

The Diving Bell eBook

The Diving Bell

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Contents

The Diving Bell eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	13
Page 6.....	15
Page 7.....	17
Page 8.....	19
Page 9.....	20
Page 10.....	22
Page 11.....	24
Page 12.....	26
Page 13.....	27
Page 14.....	29
Page 15.....	30
Page 16.....	32
Page 17.....	34
Page 18.....	36
Page 19.....	38
Page 20.....	40
Page 21.....	42
Page 22.....	44

[Page 23.....](#)[46](#)

[Page 24.....](#)[48](#)

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
THE NAME OF MY BOOK.		1
II.		2
III.		4
IV.		6
V.		9
VI.		13
VII.		15
VIII.		15
MORAL.		15
IX.		16
X.		18
XI.		18
MORAL.		19
XII.		20
XIII.		20
XIV.		21
XV.		22
UNCLE FRANK'S BOYS' AND GIRLS' LIBRARY.		23

Page 1

THE NAME OF MY BOOK.

[Illustration]

The reader, perhaps, as he turns over the first pages of this volume, is puzzled, right at the outset, with the meaning of my title, *The Diving Bell*. It is plain enough to Uncle Frank, and possibly it is to you; but it may not be; so I will tell you what a diving bell is, and then, probably, you can guess the reason why I have given this name to the following pages.

If you will take a common glass tumbler, and plunge it into water, with the mouth downwards, you will find that very little water will rise into the tumbler. You can satisfy yourself better about this matter, if, in the first place, you lay a cork upon the surface of the water, and then put the tumbler over it.

Did you ever try the experiment? Try it now, if you never have done so, and if you have any doubt on the subject.

You might suppose, that the cork would be carried down far below the surface of the water. But it is not so. The upper side of the cork, after you have pressed the tumbler down so low that the upper end of it is even below the surface of the water—the upper side of the cork is not wet at all.

“And what is the reason of this, Uncle Frank?”

I will tell you. There is air in the tumbler, when you plunge it into the water. The air stays in the vessel, so that there is no room for the water.

“Oh, yes, sir; I see how that is. But I see that a little water finds its way into the tumbler, every time I try the experiment. How is that?”

You can press air, the same as you can press wood, or paper, or cloth, so that it will go into a smaller space than it occupied before you pressed it. Did you ever make a pop-gun?

“Oh, yes, sir, a hundred times.”

Well, when you send the wad out of the pop-gun, you do it by pressing the air inside the tube. Now if your tumbler was a hundred or a thousand times as large, the air would prevent the water from coming in, just as it does in this instance. Suppose I had dropped a purse full of gold into a very deep river, and it had sunk to the bottom. Suppose I could not get it in any other way but by going down to the bottom after it. I could go down to that depth, and live there for some time, by means of a diving bell made large enough to hold me, precisely in the same way that a bird might go down to



the bottom of a tub of water, in a tumbler, and stand there with the water hardly over his feet. There is a good deal of machinery about a diving bell, it is true. But I need not take up much time in describing it. It is necessary for the man to breathe, of course, while he is in the diving bell; and as the air it contains is soon rendered impure by breathing, fresh air must be introduced into the bell by means of a pump, or in some other way. I am not very familiar with the necessary machinery, to tell the truth. I never explored the bottom of a river in this way, and I think it will be a long time before I make such a voyage.

Page 2

The diving bell has been used for a good many useful purposes—to lay the foundations of docks and the piers of bridges; to collect pearls at Ceylon, and coral at other places.

I am not sure but the diving bell is getting somewhat out of use now. People have found out another way of groping along on the bottom of rivers and seas. They do it frequently, I believe, by means of a kind of armor made of India rubber. But so far as my book is concerned, it is of no consequence whether the diving bell is out of use or not. I shall use the title, at all events.

If, after my account of the diving bell, you still ask why I choose to give such a name to the budget I have prepared for you, I can answer your question very easily.

I think you will find something worth looking at in the budget—not pearls, or pieces of coral, or lost treasures, exactly, but still something which will please you, and something which, when you get hold of it, will be worth keeping and laying up in some snug corner of your memory box. I say *when you get hold of it*; for the valuable things I have for you do not all lie on the surface. You will have to *search* for them a little. That is, you will have to think. When you have read one of my stories, or fables, you may find it necessary to stop, and ask yourself “What does Uncle Frank mean by all this?” In other words, you will have to use the diving bell, and see if you can’t hunt up something in the story or the fable, which will be useful to you, and which will make you wiser and better. Now you see why I have called my book *The Diving Bell*, don’t you?

II.

Thinking and laughing.

It is Uncle Frank’s notion, that it is a good thing to laugh, but a better thing to think. A great many people, however, old as well as young, and young as well as old, live and die without thinking much. They lose three quarters of the benefit they ought to get from reading, and from what they see and learn as they go through the world, by never diving below the surface of things. I don’t suppose it is so with you. I hope not, at all events. If it is so, then you had better shut up this book, and pass it over to some young friend of yours, who has learned to think, and who loves to read books that will help him about thinking. No, on the whole, you needn’t do any such thing. Just read the book—read it through. Perhaps you will get a taste for such reading, while you are going through the book.

I must tell you an anecdote just here. You will not refuse to read that, at any rate.

Not long ago I was in a book store, looking over some new books which I saw on the counter, when a fine-looking boy, who appeared to be about nine years old, came in. He had a shilling in his hand, and said he wanted to buy a book.

“But what book do you want?” one of the clerks asked.

Page 3

The boy could not tell what it was exactly. But it was a “funny book”—he was sure of that—and it cost a shilling.

Well, it finally turned out that the book which the little fellow wanted was a comic almanac—a book filled with miserable pictures—pictures of men and beasts twisted into all sorts of odd shapes—and vulgar jokes, and scraps of low wit.

“Will you let me look at it?” I asked the little boy as the clerk handed the book to him.

“Yes, sir,” said he.

I took the almanac, and turned over some of its leaves. There was not a particle of information in the book, except what related to the sun, and moon, and stars, and that formed but a small portion of the volume. “My son,” said I, pleasantly, “what do you buy this book for?”

“To make me laugh,” said he.

“But is *that* all you read books for—to find something to laugh at?” I inquired.

“No, sir,” he replied, “but then this book is so funny. Giles Manly has got one, and”—he hesitated.

“He has a great time over it,” I interrupted, to which the little boy nodded, as much as to say,

“Yes, sir, that’s it.”

“Did your father send you after this book?” I asked.

“No, sir.”

“Did your mother tell you to get it?”

“No, sir. But my mother gave me a shilling, and told me I might buy just such a book as I liked.”

“Well, my son,” said I, “look here. You have heard Giles read some of the funny things in this almanac, have you not?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you’ve seen some of the pictures?”

“Yes, sir, all of them.”

“Then you know pretty well what the book is?”

“Yes, sir, all about it, and that’s what makes me want to buy it.”

