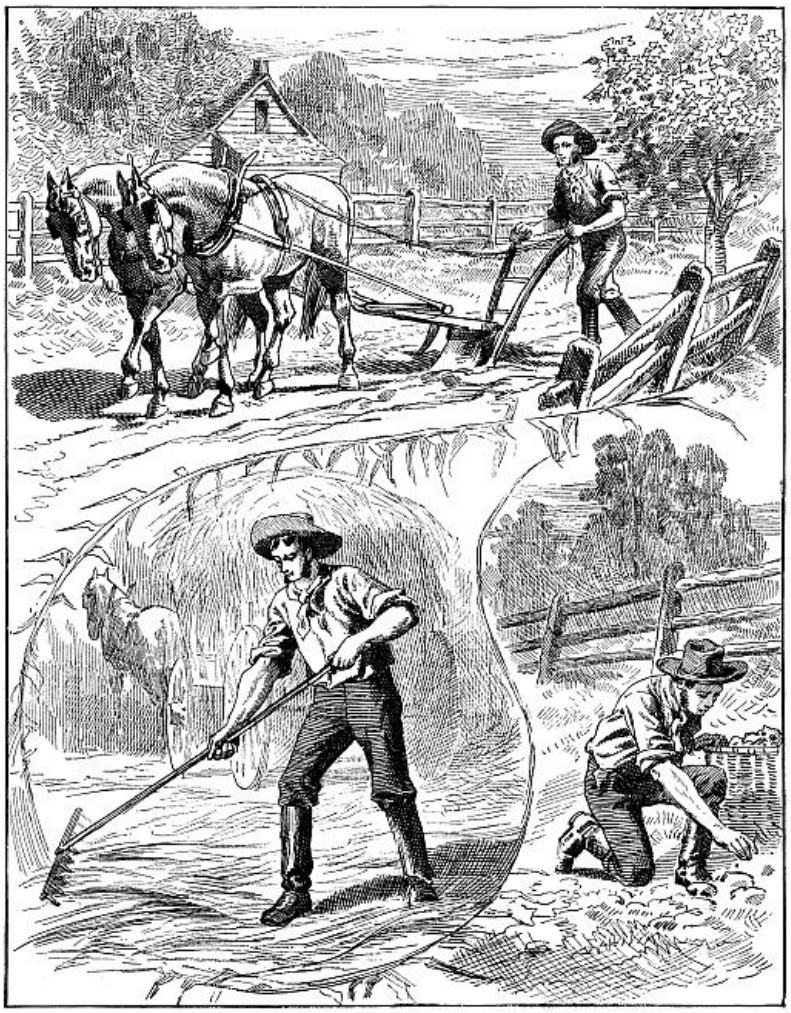


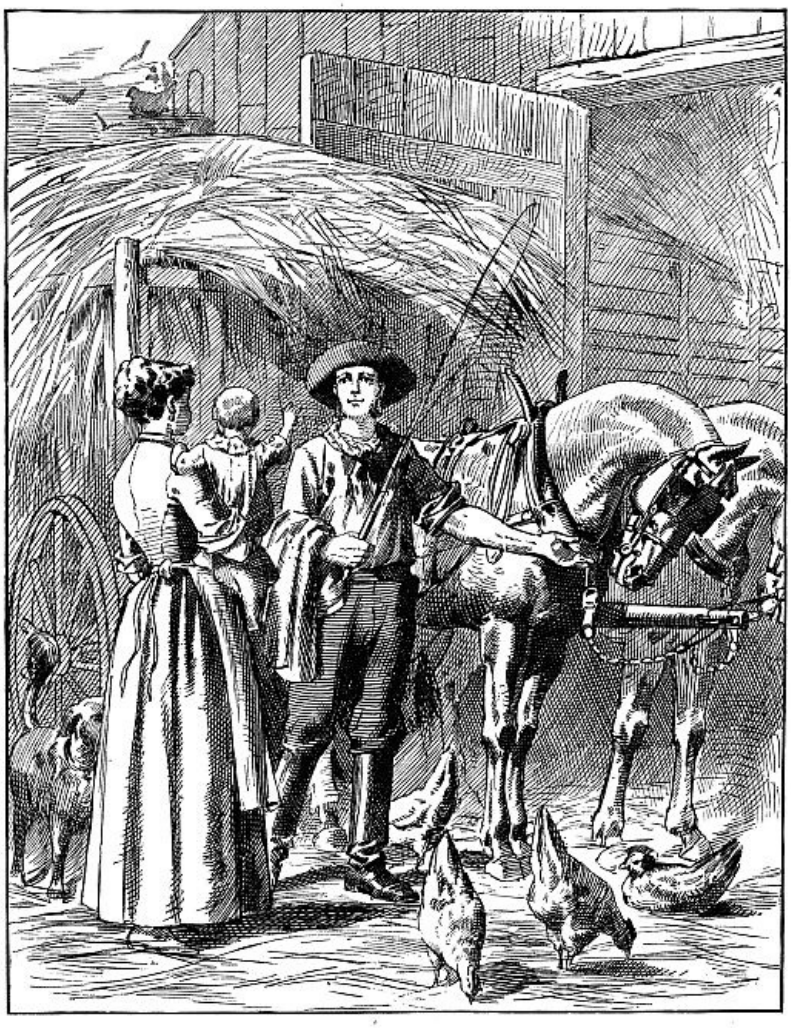
[316] The stony field was hard to cultivate. The ploughing was laborious, and so were all the other processes of farming it. Yet he persevered till it was well seeded down with grass and clover. The middle field—the one with the thin light soil—required a great deal of help. He had to spend largely for different kinds of fertilizers, and afterward was at much trouble in clearing the ground to receive them. But by hard work he got this field also planted with oats in good time.

The rich loamy field, which from the start he had longed to begin on, was left, purposely, till the last. As he took down the bars and drove his team into it day after day he chuckled to himself, saying: “I do love to farm this field!”

It required but half the expense and labor to make it ready that either of the others required, and no sooner had he drilled in the wheat than there came a shower that made it spring up, so that he could almost see it growing.

The planting being done, he waited patiently for the harvest. Then the stony field yielded him a good crop of hay, which he got safely into his barn without a single wetting; the field with the thin light soil gave a fair crop of oats—enough to feed his stock during the winter; and the rich loamy ground yielded a splendid crop of wheat—sufficient not only to furnish his family with

flour, but also to let him sell a portion, that brought in enough money for all his other needs. [317]
[318]



“How much better are we off,” he said to his wife one day after the harvesting was over, “that we took the land willingly, just as it came to us, instead of finding fault with it and neglecting the poorer fields because they did not equal our expectations! And, now that we have got them so well started, we may expect them, with proper care, to go on improving from year to year.”

Among those who come under our care (our own children, it may be) we shall find some less answerable to our wishes than others. But our duty to all is alike, and by performing it we shall not only do justice to them, but secure a recompense, in the end, to ourselves.

WAYFARERS.

A MAN who had an ugly limp in his gait, but was nevertheless a good walker, sat down on a bench by the wayside one day, saying, impatiently:

"This lameness embitters my life. I cannot for a moment lose sight of it. I go limping along, my legs are unlike, my steps are uneven, and, though I do not suffer positive pain, I very often experience discomfort. Beside all this, I fear, as I grow older, my halt will increase upon me, so [320] that I shall be even more of a cripple then than I am now. How I wish I could change places with yonder cheerful-looking man who is coming this way with such an even, measured tread!"

As he ceased speaking the man he referred to suddenly turned toward the bench on which the speaker was resting and took a seat at his side, but rather closer than was needful, as they two had it alone.

"Excuse me," said the new comer as he felt himself crowding his neighbor; "I am blind, and, although I know this path so well that I can walk along it without a guide, I could not see that another was seated here before me."

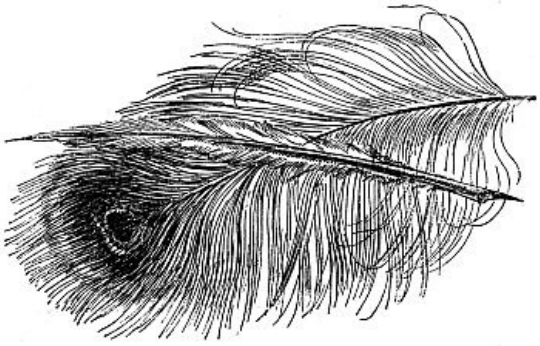
"I am sorry for you," said the lame man, feelingly. "Surely, no one would suspect you were blind from your firm step and your cheerful countenance. May I ask how it is you preserve so happy an aspect under so great a misfortune?"

"By looking at what I have, and not at what I have lost," replied the blind man. "Though I cannot see, I can hear the voice of my friends, the sound of music, the singing of birds. I can taste three good meals, and enjoy them, every day. I can smell a rose in bloom farther than you can, for all my senses that remain are keener for the absence of the one that is gone. My health, too, [321] is good, and I have learned to work so skilfully at basket-making that, with a little I have beside, I [322] am able to pay my own way without being a burden to others. Thus, in the apportioning of my lot, so much more has been given than taken, that I consider life's bargain a good one for me."

Having thus spoken, the blind man, after a few moments' rest, bade his new acquaintance "Good-bye," and, rising from the bench, felt his way cautiously, counting each step, until he reached the middle of the sidewalk, when he wheeled around and proceeded on his way with the same measured tread that had first attracted his companion's attention. As he disappeared the latter said:

"What is my limp, which still permits me to walk wherever I will, to his blindness, which shuts out every ray of light? Yet he is the happier of the two! After all, blind as he is, I was doing myself no unkindness in wishing I could take his place."

> How often does he who has the most go poor because he is unconscious of it! while he who has the least is made rich by being able to appreciate what he has.



OTHER BIRDS’ FEATHERS.

A GANDER and a cock lived on the same farm. They were young and handsome birds, each well satisfied with himself, but, unfortunately, jealous of the other. This made them always ready to pick a quarrel. Chancing one day to meet beside a brook that ran by the farmhouse, the cock straightened himself up and said:

“Look at my long and graceful tail-feathers, and compare them with the short stubby quills in your tail.”

To which the gander replied:

“Look at the soft white down on my breast, and compare it with the frowsy black stubble on yours.”

“I can crow,” said the cock, “but you can’t.”

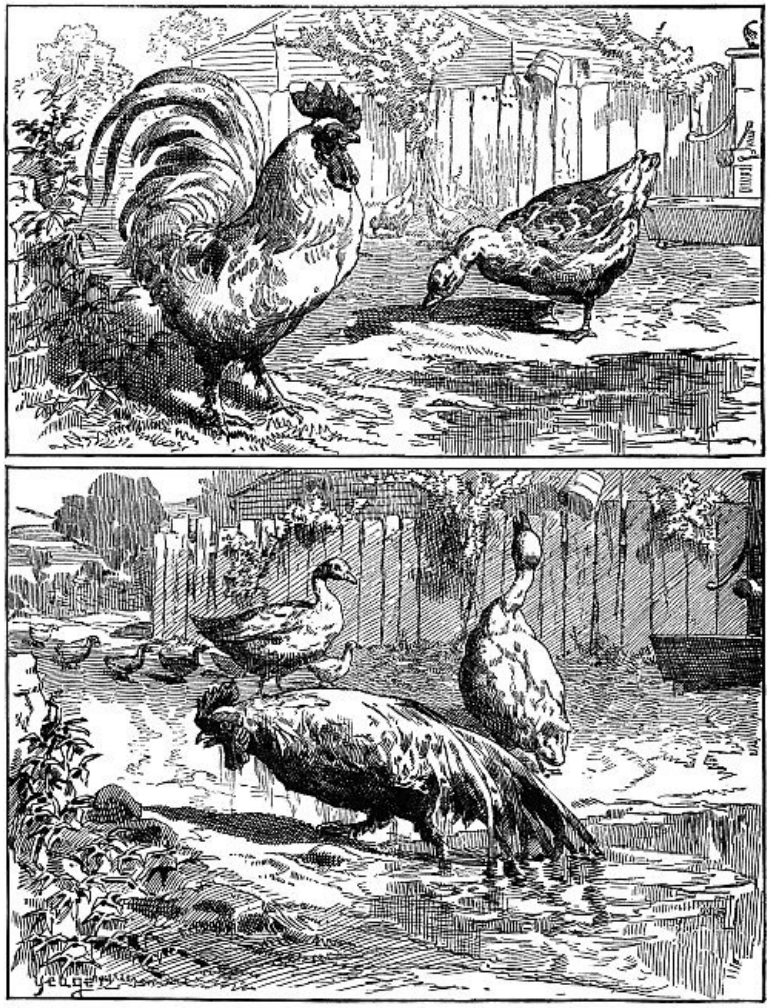
“I can swim,” said the gander, “and you can’t.” [324]

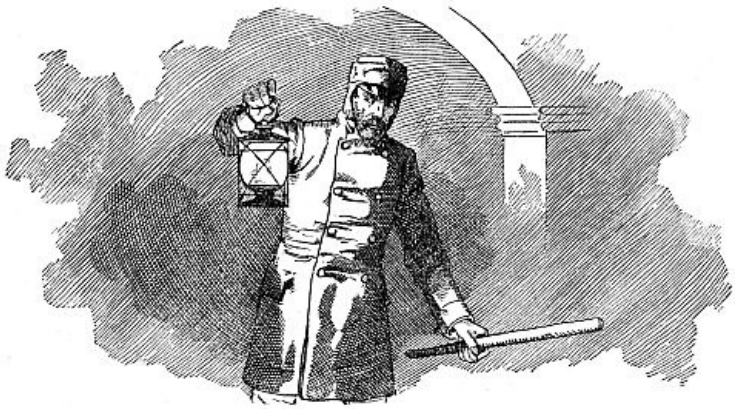
“I can!” “I can!” cried both birds in a rage; and with that the cock jumped into the water and nearly drowned himself in attempting to swim, and the gander strutted up and down trying to crow.

Just then a goose, with her brood of goslings passing by, looked at them, and said:

“My children, take warning from these two fools. Be content, when you grow up, to wear your own feathers, and to let other birds wear theirs.”

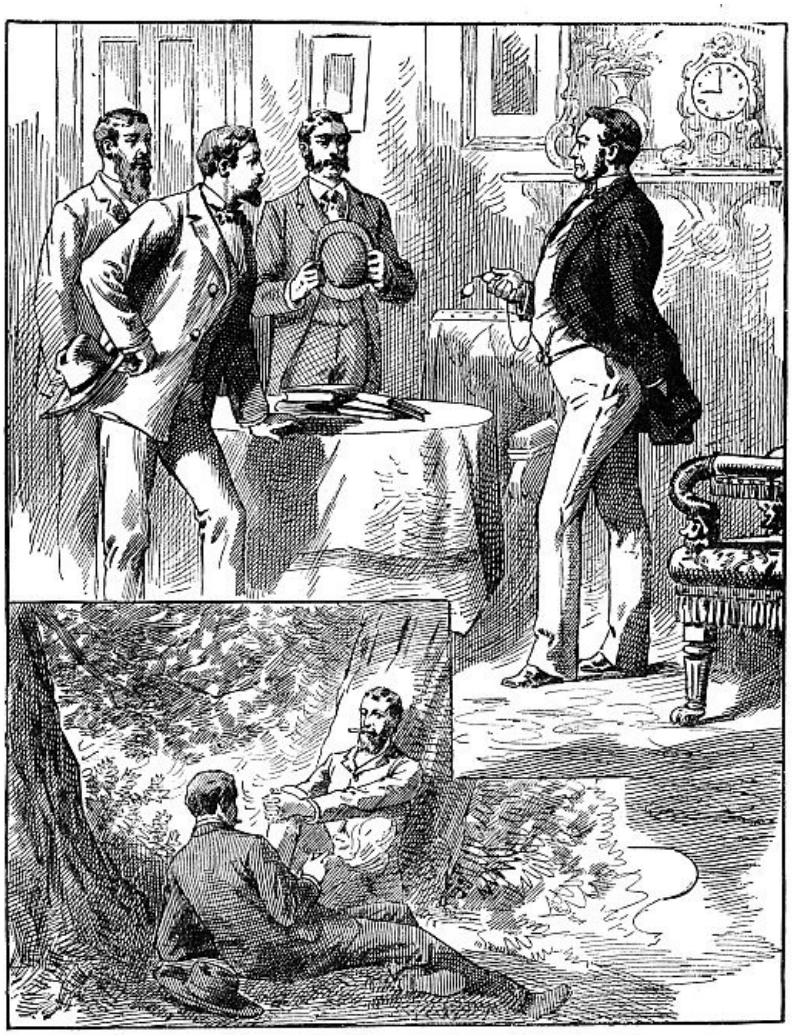
There are always persons about us who possess some gifts that we lack. To deny them credit for these only makes our defects more plain, and brings disgrace on what good qualities we have.





THE NIGHT-WATCHMAN.

A CERTAIN man who prided himself upon his infidel opinions desired to employ a watchman around his house during the night. This it was no more than prudent for him to do, as he was very rich, keeping up an expensive establishment and known often to have a large amount of money about his person.



Many came to apply for the position he wanted filled, some of whom he dismissed at a glance, some after a brief interview; but others appeared well qualified for the place. Of these, three came equally well recommended, and he determined to make his choice from among them. He [327] therefore took them apart separately, and after inquiring more particularly into their former [328] occupations and history wrote down the places of their residence, and also, without letting them know it, a careful description of their dress and appearance. As soon as they were gone he called three of his servants to him and said:

“You know I am looking for a man as night-watchman; I think he can be found among those who have just left, and I want you to assist me in making a selection. To-morrow will be Sunday. Be up, all of you, bright and early, and one go and stand near the lodging-place of each of these men. Watch them when they come out in the morning, keep near them all day, and come here at night and report what you have seen.”

The servants, promising obedience, retired, and the next night, according to orders, returned to their master.

“And what have you to tell about your man?” he said to the first who appeared.

“He spent the day in the country,” replied the servant.

“Sensible fellow!” said his master. “And did you go with him?”

“Indeed I did—got off at the same station, took dinner at the same table, and came back in the same train.”

“And how did he behave himself?” [329]

“Like a sensible fellow, sir, as you called him. He had a friend with him, and they just smoked their cigars and lay about in the shade all day; took a glass of beer now and then—nothing more. I believe he’s the very man that would suit you.” Here the second servant came in.

“And what have you to say?” asked his master.

“My man,” replied the servant, “went to the tavern.”

“He’s none the worse for that, if he didn’t take too much after he got there.”

“And he didn’t; only three glasses—I counted them—between breakfast and dinner.”

“Little enough!”

“You’d have thought so if you had only seen how his friends pressed him, a dozen times, to take more.”

“But he wouldn’t?”

“They couldn’t make him. He’s just the man for a watchman, I’m sure.” The third servant now appeared.

“And where did your man go?” asked his master.

“To church,” replied the servant.

“Did you follow him?”

“You told me to, and I did, and sat in the pew right behind him.” At this the other men laughed.

“Well, did he gape around at his neighbors, and then fall asleep, like the rest of the hypocrites who go there?”

“No; I must tell you the truth.” [330]

“Let’s have it, then.”

“I watched him and never took my eyes off him, and I tell you he’s in earnest.”

“What do you mean?”

