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LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE ;

AND OTHER TALES.



# LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE

AND OTHER TALES.

BY

JULIANA HORATIA EWING.

LONDON:

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Committee.]

TO  
JAMES BOYN McCOMBIE, Esq.,  
OF ABERDEEN,

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS VERY AFFECTIONATELY  
DEDICATED.

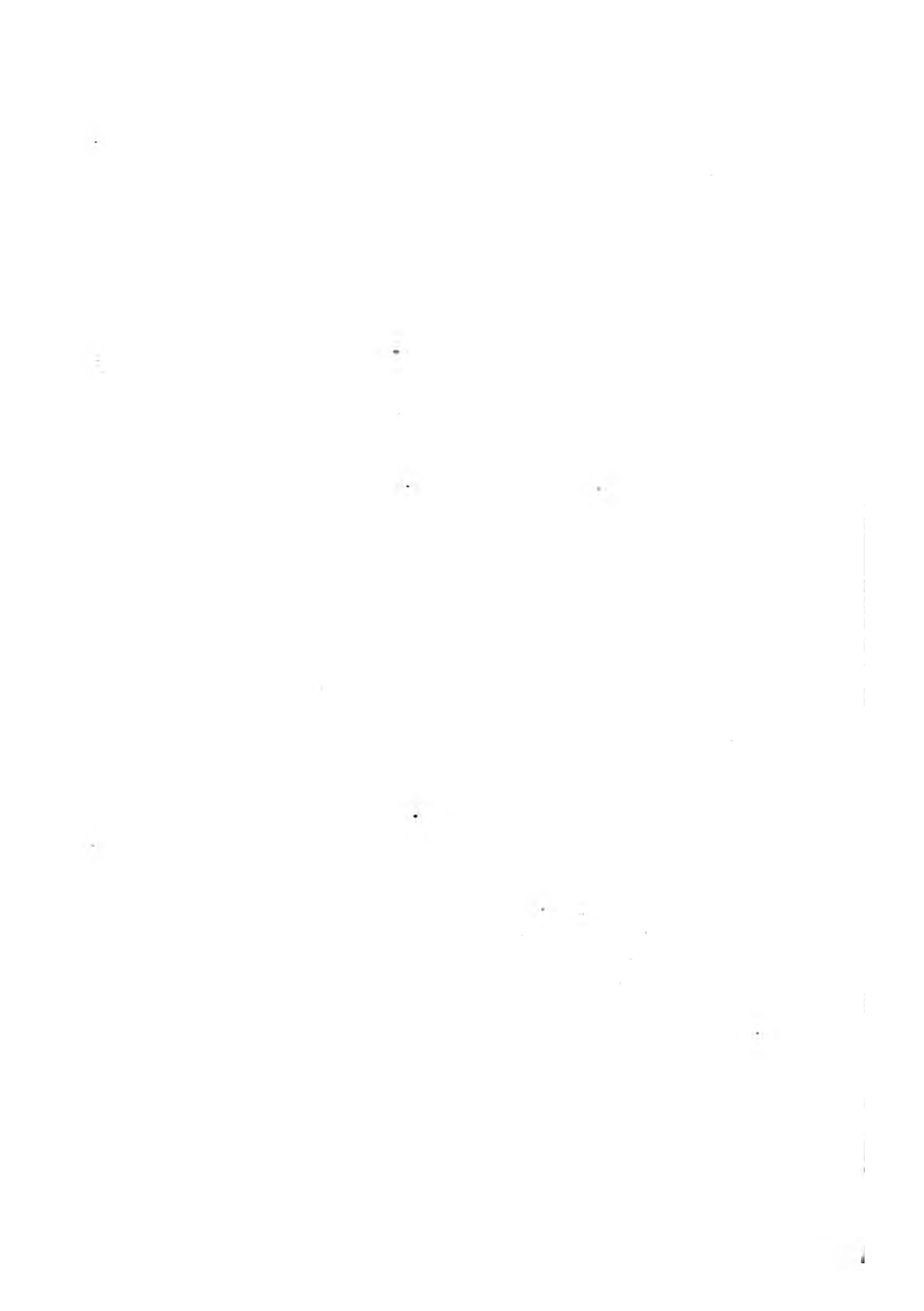
J. H. E.



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LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE ;

OR,

THE LUCK OF LINGBOROUGH.



## LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE.

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### INTRODUCTORY.

LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE—the Lubber-fiend, as Milton calls him—is a rough kind of Brownie or House Elf, supposed to haunt some north-country homesteads, where he does the work of the farm labourers, for no grander wages than

“— to earn his cream-bowl duly set.”

Not that he is insensible of the pleasures of rest, for

“— When, in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn  
That ten day-labourers could not end,  
Then lies him down the Lubber-fiend,  
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength.”

It was said that a Lob Lie-by-the-fire once haunted the little old Hall at Lingborough. It was an old stone house on the Borders, and seemed to have got its tints from the grey skies that hung above it. It was



cold-looking without, but cosy within, "like a north-country heart," said Miss Kitty, who was a woman of sentiment, and kept a commonplace book.

It was long before Miss Kitty's time that Lob Lie-by-the-fire first came to Lingborough. Why and whence he came is not recorded, nor when and wherefore he withdrew his valuable help, which, as wages rose, and prices rose also, would have been more welcome than ever.

This tale professes not to record more of him than comes within the memory of man.

Whether (as Fletcher says) he were the son of a witch, if curds and cream won his heart, and new clothes put an end to his labours, it does not pretend to tell. His history is less known than that of any other sprite. It may be embodied in some oral tradition that shall one day be found; but as yet the mists of forgetfulness hide it from the story-teller of to-day as deeply as the sea fogs are wont to lie between Lingborough and the adjacent coast.

#### THE LITTLE OLD LADIES.—ALMS DONE IN SECRET.

The little old ladies of Lingborough were heiresses.

Not, mind you, in the sense of being the children of some mushroom millionaire, with more money than manners, and (as Miss Betty had seen with her own eyes, on the daughter of a manufacturer who shall be

nameless) dresses so fine in quality and be-furbelowed in construction as to cost a good quarter's income (of the little old ladies), but trailed in the dirt from "beggarly extravagance," or kicked out behind at every step by feet which fortune (and a very large fortune, too) had never taught to walk properly.

"And how should she know how to walk?" said Miss Betty. "Her mother can't have taught her, poor body! that ran through the streets of Leith, with a creel on her back, as a lassie; and got out of her coach (lined with satin, you mind, sister Kitty?) to her dying day, with a bounce, all in a heap, her dress caught, and her stockings exposed (among ourselves, ladies!) like some good wife that's afraid to be late for the market. Aye, aye! Malcolm Midden—good man!—made a fine pocket of silver in a dirty trade, but his women 'll jerk, and toss, and bounce, and fuss, and fluster for a generation or two yet, for all the silks and satins he can buy 'em."

From this it will be seen that the little old ladies inherited some prejudices of their class, and were also endowed with a shrewdness of observation common among all classes of north-country women.

But to return to what else they inherited. They were heiresses, as the last representatives of a family as old in that Border country as the bold blue hills which broke its horizon. They were heiresses also in

default of heirs male to their father, who got the land from his uncle's dying childless—sons being scarce in the family. They were heiresses, finally, to the place and the farm, to the furniture that was made when folk seasoned their wood before they worked it, to a diamond brooch which they wore by turns, besides two diamond rings, and two black lace shawls, that had belonged to their mother and their Auntie Jean, long since departed thither where neither moth nor rust corrupt the true riches.

As to the incomings of Lingborough, "It was nobody's business but their own," as Miss Betty said to the lawyer who was their man of business, and whom they consulted on little matters of rent and repairs at as much length, and with as much formal solemnity, as would have gone elsewhere to the changing hands of half-a-million of money. Without violating their confidence, however, we may say that the estate paid its way, kept them in silk stockings, and gave them new tabbinet dresses once in three years. It supplied their wants the better that they had inherited house plenishing from their parents, "which they thanked their stars was not made of tag-rag, and would last their time," and that they were quite content with an old home and old neighbours, and never desired to change the grand air that blew about their native hills for worse, in order to be

poisoned with bad butter, and make the fortunes of extortionate lodging-house-keepers.

The rental of Lingborough did more. How much more the little old ladies did not know themselves, and no one else shall know, till that which was done in secret is proclaimed from the house-tops.

For they had had a religious scruple, founded upon a literal reading of the scriptural command that a man's left hand should not know what his right hand gives in alms, and this scruple had been ingeniously set at rest by the parson, who, failing in an attempt to explain the force of Eastern hyperbole to the little ladies' satisfaction, had said that Miss Betty, being the elder, and the head of the house, might be likened to the right hand, and Miss Kitty, as the younger, to the left, and that if they pursued their good works without ostentation, or desiring the applause even of each other, the spirit of the injunction would be fulfilled.

The parson was a good man and a clever. He had (as Miss Betty justly said) a very spiritual piety. But he was also gifted with much shrewdness in dealing with the various members of his flock. And his word was law to the sisters.

Thus it came about that the little ladies' charities were not known even to each other—that Miss Betty turned her morning camlet twice instead of once, and

Miss Kitty denied herself in sugar, to carry out benevolent little projects which were accomplished in secret, and of which no record appears in the Lingborough Ledger.

#### AT TEA WITH MRS. DUNMAW.

The little ladies of Lingborough were very sociable, and there was, as they said, "as much gaiety as was good for any one" within their reach. There were at least six houses at which they drank tea from time to time, all within a walk. As hosts or guests, you always met the same people, which was a friendly arrangement, and the programmes of the entertainments were so uniform, that no one could possibly feel awkward. The best of manners and home-made wines distinguished these tea-parties, where the company was strictly genteel, if a little faded. Supper was served at nine, and the parson and the lawyer played whist for love with different partners on different evenings with strict impartiality.

Small jealousies are apt to be weak points in small societies, but there was a general acquiescence in the belief that the parson had a friendly preference for the little ladies of Lingborough.

He lived just beyond them, too, which led to his invariably escorting them home. Miss Betty and Miss Kitty would not for worlds have been so in-

delicate as to take this attention for granted, though it was a custom of many years' standing. The older sister always went through the form of asking the younger to "see if the servant had come," and at this signal the parson always bade the lady of the house good-night, and respectfully proffered his services as an escort to Lingborough.

It was a lovely evening in June, when the little ladies took tea with the widow of General Dunmaw at her cottage, not quite two miles from their own home.

It was a memorable evening. The tea-party was an agreeable one. The little ladies had new tabbinets on, and Miss Kitty wore the diamond brooch. Miss Betty had played whist with the parson, and the younger sister (perhaps because of the brooch) had been favoured with a good deal of conversation with the lawyer. It was an honour, because the lawyer bore the reputation of an *esprit fort*, and was supposed to have, as a rule, a contempt for feminine intellects, which good manners led him to veil under an almost officious politeness in society. But honours are apt to be uneasy blessings, and this one was at least as harassing as gratifying. For a somewhat monotonous vein of sarcasm, a painful power of producing puns, and a dexterity in suggesting doubts of everything, were the main foundation of his intel-



lectual reputation, and Miss Kitty found them hard to cope with. And it was a warm evening.

But women have much courage, especially to defend a friend or a faith, and the less Miss Kitty found herself prepared for the conflict the harder she esteemed it her duty to fight. She fought for Church and State, for parsons and poor people, for the sincerity of her friends, the virtues of the Royal Family, the merit of Dr. Drugson's prescriptions, and for her favourite theory that there is some good in every one and some happiness to be found everywhere.

She rubbed nervously at the diamond brooch with her thin little mittened hands. She talked very fast ; and if the lawyer were guilty of feeling any ungallant indifference to her observations, she did not so much as hear his, and her cheeks became so flushed that Mrs. Dunmaw crossed the room in her China crape shawl and said, "My dear Miss Kitty, I'm sure you feel the heat very much. Do take my fan, which is larger than yours."

But Miss Kitty was saved a reply, for at this moment Miss Betty turned on the sofa, and said, "Dear Kitty, will you kindly see if the servant——"

And the parson closed the volume of *Friendship's Offering*, which lay before him, and advanced towards Mrs. Dunmaw and took leave in his own dignified way.

Miss Kitty was so much flustered that she had not even presence of mind to look for the servant, who had never been ordered to come, but the parson relieved her by saying in his round, deep voice, "I hope you will not refuse me the honour of seeing you home, since our roads happen to lie together." And she was glad to get into the fresh air, and beyond the doubtful compliments of the lawyer's nasal suavity—"You have been very severe upon me to-night, Miss Kitty. I'm sure I had no notion I should find so powerful an antagonist," &c.

#### MIDSUMMER EVE.—A LOST DIAMOND.

It was Midsummer Eve. The long light of the North was pale and clear, and the western sky shone luminous through the fir-wood that bordered the road. Under such dim lights colours deepen, and the great bushes of broom, that were each one mass of golden blossom, blazed like fairy watch-fires up the lane.

Miss Kitty leaned on the left arm of the parson and Miss Betty on his right. She chatted gaily, which left her younger sister at leisure to think of all the convincing things she had not remembered to say to the lawyer, as the evening breeze cooled her cheeks.

"A grand prospect for the crops, sir," said Miss Betty; "I never saw the broom so beautiful." But



as she leaned forward to look at the yellow blaze which foretells good luck to farmers, as it shone in the hedge on the left-hand side of the road, she caught sight of the brooch in Miss Kitty's lace shawl. Through a gap in the wood the light from the western sky danced among the diamonds. But where one of the precious stones should have been, there was a little black hole.

"Sister, you've lost a stone out of your brooch!" screamed Miss Betty. The little ladies were well trained, and even in that moment of despair Miss Betty would not hint that her sister's ornaments were not her sole property.

When Miss Kitty burst into tears the parson was a little astonished as well as distressed. Men are apt to be so, not perhaps because women cry on such very small accounts, as because the full reason does not always transpire. Tears are often the climax of nervous exhaustion, and this is commonly the result of more causes than one. Ostensibly Miss Kitty was "upset" by the loss of the diamond, but she also wept away a good deal of the vexation of her unequal conflict with the sarcastic lawyer, and of all this the parson knew nothing.

Miss Betty knew nothing of that, but she knew enough of things in general to feel sure that the diamond was not all the matter.

“What is amiss, sister Kitty?” said she. “Have you hurt yourself? Do you feel ill? Did you know the stone was out?”—“I hope you’re not going to be hysterical, sister Kitty,” added Miss Betty anxiously; “there never was a hysterical woman in our family yet.”

“Oh dear, no, sister Betty,” sobbed Miss Kitty; “but it’s all my fault. I know I was fidgeting with it whilst I was talking; and it’s a punishment on my fidgety ways, and for ever presuming to wear it at all, when you’re the head of the family, and solely entitled to it. And I shall never forgive myself if it’s lost, and if it’s found I’ll never, never wear it any more.” And as she deluged her best company pocket-handkerchief (for the useful one was in a big pocket under her dress, and could not be got at, the parson being present), Church, State, the Royal Family, the family Bible, her highest principles, her dearest affections, and the diamond brooch, all seemed to swim before her disturbed mind in one sea of desolation.

There was not a kinder heart than the parson’s towards women and children in distress. He tucked the little ladies again under his arms, and insisted upon going back to Mrs. Dunmaw’s, searching the lane as they went. In the pulpit or the drawing-room a ready anecdote never failed him, and on this occa-

sion he had several. Tales of lost rings, and even single gems, recovered in the most marvellous manner and the most unexpected places—dug up in gardens, served up to dinner in fishes, and so forth. “Never,” said Miss Kitty afterwards, “never, to her dying day, could she forget his kindness.”

She clung to the parson as a support under both her sources of trouble, but Miss Betty ran on and back, and hither and thither, looking for the diamond. Miss Kitty and the parson looked too, and how many aggravating little bits of glass and silica, and shining nothings and good-for-nothings there are in the world, no one would believe who has not looked for a lost diamond on a high-road.

But another story of found jewels was to be added to the parson’s stock. He had bent his long back for about the eighteenth time, when such a shimmer as no glass or silica can give flashed into his eyes, and he caught up the diamond out of the dust, and it fitted exactly into the little black hole.

Miss Kitty uttered a cry, and at the same moment Miss Betty, who was farther down the road, did the same, and these were followed by a third, which sounded like a mocking echo of both. And then the sisters rushed together.

“A most miraculous discovery!” gasped Miss Betty.

“You must have passed the very spot before,” cried Miss Kitty.

“Though I’m sure, sister, what to do with it now we have found it I don’t know,” said Miss Betty, rubbing her nose, as she was wont to do when puzzled.

“It shall be taken better care of for the future, sister Betty,” said Miss Kitty, penitently. “Though how it got out I can’t think now.”

“Why, bless my soul! you don’t suppose it got there of itself?” snapped Miss Betty. “How it did get there is another matter.”

“I felt pretty confident about it, for my own part,” smiled the parson as he joined them.

“Do you mean to say, sir, that you knew it was there?” asked Miss Betty, solemnly.

“I didn’t know the precise spot, my dear madam, but——”

“You didn’t see it, sir, I hope?” said Miss Betty.

“Bless me, my dear madam, I found it!” cried the parson.

Miss Betty bridled and bit her lip.

“I never contradict a clergyman, sir,” said she, “but I can only say that if you did see it, it was not like your usual humanity to leave it lying there.”

“Why { I’ve got it in my hand, ma’am!”  
He’s got it in his hand, sister!”

cried the parson and Miss Kitty in one breath. Miss Betty was too much puzzled to be polite.

“What are you talking about?” she asked.

“The diamond, oh dear, oh dear! *The diamond!*” cried Miss Kitty. “But what are you talking about, sister?”

“*The Baby,*” said Miss Betty.

#### WHAT MISS BETTY FOUND.

It was found under a broom-bush. Miss Betty was poking her nose near the bank that bordered the wood, in her hunt for the diamond, when she caught sight of a mass of yellow of a deeper tint than the mass of broom-blossom above it, and this was the baby.

This vivid colour, less opaque than “deep chrome” and a shade more orange, seems to have a peculiar attraction for wandering tribes. Gipsies use it, and it is a favourite colour with Indian squaws. To the last dirty rag it is effective, whether it flutters near a tent on Bagshot Heath, or in some wigwam doorway makes a point of brightness against the grey shadows of the pine forest.

A large kerchief of this, wound about its body, was the baby’s only robe, but he seemed quite comfortable in it when Miss Betty found him, sleeping on a pillow of deep hair moss, his little brown fists

closed as fast as his eyes, and a crimson toadstool grasped in one of them.

When Miss Betty screamed the baby awoke, and his long black lashes tickled his cheeks and made him wink and cry. But by the time she returned with her sister and the parson, he was quite happy again, gazing up with dark eyes full of delight into the glowing broom-bush, and fighting the evening breeze with his feet, which were entangled in the folds of the yellow cloth, and with the battered toadstool which was still in his hand.

“And, indeed, sir,” said Miss Betty, who had rubbed her nose till it looked like the twin toadstool to that which the baby was flourishing in her face, “you won’t suppose I would have left the poor little thing another moment, to catch its death of cold on a warm evening like this; but having no experience of such cases, and remembering that murder at the inn in the Black Valley, and that the body was not allowed to be moved till the constables had seen it, I didn’t feel to know how it might be with foundlings, and——”

But still Miss Betty did not touch the bairn. She was not accustomed to children. But the parson had christened too many babies to be afraid of them, and he picked up the little fellow in a moment, and tucked the yellow rag round him, and then addressing



the little ladies precisely as if they were sponsors, he asked in his deep round voice, "Now where on the face of the earth are the vagabonds who have deserted this child?"

The little ladies did not know, the broom-bushes were silent, and the question has remained unanswered from that day to this.

#### THE BABY, THE LAWYER, AND THE PARSON.

There were no railways near Lingborough at this time. The coach ran three times a week, and a walking postman brought the letters from the town to the small hamlets. Telegraph wires were unknown, and yet news travelled quite as fast then as it does now, and in the course of the following morning all the neighbourhood knew that Miss Betty had found a baby under a broom-bush, and the lawyer called in the afternoon to inquire how the ladies found themselves after the tea-party at Mrs. General Dunmaw's.

Miss Kitty was glad on the whole. She felt nervous, but ready for a renewal of hostilities. Several clinching arguments had occurred to her in bed last night, and after hastily looking up a few lines from her commonplace book, which always made her cry when she read them, but which she hoped to be able to hurl at the lawyer with a steady voice, she followed Miss Betty to the drawing-room.

It was half a relief and half a disappointment to find that the lawyer was quite indifferent to the subject of their late contest. He overflowed with compliments ; was quite sure he must have had the worst of the argument, and positively dying of curiosity to hear about the baby.

The little ladies were very full of the subject themselves. An active search for the baby's relations, conducted by the parson, the clerk, the farm-bailiff, the constable, the cowherd, and several supernumeraries, had so far proved quite vain. The country folk were most anxious to assist, especially by word of mouth. Except a small but sturdy number who had seen nothing, they had all seen "tramps," but unluckily no two could be got together whose accounts of the tramps themselves, of the hour at which they were seen, or of the direction in which they went, would tally with each other.

The little ladies were quite alive to the possibility that the child's parents might never be traced, indeed the matter had been constantly before their minds ever since the parson had carried the baby to Lingborough, and laid it in the arms of Thomasina, the servant.

Miss Betty had sat long before her toilette-table that evening, gazing vacantly at the looking-glass. Not that the reflection of the eight curl-papers she



had neatly twisted up was conveyed to her brain. She was in a brown study, during which the following thoughts passed through her mind, and they all pointed one way :

That that fine little fellow was not to blame for his people's misconduct.

That they would never be found.

That it would probably be the means of the poor child's ruin, body and soul, if they were.

That the master of the neighbouring workhouse bore a bad character.

That a child costs nothing to keep—where cows are kept too—for years.

That just at the age when a boy begins to eat dreadfully and wear out his clothes, he is very useful on a farm (though not for these reasons).

That Thomasina had taken to him.

That there need be no nonsense about it, as he could be brought up in his proper station in life in the kitchen and the farmyard.

That tramps have souls.

That he would be taught to say his prayers.

Miss Betty said hers, and went to bed ; but all through that midsummer night the baby kept her awake, or flaunted his yellow robe and crimson toadstool through her dreams.

The morning brought no change in Miss Betty's

views, but she felt doubtful as to how her sister would receive them. Would she regard them as foolish and unpractical, and her respect for Miss Betty's opinion be lessened thenceforward?

The fear was needless. Miss Kitty was romantic and imaginative. She had carried the baby through his boyhood about the Lingborough fields whilst she was dressing; and he was attending her own funeral in the capacity of an attached and faithful servant, in black livery with worsted frogs, as she sprinkled salt on her buttered toast at breakfast, when she was startled from this affecting day-dream by Miss Betty's voice.

"Dear sister Kitty, I wish to consult you as to our plans in the event of those wicked people who deserted the baby not being found."

The little ladies resolved that not an inkling of their benevolent scheme must be betrayed to the lawyer. But they dissembled awkwardly, and the tone in which they spoke of the tramp-baby roused the lawyer's quick suspicions. He had a real respect for the little ladies, and was kindly anxious to save them from their own indiscretion.

"My dear ladies," said he, "I do hope your benevolence—may I say your romantic benevolence?—of disposition is not tempting you to adopt this gipsy waif?"

“I hope we know what is due to ourselves, and to the estate—small as it is—sir,” said Miss Betty, “as well as to Providence, too well to attempt to raise any child, however handsome, from that station of life in which he was born.”

“Bless me, madam! I never dreamed you would adopt a beggar child as your heir; but I hope you mean to send it to the workhouse, if the gipsy tramps it belongs to are not to be found?”

“We have not made up our minds, sir, as to the course we propose to pursue,” said Miss Betty, with outward dignity proportioned to her inward doubts.

“My dear ladies,” said the lawyer anxiously, “let me implore you not to be rash. To adopt a child in the most favourable circumstances is the greatest of risks. But if your benevolence *will* take that line, pray adopt some little boy out of one of your tenants’ families. Even your teaching will not make him brilliant, as he is likely to inherit the minimum of intellectual capacity; but he will learn his catechism, probably grow up respectable, and possibly grateful, since his forefathers have (so Miss Kitty assures me) had all these virtues for generations. But this baby is the child of a heathen, barbarous, and wandering race. The propensities of the vagabonds who have deserted him are in every drop of his blood. All the parsons in the diocese won’t make a Christian

of him, and when (after anxieties I shudder to foresee) you flatter yourselves that he is civilized, he will run away and leave his shoes and stockings behind him."

"He has a soul to be saved, if he is a gipsy," said Miss Kitty, hysterically.

"The soul, my dear Miss Kitty"—began the lawyer, facing round upon her.

"Don't say anything dreadful about the soul, sir, I beg," said Miss Betty, firmly. And then she added in a conciliatory tone, "Won't you look at the little fellow, sir? I have no doubt his relations are shocking people; but when you see his innocent little face and his beautiful eyes, I think you'll say yourself that if he were a duke's son he couldn't be a finer child."

"My experience of babies is so limited, Miss Betty," said the lawyer, "that really—if you'll excuse me—but I can quite imagine him. I have before now been tempted myself to adopt stray—puppies, when I have seen them in the round, soft, innocent, bright-eyed stage. And when they have grown up in the hands of more credulous friends into lanky, ill-conditioned, misconducted curs, I have congratulated myself that I was not misled by the graces of an age at which ill-breeding is less apparent than later in life."

The little ladies both rose. "If you see no difference, sir," said Miss Betty in her stateliest manner, "between a babe with an immortal soul and the beasts that perish, it is quite useless to prolong the conversation."

"Reason is apt to be useless when opposed to the generous impulses of a sex so full of sentiment as yours, madam," said the lawyer, rising also. "Permit me to take a long farewell, since it is improbable that our friendship will resume its old position until your *protégé* has—run away."