“Well, you have a right to buy just such a book as you want. But if I were in your place, I would not buy that book; and I’ll tell you why. There’s a good deal of fun in it, to be sure. No doubt you would laugh over it, if you had it. But you can’t learn anything from it. Come, now, I’ll make a bargain with you. Here’s a book”—I handed him one of the *Lucy* books, written by Mr. *Jacob Abbott*—“which is worth a dozen of that. This will make you laugh some, as well as the other book; and it will do much more and better than that. It will set you to *thinking*. It will instruct, as well as amuse you. It will sow some good seeds in your mind, and your heart, too. It will teach you to be a *thinker* as well as a reader. It costs a little more than that almanac, it is true. But never mind that. If you’ll take this book, and give the gentleman your shilling, I’ll pay him the rest of the money. Will you do it? Will you take the *Lucy* book, and leave the funny almanac?”

He hesitated. He hardly knew whether he should make or lose by the trade.

“If you will do so,” I continued, “and read the book, when you get through with it, you may come to my office in Nassau street, and tell me how you was pleased with it. Then, if you say that you did not like Mr. Abbott’s book so well as you think you would have liked the book with the funny pictures, and tell me that you made a bad bargain, I’ll take back the *Lucy* book, and give you the almanac in the place of it.”

Page 4

That pleased the little fellow. The bargain was struck. Mr. Abbott's book was bought, and the boy left the store, and ran home.

I think it was about a week after that, or it might have been a little longer, that I heard my name spoken, as I was sitting at my desk. I turned around, and, sure enough, there was the identical boy with whom I had made the trade at the book store.

"Well, my little fellow," I said, "you've got sick of your bargain, eh?" "No, sir," he said, "I'm glad I made it;" and he proceeded to tell me his errand. It seemed that he had been so pleased with the book, that he "wanted a few more of the same sort," as the razor strop man says; and his father had told him that he might come to me, ask me to get all the Lucy books for him.

Now you see how it was with that little fellow, before he read the book I gave him. He had got the notion that a child's book could not be amusing—could not be worth reading—unless it was filled with such nonsense as there was in the "funny book" he called for. He had not got a *taste* for reading anything else. As soon as he did get such a taste, he liked that kind of reading the best; because, besides making him laugh a little now and then, it put some thoughts into his head—gave him some hints which would be worth something to him in after life.

Now, I presume there are a great many boys and girls, who love to read such nonsense as one finds in comic almanacs, and books like "Bluebeard," and "Jack the Giant Killer," but who, like the youth I met in the book store, could very easily learn to like useful books just as well, and better too, if they would only take them up, and read them.

Why, my little friends, a book need not be dull and dry, because it is not all nonsense. Uncle Frank don't mean to have a long face on, when he writes for young people. He believes in laughing. He likes to laugh himself, and he likes to see his young friends laugh, too, sometimes.

I hope, indeed, that you will find this little book amusing, as well as useful; though I should be very sorry if it were not useful, as well as amusing.

[Illustration: THE SPIDER'S INVITATION.]

III.

THE SCHEMING SPIDER.

A FABLE FOR MANY IN GENERAL, AND A FEW IN PARTICULAR.

I.

A bee who had chased after pleasure all day,
And homeward was lazily wending his way,
Fell in with a Spider, who called to the Bee:
“Good evening! I trust you are well,” said he.

II.

The bee was quite happy to stop awhile there—
He always had leisure enough and to spare—
“Good day, Mr. Spider,” he said, with a bow,
“I thank you, I feel rather poorly, just now.”

III.

“’Tis nothing but work, with all one’s might—
’Tis nothing but work, from morning till night.
I wish I were dead, Mr. Spider; you know
I might as well die as to drag along so.”

Page 5

IV.

The Spider pretended to pity the Bee—
For a cunning old hypocrite spider was he—
“I’m sorry to see you so poorly,” he said;
And he whispered his wife, “He will have to be bled.”

V.

“’Tis true sir,”—the knave! every word is a lie—
“That rather than live so, ’twere better to die.
’Twere better to finish the thing, as you say,
Than to live till you’re old, and die every day.

VI.

“The life that you lead, it may do very well
For the beaver’s rude hut, or the honey bee’s cell;
But it never would suit a gay fellow like me.
I love to be merry—I love to be free.”

VII.

“In hoarding up riches you’re wasting your time;
And—pray, sir, excuse me—such waste is a crime.
And then to be guilty of avarice, too!
Alas! how I pity such sinners as you!”

VIII.

Strange, strange that the Bee was so stupid and blind;
“Amen!” he exclaimed, “you have spoken my mind;
I’ve been very wicked, I know it, I feel it;
The bees have no right to their honey—they steal it.

IX.

“But how in the world shall I manage to live?
Should I beg of my friends, not a mite would they give;
’Tis easy enough to be idle and sing,
But living on air is a different thing.”

X.



Our Spider was silent, and looked very grave—
'Twas a habit he had, the cunning old knave!
No Spider, pursuing his labor of love,
Had more of the serpent, or less of the dove.

XI.

At length, "I believe I have hit it," said he;
"Walk into my palace, and tarry with me.
We spiders know nothing of labor and care;
Come in; you are welcome our bounty to share.

XII.

"I live like a king, and my wife like a queen;
We wander where flowers are blooming and green,
And then on the breast of the lily we lie,
And list to the stream running merrily by.

XIII.

"With us you shall mingle in scenes of delight,
All summer, all winter, from morn until night,
And when 'neath the hills sinks the sun in the west,
Your head on a pillow of roses shall rest.

XIV.

"When miserly bees shall return from their toils"—
He winked as he said it—"we'll feast on the spoils;
I'll lighten their loads"—said the Bee, "So will I."
And the Spider said, "Well, if you live, you may try."

XV.

The Bee did not wait to be urged any more,
But nodded his thanks, as he entered the door.
"Aha!" said the Spider, "I have you at last!"
And he seized the poor fellow, and tied him up fast.

XVI.

Page 6

The Bee, when aware of his perilous state,
Recovered his wit, though a moment too late.
“O treacherous Spider! for shame!” said he.
“Is it thus you betray a poor innocent Bee?”

XVII.

The cunning old rascal then laughed outright.
“My friend!” he said, grinning, “you’re in a sad plight.
Ha! ha! what a dunce you must be to suppose
That the heart of a Spider could pity your woes!

XVIII.

“I never could boast of much honor or shame,
Though slightly acquainted with both by name;
But I think if the Bees can a brother betray,
We Spiders are quite as good people as they.

XIX.

“I guess you have lived long enough, little sinner,
And, now, with your leave, I will eat you for dinner.
You’ll make a good morsel, it must be confessed;
And the world, very likely, will pardon the rest.”

[Illustration: THE SPIDER’S TRIUMPH.]

MORAL.