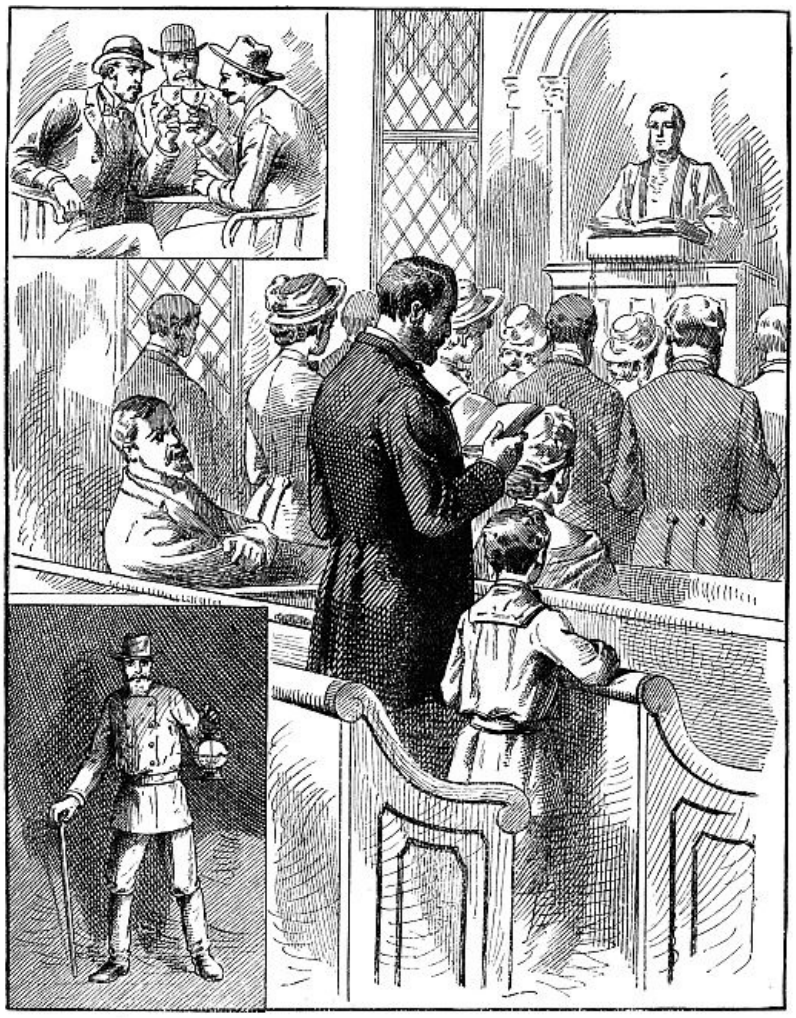
“I mean he’s among them that believe there’s a God, and have made up their mind to serve him.”

“That’ll do,” said the master. “You have made your report, and now you may go.”

The next night there was a new watchman around the rich infidel’s house. It was he who went to church on a Sunday.

When they must commit themselves, or their substance, to another’s keeping, both good men and bad men want good men to serve them.

[331]



[332]

SINGLE AND DOUBLE.

A FARMER who owned a lazy horse was riding him barebacked one day, when the beast began to complain of his load, saying:

“Such a heavy man as you ought to ride in a wagon and have a pair instead of one poor overworked horse to carry him.”

The farmer made no reply, but jogged on quietly. Presently he came up with one of his neighbors afoot. The farmer slackened his pace and the man walked beside him in the road, the two talking together about their corn, and oats, and clover. They had not gone far before the farmer noticed a limp in his neighbor’s gait.

“What is the matter?” said he.

“A sharp peg in my boot,” replied the other, “seems to object to my walking.”

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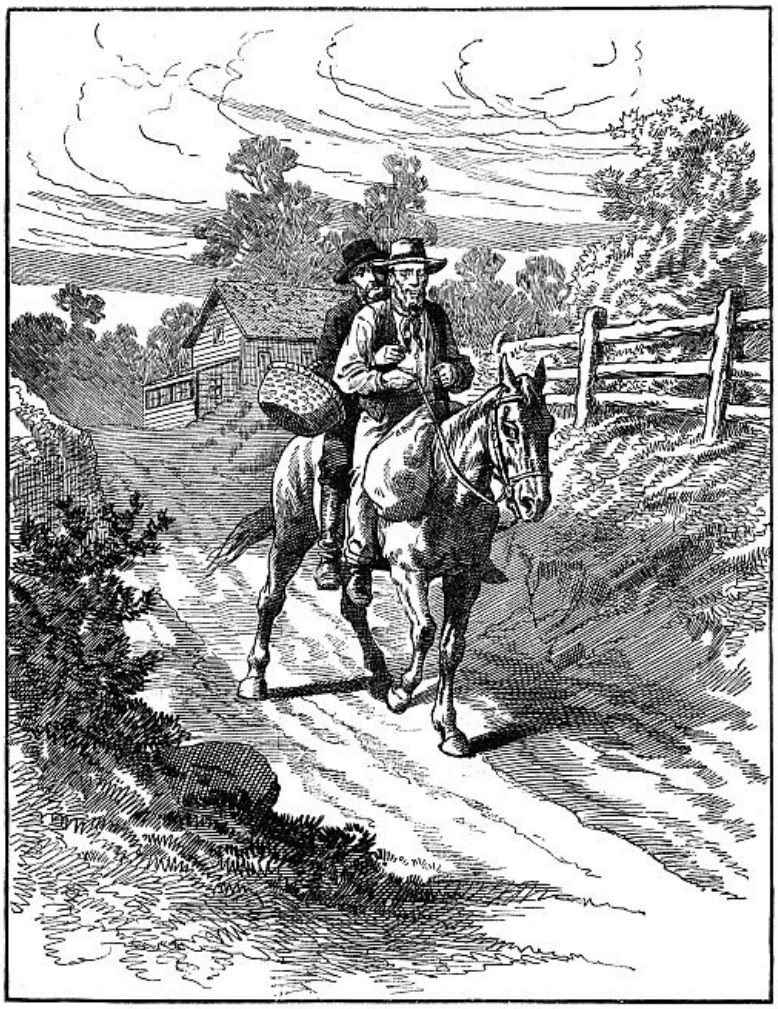


“Then you’d better get up and ride behind me,” said the farmer.

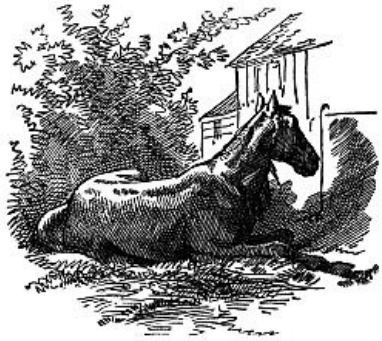
[334]

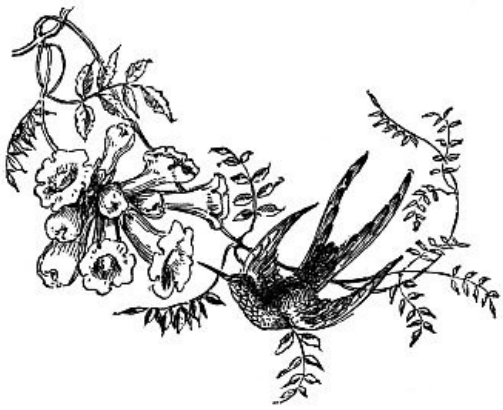
“That I will,” said the man—“gladly; and thank you.”

As he clambered on to the horse from the top of a fence beside which his friend had stopped, the animal said to himself:

“Ah! I did not know when I was well off. Willingly now would I carry my master alone, but another behind him almost breaks my back. Never again will I complain of my load until I have asked myself how I should feel if it were suddenly made twice as heavy.”

When real discomforts come, we look back and wonder how we could have fretted under those which were only imaginary.





THE BOASTFUL FLY.

A FLY that had lodged on a crumbling wall, seeing other flies swarming around it, began to boast about their numbers, saying:

“Look at us! Multitudes in this little space! We are everywhere—in the garden among the flowers, in the field amid the clover, in the woods darting in and out of the sunbeams that fall between the branches.”

Here a humming-bird lighted in a trumpet-vine that grew over the wall. Said the fly:

“You are a traveller, sir, I hear, and have been to other countries. Pray, have you ever been in any place where there are no flies?” [336]

“Never,” said the humming-bird.

“Oh that I had your strong wings,” cried the fly, “to carry me where I could see the flies that live far away as well as those that live here! But you have seen them; maybe, now, you can guess how many flies there are?”

“Impossible!” said the bird. “You cannot be counted. Why, all the bluebirds and blackbirds, the humming-birds, and birds of every kind, put together, are as nothing compared with you!”

“We are the people,” continued the boastful fly, raising its tiny voice—“not so big as some others, we’ll admit, but look at our numbers: myriads upon myriads!”

“Great in numbers, it is true,” said a mossy stone in the wall, “but one thing you’ve forgotten.”

“What is that?” asked the fly.

“That midsummer is already past, and in a few short weeks the green will have faded from the fields, and frost will cover the ground; and then, though we look diligently for you, not one of all your myriads shall be found.”

That which seems great in the light of the present, when looked at in the light of the future shrinks into nothingness. [338]

THE MENDED BOOTS.

A MAN who had a pair of boots that needed mending carried them to the cobbler's and dropped them beside his bench, saying, "They'll do any time to-day; send them home as soon as they are finished," and without waiting for an answer departed.

While the cobbler was examining the boots and preparing to go to work on them, another man, with a badly-worn pair in his hand, came into the shop, and said:

"I want you to mend these at once; I'll send for them in the evening."

At this the cobbler let the first pair fall upon the floor, saying to himself: "As he will send, I must be sure and have them ready." [340]

And, going to work on them, he kept at it until they were done. In the evening the man's little son called, and carried them away with him.

The next day, after breakfast, as he sat down on his bench, the cobbler said:

"Now I must get at the other pair, that was left first."

But just as he was putting the last into one of them, a man entered the shop with a quick step and handed him a pair of shoes that were almost worn to pieces:

"I must have these, without fail, in the morning," he cried, "and will call for them myself. On no account disappoint me."

The cobbler at once dropped the boot that was in his lap, and, seeming to have caught the man's ardor, thrust the last into one of his shoes and continued to work diligently until evening, and so finished them.

In the morning the man appeared, with as rapid a step as ever, and, finding his shoes done, paid for them, and was quickly gone.

A little while after this, as the cobbler sat calmly reading his newspaper, the man who left the first pair strolled into the shop.

“As I happen to be passing,” he said, “I’ll just take my boots with me.” But, seeing a confused look on the cobbler’s face, he added: [341] [342]

“Of course they’re ready; you know they were to be done the day before yesterday.”

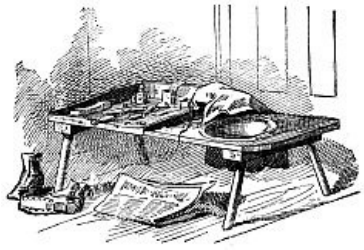
Then, looking on the floor, he saw them lying exactly where he had left them.

“I’ve been so very bu—busy,” stammered the cobbler, “that I haven’t got ’em quite finished yet.”

“‘Quite finished’!” exclaimed the man. “Why, you haven’t touched them!”

“But I’m going to begin this minute,” said the cobbler, “and you shall have them to-morrow, for certain.”

He who is the least urgent is apt to be the last served.



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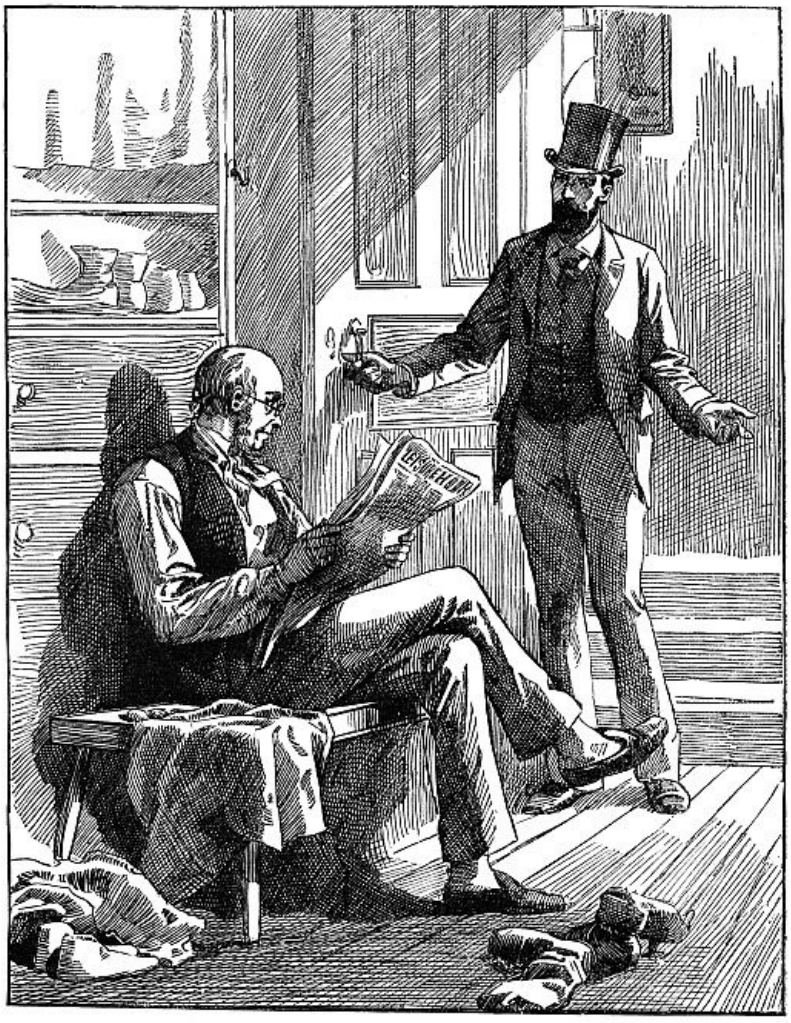


[344]

THE CRIPPLE AND HIS STAFF.

A POOR cripple who had to go on foot to the hospital (where only he could be cured) cut a staff to help him in walking. It was the best he could get from the woods that grew by the way, and was just like those that other cripples used on that same road.

[345]

For a time, as long as the road was smooth, the staff seemed to be all that he needed; but when he came to an uneven place, he found that it did not answer. It was too short, though as long as that sort of wood grew, and it was too rough, hurting his hand as he leaned upon it. Beside this, it did not take a firm hold on the ground, but slipped from under him, giving him many falls. [346]

[347]

After one of these falls, while he was lying prostrate and hardly able to rise, a man came to him with a pair of crutches in his hand. The man raised him up from the ground, put the crutches under his arms, and showed him how to walk with them. [348]

[349]

And now the poor cripple was overjoyed to find that he could walk with comparative ease and with perfect safety. Yet he kept the staff that he had cut for himself, carrying it, thrust under his girdle, across his back, behind him. [350]

He walked leaning on his crutches for a considerable distance and over a good deal of rough ground, and then came to another smooth spot.

[351]

Here a desire seized him to try his staff again. But why should he want to do this? In the first place, he had forgotten in that short space of time the falls it had before given him. Then it seemed as if the staff would be lighter and more easily handled than the crutches. But perhaps the chief reason was that he would not appear so great a cripple with the staff as with the crutches; for above all things else the cripple desires to appear not a cripple, and to seem to walk as if nothing were the matter with him. [352]

So he tried his staff again, and for a time got along quite well.

[353]

23

While he was walking at his best, hardly limping, as he thought, a man came to him saying: [354]

“How well you walk! That staff is just the thing for you. But you don’t need the crutches; why do you cumber yourself with them?”

With this the man took hold of the crutches to take them from him, but the cripple would not let go of them. The man stood and reasoned a while with him; but when he found it was of no use, he turned away, disgusted, saying, as he left him:

“Any way, you are a fool, to keep both.”

[355]

The cripple had not gone much farther, leaning on his staff, when he came to some more rough ground, where he floundered about for a while and then fell to the earth, striking his head and bringing the blood. Then he was glad that he had not parted with the crutches. He drew them out from behind him, put them under his arms, and proceeded on his way. [356]

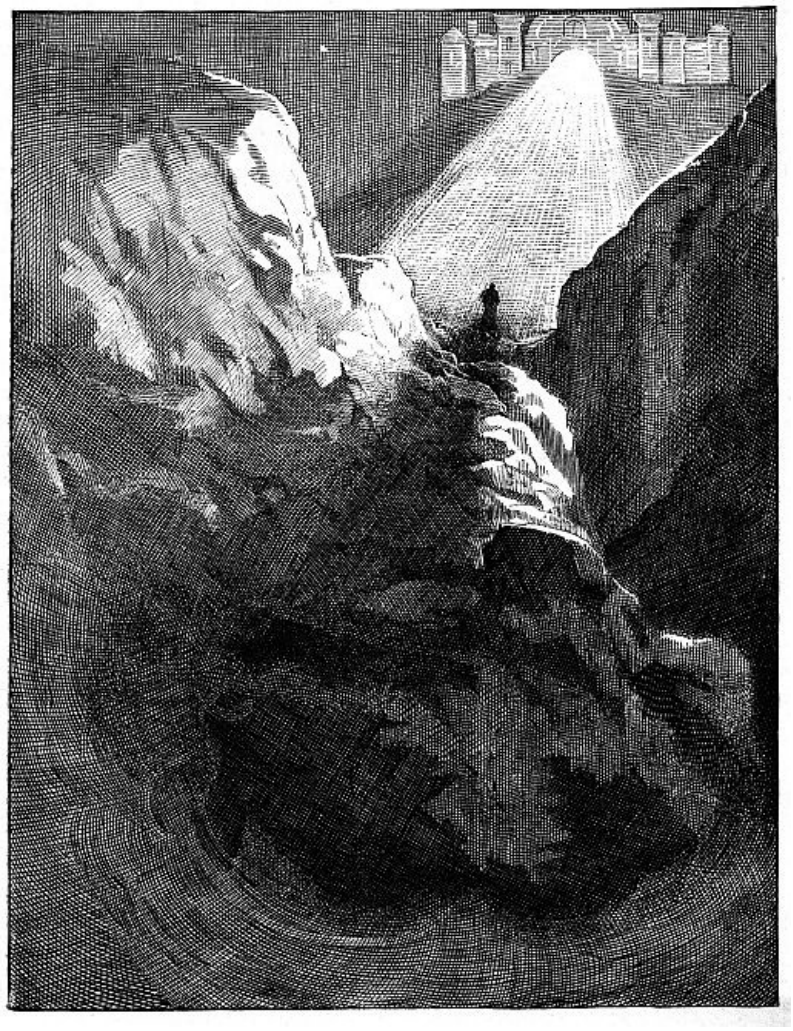
Now we should think that he would never trust to his staff again. But it was not so. He hardly ever came to a smooth place that he did not draw it forth and walk with it, till he learned again, by sad experience, that it would not support him; so that this was, in fact, the history of his going —toiling along with his staff and falling, and then betaking himself to his crutches once more.

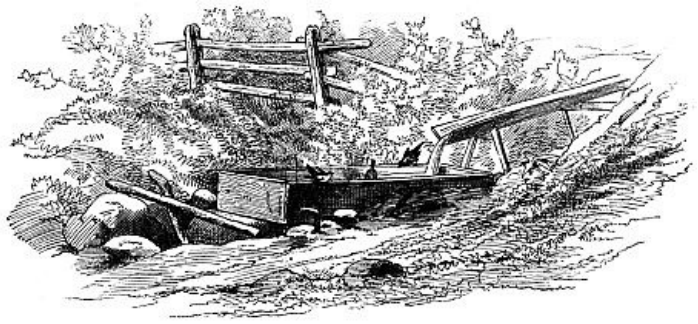
[357]

At last he came to the foot of the hill on the top of which was the hospital. But the ascent of that hill! he was terrified as he looked at it. It was covered with rocks and rolling stones, and beside its steep path was a yawning chasm. He stood gazing at it for a moment, and then, as if realizing for the first time his actual needs, he drew forth his staff and cast it from him as far as his strength would send it. [358]

Now, he had not known himself what a weight that staff had been to him, for no sooner was he rid of it than it seemed to him almost as if he had wings. Then, resting wholly on his crutches, he addressed himself to his last labor. And, truly, those who looked after him saw that he made that most difficult ascent (up to the place where he knew there was a Physician who would heal him) as if it were the easiest part of his journey.

