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by James Whitcomb Riley**

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A CHILD-WORLD \*\*\*

**A CHILD-WORLD**  
**James Whitcomb Riley**

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**A CHILD-WORLD**

*The Child-World—long and long since lost to view—  
A Fairy Paradise!—  
How always fair it was and fresh and new—  
How every affluent hour heaped heart and eyes  
With treasures of surprise!*

*Enchantments tangible: The under-brink  
Of dawns that launched the sight  
Up seas of gold: The dewdrop on the pink,  
With all the green earth in it and blue height  
Of heavens infinite:*

*The liquid, dripping songs of orchard-birds—  
The wee bass of the bees,—  
With lucent deeps of silence afterwards;*

*The gay, clandestine whisperings of the breeze  
And glad leaves of the trees.*

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O Child-World: After this world—just as when  
I found you first sufficed  
My soulmost need—if I found you again,  
With all my childish dream so realised,  
I should not be surprised.

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## THE CHILD-WORLD

A Child-World, yet a wondrous world no less,  
To those who knew its boundless happiness.

A simple old frame house—eight rooms in all—  
Set just one side the center of a small  
But very hopeful Indiana town,—  
The upper-story looking squarely down  
Upon the main street, and the main highway  
From East to West,—historic in its day,  
Known as The National Road—old-timers, all  
Who linger yet, will happily recall  
It as the scheme and handiwork, as well  
As property, of "Uncle Sam," and tell  
Of its importance, "long and long afore  
Railroads wuz ever *dreamp'* of!"—Furthermore,  
The reminiscent first Inhabitants  
Will make that old road blossom with romance  
Of snowy caravans, in long parade  
Of covered vehicles, of every grade  
From ox-cart of most primitive design,  
To Conestoga wagons, with their fine  
Deep-chested six-horse teams, in heavy gear,  
High names and chiming bells—to childish ear  
And eye entrancing as the glittering train  
Of some sun-smitten pageant of old Spain.  
And, in like spirit, haply they will tell  
You of the roadside forests, and the yell  
Of "wolfs" and "painters," in the long night-ride,  
And "screechin' catamounts" on every side.—  
Of stagecoach-days, highwaymen, and strange crimes,  
And yet unriddled mysteries of the times  
Called "Good Old." "And why 'Good Old'?" once a rare  
Old chronicler was asked, who brushed the hair  
Out of his twinkling eyes and said,—"Well John,  
They're 'good old times' because they're dead and gone!"

The old home site was portioned into three  
Distinctive lots. The front one—natively  
Facing to southward, broad and gaudy-fine  
With lilac, dahlia, rose, and flowering vine—  
The dwelling stood in; and behind that, and  
Upon the alley north and south, left hand,  
The old wood-house,—half, trimly stacked with wood,  
And half, a work-shop, where a workbench stood  
Steadfastly through all seasons.—Over it,  
Along the wall, hung compass, brace-and-bit,  
And square, and drawing-knife, and smoothing-plane—  
And little jack-plane, too—the children's vain  
Possession by pretense—in fancy they  
Manipulating it in endless play,  
Turning out countless curls and loops of bright,  
Fine satin shavings—Rapture infinite!  
Shelved quilting-frames; the toolchest; the old box  
Of refuse nails and screws; a rough gun-stock's  
Outline in "curly maple"; and a pair  
Of clamps and old krout-cutter hanging there.  
Some "patterns," in thin wood, of shield and scroll,  
Hung higher, with a neat "cane-fishing-pole"  
And careful tackle—all securely out  
Of reach of children, rummaging about.

Beside the wood-house, with broad branches free  
Yet close above the roof, an apple-tree  
Known as "The Prince's Harvest"—Magic phrase!  
That was a *boy's own tree*, in many ways!—  
Its girth and height meet both for the caress  
Of his bare legs and his ambitiousness:  
And then its apples, humoring his whim,  
Seemed just to fairly *hurry* ripe for him—  
Even in June, impetuous as he,  
They dropped to meet him, halfway up the tree.  
And O their bruised sweet faces where they fell!—  
And ho! the lips that feigned to "kiss them *well*!"

"The Old Sweet-Apple-Tree," a stalwart, stood  
In fairly sympathetic neighborhood  
Of this wild princeling with his early gold  
To toss about so lavishly nor hold

In bounteous hoard to overbrim at once  
All Nature's lap when came the Autumn months.  
Under the spacious shade of this the eyes  
Of swinging children saw swift-changing skies  
Of blue and green, with sunshine shot between,  
And "when the old cat died" they saw but green.  
And, then, there was a cherry-tree.—We all  
And severally will yet recall  
From our lost youth, in gentlest memory,  
The blessed fact—There was a cherry-tree.

There was a cherry-tree. Its bloomy snows  
Cool even now the fevered sight that knows  
No more its airy visions of pure joy—  
As when you were a boy.

There was a cherry-tree. The Bluejay set  
His blue against its white—O blue as jet  
He seemed there then!—But *now*—Whoever knew  
He was so pale a blue!

There was a cherry-tree—Our child-eyes saw  
The miracle:—Its pure white snows did thaw  
Into a crimson fruitage, far too sweet  
But for a boy to eat.

There was a cherry-tree, give thanks and joy!—  
There was a bloom of snow—There was a boy—  
There was a Bluejay of the realest blue—  
And fruit for both of you.

Then the old garden, with the apple-trees  
Grouped 'round the margin, and "a stand of bees"  
By the "white-winter-pearmain"; and a row  
Of currant-bushes; and a quince or so.  
The old grape-arbor in the center, by  
The pathway to the stable, with the sty  
Behind it, and *upon* it, cootering flocks  
Of pigeons, and the cutest "martin-box"—  
Made like a sure-enough house—with roof, and doors  
And windows in it, and veranda-floors  
And balusters all 'round it—yes, and at  
Each end a chimney—painted red at that  
And penciled white, to look like little bricks;  
And, to cap all the builder's cunning tricks,  
Two tiny little lightning-rods were run  
Straight up their sides, and twinkled in the sun.  
Who built it? Nay, no answer but a smile.—  
It *may* be you can guess who, afterwhile.  
Home in his stall, "Old Sorrel" munched his hay  
And oats and corn, and switched the flies away,  
In a repose of patience good to see,  
And earnest of the gentlest pedigree.  
With half pathetic eye sometimes he gazed  
Upon the gambols of a colt that grazed  
Around the edges of the lot outside,  
And kicked at nothing suddenly, and tried  
To act grown-up and graceful and high-bred,  
But dropped, *k'whop!* and scraped the buggy-shed,  
Leaving a tuft of woolly, foxy hair  
Under the sharp-end of a gate-hinge there.  
Then, all ignobly scrambling to his feet  
And whinneying a whinney like a bleat,  
He would pursue himself around the lot  
And—do the whole thing over, like as not!...  
Ah! what a life of constant fear and dread  
And flop and squawk and flight the chickens led!  
Above the fences, either side, were seen  
The neighbor-houses, set in plots of green  
Dooryards and greener gardens, tree and wall  
Alike whitewashed, and order in it all:  
The scythe hooked in the tree-fork; and the spade  
And hoe and rake and shovel all, when laid  
Aside, were in their places, ready for  
The hand of either the possessor or

Of any neighbor, welcome to the loan  
Of any tool he might not chance to own.

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## THE OLD-HOME FOLKS

Such was the Child-World of the long-ago—  
The little world these children used to know:—  
Johnty, the oldest, and the best, perhaps,  
Of the five happy little Hoosier chaps  
Inhabiting this wee world all their own.—  
Johnty, the leader, with his native tone  
Of grave command—a general on parade  
Whose each punctilious order was obeyed  
By his proud followers.

But Johnty yet—  
After all serious duties—could forget  
The gravity of life to the extent,  
At times, of kindling much astonishment  
About him: With a quick, observant eye,  
And mind and memory, he could supply  
The tamest incident with liveliest mirth;  
And at the most unlooked-for times on earth  
Was wont to break into some travesty  
On those around him—feats of mimicry  
Of this one's trick of gesture—that one's walk—  
Or this one's laugh—or that one's funny talk,—  
The way "the watermelon-man" would try  
His humor on town-folks that wouldn't buy;—  
How he drove into town at morning—then  
At dusk (alas!) how he drove out again.

Though these divertisements of Johnty's were  
Hailed with a hearty glee and relish, there  
Appeared a sense, on his part, of regret—  
A spirit of remorse that would not let  
Him rest for days thereafter.—Such times he,  
As some boy said, "jist got too overly  
Blame good fer common boys like us, you know,  
To 'sociate with—less'n we 'ud go  
And jine his church!"

Next after Johnty came  
His little tow-head brother, Bud by name.—  
And O how white his hair was—and how thick  
His face with freckles,—and his ears, how quick  
And curious and intrusive!—And how pale  
The blue of his big eyes;—and how a tale  
Of Giants, Trolls or Fairies, bulged them still  
Bigger and bigger!—and when "Jack" would kill  
The old "Four-headed Giant," Bud's big eyes  
Were swollen truly into giant-size.  
And Bud was apt in make-believes—would hear  
His Grandma talk or read, with such an ear  
And memory of both subject and big words,  
That he would take the book up afterwards  
And feign to "read aloud," with such success  
As caused his truthful elders real distress.  
But he *must* have *big words*—they seemed to give  
Extremer range to the superlative—  
That was his passion. "My Gran'ma," he said,  
One evening, after listening as she read  
Some heavy old historical review—  
With copious explanations thereunto  
Drawn out by his inquiring turn of mind,—  
"My Gran'ma she's read *all* books—ever' kind

They is, 'at tells all 'bout the land an' sea  
An' Nations of the Earth!—An' she is the  
Historicul-est woman ever wuz!"  
(Forgive the verse's chuckling as it does  
In its erratic current.—Oftentimes  
The little willowy waterbrook of rhymes  
Must falter in its music, listening to  
The children laughing as they used to do.)

Who shall sing a simple ditty all about the Willow,  
Dainty-fine and delicate as any bending spray  
That dandles high the happy bird that flutters there to trill a  
Tremulously tender song of greeting to the May.

Ah, my lovely Willow!—Let the Waters lilt your graces,—  
They alone with limpid kisses lave your leaves above,  
Flashing back your sylvan beauty, and in shady places  
Peering up with glimmering pebbles, like the eyes of love.

Next, Maymie, with her hazy cloud of hair,  
And the blue skies of eyes beneath it there.  
Her dignified and "little lady" airs  
Of never either romping up the stairs  
Or falling down them; thoughtful everyway  
Of others first—The kind of child at play  
That "gave up," for the rest, the ripest pear  
Or peach or apple in the garden there  
Beneath the trees where swooped the airy swing—  
She pushing it, too glad for anything!  
Or, in the character of hostess, she  
Would entertain her friends delightfully  
In her play-house,—with strips of carpet laid  
Along the garden-fence within the shade  
Of the old apple-trees—where from next yard  
Came the two dearest friends in her regard,  
The little Crawford girls, Ella and Lu—  
As shy and lovely as the lilies grew  
In their idyllic home,—yet sometimes they  
Admitted Bud and Alex to their play,  
Who did their heavier work and helped them fix  
To have a "Festibul"—and brought the bricks  
And built the "stove," with a real fire and all,  
And stovepipe-joint for chimney, looming tall  
And wonderfully smoky—even to  
Their childish aspirations, as it blew  
And swooped and swirled about them till their sight  
Was feverish even as their high delight.  
Then Alex, with his freckles, and his freaks  
Of temper, and the peach-bloom of his cheeks,  
And "*amber-colored* hair"—his mother said  
'Twas that, when others laughed and called it "*red*"  
And Alex threw things at them—till they'd call  
A truce, agreeing "'t'uz n't red *ut-tall!*"

But Alex was affectionate beyond  
The average child, and was extremely fond  
Of the paternal relatives of his  
Of whom he once made estimate like this:—  
"*I'm* only got *two* brothers,—but my *Pa*  
He's got most brothers'n you ever saw!—  
He's got *seven* brothers!—Yes, an' they're all my  
Seben Uncles!—Uncle John, an' Jim,—an' I'  
Got Uncle George, an' Uncle Andy, too,  
An' Uncle Frank, an' Uncle Joe.—An' you  
*Know* Uncle *Mart*.—An', all but *him*, they're great  
Big mens!—An' nen s Aunt Sarah—she makes eight!—  
I'm got *eight* uncles!—'cept Aunt Sarah *can't*  
Be ist my *uncle* 'cause she's ist my *aunt!*"

Then, next to Alex—and the last indeed  
Of these five little ones of whom you read—  
Was baby Lizzie, with her velvet lisp,—  
As though her Elfin lips had caught some wisp  
Of floss between them as they strove with speech,  
Which ever seemed just in yet out of reach—

Though what her lips missed, her dark eyes could say  
With looks that made her meaning clear as day.

And, knowing now the children, you must know  
The father and the mother they loved so:—  
The father was a swarthy man, black-eyed,  
Black-haired, and high of forehead; and, beside  
The slender little mother, seemed in truth  
A very king of men—since, from his youth,  
To his hale manhood *now*—(worthy as then,—  
A lawyer and a leading citizen  
Of the proud little town and county-seat—  
His hopes his neighbors', and their fealty sweet)—  
He had known outdoor labor—rain and shine—  
Bleak Winter, and bland Summer—foul and fine.  
So Nature had ennobled him and set  
Her symbol on him like a coronet:  
His lifted brow, and frank, reliant face.—  
Superior of stature as of grace,  
Even the children by the spell were wrought  
Up to heroics of their simple thought,  
And saw him, trim of build, and lithe and straight  
And tall, almost, as at the pasture-gate  
The towering ironweed the scythe had spared  
For their sakes, when The Hired Man declared  
It would grow on till it became a *tree*,  
With cocoanuts and monkeys in—maybe!

Yet, though the children, in their pride and awe  
And admiration of the father, saw  
A being so exalted—even more  
Like adoration was the love they bore  
The gentle mother.—Her mild, plaintive face  
Was purely fair, and haloed with a grace  
And sweetness luminous when joy made glad  
Her features with a smile; or saintly sad  
As twilight, fell the sympathetic gloom  
Of any childish grief, or as a room  
Were darkened suddenly, the curtain drawn  
Across the window and the sunshine gone.  
Her brow, below her fair hair's glimmering strands,  
Seemed meetest resting-place for blessing hands  
Or holiest touches of soft finger-tips  
And little roseleaf-cheeks and dewy lips.

Though heavy household tasks were pitiless,  
No little waist or coat or checkered dress  
But knew her needle's deftness; and no skill  
Matched hers in shaping pleat or flounce or frill;  
Or fashioning, in complicate design,  
All rich embroideries of leaf and vine,  
With tiniest twining tendril,—bud and bloom  
And fruit, so like, one's fancy caught perfume  
And dainty touch and taste of them, to see  
Their semblance wrought in such rare verity.

Shrined in her sanctity of home and love,  
And love's fond service and reward thereof,  
Restore her thus, O blessed Memory!—  
Throned in her rocking-chair, and on her knee  
Her sewing—her workbasket on the floor  
Beside her,—Springtime through the open door  
Balmily stealing in and all about  
The room; the bees' dim hum, and the far shout  
And laughter of the children at their play,  
And neighbor-children from across the way  
Calling in gleeful challenge—save alone  
One boy whose voice sends back no answering tone—  
The boy, prone on the floor, above a book  
Of pictures, with a rapt, ecstatic look—  
Even as the mother's, by the selfsame spell,  
Is lifted, with a light ineffable—  
As though her senses caught no mortal cry,  
But heard, instead, some poem going by.

The Child-heart is so strange a little thing—  
So mild—so timorously shy and small.—  
When *grown-up* hearts throb, it goes scampering  
Behind the wall, nor dares peer out at all!—  
It is the veriest mouse  
That hides in any house—  
So wild a little thing is any Child-heart!

*Child-heart!—mild heart!—  
Ho, my little wild heart!—  
Come up here to me out o' the dark,  
Or let me come to you!*

So lorn at times the Child-heart needs must be.  
With never one maturer heart for friend  
And comrade, whose tear-ripened sympathy  
And love might lend it comfort to the end,—  
Whose yearnings, aches and stings.  
Over poor little things  
Were pitiful as ever any Child-heart.

*Child-heart!—mild heart!—  
Ho, my little wild heart!—  
Come up here to me out o' the dark,  
Or let me come to you!*

Times, too, the little Child-heart must be glad—  
Being so young, nor knowing, as *we* know.  
The fact from fantasy, the good from bad,  
The joy from woe, the—*all* that hurts us so!  
What wonder then that thus  
It hides away from us?—  
So weak a little thing is any Child-heart!

*Child-heart!—mild heart!—  
Ho, my little wild heart!—  
Come up here to me out o' the dark,  
Or let me come to you!*

Nay, little Child-heart, you have never need  
To fear *us*,—we are weaker far than you—  
Tis *we* who should be fearful—we indeed  
Should hide us, too, as darkly as you do,—  
Safe, as yourself, withdrawn,  
Hearing the World roar on  
Too willful, woful, awful for the Child-heart!