The words "long farewell" and "old friendship" were quite sufficient to soften wrath in the tender hearts of the little ladies. But the lawyer had really lost his temper, and before Miss Betty had decided how to offer the olive branch without conceding her principles he was gone.

The weather was warm. The little ladies were heated by discussion and the parson by vain scouring of the country on foot, when they asked his advice upon their project, and related their conversation with the lawyer. The two gentlemen had so little in common that the parson felt it his duty not to let his advice be prejudiced by this fact. For some moments he sat silent, then he began to walk about as if he were composing a sermon; then he stopped before the little ladies (who were sitting as stiffly on

the sofa as if it were a pew) and spoke as if he were delivering one.

“If you ask me, dear ladies, whether it is your duty to provide for this child because you found him, I say that there is no such obligation. If you ask if I think it wise in your own interests, and hopeful as to the boy’s career, I am obliged to agree with your legal adviser. Vagabond ways are seldom cured in one generation, and I think it is quite probable that, after much trouble and anxiety spent upon him, he may go back to a wandering life. But, Miss Betty,” continued the parson in deepening tones, as he pounded his left palm with his right fist for want of a pulpit, “if you ask me whether I believe any child of any race is born incapable of improvement, and beyond benefit from the charities we owe to each other, I should deny my faith if I could say yes. I shall not, madam, confuse the end of your connection with him with the end of your training in him, even if he runs away, or fancy that I see the one because I see the other. I do not pretend to know how much evil he inherits from his forefathers as accurately as our graphic friend; but I do know that he has a Father Whose image is also to be found in His children—not quite effaced in any of them—and Whose care of this one will last when yours, madam, may seem to have been in vain.”



As the little ladies rushed forward and each shook a hand of the parson, he felt some compunction for his speech.

“I fear I am encouraging you in grave indiscretion,” said he. “But, indeed, my dear ladies, I am quite against your project, for you do not realize the anxieties and disappointments that are before you, I am sure. The child will give you infinite trouble. I think he will run away. And yet I cannot in good conscience say that I believe love’s labour must be lost. He may return to the woods and wilds; but I hope he will carry something with him.”

“Did the reverend gentleman mean Miss Betty’s teaspoons?” asked the lawyer, stroking his long chin, when he was told what the parson had said.

BABYHOOD.—PRETTY FLOWERS.—THE ROSE-COLOURED TULIPS.

The matter of the baby’s cap disturbed the little ladies. It seemed so like the beginning of a fulfilment of the lawyer’s croakings.

Miss Kitty had made it. She had never seen a baby without a cap before, and the sight was unusual, if not indecent. But Miss Kitty was a quick needlewoman, and when the new cap was fairly tied over the thick crop of silky black hair, the baby looked so

much less like Puck, and so much more like the rest of the baby world, that it was quite a relief.

Miss Kitty's feelings may therefore be imagined when, going to the baby just after the parson's departure, she found him in open rebellion against his cap. It had been tied on whilst he was asleep, and his eyes were no sooner open than he commenced the attack. He pulled with one little brown hand and tugged with the other; he dragged a rosette over his nose and got the frills into his eyes; he worried it as a puppy worries your handkerchief if you tie it round its face and tell it to "look like a grandmother." At last the strings gave way, and he cast it triumphantly out of the clothes-basket which served him for cradle.

Successive efforts to induce him to wear it proved vain, so Thomasina said the weather was warm and his hair was very thick, and she parted this and brushed it, and Miss Kitty gave the cap to the farm-bailiff's baby, who took to it as kindly as a dumpling to a pudding-cloth.

How the boy was ever kept inside his christening clothes, Thomasina said she did not know. But when he got into the parson's arms he lay quite quiet, which was a good omen. That he might lack no advantage, Miss Betty stood godmother for him, and the parish clerk and the sexton were his god-fathers.



He was named John.

“A plain, sensible name,” said Miss Betty. “And while we are about it,” she added, “we may as well choose his surname. For a surname he must have, and the sooner it is decided upon the better.”

Miss Kitty had made a list of twenty-seven of her favourite Christian names, which Miss Betty had sternly rejected, that everything might be plain, practical, and respectable at the outset of the tramp-child’s career. For the same reason she refused to adopt Miss Kitty’s suggestions for a surname.

“It’s so seldom there’s a chance of *choosing* a surname for anybody, sister,” said Miss Kitty, “it seems a pity not to choose a pretty one.”

“Sister Kitty,” said Miss Betty, “don’t be romantic. The boy is to be brought up in that station of life for which one syllable is ample. I should have called him Smith if that had not been Thomasina’s name. As it is, I propose to call him Broom. He was found under a bush of broom, and it goes very well with John, and sounds plain and respectable.”

So Miss Betty bought a Bible, and on the fly-leaf of it she wrote in her fine, round, gentlewoman’s writing—“*John Broom. With good wishes for his welfare, temporal and eternal. From a sincere friend.*” And when the inscription was dry the Bible was

wrapped in brown paper, and put by in Thomasina's trunk till John Broom should come to years of discretion.

He was slow to reach them, though in other respects he grew fast.

When he began to walk he would walk barefoot. To be out of doors was his delight, but on the threshold of the house he always sat down and discarded his shoes and stockings. Thomasina bastinadoed the soles of his feet with the soles of his shoes "to teach him the use of them," so she said. But Miss Kitty sighed, and thought of the lawyer's prediction.

There was no blinking the fact that the child was as troublesome as he was pretty. The very demon of mischief danced in his black eyes, and seemed to possess his feet and fingers as if with quicksilver. And if, as Thomasina said, you "never knew what he would be at next," you might also be pretty sure that it would be something he ought to have left undone.

John Broom early developed a taste for glass and crockery, and as the china cupboard was in that part of the house to which he by social standing also belonged, he had many chances to seize upon cups, jugs, and dishes. If detected with anything that he ought not to have had, it was his custom to drop the

forbidden toy and toddle off as fast as his unpractised feet would carry him. The havoc which this caused amongst the glass and china was bewildering in a household where tea-sets and dinner-sets had passed from generation to generation, where slap-dash, giddy-pated kitchenmaids never came, where Miss Betty washed the best teacups in the parlour, where Thomasina was more careful than her mistress, and the breaking of a single plate was a serious matter, and, if beyond riveting, a misfortune.

Thomasina soon found that her charge was safest, as he was happiest, out of doors. A very successful device was to shut him up in the drying-ground, and tell him to "pick the pretty flowers." John Broom preferred flowers even to china cups with gilding on them. He gathered nosegays of daisies and buttercups, and the winning way in which he would present these to the little ladies atoned, in their benevolent eyes, for many a smashed teacup.

But the tramp-baby's restless spirit was soon weary of the drying-ground, and he set forth one morning in search of "fresh woods and pastures new." He had seated himself on the threshold to take off his shoes when he heard the sound of Thomasina's footsteps, and, hastily staggering to his feet, toddled forth without farther delay. The sky was blue above him, the sun was shining, and the air was very sweet. He

ran for a bit and then tumbled, and picked himself up again, and got a fresh impetus, and so on till he reached the door of the kitchen-garden, which was open. It was an old-fashioned kitchen-garden, with flowers in the borders. There were single rose-coloured tulips which had been in the garden as long as Miss Betty could remember, and they had been so increased by dividing the clumps that they now stretched in two rich lines of colour down both sides of the long walk. And John Broom saw them.

“Pick the pretty f’owers, love,” said he, in imitation of Thomasina’s patronizing tone, and forthwith beginning at the end, he went steadily to the top of the right-hand border, mowing the rose-coloured tulips as he went.

Meanwhile, when Thomasina came to look for him he could not be found, and when all the back premises and the drying-ground had been searched in vain, she gave the alarm to the little ladies.

Miss Kitty’s vivid imagination leaped at once to the conclusion that the child’s vagabond relations had fetched him away, and she became rigid with alarm. But Miss Betty rushed out into the shrubbery, and Miss Kitty took a whiff of her vinaigrette and followed her.

When they came at last to the kitchen-garden, Miss Betty’s grief for the loss of John Broom did

not prevent her observing that there was something odd about the borders, and when she got to the top, and found that all the tulips had been picked from one side, she sank down on the roller which happened to be lying beside her.

And John Broom staggered up to her, and crying, "For 'oo, Miss Betty," fell headlong with a sheaf of rose-coloured tulips into her lap.

As he did not offer any to Miss Kitty, her better judgment was not warped, and she said, "You must slap him, sister Betty."

"Put out your hand, John Broom," said Miss Betty, much agitated.

And John Broom, who was quite composed, put out both his little grubby paws so trustfully that Miss Betty had not the heart to strike him. But she scolded him, "Naughty boy!" and she pointed to the tulips and shook her head. John Broom looked thoughtfully at them, and shook his.

"Naughty boy!" repeated Miss Betty, and she added in very impressive tones, "John Broom's a very naughty boy!"

After which she took him to Thomasina, and Miss Kitty collected the rose-coloured tulips and put them into water in the best old china punch-bowl.

In the course of the afternoon she peeped into

the kitchen, where John Broom sat on the floor, under the window, gazing thoughtfully into the sky.

“As good as gold, bless his little heart!” murmured Miss Kitty. For as his feet were tucked under him, she did not know that he had just put his shoes and stockings into the pig-tub, into which he all but fell himself from the exertion. He did not hear Miss Kitty, and thought on. He wanted to be out again, and he had a tantalizing remembrance of the ease with which the tender juicy stalks of the tulips went snap, snap, in that new place of amusement he had discovered. Thomasina looked into the kitchen and went away again. When she had gone, John Broom went away also.

He went both faster and steadier on his bare feet. And when he got into the kitchen-garden, it recalled Miss Betty to his mind. And he shook his head, and said, “Naughty boy!” And then he went up the left-hand border, mowing the tulips as he went; after which he trotted home, and met Thomasina at the back door. And he hugged the sheaf of rose-coloured tulips in his arms, and said, “John Broom a very naughty boy!”

Thomasina was not sentimental, and she slapped him well—his hands for picking the tulips, and his feet for going barefoot.



But his feet had to be slapped with Thomasina's slipper, for his own shoes could not be found.

EDUCATION.—FIRESIDE TALES.

In spite of all his pranks, John Broom did not lose the favour of his friends. Thomasina spoiled him, and Miss Betty and Miss Kitty tried not to do so.

The parson had said, "Treat the child fairly. Bring him up as he will have to live hereafter. Don't make him half pet and half servant." And following this advice, and her own resolve that there should be "no nonsense" in the matter, Miss Betty had made it a rule that he should not be admitted to the parlour. It bore more heavily on the tender hearts of the little ladies than on the light heart of John Broom, and led to their waylaying him in the passages and gardens with little gifts, unknown to each other. And when Miss Kitty kissed his newly-washed cheeks, and pronounced them "like ripe russets," Miss Betty murmured, "Be judicious, sister Kitty;" and Miss Kitty would correct any possible ill effects by saying, "*Now* make your bow to your betters, John Broom, and say, 'Thank you, ma'am!'" which was accomplished by the child's giving a tug to the forelock of his thick black hair, with a world of mischief in his eyes.

When he was old enough the little ladies sent him to the village school.

The total failure of their hopes for his education was not the smallest of the disappointments Miss Betty and Miss Kitty endured on his behalf. The quarrel with the lawyer had been made up long ago, and though there was always a touch of raillery in his inquiries after "the young gipsy," he had once said, "If he turns out anything of a genius at school, I might find a place for him in the office, by and by." The lawyer was kind-hearted in his own fashion, and on this hint Miss Kitty built up hopes, which unhappily were met by no responsive ambition in John Broom.

As to his fitness to be an errand-boy, he could not carry a message from the kitchen to the cow-house without stopping by the way to play with the yard-dog, and a hedgehog in the path would probably have led him astray, if Thomasina had had a fit and he had been despatched for the doctor.

During school hours he spent most of his time under the fool's-cap when he was not playing truant. With his schoolmates he was good friends. If he was seldom out of mischief, he was seldom out of temper. He could beat any boy at a foot race (without shoes); he knew the notes and nests of every bird that sang, and whatever an old pocket-



knife is capable of, that John Broom could and would do with it for his fellows.

Miss Betty had herself tried to teach him to read, and she continued to be responsible for his religious instruction. She had hoped to stir up his industry by showing him the Bible, and promising that when he could read it he should have it for his "very own." But he either could not or would not apply himself, so the prize lay unearned in Thomasina's trunk. But he would listen for any length of time to Scripture stories, if they were read or told to him, especially to the history of Elisha, and the adventures of the Judges.

Indeed, since he could no longer be shut up in the drying-ground, Thomasina had found that he was never so happy and so safe as when he was listening to tales, and many a long winter evening he lay idle on the kitchen hearth, with his head on the sheep-dog, whilst the more industrious Thomasina plied her knitting-needles, as she sat in the ingle-nook, with the flickering firelight playing among the plaits of her large cap, and told tales of the country side.

Not that John Broom was her only hearer. Annie "the lass" sat by the hearth also, and Thomasina took care that she did not "sit with her hands before her." And a little farther away sat the cowherd.

He had a sleeping-room above the barn, and took his meals in the house. By Miss Betty's desire he always went into family prayers after supper, when he sat as close as possible to the door, under an uncomfortable consciousness that Thomasina did not think his boots clean enough for the occasion, and would find something to pick off the carpet as she followed him out, however hardly he might have used the door-scraper beforehand.

It might be a difficult matter to decide which he liked best, beer or John Broom. But next to these he liked Thomasina's stories.

Thomasina was kind to him. With all his failings and the dirt on his boots, she liked him better than the farm-bailiff. The farm-bailiff was thrifty and sensible and faithful, and Thomasina was faithful and sensible and thrifty, and they each had a tendency to claim the monopoly of those virtues. Notable people complain, very properly, of thriftless and untidy ones, but they sometimes agree better with them than with rival notabilities. And so Thomasina's broad face beamed benevolently as she bid the cowherd "draw up" to the fire, and he, who (like Thomasina) was a native of the country, would confirm the marvels she related, with a proper pride in the wonderful district to which they both belonged.

He would help her out sometimes with names and

dates in a local biography. By his own account he knew the man who was murdered at the inn in the Black Valley so intimately that it turned Annie the lass as white as a dish-cloth to sit beside him. If Thomasina said that folk were yet alive who had seen the little green men dance in Dawborough Croft, the cowherd would smack his knees and cry, "Scores on 'em!" And when she whispered of the white figure which stood at the cross roads after midnight, he testified to having seen it himself—tall beyond mortal height, and pointing four ways at once. He had a legend of his own too, which Thomasina sometimes gave him the chance of telling, of how he was followed home one moonlight night by a black Something as big as a young calf, which "wimmled and wammled" around him till he fell senseless into the ditch, and being found there by the farm-bailiff on his return from market, was unjustly accused of the vice of intoxication.

"Fault-finders should be free of flaws," Thomasina would say with a prim chin. She *had* seen the farm-bailiff himself "the worse" for more than his supper beer.

But there was one history which Thomasina was always loth to relate, and it was that which both John Broom and the cowherd especially preferred—the history of Lob Lie-by-the-fire.

Thomasina had a feeling (which was shared by Annie the lass) that it was better not to talk of "anything" peculiar to the house in which you were living. One's neighbours' ghosts and bogles are another matter.

But to John Broom and the cowherd no subject was so interesting as that of the Lubber-fiend. The cowherd sighed to think of the good old times when a man might sleep on in spite of cocks, and the stables be cleaner, and the beasts better tended than if he had been up with the lark. And John Broom's curiosity was never quenched about the rough, hairy Good-fellow who worked at night that others might be idle by day, and who was sometimes caught at his hard-earned nap, lying, "like a great hurgin bear," where the boy loved to lie himself, before the fire, on this very hearth.

Why and where he had gone, Thomasina could not tell. She had heard that he had originally come from some other household, where he had been offended. But whether he had gone elsewhere when he forsook Lingborough, or whether "such things had left the country" for good, she did not pretend to say.

And when she had told, for the third or fourth time, how his porridge was put into a corner of the cow-house for him over-night, and how he had been often

overheard at his work, but rarely seen, and then only lying before the fire, Miss Betty would ring for prayers, and Thomasina would fold up her knitting and lead the way, followed by Annie the lass, whose nerves John Broom would startle by treading on her heels, the rear being brought up by the cowherd, looking hopelessly at his boots.

Miss Betty and Miss Kitty did really deny themselves the indulgence of being indulgent, and treated John Broom on principles, and for his good. But they did so in their own tremulous and spasmodic way, and got little credit for it. Thomasina, on the other hand, spoiled him with such a masterful managing air, and so much sensible talk, that no one would have thought that the only system she followed was to conceal his misdemeanours, and to stand between him and the just wrath of the farm-bailiff.

The farm-bailiff, or grieve, as he liked to call himself, was a Scotchman, with a hard-featured face (which he washed on the Sabbath), a harsh voice, a good heart rather deeper down in his body than is usual, and a shrewd, money-getting head, with a speckled straw hat on the top of it. No one could venture to imagine when that hat was new, or how long ago it was that the farm-bailiff went to the expense of purchasing those work-day clothes. But the dirt on his face and neck was an orderly accumulation, such as

gathers on walls, oil-paintings, and other places to which soap is not habitually applied; it was not a matter of spills and splashes, like the dirt John Broom disgraced himself with. And his clothes, if old, fitted neatly about him; they never suggested raggedness, which was the normal condition of the tramp-boy's jackets. They only looked as if he had been born (and occasionally buried) in them. It is needful to make this distinction, that the good man may not be accused of inconsistency in the peculiar vexation which John Broom's disorderly appearance caused him.

In truth, Miss Betty's *protégé* had reached the age at which he was to "eat dreadfully, wear out his clothes, and be useful on the farm;" and the last condition was quite unfulfilled. At eleven years old he could not be trusted to scare birds, and at half that age the farm-bailiff's eldest child could drive cattle.

"And no' just ruin the leddies in new coats and compliments, either, like some ne'er-do-weels," added the farm-bailiff, who had heard with a jealous ear of sixpences given by Miss Betty and Miss Kitty to their wasteful favourite.

When the eleventh anniversary of John Broom's discovery was passed, and his character at school gave no hopes of his ever qualifying himself to serve the



lawyer, it was resolved that, "idleness being the mother of mischief," he should be put under the care of the farm-bailiff, to do such odd jobs about the place as might be suited to his capacity and love of out-door life. And now John Broom's troubles began. By fair means or foul, with here an hour's weeding and there a day's bird-scaring, and with errands perpetual, the farm-bailiff contrived to "get some work out of" the idle little urchin. His speckled hat and grim face seemed to be everywhere, and always to pop up when John Broom began to play.

They lived "at daggers drawn." I am sorry to say that John Broom's fitful industry was still kept for his own fancies. To climb trees, to run races with the sheep-dog, to cut grotesque sticks, gather hedge fruits, explore a bog, or make new friends among beasts and birds—at such matters he would labour with feverish zeal. But so far from trying to cure himself of his indolence about daily drudgery, he found a new and pleasant excitement in thwarting the farm-bailiff at every turn.

It would not sound dignified to say that the farm-bailiff took pleasure in thwarting John Broom. But he certainly did not show his satisfaction when the boy did do his work properly. Perhaps he thought that praise is not good for young people; and the child did not often give him the chance of trying.



Of blame he was free enough. Not a good scolding to clear the air, such as Thomasina would give to Annie the lass, but his slow, caustic tongue was always growling, like muttered thunder, over John Broom's incorrigible head.

He had never approved of the tramp-child, who had the overwhelming drawbacks of having no pedigree and of being a bad bargain as to expense. This was not altogether John Broom's fault, but with his personal failings the farm-bailiff had even less sympathy. It has been hinted that he was born in the speckled hat, and whether this were so or not, he certainly had worn an old head whilst his shoulders were still young, and could not remember the time when he wished to waste his energies on anything that did not earn or at least save something.

Once only did anything like approval of the lad escape his lips.

Miss Betty's uncle's second cousin had returned from foreign lands with a good fortune and several white cockatoos. He kept the fortune himself, but he gave the cockatoos to his friends, and he sent one of them to the little ladies of Lingborough.

He was a lovely creature (the cockatoo, not the cousin, who was plain), and John Broom's admiration of him was boundless. He gazed at the sulphur-coloured crest, the pure white wings with their deeper-

tinted lining, and even the beak and the fierce round eyes, as he had gazed at the broom-bush in his babyhood, with insatiable delight.

The cousin did things handsomely. He had had a ring put round one of the cockatoo's ankles, with a bright steel chain attached and a fastener to secure it to the perch. The cockatoo was sent in the cage by coach, and a perch, made of foreign wood, followed by the carrier.

Miss Betty and Miss Kitty were delighted both with the cockatoo and the perch, but they were a good deal troubled as to how to fasten the two together. There was a neat little ring on the perch, and the cockatoo's chain was quite complete, and he evidently wanted to get out, for he shook the walls of his cage in his gambols. But he put up his crest and snapped when any one approached, in a manner so alarming that Annie the lass shut herself up in the dairy, and the farm-bailiff turned his speckled hat in his hands, and gave cautious counsel from a safe distance.

"How he flaps!" cried Miss Betty. "I'm afraid he has a very vicious temper."

"He only wants to get out, Miss Betty," said John Broom. "He'd be all right with his perch, and I think I can get him on it."

"Now Heaven save us from the sin o' pre-

sumption!" cried the farm-bailiff, and putting on the speckled hat, he added, slowly: "I'm thinking, John Broom, that if ye're engaged wi' the leddies this morning it'll be time I turned my hand to singling these few turnips ye've been thinking about the week past."

On which he departed, and John Broom pressed the little ladies to leave him alone with the bird.

"We shouldn't like to leave you alone with a wild creature like that," said Miss Betty.

"He's just frightened on ye, Miss Betty. He'll be like a lamb when you're gone," urged John Broom.

"Besides, we should like to see you do it," said Miss Kitty.

"You can look in through the window, miss. I must fasten the door, or he'll be out."

"I should never forgive myself if he hurt you, John," said Miss Betty, irresolutely, for she was very anxious to have the cockatoo and perch in full glory in the parlour.

"He'll none hurt me, miss," said John, with a cheerful smile on his rosy face. "I likes him, and he'll like me."

This settled the matter. John was left with the cockatoo. He locked the door, and the little ladies went into the garden and peeped through the window.

They saw John Broom approach the cage, on

which the cockatoo put up his crest, opened his beak slowly, and snarled, and Miss Betty tapped on the window and shook her black satin workbag.

"Don't go near him!" she cried. But John Broom paid no attention.

"What are you putting up that top-knot of yours at me for?" said he to the cockatoo. "Don't ye know your own friends? I'm going to let ye out, I am. You're going on to your perch, you are."

"Eh, but you're a bonny creature!" he added, as the cockatoo filled the cage with snow and sulphur flutterings.

"Keep away, keep away!" screamed the little ladies, playing a duet on the window-panes.

"Out with you!" said John Broom, as he unfastened the cage door.

And just when Miss Betty had run round, and as she shouted through the keyhole, "Open the door, John Broom. We've changed our minds. We've decided to keep it in its cage," the cockatoo strode solemnly forth on his eight long toes.

"Pretty Cocky!" said he.

When Miss Betty got back to the window, John Broom had just made an injudicious grab at the steel chain, on which Pretty Cocky flew fiercely at him, and John, burying his face in his arms, received the attack on his thick poll, laughing into his sleeves and holding

fast to the chain, whilst the cockatoo and the little ladies screamed against each other.

“It’ll break your leg—you’ll tear its eyes out!” cried Miss Kitty.

“Miss Kitty means that you’ll break its leg, and it will tear your eyes out,” Miss Betty explained through the glass. “John Broom! Come away! Lock it in! Let it go!”

But Cocky was now waddling solemnly round the room, and John Broom was creeping after him, with the end of the chain in one hand, and the perch in the other, and in a moment more he had joined the chain and the ring, and just as Miss Betty was about to send for the constable and have the door broken open, Cocky—driven into a corner—clutched his perch and was raised triumphantly to his place in the bow-window.

He was now a parlour pet, and John Broom saw little of him. This vexed him, for he had taken a passionate liking for the bird. The little ladies rewarded him well for his skill, but this brought him no favour from the farm-bailiff, and matters went on as ill as before.

One day the cockatoo got his chain entangled, and Miss Kitty promptly advanced to put it right. She had unfastened that end which secured it to the perch, when Cocky, who had been watching the

proceeding with much interest, dabbed at her with his beak. Miss Kitty fled, but with great presence of mind shut the door after her. She forgot, however, that the window was open, in front of which stood the cockatoo scanning the summer sky with his fierce eyes, and flapping himself in the breeze.

And just as the little ladies ran into the garden, and Miss Kitty was saying, "One comfort is, sister Betty, that it's quite safe in the room, till we can think what to do next," he bowed his yellow crest, spread his noble wings, and sailed out into the æther.

In ten minutes the whole able-bodied population of the place was in the grounds of Lingborough, including the farm-bailiff.

The cockatoo was on the top of a fir-tree, and a fragment of the chain was with him, for he had broken it, and below on the lawn stood the little ladies, who, with the unfailing courage of women in a hopeless cause, were trying to dislodge him by waving their pocket-handkerchiefs and crying "sh!"

He looked composedly down out of one eye for some time, and then he began to move.

"I think it's coming down now," said Miss Kitty.

But in a quarter of a minute, Cocky had sailed a quarter of a mile, and was rocking himself on the top of an old willow-tree. And at this moment John Broom joined the crowd which followed him.



"I'm thinking he's got his chain fast," said the farm-bailiff; "if onybody that understood the beastie daured to get near him——"

"I'll get him," said John Broom, casting down his hat.

"Ye'll get your neck thrawed," said the farm-bailiff.

"We won't hear of it," said the little ladies.

But to their horror, John Broom kicked off his shoes, after which he spat upon his hands (a shock which Miss Kitty thought she never could have survived), and away he went up the willow.