[359]



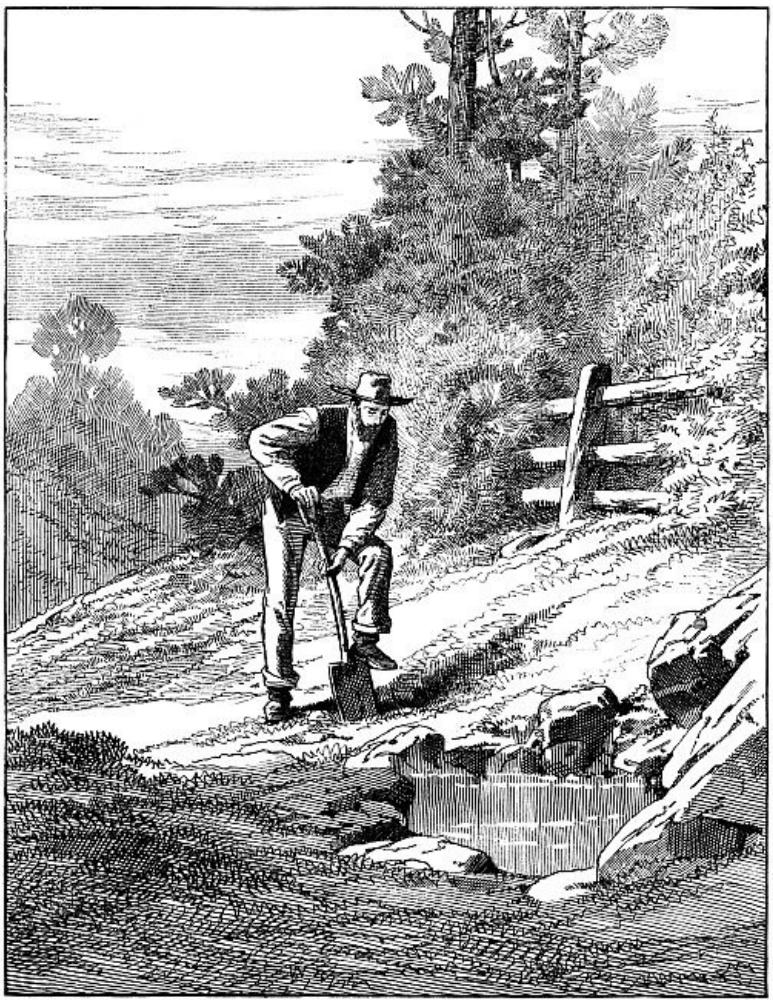


THE SEARCH.

A MAN had a never-failing spring in his grounds, the water from which he brought through pipes to his house. There it was used for drinking, cooking, washing, and all domestic purposes. After a time, however, the family became aware that, from some cause, the water was tainted. They were loth to acknowledge this, but it was so evident that all their wishes to the contrary could not deceive them.

The first thing the man did was to go to the spring and examine it. No water could look purer. He dipped a cupful from the surface, and drank it without detecting any unpleasant taste. What was next to be done? He had heard of a filter for sale at the village store. It would cost several dollars, but the doctor’s bill might come to a great deal more. There was no help for it: the filter [361] was bought and placed where every drop from the spring passed through it before being used at [362] the house. Reluctant indeed were the man and his family, after such an expense, still to recognize, without being able to detect the cause of, the impurity.

But one course was left, and that was to take up and examine every foot of pipe through which the water ran. This required a whole day’s labor. Nevertheless, it was done. No dead toads or frogs were found in it, so it was carefully cleaned and laid back in its place. The water was turned on again, and, although there was in reality no reason to look for an improvement, the family felt disappointed when it became evident, after all this additional trouble, that the disagreeable taste remained.



The man sat silent all the evening after his hard day’s work, discouraged, but still trying to devise some means of prosecuting his search. The next morning he rose up bright and early, and without saying a word to any one put his long post-spade over his shoulder and walked out to the spring. There, beginning a little way back from its edge, he began to dig. Finding nothing but good top-soil, with clay underneath, he pursued his labors until he had gone almost the whole way around it. Then he came suddenly upon a dark spot in the earth. He dug into it still deeper; the odor that arose from it revealed its nature: it was a mass of decay. He uncovered it to the [363] spring’s side, and found that it cropped out there at the very spot where his pipe opened into the [364] water. At last the cause of all his trouble was revealed.

It was no small task to dam back the rising tide, so that the foul matter could be removed and replaced with pure earth. But, now that he could see where to direct his efforts, this was a simple matter, requiring only persevering labor, which was willingly bestowed; and so in due time the work was well and thoroughly done and the object attained. And the man and his family continued ever afterward to enjoy the pure water of the spring.

As long as we allow the source to remain impure, we will try in vain to purify that which issues from it.

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[365]

THE SWALLOWS AND THE WINDMILL.

A PAIR of swallows, while looking for a barn in which to build, came across a windmill, with its sails furled and its great wheel standing motionless.

“What sort of a place is this?” they said. “Surely no better can be found for our home. We’ll let other swallows go into the old tumble-down barns around, but this beautiful tower we will secure for ourselves.”

Then, flying below the dome-like roof of the mill, they discovered a small window, just under the eaves, with a pane of glass broken out, through which they darted, and soon picked out a spot under a rafter inside for their nest. At once they went to work building it. A pond near by [366] supplied them with mud. Working up little balls of this with their bills, they carried them into the mill and fastened them against the rafter they had chosen. In this way, adding little by little, as a bricklayer builds up a house, they built up the walls of their nest. Then they brought grass to line the inside, coiling it around nicely that it might be smooth and even. Last of all, above the grass, they made a bed of soft feathers.

Now, it happened, the very next night after all this was finished, that a strong wind sprang up, and the next morning early the miller appeared and went into his mill. Presently he came out again, and, standing on the ground, under the great wheel, began to unfurl the sails on each of its four arms, one after the other. As soon as this was done, loosening its fastenings he let the wheel go; and the wind, filling the sails, began to turn it around—at first slowly, but gradually faster and faster, until it was running at full speed.

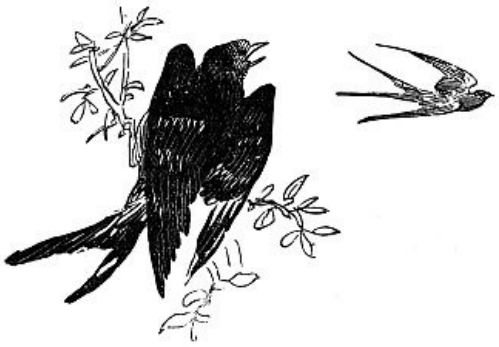
The swallows, that were taking a holiday after their labors, and flying about joyously up in the air, looked down surprised at what was going on. But their surprise was turned to dismay when they found that the wheel was revolving directly in front of the little window through which they gained entrance into the mill. They flew from side to side, hour after hour, hoping the wheel [367] would stop; but it never once rested through the day or the night, and continued to go until [368] another morning appeared. Then, wearied out and in despair, they lodged on a fence near by.

Here another swallow, that had her home in a neighboring barn, saw them perched with drooping wings. Lighting beside them, she asked what was the matter.

"'Matter'!" cried they. "We are ruined. The man in yonder mill tied up his horrid wheel just long enough for us to build our nest under his roof, and then set it going. Look at it! Were we inside, we could never get out; and now that we are out, we can never get in. So cruelly have we been deceived!"

"You have been deceived, my friends, that is true," replied the other, gently, "but not by the miller: you have deceived yourselves. What does he care for swallows? It was your place to inquire how the building was used, before making your nest in it. Instead of doing this, you took the risk, and so have lost your labor. But do not despair as though all had been lost. If you will be satisfied to lodge like other swallows, and will come to our barn, across yonder field, there is plenty of room left over the haymow, and time enough too, for you to build another nest; and there you may yet rear your brood in peace and content." [369]

When we take for granted what we ought to prove by careful research, we are apt to be disappointed in the result; especially is caution needed when, leaving the old beaten track, we venture to mark out a new path for ourselves.



[370]

THE MEDICINE-MAN.

A MAN who lived in an unhealthy region of country supported himself by preparing and selling a medicine which acted as an antidote to the malarial or other poison prevailing there. This poison was taken into the system through the air the people breathed, the water they drank, and the food they ate. The entire population was suffering from it. Unless its effects were arrested, they became in the end fatal. The medicine, however, was a certain cure. Nature had evidently provided it as a remedy for a people otherwise incurably smitten, and the man who made a business of preparing it put it up in such quantities that there was an abundant supply within the [371] reach of all by whom it was needed.

But here was a curious thing: The man himself neglected to take of the medicine. This was not because he had escaped the prevailing infection. Signs of it in his own person were evident enough to his friends, and some of them who had been cured through his means took occasion to speak with him on the subject. Said one of them:

“No one knows better than yourself the value of this remedy. And though it be not always pleasant to take, and requires some self-denial while using, what is this to the risk of one’s life?”

To this reasonable appeal the man at first made no answer; but when further pressed, he replied as follows:

“Am I doing any harm, that I should be thus annoyed and interfered with? Is it not better that I should deal out this medicine than poison to the people?”

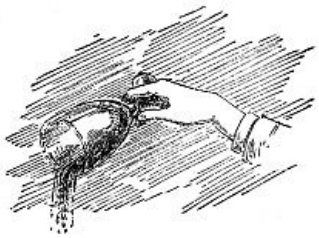
“It is indeed,” said his friend. “You are doing no harm, but good, to others, but are not resisting the harm that is being done to yourself.”

“That is a personal matter,” said the man, “with which nobody else has anything to do. I can attend to my own health, and have no wish that another should prescribe for me.”

So they could do no more, but had to stand by and see the fatal malady increasing upon him. [372]

It was like looking at a man standing in the water, breast-deep, with the vessel sinking under him, and he, after handing all the rest into the lifeboat, turning a deaf ear when they begged him to come too, and be saved.

Leading another into the right path does not excuse me for continuing in the wrong one. Neither can his reaching the goal help me to get there while I walk in a different way.



[373]

THE EAGLE AND THE WREN.

A WREN that came into a mountainous region where mining was carried on, having found a deserted pit, made her nest in a hole in its side. One hot summer day an eagle lodged on the branch of a pine tree that stood near the pit, and spied the little wren coming up out of its mouth. Said the eagle:

"So you are not satisfied with getting down on to the ground? You must burrow under it to make your nest! Well, every creature finds its own proper level; but can you see so far as that [375] lofty crag on the top of yonder mountain? There, up among the clouds, is where I sit with my [376] young, looking down on you little birds that dare not fly to the height of our home."

The wren, overawed by the eagle's voice, made no answer, but flew down into the pit again.

The day grew hotter and hotter; the birds through the woods ceased singing and the insects chirping; all nature seemed oppressed by the heat. In the afternoon a small black cloud appeared in the west. It rose rapidly, and soon spread over the whole sky. Then there was a strange sound heard in the distance. It grew louder and nearer. As it approached, tall forest trees bent over and snapped asunder, and great branches, and heavy stones even, were seen flying through the air. It lasted but a moment, and then all was still again.

Now, the wren, hidden in the hole in the pit's side, had not heard the noise of the storm; but, coming up soon afterward to hunt for a worm, she was dismayed at the scene of desolation that

met her eye. Great trunks of trees, and rocks, were strewn over the earth, while among them lay prostrate the eagle and her young. The young ones were dead, and their mother, with a broken wing, in her effort to rise, was vainly beating the ground.

“Alas!” cried the wren, “what has wrought such sad ruin? And how is it that I have escaped, when a strong eagle has been cast down?” [377]

“Ah!” replied the eagle, “had I been a wren with a lowly nest, like you, instead of a proud eagle with her nest built on high, the tornado, which you did not even hear, would have left me and mine, too, unharmed.”

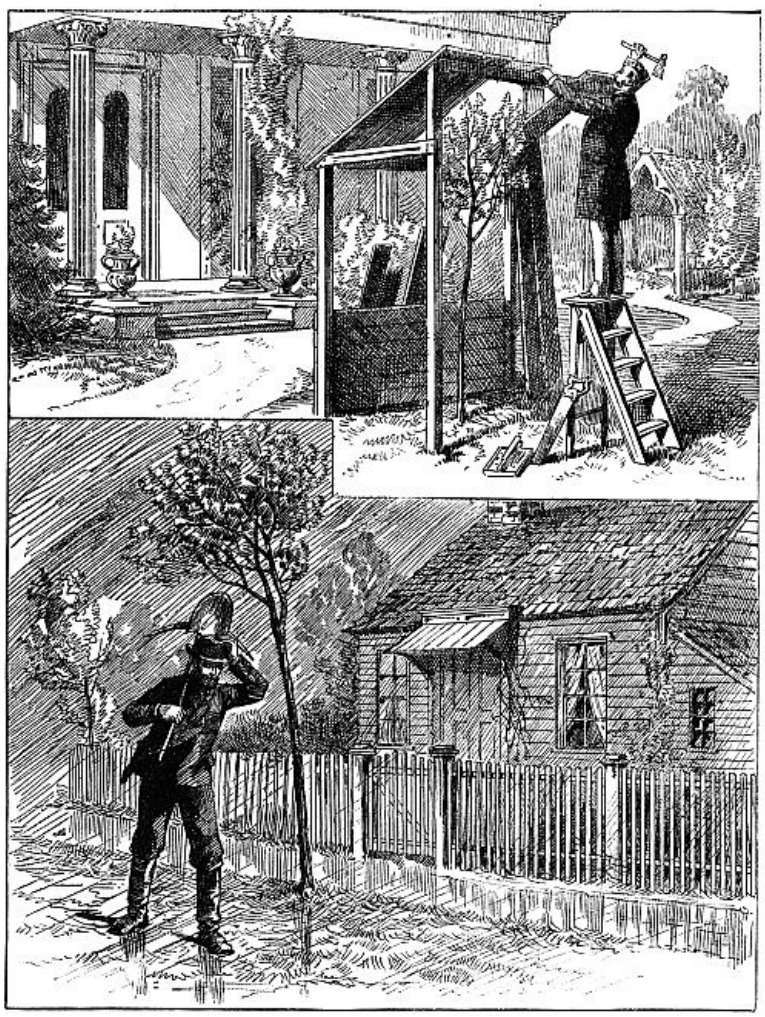
Persons who fill lofty stations are subject to dangers which others know not of, and many a time, when no one suspects it, would be glad to change places with those who envy them.

THE TWO SAPLINGS.

TWO slender saplings were planted on the same day—one before the house of a rich man, and the other at a poor man’s door.

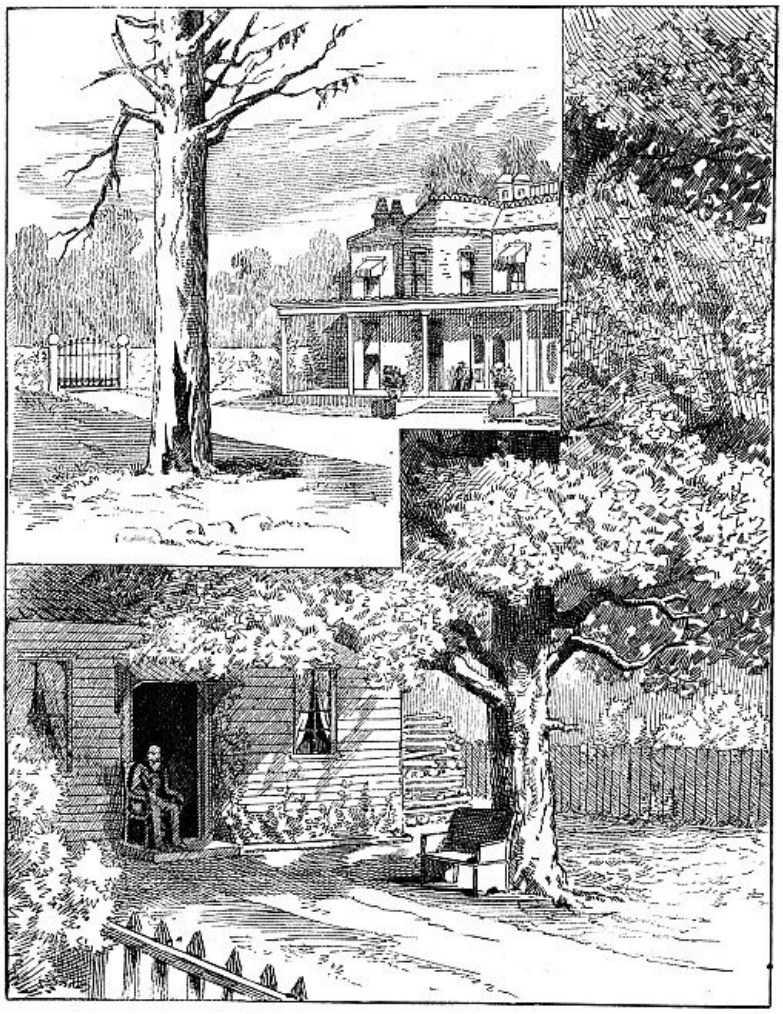
The summer passed, and winter came. Then, as the rich man saw his young tree tossed to and fro by the storm, he was afraid it would be broken; so he went to it and built a fence around it and spread a roof over it. But the poor man, because he had to labor out in the storm himself, never thought of sheltering his tree.

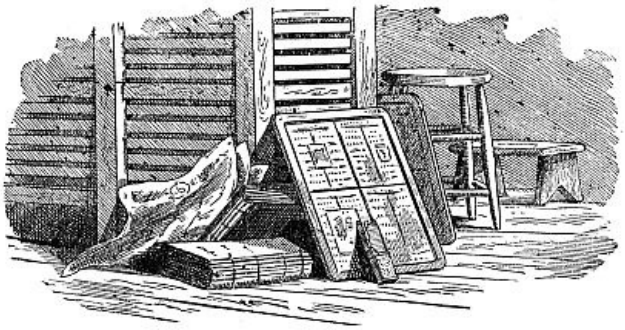
Season followed after season; the rich man was still nursing his tree, and, as it grew, building his fence up higher and higher. But the poor man’s tree was left to the sunshine, the wind, and the rain. [379] [380]



And now long years have gone; youth has fled, and age has come. The rich man can no longer keep up his watchful care, nor the poor man go forth to his labor. But, as they sit resting at their doors at the close of the day, the poor man sees, towering above him, a strong oak in its prime, spreading its protecting branches over his roof; while the rich man sees a weak and unhealthy trunk that is already decaying at the root, and destined hardly to outlast himself.

Parents who shield their children from the hardships which they ought to bear in youth, unfit them for the hardships which they must bear in maturer years.



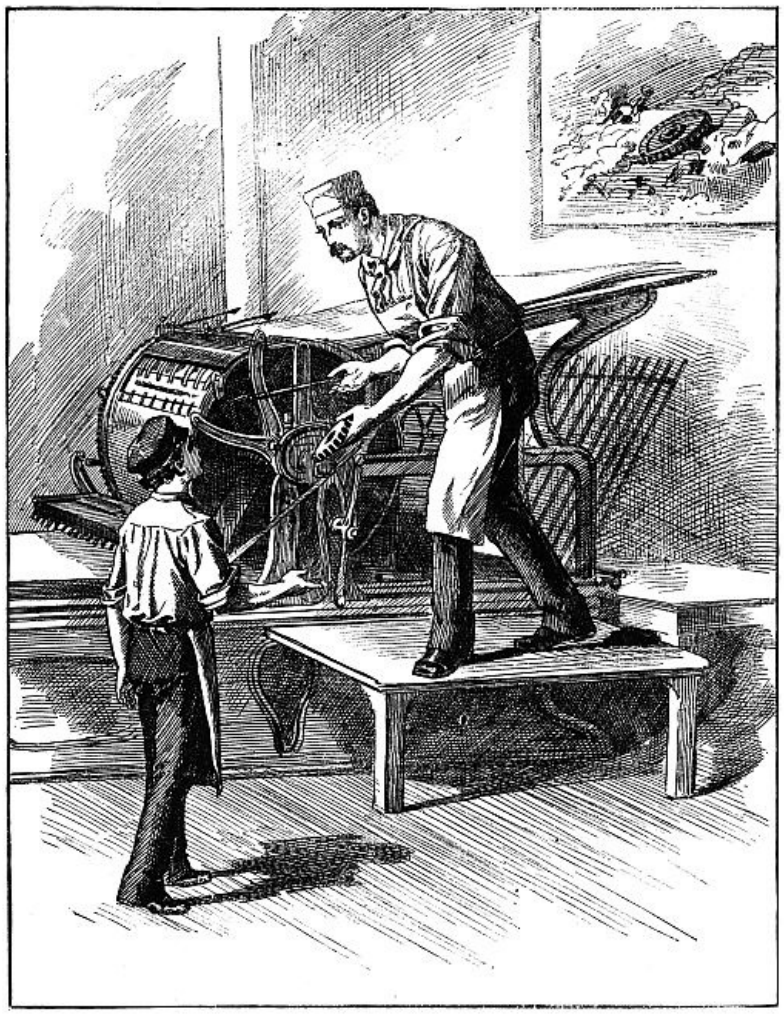


THE COG-WHEEL.