*Child-heart!—mild heart!—  
Ho, my little wild heart!—  
Come up here to me out o' the dark,  
Or let me come to you!*

The clock chats on confidingly; a rose  
Taps at the window, as the sunlight throws  
A brilliant, jostling checkerwork of shine  
And shadow, like a Persian-loom design,  
Across the homemade carpet—fades,—and then  
The dear old colors are themselves again.  
Sounds drop in visiting from everywhere—  
The bluebird's and the robin's trill are there,  
Their sweet liquidity diluted some  
By dewy orchard spaces they have come:  
Sounds of the town, too, and the great highway—  
The Mover-wagons' rumble, and the neigh  
Of overtraveled horses, and the bleat  
Of sheep and low of cattle through the street—  
A Nation's thoroughfare of hopes and fears,  
First blazed by the heroic pioneers  
Who gave up old-home idols and set face  
Toward the unbroken West, to found a race  
And tame a wilderness now mightier than  
All peoples and all tracts American.  
Blent with all outer sounds, the sounds within:—  
In mild remoteness falls the household din  
Of porch and kitchen: the dull jar and thump



Of churning; and the "glung-glung" of the pump,  
With sudden pad and skurry of bare feet  
Of little outlaws, in from field or street:  
The clang of kettle,—rasp of damper-ring  
And bang of cookstove-door—and everything  
That jingles in a busy kitchen lifts  
Its individual wrangling voice and drifts  
In sweetest tinny, coppery, pewtery tone  
Of music hungry ear has ever known  
In wildest famished yearning and conceit  
Of youth, to just cut loose and eat and eat!—  
The zest of hunger still incited on  
To childish desperation by long-drawn  
Breaths of hot, steaming, wholesome things that stew  
And blubber, and up-tilt the pot-lids, too,  
Filling the sense with zestful rumors of  
The dear old-fashioned dinners children love:  
Redolent savorings of home-cured meats,  
Potatoes, beans, and cabbage; turnips, beets  
And parsnips—rarest composite entire  
That ever pushed a mortal child's desire  
To madness by new-grated fresh, keen, sharp  
Horseradish—tang that sets the lips awarp  
And watery, anticipating all  
The cloyed sweets of the glorious festival.—  
Still add the cinnamony, spicy scents  
Of clove, nutmeg, and myriad condiments  
In like-alluring whiffs that prophesy  
Of sweltering pudding, cake, and custard pie—  
The swooning-sweet aroma haunting all  
The house—upstairs and down—porch, parlor, hall  
And sitting-room—invading even where  
The Hired Man sniffs it in the orchard-air,  
And pauses in his pruning of the trees  
To note the sun minutely and to—sneeze.

Then Cousin Rufus comes—the children hear  
His hale voice in the old hall, ringing clear  
As any bell. Always he came with song  
Upon his lips and all the happy throng  
Of echoes following him, even as the crowd  
Of his admiring little kinsmen—proud  
To have a cousin *grown*—and yet as young  
Of soul and cheery as the songs he sung.

He was a student of the law—intent  
Soundly to win success, with all it meant;  
And so he studied—even as he played,—  
With all his heart: And so it was he made  
His gallant fight for fortune—through all stress  
Of battle bearing him with cheeriness  
And wholesome valor.

And the children had  
Another relative who kept them glad  
And joyous by his very merry ways—  
As blithe and sunny as the summer days,—  
Their father's youngest brother—Uncle Mart.  
The old "Arabian Nights" he knew by heart—  
"Baron Munchausen," too; and likewise "The  
Swiss Family Robinson."—And when these three  
Gave out, as he rehearsed them, he could go  
Straight on in the same line—a steady flow  
Of arabesque invention that his good  
Old mother never clearly understood.  
He *was* to be a *printer*—wanted, though,  
To be an *actor*.—But the world was "show"  
Enough for *him*,—theatric, airy, gay,—  
Each day to him was jolly as a play.  
And some poetic symptoms, too, in sooth,  
Were certain.—And, from his apprentice youth,  
He joyed in verse-quotations—which he took  
Out of the old "Type Foundry Specimen Book."  
He craved and courted most the favor of  
The children.—They were foremost in his love;

And pleasing *them*, he pleased his own boy-heart  
And kept it young and fresh in every part.  
So was it he devised for them and wrought  
To life his quaintest, most romantic thought:—  
Like some lone castaway in alien seas,  
He built a house up in the apple-trees,  
Out in the corner of the garden, where  
No man-devouring native, prowling there,  
Might pounce upon them in the dead o' night—  
For lo, their little ladder, slim and light,  
They drew up after them. And it was known  
That Uncle Mart slipped up sometimes alone  
And drew the ladder in, to lie and moon  
Over some novel all the afternoon.  
And one time Johnty, from the crowd below,—  
Outraged to find themselves deserted so—  
Threw bodily their old black cat up in  
The airy fastness, with much yowl and din.  
Resulting, while a wild periphery  
Of cat went circling to another tree,  
And, in impassioned outburst, Uncle Mart  
Loomed up, and thus relieved his tragic heart:

*"Hence, long-tailed, ebon-eyed, nocturnal ranger!  
What led thee hither 'mongst the types and cases?  
Didst thou not know that running midnight races  
O'er standing types was fraught with imminent danger?  
Did hunger lead thee—didst thou think to find  
Some rich old cheese to fill thy hungry maw?  
Vain hope! for none but literary jaw  
Can masticate our cookery for the mind!"*

So likewise when, with lordly air and grace,  
He strode to dinner, with a tragic face  
With ink-spots on it from the office, he  
Would aptly quote more "Specimen-poetry—"  
Perchance like "*Labor's bread is sweet to eat,  
(Ahem!) And toothsome is the toiler's meat.*"

Ah, could you see them *all*, at lull of noon!—  
A sort of *boisterous* lull, with clink of spoon  
And clatter of deflecting knife, and plate  
Dropped saggingly, with its all-bounteous weight,  
And dragged in place voraciously; and then  
Pent exclamations, and the lull again.—  
The garland of glad faces 'round the board—  
Each member of the family restored  
To his or her place, with an extra chair  
Or two for the chance guests so often there.—  
The father's farmer-client, brought home from  
The courtroom, though he "didn't *want* to come  
Tel he jist saw he *hat* to!" he'd explain,  
Invariably, time and time again,  
To the pleased wife and hostess, as she pressed  
Another cup of coffee on the guest.—  
Or there was Johnty's special chum, perchance,  
Or Bud's, or both—each childish countenance  
Lit with a higher glow of youthful glee,  
To be together thus unbrokenly,—  
Jim Offutt, or Eck Skinner, or George Carr—  
The very nearest chums of Bud's these are,—  
So, very probably, *one* of the three,  
At least, is there with Bud, or *ought* to be.  
Like interchange the town-boys each had known—  
His playmate's dinner better than his own—  
*Yet* blest that he was ever made to stay  
At *Almon Keefer's*, *any* blessed day,  
For *any* meal!... Visions of biscuits, hot  
And flaky-perfect, with the golden blot  
Of molten butter for the center, clear,  
Through pools of clover-honey—*dear-o-dear!*—  
With creamy milk for its divine "farewell":  
And then, if any one delectable  
Might yet exceed in sweetness, O restore  
The cherry-cobbler of the days of yore

Made only by Al Keefer's mother!—Why,  
The very thought of it ignites the eye  
Of memory with rapture—cloys the lip  
Of longing, till it seems to ooze and drip  
With veriest juice and stain and overwaste  
Of that most sweet delirium of taste  
That ever visited the childish tongue,  
Or proved, as now, the sweetest thing unsung.

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## ALMON KEEFER

Ah, Almon Keefer! what a boy you were,  
With your back-tilted hat and careless hair,  
And open, honest, fresh, fair face and eyes  
With their all-varying looks of pleased surprise  
And joyous interest in flower and tree,  
And poising humming-bird, and maundering bee.

The fields and woods he knew; the tireless tramp  
With gun and dog; and the night-fisher's camp—  
No other boy, save Bee Lineback, had won  
Such brilliant mastery of rod and gun.  
Even in his earliest childhood had he shown  
These traits that marked him as his father's own.  
Dogs all paid Almon honor and bow-wowed  
Allegiance, let him come in any crowd  
Of rabbit-hunting town-boys, even though  
His own dog "Sleuth" rebuked their acting so  
With jealous snarls and growlings.

But the best  
Of Almon's virtues—leading all the rest—  
Was his great love of books, and skill as well  
In reading them aloud, and by the spell  
Thereof entralling his mute listeners, as  
They grouped about him in the orchard grass,  
Hinging their bare shins in the mottled shine  
And shade, as they lay prone, or stretched supine  
Beneath their favorite tree, with dreamy eyes  
And Argo-fandes voyaging the skies.  
"Tales of the Ocean" was the name of one  
Old dog's-eared book that was surpassed by none  
Of all the glorious list.—Its back was gone,  
But its vitality went bravely on  
In such delicious tales of land and sea  
As may not ever perish utterly.  
Of still more dubious caste, "Jack Sheppard" drew  
Full admiration; and "Dick Turpin," too.  
And, painful as the fact is to convey,  
In certain lurid tales of their own day,  
These boys found thieving heroes and outlaws  
They hailed with equal fervor of applause:  
"The League of the Miami"—why, the name  
Alone was fascinating—is the same,  
In memory, this venerable hour  
Of moral wisdom shorn of all its power,  
As it unblushingly reverts to when  
The old barn was "the Cave," and hears again  
The signal blown, outside the buggy-shed—  
The drowsy guard within uplifts his head,  
And "'*Who goes there?*'" is called, in bated breath—  
The challenge answered in a hush of death,—  
"Sh!—'*Barney Gray!*'" And then "'*What do you seek?*'"  
"'*Stables of The League!*'" the voice comes spent and weak,  
For, ha! the *Law* is on the "Chieftain's" trail—  
Tracked to his very lair!—Well, what avail?

The "secret entrance" opens—closes.—So  
The "Robber-Captain" thus outwits his foe;  
And, safe once more within his "cavern-halls,"  
He shakes his clenched fist at the warped plank-walls  
And mutters his defiance through the cracks  
At the balked Enemy's retreating backs  
As the loud horde flees pell-mell down the lane,  
And—*Almon Keefer* is himself again!

Excepting few, they were not books indeed  
Of deep import that Almon chose to read;—  
Less fact than fiction.—Much he favored those—  
If not in poetry, in hectic prose—  
That made our native Indian a wild,  
Feathered and fine-preened hero that a child  
Could recommend as just about the thing  
To make a god of, or at least a king.  
Aside from Almon's own books—two or three—  
His store of lore The Township Library  
Supplied him weekly: All the books with "or"s—  
Sub-titled—lured him—after "Indian Wars,"  
And "Life of Daniel Boone,"—not to include  
Some few books spiced with humor,— "Robin Hood"  
And rare "Don Quixote."—And one time he took  
"Dadd's Cattle Doctor."... How he hugged the book  
And hurried homeward, with internal glee  
And humorous spasms of expectancy!—  
All this confession—as he promptly made  
It, the day later, writhing in the shade  
Of the old apple-tree with Johnty and  
Bud, Noey Bixler, and The Hired Hand—  
Was quite as funny as the book was not....  
O Wonderland of wayward Childhood! what  
An easy, breezy realm of summer calm  
And dreamy gleam and gloom and bloom and balm  
Thou art!—The Lotus-Land the poet sung,  
It is the Child-World while the heart beats young....

While the heart beats young!—O the splendor of the Spring,  
With all her dewy jewels on, is not so fair a thing!  
The fairest, rarest morning of the blossom-time of May  
Is not so sweet a season as the season of to-day  
While Youth's diviner climate folds and holds us, close caressed,  
As we feel our mothers with us by the touch of face and breast;—  
Our bare feet in the meadows, and our fancies up among  
The airy clouds of morning—while the heart beats young.

While the heart beats young and our pulses leap and dance.  
With every day a holiday and life a glad romance,—  
We hear the birds with wonder, and with wonder watch their flight—  
Standing still the more enchanted, both of hearing and of sight,  
When they have vanished wholly,—for, in fancy, wing-to-wing  
We fly to Heaven with them; and, returning, still we sing  
The praises of this lower Heaven with tireless voice and tongue,  
Even as the Master sanctions—while the heart beats young.

While the heart beats young!—While the heart beats young!  
O green and gold old Earth of ours, with azure overhung  
And looped with rainbows!—grant us yet this grassy lap of thine—  
We would be still thy children, through the shower and the shine!  
So pray we, lispings, whispering, in childish love and trust  
With our beseeching hands and faces lifted from the dust  
By fervor of the poem, all unwritten and unsung,  
Thou givest us in answer, while the heart beats young.

Another hero of those youthful years  
Returns, as Noey Bixler's name appears.  
And Noey—if in any special way—  
Was notably good-natured.—Work or play  
He entered into with selfsame delight—  
A wholesome interest that made him quite  
As many friends among the old as young,—  
So everywhere were Noey's praises sung.

And he was awkward, fat and overgrown,  
With a round full-moon face, that fairly shone  
As though to meet the simile's demand.  
And, cumbrous though he seemed, both eye and hand  
Were dowered with the discernment and deft skill  
Of the true artisan: He shaped at will,  
In his old father's shop, on rainy days,  
Little toy-wagons, and curved-runner sleighs;  
The trimmest bows and arrows—fashioned, too.  
Of "seasoned timber," such as Noey knew  
How to select, prepare, and then complete,  
And call his little friends in from the street.  
"The very *best* bow," Noey used to say,  
"Haint made o' ash ner hick'ry thataway!—  
But you git *mulberry*—the *bearin'*-tree,  
Now mind ye! and you fetch the piece to me,  
And lem me git it *seasoned*; then, i gum!  
I'll make a bow 'at you kin brag on some!  
Er—ef you can't git *mulberry*,—you bring  
Me a' old *locus*' hitch-post, and i jing!  
I'll make a bow o' *that* 'at *common* bows  
Won't dast to pick on ner turn up their nose!"  
And Noey knew the woods, and all the trees,  
And thickets, plants and myriad mysteries  
Of swamp and bottom-land. And he knew where  
The ground-hog hid, and why located there.—  
He knew all animals that burrowed, swam,  
Or lived in tree-tops: And, by race and dam,  
He knew the choicest, safest deeps wherein  
Fish-traps might flourish nor provoke the sin  
Of theft in some chance peeking, prying sneak,  
Or town-boy, prowling up and down the creek.  
All four-pawed creatures tamable—he knew  
Their outer and their inner natures too;  
While they, in turn, were drawn to him as by  
Some subtle recognition of a tie  
Of love, as true as truth from end to end,  
Between themselves and this strange human friend.  
The same with birds—he knew them every one,  
And he could "name them, too, without a gun."  
No wonder *Johnty* loved him, even to  
The verge of worship.—Noey led him through  
The art of trapping redbirds—yes, and taught  
Him how to keep them when he had them caught—  
What food they needed, and just where to swing  
The cage, if he expected them to *sing*.

And *Bud* loved Noey, for the little pair  
Of stilts he made him; or the stout old hair  
Trunk Noey put on wheels, and laid a track  
Of scantling-railroad for it in the back  
Part of the barn-lot; or the cross-bow, made  
Just like a gun, which deadly weapon laid  
Against his shoulder as he aimed, and—" *Sping!*"  
He'd hear the rusty old nail zoon and sing—  
And *zip!* your Mr. Bluejay's wing would drop  
A farewell-feather from the old tree-top!  
And *Maymie* loved him, for the very small  
But perfect carriage for her favorite doll—  
A *lady's* carriage—not a *baby*-cab,—  
But oilcloth top, and two seats, lined with drab  
And trimmed with white lace-paper from a case  
Of shaving-soap his uncle bought some place  
At auction once.

And *Alex* loved him yet

The best, when Noey brought him, for a pet,  
A little flying-squirrel, with great eyes—  
Big as a child's: And, childlike otherwise,  
It was at first a timid, tremulous, coy,  
Retiring little thing that dodged the boy  
And tried to keep in Noey's pocket;—till,  
In time, responsive to his patient will,  
It became wholly docile, and content  
With its new master, as he came and went,—  
The squirrel clinging flatly to his breast,  
Or sometimes scampering its craziest  
Around his body spirally, and then  
Down to his very heels and up again.

And *Little Lizzie* loved him, as a bee  
Loves a great ripe red apple—utterly.  
For Noey's ruddy morning-face she drew  
The window-blind, and tapped the window, too;  
Afar she hailed his coming, as she heard  
His tuneless whistling—sweet as any bird  
It seemed to her, the one lame bar or so  
Of old "Wait for the Wagon"—hoarse and low  
The sound was,—so that, all about the place,  
Folks joked and said that Noey "whistled bass"—  
The light remark originally made  
By Cousin Rufus, who knew notes, and played  
The flute with nimble skill, and taste as wall,  
And, critical as he was musical,  
Regarded Noey's constant whistling thus  
"Phenominally unmelodious."  
Likewise when Uncle Mart, who shared the love  
Of jest with Cousin Rufus hand-in-glove,  
Said "Noey couldn't whistle '*Bonny Doon*'  
Even! and, *he'd* bet, couldn't carry a tune  
If it had handles to it!"