It was not an easy tree to climb, and he had one or two narrow escapes, which kept the crowd breathless, but he shook the hair from his eyes, moistened his hands afresh, and went on. The farm-bailiff's far-away heart was stirred. No Scotchman is insensible to gallantry. And courage is the only thing a "canny" Scot can bear to see expended without return.

"John Broom," screamed Miss Betty, "come down! I order, I command you to come down."

The farm-bailiff drew his speckled hat forward to shade his upward gaze, and folded his arms.

"Dinna call on him, leddies," he said, speaking more quickly than usual. "Dinna mak him turn his head. Steady, lad! Grip wi' your feet. Spit on your pawms, man."



Once the boy trod on a rotten branch, and as he drew back his foot, and it came crashing down, the farm-bailiff set his teeth, and Miss Kitty fainted in Thomasina's arms.

"I'll reward any one who'll fetch him down," sobbed Miss Betty. But John Broom seated himself on the same branch as the cockatoo, and undid the chain and prepared his hands for the downward journey.

"You've got a rare perch, this time," said he. And Pretty Cockey crept towards him, and rubbed its head against him and chuckled with joy.

What dreams of liberty in the tree-tops, with John Broom for a playfellow, passed through his crested head, who shall say? But when he found that his friend meant to take him prisoner, he became very angry and much alarmed. And when John Broom grasped him by both legs and began to descend, Cockey pecked him vigorously. But the boy held the back of his head towards him, and went steadily down.

"Weel done!" roared the farm-bailiff. "Gently, lad! Gude save us! ha'e a care o' yoursen. That's weel. Keep your pow at him. Dinna let the beast get at your een."

But when John Broom was so near the ground as to be safe, the farm-bailiff turned wrathfully upon his

son, who had been gazing open-mouthed at the sight which had so interested his father.

“Ye look weel standing gawping here, before the leddies,” said he, “wasting the precious hours, and bringing your father’s grey hairs wi’ sorrow to the grave; and John Broom yonder shaming ye, and you not so much as thinking to fetch the perch for him, ye lazy loon. Away wi’ ye and get it, before I lay a stick about your shoulders.”

And when his son had gone for the perch, and John Broom was safely on the ground, laughing, bleeding, and triumphant, the farm-bailiff said—

“Ye’re a bauld chiel, John Broom, I’ll say that for ye.”

#### INTO THE MIST.

Unfortunately the favourable impression produced by “the gipsy lad’s” daring soon passed from the farm-bailiff’s mind. It was partly effaced by the old jealousy of the little ladies’ favour. Miss Betty gave the boy no less than four silver shillings, and he ungraciously refused to let the farm-bailiff place them in a savings bank for him.

Matters got from bad to worse. The farming man was not the only one who was jealous, and John Broom himself was as idle and restless as ever. Though, if he had listened respectfully to the Scotch-

man's counsels, or shown any disposition to look up to and be guided by him, much might have been overlooked. But he made fun of him and made a friend of the cowherd. And this latter most manifest token of low breeding vexed the respectable taste of the farm-bailiff.

John Broom had his own grievances too, and he brooded over them. He thought the little ladies had given him over to the farm-bailiff, because they had ceased to care for him, and that the farm-bailiff was prejudiced against him beyond any hope of propitiation. The village folk taunted him, too, with being an outcast, and called him Gipsy John, and this maddened him. Then he would creep into the cow-house and lie in the straw against the white cow's warm back, and for a few of Miss Betty's coppers, to spend in beer or tobacco, the cowherd would hide him from the farm-bailiff and tell him country-side tales. To Thomasina's stories of ghosts and gossip, he would add strange tales of smugglers on the near-lying coast, and as John Broom listened, his restless blood rebelled more and more against the sour sneers and dry drudgery that he got from the farm-bailiff.

Nor were sneers the sharpest punishment his misdemeanours earned. The farm-bailiff's stick was thick and his arm was strong, and he had a tendency to believe that if a flogging was good for a boy,

the more he had of it the better it would be for him.

And John Broom, who never let a cry escape him at the time, would steal away afterwards and sob out his grief into the long soft coat of the sympathizing sheep-dog.

Unfortunately he never tried the effect of deserving better treatment as a remedy for his woes. The parson's good advice and Miss Betty's entreaties were alike in vain. He was ungrateful even to Thomasina. The little ladies sighed and thought of the lawyer. And the parson preached patience.

"Cocky has been tamed," said Miss Kitty, thoughtfully, "perhaps John Broom will get steadier by and by."

"It seems a pity we can't chain him to a perch, Miss Kitty," laughed the parson; "he would be safe then, at any rate."

Miss Betty said afterwards that it did seem so remarkable that the parson should have made this particular joke on this particular night—the night when John Broom did not come home.

He had played truant all day. The farm-bailiff had wanted him, and he had kept out of the way.

The wind was from the east, and a white mist rolled in from the sea, bringing a strange invigorating smell, and making your lips clammy with salt. It

made John Broom's heart beat faster, and filled his head with dreams of ships and smugglers, and rocking masts higher than the willow-tree, and winds wilder than this wind, and dancing waves.

Then something loomed through the fog. It was the farm-bailiff's speckled hat. John Broom hesitated—the thick stick became visible.

Then a cloud rolled between them, and the child turned, and ran, and ran, and ran, coastwards, into the sea mist.

#### THE SEA.—THE ONE-EYED SAILOR.—THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.

John Broom was footsore when he reached the coast, but that keen, life-giving smell had drawn him on and held him up. The fog had cleared off, and he strained his black eyes through the darkness to see the sea.

He had never seen it—that other world within this, on which one lived out of doors, and climbed about all day, and no one blamed him.

When he did see it, he thought he had got to the end of the world. If the edge of the cliff were not the end, he could not make out where the sky began; and if that darkness were the sea, the sea was full of stars.

But this was because the sea was quiet and reflected the colour of the night sky, and the stars were the lights of the herring-boats twinkling in the bay.

When he got down by the water he saw the vessels lying alongside, and they were dirtier than he had supposed. But he did not lose heart, and remembering, from the cowherd's tales, that people who cannot pay for their passage must either work it out or hide themselves on board ship, he took the easier alternative, and got on to the first vessel which had a plank to the quay, and hid himself under some tarpaulin on the deck.

The vessel was a collier bound for London, and she sailed with the morning tide.

When he was found out he was not ill-treated. Indeed, the rough skipper offered to take him home again on his return voyage. He would have liked to go, but pride withheld him, and home-sickness had not yet eaten into his very soul. Then an old sailor with one eye (but that a sly one) met him, and told him tales more wonderful than the cowherd's. And with him he shipped as cabin-boy, on a vessel bound for the other side of the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

A great many sins bring their own punishment in this life pretty clearly, and sometimes pretty closely ;



but few more directly or bitterly than rebellion against the duties, and ingratitude for the blessings, of home.

There was no playing truant on board ship; and as to the master poor John Broom served now, his cruelty made the memory of the farm-bailiff a memory of tenderness and gentleness and indulgence. Till he was half-naked and half-starved, and had only short snatches of sleep in hard corners, it had never struck him that when one has got good food and clothes, and sound sleep in a kindly home, he has got more than many people, and enough to be thankful for.

He did everything he was told now as fast as he could do it, in fear for his life. The one-eyed sailor had told him that the captain always took orphans and poor friendless lads to be his cabin-boys, and John Broom thought what a nice kind man he must be, and how different from the farm-bailiff, who thought nobody could be trustworthy unless he could show parents and grand-parents, and cousins to the sixth degree. But after they had sailed, when John Broom felt very ill, and asked the one-eyed sailor where he was to sleep, the one-eyed sailor pleasantly replied that if he hadn't brought a four-post bed in his pocket he must sleep where he could, for that all the other cabin-boys were sleeping in Davy's Locker,



and couldn't be disturbed. And it was not till John Broom had learned ship's language that he found out that Davy's Locker meant the deep, and that the other cabin-boys were dead. "And as they'd nobody belonging to 'em, no hearts was broke," added the sailor, winking with his one eye.

John Broom slept standing sometimes for weariness, but he did not sleep in Davy's Locker. Young as he was he had dauntless courage, a careless hopeful heart, and a tough little body; and that strong, life-giving sea smell bore him up instead of food, and he got to the other side of the world.

Why he did not stay there, why he did not run away into the wilderness to find at least some easier death than to have his bones broken by the cruel captain, he often wondered afterwards. He was so much quicker and braver than the boys they commonly got, that the old sailor kept a sharp watch over him with his one eye whilst they were ashore; but one day he was too drunk to see out of it, and John Broom ran away.

It was Christmas Day, and so hot that he could not run far, for he was at the other side of the world, where things are upside down, and he sat down by the roadside on the outskirts of the city; and as he sat, with his thin, brown face resting on his hands, a familiar voice beside him said, "Pretty Cocky!" and

looking up he saw a man with several cages of birds. The speaker was a cockatoo of the most exquisite shades of cream-colour, salmon, and rose, and he had a rose-coloured crest. But lovely as he was, John Broom's eyes were on another cage, where, silent, solemn, and sulky, sat a big white one with sulphur-coloured trimmings and fierce black eyes; and he was so like Miss Betty's pet, that the poor child's heart bounded as if a hand had been held out to him from home.

"If you let him get at you, you'll not do it a second time, mate," said the man. "He's the nastiest-tempered beast I ever saw. I'd have wrung his neck long ago if he hadn't such a fine coat."

But John Broom said, as he had said before, "I like him, and he'll like me."

When the cockatoo bit his finger to the bone, the man roared with laughter, but John Broom did not draw his hand away. He kept it still at the bird's beak, and with the other he gently scratched him under the crest and wings. And when the white cockatoo began to stretch out his eight long toes, as cats clutch with their claws from pleasure, and chuckled, and sighed, and bit softly without hurting, and laid his head against the bars till his snow and sulphur feathers touched John Broom's black locks, the man was amazed.

“Look here, mate,” said he, “you’ve the trick with birds, and no mistake. I’ll sell you this one cheap, and you’ll be able to sell him dear.”

“I’ve not a penny in the world,” said John Broom.

“You do look cleaned out, too,” said the man, scanning him from head to foot. “I tell you what, you shall come with me a bit and tame the birds, and I’ll find you something to eat.”

Ten minutes before, John Broom would have jumped at this offer, but now he refused it. The sight of the cockatoo had brought back the fever of home-sickness in all its fierceness. He couldn’t stay out here. He would dare anything, do anything, to see the hills about Lingborough once more before he died; and even if he did not live to see them, he might live to sleep in that part of Davy’s Locker which should rock him on the shores of home.

The man gave him a shilling for fastening a ring and chain on to the Cocky’s ankle, and with this he got the best dinner he had eaten since he lost sight of the farm-bailiff’s speckled hat in the mist.

And then he went back to the one-eyed sailor, and shipped as cabin-boy again for the homeward voyage.

THE HIGHLANDER.—BARRACK LIFE.—THE GREAT  
CURSE.—JOHN BROOM'S MONEY-BOX.

When John Broom did get home he did not go to sea again. He lived from hand to mouth in the seaport town, and slept, as he was well accustomed to sleep, in holes and corners.

Every day and every night, through the long months of the voyage, he had dreamed of begging his way barefoot to Miss Betty's door. But now he did not go. His life was hard, but it was not cruel. He was very idle, and there was plenty to see. He wandered about the country as of old. The ships and shipping too had a fascination for him now that the past was past, and here he could watch them from the shore; and, partly for shame and partly for pride, he could not face the idea of going back. If he had been taunted with being a vagrant boy before, what would be said now if he presented himself, a true tramp, to the farm-bailiff? Besides, Miss Betty and Miss Kitty could not forgive him. It was impossible!

He was wandering about one day when he came to some fine high walls with buildings inside. There was an open gateway, at which stood a soldier with a musket. But a woman and some children went in, and he did not shoot them; so when his back was

turned, and he was walking stiffly to where he came from, John Broom ran in through the gateway.

The first man he saw was the grandest-looking man he had ever seen. Indeed, he looked more like a bird than a man—a big bird with a big black crest. He was very tall. His feet were broad and white, like the feathered feet of some plummy bird, his legs were bare and brown and hairy. He was clothed in many colours. He had fur in front, which swung as he walked, and silver and shining stones about him. He held his head very high, and from it drooped great black plumes. His face looked as if it had been cut—roughly but artistically—out of a block of old wood, and his eyes were the colour of a summer sky. And John Broom felt as he had felt when he first saw Miss Betty's cockatoo.

In repose the Highlander's eye was as clear as a cairngorm and as cold, but when it fell upon John Broom it took a twinkle not quite unlike the twinkle in the one eye of the sailor; and then, to his amazement, this grand creature beckoned to John Broom with a rather dirty hand.

"Yes, sir," said John Broom, staring up at the splendid giant, with eyes of wonder.

"I'm saying," said the Highlander, confidentially (and it had a pleasant homely sound to hear him speak like the farm-bailiff)—"I'm saying, I'm confined

to barracks, ye ken ; and I'll gie ye a hawpenny if ye'll get the bottle filled wi' whusky. Roun' yon corner ye'll see the 'Britain's Defenders.' ”

But at this moment he erected himself, his turquoise eyes looked straight before them, and he put his hand to his head and moved it slowly away again, as a young man with more swinging grandeur of colours and fur and plumes, and with greater glitterings of gems and silver, passed by, a sword clattering after him.

Meanwhile John Broom had been round the corner and was back again.

“What for are ye stannin' there, ye fule?” asked his new friend. “What for didna ye gang for the whusky?”

“It's here, sir.”

“My certy, ye dinna let the grass grow under your feet,” said the Highlander ; and he added, “If ye want to run errands, laddie, ye can come back again.”

It was the beginning of a fresh life for John Broom. With many other idle or homeless boys he now haunted the barracks, and ran errands for the soldiers. His fleetness of foot and ready wit made him the favourite. Perhaps, too, his youth and his bright face and eyes pleaded for him, for British soldiers are a tender-hearted race.



He was knocked about, but never cruelly, and he got plenty of coppers and broken victuals, and now and then an old cap or pair of boots, a world too large for him. His principal errands were to fetch liquor for the soldiers. In arms and pockets he would sometimes carry a dozen bottles at once, and fly back from the canteen or public-house without breaking one.

Before the summer was over he was familiar with every barrack-room and guard-room in the place; he had food to eat and coppers to spare, and he shared his bits with the mongrel dogs who lived, as he did, on the good-nature of the garrison.

It must be confessed that neatness was not among John Broom's virtues. He looped his rags together with bits of string, and wasted his pence or lost them. The soldiers standing at the bar would often give him a drink out of their pewter-pots. It choked him at first, and then he got used to it, and liked it. Some relics of Miss Betty's teaching kept him honest. He would not condescend to sip by the way out of the soldiers' jugs and bottles as other errand-boys did, but he came to feel rather proud of laying his two-pence on the counter, and emptying his own pot of beer with a grimace to the bystanders through the glass at the bottom.

One day he was winking through the froth of a



pint of porter at the canteen sergeant's daughter, who was in fits of laughing, when the pewter was knocked out of his grasp, and the big Highlander's hand was laid on his shoulder and bore him twenty or thirty yards from the place in one swoop.

"I'll trouble ye to give me your attention," said the Highlander, when they came to a standstill, "and to speak the truth. Did ye ever see me the worse of liquor?"

John Broom had several remembrances of the clearest kind to that effect, so he put up his arms to shield his head from the probable blow, and said, "Yes, M'Alister."

"How often?" asked the Scotchman.

"I never counted," said John Broom; "pretty often."

"How many good-conduct stripes do you ken me to have lost of your ain knowledge?"

"Three, M'Alister."

"Is there a finer man than me in the regiment?" asked the Highlander, drawing up his head.

"That there's not," said John Broom, warmly.

"Our sairgent, now," drawled the Scotchman, "wad ye say he was a better man than me?"

"Nothing like so good," said John Broom, sincerely.

"And what d'ye suppose, man," said the High-

lander, firing with sudden passion, till the light of his clear blue eyes seemed to pierce John Broom's very soul—"what d'ye suppose has hindered me that I'm not sairgent, when yon man is? What has keepit me from being an officer, that has served my country in twa battles when oor quartermaster hadna enlisted? Wha gets my money? What lost me my stripes? What loses me decent folks' respect and, waur than that, my ain? What gars a hand that can grip a broadsword tremble like a woman's? What fills the canteen and the kirkyard? What robs a man of health and wealth and peace? What ruins weans and women, and makes mair homes desolate than war? Drink, man, drink! The deevil of drink!"

It was not till the glare in his eyes had paled that John Broom ventured to speak. Then he said—

"Why don't ye give it up, M'Alister?"

The man rose to his full height, and laid his hand heavily on the boy's shoulder, and his eyes seemed to fade with that pitiful, weary look, which only such blue eyes show so well, "Because I *canna*," said he; "because, for as big as I am, I canna. But for as little as you are, laddie, ye can, and, Heaven help me, ye shall."

That evening he called John Broom into the barrack-room where he slept. He was sitting on the

edge of his bed, and had a little wooden money-box in his hands.

“What money have ye, laddie?” he asked.

John Broom pulled out three halfpence lately earned, and the Scotchman dropped them slowly into the box. Then he turned the key, and put it into his pocket, and gave the box to the boy.

“Ye’ll put what ye earn in there,” said he; “I’ll keep the key, and ye’ll keep the box yoursel’; and when it’s opened we’ll open it together, and lay out your savings in decent clothes for ye against the winter.”

At this moment some men passing to the canteen shouted, “M’Alister!” The Highlander did not answer, but he started to the door. Then he stood irresolute, and then turned and reseated himself.

“Gang and bring me a bit o’ tobacco,” he said, giving John Broom a penny. And when the boy had gone he emptied his pocket of the few pence left, and dropped them into the box, muttering, “If he manna, I wanna.”

And when the tobacco came, he lit his pipe, and sat on the bench outside, and snarled at every one who spoke to him.

OUTPOST DUTY.—THE SERGEANT'S STORY.—GRAND  
ROUNDS.

It was a bitterly cold winter. The soldiers drank a great deal, and John Broom was constantly trotting up and down, and the box grew very heavy.

Bottles were filled and refilled, in spite of greatly increased strictness in the discipline of the garrison, for there were rumours of invasion, and penalties were heavy, and sentry posts were increased, and the regiments were kept in readiness for action.

The Highlander had not cured himself of drinking, though he had cured John Broom. But, like others, he was more wary just now, and had hitherto escaped the heavy punishments inflicted in a time of probable war; and John Broom watched over him with the fidelity of a sheep-dog, and more than once had roused him with a can of cold water when he was all but caught by his superiors in a state of stupor, which would not have been credited to the frost alone.

The talk of invasion had become grave, when one day a body of men were ordered for outpost duty, and M'Alister was among them. The officer had got a room for them in a farmhouse, where they sat round the fire, and went out by turns to act as sentries at various posts for an hour or two at a time.

The novelty was delightful to John Broom. He hung about the farmhouse, and warmed himself at the soldiers' fire.

In the course of the day M'Alister got him apart and whispered, "I'm going on duty the night at ten, laddie. It's fearsome cold, and I hav'na had a drop to warm me the day. If ye could ha' brought me a wee drappie to the corner of the three roads—it's twa miles from here, I'm thinking——"

"It's not the miles, M'Alister," said John Broom, "but you're on outpost duty, and——"

"And you're misdoubting what may be done to ye for bringing liquor to a sentry on duty? Aye, aye, lad, ye do weel to be cautious," said the Highlander, and he turned away.

But it was not the fear of consequences to himself which had made John Broom hesitate, and he was stung by the implication.

The night was dark and very cold, and the Highlander had been pacing up and down his post for about half-an-hour, when his quick ear caught a faint sound of footsteps.

"Wha goes there?" said he.

"It's I, M'Alister," whispered John Broom.

"Whisht, laddie," said the sentry; "are ye there after all? Did no one see ye?"

"Not a soul; I crept by the hedges. Here's

your whisky, M'Alister; but oh, be careful!" said the lad.

The Scotchman's eyes glittered greedily at the bottle.

"Never fear," said he, "I'll just rub a wee drappie on the pawms of my hands to keep away the frost-bite, for it's awsome cold, man. Now away wi' ye, and take tent, laddie, keep off the other sentries."

John Broom went back as carefully as he had come, and slipped in to warm himself by the guard-room fire.

It was a good one, and the soldiers sat close round it. The officer was writing a letter in another room, and in a low, impressive voice the sergeant was telling a story which was listened to with breathless attention. John Broom was fond of stories, and he listened also.

It was of a friend of the sergeant's, who had been a boy with him in the same village at home, who had seen active service with him abroad, and who had slept at his post on such a night as this, from the joint effects of cold and drink. It was war time, and he had been tried by court-martial, and shot for the offence. The sergeant had been one of the firing party to execute his friend, and they had taken leave of each other as brothers, before the final parting face to face in this last awful scene.



The man's voice was faltering, when the tale was cut short by the jingling of the field-officer's accoutrements as he rode by to visit the outposts. In an instant the officer and men turned out to receive him; and, after the usual formalities, he rode on. The officer went back to his letter, and the sergeant and his men to their fireside.

The opening of the doors had let in a fresh volume of cold, and one of the men called to John Broom to mend the fire. But he was gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

John Broom was fleet of foot, and there are certain moments which lift men beyond their natural powers, but he had set himself a hard task.

As he listened to the sergeant's tale, an agonizing fear smote him for his friend M'Alister. Was there any hope that the Highlander could keep himself from the whisky? Officers were making their rounds at very short intervals just now, and if drink and cold overcame him at his post!

Close upon these thoughts came the jingling of the field-officer's sword, and the turn out of the guard. "Who goes there?"—"Rounds."—"What rounds?"—"Grand rounds."—"Halt, grand rounds, advance one, and give the countersign!" The familiar words struck coldly on John Broom's heart, as if they had been orders to a firing party, and



the bandage was already across the Highlander's blue eyes. Would the grand rounds be challenged at the three roads to-night? He darted out into the snow.

He flew, as the crow flies, across the fields, to where M'Alister was on duty. It was a much shorter distance than by the road, which was winding; but whether this would balance the difference between a horse's pace and his own was the question, and there being no time to question, he ran on.

He kept his black head down, and ran from his shoulders. The clatter, clatter, jingle, jingle, on the hard road came to him through the still frost on a level with his left ear. It was terrible, but he held on, dodging under the hedges to be out of sight, and the sound lessened, and by and by, the road having wound about, he could hear it faintly, *but behind him.*

And he reached the three roads, and M'Alister was asleep in the ditch.

But when, with jingle and clatter, the field-officer of the day reached the spot, the giant Highlander stood like a watch-tower at his post, with a little snow on the black plumes that drooped upon his shoulders.

## HOSPITAL.—“HAME.”

John Broom did not see the Highlander again for two or three days. It was Christmas week, and, in spite of the war panic, there was festivity enough in the barracks to keep the errand-boy very busy.

Then came New Year's Eve—“Hogmanay,” as the Scotch call it—and it was the Highland regiment's particular festival. Worn out with whisky-fetching and with helping to deck barrack-rooms and carrying pots and trestles, John Broom was having a nap in the evening, in company with a mongrel deer-hound, when a man shook him, and said, “I heard some one asking for ye an hour or two back ; M'Alister wants ye.”

“Where is he?” said John Broom, jumping to his feet.

“In hospital ; he's been there a day or two. He got cold on outpost duty, and it's flown to his lungs, they say. Ye see he's been a hard drinker, has M'Alister, and I expect he's breaking up.”

With which very just conclusion the speaker went on into the canteen, and John Broom ran to the hospital.

Stripped of his picturesque trappings, and with no plumes to shadow the hollows in his temples, M'Alister looked gaunt and feeble enough, as he

lay in the little hospital bed, which barely held his long limbs. Such a wreck of giant powers of body and noble qualities of mind as the drink-shops are preparing for the hospitals every day!

Since the quickly-reached medical decision that he was in a rapid decline, and that nothing could be done for him, M'Alister had been left a good deal alone. His intellect (and it was no fool's intellect) was quite clear, and if the long hours by himself, in which he reckoned with his own soul, had hastened the death-damps on his brow, they had also written there an expression which was new to John Broom. It was not the old sour look, it was a kind of noble gravity.

His light-blue eyes brightened as the boy came in, and he held out his hand, and John Broom took it with both his, saying—

“I never heard till this minute, M'Alister. Eh, I do hope you'll be better soon.”

“The Lord being merciful to me,” said the Highlander. “But *this* world's nearly past, laddie, and I was fain to see ye again. Dinna greet, man, for I've important business wi' ye, and I should wish your attention. Firstly, I'm aboot to hand ower to ye the key of your box. Tak it, and put it in a pocket that's no got a hole in it, if you're worth one. Secondly, there's a bit bag I made mysel', and it's

got a trifle o' money in it that I'm giving and bequeathing to ye, under certain conditions, namely, that ye shall spend the contents of the box according to my last wishes and instructions, with the ultimate end of your ain benefit, ye'll understand."

A fit of coughing here broke M'Alister's discourse; but, after drinking from a cup beside him, he put aside John Broom's remonstrances with a dignified movement of his hand, and continued—

"When a body comes of decent folk, he won't just care, maybe, to have their names brought up in a barrack-room. Ye never heard me say aught of my father or my mither?"

"Never, M'Alister."

"I'd a good hame," said the Highlander, with a decent pride in his tone. "It was a strict hame—I've no cause now to deceive mysel', and I'm thinking it was a wee bit ower strict—but it was a good hame. I left it, man—I ran away."

The glittering blue eyes turned sharply on the lad, and he went on—

"A body doesna' care to turn his byeganes oot for every fool to peck at. Did I ever speer about your past life, and whar ye came from?"

"Never, M'Alister."