A SMALL cog-wheel in the upper part of a great printing-press came to the conclusion that it was not turned by the steam-engine, but turned of its own accord. Having taken up this notion, in a little while it brought itself to believe that it drove the whole press.

“It is easy to see,” it said, “that the other wheels keep time with my movements, going slow when I go slow, and fast when I run at greater speed. From this it is plain that I give motion to the whole, and that all the work of the press depends upon me.”

Then it began to boast about that work.



“Look,” it said, “at that great sheet of white paper. It is laid on my feed-board blank and [383] meaningless, but comes out from under my cylinder covered with the clearest print. It is a [384] newspaper, which is distributed by tens of thousands over the land. At other times I print books. Some are learned ones, for scholars to read; some are children’s books filled with pictures, and of these last I assert that nothing made of paper and ink can be more beautiful. But it is all my work, neither could it possibly be done without me, as I will now prove by holding back for a moment the entire press.”

Saying which, the wheel turned a little on its side, thus hindering the one next to it. But just at that moment the pressman, stepping up and seeing some derangement in its movement, stopped the press. Then, calling to a boy, who was covered with printer’s ink from head to foot,

“Run quickly,” he said, “to the store-room and bring me another cog-wheel.”

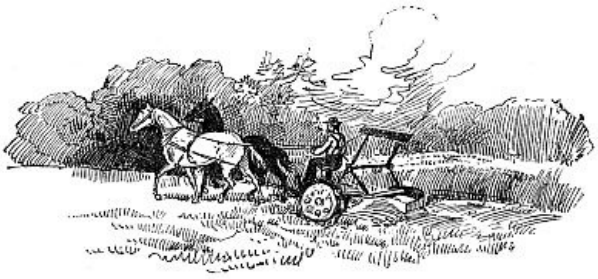
No sooner had the boy brought it than the pressman, slipping off the old wheel, put the new

one in its place.

“Take this,” he said, handing the old one to the boy, “and throw it on the scrap-heap.”

In another moment the press was running again at full speed.

Because some good work prospers in our hands we presently think ourselves the author of it, forgetting that we are only instruments appointed to carry it on, and that there are many others who are ready, if need be, to take our place. [385]

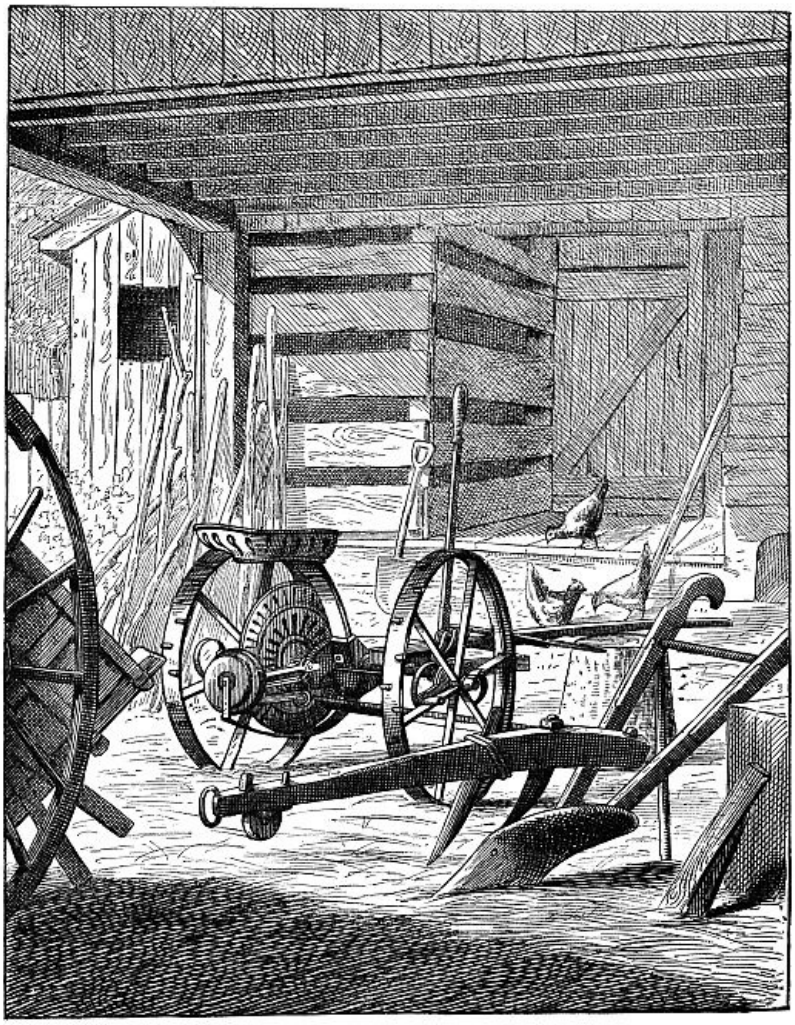


THE PLOUGH AND THE MOWING-MACHINE.

A FARMER, having bought a new mowing-machine, brought it home and put it in the barn where his plough was housed, waiting for the opening of spring.

When the mower, in its bright paint and glossy varnish, saw the soiled and toil-worn plough, it said, with a scornful look:

“Why am I placed in such low company?”



“You think yourself better than I am,” said the plough, “but where would you be without me? If I did not first turn up the soil for the planting, you would never be wanted for the mowing. You only finish where I have begun, and on my work your very existence depends.” [387] [388]

We sometimes look down on those who are not only our equals in usefulness, but whose honest labor has helped to make us better off than themselves.

FAT AND LEAN.

A STRONG fat ox stood with his eyes half shut, chewing the cud, while his driver heaped up a heavy load of stone on the cart he was yoked to.

A neighbor, who chanced to be riding by on a fast but very lean horse, stopped to speak to the man. The horse, on being held in, began to paw the ground, as if impatient to go on, then, looking around scornfully at the ox, said:

“What do you stand there chewing the cud for now?”

“Why shouldn’t I?” asked the ox. “What harm does it do?”

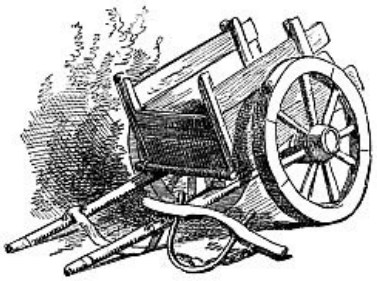
“When I’m in harness,” replied the horse, “I like to work, and not go to sleep.”

“I have to do my share of work,” said the ox; “there’s no doubt about that. If you’ll wait till I [390] get the word, you’ll see how I pull. When I come to a heavy hill, I stop chewing the cud; but as soon as I come to a level place, I begin again. For even while I’m at work I take all the comfort I can.”

“‘Comfort’!” exclaimed the horse. “Is that your aim? Mine is to pass every other team on the road.”

“Ah, well!” said the ox, “that sounds very fine,
But just look at your ribs, and then look at mine!”

He who cannot be happy as long as he sees another more fortunate or successful than himself, whatever else he may gain, will never know peace and content.



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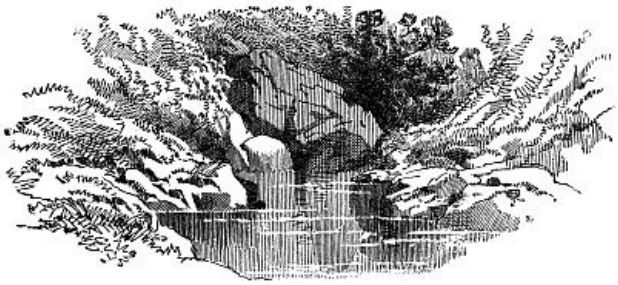
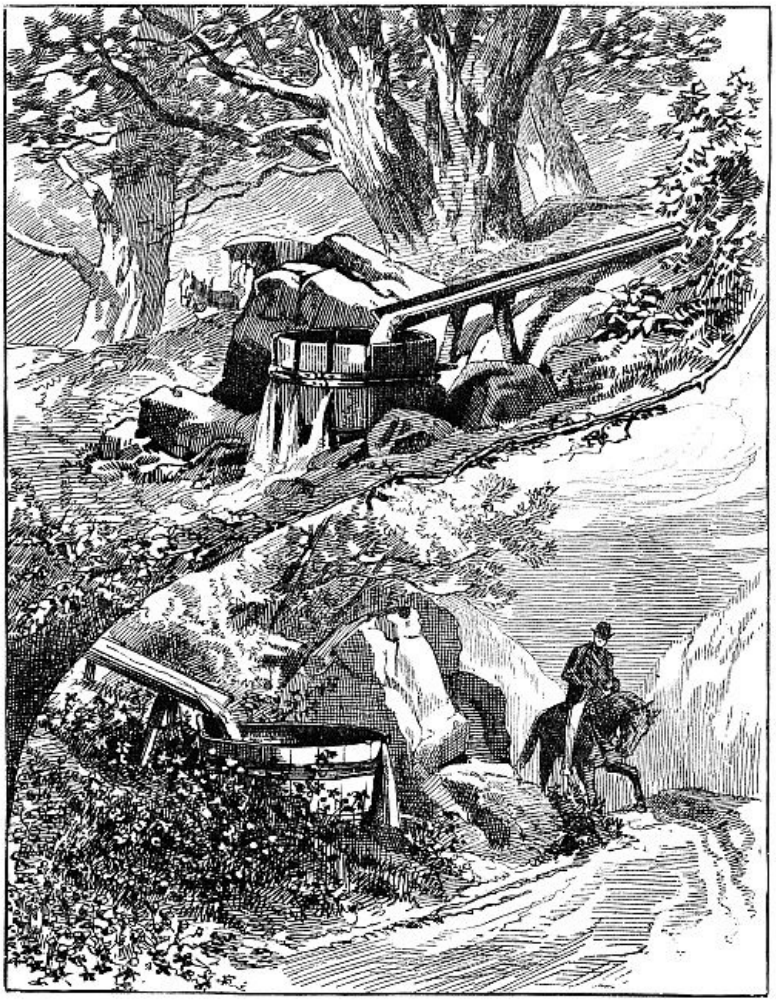


HALF EMPTY AND QUITE FULL.

IN a quiet, lonely spot, beside a mountain-road, a half barrel stood partly sunk in the ground. A small wooden trough resting on its rim led the water from a spring that was hidden a little way back in the woods. The water was for ever running into it, yet the half barrel was never full. Its hoops were loosened, its joints opened, and much of the pure stream that it received escaped, trickling down its sides and sinking into the earth. But while it was never full, except perhaps once or twice in a summer, when there fell such a flood of rain as overcame all its leaks and openings, neither was it ever quite empty; for, although it was a poor leaky vessel at best, it had never quite fallen to pieces.

[393]



[394] A few miles beyond this spot, on that mountain-road, stood what looked to be the other half of the same barrel. A trough exactly similar to the first led a stream of water into it, but this half barrel, compact and tight, was always full to the brim ready to spare some of its refreshing contents to the tired traveller, who, after he had quenched his own thirst, unreined his horse and allowed him to sink his mouth deeply into it and drink.

Some men, retaining their gracious gifts, are ever ready to impart to those who need; while others, suffering the loss of theirs, are ever in need themselves.

THE SNAKE.

A BEAUTIFUL and harmless little garter-snake was gliding across the road, when a man who happened to be passing seized a club and struck it a crushing blow. As it writhed in agony it turned to its assailant and said:

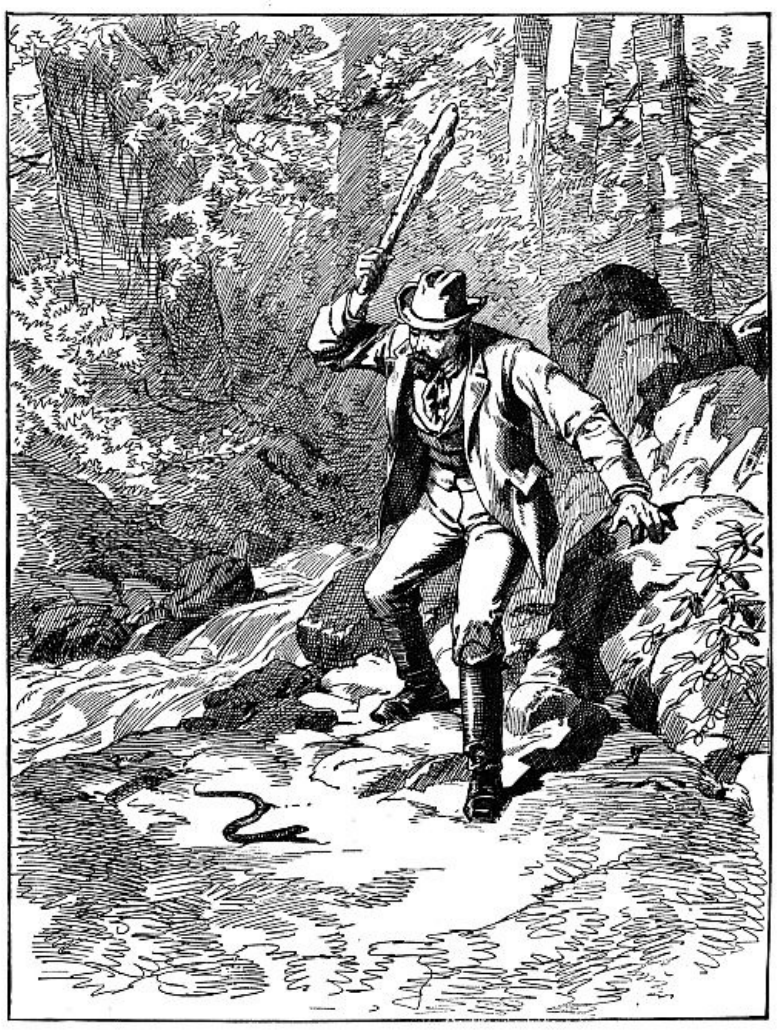
"Why do you kill me?"

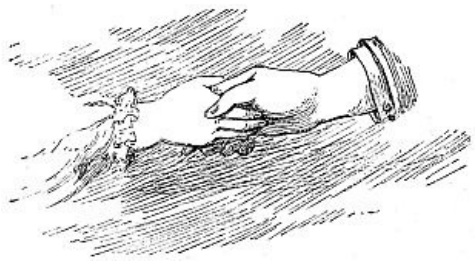
"Do you suppose," replied the man, "I will let anything in the form of a snake live, when I know there are venomous copperheads in this very woods?"

"And are there no men," asked the snake, "that are revengeful and dangerous, and would you destroy all men for their sake?" [396]

Let us not be prejudiced against a whole family for the faults of one member of it, or be unable to see any merit in a thing because it is not wholly free from defect.

[397]





RICH AND POOR.

TWO men were neighbors—one rich, the other poor—and both of them had children of whom they were fond. The children of the rich man received many costly presents of such things as young people prize, but the children of the poor man had only their food and clothing, and that of the plainest sort.

Years passed by. Both families grew up like young trees in an orchard, and in due season began to display the fruits of their training, when the rich man, meeting his poor neighbor one day, said to him:

“I have been watching your children, and I notice they appear to feel as though they could never see enough of you or do enough for you. It is not so with mine. I wonder if you can tell the secret of this difference?”

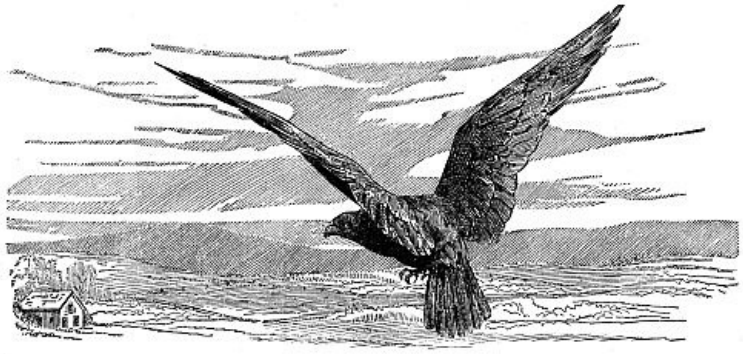
“Perhaps it lies here,” replied the poor man: “As I am unable to draw my children to me by what I can give them, I have to try and accomplish it by what I can do for them. To this end I am careful about four things—viz.: To be as sparing as I can of my censure when they do wrong; to be as liberal as I can of my praise when they do right; to take an interest in whatever interests them; and to let them see that I deny myself to supply their needs as far as I can.”

“I see,” replied the rich man, “wherein our plans have differed: you have worked for what I have tried to buy. I gave of my money, you of what costs more—forbearance, consideration, and love. So I have been shut out of my children’s hearts, while you have gained an entrance into yours. I thank you for the lesson you have taught me, and purpose, though I begin late, to profit by it.”

We cannot buy affection at any price, or retain it by the mere tie of kindred, however close. We must secure it in each case by deserving it,

and hold it by continuing to deserve it from day to day.

[401]



THE HAWK AND THE CHICKEN.

A HAWK, as it soared on high, seeing a young chicken in the field below, rapidly descended, and seized it in his talons.

"Alas!" said the chicken, "I have no power to struggle, or any hope of saving myself by resisting you in any way. But I pray you listen to me. I am yet young, hardly grown, and am just beginning to enjoy roaming through the fields by myself. Do not cut off my days. I beg you out of pity to spare my life."

"What you say may be all true," said the hawk. "I don't pretend to know whether it is, or is not; all I do know is that I am hungry, and that you are the only food provided for me. I can't go into any reasonings behind that." [403] [404]

Saying which, he dug his talons deeper into the flesh of his victim, and, carrying it off, devoured it on a neighboring tree.

At this a horse that was feeding in the meadow below, and had heard the birds speaking, said to himself:

"As I don't wear feathers or fly with wings, I won't presume to judge those who do. But, as for me, I know it is my duty to earn my living by honest labor and let other people alone."

What may be lawful for others who are living under different conditions from ourselves, affords us no excuse for ever departing from

the strict course of mercy and justice.

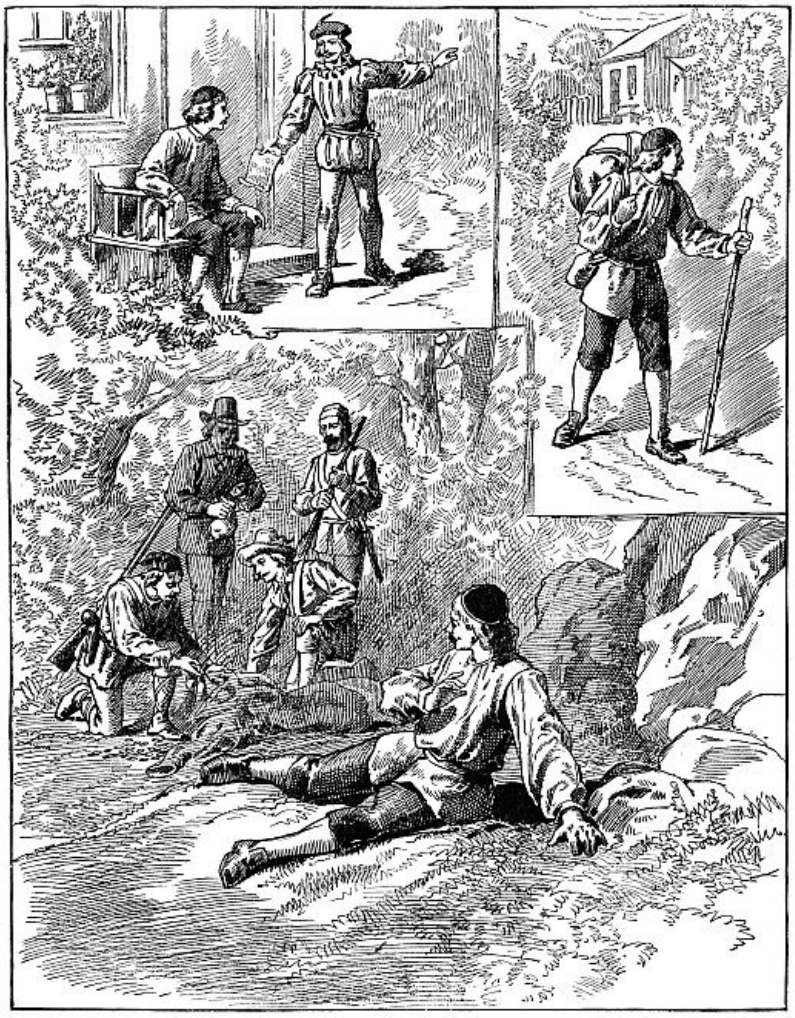
THE SERVANT’S MONEY.

