

The Children's Portion eBook

The Children's Portion

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I.

The king's children.

There was once, in Christendom, a little kingdom where the people were pious and simple-hearted. In their simplicity they held for true many things at which people of great kingdoms smile. One of these things was what is called the "Golden Age."

There was not a peasant in the villages, nor a citizen in the cities, who did not believe in the Golden Age. If they happened to hear of anything great that had been done in former times, they would say, "That was in the Golden Age." If anybody spoke to them of a good thing he was looking for in years to come, they would say, "Then shall be the Golden Age." And if they should be speaking of something happy or good which was going on under their eyes, they always said, "Yes, the Golden Age is there."

Now, words like these do not come to people in a day. And these words about the Golden Age did not come to the people of that ancient kingdom in a day. More than a hundred years before, there was reigning over the kingdom a very wise king, whose name was Pakronus. And to him one day came the thought, and grew from little to more in his mind, that some time or other there must have been, and some time or other there would be again, for his people and for all people a "Golden Age."

"Other ages," he said, "are silver, or brass, or iron; but one is a Golden Age." And I suppose he was thinking of that Age when he gave names to his three sons, for he called them *Yestergold*, *Goldenday*, and *Goldmorrow*. Sometimes when he talked about them, he would say, "They are my three captains of the Golden Age." He had also a little daughter whom he greatly loved. Her name was *faith*.

These children were very good. And they were clever as well as good. But like all the children of that old time, they remained children longer than the children of now-a-days. It was many years before their school days came to an end, and when they ended they did not altogether cease to be children. They had simple thoughts and simple ways, just like the people of the kingdom. Their father used to take them up and down through the country, to make them acquainted with the lives of the people. "You shall some day be called to high and difficult tasks in the kingdom," he said to them, "and you should prepare yourselves all you can." Almost every day he set their minds a-thinking, how the lives of the people could be made happier, and hardly a day passed on which he did not say to them, that people would be happier the nearer they got to the Golden Age. In this way the children came early to the thought that, one way or other, happiness would come into the world along with the Golden Age.

But always there was one thing they could not understand: that was the time when the Golden Age should be.

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About the Age itself they were entirely at one. They could not remember a year in their lives when they were not at one in this. As far back as the days when, in the long winter evenings, they sat listening to the ballads and stories of their old nurse, they had been lovers and admirers of that Age. "It was the happy Age of the world," the nurse used to say. "The fields were greener, the skies bluer, the rainbows brighter than in other Ages. It was the Age when heaven was near, and good angels present in every home. Back in that Age, away on the lonely pastures, the shepherds watching their flocks by night heard angels' songs in the sky. And the children in the cities, as they were going to sleep, felt the waving of angel wings in the dark. It was a time of wonders. The very birds and beasts could speak and understand what was said. And in the poorest children in the streets might be found princes and princesses in disguise."

They remembered also how often, in the mornings, when they went down to school, their teacher chose lessons which seemed to tell of a Golden Age. They recalled the lessons about the city of pure gold that was one day to come down from heaven for men to dwell in; and other lessons that told of happy times, when nations should learn the art of war no more, and there should be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the earth.

"Yes, my dear children," their mother would say, in the afternoon, when they told her of the teacher's lessons and the nurse's stories. "Yes, there is indeed a happy age for the children of men, which is all that your nurse and teacher say. It is a happy time and a time of wonders. In that time wars cease and there is nothing to hurt or destroy. Princes and princesses in poor clothing are met in the streets, because in that Age the poorest child who is good is a child of the King of Heaven. And heaven and good angels are near because Christ is near. It is Christ's presence that works the wonders. When He is living on the earth, and His life is in the lives of men, everything is changed for the better. There is a new heaven and a new earth. And the Golden Age has come."

II.

Different views.

It was a great loss to these children that this holy and beautiful mother died when they were still very young. But her good teaching did not die. Her words about the Golden Age never passed out of their minds. Whatever else they thought concerning it in after years, they always came back to this—in this they were all agreed—that it is the presence of Christ that makes the Gold of the Golden Age.

But at this point their agreement came to an end. They could never agree respecting the time of the Golden Age.

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Yestergold believed that it lay in the past. In his esteem the former times were better than the present. People were simpler then, and truer to each other and happier. There was more honesty in trade, more love in society, more religion in life. Many an afternoon he went alone into the old abbey, where the tombs of saintly ladies, of holy men, and of brave fighters lay, and as he wandered up and down looking at their marble images, the gates of the Golden Age seemed to open up before him. There was one figure, especially, before which he often stood. It was the figure of a Crusader, his sword by his side, his hands folded across his breast, and his feet resting on a lion. "Ay," he would say, "in that Age the souls of brave men really trod the lion and the dragon under foot." But when the light of the setting sun came streaming through the great window in the west, and kindling up the picture of Christ healing the sick, his soul would leap up for joy, a new light would come into his eyes, and this thought would rise within him like a song—"The Golden Age itself—the Age into which all other Ages open and look back—is pictured there."

But on such occasions, as he came out of the abbey and went along the streets, if he met the people hastening soiled and weary from their daily toils, the joy would go out of his heart. He would begin to think of the poor lives they were leading. And he would cry within himself, "Oh that the lot of these toiling crowds had fallen on that happy Age! It would have been easy then to be good. Goodness was in the very air blessed by His presence. The people had but to see Him to be glad." And sometimes his sorrow would be for himself. Sometimes, remembering his own struggles to be good, and the difficulties in his way, and how far he was from being as good as he ought to be, he would say, "Would that I myself had been living when Jesus was on the earth." More or less this wish was always in his heart. It had been in his heart from his earliest years. Indeed, it is just a speech of his, made when he was a little boy, which has been turned into the hymn we so often sing:—

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children, as lambs, to His fold,
I should like to have been with Him then.

"I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
That I might have seen His kind looks when He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'"

Goldmorrow's thoughts were different. They went forward into the future. He had hardly any of Yestergold's difficulties about being good. He did not think much about his own state. What took up all his thoughts was the state of the world in which his brothers and he were living. How was that to be made better? As he went up and down in his father's kingdom, he beheld

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hovels in which poor people had to live, and drink-shops, and gambling-houses, and prisons. He was always asking himself, how are evils like these to be put away? Whatever good any Age of the past had had, these things had never been cast out. He did not think poorly of the Age when Christ was on the earth. He was as pious as his brother. He loved the Lord as much as his brother. But his love went more into the future than into the past. It was the Lord who was coming, rather than the Lord who had come, in whom he had joy. "The Golden Age would come when Christ returned to the earth," he said. The verses in the Bible where this coming was foretold shone like light for Goldmorrow. And often, as he read them aloud to his brothers and his sister, his eyes would kindle and he would burst out with speeches like this: "I see that happy time approaching. I hear its footsteps. My ears catch its songs. It is coming. It is on the way. My Lord will burst those heavens and come in clouds of glory, with thousands and tens of thousands in His train. And things evil shall be cast out of the kingdom. And things that are wrong shall be put right. There shall be neither squalor, nor wretched poverty, nor crime, nor intemperance, nor ignorance, nor hatred, nor war. All men shall be brothers. Each shall be not for himself but for the kingdom. And Christ shall be Lord of all."

In these discussions Goldenday was always the last to speak. And always he had least to say. I have been told that he was no great speaker. But my impression is that he got so little attention from his brothers when he spoke, that he got into the way of keeping his thoughts to himself. But everybody knew that he did not agree with either of his brothers. His belief was that the present Age, with all its faults, was the Golden Age for the people living in it. And there is no doubt that that was the view of his sister Faith. For when at any time he happened to let out even the tiniest word with that view in it, she would come closer to him, lean up against his side, and give him a hidden pressure of the hand.

III.

Search for the golden age.

When these views of the young Princes came to be known, the people took sides, some with one Prince, some with another. The greatest number sided with Yestergold, a number not so great with Goldmorrow, and a few, and these for the most part of humble rank, with Goldenday. In a short time nothing else was talked about, from one end of the kingdom to the other, but the time of the Golden Age. And this became a trouble to the King.

Now there happened to be living at that time in the palace a wise man, a high Councillor of State, whom the King greatly esteemed, and whose counsel he had often sought. To him in his trouble the King turned for advice.

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"Let not this trouble thee, O King," the Councillor said. "Both for the Princes and the people it is good that thoughts on this subject should come out into talk. But let the thoughts be put to the test. Let the Princes, with suitable companions, be sent forth to search for this Age of Gold. Although the Age itself, in its very substance, is hid with God, there is a country in which shadows of all the Ages are to be seen. In that country, the very clouds in the sky, the air which men breathe, and the hills and woods and streams shape themselves into images of the life that has been, or is to be among men. And whosoever reaches that country and looks with honest, earnest eyes, shall see the Age he looks for, just as it was or is to be, and shall know concerning it whether it be his Age of Gold. At the end of a year, let the travelers return, and tell before your Majesty and an assembly of the people the story of their search." To this counsel the King gave his assent. And he directed his sons to make the choice of their companions and prepare for their journey.

Yestergold, for his companions, chose a painter and a poet. Goldmorrow preferred two brothers of the Order of Watchers of the Sky. But Goldenday said, "I shall be glad if my sister Faith will be companion to me." And so it was arranged.

Just at that time the King was living in a palace among the hills. And it was from thence the travelers were to leave. It was like a morning in Wonderland. The great valley on which the palace looked down, and along which the Princes were to travel, was that morning filled with vapor. And the vapor lay, as far as the eye could reach, without a break on its surface, or a ruffled edge, in the light of the rising sun, like a sea of liquid silver. The hills that surrounded the palace looked like so many giants sitting on the shores of a mighty sea. It was into this sea the travelers had to descend. One by one, with their companions, they bade the old King farewell. And then, stepping forth from the palace gates and descending toward the valley, they disappeared from view.

The country to which they were going lay many days' distance between the Purple Mountains and the Green Sea. The road to it lay through woods and stretches of corn and pasture land. It was Autumn. In every field were reapers cutting or binding the corn. At every turn of the road were wagons laden with sheaves. Then the scene changed. The land became poor. The fields were covered with crops that were thin and unripe. The people who passed on the road had a look of want on their faces. The travelers passed on. Every eye was searching the horizon for the first glimpse of the mountain peaks. In every heart was the joyful hope of finding the Golden Age. Can you think what the joy of a young student going for the first time to a university is? It was a joy like his. While this joy was in their hearts, the road passed into a mighty forest. And suddenly among the shadows of the trees a miserable spectacle crossed their path. It was a crowd of peasants of the very poorest class. A plague had fallen on their homes, and they were fleeing from their village, which lay among the trees a mile or two to the right.

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Yestergold was the first to meet them. He was filled with anguish. His sensitive nature could not bear to see suffering in others. He shrank from the very sight of misery. Turning to his companions, he said, "If the Lord of Life had been traveling on this road as He was on that other, long ago, when the widow of Nain met Him with her dead son, He would have destroyed the plague by a word." "Oh, holy and beautiful Age!" exclaimed the poet, "why dost thou lie in thy soft swathings of light, and power to do mighty deeds, so far behind us in the past?" "But let us use it as a golden background," said the painter. "That is the beautiful Age on which Art is called to portray the Divine form of the Great Physician!" Saying these fine words, the party rode swiftly past.

The terrified villagers were still streaming across the road when Goldmorrow came up. Nothing could exceed the pity which the spectacle stirred in his breast. Tears streamed from his eyes. The bareness, the poverty, the misery of the present time seemed to come into view and gather into a point in what he saw. "Oh!" he cried to his companions, "if Christ were only come! Only He could deal with evils so great as these!" Then, withdrawing his thoughts into himself, and still moved with his humane pity, he breathed this prayer to Christ: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and lay thy healing hand on the wounds and sorrows of the world." His companions were also touched with what they saw. And in earnest and reverent words one of them exclaimed: "Blessed hope! Light of the pilgrim! Star of the weary! The earth has waited long thy absent light to see." But, by the time the words were spoken, the villagers were behind them, and, spurring their horses, the travelers hastened forward on their way.

IV.

A plague-stricken village.

The dust raised by their horses' hoofs was still floating over the highway when Goldenday, with his sister and their attendants, rode up to the spot. Two or three groups of the fugitives had made a temporary home for the night under the shelter of the trees on the left. Others were still arriving. The pale faces, the terrified looks of the villagers, filled the Prince with concern. "It is the pestilence," they said, in answer to his inquiries. "The pestilence, good sir, and it is striking us dead in the very streets of our village." The Prince turned to his sister. She was already dismounted. A light was in her eye which at once went to his heart. The two understood each other. They knew that it was Christ and not merely a crowd of terrified peasants who had met them. They were His eyes that looked out at them through the tear-filled eyes of the peasantry. It was His voice that appealed to them in their cries and anguish. He seemed to be saying to them: "Inasmuch as ye do it to one of the least of these, ye do it unto Me." In a few moments the Prince had halted his party and unpacked his stores, and was supplying the wants of the groups on the left. Before an hour was past he had brought

light into their faces by his words of cheer, and, with his sister and his servants, was on his way to the plague-stricken village.

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Most pitiable was the scene which awaited him there. People were really dying in the streets, as he had been told. Some were already dead. A mother had died in front of her cottage, and her little children sat crying beside her body. Another, with a look of despair in her eyes, sat rocking the dead body of the child. The men seemed to have fled.

The Prince's plans were soon formed. He had stores enough to last his party and himself for a year. He would share these with the villagers as far as they would go. He had tents also for the journey. He would use these for a home to his own party and for hospitals for the sick. Before the sun had set, the tents for his own party were erected on a breezy height outside the village. And, ere the sun had arisen the next morning, the largest tent of all had been set in a place by itself, ready to receive the sick.

Goldenday and his sister never reached the country where the images of all the Ages are to be found. A chance of doing good met them on their journey, and they said to each other, "It has been sent to us by God." They turned aside that they might make it their own. They spent the year in the deeds of mercy to which it called them among the plague-stricken villagers.

It would take too long to tell all that this good Prince and his sister achieved in that year. The village lay in a hollow among dense woods and on the edge of a stagnant marsh. The Prince had the marsh drained and the woods thinned. Every house in the village was thoroughly repaired and cleaned. The sick people were taken up to the tent-hospital and cared for until they got well. The men who had fled returned. The terrified mothers ventured back. The sickness began to slacken. In a few months it disappeared. Then the Prince caused wells to be dug to supply water for drinking. Then he built airy schools for the children. Last of all he repaired the church, which had fallen into ruin, and trained a choir of boys to sing thanks to God. But when all these things had been accomplished, the year during which he was to have searched for the Golden Age was within a few weeks of its close. And, what was worse, it was too plain to his sister that the Prince's health had suffered by his toils. Night and day he had labored in his service of love. Night and day he had carried the burden of the sickness and infirmities of the village in his heart. It had proved a burden greater than he could bear. He had toiled on till he saw health restored to every home. He toiled until he saw the village itself protected from a second visitation of the plague. But his own strength was meanwhile ebbing away. The grateful villagers observed with grief how heavily their deliverer had to lean on his sister's arm in walking. And tears, which they strove in vain to conceal, would gather in their eyes as they watched the voice that had so often cheered them sinking into a whisper, and the pale face becoming paler every day.

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V.

Return of the searchers.

The year granted to the Princes by the King had now come to a close. And he and his nobles and the chief men of his people assembled on the appointed day to welcome the Princes on their return and to hear their reports concerning the time of the Golden Age.

The first to arrive was Prince Yestergold. He was accompanied to the platform on which the throne was set by the painter and poet, who had been his companions during the year. Having embraced his father, he stepped to the front and said:—

“Most high King and father beloved, and you, the honorable nobles and people of his realm, on some future occasion my two companions will, the one recite the songs in which the Age which we went to search for is celebrated, and the other exhibit the pictures in which its life is portrayed. On this occasion it belongs to me to tell the story of our search, and of what we found and of what we failed to find. We went forth to discover the time of the Golden Age. We went in the belief that it was the time when our Lord was on the earth. How often have I exclaimed in your hearing, ‘Oh that I had been born in that age! How much easier to have been a Christian then!’ I have this day, with humbleness of heart, to declare that I have found myself entirely in the wrong. I have been in the country where images of the Ages are stored. I have seen the very copy of the Age of our Lord. I was in it as if I had been born in it. I saw the scenes which those who then lived saw. I saw the crowds who moved in those scenes. I beheld the very person of the Divine Lord. And oh! my father, and oh! neighbors and friends, shall I shrink from saying to you, ‘Be thankful it is in this Age and not in that you have been born, and that you know the Lord as this Age knows Him, and not as He was seen and known in His own.’

“We arrived at Bethany on the day when Lazarus was raised. I mingled with the crowd around the grave. I saw the sisters. I was amazed to find that nothing looked to me as I had expected it to do. Even the Lord had not the appearance of One who could raise the dead. And when the dead man came forth, I could not but mark that some who had seen the mighty miracle turned away from the spot, jeering and scoffing at the Lord, its worker.

“When I next saw the Lord He was in the hands of the scoffers who had turned away from the grave of Lazarus. He was being led along the streets of Jerusalem to Calvary. The streets on both sides were crowded with stalls, and with people buying and selling as at a fair. Nobody except a few women seemed to care that so great a sufferer was passing by. He was bending under the weight of the Cross. His face was pale and all streaked with blood. I said to myself: ‘Can this be He who is more beautiful than ten thousand?’ My eyes filled with tears. Sickness came over

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my heart. I was like one about to die. I hurried away from the pitiless crowd, from the terrible spectacle, from the city accursed. And straightway I turned my face toward my home. And as I came within sight of my father's kingdom, I gave thanks to God that my lot had been cast in this favored Age, and that the horrors through which the Lord had to pass are behind us; and that we see Him now in the story of the Gospels, as the Son of God, clothed with the glory of God, seated on the throne of heaven and making all things work together for good."

As the Prince was bringing his speech to a close, a distant rolling of drums announced that one of his brothers had arrived at the gates of the city. It was Goldmorrow. And in a little while he entered the hall, embraced his father, and was telling the story of his travel.

"My companions and I," he said, "have been where the Golden Age of my dreams is displayed. We have been in that far future where there is to be neither ignorance nor poverty, neither sickness nor pain, and where cruelty and oppression and war are to be no more. It is greater than my dreams. It is greater than I have words to tell. It is greater than I had eyes to see. We were not able to endure the sight of it. We felt ourselves to be strangers in a strange land. The people we met looked upon us as we look upon barbarians. Our hearts sickened. We said to each other: 'It is too high, we cannot reach up to it.' The very blessings we had come to see did not look to us like the blessings of which we had dreamed.

"But our greatest trial was still to come. The Lord had come back to the earth and was living among the people of that Age. We made our way to the palace in which He lived. It was like no palace we had ever seen. It was like great clouds piled up among the hills. We were present when the doors were thrown open. We beheld Him coming forth. But the vision of that glory smote our eyes like fire. We were not able to gaze upon it. Our hearts failed within us. This was not the Christ we had known. We shrank back from the light of that awful presence. We fell on the ground before Him. 'God be merciful to us sinners,' we cried, 'we are not worthy to look upon thy face.' And when we could open our eyes again the vision had passed.

"Then, O father! then, O friends beloved, I knew that I had sinned. In that moment of my humiliation and shame I recalled a sight which I had seen in the first days of my journey. I remembered some peasants fleeing from a plague-stricken village, whom we had passed. I said to myself, I say this day to you, we were that day at the gates of the real Golden Age and we did not know it. We might that day have turned aside to the help of these peasants, but we missed the golden chance sent to us by God."

VI.

The Finder of the age.

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When Goldmorrow had finished, a strain of the most heavenly music was heard. It sounded as if it were coming toward the assembly hall from the gates of the city. It was like the chanting of a choir of angels, and the sounds rose and fell as they came near, as if they were blown hither and thither by the evening wind. In a little while the singing was at the doorway of the hall, and every eye was turned in that direction. A procession of white-robed children entered first. Behind them came a coffin, carried on men's shoulders, and covered with wreaths of flowers. Then, holding the pall of the coffin, came in the Princess Faith, behind her the attendants who had accompanied her brother and herself, and last of all a long line of bare-headed peasants walking two and two. It was the coffin of the Prince Goldenday. His strength had never come back to him. He had laid down his life for the poor villagers. Having fulfilled his task in their desolate home, the brave young helper sickened and died.

When this was known, the old King lifted up his voice and wept, and the Princes, and the nobles, and all the people present joined in his sorrow. Then it seemed to be found out, that the dead Prince had been of the three brothers the most beloved. Then, when the weeping had continued for a long time, the Princess Faith stepped forward, and in few words told the story of the year. Then silence, only broken by bursts of sorrow, fell upon all. And then the Councillor rose up from his seat at the right hand of the King, and said:

"We have heard, O King, the words of the Princes who searched the Past and the Future for the Age of Gold. The lips that should have spoken for the Age we are living in are forever closed; but in the beautiful statement of our Princess we have heard the story they had to tell.

"Can there be even one in this great assembly, who has listened to the story of the Princess, and does not know that the Age of Gold is found, and that it was found by the Prince whose dead body is here?

"O King, and ye Princes and peers and people, it was the daily teaching of the Sainted Lady, our Queen, that the Golden Age is the time when Christ is present in our life. In every form in which Christ's presence can be felt, it was felt in the village for whose helping the dear Prince laid down his life.

"A time of great misery had come to that village. The harvest, year after year, had failed. Poverty fell upon the people. Then, last and worst of all, came the pestilence. Through the story told by the beloved Princess we can see that faith in God began to fail. The people cried out in their agony: 'Has God forgotten?' And some, 'Is there a God at all?'

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“It was in the thick darkness of that time the Prince visited them. He met them fleeing from their home. He gave up his own plans that he might help them. His coming into the village, into the very thick of its misery, was like the morning dawn. He was summer heat and summer cheer to the people. The clouds of anxiety and of terror began to lift. The shadow of death was changed for them into the morning. He made himself one with them. He went from house to house with cheer and help. The burden seemed less heavy, the future less dark, that this helper was by their side. Best of all, faith came back to them. It was as if the Lord had come back. In a real sense He had come back. He was present in His servant the Prince. The people beheld the form of the Son of God going about their streets doing good. They saw the old miracles. The blind saw, the deaf heard God, as in the days when Jesus was in the flesh. Even death was conquered before their eyes. A real gleam of heaven is falling this evening on the once-darkened village. The evil things that infested its life have been cast out and a new heaven and a new earth have come to it. It is the Golden Age come down to them from God.

“In his great task the dear Prince died. Our hearts are heavy for that we shall see his face no more. But count it not strange that he died, or that this trial should have descended on our King and us. It is the rule in the kingdom of the Lord. Whoever will bring the Golden Age where sin is, must himself lay down his life. For those peasants, as Christ for all mankind, the Prince laid down his life.”

The people listened till the Councillor reached these words, then, as by one impulse, they rose and burst into a grand doxology. Then a company of torch-bearers entered. Then, the children took up their place at the head of the coffin and began again to sing. The bearers lifted the coffin. The King and Faith and the two Princes followed; after them the peasants from the village, then the chief nobles and the people, and in this order the coffin was carried to the place of the dead.

In the course of years the wise Pakronus died, and Yestergold became King. He made his brother Prime Minister. And the two brothers became really what their father called them when boys—“Captains of the Golden Age.” In everything that was for the good of the people, they took the lead. They were Captains in every battle with sin and misery. What Goldenday did for the plague-stricken village, they strove to do for the whole kingdom. Their Sister Faith gave herself to the building and care of schools and hospitals. And the time in which those three lived is described in all the histories of that kingdom as a Golden Age.

It is told by travelers who have visited the Royal city, that a statue of the Prince Goldenday stands above the old gateway of the Abbey, and that there are written below it the words:

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"To-day if ye will hear his voice."

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

As told by Mary Seymour.

In the beautiful Italian city of Venice there dwelt in former times a Jew, by name Shylock, who had grown rich by lending money at high interest to Christian merchants. No one liked Shylock, he was so hard and so cruel in his dealings; but perhaps none felt such an abhorrence of his character as a young man of Venice named Antonio.

This hatred was amply returned by the Jew; for Antonio was so kind to people in distress that he would lend them money without taking interest. Besides, he used to reproach Shylock for his hard dealings, when they chanced to meet. Apparently the Jew bore such reproaches with wonderful patience; but could you have looked into his heart, you would have seen it filled with longing for revenge.

It is not strange to find that Antonio was greatly loved by his fellow-countrymen; but dearest of all his friends was Bassanio, a young man of high rank, though possessed of but small fortune.

One day Bassanio came to tell Antonio that he was about to marry a wealthy lady, but to meet the expense of wedding such an heiress, he needed the loan of three thousand ducats.

Just at that time Antonio had not the money to lend his friend, but he was expecting home some ships laden with merchandise; and he offered to borrow the required sum of Shylock upon the security of these vessels.

Together they repaired to the Jewish money-lender; and Antonio asked for three thousand ducats, to be repaid from the merchandise contained in his ships. Shylock remembered now all that Antonio had done to offend him. For a few moments he remained silent; then he said:

"Signor, you have called me a dog, and an unbeliever. Is it for these courtesies I am to lend you money?"

"Lend it not as a friend," said Antonio; "rather lend it to me as an enemy, so that you may the better exact the penalty if I fail."

Then Shylock thought he would pretend to feel more kindly.

"I would be friends with you," he said. "I will forget your treatment of me, and supply your wants without taking interest for my money."



Antonio was, of course, very much surprised at such words. But Shylock repeated them; only requiring that they should go to some lawyer, before whom—as a jest—Antonio should swear, that if by a certain day he did not repay the money, he would forfeit a pound of flesh, cut from any part of his body which the Jew might choose.

“I will sign to this bond,” said Antonio; “and will say there is much kindness in a Jew.”

But Bassanio now interfered, declaring that never should Antonio put his name to such a bond for his sake. Yet the young merchant insisted; for he said he was quite sure of his ships returning long before the day of payment.

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Meanwhile Shylock was listening eagerly; and feigning surprise, he exclaimed: “Oh, what suspicious people are these Christians! It is because of their own hard dealings that they doubt the truth of others.—Look here, my lord Bassanio. Suppose Antonio fail in his bond, what profit would it be to me to exact the penalty? A pound of man’s flesh is not of the value of a pound of beef or mutton! I offer friendship, that I may buy his favor. If he will take it, so; if not, adieu.”

But still Bassanio mistrusted the Jew. However, he could not persuade his friend against the agreement, and Antonio signed the bond, thinking it was only a jest, as Shylock said.

The fair and beautiful lady whom Bassanio hoped to marry lived near Venice; and when her lover confessed that,—though of high birth,—he had no fortune to lay at her feet, Portia prettily said that she wished herself a thousand times more fair, and ten thousand times more rich, so that she might be less unworthy of him. Then, declaring that she gave herself to be in all things directed and governed by him, she presented Bassanio with a ring.

Overpowered with joy at her gracious answer to his suit, the young lord took the gift, vowing that he would never part with it.

Gratiano was in attendance upon his master during this interview; and after wishing Bassanio and his lovely lady joy, he begged leave to be married also; saying that Nerissa, the maid of Portia, had promised to be his wife, should her mistress wed Bassanio.

At this moment a messenger entered, bringing tidings from Antonio; which Bassanio reading, turned so pale that his lady asked him what was amiss.

“Oh, sweet Portia, here are a few of the most unpleasant words that ever blotted paper,” he said. “When I spoke of my love, I freely told you I had no wealth, save the pure blood that runs in my veins; but I should have told you that I had less than nothing, being in debt.”

And then Bassanio gave the history of Antonio’s agreement with Shylock, the Jew. He next read the letter which had been brought: “Sweet Bassanio—My ships are lost: my bond to the Jew is forfeited; and since in paying it, it is impossible I should live, I could wish to see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure: if your love for me do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.”

Then Portia said such a friend should not lose so much as a hair of his head by the fault of Bassanio, and that gold must be found to pay the money; and in order to make all her possessions his, she would even marry her lover that day, so that he might start at once to the help of Antonio.

So in all haste the young couple were wedded, and also their attendants, Gratiano and Nerissa. Bassanio immediately set out for Venice, where he found his friend in prison.

The time of payment was past, and the Jew would not accept the money offered him: nothing would do now, he said, but the pound of flesh! So a day was appointed for the case to be tried before the Duke of Venice; and meanwhile the two friends must wait in anxiety and fear.

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Portia had spoken cheerfully to her husband when he left her, but her own heart began to sink when she was alone; and so strong was her desire to save one who had been so true a friend to her Bassanio, that she determined to go to Venice and speak in defence of Antonio.

There was a gentleman dwelling in the city named Bellario, a counsellor, who was related to Portia; and to him she wrote telling the case, and begging that he would send her the dress which she must wear when she appeared to defend the prisoner at his trial. The messenger returned, bringing her the robes of the counsellor, and also much advice as to how she should act; and, in company of her maid Nerissa, Portia started upon her errand, arriving at Venice on the day of the trial.

The duke and the senators were already in court, when a note was handed from Bellario saying that, by illness, he was prevented pleading for Antonio; but he begged that the young and learned Doctor Balthasar (for so he called Portia) might be allowed to take his place.

The duke marveled at the extremely youthful appearance of this stranger, but granted Bellario's request; and Portia, disguised in flowing robes and large wig, gazed round the court, where she saw Bassanio standing beside his friend.

The importance of her work gave Portia courage; and she began her address to Shylock, the Jew, telling him of mercy:

"The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown."

But Shylock's only answer was, that he would insist upon the penalty: upon which Portia asked if Antonio could not pay the sum. Bassanio then publicly offered the payment of the three thousand ducats; the hard Jew still refusing it, and declaring that he would take nothing but the promised pound of flesh.

Bassanio was now terribly grieved, and asked the learned young counsellor to "wrest the law a little."

"It must not be—there is no power in Venice can alter a decree established," said Portia. Shylock, hearing her say this, believed she would now favor him, and exclaimed: "A Daniel come to judgment! O wise young judge, how do I honor thee!"

He never guessed what was coming, when the young counsellor gravely asked to look at the bond. She read it, and declared that the Jew was lawfully entitled to the pound of flesh, but once more she begged him to take the offered money, and be merciful.

It was in vain to talk to Shylock of mercy. He began to sharpen a knife; and then Portia asked Antonio if he had anything to say. He replied that he could say but little; and prepared to take leave of his well-beloved Bassanio, bidding him tell his wife how he had died for friendship.

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In his grief, Bassanio cried out that, dearly as he loved his wife, even she could not be more precious to him than Antonio's life; and that he would lose her and all he had, could it avail to satisfy the Jew.

"Your wife would give you little thanks for that, if she were by to hear you make that offer," said Portia; not at all angry, however, with her husband for loving such a noble friend well enough to say this.

Then Bassanio's servant exclaimed that *he* had a wife whom he loved, but he wished she were in heaven, if, by being there, she could soften the heart of Shylock.

At this, Nerissa—who, in her clerk's dress, was by Portia's side—said, "It is well you wish this behind her back."

But Shylock was impatient to be revenged on his victim, and cried out that time was being lost. So Portia asked if the scales were in readiness; and if some surgeon were near, lest Antonio should bleed to death.

"It is not so named in the bond," said Shylock.

"It were good you did so much for charity," returned Portia.

But charity and mercy were nothing to the Jew, who sharpened his knife, and called upon Antonio to prepare. But Portia bade him tarry; there was something more to hear. Though the law, indeed, gave him a pound of flesh, it did not give him one single drop of blood; and if, in cutting off the flesh, he shed one drop of Antonio's blood, his possessions were confiscated by the law to the State of Venice!