"But that's no to say that, if I knew manners, I didna obsairve. And there's been things now and

again, John Broom, that's gar'd me think that ye've had what I had, and done as I did. Did ye rin awa', laddie?"

John Broom nodded his black head, but tears choked his voice.

"Man!" said the Highlander, "ane word's as gude's a thousand. Gang back! Gang hame! There's the bit siller here that's to tak ye, and the love yonder that's waiting ye. Listen to a dying man, laddie, and gang hame!"

"I doubt if they'd have me," sobbed John Broom; "I gave 'em a deal of trouble, M'Alister."

"And d'ye think, lad, that that thought has na' cursed *me*, and keepit me from them that loved me? Aye, lad, and till this week I never overcame it.

"Weel may I want to save ye, bairn," added the Highlander tenderly, "for it was the thocht of a' ye riskit for the like of me at the three roads, that made me consider wi' mysel' that I've aiblins been turning my back a' my wilfu' life on love that's bigger than a man's deservings. It's near done now, and it'll never lie in my poor power so much as rightly to thank ye. It's strange that a man should set store by a good name that he doesn' deserve; but if ony blessings of mine could bring ye good, they're yours, that saved an old soldier's honour, and let him die respectit in his regiment."

“Oh, M’Alister, let me fetch one of the chaplains to write a letter to fetch your father,” cried John Broom.

“The minister’s been here this morning,” said the Highlander, “and I’ve tell’t him mair than I’ve tell’t you. And he’s jest directed me to put my sinful trust in the Father of us a’. I’ve sinned heaviest against *Him*, laddie, but His love is stronger than the lave.”

John Broom remained by his friend, whose painful fits of coughing, and of gasping for breath, were varied by intervals of seeming stupor. When a candle had been brought in and placed near the bed, the Highlander roused himself and asked—

“Is there a Bible on yon table? Could ye read a bit to me, laddie?”

There is little need to dwell on the bitterness of heart with which John Broom confessed—

“I can’t read big words, M’Alister.”

“Did ye never go to school?” said the Scotchman.

“I didn’t learn,” said the poor boy; “I played.”

“Aye, aye. Weel, ye’ll learn when ye gang hame,” said the Highlander, in gentle tones.

“I’ll never get home,” said John Broom, passionately. “I’ll never forgive myself. I’ll never get over it, that I couldn’t read to ye when ye wanted me, M’Alister.”



"Gently, gently," said the Scotchman. "Dinna daunt yoursel' owermuch wi' the past, laddie. And for me—I'm not that presoomtious to think I can square up a misspent life as a man might compound wi's creditors. 'Gin HE forgi'es me, He'll forgi'e; but it's not a prayer up or a chapter doun that'll stan' between me and the Almighty. So dinna fret yoursel', but let me think while I may."

And so, far into the night, the Highlander lay silent, and John Broom watched by him.

It was just midnight when he partly raised himself, and cried—

"Whisht, laddie; do ye hear the pipes?"

The dying ears must have been quick, for John Broom heard nothing; but in a few moments he heard the bagpipes from the officers' mess, where they were keeping Hogmanay. They were playing the old year out with "Auld lang syne," and the Highlander beat the tune out with his hand, and his eyes gleamed out of his rugged face in the dim light, as cairngorms glitter in dark tartan.

There was a pause after the first verse, and he grew restless, and turning doubtfully to where John Broom sat, as if his sight were failing, he said, "Ye'll mind your promise, ye'll gang hame?" And after awhile he repeated the last word,

"*Hame!*"



But as he spoke there settled over his face a smile so tender and so full of happiness, that John Broom held his breath as he watched him. As the light of sunrise creeps over the face of some rugged rock, it crept from chin to brow, and the pale blue eyes shone tranquil, like water that reflects heaven.

And when it had passed it left them still open, but gems that had lost their ray.

#### LUCK GOES.—AND COMES AGAIN.

The spirit does not always falter in its faith because the flesh is weary with hope deferred. When week after week, month after month, and year after year, went by and John Broom was not found, the disappointment seemed to "age" the little ladies, as Thomasina phrased it. But yet they said to the parson, "We do not regret it."

"God forbid that you should regret it," said he.

And even the lawyer (whose heart was kinder than his tongue) abstained from taunting them with his prophecies, and said, "The force of the habits of early education is a power as well as that of inherent tendencies. It is only for your sake that I regret a too romantic benevolence." And Miss Betty and Miss Kitty tried to put the matter quite away. But John Broom was very closely bound up with the life

of many years past. Thomasina mourned him as if he had been her son, and Thomasina being an old and valuable servant, it is needless to say that when she was miserable no one in the house was permitted to be quite at ease.

As to Pretty Cocky, he lived, but Miss Kitty fancied that he grew less pretty and drooped upon his polished perch.

There were times when the parson felt almost conscience-stricken because he had encouraged the adoption of John Broom. Disappointments fall heavily upon elderly people. They may submit better than the young, but they do not so easily revive. The little old ladies looked greyer and more nervous, and the little old house looked greyer and gloomier than of old.

Indeed there were other causes of anxiety. Times were changing, prices were rising, and the farm did not thrive. The lawyer said that the farm-bailiff neglected his duties, and that the cowherd did nothing but drink ; but Miss Betty trembled, and said they could not part with old servants.

The farm-bailiff had his own trouble, but he kept it to himself. No one knew how severely he had beaten John Broom the day before he ran away, but he remembered it himself with painful clearness. Harsh men are apt to have consciences, and his was far from

easy about the lad who had been entrusted to his care. He could not help thinking of it when the day's work was over, and he had to keep filling up his evening whisky-glass again and again to drown disagreeable thoughts.

The whisky answered this purpose, but it made him late in the morning; it complicated business on market days, not to the benefit of the farm, and it put him at a disadvantage in dealing with the drunken cowherd.

The cowherd was completely upset by John Broom's mysterious disappearance, and he comforted himself as the farm-bailiff did, but to a larger extent. And Thomasina winked at many irregularities in consideration of the groans of sympathy with which he responded to her tears as they sat round the hearth where John Broom no longer lay.

At the time that he vanished from Lingborough the gossips of the country side said, "This comes of making pets of tramps' brats, when honest folk's sons may toil and moil without notice." But when it was proved that the tramp-boy had stolen nothing, when all search for him was vain, and when prosperity faded from the place season by season and year by year, there were old folk who whispered that the gaudily-clothed child Miss Betty had found under the broom-bush had something more than common in him, and

that whoever and whatever had offended the eerie creature, he had taken the luck of Lingborough with him when he went away.

It was early summer. The broom was shining in the hedges with uncommon wealth of golden blossoms. "The lanes look for all the world as they did the year that poor child was found," said Thomasina, wiping her eyes. Annie the lass sobbed hysterically, and the cowherd found himself so low in spirits that after gazing dismally at the cow-stalls, which had not been cleaned for days past, he betook himself to the ale-house to refresh his energies for this and other arrears of work.

On returning to the farm, however, he found his hands still feeble, and he took a drop or two more to steady them, after which it occurred to him that certain new potatoes which he had had orders to dig were yet in the ground. The wood was not chopped for the next day's use, and he wondered what had become of a fork he had had in the morning and had laid down somewhere.

So he seated himself on some straw in the corner to think about it all, and whilst he was thinking he fell fast asleep.

By his own account many remarkable things had befallen him in the course of his life, including that meeting with a Black Something to which allusion has

been made, but nothing so strange as what happened to him that night.

When he awoke in the morning and sat up on the straw, and looked around him, the stable was freshly cleaned, the litter in the stalls was shaken and turned, and near the door was an old barrel of newly-dug potatoes, and the fork stood by it. And when he ran to the wood-house there lay the wood neatly chopped and piled to take away.

He kept his own counsel that day and took credit for the work, but when on the morrow the farm-bailiff was at a loss to know who had thinned the turnips that were left to do in the upper field, and Annie the lass found the kitchen-cloths she had left overnight to soak, rubbed through and rinsed, and laid to dry, the cowherd told his tale to Thomasina, and begged for a bowl of porridge and cream to set in the barn, as one might set a mouse-trap baited with cheese.

“For,” said he, “the luck of Lingborough’s come back, missis. *It’s Lob Lie-by-the-fire!*”

#### LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE.

“It’s Lob Lie-by-the-fire!”

So Thomasina whispered exultingly, and Annie the lass timidly. Thomasina cautioned the cowherd to hold his tongue, and she said nothing to the little ladies on the subject. She felt certain that they would

tell the parson, and he might not approve. The farm-bailiff knew of a farm on the Scotch side of the Border where a brownie had been driven away by the minister preaching his last Sunday's sermon over again at him, and as Thomasina said, "There'd been little enough luck at Lingborough lately, that they should wish to scare it away when it came."

And yet the news leaked out gently, and was soon known all through the neighbourhood—as a secret.

"The luck of Lingborough's come back. Lob's lying by the fire!"

He could be heard at his work any night, and several people had seen him, though this vexed Thomasina, who knew well that the Good People do not like to be watched at their labours.

The cowherd had not been able to resist peeping down through chinks in the floor of the loft above the barn, where he slept, and one night he had seen Lob fetching straw for the cowhouse. "A great rough, black fellow," said he, and he certainly grew bigger and rougher and blacker every time the cowherd told the tale.

The Lubber-fiend appeared next to a boy who was loitering at a late hour somewhere near the little ladies' kitchen-garden, and whom he pursued and pelted with mud till the lad nearly lost his wits with terror. (It was the same boy who was put in the



lock-up in the autumn for stealing Farmer Mangel's Siberian crabs.)

For this trick, however, the rough elf atoned by leaving three pecks of newly-gathered fruit in the kitchen the following morning. Never had there been such a preserving season at Lingborough within the memory of Thomasina.

The truth is, hobgoblins, from Puck to Will-o'-the-wisp, are apt to play practical jokes and knock people about whom they meet after sunset. A dozen tales of such were rife, and folks were more amused than amazed by Lob Lie-by-the-fire's next prank.

There was an aged pauper who lived on the charity of the little ladies, and whom it was Miss Betty's practice to employ to do light weeding in the fields for heavy wages. This venerable person was toddling to his home in the gloaming with a barrow-load of Miss Betty's new potatoes, dexterously hidden by an upper sprinkling of groundsel and hemlock, when the Lubber-fiend sprang out from behind an elder-bush, ran at the old man with his black head, and knocked him, heels uppermost, into the ditch. The wheelbarrow was afterwards found in Miss Betty's farmyard, quite empty.

And when the cowherd (who had his own opinion of the aged pauper, and it was a very poor one) went that evening to drink Lob Lie-by-the-fire's health



from a bottle he kept in the harness-room window, he was nearly choked with the contents, which had turned into salt and water, as fairy jewels turn to withered leaves.

But luck had come to Lingborough. There had not been such crops for twice seven years past.

The lay-away hen's eggs were brought regularly to the kitchen.

The ducklings were not eaten by rats.

No fowls were stolen.

The tub of pig-meal lasted three times as long as usual.

The cart-wheels and gate-hinges were oiled by unseen fingers.

The mushrooms in the croft gathered themselves and lay down on a dish in the larder.

It is by small savings that a farm thrives, and Miss Betty's farm throve.

Everybody worked with more alacrity. Annie the lass said the butter came in a way that made it a pleasure to churn.

The neighbours knew even more than those on the spot. They said—That since Lob came back to Lingborough the hens laid eggs as large as turkeys' eggs, and the turkeys' eggs were—oh, you wouldn't believe the size!

That the cows gave nothing but cream, and that

Thomasina skimmed butter off it as less lucky folk skim cream from milk.

That her cheeses were as rich as butter.

That she sold all she made, for Lob took the fairy butter from the old trees in the avenue, and made it up into pats for Miss Betty's table.

That if you bought Lingborough turnips, you might feed your cows on them all the winter and the milk would be as sweet as new-mown hay.

That horses foddered on Lingborough hay would have thrice the strength of others, and that sheep who cropped Lingborough pastures would grow three times as fat.

That for as good a watch-dog as it was, the sheep-dog never barked at Lob, a plain proof that he was more than human.

That for all its good luck it was not safe to loiter near the place after dark, if you wished to keep your senses. And if you took so much as a fallen apple belonging to Miss Betty, you might look out for palsy or St. Vitus's dance, or be carried off bodily to the underground folk.

Finally, that it was well all the cows gave double, for that Lob Lie-by-the-fire drank two gallons of the best cream every day, with curds, porridge, and other dainties to match. But what did that matter, when he had been overheard to swear that luck should not

leave Lingborough till Miss Betty owned half the country side?

MISS BETTY IS SURPRISED.

Miss Betty and Miss Kitty having accepted a polite invitation from Mrs. General Dunmaw, went down to tea with that lady one fine evening in this eventful summer.

Death had made a gap or two in the familiar circle during the last fourteen years, but otherwise it was quite the same, except that the lawyer was married and not quite so sarcastic, and that Mrs. Brown Jasey had brought a young niece with her dressed in the latest fashion, which looked quite as odd as new fashions are wont to do, and with a *coiffure* "enough to frighten the French away," as her aunt told her.

It was while this young lady was getting more noise out of Mrs. Dunmaw's red silk and rosewood piano than had been shaken out of it during the last thirty years, that the lawyer brought his cup of coffee to Miss Betty's side, and said, suavely, "I hear wonderful accounts of Lingborough, dear Miss Betty."

"I am thankful to say, sir, that the farm is doing well this year. I am very thankful, for the past few years have been unfavourable, and we had begun to

face the fact that it might be necessary to sell the old place. And I will not deny, sir, that it would have gone far to break my heart, to say nothing of my sister Kitty's."

"Oh, we shouldn't have let it come to that," said the lawyer. "I could have raised a loan——"

"Sir," said Miss Betty with dignity, "if we have our own pride, I hope it's an honest one. Lingborough will have passed out of our family when it's kept up on borrowed money.

"I *could* live in lodgings," added Miss Betty, firmly, "little as I've been accustomed to it, but *not in debt*."

"Well, well, my dear madam, we needn't talk about it now. But I'm dying of curiosity as to the mainstay of all this good luck."

"The turnips——" began Miss Betty.

"Bless my soul, Miss Betty!" cried the lawyer, "I'm not talking of turnips. I'm talking of Lob Lie-by-the-fire, as all the country side is for that matter."

"The country people have plenty of tales of him," said Miss Betty, with some pride in the family goblin. "He used to haunt the old barns, they say, in my great-grandfather's time."

"And now you've got him back again," said the lawyer.

“Not that I know of,” said Miss Betty.

On which the lawyer poured into her astonished ear all the latest news on the subject, and if it had lost nothing before reaching his house in the town, it rather gained in marvels as he repeated it to Miss Betty.

No wonder that the little lady was anxious to get home to question Thomasina, and that somewhat before the usual hour she said—

“Sister Kitty, if it’s not too soon for the servant——”

And the parson, threading his way to where Mrs. Dunmaw’s china crape shawl (dyed crimson) shone in the bow window, said, “The clergy should keep respectable hours, madam; especially when they are as old as I am. Will you allow me to thank you for a very pleasant evening, and to say good-night?”

#### THE PARSON AND THE LUBBER-FIEND.

“Do you think there’d be any harm in leaving it alone, sister Betty?” said Miss Kitty, tremulously.

They had reached Lingborough, and the parson had come in with them, by Miss Betty’s request, and Thomasina had been duly examined.

“Eh, Miss Betty, why should ye chase away good luck with the minister?” cried she.

“Sister Kitty! Thomasina!” said Miss Betty. “I would not accept good luck from a doubtful quarter to save Lingborough. But if It can face this excellent clergyman, the Being who haunted my great-grandfather’s farm is still welcome to the old barns, and you, Thomasina, need not grudge It cream or curds.”

“You’re quite right, sister Betty,” said Miss Kitty. “You always are; but oh dear, oh dear!”

“Thomasina tells me,” said Miss Betty, turning to the parson, “that on chilly evenings It sometimes comes and lies by the kitchen fire after they have gone to bed, and I can distinctly remember my grandmother mentioning the same thing. Thomasina has of late left the kitchen door on the latch for Its convenience, and as they had to sit up late for us, she and Annie have taken their work into the still-room to leave the kitchen free for Lob Lie-by-the-fire. They have not looked into the kitchen this evening, as such beings do not like to be watched. But they fancy that they heard It come in. I trust, sir, that neither in myself nor my sister Kitty does timidity exceed a proper feminine sensibility, where duty is concerned. If you will be good enough to precede us, we will go to meet the old friend of my great-grandfather’s fortunes, and we leave it entirely to your valuable discretion to pursue what course you think proper on the occasion.”



“Is this the door?” said the parson, cheerfully, after knocking his head against black beams and just saving his legs down shallow and unexpected steps on his way to the kitchen—beams so unfelt and steps so familiar to the women that it had never struck them that the long passage was not the most straightforward walk a man could take—“I think you said It generally lies on the hearth?”

The happy thought struck Thomasina that the parson might be frightened out of his unlucky interference.

“Aye, aye, sir,” said she from behind. “We’ve heard him rolling by the fire, and growling like thunder to himself. They say he’s an awful size, too, with the strength of four men, and a long tail, and eyes like coals of fire.”

But Thomasina spoke in vain, for the parson opened the door, and as they pressed in, the moonlight streaming through the latticed window showed Lob lying by the fire.

“There’s his tail! Ay——k!” screeched Annie the lass, and away she went, without drawing breath, to the top garret, where she locked and bolted herself in, and sat her bandbox flat, and screamed for help.

But it was the plummy tail of the sheep-dog, who was lying there with the Lubber-fiend. And Lob

was asleep, with his arms round the sheep-dog's neck, and the sheep-dog's head lay on his breast, and his own head touched the dog's.

And it was a smaller head than the parson had been led to expect, and it had thick black hair.

As the parson bent over the hearth, Thomasina took Miss Kitty round the waist, and Miss Betty clutched her black velvet bag till the steel beads ran into her hands, and they were quite prepared for an explosion, and sulphur, and blue lights, and thunder.

And then the parson's deep round voice broke the silence, saying,—

“Is that you, lad? GOD bless you, John Broom. You're welcome home!”

#### THE END.

Some things—such as gossip—gain in the telling, but there are others before which words fail, though each heart knows its own power of sympathy. And such was the joy of the little ladies and of Thomasina at John Broom's return.

The sheep-dog had had his satisfaction out long ago, and had kept it to himself, but how Pretty Cocky crowed, and chuckled, and danced, and bowed his crest, and covered his face with his amber wings, and

kicked his seed-pot over, and spilled his water-pot on to the Derbyshire marble chess-table, and screamed till the room rang again, and went on screaming, with Miss Kitty's pocket-handkerchief over his head to keep him quiet, my poor pen can but imperfectly describe.

The desire to atone for the past which had led John Broom to act the part of one of those Good-Fellows who have, we must fear, finally deserted us, will be easily understood. And to a nature of his type, the earning of some self-respect, and of a new character before others, was perhaps a necessary prelude to future well-doing.

He did do well. He became "a good scholar," as farmers were then. He spent as much of his passionate energies on the farm as the farm would absorb, and he restrained the rest. It is not cockatoos only who have sometimes to live and be happy in this unfinished life with one wing clipped.

In fine weather, when the perch was put into the garden, Miss Betty was sometimes startled by stumbling on John Broom in the dusk, sitting on his heels, the unfastened chain in his hand, with his black head lovingly laid against Cocky's white and yellow poll, talking in a low voice, and apparently with the sympathy of his companion; and, as Miss Betty justly feared, of that "other side of the world,"

which they both knew, and which both at times had cravings to revisit.

Even after the sobering influences of middle age had touched him, and a wife and children bound him with the quiet ties of home, he had (at long intervals) his "restless times," when his good "missis" would bring out a little store laid by in one of the children's socks, and would bid him "Be off, and get a breath of the sea-air," but on condition that the sock went with him as his purse. John Broom always looked ashamed to go, but he came back the better, and his wife was quite easy in his absence with that confidence in her knowledge of "the master," which is so mysterious to the unmarried, and which Miss Betty looked upon as "want of feeling" to the end. She always dreaded that he would not return, and a little ruse which she adopted of giving him money to make bargains for foreign articles of *vertu* with the sailors, is responsible for many of the choicest ornaments in the Lingborough parlour.

"The sock 'll bring him home," said Mrs. Broom, and home he came, and never could say what he had been doing. Nor was the account given by Thomasina's cousin, who was a tide-waiter down yonder, particularly satisfying to the women's curiosity. He said that John Broom was always about ;

that he went aboard of all the craft in the bay, and asked whence they came and whither they were bound. That, being once taunted to it, he went up the rigging of a big vessel like a cat, and came down it looking like a fool. That, as a rule, he gossiped and shared his tobacco with sailors and fishermen, and brought out the sock much oftener than was prudent for the benefit of the ragged boys who haunt the quay.

He had two other weaknesses, which a faithful biographer must chronicle.

A regiment on the march would draw him from the plough-tail itself, and "With daddy to see the pretty soldiers" was held to excuse any of Mrs. Broom's children from household duties.

The other shall be described in the graphic language of that acute observer the farm-bailiff.

"If there cam' an Irish beggar, wi' a stripy cloot roond him and a bellows under 's arm, and ca'd himsel' a Hielander, the lad wad gi'e him his silly head off his shoulders."

As to the farm-bailiff, perhaps no one felt more or said less than he did on John Broom's return. But the tones of his voice had tender associations for the boy's ears as he took off his speckled hat, and after contemplating the inside for some moments, put it on again, and said—

“Aweel, lad, sae ye’ve cam’ hame?”

But he listened with quivering face when John Broom told the story of M’Alister, and when it was ended he rose and went out, and “took the pledge” against drink, and—kept it.

Moved by similar enthusiasm, the cowherd took the pledge also, and if he didn’t keep it, he certainly drank less, chiefly owing to the vigilant oversight of the farm-bailiff, who now exercised his natural severity almost exclusively in the denunciation of all liquors whatsoever, from the cowherd’s whisky to Thomasina’s elder-flower wine.

The plain cousin left his money to the little old ladies, and Lingborough continued to flourish.

Partly perhaps because of this, it is doubtful if John Broom was ever looked upon by the rustics as quite “like other folk.”

The favourite version of his history is that he was Lob under the guise of a child; that he was driven away by new clothes; that he returned from unwillingness to see an old family go to ruin “which he had served for hundreds of years;” that the parson preached his last Sunday’s sermon at him; and that, having stood that test, he took his place among Christian people.

Whether a name invented off-hand, however plain and sensible, does not stick to a man as his father’s



does, is a question. But John Broom was not often called by his.

With Scotch caution, the farm-bailiff seldom exceeded the safe title of "Man!" and the parson was apt to address him as "My dear boy" when he had certainly outgrown the designation.

Miss Betty called him John Broom, but the people called him by the name he had earned.

And long after his black hair lay white and thick on his head, like snow on the old barn roof, and when his dark eyes were dim in an honoured old age, the village children would point him out to each other, crying, "There goes Lob Lie-by-the-fire, the Luck of Lingborough!"





TIMOTHY'S SHOES.

## NOTE.

Some time after the appearance of "Timothy's Shoes," in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, I was told by a friend that a tale about a very similar pair of shoes had appeared in an American publication. My friend had forgotten the title, and I have not yet seen the story, but it is perhaps due to the writer of it to apologize for any unintentional similarity, and to myself to say that *my* little shoes were cobbled in my own brain, and not on a borrowed last.

—J. H. E.

## TIMOTHY'S SHOES.

### THE FAIRY GODMOTHER.

TIMOTHY'S mother was very conscientious. When she was quite a young woman, just after the birth of her first baby, and long before Timothy saw the light, she was very much troubled about the responsibilities of having a family.

“Suppose,” she murmured, “they catch measles, whooping-cough, chicken-pox, scarlatina, croup, or inflammation of the lungs, when I might have prevented it; and either die, or have weak eyes, weak lungs, or a chronic sore throat to the end of their days. Suppose they have bandy legs from walking too soon, or crooked spines from being carried too long. Suppose, too, that they grow up bad—that they go wrong, do what one will to keep them right. Suppose I cannot afford to educate them properly, or

that they won't learn if I can afford to have them taught. Suppose that they die young, when I might have kept them alive ; or live only to make me think they had better have died young. Oh dear, it's a terrible responsibility having a family !”

“It's too late to talk about that now, my dear,” said her godmother (a fairy godmother, too !); “the baby is a very fine boy, and if you will let me know when the christening-day is fixed, I will come and give him a present. I can't be godmother, though ; I'm too old, and you've talked about responsibilities till I'm quite alarmed.” With which the old lady kissed her goddaughter, and nearly put out the baby's eye with the point of her peaked hat, after which she mounted her broomstick and rode away.

“A very fine boy,” continued the young mother. “Ah ! that's just where it is ; if it had only been a girl I shouldn't have felt so much afraid. Girls are easily managed. They have got consciences, and they mend their own clothes. You can make them work, and they can amuse themselves when they're not working. Now with boys it is quite different. And yet I shouldn't wonder if I have a large family of boys, just because I feel it to be such a responsibility.”

She was quite right. Years went by : one baby



after another was added to the family, and they were all boys. "Twenty feet that want socks," sighed the good woman, "and not a hand that can knit or darn!"

But we must go back to the first christening. The godmother arrived, dressed in plum-coloured satin, with a small brown-paper parcel in her hand.

"Fortunatus's purse!" whispered one of the guests, nudging his neighbour with his elbow. "The dear child will always be welcome in my poor establishment," he added aloud to the mother.

"A mere trifle, my love," said the fairy godmother, laying the brown-paper parcel beside her on the table and nodding kindly to her goddaughter.

"That means a mug," said one of the godfathers, decidedly. "Rather shabby! I've gone as far as a knife, fork, and spoon myself."

"Doubtless 'tis of the more precious metal," said Dr. Dixon Airey, the school-master (and this was his way of saying that it was a gold mug), "and not improbably studded with the glittering diamond. Let us not be precipitate in our conclusions."