A CERTAIN king sent a message to one of his servants who lived in a distant part of his kingdom, bidding the servant come to him, and promising that henceforth all his wants should be supplied in the king’s palace.

The servant, overjoyed at the message, prepared at once to obey it; but, being a poor man who through long years of saving and pinching had come to set great store by small possessions, it [406] went very hard with him to leave behind such things as he could call his own—the little house he lived in, with the plot of ground around it, and the few rude implements with which he tilled the soil. As it was impossible, however, to take them with him, he sold them for what he could get (which was not much); and then, packing up his clothes in divers parcels and hiding his little store of money among them, he started on his journey.

The first part of this, which led through well-tilled fields and among people whom he knew, was very pleasant. Many who were his friends came out, as he passed by, to meet him, begging him to stop and rest a while in their houses. And when it happened to be toward evening, he went in and supped and lodged with them.

But after leaving this part of the country he came to a bleak and lonely region abounding in rocks and caves. Here, as he was pressing on, hoping to get through it safely, some robbers rushed out from their hiding-place upon him. Hastily looking through the bundles with which he was loaded, and finding they were made up of old worn-out clothes, they refused to take them. But, in making the search, they spied his money, and, seizing it, quickly disappeared.



When the poor man saw them hurrying away with his treasure—which, small as it was, represented his lifelong labors—his grief overcame him, and he sat down and wept. But, presently recovering himself, he said: [407] [408]

“Shall I stay here crying in this wilderness, when I am sent for by the king?”

Then he rose up from the ground, and pursued his way without further interruption, though with a heavy heart and faltering step, until he came to the gates of the king’s palace. There he found many others assembled from different parts of the kingdom, who had also come at the king’s command—some of them poor like himself, some rich; and they all waited for the day when the gates should open.

But while they were waiting for this what was his surprise to see the poor draw forth their pence, and the rich their silver and gold, and throw them away! For they had been told they would have no need of them within the gates, and that until they had parted with them they could not enter. So they all cast their money from them, whether it was little or much, and it lay scattered over the ground, with none to gather it. Neither was the servant any poorer than the richest of them, though he had been robbed of all. Then he said to himself, “How foolish was I to set such store by, and grieve so much after, what was of no real value!”

[409]

And after that, with nothing except the garments that they wore (and even these had been given them), he and all who waited with him entered joyfully into the palace-gates. [410]

It is of little account what we lose by the way if we keep that which alone has any value at the end of our journey.

FUTURE GREATNESS.

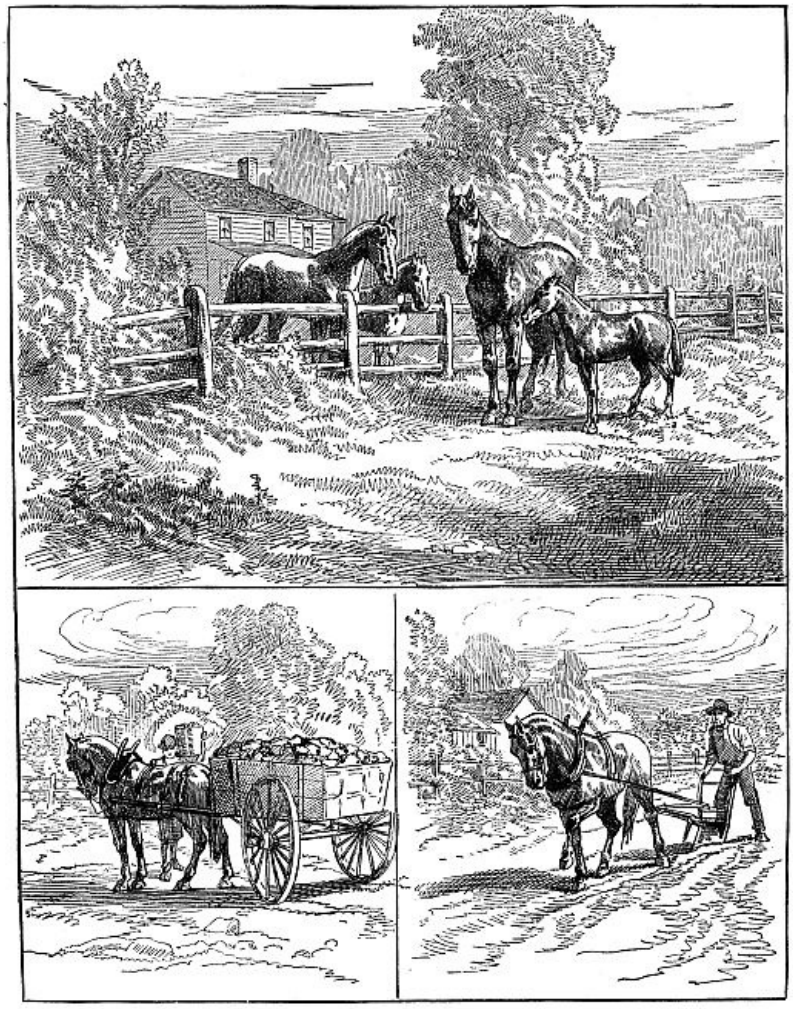
TWO young colts, each by the side of its mother, were at pasture in adjoining fields. The mother of one, coming to the dividing fence, and putting her head over it, said to her neighbor:

"Just look at the color of my colt! Was there ever a lovelier bay? Before another spring has passed over his head I expect to see him in the stable of some millionaire. You know what a rage there is among rich men for fast horses. Now, look at the points in my colt—his long, clean limbs, his deer-like shape, his full eye and broad nostril. I am as certain of his speed as if he had just been around the track and I heard the time-keeper calling out:

"'Two minutes ten and a half seconds!'" [412]

"I have been looking at your colt," replied the other, "and admit he promises well; but what do you think of the little roan on this side the fence? Now, I wouldn't care to have him in a millionaire's stable, or put him there, if I could, by a wish. Those rich men think of nobody but themselves, and keep fine horses only to swell their own importance. Then they are speculators, to a man; there's no telling how long they'll keep their money. Let that go, and their horses go with it, to the jockey and the race-course, to be abused and betted on and driven to death.

"No; I would rather see my colt in the hands of some grand, rich lady—the gem of her stable, her daily companion and pet. And is he not made for it? Look at his round, short body, so plump and easily kept; his strong, arched neck, and his beautiful thick mane and tail. And mark my words: it won't be long before all that I predict about him comes true. In fact, I think I know who the lady is already. She drives by here in her barouche with liveried coachman and footman, each with a bouquet in his buttonhole, and as she passes I can see her looking over the fence."



Here we will imagine that several years have suddenly vanished, and we are again visiting the fields where the above interview took place. One of them is being ploughed, and a stout roan [413] horse is stepping briskly in front of the furrow; the other field its owner is clearing of stones, and [414] a young bay is hauling out a heavy cart-load of them. Both horses are strong and willing helpers on the farm, earning an honest living, valued and well cared for by their masters, and far better off than they would be if left to the heedless servants of the fashionable lady or the proud millionaire.

What weakness and folly do we often show in the secret expectations we cherish concerning those who are to come after us! And how well it is for them that the shaping of their destinies is not in our hands!

THE OLD MAN’S WATCH.

AN old man and a young one were walking together over a rough and hilly road. Said the old man:

“Though I detain you by being unable to keep up with your rapid step, yet, in spite of this feeble frame, I am feeling in spirit as young as you. Perhaps you can hardly believe this?”

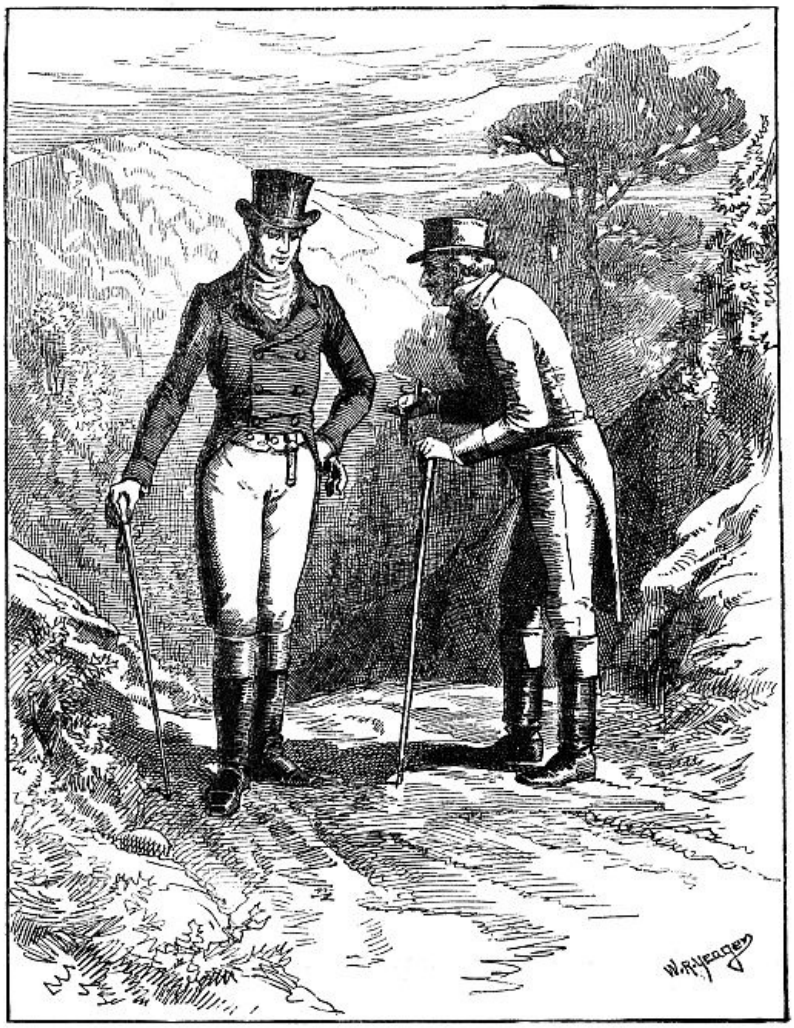
“I can believe it if you say so,” replied the young man, “but confess that when I look at your snowy locks and your bent form, I cannot understand it.”

“Stop a moment,” said the old man, drawing out his watch and exposing its works to view. “You see that, like myself, this watch has seen its best days. Its case shows wear, and so do its [416] works. These little cog-wheels do not fit into each other as closely as they once did, and they are growing farther apart, by wear, every day. But now look at the mainspring, where it lies, here, coiled up by itself. It shows no wear. The same power and elasticity it has had all along remain in it still.”

“I see,” replied the other; and, becoming so interested in the watch as to forget it was being used only as an illustration, he continued: “Why do you not have the rest of the works repaired?”

“Your question is natural,” said the old man. “So I might have these worn-out works repaired, but not this worn-out body. Neither do I desire it. It will soon have done its work and lasted out its appointed time here. But in another state of being the immortal part—the mainspring, so to speak—will live on, clothed with a new body as immortal as itself. It is this that still remains as vigorous as ever, and makes me feel, in spirit, as young as yourself.”

As we advance in years we are conscious of that within us which does not grow old, but which, having learned that this world cannot satisfy, grows weary of it, and peers anxiously into the next.



THE TEACHER.

I DREAMED that I had started on a journey, and as I trudged along the path alone a man carrying a mirror, stopped me, saying:

"I want to speak with you."

I replied: "From whence do you come, and what may your calling be?"

He answered: "I come from beyond that steep hill in front of you which you have yet to climb; and I am a teacher, teaching by the things that I show in my mirror."

Then he held his mirror up before my eyes and told me to look. I obeyed, and saw a ship tossed in a storm. The sails were blown to pieces, the boats were broken, the deck was swept by the waves, and the ship was ready to sink. Then I saw the master come to the side, and stand there [419] pouring oil from a vessel in his hand on the angry waters. And presently, although the storm [420] continued to rage over the rest of the ocean, the ship seemed to be rocked in a little basin that was calm.

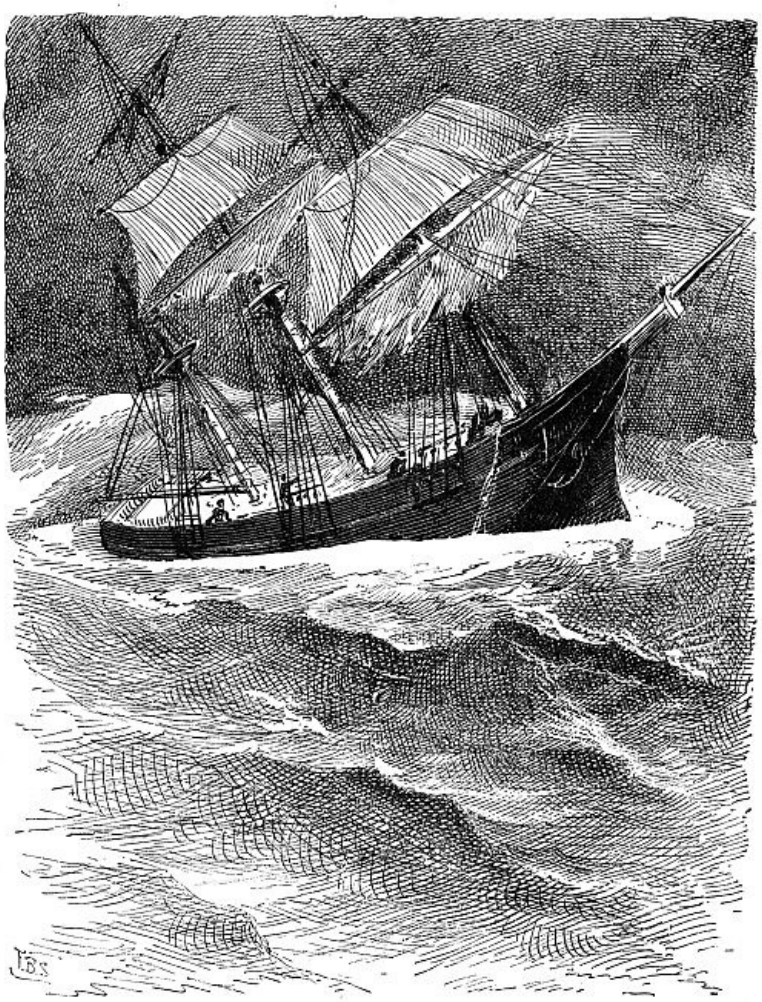
Said the teacher: "Gentleness overcomes where resistance would be in vain."

He held up the mirror again, and I saw two stone-cutters at work dressing a great block of granite. On the wall above them was a clock. Now, one of the men stood with his back to the clock, so that he could not see it, and his arm dealt strong and rapid blows on the stone, seeming never to tire. But the other man stood facing the clock, and was constantly lifting up his eyes to it; and I noticed that his arm was raised slowly and feebly, as if losing its strength, and his face wore an expression of weariness.

The teacher said: "He who does not set his heart on his task, but on the rest that comes after it, makes poor work for his employer and long hours for himself."

Again he held the mirror up, and I saw a vine planted in the ground, with branches growing

out of each side. Now, the vine was as if it were made of glass, so that I could see the sap running from the stalk into the branches. And as it did this they all put forth leaves and blossoms. But suddenly, as I looked, the sap ceased to flow into one of the branches. Then the buds and [421] blossoms fell from it to the earth, and the branch withered and died before my eyes. [422]



Said the teacher: “It is not what the branch gives, but what it receives, that makes it of value in the vineyard.”

He held up the mirror again, and I saw a man with a lantern leading a company that followed him on a dark and narrow path. But presently he closed his eyes, and, as he did so, stumbled and fell. Then one of his followers seized the lantern from his hand and led the others in safety, but the one who had fallen did not return again.

The teacher said: “Even the guide who points out the way must tread carefully, or he may step aside and be lost.”

Again he held up the mirror, and I saw a great fire burning—not near, but, as it were, in a far-off abyss. In it were being consumed what I had always looked upon as the greatest works of men. And those of my own works in which I had taken the greatest pride were also being devoured by the flames. Only a few of the deeds that had seemed to me of lesser value, but that had been done for love (the love of One who first loved me), stood unconsumed in the fire.

And the teacher said: “Behold true and false immortality.”

[423]

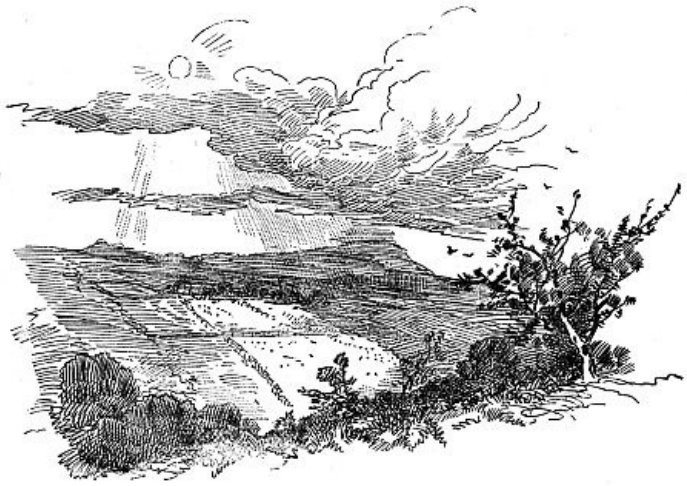
Once more he held up the mirror, and I saw a man carrying a heavy load up a hill. The hill grew steeper at every step, and the man bent down under the weight of the load until his forehead nearly touched the ground in front of him. Then I saw one having a face full of love and a strong arm come up beside the man. But just as I supposed he was going to help him, what was my surprise to see this strong one pick up a heavy stone and put it on the top of his burden! Then I looked to see the man sink down, crushed, to the earth, but I saw the other touch him, and by that touch new strength was given him; so that he bore this heavy burden more easily than he had borne the lighter one. [424]

And the teacher said: “No load is to be feared if only the strength be given to bear it.”

Then he took the mirror from before me and held it up to his own lips, breathing upon it. And I saw the vapor gather on its surface for a moment and then disappear.

And the teacher said: “Such are good impressions when made on the heart of man unless a higher Power fix them there.”

[425]



CLOUD-SHADOWS.

A CLOUD came sailing on the wind, which died away just as it reached a fruitful field.

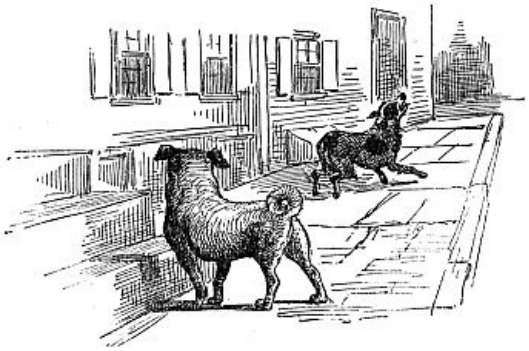
"Pass on," said the field, "and let me see the blue sky."

The cloud spread itself out to catch the little air that was left, and slowly passed on to a field beyond. There it hung motionless. In the night it began to drop its watery contents upon the [427] thirsty sward beneath, so that every green blade glistened as the sun rose upon it, and sprang up with renewed freshness and beauty. The field that had complained, seeing this and being parched with the sun's rays, said:

"Ah that I had borne the cloud's presence a while for the sake of the blessing it contained! I was impatient under its shadow, and now long for that which my neighbor has gained who submitted to its visitation without murmuring."

We put out our hand and thrust away an imagined evil, to find out afterward that, if we had but welcomed it, it would have filled that hand with good.

[428]



THE PENITENT TRANSGRESSOR.

A GOOD natured poodle-dog, while trotting along the street one day, saw a friend of his, an ugly pug, lying on a doorstep looking very much dejected and out of spirits.