A murmur of applause ran through the court at the wise thought of the young counsellor; for it was clearly impossible for the flesh to be cut without the shedding of blood, and therefore Antonio was safe.

Shylock then said he would take the money Bassanio had offered; and Bassanio cried out gladly, "Here it is!" at which Portia stopped him, saying that the Jew should have nothing but the penalty named in the bond.

"Give me my money and I will go!" cried Shylock once more; and once more Bassanio would have given it, had not Portia again interfered. "Tarry, Jew," she said; "the law hath yet another hold on you." Then she stated that, for conspiring against the life of a citizen of Venice, the law compelled him to forfeit all his wealth, and his own life was at the mercy of the duke.

The duke said he would grant him his life before he asked it; one-half of his riches only should go to the State, the other half should be Antonio's.

More merciful of heart than his enemy could expect, Antonio declared that he did not desire the Jew's property, if he would make it over at his death to his own daughter, whom he had discarded for marrying a Christian, to which Shylock reluctantly agreed.

THE AFFLICTED PRINCE.

A tale of the ancient Britons.

I.

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It is said by some ancient historians, and by those who have bestowed much pains in examining and comparing old conditions, that several kings reigned over Britain before Julius Caesar landed in the country. Lud Hurdebras is supposed to have been the eighth king from Brute, whom the Bards, and after them, the monkish historians, report to have been the first monarch of Britain. I am going to tell you a story of Prince Bladud, the son of this Lud Hurdebras, which, there is reason to believe, is founded on fact.

Bladud was the only child of the king and queen, and he was not only tenderly beloved by his parents, but was also considered as a child of great beauty and promise by the chiefs and the people. It, however, unfortunately happened that he was attacked with that loathsome disease, so frequently mentioned in Scripture by the name of leprosy. The dirty habits and gross feeding of the early natives of Britain, as well as of all other uncivilized people, rendered this malady common; but at the time in which Prince Bladud lived, no cure for it was known to the Britons. Being highly infectious, therefore, all persons afflicted with it were not only held in disgust and abhorrence, but, by the barbarous laws of the times, were doomed to be driven from the abodes of their fellow-creatures, and to take their chance of life or death in the forests and the deserts, exposed alike to hunger and to beasts of prey.

So great was the horror of this disease among the heathen Britons, and so strictly was the law for preventing its extension observed, that even the rank of the young prince caused no exception to be made in his favor. Neither was his tender youth suffered to plead for sympathy; and the king himself was unable to protect his own son from the cruel treatment accorded to the lepers of those days. No sooner was the report whispered abroad, that Prince Bladud was afflicted with leprosy, than the chiefs and elders of the council assembled together, and insisted that Lud Hurdebras should expel his son from the royal city, and drive him forth into the wilderness, in order to prevent the dreaded infection from spreading.

The fond mother of the unfortunate Bladud vainly endeavored to prevail on her royal husband to resist this barbarous injunction. All that maternal love and female tenderness could urge, she pleaded in behalf of her only child, whose bodily sufferings rendered him but the dearer object of affection to her fond bosom.

The distressed father, however deeply and painfully he felt the queen's passionate appeal, could not act in contradiction to the general voice of his subjects; he was compelled to stifle all emotions of natural compassion for his innocent son, and to doom him to perpetual banishment.

Bladud awaited his father's decision, in tears and silence, without offering a single word of supplication, lest he should increase the anguish of his parent's hearts. But, when the cruel sentence of banishment was confirmed by the voice of his hitherto doating sire, he uttered a cry of bitter sorrow, and covering his disfigured visage with both

hands, turned about to leave the haunts of his childhood forever, exclaiming, "Who will have compassion upon me, now that I am abandoned by my parents?"

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How sweet, how consoling, would have been the answer of a Christian parent to this agonizing question; but on Bladud's mother the heavenly light of Revelation had never shone. She knew not how to speak comfort to the breaking heart of her son, in those cheering words of Holy Writ, which would have been so applicable to his case in that hour of desertion: *When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, I will take thee up.* She could only weep with her son, and try to soothe his sorrow by whispering a hope, which she was far from feeling, that the day might come, when he could return to his father's court, cured of the malady which was the cause of his banishment.

"But years may pass away before that happy day, if it ever should come," replied the weeping boy; "and I shall be altered in stature and in features; the tones of my voice will have become strange to your ears, my mother! Toil and sorrow will have set their hard marks upon my brow. These garments, now so brightly stained with figures that denote my royal birth and princely station, will be worn bare, or exchanged for the sheep-skin vest of indigence. How, then, will you know that I am indeed your son, should I ever present myself before you cleansed of this dreadful leprosy?"

"My son," replied the queen, taking a royal ring of carved agate from her finger, and placing it on a stand before him, for so great was the terror of contagion from those afflicted with leprosy, that even the affectionate mother of Bladud avoided the touch of her child,—*"this ring was wrought by the master-hand of a Druid, a skillful worker in precious stones, within the sacred circle of Stonehenge. It was placed upon my finger before the mystic altar, when I became the wife of the king, your father, and was saluted by the Arch-Druid as Queen of Britain. In the whole world, there is not another like unto it; and, should you bring it back to me, by that token shall I know you to be my son, even though the lapse of thrice ten years shall have passed away, and the golden locks of my princely boy shall be darkened with toil and time, and no longer wave over a smooth, unfurrowed brow."*

II.

The unfortunate Bladud, having carefully suspended his mother's ring about his neck, bade her a tearful farewell, and slowly and sorrowfully pursued his lonely way across the hills and downs of that part of England which is now called Somersetshire.

Evening was closing in before Bladud met with a single creature to show him the slightest compassion. At length, he was so fortunate as to encounter a shepherd-boy, who appeared in scarcely less distress than himself; for one of the sheep belonging to his flock had fallen into a ditch, the sides of which were so steep that he was unable to pull it out without assistance.

“Stranger,” said he, addressing the outcast prince, “if ever you hope to obtain pity from others, I beseech you to lend me your aid, or I shall be severely punished by my master, for suffering this sheep to fall into the ditch.”

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Bladud required no second entreaty, but hastily divesting himself of his princely garments, assisted the boy in extricating the sheep from the water. The grateful youth bestowed upon him, in return, a share of his coarse supper of oaten cakes. Bladud, who had not broken his fast since the morning, ate this with greater relish than he had often felt for the dainties of which he had been accustomed to partake at his father's board.

It was a fine and lovely evening; the birds were singing their evening song; and a delicious fragrance was diffused from the purple heath and the blooming wild flowers. The sheep gathered round their youthful keeper; and he took up a rustic pipe, made from the reeds that overhung the margin of a neighboring rivulet, and played a merry tune, quite forgetful of his past trouble.

Bladud saw that a peasant boy, while engaged in the performance of his duties, might be as happy as a prince. Contentment and industry sweeten every lot, while useless repining only tends to aggravate the hardships to which it is the will of God that the human family should be exposed.

"You appear very happy," said Bladud to his new friend.

"How should I be otherwise?" replied the shepherd-boy: "I have wherewithal to eat and to drink; I have strength to labor, and health to enjoy my food. I sleep soundly on my bed of rushes after the toils of the day; and my master never punishes me except for carelessness or disobedience."

"I wish I were a shepherd-boy, also," said the prince: "can you tell me of some kind master, who would employ me to feed his flocks on these downs?"

The shepherd-boy shook his head, and replied, "You are a stranger lad from some distant town; most probably, by your fine painted dress, the runaway son of some great person, and unacquainted with any sort of useful occupation. Let me hear what you can do to get an honest living."

Bladud blushed deeply. He had been accustomed to spend his time in idle sports with the sons of the chieftains, and had not acquired the knowledge of anything likely to be of service in his present situation. He was silent for some minutes, but at length replied, "I can brighten arrows, string bows, and shoot at a mark."

Math, the shepherd-boy, advised his new companion, in his rustic language, not to mention these accomplishments to the peaceful herdsmen of Caynsham, (as the spot where this conference took place is now called,) lest it should create a prejudice against him; "neither," continued he, "would I counsel you to sue for service in a suit of this fashion." He laid his sunburnt hand, as he spoke, on Bladud's painted vest, lined with the fur of squirrels, which was only worn by persons of royal rank.



“Will you, for charity’s sake, then, exchange your sheep-skin coat for my costly garments?” asked Bladud.

“Had you not so kindly helped me to pull my sheep out of the ditch, I would have said to you nay,” replied Math; “but as one good turn deserves another, I will even give you my true shepherd’s suit for your finery.” So saying, he exchanged suits with the young prince.

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“And now,” said Bladud, “do you think I may venture to ask one of the herdsmen of the valley to trust me with the care of a flock?”

“Trust you with the care of a flock, forsooth!” cried Math, laughing; “I wonder at your presumption in thinking of such a thing, when you confess yourself ignorant of all the duties of a shepherd-boy!”

“They are very simple, and can easily be learned, I should think,” said Bladud.

“Ay,” replied Math, “or you had not seen them practiced by so simple a lad as Math, the son of Goff. But as all learners must have a beginning, I would not have you aspire at first to a higher office than that of a swineherd’s boy; for remember, as no one knows who you are, or whence you come, you must not expect to obtain much notice from those who are the possessors of flocks and herds.”

Bladud sighed deeply at this remark; but as he felt the truth of what Math said, he did not evince any displeasure at his plain speaking. He, therefore, mildly requested Math to recommend him to some master who would give him employment.

Math happened to know an aged swineherd who was in want of a lad of Bladud’s age to attend on his pigs. He accordingly introduced his new friend, Bladud, as a candidate for that office; and his mild and sedate manners so well pleased the old man, that he immediately took him into his service.

Bladud at first felt the change of his fortunes very keenly, for he had been delicately fed and nurtured, and surrounded by friends, servants, and busy flatterers. He was now far separated from all who knew and loved him; exposed to wind and weather, heat and cold, and compelled to endure every species of hardship. He had no other bed than straw or rushes; his food was far worse than that which is now eaten by the poorest peasants, who deem their lot so hard; and he was clothed in undressed sheep-skins, from which the wool had been shorn. His drink was only water from the brook, and his whole time was occupied in his attendance on the swine.

At the earliest peep of dawn he was forced to rise, and lead forth into the fields and woods a numerous herd of grunting swine in quest of food, and there to remain till the shades of evening compelled him to drive them to the shelter of the rude sheds built for their accommodation, round the wretched hovel wherein his master dwelt. Bladud was sure to return weary and hungry, and often wet and sorrowful, to his forlorn home. Yet he did not murmur, though suffering at the same time under a most painful, and, as he supposed, an incurable disease.

He endeavored to bear the hardships of his lot with patience, and he derived satisfaction from the faithful performance of the duties which he had undertaken, irksome as they were. The greatest pain he endured, next to his separation from his

parents, was the discovery that several of his master's pigs were infected with the same loathsome disease under which he was laboring; and this he feared would draw upon him the displeasure of the old herdsman.

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But the leprosy, and its contagious nature, were evils unknown to the herdsmen of Caynsham, or Bladud would never have been able to obtain employment there. His master was an aged man, nearly blind, who, being convinced of the faithful disposition of his careful attendant, left the swine entirely to his management; so the circumstance of several of the most valuable of them being infected with leprosy, was never suspected by him. Bladud continued to lead them into the fields and forests in quest of their daily food, without incurring either question or reproach from him, or, indeed, from any one, for it was a thinly-inhabited district, and there were no gossiping neighbors to bring the tale of trouble to the old herdsman.

But though Bladud's misfortune remained undetected, he was seriously unhappy, for he felt himself to be the innocent cause of bringing the infection of a sore disease among his master's swine. He would have revealed the whole matter to him, only that he feared the evil could not now be cured.

From day to day he led his herd deeper into the forests, and further a-field; for he wished to escape the observation of every eye. Sometimes, indeed, he did not bring them back to the herdsmen's enclosure above once in a week. In the meantime he slept at night, surrounded by his uncouth companions, under the shade of some wide-spreading oak of the forest, living like them, upon acorns, or the roots of the pig-nuts, which grew in the woods and marshes, and were, when roasted, sweet and mealy, like potatoes, with the flavor of the chestnut. These were dainties in comparison to the coarse, black unleavened cakes on which poor Bladud had been used to feed ever since his unhappy banishment.

The old herdsman was perfectly satisfied with Bladud's management of the swine, and glad to find that he took the trouble of leading them into fresh districts for change of food, of which swine are always desirous.

So Bladud continued to penetrate into new and untrodden solitudes with his grunting charge, till one day he saw the bright waters of the river Avon sparkling before him in the early beams of the morning sun. He felt a sudden desire of crossing this pleasant stream. It was the fruitful season of autumn, and the reddening acorns, with which the rich oaken groves that crowned the noble hills on the opposite side were laden, promised an abundant feast for his master's swine, of whose wants he was always mindful.

He would not, however, venture to lead them across the river without first returning to acquaint his master, for he had already been abroad more than a week. So he journeyed homeward, and reached his master's hovel, with his whole herd, in safety. He then reported to the good old man, that he had wandered to the side of a beautiful river, and beheld from its grassy banks a rich and smiling country, wherein, he doubted not, that the swine would find food of the best kind, and in great abundance. "Prithee, master," quoth he, "suffer me to drive the herd across that fair stream, and if aught

amiss befall them, it shall not be for want of due care and caution on the part of your faithful boy.”

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“Thou art free to lead the herd across the fair stream of which thou speakest, my son,” replied the herdsman, “and may the blessing of an old man go with them and thee; for surely thou hast been faithful and wise in all thy doings since thou hast been my servant.”

That very day he set out once more to the shores of the silvery Avon, and crossed it with the delighted pigs, at a shallow spot, which has ever since that time, in memory thereof, been called Swinford, or Swine's-ford.

No sooner, however, had they reached the opposite shore, than the whole herd set off, galloping and scampering, one over the other, as if they had one and all been seized with a sudden frenzy. No less alarmed than astonished at their sudden flight, Bladud followed them at his quickest speed, and beheld them rapidly descending into a valley, towards some springs of water, that seemed to ooze out of the boggy land in its bottom, amidst rushes, weeds, and long rank grass. Into this swamp the pigs rushed headlong, and here they rolled and reveled, tumbling, grunting, and squeaking, and knocking each other head over heels, with evident delight, but to the utter astonishment of Bladud, who was altogether unconscious of the instinct by which the gratified animals had been impelled.

All the attempts which Bladud made to, drive or entice them from this spot were entirely useless. They continued to wallow in their miry bed, until at length the calls of hunger induced them to seek the woods for food; but after they had eaten a hearty meal of acorns, they returned to the swamp, to the increasing surprise of Bladud. As for his part, having taken a supper of coarse black bread and roasted acorns, he sought shelter for the night in the thick branches of a large oak-tree.

Now poor Bladud was not aware that, guided by superior Wisdom, he had, unknown to himself, approached a spot wherein there existed a remarkable natural peculiarity. This was no other than some warm, springs of salt water, which ooze out of the earth, and possess certain medicinal properties which have the effect of curing various diseases, and on which account they are sought by afflicted persons even to the present day.

III.

Bladud awoke with the first beams of morning, and discovered his grunting charge still actively wallowing in the oozy bed in which they had taken such unaccountable delight on the preceding day.

Bladud, however, who was accustomed to reason and to reflect on everything he saw, had often observed that the natural instinct of animals prompted them to do such things as were most beneficial to them. He had noticed that cats and dogs, when sick, had recourse to certain herbs and grasses, which proved effectual remedies for the malady

under which they labored; and he thought it possible that pigs might be endowed with a similar faculty of discovering an antidote for disease. At all events he resolved to watch the result of their revelings in the warm ooze bath, wherein they continued to wallow, between whiles, for several days.

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The wisdom of this proceeding was shortly manifested; for Bladud soon observed that a gradual improvement was taking place in the appearance of the swine.

The leprous scales fell off by degrees, and in the course of a few weeks the leprosy gradually disappeared, and the whole herd being cleansed, was restored to a sound and healthy state.

The heart of the outcast prince was buoyant with hope and joy when the idea first presented itself to his mind, that the same simple remedy which had restored the infected swine might be equally efficacious in his own case. Divesting himself of his humble clothing and elate with joy and hope, he plunged into the warm salt ooze bed, wherein his pigs had reveled with so much advantage.

He was soon sensible of an abatement of the irritable and painful symptoms of his loathsome malady; and, in a short time, by persevering in the use of the remedy which the natural sagacity of his humble companions had suggested, he became wholly cured of the leprosy and was delighted to find himself restored to health and vigor.

After bathing, and washing away in the river the stains of the ooze, he first beheld the reflection of his own features in the clear mirror of the stream. He perceived that his skin, which had been so lately disfigured by foul blotches and frightful scales, so as to render him an object of abhorrence to his nearest and dearest friends, was now smooth, fair, and clear.

"Oh, my mother!" he exclaimed, in the overpowering rapture of his feelings on this discovery, "I may then hope to behold thy face once more! and thou wilt no longer shrink from the embrace of thy son, as in the sad, sad hour of our sorrowful parting!"

He pressed the agate ring which she had given him as her farewell token of remembrance, to his lips and to his bosom, as he spoke; then quitting the water, he once more arrayed himself in the miserable garb of his lowly fortunes, and guided his master's herd homeward.

The old man, who was beginning to grow uneasy at the unwonted length of Bladud's absence, and fearing that some accident had befallen the swine, was about to set forth in search of him, when he heard the approach of the noisy herd, and perceived Bladud advancing toward him.

"Is all well with thyself and with the herd my son?" inquired the old man.

"All is well, my father," replied Bladud, bowing himself before his lowly master, "yea, more than well; for the blessing of the great Disposer of all that befall the children of men, hath been with me. I left you as a poor destitute, afflicted with a sore disease, that had rendered me loathsome to my own house, and despised and shunned by all men. I



was driven forth from the dwellings of health and gladness, and forced to seek shelter in the wilderness. From being the son of a king, I was reduced to become the servant of one of the humblest of his subjects, and esteemed myself fortunate in obtaining the care of a herd of swine, that I might obtain even a morsel of coarse food, and a place wherein to lay my head at night. But, behold, through this very thing have I been healed of my leprosy!"

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“And who art thou, my son?” demanded the old herdsman, in whose ears the words of his youthful servant sounded like the language of a dream.

“I am Bladud, the son of Lud Hurdebras, thy king,” replied the youth. “Up—let us be going, for the time seemeth long to me, till I once more look upon his face, and that of the queen, my mother.”

“Thou hast never yet in aught deceived me, my son,” observed the herdsman, “else should I say thou wert mocking me with some wild fable; so passing all belief doth it seem, that the son of my lord the king should have been contented to dwell with so poor and humble a man as myself in the capacity of a servant.”

“In truth, the trial was a hard one,” replied Bladud; “but I knew that it was my duty to submit to the direction of that heavenly Guardian who has thus shaped my lot after His good pleasure; and now do I perceive that it was in love and mercy, as well as in wisdom, that I have been afflicted.” Bladud then proposed to his master that he should accompany him to his father’s court; to which the old herdsman, who scarcely yet credited the assertion of his young attendant, at length consented; and they journeyed together to the royal city.

In these days, many a mean village is in appearance a more important place than were the royal cities wherein the ancient British kings kept court; for these were merely large straggling enclosures, surrounded with trenches and hedge-rows, containing a few groups of wattled huts, plastered over with clay. The huts were built round the king’s palace, which was not itself a more commodious building than a modern barn, and having neither chimneys nor glazed windows, must have been but a miserable abode in the winter season.

At the period to which our story has now conducted us, it was, however, a fine warm autumn day. King Hurdebras and his queen were therefore dwelling in an open pavilion, formed of the trunks of trees, which were covered over with boughs, and garlanded with wreaths of wild flowers.

Bladud and his master arrived during the celebration of a great festival, held to commemorate the acorn-gathering, which was then completed. All ranks and conditions of people were assembled in their holiday attire, which varied from simple sheep-skins to the fur of wolves, cats, and rabbits.

Among all this concourse of people, Bladud was remarked for the poverty of his garments, which were of the rude fashion and coarse material of those of the humblest peasant. As for the old herdsman, his master, when he observed the little respect with which Bladud was treated by the rude crowds who were thronging to the royal city, he began to suspect either that the youth himself had been deluded by some strange

dream respecting his royal birth and breeding, or that for knavish purposes he had practiced on his credulity, in inducing him to undertake so long a journey.

These reflections put the old man into an ill humor, which was greatly increased when, on entering the city, he became an object of boisterous mirth and rude jest to the populace. On endeavoring to ascertain the cause of this annoyance, he discovered that one of his most valuable pigs, that had formed a very powerful attachment to Prince Bladud, had followed them on their journey, and was now grunting at their very heels.

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The herdsman's anger at length broke out in words, and he bitterly upbraided Bladud for having beguiled him into such a wild-goose expedition. "And, as if that were not enough," quoth he, "thou couldst not be contented without bringing thy pet pig hither, to make a fool both of thyself and me. Why, verily, we are the laughing-stock of the whole city."

Bladud mildly assured his master that it was through no act of his that the pig had followed them to his father's court.

"Thy father's court, forsooth!" retorted the old man, angrily; "I do verily believe it is all a trick which thou hast cunningly planned, for the sake of stealing my best pig. Else why shouldst thou have permitted it to follow thee thither?"

Bladud was prevented from replying to this unjust accusation by a rabble of rude boys, who had gathered round them, and began to assail the poor pig with sticks and stones. Bladud at first mildly requested them to desist from such cruel sport; but finding that they paid no attention to his remonstrances, he began to deal out blows, right and left, with his stout quarter-staff, by which he kept the foremost at bay, calling at the same time on his master to assist him in defending the pig.

But Bladud and his master together were very unequally matched against this lawless band of young aggressors. They certainly would have been very roughly handled, had it not been for the unexpected aid of a shepherd-lad who came to their assistance, and, with the help of his faithful dog, succeeded in driving away the most troublesome of their assailants.

In this brave and generous ally, Bladud had the satisfaction of discovering his old friend Math of the Downs. So completely, however, was Bladud's appearance changed in consequence of his being cleansed of the leprosy, that it was some time before he could convince Math that he was the wretched and forlorn outcast with whom he had changed clothes, nearly a twelvemonth before on the Somersetshire Downs.

Math, however, presently remembered his old clothes, in the sorry remains of which Bladud was still dressed; and Bladud also pointed with a smile to the painted vest of a British prince, in which the young shepherd had arrayed himself to attend the festival of the acorn-gathering. Strange to say, the generous boy had altogether escaped infection from the clothes of his diseased prince.

Bladud now briefly explained his situation to the astonished Math, whom he invited to join himself and his master in their visit to the royal pavilion, in order that he might be a witness of his restoration to the arms of his parents, and the honors of his father's court.

Math, though still more incredulous than even the old herdsman, was strongly moved by curiosity to witness the interview. He stoutly assisted Bladud in making his way through

the crowd, who appeared resolutely bent on impeding their progress to the royal pavilion, which, however, they at length approached, still followed by the persevering pig.

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IV.

The last load of acorns, adorned with the faded branches of the noble oak, and crowned with the mistletoe, a plant which the Druids taught the ancient Britons to hold in superstitious reverence, was now borne into the city, preceded by a band of Druids in their long white robes, and a company of minstrels, singing songs, and dancing before the wain. The king and queen came forth to meet the procession, and, after addressing suitable speeches to the Druids and the people, re-entered the pavilion, where they sat down to regale themselves.

Bladud, who had continued to press forward, now availed himself of an opportunity of entering the pavilion behind one of the queen's favorite ladies, whose office it was to fill her royal mistress' goblet with mead. This lady had been Bladud's nurse, which rendered her very dear to the queen, whom nothing could console for the loss of her son.

Bladud, concealed from observation by one of the rude pillars that supported the roof of the building, contemplated the scene in silence, which was broken only by the agitated beating of his swelling heart. He observed that the queen, his mother, looked sad and pale, and that she scarcely tasted of the cheer before her. She sighed deeply from time to time, and kept her eyes fixed on the vacant place which, in former happy days used to be occupied by her only son!

King Hurdebras endeavored to prevail upon her to partake of some of the dainties with which the board was spread.

"How can I partake of costly food," she replied, "when my only child is a wanderer on the face of the earth, and, perchance, lacketh bread?"

Bladud, unable longer to restrain the emotions under which he labored, now softly stole from behind the pillar, and, unperceived, dropped the agate ring into his mother's goblet.

"Nay," replied the king, "but this is useless sorrow, my lady queen. Thinkest thou that I have borne the loss of our only son without grief and sorrow? Deeply have I also suffered; but we must not forget that it is our duty to bow with humility to the wise decrees of the great Disposer of all human events?"

"But canst thou feel our loss in like degree with me?" she exclaimed, bursting into tears; "what shall equal a mother's love, or the grief of her who sorroweth for her only one?"

"Fill high the goblet, Hetha," said the king, turning to the favorite of his royal consort; "and implore the queen, thy mistress, to taste of the sweet mead, and, for the happiness of those around her, to subdue her sorrow."



The queen, after some persuasion, took the wine-cup, and raised it with a reluctant hand; but, ere the sparkling liquor reached her lips, she perceived the ring at the bottom of the goblet, and hastily pouring the mead upon the ground, seized the precious token, and holding it up, with a cry of joy, exclaimed, "My son! my son!"

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Bladud sprang forward, and bowed his knee to the earth before her. "Hast thou forgotten me, oh! my mother?" he exclaimed, in a faltering voice; for the queen, accustomed to see her princely son attired in robes befitting his royal birth, looked with a doubtful eye on the ragged garb of abject indigence in which the youth was arrayed. Moreover, he was sun-burnt and weather-beaten; had grown tall and robust; and was, withal, attended by his strange friend, the pig, who, in the untaught warmth of his affection, had intruded himself into the presence of royalty, in the train of his master.

A second glance convinced the queen, the king, and the delightful Hetha, that it was indeed the long-lost Bladud upon whom they looked; and it scarcely required the testimony of the old herdsman, his master, and that of his friend Math, the shepherd, to certify the fact, and bear witness to the truth of his simple tale.

Touching was the scene when the king, recovering from the surprise into which the first shock of recognition had plunged him, rushed forward and clasped his long-lost son to his bosom. The big tear-drops rolled down his manly cheeks, and, relaxing the dignity of the king, and the sternness of the warrior, all the energies of his nature were embodied in the one single feeling, that he was a happy and a beloved father!

The news of the return of their prince spread throughout the assembled multitudes, on wings of joy. Loud and long were the shouts and acclamations which burst forth in every direction, as the distant groups became apprised of the event. The Druids and the Minstrels formed themselves into processions, in which the people joined; and the harpers, sounding their loudest strains, struck up their songs of joy and triumph. The oxen, loosened from the wains, and decked with garlands of flowers, were led forward in the train; and the dancers and revelers followed, performing with energy and delight their rude sports and pastimes around the king's pavilion.

Night at length closed upon the happy scene, and the king and queen retired to their tent, accompanied by their son, to learn from his lips the course of events by which his life had been preserved, and his health restored. They joined in humble thanks to the Great Author of all happiness, for the special blessings that had been bestowed upon them; and the king marked his sense of gratitude by gifts and benefits extended to the helpless and the deserving among his subjects. The good old herdsman was among the most favored, and the worthy Math was put in a path of honor and promotion, of which he proved himself well deserving.

"His ludship."

Barbara Yechton.

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You could not have found anywhere two happier boys than were Charlie and Selwyn Kingsley one Saturday morning early in June. In their delight they threw their arms around each other and danced up and down the piazza, they tossed their hats in the air and hurraed, they sprang down the stone steps two at a time, dashed about the grounds in a wild fashion that excited their dog Fritz, and set him barking in the expectation of a frolic, then raced across to their special chum and playmate, Ned Petry. They arrived there almost out of breath, but with such beaming faces that before they reached the hammock where he lay swinging Ned called out, "Halloa! what's happened? Something good, I know."

"We're going—" panted Charlie, dropping down on the grass beside him.

"To Europe!" supplemented Selwyn.

"No!" cried Ned, springing up. "Isn't that just jolly! When do you sail, and who all are going? Let's sit in the hammock together. Now tell me all about it." The three boys crowded into the hammock, and for a few minutes questions and answers flew thick and fast.

"You know we've always wanted to go," said Charlie. Ned nodded. "And the last time papa went he promised he'd take us the next trip, but we didn't dream he was going this summer."

"Though we suspected something was up," broke in Selwyn, "because for about a week past whenever Charlie and I would come into the room papa and mamma'd stop talking; but we never thought of Europe."

"Until this morning," continued Charlie, "after breakfast, when papa said, 'Boys, how would you like a trip to Europe with your mother and me?'"

"At first we thought he was joking," again interrupted eager little Selwyn, "because his eyes twinkled just as they do when he is telling a joke."

"But he wasn't," resumed his brother, "and the long and short of the matter is that we are all—papa, mamma, sister Agatha, Selwyn, and I—to sail in the Majestic, June 17, so we've only about a week more to wait."

"Oh! oh! it's too splendid for anything!" cried Selwyn, clapping his hands in delight and giving the hammock a sudden impetus, which set it swaying rapidly. "We're to spend some time with Uncle Geoffrey Barrington—you know, Ned, Rex's father—and we're to see all the sights of 'famous London town'—the Houses of Parliament, the Zoo, Westminster Abbey, and the dear old Tower! Just think of it, Ned, papa's going to show us the very cells in which Lady Jane Grey and Sir Walter Raleigh were shut up! Oh, don't I wish you were going, too!"

“Wouldn’t it be splendid!” said Charlie, throwing his arm across Ned’s shoulders.

“Wouldn’t it!” echoed Ned, ruefully. “I wonder when our turn will come; soon, I hope. I shall miss you fellows awfully.”

“Never mind, Ned, we’ll write to you,” cried both boys, warmly, “and tell you all about everything.”

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The next week was full of pleasant excitement for Charlie and Selwyn. They left school a few days before it closed that they might help mamma and sister Agatha, who were very busy getting things into what papa called "leaving order." There was a great deal to do, but at last everything was accomplished, the steamer trunks had been packed, and some last good-byes spoken. Fritz and the rabbits had been given into Ned's keeping with many injunctions and cautions. Carefully wrapped in cloths, the boys had placed their bicycles in the seclusion which a garret granted. Balls, tennis rackets, boxes of pet tools, favorite books, everything, in fact, had been thought of and cared for, and at last the eventful day of sailing arrived.

A number of friends came to the city to see the Kingsleys off. They sat in the saloon of the big steamer with Mrs. Kingsley and her daughter, while the boys, under papa's care, remained on the dock for a while, deeply interested in their unusual surroundings. They were almost wild with excitement, which not even the prospect of parting with Ned could quiet, and it is not much to be wondered at, there was so much going on.

The long covered dock was crowded with men, women, and children, nearly all of whom were talking at the same time. Large wagons were unloading; trunks, boxes and steamer-chairs stood about, which the steamer "hands" were carrying up the gangway as rapidly as possible; huge cases, burlap-covered bundles, barrels and boxes were being lowered into the hold by means of a derrick; men were shouting, children crying, horses champing, and in the midst of the confusion loving last words were being spoken.

When papa joined the grown people in the saloon, Charlie, Selwyn, and Ned made a tour of the steamer. Of course they were careful not to get in the way of the busy sailors, but they found lots to see without doing that. First, wraps and hand-satchels were deposited in their state-rooms, which were directly opposite each other, and the state-rooms thoroughly investigated, each boy climbing into the upper berths "to see how it felt." Then they visited the kitchen, saw the enormous tea and coffee pots, and the deep, round shining pans in which the food was cooked. But they did not stay here long, as it was nearly dinner time, and everybody was very busy. Next came the engine-room, which completely fascinated them with its many wheels and rods and bolts, all shining like new silver and gold.