At this moment the fairy spoke again. "My dear goddaughter," she began, laying her hand upon the parcel, "I have too often had reason to observe that the gift of beauty is far from invariably proving a

benefit to its possessor." ("I told you it was a purse," muttered the guest.) "Riches," continued the fairy, "are hardly a less doubtful boon ; and the youth who is born to almost unlimited wealth is not always slow to become a bankrupt. Indeed, I fear that the experience of many centuries has almost convinced us poor fairies that extraordinary gifts are not necessarily blessings. This trifle," she continued, beginning to untie the string of the parcel, "is a very common gift to come from my hands, but I trust it will prove useful."

"There!" cried the godfather, "didn't I say it was a mug? Common? Why there's nothing so universal except, indeed, the knife, fork, and spoon."

But before he had finished his sentence the parcel was opened, and the fairy presented the young mother with—*a small pair of strong leather shoes, copper tipped and heeled.* "They'll never wear out, my dear," she said ; "rely upon it, you'll find them 'a mother's blessing,' and however large a family you may have, your children will step into one another's shoes just at the age when little feet are most destructive." With which the old lady carefully wound the string on her finger into a neat twist, and folding the bit of brown paper, put both in her pocket, for she was a very economical dame.

I will not attempt to describe the scandalized buzz in which the visitors expressed their astonishment at the meanness of the fairy's gift. As for the young mother, she was a sensible, sweet-tempered woman, and very fond of her old godmother, so she set it down to a freak of eccentricity; and, dismissing a few ambitious day-dreams from her mind, she took the shoes and thanked the old lady pleasantly enough.

When the company had departed, the godmother still lingered, and kissed her goddaughter affectionately. "If your children inherit your good sense and good temper, my love, they will need nothing an old woman like me can give them," said she; "but, all the same, my little gift is not *quite* so shabby as it looks. These shoes have another quality besides that of not wearing out. The little feet that are in them cannot very easily go wrong. If, when your boy is old enough, you send him to school in these shoes, should he be disposed to play truant, they will pinch and discomfit him so that it is probable he will let his shoes take him the right way; they will in like manner bring him home at the proper time. And——"

"Mrs. Godmother's broom is at the door!" shouted the farming man who was acting as footman on this occasion.

“Well, my dear,” said the old lady, “you will find out their virtues all in good time, and they will do for the whole family in turn ; for I really can come to no more christenings. I am getting old—besides, our day is over. Farewell, my love.” And mounting her broomstick, the fairy finally departed.

## KINGCUPS.

As years went by, and her family increased, the mother learned the full value of the little shoes. Her nine boys wore them in turn, but they never wore them out. So long as the fairy shoes were on their feet they were pretty sure to go where they were sent and to come back when they were wanted, which, as all parents know, is no light matter. Moreover, during the time that each boy wore them, he got into such good habits that he was thenceforward comparatively tractable. At last they descended to the ninth and youngest boy, and became—Timothy’s shoes.

Now the eighth boy had very small feet, so he had worn the shoes rather longer, and Timothy got them somewhat later than usual. Then, despite her conscientiousness, Timothy’s mother was not above the weakness of spoiling the youngest of the family ; and

so, for one reason or another, Master Timothy was wilful, and his little feet pretty well used to taking their own way, before he stepped in the fairy shoes. But he played truant from the dame's school and was late for dinner so often, that at length his mother resolved to bear it no longer; and one morning the leather shoes were brightly blacked and the copper tips polished, and Master Tim was duly shod, and dismissed to school with many a wise warning from his fond parent.

"Now, Tim, dear, I know you will be a good boy," said his mother, a strong conviction that he would be no such thing pricking her conscience. "And mind you don't loiter or play truant, for if you do, these shoes will pinch you horribly, and you'll be sure to be found out."

Tim's mother held him by his right arm, and Tim's left arm and both his legs were already as far away as he could stretch them, and Tim's face looked just as incredulous as yours would look if you were told that there was a bogy in the store-closet who would avenge any attack upon the jam-pots with untold terrors. At last the good woman let go her hold, and Tim went off like an arrow from a bow, and he gave not one more thought to what his mother had said.

The past winter had been very cold, the spring

had been fitful and stormy, and May had suddenly burst upon the country with one broad bright smile of sunshine and flowers. If Tim had loitered on the school path when the frost nipped his nose and numbed his toes, or when the trees were bare and the ground muddy, and the March winds crept up his jacket-sleeves, one can imagine the temptations to delay when every nook had a flower and every bush a bird. It is very wrong to play truant, but still it was very tempting. Twirr-r-r-r—up into the blue sky went the larks; hedge-birds chirped and twitted in and out of the bushes, the pale milkmaids opened their petals, and down in the dark marsh below the kingcups shone like gold.

Once or twice Tim loitered to pick milkmaids and white starflowers and speedwell; but the shoes pinched him, and he ran on all the more willingly that a newly-fledged butterfly went before him. But when the path ran on above the marsh, and he looked down and saw the kingcups, he dismissed all thoughts of school. True, the bank was long and steep, but that only added to the fun. Kingcups he must have. The other flowers he flung away. Milkmaids are wan-looking at the best; starflowers and speedwell are ragged; but those shining things that he had not seen for twelve long months, with cups of gold and leaves like water-lilies—Tim flung his satchel on to



the grass, and began to scramble down the bank. But though he turned his feet towards the kingcups, the shoes seemed resolved to go to school; and as he persisted in going towards the marsh, he suffered such twitches and twinges that he thought his feet must have been wrenched off. But Tim was a very resolute little fellow, and though his ankles bid fair to be dislocated at every step, he dragged himself, shoes and all, down to the marsh. And now, provokingly enough, he could not find a kingcup within reach; in very perversity, as it seemed, not one would grow on the safe edge, but, like so many Will-o'-the-wisps, they shone out of the depths of the treacherous bog. And as Tim wandered round the marsh, jerk, wrench—oh, dear! every step was like a galvanic shock. At last, desperate with pain and disappointment, he fairly jumped into a brilliant clump that looked tolerably near, and was at once ankle-deep in water. Then, to his delight, the wet mud sucked the shoes off his feet, and he waded about among the rushes, reeds, and kingcups, sublimely happy.

And he was none the worse, though he ought to have been. He moved about very cautiously, feeling his way with a stick from tussock to tussock of reedy grass, and wondering how his eight brothers had been so feeble-minded as never to think of throwing the obnoxious shoes into a bog and so getting rid of them



once for all. True, in fairy stories, the youngest brother always does accomplish what his elders had failed to do: but fairy tales are not always true. At last Tim began to feel tired; he hurt his foot with a sharp stump. A fat yellow frog jumped up in his face and so startled him that he nearly fell backwards into the water. He was frightened, and had culled more kingcups than he could carry. So he scrambled out, and climbed the bank, and cleaned himself up as well as he could with a small cotton pocket-handkerchief, and thought he would go on to school.

Now, with all his faults, Tim was no coward and no liar, so with a quaking heart and a stubborn face he made up his mind to tell the dame that he had played truant; but even when one has resolved to confess, the words lag behind, and Tim was still composing a speech in his mind, and had still got no farther than "Please, ma'am," when he found himself in the school and under the dame's very eye.

But Tim heeded not her frown, nor the subdued titters of the children; his eyes were fixed upon the school-room floor, where—in Tim's proper place in the class—stood the little leather shoes, very muddy, and with a kingcup in each.

"You've been in the marsh, Timothy," said the dame. "*Put on your shoes.*"

It will be believed that when his punishment and

his lessons were over, Tim allowed his shoes to take him quietly home.

#### THE SHOES AT SCHOOL.

When Timothy's mother heard how he had been in the marsh, she decided to send him at once to a real boys' school, as he was quite beyond dame's management. So he was sent to live with Dr. Dixon Airey, who kept a school on the moors, assisted by one usher, a gentleman who had very long legs and used very long words, and who wore common spectacles of very high power on work days, and green ones on Sundays and holidays.

And Timothy's shoes went with him.

On the whole he liked being at school. He liked the boys, he did not hate Dr. Airey much, and he would have felt kindly towards the Usher but for certain exasperating circumstances. The Usher was accustomed to illustrate his lessons by examples from familiar objects, and as he naturally had not much imagination left after years of grinding at the rudiments of everything with a succession of lazy little boys, he took the first familiar objects that came to hand, and his examples were apt to be tame. Now though Timothy's shoes were well known in his native village, they created quite a sensation in Dr. Dixon

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Airey's establishment, and the Usher brought them into his familiar examples till Timothy was nearly frantic. Thus: "If Timothy's shoes cost 8s. 7d. without the copper tips, &c.;" or, illustrating the genitive case, "Timothy's shoes, or the shoes of Timothy;" or again: "The shoes. Of the shoes. To or for the shoes. The shoes. O shoes! By, with, or from the shoes."

"I'll run away by, with, or from the shoes shortly," groaned Timothy, "see if I don't. I can't stand it any longer."

"I wouldn't mind it, if I were you," returned Bramble minor. "They all do it. Look at the fellow who wrote the Latin Grammar! He looks round the school-room, and the first thing that catches his eyes goes down for the first declension, *forma*, a form. They're all alike."

But when the fruit season came round, and boys now and then smuggled cherries into school, which were forfeited by the Usher, he sometimes used these for illustrations instead of the shoes, thus (in the arithmetic class): "Two hundred and fifty-four cherries added to one thousand six hundred and seventy-five will make ——?"

"A *very* big pie!" cried Tim on one of these occasions. He had been sitting half asleep in the sunshine, his mind running on the coming enjoy-

ments of the fruit season, cooked and uncooked ; the Usher had appealed to him unexpectedly, and the answer was out of his lips before he could recollect himself. Of course he was sent to the bottom of the class ; and the worst of going down in class for Timothy was that his shoes were never content to rest there. They pinched his poor feet till he shuffled them off in despair, and then they pattered back to his proper place, where they stayed till, for very shame, Tim was obliged to work back to them : and if he kept down in class for two or three days, for so long he had to sit in his socks, for the shoes always took the place that Tim ought to have filled.

But, after all, it was pleasant enough at that school upon the moors, from the time when the cat-heather came out upon the hills to the last of the blackberries ; and even in winter, when the northern snow lay deep, and the big dam was "safe" for skaters, and there was a slide from the Doctor's gate to the village post-office—one steep descent of a quarter of a mile on the causeway, and as smooth as the glass mountain climbed by the princess in the fairy tale. Then Saturday was a half-holiday, and the boys were allowed to ramble off on long country walks, and if they had been particularly good they were allowed to take out Nardy.

This was the Doctor's big dog, a noble fellow of

St. Bernard breed. The Doctor called him Bernardus, but the boys called him Nardy.

Sometimes, too, the Usher would take one or two boys for a treat to the neighbouring town, and when the Usher went out holidaying, he always wore the green spectacles, through which he never saw anything amiss, and indeed (it was whispered) saw very little at all.

Altogether Timothy would have been happy but for the shoes. They did him good service in many ways, it is true. When Timothy first came, the little boys groaned under the tyranny of a certain big bully of whom all were afraid. One day when he was maltreating Bramble minor in a shameful and most unjust fashion, Timothy rushed at him and with the copper tips of his unerring shoes he kicked him so severely that the big bully did not get over it for a week, and no one feared him any more. Then in races, and all games of swift and skilful chase, Timothy's shoes won him high renown. But they made him uncomfortable whenever he went wrong, and left him no peace till he went right, and he grumbled loudly against them.

“There is a right way and a wrong way in all sublunary affairs,” said the Usher. “Hereafter, young gentleman, you will appreciate your singular felicity in being incapable of taking the wrong course without feeling uncomfortable.”

“What’s the use of his talking like that?” said Timothy, kicking the bench before him with his “copper tips.” “I don’t want to go the wrong way, I only want to go my own way, that’s all.” And night and day he beat his brains for a good plan to rid himself of the fairy shoes.

#### THE SHOES AT CHURCH.

On Sunday, Dr. Dixon Airey’s school went to the old church in the valley. It was a venerable building with a stone floor, and when Dr. Dixon Airey’s young gentlemen came in they made such a clattering with their feet that everybody looked round. So the Usher very properly made a point of being punctual, that they might not disturb the congregation.

The Usher always went to church with the boys, and he always wore his green spectacles. It has been hinted that on Sundays and holidays he was slow to see anything amiss. Indeed if he were directly told of misconduct he would only shake his head and say :

“*Humanum est errare*, my dear boy, as Dr. Kerchever Arnold truly remarks in one of the exercises.”

And the boys liked him all the better, and did not on the whole behave any the worse for this occasional lenity.



Four times in the year, on certain Sunday afternoons, the young people of the neighbourhood were publicly catechized in the old church after the second lesson at Evening Prayer, and Dr. Dixon Airey's young gentlemen with the rest. They all filed down the nave in a certain order, and every boy knew beforehand which question and answer would fall to his share. Now Timothy's mother had taught him the Catechism very thoroughly, and so on a certain Sunday he found that the lengthy answer to the question, "What is thy duty towards thy neighbour?" had been given to him. He knew it quite well; but a stupid, half-shy, and wholly aggravating fit came upon him, and he resolved that he would not stand up with the others to say his Catechism in church. So when they were about half-way there, Timothy slipped off unnoticed, and the Usher—all confidence and green spectacles—took the rest of the party on without him.

Oh, how the shoes pinched Tim's feet as he ran away over the heather, and how Tim vowed in his heart never to rest till he got rid of them! At last the wrenching became so intolerable that Tim tore them off his feet, and kicked them for very spite. Fortunately for Tim's shins the shoes did not kick back again, but they were just setting off after the Usher, when Tim snatched them up and put them in

his pocket. At last he found among the grey rocks that peeped out of the heather and bracken, one that he could just move, and when he had pushed it back, he popped the shoes under it, and then rolled the heavy boulder back on them to keep them fast. After which he ate bilberries till his teeth were blue, and tried to forget the shoes and enjoy himself. But he could not do either.

As to the Usher, when he found that Timothy was missing, he was very much vexed; and when the Psalms were ended and still he had not come, the Usher took off his green spectacles and put them into his pocket. And Bramble minor, who came next to Timothy, kept his Prayer-Book open at the Church Catechism and read his Duty to his Neighbour instead of attending to the service. At last the time came, and all the boys filed down the nave. First the parish schools and then Dr. Dixon Airey's young gentlemen; and just as they took their places, between Bramble minor and the next boy—in the spot where Timothy should have been—stood Timothy's shoes.

After service the shoes walked home with the boys, and followed the Usher into Dr. Dixon Airey's study.

“I regret, sir,” said the Usher, “I deeply regret to have to report to you that Timothy was absent from Divine worship this evening.”

“And who did his Duty to his Neighbour?” asked the Doctor, anxiously.

“Bramble minor, sir?”

“And how did he do it?” asked the Doctor.

“Perfectly, sir.”

“Mrs. Airey and I,” said the Doctor, “shall have much pleasure in seeing Bramble minor at tea this evening. I believe there are greengage turnovers. We hope also for the honour of *your* company, sir,” added the Doctor. “And when Timothy retraces his erring steps, *tell him to come and fetch his shoes.*”

#### THE POOR PERSON.

I regret to say that the events just related only confirmed Timothy in his desire to get rid of his shoes. He took Bramble minor into his confidence, and they discussed the matter seriously after they went to bed.

What a gift it is to be able to dispose in one trenchant sentence of a question that has given infinite trouble to those principally concerned! Most journalists have this talent, and Bramble minor must have had some of it, for when Timothy had been stating his grievance in doleful and hopeless tones, his friend said:

“What’s the use of putting them under stones

and leaving them in bogs? Give your shoes to some one who wants 'em, my boy, and they'll be kept fast enough, you may be sure!"

"But where am I to find any one who wants them?" asked Timothy.

"Why, bless your life!" said Bramble minor, "go to the first poor person's cottage you come to, and offer them to the first person you see. Strong shoes with copper tips and heels will not be refused in a hurry, and will be taken very good care of, you'll find."

With which Bramble minor rolled over in his little bed and went to sleep, and Timothy turned over in his, and thought what a thing it was to have a practical genius—like Bramble minor! And the first half-holiday he borrowed a pair of shoes, and put his own in his pocket, and set forth for the nearest poor person's cottage.

He did not go towards the village (it was too public, he thought); he went over the moors, and when he had walked about half a mile, down by a sandy lane just below him he saw a poor person's cottage. The cottage was so tumble-down, and so old and inconvenient, there could be no doubt but that it belonged to a poor person, and to a very poor person indeed!

When Timothy first rapped at the door he could hear no answer, but after knocking two or three times

he accepted a faint sound from within as a welcome, and walked into the cottage. Though more comfortable within than without, it was unmistakably the abode of a "poor person," and the poor person himself was sitting crouched over a small fire, coughing after a manner that shook the frail walls of the cottage and his own frailer body. He was an old man, and rather deaf.

"Good-afternoon," said Timothy, for he did not know what else to say.

"Good-day to ye," coughed the old man.

"And how are you this afternoon?" asked Tim.

"No but badly, thank ye," said the old man; "but I'm a long age, and it's what I mun expect."

"You don't feel as if a small pair of strong leather shoes would be of any use to you?" asked Tim in his ear.

"Eh? Shoes? It's not many shoes I'm bound to wear out now. These 'll last my time, I expect. I'm a long age, sir. But thank ye kindly all the same."

Tim was silent, partly because the object of his visit had failed, partly with awe of the old man whose time was measured by the tattered slippers on his feet.

"You be one of Dr. Airey's young gentlemen, I reckon," said the old man at last. Tim nodded.

“And how’s the old gentleman? He wears well, do the Doctor. And I expect he’s a long age too?”

“He’s about sixty, I believe,” said Timothy.

“I thowt he’d been better nor seventy,” said the old man, in almost an injured tone, for he did not take much interest in any one younger than threescore years and ten.

“Have you any children?” asked Tim, still thinking of the shoes.

“Four buried and four living,” said the old man.

“Perhaps *they* might like a pair——” began Timothy; but the old man had gone on without heeding him.

“And all four on ’em married and settled, and me alone; for my old woman went Home twenty years back, come next fift’ o’ March.”

“I dare say you have grandchildren, then?” said Tim.

“Ay, ay. Tom’s wife’s brought him eleven, *so* fur; and six on ’em boys.”

“They’re not very rich, I dare say,” said Tim.

“Rich!” cried the old man; “why, bless ye, last year Tom were out o’ work six month, and they were a’most clemmed.”

“I’m so sorry,” said Tim; “and will you please



give them these shoes? They're sure to fit one of the boys, and they are very very strong leather, and copper-tipped and heeled, and ——"

But as Tim enumerated the merits of his shoes the old man tried to speak, and could not for a fit of coughing, and as he choked and struggled he put back the shoes with his hand. At last he found voice to gasp,—“Lor' bless you, Tom's in Osstraylee.”

“Whatever did he go there for?” cried Tim, impatiently, for he saw no prospect of getting rid of his tormentors.

“He'd nowt to do at home, and he's doing well out yonder. He says he'll send me some money soon, but I doubt it won't be in time for my burying. I'm a long age,” muttered the old man.

Tim put the shoes in his pocket again, and pulled out a few coppers, the remains of his pocket-money. These the old man gratefully accepted, and Tim departed. And as he was late, he took off the borrowed shoes and put on his own once more, for they carried him quicker over the ground.

And so they were still Timothy's shoes.

## THE DIRTY BOY.

One day the Usher invited Timothy to walk to the town with him. It was a holiday. The Usher wore his green spectacles; Tim had a few shillings of pocket-money, and plums were in season. Altogether the fun promised to be good.

Timothy and the Usher had so much moor breeze and heather scents every day, that they quite enjoyed the heavier air of the valley and the smell and smoke of town life. Just as they entered the first street a dirty little boy, in rags and with bare feet, ran beside them, and as he ran he talked. And it was all about his own trouble and poverty, and hunger and bare feet, and he spoke very fast, with a kind of whine.

"I feel quite ashamed, Timothy," said the Usher (who worked hard for twelve hours a day, and supported a blind mother and two sisters),—"I feel quite ashamed to be out holidaying when a fellow-creature is barefooted and in want." And as he spoke the Usher gave sixpence to the dirty little boy (who never worked at all, and was supported by kind people out walking). And when the dirty little boy had got the sixpence, he bit it with his teeth and rang it on the stones, and then danced catherine-wheels on the pavement till somebody else came by.

But the Usher did not see this through his green spectacles.

And Timothy thought, "My shoes would fit that barefooted boy."

After they had enjoyed themselves very much for some time, the Usher had to pay a business visit in the town, and he left Timothy to amuse himself alone for a while. And Timothy walked about, and at last he stopped in front of a bootmaker's shop, and in the window he saw a charming little pair of boots just his own size. And when he turned away from the window, he saw something coming very fast along the pavement like the three legs on an Isle of Man halfpenny, and when it stood still it was the barefooted boy.

Then Timothy went into the shop, and bought the boots, and this took all his money to the last farthing.

And when he came out of the shop the dirty little boy was still there.

"Come here, my poor boy," said Tim, speaking like a young gentleman out of 'Sandford and Merton.' "You look very poor, and your feet must be very cold."

The dirty boy whined afresh, and said his feet were so bad he could hardly walk. They were frost-bitten, sun-blistered, sore, and rheumatic; and

he expected shortly to become a cripple like his parents and five brothers, all from going barefoot. And Timothy stooped down and took off the little old leather shoes.

“I will give you these shoes, boy,” said he, “on one condition. You must promise not to lose them, nor to give them away.”

“Catch me!” cried the dirty boy, as he took the shoes. And his voice seemed quite changed, and he put one of his dirty fingers by the side of his nose.

“I could easily catch you if I wished,” said Tim. (For slang was not allowed in Dr. Dixon Airey’s establishment, and he did not understand the remark.)

“Well, you *are* green!” said the dirty boy, putting on the shoes.

“It’s no business of yours what colour I am,” said Tim, angrily. “You’re black, and that’s your own fault for not washing yourself. And if you’re saucy or ungrateful, I’ll kick you—at least, I’ll try,” he added, for he remembered that he no longer wore the fairy shoes, and could not be sure of kicking or catching anybody now.

“Walker!” cried the dirty boy. But he did not walk, he ran, down the street as fast as he could go, and Timothy was parted from his shoes.

He gave a sigh, just one sigh, and then he put on the new boots, and went to meet the Usher.

The Usher was at the door of a pastry-cook's shop, and he took Tim in, and they had veal-pies and ginger-wine ; and the Usher paid the bill. And all this time he beamed affably through his green spectacles, and never looked at Timothy's feet.

Then they went out into the street, where there was an interesting smell of smoke, and humanity, and meat, and groceries, and drapery, and drugs, quite different to the moor air, and the rattling and bustling were most stimulating. And Tim and the Usher looked in at all the shop-windows gratis, and chose the things they would have bought if they had had the money. At last the Usher went into a shop and bought for Tim a kite which he had admired ; and Tim would have given everything he possessed to have been able to buy some small keepsake for the Usher, but he could not, for he had spent all his pocket-money on the new boots.

When they reached the bottom of the street, the Usher said, "Suppose we go up the other side and look at the shops there." And when they were half-way up the other side, they found a small crowd round the window of a print-seller, for a new picture was being exhibited in the window. And outside the crowd was the dirty boy, but Tim and the Usher

did not see him. And they squeezed in through the crowd and saw the picture. It was a historical subject with a lot of figures, and they were all dressed so like people on the stage of a theatre that Tim thought it was a scene out of Shakespeare. But the Usher explained that it was the signing of the Magna Charta, or the Foundation Stone of our National Liberties, and he gave quite a nice little lecture about it, and the crowd said, "Hear, hear!" But as everybody wanted to look at King John at the same moment when the Usher called him "treacherous brother and base tyrant," there was a good deal of pushing, and Tim and he had to stand arm-in-arm to keep together at all. And thus it was that when the dirty boy from behind put his hand in the Usher's waistcoat-pocket, and took out the silver watch that had belonged to his late father, the Usher thought it was Tim's arm that seemed to press his side, and Tim thought it was the Usher's arm that *he* felt. But just as the dirty boy had secured the watch the shoes gave him such a terrible twinge, that he started in spite of himself. And in his start he jerked the Usher's waistcoat, and in one moment the Usher forgot what he was saying about our national liberties, and recalled (as with a lightning flash) the connection between crowds and our national pickpockets. And when he



clapped his hand to his waistcoat—his watch was gone!

“My watch has been stolen!” cried the Usher, and, as he turned round, the dirty boy fled, and Tim, the Usher, and the crowd ran after him, crying, “Stop thief!” and every one they met turned round and ran with them, and at the top of the street they caught a policeman, and were nearly as glad as if they had caught the thief.

Now if the dirty boy had still been barefoot no one could ever have stopped *him*. But the wrenching and jerking of the shoes made running most difficult, and just as he was turning a corner they gave one violent twist that turned him right round, and he ran straight into the policeman’s arms.

Then the policeman whipped out the watch as neatly as if he had been a pickpocket himself, and gave it back to the Usher. And the dirty boy yelled, and bit the policeman’s hand, and butted him in the chest with his head, and kicked his shins; but the policeman never lost his temper, and only held the dirty boy fast by the collar of his jacket, and shook him slightly. When the policeman shook him, the dirty boy shook himself violently, and went on shaking in the most ludicrous way, pretending that it was the policeman’s doing, and he did it so cleverly that Tim could not help laughing. And then the

dirty boy danced, and shook himself faster and faster, as a conjuror shakes his chain of iron rings. And as he shook, he shook the shoes off his feet, and drew his arms in, and ducked his head, and, as the policeman was telling the Usher about a pickpocket he had caught the day before yesterday, the dirty boy gave one wriggle, dived, and leaving his jacket in the policeman's hand, fled away like the wind on his bare feet.