This lesson for every one, little and great, Is taught in that vagabond’s tragical fate: *Of him who is scheming your friend to ensnare, Unless you’ve a passion for bleeding, beware!*

IV.

GENIUS IN THE BUD.

Genius, in its infancy, sometimes puts on a very funny face. The first efforts of a painter are generally rude enough. So are those of a poet, or any other artist. I have often wished I might see the first picture that such a man as Titian, or Rubens, or Reynolds, or West, ever drew. It would interest me much, and, I suspect, would provoke a smile or two, at the expense of the young artists.

History does not often transmit such sketches to the world. But I wish it would. I wish the picture of the sheep that Giotto was sketching, when Cimabue, one of the greatest painters of his age, came across him, could be produced. I would go miles to see it. And I wish West's mother had carefully preserved, for some public gallery, the picture that her son Benjamin made of the little baby in the cradle. You have heard that story, I dare say.

Benjamin, you know, showed a taste for drawing and painting, when he was a very little boy. His early advantages were but few. But he made the most of these advantages; and the result was that he became one of the first painters of his day, and before he died, he was chosen President of the Royal Society in London. How do you think he made his colors? You will smile when you hear that they were formed with charcoal and chalk, with an occasional sprinkling of the juice of red berries. His brush was rather a rude one. It was made of the hair he pulled from the tail of Pussy, the family cat. Poor old cat! she lost so much of her fur to supply the young artist with brushes, that the family began to feel a good deal of anxiety for her pussyship. They thought her hair fell off by disease, until Benjamin, who was an honest boy, one day informed them of their mistake. What a pity that the world could not have the benefit of one of the pictures that West painted with his cat-tail brush.

Page 7

And then, what a treat it would be, to get hold of the first rhymes that Watts and Pope ever made. I believe that Watts had been rhyming some time when he got a fatherly flogging for this exercise of his genius, and he sobbed out, between the blows,

“Dear father, do some pity take,
And I will no more verses make.”

That couplet was not his first one, by a good deal. The habit, it would seem, had taken a pretty strong hold of him, when the whipping drew that out of him.

It seems to me that the childhood and early youth of a genius are more interesting than any riper periods of his life; or rather, that they become so, when time and circumstances have developed what there was in the man, and when from the standpoint of his fame in manhood, we look back upon his early history. What small beginnings there have been to all the efforts of those who have made themselves masters of the particular art to which they have directed their attention.

I wonder what kind of a thing Washington Irving's first composition was. There must have been a first one; and, without doubt, it was a clumsy affair enough. If I were going to write his history, I would find those who knew him when he was a mere child, and I would pump from them as many anecdotes about his little scribblings as I possibly could, and I would print them, lots of them. I hardly think I could do the reader of his biography a better service.

I wonder what his first experience was with the editors. These editors, by the way, are often very troublesome to the young sprig of genius. Placed, as they are, at the door of the temple of fame, they often seem to the unfledged author the most disobliging, iron-hearted men in the world. He could walk right into the temple, and make himself perfectly at home there, if they would only open the door. So he fancies; and he wonders why the barbarians don't see the genius sticking out, when he comes along with his nicely-written verses, and why they don't just give him, at once, a ticket of admission to the honors of the world. “These editors are slow to perceive merit,” he says to himself.

Your old friend Uncle Frank once set himself up for a genius. Don't laugh—pray, don't laugh. I was young then, and as green as a juvenile gosling. Age has branded into me a great many truths, which, somehow or other, were very slow in finding their way to my young mind. The notion that I am a genius does not haunt me now, and a great many years have passed since such a vision flitted across my imagination. But I will tell you how I was cooled off, once on a time, when I got into a raging fever of authorship, and was burning up with a desire to make an impression on the world. I had written some verses—written them with great care, and with ever so many additions, subtractions, and divisions. They were perfect, at last—that is, I could not make them any more perfect—and off they were posted to the editor of the village newspaper. I declare I

don't remember what they were about. But I dare say, they were "Lines" to somebody, or "Stanzas" to something; and I remember they were signed "Theodore Thinker," in a very large, and as I then thought, a very fair hand.

Page 8

“Well, did the editor print them, Uncle Frank?”

Hold on, my dear fellow. You are quite too fast. As I said, when the lines to somebody or something were sent to the editor, I was in a perfect fever. I could hardly wait for Wednesday to come, the day on which the paper was to be issued—the paper which was to be the medium of the first acquaintance of my muse with “a discerning public.”

“Well, how did you feel when the lines were printed?”

When they were printed! Alas, for my fame! they were not printed at all. The editor rejected them. “Theodore’s lines,” said he—the great clown! what did *he* know about poetry?—“Theodore’s lines have gone to the shades. They possessed some merit,”—*some* merit! that’s all he knows about poetry; the brute!—“but not enough to entitle them to a place. Still, whenever age and experience have sufficiently developed his genius,”—mark the smooth and oily manner in which the savage knocks a poor fellow down, and treads on his neck—“whenever age and experience have sufficiently developed his genius, we shall be happy to hear from him again.”

If you can fancy how a man feels, when he is taken from an oven, pretty nearly hot enough to bake corn bread, and plunged into a very cold bath, indeed—say about forty degrees Fahrenheit—you can form some idea of my feelings when I read that paragraph in the editorial column, under the notice “To correspondents.”

I am inclined to think there are a great many little folks climbing up the stairs of the stage of life, who verily believe that genius has got them by the hand, leading them along, but who, in fact, are not a little mistaken. It is rather important that one should know whether he has any genius or not; and if he has, in what particular direction he will be likely to distinguish himself.

I don’t believe in the old-fashioned notion that people all come into the world with minds and tastes so unlike, that, if you educate one ever so carefully, he never will make a poet, or a painter, or a musician, as the case may be; while the other will be a master in one of these branches, with scarcely any instruction. But I do believe there is a great difference in natural capacities for a particular art; and that some persons learn that art easily, while others learn it with difficulty, and could, perhaps, never excel in it, if they should drive at it for a life-time.

Ralph Waldo, a boy who lived near our house, when I was a child, was the sport of all the neighborhood, on account of the high estimate in which he held his talent at drawing pictures. Now it so happened that Ralph’s pictures, to say the least, were rather poor specimens of the art. Some of them, according to the best of my recollection, would never have suggested the particular animal or thing for which they were made, if they had not been labeled, or if Ralph had not called them by name.

Page 9

Such dogs and cats, such horses and cows, such houses and trees, such men and women, were never seen since the world began, as those which figured on his slate. And yet he thought a great deal of his pictures. How happy it used to make him, when some of the boys in the neighborhood, perhaps purely out of sport, would say, "Come, Ralph, let's see you make a horse now." With what zeal he used to set himself about the task of making a horse. When it was done, and ready for exhibition, though it was a perfect scare-crow of a thing, he used to hold it up, with ever so much pride expressed in the rough features of his face, as if it were an effort worthy of being hung up in the Academy of Design, or the Gallery of Fine Arts.