From there they went on deck, clambered up little flights of steps as steep as ladders and as slippery as glass; walked about the upper deck, and managed to see a great deal in fifteen or twenty minutes. By the time they returned to the gangway all the baggage and merchandise had been taken on board. A man in a blue coat with brass buttons, and a cap with a gilt band around it, called out in a loud voice, "All on shore!" and then came last good-byes. Smiles and laughter vanished, tears and sobs took their places. "Good-bye!" "God bless you!" "Bon voyage!" "Don't forget to write!" was heard on every side. Mamma and sister Agatha shed a few tears; even papa was seen to take off his glasses several times to wipe the moisture which would collect on them.

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Of course, Charlie, Selwyn, and Ned wouldn't cry, that was "too babyish;" but they had to wink very hard at one time to avert such a disgrace, and just at the last, when no one was looking, they threw dignity to the winds, and heartily kissed each other good-bye.

"Write just as soon as you get over," cried Ned, as he ran down the gangway.

"We will, indeed we will!" the boys answered, eagerly. Then the gangway was drawn on board, the engine began to move, and the big ship steamed away from the pier in fine style, with flags flying and handkerchiefs fluttering.

Mrs. Kingsley was confined to her berth for nearly all of the voyage, but the rest of the family remained in excellent health and spirits, and the boys thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

When about three days out the ship passed near enough to an iceberg for the passengers to distinguish distinctly its castle-like outline, and to feel the chill it gave to the air.

Our two boys were such courteous, kindly little gentlemen that all who came in contact with them liked them, and returned to them the same measure that they gave. The captain even took them on the "bridge," a favor which was not accorded to any other boy or girl on board. And what with visiting the engine-room, waiting on mamma and sister Agatha, walking and talking with papa, sitting in their steamer-chairs, and paying proper attention to the good things which were served four or five times a day, Charlie and Selwyn found that the time fairly flew away. Selwyn had brought "An American Boy in London" to read aloud to Charlie, but there were so many other interesting things to occupy their attention that only one chapter was accomplished.

On the afternoon of the seventh day after leaving New York, the Majestic steamed up to the Liverpool dock, and a few hours later the Kingsleys found themselves comfortably settled in a railroad carriage en route for London. It was late when they arrived in the great metropolis, and every one was glad enough to get to the hotel and to rest as quickly as possible.

Early the next morning Uncle Geoffrey Barrington came to carry off the entire family to his big house in Portland Place. Here he declared they should remain during their stay in London, and as he had a charming wife and grown-up daughter, who devoted themselves to Mrs. Kingsley and sister Agatha, and a son about Charlie's age, who was full of fun and friendliness, all parties found themselves well satisfied with the arrangement.

Uncle Geof was one of the judges of the Queen's Bench, and a very busy man, so he could not always go about with his American relatives; but Dr. Kingsley was well acquainted with London, and therefore able to escort his party to all the places of

interest. I only wish I had time to tell you of all the delightful trips they took, and all the interesting things they saw in this fascinating old city. Visits to the Tower, the Houses of Parliament, where they heard “Big Ben” strike the hour—and Westminster Abbey with its illustrious dead; excursions to Windsor and the Crystal Palace; sails down the Thames, and dinners and teas at Richmond and Kew Gardens, driving home by moonlight! How the boys did enjoy it all, and what long letters went home to America addressed to Master Edward Petry!

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All this sight-seeing took up many days; three weeks slipped by before anybody realized it, and Dr. Kingsley was talking of a trip to the Continent, when a little incident occurred of which I must tell you.

Rex and his American cousins had become the best of friends. He knew all about their pretty home in Orange, about Ned and the rabbits, Fritz, the bicycling, and the tennis playing, while they in their turn took the deepest interest in his country and Eton experiences. They took “bus” rides together, and played jokes on the pompous footman, whom Charlie had nicknamed the “S. C.” (Superb Creature).

One morning Rex and our two boys went to Justice Barrington’s chambers. There they expected to find Dr. Kingsley, but when they arrived only Jarvis, the solemn-faced old servitor, met them. He showed them into the inner room and left them to their own devices, saying that “his ludship and the reverend doctor” would, no doubt, soon be in.

The room was very dark; three sides were covered with uninteresting-looking law books, and after gazing out of the window, which overlooked a quiet little church-yard where the monuments and headstones were falling into decay, the three boys were at a loss what to do with themselves. Charlie and Selwyn would have liked a walk about the neighborhood, but Reginald demurred. “It’s a horrid bore being shut up here,” he admitted frankly, “but papa might return while we were out, and I’m not sure that he would like to find us away. I wish I could think of some way to amuse you. Oh, I know—we were talking about barristers’ robes the other day; I’ll show you papa’s gown and wig. I know where Jarvis keeps them. Wouldn’t you like to see them?”

“Indeed we should,” responded the American boys. So, after hunting for the key, Rex opened what he called a “cupboard” (though Charlie and Selwyn thought it a closet), where hung a long black silk robe, very similar in style to those worn by our bishops in America. This he brought out; next, from a flat wooden box, which looked very old and black, he drew a large, white, curly wig. The boys looked at these with eager interest. “These are like what are worn in the Houses of Parliament,” said Charlie. “What a funny idea to wear such a dress.”

“I think it’s a very nice idea,” Rex answered, quickly. “I assure you the judges and the barristers look very imposing in their robes and wigs.”

“I expect to be a lawyer one of these days; wouldn’t I astonish the American public if I appeared in such a costume?” said Charlie, laughing. “I wonder how I’d look in it?”

“Try it on and see,” suggested Rex.

“Oh, do, do, Charlie! it’ll be such fun!” pleaded Selwyn. So, nothing loth, Charlie slipped on the long black silk robe, then Rex and Selwyn arranged the thin white muslin bands at his throat, and settled the big white wig on his head. His soft, dark hair was brushed

well off his face so that not a lock escaped from beneath the wig, and when he put on a pair of Uncle Geof's spectacles, which lay conveniently near, the boys were convulsed with laughter at his appearance.

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“Good-day, your ‘ludship,’” said Rex, with a mocking bow; “will your ‘ludship’ hold court to-day?”

“Yes, let’s have court and try a prisoner,” cried Charlie, who began to feel rather proud of his unusual appearance. “You don’t mind, do you, Rex?”

“Why, no! I think it’ll be no end of fun,” was the merry reply. “One of us could be the prisoner, and the other the barrister who defends him. I’d better be the barrister, because I know more about English law than Selwyn does. And the furniture’ll have to be the other counsel and the gentlemen of the jury. Sit over there, Charlie, near that railing, and we’ll make believe it’s the bar. The only trouble is the barrister will have no gown and wig. Isn’t it a pity?”

“Let’s take the table cover,” suggested Selwyn, which was immediately acted upon. With their combined efforts, amid much laughter, it was draped about Rex’s shoulders in a fashion very nearly approaching the graceful style of a North American Indian’s blanket. A Russian bath towel, which they also found in the closet, was arranged on his head for a wig; then Selwyn was placed behind a chair which was supposed to be the prisoner’s box, the judge took his place, and court opened.

The ceremony differed from any previously known in judicial experience, and bursts of merry laughter disturbed the dignity of the learned judge and counsel, to say nothing of the prisoner.

“The prisoner at the bar, your ‘ludship,’” began the counsel, striving to steady his voice, “has stolen a—a—a—what shall I say you have stolen?” addressing Selwyn in a stage whisper.

“Tom, Tom, the piper’s son,
Stole a pig,
And away did run;
The pig was eat,
And Tom was beat,
And Tom went roaring
Down the street,”

sang the prisoner, in a sweet little voice.

“Your ‘ludship,’ singing is contempt of court; you will please fine the prisoner at the bar,” said the counsel, regardless of the fact that the prisoner was supposed to be his client.

“Silence, both of you!” cried the judge, with impartial justice, rapping his desk sharply with a brass paper-cutter. “Now, Mr. Barrister, state the case.” Then, in an aside, “Wasn’t that well said?”

“The prisoner has stolen a pig, your ‘ludship,’” said the counsel. “He admits it, but as the animal has been eaten—”

“And the prisoner has been beaten,” put in the incorrigible Selwyn.

“And the prisoner is a stranger in a strange land,” continued Rex, ignoring the irrelevant remark, “a most noble and learned American—ahem!—what sentence, your ‘ludship,’ shall be passed upon him?”

“Hum, hum!” said his “ludship,” resting his cheek on his hand meditatively, trying to assume the expression which he had seen sometimes on papa’s face when he and Selwyn were under consideration for some childish offence.

“The court waits, your ‘ludship,’” remarked the counsel, throwing a paper ball at the judge.

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“Silence!” again shouted the judge, rapping vigorously. “The sentence is this: the prisoner shall stand on his head for two seconds, then recite a piece of poetry, and then—in the course of a week—leave the country.”

“Your ‘ludship’ will please sign the sentence and we will submit it to the jury,” suggested the learned counsel, who, as you will perceive, had rather peculiar ideas about court formula.

“What shall I sign?” asked his “ludship.”

“Anything,” said Rex. “Those papers all look like old things—quick! I think I hear Jarvis coming. Sign the one in your hand. Just write Geoffrey Addison Barrington. It’s only for fun, you know.”

He caught up a dingy-looking document, opened it, and, thrusting the pen which was in his “ludship’s” hand into the ink, he and the prisoner at the bar crowded up to see the signature which Charlie wrote as he had been told to do, in a distinct schoolboy’s hand. He had barely crossed the “t” and dotted the last “i” when they heard a step, and scurrying into the cupboard, they saw Jarvis come in, take something from the desk, and go out without a glance in their direction. As the door closed behind him it opened again to admit Justice Barrington and Dr. Kingsley.

“Where are they?” asked Uncle Geof, peering about the dark room as if the boys might be hidden behind some table or chair.

“Boys,” called the doctor, “where are you?”

Then they walked out—such a funny-looking trio! Rex’s table-cover robe floated behind him, and the style of his wig was certainly unique. Selwyn had brought away on his coat a goodly share of the dust of the cupboard. His brown hair stood on end, and his blue eyes were shining with excitement. But his “ludship” brought down the house. He came forth holding up his long gown on each side, his bands were almost under his left ear, his wig was on one side, and his glasses awry! The contrast between his magisterial garb and his round young face and merry hazel eyes was too much for the gravity of the two gentlemen. With a glance at each other they burst into a long, hearty laugh, in which the boys joined.

A little later, the gown and wig having been restored to their proper places by the much scandalized Jarvis, the party returned to Portland Square. And none of the boys thought of mentioning that Charlie had signed a document with his uncle’s name, which he had not read.

A few days after this Dr. Kingsley and his family left England for the Continent, taking Rex with them, and not until September did they return to London for a short visit before sailing for America.

“I have an account to settle with you, Master Charlie,” said Uncle Geoffrey, the first evening, when they were all assembled in the drawing-room. “Do you recollect a certain visit to my chambers when you represented a judge of the Queen’s Bench?”

Charlie, Selwyn and Rex looked at each other, laughed, and nodded.

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"Do you remember signing a paper?" asked the justice.

"Yes," said Charlie; "but it was an old dingy-looking one—we didn't read it—I just signed it for fun."

"I told Charlie to put your name to it," broke in Rex, eagerly. "Is anything wrong, papa?"

"I will tell you the story and you shall judge for yourself," said the justice, smiling. "As it happened, the paper Charlie signed was not an old one. It was in reference to removing an orphan boy from one guardianship to another. He is about as old as Charlie, and it appears that the first guardian ill-treated the little fellow under the guise of kindness, being only intent on gain. When the paper which 'his ludship,'" with a deep bow in Charlie's direction—"signed arrived, the boy was delighted, and he thoroughly enjoys the excellent home he is now in. Imagine my surprise when a letter reached me thanking me for my wise decision. I could not understand it, as I thought I knew the paper in reference to it was lying on my desk waiting its turn. You may well laugh, you young rogues."

"How did you find out?" asked Charlie, divided between contrition and a desire to enjoy the joke.

"Jarvis and I traced it out. I paid a visit to Wales and put the signature of the original Barrington to the document. The present guardian of the boy declares the little fellow's disposition would have been completely ruined if he had remained much longer under his former guardian's care, and I am afraid, in the ordinary course of the law, which moves slowly, it would have been some time before the matter could have been attended to. So you have done that much good to a fellow-boy. Only be careful in the future, dear lad, to read a document before signing it, for carelessness in that direction might not always end as well as it has in this instance. What puzzles me is how you came to take that particular paper when so many others lay about; it was but one chance in a million."

"A chance—the eternal God that chance did guide," quoted Dr. Kingsley, in his quiet, gentle voice.

"What lots we'll have to tell Ned! O boys, do let's cheer!" cried Selwyn eagerly, springing to his feet. "Here goes—three cheers for Uncle Geof and dear papa, and a big, big 'tiger' for his 'ludship!'"

THE PIOUS CONSTANCE.

Once upon a time the Emperor of Rome had a beautiful daughter named Constance. She was so fair to look on, that far and wide, she was spoken of as "the beautiful princess." But, better than that, she was so good and so saintly that everybody in her

father's dominions loved her, and often they forgot to call her "the beautiful princess," but called her instead, "Constance the good."



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All the merchants who came thither to buy and sell goods, carried away to other countries accounts of Constance, her beauty, and her holiness. One day there came to Rome some merchants from Syria, with shiploads of cloths of gold, and satins rich in hue, and all kinds of spicery, which they would sell in the Roman markets. While they abode here, the fame of Constance came to their ears, and they sometimes saw her lovely face as she went about the city among the poor and suffering, and were so pleased with the sight that they could talk of nothing else when they returned home; so that, after a while, their reports came to the ear of the Soldan of Syria, their ruler, and he sent to the merchants to hear from their lips all about the fair Roman maiden.

As soon as he heard this story, this Soldan began secretly to love the fair picture which his fancy painted of the good Constance, and he shut himself up to think off her, and to study how he could gain her for his own.

At length he sent to all his wise men, and called them together in council.

“You have heard,” he said to them, “of the beauty and goodness of the Roman princess. I desire her for my wife. So cast about quickly for some way by which I may win her.”

Then all the wise men were horrified; because Constance was a Christian, while the Syrians believed in Mohammed as their sacred prophet. One wise man thought the Soldan had been bewitched by some fatal love-charm brought from Rome. Another explained that some of the stars in the heavens were out of place, and had been making great mischief among the planets which governed the life of the Soldan. One had one explanation and one another, but to all the Soldan only answered,—“All these words avail nothing. I shall die if I may not have Constance for my wife.”

One of the wise men then said plainly,—“But the Emperor of Rome will not give his daughter to any but a Christian.”

When the Soldan heard that he cried joyfully: “O, if that is all, I will straight-way turn Christian, and all my kingdom with me.”

So they sent an ambassador to the Emperor to know if he would give his daughter to the Soldan of Syria, if he and all his people would turn Christian. And the Emperor, who was very devout, and thought he ought to use all means to spread his religion, answered that he would.

So poor little Constance, like a white lamb chosen for a sacrifice, was made ready to go to Syria. A fine ship was prepared, and with a treasure for her dowry, beautiful clothes, and hosts of attendants, she was put on board.



She herself was pale with grief and weeping at parting from her home and her own dear mother. But she was so pious and devoted that she was willing to go if it would make Syria a good Christian land. So, as cheerfully as she could, she set sail.

Now the Soldan had a very wicked mother, who was all the time angry in her heart that the Soldan had become a Christian. Before Constance arrived in Syria she called together all the lords in the kingdom whom she knew to be friendly to him. She told them of a plot she had made to kill the Soldan and all those who changed their religion with him, as soon as the bride had come. They all agreed to this dreadful plot, and then the old Soldaness went smiling and bland, to the Soldan's palace.

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"My dear son," she said, "at last I am resolved to become a Christian; I am surprised I have been blind so long to the beauty of this new faith. And, in token of our agreement about it, I pray you will honor me by attending with your bride at a great feast which I shall make for you."

The Soldan was overjoyed to see his mother so amiable. He knelt at her feet and kissed her hand, saying,—“Now, my dear mother, my happiness is full, since you are reconciled to this marriage. And Constance and I will gladly come to your feast.”

Then the hideous old hag went away, nodding and mumbling,—“Aha! Mistress Constance, white as they call you, you shall be dyed so red that all the water in your church font shall not wash you clean again!”

Constance came soon after, and there was great feasting and merry-making, and the Soldan was very happy.

Then the Soldaness gave her great feast, and while they sat at the table, her soldiers came in and killed the Soldan and all the lords who were friendly to him, and slaughtered so many that the banquet hall swam ankle deep in blood.

But they did not slay Constance. Instead, they bore her to the sea and put her on board her ship all alone, with provisions for a long journey, and then set her adrift on the wide waters.

So she sailed on, drifting past many shores, out into the limitless ocean, borne on by the billows, seeing the day dawn and the sun set, and never meeting living creature. All alone on a wide ocean! drifting down into soft southern seas where the warm winds always blew, then driving up into frozen waters where green, glittering icebergs sailed solemnly past the ship, so near, it seemed as if they would crush the frail bark to atoms.

So for three long years, day and night, winter and summer, this lonely ship went on, till at length the winds cast it on the English shores.

As soon as the ship stranded, the governor of the town, with his wife and a great crowd of people, came to see this strange vessel. They were all charmed with the sweet face of Constance, and Dame Hennegilde, the governor's wife, on the instant loved her as her life. So this noble couple took her home and made much of her. But Constance was so mazed with the peril she had passed that she could scarcely remember who she was or whence she came, and could answer naught to all their questionings.

While she lived with the good Hennegilde, a young knight began to love her, and sued for her love in return. But he was so wicked that Constance would not heed him. This made him very angry. He swore in his heart that he would have revenge. He waited until one night when the governor was absent, and going into the room where Dame

Hennegilde lay, with Constance sleeping in the same chamber, this wicked knight killed the good lady. Then he put the dripping knife into the hand of Constance, and smeared her face and clothes with blood, that it might appear she had done the deed.

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When the governor returned and saw this dreadful sight, he knew not what to think. Yet, even then, he could not believe Constance was guilty. He carried her before the king to be judged. This king, Alla, was very tender and good, and when he saw Constance standing in the midst of the people, with her frightened eyes looking appealing from one to another like a wounded deer who is chased to its death, his heart was moved with pity.

The governor and all his people told how Constance had loved the murdered lady, and what holy words she had taught. All except the real murderer, who kept declaring she was the guilty one, believed her innocent.

The king asked her, "Have you any champion who could fight for you?"

At this Constance, falling on her knees, cried out that she had no champion but God, and prayed that He would defend her innocence.

"Now," cried the king, "bring the holy book which was brought from Brittany by my fathers, and let the knight swear upon it that the maiden is guilty."

So they brought the book of the Gospels, and the knight kissed it, but as soon as he began to take the oath he was felled down as by a terrible blow, and his neck was found broken and his eyes burst from his head. Before them all, in great agony, he died, confessing his guilt and the innocence of Constance.

King Alla had been much moved by the beauty of Constance and her innocent looks, and now she was proved guiltless, all his heart went out to her. And when he asked her to become his queen she gladly consented, for she loved him because he had pitied and helped her. They were soon married amidst the great rejoicing of the people, and the king and all the land became converted to the Christian faith.

This king also had a mother, named Donegilde, an old heathenness, no less cruel than the mother of the Soldan. She hated Constance because she had been made queen though for fear of her son's wrath she dared not molest her.

After his honeymoon, King Alla went northward to do battle with the Scots, who were his foemen, leaving his wife in charge of a bishop and the good governor, the husband of the murdered Hennegilde. While he was absent heaven sent Constance a beautiful little son, whom she named Maurice.

As soon as the babe was born, the governor sent a messenger to the king with a letter telling him of his good fortune. Now it happened this messenger was a courtier, who wished to keep on good terms with all the royal family. So, as soon as he got the letter, he went to Donegilde, the king's mother, and asked her if she had any message to send her son.

Donegilde was very courteous and begged him to wait till next morning, while she got her message ready. She plied the man with wine and strong liquor till evening, when he slept so fast that nothing could wake him. While he was asleep she opened his letters and read all that the governor had written. Then this wicked old woman wrote to Alla that his wife Constance was a witch who had bewitched him and all his people, but now her true character became plain, and she had given birth to a horrible, fiend-like creature, who, she said, was his son. This she put in place of the governor's letter, and dispatched the messenger at dawn.

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King Alla was nearly heart-broken when he read these bad tidings, but he wrote back to wait all things till he returned, and to harm neither Constance nor her son. Back rode the messenger to Donegilde once again. She played her tricks over again and got him sound asleep. Then she took the king's letter and put one in its place commanding the governor to put Constance and her child aboard the ship in which she came to these shores and set her afloat.

The good governor could hardly believe his eyes when he read these orders, and the tears ran over his cheeks for grief. But he dared not disobey what he supposed was the command of his king and master, so he made the vessel ready and went and told Constance what he must do.

She, poor soul, was almost struck dumb with grief. Then, kneeling before the governor, she cried, with many tears,—

“If I must go again on the cruel seas, at least this poor little innocent, who has done no evil, may be spared. Keep my poor baby till his father comes back, and perchance he will take pity on him.”

But the governor dared not consent, and Constance must go to the ship, carrying her babe in her arms. Through the street she walked, the people following her with tears, she with eyes fixed on heaven and the infant sobbing on her bosom. Thus she went on board ship and drifted away again.

Now, for another season, she went about at the mercy of winds and waves, in icy waters where winds whistled through the frozen rigging, and down into tropical seas where she lay becalmed for months in the glassy water. Then fresh breezes would spring up and drive her this way or that, as they listed. But this time she had her babe for comfort, and he grew to be a child near five years old before she was rescued. And this is the way it happened. When the Emperor of Rome heard of the deeds the cruel Soldaness had done, and how his daughter's husband had been slain, he sent an army to Syria, and all these years they had besieged the royal city till it was burnt and destroyed. Now the fleet, returning to Rome, met the ship in which Constance sailed, and they fetched her and her child to her native country. The senator who commanded the fleet was her uncle, but he knew her not, and she did not make herself known. He took her into his own house, and her aunt, the senator's wife, loved her greatly, never guessing she was her own princess and kinswoman.

When King Alla got back from his war with the Scots and heard how Constance had been sent away, he was very angry; but when he questioned and found the letter which had been sent him was false, and that Constance had borne him a beautiful boy, he knew not what to think. When the governor showed him the letter with his own seal which directed that his wife and child should be sent away, he knew there was some

hidden wickedness in all this. He forced the messenger to tell where he had carried the letters, and he confessed he had slept two nights at the castle of Donegilde.

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So it all came out, and the king, in a passion of rage, slew his mother, and then shut himself up in his castle to give way to grief.

After a time he began to repent his deed, because he remembered it was contrary to the gentle teachings of the faith Constance had taught him. In his penitence he resolved to go to Rome on a pilgrimage to atone for his sin. So in his pilgrim dress he set out for the great empire.

Now when it was heard in Rome that the great Alla from the North-land had come thither on a Christian pilgrimage, all the noble Romans vied to do him honor. Among others, the senator with whom Constance abode invited him to a great banquet which he made for him. While Alla sat at this feast, his eyes were constantly fixed upon a beautiful boy, one of the senator's pages, who stood near and filled their goblets with wine. At length he said to his host,—“Pray tell me, whence came the boy who serves you? Who is he, and do his father and mother live in the country?”

“A mother he has,” answered the senator: “so holy a woman never was seen. But if he has a father I cannot tell you.” Then he went on and told the king of Constance, and how she was found with this bey, her child, on the pathless sea.

Alla was overjoyed in his heart, for he knew then that this child was his own son. Immediately they sent for Constance to come thither. As soon as she saw her husband, she uttered a cry and fell into a deep swoon. When she was recovered she looked reproachfully at Alla, for she supposed it was by his order she had been so ruthlessly sent from his kingdom. But when, with many tears of pity for her misfortunes, King Alla told her how he had grieved for her, and how long he had suffered thus, she was convinced.

Then they embraced each other, and were so happy that no other happiness, except that of heavenly spirits, could ever equal theirs.

After this, she made herself known to the Emperor, her father, who had great rejoicing over his long-lost daughter, whom he had thought dead. For many weeks Rome was full of feasting, and merry-making, and happiness. These being over, King Alla, with his dear wife, returned to his kingdom of England, where they lived in great happiness all the rest of their days.

THE DOCTOR'S REVENGE.

By Aloe.

Painfully toiled the camels over the burning sands of Arabia. Weary and thirsty were they, for they had not for days had herbage to crop, or water to drink, as they trod, mile after mile, the barren waste, where the sands glowed red like a fiery sea. And weary

were the riders, exhausted with toil and heat, for they dared not stop to rest. The water which they carried with them was almost spent; some of the skins which had held it flapped empty against the sides of the camels, and too well the travelers knew that if they loitered on their way, all must perish of thirst.

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Amongst the travelers in that caravan was a Persian, Sadi by name, a tall, strong man, with black beard, and fierce, dark eye. He urged his tired camel to the side of that of the foremost Arab, the leader and guide of the rest, and after pointing fiercely toward one of the travelers a little behind him, thus he spake:

“Dost thou know that yon Syrian Yusef is a dog of a Christian, a kaffir?” (Kaffir—unbeliever—is a name of contempt given by Moslems, the followers of the false Prophet, to those who worship our Lord.)

“I know that the hakeem (doctor) never calls on the name of the Prophet,” was the stern reply.

“Dost thou know,” continued Sadi, “that Yusef rides the best camel in the caravan, and has the fullest water-skin, and has shawls and merchandise with him?”

The leader cast a covetous glance toward the poor Syrian traveler, who was generally called the hakeem because of the medicines which he gave, and the many cures which he wrought.

“He has no friends here,” said the wicked Sadi; “if he were cast from his camel and left here to die, there would be none to inquire after his fate; for who cares what becomes of a dog of a kaffir?”

I will not further repeat the cruel counsels of this bad man, but I will give the reason for the deadly hatred which he bore toward the poor hakeem. Yusef had defended the cause of a widow whom Sadi had tried to defraud; and Sadi’s dishonesty being found out, he had been punished with stripes, which he had but too well deserved. Therefore did he seek to ruin the man who had brought just punishment on him, therefore he resolved to destroy Yusef by inducing his Arab comrades to leave him to die in the desert.

Sadi had, alas! little difficulty in persuading the Arabs that it was no great sin to rob and desert a Christian. Just as the fiery sun was sinking over the sands, Yusef, who was suspecting treachery, but knew not how to escape from it, was rudely dragged off his camel, stripped of the best part of his clothes, and, in spite of his earnest entreaties, left to die in the terrible waste. It would have been less cruel to slay him at once.

“Oh! leave me at least water—water!” exclaimed the poor victim of malice and hatred.

“We’ll leave you nothing but your own worthless drugs, hakeem!—take that!” cried Sadi, as he flung at Yusef’s head a tin case containing a few of his medicines.

Then bending down from Yusef’s camel, which he himself had mounted, Sadi hissed out between his clenched teeth, “Thou hast wronged me—I have repaid thee, Christian! this is a Moslem’s revenge!”

They had gone, the last camel had disappeared from the view of Yusef; darkness was falling around, and he remained to suffer alone, to die alone, amidst those scorching-sands! The Syrian's first feeling was that of despair, as he stood gazing in the direction of the caravan which he could no longer see. Then Yusef lifted up his eyes to the sky above him: in its now darkened expanse shone the calm evening star, like a drop of pure light.

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Yusef, in thinking over his situation, felt thankful that he had not been deprived of his camel in an earlier part of his journey, when he was in the midst of the desert. He hoped that he was not very far from its border, and resolved, guided by the stars, to walk as far as his strength would permit, in the faint hope of reaching a well, and the habitations of men. It was a great relief to him that the burning glare of day was over: had the sun been still blazing over his head, he must soon have sunk and fainted by the way. Yusef picked up the small case of medicines which Sadi in mockery had flung at him; he doubted whether to burden himself with it, yet was unwilling to leave it behind. "I am not likely to live to make use of this, and yet—who knows?" said Yusef to himself, as, with the case in his hand, he painfully struggled on over the wide expanse of dreary desert. "I will make what efforts I can to preserve the life which God has given."

Struggling against extreme exhaustion, his limbs almost sinking under his weight, Yusef pressed on his way, till a glowing red line in the east showed where the blazing sun would soon rise. What was his eager hope and joy on seeing that red line broken by some dark pointed objects that appeared rise out of the sand. New strength seemed given to the weary man, for now his ear caught the welcome sound of the bark of a dog, and then the bleating of sheep.

"God be praised!" exclaimed Yusef, "I, am near the abodes of men!"

Exerting all his powers, the Syrian, made one great effort to reach the black tents which he now saw distinctly in broad daylight, and which he knew must belong to some tribe of wandering Bedouin Arabs: he tottered on for a hundred yards, and then sank exhausted on the sand.

But the Bedouins had seen the poor, solitary stranger, and as hospitality is one of their leading virtues, some of these wild sons of the desert now hastened toward Yusef. They raised him, they held to his parched lips a most delicious draught of rich camel's milk. The Syrian felt as if he were drinking in new life, and was so much revived by what he had taken, that he was able to accompany his preservers to the black goat's-hair tent of their Sheik or chief, an elderly man of noble aspect, who welcomed the stranger kindly.

Yusef had not been long in that tent before he found that he had not only been guided to a place of safety, but to the very place where his presence was needed. The sound of low moans made him turn his eyes toward a dark corner of the tent. There lay the only son of the Sheik, dangerously ill, and, as the Bedouins believed, dying. Already all their rough, simple remedies had been tried on the youth, but tried in vain. With stern grief the Sheik listened to the moans of pain that burst from the suffering lad and wrung the heart of the father.

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The Syrian asked leave to examine the youth, and was soon at his side. Yusef very soon perceived that the Bedouin's case was not hopeless,—that God's blessing on the hakeem's skill might in a few days effect a wonderful change. He offered to try what his art and medicines could do. The Sheik caught at the last hope held out to him of preserving the life of his son. The Bedouins gathered round, and watched with keen interest the measures which were at once taken by the stranger hakeem to effect the cure of the lad.

Yusef's success was beyond his hopes. The medicine which he gave afforded speedy relief from pain, and within an hour the young Bedouin had sunk into a deep and refreshing sleep. His slumber lasted long, and he awoke quite free from fever, though of course some days elapsed before his strength was fully restored.

Great was the gratitude of Azim, the Sheik, for the cure of his only son; and great was the admiration of the simple Bedouins for the skill of the wondrous hakeem. Yusef soon had plenty of patients. The sons of the desert now looked upon the poor deserted stranger as one sent to them by heaven; and Yusef himself felt that his own plans had been defeated, his own course changed by wisdom and love. He had intended, as a medical missionary, to fix his abode in some Arabian town: he had been directed instead to the tents of the Bedouin Arabs. The wild tribe soon learned to reverence and love him, and listen to his words. Azim supplied him with a tent, a horse, a rich striped mantle, and all that the Syrian's wants required. Yusef found that he could be happy as well as useful in his wild desert home.

One day, after months had elapsed, Yusef rode forth with Azim and two of his Bedouins, to visit a distant encampment of part of the tribe. They carried with them spear and gun, water, and a small supply of provisions. The party had not proceeded far when Azim pointed to a train of camels that were disappearing in the distance. "Yonder go pilgrims to Mecca," he said: "long and weary is the journey before them; the path which they take will be marked by the bones of camels that fall and perish by the way."