The policeman looked seriously annoyed; but the Usher said he was very glad, as he shouldn't like to prosecute anybody, and had never been in a police-court in his life. And he gave the policeman a shilling for his trouble, and the policeman said the court "wouldn't be no novelty to him,"—meaning to the dirty boy.

And when the crowd had dispersed, Timothy told the Usher about the boots, and said he was very sorry; and the Usher accepted his apologies, and said, "*Humanum est errare*, my dear boy, as Dr. Kerchever Arnold truly remarks in one of the exercises." Then Timothy went to the bootmaker, who agreed to take back the boots "for a consideration." And with what was left of his money, Tim bought some things for himself and for Bramble minor and for the Usher.

And the shoes took him very comfortably home.

## THE CHILDREN'S PARTY.

When Timothy went home for the Christmas holidays, his mother thought him greatly improved. His friends thought so too, and when Tim had been at home about a week, a lady living in the same town invited him to a children's party and dance. It was not convenient for any one to go with him; but his mother said, "I think you are to be trusted now, Timothy, especially in the shoes. So you shall go, but on one condition. The moment ten o'clock strikes, you must start home at once. Now remember!"

"I can come home in proper time without those clod-hopping shoes," said Timothy to himself. "It is really too bad to expect one to go to a party in leather shoes with copper tips and heels!"

And he privately borrowed a pair of pumps belonging to his next brother, made of patent leather and adorned with neat little bows, and he put a bit of cotton wool into each toe to make them fit. And he went by a little by-lane at the back of the house, to avoid passing under his mother's window, for he was afraid she might see the pumps.

Now the little by-lane was very badly lighted, and there were some queer-looking people loitering about, and one of them shouted something at him,

and Timothy felt frightened, and walked on pretty fast. And then he heard footsteps behind him, and walked faster, and still the footsteps followed him, and at last he ran. Then they ran too, and he did not dare to look behind. And the footsteps followed him all down the by-lane and into the main street and up to the door of the lady's house, where Tim pulled the bell, and turned to face his pursuer.

But nothing was to be seen save Timothy's little old leather shoes, which stood beside him on the steps.

"Your shoes, sir?" said the very polite footman who opened the door. And he carried the shoes inside, and Tim was obliged to put them on and leave the pumps with the footman, for (as he said) "they'll be coming up-stairs, and making a fool of me in the ball-room."

Tim had no reason to regret the exchange. Other people are not nearly so much interested in one's appearance as one is oneself; and then the shoes danced so beautifully that every little girl in the room wanted Tim for her partner, and he was perfectly at home, even in the Lancers. He went down twice to supper, and had lots of gooseberry-fool; and they were just about to dance Sir Roger de Coverley, when the clock struck ten.

Tim knew he ought to go, but a very nice little

girl wanted to dance with him, and Sir Roger is the best of fun, and he thought he would just stay till it was over. But though he secured his partner and began, the shoes made dancing more a pain than a pleasure to him. They pinched him, they twitched him, they balked his *glissades*, and once when he should have gone down the room they fairly turned him round and carried him off towards the door. The other dancers complained, and Tim kicked off the shoes in a pet, and resolved to dance it out in his socks.

But when the shoes were gone, Tim found how much the credit of his dancing was due to them. He could not remember the figure. He swung the little lady round when he should have bowed, and bowed when he should have taken her hand, and led the long line of boys the wrong way, and never made a triumphal arch at all. The boys scolded and squabbled, the little ladies said he had had too much gooseberry-fool, and at last Timothy left them and went down-stairs. Here he got the little pumps from the footman and started home. He ran to make up for lost time, and as he turned out of the first street he saw the leather shoes running before him, the copper tips shining in the lamplight.

And when he reached his own door the little shoes were waiting on the threshold.

## THE SNOW-STORM.

When Timothy went back to school in the beginning of the year, the snow lay deep upon the moors. The boys made colossal snow men, and buried things deep under drifts, for the dog Bernardus to fetch out. On the ice Timothy's shoes were invaluable. He was the best skater and slider in the school, and when he was going triumphantly down a long slide with his arms folded and his friends cheering, Tim was very glad he had not given away his shoes.

One Saturday the Usher took him and Bramble minor for a long walk over the hills. They had tea with a friendly farmer, whose hospitality would hardly let them go. So they were later than they had intended, and about the time that they set out to return a little snow began to fall. It was small snow, and fell very quietly. But though it fell so quietly, it was wonderful how soon the walls and gates got covered; and though the flakes were small they were so dense that in a short time no one could see more than a few yards in front of him. The Usher thought it was desirable to get home as quickly as possible, and he proposed to take a short cut across the moors, instead of following the high-road all the way. So they climbed a wall, and ploughed their way through the untrodden snow,



and their hands and feet grew bitterly painful and then numb, and the soft snow lodged in their necks and drifted on to their eyelashes and into their ears, and at last Timothy fairly cried. For he said, that besides the biting of the frost his shoes pinched and pulled at his feet.

“It’s because we are not on the high-road,” said the Usher; “but this will take half-an-hour off our journey, and in five minutes we shall strike the road again, and then the shoes will be all right. Bear it for a few minutes if you can, Tim.”

But Tim found it so hard to bear, that the Usher took him on his back and took his feet into his hands, and Bramble minor carried the shoes. And five minutes passed, but they did not strike the road, and five more minutes passed, and though Tim lay heavy upon the Usher’s shoulder (for he was asleep), the Usher’s heart was heavier still. And five minutes more passed, and Bramble minor was crying, and the Usher said, “Boys, we’ve lost our way. I see nothing for it but to put Timothy’s shoes down and follow them.”

So Bramble minor put down the shoes, and they started off to the left, and the Usher and the boys followed them.

But the shoes tripped lightly over the top of the snow, and went very fast, and the Usher and Bramble

minor waded slowly through it, and in a few seconds the shoes disappeared into the snowstorm, and they lost sight of them altogether, and Bramble minor said—"I *can't* go any further. I don't mind being left, but I must lie down, I am so very, very tired."

Then the Usher woke Timothy, and made him put on Bramble minor's boots and walk, and he took Bramble minor on to his back, and made Timothy take hold of his coat, and they struggled on through the storm, going as nearly as they could in the way that the shoes had gone.

"How are you getting on, Timothy?" asked the Usher after a long silence. "Don't be afraid of holding on to me, my boy."

But Timothy gave no answer.

"Keep a brave heart, laddie!" cried the Usher, as cheerfully as his numb and languid lips could speak.

Still there was silence, and when he looked round, *Timothy was not there.*

When and where he had lost his hold the distracted Usher had no idea. He shouted in vain.

"How could I let him take off the shoes?" groaned the poor man. "Oh! what shall I do? Shall I struggle on to save this boy's life, or risk all our lives by turning back after the other?"

He turned round as he spoke, and the wild blast

and driving snow struck him in the face. The darkness fell rapidly, the drifts grew deeper, and yet the Usher went after Timothy.

And he found him, but too late—for his own strength was exhausted, and the snow was three feet deep all round him.

#### BERNARDUS ON DUTY.

When the snow first began to fall, Dr. Dixon Airey observed—"Our friends will get a sprinkling of sugar this evening;" and the boys laughed, for this was one of Dr. Dixon Airey's winter jokes.

When it got dusk, and the storm thickened, Dr. Dixon Airey said—"I hope they will come home soon."

But when the darkness fell, and they did not come, Dr. Dixon Airey said, "I think they must have remained at the farm." And when an hour passed and nothing was to be seen or heard without but the driving wind and snow, the Doctor said, "Of course they are at the farm. Very wise and proper." And he drew the study curtains, and took up the newspaper, and rang for tea. But the Doctor could not eat his tea, and he did not read his paper, and every five minutes he opened the front door and looked out, and all was dark and silent, only a few snow-flakes

close to him looked white as they fell through the light from the open door. And the Doctor said, "There can't be the slightest doubt they are at the farm."

But when Dr. Dixon Airey opened the door for the seventh time, Timothy's shoes ran in, and they were filled with snow. And when the Doctor saw them he covered his face with his hands.

But in a moment more he had sent his manservant to the village for help, and Mrs. Airey was filling his flask with brandy, and he was tying on his comforter and cap, and fastening his leggings and great-coat. Then he took his lantern and went out in the yard.

And there lay Bernardus with his big nose at the door of his kennel smelling the storm. And when he saw the light and heard footsteps, his great, melancholy, human eyes brightened, and he moaned with joy. And when the men came up from the village and moved about with shovels and lanterns, he was nearly frantic, for he thought, "This looks like business;" and he dragged at his kennel, as much as to say, "If you don't let me off the chain now, of all moments, I'll come on my own responsibility and bring the kennel with me."

Then the Doctor unfastened the chain, and he tied Timothy's shoes round the dog's neck, saying,

“Perhaps they will help to lead their wearer aright.” And either the shoes did pull in the right direction, or the sagacity of Bernardus sufficed him, for he started off without a moment’s hesitation. The men followed him as fast as they were able, and from time to time Bernardus would look round to see if they were coming, and would wait for them. But if he saw the lanterns he was satisfied and went on.

“It’s a rare good thing there’s some dumb animals cleverer than we are ourselves,” observed one of the labourers as they struggled blindly through the snow, the lanterns casting feeble and erratic patches of light for a yard or two before their feet. To Bernardus his own wonderful gift was light, and sight, and guide, its own sufficient stimulus, and its own reward.

“There’s some’at amiss,” said another man presently; “t’ dog’s whining; he’s stuck fast.”

“Or perhaps he has found something,” said the Doctor, trembling.

The Doctor was right. He had found Timothy, and Bramble minor, and the Usher: and they were still alive.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Mrs. Airey,” said the Doctor, as, an hour later, they sat round the study fire wrapped in blankets, and drinking tumblers of hot compounds—“Mrs. Airey, that is a creature above kennels. From this

eventful evening I wish him to sleep under our roof."

And Mrs. Airey began, "Bless him!" and then burst into tears.

And Bernardus, who lay with his large eyes upon the fire, rejoiced in the depths of his doggish heart.

#### THE SHOES GO HOME.

It is hardly needful to say that Timothy was reconciled to his shoes. As to being ashamed of them—he would as soon have been ashamed of that other true friend of his, the Usher. He would no more have parted with them now than Dr. Dixon Airey would have parted with the dog Bernardus.

But, alas! how often it happens that we do not fully value our best friends till they are about to be taken from us! It was a painful fact, but Timothy was outgrowing his shoes.

He was at home when the day came on which the old leather shoes into which he could no longer squeeze his feet were polished for the last time, and put away in a cupboard in his mother's room: Timothy blacked them with his own hands, and the tears were in his eyes as he put them on the shelf.

"Good-bye, good little friends," said he; "I will try and walk as you have taught me."



Timothy's mother was much affected by this event. She could not sleep that night for thinking of the shoes in the cupboard. She seemed to live over again all the long years of her married life. Her first anxieties, the good conduct of all her boys, the faithful help of those good friends to her nine sons in turn—all passed through her mind as she knitted her brows under the frill of her nightcap and gazed at the cupboard door with sleepless eyes. "Ah!" she thought, "how wise the good godmother was! No money, no good luck, would have done for my boys what the early training of these shoes has done. That early discipline which makes the prompt performance of duty a habit in childhood, is indeed the quickest relief to parental anxieties, and the firmest foundation for the fortunes of one's children."

Such, and many more, were the excellent reflections of this conscientious woman; but excellent as they were, they shall not be recorded here. One's own experience preaches with irresistible eloquence; but the second-hand sermons of other people's lives are apt to seem tedious and impertinent.

Her meditations kept her awake till dawn. The sun was just rising, and the good woman was just beginning to feel sleepy, and had once or twice lost sight of the bedroom furniture in a half-dream, when she was startled by the familiar sound as of a child

jumping down from some height to the floor. The habit of years was strong on her, and she cried, "Bless the boy! He'll break his neck!" as she had had reason to exclaim about one or other of her nine sons any day for the last twenty years.

But as she spoke the cupboard door swung slowly open, and Timothy's shoes came out and ran across the floor. They paused for an instant by his mother's bed, as if to say farewell, and then the bedroom door opened also and let them pass. Down the stairs they went, and they ran with that music of a childish patter that no foot in the house could make now; and the mother sobbed to hear it for the last time. Then she thought, "The house-door's locked, they can't go right away yet."

But in that moment she heard the house-door turn slowly on its hinges. Then she jumped out of bed, and ran to the window, pushed it open, and leaned out.

In front of the house was a little garden, and the little garden was kept by a gate, and beyond the gate was a road, and beyond the road was a hill, and on the grass of the hill the dew lay thick and white, and morning mists rested on the top. The little shoes pattered through the garden, and the gate opened for them and sneaked after them. And they crossed the road, and went over the hill, leaving little footprints

in the dew. And they passed into the morning mists, and were lost to sight.

And when the sun looked over the hill and dried the dew, and sent away the mists, TIMOTHY'S SHOES were gone.

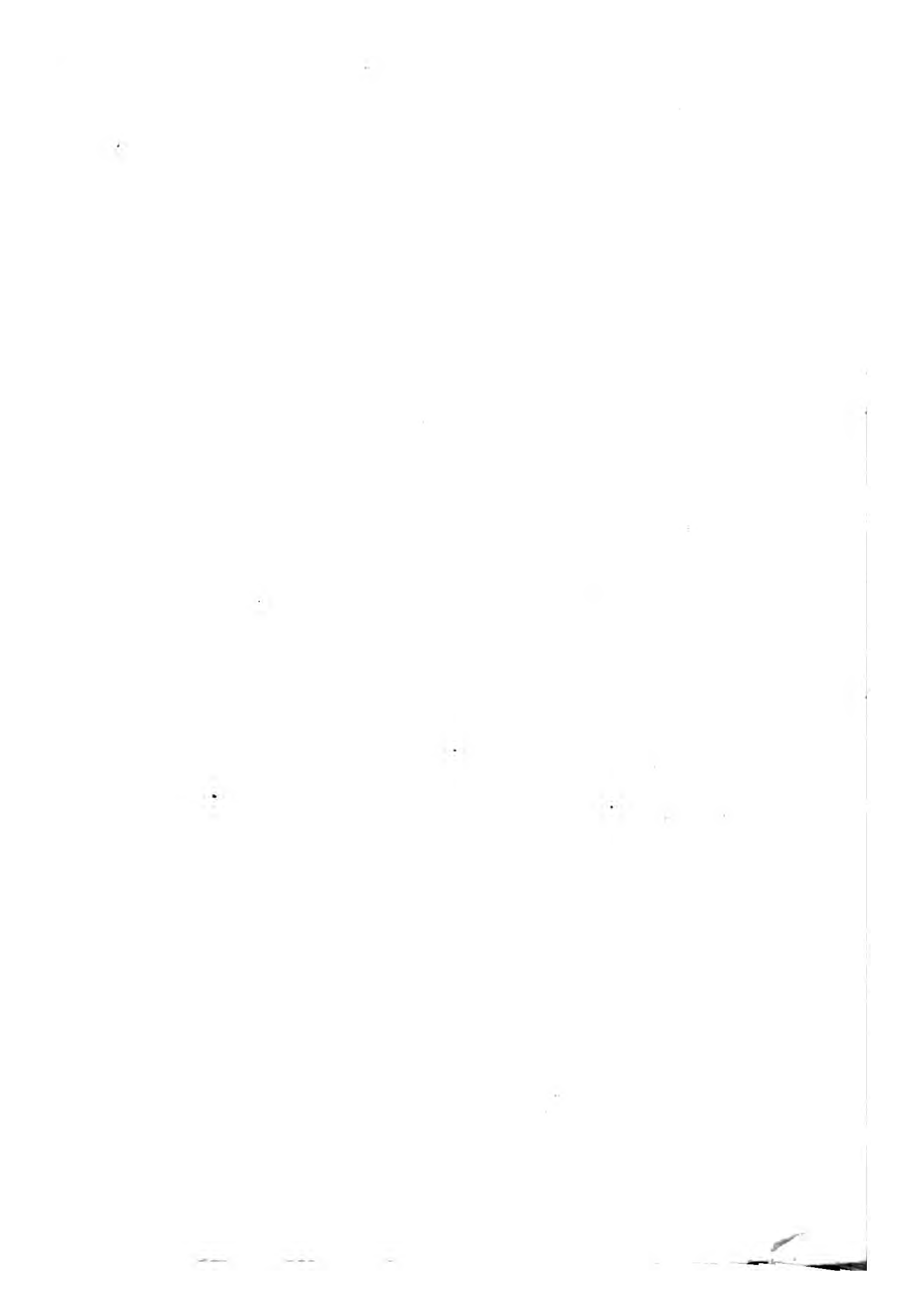
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"If they never come back," said Timothy's mother, "I shall know that I am to have no more children!" and though she had certainly had her share, she sighed.

But they never did come back ; and Timothy remained the youngest of the family.



BENJY IN BEASTLAND.



## BENJY IN BEASTLAND.

### A BAD BOY.

BENJY was a bad boy. His name was Benjamin, but he was always called Benjy. He looked like something ending in jy or gy, or rather dgy, such as *podgy*. Indeed he was podgy, and moreover smudgy, having that cloudy, slovenly look (like a slate *smudged* instead of washed) which is characteristic of people whose washing and dressing is not so thorough as it should be.

Boys are very nice creatures. Far be it from us to think, with some people, that they are nuisances to be endured as best may be till they develop into men. An intelligent and modest boy is one of the most charming of companions. As to an obliging boy (that somewhat rare but not extinct animal), there is hardly a limit to his powers of usefulness; or anything—from emigrating to a desert island to cleaning the kitchen clock—that one would not feel



justified in undertaking with his assistance, and free access to his pocket stores.

Then boys' wholesale powers of accumulation and destruction render their dens convenient storehouses of generally useless and particularly useful lumber. If you want string or wire, or bottles or flower-pots, or a birdcage, or an odd glove or shoe, or anything of any kind to patch up something of a similar kind, or missing property of your own or another's—go to a boy's room! There one finds abundance of everything, from cobbler's wax to the carmine from one's own water-colour box.

(One is apt to recognize old acquaintances, and one occasionally reclaims their company!)

All things are in a more or less serviceable condition, and at the same time sufficiently damaged to warrant appropriation to the needs of the moment. One suffers much loss at boys' hands from time to time, and it is trying to have dainty feminine bowers despoiled of their treasures; but there are occasions when one spoils the spoiler!

Then what admirable field naturalists boys can make! They are none the worse for nocturnal moth hunts, or for wading up a stream for a *Batrachospermum*, or for standing in a pond pressing recruits for the fresh-water aquarium. A "collection" more or less is as nothing in the vast chaos of their pos-

sessions, though some scrupulous sister might be worried to find "a place for it." And Fortune (capricious dame!) is certainly fond of boys, and guides some young "harum-scarum" to a *habitat* that has eluded the spectacles of science. And their cuttings always grow!

Then as to boys' fun; within certain limits, there is no rough-and-ready wit to be compared with it.

Thus it is a pity that some boys bring a delightful class into disrepute—boys who are neither intelligent, modest, obliging, nor blest with cultivated tastes—boys who kick animals, tease children, sneer at feminine society, and shirk any company that is better than their own—boys, in short, like Benjy, who at one period of his career did all this, and who had a taste for low company, too, and something about his general appearance which made you think how good for him it would be if he could be well scrubbed with hot water and soft soap both inside and out.

But Benjy's worst fault, *the* vice of his character, was cruelty to animals. He was not merely cruel with the thoughtless cruelty of childhood, nor with the cruelty which is a secondary part of sport, nor with the occasional cruelty of selfishness or ill-temper. But he had that taste for torture, that pleasure in other creatures' pain, which does seem to be born with some boys; and which human experience forbids

one to hope is unknown to men. It is incomprehensible by those who have never felt the hateful temptation, and it certainly seems more like a fiendish characteristic than a human infirmity.

Benjy was one of three children, and the only boy. He had two little sisters, but they were younger than himself, and he held them in supreme contempt. They were nice, merry little things, and many boys (between teasing, petting, patronizing, and making them useful) would have found them companionable enough, at any rate for the holidays. But Benjy, as I have said, liked low company, and a boy with a taste for low company seldom cares for the society of his sisters. Benjy thought games stupid; he never touched his garden (though his sisters kept it religiously in order during his absence at school); and as to natural history, or reading, or any civilizing pursuit, such matters were not at all in Benjy's line.

But he was proud of being patronized by Tom, the coachman's scapegrace son—a coarse, cruel, and uneducated lad, whose ideas of "fun" Benjy unfortunately made his own. With him he went to see pigs killed, helped to drown supernumerary pups and kittens, and became learned in dog-fights, cock-fights, rat-hunting, cat-hunting, and so forth.

Benjy's father was an invalid, and he had no brothers, so that he was without due control and

companionship. His own lack of nice pursuits made the excitement of cruelty an acceptable amusement for his idleness, and he would have thought it unmanly to be more scrupulous and tender-hearted than the coachman's son.

The society of this youth did not tend to improve Benjy's manners, and indeed he was very awkward in the drawing-room. But he was talkative enough in the stable, and rather a hero amongst the village boys who stoned frogs by the river-side, in the sweet days of early summer.

Truly Benjy had little in common with those fair, grey-eyed, demure little maidens, his sisters. As one of them pathetically said, "Benjy does not care for us, you know, because we are only girls. So we have taken Nox for our brother."

#### Nox,

so called because he was (as poets say) "as black as night," was a big, curly dog, partly retriever and partly of Newfoundland breed. He was altogether black, except for his paws, which were brown, and for a grey spot under his tail. Now as the grey-eyed, gentle little sisters elected him for their brother in the room of Benjy, it is but fair to compare the two together.

Benjy, to look at, was smudgy and slovenly, and

not at all handsome, for he hated tubs, and brushes, and soap, and cold water, and he liked to lie late in a morning, and then was apt to shuffle on his clothes and come down after very imperfect ablutions, having forgotten to brush his teeth, and with his hair still in dusty "cockatoos" from tossing about in bed.

Nox rose early, delighted in cold water, and had teeth like ivory and hair as glossy as a raven's wing; his face beamed with intelligence and truthfulness, and his clear brown eyes looked straight into yours when you spoke to him, as if he would say, "Let my eyes speak for me, if you please; I have not the pleasure of being able to converse in your language."

Benjy's waistcoat and shirt-front were untidy and spotted with dirt.

The covering of Nox's broad chest was always glossy and in good order.

Benjy came into the drawing-room with muddy boots and dirty hands.

Nox, if he had been out in the mud, would lie down on his return and lick his broad, soft, brown paws, like a cat, till they were clean.

It has been said that Benjy did not care for the society of girls; but when Nox was petted by his lady-sisters, he put his big head on their shoulders, and licked their faces with his big red tongue (which was his way of kissing). And he would put up his

brown feet in the most insinuating manner, and shake paws over and over again, pressing tightly with his strong toes, but never hurting the little girls' hands.

Benjy destroyed lives with much wanton cruelty.

Nox had saved lives at the risk of his own.

The ruling idea of his life, and what he evidently considered his most important pursuit, in fact, his duty, or vocation, must be described at some length.

Near the dog's home ran a broad deep river. Here one could bathe and swim most delightfully. Here also many an unfortunate animal found a watery grave. There was one place from which (the water being deep and the bank convenient at this spot) the poor wretches were generally thrown. A good deal of refuse and worn-out articles of various sorts also got flung in here, for at this point the river skirted the back part of the town.

Hither at early morning Nox would come, in conformity with his own peculiar code of duty, which may be summed up in these words: "*Whatever does not properly or naturally belong to the water should be fetched out.*"

Now near the River Seine, in Paris, there is a building called the *Morgue*, where the bodies of the drowned are laid out for recognition by their friends. There was no such institution in the town where Nox lived, so he established a Morgue for himself. Not



far from the spot I have mentioned, an old willow-tree spread its branches widely over the bank, and here and there stretched a long arm, and touched the river with its pointed fingers. Under the shadow of this tree was the Morgue, and here Nox brought the bodies he rescued from the river and laid them down.

I use the word bodies in its most scientific sense, for it was not alone the bodies of men or animals that Nox felt himself bound to reclaim. He would strive desperately for the rescue of an old riding-boot, the rung of a chair, a worn-out hearth-brush, or anything obviously out of place in the deep waters. Whatever the prize might be, when he had successfully brought it ashore, he would toss his noble head, arch his neck, paw with his forefeet, and twist and stick out his curly back, as much as to say, "Will no one pat me as I deserve?" Though he held his prize with all the delicacy of his retriever instincts, he could seldom resist the temptation to give it one proud shake, after which he would hurry with it to the willow-tree, as if conscious that it was high time it should be properly attended to.

There the mother whose child had fallen into the river, and the mother whose child had thrown her broom into the water, might come to reclaim their property, with equal chance of success.

Now it is hardly needful to say that between

Benjy and Nox there was a very little in common. And if there were two things about Nox which Benjy disliked more than others, they were his talent for rescue and the institution of the Morgue.

There was a reason for this. Benjy had more than once been concerned in the death of animals belonging to other people, and the owners had made an inconvenient fuss and inquiry. In such circumstances Benjy and Tom were accustomed to fasten a stone to the corpse and drop it into the river, and thus, as they hoped, get rid of all testimony to the true reason of the missing favourite's disappearance.

But of all the fallacies which shadow the half-truths of popular proverbs, none is greater than that of the saying, "Dead men tell no tales." For, to begin with, the dead body is generally the first witness to a murder, and that despite the most careful hiding. And so the stones which had been tied with hurried or nervous fingers were apt to come off, and then the body of Neighbour Goodman's spaniel, or old Lady Dumble's Angola cat, would float on the river, and tell their own true and terrible tale.

But even then the current might have favoured Benjy, and carried the corpses away, had it had not been for Nox's early rounds whilst Benjy was still in bed, and for that hateful and too notorious Morgue.