—But forgive

The deviations here so fugitive,  
And turn again to Little Lizzie, whose  
High estimate of Noey we shall choose  
Above all others.—And to her he was  
Particularly lovable because  
He laid the woodland's harvest at her feet.—  
He brought her wild strawberries, honey-sweet  
And dewy-cool, in mats of greenest moss  
And leaves, all woven over and across  
With tender, biting "tongue-grass," and "sheep-sour,"  
And twin-leaved beach-mast, pranked with bud and flower  
Of every gypsy-blossom of the wild,  
Dark, tangled forest, dear to any child.—  
All these in season. Nor could barren, drear,  
White and stark-featured Winter interfere  
With Noey's rare resources: Still the same  
He blithely whistled through the snow and came  
Beneath the window with a Fairy sled;  
And Little Lizzie, bundled heels-and-head,  
He took on such excursions of delight  
As even "Old Santy" with his reindeer might  
Have envied her! And, later, when the snow  
Was softening toward Springtime and the glow  
Of steady sunshine smote upon it,—then  
Came the magician Noey yet again—  
While all the children were away a day  
Or two at Grandma's!—and behold when they  
Got home once more;—there, towering taller than  
The doorway—stood a mighty, old Snow-Man!

A thing of peerless art—a masterpiece  
Doubtless unmatched by even classic Greece  
In heyday of Praxiteles.—Alone  
It loomed in lordly grandeur all its own.  
And steadfast, too, for weeks and weeks it stood,  
The admiration of the neighborhood  
As well as of the children Noey sought  
Only to honor in the work he wrought.

The traveler paid it tribute, as he passed  
Along the highway—paused and, turning, cast  
A lingering, last look—as though to take  
A vivid print of it, for memory's sake,  
To lighten all the empty, aching miles  
Beyond with brighter fancies, hopes and smiles.  
The cynic put aside his biting wit  
And tacitly declared in praise of it;  
And even the apprentice-poet of the town  
Rose to impassioned heights, and then sat down  
And penned a panegyric scroll of rhyme  
That made the Snow-Man famous for all time.

And though, as now, the ever warmer sun  
Of summer had so melted and undone  
The perishable figure that—alas!—  
Not even in dwindled white against the grass—  
Was left its latest and minutest ghost,  
The children yet—*materially*, almost—  
Beheld it—circled 'round it hand-in-hand—  
(Or rather 'round the place it used to stand)—  
With "Ring-a-round-a-rosey! Bottle full  
O' posey!" and, with shriek and laugh, would pull  
From seeming contact with it—just as when  
It was the *real-est* of old Snow-Men.

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## "A NOTED TRAVELER"

Even in such a scene of senseless play  
The children were surprised one summer-day  
By a strange man who called across the fence,  
Inquiring for their father's residence;  
And, being answered that this was the place,  
Opened the gate, and with a radiant face,  
Came in and sat down with them in the shade  
And waited—till the absent father made  
His noon appearance, with a warmth and zest  
That told he had no ordinary guest  
In this man whose low-spoken name he knew  
At once, demurring as the stranger drew  
A stuffy notebook out and turned and set  
A big fat finger on a page and let  
The writing thereon testify instead  
Of further speech. And as the father read  
All silently, the curious children took  
Exact ing inventory both of book  
And man:—He wore a long-napped white fur-hat  
Pulled firmly on his head, and under that  
Rather long silvery hair, or iron-gray—  
For he was not an old man,—anyway,  
Not beyond sixty. And he wore a pair  
Of square-framed spectacles—or rather there  
Were two more than a pair,—the extra two  
Flared at the corners, at the eyes' side-view,  
In as redundant vision as the eyes  
Of grasshoppers or bees or dragonflies.  
Later the children heard the father say  
He was "A Noted Traveler," and would stay  
Some days with them—In which time host and guest  
Discussed, alone, in deepest interest,  
Some vague, mysterious matter that defied  
The wistful children, loitering outside  
The spare-room door. There Bud acquired a quite  
New list of big words—such as "Disunite,"  
And "Shibboleth," and "Aristocracy,"  
And "Juggernaut," and "Squatter Sovereignty,"

And "Anti-slavery," "Emancipate,"  
"Irrepressible conflict," and "The Great  
Battle of Armageddon"—obviously  
A pamphlet brought from Washington, D. C.,  
And spread among such friends as might occur  
Of like views with "The Noted Traveler."

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## A PROSPECTIVE VISIT

While *any* day was notable and dear  
That gave the children Noey, history here  
Records his advent emphasized indeed  
With sharp italics, as he came to feed  
The stock one special morning, fair and bright,  
When Johnty and Bud met him, with delight  
Unusual even as their extra dress—  
Garbed as for holiday, with much excess  
Of proud self-consciousness and vain conceit  
In their new finery.—Far up the street  
They called to Noey, as he came, that they,  
As promised, both were going back that day  
To *his* house with him!

And by time that each  
Had one of Noey's hands—ceasing their speech  
And coyly anxious, in their new attire,  
To wake the comment of their mute desire,—  
Noey seemed rendered voiceless. Quite a while  
They watched him furtively.—He seemed to smile  
As though he would conceal it; and they saw  
Him look away, and his lips purse and draw  
In curious, twitching spasms, as though he might  
Be whispering,—while in his eye the white  
Predominated strangely.—Then the spell  
Gave way, and his pent speech burst audible:  
"They wuz two stylish little boys,  
and they wuz mighty bold ones,  
Had two new pairs o' britches made  
out o' their daddy's old ones!"  
And at the inspirational outbreak,  
Both joker and his victims seemed to take  
An equal share of laughter,—and all through  
Their morning visit kept recurring to  
The funny words and jingle of the rhyme  
That just kept getting funnier all the time.

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## AT NOEY'S HOUSE

At Noey's house—when they arrived with him—  
How snug seemed everything, and neat and trim:  
The little picket-fence, and little gate—  
It's little pulley, and its little weight,—  
All glib as clock-work, as it clicked behind  
Them, on the little red brick pathway, lined  
With little paint-keg-vases and teapots  
Of wee moss-blossoms and forgetmenots:  
And in the windows, either side the door,  
Were ranged as many little boxes more



Of like old-fashioned larkspurs, pinks and moss  
And fern and phlox; while up and down across  
Them rioted the morning-glory-vines  
On taut-set cotton-strings, whose snowy lines  
Whipt in and out and under the bright green  
Like basting-threads; and, here and there between,  
A showy, shiny hollyhock would flare  
Its pink among the white and purple there.—  
And still behind the vines, the children saw  
A strange, bleached, wistful face that seemed to draw  
A vague, indefinite sympathy. A face  
It was of some newcomer to the place.—  
In explanation, Noey, briefly, said  
That it was "Jason," as he turned and led  
The little fellows 'round the house to show  
Them his menagerie of pets. And so  
For quite a time the face of the strange guest  
Was partially forgotten, as they pressed  
About the squirrel-cage and roused both  
The lazy inmates out, though wholly loath  
To whirl the wheel for them.—And then with awe  
They walked 'round Noey's big pet owl, and saw  
Him film his great, clear, liquid eyes and stare  
And turn and turn and turn his head 'round there  
The same way they kept circling—as though he  
Could turn it one way thus eternally.

Behind the kitchen, then, with special pride  
Noey stirred up a terrapin inside  
The rain-barrel where he lived, with three or four  
Little mud-turtles of a size not more  
In neat circumference than the tiny toy  
Dumb-watches worn by every little boy.

Then, back of the old shop, beneath the tree  
Of "rusty-coats," as Noey called them, he  
Next took the boys, to show his favorite new  
Pet 'coon—pulled rather cooly into view  
Up through a square hole in the bottom of  
An old inverted tub he bent above,  
Yanking a little chain, with "Hey! you, sir!  
Here's *comp'ny* come to see you, Bolivur!"  
Explanatory, he went on to say,  
"I named him '*Bolivur*' jes thisaway,—  
He looks so *round* and *ovalish* and *fat*,  
'Peared like no other name 'ud fit but that."

Here Noey's father called and sent him on  
Some errand. "Wait," he said—"I won't be gone  
A half a' hour.—Take Bud, and go on in  
Where Jason is, tel I git back agin."

Whoever *Jason* was, they found him there  
Still at the front-room window.—By his chair  
Leaned a new pair of crutches; and from one  
Knee down, a leg was bandaged.—"Jason done  
That-air with one o' these-'ere tools *we* call  
A '*shin-hoe*'—but a *foot-adz* mostly all  
*Hardware*-store-keepers calls 'em."—(*Noey* made  
This explanation later.)

Jason paid  
But little notice to the boys as they  
Came in the room:—An idle volume lay  
Upon his lap—the only book in sight—  
And Johnty read the title,—"*Light, More Light,*  
*There's Danger in the Dark,*"—though *first* and best—  
In fact, the *whole* of Jason's interest  
Seemed centered on a little *dog*—one pet  
Of Noey's all uncelebrated yet—  
Though *Jason*, certainly, avowed his worth,  
And niched him over all the pets on earth—  
As the observant Johnty would relate  
The *Jason*-episode, and imitate  
The all-enthusiastic speech and air

## "THAT LITTLE DOG"

"That little dog 'ud scratch at that door  
And go on a-whinin' two hours before  
He'd ever let up! *There!*—Jane: Let him in.—  
(Hah, there, you little rat!) Look at him grin!  
Come down off o' that!—  
W'y, look at him! (*Drat*  
*You! you-rascal-you!*)—bring me that hat!  
Look *out!*—He'll snap *you!*—*He* wouldn't let  
*You* take it away from him, now you kin bet!  
That little rascal's jist natchurly mean.—  
I tell you, I *never* (*Git out!!*) never seen  
A *spunkier* little rip! (*Scratch to git in,*  
And *now* yer a-scratchin' to git *out* agin!  
Jane: Let him out!) Now, watch him from here  
Out through the winder!—You notice one ear  
Kindo' *in* side-*out*, like he holds it?—Well,  
*He's* got a *tick* in it—*I* kin tell!  
Yes, and he's cunnin'—  
Jist watch him a-runnin',  
*Sidelin'*—see!—like he ain't '*plum'd true'*  
And legs don't 'track' as they'd ort to do:—  
Plowin' his nose through the weeds—I jing!  
Ain't he jist cuter'n anything!

"W'y, that little dog's got *grown*-people's sense!—  
See how he gits out under the fence?—  
And watch him a-whettin' his hind-legs 'fore  
His dead square run of a miled er more—  
'Cause *Noey's* a-comin', and Trip allus knows  
When *Noey's* a-comin'—and off he goes!—  
Putts out to meet him and—*There they come now!*  
Well-sir! it's raially singlar how  
That dog kin *tell*,—  
But he knows as well  
When *Noey's* a-comin' home!—Reckon his *smell*  
'Ud carry two miled?—You needn't to *smile*—  
He runs to meet *him*, ever'-once-n-a-while,  
Two miled and over—when he's slipped away  
And left him at home here, as he's done to-day—  
'Thout ever knowin' where *Noey* wuz goin'—  
But that little dog allus hits the right way!  
Hear him a-whinin' and scratchin' agin?—  
(*Little tormentin' fice!*) Jane: Let him in.

"—You say he ain't *there*?—  
Well now, I declare!—  
Lem *me* limp out and look! ... I wunder where—  
*Heuh*, Trip!—*Heuh*, Trip!—*Heuh*, Trip!... *There*—  
*There* he is!—Little sneak!—What-a'-you-'bout?—  
*There* he is—quiled up as meek as a mouse,  
His tail turnt up like a teakittle-spout,  
A-sunnin' hisse'f at the side o' the house!  
*Next* time you scratch, sir, you'll haf to git in,  
My fine little feller, the best way you kin!  
—*Noey* *he* learns him sich capers!—And they—  
*Both* of 'em's ornrier every day!—  
*Both* tantalizin' and meaner'n sin—  
Allus a—(*Listen there!*)—Jane: Let him in.

"—O! yer so *innocent!* hangin' yer head!—  
(*Drat* ye! you'd *better* git under the bed!)  
—Listen at that!—

He's tackled the cat!—  
Hah, there! you little rip! come out o' that!—  
Git yer blame little eyes scratched out  
'Fore you know what yer talkin' about!—  
*Here!* come away from there!—(Let him alone—  
He'll snap *you*, I tell ye, as quick as a bone!)  
*Hi*, Trip!—*Hey*, here!—What-a'-you-'bout!—  
*Oo! ouch!* 'Ll I'll be blamed!—*Blast ye!* GIT OUT!  
... O, it ain't nothin'—jist *scratched* me, you see.—  
Hadn't no idy he'd try to bite *me!*  
*Plague take him!*—Bet he'll not try *that* agin!—  
Hear him yelp.—(*Pore feller!*) Jane: Let him in."

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## THE LOEHRS AND THE HAMMONDS

"Hey, Bud! O Bud!" rang out a gleeful call,—  
"*The Loehrs is come to your house!*" And a small  
But very much elated little chap,  
In snowy linen-suit and tasseled cap,  
Leaped from the back-fence just across the street  
From Bixlers', and came galloping to meet  
His equally delighted little pair  
Of playmates, hurrying out to join him there—  
"*The Loehrs is come!*—*The Loehrs is come!*" his glee  
Augmented to a pitch of ecstasy  
Communicated wildly, till the cry  
"*The Loehrs is come!*" in chorus quavered high  
And thrilling as some paeon of challenge or  
Soul-stirring chant of armed conqueror.  
And who this *avant courier* of "the Loehrs"?—  
This happiest of all boys out-o'-doors—  
Who but Will Pierson, with his heart's excess  
Of summer-warmth and light and breeziness!  
"From our front winder I 'uz first to see  
'Em all a-drivin' into town!" bragged he—  
"An' seen 'em turnin' up the alley where  
*Your* folks lives at. An' John an' Jake wuz there  
Both in the wagon;—yes, an' Willy, too;  
An' Mary—Yes, an' Edith—with bran-new  
An' purtiest-trimmed hats 'at ever wuz!—  
An' Susan, an' Janey.—An' the *Hammonds-uz*  
In their fine buggy 'at they're ridin' roun'  
So much, all over an' aroun' the town  
An' *ever'wheres*,—them *city*-people who's  
A-visutin' at Loehrs-uz!"

Glorious news!—  
Even more glorious when verified  
In the boys' welcoming eyes of love and pride,  
As one by one they greeted their old friends  
And neighbors.—Nor until their earth-life ends  
Will that bright memory become less bright  
Or dimmed indeed.

... Again, at candle-light,  
The faces all are gathered. And how glad  
The Mother's features, knowing that she had  
Her dear, sweet Mary Loehr back again.—  
She always was so proud of her; and then  
The dear girl, in return, was happy, too,  
And with a heart as loving, kind and true  
As that maturer one which seemed to blend  
As one the love of mother and of friend.  
From time to time, as hand-in-hand they sat,  
The fair girl whispered something low, whereat

A tender, wistful look would gather in  
The mother-eyes; and then there would begin  
A sudden cheerier talk, directed to  
The stranger guests—the man and woman who,  
It was explained, were coming now to make  
Their temporary home in town for sake  
Of the wife's somewhat failing health. Yes, they  
Were city-people, seeking rest this way,  
The man said, answering a query made  
By some well meaning neighbor—with a shade  
Of apprehension in the answer.... No,—  
They had no *children*. As he answered so,  
The man's arm went about his wife, and she  
Leant toward him, with her eyes lit prayerfully:  
Then she arose—he following—and bent  
Above the little sleeping innocent  
Within the cradle at the mother's side—  
He patting her, all silent, as she cried.—  
Though, haply, in the silence that ensued,  
His musings made melodious interlude.

In the warm, health-giving weather  
My poor pale wife and I  
Drive up and down the little town  
And the pleasant roads thereby:  
Out in the wholesome country  
We wind, from the main highway,  
In through the wood's green solitudes—  
Fair as the Lord's own Day.

We have lived so long together.  
And joyed and mourned as one,  
That each with each, with a look for speech,  
Or a touch, may talk as none  
But Love's elect may comprehend—  
Why, the touch of her hand on mine  
Speaks volume-wise, and the smile of her eyes,  
To me, is a song divine.

There are many places that lure us:—  
"The Old Wood Bridge" just west  
Of town we know—and the creek below,  
And the banks the boys love best:  
And "Beech Grove," too, on the hill-top;  
And "The Haunted House" beyond,  
With its roof half off, and its old pump-trough  
Adrift in the roadside pond.

We find our way to "The Marshes"—  
At least where they used to be;  
And "The Old Camp Grounds"; and "The Indian Mounds,"  
And the trunk of "The Council Tree:"  
We have crunched and splashed through "Flint-bed Ford";  
And at "Old Big Bee-gum Spring"  
We have stayed the cup, half lifted up.  
Hearing the redbird sing.

And then, there is "Wesley Chapel,"  
With its little graveyard, lone  
At the crossroads there, though the sun sets fair  
On wild-rose, mound and stone ...  
A wee bed under the willows—  
My wife's hand on my own—  
And our horse stops, too ... And we hear the coo  
Of a dove in undertone.