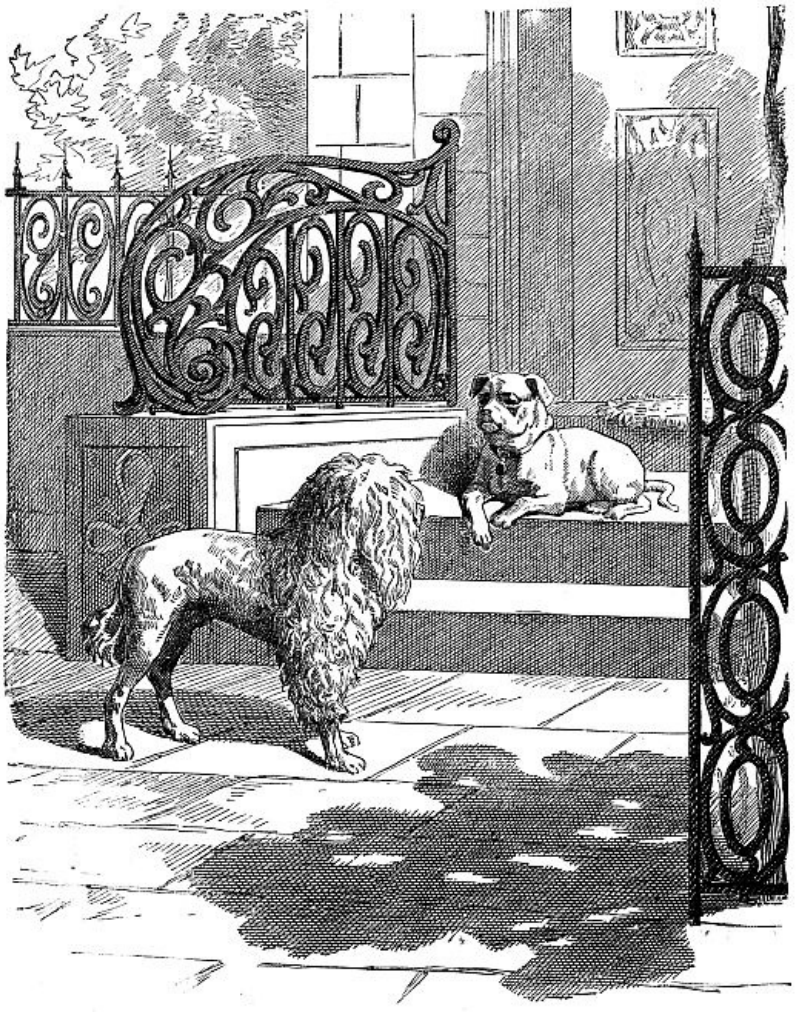
“Why do you look so mournful?” asked the poodle. “What has happened?”

“I feel sorry for something I’ve done,” replied the pug.

“What is it? Have you been peeping into your master’s looking-glass?”

“No, but I’ve bitten another dog.”

[429]



“Well, I suppose he took a bone away from you or snarled at you, or did something else to deserve it.” [430]

“He did snarl at me, that’s true, but I don’t think I ought to have bitten him.”

“Didn’t he bite you back again?”

“No, and that makes me feel all the worse.”

“Oh, well, cheer up; it’s over now, and very likely you’ll never see him any more.”

“Yes, I will, though, for he’s a relation of mine.”

“But you’ll never bite him again after being so sorry for it—I’m sure of that—and that’s some comfort.”

“But I’m not sure, for I’ve done it before, and been sorry too. When anything doesn’t please

me, all at once I get so mad that I hardly know what I’m about, and then I’m ready to bite my dearest friend.”

“Do you mean that you get crazy and lose your senses?”

“No, I only mean that I lose my temper. I’m sorry for it every time, but I go on losing it and biting my friends over and over again; and I’m discouraged about it, and don’t know what to do.”

“Well, if you haven’t got sense enough to stop it, right now and without any more whining, the sooner you go and give yourself up to the dog-catchers, the better.”

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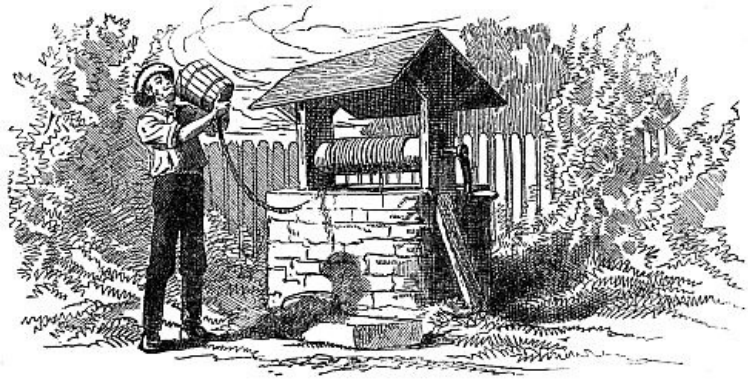
[431]

Persons who easily fly into a passion forfeit not only the regard and confidence of other people, but also their own self-respect.

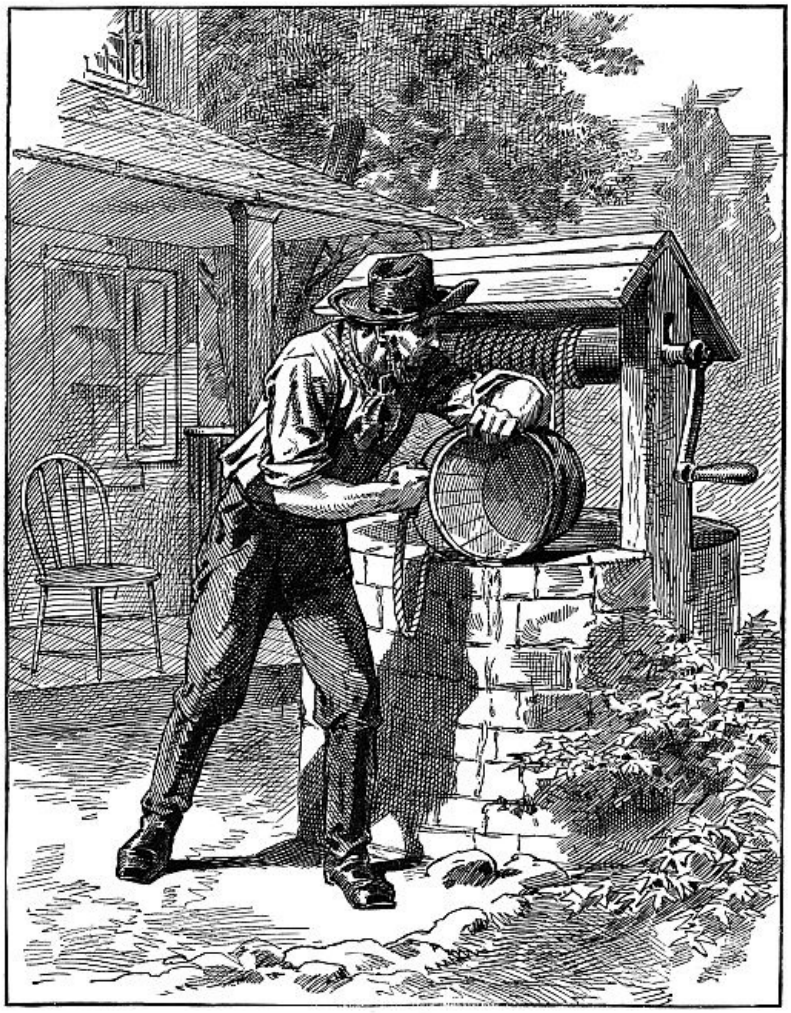


THE DRY WELL.

A man who had always been able to get as much water from his well as he wanted, on drawing up the bucket one hot summer day, found less than a cupful in it. There was so little water at the bottom of the well that the bucket could not turn over and fill itself. As soon as the man discovered this he began abusing his well, saying:

"Is that all you can do? You are not worth the room you take or the money you cost to dig. If there is any one thing more useless and contemptible than another, it is a well that holds no water."

"Does all my past service go for nothing, then?" asked the well. "I have filled your bucket, year after year, with unfailing streams, as you yourself know. And even now what I have I willingly offer, to the last drop." [433] [434]



"'Drop' indeed, and little more!" said the man. "But what good will that do me? What I want is a barrelful or a hogsheadful if I need it."

"I have not the ocean to draw from," replied the well, "or even a river, but only one trickling spring. If that fails, I have no other resource, but must wait till its dried-up current begins to flow again. Can you, at all times, command the same fulness and excellence in your own work? Pray, do your powers never fail?"

How often are we intolerant of a single failure on the part of those

who have generally succeeded in pleasing us, and who are still doing their very best to accomplish that end!

THE FRUIT TREE.

A FRUIT tree sprang up from a seed in the corner of a certain man’s field. It grew rapidly and put forth branches. Great was the man’s delight when he saw these bearing blossoms.

“Now I shall have fruit of my own,” he said.

Autumn came and the fruit appeared, but as it ripened, instead of growing round and rich and mellow, it grew knotted and hard and bitter to the taste.

“’Tis because it is young and the soil where it stands thin and poor,” the land-owner said.

Then he loosened the ground around its roots and enriched and watered it, and afterward [436] waited for spring. Spring came, and again the tree put forth blossoms and bore fruit, more abundantly than before; but it was worthless and unfit to be eaten.

Another winter passed and spring returned once more, and one sunny morning, as the land-owner stood looking at his tree and repining over it, there came a gardener by that way.

“What troubles you?” he said, seeing the man’s sad face.

“My tree has proved worthless,” replied the other. “Yet I have done all that could be done to it, and still it bears only evil fruit.”

At this the gardener took out his pruning-knife and opening it, he came to the tree and at one stroke severed its top, with all its spreading boughs, so that they fell down on the ground, as fit only for the burning. Then he made a deep cleft in the stock of the tree, and into this he inserted a young shoot that he carried with him. Next he anointed, with clay, the wound that his knife had made, and wrapped it about carefully, and, turning to the land-owner, said:

“Be patient; give it time. All yet will be well.”

Another season came. The new shoot put forth buds; it blossomed, and then (after the [437] gardener had grafted it, but not before) the tree brought forth good fruit.

There is a life which is ours by natural inheritance, and another which comes only as a free gift. Though both are housed in the same body, they are received at different times and have each a separate existence and destiny.

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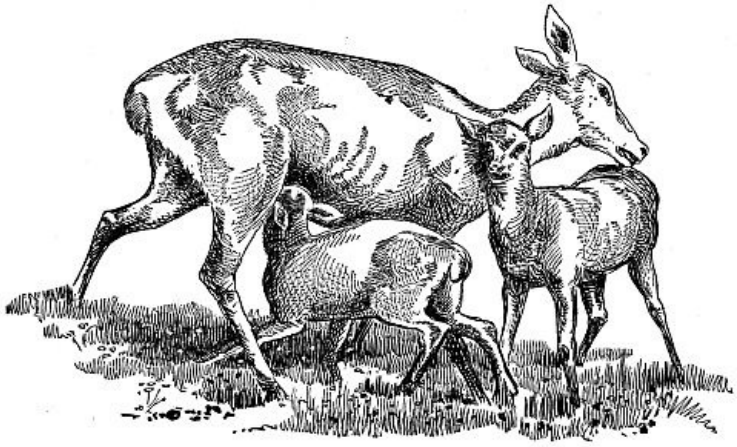
[438]



THE DEER.

A DEER that lived in a country far from the abodes of men used to stay during the winter on some low-lying lands where she could find patches of grass growing through the cold weather, and thick coverts, also, among the evergreens, in which to hide while the fierce snow-storms were prevailing. But as soon as spring returned she left the low-lands and hastened to a mountain many miles away, and there, roaming over its wooded heights and drinking from a quiet lake that lay spread out on its very top, she stayed, rejoicing, all the summer long. [439]

After she had been doing thus for many years, and when she was no longer young, it happened one winter that certain strange sensations crept through her frame such as she had never before known. She rose from her lair with more difficulty than formerly, and walked at times with an unsteady step. She grew weak and thin, and afraid of the storms that she used to face boldly when going forth in search of food. Then she began to wonder, and say:

"What ails me, and what do these feelings mean?"

But presently she answered:

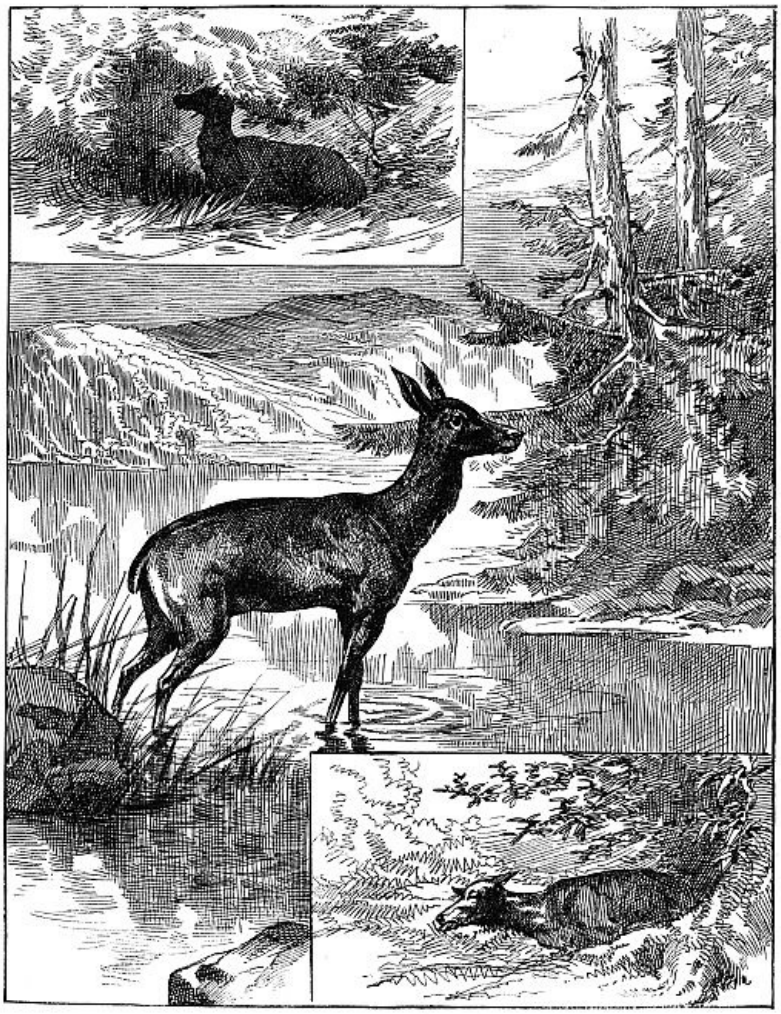
"I know what I need: it is a drink from the lake on the mountain-top. When I can taste of it once more, these feelings will pass away."

So she waited in her low-land home, through the cold and dreary winter days that remained, for the opening buds and singing birds of spring. As soon as these appeared she started on her journey to the mountain. But now that journey seemed longer than it used to seem. She had to rest oftener by the way. Instead of leaping from crag to crag as she ascended the mountain-side, she found herself picking out the easiest and safest paths. Still laboring on up the steep ascent, she at last reached the summit and stood beside the lake that she loved. It looked the same. The [440] rocks around its shores were reflected in its bosom, the water-lilies floated on its surface, the trees and wild-flowers grew down to its very edge. All was as it had ever been. She said: "I shall soon be well again;" and, putting her mouth down to the water, drank. But presently she raised it slowly, saying: "Either it is changed, or I am. It does not taste as it once did, or bring the refreshment it has always before brought to my wearied frame."

Then, turning with feeble step to the bed of moss under the thick bushes where she had so often rested in years gone by, she lay down, to rise from it no more. The fresh, pure mountain-breeze was still blowing; other deer came and drank in new life and vigor at the lake; it was as beautiful and its surroundings were as health-giving as ever; but they could not recall the life that, having reached its farther bound, had passed away.

> There is a day coming when the scenes and influences that once revived our failing strength will do so no more, and their failure will be a token that to us the end of earthly things is at hand.

[441]



HOMELY AND HANDSOME.

A HORSE and a cow that were turned out to pasture together cropped the grass in company until they came to a tree in the middle of the field, where they stopped to rest in the shade. The cow lay down and chewed the cud, but the horse stood switching off the flies with his long tail.

While doing this he turned to the cow and said:

"I've just been thinking what a contrast there is between us two. I am so swift, and you are so slow. You travel only from the barn to the field in summer, and hardly get out of the barnyard in winter. Your walk is clumsy and awkward; and when you try to run, you seem to have our old [443] master's rheumatism in every joint. How different it is with me, galloping swiftly over the country around, visiting our neighbors' farms and hearing of all that is going on! But then it is not your fault that you were made to be only a cow, while I was made a fleet-footed horse."

"I'm very glad," said the cow, "that you are so well satisfied with your lot, but I don't want you to think I am dissatisfied with mine. When our mistress pats me on the side and calls me kind names, after milking, I feel proud too. For this I go through the fields picking out the freshest grass and the richest clover, saying to myself, 'I'll give her a good pailful to-night.' Then, when I see the red cheeks of the children, I know I've had something to do with them; and when our master drives you to market with his butter-tub well filled, I have a notion he would miss me, as well as you."

"I don't deny," replied the horse, "that you have your good points and are useful in your way. I was only pitying you for being so slow and so ugly."

As he spoke these words he saw the farmer coming through the gate into the field and bringing a strange man with him. They came directly to the tree where the horse and the cow were resting.

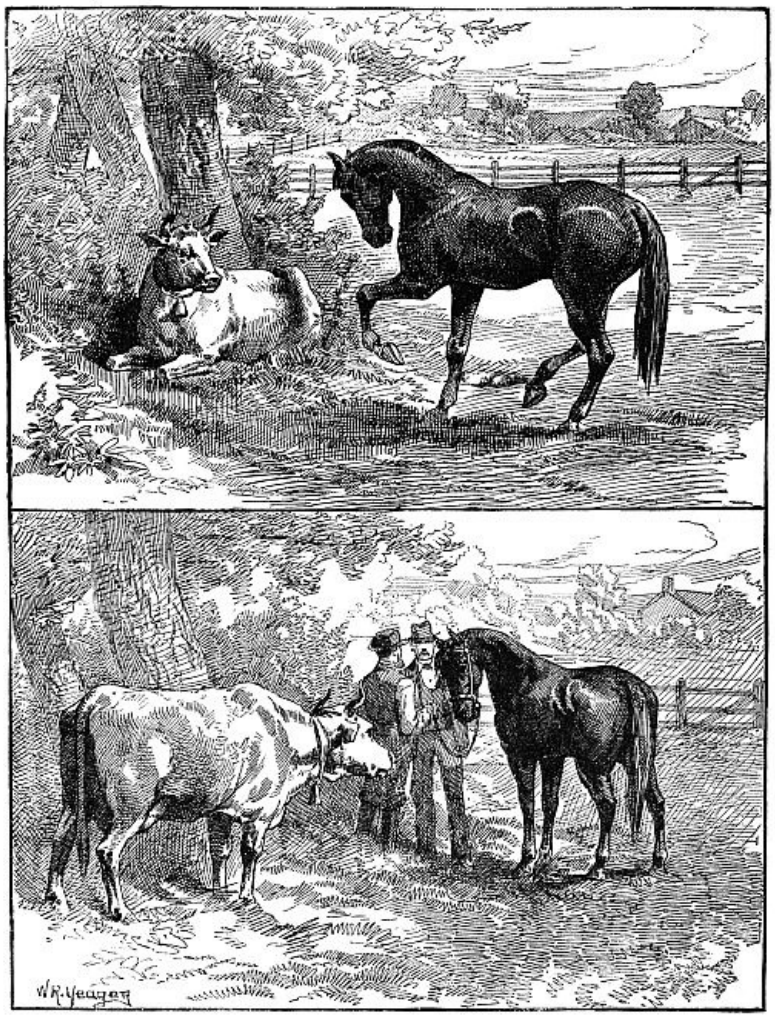
"Yes," said the stranger, looking at the horse; "he's a smart, good-looking colt, and by putting [444] him through some pretty hard training I reckon I can work him off at a fair profit. I'll give you your price for him."

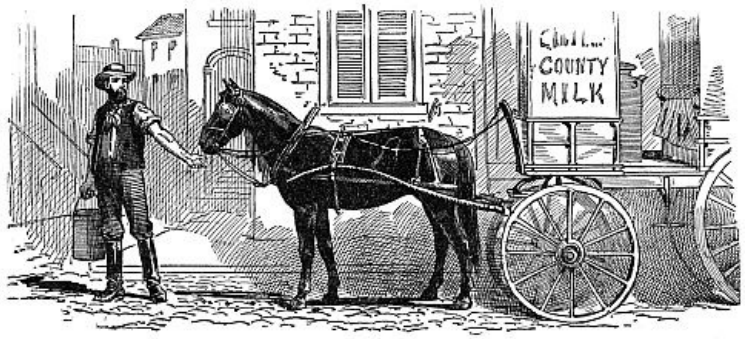
"Then you can have him," said the farmer. "If he's worth that, I can't afford to keep him; a lower-priced beast will do just as well for me."