"Methinks by yon sand-mound," observed Yusef, "I see an object that looks at this distance like a pilgrim stretched on the waste."

"Some traveler may have fallen sick," said the Sheik, "and be left on the sand to die."

The words made Yusef at once set spurs to his horse: having himself so narrowly escaped a dreadful death in the desert, he naturally felt strong pity for any one in danger of meeting so terrible a fate. Azim galloped after Yusef, and having the fleeter horse outstripped him, as they approached the spot on which lay stretched the form of a man, apparently dead.

As soon as Azim reached the pilgrim he sprang from his horse, laid his gun down on the sand, and, taking a skin-bottle of water which hung at his saddle bow, proceeded to pour some down the throat of the man, who gave signs of returning life.

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Yusef almost instantly joined him; but what were the feelings of the Syrian when in the pale, wasted features of the sufferer before him he recognized those of Sadi, his deadly, merciless foe!

"Let me hold the skin-bottle, Sheik!" exclaimed Yusef; "let the draught of cold water be from my hand." The Syrian remembered the command, "If thine enemy thirst, give him drink."

Sadi was too ill to be conscious of anything passing around him; but he drank with feverish eagerness, as if his thirst could never be slaked.

"How shall we bear him hence?" said the Sheik; "my journey cannot be delayed."

"Go on thy journey, O Sheik," replied Yusef; "I will return to the tents with this man, if thou but help me to place him on my horse. He shall share my tent and my cup,—he shall be to me as a brother."

"Dost thou know him?" inquired the Sheik.

"Ay, well I know him," the Syrian replied.

Sadi was gently placed on the horse, for it would have been death to remain long unsheltered on the sand. Yusef walked beside the horse, with difficulty supporting the drooping form of Sadi, which would otherwise soon have fallen to the ground. The journey on foot was very exhausting to Yusef, who could scarcely sustain the weight of the helpless Sadi. Thankful was the Syrian hakeem when they reached the Bedouin tents.

Then Sadi was placed on the mat which had served Yusef for a bed. Yusef himself passed the night without rest, watching at the sufferer's side. Most carefully did the hakeem nurse his enemy through a raging fever. Yusef spared no effort of skill, shrank from no painful exertion, to save the life of the man who had nearly destroyed his own!

On the third day the fever abated; on the evening of that day Sadi suddenly opened his eyes, and, for the first time since his illness, recognized Yusef, who had, as he believed, perished months before in the desert.

"Has the dead come to life?" exclaimed the trembling Sadi, fixing upon Yusef a wild and terrified gaze; "has the injured returned for vengeance?"

"Nay, my brother," replied Yusef soothingly; "let us not recall the past, or recall it but to bless Him who has preserved us both from death."

Tears dimmed the dark eyes of Sadi; he grasped the kind hand which Yusef held out. "I have deeply wronged thee," he faltered forth; "how can I receive all this kindness at thy hand?"

A gentle smile passed over the lips of Yusef; he remembered the cruel words once uttered by Sadi, and made reply: "If thou hast wronged me, thus I repay thee: Moslem, this is a Christian's revenge!"

THE WOODCUTTER'S CHILD.

Once upon a time, near a large wood, there lived a woodcutter and his wife, who had only one child, a little girl three years old; but they were so poor that they had scarcely food sufficient for every day in the week, and often they were puzzled to know what they should get to eat. One morning the woodcutter went into the wood to work, full of care, and, as he chopped the trees, there stood before him a tall and beautiful woman, having a crown of shining stars upon her head, who thus addressed him:

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"I am the Guardian Angel of every Christian child; thou art poor and needy; bring me thy child, and I will take her with me. I will be her mother, and henceforth she shall be under my care." The woodcutter consented, and calling his child gave her to the Angel, who carried her to the land of Happiness. There everything went happily; she ate sweet bread and drank pure milk; her clothes were gold, and her playfellows were beautiful children. When she became fourteen years old, the Guardian Angel called her to her side and said, "My dear child, I have a long journey for thee. Take these keys of the thirteen doors of the land of Happiness; twelve of them thou mayest open, and behold the glories therein; but the thirteenth, to which this little key belongs, thou art forbidden to open. Beware! if thou dost disobey, harm will befall thee."

The maiden promised to be obedient, and, when the Guardian Angel was gone, began her visits to the mansions of Happiness. Every day one door was unclosed, until she had seen all the twelve. In each mansion there sat an angel, surrounded by a bright light. The maiden rejoiced at the glory, and the child who accompanied her rejoiced with her. Now the forbidden door alone remained. A great desire possessed the maiden to know what was hidden there; and she said to the child, "I will not quite open it, nor will I go in, but I will only unlock the door so that we may peep through the chink." "No, no," said the child; "that will be a sin. The Guardian Angel has forbidden it, and misfortune would soon fall upon us."

At this the maiden was silent, but the desire still remained in her heart, and tormented her continually, so that she had no peace. One day, however, all the children were away, and she thought, "Now I am alone and can peep in, no one will know what I do;" so she found the keys, and, taking them in her hand, placed the right one in the lock and turned it round. Then the door sprang open, and she saw three angels sitting on a throne, surrounded by a great light. The maiden remained a little while standing in astonishment; and then, putting her finger in the light, she drew it back and it was turned into gold. Then great alarm seized her, and, shutting the door hastily, she ran away. But her fear only increased more and more, and her heart beat so violently that she thought it would burst; the gold also on her finger would not come off, although she washed it and rubbed it with all her strength.

Not long afterward the Guardian Angel came, back from her journey, and calling the maiden to her, demanded the keys of the mansion. As she delivered them up, the Angel looked in her face and asked, "Hast thou opened the thirteenth door?"—"No," answered the maiden.

Then the Angel laid her hand upon the maiden's heart, and felt how violently it was beating; and she knew that her command had been disregarded, and that the child had opened the door. Then she asked again, "Hast thou opened the thirteenth door?"—"No," said the maiden, for the second time.

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Then the Angel perceived that the child's finger had become golden from touching the light, and she knew that the child was guilty; and she asked her for the third time, "Hast thou opened the thirteenth door?"—"No," said the maiden again.

Then the Guardian Angel replied, "Thou hast not obeyed me, nor done my bidding; therefore thou art no longer worthy to remain among good children."

And the maiden sank down in a deep sleep, and when she awoke she found herself in the midst of a wilderness. She wished to call out, but she had lost her voice. Then she sprang up, and tried to run away; but wherever she turned thick bushes held her back, so that she could not escape. In the deserted spot in which she was now enclosed, there stood an old hollow tree; this was her dwelling-place. In this place she slept by night, and when it rained and blew she found shelter within it. Roots and wild berries were her food, and she sought for them as far as she could reach. In the autumn she collected the leaves of the trees, and laid them in her hole; and when the frost and snow of the winter came, she clothed herself with them, for her clothes had dropped into rags. But during the sunshine she sat outside the tree, and her long hair fell down on all sides and covered her like a mantle. Thus she remained a long time experiencing the misery and poverty of the world.

But, once, when the trees had become green again, the King of the country was hunting in the forest, and as a bird flew into the bushes which surrounded the wood, he dismounted, and, tearing the brushwood aside, cut a path for himself with his sword. When he had at last made his way through, he saw a beautiful maiden, who was clothed from head to foot with her own golden locks, sitting under the tree. He stood in silence, and looked at her for some time in astonishment; at last he said, "Child, how came you into this wilderness?" But the maiden answered not, for she had become dumb. Then the King asked, "Will you go with me to my castle?" At that she nodded her head, and the King, taking her in his arms, put her on his horse and rode away home. Then he gave her beautiful clothing, and everything in abundance. Still she could not speak; but her beauty was so great, and so won upon the King's heart, that after a little while he married her.

When about a year had passed away, the Queen brought a son into the world, and in that night, while lying alone in her bed the Guardian Angel appeared to her and said:

"Wilt thou tell the truth and confess that thou didst unlock the forbidden door? For then will I open thy mouth and give thee again the power of speech; but if thou remainest obstinate in thy sin then will I take from thee thy new-born babe."

And the power to answer was given to her, but she remained hardened, and said, "No, I did not open the door;" and at those words the Guardian Angel took the child out of her arms and disappeared with him.

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The next morning, when the child was not to be seen, a murmur arose among the people, that their Queen was a murderess, who had destroyed her only son; but, although she heard everything, she could say nothing. But the King did not believe the ill report because of his great love for her.

About a year afterward another son was born, and on the night of his birth the Guardian Angel again appeared, and asked, "Wilt thou confess that thou didst open the forbidden door? Then will I restore to thee thy son, and give thee the power of speech; but if thou hardenest thyself in thy sin, then will I take this new-born babe also with me."

Then the Queen answered again, "No, I did not open the door;" so the Angel took the second child out of her arms and bore him away. On the morrow, when the infant could not be found, the people said openly that the Queen had slain him, and the King's councillors advised that she should be brought to trial. But the King's affection was still so great that he would not believe it, and he commanded his councillors never again to mention the report on pain of death.

The next year a beautiful little girl was born, and for the third time the Guardian Angel appeared and said to the Queen, "Follow me;" and, taking her by the hand, she led her to the kingdom of Happiness, and showed to her the two other children, who were playing merrily. The Queen rejoiced at the sight, and the Angel said, "Is thy heart not yet softened? If thou wilt confess that thou didst unlock the forbidden door, then will I restore to thee both thy sons." But the Queen again answered, "No, I did not open it;" and at these words she sank upon the earth, and her third child was taken from her.

When this was rumored abroad the next day, all the people exclaimed, "The Queen is a murderess; she must be condemned;" and the King could not this time repulse his councillors. Thereupon a trial was held, and since the Queen could make no good answer or defence, she was condemned to die upon a funeral pile. The wood was collected; she was bound to the stake, and the fire was lighted all around her. Then the iron pride of her heart began to soften, and she was moved to repentance; and she thought, "Could I but now, before my death, confess that I opened the door!" And her tongue was loosened, and she cried aloud, "Thou good Angel, I confess." At these words the rain descended from heaven and extinguished the fire; then a great light shone above, and the Angel appeared and descended upon the earth, and by her side were the Queen's two sons, one on her right hand and the other on her left, and in her arms she bore the new-born babe. Then the Angel restored to the Queen her three children, and loosening her tongue promised her great happiness and said, "Whoever will repent and confess their sins, they shall be forgiven."

SHOW YOUR COLORS.

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By Rev. C. H. Mead.

I was riding on the train through the eastern section of North Carolina. Nothing can be flatter than that portion of the country, unless it be the religious experience of some people. The rain was pouring down fast, and, for a person so inclined, not a better day and place for the blues could be found. Looking out of the car windows brought nothing more interesting to view than pine trees, bony mules and razor-back hogs. Groups of men, white and black, gathered at each station to see the train arrive and depart. Each passenger that entered brought in more damp, moisture and blues.

Two men at last came in and took the seat in front of me. Shortly after, one of them took a bottle from his pocket, pulled the cork, and handed the bottle to his companion. He took a drink, and the smell of liquor filled the car. Then the first one took a drink, and back and forth the bottle passed, until at last it was empty and they were full. Then one of them commenced swearing, and such blasphemy I never heard in all my life. It made the very air blue—women shrank back, while the heads of men were uplifted to see where the stream of profanity came from. It went on for some time, until I began talking to myself. I always did like to talk to a sensible man.

“Henry, that man belongs to the devil.”

“There is no doubt about that,” I replied.

“He is not ashamed of it.”

“Not a bit ashamed.”

“Whom do you belong to?”

“I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Are you glad or sorry?”

“I am glad—very glad.”

“Who in the car knows that man belongs to the devil?”

“Everybody knows that, for he has not kept it a secret.”

“Who in the car knows you belong to the Lord Jesus?”

“Why, no one knows it, for you see I am a stranger around here.”

“Are you willing they should know whom you belong to?”



“Yes; I am willing.”

“Very well, will you let them know it?”

I thought a moment and then said, “By the help of my Master I will.”

Then straightening up and taking a good breath, I began singing in a voice that could be heard by all in the car:

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

Before I had finished the first verse and chorus, the passengers had crowded down around me, and the blasphemer had turned round and looked at me with a face resembling a thunder cloud. As I finished the chorus, he said:

“What are you doing?”

“I am singing,” I replied.

“Well,” said he, “any fool can understand that.”

“I am glad you understand it.”

“What are you singing?”

“I am singing the religion of the Lord Jesus.”

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"Well, you quit."

"Quit what?"

"Quit singing your religion on the cars."

"I guess not," I replied, "I don't belong to the Quit family; my name is Mead. For the last half hour you have been standing by your master; now for the next half hour I am going to stand up for my Master."

"Who is my master?"

"The devil is your master—while Christ is mine. I am as proud of my Master as you are of yours. Now I am going to have my turn, if the passengers don't object."

A chorus of voices cried out: "Sing on, stranger, we like that."

I sung on, and as the next verse was finished, the blasphemer turned his face away, and I saw nothing of him after that but the back of his head, and that was the handsomest part of him. He left the train soon after, and I am glad to say I've never seen him since. Song after song followed, and I soon had other voices to help me. When the song service ended, an old man came to me, put out his hand, and said, "Sir, I owe you thanks and a confession."

"Thanks for what?"

"Thanks for rebuking that blasphemer."

"Don't thank me for that, but give thanks to my Master. I try to stand up for Him wherever I am. What about the confession?"

"I am in my eighty-third year. I have been a preacher of the Gospel for over sixty years. When I heard that man swearing so, I wanted to rebuke him. I rose from my seat two or three times, to do so, but my courage failed. I have not much longer to live, but never again will I refuse to show my colors anywhere."

HER DANGER SIGNAL.

By Emma C. Hewitt.

She did—I am sorry to record it, but she did—Letty Bascombe salted her pie-crust with a great, big tear.



Not that she had none of the other salt, nor that she intended to do it, but, all of a sudden, a big tear, oh, as big as the end of your thumb, if you are a little, little girl, ran zigzag across her cheek down to her chin, and, before she could wipe it off, a sudden, sharp sob took her unawares and, plump, right into the pastry, went this big fat tear. Of course, if you are even a little girl you must know that it is as useless to hunt for tears in pie-crust as it is to "hunt for a needle in a hay-stack." So Letty did not even try to recover her lost property. But it had one good effect, it made her laugh, and, between you and me (I tell this to you as a secret), Letty, like every other girl, little or big, fat or thin, was much pleasanter to look upon when she smiled than when she cried. But she didn't smile for that. Oh, dear, no. She smiled because she couldn't help it. She was a good-natured, sweet-tempered little puss, most times, and possessed of a very sunny disposition. "Why did she salt her pie-crust with tears, then?" I hear you ask. Ah, "Why?" And wait till I tell you. The most curious part of it all was that it was a Thanksgiving crust. There, now. The worst is out. A common, every-day, week-a-day pie, or even a Sunday pie, would be bad enough, but a Thanksgiving pie of all things. Why, everybody is happy at Thanksgiving.

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Well, not quite everybody, it seems, because if that was so Letty wouldn't be crying.

Now let me tell you why poor Letty Bascombe, with her sunny temper, cried on this day while she was making pies.

You see, she was only fifteen, and when one is fifteen, and there is fun going on that one can't be in, it is very trying, to say the least. Not that tears help it the least in the world, no, indeed. In fact, tears at such times always make matters worse.

Well, she was only fifteen, as I was saying, and, instead of going with the family into town, she had to stay home and make pies.

Now the family were no relation to her. She was only Mrs. Mason's "help." Eighteen months ago Letty's mother (a widow) had died. Her brother had gone away off to a large city, and she had come to Mrs. Mason's to live. Mrs. Mason was as kind as she could be to her, but you know one must feel "blue" at times when one has lost all but one relative in the world, and that one is a dear brother who is way, way off, even if one is surrounded by the kindest friends.

So now, tell me, don't you think Letty had something to shed tears about?

"I j-just c-can't help it. I'm not one bit 'thankful' this Thanksgiving, and I'm not going to pretend I am. So there. And here I am making nasty pies, when everybody else has gone to town having a good time. No, I'm not one bit thankful, so there, and I feel as if turkey and cranberries and pumpkin pie would choke me."

But after Letty "had her cry out" she felt better, and in a little while her nimble fingers had finished her work and she was ready for a little amusement. This amusement she concluded to find by taking a little walk to the end of the garden. The garden ended abruptly in a ravine, and it was a source of unfailing delight to go down there and, from a secure position, see the trains go thundering by.

In fifteen minutes the train would be along and then she would go back. Idly gazing down from her secure height, her eye was suddenly caught by something creeping along the ground. Letty's keen sight at once decided this to be a man—a man with a log in his hand. This log he carefully adjusted across the track.

"What a very curious—" began Letty. But her exclamation was cut short by the awful intuition that the man meant to wreck the on-coming train.

All thought of private sorrow fled in an instant. What could she do? What must she do, for save the train she must, of course. Who else was there to do it? And oh, such a little time to do it in. To go around by the path would take a half-hour. To climb down the side of the ravine would be madness. Suddenly her mind was illuminated. Yes, she



could do that, and like the wind she was up at the house and back again, only this time she steered for a spot a hundred rods up, just the other side of the curve.

In a trice she had whipped off her scarlet balmoral, the balmoral she hated so, and had attached to it one end of the hundred feet of rope she had brought from the house.

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Could she do it? Could she crawl out on that branch there and hold that danger signal down in front of the train?

She shuddered and covered her face with her hands. O, no, no, she never could do it. Suppose she should fall off or the limb break. But she wouldn't fall, she mustn't fall. Hark! There is the engine. If she is going to save the train there is no time for further delay. With a prayer for guidance and protection, slowly, oh so slowly, that it seemed hours before she got there, Letty crawled out to the branch and dangled below her, across the track, her flag of danger. She could not see what was going on, because she dared not look down. So, looking constantly up (and, children, believe me, "looking up" is one of the best things you can do when in danger or trouble), and sending a silent wordless petition for the safety of the train, Letty held her precarious post. Hark, it is slowing up. Her balmoral has been seen and the train is saved. The tension over, she cautiously turned and crawled slowly back to land, and then dropped in a dead faint. Recovering, however, she went slowly up to the house, trembling and sick and shivering with the cold from the loss of the warm skirt hanging on the clothes-line down in the ravine.

Relaxed and limp she sat down in the big rocker before the kitchen stove, a confused mass of thoughts racing through her head. Dazed and excited, she hardly knew how time was passing until she heard the sound of wheels.

"O, Letty, the funniest thing—" shouted Laura, bursting into the kitchen.

"Wait, let me tell," interrupted Jamie. "Why, Letty, somebody's hung—"

"Somebody hung," exclaimed Letty, in horror. "Why, Laura Mason, how dare you say that was funny?"

"I didn't—" began Laura, indignantly, but here Mrs. Mason interfered with a "Sh-sh-sh, children, mercy, goodness, you nearly drive me wild. Here. Laura, take mother's bonnet and shawl up-stairs.

"Here, Jamie, take my boots and bring me my slippers. I'm that tired I don't know what to do with myself. Goodness, but it feels good to get home. The strangest thing's happened, Letty. The afternoon express was coming into town this afternoon, and, when it was about two miles out, all of a sudden the engineer saw a red flannel petticoat hanging right down in the middle of the track, hanging by a clothes-line, mind, from the limb of a tree. He thought at first it was a joke, but changed his mind and thought he'd look further, and would you believe it, he found a great, big log across the track. If the train had come on that I guess there'd been more grief than Thanksgiving in this neighborhood to-morrow."

Mrs. Mason had said all this along in one steady strain, while she was walking round the room putting away her parcels.

Getting no response, she turned to look at Letty for the first time. "Why goodness! The girl has fainted. What on earth do you suppose is the matter with her?"

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"Jamie, come quick. Get me some water.

"There," when the restorative had had the desired effect. "Why, what ailed you, Letty? You weren't sick when I went away. Bless me! I hope you ain't going to be sick, and such a surprise as we've got for you, too, out in the barn. But there. If that isn't just like me. I didn't mean to tell you yet."

"Why, mother, mother," exclaimed Father Mason excitedly as he rushed into the room. "Somebody's just come from the village with this," flourishing Letty's skirt wildly around, "and they say the train was stopped right back of our house."

"For the land's sake, Job! Well, if that ain't our Letty's red balmoral. How did it—is that the—Letty, was it you?" she finished up rather disjointedly.

Letty nodded, unable to speak just then.

"Well, who'd 'a' thought it. So you saved the train! Do tell us all about it."

"Mother, don't you think we'd better wait a bit till she looks a mite stronger," suggested kind-hearted Job Mason.

"Well, I don't know but you're right, but I'm clean beat out. Don't you think, Job, that we might bring Letty's surprise—but there's the surprise walking in from the barn of itself. Tired of waiting, likely as not."

"Yes, Letty," broke in Laurie. "Did you know your brother had come home and that you saved his life this afternoon with that old red skirt of yours?" So the mischief was out at last, and though the excitement and everything nearly killed Letty, it didn't quite, or I don't think I would have undertaken to tell this story. I don't like sad Thanksgiving stories. Not that there aren't any; I only say I don't like them, that's all.

Well, sitting in her brother's lap—(what, fifteen years old?)—yes, sitting in her brother's lap, she had to tell over and over again all she thought and felt that afternoon, and to hear over and over again what a dreadful time they had keeping the secret from her. How they were so afraid that she would find out that they expected to meet her brother—how he had been so anxious that she should not be told lest by some accident he shouldn't arrive, and then she would be bitterly disappointed and her Thanksgiving spoiled.

Accident! Letty shuddered each time that they reached that part of the story, for she thought how nearly the accident had happened, and as she knelt to say her prayers that night it was with a penitent heart that she remembered how she had felt in the morning, and she had added fervently, "Dear Lord, I thank Thee for this beautiful Thanksgiving."

THE KNIGHT'S DILEMMA.

(From Chaucer.)

One of the nobles of King Arthur's court had grievously transgressed the laws of chivalry and knightly honor, and for this cause had he been condemned to suffer death. Great sorrow reigned among all the lords and dames, and Queen Guinevere, on bent knees, had sued the king's pardon for the recreant knight. At length, after many entreaties, Arthur's generous heart relented, and he gave the doomed life into the queen's hands to do with it as she willed.

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Then Guinevere, delighted at the success of her suit with her royal husband, sent for the knight to appear before her, in her own bower, where she sat among the ladies of her chamber.

When the knight, who was called Sir Ulric, had reached the royal lady's presence, he would have thrown himself at her feet with many thanks for the dear boon which she had caused the king to grant him. But she motioned him to listen to what she had to say, before she would receive his gratitude.

"Defer all thanks, Sir Knight," said the queen, "until first I state to thee the conditions on which thou yet holdest thy life. It is granted thee to be free of death, if within one year and a day from this present thou art able to declare to me what of earthly things all women like the best. If in that time thou canst tell, past all dispute, what this thing be, thou shalt have thy life and freedom. Otherwise, on my queenly honor, thou diest, as the king had first decreed."

When the knight heard this he was filled with consternation and dismay too great for words. At once in his heart he accused the king of cruelty in permitting him to drag out a miserable existence for a whole year in endeavoring to fulfill a condition which in his thoughts he at once resolved to be impossible. For who could decide upon what would please all ladies best, when it was agreed by all wise men that no two of the uncertain sex would ever fix upon one and the same thing?

With these desponding thoughts Sir Ulric went out of the queen's presence, and prepared to travel abroad over the country, if perchance by inquiring far and wide he might find out the answer which would save his life.

From house to house and from town to town traveled Sir Ulric, asking maid and matron, young or old, the same question. But never, from any two, did he receive a like answer. Some told him that women best loved fine clothes; some that they loved rich living; some loved their children best; others desired most to be loved; and some loved best to be considered free from curiosity, which, since Eve, had been said to be a woman's chief vice. But among all, no answers were alike, and at each the knight's heart sank in despair, and he seemed as if he followed and ignis fatuus which each day led him farther and farther from the truth.

One day, as he rode through a pleasant wood, the knight alighted and sat himself down under a tree to rest, and bewail his unhappy lot. Sitting here, in a loud voice he accused his unfriendly stars that they had brought him into so sad a state. While he spoke thus, he looked up and beheld an old woman, wrapped in a heavy mantle, standing beside him. Sir Ulric thought he had never seen so hideous a hag as she who now stood gazing at him. She was wrinkled and toothless, and bent with age. One eye was shut, and in the other was a leer so horrible that he feared her some uncanny creature of the wood, and crossed himself as he looked on her.

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“Good knight,” said the old crone, before he could arise to leave her sight, “tell me, I pray thee, what hard thing ye seek. I am old, and have had much wisdom. It may happen that I can help you out of the great trouble into which you have come.”

The knight, in spite of her loathsomeness, felt a ray of hope at this offer, and in a few words told her what he was seeking.

As soon as she had heard, the old creature burst into so loud a laugh that between laughing and mumbling Sir Ulric feared she would choke herself before she found breath to answer him.

“You are but a poor hand at riddles,” she said at length, “if you cannot guess what is so simple. Let me but whisper two words in your ear, and you shall be able to tell the queen what neither she nor her ladies nor any woman in all the kingdom shall be able to deny. But I give my aid on one condition,—that if I be right in what I tell, you shall grant me one boon, whatever I ask, if the same be in your power.”

The knight gladly consented, and on this the old hag whispered in his ear two little words, which caused him to leap upon his horse with great joy and set out directly for the queen’s court.

When he had arrived there, and given notice of his readiness to answer her, Guinevere held a great meeting in her chief hall, of all the ladies in the kingdom. Thither came old and young, wife, maid and widow, to decide if Sir Ulric answered aright.

The queen was placed on a high throne as judge if what he said be the truth, and all present waited eagerly for his time to speak. When, therefore, it was demanded of him what he had to say, all ears stretched to hear his answer.

“Noble lady,” said the knight, when he saw all eyes and ears intent upon him, “I have sought far and wide the answer you desired. And I find that the thing of all the world which pleaseth women best, is to have their own way in all things.”

When the knight had made this answer in a clear and manly voice, which was heard all over the audience chamber, there was much flutter and commotion among all the women present, and many were at first inclined to gainsay him. But Queen Guinevere questioned all thoroughly, and gave fair judgment, and at the end declared that the knight had solved the question, and there was no woman there who did not confess that he spoke aright.

On this Ulric received his life freely, and was preparing to go out in great joy, when suddenly as he turned to go, he saw in his way the little old woman to whom he owed the answer which had bought his life. At sight of her, more hideous than ever, among

the beauty of the court ladies, who looked at her in horror of her ugliness, the knight's heart sank again. Before he could speak she demanded of him her boon.

"What would you ask of me?" said Ulric, fearfully.

"My boon is only this," answered the hag, "that in return for thy life, which my wit has preserved to thee, thou shalt make me thy true and loving wife."

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Sir Ulric was filled with horror, and would gladly have given all his goods and his lands to escape such a union. But not anything would the old crone take in exchange for his fair self; and the queen and all the court agreeing that she had the right to enforce her request, which he had promised on his knightly honor, he was at last obliged to yield and make her his wife.

Never in all King Arthur's court were sadder nuptials than these. No feasting, no joy, but only gloom and heaviness, which, spreading itself from the wretched Sir Ulric, infected all the court. Many a fair dame pitied him sorely, and not a knight but thanked his gracious stars that he did not stand in the like ill fortune.

After the wedding ceremonies, as Ulric sat alone in his chamber, very heavy-hearted and sad, his aged bride entered and sat down near him. But he turned his back upon her, resolving that now she was his wife, he would have no more speech with her.

While he sat thus inattentive, she began to speak with him, and in spite of his indifference, Sir Ulric could but confess that her voice was passing sweet, and her words full of wit and sense. In a long discourse she painted to him the advantage of having a bride who from very gratitude would always be most faithful and loving. She instanced from history and song all those who by beauty had been betrayed, and by youth had been led into folly. At last she said:—

“Now, my sweet lord, I pray thee tell me this. Would you rather I should be as I am, and be to you a true and humble wife, wise in judgment, subject in all things to your will, or young and foolish, and apt to betray your counsels. Choose now betwixt the two.”

Then the knight, who had listened in much wonder to the wisdom with which she spoke, and had pondered over her words while speaking, could not help being moved by the beauty of her conversation, which surpassed the beauty of any woman's face which he had ever seen. Under this spell he answered her:—

“Indeed I am content to choose you even as you are. Be as you will. A man could have no better guidance than the will of so sensible a wife.”

On this his bride uttered a glad cry.

“Look around upon me, my good lord,” she said; “since you are willing to yield to my will in this, behold that I am not only wise, but young and fair also. The enchantment, which held me thus aged and deformed, till I could find a knight who in spite of my ugliness would marry me, and would be content to yield to my will, is forever removed. Now, I am your fair, as well as your loving wife.”

Turning around, the knight beheld a lady sweet and young, more lovely in her looks than Guinevere herself. With happy tears she related how the enchantments had been

wrought which held her in the form of an ancient hag until he had helped to remove the spell. And from that time forth they lived in great content, each happy to yield equally to each other in all things.

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HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS.

By Rev. C. H. Mead.

"Black yer boots, mister? Shine 'em up—only a nickel." Such were the cries that greeted me from half a dozen boot-blacks as I came through the ferry gates with my boots loaded down with New Jersey mud. Never did barnacles stick to the bottom of a vessel more tenaciously, or politician hold on to office with a tighter grip, than did that mud cling to my boots. And never did flies scent a barrel of sugar more quickly than that horde of boot-blacks discovered my mud-laden extremities. They swooped down upon me with their piercing cries, until many of my fellow-passengers gazed on my boots with looks that seemed to rebuke me for my temerity in daring to bring such a large amount of soil to add to the already over-stocked supply of the city. My very boots seemed to plead with me to let one of those boys relieve them of the load that weighed them down. But, behold my dilemma—six persistent, lusty, vociferous boys clamoring for one job, while I, as arbiter, must deal out elation to one boy, and dejection to the five.

"Silence! Fall into line for inspection!" Behold my brigade, standing in line, and no two of them alike in size, feature or dress. All looked eager, and five of them looked at my boots and pointed their index fingers at the same objects. The sixth boy held up his head in a manly way and looked me in the eye. I looked him over and was affected in two ways. His clothes touched my funny bone and made me laugh before I knew it. If those pants had been made for that boy, then since that time there had been a great growth in that boy or a great shrinkage in the pants. But, if the pants were several sizes too small and fit him too little, the coat was several sizes too large and fit him too much, so that his garments gave him the appearance of being a small child from his waist down, and an old man from his waist up. The laugh that came as my sense of humor was touched, instantly ceased as I saw the flush that came to the boy's face. The other five boys wanted to get at my boots, but this one had got at my heart, and I made up my mind he should get at my boots as well, and straightway made known my decision. This at once brought forth a volley of jibes and jeers and cutting remarks. "Oh, 'His Royal Highness' gets the job, and he will be prouder and meaner than ever, he will. Say, mister, he's too proud to live, he is. He thinks he owns the earth, he does."

The flush deepened on the boy's face, and I drove his assailants away ere I let him begin his work.

"Now, my boy, take your time, and you shall have extra pay for the job; pardon me for laughing at you; don't mind those boys, but tell me why they call you 'His Royal Highness?'"

He gazed up in my face a moment with a hungry look, and I said, "You can trust me."

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"Well, sir, they thinks I'm proud and stuck-up, 'cause I won't pitch pennies and play 'craps' with 'em, and they says I'm stingy and trying to own the earth, 'cause I won't chew tobacco and drink beer, or buy the stuff for 'em. They says my father must be a king, for I wears such fashionable clothes, and puts on so many airs, but that I run away from home 'cause I wanted to boss my father and be king myself. So they calls me 'His Royal Highness.'"