The dusk, the dew, and the silence.  
"Old Charley" turns his head  
Homeward then by the pike again,  
Though never a word is said—  
One more stop, and a lingering one—  
After the fields and farms,—  
At the old Toll Gate, with the woman await  
With a little girl in her arms.

The silence sank—Floretty came to call  
The children in the kitchen, where they all  
Went helter-skeltering with shout and din  
Enough to drown most sanguine silence in,—  
For well indeed they knew that summons meant  
Taffy and popcorn—so with cheers they went.

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## THE HIRED MAN AND FLORETTY

The Hired Man's supper, which he sat before,  
In near reach of the wood-box, the stove-door  
And one leaf of the kitchen-table, was  
Somewhat belated, and in lifted pause  
His dextrous knife was balancing a bit  
Of fried mush near the port awaiting it.

At the glad children's advent—gladder still  
To find *him* there—"Jest tickled fit to kill  
To see ye all!" he said, with unctious cheer.—  
"I'm tryin'-like to he'p Floretty here  
To git things cleared away and give ye room  
Accordin' to yer stren'th. But I p'sume  
It's a pore boarder, as the poet says,  
That quarrels with his victuals, so I guess  
I'll take another wedge o' that-air cake,  
Florett', that you're a-*learnin'* how to bake."  
He winked and feigned to swallow painfully.—

"Jest 'fore ye all come in, Floretty she  
Was boastin' 'bout her *biscuits*—and they *air*  
As good—sometimes—as you'll find anywhere.—  
But, women gits to braggin' on their *bread*,  
I'm s'picious 'bout their *pie*—as Danty said."  
This raillery Floretty strangely seemed  
To take as compliment, and fairly beamed  
With pleasure at it all.

—"Speakin' o' *bread*—

When she come here to live," The Hired Man said,—  
"Never ben out o' *Freeport* 'fore she come  
Up here,—of course she needed '*sperience* some.—  
So, one day, when yer Ma was goin' to set  
The risin' fer some bread, she sent Florett  
To borry *leaven*, 'crost at Ryans'—So,  
She went and asked fer *twelve*.—She didn't *know*,  
But thought, *whatever* 'twuz, that she could keep  
*One* fer *herse'f*, she said. O she wuz deep!"

Some little evidence of favor hailed  
The Hired Man's humor; but it wholly failed  
To touch the serious Susan Loehr, whose air  
And thought rebuked them all to listening there  
To her brief history of the *city*-man  
And his pale wife—"A sweeter woman than  
*She* ever saw!"—So Susan testified,—  
And so attested all the Loehrs beside.—  
So entertaining was the history, that  
The Hired Man, in the corner where he sat  
In quiet sequestration, shelling corn,  
Ceased wholly, listening, with a face forlorn  
As Sorrow's own, while Susan, John and Jake  
Told of these strangers who had come to make  
Some weeks' stay in the town, in hopes to gain  
Once more the health the wife had sought in vain:  
Their doctor, in the city, used to know  
The Loehrs—Dan and Rachel—years ago,—

And so had sent a letter and request  
For them to take a kindly interest  
In favoring the couple all they could—  
To find some home-place for them, if they would,  
Among their friends in town. He ended by  
A dozen further lines, explaining why  
His patient must have change of scene and air—  
New faces, and the simple friendships there  
With *them*, which might, in time, make her forget  
A grief that kept her ever brooding yet  
And wholly melancholy and depressed,—  
Nor yet could she find sleep by night nor rest  
By day, for thinking—thinking—thinking still \

Upon a grief beyond the doctor's skill,—  
The death of her one little girl.

"Pore thing!"

Floretty sighed, and with the turkey-wing  
Brushed off the stove-hearth softly, and peered in  
The kettle of molasses, with her thin  
Voice wandering into song unconsciously—  
In purest, if most witless, sympathy.—

"Then sleep no more:  
Around thy heart  
Some ten-der dream may i-dlee play.  
But mid-night song,  
With mad-jick art,  
Will chase that dree muh-way!"

"That-air besetment of Floretty's," said  
The Hired Man,—"*singin*—she *inhairited*,—  
Her *father* wuz addicted—same as her—  
To *singin'*—yes, and played the dulcimer!  
But—gittin' back,—I s'pose yer talkin' 'bout  
Them *Hammondses*. Well, Hammond he gits out  
*Pattents* on things—inventions-like, I'm told—  
And's got more money'n a house could hold!  
And yit he can't git up no pattent-right  
To do away with *dyin'*.—And he might  
Be worth a *million*, but he couldn't find  
Nobody sellin' *health* of any kind!...  
But they's no thing onhandier fer *me*  
To use than other people's misery.—  
Floretty, hand me that-air skillet there  
And lem me git 'er het up, so's them-air  
Childern kin have their popcorn."

It was good  
To hear him now, and so the children stood  
Closer about him, waiting.

"Things to *eat*,"

The Hired Man went on, "'s mighty hard to beat!  
Now, when *I* wuz a boy, we was so pore,  
My parunts couldn't 'ford popcorn no more  
To pamper *me* with;—so, I hat to go  
*Without* popcorn—sometimes a *year* er so!—  
And *suffer'n' saints!* how hungry I would git  
Fer jest one other chance—like this—at it!  
Many and many a time I've *dreamp'*, at night,  
About popcorn,—all busted open white,  
And hot, you know—and jest enough o' salt  
And butter on it fer to find no fault—  
*Oomh!*—Well! as I was goin' on to say,—  
After a-*dreamin'* of it thataway,  
*Then* havin' to wake up and find it's all  
A *dream*, and hain't got no popcorn at-tall,  
Ner haint *had* none—I'd think, '*Well, where's the use!*'  
And jest lay back and sob the plaster'n' loose!  
And I have *prayed*, whatever happened, it  
'Ud eether be popcorn er death!.... And yit  
I've noticed—more'n likely so have you—  
That things don't happen when you *want* 'em to."

And thus he ran on artlessly, with speech  
And work in equal exercise, till each  
Tureen and bowl brimmed white. And then he greased  
The saucers ready for the wax, and seized  
The fragrant-steaming kettle, at a sign  
Made by Floretty; and, each child in line,  
He led out to the pump—where, in the dim  
New coolness of the night, quite near to him  
He felt Floretty's presence, fresh and sweet  
As ... dewy night-air after kitchen-heat.

There, still, with loud delight of laugh and jest,  
They plied their subtle alchemy with zest—  
Till, sudden, high above their tumult, welled  
Out of the sitting-room a song which held  
Them stilled in some strange rapture, listening  
To the sweet blur of voices chorusing:—

"When twilight approaches the season  
That ever is sacred to song,  
Does some one repeat my name over,  
And sigh that I tarry so long?  
And is there a chord in the music  
That's missed when my voice is away?—  
And a chord in each heart that awakens  
Regret at my wearisome stay-ay—  
Regret at my wearisome stay."

All to himself, The Hired Man thought—"Of course  
*They'll* sing *Floretty* homesick!"

... O strange source  
Of ecstasy! O mystery of Song!—  
To hear the dear old utterance flow along:—

"Do they set me a chair near the table  
When evening's home-pleasures are nigh?—  
When the candles are lit in the parlor.  
And the stars in the calm azure sky."...

Just then the moonlight sliced the porch slantwise,  
And flashed in misty spangles in the eyes  
Floretty clenched—while through the dark—"I jing!"  
A voice asked, "Where's that song '*you'd* learn to sing  
Ef I sent you the *ballad*?'—which I done  
Last I was home at Freeport.—S'pose you run  
And git it—and we'll all go in to where  
They'll know the notes and sing it fer ye there."  
And up the darkness of the old stairway  
Floretty fled, without a word to say—  
Save to herself some whisper muffled by  
Her apron, as she wiped her lashes dry.

Returning, with a letter, which she laid  
Upon the kitchen-table while she made  
A hasty crock of "float,"—poured thence into  
A deep glass dish of iridescent hue  
And glint and sparkle, with an overflow  
Of froth to crown it, foaming white as snow.—  
And then—poundcake, and jelly-cake as rare,  
For its delicious complement,—with air  
Of Hebe mortalized, she led her van  
Of votaries, rounded by The Hired Man.

Within the sitting-room, the company  
Had been increased in number. Two or three  
Young couples had been added: Emma King,  
Ella and Mary Mathers—all could sing  
Like veritable angels—Lydia Martin, too,  
And Nelly Millikan.—What songs they knew!—

*"Ever of Thee—wherever I may be,  
Fondly I'm drea-m-ing ever of thee!"*

And with their gracious voices blend the grace  
Of Warsaw Barnett's tenor; and the bass  
Unfathomed of Wick Chapman—Fancy still  
Can *feel*, as well as *hear* it, thrill on thrill,  
Vibrating plainly down the backs of chairs  
And through the wall and up the old hall-stairs.—  
Indeed young Chapman's voice especially  
Attracted *Mr. Hammond*—For, said he,  
Waiving the most Elysian sweetness of  
The *ladies'* voices—altitudes above  
The *man's* for sweetness;—*but*—as *contrast*, would  
Not Mr. Chapman be so very good  
As, just now, to oblige *all* with—in fact,  
Some sort of *jolly* song,—to counteract  
In part, at least, the sad, pathetic trend  
Of music *generally*. Which wish our friend  
"The Noted Traveler" made second to  
With heartiness—and so each, in review,  
Joined in—until the radiant *basso* cleared  
His wholly unobstructed throat and peered  
Intently at the ceiling—voice and eye  
As opposite indeed as earth and sky.—  
Thus he uplifted his vast bass and let  
It roam at large the memories booming yet:

*"Old Simon the Cellarer keeps a rare store  
Of Malmsey and Malvoi-sie,  
Of Cyprus, and who can say how many more?—  
But a chary old so-u-l is he-e-ee—  
A chary old so-u-l is he!  
Of hock and Canary he never doth fail;  
And all the year 'round, there is brewing of ale;—  
Yet he never aileth, he quaintly doth say,  
While he keeps to his sober six flagons a day."*

... And then the chorus—the men's voices all  
*Warred* in it—like a German Carnival.—  
Even *Mrs. Hammond* smiled, as in her youth,  
Hearing her husband—And in veriest truth  
"The Noted Traveler's" ever-present hat  
Seemed just relaxed a little, after that,  
As at conclusion of the Bacchic song  
He stirred his "float" vehemently and long.

Then Cousin Rufus with his flute, and art  
Blown blithely through it from both soul and heart—  
Inspired to heights of mastery by the glad,  
Enthusiastic audience he had  
In the young ladies of a town that knew  
No other flutist,—nay, nor *wanted* to,  
Since they had heard *his* "Polly Hopkin's Waltz,"  
Or "Rickett's Hornpipe," with its faultless faults,  
As rendered solely, he explained, "by ear,"  
Having but heard it once, Commencement Year,  
At "Old Ann Arbor."

Little Maymie now  
Seemed "friends" with *Mr. Hammond*—anyhow,  
Was lifted to his lap—where settled, she—  
Enthroned thus, in her dainty majesty,  
Gained *universal* audience—although  
Addressing him alone:—"I'm come to show  
You my new Red-blue pencil; and *she* says"—  
(Pointing to *Mrs. Hammond*)—"that she guess'  
You'll make a *picture* fer me."



"And what *kind*  
Of picture?" Mr. Hammond asked, inclined  
To serve the child as bidden, folding square  
The piece of paper she had brought him there.—  
"I don't know," Maymie said—"only ist make  
A *little dirl*, like me!"

He paused to take  
A sharp view of the child, and then he drew—  
Awhile with red, and then awhile with blue—  
The outline of a little girl that stood  
In converse with a wolf in a great wood;  
And she had on a hood and cloak of red—  
As Maymie watched—"Red Riding Hood!" she said.  
"And who's 'Red Riding Hood'?"

"W'y, don't *you* know?"  
Asked little Maymie—

But the man looked so  
All uninformed, that little Maymie could  
But tell him *all about* Red Riding Hood.

---

## MAYMIE'S STORY OF RED RIDING HOOD

W'y, one time wuz a little-weenty dirl,  
An' she wuz named Red Riding Hood, 'cause her—  
Her *Ma* she maked a little red cloak fer her  
'At turnt up over her head—An' it 'uz all  
Ist one piece o' red cardinal 'at 's like  
The drate-long stockin's the store-keepers has.—  
O! it 'uz purtiest cloak in all the world  
An' *all* this town er anywheres they is!  
An' so, one day, her Ma she put it on  
Red Riding Hood, she did—one day, she did—  
An' it 'uz *Sund'y*—'cause the little cloak  
It 'uz too nice to wear ist *ever'* day  
An' *all* the time!—An' so her Ma, she put  
It on Red Riding Hood—an' telled her not  
To dit no dirt on it ner dit it mussed  
Ner nothin'! An'—an'—nen her Ma she dot  
Her little basket out, 'at Old Kriss bringed  
Her wunst—one time, he did. And nen she fill'  
It full o' whole lots an' 'bundance o' good things t' eat  
(Allus my Dran'ma *she* says "'bundance,' too.)  
An' so her Ma fill' little Red Riding Hood's  
Nice basket all ist full o' dood things t' eat,  
An' tell her take 'em to her old Dran'ma—  
An' not to *spill* 'em, neever—'cause ef she  
'Ud stump her toe an' spill 'em, her Dran'ma  
She'll haf to *punish* her!

An' nen—An' so  
Little Red Riding Hood she p'omised she  
'Ud be all careful nen an' cross' her heart  
'At she wont run an' spill 'em all fer six—  
Five—ten—two-hundred-bushel-dollars-gold!  
An' nen she kiss her Ma doo'-bye an' went  
A-skippin' off—away fur off frough the  
Big woods, where her Dran'ma she live at.—No!—  
She didn't do *a-skippin'*, like I said:—  
She ist went *walkin'*—careful-like an' slow—  
Ist like a little lady—walkin' 'long  
As all polite an' nice—an' slow—an' straight—

An' turn her toes—ist like she's marchin' in  
The Sund'y-School k-session!

An'—an'—so

She 'uz a-doin' along—an' doin' along—  
On frough the drate big woods—'cause her Dran'ma  
She live 'way, 'way fur off frough the big woods  
From *her* Ma's house. So when Red Riding Hood  
She dit to do there, allus have most fun—  
When she do frough the drate big woods, you know.—  
'Cause she ain't feared a bit o' anything!  
An' so she sees the little hoppty-birds  
'At's in the trees, an' flyin' all around,  
An' singin' dlad as ef their parunts said  
They'll take 'em to the magic-lantern show!  
An' she 'ud pull the purty flowers an' things  
A-growin' round the stumps—An' she 'ud ketch  
The purty butterflies, an' drasshoppers,  
An' stick pins frough 'em—No!—I ist *said* that!—  
'Cause she's too dood an' kind an' 'bedient  
To *hurt* things thataway.—She'd *ketch* 'em, though,  
An' ist *play* wiv 'em ist a little while,  
An' nen she'd let 'em fly away, she would,  
An' ist skip on adin to her Dran'ma's.

An' so, while she uz doin' 'long an' 'long,  
First thing you know they 'uz a drate big old  
Mean wicked Wolf jumped out 'at wanted t' eat  
Her up, but *dassent* to—'cause wite clos't there  
They wuz a Man a-choppin' wood, an' you  
Could *hear* him.—So the old Wolf he 'uz '*feared*  
Only to ist be *kind* to her.—So he  
Ist 'tended like he wuz dood friends to her  
An' says "Dood-morning, little Red Riding Hood!"—  
All ist as kind!

An' nen Riding Hood

She say "Dood-morning," too—all kind an' nice—  
Ist like her Ma she learn'—No!—mustn't say  
"Learn," cause "*Learn*" it's unproper.—So she say  
It like her *Ma* she "*teached*" her.—An'—so she  
Ist says "Dood-morning" to the Wolf—'cause she  
Don't know ut-tall 'at he's a *wicked* Wolf  
An' want to eat her up!

Nen old Wolf smile

An' say, so kind: "Where air you doin' at?"  
Nen little Red Riding Hood she says: "I'm doin'  
To my Dran'ma's, 'cause my Ma say I might."  
Nen, when she tell him that, the old Wolf he  
Ist turn an' light out frough the big thick woods,  
Where she can't see him any more. An so  
She think he's went to *his* house—but he haint,—  
He's went to her Dran'ma's, to be there first—  
An' *ketch* her, ef she don't watch mighty sharp  
What she's about!

An' nen when the old Wolf

Dit to her Dran'ma's house, he's purty smart,—  
An' so he 'tend-like *he's* Red Riding Hood,  
An' knock at th' door. An' Riding Hood's Dran'ma  
She's sick in bed an' can't come to the door  
An' open it. So th' old Wolf knock *two* times.  
An' nen Red Riding Hood's Dran'ma she says  
"Who's there?" she says. An' old Wolf 'tends-like he's  
Little Red Riding Hood, you know, an' make'  
His voice soun' ist like hers, an' says: "It's me,  
Dran'ma—an' I'm Red Riding Hood an' I'm  
Ist come to see you."