With that the old man slipped a halter over the horse's head and led him away. As he sadly followed his master he looked back at the old cow, still contentedly chewing her cud, and said:

"I go from this pleasant farm, where I was bred and have lived so long, to be driven and beaten, and then sold I know not where. Ah, my old friend! I wish now that I was as ugly and as slow as you."

If we have any gifts beyond our neighbors, let us possess them humbly; for we cannot tell but what those very gifts may some day cause our happiness to be less than theirs.


W.R. Yeager

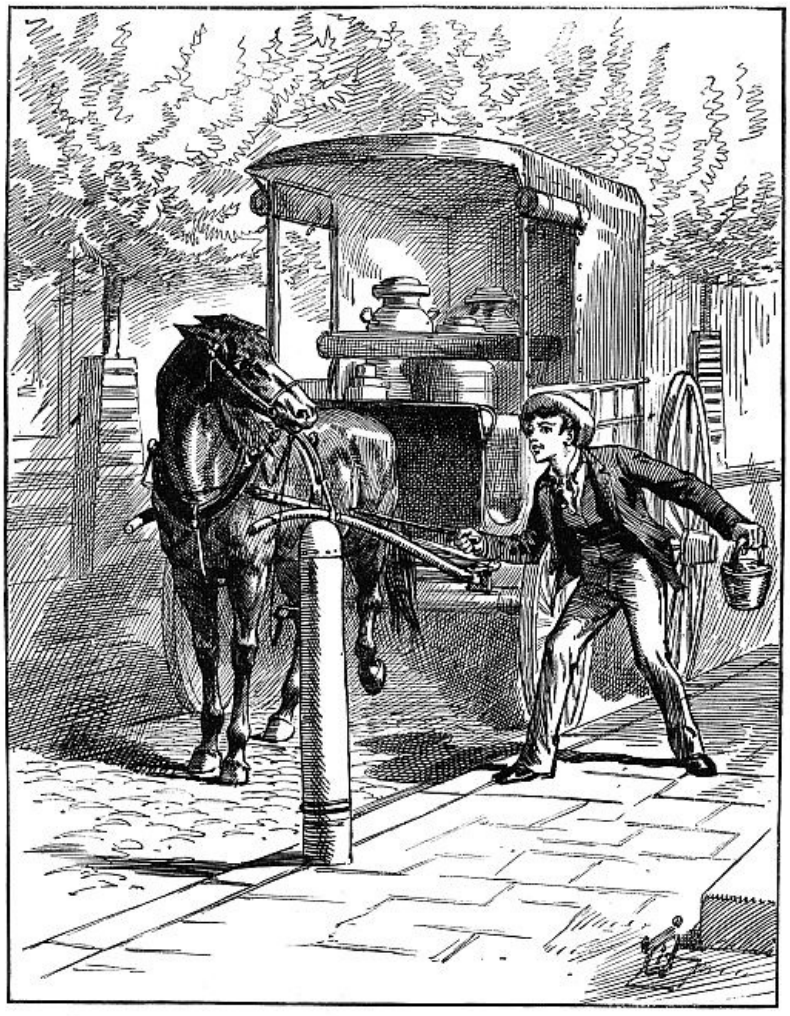


THE COLT AND OLD GRAY.

A COLT that had just been broken to harness was driven in a milk-wagon every day to the city, where he was fastened to a hitching-post, and left standing, while the farmer went around to the neighboring houses serving milk.

A boy on the way to his work one morning chanced to rap against the post in passing, when the colt put back his ears. Seeing this, the boy stopped and gave him a thrust in the side, when the colt snapped at him and raised his hind foot, showing that he was angry.

Instead of checking the boy, this only encouraged him; so that the next morning he repeated his offence, and continued to do it afterward every morning, seeming to take a wicked delight in rousing the colt's temper. Yet the colt, being tied, could do nothing to revenge himself, as the boy took good care to keep out of the reach of both his teeth and his heels. [447] [448]



One day, on going back to the stable, the colt told an old gray horse that stood in the next stall how cruelly he was tormented, without being able to stop his tormentor.

"I know how you could stop him," said the old gray, "and that without giving yourself the least trouble."

"Tell me," said the colt.

"What will you give me for my secret?" asked Old Gray.

"My share of the feed that we'll get for our dinner."

"All right," said Old Gray; "I'll tell you as soon as I have eaten it."

In a little while the farmer passed through the stable, and poured out six quarts of oats for each horse. And the colt, although he was very hungry and his mouth watered for them, allowed the old horse to put his head over and eat up every grain in his manger.

“Now,” said the colt, impatiently, “tell me, as you promised, how I can stop that young rogue from poking at my ribs every morning.”

[449]

“In this way,” said the old horse. “Let him do it, and pretend you don’t feel it.” [450]

“Is that all you have to say?” said the colt, angrily. “I could have done that without being told, or being cheated out of my dinner, either.”

“But you never thought of it till I told you,” said Old Gray. “Now, just try it.”

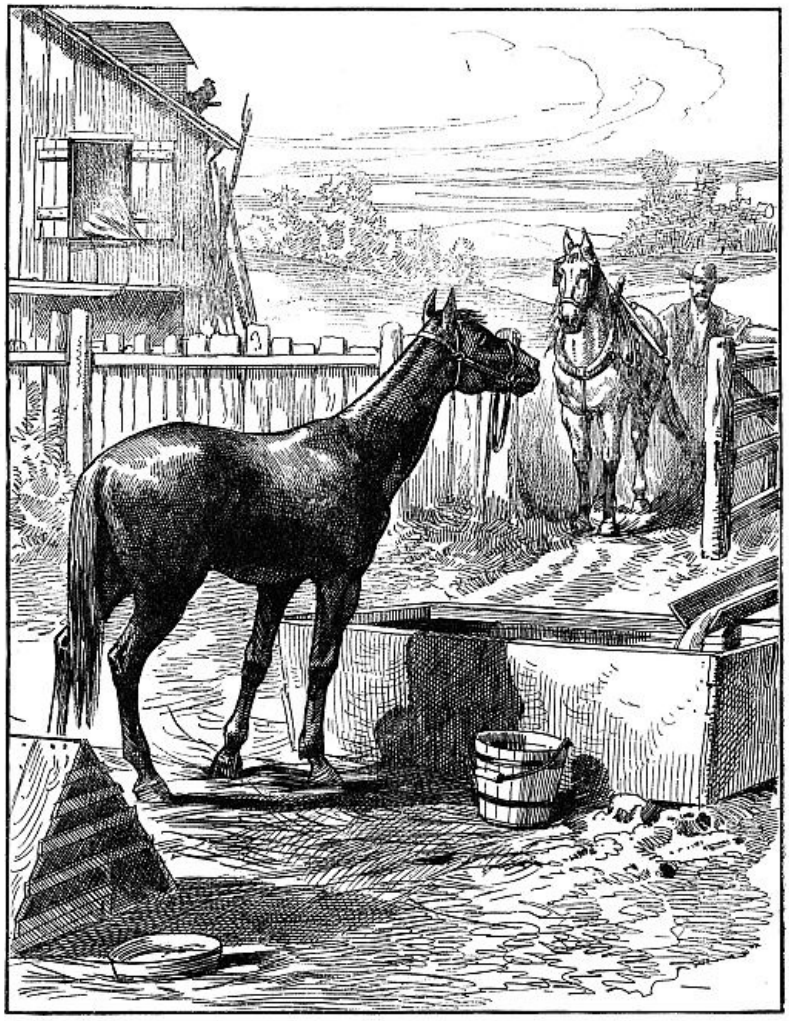
As the oats were all gone and could never be gotten back, the colt concluded there was no use in fretting any more about them. Yet he found himself thinking over Old Gray’s advice, and before night concluded to try it.

The next morning the boy came along as usual, and, stealing up softly by the colt’s side, gave him a thrust in the tender spot just behind his shoulder. The colt never winced, nor even turned his eyes toward him. The boy tried it again and again, with no better success, until he had to hurry away, for fear of a scolding from his master.

For several mornings after this he renewed the attempt (though with less spirit each morning), until, finding it made no impression, he gave it up altogether, and passed by whistling, with his hands in his pockets, as if no colt were there.

Shortly after this, one evening about sundown, as the colt was drinking in the stable-yard, Old Gray came in from ploughing.

[451]

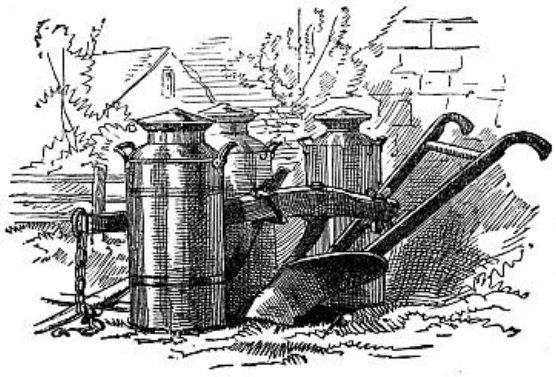


Said the colt, raising his head from the horse-trough: [452]

“Your advice was good and worth the oats, after all. I ask your pardon for being so rude the other morning.”

“I can easily forgive you,” said Old Gray. “Trifles do not worry me. You are only a colt yet, just put to the milk-wagon. You’ll be wiser by the time you get to the plough.”

By noticing small affronts, we give every passer-by the power to vex us; by overlooking them, we take that power away.



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[453]

THE KING’S ALMONER.

A KING was told that his subjects in a certain city were suffering from hunger and cold and nakedness. Then he said to himself,

“What man is there among them, of prudence and charity, with whom I can intrust supplies for their relief?”

And one being named he sent to him stores of food and raiment and money, with this message:

“These things are for the benefit of all the dwellers in your city. Not that you should be neglected while others are provided for; on the contrary, as you will have to wait on the rest as my almoner, you may keep somewhat the largest share for yourself.”

So the man received what the king sent, and divided it in due proportion between himself and [454] the sufferers around him.

But after doing this justly and generously for a time he began, as new supplies came in, to increase his own portion and diminish that which he divided among his neighbors, thus making himself richer and richer, while they became poorer and poorer.

Now, it was the king’s custom at certain seasons to leave his royal palace and travel through his dominions, visiting his people in every city; and, the time for his departure having come, he set out on his journey, and at length came to the city which he had befriended. And he went among the people, visiting them in their houses, and found great poverty and distress among them.

Then he came to the house of his almoner, and walked through its spacious rooms (for the man had built himself a new house) and saw his children richly clothed and his table covered with dainties. And the king sat down with them and partook of the rich fare that was provided, and afterward went to his own home.

As soon as he came there he called his chief servant and commanded him to send fresh supplies of food and money and raiment—greater and more abundant than ever before—to the suffering city. And these, being sent forth in haste, quickly reached their destination. And the [455] king’s almoner received them, and after giving a very little to the people around him laid up the rest for himself. As he did so he said,

“Now am I sure of the king’s love and favor, for behold by his bounty how my wealth has increased!”

But not many days after this the almoner’s servant who had charge of his storehouse came to him, saying,

“The food which you have laid up has bred worms and is spoiled.”

Then the servant who kept his raiment came and said,

“The rich garments sent by the king, which you have laid by so carefully, are being consumed by the moth and destroyed.”

And the keeper of his gold came, saying,

“The treasure-boxes which appeared so strong are falling to pieces; much gold has already been lost from them, and because they are opening of themselves they invite the hand of the pilferer and robber.”

Then the rich man was in great trouble, and he went in haste to the king and told him of the losses which had so suddenly befallen him.

The king replied,

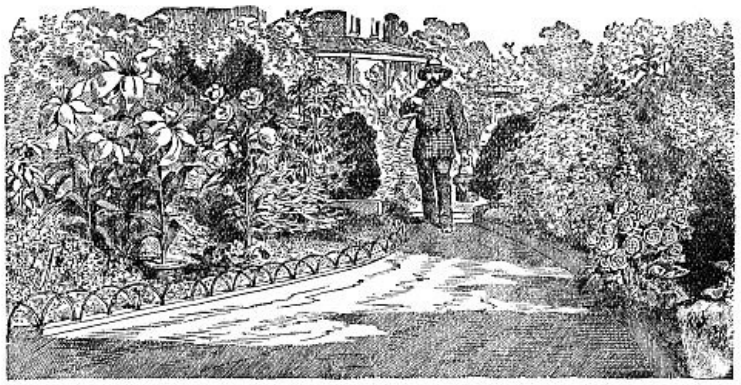
“How can that be lost now which was given long ago to the poor?”

The rich man answered, [456]

“I have done wrong in keeping for my own what did not belong to me.”

So he returned to his house sad at heart, to find all his riches melted away, and truly (as he knew) it was by his own act, and not by the hand of an enemy.

He who will be richer than he ought to be shall be poorer than he need to be.



PANSIES.

TWO purple pansies opened their velvet-like leaves one summer morning, but on looking around them saw that they had not the garden-bed alone. On one side a clump of crimson poppies towered above their heads, and on the other some tall golden lilies were nodding in the breeze.

When the lowly pansies saw their lofty neighbors, the joy which at first they felt in their new being quickly waned. They looked up enviously, first at the poppies, and then at the lilies, saying to one another,

"Between these haughty flowers, there is nothing left us but to hang our heads in shame."

Just then the gardener passing by, they cried, [458]

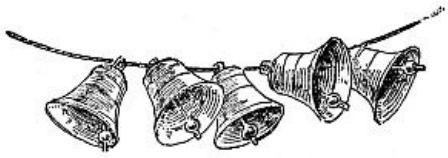
"Take us from here, we pray you, and plant us in a bed of flowers yet lowlier than ourselves."

"And why do you ask this change?" he said.

"Do you not see," they replied, "how our gorgeous neighbors overshadow us, and by contrast how poor and mean we seem?"

"Then it is nothing but pride," the gardener answered, "that prompts the request: you would be to others what these gorgeous neighbors are to you. Be satisfied rather to remain where you are. And know that it is not for the glory of the flower its place in the garden is chosen, yet its greatest beauty may be attained where it stands in fulfilling my design."

A desire to be the greatest as well as a willingness to be least may lead us to choose our place in a lower sphere.



THE BIRDS AND THE BELLS.

A VILLAGE church was presented with a chime of bells, which were rung for the first time on a bright spring morning. The country-people were delighted with the unusual sounds, but there was one class of hearers displeased. These were the birds. Heretofore they had made all the music for the fields and hills, and the sound of the bells seemed to them an invasion of their rights. They met together in an evergreen hedge to talk over the matter.

Said the robin:

“My notes can no longer be heard.”

The bluebird said:

“I might as well have no voice at all.”

The wrens and swallows whose nests were in the church-tower declared they were driven out of house and home. The meeting appointed the oriole and the dove to wait on the pastor and lay their grievance before him.

The next morning, as the good man was at work in his garden, the two appeared in a pear tree near by. [460]

“Good-morning, sir,” said the oriole.

“Good-morning, my feathered friend,” replied the pastor. “When did you arrive from the South?”

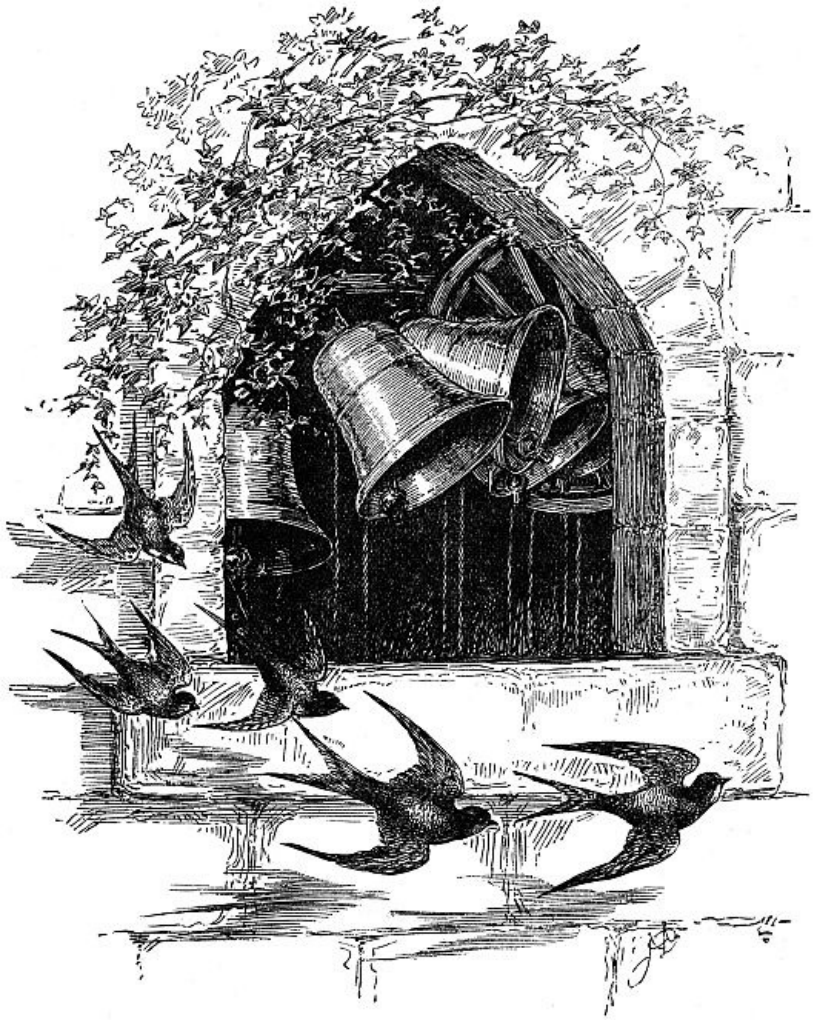
“Only a few days ago, but it was to find a sad change here.”

“Pray, what may it be? Not gunners already, nor boys after your nests?”

“Not these, but the bells in your church-tower.”

“Why, do not they please you?”

“No, indeed! and all the birds have sent us to protest against them. We and our forefathers have enlivened these hills with our songs time out of mind, and we believe the air, for music, belongs to us still. And we have come to give you your choice: Take down the bells, or we will be still and never sing for you again.”



The pastor was dumb with astonishment as the birds flew away. He held the hoe in his hand full five minutes without moving, deep in thought concerning the strange interview. But of course submission to so unreasonable a demand was not to be thought of, and the next Sunday morning the bells again sent forth their glad peal. The ringers were in earnest, and their chimes floated far over hill and vale. But for the rest of the sacred day, and for full twenty-four hours afterward, [461] not a bird uttered a note. They could be seen flitting through the bushes and the trees, but all [462] was perfectly still.

“How I miss their sweet voices!” said the pastor to his wife. “Though the leaves are unfolding and the rosebuds are swelling, without the birds’ voices it does not seem like spring.”

“Never fear,” replied his wife; “it will all come right again.”

Now, the birds, in resolving not to sing, had forgotten that, besides disobliging the people, they might inconvenience themselves. The spring was the season for their songs, and they soon found this out. After being silent for two whole days, the robin said:

“I really cannot keep still any longer. I will fly down to the other end of the woods, beyond the creek, where nobody can hear me, and sing a little song to myself.”

But great was his surprise, on reaching the woods, to hear the oriole, who had come there for the same purpose a little while before him. And presently the cuckoo, and a number of other birds, joined them at the place.

“What does this mean?” they said, looking round at each other.

“It is not hard to guess,” said the wren. “I don’t doubt we have all gone through the same [463] experience. To confess the truth, I believe we are spiting ourselves more than anybody else.”

“Well, now,” said the owl, who spent his days asleep in that dark woods, but had been waked up by the voices, “let us reconsider our vote. Long ago, in the days of our fathers, these hills remained the same from age to age; but now the world has changed, and we must put up with it. The bells are not so bad as they might be, after all. They don’t ring all the time, and though they are not as musical as your songs, or as my hoot, yet they are not altogether without harmony. I move it be left to each bird to do as he chooses.”