There was a tremble in his voice as he paused a moment, and then he continued:

"If I ever had a father, I never seen him, and if, I had a mother, I wish someone would tell me who she was. How can a feller be proud and stuck-up who ain't got no father and no mother, and no name only Joe? They calls me stingy 'cause I'm saving all the money I can, but I ain't saving it for myself—I'm saving it for Jessie."

"Is Jessie your sister?" I asked.

"No, sir; I ain't got no relatives."

"Perhaps, then, she is your sweetheart," I said.

Again he looked up in my face and said very earnestly, "Did you ever know a boot-black without any name to have an angel for a sweetheart?"

His eyes were full of tears, and I made no answer, though I might have told him I had found a boot-black who had a big, warm heart even if he had no sweetheart. Very abruptly he said:

"You came over on the boat; what kind of a land is it over across the river?"

"It is very pleasant in the country," I replied.

"Is it a land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign?"

Having just come from New Jersey where the infamous race track, and the more infamous rum-traffic legalized by law, would sink the whole State in the Atlantic Ocean, if it were not that it had a life preserver in Ocean Grove, I was hardly prepared to vouch for it being that kind of a land.

"Why do you ask that?" I said.

"Because I hear Jessie sing about it so much, and when I asked her about it, she said it's a land where there's green fields, and flowers that don't wither, and rivers of delight, and where the sun always shines, and she wants to go there so much. I hasn't told anybody about it before, but I eats as little as I can and gets along with these clothes



what made you laugh at me, and I'm saving up my money to take Jessie to that land of pure delight just as soon as I gets enough. Does yer know where that land is?"

"I think I do, my boy, but you haven't told me yet who Jessie is."

"Jessie's an angel, but she's sick. She, lives up in a room in the tenement, and I lives in the garret near by. She ain't got no father, and her mother don't get much work, for she can't go out to work and take care of Jessie, too. She cries a good deal when Jessie don't see her, 'cause she thinks she is going to lose Jessie, but over in that land of pure delight, Jessie says nobody is sick, and everybody

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who goes there gets well right away, and, oh sir, I wants to take Jessie there just as soon as I can. I takes her a flower every night, and then I just sits and looks at her face, until my heart gets warmer and warmer, and do yer think I could come out of such a place and then swear and drink, and chew tobacco, and pitch pennies, and tell lies? I tells Jessie how the boys calls me 'His Royal Highness,' and she tells me I musn't mind it, and I musn't get mad, but just attend to my work. And—and—and, oh sir, I wanted to tell somebody all this, for I always tries to look bright when I goes in to see Jessie, and not let her know I am fretting about anything; but I does want to take Jessie to the land where flowers always bloom and people are always well. That's so little for me to do after all the good that's come to me from knowing Jessie. But, I begs yer pardon for keeping yer so long, and I thanks yer for letting me tell yer about Jessie."

Ah, the boys named him better than they knew, for here was a prince in truth, and despite his rags "His Royal Highness" was a more befitting name than Joe.

"Where does Jessie live, my boy?"

"Oh, sir, yer isn't going to take Jessie to that land of pure delight, and spoil all my pleasure. I does want to do it myself. Yer won't be so mean as that, after listening to what I've been telling yer, will yer?"

"Not I, my boy, not I. Just let me go and see Jessie and her mother, and whatever I can do for them, I'll do it through you."

A little persuasion, and then "His Royal Highness" and I made our way to the tenement and began climbing the stairs. We had gone up five flights and were mounting the sixth, when the boy stopped suddenly and motioned for me to listen. The voice of a woman reached my ear—a voice with deep grief in every tone—saying, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." A pause—then a sob—and the voice wailing rather than singing:

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, oh, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring,
Cover my defenceless head,
With the shadow of Thy wing.

The boy grasped my hand a moment—gasped out "That's Jessie's mother, something's happened"—and then bounded up the stairs and into the room. I followed him and



found sure enough something had happened, for Jessie had gone to the land of pure delight, and the mother stood weeping beside her dead. On the face of Jessie lingered a smile, for she was well at last. In her hand was a pure white rosebud, the last flower Joe had carried to her the evening before. Her last message to him was that she had gone to the land of pure delight, and for him to be sure and follow her there.

I draw the curtain over the boy's grief. His savings bought the coffin in which Jessie was laid under the green sod. Where "His Royal Highness" is, must for the present remain a secret between Joe and myself. His face and his feet are turned toward the land of pure delight. His heart is there already. You have his story, and it may help you to remember that some paupers wear fine linen and broadcloth, while here and there a prince is to be found clothed in rags.

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PATIENT GRISELDA.

Many years ago, in a lovely country of Italy, shut in by Alpine mountains, there lived a noble young duke, who was lord over all the land. He was one of a long line of good princes, and his people loved him dearly. They had only one fault to find with him, for he made good laws, and ruled them tenderly; but alas! he would not marry. So his people feared he would not leave any son to inherit his dukedom. Every morning his wise counsellors asked him if he had made up his mind on the subject of marriage, and every morning the young duke heard them patiently; and as soon as they had spoken, he answered, "I am thinking of marriage, my lords; but this is a matter which requires much thought."

Then he called for his black hunting-steed and held up his gloved hand for his white falcon to come and alight upon his wrist, and off he galloped to the hunt, of which he was passionately fond, and which absorbed all the time that was not occupied with the cares of his government.

But after a while, his counsellors insisted on being answered more fully.

"Most dear prince," urged they, "only fancy what a dreadful thing it would be if you should be taken from your loving people, and leave no one in your place. What fighting, and confusion, and anarchy there would be over your grave! All this could never happen, if you had a sweet wife, who would bring you, from God, a noble son, to grow up to be your successor."

The morning on which they urged this so strongly, Duke Walter stood on the steps of his palace, in his hunting-suit of green velvet, with his beautiful falcon perched on his wrist, while a page in waiting stood by holding his horse. Suddenly he faced about, and looked full at his advisers.

"What you say is very wise," he answered. "To-day I am going to follow your advice. This is my wedding-day."

Here all the counsellors stared at each other with round eyes.

"Only you must promise me one thing," continued the duke. "Whoever I marry, be she duchess or beggar, old or young, ugly or handsome, not one of you must find fault with her, but welcome her as my wife, and your honored lady."

All the courtiers, recovering from their surprise, cried out, "We will; we promise."

Thereupon, all the court who were standing about gave a loud cheer; and the little page, who held the horse's bridle, tossed up his cap, and turned two double somersaults on the pavement of the court-yard. Then the duke leaped into his saddle, humming a song

of how King Cophetua wooed a beggar maid; tootle-te-tootle went the huntsmens' bugles; clompety-clomp went the horses' hoofs on the stones, and out into the green forest galloped the royal hunt.

Now, in the farther border of the wood was a little hut which the hunting-train passed by daily. In this little cottage lived an old basketmaker named Janiculo, with his only daughter Griselda, the child of his old age. He had also a son Laureo, who was a poor scholar in Padua, studying hard to get money enough to make himself a priest. But Laureo was nearly always away, and Griselda took care of her father, kept the house, and wove baskets with her slender, nimble fingers, to sell in the town close by.

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I cannot tell you in words of the loveliness of Griselda. She was as pure as the dew which gemmed the forest, as sweet-voiced as the birds, as light-footed and timid as the deer which started at the hunters' coming. Then her heart was so tender and good, she was so meek and gentle, that to love her was of itself a blessing; and to be in her presence was like basking in the beams of the May sun.

This morning she and her father sat under the tree by their cottage door, as the hunting-train passed by. They were weaving baskets; and, as they worked, they sang together.

As the hunting party swept by, Griselda looked up, and noted again, as had happened several mornings before, that the penetrating eyes of the handsome duke were fixed on her.

"I fear he is angry that we sit so near his path," mused Griselda. "How his eyes look into one's soul. His gaze really makes me tremble. I will not sit here on his return, lest it be displeasing to him."

Before the hunt was fairly out of sight, a gossiping neighbor came to the hut of Janiculo, to tell the good news. Now, indeed, the duke was really going to wed. He had promised to bring a wife with him when he came back from the hunt. People said he had ridden into the next province, to ask the hand of the duke's beautiful daughter in marriage. And it might be depended on he would bring the bride home on the milk-white palfrey, which one of his squires had led by a silver bridle.

It was almost sunset when the trampling of hoofs told Griselda that the hunting party were coming back; and remembering what the talkative neighbor had said, she thought she would like to take a peep at the young bride when they passed on their way to the palace. She had just been to the well for some water, and she stood in the doorway, with her bare, round arm poising the earthen pitcher on her head, and the rosy toes of her little bare feet peeping from beneath her brown gown, to watch the hunt go by.

Nearer and nearer came the train; louder and louder sounded the clatter, and full in sight came the duke, with the white palfrey, led by its silver bridle, close beside him. But the saddle was empty, and no bride was among the huntsmen.

"Can it be possible the lady would refuse him,—so handsome and noble as he looks?" thought Griselda.

How astonished she was when the duke, riding up to the hut, asked for her father. She was pale with fright, lest their humble presence had in some way offended the prince; and, all in a tremble, ran in to call old Janiculo. He came out, as much puzzled and frightened as his daughter. "Look up, Janiculo," said the duke, graciously. "You have heard, perhaps, that to-day is my wedding-day. With your good will, I propose to take to wife your daughter Griselda. Will you give her to me in marriage?"

If a thunder-bolt had struck the earth at old Janiculo's feet, he could not have been more stunned. He gazed at the earth, the sky, and into his lord's face, who had to repeat his question three times, before the old man could speak.

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"I crave your lordship's pardon," he stammered at length. "It is not for me to give anything to your lordship. All that is in your kingdom belongs to yourself. And my daughter is only a part of your kingdom."

And when he had said this, he did not know whether he was dreaming or awake.

Griselda had modestly stayed in-doors; but now they called her out, and told her she was to be the duke's bride. All amazed, she suffered them to mount her on the snow-white steed, and lead her beside the duke, to the royal palace. All along the road the people had gathered, and shouts rent the air; and at the palace gates the horses' feet sank to the fetlocks in roses, which had been strewn in their pathway. Everywhere the people's joy burst bounds, that now their prince had taken a bride. As for Griselda, she rode along, still clad in her russet gown, her large eyes looking downward, while slow tears, unseen by the crowd, ran over her cheeks, caused half by fear and half by wonder at what had happened. Not once did she look into her lord's face, till the moment when they reached the palace steps; and leaping lightly from his horse, Duke Walter took her from the palfrey in his own royal arms. Then he said, "How say'st thou, Griselda? Wilt be my true wife, subject to my will, as a dutiful wife should be?"

And looking in his face, she said solemnly, as if it were her marriage vow, "I will be my lord's faithful servant, obedient in all things."

Then they brought rich robes to put on Griselda, and the priest pronounced the wedding ceremony, and the bridal feast was eaten, and patient Griselda became a great duchess.

For a time all went on happily in the country of Saluzzo, where Duke Walter held reign. The people loved the meek duchess no less that she was lowly born; and when two beautiful twin babes were born to the duke, a boy and girl, the joy was unbounded all over the kingdom. Walter, too, was very joyful; or, he would have been very happy, if a demon of distrust had not been growing up in his heart ever since he had married the beautiful Griselda. He saw how gentle she was, and how obedient to him in all things, and he was all the time uncertain whether this yielding spirit was caused by love of him, or by gratitude at the high place to which he had lifted her, and the grandeur with which he had surrounded her. He remembered the vow she had taken when she looked into his eyes and said, "I will be my lord's faithful servant, obedient in all things," and thinking of it, day by day, there arose in his heart a desire to put her love and faith to the test.

The resolution to which he came was so cruel, that we can scarcely believe he could have loved Griselda, and had the heart to attempt to carry out his design. He took into his counsel only an old servant named Furio, and to him he gave the execution of his plan.

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One day Griselda sat in her chamber, caressing and playing with her two babes. She had never intrusted their care and rearing to any but herself, and her chief delight had been to tend them, to note their pretty ways, to rock them asleep, and to watch their rosy slumbers. At this moment, tired out with play, her noble boy, the younger Walter, lay in his cradle at her foot; and the sweet girl, with her father's dark eyes, lay on the mother's bosom, while she sang softly this cradle song, to lull them to sleep:

"Golden slumbers kiss your eyes,
Smiles awake when you do rise;
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby;
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

"Care is heavy, therefore sleep you,
You are care, and care must keep you;
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby;
Rock them, rock them, lullaby."

While the young duchess sang the last notes of her song, Furio appeared on the threshold. Some remorse for what he was to do, made the water for an instant dim his eyes, as he watched the group. But he had sworn to do his lord's bidding, and he only hesitated for a moment, looking up, Griselda saw him, and greeted him with a smile.

"Enter, good Furio," she said. "See, they are both asleep. When he sleeps, my boy is most like his father; but awake, my girl's dark eyes recall him most. Have you any message from my lord, Furio?"

"My lady," answered the old man, hesitatingly, "I have a message. It is somewhat hard to deliver, but the duke must have his own will. My lord fears you are too much with the babes; that you are not quite a fitting nurse for them. Not that he fears your low birth will taint the manners of his children, but he fears the people might fancy it was so, and he must consult the wishes of his people."

"If my lord thinks so," answered Griselda, "he may find nurses for his babes. It seems as if no love could be so dear as mine. But perchance he is right. My ways are uncouth beside those of royal blood. I will give my babes a better teacher. Only I may see them often, and love them still as dear, can I not, Furio?"

"That is not my lord's wish, madam," said Furio, not daring to look full at the duchess, and keeping his eyes fixed on the ground. "The duke fears that even now the people murmur that an heir of base origin shall grow up to rule over them. And he is forced to study the will of his people. So he has sent me to take away the babes, and dispose of them according to his royal orders."

When he had said this, Griselda looked at him as one who did not understand the language which he spake. All the blood forsook her cheek, her strength gave way, and falling at the feet of the old servant, still holding her baby clasped to her breast, she looked up in his face imploringly, like the deer who lies under the knife of the hunter.

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But when Furio began to take up the babes, the boy from his nest among his cradle pillows, the girl from her soft refuge in the mother's bosom,—then the sorrow of Griselda would have melted the tough flint to tears. She prayed with moving words, she shed such floods of tears, she gave such piteous cries of agony, that Furio, tearing the children away with one strong effort, ran from the room with the screaming infants, his own face drenched with weeping. When the duke heard of all this, though it did not move him from his obstinacy of purpose, he yet grieved in secret, and wondered if Griselda's love could outlast this trial.

The twin babes, torn so rudely from their mother, were sent to a noble sister of the duke, who dwelt in Pavia; but no word was told to Griselda of their fate; and she, poor mother, submissive to her husband's will, because she believed it supreme, like God's, dared not ask after them, lest she should hear that they were slain.

When the duke saw how Griselda had no reproaches, nothing but grief, to oppose to his will, even his jealousy was forced to confess that her faith had stood the test. Whenever he looked on her, her gentle patience moved his heart to pity, and many times he half repented his cruelty.

Month after month, and year after year went by, and again and again did this demon of suspicion stir the duke to some trial of his wife's obedience and patience. He drove out the aged Janiculo from the comfortable lodgment in the palace in which Griselda had bestowed him, and forced him to return to the hut where he had lived before his daughter's greatness. And though Griselda's paling face and sad eye told her sorrow, she uttered no word of complaint or anger against the duke.

"Is he not my liege lord?" she said to her own heart, when it sometimes rose in bitter complainings, "and did I not swear to obey his will in all things?"

At last the day came when they had been wedded twelve years. Long ago had Griselda won the hearts of the people by her gentle manners, her sweet, sad face, her patient ways. If Walter's heart had not been made of senseless stone, he would now have been content. But in his scheming brain he had conceived one final test, one trial more, from which, if Griselda's patience came out unmoved, it would place her as the pearl of women, high above compare.

On this wedding morn, then, he came into her bower, and in cold speech, thus spoke to her,—“Griselda, thou must have guessed that for many years I have bewailed the caprice which led me to take thee, low-born, and rude in manners, as my wife. At last my people's discontent, and my own heart, have told me that I must take a bride who can share fitly my state, and bring me a noble heir. Even now from Pavia, my sister's court, my young bride, surpassing beautiful, is on her way hither. Canst thou be content to go back to thy father, and leave me free to marry her?”

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“My dear lord,” answered Griselda, meekly, “in all things I have kept my vow. I should have been most happy if love for me had brought thy heart to forget my low station. But in all things I am content. Only one last favor I ask of thee. Thy new wife will be young, high-bred, impatient of restraint, tender to rude sorrow. Do not put on her faith such trials as I have borne, lest her heart bend not under them, but break at once.”

When she had done speaking, she turned to her closet, where all these years she had kept the simple russet gown which she had worn on the day Duke Walter wooed her, and laying aside her velvet robes, her laces, and jewels, she put it on, went before the duke again, ready to depart from the palace forever. But he had one request to make of her. It was that she would stay to superintend the bride's coming, to see that the feast was prepared, the wedding chamber ready, and the guests made welcome, because none so well as she knew the management of the affairs in the palace.

Then Griselda went among the servants and saw that the feast was made, and all things were in order, concealing her aching heart under a face which tried to smile. When at evening she heard the fickle people shouting in the streets, and saw the roses strewn as they had been on her wedding-day, then the tears began to fall, and her soul sank within her. But at that moment the duke called, “Griselda, where is Griselda?”

On this, she came forth into the great feast chamber from whence he called. At the head of the room stood the duke, still handsome and youthful; and on each side of him a noble youth and maiden, both fresh, blooming and beautiful.

A sudden faintness overcame Griselda at the sight. She grew dizzy, and would have fallen, if Duke Walter had not quickly caught her in his arms.

“Look up, Griselda, dear wife,” he cried, “for thou art my dear wife, and all I shall ever claim. I have tried enough thy faith and patience. Know, truly, that I love thee most dear; and these are thy children returned to thee, whom for so many years I have cruelly kept hid from thee.”

When Griselda heard these words, as one who hears in a dream, she fell into a deep swoon, from which for a time neither the voice of her husband, nor the tears and kisses of her children, could rouse her. But when she was brought back to life, to find herself in the arms of her lord, and meet the loving looks of her children, she was speedily her calm and gentle self again.

Then they led her to her chamber, and put on her richest robes, and a crown of jewels on her head; and, radiant with happiness, all the beauty of her girlhood seemed to come back to her face. Nay, a greater beauty than that of girlhood; for, softened by heavenly patience, her face was sweet as an angel's. From that time forth the duke strove, by every look and deed, and tender word, to make amends for her hard trials. And to all

ages will her story be known, and in all poetry will she be enshrined as the sweet image of wifely patience, the incomparable Griselda.

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LET IT ALONE.

By Mary E. Bamford.

"Hold him tight, Sid!"

"I'm a-holding, Dave!"

The two-year colt, Rix, lay on the ground. Sid was holding tightly to the lasso, while Dave was trying to put the points of a pair of small nippers into Rix's right eye. Rix had objected very much, but Dave was determined; he knew something was wrong with that eye.

"There!" said Dave at last, holding up the nippers. "See? Fox-tail, just's I thought. Got it in his eye."

Dave jumped up, holding the piece of fox-tail grass yet in the nippers. Sid relaxed the lasso, and Rix rose slowly to his feet. The colt shut his eyes, and shook his head, as if wondering whether the agonizing fox-tail was really out at last.

"Poor fellow!" said Sid.

"I knowed that was it," asserted Dave. "I see something was the matter with his eye when he come in this noon."

Rix, released, trotted away.

"Guess he'll stay out of fox-tail after this," said Sid.

"I dunno," said Dave. "Critters walk right into trouble with their eyes wide open. I'm going to make bread now."

Sid followed into the shanty, and watched Dave stir together sour milk and soda for bread. The ranch was away in the hills, much too far from any town for visits from the baker's wagon. The treeless hills were the ranging-place of cattle and horses. Far away in the valley Sid could see the river-bed. It was dry now, but Dave said that if one dug down anywhere in the sand, one could find a current of water a few feet below the surface. Dave always knew things. Sid liked to hear him talk. All this country was new to Sid.

"Does your bread always rise?" he asked.

"If it don't I give it to the chickens," said Dave, putting in some more soda. "Tried yeast-cakes, but I couldn't make them work."

"Is fox-tail grass much bother to folks?" questioned Sid, seeing Rix from the door.

"Awful!" said Dave. "Gets in the hogs' eyes, and the sheep's too. Sheep-men try to burn the fox-tail off the pasture land, and the fire runs into the farmers' grain, lots of times. That's what makes farmers hate sheep-men so. Folks down 'n the valley round up the hogs every June to pick fox-tail out of their eyes. If they didn't, half the hogs'd go blind."

"Round up?" questioned Sid.

"Drive 'em together," explained Dave. "You'll see a round-up of my cattle 'fore long. Got to go out and hunt the hills for 'em, and drive 'em away down to the railroad. The other men are going to do it on their ranches too. Takes about a day for us little cattle-men to round up, and then about two days more to drive them down to the railroad. Big cattle-men it takes longer."

"You like it?" asked Sid.

Dave laughed.

"Well 'nough," he said. "We stop, you know, and have a good time on the road every little while."

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"What do you do?" questioned Sid.

"Oh! drink—some," answered Dave.

"You don't though—do you?" asked Sid.

"Oh! well—some," said Dave slowly, as he poked the fire. "Have to drink with other men, you know. They wouldn't think I was friendly if I didn't."

Sid looked troubled. Dave never used to drink when he worked for Sid's father two or three years before, on the fruit ranch up country.

Dave's bread was done. There were yellow streaks in it, but Sid ate it.

"The principal thing's to get something to eat when your [Transcriber's note: you're?] ranching," apologized Dave.

About a week after this the round-up began.

"You take Rix," said Dave. "I'll take another horse, and we'll hunt the cattle up."

In and out of the gullies they rode, here and there through the hills. Late in the afternoon all the cattle that were to be shipped were together. The moon rose full and bright, making the hills almost as light as day. Sid and Dave stood by the shanty, looking back at the corral, where the cattle were.

"We'll start early to-morrow morning, Sid," said Dave. "Guess we'll meet some of the other ranchers on the road, most likely. You tired? Musn't let one day's riding use you up. We'll be two days going down, and one coming back. We can ride nights some, maybe. It'll be pleasant."

Next night they were part way down the hills, far enough so that they were leaving the bare portions behind, and entering the live-oak districts. Sid stood in the moonlight by an oak, and watched some of the men. They sat around a little fire, and played cards and drank. Out in the moonlight were other men, taking charge of the droves of cattle. Sid could see horns and heads, and once in a while a man would come to the fire and drink and joke with the others. Dave came after a time. He saw Sid with Rix by the tree. Sid had tied the horse there.

"Come over to the fire, and get warm," said Dave.

Sid went. One of the men held out a bottle to Dave. He took it, and drank.

"Give some to the youngster," said the man good-naturedly. "He's tired driving cattle, I reckon."

Dave looked at Sid, but Sid shook his head.

“Too fine to drink with us cowboys?” asked the man by the fire.

“Let him alone,” said Dave. “He ain’t going to drink if he don’t want to.”

Sid went back to his tree. He put an old gray quilt around him, and lay down. Then he remembered. He rose again, and knelt in the dark by the tree trunk. He asked God to keep the cattle from injuring anybody, and to keep the men and Dave from becoming very drunk. Sid was afraid.

He lay down again. Once in a while he looked over toward the fire. Dave came to it sometimes, and always one or the other of the men offered him a bottle. Sometimes Dave acted as though he were going to refuse; but the other men always joked, and then Dave drank.

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"Why doesn't he stay away from the fire if he doesn't want to drink?" thought Sid.
"Maybe he's cold. I wonder if mother—"

He went to sleep.

Next day they drove the cattle again a long, long way. At last they came to a town. There was the railroad, and there were the stock cars. When the cattle were on board, Dave and Sid jumped on their horses.

"Want to stay in town over night?" asked Dave. "Like a little change from the hills?"

"Let's go and get something to eat," said one of the other men, who rode up. "I want somethin' different from ranch cookin'. Ain't a first-class cook myself."

Sid was glad to eat bread that did not have yellow streaks in it. He was glad to have some meat, too. But, after eating, the other man said to Dave:

"Come take a drink."

They were on the sidewalk, untying their horses. Sid pulled Dave by the sleeve.

"Don't," whispered Sid.

Dave stopped and smiled.

"Come on!" said the other man.

"I don't get down to town only once in a while," said Dave. "Never drink other times, Sid."

He went with the man. Sid waited; it seemed to him that he had to wait a long time.

"Round-ups are bad things for Dave," thought he. "Mother'd be sorry."

There was a great noise from the saloon on the corner. Pretty soon Dave came out. He looked very white as he came to the place where the boy waited. Dave leaned against Rix, and groaned.

"What's the matter?" asked Sid in alarm.

"It's my arm," said Dave, growing whiter. "There was a fight—in that place—somehow. They knocked against me. I fell. One man fell on top of me and my arm was sort of doubled up under me. It hurts—awful. I don't know whether it's sprained—or broken—or—"

They had to stay in town a week before they could go back to the ranch. When they went back Dave had his arm in a sling.

"It's a good thing the twenty-three tons of hay are in," said Sid. "You couldn't do much with that arm."

Dave did not say anything.

Next Sunday night Sid sat in the door of the shanty on the ranch. He was singing to himself a little. "Safely through another week," he hummed. His mother always sang that Sundays at home. Sid was a bit homesick Sundays in the hills.

Dave came and sat down by Sid, and looked out at the sunset and the dry river away down in the valley. Rix came trotting up near the shanty.

"He's a smart colt—ain't he?" said Sid. "He hasn't been bothered with fox-tail since that day you'n and I took that piece out of his eye. He's kept his eyes away from the stuff, whether he's meant to or not. Do you suppose he has as much sense as that?"

"Critters ain't the only things that walk into trouble with their eyes open," said Dave. "I ain't goin' to let Rix be smarter than I be. I'm goin' to keep out of trouble, too, Sid. I ain't goin' to drink no more, ever."

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"Not round-up times?" asked Sid.

"Not round-up times, nor other times, if God will help me," said Dave, soberly.

"He will," said Sid. "Oh, I'm so glad!"

THE MAN WHO LOST HIS MEMORY.

It was on a morning of May, 1613, that a lady, still young, might be seen, followed by her two children, going toward the cemetery of a village near Haerlem. The pale cheeks of this lady, her eyes red with weeping, her very melancholy face, bespoke one of those deep sorrows over which Time might fling its flowers, but it would be all in vain. Her children, the elder of whom was barely four years old, accompanied her, with the carelessness natural to their age. Indeed, they were astonished to see their noble mansion still in mourning, and their mother and themselves in mourning also, though a melancholy voice had said to them one day, when they were shown a bier covered with funereal pall, "Children, you have no more a father."

A month after this they were playing as gaily as ever. Can it be that the griefs of our early years are so terrible that heaven will not permit them to dwell in remembrance? It may be so; but at all events those children forgot for whom they had been put into mourning.

As that lady arrived at the little cemetery gate, the passers-by asked aloud (for curiosity respects neither modesty nor grief) who might be that lady who passed on so sadly, and who it seemed had good cause for her sadness.

And an old beggar-woman said, "That lady passing by is the widow of John Durer, who died this three months gone, and who was in his time Minister to his Majesty the Emperor."

II.

John Durer belonged to the family of a poor shepherd. He worked hard as a scholar, but even when he was at play he showed a violent disposition to domineer over the rest. He seemed to be devoured with ambition: at all events he carried off every prize at school. By the time he was fifteen he was the admiration, he was the pride, of all his masters. But John was not loved by his schoolmates; he displayed a vanity which repelled them, which sometimes provoked them. He made few friendships, spoke freely with few, and looked haughtily down on such of his little companions as were less happily gifted than he was. His words were short, his look was cold, and the pride in which he shut himself up on purpose, made him unapproachable. He lived by himself.



One evening this young Durer, feeling, even more than usually, the necessity of solitude and meditation, went out into the country, dreaming, no doubt, of the grandeur to which his pride aspired, and which he was hopeless of ever reaching; for his face was sad, and he walked with a slow step, as does some discouraged traveler on a road without end, toward something in the distance that perpetually escapes him. At last he stopped in a hollow, called the Valley of Bushes, on account of the gigantic white-thorn trees that grew there. He sat down in their shadow: a small bird was fluttering about, and singing blithely overhead; but he did not hear her.

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When the storm is loud, all natural sounds are silenced. Thus it was with Durer; the throbbing of ambition in every vein with him absorbed all the sweeter melodies which should charm the heart and fancy of youth.

He was dreaming of fame and fortune. How to rise was his sole thought; and it was not probable, except by some very rare circumstance and chance, that his dream should be realized; for in those days of the world, at least, it was thought that a shepherd's son should have a shepherd's tastes. The young man did not see a single path open in which he could plant his foot—one was barred by wealth, another by position, another by birth. All that he could dream of was some blest chance that should break down for him one of these barriers. He was sullen, afflicted, ashamed, indignant, and alarmed, —above all, when he thought of one thing—that thing was his poverty.

For this had the shepherd of the village near Haerlem labored twenty years; for this had he spent the savings of those twenty years, in giving an education to this young nobleman.

John was buried deep in these reveries—too deep for his age—when some one came up smiling to him. This was a little, fat, chubby-faced man, as round as a barrel, with a low brown hat on his head. He had on a large brown cloak, a handsome yellow doublet, black breeches in the old fashion, and square-toed glossy shoes, with large roses of purple ribbon. The glance of this man, whose hair was already becoming gray, was keen and penetrating. Though his lips were thick, there was an open, honest expression about his mouth; while his clear eyes and sharply-cut eyebrows seemed to belong to a man of strict uprightness.

"I do not like to see youth melancholy," said the little man, coming close to John Durer, and examining him—"it is a sign of the disease too common among young people—which is a desire to be something and somebody before they are well born into the world. I would bet my fortune against this boy's dreams that he is already an old scholar. Plague take those parents who fill their children's heads with learning ere they have made men of them! who neglect all care to form a character, and think only how to bring forward the understanding!—Vanity kills right feeling!"

Mumbling thus to himself, the little man went up to John, and began to question him. The dreamer started as if a thunderbolt had fallen close to his elbow.

"Young man, how far is it from the earth to the sun?"

"Thirty-three millions of leagues," replied John, without the least hesitation.

"As if I did not know that he would know," said the little man to himself, with a smile.

“And how long would it take a humming-bird who could fly a league in a minute to get there!”

“Twenty-eight years, sir,” was Durer’s answer.

“When one calculates so well, and so rapidly, no wonder one is melancholy,” said the little man to himself. Then going on—“Who was the greatest man of antiquity?” asked he.

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“Alexander.”

“Who was the wisest?”

“Socrates.”

“Who was the proudest?”

“Diogenes.”

“Which of these do you like the best?”

“Alexander.”

“What do you think of the neighbor who obliges his neighbor?”

“I think that the first has the advantage of the second.”

The little gentleman considered a moment, and began again—

“What is your father’s trade, young man?”

This simple question made Durer blush. He did not say a word in answer. The little man, who was very clear-sighted, said—“This young fellow is ashamed to own that he belongs to a poor shepherd in the village hard by. Bad heart—strong head—detestable nature! This boy will never make anything but a diplomatist.” Then, after a moment’s reflection, he said to himself—“But it’s of no consequence.”