This state of things lasted for some years. But Ralph did not make much progress in the art. His horses continued to be the same stiff, awkward things that they were at first. So did his cows, and oxen, and dogs, and cats, and men. It became pretty evident, at least to everybody except the young artist himself, that he never would shine in his favorite profession. He was not "cut out for it," apparently, though it took a great while to beat the idea out of his head, that he was going to make one of the greatest painters in the country. When he became a young man, however, he had sense enough to choose the carpenter's trade, instead of the painter's art. I think he showed a great deal more judgment than many other people do, who imagine they are destined to astonish two or three continents with their wonderful productions in some department of the fine arts, but who, unfortunately, are not much better fitted for either of them than a goose or a sheep.

V.

PUTTING ON AIRS:

OR, HOW I TRIED TO WIN RESPECT.

Reader—young reader, for I take it for granted you *are* young, though if you should not happen to be, it does not matter—I have about three quarters of a mind to let you know what I think of the practice of *putting on airs*. The best way to do the thing perhaps, will be in the form of a story, and a story it shall be—a story about a friend of mine who is sometimes called Aunt Kate, and who has been known to call herself by that name.

It is true that some of the incidents in this story are not much to my friend's credit. But I am sure she cannot blame me for mentioning them to you; for she gave me the whole story, and I shall tell it almost exactly in her own words. Are you ready for it? Well, then, here it is:

Reader, have you ever been from home? Of course you have. Everybody goes from home in these days; but in the days of my childhood such an event was not a matter of

course affair, as it now is. Most people stayed at home then, more than they do now—the very aged, and the very young, especially.

When I was a child, my parents sometimes took me with them, when they went to visit their city friends. These journeys used to excite the envy of all my young companions, none of whom, if I recollect right, had ever been to a city. But times have changed even in my native village; and the juvenile portion of its inhabitants begin their travels much earlier in life now, than they did then.

Page 10

But the first time I went from home alone—that was an event! Went alone, did I say? I am too fast. My father saw me safely to the place where I was to go, and left me to spend a few days and come home in the *stage*.

When he left me, he gave me a bright half dollar, for spending money. Now would you give anything, my little friend, to know how I spent it? If you had known me in those days, you could have easily guessed, even if not much of a Yankee. I bought a book with it, of course. I thought I could not purchase anything to be compared with that in value. Since then I have learned there are other things in the world besides books, although I must own that I still cling to not a little of my old friendship for them. How long seemed the few days I was absent from my father's house. I had seen a great deal of the world, I thought, during that time. There seemed to be an illusion about it—a feeling as if I had been from home for weeks; and when I returned, and found some of the good things upon the table which were baked before I left home, I thought they must be very old—very old indeed.

"I should like to know how long you think you have been gone," said some member of the family.

Sure enough! How long had I been away? Not quite a week. But you need not smile, for that week *was* a long one. We do not always measure time by minutes and hours. That is not the only week of my life that has appeared long. I have seen other weeks that seemed as long as some months. We sometimes live very fast, and at other times, more slowly.

But this is not *the* journey I am going to tell you about. I was young then, and a little green, no doubt; but before I left home again, I had got rid of my ignorance on some points. Miss Tompkins, a maiden lady, who sometimes came to our house to sew, and who laid claim to more personal experience in such matters than myself, had received from some one a chapter of instructions about traveling—a kind of traveler's guide—and as she did not wish to be so selfish as to keep all her knowledge for her own use, she very freely gave away some of it for my benefit.

[Illustration: AUNT KATE AND HER TUTOR]

"When you travel," said my instructor, "you must not be too modest and retiring. You must always help yourself to the best things that come within your reach, as if you considered them yours, as a matter of course. If you only act as if you think yourself a person of consequence, you will be treated as such. But if you stand one side, and seem to think that anything is good enough for you, every one will be sure to think so too. It is as much as saying that you don't think yourself of much importance. Others, of course, will conclude that you ought to be the best judge, and that you are a sort of nobody, who may be disposed of to suit anybody's convenience."

Now as these items of advice were given as the result of the experience of those who had seen a great deal of the world, and as I was very ready to admit my own ignorance, I resolved to lay up these hints for future service, when I should travel again.

Page 11

The time came, at length, for another journey. The stage, which passed regularly through our village once a day, accommodating those who wished to go north one day, and those who wished to go south the next, picked me and my baggage up, at my father's door. A very young lady, an acquaintance of mine, and two stranger gentlemen, were the only passengers besides myself, until we reached the next town, five miles distant, where we stopped to change horses. When we got into the coach again, at this place, we found a new passenger safely stowed away in one corner of the back seat.

This passenger was an old lady, of a class sometimes found in our country villages, who are aunts to everybody, and claim the greater part of the younger portion of the community as sheer boys and girls. It seems the driver was one of her boys, and, on account of his being so nearly related, she claimed a free passage. She was already *there*, and the driver had to choose between these two things—either to admit her claim, or to turn her out. He wisely concluded to make a virtue of necessity. It would not answer to be rude to Aunt Polly, he thought. Some of the other nephews and nieces might think him cruel.

But there was another question to be settled. She had possession of the back seat. This would hardly do on the strength of a free ticket, when it was claimed by those who had paid their passage.

"You must get up, Aunt Polly," said the driver, "and let these ladies have the back seat."

But Aunt Polly, alas! declared, in the most positive manner, that she *could not* ride on the middle seat.

"Yes you *can*," said the driver, "and you *must*; so get up."

But Aunt Polly was by no means easily moved. She still, to the no small vexation of the driver, kept on saying that she could not ride on the middle seat. In this state of things one of the gentlemen undertook the task of settling matters, and, addressing me, inquired which seat I preferred. All the instructions which I had received at once rushed to my mind. Now was the time to put them in practice—to let it be known that I was not going to give up my seat to any one, certainly not to one who had no claim to it. So drawing myself up to my full height—which was nothing to boast of, by the way—I answered with becoming dignity, "I prefer the back seat, sir."

He then turned to my companion, and said, "Which seat do you prefer?"

"It makes no difference with me, sir," was the modest reply.

A smile passed over the face of the gentleman—a smile which evidently indicated one of two things; either that he thought my companion showed her ignorance of the world, in making herself of so little consequence, and seeming to say, "You may do what you

please with me;" or he thought my reply very old for one of my years. Which was it? Ah, that was the question. I could not forget that peculiar smile. In fact, you see I have not forgotten it yet. It seemed to mean something; but what did it mean? Oh, how I wanted to know exactly what it meant, and how carefully I watched, to see if I could not find out.

Page 12

The matter of seats was soon arranged to the satisfaction of all parties. The old lady and myself had the back seat, while my companion took the middle seat. I observed that the above-named gentleman passenger offered several polite attentions to my companion, while he did not seem to notice me at all, although I had let him know that I was a person of so much consequence. This might be accounted for by the fact that she was seated very near him, while my seat was more distant, or there might be some other cause for it.