Nen her old Dran'ma

She think it *is* little Red Riding Hood,  
An' so she say: "Well, come in nen an' make  
You'se'f at home," she says, "'cause I'm down sick  
In bed, and got the 'ralgia, so's I can't

Dit up an' let ye in."

An' so th' old Wolf

Ist march' in nen an' shet the door adin,  
An' *drowl*, he did, an' *splunge* up on the bed  
An' et up old Miz Riding Hood 'fore she  
Could put her specs on an' see who it wuz.—  
An' so she never knowed *who* et her up!

An' nen the wicked Wolf he ist put on  
Her nightcap, an' all covered up in bed—  
Like he wuz *her*, you know.

Nen, purty soon

Here come along little Red Riding Hood,  
An' *she* knock' at the door. An' old Wolf 'tend  
Like *he's* her Dran'ma; an' he say, "Who's there?"  
Ist like her Dran'ma say, you know. An' so  
Little Red Riding Hood she say "It's *me*,  
Dran'ma—an' I'm Red Riding Hood and I'm  
Ist come to *see* you."

An' nen old Wolf nen

He cough an' say: "Well, come in nen an' make  
You'se'f at home," he says, "'cause I'm down sick  
In bed, an' got the 'ralgia, so's I can't  
Dit up an' let ye in."

An' so she think

It's her Dran'ma a-talkin'.—So she ist  
Open' the door an' come in, an' set down  
Her basket, an' taked off her things, an' bringed  
A chair an' clumbed up on the bed, wite by  
The old big Wolf she thinks is her Dran'ma.—  
Only she thinks the old Wolf's dot whole lots  
More bigger ears, an' lots more whiskers, too,  
Than her Dran'ma; an' so Red Riding Hood  
She's kindo' skeered a little. So she says  
"Oh, Dran'ma, what *big eyes* you dot!" An' nen  
The old Wolf says: "They're ist big thataway  
'Cause I'm so dlad to see you!"

Nen she says,—

"Oh, Dran'ma, what a drate big nose you dot!"  
Nen th' old Wolf says: "It's ist big thataway  
Ist 'cause I smell the dood things 'at you bringed  
Me in the basket!"

An' nen Riding Hood

She say "Oh-me-oh-*my!* Dran'ma! what big  
White long sharp teeth you dot!"

Nen old Wolf says:

"Yes—an' they're thataway," he says—an' drowled—  
"They're thataway," he says, "to *eat* you wiv!"  
An' nen he ist *jump'* at her.—

But she *scream'*—

An' *scream'*, she did—So's 'at the Man  
'At wuz a-choppin' wood, you know,—*he* hear,  
An' come a-runnin' in there wiv his ax;  
An', 'fore the old Wolf know' what he's about,  
He split his old brains out an' killed him s'quick  
It make' his head swim!—An' Red Riding Hood  
She wuzn't hurt at all!

An' the big Man

He tooked her all safe home, he did, an' tell  
Her Ma she's all right an' ain't hurt at all  
An' old Wolf's dead an' killed—an' ever'thing!—  
So her Ma wuz so tickled an' so proud,  
She divded *him* all the dood things t' eat they wuz  
'At's in the basket, an' she tell him 'at  
She's much oblige', an' say to "call adin."  
An' story's honest *truth*—an' all *so*, too!

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## LIMITATIONS OF GENIUS

The audience entire seemed pleased—indeed  
*Extremely* pleased. And little Maymie, freed  
From her task of instructing, ran to show  
Her wondrous colored picture to and fro  
Among the company.

"And how comes it," said  
Some one to Mr. Hammond, "that, instead  
Of the inventor's life you did not choose  
The *artist's?*—since the world can better lose  
A cutting-box or reaper than it can  
A noble picture painted by a man  
Endowed with gifts this drawing would suggest"—  
Holding the picture up to show the rest.  
"*There now!*" chimed in the wife, her pale face lit  
Like winter snow with sunrise over it,—  
"That's what *I'm* always asking him.—But *he*—  
*Well*, as he's answering *you*, he answers *me*,—  
With that same silent, suffocating smile  
He's wearing now!"

For quite a little while  
No further speech from anyone, although  
All looked at Mr. Hammond and that slow,  
Immutable, mild smile of his. And then  
The encouraged querist asked him yet again  
*Why was it*, and etcetera—with all  
The rest, expectant, waiting 'round the wall,—  
Until the gentle Mr. Hammond said  
He'd answer with a "*parable*," instead—  
About "a dreamer" that he used to know—  
"An artist"—"master"—*all*—in *embryo*.

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## MR. HAMMOND'S PARABLE

### THE DREAMER

I

He was a Dreamer of the Days:  
Indolent as a lazy breeze  
Of midsummer, in idlest ways  
Lolling about in the shade of trees.  
The farmer turned—as he passed him by  
Under the hillside where he kneeled  
Plucking a flower—with scornful eye  
And rode ahead in the harvest field  
Muttering—"Lawz! ef that-air shirk  
Of a boy was mine fer a week er so,  
He'd quit *dreamin'* and git to work  
And *airn* his livin'—er—Well! *I* know!"  
And even kindlier rumor said,  
Tapping with finger a shaking head,—  
"Got such a curious kind o' way—  
Wouldn't surprise me much, I say!"

Lying limp, with upturned gaze  
Idly dreaming away his days.  
No companions? Yes, a book  
Sometimes under his arm he took  
To read aloud to a lonesome brook.

And school-boys, truant, once had heard  
A strange voice chanting, faint and dim—  
Followed the echoes, and found it him,  
Perched in a tree-top like a bird,  
Singing, clean from the highest limb;  
And, fearful and awed, they all slipped by  
To wonder in whispers if he could fly.  
"Let him alone!" his father said  
When the old schoolmaster came to say,  
"He took no part in his books to-day—  
Only the lesson the readers read.—  
His mind seems sadly going astray!"  
"Let him alone!" came the mournful tone,  
And the father's grief in his sad eyes shone—  
Hiding his face in his trembling hand,  
Moaning, "Would I could understand!  
But as heaven wills it I accept  
Uncomplainingly!" So he wept.

Then went "The Dreamer" as he willed,  
As uncontrolled as a light sail filled  
Flutters about with an empty boat  
Loosed from its moorings and afloat:  
Drifted out from the busy quay  
Of dull school-moorings listlessly;  
Drifted off on the talking breeze,  
All alone with his reveries;  
Drifted on, as his fancies wrought—  
Out on the mighty gulfs of thought.

## II

The farmer came in the evening gray  
And took the bars of the pasture down;  
Called to the cows in a coaxing way,  
"Bess" and "Lady" and "Spot" and "Brown,"  
While each gazed with a wide-eyed stare,  
As though surprised at his coming there—  
Till another tone, in a higher key,  
Brought their obedience lothfully.

Then, as he slowly turned and swung  
The topmost bar to its proper rest,  
Something fluttered along and clung  
An instant, shivering at his breast—  
A wind-scared fragment of legal cap,  
Which darted again, as he struck his hand  
On his sounding chest with a sudden slap,  
And hurried sailing across the land.  
But as it clung he had caught the glance  
Of a little penciled countenance,  
And a glamour of written words; and hence,  
A minute later, over the fence,  
"Here and there and gone astray  
Over the hills and far away,"  
He chased it into a thicket of trees  
And took it away from the captious breeze.

A scrap of paper with a rhyme  
Scrawled upon it of summertime:  
A pencil-sketch of a dairy-maid,  
Under a farmhouse porch's shade,  
Working merrily; and was blent  
With her glad features such sweet content,  
That a song she sung in the lines below  
Seemed delightfully *apropos*:—

## SONG

"Why do I sing—Tra-la-la-la-la!

Glad as a King?—Tra-la-la-la-la!  
Well, since you ask,—  
I have such a pleasant task,  
I can not help but sing!

"Why do I smile—Tra-la-la-la-la!  
Working the while?—Tra-la-la-la-la!  
Work like this is play,—  
So I'm playing all the day—  
I can not help but smile!

"So, If you please—Tra-la-la-la-la!  
Live at your ease!—Tra-la-la-la-la!  
You've only got to turn,  
And, you see, its bound to churn—  
I can not help but please!"

The farmer pondered and scratched his head,  
Reading over each mystic word.—  
"Some o' the Dreamer's work!" he said—  
"Ah, here's more—and name and date  
In his hand-write'!"—And the good man read,—  
"Patent applied for, July third,  
Eighteen hundred and forty-eight'!"  
The fragment fell from his nerveless grasp—  
His awed lips thrilled with the joyous gasp:  
"I see the p'int to the whole concern,—  
He's studied out a patent churn!"

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## FLORETTY'S MUSICAL CONTRIBUTION

All seemed delighted, though the elders more,  
Of course, than were the children.—Thus, before  
Much interchange of mirthful compliment,  
The story-teller said *his* stories "went"  
(Like a bad candle) *best* when they went *out*,—  
And that some sprightly music, dashed about,  
Would *wholly* quench his "glimmer," and inspire  
Far brighter lights.

And, answering this desire,  
The flutist opened, in a rapturous strain  
Of rippling notes—a perfect April-rain  
Of melody that drenched the senses through;—  
Then—gentler—gentler—as the dusk sheds dew,  
It fell, by velvety, staccatoed halts,  
Swooning away in old "Von Weber's Waltz."  
Then the young ladies sang "Isle of the Sea"—  
In ebb and flow and wave so billowy,—  
Only with quavering breath and folded eyes  
The listeners heard, buoyed on the fall and rise  
Of its insistent and exceeding stress  
Of sweetness and ecstatic tenderness ...  
With lifted finger *yet*, Remembrance—List!—  
"*Beautiful isle of the sea!*" wells in a mist  
Of tremulous ...

... After much whispering  
Among the children, Alex came to bring  
Some kind of *letter*—as it seemed to be—  
To Cousin Rufus. This he carelessly  
Unfolded—reading to himself alone,—  
But, since its contents became, later, known,  
And no one "*plagued so awful* bad," the same  
May here be given—of course without full name,

Fac-simile, or written kink or curl  
Or clue. It read:—

"Wild Roved an indian Girl  
Brite al Floretty"  
deer freind  
I now take

\*this\* These means to send that *Song* to you & make  
my Promus good to you in the Regards  
Of doing What i Promust afterwards,  
the *notes* & *Words* is both here *Printed* SOS  
you \*kin\* can git *uncle Mart* to read you \*them\* those  
& cousin Rufus you can git to *Play*  
the *notes* fur you on eny Plezunt day  
His Legul Work aint \*Pressin\* Pressing.

Ever thine  
As shore as the Vine  
doth the Stump intwine  
thou art my Lump of Sackkerrine  
Rinaldo Rinaldine  
the Pirut in Captivity.

... There dropped  
Another square scrap.—But the hand was stopped  
That reached for it—Floretty suddenly  
Had set a firm foot on her property—  
Thinking it was the *letter*, not the *song*,—  
But blushing to discover she was wrong,  
When, with all gravity of face and air,  
Her precious letter *handed* to her there  
By Cousin Rufus left her even more  
In apprehension than she was before.  
But, testing his unwavering, kindly eye,  
She seemed to put her last suspicion by,  
And, in exchange, handed the song to him.—

A page torn from a song-book: Small and dim  
Both notes and words were—but as plain as day  
They seemed to him, as he began to play—  
And plain to *all* the singers,—as he ran  
An airy, warbling prelude, then began  
Singing and swinging in so blithe a strain,  
That every voice rang in the old refrain:  
From the beginning of the song, clean through,  
Floretty's features were a study to  
The flutist who "read *notes*" so readily,  
Yet read so little of the mystery  
Of that face of the girl's.—Indeed *one* thing  
Bewildered him quite into worrying,  
And that was, noticing, throughout it all,  
The Hired Man shrinking closer to the wall,  
She ever backing toward him through the throng  
Of barricading children—till the song  
Was ended, and at last he saw her near  
Enough to reach and take him by the ear  
And pinch it just a pang's worth of her ire  
And leave it burning like a coal of fire.  
He noticed, too, in subtle pantomime  
She seemed to dust him off, from time to time;  
And when somebody, later, asked if she  
Had never heard the song before—"What! *me*?"  
She said—then blushed again and smiled,—  
"I've knowed that song sence *Adam* was a child!—  
It's jes a joke o' this-here man's.—He's learned  
To *read* and *write* a little, and its turned  
His fool-head some—That's all!"

And then some one  
Of the loud-wrangling boys said—"Course they's none  
No more, *these* days!—They's Fairies *ust* to be,  
But they're all dead, a hunderd years!" said he.

"Well, there's where you're *mustakened*!"—in reply  
They heard Bud's voice, pitched sharp and thin and high.—

"An' how you goin' to *prove* it!"

"Well, I *kin*!"

Said Bud, with emphasis,—*"They's one lives in  
Our garden—and I see 'im wunst, wiv my  
Own eyes—one time I did."*

*"Oh, what a lie!"*

—*"Sh!"*

"Well, nen," said the skeptic—seeing there  
The older folks attracted—"Tell us *where*  
You saw him, an' all *'bout* him!"

"Yes, my son.—

If you tell 'stories,' you may tell us one,"  
The smiling father said, while Uncle Mart,  
Behind him, winked at Bud, and pulled apart  
His nose and chin with comical grimace—  
Then sighed aloud, with sanctimonious face,—  
*"How good and comely it is to see  
Children and parents in friendship agree!"*—  
You fire away, Bud, on your Fairy-tale—  
Your *Uncle's* here to back you!"

Somewhat pale,  
And breathless as to speech, the little man  
Gathered himself. And thus his story ran.

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## BUD'S FAIRY-TALE

Some peoples thinks they ain't no Fairies *now*  
No more yet!—But they *is*, I bet! 'Cause ef  
They *wuzn't* Fairies, nen I like to know  
Who'd w'ite 'bout Fairies in the books, an' tell  
What Fairies *does*, an' how their *picture* looks,  
An' all an' ever'thing! W'y, ef they don't  
Be Fairies anymore, nen little boys  
'U'd ist *sleep* when they go to sleep an' wont  
Have ist no dweams at all,—'Cause Fairies—*good*  
Fairies—they're a-purpose to make dweams!  
But they *is* Fairies—an' I *know* they is!  
'Cause one time wunst, when its all Summertime,  
An' don't haf to be no fires in the stove  
Er fireplace to keep warm wiv—ner don't haf  
To wear old scwatchy flannen shirts at all,  
An' aint no fweeze—ner cold—ner snow!—An'—an'  
Old skwecky twees got all the gween leaves on  
An' ist keeps noddin', noddin' all the time,  
Like they 'uz lazy an' a-twyin' to go  
To sleep an' couldn't, 'cause the wind won't quit  
A-blowin' in 'em, an' the birds won't stop  
A-singin' so's they *kin*.—But twees *don't* sleep,  
I guess! But *little boys* sleeps—an' *dweams*, too.—  
An' that's a sign they's Fairies.

So, one time,

When I ben playin' "Store" wunst over in  
The shed of their old stable, an' Ed Howard  
He maked me quit a-bein' pardners, 'cause  
I dwinked the 'tend-like sody-water up  
An' et the shore-nuff cwackers.—W'y, nen I  
Clumbed over in our garden where the gwapes  
Wuz purt'-nigh ripe: An' I wuz ist a-layin'  
There on th' old cwoked seat 'at Pa maked in  
Our arber,—an' so I 'uz layin' there



A-whittlin' beets wiv my new dog-knife, an'  
A-lookin' wite up through the twimby leaves—  
An' wuzn't 'sleep at all!—An'-sir!—first thing  
You know, a little *Fairy* hopped out there!  
A *leettle-teenty Fairy!*—*hope-may-die!*  
An' he look' down at me, he did—An' he  
Ain't bigger'n a *yellerbird!*—an' he  
Say "Howdy-do!" he did—an' I could *hear*  
Him—ist as *plain!*

Nen I say "Howdy-do!"  
An' he say "*I'm* all hunkey, Nibsey; how  
Is *your* folks comin' on?"

An' nen I say  
"My name ain't '*Nibsey*,' nenever—my name's *Bud*.  
An' what's *your* name?" I says to him.

An'he  
Ist laugh an' say "'*Bud's*' awful *funny* name!"  
An' he ist laid back on a big bunch o' gwapes  
An' laugh' an' laugh', he did—like somebody  
'Uz tick-el-un his feet!

An' nen I say—  
"What's *your* name," nen I say, "afore you bust  
Yo'-se'f a-laughin' 'bout *my* name?" I says.  
An' nen he dwy up laughin'—kindo' mad—  
An' say "W'y, *my* name's *Squidjicum*," he says.  
An' nen I laugh an' say—"Gee! what a name!"  
An' when I make fun of his name, like that,  
He ist git awful mad an' spunky, an'  
'Fore you know, he ist gwabbed holt of a vine—  
A big long vine 'at's danglin' up there, an'  
He ist helt on wite tight to that, an' down  
He swung quick past my face, he did, an' ist  
Kicked at me hard's he could!