The end was, that young Durer went back to the cottage wild with joy. He took leave of his father and his mother, who shed torrents of tears at his leaving them. John was turning his back on the shepherd’s cabin for ever: he was to go to Vienna, to finish his studies there. For the little man had put into his hand three purses full of gold, and had said, “I am Counsellor Werter, favorite of his Majesty the Emperor. Your assiduity in study has become known to me. Work on—for aught you know, you may be on the high road.”

Three years afterward, Durer entered the office of the Emperor’s secretary. Later, he became, himself, private secretary. Later still, he received a barony and a handsome estate.—So much for the prophecies, so much for the secret influence of the Counsellor Werter!

Durer was on the highway paved with gold;—but he forgot his father, and he forgot his mother, too.

One day, when Counsellor Werter was going to court, he met Durer on the staircase of the palace. He said to him,—

“Baron Durer, I sent yesterday, in your name, twelve thousand crowns to a certain old shepherd in a village not far from Haerlem.”

The Counsellor said this in rather a scornful voice; and he saw that Baron Durer turned as red as the boy had done in the Valley of the Bushes, on the evening when he was asked what his father's trade was. The two men looked steadily at each other: the Baron with that hatred which is never to be appeased—the Counsellor with bitter indignation.

On the evening of that very day, the Emperor received his faithful old friend, the incorruptible Counsellor, coldly. On the morrow, Werter was not summoned to the palace—nor the day after. Disgrace had fallen on him. He had nourished a serpent in his bosom. He left court, and retired far away, to a small estate which he, too, chanced to possess in the neighborhood of Haerlem.

III.

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As to John Durer, he rose to higher and higher dignities. The Emperor, after having made him minister, married him to a noble heiress. About that self-same time, the old shepherd and his wife died. Their village neighbors accompanied them in silence to the humble churchyard. A little man, whose hair was now white as snow, followed the dead with his head uncovered. When the priest had cast on their coffins that handful of dust which sounds so drearily, the old man murmured—

“There are bad sons, who, when they become fortunate, forget the aged parents who cherished them when they were children. May they be requited! for of such is not the kingdom of heaven.”—Then he knelt down by the side of the grave and prayed.

This old man was Counsellor Werter. Wearied of the world, he had retired into obscurity, after having divided the larger part of his splendid fortune among the poor. He was gay, nimble—in the enjoyment of robust health; and many a time would he thank heaven that no children had been born to him, when he thought of the hard-heartedness of John Durer.

Not long after this, on the spot where the shepherd’s cabin had stood was seen a magnificent chateau. It had been built so quickly, that it seemed like an enchanted palace. Toward the middle of summer, a fine young lord, a fair noble lady of the castle, and two lovely children, entered the village near to Haerlem in pride and triumph, escorted by the peasants, who had assembled in their honor. That fine young lord was John Durer, first Minister to his Majesty the Emperor of Germany.

It had chanced that heavy losses had befallen Counsellor Werter, which brought him within an inch of ruin. Had it not been for a sister left him who took care of him, the poor old gentleman would have been, indeed, in a miserable plight. A single word spoken by John Durer would have restored his ancient benefactor to court, and replaced him in the Emperor’s favor. But vanity is without a heart; and wounded pride never forgives him who has wounded it.

IV.

One day the fine young lord took a fancy to go and visit all the spots in which, once on a time, he had dreamed away so many anxious hours. But he would go alone, not choosing that any should witness his meeting with those old friends, the haunts which might reveal to a companion the poverty of his early life. He set forth without attendants, mounted on a magnificent courser. He rode here, he rode there, not feeling even surprised to see everything so much as it was when he had quitted the country. The day began to go down—it was evening—when at last he came to the Valley of Bushes. There was a small bird singing there, just as it sang on that evening long ago. The sight of the white-thorn trees awakened painful recollections in his mind,—no doubt, perhaps, even a pang of remorse; and he spurred his courser in order to get

clear of the place. But the animal trembled, snorted, and refused to move a step. He spurred his courser: the animal began to neigh violently.

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"Is it some serpent that he sees?" said the fine young lord.

It was a little old man, who stepped out from among the bushes. He was dressed in a black mantle. Out he came, right into the middle of the road, closed his arms on his breast, and said in a dull voice, "Baron Durer, can you tell me what is the distance from a shepherd's hovel to a king's palace?"

"That which there is betwixt the earth and the sun," was the reply of the haughty upstart.

At this, the old man threw his cloak open, and showed himself to the Minister, as he had shown himself twenty years before, on that very spot, to the scholar John Durer. The Counsellor was little changed in appearance, except in his hair, which had been black, and was now white as the snow of winter.

John Durer's visage was mostly pale; but when he recognized that old man, it became as red as blood. It was the third time that he had blushed face to face with his former patron. Then the old man cried in a louder voice,—

"Does the scholar of the village remember one Counsellor Werter?"

"The Minister remembers nothing of the scholar," was the cold and arrogant answer.

"What, then, does he remember?" said the old man, pressing a little nearer.

"*Nothing!*" cried the fine young lord, and he buried his spurs in the sides of his courser. They went off at a fierce gallop.

V.

But the fine young lord had only answered the truth. Whether it was from that sudden struggle of pride, and his hard-hearted resolution not to remember the Counsellor who had befriended him formerly or whether the labor of many years had caused it, from that evening, from that moment, the memory of the Emperor's great Minister began to decay. The ambitious designs of the shepherd boy of twenty years ago came back to him; but of all that had befallen him since, John Durer remembered nothing. The hour of requital was begun!

VI.

Thanks to his good courser, Baron Durer, the Minister, got home in safety to his chateau. The first person that he met was the baroness. He turned abruptly away from her.



"Whither are you hurrying so fast, my dear baron?" said she, seeing her husband running away from her, which was not his custom, for he was fond of his wife.

"Baron!" was his reply; "to what baron were you calling? I am no baron, madame—though one day, perhaps, I may be. Let us hope I may."

The tone in which he spoke these words terrified the baroness. Her husband immediately afterward left the chateau, and began running as fast as his legs could carry him, neither stopping nor slackening his pace. His head was bent down, like the head of a miser who is seeking about everywhere for the treasure which some one has stolen from him. From that day forward his face assumed a gloomy expression, his color became sallow, his eye haggard; and he began bitterly to complain that heaven had thought fit to send him on earth in a shepherd's form and a shepherd's dress.

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Some days later, a messenger from the Emperor's court arrived at the chateau: "May it please my lord Minister," he began—

"I am no Minister," replied Durer, impatiently; "but have patience, sir, have patience; I may be Minister one day." Then he began to walk up and down hastily in the gallery of the chateau, perpetually saying, "I might have been a Minister by this time, sir, if your great ones did not leave men of strong intellect, and ability, and purpose, in the jaws of a misery which eats away the very brain as rust eats away the steel. Why—why, I ask, debar these men from high offices—these men who have nothing—merely out of a prejudice, which is as fatal to the individual as it is deadly to the state?" Then turning sharply on the Emperor's emissary, "Go, and tell your master, sir," said he, "that yesterday I was—I was—I was"—pressing his hand, as he spoke, above his forehead, as though he was trying to find a coronet which had belonged to it. Then rushing away distractedly—"Minister!" cried he, "I am—I was—No, no—I was not—but I soon will be!—Leave me, sir! leave me! leave me!"

Another day, his wretched family, who watched him with terror, overheard him talking to his gardener: "What a magnificent piece of work you are laying out, my good boy," said Durer; "a garden admirably designed, if there ever was such a thing." Then casting a disturbed glance toward the chateau, "'Tis a grand place, this," said he; "rich and elegant, and capitably situated—to whom does it belong, Joseph?"

"My lord baron knows right well that park, gardens, and chateau, belong to his noble self," said the gardener, leaning on his spade, and raising his cap.

Durer began to laugh to himself—but it was a piteous laugh—"Belong to me, my good boy!" said he; "not yet—not yet—and yet it seems to me as if I had owned—as if I had owned"—and he passed his hand over his forehead, as if he could call back some recollection which had drifted away out of his reach—murmuring, after a pause, "Is it to be this shepherd's hovel—for ever?—for ever?—for ever?" He fell on a turf seat, sobbing bitterly; then raising his head, he saw his two fair little children, who were at play in one of the alleys of the park.

"What lovely children!" sighed he; "ah!—he must, at least, be happy, whoever he be, that is father to such a pair of angels!"

The children came and flung themselves, laughing, into the Minister's arms, and hung about him with all manner of tender caresses. In return, he could but press their tiny hands in his, or let his lean, feverish fingers play with their golden curls. They kept calling him "Father."

"What are they saying!" murmured the Baron; "the blessing of being called father I shall never know! What is life—without a home, without a family round me! But these gifts only belong to fortune, and come with it." Then looking from one lovely little creature to

another, with his dim and bloodshot eyes, he said, “And yet these children—these children—” He could not finish his sentence, but again passed his hand over his forehead; and the children became silent and awe-stricken, for they saw that he was weeping to himself.

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Not long after this, he ceased to know his wife, whom he called for without ceasing; then he would bury himself deep in reading, without recollecting a word of what he had read when he had ended. All that was left to him was the memory of his young desires; the power of retaining anything had passed away utterly. His ardor began to change into frenzy; he was devoured with fever, and haunted with dream after dream that tempted him to pursue them, and mocked him at the very moment when he thought that he had reached them. The struggle wore him out, life and limb. He was seen day by day to wither, and grow weaker. The end was not far. On the last day of his illness, a strange fancy seized him: he would get up—rushed out of the chateau, and began to run wildly across the country, as if he were chasing something before him that no one, save himself could see. “Sire!” cried he, hoarsely, “deliver me from the obscurity of this shepherd’s life! Sire! do listen to me! I am John Durer! I have studied everything! I have learned everything! I have fathomed everything! Raise me from my lowly condition, sire! Who knows? one day you may have no one among your servants more devoted, more enlightened, than your poor John Durer!”

The thing that he pursued, fled—fled. Durer ran after it more wildly as he grew weaker, trying to raise his voice higher and higher, and stretching out his arms more and more eagerly. They were now at the Valley of Bushes. “Sire!” cried he once again.

“John Durer, scholar, of the village near Haerlem,” replied a voice from the shadows of the wood, “his Majesty the Emperor does not love people who have lost their memory.”

The whole past—the long, long, years of his ambitious and glorious and ungrateful life—seemed in one instant to come back, as in a flash of lightning, before the weary, distracted man; and with this, too, the consciousness of his present state. He uttered one terrible cry, and fell down dead.

VII.

Three months later, when his orphans were led by their mother a second time to visit the humble cemetery of the village near Haerlem, they found a little old man writing rapidly, with a piece of charcoal, a few strange words on the stone under which the body of their father, the Minister, had been laid. When they came close to the spot, the old man ceased, and pointed out to them, with an awful look, that which he had written. After the inscription, “John Durer, formerly Minister to his Majesty the Emperor of Germany,” the old man had written—

“Heaven requites ingratitude.”

THE STORY OF A WEDGE.

By Rev. C. H. Mead.

For more than a hundred miles, I had traveled, having the entire seat to myself.

Aside from the selfishness of the average traveler, who, while unwilling to pay for more sitting, is more than willing to monopolize the whole seat, I was glad of plenty of elbow room to enable me to answer some pressing letters.

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But as the car began to fill up, I knew the bag at my side must soon give way to another kind of neighbor, and presently down the aisle he came. From a perpendicular standpoint he was small, but horizontally, he was immense, and I viewed his approach with some alarm.

There was a merry twinkle in his eye, and his face beamed with good nature as he said, "Ah, I see you have room for a wedge at your side; allow me to put it in place." With considerable effort and a good deal of tight squeezing, he at last settled down in the seat, remarking, with a merry laugh, "Here I am at last;" and there I was too, and there I was likely to remain, if that wedge did not fly out, or the side of the car give way.

"Have you room enough?" I slyly inquired.

"Plenty of room, thank you," he replied; "I trust you are nice and snug."

"Never more snug in my life."

"That's right; the loose way in which most people travel is a continual menace to life and limb. I believe in keeping things snug, spiritually, physically, socially, financially and politically snug. And if things are spiritually snug, all the others must be so, as a matter of course. I learned that fact years ago in England."

"Are you an Englishman," I inquired.

"No, sir; I'm a Presbyterian" he laughingly replied; "my father was born in England, my mother was born in Ohio, and I was born the first time in New Jersey. Then on a visit to England I was 'born again.' My father was a Methodist; my mother was a Quaker, so of course I had to be a Presbyterian."

His unctuous laughter made the seat tremble. "Not a blue one, mind you. Blue? Not a bit of it. Why, bless you, when I became a Christian, all the blue went out of my heart and went into my sky.

"My father was physically large—I take after him. My mother—" he stopped abruptly and lifted his hat reverently; the tears filled his eyes and coursed down his cheeks, and presently, with choking voice he continued:

"My mother, God bless her memory, was the best woman and the grandest Christian I ever knew. She lives in heaven, and she lives in my heart. I would that I were as much like mother spiritually as I resemble father physically."

The tender pathos of his voice, as he said this, made me feel that his sainted mother, were she present, would have no reason to feel ashamed of her son.

As he was about to replace his hat on his head, I noticed in large letters pasted on the lining, these words, “Hinder nobody—help everybody.”

“Excuse me, sir;” I said, as I pointed to the words, “what is the meaning of that?”

Quickly the tears on his cheeks, were illuminated by a smile as he said—“That’s my watchword; I carry it in my hat, have it hung up on my wall at home, and since I went into my present business, I’ve tried to make it the daily practice of my life.”

“May I inquire what your business is?”

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“Certainly, sir, my business is serving the Lord, and there is no business like it in the universe. It pays good dividends, brings me no worry, insures me a good standing in the best society; feeds me on the fat of the land, fills my heart with peace and makes me an heir to a kingdom, a robe and a crown. Bankruptcy and bad debts never stare me in the face, and every draft I draw is honored at the bank. Thus, I ‘hinder nobody,’ and am able to ‘help every body.’”

“Where do you reside?” I asked.

“On Pisgah’s top”—and his face fairly shone as he repeated it—“on Pisgah’s top. At first I lived down in the valley among Ezekiel’s dry bones, and used to help the multitudes sing—

“‘Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o’er:
Not Jordan’s stream nor death’s cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore.’”

“But I moved on and up to my present residence, and now I sing—

“‘From Pisgah’s top, the promised land,
I now exult to see:
My hope is full, oh, glorious hope,
Of immortality.’”

“But I beg your pardon, sir; am I crowding you?”

“Crowding me? not a bit of it. I trust I shall always have room for company like you.”

“Thank you, sir, thank you. I’m only a wedge”—with a merry laugh—“but I try to fill every opening the Lord shows me. Excuse me but how far are you going?”

“I get off at Albany,” I replied. He looked at me as if taking my measure, and, after a moment he said:

“I hope you are not a member of the legislature.”

“No, sir,” I said, “I’m a Methodist.”

“Give me your hand. I am so glad to know you are going in the opposite direction. A man may go to heaven by way of the legislature, but I would as soon think of going where I could get cholera in order to secure good health, as expect to serve God by becoming a member of the legislature. Ah, here is Albany! Good day, sir; don’t forget the wedge. And if you will, I wish you would remember the watchword—‘Hinder nobody—Help everybody.’”

PRINCE EDWIN AND HIS PAGE.

A tale of the Anglo-Saxons.

CHAPTER I.

On a certain high festival, which was set apart by Saxon monarchs for receiving the petitions of the poor, and the appeals of such of their subjects as had any cause of complaint, the great King Athelstane sat enthroned in royal state, to listen to the applications of all who came to prefer their suits to him.

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In one corner of the hall stood a noble-looking Saxon lady dressed in deep mourning, and holding a little boy by the hand. The lady was evidently a widow, and of high rank, for she wore a widow's hood and barb—the barb, a piece of white lawn, that covered the lower part of the face, being worn only by widows of high degree. The little boy, too, was also arrayed in black attire; his youthful countenance bore an expression of the utmost grief, and his large blue eyes were full of tears. This sorrowful pair did not press forward like the other petitioners, but kept at a modest distance from the throne, evidently waiting for the king to give them some encouraging signal before they ventured to approach him.

The royal Athelstane's attention was at length attracted by the anxious glances which both mother and son bent upon him; and as he perceived that they were in distress, he waved his hand for them to draw near.

"Who are ye?" said the king, when the mournful widow and her son, in obedience to his encouraging sign, advanced, and bowed the knee before him.

"Will my royal lord be graciously pleased to answer me one question before I reply to that which he has asked of me?" said the Saxon lady.

"Speak on," replied King Athelstane.

"Is it just that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, O King?" said she.

"Assuredly not," replied the king.

"Then, wherefore," said the Saxon lady, "hast thou deprived my son, Wilfrid, of his inheritance, for the fault of his father? Cendric has already paid the forfeit of his life for having unhappily leagued himself with a traitor who plotted against thy royal life; but this boy, his guiltless orphan, did never offend thee! Why, then, should he be doomed to poverty and contempt?"

"It was the crime of the traitor Cendric, not my will, that deprived his son of his inheritance," said the king.

"I acknowledge it with grief, my royal lord," said Ermengarde, for that was the name of the Saxon widow; "but it rests with thy good pleasure to restore to his innocent child the forfeit lands of the unhappy Cendric."

"Is this boy the son of the traitor Cendric?" asked the king, placing his hand on the head of the weeping Wilfrid.

"He is, my gracious lord," replied Ermengarde. "He has been carefully brought up in the fear of God, and I, his widowed mother, will be surety to thee, that the boy shall serve

thee truly and faithfully all the days of his life if thou wilt but restore him to his inheritance."

"Widow of Cendric, listen to me," said the king. "Thy husband plotted with traitors to deprive me of my crown and my life; and the laws of his country, which he had broken, doomed him to death, and confiscated his lands and castles to my use. I might retain them in my own hands, if it were my pleasure so to do; but I will only hold them in trust for thy son, whom I will make my ward, and place in the college at Oxford. If he there conducts himself to my satisfaction, I will, when he comes of age, restore to him the forfeited lands of his father, Cendric."

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Ermengarde and Wilfrid threw themselves at the feet of the gracious Athelstane, and returned their tearful thanks for his goodness.

“Wilfrid,” said the king, “your fortunes are now in your own hands; and it depends on your own conduct whether you become a mighty thane or a landless outcast. Remember, it is always in the power of a virtuous son to blot out the reproach which the crimes of a wicked parent may have cast upon his name.”

The words of King Athelstane were as balm to the broken spirit of the boy, and they were never forgotten by him in all the trials, many of them grievous ones, which awaited him in after-life.

King Athelstane, and his brother, Prince Edwin, were sons of King Edward, surnamed the Elder, the son and successor of Alfred the Great. After a glorious reign, Edward died in the year of our Lord 925, and at his death a great dispute arose among the nobles as to which of his sons should succeed him in the royal dignity.

Athelstane had early distinguished himself by his valor in battle, his wisdom in council, and by so many princely actions, that he was the darling of the people. His grandfather, the great Alfred, had, therefore, on his death-bed adjudged Athelstane to be the most suitable of all Edward's sons to reign over England. There were, however, some of the Saxon lords who objected to Athelstane being made king, because he was born before King Edward's royal marriage with the reigning queen; Athelstane's mother, Egwina, having been only a poor shepherd's daughter. They wished, therefore, that Prince Edwin, the eldest son of King Edward's queen, should be declared king; but as Edwin was very young, the people decided on crowning Athelstane, he being of a proper age to govern.

This election was very displeasing to some of the proud Saxon lords; and Cendric, the father of Wilfrid, had been among those who conspired with a wicked traitor of the name of Alfred, to take away the life of Athelstane. The conspiracy was discovered, and all who were engaged in it were punished with death.

The college in which Wilfrid was placed at Oxford, had been founded by Alfred the Great, for the education of the youthful nobles and gentles of the land. It had been deemed the most proper place for the education of the king's younger brother, Prince Edwin, and some other royal wards, for the most part sons of Anglo-Saxon and Danish nobles, whose persons and estates had been committed to the guardianship of the king during their minority. King Athelstane, who, like his grandfather, Alfred the Great, was very desirous of promoting learning, had provided suitable masters for their instruction in every branch of knowledge, leaving, therefore, men of distinguished learning and of great wisdom to conduct the education, and form the minds and morals of this youthful community; and being himself engaged in the cares of government, and in repelling the

attacks of the Danes, the king limited his further attention to occasional inquiries after the health and improvement of his brother and the rest of the royal wards.

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He had, indeed, taken the pains to draw up the rules which he deemed proper to be observed in this juvenile society. One of the most important of these, namely, that a system of perfect equality should be observed toward all the individuals of whom it was composed, was, however, soon violated in favor of Prince Edwin, who, because he was the Atheling, as the heir apparent to the throne was called in those days, was honored with peculiar marks of distinction. Every person in the college, from the masters to the humblest servitor, appeared desirous of winning the favor of the future sovereign, and of this Edwin too soon became aware.

Prince Edwin was the leader of the sports, and no amusement was adopted unless his approbation had previously been asked and obtained. All disputed matters were referred to his decision, and no appeal from his judgment was permitted.

It would have afforded subject of serious reflection, perhaps of jealous alarm, to the king had he been aware of the injudicious courses which were pursued by those around Prince Edwin; but Athelstane was engaged in bloody wars with the Danes and the insurgent Welsh princes, which kept him far remote from Oxford. His brother, meanwhile, continued to receive the most pernicious flattery from every creature around him, except Wilfrid, the son of Cendric, who, by order of King Athelstane, had been appointed his page of honor.

When Wilfrid was first admitted into the college he was treated with great scorn by the royal wards. Among them were many who, in the pride of circumstance and the vanity of youth, were so unkind as to cherish disdainful feelings against the unfortunate Wilfrid, and to murmur at his introduction into their society.

Prince Edwin was, however, of a more generous disposition, and by extending his favor and protection to the forlorn youth, rendered his residence in the college less irksome than it otherwise would have been. But the very affection with which Wilfrid was regarded by his young lord had the effect of increasing the hostile feeling of the others against him; and in the absence of the Atheling, he had to endure a thousand bitter taunts and cruel insults respecting his father's crime and the ignominious death he had suffered.

Wilfrid was too noble-minded to complain to his young lord of this treatment, although he felt it deeply. It required all his firmness and forbearance to endure it patiently; but he remembered the words of King Athelstane—"that his future fortunes depended upon his own conduct;" and he resolved, under all circumstances, to persevere in the path of duty; and, if possible, by his own virtues to blot out the remembrance of his father's fault. He was also duly impressed with a grateful sense of the king's goodness in extending to him the advantages of a liberal and courtly education; of which he wisely determined to make the most he could. By unremitting exertions, he soon made so rapid a progress in his studies that he outstripped all his fellow-students; and, though

the youngest boy in the college, he obtained the highest place of all, except the seat of honor, which his partial preceptors allowed Prince Edwin to retain.

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Prince Edwin loved Wilfrid, and took real pleasure in witnessing his repeated triumphs over those who regarded him with such unkindly feelings. But Prince Edwin himself was proud and capricious—his naturally frank and noble disposition having been spoiled by the adulation of those about him; and Wilfrid was, perhaps, more than any other person, exposed to suffer from his occasional fits of passion. Yet Wilfrid was the only person who ventured to represent to him the folly and impropriety of conduct so unbecoming in any one, but peculiarly unwise in a prince, who, on account of his elevated rank, and the respect with which he was treated, is required to practice universal courtesy, and to avoid, if possible, giving offence to any one.

Prince Edwin, though often piqued at the plain dealing of his page, knew how to value his sincerity and attachment. However he might at times give way to petulance toward him, he treated him, on the whole, with greater consideration, and paid more attention to his opinions than to those of any other person. The regard of Prince Edwin for his page was, however, soon observed with jealous displeasure by one of the royal wards, named Brithric, who was older by two or three years than any of the other young companions of the prince.

CHAPTER II.

Brithric was a youth of a specious and deceitful character: it was his practice to dissemble his real sentiments, and to recommend himself by flattering speeches to the favor of his superiors. By constantly addressing Prince Edwin in the language of adulation, he succeeded in rendering his company very agreeable to him; for the prince's besetting sin was vanity, and the artful Brithric was only too well skilled in perceiving and taking advantage of the weak points of others.

Wilfrid beheld this growing intimacy with pain; nor did he attempt to conceal his uneasiness whenever the prince spoke to him on the subject of his evident dislike of the society of Brithric. "I do not respect Brithric, my lord," replied Wilfrid; "and where esteem is wanting, there can be no true grounds for forming friendships."

"And what are your reasons, Wilfrid, for denying your esteem to Brithric?" said the prince. "He is obliging, and often says very agreeable things to you."

"It costs more to win my esteem than a few unmeaning compliments, which Brithric is accustomed to pay to every one with whom he is desirous of carrying his point," said Wilfrid.

"And what should Brithric, who is the heir of the richest thane in my brother's court, want to gain of a poor, landless orphan who owes his sustenance and education to the compassion of King Athelstane?" retorted the prince, angrily.

The pale cheek of Wilfrid flushed with unwonted crimson at this unexpected taunt from the lips of his young lord. It was with difficulty that he restrained the tears which filled his eyes from overflowing, but turning meekly away, he said—

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"It is the first time the Atheling has condescended to upbraid his page with the bounty of his royal brother, the generous Athelstane, whom may heaven long preserve and bless."

"It is good policy, methinks, for the son of a traitor to speak loudly of his loyalty to the mighty Athelstane," said Brithric, who, having entered unperceived, was listening to this conversation.

"Nay, Brithric," said the prince, "Wilfrid could not help his father's fault; though the remembrance of his crime and punishment ought to restrain him from offering his opinion too boldly, when speaking of the friends of his lord."

"Let every one be judged by his own deeds," replied Wilfrid. "My unfortunate parent offended against the laws of his country, and has suffered the penalty decreed to those who do so by the loss of life and forfeiture of lands. As a further punishment, I, his only child, who was born the heir of a fair patrimony, am reared in a state of servitude and sorrow, and am doomed not only to mourn my early bereavement of a father's care and my hard reverse of fortune, but to endure the taunts of those who are unkind enough to reproach me with the sore calamities which, without any fault of mine, have fallen upon my youthful head."

The voice of Wilfrid failed him as he concluded, and he burst into a flood of tears.

The heart of Prince Edwin smote him for the pain he had inflicted upon his faithful page; but he was too proud to acknowledge his fault. He could not, however, bear to look upon his tears; so he left him to indulge them in solitude, and, taking the ready arm of Brithric, strolled into the archery ground to amuse himself by shooting at a mark.

His hand was unsteady and his aim uncertain that day, yet Brithric's voice was louder than ever in praising the skill of the Atheling. The rest of the royal wards took their cue from the bold flatterer, and addressed to the prince the most extravagant compliments every time his arrow came near the mark, which they all purposely abstained from hitting.

At that moment the pale, sorrowful Wilfrid crossed the ground; but, wishing to escape the attention of the joyous group, he kept at a distance. The prince, however, observed him, and willing to obliterate the remembrance of his late unkindness, called to him in a lively voice: "Come hither, Wilfrid," said he, "and tell me if you think you could send an arrow nearer to yonder mark than I have done."

"Certainly," replied Wilfrid, "or I should prove myself but a bad archer."

The group of youthful flatterers, who surrounded the heir of the throne, smiled contemptuously at the unguarded sincerity of the page in speaking the truth thus openly and plainly to his lord.

“Wilfrid, if we may believe his own testimony, is not only wiser and better than any of the servants of the Atheling,” said Brithric scornfully, “but excels even the royal Atheling himself, in all the exercises of princely skill.”

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"He has yet to prove his boast," replied the prince, coloring with suppressed anger; "but give him his bow, Brithric," continued he, "that we may all have the advantage of taking a lesson from so peerless an archer."

"It is far from my wish presumptuously to compete with my lord," replied Wilfrid, calmly rejecting the bow.

"He has boasted that which he cannot perform," said Brithric, with an insulting laugh.

"You are welcome to that opinion, Brithric, if it so please you," said Wilfrid, turning about to quit the ground.

"Nay," cried the prince, "you go not till you have made good your boast, young sir, by sending an arrow nearer to the mark than mine."

"Ay, royal Atheling," shouted the company, "compel the vaunter to show us a sample of his skill."

"Rather, let my lord, the Atheling, try his own skill once more," said Wilfrid; "he can hit the mark himself, if he will."

Prince Edwin bent his bow, and this time the arrow entered the centre of the target. The ground rang with the plaudits of the spectators.

"Let us see now if Wilfrid, the son of Cendric, the traitor, can equal the Atheling's shot," shouted Brithric.

"Shoot, Wilfrid, shoot!" cried more than twenty voices among the royal wards.

"I have no wish to bend the bow to-day," said Wilfrid.

"Because you know that you must expose yourself to contempt by failing to make your vaunt good," said Brithric; "but you shall not escape thus lightly."

"Nothing but the express command of the prince, my master, will induce me to bend my bow to-day," said Wilfrid.

"Wilfrid, son of Cendric, I, Edwin Atheling, command thee to shoot at yonder mark," said the prince.

Wilfrid bowed his head in obedience to the mandate. He fitted the arrow to the string, and stepping a pace backward, took his aim and bent the bow. The arrow flew unerringly, and cleft in twain that of Prince Edwin which already remained fixed in the centre of the mark.

This feat of skillful archery on the part of the page called forth no shout, nor even a word of applause, from the partial group of flatterers, who had so loudly commended the Atheling's less successful shots. Their silence, however, was best pleasing to the modest Wilfrid, who, without so much as casting a single triumphant glance upon those who had insulted and reviled him, dropped his bow upon the earth, and, bowing to his royal master, retired from the scene without uttering a syllable.

From that day there was a visible change in the manners of the Atheling toward his page, for his vanity had been piqued by this trifling circumstance, of which the artful Brithric took advantage to irritate his mind against Wilfrid. He now addressed him only in the language of imperious command, and not unfrequently treated him with personal indignity.

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Wilfrid felt these things very acutely, and the more so because the former kindness of his youthful lord had won his earliest affections. But he now bore all his capricious changes of temper with meekness. It was only in his unrestrained confidence with his widowed mother that he ever uttered a complaint of the young Atheling, and then he spoke of him in sorrow, not in anger; for he rightly attributed much of Prince Edwin's unamiable conduct to the pernicious influence which the artful Brithric had, through flattery, obtained over his mind.

"Patience, my son," would the widowed Ermengarde say in those moments when Wilfrid sought relief by venting his anguish in tears on the bosom of his tender mother, "patience, my son; true greatness is shown most especially in enduring with magnanimity the crosses and trials which are of every-day occurrence. Let sorrow, sickness, or any other adversity touch Prince Edwin, and he will learn the difference between a true friend and a false flatterer. In due time, your worth will be proved, and your victory will be a glorious one: for it will be the triumph of virtue!"

CHAPTER III.

The day which Ermengarde had predicted was close at hand. An infectious fever broke out in the college, which, in several instances, proved fatal to those who were attacked by it, and spread such terror throughout the college that when Prince Edwin fell sick he was forsaken by almost every living creature. His faithful page, Wilfrid, however, watched him day and night, and supplied him with drink and nourishment, which were brought to him by the widow Ermengarde.

For six days the young Atheling was insensible of everything but his own sufferings, and gave no indications of consciousness. On the night of the seventh, as Wilfrid was supporting upon his bosom the head of his afflicted master, and holding a cup of cooling drink to his parched lips, he murmured, "Is it you, my faithful Brithric?"

"No," replied the page, "Brithric is not present, neither hath he entered this chamber, my lord, since the term of your sore sickness commenced."

"Surely, then, he must himself be sick, perhaps dead," said the prince.

"No," replied Wilfrid, with a smile; "he is only fearful of exposing himself to the contagion of the fever."