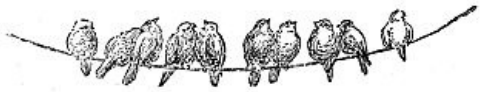
The vote was taken and carried, and the birds flew off merrily; but the owl went to sleep again.

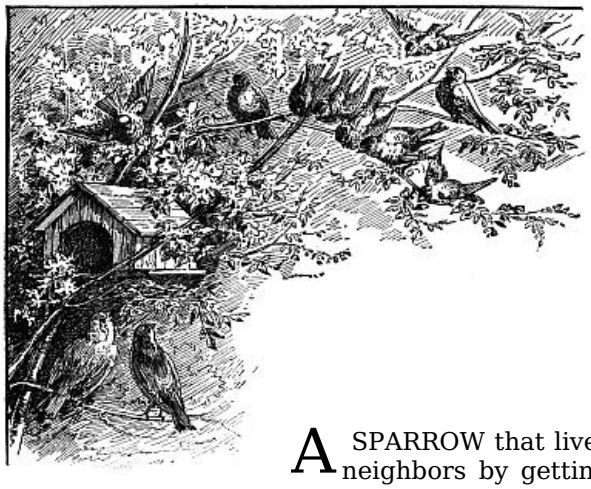
The next morning, as the pastor and his wife were in their garden tending their flower-beds, and both longing for the songs of the birds, suddenly the voice of the oriole was heard in the pear tree. He was leaping from branch to branch, singing as if to make up for lost time and as though he could not utter the notes fast enough.

“Here I am!” he said to the pastor. “We have thought the matter over and concluded to let the bells ring.”

The pastor looked up delighted, and his wife shared his joy.

“Did I not tell you,” she cried, “that it would all come right? For when no harm is intended and both sides mean to be fair, though they may sometimes get crooked, they are pretty sure to come straight again.” [464]





JACK AND JENNY.

A SPARROW that lived with many others in a public park offended his neighbors by getting up too early in the morning and beginning to chirp before they were willing to be waked. They called a meeting of all the flock, and after considering the matter told him that he and his mate must look for another home.

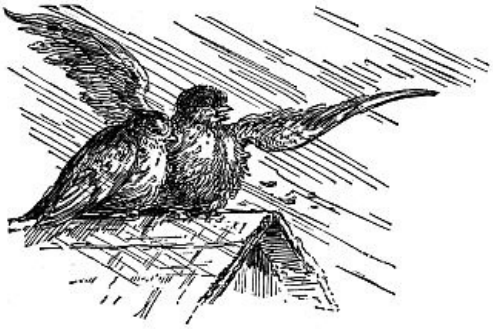
This he refused to do, saying that he had as good a right to stay where he was as they had.

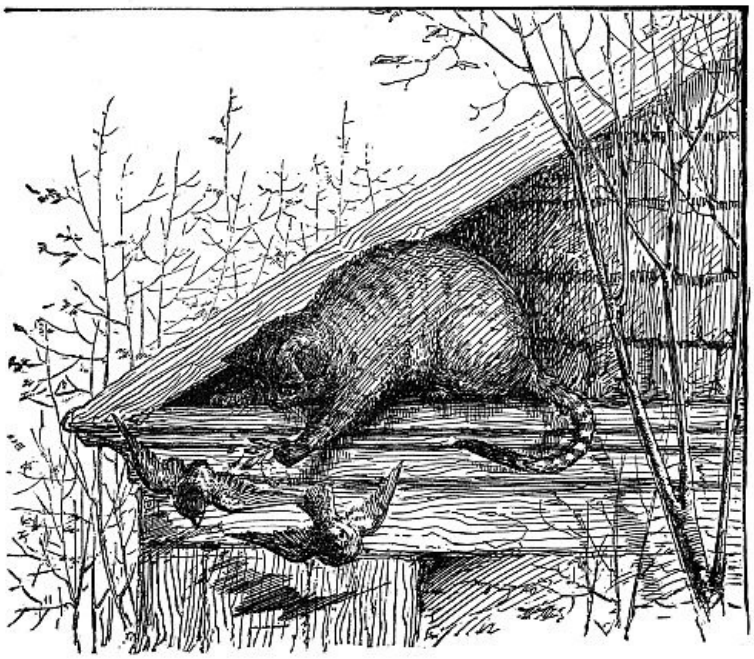
“These trees do not belong to you,” he said, “and you don’t pay rent for the bird-boxes we live in. They were put up by the people who own the park, because they love to see us building our nests and flying about here.

“Beside this,” he continued, “I have done nothing with which you ought to find fault, for I never wake till the break of day, and do not begin to chirp for several minutes after that, when all industrious sparrows should be ready for breakfast. This very morning I heard a cock crow before [466] I opened my bill, and what sparrow would not be ashamed to be lazier than the chickens?”

When the other birds heard this speech, they did not try to answer it—for, indeed, it was every word true and they could say nothing against it—but, having the power on their side, they all at once fiercely attacked the sparrow with their beaks and claws. Nor did they attack him alone, but [467] they flew at his innocent mate also, and hurt her more than they hurt him; for after they were both driven out of the park and had lodged on a neighboring fence it was found not only that her feathers were badly tumbled and torn, but, alas! that one of her eyes was pecked out.

As winter was just coming on, they knew not where to go or what to do. For the first few nights they roosted on the roof of a stable; but this was a forlorn, lonely place, and, as they had no perch to clasp with their little feet, the wind almost blew them away. Beside this, the man who kept the stable was so saving of his corn, and swept the yard so clean, that they could hardly pick up as [468] much as would make a good meal in a whole day.





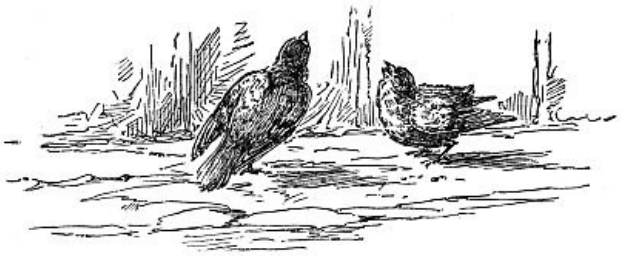
From the roof of the stable they moved under the eaves of a carpenter-shop, and thought they were nicely fixed, until one dark night a cat stole softly along the roof to the spot where they were sleeping, and, suddenly putting out her paw, almost caught them both in her sharp claws. [469] As it was, she caught poor Jenny’s tail and pulled out every feather of it, which did the cat no good, but was a great loss to Jenny, for she could hardly guide herself in flying, and looked very odd beside.

After this they led a sad wandering life for the rest of the winter, always sleeping in fear on clothes-lines and fences, and picking up a poor living—mostly from frozen slop-buckets and around kitchen doors.

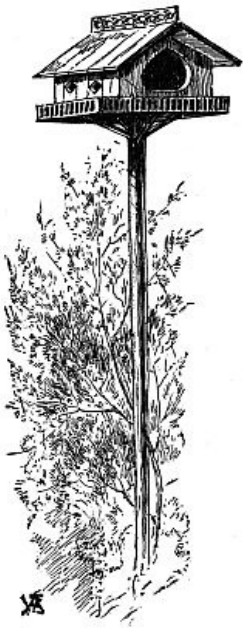
But toward spring better fortune came to them, for a little girl, looking out of the dining-room window one morning, spied them hopping about the pavement below, and threw them some crumbs. Her joy was great when she saw them quickly eat what she had thrown and then seem to look up for more. She ran back to the table, and brought them as much as they wanted.

[470]

The next day they came again, and after this, every day, almost as soon as it was light, they might be seen waiting for their breakfast from the hands of their little friend.



But think of their surprise one April morning, when the sun was shining brightly and the buds were just beginning to swell on the rose-bushes, to see the carpenter come in at the garden-gate carrying a new bird-box fastened to the top of a high pole, which he at once began to set up in the middle of the grass-plot, digging a deep hole to set it in, so that it would stand firm in spite of wind and weather. [471]



Their kind little friend ran out from the house and almost danced for joy around the pole while it was being planted. And her father and mother, and brothers and sisters, sharing in her delight, all left the breakfast-table to watch the carpenter at his work.

That very day the happy pair—little Jack and Jenny—went into their new home, and before night were picking up dried grass and twigs with which to begin building their nest. [472]

Now, it happened, not long after this, that a young sparrow who lived at the park, in taking a longer flight than usual one morning, spied the pretty bird-box with her old acquaintances perched at its door.

“Oh ho!” said she to herself, “is this where you have come? and to such a fine house, too!” and in a lower voice, which no one could hear, she whispered, “I would like to live in it myself.”

She waited till Jenny had gone off in search of a twig; then she quickly flew down to Jack, who was singing on the roof.

“Don’t you remember me?” she asked. “My parents lived next door to you at the park. But I was not one of those who drove you away; indeed, I never raised my wing against you.”

“I remember you,” replied Jack. “But how in the world did you get here?”

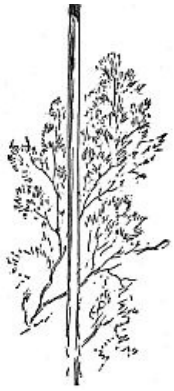
“I came to admire your beautiful new home,” said Pert, “and to tell you how glad I am that you have got up in the world.” [473]

“Thank you for your kindness,” replied Jack.

“There is something else,” said Pert, “that I want to say, but I don’t like to mention it.”

“Speak out,” said Jack; “I want ever so much to hear it.”

“Well, then,” replied Pert, “to tell you the truth, I am afraid that all the other birds, when they hear of your good fortune, will laugh at your wife.”

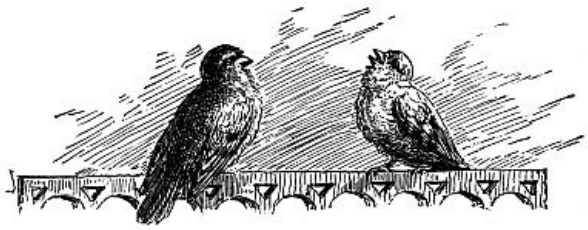


“What ails her?” asked Jack.

“She is not the one,” replied Pert, “for so handsome a sparrow as you, and for such a fine house.” Here Miss Pert turned all the way round to show her fine feathers. “And I have come as a friend,” she continued, “to ask if I can help you in finding a prettier mate.”

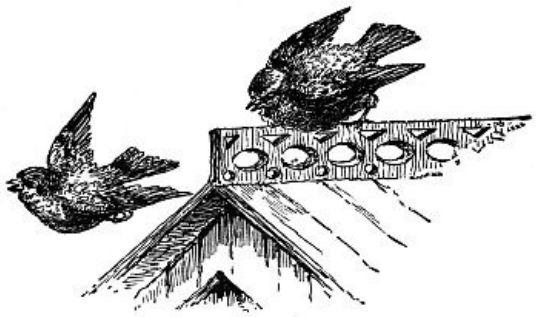
“I don’t want one,” said Jack.

“What?” exclaimed Pert. “And Jenny with only one eye and all her tail-feathers pulled out?” [474]



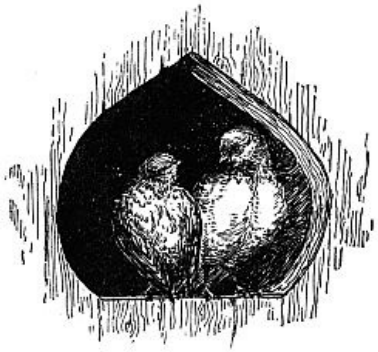
“Ah, but,” said Jack, “her other eye is the brightest and softest that ever was seen. And, as for her tail-feathers, they are all growing again.”

“Pooh!” said Pert, “she is too old for you, beside being ugly.”



“Oh no,” said Jack; “she is just the right age. And if she *has* lost her good looks, she has lost them for me. When you were against me, then she was my friend; and now, when you are willing to be my friend because I have grown rich, I will not turn her off to please you. Go home again, Miss Pert, for nobody but Jenny shall share my fine house.”

That person seems the prettiest whom we love the best; and the one who was faithful to us when we were in trouble is the one we should remain faithful to when our troubles are taken away. [475]



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[476]

THE MEETING OF THE WINDS.

THE north and the south winds met one day in a field beside a river. The north wind had brought some snow the night before, but the south wind blew soon after, and melted nearly all of it. Only a few white patches were left, here and there, along the sunny banks of the stream.

As soon as the winds came near each other the south wind said:

“Good-morning, brother! I am glad to meet you, though your cold breath quite chills me.”

“But I am not glad to meet you,” answered the north wind. “Why did you melt my snow so quickly? Could you not let it lie for one day?”

[477]

“The time has come for the grass and flowers, you know, brother, and I must be at work,” said the gentle south wind. [478]

“There was no need of such haste,” said the burly north wind; “when friends meet, they should be polite.”

“I have to call up the daisies and to waken the roses,” said the south wind, “and to make all the fields green by the first of May. I have no time to lose. Look at yonder meadow how brown it is, and at these trees how bare! Scarcely a fly is buzzing in the sunshine, and not a tortoise has yet crept out of his hole in the ground.”

“I do not care for your daisies and your tortoises,” muttered the north wind; “you want to hurry me off, but I will not go so soon.”

[479]

"Have you not had the whole winter to yourself," asked the south wind, "freezing the brooks, driving away all my birds and my butterflies, and covering the fields and roads and bushes and barns with snow? If I chanced to come then and pay you a visit some bright morning, how quickly you drove me away again! Never might I stay till the sun went down!" [480]

"The winter is my time," said the north wind; "it belongs to me, and you had no right to come then."

"And the spring is my time," answered the south wind; "you know the law is that I must have the fields now."

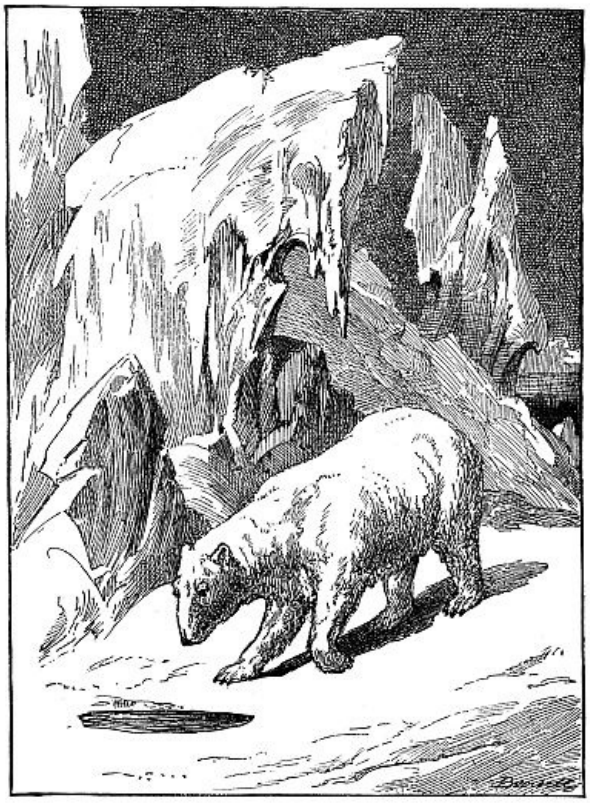
[481]

"You think a great deal of yourself," said the north wind, angrily, "but I am stronger than you. I can fly farther, and I see things that you never see. Where do you think I came from this morning?" [482]

"Tell me, I cannot guess?" answered the south wind.

"I came all the way from the icy pole, where the sea is frozen over, and the land is covered with snow that never melts. The white bear lives there. I saw one but a few hours ago, watching for fish by a hole that he had broken through the ice."

[483]



“But you never saw my home, nor the strange sights that are there,” said the south wind. “I come from the far-off torrid zone, where the snow never falls, and the frost never kills the buds and the flowers. There the panther lives. I passed by one last night in the forest lying out on the branch of a great tree, watching for his prey, that he might spring down on it as it passed beneath.” [484]

[485]

“But I see the Esquimaux,” answered the north wind, “in their strange skin dresses, living in houses of snow. They fight the fierce walrus on the ice, and spear the fur-covered seal from their little boats that dance on the waves. I watch the Northern Lights, so red and beautiful, shooting up like bright flames in the sky, and the night is almost as light as the day. Then the Esquimaux harnesses his dogs, and the Laplander his reindeer, and they travel swiftly over the frozen plain.” [486]

[487]

"Yesterday I blew with all my might until I loosed a field of ice and sent it out to sea. A white bear was on it, and he sailed on his ice-boat across the sea to Iceland. As I passed the steep, high rocks on the shores of Greenland I saw the eider-ducks brooding there. Each one had lined her nest with soft down plucked off of her own breast. Then I frightened them with my hoarse voice, and thousands—yes, hundreds of thousands—rose up in the air like a cloud." [488]

[489]

"But let me ask you," murmured the south wind, "did you ever hear among your icebergs and your frozen wastes the song of the oriole and the mocking-bird, that I hear every day in the woods where I live? You look at your Esquimaux in their snow houses, but I peep in at the hut of the Indian that stands under the forest shade, or I blow against the sail of his canoe and waft it up some quiet river where the trees grow thick on each side and meet overhead. The red flamingo wades out into the water, and the monkeys and parrots chatter among the branches. [490]

"I see the boa-constrictor coiled among the roots on the shore, or watch the alligator floating down the stream. My home is among the orange trees and in the fields where the sugar-cane grows. There I lie still and sleep, or awake to go forth on my journeys over the earth—not to freeze up the ground and make it barren and bare, but to cover it with green and bring out the

buds and flowers on every bush and tree.”

[491]

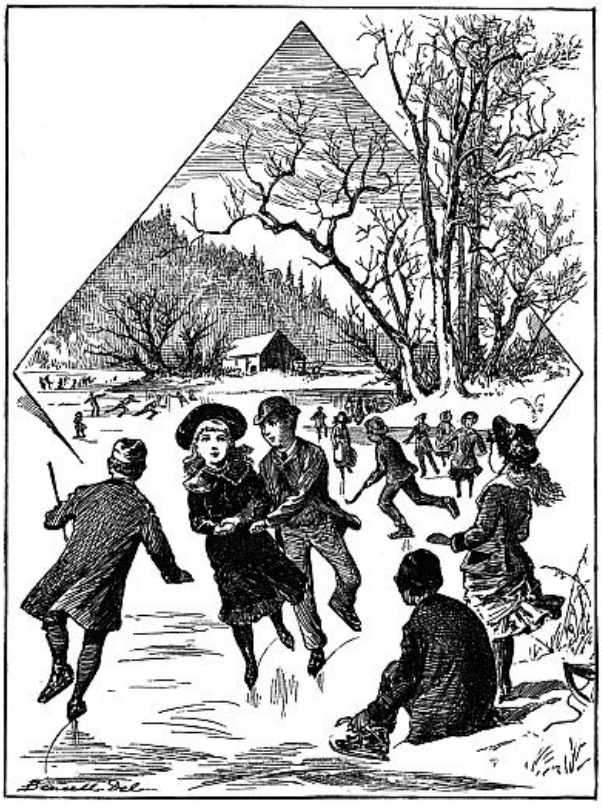
While the winds were talking in this way, the river, that had been listening to them, said: [492]

“Why do you thus boast and provoke one another? Why not speak gently and kindly of the wonderful things you have seen? You would not change homes, would you?”

“No, indeed!” each one replied; “I love my own the best!”

“Then,” said the river, “what good can come of disputing when both are satisfied? As for me, I love you both. I am glad for the north wind to blow cold, and cover me with ice in the winter, so that the merry skaters can come and glide swiftly over my smooth surface.

[493]



“And I love the south wind to breathe softly in the spring, and make my banks green again, and waken the frogs along my shore, and bring the fisherman in his boat, and the boys to swim. [494]

“Let us all be friends, then, and love each other, and be satisfied with what our kind Creator has given us, and happy in doing what will please Him.”

Then the north wind said: [496]

“I am willing to be friends again. It is true that the spring is your time, gentle south wind; I will not stay to nip your opening flowers, but will fly away to my cold home.”

And the south wind said:

“Forgive me if I was rude, brother. When November shall come once more, I will leave the fields and woods to you. Take this sprig of evergreen to remember me by, and may it not fade till we meet again! Farewell!”

Transcriber’s Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 172, “lookod” changed to “looked” (Peter looked around the)

Page 457, “ou” changed to “on” (but on looking around)

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