But I'm too quick  
Fer *Mr. Squidjicum!* I ist weached out  
An' ketched him, in my hand—an' helt him, too,  
An' *squeezed* him, ist like little wobins when  
They can't fly yet an' git flopped out their nest.  
An' nen I turn him all wound over, an'  
Look at him clos't, you know—wite clos't,—'cause ef  
He *is* a Fairy, w'y, I want to see  
The *wings* he's got—But he's dwessed up so fine  
'At I can't *see* no wings.—An' all the time  
He's twyin' to kick me yet: An' so I take  
F'esh holts an' *squeeze* agin—an' harder, too;  
An' I says, "*Hold up, Mr. Squidjicum!*—  
You're kickin' the w'ong man!" I says; an' nen  
I ist *squeeze* ' *him*, purt'-nigh my *best*, I did—  
An' I heerd somepin' bust!—An' nen he cwied  
An' says, "You better look out what you're doin'!—  
You' bust' my spiderweb-suspen'ners, an'  
You' got my woseleaf-coat all cwinkled up  
So's I can't go to old Miss Hoodjicum's  
Tea-party, 's'afternoon!"

An' nen I says—  
"Who's 'old Miss Hoodjicum'?" I says

An'he  
Says "Ef you lemme loose I'll tell you."

So  
I helt the little skeezics 'way fur out  
In one hand—so's he can't jump down t' th' ground  
Wivout a-gittin' all stove up: an' nen  
I says, "You're loose now.—Go ahead an' tell  
'Bout the 'tea-party' where you're goin' at  
So awful fast!" I says.

An' nen he say,—

"No use to *tell* you 'bout it, 'cause you won't  
Believe it, 'less you go there your own se'f  
An' see it wiv your own two eyes!" he says.  
An' *he* says: "Ef you lemme *shore-nuff* loose,  
An' p'omise 'at you'll keep wite still, an' won't  
Tetch nothin' 'at you see—an' never tell  
Nobody in the world—an' lemme loose—  
W'y, nen I'll *take* you there!"

But I says, "Yes  
An' ef I let you loose, you'll *run!*" I says.  
An' he says "No, I won't!—I hope may die!"  
Nen I says, "Cwoss your heart you won't!"

An'he  
Ist cwoss his heart; an' nen I weach an' set  
The little feller up on a long vine—  
An' he 'uz so tickled to git loose agin,  
He gwab' the vine wiv boff his little hands  
An' ist take an' turn in, he did, an' skin  
'Bout forty-'leven cats!

Nen when he git  
Through whirlin' wound the vine, an' set on top  
Of it agin, w'y nen his "woseleaf-coat"  
He bwag so much about, it's ist all tored  
Up, an' ist hangin' strips an' rags—so he  
Look like his Pa's a dwunkard. An' so nen  
When he see what he's done—a-actin' up  
So smart,—he's awful mad, I guess; an' ist  
Pout out his lips an' twis' his little face  
Ist ugly as he kin, an' set an' tear  
His whole coat off—an' sleeves an' all.—An' nen  
He wad it all togevver an' ist *throw*  
It at me ist as hard as he kin dwive!

An' when I weach to ketch him, an' 'uz goin'  
To give him 'nuvver squeezin', *he ist flewed*  
*Clean up on top the arber!*—'Cause, you know,  
They *wuz* wings on him—when he tored his *coat*  
Clean off—they *wuz* wings *under there*. But they  
Wuz purty wobbly-like an' wouldn't work  
Hardly at all—'Cause purty soon, when I  
Throwed clods at him, an' sticks, an' got him shooed  
Down off o' there, he come a-floppin' down  
An' lit k-bang! on our old chicken-coop,  
An' ist laid there a-whimper'n' like a child!  
An' I tiptoed up wite clos't, an' I says "What's  
The matter wiv ye, Squidjicum?"

An'he  
Says: "Dog-gone! when my wings gits stwaight agin,  
Where you all *cwumped* 'em," he says, "I bet  
I'll ist fly clean away an' won't take you  
To old Miss Hoodjicum's at all!" he says.  
An' nen I ist weach out wite quick, I did,  
An' gwab the sassy little snipe agin—  
Nen tooked my topstwing an' tie down his wings  
So's he *can't* fly, 'less'n I want him to!  
An' nen I says: "Now, Mr. Squidjicum,  
You better ist light out," I says, "to old  
Miss Hoodjicum's, an' show *me* how to git  
There, too," I says; "er ef you don't," I says,  
"I'll climb up wiv you on our buggy-shed  
An' push you off!" I says.

An nen he say  
All wight, he'll show me there; an' tell me nen  
To set him down wite easy on his feet,  
An' loosen up the stwing a little where  
It cut him under th' arms. An' nen he says,  
"Come on!" he says; an' went a-limpin' 'long  
The garden-path—an' limpin' 'long an' 'long  
Tel—purty soon he come on 'long to where's  
A grea'-big cabbage-leaf. An' he stoop down

An' say "Come on inunder here wiv me!"  
So *I* stoop down an' crawl inunder there,  
Like he say.

An' inunder there's a grea'  
Big clod, they is—a awful grea' big clod!  
An' nen he says, "*Roll this-here clod away!*"  
An' so I roll' the clod away. An' nen  
It's all wet, where the dew'z inunder where  
The old clod wuz,—an' nen the Fairy he  
Git on the wet-place: Nen he say to me  
"Git on the wet-place, too!" An' nen he say,  
"Now hold yer breff an' shet yer eyes!" he says,  
"Tel I say *Squinchy-winchy!*" Nen he say—  
Somepin *in Dutch*, I guess.—An' nen I felt  
Like we 'uz sinkin' down—an' sinkin' down!—  
Tel purty soon the little Fairy weach  
An' pinch my nose an' yell at me an' say,  
"*Squinchy-winchy! Look wherever you please!*"  
Nen when I looked—Oh! they 'uz purtyest place  
Down there you ever saw in all the World!—  
They 'uz ist *flowers* an' *woses*—yes, an' *twees*  
Wiv *blossoms* on an' *big ripe apples* boff!  
An' butterflies, they wuz—an' hummin'-birds—  
An' *yellowbirds* an' *bluebirds*—yes, an' *red!*—  
An' ever'wheres an' all awound 'uz vines  
Wiv ripe p'serve-pears on 'em!—Yes, an' all  
An' ever'thing 'at's ever gwowin' in  
A garden—er canned up—all ripe at wunst!—  
It wuz ist like a garden—only it  
'Uz *little* tit o' garden—'bout big wound  
As ist our twun'el-bed is.—An' all wound  
An' wound the little garden's a gold fence—  
An' little gold gate, too—an' ash-hopper  
'At's all gold, too—an' ist full o' gold ashes!  
An' wite in th' middle o' the garden wuz  
A little gold house, 'at's ist 'bout as big  
As ist a bird-cage is: An' *in* the house  
They 'uz whole-lots *more* Fairies there—'cause I  
Picked up the little house, an' 'peeked in at  
The winders, an' I see 'em all in there  
Ist *buggin'* wound! An' Mr. Squidjicum  
He twy to make me quit, but I gwab *him*,  
An' poke him down the chimbly, too, I did!—  
An' y'ort to see *him* hop out 'mongst 'em there!  
Ist like he 'uz the boss an' ist got back!—  
"*Hain't ye got on them-air dew-dumplin's yet?*"  
He says.

An' they says no.

An' nen he says  
"*Better git at 'em nen!*" he says, "*wite quick—*  
*'Cause old Miss Hoodjicum's a-comin'!*"

Nen  
They all set wound a little gold tub—an'  
All 'menced a-peelin' dewdwops, ist like they  
'Uz *peaches*.—An', it looked so funny, I  
Ist laugh' out loud, an' *dwopped* the little house,—  
An' 't busted like a soap-bubble!—An't skeered  
Me so, I—I—I—I,—it skeered me so,  
I—ist *waked* up.—No! I *ain't* ben *asleep*  
An' *dream* it all, like *you* think,—but it's shore  
Fer-certain *fact* an' cwoss my heart it is!

## A DELICIOUS INTERRUPTION

All were quite gracious in their plaudits of  
Bud's Fairy; but another stir above  
That murmur was occasioned by a sweet  
Young lady-caller, from a neighboring street,  
Who rose reluctantly to say good-night  
To all the pleasant friends and the delight  
Experienced,—as she had promised sure  
To be back home by nine. Then paused, demure,  
And wondered was it *very* dark.—Oh, *no!*—  
She had *come* by herself and she could go  
Without an *escort*. Ah, you sweet girls all!  
What young gallant but comes at such a call,  
Your most abject of slaves! Why, there were three  
Young men, and several men of family,  
Contesting for the honor—which at last  
Was given to Cousin Rufus; and he cast  
A kingly look behind him, as the pair  
Vanished with laughter in the darkness there.

As order was restored, with everything  
Suggestive, in its way, of "romancing,"  
Some one observed that *now* would be the chance  
For *Noey* to relate a circumstance  
That *he*—the very specious rumor went—  
Had been eye-witness of, by accident.  
Noey turned pippin-crimson; then turned pale  
As death; then turned to flee, without avail.—  
"*There!* head him off! *Now!* hold him in his chair!—  
Tell us the Serenade-tale, now, Noey.—*There!*"

---

## NOEY'S NIGHT-PIECE

"They ain't much 'tale' about it!" Noey said.—  
"K'tawby grapes wuz gittin' good-n-red  
I rickollect; and Tubb Kingry and me  
'Ud kindo' browse round town, daytime, to see  
What neighbors 'peared to have the most to spare  
'At wuz git-at-able and no dog there  
When we come round to git 'em, say 'bout ten  
O'clock at night when mostly old folks then  
Wuz snorin' at each other like they yit  
Helt some old grudge 'at never slep' a bit.  
Well, at the *Pars'nige*—ef ye'll call to mind,—  
They's 'bout the biggest grape-arber you'll find  
'Most anywheres.—And mostly there, we knowed  
They wuz *k'tawbies* thick as ever growed—  
And more'n they'd *p'serve*.—Besides I've heerd  
Ma say k'tawby-grape-p'serves jes 'peared  
A waste o' sugar, anyhow!—And so  
My conscience stayed outside and lem me go  
With Tubb, one night, the back-way, clean up through  
That long black arber to the end next to  
The house, where the k'tawbies, don't you know,  
Wuz thickest. And t'uz lucky we went *slow*,—  
Fer jest as we wuz cropin' tords the gray-  
End, like, of the old arber—heerd Tubb say  
In a skeered whisper, 'Hold up! They's some one  
Jes slippin' in here!—and *looks like a gun*  
He's carryin'!' I *golly!* we both spread  
Out flat aginst the ground!

"'What's that?' Tubb said.—  
And jest then—' *plink! plunk! plink!*' we heerd something  
Under the back-porch-winder.—Then, i jing!

Of course we rickollected 'bout the young  
School-mam 'at wuz a-boardin' there, and sung,  
And played on the melodium in the choir.—  
And she 'uz 'bout as purty to admire  
As any girl in town!—the fac's is, she  
Jest *wuz*, them times, to a dead certainty,  
The belle o' this-here bailywick!—But—Well,—  
I'd best git back to what I'm tryin' to tell:—  
It wuz some feller come to serenade  
Miss Wetherell: And there he plunked and played  
His old guitar, and sung, and kep' his eye  
Set on her winder, blacker'n the sky!—  
And black it *stayed*.—But mayby she wuz 'way  
From home, er wore out—bein' *Saturday!*

"It *seemed* a good-'eal *longer*, but I *know*  
He sog and plunked there half a' hour er so  
Afore, it 'peared like, he could ever git  
His own free qualified consents to quit  
And go off 'bout his business. When he went  
I bet you could a-bought him fer a cent!

"And now, behold ye all!—as Tubb and me  
Wuz 'bout to raise up,—right in front we see  
A feller slippin' out the arber, square  
Smack under that-air little winder where  
The *other* feller had been standin'.—And  
The thing he wuz a-carryin' in his hand  
Wuzn't no *gun* at all!—It wuz a *flute*,—  
And *whoop-ee!* how it did git up and toot  
And chirp and warble, tel a mockin'-bird  
'Ud dast to never let hisse'f be heerd  
Ferever, after sich miracalous, high  
Jim-cracks and grand skyrootics played there by  
Yer Cousin Rufus!—Yes-sir; it wuz him!—  
And what's more,—all a-suddent that-air dim  
Dark winder o' Miss Wetherell's wuz lit  
Up like a' oyshture-sign, and under it  
We see him sort o' wet his lips and smile  
Down 'long his row o' dancin' fingers, while  
He kindo' stiffened up and kinked his breath  
And everlastin'ly jest blowed the peth  
Out o' that-air old one-keyed flute o' his.  
And, bless their hearts, that's all the 'tale' they is!"

And even as Noey closed, all radiantly  
The unconscious hero of the history,  
Returning, met a perfect driving storm  
Of welcome—a reception strangely warm  
And *unaccountable*, to *him*, although  
Most *gratifying*,—and he told them so.  
"I only urge," he said, "my right to be  
Enlightened." And a voice said: "*Certainly*:—  
During your absence we agreed that you  
Should tell us all a story, old or new,  
Just in the immediate happy frame of mind  
We knew you would return in."

So, resigned,  
The ready flutist tossed his hat aside—  
Glanced at the children, smiled, and thus complied.

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## COUSIN RUFUS' STORY

My little story, Cousin Rufus said,  
Is not so much a story as a fact.

It is about a certain willful boy—  
An aggrieved, unappreciated boy,  
Grown to dislike his own home very much,  
By reason of his parents being not  
At all up to his rigid standard and  
Requirements and exactions as a son  
And disciplinarian.

So, sullenly  
He brooded over his disheartening  
Environments and limitations, till,  
At last, well knowing that the outside world  
Would yield him favors never found at home,  
He rose determinedly one July dawn—  
Even before the call for breakfast—and,  
Climbing the alley-fence, and bitterly  
Shaking his clenched fist at the woodpile, he  
Evanished down the turnpike.—Yes: he had,  
Once and for all, put into execution  
His long low-muttered threatenings—He had  
*Run off!*—He had—had run away from home!

His parents, at discovery of his flight,  
Bore up first-rate—especially his Pa,—  
Quite possibly recalling his own youth,  
And therefrom predicating, by high noon,  
The absent one was very probably  
Disporting his nude self in the delights  
Of the old swimmin'-hole, some hundred yards  
Below the slaughter-house, just east of town.  
The stoic father, too, in his surmise  
Was accurate—For, lo! the boy was there!

And there, too, he remained throughout the day—  
Save at one starving interval in which  
He clad his sunburnt shoulders long enough  
To shy across a wheatfield, shadow-like,  
And raid a neighboring orchard—bitterly,  
And with spasmodic twitchings of the lip,  
Bethinking him how all the other boys  
Had *homes* to go to at the dinner-hour—  
While *he*—alas!—*he had no home!*—At least  
These very words seemed rising mockingly,  
Until his every thought smacked raw and sour  
And green and bitter as the apples he  
In vain essayed to stay his hunger with.  
Nor did he join the glad shouts when the boys  
Returned rejuvenated for the long  
Wet revel of the feverish afternoon.—  
Yet, bravely, as his comrades splashed and swam  
And spluttered, in their weltering merriment,  
He tried to laugh, too,—but his voice was hoarse  
And sounded to him like some other boy's.  
And then he felt a sudden, poking sort  
Of sickness at the heart, as though some cold  
And scaly pain were blindly nosing it  
Down in the dreggy darkness of his breast.  
The tensioned pucker of his purple lips  
Grew ever chillier and yet more tense—  
The central hurt of it slow spreading till  
It did possess the little face entire.  
And then there grew to be a knuckled knot—  
An aching kind of core within his throat—  
An ache, all dry and swallowless, which seemed  
To ache on just as bad when he'd pretend  
He didn't notice it as when he did.  
It was a kind of a conceited pain—  
An overbearing, self-assertive and  
Barbaric sort of pain that clean outhurt  
A boy's capacity for suffering—  
So, many times, the little martyr needs  
Must turn himself all suddenly and dive  
From sight of his hilarious playmates and  
Surreptitiously weep under water.

### Thus

He wrestled with his awful agony  
Till almost dark; and then, at last—then, with  
The very latest lingering group of his  
Companions, he moved turgidly toward home—  
Nay, rather *oozed* that way, so slow he went,—  
With lothful, hesitating, loitering,  
Reluctant, late-election-returns air,  
Heightened somewhat by the conscience-made resolve  
Of chopping a double-armful of wood  
As he went in by rear way of the kitchen.  
And this resolve he executed;—yet  
The hired girl made no comment whatsoever,  
But went on washing up the supper-things,  
Crooning the unutterably sad song, "*Then think,  
Oh, think how lonely this heart must ever be!*"  
Still, with affected carelessness, the boy  
Ranged through the pantry; but the cupboard-door  
Was locked. He sighed then like a wet fore-stick  
And went out on the porch.—At least the pump,  
He prophesied, would meet him kindly and  
Shake hands with him and welcome his return!  
And long he held the old tin dipper up—  
And oh, how fresh and pure and sweet the draught!  
Over the upturned brim, with grateful eyes  
He saw the back-yard, in the gathering night,  
Vague, dim and lonesome, but it all looked good:  
The lightning-bugs, against the grape-vines, blinked  
A sort of sallow gladness over his  
Home-coming, with this softening of the heart.  
He did not leave the dipper carelessly  
In the milk-trough.—No: he hung it back upon  
Its old nail thoughtfully—even tenderly.  
All slowly then he turned and sauntered toward  
The rain-barrel at the corner of the house,  
And, pausing, peered into it at the few  
Faint stars reflected there. Then—moved by some  
Strange impulse new to him—he washed his feet.  
He then went in the house—straight on into  
The very room where sat his parents by  
The evening lamp.—The father all intent  
Reading his paper, and the mother quite  
As intent with her sewing. Neither looked  
Up at his entrance—even reproachfully,—  
And neither spoke.