"Who, then, hath nursed and attended upon me so kindly during these many days of suffering while I have lain here unconscious of everything around me?"

"Your servant Wilfrid," replied the page.

“And where then are my chamberlains and attendants, by whom I ought to be surrounded?” asked the prince, raising his languid head from the bosom of Wilfrid, and looking round the spacious but deserted room of state, in which he lay.

“They are all overcome by the terrors of the contagion,” said Wilfrid.

“And why did you not flee from it also, Wilfrid?” asked the prince.

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"Because, my lord," said Wilfrid, "I knew that you must perish if I abandoned you."

"Ah! Wilfrid," said the prince, bursting into tears, "I deserve not this goodness from you, for of late I have treated you very unkindly; I know and feel that I have: can you forgive me?"

"Think no more of it, my lord, I pray you," replied Wilfrid, pressing the burning hand of the prince to his lips. "I freely forgive all that has passed, and only wish you to remember it, whenever you feel disposed to yield to the impulses of a defective temper, which, for your own sake, rather than mine, I earnestly hope you will correct."

Prince Edwin bowed his face on the bosom of his faithful page, and wept long and passionately, promising, at the same time, amendment of his faults if ever it should please his Heavenly Father to raise him up from the bed of sickness on which he then lay.

How careful should young people be to perform the resolutions of correcting their evil habits which they make at moments when sickness or adversity brings them to a recollection of their evil propensities. Yet, alas! how often is it that such promises are forgotten, as soon as they find themselves in a condition to repeat their faults.

Thus it was with Prince Edwin. Instead of seeking the assistance of a higher power than his own weak will to strengthen and support him in the right path, he contented himself with saying, "I am determined to begin a fresh course; to correct my hasty, imperious temper; to pursue my studies steadily and perseveringly; and to shun the society of those who, by flattery and false speaking, seek to increase my foolish vanity, and impede my improvement!"

Now it was easy to say all this, but very difficult to put these good resolutions into practice. Prince Edwin, neglecting to implore the Divine aid to strengthen him in their performance, soon yielded to temptation, and in a little time, listened to the pernicious flatteries of Brithric with as much pleasure as he had done before the period of his sickness.

It was to no purpose that the faithful Wilfrid remonstrated with him, and pointed out the fatal consequences that result from listening to the false commendations of those who pay no regard to truth. Prince Edwin loved to hear himself praised, even for those very qualities in which he was most deficient. He grew weary of Wilfrid's admonitions, and frequently reproved him when he ventured to reason with him, or attempted to offer the counsel of a true friend.

Brithric was, as I said before, much older than the prince or any of the royal wards. He was artful and ambitious, and had formed in his heart a wicked project for his own advancement, which was too likely to plunge the country into the horrors of a civil war.

This project was no less than that of attempting to induce Prince Edwin to set himself up for king, and to claim the throne as the eldest legitimate son of the late King Edward.

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In all this, Brithric was very ungrateful to King Athelstane, who had been very kind to him, and had recently appointed him to the honorable office of his cup-bearer. That employment, however, was not sufficient to content Brithric, who perceived that King Athelstane was too wise a prince to listen to artful flattery or to allow any person of his court to obtain an undue influence over his mind.

“Ah!” said Brithric to himself, “if Edwin were king, I should be his chief favorite. Wealth and honors would be at my disposal; and as he believes everything I say to him I should be able to govern him, and persuade him to do whatever I wished.”

Brithric had soon an opportunity of introducing this treasonable project to Prince Edwin; for King Athelstane sent him with a letter to the head of the college; and as soon as he had delivered it he paid a visit to Prince Edwin, whom he found in his own chamber, engaged with Wilfrid in brightening his arrows.

“So, Brithric,” said the prince, “do you bring me an invitation to the court of the king, my brother?”

Brithric shook his head, and replied, “No, my prince; King Athelstane has no wish to see you there. Take my word for it, he will never give you an invitation to his court.”

“Why not?” asked Prince Edwin, reddening with sudden anger.

“King Athelstane knows that you have a better title to the throne than himself,” replied Brithric. “He knows, also, that were his valiant Thames and Ealdormen to see you, they would be very likely to make you king; for you are possessed of far more princely qualities than the base-born Athelstane.”

The eyes of Prince Edwin brightened at the words of Brithric, and he grasped the arrow which he had in his hand with the air of one who holds a sceptre. “Fie, Brithric,” said Wilfrid, “how can you be so treacherous to your royal master as to speak of him with such disrespect, and to put such dangerous and criminal ideas into the mind of Prince Edwin?”

“Peace, meddling brat,” cried Edwin, angrily; “who asked counsel of thee in this matter?”

“There are some things which it would be a crime to hear in silence,” replied Wilfrid; “and I implore you, my dear, dear lord, by all the love that once united you and your faithful page in the bonds of friendship, not to listen to the fatal suggestions of the false Brithric.”

“False Brithric!” echoed the wily tempter; “I will prove myself the true friend of the Atheling, if he will only give consent to the deed by which I will make him this very day the lord of England.”

“Impossible,” cried the prince; “you have no power to raise me to the throne of my father Edward, albeit it is my lawful inheritance.”

“The usurper Athelstane knows that full well,” observed Brithric. “Therefore it is that you are kept here, like a bird in a cage, leading a life of monkish seclusion in an obscure college, instead of learning to wield the battleaxe, to hurl the spear, and rein the war-horse, like a royal Saxon prince.”

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"The wily tyrant shall find that Edwin the Atheling is not to be so treated," exclaimed the prince, yielding to a burst of passion.

"You have no remedy, my lord," said Brithric; "for the people love the usurper, and know nothing of his imprisoned brother, Edwin, the rightful king of England."

"And shall I always be immured, like a captived thrush?" asked Edwin, indignantly.

"Yes, while Athelstane lives, you must expect no other fate," said Brithric. "But what if Athelstane should die?" continued he, fixing his eyes on the face of the prince.

"Oh! hear him not, my lord," cried Wilfrid, flinging himself at the Atheling's feet; "he would tempt you to a crime as deadly as that of Cain."

"Peace, son of Cendric, the traitor!" exclaimed Prince Edwin, leveling at the same time a blow at his faithful page, which felled him to the earth, where he lay covered with blood, and apparently without sense or motion.

"And now speak on, my loving Brithric," continued the Atheling, without paying the slightest regard to the condition of poor Wilfrid, who was, however, perfectly aware of all that was passing, though, to all appearance, insensible.

"My lord," said Brithric, drawing nearer to the Atheling, "I will now speak plainly. I am the cup-bearer of King Athelstane, and the next time I present the red wine to him at the banquet it shall be drugged with such a draught as shall make Prince Edwin lord of England within an hour after the usurper has swallowed it."

"Traitor, begone!" exclaimed the prince, filled with horror at this dreadful proposal. "I would not stain my soul with the crime of murder, if by such means I could obtain the empire of the world."

Brithric used many wicked arguments to induce Prince Edwin to consent to the murder of his royal brother; but Edwin commanded him to leave his presence, and never to presume to enter it again. The vile wretch, however, alarmed lest the prince should inform the king of the crime he had meditated against him, went to his royal master and accused the Atheling of having endeavored to persuade him to mix poison in the wine cup of his sovereign.

Athelstane, justly indignant at the crime laid to the charge of his royal brother, came with a party of guards to the college. Here, before his preceptors and all the royal wards, his companions, he charged Edwin with having meditated the crime of treason and fratricide.

You may imagine the consternation of the prince on hearing this dreadful accusation. It was to no purpose that he protested his innocence, and called on all his faithful

associates to witness for him that he had never uttered an injurious thought against the king. Those who had been most ready to flatter him were silent on this occasion, for they perceived that King Athelstane was persuaded of his brother's guilt; and some of them said, "They remembered that Prince Edwin had often said that he had a better title to the throne than King Athelstane."

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Prince Edwin could not deny that he had used these words; but it seemed to him very hard that they should be repeated to the king in the hour of his sore distress. Looking around, with a countenance expressive of mingled sorrow and indignation, he said,—

“Unhappy that I am! they that were my most familiar friends are they that speak against me! Is there no one that can bear me witness that I am guiltless of the crime of plotting to take away my brother’s life?”

“I will, though I die for it!” cried a voice, feeble from bodily suffering, but firm in the courageous utterance of truth. It was that of Wilfrid, the page, who, with his countenance still pale and disfigured from the effects of the blow received from Prince Edwin, stood boldly forward to bear witness of the scene which had taken place in his presence between Brithric and the prince.

“Oh, Wilfrid, generous Wilfrid,” cried Edwin, bursting into tears, “how nobly do you fulfill the precepts of your heavenly Master by returning good for evil!”

Now Athelstane had been so deeply prejudiced against his unfortunate brother by the wicked Brithric, that he would not listen to Wilfrid’s honest evidence. When, therefore, he heard that he was the son of the traitor Cendric, who had been so deeply implicated in Alfred’s plot, he was so unjust as to believe all that Brithric said against him. Accordingly, he took Wilfrid, as well as the young Atheling, and carried them prisoners to London. He there put them on board a ship that was lying in the river Thames, and when night came, set sail with them and went out to sea.

CHAPTER IV.

Prince Edwin was not greatly alarmed, for he thought the king, his brother, was only going to banish him to some foreign country, where he fondly thought that Wilfrid and himself might live together very happily. But when they were out of sight of land, and the moon had risen over a wild waste of stormy billows, the king had both the prisoners brought upon deck, and he then ordered the captain to put them into a small boat and set them adrift at the mercy of the winds and waves.

It was to no purpose that the wretched Edwin threw himself at his brother’s feet, and entreated for mercy. Athelstane only replied, “You tried to persuade my faithful cup-bearer to take my life—your own life, therefore, is forfeited; but, as you are the son of my royal father, I will not shed your blood upon the scaffold. I commit you and your guilty companion, the son of the traitor Cendric, to the mercy of God, who can and will preserve the innocent if it be his good pleasure so to do.”

“And to His mercy, not thine, O king! do I, in full confidence of innocence, commend both myself and my unfortunate master,” said Wilfrid, as the seamen hurried him, with

the weeping Atheling, over the side of the vessel into the little boat that lay tossing and rocking among the tempestuous billows.

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When the unhappy youths found themselves alone, without sails or rudder, on the pathless ocean, they sank into each other's arms and wept long and passionately.

At length Wilfrid lifted up his voice and heart in fervent prayer to that Almighty and merciful God, who had delivered Daniel from the lions' den, and preserved his faithful servants, Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego, unharmed in the fiery furnace. Prince Edwin, on the contrary, gave himself up to despair, and when he saw the king's ship spreading her canvas to the gale, and fast receding from his sight, he uttered a cry that was heard above the uproar of the winds and waves. Starting up in the boat, and extending his arms toward the disappearing vessel, he unwittingly lost his balance, and was in a moment engulfed in the stormy billows.

We may imagine the anguish and terror of Wilfrid on witnessing the sad fate of his young lord, which he had no power to prevent. Thoughts of his widowed mother's grief for himself, too, came over his mind and filled his eyes with tears, for her, as well as for his ill-fated lord. For himself, however, he felt no fears, even in this dreadful hour, when left companionless on the tempestuous ocean, for his trust was firm and steadfast in the mercies of his Heavenly Father.

That night the winds roared, and the waves raged mightily. Many a gallant bark foundered in the storm, and many a skillful seaman found a watery grave before the morning dawned in the cloudy horizon. But the frail vessel into which the unfortunate Atheling and his page had been thrust, weathered the gale and, with her lonely tenant, Wilfrid, was driven ashore at a place called Whitesande, on the coast of Picardy, in France.

When Wilfrid landed, he was drenched through and through. He was hungry, too, and sorrowful and weary. He knew not where he was, but he failed not to return thanks to that gracious God who had preserved him from the perils of the raging seas to which he had been so awfully exposed, and whose merciful providence, he doubted not, would guide and sustain him in the strange land whither he had been conducted.

Thus meekly, thus nobly, did the young page support himself under this fresh trial. But when the remembrance of the unfortunate Atheling, his royal master, came over him, his heart melted within him; he bowed his face on his knees as he sat all lonely on the sea beach, and he wept aloud, exclaiming—

"Oh, Edwin! royal Edwin! hadst thou patiently trusted in the mercy of God thou slightest, notwithstanding thy late adversity, have lived to wear the crown of thy father Edward." Overpowered by his emotions, he again sank upon the ground.

"Is it of Edwin of England that thou speakest, young Saxon?" asked a soft voice in the sweet familiar language of his own native land.

He raised his head and found that he was surrounded by a party of ladies, one of whom questioned him with an air of eager interest respecting the expressions he had used touching the unfortunate Prince Edwin.

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Now this lady was no other than Ogina, Queen of France, the sister of Prince Edwin. Being on a visit at the house of a great lord on the coast of Picardy, she had come down to the beach that morning, with her ladies of honor, to bathe: a custom among ladies, even of the highest rank, in those days. Hearing that a Saxon bark had been driven on shore by the storm, and seeing the disconsolate figure of Wilfrid on the beach, she had drawn near, and, unperceived by the suffering youth, had overheard his melancholy soliloquy.

While Wilfrid related the sad story of his master's untimely fate, the royal lady wept aloud. After he had concluded his melancholy tale, she took him to the castle of which she was herself an inmate, and commended him to the care of her noble host, who quickly attended to all his wants, and furnished him with dry garments.

When Wilfrid had taken due rest and refreshment, the queen requested that he should be brought into her presence. He was, accordingly, ushered into a stately apartment, where Ogina was seated under a crimson canopy, fringed with gold. She bade him draw near, and extended her hand toward him. Being well acquainted with courtly customs, the youth respectfully bowed his knee and humbly kissed the hand of the royal lady, who proceeded to say,—

"Thou hast been found true when the only reward thou didst expect for thy faithfulness was a cruel death. But surely thou hast been conducted by a kind Providence into the presence of one who has both the will and the power to requite thee for thy fidelity to the unfortunate Atheling; for I am his sister, the Queen of France."

"And I have then the honor to stand before the royal Ogina, daughter of my late lord, King Edward, and Queen of King Charles of France?" said Wilfrid, again bowing himself.

"The same," replied the queen, taking a ring of great value from her finger and placing it on that of the page.

"Take this ring," continued she, "in token of my favor; and if thou wilt serve me in one thing, I will make thee the greatest lord in my husband's court."

"Royal lady," said Wilfrid, "I have a widowed mother in my own land whom I cannot forsake; neither would I desert my native country to become a peer of France. But tell me wherein I can be of service to thee, and if it be in my power it shall be done."

"Darest thou," said the queen, "return to England and presenting thyself before my brother Athelstane, thy king, declare to him the innocence and the sad fate of Edwin, the Atheling, his father's son?"

“Lady, I not only dare, but I desire so to do,” replied Wilfrid; “for I fear my God, and I have no other fear.”

Then the Queen of France loaded Wilfrid with rich presents, and sent him over to England in a gallant ship to bear the mournful tidings of poor Prince Edwin’s death to England’s king. She thought that when Athelstane should hear the sad tale told in the pathetic language of the faithful page, his heart would be touched with remorse for what he had done.

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Now King Athelstane was already conscience-stricken for his conduct toward his brother Edwin. His ship, during the same night that he had compelled him to enter the boat with Wilfrid, was terribly tossed by the tempest, and he felt that the vengeance of God was upon him for his hardness of heart. The crew of the royal vessel had toiled and labored all night, and it was with great difficulty that the ship was at length got into port. Every individual on board, as well as the king himself, felt convinced that the storm was a visitation upon them for what they had done.

King Athelstane had become very melancholy and offered large rewards to any one who would bring him news of his unfortunate brother; and he looked with horror upon Brithric as the cause of his having dealt so hardly with Edwin. One day, when Brithric was waiting at table with the king's cup, it happened that his foot slipped, and he would have fallen if he had not dexterously saved himself with the other foot: observing some of the courtiers smile, he cried out jestingly, "See you, my lords, how one brother helps the other."

"It is thus that brother should aid brother," said the king; "but it was thee, false traitor, that did set me against mine! for the which thou shalt surely pay the forfeit of thy life in the same hour that tidings are brought me of his death."

At that moment Wilfrid, presenting himself before the king, said, "King Athelstane, I bring thee tidings of Edwin the Atheling!"

"The fairest earldom in my kingdom shall be the reward of him who will tell me that my brother liveth," exclaimed the king eagerly.

"If thou wouldst give the royal crown of England from off thine head it would not bribe the deep sea to give up its dead!" replied the page.

"Who art thou that speakest such woeful words?" demanded Athelstane, fixing his eyes with a doubting and fearful scrutiny on the face of the page.

"Hast thou forgotten Wilfrid, the son of Cendric?" replied the youth; "he who commended himself to the mercy of the King of kings, in that dark hour when thy brother Edwin implored for thine in vain."

"Ha!" cried the king, "I remember thee now; thou art the pale stripling who bore witness of my brother's innocence of the crime with which the false-tongued Brithric charged him!"

"The same, my lord," said Wilfrid; "and God hath witnessed for my truth by preserving me from the waters of the great deep, to which thou didst commit me with my lord, Prince Edwin."

“But Edwin—my brother Edwin! tell me of him!” cried Athelstane, grasping the shoulder of the page.

“Did not his drowning cry reach thine ear, royal Athelstane?” asked Wilfrid, bursting into tears. “Ere thy tall vessel had disappeared from our sight the fair-haired Atheling was engulfed in the stormy billows that swelled round our frail bark, and I, only I, am, by the especial mercy of God, preserved to tell thee the sad fate of thy father’s son, whom thou wert, in an evil hour, moved by a treacherous villain to destroy.”

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“Traitor,” said the king, turning to Brithric, “thy false tongue hath not only slain my brother, but thyself! Thou shalt die for having wickedly induced me to become his murderer!”

“And thou wilt live, O king, to suffer the pangs of an upbraiding conscience,” replied the culprit. “Where was thy wisdom, where thy discrimination, where thy sense of justice, when thou lent so ready an ear to my false and improbable accusations against thy boyish brother? I sought my own aggrandizement—and to have achieved that I would have destroyed thee and placed him upon the throne. I made him my tool—you became my dupe—and I now myself fall a victim to my own machinations.”

The guards then removed Brithric from the royal presence, and the next day he met with his deserts in a public execution.

As for the faithful Wilfrid, King Athelstane not only caused the lands and titles of which his father, Cendric, had been deprived, to be restored to him, but also conferred upon him great honors and rewards. He lived to be the pride and comfort of his widowed mother, Ermengarde, and ever afterward enjoyed the full confidence of the king.

The royal Athelstane never ceased to lament the death of his unfortunate brother, Edwin. He gained many great victories, and reigned long and gloriously over England, but he was evermore tormented by remorse of conscience for his conduct toward his youthful brother, Prince Edwin.

CISSY’S AMENDMENT.

By Anna L. Parker.

She was a dainty, blue-eyed, golden-haired darling, who had ruled her kingdom but four short years when the events in our history occurred. Very short the four years had seemed, for the baby princess brought into the quiet old house such a wealth of love, with its golden sunshine, that time had passed rapidly since her arrival, as time always does when we are happy and contented.

Our little princess did not owe her title to royal birth, but to her unquestioned sway over those around her; a rule in which was so happily blended entreaty and command that her willing subjects were never quite sure to which they were yielding. But of one thing they were sure, which was that the winning grace of the little sovereign equaled their pleasures in obeying her small commands, and the added fact—a very important one—that this queen of hearts never abused her power.

No little brothers nor sisters were numbered among the princess’ retainers, but she had had from her babyhood an inseparable companion and playfellow in Moses. Now Moses was a big brown dog who, like his namesake of old, had been rescued from a

watery grave, and it chanced that baby-girl and baby-dog became inmates of the quiet old house about the same time. But the dog grew much faster than the little girl, as dogs are wont to do, and was quite a responsible person by the time Cissy could toddle around.

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When she was old enough to play under the old elm tree Moses assumed the place of protector of her little highness, and was all the bodyguard the princess needed, for he was wise and unwearied in his endeavors to guard her from all mishaps. But, although Moses felt the responsibility of his position, he did not consider it beneath his dignity to amuse his mistress, and so they played together, baby and dog, shared their lunch together, and frequently took their nap together of a warm afternoon, the golden curls of the little princess tumbled over Moses' broad, shaggy shoulder.

One day when Cissy was about four years old an event occurred in her life that seemed for a time to endanger the intimacy between the little girl and her four-footed friend, and caused Moses considerable anxiety. It was a rainy morning and she could not play under the trees as usual, so she took her little chair and climbed up to the window to see if the trees were lonesome without her. Something unusual going on in the house next door attracted her attention, and her disappointment was soon forgotten. No one had lived in the house since the little girl could remember. Now the long closed doors and windows were thrown wide open, and men were running up and down the steps. She was puzzled to know what it could all mean, and kept her little face close to the window, and was so unmindful of Moses that he felt quite neglected and lonely.

The following morning was warm and bright, and the little princess and her attendant were playing under the trees again. Moses was so delighted in having won the sole attention of his little mistress and played so many droll pranks that Cissy shouted with laughter. In the midst of her merriment she chanced to look up, and saw through the paling a pair of eyes as bright as her own, dancing with fun and evidently enjoying Moses' frolic quite as much as the little girl herself. The bright eyes belonged to a little boy about Cissy's age, whose name was Jamie, and who had moved into the house that had interested her so much the day before.

Now our little princess in her winning way claimed the allegiance of all that came within her circle, and so confidently ran over to the fence to make the acquaintance of her new subject. Jamie was quite willing to be one of her servitors, and although they were separated by the high palings they visited through the openings all the morning, and for many mornings after, exchanging dolls, books, balls, and strings, and becoming the best of friends. This new order of things was not quite satisfactory to Moses, who felt he was no longer necessary to Cissy's happiness. He still kept his place close beside her, and tried to be as entertaining as possible. But do what he would he could not coax her away from her new-found friend, and all the merry plays under the old elm tree seemed to have come to an end, but Cissy was not really ungrateful to her old playfellow. She

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was deeply interested in her new companion and for the time somewhat forgetful of Moses, which is not much to be wondered at when we remember what great advantage over Moses Jamie had in one thing. He could talk with Cissy and Moses could not. But although the dog's faithful heart ached at the neglect of his little mistress, he did not desert his place of protector, but watched and guarded the princess while she and her friend prattled on all the long, bright days, quite unconscious of his trouble.

One afternoon Cissy's happiness reached its highest point. Her mother had been watching the visiting going on through the fence, and saw Cissy's delight in her new companion, so, unknown to her, she wrote a note asking that Jamie be permitted to come into the yard and play under the elm tree. When Cissy saw Jamie coming up the walk in her own yard, her delight knew no bounds. She ran to meet him, and dolls and buggies and carts and everything she prized was generously turned over to her visitor. How quickly the afternoon passed.

Moses was as happy as the children themselves—for if he could not talk he could at least bark, and now they were altogether under the tree, his troubles were forgotten and which were the happier, children or dog, it were hard to say. So with merry play the beautiful day came to a close. The sun was sending up his long golden beams in the west. Jamie was called home, and Cissy came into the house. The tired little eyes were growing drowsy and the soft curls drooped over the nodding head when mamma undressed her little girl to make her ready for bed. Then Cissy knelt beside her little bed and repeated the prayer she had been taught: "Now, I lay me down to sleep," and "God bless papa and mamma and everybody, and make Cissy a good girl." But when she had done she did not rise as usual; looking up earnestly at her mother, she said: "Please, mamma, I want to pray my own prayer now." Then folding her little hands, the sweet childish voice took on an earnestness it had not shown before, as she said: "Dear Father in heaven, I thank you for making Jamie, and 'cause his mamma let him come in my yard to play. Please make lots more Jamies," and with this sincere expression of her grateful heart, and her loving recognition that all our blessings come from the Father above, the tired, happy little girl was ready for bed, and soon asleep.

Moses lay sleeping contentedly on the rug beside the princess' little bed. He too had had a happy day. I wonder if he had any way to express his thankfulness to his Creator, the same Father in heaven to which Cissy prayed, for the love and companionship of his little playfellows, and for the bright, happy day he had spent? I believe he had. What do you think about it?

THE WINTER'S TALE.

As told by Mary Seymour.



Leontes of Sicily, and Hermione, his lovely queen, lived together in the greatest harmony—a harmony and happiness so perfect that the king said he had no wish left to gratify excepting the desire to see his old companion Polixenes, and present him to the friendship of his wife.

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Polixenes was king of Bohemia; and it was not until he had received many invitations that he came to visit his friend Leontes of Sicily.

At first this was the cause of great joy. It seemed that Leontes never tired of talking over the scenes of bygone days with his early friend, while Hermione listened well pleased. But when Polixenes wished to depart, and both the king and the queen entreated him to remain yet longer, it was the gentle persuasion of Hermione which overcame his resistance, rather than the desire of his friend Leontes, who upon this grew both angry and jealous, and began to hate Polixenes as much as he had loved him.

At length his feelings became so violent that he gave an order for the King of Bohemia to be killed. But fortunately he intrusted the execution of this command to Camillo—a good man, who helped his intended victim to escape to his own dominions. At this, Leontes was still more angry and, rushing to the room where his wife was engaged with her little son Mamillius took the child away, and ordered poor Hermione to prison.

While she was there, a little daughter was born to her; and a lady who heard of this, told the queen's maid Emilia, that she would carry the infant into the presence of its father if she might be intrusted with it, and perhaps his heart would soften toward his wife and the innocent babe.

Hermione very willingly gave up her little daughter into the arms of the lady Paulina, who forced herself into the king's presence, and laid her precious burden at his feet, boldly reproaching him with his cruelty to the queen. But Paulina's services were of no avail: the king ordered her away, so she left the little child before him, believing, when she retired, that his proud, angry heart would relent.

But she was mistaken. Leontes bade one of his courtiers take the infant to some desert isle to perish; and Antigonus, the husband of Paulina, was the one chosen to execute this cruel purpose.

The next action of the king was to summon Hermione to be tried for having loved Polixenes too well. Already he had had recourse to an oracle; and the answer, sealed up, was brought into court and opened in the presence of the much-injured queen:

"Hermione is innocent; Polixenes blameless; Camillo a true subject; Leontes a jealous tyrant; and the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found."

Thus it ran; but the angry king said it was all a falsehood, made up by the queen's friends, and he bade them go on with the trial. Yet even as he spoke, a messenger entered to say that the king's son Mamillius had died suddenly, grieving for his mother. Hermione, overcome by such sad tidings, fainted; and then Leontes, feeling some pity for her, bade her ladies remove her, and do all that was possible for her recovery.



Very soon Paulina returned, saying that Hermione, the queen, was also dead. Now Leontes repented of his harshness; now he readily believed she was all that was good and pure; and, beginning to have faith in the words of the oracle which spoke of that which was lost being found, declared he would give up his kingdom could he but recover the lost baby he had sent to perish.

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The ship which had conveyed Antigonus with the infant princess away from her father's kingdom, was driven onshore upon the Bohemian territory, over which Polixenes reigned. Leaving the child there, Antigonus started to return to his ship; but a savage bear met and destroyed him, so that Leontes never heard how his commands had been fulfilled.

When poor Hermione had sent her baby in Paulina's care to be shown to her royal father, she had dressed it in its richest robes, and thus it remained when Antigonus left it. Besides, he pinned a paper to its mantle upon which the name Perdita was written.

Happily, a kind-hearted shepherd found the deserted infant, and took it home to his wife, who cherished it as her own. But they concealed the fact from every one; and lest the tale of the jewels upon Perdita's little neck should be noised abroad, he sold some of them, and leaving that part of the country, bought herds of sheep, and became a wealthy shepherd.

Little Perdita grew up as sweet and lovely as her unknown mother; yet she was supposed to be only a shepherd's child.

Polixenes of Bohemia had one only son—Florizel by name; who, hunting near the shepherd's dwelling, saw the fair maiden, whose beauty and modesty soon won his love. Disguising himself as a private gentleman, instead of appearing as the king's son, Florizel took the name of Doricles, and came visiting at the shepherd's dwelling. So often was he there, and thus so frequently missed at court, that people began to watch his movements, and soon discovered that he loved the pretty maiden Perdita.

When this news was carried to Polixenes, he called upon his faithful servant Camillo to go with him to the shepherd's house; and they arrived there in disguise just at the feast of sheep-shearing, when there was a welcome for every visitor.

It was a busy scene. There was dancing on the green, young lads and lassies were chaffering with a peddler for his goods, sports were going on everywhere; yet Florizel and Perdita sat apart, talking happily to each other.

No one could have recognized the king; even Florizel did not observe him as he drew near enough to listen to the conversation of the young people. Perdita's way of speaking charmed him much—it seemed something very different to the speech of a shepherd's daughter; and, turning to Camillo, Polixenes said:

“Nothing she does or seems
But tastes of something greater than her self,
Too noble for this place.”

Then he spoke to the old shepherd, asking the name of the youth who talked to his daughter.

“They call him Doricles,” said the man; adding, too, that if he indeed loved Perdita, he would receive with her something he did not reckon on. By this the shepherd meant a part of her rich jewels which he had not sold, but kept carefully until such time as she should marry. Polixenes turned to his son, telling him jestingly that he should have bought some gift for his fair maid—not let the peddler go without seeking anything for her.

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Florizel little imagined it was his father talking to him, and he replied that the gifts Perdita prized were those contained within his heart; and then he begged the “old man” to be a witness of their marriage.

Still keeping up his disguise, Polixenes asked Florizel if he had no father to bid as a guest to his wedding. But the young man said there were reasons why he should not speak of the matter to his father.

Polixenes chose this for the moment in which to make himself known; and reproaching his son bitterly for giving his love to a low-born maiden, bade him accompany Camillo back to court.

As the king retired thus angry, Perdita said, “I was not much afraid; for once or twice I was about to speak, to tell him plainly,—

“The self-same sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
Looks on alike.”

Then she sorrowfully bade Florizel leave her.

Camillo felt sorry for the two, and thought of a way in which he could stand their friend. Having known a long time that his former master, Leontes, repented of all his cruelty, he proposed that Florizel and Perdita should accompany him to Sicily to beg the king to win for them the consent of Polixenes to their marriage.

The old shepherd was allowed to be of the party, and he took with him the clothes and jewels which had been found with Perdita, and also the paper on which her name had been written.

On their arrival, Leontes received Camillo with kindness, and welcomed Prince Florizel; but it was Perdita who engrossed all his thoughts. She seemed to remind him of his fair queen Hermione, and he broke out into bitter self-accusation, saying that he might have had just such another lovely maiden to call him father, but for his own cruelty.

The shepherd, listening to the king’s lamentations, began to compare the time when he had lost the royal infant with the time when Perdita was found, and he came to the conclusion that she and the daughter of Leontes were one and the same person. When he felt assured of this he told his tale, showed the rich mantle which had been wrapped round the infant, and her remaining jewels; and Leontes knew that his daughter was brought back to him once more. Joyful as such tidings were, his sorrow at the thought of Hermione, who had not lived to behold her child thus grown into a fair maiden, almost exceeded his happiness, so that he kept exclaiming, “Oh, thy mother! thy mother!”



Paulina now appeared, begging Leontes to go to her house and look at a statue she possessed which greatly resembled Hermione. Anxious to see anything like his much-lamented wife, the king agreed; and when the curtain was drawn back his sorrow was stirred afresh. At last he said that the statue gave Hermione a more aged, wrinkled look than when he last beheld her; but Paulina replied, that if so, it was a proof of the sculptor's art, who represented the queen as she would appear after the sixteen years which had passed. She would have drawn the curtain again, but Leontes begged her to wait a while, and again he appealed to those about him to say if it was not indeed a marvelous likeness.