The opinion of a stranger whom I never expected again to meet, was not in itself of any great importance; yet it certainly had a bearing on the question whether or not my traveling instructions were of the right kind. If they were, my answer was certainly the right one, and calculated to make a favorable impression upon the minds of my fellow passengers. But when I tried to look at the affair in this light, I was disturbed by a secret thought that I should have had a more comfortable feeling of self-respect, if I had given up the back seat—for which, after all, I did not care a straw—to an aged female, who really thought she could not ride on the middle seat.

When I returned home, I related the incident to Miss Tompkins, the seamstress whose directions I had undertaken to follow, and also frankly owned that I was not quite sure which reply had caused that peculiar smile. She assured me there could be no doubt on that point. “The gentleman was amused at the ignorance of the world which that other girl showed. He thought she was not much, or she would not so readily step aside, and give up her *rights* to any one who might choose to claim them.”

But I was by no means convinced of the truth of this statement of the case; and when I was a little older, I came to such conclusions on the subject that I believe I have never tried, since that time, to establish my claim to be a person of consequence by similar means.

Indeed, to tell the truth, I have not thought much of the wisdom of these instructions, from that day to this; and I certainly would not recommend to you, my young friend, that which I have turned out of my own service, as useless lumber. Seriously, I do not think you will ever suffer in the opinion of your fellow travelers, by being kind and obliging, and showing that you do not think yourself of so much consequence as to forget there is any one else in the world. When a person takes pains to impress others with a sense of his importance, it almost always excites a suspicion that he is trying to pass for something more than he really is. It does not require all this show and pretension to keep the place which really belongs to him, and to attempt more than this, will only draw upon him neglect and contempt.

To this chapter in the experience of Aunt Kate, I feel very much like adding a word or two, “by way of improvement,” as the ministers say. But on second thought, I guess it will be as well to let you use the diving bell, and see if you cannot bring out the improvement yourselves.

Page 13

VI.

“TRY THE OTHER END.”

The other day I came across a man who was tugging with all his might at the wrong end of a lever. That is, he had a great crowbar, almost as large as he could lift, and was bearing down on one end of it, while the block of wood which he had put under it for a *purchase*, was at the same end. He was trying to pry up a large stone in that way. But the stone would not be pryed up. It was a very obstinate stone, the good old farmer thought. He had no notion of giving up the project, however. So he pulled off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and went to work in right good earnest. Still the stone did not stir; or if it did it was only just enough to aggravate the man.

What could be the matter? The stone was not a very large one. It did not look as if it could stand a great deal of prying. What was the matter?

There happened to be a school-boy passing that way at the time. He was not much of a farmer, and still less of a mechanic, I should think; but he thought he saw what the trouble was. It did not seem to be so much the lever itself, or the farmer, or the stone to be moved, as in the way the man went to work. The boy ventured to hint this idea to the farmer:

“Why, my dear sir,” he said, “there is no use in your breaking your neck in that style. You are at the wrong end of the lever. You haven’t *purchase* enough.”

The good-natured farmer (for he was good-natured, and did not get into a passion because a mere boy, young enough to be his grand-child, attempted to help him out of his difficulty) the good-natured farmer stopped a moment, looked at the matter carefully, and frankly acknowledged that he had gone the wrong way to work.

“I wonder what on earth I was thinking of,” said he, in his usual blunt language. Of course he shifted his crow-bar immediately, so as to get a good *purchase*. The trouble was all over then. The stone came up easily enough, of course.

It came into my mind while I was thinking about this farmer’s mistake in the use of his lever, that certain people—myself included, perhaps—might profit by this blunder.

A great many, for instance, use the lever of *truth*—a very good crow-bar, the best to be had—in overturning moral evils. But they do not accomplish anything, because they take hold of the wrong end of the lever. They have no *purchase*.

Here is a man, who, as I think, is in the habit of wrong doing every day. Well, I settle it in my mind that I will talk to him, and see if I cannot make a better man of him. I look him up, and go to prying at his sin, like a man digging up pine stumps by the job. I call

him hard names. Why not? He deserves them. Everybody knows that. I do not mince the matter with him at all. But what I say seems to have no good effect upon him. It makes him angry, and he advises me to mind my own business, assuring me, at the same time, that he shall take good care to mind his.

Page 14

I see plainly enough that I have been working half an hour or more to no purpose, and that very likely I have made matters worse. Yet what was my error?

Simply this: that I spent all my strength at the short arm of the lever. If I had gone to work with a kind and tender spirit, something as Nathan went to work at David, once on a time, and used the other end of the lever, I should have got a good *purchase*, at least, and I am not sure but the stone would have yielded. As it is, however, the troublesome thing is there yet, and it seems to be settling into the ground deeper than ever.

I know some good people, among whom I can count half a score of ministers, who try very hard to keep bad books and periodicals out of the family circle.

There is no end to their talk against these things. They tell their children that they must never read such and such books, and that if they ever catch one of them reading these books, they shall take good care to punish them for it.

But in spite of all the efforts of these people, they don't succeed in keeping these bad books out of the family. In some way or other, they are smuggled into the hands of a boy or girl, and they are read, while the parent, perhaps, knows nothing of it. That is all wrong, of course. I don't mean to say anything to excuse the boy or girl—nothing of the kind. But why didn't these parents go another way to work? Why, instead of preaching all those long sermons on bad books, and threatening their children with punishment in case they read these books, why did they not provide other books, equally interesting, though innocent and useful? That would have been a wiser course, methinks. That would have been the right end of the crow-bar to work at. The way to get rid of an evil is to find something else to put in its place. So I think.

But some of these very fathers and mothers, though they cry out so loudly against immoral books and periodicals, say they cannot afford to buy books for their children. It was only last week that I heard one of them tell a friend, who asked him to subscribe for a magazine for his daughter, that he was poor, and could not afford it. Poor! he gave one party last winter, on this same daughter's account, which cost him more than a hundred dollars. He cannot afford it! Well, if he does not afford to furnish reading for those children, I am afraid they will afford it themselves.

I have seen a little girl, when her sister had been doing something wrong, run straight to her mother, and tell her of it. But it only made the little mischief-maker worse. She went the wrong way to work. She labored hard enough to come at her sister's fault; but her labor was all thrown away. She was at the wrong end of the crow-bar. If, instead of posting off, as fast as she could run, to her mother, every time that sister did wrong, as if she really *liked* to be a tell-tale, she had said, as kindly as she could, "Susy, don't do so; that's naughty," or something of the kind, I presume it would all have been well enough.

Page 15

VII.

THE FOX AND THE CRAB;

OR, A GOOD RULE, WITH A FLAW IN IT.

A FABLE.

A crab boasted that he was very cunning in setting traps. He used to bury himself in the mud, just under a nice morsel of a clam or an oyster; and when the silly fish came to make a dinner of this dainty morsel, he would catch him in his claws, and eat him.