## MISTER ROUGH

was another dog belonging to Benjy's father, and commonly regarded as the property of Benjy himself. He was a wiry-haired terrier, with clipped ears and tail, and a chain collar that jingled as he trotted about on his bent legs. He was of a grizzled brown colour, excepting his shirt-front, which was white, and his toe-tips, which were like the light-coloured toes of woollen socks. His eyes had been scratched by cats—though not quite out—his lean little body bore marks of all kinds of rough usage, and his bark was hoarse from a long imprisonment in a damp outhouse in winter. Much training (to encounter rats and cats), hard usage, short commons, and a general preponderance of kicks over half-pence in his career had shortened his temper and his bark, and caused both to be exhibited more often than would probably have been the case in happier circumstances. He had been characterized as “rough, tough, gruff, and up to snuff,” and the description fitted well.

If Benjy had a kind feeling for any animal, it was for Mister Rough, though it might more truly be called admiration. And yet he treated him worse than Nox, to whom he bore an unmitigated dislike. But Nox was a large dog, and could not be ill-treated with impunity. So Benjy feared him and hated him doubly.

Next to an animal too strong to be ill-used at all, Benjy disliked an animal too weak to be ill-used much or long. Now as to this veteran Mister Rough, there was no saying what he had not borne, and would not bear. He seemed to absorb the nine lives of every cat he killed into his own constitution, and only to grow leaner, tougher, more scarred, more grizzled, and more "game" as time went on.

And so there grew up in Benjy an admiration for his powers of endurance which almost amounted to regard.

#### MORE MISCHIEF.

Benjy had got a bad fit on him. He was in a mood for mischief. Perhaps he was not well; he certainly was intolerable by all about him. He even ventured to play a trick on Nox. Thus :

Nox was a luxurious, comfort-loving old fellow, and after a good deal of exercise in the fresh air he thoroughly enjoyed the drowsy effect of a plentiful meal, a warm room, and a comfortable hearth-rug.

If anything in the events of the day had disturbed his composure, or affected his feelings, how he talked it all over to himself, with curious, expressive little noises, marvellously like human speech, till by degrees the remarks came few and far between, the velvety eyelids closed, and with one expressive grunt Nox

was asleep! But in a few moments, though the handsome black body was at rest on the crimson sheepskin that was so becoming to his beauty, his—whatever you please to allow him in the shape of an “inner consciousness”—was in the land of dreams. He was talking once more, this time with short, muffled barks and whines, and twitching violently with his legs. Perhaps he fancied himself accomplishing a rescue. But a whistle from his master would pierce his dream, and quiet without awaking him.

In his most luxurious moments he would roll on to his back, and stretching his neck and his four legs to their uttermost, would abandon himself to sleep and enjoyment.

It was one of these occasions which Benjy chose for teasing poor Nox. As he sat near him he kept lightly pricking his sensitive lips with a fine needle. Nox would half wake, shake his head, rub his lips with his paw in great disgust, and finally drop off again. When he was fairly asleep, Benjy recommenced, for he did dearly love to tease and torment, and this evening he was in a restless, mischievous mood. At last one prick was a little too severe; Nox jumped up with a start, and the needle went deeply in, the top breaking off with the jerk, but the remainder was fast in the flesh, where his little sisters discovered it.

Oh! how they wept for the sufferings of their pet! *They* were not afraid of Nox, and had no scruple in handling the powerful mouth whose sharp white teeth had so often pretended to bite their hands, with a pretence as gentle as if they had been made of egg-shell. At last the braver of the two held his lips and extracted the needle, whilst the other wiped the tears from her sister's eyes that she might see what she was about. Nox himself sat still and moaned faintly, and wagged his tail very feebly; but when the operation was over he fairly knocked the little sisters down in his gratitude, and licked their faces till he was out of breath.

Then he talked to himself for a full half-hour about the injury, and who could have been the culprit.

And then he fell asleep and dreamed of his enemy, and growled at him.

But Benjy went out and threw a stick at Mister Rough. And when Mister Rough caught it he swung him by it violently round and round. But Mister Rough's teeth were beginning to be the worse for wear, and at the fifth round he lost his hold for the first time in his career.

Then Benjy would have caught him to punish him, but either unnerved by his failure, or suspicious of the wicked look in Benjy's eye, Mister Rough for



the first time "feared his fate," and took to his heels.

Benjy could not find him, but he found Tom, who was chasing a Scotch terrier with stones. So Benjy joined the sport, which would have been very good fun, but that one of the stones perversely hit the poor beast on the head, and put an end to the chase.

And that night a neighbour's dog was lost, and there was another corpse in the river.

#### FROM THE MORGUE TO THE MOON.

Benjy went to bed, but he could not sleep. He wished he had not put that dog in the river—it would get him into a scrape. He had been flogged for Mr. Goodman's spaniel, and though Mister Rough had been flogged for Lady Dumble's cat, Benjy knew on whose shoulders the flogging should by rights have descended. Then Nox seemed all right, in spite of the needle, and would no doubt pursue his officious charities with sunrise. Benjy could not trust himself to get up early in the morning, but he could go out that night, and he would—with a hayfork—and get the body out of the water, and hide or bury it.

When Benjy came to the river-side a sort of fascination drew him to the Morgue. What if the

body were already there! But it was not. There were only a kitten, part of an old basket, and the roller of a jack-towel. And when Benjy looked up into the willow, the moon was looking down at him through the forked limbs of the tree, and it looked so large and so near, that Benjy thought that if he were sitting upon a certain branch he could touch it with his hand.

Then he bethought him of a book which had been his mother's and which now belonged to his sisters, in which it was amusingly pretended that dogs went to the moon after their existence on earth was over. The book had a frontispiece representing the dogs sitting in the moon and relating their former experiences.

"It would be odd if the one we killed last night were up there now," said Benjy to himself. And he fancied that as he said it the man in the moon winked at him.

"I wonder if it is really true," said Benjy, aloud.

"Not exactly," said the man in the moon, "but something like it. This is Beastland. Won't you come up?"

"Well, I never did!" cried Benjy, whose English was not of the most refined order.

"Oh, yes, you have," said the man in the moon

waggishly. "Now, are you coming up? But perhaps you can't climb."

"Can't I?" said Benjy, and in three minutes he was on the branch, and close to the moon. The higher he climbed the larger the moon looked, till it was like the biggest disc of light ever thrown by a magic lantern, and when he was fairly seated on the branch close by, he could see nothing but a blaze of white light all round him.

"Walk boldly in," he heard the man in the moon say. "Put out your feet, and don't be afraid; it's not so bright inside." So Benjy put his feet down, and dropped, and thought he was certainly falling into the river. But he only fell upon his feet, and found himself in Beastland. It was an odd place truly!

As Cerberus guarded the entrance to Pluto's domains, so there sat at the going in to Beastland a black dog—the very black dog who gets on to sulky children's backs. And on the back of the black dog sat a crow—the crow that people pluck when they quarrel; and though it has been plucked so often it has never been plucked bare, but is in very good feather yet, unfortunately. And in a field behind was an Irish bull, a mad bull, but quite harmless. The old cow was there too, but not the tune she died of, for being still popular on earth, it could not be

spared. Near these the nightmare was grazing, and in a corner of the field was the mare's nest, on which sat a round-robin, hatching plots.

And about the mare's nest flew a tell-tale-tit—the little bird who tells tales and carries news. And it has neither rest nor nest of its own, for gossips are always gadding, and mischief is always being made. And in a cat's cradle swung from the sky slept the cat who washes the dishes, with a clean dishcloth under her head, ready to go down by the first sunbeam to her work. Whilst the bee that gets into Scotchmen's bonnets went buzzing restlessly up and down with nothing to do, for all the lunatics in North Britain happened to be asleep that evening. And on the head of the right nail hung a fancy portrait of the cat who "does it," when careless or dishonest servants waste and destroy things. I need hardly say that the cat could not be there herself, because (like Mrs. Gamp's friend, Mrs. Harris) "there ain't no such a person."

Benjy stared about him for a bit, and then he began to feel uncomfortable.

"Where is the man in the moon?" he inquired.

"Gone to Norwich," said the tell-tale-tit.

"And have you anything to say against that?" asked the crow. "Caw, caw, caw! pluck me, if you dare!"

"It's very odd," thought Benjy; "but I'll go on."

The black dog growled, but let him pass; the bee buzzed about, and the cat in the cradle swung and slept serenely through it all.

"I should get on quicker if I rode instead of walking," thought Benjy; so he went up to the nightmare and asked if she would carry him a few miles.

"You must be the victim of a very singular delusion," said the nightmare, coolly. "It is for me to be carried by you, not for you to ride on me." And as Benjy looked, her nose grew longer and longer, and her eyes were so hideous, they took Benjy's breath away; and he fled as fast as his legs would carry him. And so he got deep, deep into Beastland.

Oh! it was a beautiful place. There were many more beasts than there are in the Zoological Gardens; and they were all free. They did not devour each other, for a peculiar kind of short grass grew all over Beastland, which was eaten by every beast alike.

If by chance there were any quarrelling, or symptoms of misbehaviour, the man in the moon would cry "Manners!" and all was quiet at once.

Talking of manners, the civility of the beasts in Beastland was most conspicuous. They came in

crowds and welcomed Benjy, each after his own fashion. The cats rubbed their heads against his legs and held their tails erect, as if they were presenting arms. The dogs wagged theirs, and barked and capered round him; except one French poodle, who "sat up" during the whole visit, as an act of politeness. The little birds sang and chirruped. The pigeons sat on his shoulders and cooed; two little swallows clung to the eaves of his hat, and twitched their tails, and said "Kiwit! kiwit!" A peacock with a spread tail went before him; and a flock of rose-coloured cockatoos brought up the rear. Presently a wise and solemn old elephant came and knelt before Benjy; and Benjy got on to his back and rode in triumph, the other beasts following.

"Let us show him the lions!" cried all the beasts; and on they went.

But when Benjy found that they meant real lions—like the lions in a menagerie, but not in cages—he was frightened, and would not go on. And he explained that by the "lions" of a place *he* meant the "sights" that are exhibited to strangers, whether natural curiosities or local manufactures. When the beasts understood this, they were most anxious to show him "lions" of his own kind.

So the wise-eyed beavers, whose black faces were as glossy as that of Nox, took him to their lodges, and



showed him how they fell or collect wood "up stream" with their sharp teeth, and so float it down to the spot where they have decided to build, as the "logs" from American forests float down the rivers in spring. And as they displayed the wondrous forethought and ingenuity of their common dwellings, a little caddis worm, in the water hard by, begged Benjy to observe that, on a smaller scale, his own house bore witness to similar patience and skill, with its rubble walls of motley variety.

In another stream a doughty little stickleback sailing round and round the barrel-shaped nest, over which he was keeping watch, displayed its construction with pardonable pride.

Then Benjy saw, with an interest it was impossible not to feel, the wonderful galleries in the earth cities of the ants; the nests of the large hornet, the wasp, and the earwig, where hive as well as comb is the work of the industrious proprietors; and whilst he was looking at these, a message came from three patches of *Lepraliæ* on the back of an old oyster-shell by the sea, to beg that Benjy would come and see their dwellings, where the cells were not of one uniform pattern, but in all varieties of exquisite shapes, each tribe or family having its own proper style of architecture. And it must not be supposed that, because lepralia cells can only be seen under a

microscope with us, that it was so in Beastland; for there all the labours and exquisite performances of every animal were equally manifest to sight.

But invitations came in fast. The “social grosbeaks” requested him to visit their city of nests in a distant wood; the “prairie dogs” wished to welcome him to their village of mounds, where each dog, sitting on his own little hut, eagerly awaited the honour of his visit. The rooks bade him to a solemn conference; and a sentinel was posted on every alternate tree, up to the place of meeting, to give notice of his approach. A spider (looking very like some little, old, hard-headed, wizen-faced, mechanical genius!) was really anxious to teach Benjy to make webs.

“Look here,” said he; “we will suppose that you are ready and about to begin. Well. You look—anywhere, in fact—down into space, and decide to what point you wish to affix your first line. Then—you have a ball of thread in your inside, of course?”

“I can’t say that I have,” said Benjy; “but I have a good deal of string in my pocket.”

“That’s all right,” said the spider; “I call it thread; you call it string. Pocket or stomach, it’s all the same, I suppose. Well——”

But just as the spider was at the crisis of his

lesson, and all was going on most pleasantly—whizz! —the tell-tale-tit made its appearance, and soon whispered, first to one animal and then to another, who and what Benjy was. The effect was magical. “Scandalous!” cried all the beasts; “the monster!” An old tabby cat puffed out her tail, and ran up a tree. “Boy!” she exclaimed, in a tone of the deepest disgust; for in Beastland they say “boy” as a term of reproach where we should say “beast.”

The confusion was great, and the tell-tale-tit revelled in it, hopping and flitting about, and adding a word here or there if the excitement seemed to flag.

“To think what he might do to us, if we were down yonder!” cried an old pug. (She was a great-grandmother, and so fat that she could hardly waddle.)

“He is in *your* power up here, you know,” said the tell-tale-tit, suggestively.

“So he is!” cried the beasts; and with one voice they shouted—“Punishment! Punishment! Bring him to the lion!” And to the lion he was brought, the beasts still crying, “Punishment! Punishment!”

“I’ll punish him!” cried a donkey, who trotted up on hearing of the matter. “Let me get a lump of cold iron between his teeth, and tug and jerk it against the corners of his mouth. Let me pull in and flog at the same moment. Let me knock him over

the head, and kick him in the ribs, and thwack his back, and prod his side ; and I'll soon make him run, and take his nasty temper out of him, and teach him to carry any weight, and go gaily in harness."

"Gently, gently, my friend," said the lion. "You speak under a very natural feeling of irritation ; but if I am to be judge of this case, the prisoner must have fair play."

Accordingly the beasts placed themselves in a sort of circle, Benjy being put in the middle ; and a bull-frog who lived in a ditch hard by was appointed to watch the case on his behalf. The bull-frog had big, watchful eyes, and was cool and cautious. As the case proceeded he occasionally said, "Omph !" which sounded thoughtful, and committed him to nothing.

"What is the prisoner accused of?" asked the lion.

At this question everybody looked round for the tell-tale-tit ; but, like most mischief-makers, the good gossip liked nothing less than being brought to book, and had taken advantage of the confusion to fly away. So the other animals had to recall what they had heard as best they might.

"He ill-uses and drowns dogs, hunts and kills cats——"

"Rough kills the cats," interrupted Benjy, for he was becoming alarmed.

“Omph!” said the bull-frog.

“Send for Mister Rough,” said the lion; and a messenger was despatched. (It is not always needful to disturb yourself, dear reader, when your pet dog is absent without leave: he may have gone on business to Beastland.)

“Cock-a-doodle-do! Flap, flap! send for more whilst you are about it,” cried a handsome gamecock, strutting into the midst. “Cock-a-doodle-do! when I crow, let no other cock open his beak. There’s a nice, cock-fighting, good-for-nothing young scape-grace! I know a pullet of the same breed down yonder: his name is Tom. Let him be fetched up, and we will fasten spurs on to their heels, and set them to kick each other, and tear each other’s eyes out. It will be rare sport. Flap, flap! cock-a-doodle-do!”

The cock was just stretched on his tip-toes, in the act of crowing, when a pattering of feet and the jingling of a chain collar were heard, and Mister Rough trotted brusquely into the circle, with his clipped ears and his stumpy tail erect.

“Mister Rough,” said the lion, “the prisoner says it is you and not he who torment the cats.”

“Bowf, bowf, bowf!” replied the terrier, jumping wildly about in his stocking feet. “Whose fault is it? Wowf, wowf, wowf! who taught me to do it?”

Bowf, wowf! that bad boy there. Rowf, rowf! let me get hold of him by the small of the back, and I'll shake him as I would shake a rat. Rowf, wowf, bowf!"

"*Manners!*" cried the man in the moon, and there was silence at once.

"Then he has not gone to Norwich, after all!" said Benjy to himself.

After a short pause the examination was resumed. Mister Rough deposed that he hunted cats by the teaching and imperative orders of Benjy and other human beings. That he could not now see a cat without a feeling which he could only describe as madness seizing him, which obliged him to chase and despatch puss without any delay. He never felt this sensation towards the cat of his own house, in her own kitchen. They were quite friendly, and ate from the same dish. In cross-examination he admitted that he had a natural taste for tearing things, and preferred fur to any other material. But he affirmed that an occasional slipper or other article would have served the purpose, but for this unfortunate education, especially if the slipper or other article were hairy or trimmed with fur.

"But all that is as nothing," cried the old tabby, indignantly; "he has been guilty of the most horrible cruelties, and they ought to be paid back to him in kind. Sss, spt, he's a boy, I say, a regular boy!"



“Omph!” said the bull-frog, and went below to consider the case.

“Gentlebeasts,” said the lion, “I consider it unnecessary to hear more evidence against the prisoner, especially as no attempt is made to deny his cruelties, though in the matter of cat-hunting he implicates Mister Rough. There are not two opinions as to his guilt; the only open question is that of punishment. As you have placed the matter in my hands, I will beg you to wait until I have taken three turns and given the subject my serious consideration.”

But instead of three turns the lion took seven, pacing majestically round and round, and now and then lashing his tail. At last he resumed his seat; the bull-frog put his green head up again, and the lion gave judgment.

“Gentlebeasts, birds, and fishes, I have given this subject my most serious consideration, and I trust that my decision will not give offence. Our friend, Madame Tabby, declares that the prisoner should be punished with a like cruelty to that which he has inflicted. Friend Donkey is ready to ride or drive him with all the kicking, beating, and pulling which soured his own temper, and stunted his faculties in their early development. I must frankly roar that I am not in favour of this. My friends, let us not degrade ourselves to the level of men. We know what they

are. Too often stupid in their kindness, vindictive in their anger, and not seldom wantonly cruel. Is this our character as a class? Do we even commonly retaliate? Ask friend Donkey himself. Does the treatment (even more irrational than unkind) which blunts the intelligence, and twists the temper of so many of his race, prevent their rendering on the whole the largest labour for the roughest usage of any servant of man? Need I speak of dogs? Do they bear malice towards a harsh master? Are they unfaithful because he is unkind? Would Mister Rough himself permit any one to touch an article of his master's property, or grudge his own life in his defence? No, my friends, we are beasts, remember—not boys. We have our own ideas of chase and sport, like men; but cruelty is not one of our vices. I believe, gentlebeasts, that it is a principle with the human race to return good for evil; but according to my experience the practice is more common amongst ourselves. Gentlebeasts, we *cannot* treat this boy as he has treated us: but he is unworthy of our society, and I condemn him to be expelled. Some of our dog-friends have taken refuge here with tin-kettles at their tails. Let one of these be fastened to Benjy, and let him be chased from Beastland."

This was no sooner said than done. And with an old tin pan cutting his heels at every step, Benjy

was hunted from the moon. The lion gave one terrific roar as the signal for starting, and all the beasts, with Mister Rough at their head, gave chase.

Dear readers, did you ever wonder—as I used to wonder—if one could get to the end of the world *and jump off*? One is bound to confess that, as regards our old earth, it is not feasible; but permit me (in a story) to state that Benjy ran and ran till he got to the end of the moon and jumped off, Mister Rough jumping after him. Down, down they went through space; past the Great Bear (where were all the ghosts of the big wild beasts); past the Little Bear (where were the ghosts of all the small wild beasts); close by the Dog Star, where good dogs go to when they die, and where “the dog in the manger” sat outside and must never go in till all the dogs are assembled. This they passed so close that they could see the dog of Montargis and the hound Gelert affably licking each other’s noses, and telling stories of old times to the latest comer. This was a white poodle, whose days on earth had been prolonged by tender care till he outlived almost every faculty and sense but the power to eat, and a strange intuitive knowledge of his master’s presence, surviving every other instinct. There he sat now, no longer the blind, deaf, feeble, shrunken heap of bones and matted wool, that died of sheer old age, and was

buried on the garden side of the churchyard wall, as near as permissible to the family vault; but the snowy, fluffy, elegant poodle of his youth, with graceful ears raised in respectful attention to the hero of Montargis.

Down, down they went, on, on! How far and long it seemed! And now it was no longer night but morning, and the sun shone, and still they went on, on, down, down: Benjy crying, "Oh! oh!" and Rough and his chain collar going "Bowf, wowf, jingle, jingle," till they came close above the river, and before Benjy could give an extra shriek the two were floundering in the water. Rough soon swam ashore, but Benjy could not swim, and the water sucked him down as it had sucked down many a dog in that very spot. Then Benjy choked, and gasped, and struggled, as his victims had so often choked, and gasped, and struggled under his eyes. And he fought with the intolerable suffocation till it seemed as if his head must burst, yet he could not cry out, for the cold water gagged him. Then he grasped at something that floated by, but it gave him no help, for it was a dead dog—the one he had thrown into the river the evening before. And horror chilled him more than the cold water had done, as he thought that now he himself must be drowned, and rot among these ghastly relics of his

cruelty. And a rook on a tree hard by cried, "Serve him right ! serve him right !" whilst the frogs on the river's brink sat staring at the crushed bodies of their relatives, and croaked, "Stone him ! stone him !"

A pike hovering near could owe him no grudge, for the creatures he had drowned had afforded it many a meal. But, like most accomplices, the pike was selfish, and only waited for the time when it could eat Benjy too.

Meanwhile, some one on the bank was giving short barks, like minute guns of distress, that had quite a different meaning.

And then Benjy sank ; and as he went down the remembrance of all his cruelties rushed over his mind, as the water rushed over his body. All, from the first bumble-bee he had tortured, to the needle in Nox's lip, came together in one hideous crowd to his remembrance, till even the callous soul of Benjy sickened, and he loathed himself.

And now he rose again for a moment to the surface, and caught a breath of air, and saw the blue sky, and heard a corn-crake in the field where his sisters had wanted him to go cowslip-gathering ; and he fancied that he saw the beautiful black head of Nox also in the water, and found himself saying in his heart, "No, no ! thank GOD I didn't kill *him.*"



And then he sank again. And he thought of his home, and his father and mother, and the little sisters whom he had teased ; and how he had got them into scrapes, and killed their pets, and laughed at their tears. And he remembered how they had come to meet him last midsummer holidays, with flowers in their hats and flowers round the donkey's ears ; and how he had prodded poor Neddy with a stick having a sliding spike which he had brought with him. And what fun he had found in the starts of the donkey and the terror and astonishment of the children. Oh ! how often had he not skulked from the society of these good and dear ones, to be proud of being noticed and instructed in evil by some untaught village blackguard ! And then he thought of the cosy bed and his mother's nightly blessing, never more to be his, who must now lie amongst dead dogs as if he himself were such another !

And then he rose again, and there was the noble head of old Nox not three feet from him. He could see the clear brown eyes fixed eagerly upon him, and he thought, "He is coming to revenge himself on me." But he did not mind, for he was almost past feeling any new pain. Only he gave one longing, wistful look towards the home that had been his. And as he looked a lark rose and went up into the



summer sky. And as the lark went up, up, Benjy went down, down.

Now as he sank there came into his mind a memory of something he had once read, comparing the return of a Christian soul to GOD to the soaring of a lark into the heavens. And no animal that he had seized in his pitiless grasp ever felt such despair and helplessness as Benjy felt when the strong, pitiless thought seized his soul, that though his body might decay among dead dogs, he could not die as the dogs had died—irresponsible for the use of life. And many a sin, besides sins of cruelty, came back to poor Benjy's mind—known sins, for which he had been punished, but not penitent; sins that were known to no human being but himself, and sins that he had forgotten until now. And he remembered one day at school, when the head-master had given some serious warnings and advice to himself and a few other boys in private. And how he had sat mum and meek, with his smudgy and secretive face, till the old doctor had departed, and how he had then delivered a not very clever mimic address in the doctor's style, to the effectual dissipation of all serious thought. And now—opportunities, advice, and time of amendment were all but gone, and what had he to look forward to? From the depths of his breaking heart Benjy prayed he might somehow or other

be spared to do better. And for the third and last time he rose to the surface.

The lark was almost out of sight; but close to Benjy's pallid face was a soft black nose, and large brown eyes met his with an expression neither revengeful nor affectionate. It was business-like, earnest, and somewhat eager and proud. And then the soft, sensitive mouth he had wounded seized Benjy with a hold as firm and as gentle as if he had been a rare water-fowl, and Nox paddled himself round with his broad, brown paws, and made gallantly for shore. Benjy was much heavier than a dead cat, and the big brave beast had hard work of it; so that by the time he had dragged the body to land, Nox was too far spent to toss his head and carry his prize about as usual. He dropped Benjy, and lay down by him, with one paw on the body, as much as to say, "Let no unauthorized person meddle in this matter."

But when he had rested, he took up Benjy in his mouth, and—not deigning so much as a glance in the direction of some men who were shouting and running towards him—he trotted with his burden to the Morgue under the willow-tree, where he laid Benjy down side by side with two dead dogs, a kitten, and an old hat.

After which he shook himself, and went home to breakfast.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### WHAT BECAME OF BENJY.

Benjy was duly found under the willow-tree and taken home. For a long time he was very ill, though at last he recovered; and I am bound to state that some of his relatives consider his visit to Beastland to be entirely mythical. They believe that he fell from the willow-tree into the water, and that his visit to the moon is a fanciful conceit woven during illness by his fevered brain.

However that may be, Benjy and beasts were thenceforward on very different terms. Some other causes may have helped towards this. Perhaps when the boys of a family are naturally disagreeable, the fact is apt to be too readily acquiesced in. They have a licence which no one would dream of according to "the girls," but it may sometimes be too readily decided that "boys will be boys," in the most obnoxious sense of the phrase, and a "bad name" is unfavourable to them as well as to dogs.