### The wistful runaway

Drew a long, quavering breath, and then sat down  
Upon the extreme edge of a chair. And all  
Was very still there for a long, long while.—  
Yet everything, somehow, seemed *restful*-like  
And *homey* and old-fashioned, good and kind,  
And sort of *kin* to him!—Only too *still!*  
If somebody would say something—just *speak*—  
Or even rise up suddenly and come  
And lift him by the ear sheer off his chair—  
Or box his jaws—Lord bless 'em!—*anything!*—  
Was he not there to thankfully accept  
Any reception from parental source  
Save this incomprehensible *voicelessness*.  
O but the silence held its very breath!  
If but the ticking clock would only *strike*  
And for an instant drown the whispering,  
Lisping, sifting sound the katydids  
Made outside in the grassy nowhere.

### Far

Down some back-street he heard the faint halloo  
Of boys at their night-game of "Town-fox,"  
But now with no desire at all to be  
Participating in their sport—No; no;—  
Never again in this world would he want  
To join them there!—he only wanted just  
To stay in home of nights—Always—always—  
Forever and a day!

He moved; and coughed—  
Coughed hoarsely, too, through his rolled tongue; and yet  
No vaguest of parental notice or  
Solicitude in answer—no response—  
No word—no look. O it was deathly still!—  
So still it was that really he could not  
Remember any prior silence that  
At all approached it in profundity  
And depth and density of utter hush.  
He felt that he himself must break it: So,  
Summoning every subtle artifice  
Of seeming nonchalance and native ease  
And naturalness of utterance to his aid,  
And gazing raptly at the house-cat where  
She lay curled in her wonted corner of  
The hearth-rug, dozing, he spoke airily  
And said: "I see you've got the same old cat!"

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## BEWILDERING EMOTIONS

The merriment that followed was subdued—  
As though the story-teller's attitude  
Were dual, in a sense, appealing quite  
As much to sorrow as to mere delight,  
According, haply, to the listener's bent  
Either of sad or merry temperament.—  
"And of your two appeals I much prefer  
The pathos," said "The Noted Traveler,"—  
"For should I live to twice my present years,  
I know I could not quite forget the tears  
That child-eyes bleed, the little palms nailed wide,  
And quivering soul and body crucified....  
But, bless 'em! there are no such children here  
To-night, thank God!—Come here to me, my dear!"  
He said to little Alex, in a tone  
So winning that the sound of it alone  
Had drawn a child more lothful to his knee:—  
"And, now-sir, *I'll* agree if *you'll* agree,—  
*You* tell us all a story, and then *I*  
Will tell one."

"*But I can't.*"

"Well, can't you *try*?"  
"Yes, Mister: he *kin* tell *one*. Alex, tell  
The one, you know, 'at you made up so well,  
About the *Bear*. He allus tells that one,"  
Said Bud,—"*He* gits it mixed some 'bout the *gun*  
An' *ax* the Little Boy had, an' *apples*, too."—  
Then Uncle Mart said—"There, now! that'll do!—  
Let *Alex* tell his story his own way!"  
And Alex, prompted thus, without delay  
Began.

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## THE BEAR-STORY

THAT ALEX "IST MAKED UP HIS-OWN-SE'F"



W'y, wunst they wuz a Little Boy went out  
In the woods to shoot a Bear. So, he went out  
'Way in the grea'-big woods—he did.—An' he  
Wuz goin'along—an'goin'along, you know,  
An' purty soon he heerd somepin' go "*Wooh!*"—  
Ist thataway—"Woo-oo!" An' he wuz *skeered*,  
He wuz. An' so he runned an' clumbed a tree—  
A grea'-big tree, he did,—a sicka-*more* tree.  
An' nen he heerd it agin: an' he looked round,  
An' '*t'uz a Bear!*—a *gre'a'-big, shore-nuff Bear!*—  
No: '*t'uz two Bears*, it wuz—two grea'-big Bears—  
*One* of 'em wuz—ist *one's a grea'-big Bear.*—  
But they ist *boff* went "*Wooh!*"—An' here *they* come  
To climb the tree an' git the Little Boy  
An'eat him up!

An' nen the Little Boy  
He 'uz skeered worse'n ever! An' here come  
The grea'-big Bear a-climbin' th' tree to git  
The Little Boy an' eat him up—Oh, *no!*—  
It 'uzn't the *Big* Bear 'at clumb the tree—  
It 'uz the *Little* Bear. So here *he* come  
Climbin' the tree—an' climbin' the tree! Nen when  
He git wite *clos't* to the Little Boy, w'y nen  
The Little Boy he ist pulled up his gun  
An' *shot* the Bear, he did, an' killed him dead!  
An' nen the Bear he falled clean on down out  
The tree—away clean to the ground, he did  
*Spling-splung!* he falled *plum* down, an' killed him, too!  
An' lit wite side o' where the '*Big* Bear's at.

An' nen the Big Bear's awful mad, you bet!—  
'Cause—'cause the Little Boy he shot his gun  
An' killed the *Little* Bear.—'Cause the *Big* Bear  
He—he 'uz the Little Bear's Papa.—An' so here  
*He* come to climb the big old tree an' git  
The Little Boy an' eat him up! An' when  
The Little Boy he saw the *gre'a'-big Bear*  
A-comin', he 'uz badder skeered, he wuz,  
Than *any* time! An' so he think he'll climb  
Up *higher*—'way up higher in the tree  
Than the old *Bear* kin climb, you know.—But he—  
He *can't* climb higher 'an old *Bears* kin climb,—  
'Cause Bears kin climb up higher in the trees  
Than any little Boys In all the Wo-r-r-ld!

An' so here come the grea'-big Bear, he did,—  
A-climbin' up—an' up the tree, to git  
The Little Boy an' eat him up! An' so  
The Little Boy he clumbed on higher, an' higher.  
An' higher up the tree—an' higher—an' higher—  
An' higher'n iss-here *house* is!—An' here come  
Th' old Bear—*clos'ter* to him all the time!—  
An' nen—first thing you know,—when th' old Big Bear  
Wuz wite *clos't* to him—nen the Little Boy  
Ist jabbed his gun wite in the old Bear's mouf  
An' shot an' killed him dead!—No; I *fergot*,—  
He didn't shoot the grea'-big Bear at all—  
'Cause *they 'uz no load in the gun*, you know—  
'Cause when he shot the *Little* Bear, w'y, nen  
No load 'uz anymore nen *in* the gun!

But th' Little Boy clumbed *higher* up, he did—  
He clumbed *lots* higher—an' on up *higher*—an' higher  
An' *higher*—tel he ist *can't* climb no higher,  
'Cause nen the limbs 'uz all so little, 'way  
Up in the teeny-weeny tip-top of  
The tree, they'd break down wiv him ef he don't  
Be keerful! So he stop an' think: An' nen  
He look around—An' here come th' old Bear!  
An' so the Little Boy make up his mind  
He's got to ist git out o' there *some* way!—  
'Cause here come the old Bear!—so *clos't*, his bref's  
Purt 'nigh so's he kin feel how hot it is

Against his bare feet—ist like old "Ring's" bref  
 When he's ben out a-huntin' an's all tired.  
 So when th' old Bear's so clos't—the Little Boy  
 Ist gives a grea'-big jump fer '*nother* tree—  
 No!—no he don't do that!—I tell you what  
 The Little Boy does:—W'y, nen—w'y, he—Oh, *yes*—  
 The Little Boy *he finds a hole up there*  
 '*At's in the tree*—an' climbs in there an' *hides*—  
 An' *nen* the old Bear can't find the Little Boy  
 Ut-tall!—But, purty soon th' old Bear finds  
 The Little Boy's *gun* 'at's up there—'cause the *gun*  
 It's too *tall* to tooked wiv him in the hole.  
 So, when the old Bear find' the *gun*, he knows  
 The Little Boy ist *hid* 'round *somers* there,—  
 An' th' old Bear 'gins to snuff an' sniff around,  
 An' sniff an' sniff around—so's he kin find  
 Out where the Little Boy's hid at.—An' *nen*—*nen*—  
 Oh, *yes!*—W'y, purty soon the old Bear climbs  
 'Way out on a big limb—a grea'-long limb,—  
 An' *nen* the Little Boy climbs out the hole  
 An' takes his ax an' chops the limb off!... *Nen*  
 The old Bear falls *k-splunge!* clean to the ground  
 An' bust an' kill hisse'f plum dead, he did!

An' *nen* the Little Boy he git his gun  
 An' 'menced a-climbin' down the tree agin—  
 No!—no, he *didn't* git his *gun*—'cause when  
 The *Bear* falled, *nen* the *gun* falled, too—An' broked  
 It all to pieces, too!—An' *nices*t gun!—  
 His Pa ist buyed it!—An' the Little Boy  
 Ist cried, he did; an' went on climbin' down  
 The tree—an' climbin' down—an' climbin' down!—  
*An'-sir!* when he 'uz purt'-nigh down,—w'y, *nen*  
*The old Bear he jumped up agin!*—an' he  
 Ain't dead ut-tall—*ist* 'tendin' thataway,  
 So he kin git the Little Boy an' eat  
 Him up! But the Little Boy he 'uz too smart  
 To climb clean *down* the tree.—An' the old Bear  
 He can't climb *up* the tree no more—'cause when  
 He fell, he broke one of his—He broke *all*  
 His legs!—an' *nen* he *couldn't* climb! But he  
 Ist won't go 'way an' let the Little Boy  
 Come down out of the tree. An' the old Bear  
 Ist growls 'round there, he does—ist growls an' goes  
 "*Wooh! woo-oooh!*" all the time! An' Little Boy  
 He haf to stay up in the tree—all night—  
 An' 'thout no *supper* neever!—Only they  
 Wuz *apples* on the tree!—An' Little Boy  
 Et apples—ist all night—an' cried—an' cried!  
*Nen* when 'tuz morning th' old Bear went "*Wooh!*"  
 Agin, an' try to climb up in the tree  
 An' git the Little Boy.—But he *can't*  
 Climb t'save his *soul*, he can't!—An' *oh!* he's *mad!*—  
 He ist tear up the ground! an' go "*Woo-oooh!*"  
 An'—*Oh, yes!*—purty soon, when morning's come  
 All *light*—so's you kin *see*, you know,—w'y, *nen*  
 The old Bear finds the Little Boy's *gun*, you know,  
 'At's on the ground.—(An' it ain't broke ut-tall—  
 I ist *said* that!) An' so the old Bear think  
 He'll take the gun an' *shoot* the Little Boy:—  
 But *Bears* they don't know much 'bout shootin' guns:  
 So when he go to shoot the Little Boy,  
 The old Bear got the *other* end the gun  
 Agin his shoulder, 'stid o' *th'other* end—  
 So when he try to shoot the Little Boy,  
 It shot *the Bear*, it did—an' killed him dead!  
 An' *nen* the Little Boy dumb down the tree  
 An' chopped his old wooly head off:—Yes, an' killed  
 The *other* Bear agin, he did—an' killed  
 All *boff* the bears, he did—an' tuk 'em home  
 An' *cooked* 'em, too, an' *et* 'em!

—An' that's

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## THE PATHOS OF APPLAUSE

The greeting of the company throughout  
Was like a jubilee,—the children's shout  
And fusillading hand-claps, with great guns  
And detonations of the older ones,  
Raged to such tumult of tempestuous joy,  
It even more alarmed than pleased the boy;  
Till, with a sudden twitching lip, he slid  
Down to the floor and dodged across and hid  
His face against his mother as she raised  
Him to the shelter of her heart, and praised  
His story in low whisperings, and smoothed  
The "amber-colored hair," and kissed, and soothed  
And lulled him back to sweet tranquillity—  
"And 'ats a sign 'at you're the Ma fer me!"  
He lisped, with gurgling ecstasy, and drew  
Her closer, with shut eyes; and feeling, too,  
If he could only *purr* now like a cat,  
He would undoubtedly be doing that!

"And now"—the serious host said, lifting there  
A hand entreating silence;—"now, aware  
Of the good promise of our Traveler guest  
To add some story with and for the rest,  
I think I favor you, and him as well,  
Asking a story I have heard him tell,  
And know its truth, in each minute detail:"  
Then leaning on his guest's chair, with a hale  
Hand-pat by way of full indorsement, he  
Said, "Yes—the Free-Slave story—certainly."

The old man, with his waddy notebook out,  
And glittering spectacles, glanced round about  
The expectant circle, and still firmer drew  
His hat on, with a nervous cough or two:  
And, save at times the big hard words, and tone  
Of gathering passion—all the speaker's own,—  
The tale that set each childish heart astir  
Was thus told by "The Noted Traveler."

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## TOLD BY "THE NOTED TRAVELER"

Coming, clean from the Maryland-end  
Of this great National Road of ours,  
Through your vast West; with the time to spend,  
Stopping for days in the main towns, where  
Every citizen seemed a friend,  
And friends grew thick as the wayside flowers,—  
I found no thing that I might narrate  
More singularly strange or queer  
Than a thing I found in your sister-state  
Ohio,—at a river-town—down here  
In my notebook: *Zanesville—situate  
On the stream Muskingum—broad and clear,  
And navigable, through half the year,  
North, to Coshocton; south, as far  
As Marietta.*—But these facts are  
Not of the *story*, but the *scene*

Of the simple little tale I mean  
To tell *directly*—from this, straight through  
To the *end* that is best worth listening to:

Eastward of Zanesville, two or three  
Miles from the town, as our stage drove in,  
I on the driver's seat, and he  
Pointing out this and that to me,—  
On beyond us—among the rest—  
A grove-y slope, and a fluttering throng  
Of little children, which he "guessed"  
Was a picnic, as we caught their thin  
High laughter, as we drove along,  
Clearer and clearer. Then suddenly  
He turned and asked, with a curious grin,  
What were my views on *Slavery*? "*Why?*"  
I asked, in return, with a wary eye.  
"Because," he answered, pointing his whip  
At a little, whitewashed house and shed  
On the edge of the road by the grove ahead,—  
"Because there are two slaves *there*," he said—  
"Two Black slaves that I've passed each trip  
For eighteen years.—Though they've been set free,  
They have been slaves ever since!" said he.  
And, as our horses slowly drew  
Nearer the little house in view,  
All briefly I heard the history  
Of this little old Negro woman and  
Her husband, house and scrap of land;  
How they were slaves and had been made free  
By their dying master, years ago  
In old Virginia; and then had come  
North here into a *free* state—so,  
Safe forever, to found a home—  
For themselves alone?—for they left South there  
Five strong sons, who had, alas!  
All been sold ere it came to pass  
This first old master with his last breath  
Had freed the *parents*.—(He went to death  
Agonized and in dire despair  
That the poor slave *children* might not share  
Their parents' freedom. And wildly then  
He moaned for pardon and died. Amen!)

Thus, with their freedom, and little sum  
Of money left them, these two had come  
North, full twenty long years ago;  
And, settling there, they had hopefully  
Gone to work, in their simple way,  
Hauling—gardening—raising sweet  
Corn, and popcorn.—Bird and bee  
In the garden-blooms and the apple-tree  
Singing with them throughout the slow  
Summer's day, with its dust and heat—  
The crops that thirst and the rains that fail;  
Or in Autumn chill, when the clouds hung low,  
And hand-made hominy might find sale  
In the near town-market; or baking pies  
And cakes, to range in alluring show  
At the little window, where the eyes  
Of the Movers' children, driving past,  
Grew fixed, till the big white wagons drew  
Into a halt that would sometimes last  
Even the space of an hour or two—  
As the dusty, thirsty travelers made  
Their noonings there in the beeches' shade  
By the old black Aunty's spring-house, where,  
Along with its cooling draughts, were found  
Jugs of her famous sweet spruce-beer,  
Served with her gingerbread-horses there,  
While Aunty's snow-white cap bobbed 'round  
Till the children's rapture knew no bound,  
As she sang and danced for them, quavering clear  
And high the chant of her old slave-days—

"Oh, Lo'd, Jinny! my toes is so'  
Dancin' on yo' sandy flo'!"

Even so had they wrought all ways  
To earn the pennies, and hoard them, too,—  
And with what ultimate end in view?—  
They were saving up money enough to be  
Able, in time, to buy their own  
Five children back.