He pretended to have a good deal of honor, though. He was quite a pious crab, according to his own account of himself. When he had caught a fish by his cunning, he used to say, "Poor fellow! it is his own fault, not mine. He ought to have kept out of the trap. If one does not know enough to keep away from my claws, he *ought* to be caught. Poor fellow! I'm sorry for him; but it can't be helped."

That is the way he took to quiet his own conscience, and to excuse himself to others, when they complained of his deceitful conduct.

An old fox, having heard of our crab's mode of catching fish, and what he said about it, determined to set a trap for the crab. He did so. He went down to the sea shore, and thrust his long, bushy tail into the water. The crab, thinking he had got another dinner by his wit, seized the fox's tail with his claws. But the fox, giving a sudden spring, brought the crab out of the water, and prepared to make a meal of him at his leisure.

The crab complained, and accused the fox of being a deceitful fellow, and a murderer to boot.

"But," said Reynard, "I have only acted according to your own rule. If one does not know enough to keep away from a fox's tail, he *ought* to be caught. It is the same thing as if he caught himself."

"Ah!" said the crab, with a sigh, "I made that rule for others, and not for myself. I see now that *there is a flaw in it.*"

VIII.

THE GREEDY FLY.

A FABLE.



A fly, who was a great lover of sweet things, came across a cup full of molasses. He alighted on the edge of the cup, and commenced sipping the molasses. It pleased him very much. He thought he had never tasted anything so good before. At length, beginning to be surfeited with his dinner, instead of flying away, and going about his business, until he should be hungry again, he plunged into the molasses, so as to enjoy as much of it as he could.

Mistaken fly! He fared very much as you might suppose he would. He lost his life in the molasses.

MORAL.

That is just the way with thousands, who have fewer legs and ought to have more brains than this fly. They are not content with a right and proper use of the good things which God has given them. They plunge into a sea of pleasure, so as to enjoy as much of it as they possibly can. But such a surfeit, instead of increasing the enjoyment, makes them miserable. They are drowned in the midst of their pleasures.

Page 16

[Illustration]

IX.

CAROLINE AND HER KITTEN;

OR, THE PRETTY FACE, WITH A SCAR ON IT.

Caroline Rose was as happy a girl as ever you saw in your life—"as happy as the days are long"—so her schoolmaster used to say. There were a great many good points in Caroline's character besides this, that she was so generally cheerful—for I consider that a good point in any one's character. She was kind to her companions, obedient, respectful, and affectionate to her parents; and she seldom got into a fit of anger, or made a fool of herself by being sulky. One might have met her frequently, and have supposed that he was well acquainted with her, and still have loved her very much. Yet there was one thing in her character which every one, as soon as he saw it, must dislike, and which sometimes, where she was well known, made her appear exceedingly unlovely. Shall I tell you what that was? I will do so, so as to put you on your guard in that particular point. That trait in her character was *selfishness*. If she ever got anything that she liked, she used to act as if she were not willing that any one else should enjoy it with her. Indeed, she appeared to be displeased, if one of her playmates, as was sometimes the case, did take a great deal of pleasure in her pretty things.

Her father once brought her home a fine set of tea things, when she was quite young. Now, should you not suppose that she would like to have all the girls in the neighborhood come and take tea with her, and use her pretty new cups and saucers, and spoons and plates? Well, so should I. But she showed a great deal of selfishness in this matter—so much, in fact, that she made herself appear ridiculous, as well as unlovely. She was glad to have the girls come and look at the tea things, and hear them say that they were very pretty. But that was as far as her generosity went. She did not ask the girls to sit down and drink tea with her. Indeed, she did not want her playmates to handle the cups and saucers. "I'm so afraid you will break them!" said she. What a foolish and unreasonable girl!

It got to be a sort of proverb in the little village where Caroline resided, when any one was not very generous, "She's almost as selfish as Carrie Rose," I don't know whether she knew how she was regarded among boys and girls of her own age; and I don't know how much she cared for their good will, if she did hear what they thought of her. But this I know, that I could not bear to have such a character. I would rather give away half of all I am worth than to give any reason to people to think I was mean and selfish. How I should dislike to have folks say to themselves, and perhaps to others, when they meet me in the streets, "There goes a selfish man—a man who is about as good as

people will average, in other respects, but who is as small as the little end of nothing, in his dealings.” I think I would rather live on a crust of dry bread than to get money by being close, and small, and mean, and selfish.

Page 17

[Illustration: MY PRETTY KITTEN.]

Caroline had a kitten given her, by her uncle, when she had grown up to be quite a large girl. It was a beautiful creature. I think they called it a Maltese kitten. Nothing of the kind had been seen in the place where Caroline lived, before Tommy, as she called her new pet, was brought there. Well, of course she told all the little folks what a fine present her uncle had made to her, and they were invited to come over and see the “dear little creature.” She talked about her kitten as if it were one of the wonders of the world, and as if she thought she was a young queen, with the wealth of Cleopatra or Elizabeth, and that half the inhabitants of the globe would certainly come and bow before her and her wonderful kitten.

When she met her young friends, she talked of nothing hardly but “my pretty Maltese kitten.”

That is the way with selfish folks. They think and talk a great deal of what concerns *them*, and you seldom hear them praise anything that belongs to their neighbors.

I shall never forget—if you will allow me to go a step or two out of my way for an illustration—I shall never forget how, when I was a little school-boy, Mother Budd, a rather selfish old lady, used to call us into her kitchen, to see the nice honey she had been taking out of her bee-hives. “Isn’t that fine?” she would ask; “eh, isn’t that fine honey, boys?” Of course it was fine, and we said so. “Well, you can go now,” she would say, after that. As for letting us taste of her fine honey, that she never thought of doing.

I don’t know but we should almost have served her right, if we had done something as a good old minister I have heard of, once did in very similar circumstances. He was making a call upon one of the ladies of his parish—upon Aunt Katy, who was noted all over the neighborhood for being close-fisted. Almost as soon as the good man had got into the house, she invited him to go into the buttery, and look at her nice cheeses. He went in, the old lady acting as a guide. “There,” said she, pointing to a mammoth cheese which she had just made for the fair, and which she was particularly proud of, “there’s a cheese for you.” “Thank you, Aunt Katy,” said the minister, “my wife was saying only this morning that we should have to get a new cheese pretty soon.” And he took the cheese down from the shelf, carried it out to his wagon, bade the astonished lady of the house a good morning, and drove off to visit some of the rest of his flock.

Selfishness has the same face, look at it where you will. It made quite a scar in the features of Caroline’s character. Without that, they would have been beautiful—with it, they were ugly enough.