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Perdita had all the while been kneeling, admiring in silence her beautiful mother. Paulina presently said that she possessed the power to make the statue move, if such were the king's pleasure; and as some soft music was heard, the figure stirred. Ah! it was no sculptured marble, but Hermione, living and breathing, who hung upon her husband and her long-lost child!

It is needless to tell that Paulina's story of her royal mistress' death was an invention to save her life, and that for all those years she had kept the queen secluded, so that Leontes should not hear that she was living until Perdita was found.

All was happiness; but none was greater than that of Camillo and Paulina, who saw the reward of their long faithfulness. One more person was to arrive upon the scene; even Polixenes, who came in search of Florizel, and was thus in time to bless the union of the young people, and take a share in the general joy.

A GRACIOUS DEED.

In an humble room in one of the poorest streets in London, Pierre, a faithful French boy, sat humming by the bedside of his sick mother. There was no bread in the closet, and for the whole day he had not tasted food. Yet he sat humming to keep up his spirits. Still at times he thought of his loneliness and hunger, and he could scarcely keep the tears from his eyes, for he knew that nothing would be so grateful to his poor mother as a good, sweet orange, and yet he had not a penny in the world.

The little song he was singing was his own; one he had composed, both air and words—for the child was a genius.

He went to the window, and looking out, he saw a man putting up a great bill with yellow letters announcing that *Mme. Malibran* would sing that night in public.

"Oh, if I could only go," thought little Pierre; and then pausing a moment he clasped his hands, his eyes lighting with new hope. Running to the little stand, he smoothed his yellow curls, and taking from a little box some old stained paper, gave one eager glance at his mother, who slept, and ran speedily from the house.

"Who did you say was waiting for me?" said madame to her servant. "I am already worn with company."

"It's only a very pretty little boy with yellow curls, who said if he can just see you he is sure you will not be sorry, and he will not keep you a moment."

"Oh, well, let him come," said the beautiful singer, with a smile. "I can never refuse children."



Little Pierre came in, his hat under his arm, and in his hand a little roll of paper. With manliness unusual for a child he walked straight to the lady and, bowing, said: "I came to see you because my mother is very sick, and we are too poor to get food and medicine. I thought, perhaps, that if you would sing my little song at some of your grand concerts, maybe some publisher would buy it for a small sum and so I could get food and medicine for my mother."

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The beautiful woman arose from her seat. Very tall and stately she was. She took the roll from his hand and lightly hummed the air.

“Did you compose it?” she asked; “you a child! And the words? Would you like to come to my concert?” she asked.

“Oh, yes!” and the boy’s eyes grew bright with happiness; “but I couldn’t leave my mother.”

“I will send somebody to take care of your mother for the evening, and there is a crown with which you may go and get food and medicine. Here is also one of my tickets. Come to-night; that will admit you to a seat near me.”

Almost beside himself with joy, Pierre bought some oranges, and many a little luxury besides, and carried them home to the poor invalid, telling her, not without tears, of his good fortune.

When evening came and Pierre was admitted to the concert hall he felt that never in his life had he been in such a place. The music, the myriad lights, the beauty, the flashing of diamonds and rustling of silk, bewildered his eyes and brain.

At last she came, and the child sat with his glance riveted on her glorious face. Could he believe that the grand lady, all blazing with jewels, and whom everybody seemed to worship, would really sing his little song?

Breathlessly he waited—the band, the whole band, struck up a plaintive little melody. He knew it, and clasped his hands for joy. And oh, how she sang it! It was so simple, so mournful. Many a bright eye dimmed with tears, and naught could be heard but the touching words of that little song.

Pierre walked home as if moving on air. What cared he for money now? The greatest singer in all Europe had sung his little song, and thousands had wept at his grief.

The next day he was frightened at a visit from Madame Malibran. She laid her hands on his yellow curls, and talking to the sick woman said: “Your little boy, madame, has brought you a fortune. I was offered this morning, by the best publisher in London, 300 pounds for his little song, and after he has realized a certain amount from the sale, little Pierre, here, is to share the profits. Madame, thank God that your son has a gift from heaven.”

The noble-hearted singer and the poor woman wept together. As to Pierre, always mindful of Him who watches over the tired and tempted, he knelt down by his mother’s bedside and offered a simple but eloquent prayer, asking God’s blessing on the kind lady who had deigned to notice their affliction.

The memory of that prayer made the singer more tender-hearted, and she, who was the idol of England's nobility, went about doing good. And in her early, happy death, he who stood beside her bed and smoothed her pillow and lightened her last moments by his undying affection, was little Pierre of former days, now rich, accomplished, and the most talented composer of his day.

TOM.

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By Rev. C. H. Mead.

Never did any one have a better start in life than Tom. Born of Christian parents, he inherited from them no bad defects, moral or physical. He was built on a liberal plan, having a large head, large hands, large feet, large body, and within all, a heart big with generosity. His face was the embodiment of good nature, and his laugh was musical and infectious. Being an only child there was no one to share with him the lavish love of his parents. They saw in him nothing less than a future President of the United States, and they made every sacrifice to fit him for his coming position. He was a prime favorite with all, and being a born leader, he was ungrudgingly accorded that position by his playmates at school and his fellows at the university. He wrestled with rhetoric, and logic, and political economy, and geometry, and came off an easy victor; he put new life into the dead languages, dug among the Greek roots by day and soared up among the stars by night. None could outstrip him as a student, and he easily held his place at the head of his class. The dullest scholar found in him a friend and a helper, while the brighter ones found in his example, an incentive to do their best.

In athletic sports, too, he was excelled by none. He could run faster, jump higher, lift a dumb-bell easier, strike a ball harder, and pull as strong an oar as the best of them. He was the point of the flying wedge in the game of foot-ball, and woe be to the opponent against whom that point struck. To sum it all up, Tom was a mental and physical giant, as well as a superb specimen of what that college could make out of a young man. But unfortunately, it was one of those institutions that developed the mental, trained the physical, and starved the spiritual, and so it came to pass ere his college days were ended, Tom had an enemy, and that enemy was the bottle.

The more respectable you make sin, the more dangerous it is. An old black bottle in the rough hand of the keeper of a low dive, would have no power to cause a clean young man to swerve from the right course, but he is a hero ten times over, who can withstand the temptation of a wine glass in the jeweled fingers of a beautiful young lady. Tom's tempter came in the latter form, and she who might have spurred him on to the highest goal, and whispered in his ear, "look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright," started him down a course which made him learn from a terrible experience that "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Does any one call a glass of wine a small thing? Read Tom's story and then call it small, if you dare! Whatever he did was done with his might, drinking not excepted. He boasted of his power to drink much and keep sober, while he laughed at the companions who imbibed far less and went to bed drunk. At first Tom was

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the master and the bottle his slave, but in three years' time they changed places. When too late, his parents discovered that the college had sent back to them a ripe scholar, a trained athlete and a drunkard. The mother tried to save her son, but failing in every effort, her heart broke and she died with Tom's name on her lips. The father, weighed down under the dead sorrow and the living trouble, vainly strove to rescue his son, and was found one night in the attitude of prayer, kneeling by the side of the bed where his wife's broken heart a few months before had ceased to beat. He died praying for his boy!

One evening as the sun was setting, a man stood leaning against the fence along one of the streets of a certain city. His clothes were ragged, his hands and face unwashed, his hair uncombed and his eyes bleared; he looked more like a wild beast hunted and hungry, than a human being. It was Tom. The boys gathered about him, and made him the object of their fun and ridicule. At first he seemed not to notice them, but suddenly he cried out: "Cease your laughter until you know what you are laughing at. Let me talk to my master while you listen."

He pulled a bottle from his pocket, held it up, and looking at it with deep hatred flashing from his reddened eyes, he said:

"I was once your master; now I am your slave. In my strength you deceived me; in my weakness you mock me. You have burned my brain, blistered my body, blasted my hopes, bitten my soul and broken my will. You have taken my money, destroyed my home, stolen my good name, and robbed me of every friend I ever had. You killed my mother, slew my father, sent me out into the world a worthless vagabond, until I find myself a son without parents, a man without friends, a wanderer without a home, a human being without sympathy, and a pauper without bread. Deceiver, mocker, robber, murderer—I hate you! Oh, for one hour of my old-time strength, that I might slay you! Oh, for one friend and some power to free me from this slavery!"

The laugh had ceased and the boys stood gazing on him with awe. A young lady and gentleman had joined the company just as Tom began this terrible arraignment of his master, and as he ceased, the young lady stepped up to him and earnestly said: "You have one friend and there is one power that can break your chains and set you free."

Tom gazed at her a moment and then said:

"Who is my friend?"

"The King is your friend," she answered.

"And pray, who are you?" said Tom.

“One of the King’s Daughters,” was the reply “and ‘In His Name’ I tell you He has power to set you free.”

“Free, free did you say? But, you mock me. A girl with as white a hand and as fair a face as yours, delivered me to my master.”

“Then, in the name of the King whose daughter am I, even Jesus Christ the Lord, let the hand of another girl lead you to Him who came to break the chains of the captive and set the prisoner free.”

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Tom looked at the earnest face of the pleading girl, hesitated awhile, as his lip quivered and the big tears filled his eyes, and then suddenly lifting the bottle high above his head, he dashed it down on the pavement, and as it broke into a thousand pieces, he said:

"I'll trust you, I'll trust you, lead me to the King!"

And lead him she did, as always a King's Daughter will lead one who sorely needs help. His chains were broken, and at twenty-nine years of age Tom began life over again. He is not the man he might have been, but no one doubts his loyalty to the King. His place in the prayer circle is never vacant, and you can always find, him in the ranks of those whose sworn purpose it is to slay Tom's old master, King Alcohol!

STEVEN LAWRENCE, AMERICAN.

By Barbara Yechton.

Stevie's papa usually wrote his name in the hotel registers as "Edward H. Lawrence, New York City, U. S. A.," but Stevie always entered his—and he wouldn't have missed doing it for anything—as "Steven Lawrence, American."

When Kate and Eva teased him about it, he would say: "Why, anybody could come from New York—an Englishman or a German or a Frenchman—without being born there, don't you see? but I'm a real out-and-out American, born there, and a citizen and everything, and I just want all these foreigners to know it, 'cause I think America's the greatest country in the world." Then the little boy would straighten his slender figure and toss back his curly hair with a great air of pride, which highly amused his two sisters. But their teasing and laughter did not trouble Stevie in the least. "Laugh all you like I don't care," he retorted, one day. "It's my way, and I like it," which amused the little girls all the more, for, as Eva said, "Everybody knew Stevie liked his own way, only he never had owned up to it before."

There was something, however, that did trouble the little boy a good deal: though he was born in New York City, he had no recollection of it or any other place in America, as his mamma's health had failed, and the whole family had gone to Europe for her benefit, when Stevie was little more than a year old. They had traveled about a good deal in the eight years since then, and Stevie had lived in some famous and beautiful old cities; but in his estimation no place was equal to his beloved America, of which Mehitabel Higginson had told him so much, and to which he longed to get back. I fancy that most American boys and girls would have enjoyed being where Stevie was at this time, for he and his papa and mamma, and Kate and Eva, and Mehitabel Higginson, were living in a large and quite grand-looking house in Venice. The entrance hall and the wide staircase leading to the next story were very imposing, the rooms were large, and the walls and high ceilings covered with elaborate carvings and frescoes; and when Stevie

looked out of the windows or the front door lo! instead of an ordinary street with paved sidewalks, there were the blue shining waters of the lagoon, and quaint-shaped gondolas floating at the door-step or gliding swiftly and gracefully by.

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The children thought it great fun to go sight-seeing in a gondola: they visited the beautiful old Cathedral of St. Mark, and admired the famous bronze horses which surmount Sansovino's exquisitely carved gates, sailed up and down the double curved Grand Canal, walked through the Ducal Palace and across the narrow, ill-lighted Bridge of Sighs—over which so many unfortunate prisoners had passed never to return—and peeped into the dark, dismal prison on the other side of the canal.

It was all very novel and interesting, but Stevie told Mehitabel, in confidence, that he would rather, any day, listen to her reminiscences of her long-ago school days in her little New England village home, or, better still, to her stories of George Washington, and the other great spirits of the Revolutionary period, and of Abraham Lincoln and the men of his time. Stevie never tired of these stories. He knew Mehitabel's leisure hour, and curling himself up among the cushions on the settee beside her tea table, he would say, with his most engaging smile: "Now's just the time for a story, Hitty; don't you think so? And please begin right away, won't you, 'cause, you know, I'll have to be going to bed pretty soon."

He knew most of the stories by heart, corrected Miss Higginson if she left out or added anything in the telling, and always joined in when she ended the entertainment with her two stock pieces—"Barbara Freitchie" and "Paul Revere's Ride," which were great favorites with him. "Oh, how I would like to be a hero!" he said with a sigh, one afternoon, just after they had finished reciting "Paul Revere's Ride" in fine style. Presently he added, thoughtfully: "Do you think, Hitty, that any one could be a hero and not know it? I suppose Washington and Paul Revere and all those others just knew every time they did anything brave."

Hitty wore her hair in short gray curls, on each side of her rather severe-looking face, and now they bobbed up and down as, she nodded her head emphatically. "Of course they did," she answered, with conviction. "You see my grandfather fought in the Revolution, so I ought to know. But," with an entire change of conversation, "bravery isn't the only thing in the world for a little boy to think of. He should try to be nice and polite to everybody; obedient to his mamma and gentle to his sisters; he shouldn't love to have his own way and go ordering people about. I don't think," with sudden assurance, "you'd have found Washington or Paul Revere or Lincoln behaving that way."

"Pooh! that's all you know about it," cried Stevie, ungratefully, slipping down from his nest among the cushions; he did not relish the personal tone the conversation had taken. "Didn't Washington order his troops about? And anyway, Kate's just as 'ordering' as I am, and you never speak to her about it." Then, before the old housekeeper could answer, he ran out of the room.

You see that was Stevie's great fault; he was a dear, warm-hearted little fellow, but he did love to have his own way, and often this made him very rude and impatient—what

they called “ordering”—to his sisters, and Hitty and the servants, and even disobedient to his mamma.

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Stevie's mamma was very much troubled about this, for she dearly loved her little son, and she saw plainly that as the days went on instead of Stevie's getting the upper hand of his fault, his fault was getting the upper hand of him. So one day she and papa had a long, serious talk about Stevie, and then papa and Stevie had a long, serious talk about the fault. I shall not tell all that passed between them, for papa had to do some plain speaking that hurt Stevie's feelings very much, and his little pocket-handkerchief was quite damp long before the interview was over.

Papa so seldom found fault that what he said now made a great impression on the little boy. "I didn't know I was so horrid, papa," he said, earnestly; "I really don't mean to be, but you see people are so trying sometimes, and then it seems as if I just have to say things. You don't know how hard it is to keep from saying them."

"Oh, yes, I do," said Mr. Lawrence, with a nod of his head; "but you are getting to be a big boy now, Stevie, and if you expect to be a soldier one of these days—as you say you do—you must begin to control yourself now, or you'll never be able to control your men by and by. And besides, you are bringing discredit on your beloved country by such behavior."

Stevie looked up with wide-open, astonished eyes. "Why, papa!" he said.

"I heard you tell Guiseppi the other day," went on his papa, "that all Americans were nice. Do you expect him to believe that, when you, the only little American boy he knows, speak so rudely to him, and he hears you ordering your sisters about as you do?"

Stevie hung his head without a word, but his cheeks got very red.

"You know, Stevie," said Mr. Lawrence, "great honors always bring great responsibilities with them. You are a Christian and an American—two great honors; and you mustn't shirk the responsibility to be courteous and noble and kind, which they entail. Even our dear Lord Christ pleased not Himself, you know; don't you suppose it grieves Him to see His little follower flying into rages because he can't have his own way? And can you possibly imagine Washington or Lincoln ordering people about as you like to do?"

There was a moment's silence; then Stevie straightened himself up and poked his hands deep down in his pockets. "Papa," he said, tossing back his yellow curls, a look of determination on his little fair face, "I'll not shirk my 'sponsibilities. I'm just going to try with all my might to be a better boy."

"Good for you, Stevie!" cried papa, kissing him warmly. "I know mamma'll be glad, and I'm sure you'll be a much pleasanter boy to live with. But you must ask God to help you, or you'll never succeed, son; and besides, you've got to keep a tight watch on yourself all the time, you know."

“Yes, I s’pose so,” agreed Stevie, with a little sigh, “cause feelings are such hard things to manage; and, papa, please don’t tell Kate and Eva, or Hitty.” Papa nodded, and then they went to tell mamma the result of the talk.

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Stevie did “try with all his might” for the next few days, and with such good results as to astonish all but his papa and mamma, who, as you know, were in the secret. Eva confided to Kate that she thought Stevie was certainly like “the little girl with the curl,” for if when he was “bad he was horrid,” “when he was good he was very, very good;” and Mehitabel watched him closely, and hoped “he wasn’t sickening for measles or Italian fever.”

How long this unusual state of affairs would have lasted under usual circumstances is uncertain; but about a week after Stevie’s talk with his papa, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence were called suddenly to Naples on urgent business, and the children were left in Venice in the housekeeper’s care. Mamma impressed upon her little son and daughters that they must be very good children and obey Mehitabel just as they would her; and when they were going, papa said to Stevie: “Son, I want you to look after the girls and Mehitabel, and take care of them while I am away. If anything happens, try to act as you think I would if I were here.”

“All right, I’ll take good care of ’em,” Stevie answered, feeling very proud to have papa say this before everybody, and winked hard to prevent the tears, that would come, from falling. Then, as the gondola glided from the door, papa leaned over the side and waved his hand. “Don’t forget the responsibilities, Steve,” he called out.

“I won’t forget—sure,” returned Stevie, waving back; but when Kate asked what papa meant, he answered: “It’s just something between papa and me—nothing ’bout you,” with such a mysterious air that of course Kate immediately suspected a secret and entreated to be told. This Stevie flatly refused to do, and they were on the verge of a quarrel when Mehitabel’s voice was heard calling them to come help her choose a dessert for their five-o’clock dinner.

Stevie found the next few days what he called “very trying.” You see, by virtue of what his papa had said he considered himself the head of the family, and his feelings were continually ruffled by Mehitabel’s decided way of settling things without regard to his opinion. The mornings were the hardest of all, when, in their mother’s absence, the children recited their lessons to Miss Higginson. Mehitabel had her own ideas about the law and order that should be maintained, and Stevie’s indignant protests were quite wasted on her.

“You may do as you please when your pa and ma are home”—she said very decidedly one morning, when Kate and Stevie told her that their mamma never expected them to stand through all the lessons nor to repeat every word as it was in the book—“but when I’m head of the family you’ve got to do things my way, and I want every word of that lesson.”

“You’re just as cross as you can be,” fumed Kate, flouncing herself into a chair.

“And anyway you’re not the head of the family one bit,” commenced Stevie, warmly tossing back his curls and getting very red in the face. “Papa said I—”

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"Oh, here's a gondola stopped at our door," broke in Eva, who, taking advantage of Miss Higginson's attention being occupied elsewhere, was looking out of the window.

"There's a boy in it lying down—a big boy. Oh, a man's just got out and—yes, they're bringing the boy in here!"

"Sakes alive!" cried Mehitabel, dropping Stevie's book on the floor and starting for the door. "Can it possibly be Mr. Joseph and Dave?"

"Uncle Joe and Dave!" "Hurrah!" exclaimed Kate and Stevie in the same breath; and Eva having scrambled down from the window, the three children collected at the head of the stairs to watch, with breathless interest, the procession which came slowly up.

The tall man on the right was their Uncle Joe Lawrence—Kate and Eva and Stevie remembered him at once, for he had visited their parents several times since they had been in Europe; and the bright-eyed, pale-faced boy who lay huddled up in the chair which he and Guiseppi carried between them must be their Cousin Dave, of whom they had heard so much. Poor Dave! he had fallen from a tree last summer, and struck his back, and the concussion had caused paralysis of the lower part of the spine, so that he could not walk a step, and might not for years, though the doctors gave hope that he would eventually recover the use of his legs. The children gazed at him with the deepest interest and sympathy, and they were perfectly astonished when, as the chair passed them, Dave turned his head, and, in answer to their smiling greetings, deliberately made a frightful face at them!

"Isn't he the rudest!" gasped Eva, as the procession—Miss Higginson bringing up the rear—disappeared behind the doors of the guest room; while Kate and Stevie were, for once in their lives, too amazed to be able to express their feelings.

After what seemed a long time to the children, Mehitabel rejoined them. "I am in a pucker," she said, sinking into a chair. Her curls were disarranged, and her spectacles were pushed up on her forehead; she looked worried. "And there isn't a creature to turn to for advice; that Italian in the kitchen doesn't speak a blessed word of English, and Guiseppi's not much better. He keeps saying, 'Si signorina,' and wagging his head like a Chinese mandarin, until he fairly makes me dizzy, and I know all the time he doesn't understand half I'm saying."

Miss Higginson paused to take breath, then, feeling the positive necessity of unburdening herself further, continued her tale of woe: "Here's your Uncle Joseph obliged to go right on to Paris within the hour, and here's Dave to remain here till his pa returns, which mayn't be for weeks. And he requires constant care, mansage (she meant massage) treatment and everything—and just as domineering and imperdent; Stevie's bad enough, but Dave goes ahead of him. And, to make matters worse, here comes a letter from your pa saying he and your ma have met with old friends at Naples,

and not to expect 'em home until we see them. Anyway, I'd made up my mind not to shorten their holiday, 'less it was a matter of life and death.

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"Now, what I want to know is this: who is going to wait on that sick boy from morning to night? And that's what he'll have to have for he can't stir off his couch, can't even sit up, and wanting something every five minutes. I'm sure I can't keep the house, and see to the servants, and take care of you children, and besides wait on that exacting young one. 'Tain't in human nature to do it—anyway, 'tain't in me. And Dave's temper's at the bottom of the whole thing; he won't have Guiseppi or any other Italian I could get, and he's just worn out the patience of his French vally till he got disgusted and wouldn't put up with it any longer for love nor money. His father's got to go, and who is to take care of that boy?"

Mehitabel's voice actually quivered. The children had never seen her so moved; the differences of the morning were all forgotten, and they crowded about her, their little faces full of loving sympathy. "I wish I could help you, Hitty," said Kate, patting the old housekeeper's hand. "Is mansage treatment a kind of medicine 'cause if it is I might give it to Dave—you know I drop mamma's medicine for her sometimes."

"No, child, mansage is a certain way of rubbing the body, and it needs more strength and skill than you've got. But that I can manage, I think; Guiseppi knows a man that we can get to come and mansage Dave every morning. And I could sleep in the room next to him, and look after him during the night; but it's some one to be with him in the day that I want most."

Stevie had listened to Mehitabel's story with a very thoughtful expression on his face; now he said suddenly, and very persuasively: "I could take care of Dave through the day, Hitty—I wish you'd let me."

"You!" cried Miss Higginson, in surprise. "Why, you wouldn't be in that room five minutes before you two would be squabbling."

"No, we wouldn't; I'm sure we wouldn't," persisted the little boy. "Just you try me."

"But, Stevie, you'd get very tired being shut up in the room with that ill-tempered boy, all day long—I know him of old—he'd try the patience of a saint. You'd have no gondola rides, no fun with your sisters, no play time at all, and no thanks for your pains either. And I'm not sure your pa'd like to have you do it."

"I don't mind one bit about the fun and all that," said Stevie, decidedly; "and indeed, Hitty, I don't think papa'd object. You see, he told me the last thing, if anything happened while he was away I was to act just as he would do if he were here; now, you know, if he were here he'd just take care of Dave, himself—wouldn't he? Well, then, as he isn't here, I ought to do it—see? And really I'd like to."

"Why not let him try it anyhow, Hitty?" pleaded the little girls. And as she really saw no other way out of the difficulty, Mehitabel reluctantly consented, with the proviso that she

should sit with Dave for an hour every afternoon while Stevie went for a gondola sail. Finally matters were arranged, and after a very short visit Mr. Joseph Lawrence started for Paris, leaving Dave in Venice, and the children went in to make their cousin's acquaintance.

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What Mehitabel said was certainly true—Dave was a very trying boy. Though possessing naturally some good qualities, he had been so humored and indulged that his own will had become his law; he loved to tease, and hated to be thwarted in the slightest degree, and this made him often very exacting and tyrannical. Miss Higginson called him a “most exasperating boy,” and she wasn’t far wrong. He teased Kate and Eva so much that they hated to go into his room, or even in the gondola when he took, now and then, an airing. But, to everybody’s surprise, he and Stevie got on better than was expected. Part of the secret of this lay in the fact that Dave had lived in America all his life—had just come from there, and was able to give Stevie long and glowing accounts of that country and everything in it—as seen from the other boy’s standpoint. Stevie’s rapt attention and implicit faith in him flattered Dave, and beside, though he wouldn’t have acknowledged it for the world, he found the little fellow’s willing ministrations very much pleasanter than those of the French valet, whose patience he had soon exhausted. And Stevie felt so sorry for the boy who had dearly loved to run and leap and climb, and who now lay so helpless that he could not even sit up for five minutes. Dave’s heart was very sore over it sometimes—once or twice he had let Stevie see it; and then he had no dear loving mother as Stevie had, and his papa had never talked to him as Stevie’s papa did to his little boy. So Stevie tried with all the strength of his brave, tender little heart to be patient with his cousin.

But, as Mehitabel would say, “human nature is human nature;” they both had quick tempers and strong wills; and for all Stevie’s good intentions, many a lively quarrel took place in the guest room, of which they both fancied the old housekeeper knew nothing. She had threatened that if Dave “abused” Stevie she would separate the boys at once, even if she had to mount guard over the invalid herself; so with Spartan-like fortitude both kept their grievances to themselves—Dave because he disliked and was a little afraid of Miss Higginson, whom he had nicknamed the “dragon,” and Stevie because he had really grown very fond of Dave, and knew how utterly dependent he was on him. But one day Stevie completely lost his temper and got so angry that he declared to himself he’d “just give up the whole thing.”

Stevie had felt a little cross himself that morning, and Dave had been unbearable; the consequence was the most serious quarrel they had ever had. In a fit of violent rage Dave threw everything he could lay hands on at Stevie—books, cushions, and last a pretty paper-weight. The books and cushions Stevie dodged, but the paper-weight hit him on the shin, a sharp enough blow to bring tears to his eyes and the angry blood to his cheeks. Catching up a cushion that lay near, he sent it whizzing at Dave, and had the satisfaction of seeing it hit his cousin full in the face; then, before Dave could retaliate, he slipped into the hall and slammed the door of the guest room.

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Out in the hall he almost danced with rage. "I'll tell Hitty," he stormed; "I won't wait on him and do things for him any longer. He's the worst-tempered boy in the whole world. I just won't have another thing to do with him! I'll go and tell her so."

Before he got half way to Mehitabel, however, he changed his mind, and stealing softly back, sat on the top step of the stairs, just outside Dave's room, to wait till Dave should call him, to make up, as had happened more than once before. Stevie determined he wouldn't go in of his own accord—he said Dave had been "too contemptibly mean." So he sat there with a very obstinate look on his little face, his elbows on his knees and his chin in his palms, staring at the patch of blue sky which was visible through the hall window nearest him.

But somehow, after a while Stevie's anger began to cool, and he began to feel sorry for Dave, and to wonder if the cushion had hurt him—a corner of it might have struck his eye! The paper-weight had hurt quite a good deal; but then he could get out of the way of such things, while Dave couldn't dodge, he had to lie there and take what Stevie threw. Poor Dave! and he might lie in that helpless way for years yet—the doctors had said perhaps by the time he was twenty-one he might be able to walk. What a long time to have to wait! Poor Dave! Stevie wondered if he would behave better than Dave if he were twelve years old and as helpless as his cousin. Mehitabel said they were both fond of their own way and loved to order people about; he guessed all boys loved their own way, whether they were nine or twelve years old.

And then suddenly there came to Stevie the remembrance of a picture that hung in his mamma's room. It was a print of a famous painting, and it represented a Boy of twelve, with a bright, eager, beautiful face, standing among grave, dark-browed, white-robed men. Mamma and Stevie had often talked about the Boy there pictured, and Stevie knew that He had not loved His own way, for He "pleased not Himself." He wouldn't have quarreled with Dave! He had been a real Boy, too; He knew just what other boys had to go through, all their trials and temptations, and mamma had said over and over that she knew He just loved to help those other boys to be good and unselfish and patient.

Then He must know all about poor Dave's having to lie helpless all the time. A wistful look came into Stevie's eyes. Oh, if Jesus were only on earth now, he thought, how quickly they would all take Dave to Him to be healed! Or perhaps He would come to the sick boy, as He did to some of those others in the Bible. Stevie pictured to himself the tall, gracious figure, clad in long, trailing robes, the holy face, the tender eyes. He would lay His hand on Dave and say: "Son"—Stevie thought that was such a beautiful word—"Son, rise up and walk." And immediately Dave would spring to his feet, well and strong. And then after that, of course, they—for he, too, would be present—would be so good and kind and patient that they wouldn't think of quarreling and throwing things at each other.

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Well, that was out of the question—Stevie sighed heavily—Jesus was in heaven now, and He didn't do those miracles any more; but—since He had been a Boy Himself He must know just how hard it was for some boys—like Dave and himself, for instance—to be good; perhaps He would help them if they asked Him. Stevie had his doubts whether Dave would ask; he made fun of Stevie whenever he said anything of that kind—which wasn't often; but he (Stevie) could ask for both, and particularly that Jesus would put it into Dave's heart to make up this quarrel—he did so hate to be the first to give in.

Then, all at once, the eyes that were staring so steadily up at the blue sky grew very tender, and Stevie's lips moved.

What he said I do not know; but after that he sprang up and ran quickly into Dave's room, up to his couch. "Say, Dave," he remarked, in the most off-hand way, "I'll fix up your pillows, then you tell me all about that base-ball team you used to belong to; you said you would—you know, the one that knocked spots out of those other fellers."

Dave lay with his head turned to the wall, his eyes closed; but as Stevie spoke he opened them and looked up, a bright smile flashing over his pale face. "All right, sir, I'm your man," he answered, readily. "Pick up the things round the room first, so the 'dragon' won't know we've had a fight, and then I'll begin. And—I say, Stevie—I—I'm going to turn over a new leaf—sure, and the next time I act as I did this morning just hit me on the head, will you? I'll deserve it." Which from Dave was a full, ample, and most honorable apology, and as such Stevie took it.

A few days later Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence returned home, much to the satisfaction and happiness of the children, who had, as Eva said, "lots and lots" to tell them. Then when the three older folks were alone together, Miss Higginson told her story. "I've watched 'em close, and seen and heard more than those boys ever dreamed I did," she finished up, "and I say that our Stevie's a hero—though he doesn't know it. What he's stood with that Dave can't be told, and never a word of complaint out of him. And, do you know, I really think he's improved Dave as well as himself in the matter of temper."

"A Christian and an American," Mr. Lawrence said, with a glad thrill in his voice, smiling over at Stevie's mamma, whose shining eyes smiled back at him. "Thank God, our boy is rising to his responsibilities. But don't let him know he's done anything wonderful, Hitty."

"I'll not tell him," promised the old housekeeper. "But the good Book tells us, 'He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city;' and seeing that's so, America's got no call to be ashamed of Stevie, for though he's not an angel by any means, yet in his way he's a hero as sure as was ever George Washington or Paul Revere, or my name's not Mehitabel Higginson!"

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