Ah! the toil gone through!  
And the long delays and the heartaches, too,  
And self-denials that they had known!  
But the pride and glory that was theirs  
When they first hitched up their shackly cart  
For the long, long journey South.—The start  
In the first drear light of the chilly dawn,  
With no friends gathered in grieving throng,—  
With no farewells and favoring prayers;  
But, as they creaked and jolted on,  
Their chiming voices broke in song—

"Hail, all hail! don't you see the stars a-fallin'?"  
Hail, all hail! I'm on my way.  
Gideon [1] am  
A healin' ba'm—  
I belong to the blood-washed army.  
Gideon am  
A healin' ba'm—  
On my way!"

And their *return!*—with their oldest boy  
Along with them! Why, their happiness  
Spread abroad till it grew a joy  
*Universal*—It even reached  
And thrilled the town till the *Church* was stirred  
Into suspecting that wrong was wrong!—  
And it stayed awake as the preacher preached  
A *Real* "Love"-text that he had not long  
To ransack for in the Holy Word.

And the son, restored, and welcomed so,  
Found service readily in the town;  
And, with the parents, sure and slow,  
*He* went "saltin' de cole cash down."

So with the *next* boy—and each one  
In turn, till *four* of the five at last  
Had been bought back; and, in each case,  
With steady work and good homes not  
Far from the parents, *they* chipped in  
To the family fund, with an equal grace.  
Thus they managed and planned and wrought,  
And the old folks throve—Till the night before  
They were to start for the lone last son  
In the rainy dawn—their money fast  
Hid away in the house,—two mean,  
Murderous robbers burst the door.  
...Then, in the dark, was a scuffle—a fall—  
An old man's gasping cry—and then  
A woman's fife-like shriek.

...Three men  
Splashing by on horseback heard  
The summons: And in an instant all  
Sprung to their duty, with scarce a word.  
And they were *in time*—not only to save  
The lives of the old folks, but to bag  
Both the robbers, and buck-and-gag  
And land them safe in the county-jail—  
Or, as Aunty said, with a blended awe  
And subtlety,—"Safe in de calaboose whah  
De dawgs caint bite 'em!"

—So prevail

The faithful!—So had the Lord upheld  
His servants of both deed and prayer,—  
HIS the glory unparalleled—  
*Theirs* the reward,—their every son  
Free, at last, as the parents were!  
And, as the driver ended there  
In front of the little house, I said,  
All fervently, "Well done! well done!"  
At which he smiled, and turned his head  
And pulled on the leaders' lines and—"See!"  
He said,—"you can read old Aunty's sign?"  
And, peering down through these specs of mine  
On a little, square board-sign, I read:

"Stop, traveler, if you think it fit,  
And quench your thirst for a-fip-and-a-bit.  
The rocky spring is very clear,  
And soon converted into beer."

And, though I read aloud, I could  
Scarce hear myself for laugh and shout  
Of children—a glad multitude  
Of little people, swarming out  
Of the picnic-grounds I spoke about.—  
And in their rapturous midst, I see  
Again—through mists of memory—  
A black old Negress laughing up  
At the driver, with her broad lips rolled  
Back from her teeth, chalk-white, and gums  
Redder than reddest red-ripe plums.  
He took from her hand the lifted cup  
Of clear spring-water, pure and cold,  
And passed it to me: And I raised my hat  
And drank to her with a reverence that  
My conscience knew was justly due  
The old black face, and the old eyes, too—  
The old black head, with its mossy mat  
Of hair, set under its cap and frills  
White as the snows on Alpine hills;  
Drank to the old *black* smile, but yet  
Bright as the sun on the violet,—  
Drank to the gnarled and knuckled old  
Black hands whose palms had ached and bled  
And pitilessly been worn pale  
And white almost as the palms that hold  
Slavery's lash while the victim's wail  
Fails as a crippled prayer might fail.—  
Aye, with a reverence infinite,  
I drank to the old black face and head—  
The old black breast with its life of light—  
The old black hide with its heart of gold.

---

## HEAT-LIGHTNING

There was a curious quiet for a space  
Directly following: and in the face  
Of one rapt listener pulsed the flush and glow  
Of the heat-lightning that pent passions throw  
Long ere the crash of speech.—He broke the spell—  
The host:—The Traveler's story, told so well,  
He said, had wakened there within his breast  
A yearning, as it were, to know *the rest*—  
That all unwritten sequence that the Lord  
Of Righteousness must write with flame and sword,  
Some awful session of His patient thought—  
Just then it was, his good old mother caught

His blazing eye—so that its fire became  
But as an ember—though it burned the same.  
It seemed to her, she said, that she had heard  
It was the *Heavenly* Parent never erred,  
And not the *earthly* one that had such grace:  
"Therefore, my son," she said, with lifted face  
And eyes, "let no one dare anticipate  
The Lord's intent. While *He* waits, *we* will wait"  
And with a gust of reverence genuine  
Then Uncle Mart was aptly ringing in—

*"If the darkened heavens lower,  
Wrap thy cloak around thy form;  
Though the tempest rise in power,  
God is mightier than the storm!"*

Which utterance reached the restive children all  
As something humorous. And then a call  
For *him* to tell a story, or to "say  
A funny piece." His face fell right away:  
He knew no story worthy. Then he must  
*Declaim* for them: In that, he could not trust  
His memory. And then a happy thought  
Struck some one, who reached in his vest and brought  
Some scrappy clippings into light and said  
There was a poem of Uncle Mart's he read  
Last April in "*The Sentinel*." He had  
It there in print, and knew all would be glad  
To hear it rendered by the author.

And,  
All reasons for declining at command  
Exhausted, the now helpless poet rose  
And said: "I am discovered, I suppose.  
Though I have taken all precautions not  
To sign my name to any verses wrought  
By my transcendent genius, yet, you see,  
Fame wrests my secret from me bodily;  
So I must needs confess I did this deed  
Of poetry red-handed, nor can plead  
One whit of unintention in my crime—  
My guilt of rhythm and my glut of rhyme.—

"Mænides rehearsed a tale of arms,  
And Naso told of curious metat*murphoses*;  
Unnumbered pens have pictured woman's charms,  
While crazy *I've* made poetry *on purposes!*"

In other words, I stand convicted—need  
I say—by my own doing, as I read.

---

## UNCLE MART'S POEM

### THE OLD SNOW-MAN

Ho! the old Snow-Man  
That Noey Bixler made!  
He looked as fierce and sassy  
As a soldier on parade!—  
'Cause Noey, when he made him,  
While we all wuz gone, you see,  
He made him, jist a-purpose,  
Jist as fierce as he could be!—  
But when we all got *ust* to him,  
Nobody wuz afraid  
Of the old Snow-Man

That Noey Bixler made!

'Cause Noey told us 'bout him  
And what he made him fer:—  
He'd come to feed, that morning  
He found we wuzn't here;  
And so the notion struck him,  
When we all come taggin' home  
'Tud *s'prise* us ef a' old Snow-Man  
'Ud meet us when we come!  
So, when he'd fed the stock, and milked,  
And ben back home, and chopped  
His wood, and et his breakfast, he  
Jist grabbed his mitts and hopped  
Right in on that-air old Snow-Man  
That he laid out he'd make  
Er bust a trace *a-tryin'*—jist  
Fer old-acquaintance sake!—  
But work like that wuz lots more fun.  
He said, than when he played!  
Ho! the old Snow-Man  
That Noey Bixler made!

He started with a big snow-ball,  
And rolled it all around;  
And as he rolled, more snow 'ud stick  
And pull up off the ground.—  
He rolled and rolled all round the yard—  
'Cause we could see the *track*,  
All wher' the snow come off, you know,  
And left it wet and black.  
He got the Snow-Man's *legs-part* rolled—  
In front the kitchen-door,—  
And then he hat to turn in then  
And roll and roll some more!—  
He rolled the yard all round agin,  
And round the house, at that—  
Clean round the house and back to wher'  
The blame legs-half wuz at!  
He said he missed his dinner, too—  
Jist clean fergot and stayed  
There workin'. Ho! the old Snow-Man  
That Noey Bixler made!

And Noey said he hat to *hump*  
To git the *top-half* on  
The *legs-half*!—When he *did*, he said,  
His wind wuz purt'-nigh gone.—  
He said, I jucks! he jist drapped down  
There on the old porch-floor  
And panted like a dog!—And then  
He up! and rolled some more!—  
The *last* batch—that wuz fer his head,—  
And—time he'd got it right  
And clumb and fixed it on, he said—  
He hat to quit fer night!—  
And *then*, he said, he'd kep' right on  
Ef they'd ben any *moon*  
To work by! So he crawled in bed—  
And *could* a-slep' tel *noon*,  
He wuz so plum wore out! he said,—  
But it wuz washin'-day,  
And hat to cut a cord o' wood  
'Fore he could git away!

But, last, he got to work agin,—  
With spade, and gouge, and hoe,  
And trowel, too—(All tools 'ud do  
What *Noey* said, you know!)  
He cut his eyebrows out like cliffs—  
And his cheekbones and chin  
Stuck *further* out—and his old *nose*  
Stuck out as fur-agin!  
He made his eyes o' walnuts,  
And his whiskers out o' this



Here buggy-cushion stuffin'—*moss*,  
The teacher says it is.  
And then he made a' old wood'-gun,  
Set keerless-like, you know,  
Acrost one shoulder—kindo' like  
Big Foot, er Adam Poe—  
Er, mayby, Simon Girty,  
The dinged old Renegade!  
*Woooh!* the old Snow-Man  
That Noey Bixler made!

And there he stood, all fierce and grim,  
A stern, heroic form:  
What was the winter blast to him,  
And what the driving storm?—  
What wonder that the children pressed  
Their faces at the pane  
And scratched away the frost, in pride  
To look on him again?—  
What wonder that, with yearning bold,  
Their all of love and care  
Went warmest through the keenest cold  
To that Snow-Man out there!

But the old Snow-Man—  
What a dubious delight  
He grew at last when Spring came on  
And days waxed warm and bright.—  
Alone he stood—all kith and kin  
Of snow and ice were gone;—  
Alone, with constant teardrops in  
His eyes and glittering on  
His thin, pathetic beard of black—  
Grief in a hopeless cause!—  
Hope—hope is for the man that *dies*—  
What for the man that *thaws!*  
O Hero of a hero's make!—  
Let *marble* melt and fade,  
But never *you*—you old Snow-Man  
That Noey Bixler made!

---

## "LITTLE JACK JANITOR"

And there, in that ripe Summer-night, once more  
A wintry coolness through the open door  
And window seemed to touch each glowing face  
Refreshingly; and, for a fleeting space,  
The quickened fancy, through the fragrant air,  
Saw snowflakes whirling where the roseleaves were,  
And sounds of veriest jingling bells again  
Were heard in tinkling spoons and glasses then.

Thus Uncle Mart's old poem sounded young  
And crisp and fresh and clear as when first sung,  
Away back in the wakening of Spring  
When his rhyme and the robin, chorusing,  
Rumored, in duo-fanfare, of the soon  
Invading johnny-jump-ups, with platoon  
On platoon of sweet-williams, marshaled fine  
To blooméd blarings of the trumpet-vine.

The poet turned to whisperingly confer  
A moment with "The Noted Traveler."  
Then left the room, tripped up the stairs, and then  
An instant later reappeared again,  
Bearing a little, lacquered box, or chest,

Which, as all marked with curious interest,  
He gave to the old Traveler, who in  
One hand upheld it, pulling back his thin  
Black lustre coat-sleeves, saying he had sent  
Up for his "Magic Box," and that he meant  
To test it there—especially to show  
*The Children*. "It is *empty now*, you know."—  
He humped it with his knuckles, so they heard  
The hollow sound—"But lest it be inferred  
It is not *really* empty, I will ask  
*Little Jack Janitor*, whose pleasant task  
It is to keep it ship-shape."

Then he tried  
And rapped the little drawer in the side,  
And called out sharply "Are you in there, Jack?"  
And then a little, squeaky voice came back,—  
"*Of course I'm in here—ain't you got the key  
Turned on me!*"

Then the Traveler leisurely  
Felt through his pockets, and at last took out  
The smallest key they ever heard about!—  
It, wasn't any longer than a pin:  
And this at last he managed to fit in  
The little keyhole, turned it, and then cried,  
"Is everything swept out clean there inside?"  
"*Open the drawer and see!—Don't talk to much;  
Or else,*" the little voice squeaked, "*talk in Dutch—  
You age me, asking questions!*"

Then the man  
Looked hurt, so that the little folks began  
To feel so sorry for him, he put down  
His face against the box and had to frown.—  
"Come, sir!" he called,—"*no impudence to me!*—  
You've swept out clean?"

"*Open the drawer and see!*"  
And so he drew the drawer out: Nothing there,  
But just the empty drawer, stark and bare.  
He shoved it back again, with a shark click.—

"*Ouch!*" yelled the little voice—"un-snap it—*quick!*—  
*You've got my nose pinched in the crack!*"

And then  
The frightened man drew out the drawer again,  
The little voice exclaiming, "*Jeemi-nee!*—  
*Say what you want, but please don't murder me!*"

"Well, then," the man said, as he closed the drawer  
With care, "I want some cotton-batting for  
My supper! Have you got it?"

And inside,  
All muffled like, the little voice replied,  
"*Open the drawer and see!*"

And, sure enough,  
He drew it out, filled with the cotton stuff.  
He then asked for a candle to be brought  
And held for him: and tuft by tuft he caught  
And lit the cotton, and, while blazing, took  
It in his mouth and ate it, with a look  
Of purest satisfaction.

"Now," said he,  
"I've eaten the drawer empty, let me see  
What this is in my mouth:" And with both hands  
He began drawing from his lips long strands  
Of narrow silken ribbons, every hue  
And tint;—and crisp they were and bright and new  
As if just purchased at some Fancy-Store.  
"And now, Bub, bring your cap," he said, "before

Something might happen!" And he stuffed the cap  
Full of the ribbons. "*There*, my little chap,  
Hold *tight* to them," he said, "and take them to  
The ladies there, for they know what to do  
With all such rainbow finery!"

He smiled  
Half sadly, as it seemed, to see the child  
Open his cap first to his mother..... There  
Was not a ribbon in it anywhere!  
"*Jack Janitor!*" the man said sternly through  
The Magic Box—"Jack Janitor, did *you*  
Conceal those ribbons anywhere?"

"*Well, yes,*"  
The little voice piped—"but you'd never guess  
*The place I hid 'em if you'd guess a year!*"

"Well, won't you *tell* me?"

"*Not until you clear*  
*Your mean old conscience*" said the voice, "*and make*  
*Me first do something for the Children's sake.*"

"Well, then, fill up the drawer," the Traveler said,  
"With whitest white on earth and reddest red!—  
Your terms accepted—Are you satisfied?"

"*Open the drawer and see!*" the voice replied.

"*Why, bless my soul!*"—the man said, as he drew  
The contents of the drawer into view—  
"It's level-full of *candy!*—Pass it 'round—  
Jack Janitor shan't steal *that*, I'll be bound!"—  
He raised and crunched a stick of it and smacked  
His lips.—"Yes, that *is* candy, for a fact!—  
And it's all *yours!*"

And how the children there  
Lit into it!—O never anywhere  
Was such a feast of sweetness!

"And now, then,"  
The man said, as the empty drawer again  
Slid to its place, he bending over it,—  
"Now, then, Jack Janitor, before we quit  
Our entertainment for the evening, tell  
Us where you hid the ribbons—can't you?"

"*Well,*"  
The squeaky little voice drawled sleepily—  
"*Under your old hat, maybe.—Look and see!*"

All carefully the man took off his hat:  
But there was not a ribbon under that.—  
He shook his heavy hair, and all in vain  
The old white hat—then put it on again:  
"Now, tell me, *honest*, Jack, where *did* you hide  
The ribbons?"

"*Under your hat!*" the voice replied.—  
"*Mind! I said 'under' and not 'in' it.—Won't*  
*You ever take the hint on earth?—or don't*  
*You want to show folks where the ribbons at?—*  
*Law! but I'm sleepy!—Under—unner your hat!*"

Again the old man carefully took off  
The empty hat, with an embarrassed cough,  
Saying, all gravely to the children: "You  
Must promise not to *laugh*—you'll all *want* to—  
When you see where Jack Janitor has dared  
To hide those ribbons—when he might have spared  
My feelings.—But no matter!—Know the worst—  
Here are the ribbons, as I feared at first."—  
And, quick as snap of thumb and finger, there

The old man's head had not a sign of hair,  
And in his lap a wig of iron-gray  
Lay, stuffed with all that glittering array  
Of ribbons ... "Take 'em to the ladies—Yes.  
Good-night to everybody, and God bless  
The Children."

In a whisper no one missed  
The Hired Man yawned: "He's a vantrilloquist"

---

So gloried all the night Each trundle-bed  
And pallet was enchanted—each child-head  
Was packed with happy dreams. And long before  
The dawn's first far-off rooster crowed, the snore  
Of Uncle Mart was stilled, as round him pressed  
The bare arms of the wakeful little guest  
That he had carried home with him....

"I think,"  
An awed voice said—"(No: I don't want a *dwink*.—  
Lay still.)—I think 'The Noted Traveler' he  
'S the inscrutibul-est man I ever see!"

[Footnote 1: *Gilead*—evidently.—[Editor.]

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