But about that kitten. Clara Goodsell was as full of fun as a hickory nut is of meat. She heard of Caroline’s kitten, and she, too, was invited to call and see it. She did not go, though, and, indeed, the girls very generally failed to comply with the invitation. They

knew well enough that, if they went to see the kitten, they would not be allowed to take it, and that all they could do would be to stand a little way off, and look at it, and remark how beautiful it was.

Page 18

One day, when the girls at school were required to write compositions, Clara thought she would write something which would make Carrie ashamed of her selfishness. The teacher read all the compositions aloud. When he came to Clara's, the girls had as much as they could do to keep from laughing, for they knew, before it was read, what it was about. The schoolmaster had to bite his lips to keep from smiling a little, too.

Clara did not call any names. But she wrote such a composition about "*My Pretty Kitten*" that anybody could see it was meant for Caroline. The selfish girl saw it, as well as the rest, and before school was out, she burst into tears, she felt so badly. But the composition did her good. She improved wonderfully after that.

X.

"I DON'T KNOW."

How difficult it is for many people to say these words. They don't like to own that they are ignorant of anything. They want to make you think that they know everything. When you ask them a hard question, instead of saying right out, plumply and honestly, "I don't know," they will try to trump up some answer that will not expose their ignorance. And oh, what wretched work they sometimes make with their answers. They make perfect fools of themselves.

People never appear well, among those of good sense, who attempt to pass themselves off as knowing more than they do. It is not to be expected that any one person can know everything; and why should you, or anybody else, be ashamed to own that you can't tell all about this thing, or that thing? Why it is often one part of wisdom to see that you can't understand a particular subject, and another part of wisdom to confess that you can't understand it.

I think that the dog, who figures with a certain vain, self-conceited monkey, in the fable, showed a good deal of wisdom in his remarks.

The monkey, you must know, belonged to a very learned astronomer. The animal often watched his master, while he was looking through his telescope. "There must be something delightful in that," he thought, and one day, when the astronomer was absent, the monkey looked through the instrument for a long time. But he saw nothing strange or wonderful; and so he concluded that his master was a fool, and that the telescope was all nonsense. Not long after that, he met Rover, the family dog, and he told him what he thought of his master. "And what do *you* think of the matter, friend Rover?" he added.

"I don't know the use of the telescope," said the dog, "and I don't know how wise our master may be. But I am satisfied of two things."

“What are they?” the monkey asked.

“First,” said the dog, “that telescopes were not made for monkeys to look through; and second, that monkeys were not made to look through telescopes.”

[Illustration: THE LEARNED GEESE.]

XI.

Page 19

THE LEARNED GEESE.

A FABLE.

A company of geese used to meet together very often, to talk about the affairs of the nation, and to contrive ways and means to do the public good. They were full of learning; had read all the valuable books that ever were printed in the goose language; and had got the notion into their heads that when they died, wisdom would perish in the earth. They looked down upon the great mass of goosehood about them with feelings of pity—almost of contempt. At their public meetings—which were held pretty often, for they had much more public than private business to attend to—they occupied a great share of their time in discussing questions which were so deep and muddy, that nobody but they ever saw to the bottom of them. Indeed, many very sensible geese, who made few pretensions to learning, have doubted whether they saw very clearly into these questions themselves. I, too, have my doubts on the subject, as well as these sensible geese; and I go farther than they in my doubts. I doubt whether, in case any learned goose could see to the bottom of very many of these muddy subjects, his knowledge would be worth much to him. I will give you a specimen of some of the questions they used to debate upon, and leave you to judge of their value for yourselves. They were such as these:

“How *thick* is the shadow of a goose in the moonlight?”

“How much would the shadow of a tolerably learned gander weigh, if it could be weighed?”

“How early do goslings begin to know a great many things, if not more?”

“When a fox starts off after a goose, is it because he loves himself, or because he loves his wife and the little foxes?”

“Whether geese ought not to be willing to die, for the sake of affording a good dinner to Christians on Christmas and Thanksgiving days?”

“Whether there would be such a thing as a good, pious goose, who was not willing to die for such a purpose?”

One day, our learned geese were holding a meeting in the barn yard, according to their custom, and were, if possible, more earnest and noisy than ever in their discussions. This time they were considering what it was best to do to prevent foxes from making such havoc in the neighborhood. The question was submitted, whether it would not be safer and better for geese to sleep with their heads up, instead of placing them under their wings, after the old fashion.

But right in the midst of the debate, while one of the speakers was astonishing himself as well as the rest of the company, with his reasoning and his eloquence, a fox, who had been slyly listening to the debate, stepped into their ranks, and seized the orator, cutting short his neck and his speech at the same instant.

MORAL.

There are several things to be learned by this fable. But I shall content myself with simply pointing out one of them, presuming your good sense will discover the rest:
Before you attempt to take care of others, learn to take care of yourselves.

Page 20

XII.

THE WRONG WAY.

Edward was rather a rude, headstrong boy. Like a great many young people of his age, he needed to be punished sometimes, and sometimes his parents did deal pretty sternly with him. Edward had a sister, older than himself, by some years. Fanny—for this was the name of the girl—tried one day, to tame little Eddy, when, according to her notion, he was inclined to be too wild. Fanny was grieved to see her brother act so rudely. They were visiting that day, at Aunt Sally's, and it was natural enough that Fanny should wish to have her brother behave as well as he could.

"Eddy," said she, in the hearing of her aunt and some of her cousins, "you act like a young colt."

"Well, what if I do?" said Eddy, rather tartly.

"Why, you will need breaking, if you go on so, that's all."

"And suppose I should need breaking, I'd like to know who'll break me."

"May be I'd try my hand at it, if there's nobody else to do it."

"I'd like to see you try it."

"Hush, Edward! I'm ashamed of you."

"You had better hush yourself, if you want me to hush."

At this point in the dispute between the brother and sister, Aunt Sally thought it was best to put a stop to it. She saw that Fanny could do no good to Edward, while he was in that mood, and so she said a word or two which turned the thoughts of both the brother and sister into another channel.

I suppose it can hardly be necessary to say to you, that, whatever may have been the right way to manage Edward, that which his sister tried at this time was certainly the wrong.

XIII.

THE RIGHT WAY.

Edward still behaved rather rudely—still “acted like a young colt.” “What a pity!” Fanny said to herself. “Mamma will be mortified, if she ever hears about it. Well, I must try again, and see what I can do with the little fellow this time.”

So she called Eddy out into the yard in front of the house, and there, where nobody else but him could hear her, she said,

“Eddy, I want to tell you a little story.”

“Well,” said Edward, “I want to hear a little story.”

“Once there was a little boy,” the sister said, commencing her story, “that had a sister who was kind to him. His sister took good care of her brother. She tried to do so, at any rate. When this little boy was abroad, playing with his cousins, he was rude. He would not mind his sister. He was a good deal younger than she was, and one would suppose that he ought to have listened to her, when she talked to him. But he did not. He was just as rude as ever; and his sister was afraid that, when his mamma heard of his conduct, she would feel ashamed of her son. What do you think of that boy, Eddy?”

“Sister,” said the little fellow, “I am a very naughty boy. But I am sorry I behaved so. I will try to do better, if you will forgive me.”

Page 21

And so, you see, the wild, rattle-headed boy, who was so full of fun, that he could hardly hold in, and who was so wild that Fanny thought it was best to check him with a curb bit, something as she would a young colt, was completely tamed by this soft, gentle language. My young friend, don't you think there's great power in such words? I do, and I advise you, when you are dealing with such a "young colt" as Eddy was, to try the plan that Fanny tried last, and see if it don't succeed better than anything else?

Use gentle words, for who can tell
The blessings they impart!
How oft they fall as manna fell,
On some nigh-fainting heart!

"In lonely wilds by light-winged birds
Rare seeds have oft been sown;
And hope has sprung from gentle words,
Where only grief had grown."

XIV.

THE OLD GOAT AND HIS PUPIL.

A FABLE.

A spruce young goat tried very hard to make himself appear like a sheep. He endeavored to talk and act like a sheep. Half his time was spent in putting on airs. He went so far as to cut off his beard, so that he might bear a more striking resemblance to the sheep family; and he was once heard to say that he would give anything if he could either get rid of his horns altogether, or have them twisted as the horns were worn by some of the old fathers whom he so much admired. The little simpleton, however, lost more than he gained by his singular manners. Instead of his being more respected and beloved, as he expected to be, he was despised by everybody.

[Illustration: THE GOAT AND HIS PUPIL.]

One day, after being ridiculed and abused by some of his young neighbors, he went to his schoolmaster with a great budget full of troubles. This schoolmaster was an old goat, with a long beard, and a long head, too, as it would seem from the character he had.

"O dear!" said the little simpleton, "everybody hates me. I wish I were dead. I'm sure I don't know what it means. The more I try to be good, the less they all like me."

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Longbeard, "I am sorry for you. But I can do nothing to help you. It will always be so, until you do better."

“Why, I do as well as I can now,” replied the young goat.

“You ape the sheep too much.”

“Well, the farmer thinks more of his sheep than he does of his goats—a great deal more.”

“And what of it?”

“Why, if he likes the sheep best, he will like me best when I act as the sheep do.”

“That’s your mistake. He will not like you half as well.”

“Why not?”

“For the same reason that nobody else likes you so well—because you don’t act like yourself. Take my advice, now. *Be yourself*. Don’t try to be anybody else. Depend upon it, if you ever come across a person that likes you, he will like you as a goat, and not as a sheep. A sheep you could never be, though you should practice all your life-time. Be a goat, then—be a goat, and nothing else.”

Page 22

This advice, I believe, proved of some service to the juvenile goat; and by the way, reader, perhaps it may be worth something to you.

XV.

ON BARKING DOGS.

It is an old saying—and there is a good deal of truth in it—that “barking dogs never bite.” I say there is a good deal of truth in it. It is not strictly true. Scarcely any proverb will bear picking to pieces, and analyzing, as a botanist would pick to pieces and analyze a rose or a tulip. Almost all dogs bark a little, now and then. Still I believe those dogs bark the most that bite the least, and the dogs that make a practice of biting the hardest and the oftenest, make very little noise about it.

Have you never been passing by a house, and seen a little pocket edition of a cur run out of the front door yard, to meet you, with ever so much bravery and heroism, as if he intended to eat you at two or three mouthfuls? What a barking he set up. The meaning of his *bow, wow, wow*, every time he repeated the words, was, “I’ll bite you! I’ll bite you!” But the very moment you turned round and faced him, he ran back into the yard, as if forty tigers were after him. You see he was all bark, and no bite.

Well, it is about the same with men and women, and boys and girls, as it is with dogs. Those who bark most bite least, the world over.

Show me a boy who talks about being as bold as a lion, and I will show you one with the heart of a young rabbit, just learning to eat cabbage. I do dislike to see boys and girls boasting of what they can do. It always gives me a low opinion of their merits.

There is Tom Thrasher. You don’t know Tom, do you? Well, he is one of your barking dogs. He is all the time boasting of the great things he is able to do. Nobody ever saw him do any such things. Still he keeps on boasting, right in the midst of the young people who know him through and through, a great deal better than he knows himself. It is strange that he should brag at that rate where everybody knows him. But he has fallen into the habit of bragging, and I suppose he hardly thinks of the absurd and foolish language he is using. According to his account of himself, he can run a mile in a minute, jump over a fence ten rails high, shoot an arrow from his bow twenty rods, and hit an apple at that distance half a dozen times running.

I must tell you a story about this Tom Thrasher. Poor Tom! he got “come up with,” not long ago, by some fun-loving boys that lived in his neighborhood. Tom had been boasting of his great feats in jumping. He could jump higher than any boy on Blue Hill. In fact, he had just jumped over the fence around Captain Corning’s goat pasture, which, as everybody knows, was eight rails high, and verily believed he could have

cleared it just as easily, if it had been two rails higher. That was the kind of language he used to this company of boys. They did not believe a word he said.

Page 23

"Let's try Tom," one whispered to another, "let's try the fellow, and see how high he can jump."

"Say, Tom," said one of the boys, "will you go down to the captain's goat pasture with us, and try that thing over again?"

Tom did not seem to be very fierce for going. But all the boys urged him so hard, that he finally consented and went. When he got to the goat pasture, he measured the fence with his eye; and from the manner in which he shrugged his shoulders, it was pretty clear that he considered the fence a very high one indeed. He was not at all in a hurry about performing the feat. But the roguish boys would not let him off.

"Come, Tom," said one.

"Now for it," said another.

"No backing out," said a third.

"It's only eight rails high," said a fourth.

Still, somehow or other, Tom could not get his courage quite up to the point. The best thing he could have done, in my way of thinking, when he found himself so completely cornered was to have said, "Well, boys, there's no use in mincing the matter at all. I am a little dunce. I can no more jump over that fence than I can build a steamboat or catch a streak of lightning." But that was not his way of getting out of the scrape.

"Let me give the word now," said one of the lads. "I'll say 'one, two, three,' and when I come to 'three,' you shall run and jump."

"Go ahead," said Tom.

And the other boy began: "*One—two—three*"—

Tom started, and ran. I'm not sure but he had boasted so much about his jumping, that he had almost made himself believe he really could jump over that fence. At any rate, he tried it, and—failed, of course. His feet struck the fence about three quarters of the distance from the ground, and over he went, head foremost, into the goat pasture. It was fortunate for him that he did not break his neck. As it was, his *spirit* was broken, and that was about all. He went home a much humbler boy than he was when he came to the goat pasture; and a somewhat wiser one, too. After that unfortunate leap, if Tom ever boasted largely of what he could do and what he had done, it was a very common thing for his playmates to say, "Take care, Tom; remember that famous leap."

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Page 24

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