Now during long weeks of convalescence, Benjy's only companions were his parents and the little sisters

whose sympathy with beastkind had always been in such manifest contrast with his own tastes. And as the little maids could only amuse him with their own amusements, and as, moreover, there is no occupation so soothing, healing, and renovating to mind and body, so full of interest without hurtful excitement, as the study of Nature, it came about that Benjy's sick-room was so decorated with plants, aquariums, and so forth, that it became a sort of miniature Beastland. From watching his sisters, Benjy took to feeding the fresh-water beasts himself; and at last became so tenderly interested in their fate, that he privately "tipped" the housemaid with his last half-crown, to induce her to come up the stairs in the morning with great circumspection. For the cray-fish was given to escaping from his tank for an early stroll, and had once been all but trodden on at the bottom of the first flight of stairs.

But it was a very sad event which finally and fully softened Benjy's heart.

As Benjy was being carried into the house after his accident, Mister Rough caught sight of his master in this doleful position, and was anxious to follow and see what became of him. But as he was in the way, a servant was ordered to fasten him up in his own out-house; and to this man's care he was confided through Benjy's illness. The little

girls often asked after him, and received satisfactory reports of his health, but as the terrier's temper was supposed to be less trustworthy than that of Nox, they were not allowed to play with him, or take him out with them. Hence it came about that he was a good deal neglected at this time, Benjy's parents being so absorbed by the anxiety of his illness, and the sisters not being allowed to make the dog their companion. Once or twice the servant took him out for a run; but Mister Rough would not take a proper "constitutional." The instant he was free, he fled to the house to see what had become of Benjy. As he did this every time, and it was inconvenient, the servant finally left him alone, and did not take him out at all. Food was put within his reach, but Mister Rough's appetite failed daily. A cat crept in under the roof and looked at her old enemy with impunity. A rat stole his crusts: and Mister Rough never moved his eyes nor his nose from the opening under the barn-door. Oh, for one sniff of Benjy passing by! Oh, to be swung round a dozen times by the teeth or tail! Oh, for a kicking, a thrashing—for *anything* from Benjy! So the gentle heart within that rough little body pined day by day in its loving anxiety for a harsh master.

But the first time that Benjy came down-stairs, he begged that Mister Rough might be brought into the

drawing-room ; for, as I have said, if he had a regard for any animal it was for the wiry terrier. So the servant opened the barn-door ; and Mister Rough thought of Benjy, and darted into the house. And when he got into the front hall, he smelt Benjy, and ran into the drawing-room ; and when he got into the drawing-room, he saw Benjy, who had heard the jingle of his collar, and stood up to receive him with outstretched arms. Then with one wild sound, that was neither a bark nor a whine, Mister Rough sprang to Benjy's arms, and fell at his feet.

Dead? Yes, dead ; with one spasm of unspeakable joy !

Benjy's grief for his faithful friend was not favourable to his bodily health just then, but it was good for him in other ways. And as the bitter tears poured over his cheeks and dropped on to the scarred, grizzled little face that could feel cruelty or kindness no more, the smudginess seemed to be washed away from him body and soul.

Yes, in spite of all past sins, Benjy lived to amend, and to become, eventually, a first-rate naturalist and a good friend to beasts. For there is no doubt that some most objectionable boys do get scrubbed, and softened, and ennobled into superior men. And Benjy was one of these.

By the time he was thoroughly strong again, he



and his little sisters had a common interest in the animals under their care—their own private Beastland. He tried to pet another terrier, but in vain. So the new “Rough” was given to the sisters, and Benjy adopted Nox. For he said, “I should like a dog who knew Mister Rough;” and, “If Nox likes me in spite of old times, I shall believe I am fit to keep a pet.” And no one who knows dogs needs to be told that not the ghost of a bit of malice lessened the love which the benevolent retriever bore to his new master.

The savings of Benjy’s pocket-money for some time were expended on a tombstone for the terrier’s grave, with this inscription—

TO A FAITHFUL FRIEND,  
ROUGH WITHOUT AND GENTLE WITHIN,  
WHO DIED OF JOY,  
APRIL 3, 18—  
ON HIS MASTER’S RECOVERY FROM  
SICKNESS.

\* \* \* \* \*

And that true and tender beast, who bore so much hard usage for so long, but died of his one great happiness—

Dear reader, do you not think he is in the Dog Star?

“SO-SO.”



“SO-SO.”

“BE sure, my child,” said the widow to her little daughter, “that you always do just as you are told.”

“Very well, Mother.”

“Or at any rate do what will do just as well,” said the small house-dog, as he lay blinking at the fire.

“You darling!” cried little Joan, and she sat down on the hearth and hugged him. But he got up and shook himself, and moved three turns nearer the oven, to be out of the way; for though her arms were soft she had kept her doll in them, and that was made of wood, which hurts.

“What a dear, kind house-dog you are!” said little Joan, and she meant what she said, for it does feel nice to have the sharp edges of one’s duty a little softened off for one.

He was no particular kind of dog, but he was very smooth to stroke, and had a nice way of blinking with

his eyes, which it was soothing to see. There had been a difficulty about his name. The name of the house-dog before him was Faithful, and well it became him, as his tombstone testified. The one before that was called Wolf. He was very wild, and ended his days on the gallows, for worrying sheep. The little house-dog never chased anything, to the widow's knowledge. There was no reason whatever for giving him a bad name, and she thought of several good ones, such as Faithful, and Trusty, and Keeper, which are fine old-fashioned titles, but none of these seemed quite perfectly to suit him. So he was called So-so ; and a very nice soft name it is.

The widow was only a poor woman, though she contrived by her industry to keep a decent home together, and to get now one and now another little comfort for herself and her child.

One day she was going out on business, and she called her little daughter and said to her, "I am going out for two hours. You are too young to protect yourself and the house, and So-so is not as strong as Faithful was. But when I go, shut the house-door and bolt the big wooden bar, and be sure that you do not open it for any reason whatever till I return. If strangers come, So-so may bark, which he can do as well as a bigger dog. Then they will go away. With this summer's savings I have bought a

quilted petticoat for you and a duffle cloak for myself against the winter, and if I get the work I am going after to-day, I shall buy enough wool to knit warm stockings for us both. So be patient till I return, and then we will have the plum-cake that is in the cupboard for tea."

"Thank you, Mother."

"Good-bye, my child. Be sure you do just as I have told you," said the widow.

"Very well, Mother."

Little Joan laid down her doll, and shut the house-door, and fastened the big bolt. It was very heavy, and the kitchen looked gloomy when she had done it.

"I wish Mother had taken us all three with her, and had locked the house and put the key in her big pocket, as she has done before," said little Joan, as she got into the rocking-chair, to put her doll to sleep.

"Yes, it would have done just as well," So-so replied as he stretched himself on the hearth.

By and by Joan grew tired of hushabying the doll, who looked none the sleepier for it, and she took the three-legged stool and sat down in front of the clock to watch the hands. After awhile she drew a deep sigh.

"There are sixty seconds in every single minute, So-so," said she.



“So I have heard,” said So-so. He was snuffing in the back place, which was not usually allowed.

“And sixty whole minutes in every hour, So-so.”

“You don’t say so!” growled So-so. He had not found a bit, and the cake was on the top shelf. There was not so much as a spilt crumb, though he snuffed in every corner of the kitchen, till he stood snuffing under the house-door.

“The air smells fresh,” he said.

“It’s a beautiful day, I know,” said little Joan. “I wish Mother had allowed us to sit on the doorstep. We could have taken care of the house——”

“Just as well,” said So-so.

Little Joan came to smell the air at the keyhole, and, as So-so had said, it smelt very fresh. Besides, one could see from the window how fine the evening was.

“It’s not exactly what Mother told us to do,” said Joan, “but I do believe——”

“It would do just as well,” said So-so.

By and by little Joan unfastened the bar, and opened the door, and she and the doll and So-so went out and sat on the doorstep.

Not a stranger was to be seen. The sun shone delightfully. An evening sun, and not too hot. All day it had been ripening the corn in the field close by, and this glowed and waved in the breeze.

"It does just as well, and better," said little Joan, "for if any one comes we can see him coming up the field-path."

"Just so," said So-so, blinking in the sunshine.

Suddenly Joan jumped up.

"Oh!" cried she, "there's a bird, a big bird. Dear So-so, can you see him? I can't, because of the sun. What a queer noise he makes. Crake! crake! Oh, I can see him now! He is not flying, he is running, and he has gone into the corn. I do wish I were in the corn, I would catch him, and put him in a cage."

"I'll catch him," said So-so, and he put up his tail, and started off.

"No, no!" cried Joan. "You are not to go. You must stay and take care of the house, and bark if any one comes."

"You could scream, and that would do just as well," replied So-so, with his tail still up.

"No, it wouldn't," cried little Joan.

"Yes, it would," reiterated So-so.

Whilst they were bickering, an old woman came up to the door; she had a brown face, and black hair, and a very red old cloak.

"Good-evening, my little dear," said she. "Are you all at home this fine evening?"

"Only three of us," said Joan; "I, and my doll,

and So-so. Mother has gone to the town on business, and we are taking care of the house, but So-so wants to go after the bird we saw run into the corn."

"Was it a pretty bird, my little dear?" asked the old woman.

"It was a very curious one," said Joan, "and I should like to go after it myself, but we can't leave the house."

"Dear, dear! Is there no neighbour would sit on the doorstep for you and keep the house till you just slip down to the field after the curious bird?" said the old woman.

"I'm afraid not," said little Joan. "Old Martha, our neighbour, is now bedridden. Of course, if she had been able to mind the house instead of us, it would have done just as well."

"I have some distance to go this evening," said the old woman, "but I do not object to a few minutes' rest, and sooner than that you should lose the bird I will sit on the doorstep to oblige you, while you run down to the corn-field."

"But can you bark if any one comes?" asked little Joan. "For if you can't, So-so must stay with you."

"I can call you and the dog if I see any one coming, and that will do just as well," said the old woman.

“So it will,” replied little Joan, and off she ran to the corn-field, where, for that matter, So-so had run before her, and was bounding and barking and springing among the wheat-stalks.

They did not catch the bird, though they stayed longer than they had intended, and though So-so seemed to know more about hunting than was supposed.

“I dare say Mother has come home,” said little Joan, as they went back up the field-path. “I hope she won’t think we ought to have stayed in the house.”

“It was taken care of,” said So-so, “and that must do just as well.”

When they reached the house, the widow had not come home.

But the old woman had gone, and she had taken the quilted petticoat and the duffle cloak, and the plum-cake from the top shelf away with her; and no more was ever heard of any of the lot.

“For the future, my child,” said the widow, “I hope you will always do just as you are told, whatever So-so may say.”

“I will, Mother,” said little Joan. (And she did.) But the house-dog sat and blinked. He dared not speak, he was in disgrace.

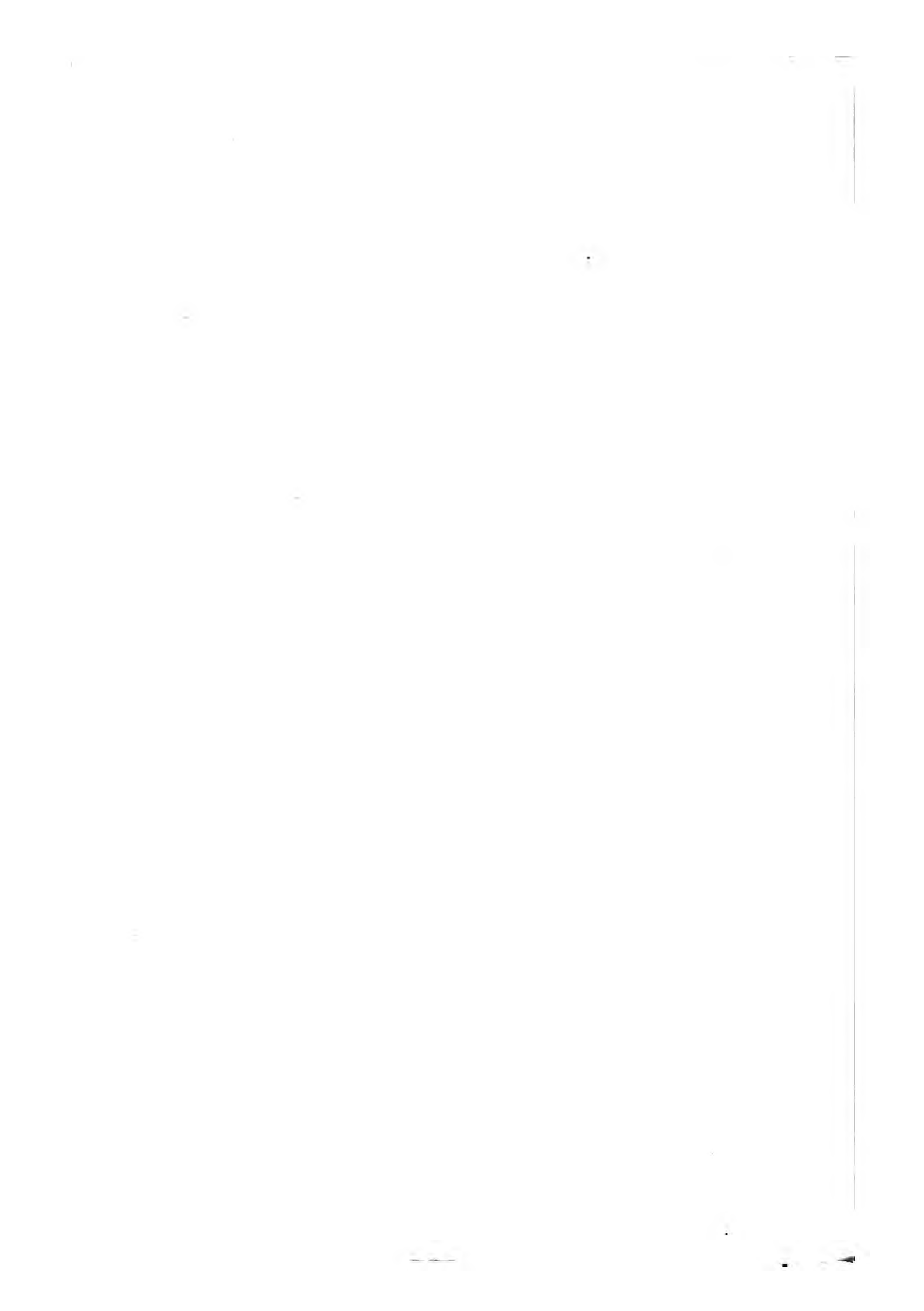
I do not feel quite sure about So-so. Wild dogs

often amend their ways far on this side of the gallows, and the Faithful sometimes fall ; but when any one begins by being only So-so, he is very apt to be So-so to the end. So-sos so seldom change.

But this one was *very* soft and nice, and he got no cake that tea-time. On the whole we will hope that he lived to be a Good Dog ever after.

THE KYRKEGRIM TURNED  
PREACHER.





# THE KYRKEGRIM TURNED PREACHER.

A LEGEND.

It is said that in Norway every church has its own Niss, or Brownie.

They are of the same race as the Good People, who haunt farm-houses, and do the maids' work for a pot of cream. They are the size of a year-old child, but their faces are the faces of aged men. Their common dress is of grey homespun, with red peaked caps; but on Michaelmas Day they wear round hats.

The Church Niss is called Kyrkegrim. His duty is to keep the church clean, and to scatter the marsh-marigold flowers on the floor before service. He also keeps order in the congregation, pinches those who fall asleep, cuffs irreverent boys, and hustles mothers with crying children out of church as quickly and decorously as possible.

But his business is not with church-brawlers alone.

When the last snow avalanche has slipped from the high-pitched roof, and the gentian is bluer than the sky, and Baldur's Eyebrow blossoms in the hot spring sun, pious folk are wont to come to church some time before service, and to bring their spades, and rakes, and watering-pots with them, to tend the graves of the dead. The Kyrkegrim sits on the Lych Gate and overlooks them.

At those who do not lay by their tools in good time he throws pebbles, crying to each, "*Skynde dig!*" (Make haste!), and so drives them in. And when the bells begin, should any man fail to bow to the church, as the custom is, the Kyrkegrim snatches his hat from behind, and he sees it no more.

Nothing displeases the Kyrkegrim more than when people fall asleep during the sermon. This will be seen in the following story.

Once upon a time there was a certain country church, which was served by a very mild and excellent priest, and haunted by a most active Kyrkegrim.

Not a speck of dust was to be seen from the altar to the porch, and the behaviour of the congregation was beyond reproach.

But there was one fat farmer who slept during the sermon, and do what the Kyrkegrim would, he could

not keep him awake. Again and again did he pinch him, nudge him, or let in a cold draught of wind upon his neck. The fat farmer shook himself, pulled up his neck-kerchief, and dozed off again.

"Doubtless the fault is in my sermons," said the priest, when the Kyrkegrim complained to him. For he was humble-minded.

But the Kyrkegrim knew that this was not the case, for there was no better preacher in all the district.

And yet when he overheard the farmer's sharp-tongued little wife speak of this and that in the discourse, he began to think that it might be so. No doubt the preacher spoke somewhat fast or slow, a little too loud or too soft. And he was not "stirring" enough, said the farmer's wife; a failing which no one had ever laid at her door.

"His soul is in my charge," sighed the good priest, "and I cannot even make him hear what I have got to say. A heavy reckoning will be demanded of me!"

"The sermons are in fault, beyond a doubt," the Kyrkegrim said. "The farmer's wife is quite right. She's a sensible woman, and can use a mop as well as myself."

"Hoot, hoot!" cried the church owl, pushing his head out of the ivy-bush. "And shall she be Kyrke-

grim when thou art turned preacher, and the preacher sits on the judgment-seat? Not so, little Niss! Dust thou the pulpit, and leave the parson to preach, and let the Maker of souls reckon with them."

"If the preacher cannot keep the people awake, it is time that another took his place," said the Kyrkegrim.

"He is not bound to find ears as well as arguments," retorted the owl, and he drew back into his ivy-bush.

But the Kyrkegrim settled his red cap firmly on his head, and betook himself to the priest, whose meekness (as is apt to be the case) encouraged the opposite qualities in those with whom he had to do.

"The farmer must be roused somehow," said he. "It is a disgrace to us all, and what, in all the hundreds of years I have been Kyrkegrim, never befell me before. It will be well if next Sunday you preach a stirring sermon on some very important subject."

So the preacher preached on Sin—fair of flower, and bitter of fruit!—and as he preached his own cheeks grew pale for other men's perils, and the Kyrkegrim trembled as he sat listening in the porch, though he had no soul to lose.

"Was that stirring enough?" he asked, twitching

the sleeve of the farmer's wife as she flounced out after service.

"Splendid!" said she, "and must have hit some folk pretty hard too."

"It kept your husband awake this time, I should think," said the Kyrkegrim.

"Heighy, teighty!" cried the farmer's wife. "I'd have you to know my good man is as decent a body as any in the parish, if he does take a nap on Sundays! He is no sinner if he is no saint, thank Heaven, and the parson knows better than to preach at him."

"Next Sunday," said the Kyrkegrim to the priest, "preach about something which concerns every one; respectable people as well as others."

So the preacher preached of Death—whom tears cannot move, nor riches bribe, nor power defy. The uncertain interruption and the only certain end of all life's labours! And as he preached, the women sitting in their seats wept for the dead whose graves they had been tending, and down the aged cheeks of the Kyrkegrim there stole tears of pity for poor men, whose love and labours are cut short so soon.

But the farmer slept as before.

"Do you not expect to die?" asked the Kyrkegrim.

"Surely," replied the farmer, "we must all die



some day, and one does not need a preacher to tell him that. But it was a funeral sermon, my wife thinks. There has been bereavement in the miller's family."

"Men are a strange race," thought the Kyrkegrim; but he went to the priest and said—"The farmer is not afraid of death. You must find some subject of which men really stand in awe."

So when Sunday came round again, the preacher preached of Judgment—that dread Avenger who dogs the footsteps of trespass, even now! That awful harvest of whirlwind and corruption which they must reap who sow to the wind and to the flesh! Lightly regarded, but biding its time, till a man's forgotten follies find him out at last.

But the farmer slept on. He did not wake when the preacher spoke of judgment to come, the reckoning that cannot be shunned, the trump of the Archangel, and the Day of Doom.

"On Michaelmas Day I shall preach myself," said the Kyrkegrim, "and if I cannot rouse him, I shall give up my charge here."

This troubled the poor priest, for so good a Kyrkegrim was not likely to be found again.

Nevertheless he consented, for he was very meek, and when Michaelmas Day came the Kyrkegrim pulled a preacher's gown over his homespun coat,

and laid his round hat on the desk by the iron-clamped Bible, and began his sermon.

“I shall give no text,” said he, “but when I have said what seems good to me, it is for those who hear to see if the Scriptures bear me out.”

This was an uncommon beginning, and most of the good folk pricked their ears, the farmer among them, for novelty is agreeable in church as elsewhere.

“I speak,” said the Kyrkegrim, “of that which is the last result of sin, the worst of deaths, and the beginning of judgment—hardness of heart.”

The farmer looked a little uncomfortable, and the Kyrkegrim went bravely on.

“Let us seek examples in Scripture. We will speak of Pharaoh.”

But when the Kyrkegrim spoke of Pharaoh the farmer was at ease again. And by and by a film stole gently before his eyes, and he nodded in his seat.

This made the Kyrkegrim very angry, for he did not wish to give up his place, and yet a Niss may not break his word.

“Let us look at the punishment of Pharaoh,” he cried. But the farmer’s eyes were still closed, and the Kyrkegrim became agitated, and turned hastily over the leaves of the iron-clamped Bible before him.

“We will speak of the plagues,” said he. “The plague of blood, the plague of frogs, the plague of lice, the plague of flies——”

At this moment the farmer snored.

For a brief instant, anger and dismay kept the Kyrkegrim silent. Then shutting the iron clamps he pushed the Book on one side, and scrambling on to a stool, stretched his little body well over the desk, and said, “But these flies were as nothing to the fly that is coming in the turnip-crop!”

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the farmer sat suddenly upright, and half rising from his place, cried anxiously, “Eh, what, sir? What does he say, wife? A new fly among the turnips?”

“Ah, soul of clay!” yelled the indignant Kyrkegrim, as he hurled his round hat at the gaping farmer. “Is it indeed for such as thee that Eternal Life is kept in store?”

And drawing the preacher’s gown over his head, he left it in the pulpit, and scrambling down the steps hastened out of church.

\* \* \* \* \*

As he had been successful in rousing the sleepy farmer the Kyrkegrim did not abandon his duties; but it is said that thenceforward he kept to them alone, and left heavier responsibilities in higher hands.

THE BLIND MAN AND THE  
TALKING DOG.



## THE BLIND MAN AND THE TALKING DOG.

THERE was once an old man whom Fortune (whose own eyes are bandaged) had deprived of his sight. She had taken his hearing also, so that he was deaf. Poor he had always been, and as Time had stolen his youth and strength from him, they had only left a light burden for Death to carry when he should come the old man's way.

But Love (who is blind also) had given the Blind Man a Dog, who led him out in the morning to a seat in the sun under the crab-tree, and held his hat for wayside alms, and brought him safely home at sunset.

The Dog was wise and faithful—as dogs often are—but the wonder of him was that he could talk. In which will be seen the difference between dogs and men, most of whom can talk; whilst it is a matter for admiration if they are wise and faithful.



One day the Mayor's little son came down the road, and by the hand he held his playmate Aldegunda.

"Give the poor blind man a penny," said she.

"You are always wanting me to give away my money," replied the boy peevishly. "It is well that my father is the richest man in the town, and I have a whole silver crown yet in my pocket."

But he put the penny into the hat which the Dog held out, and the Dog gave it to his master.

"Heaven bless you," said the Blind Man.

"Amen," said the Dog.

"Aldegunda! Aldegunda!" cried the boy, dancing with delight. "Here is a dog who can talk. I would give my silver crown for him. Old man, I say, old man! Will you sell me your dog for a silver crown?"

"My master is deaf as well as blind," said the Dog.

"What a miserable old creature he must be," said the boy compassionately.

"Men do not smile when they are miserable, do they?" said the Dog; "and my master smiles sometimes—when the sun warms right through our coats to our bones; when he feels the hat shake against his knee as the pennies drop in; and when I lick his hand."

"But for all that, he is a poor wretched old

beggar, in want of everything," persisted the boy. "Now I am the Mayor's only son, and he is the richest man in the town. Come and live with me, and I will give the Blind Man my silver crown. I should be perfectly happy if I had a talking dog of my own."

"It is worth thinking of," said the Dog. "I should certainly like a master who was perfectly happy. You are sure that there is nothing else that you wish for?"

"I wish I were a man," replied the boy. "To do exactly as I chose, and have plenty of money to spend, and holidays all the year round."

"That sounds well," said the Dog. "Perhaps I had better wait till you grow up. There is nothing else that you want, I suppose?"

"I want a horse," said the boy, "a real black charger. My father ought to know that I am too old for a hobby-horse. It vexes me to look at it."

"I must wait for the charger, I see," said the Dog. "Nothing vexes you but the hobby-horse, I hope?"

"Aldegunda vexes me more than anything," answered the boy, with an aggrieved air; "and it's very hard when I am so fond of her. She always tumbles down when we run races, her legs are so short. It's her birthday to-day, but she toddles as badly as she did yesterday, though she's a year older."

“She will have learned to run by the time that you are a man,” said the Dog. “So nice a little lady can give you no other cause of annoyance, I am sure?”

The boy frowned.

“She is always wanting something. She wants something now, I see. What do you want, Aldegunda?”

“I wish—” said Aldegunda, timidly, “I should like—the blind man to have the silver crown, and for us to keep the penny, if you can get it back out of the hat.”

“That’s just the way you go on,” said the boy angrily. “You always think differently from me. Now remember, Aldegunda, I won’t marry you when you grow big, unless you agree with what I do, like the wife in the story of ‘What the Goodman does is sure to be right.’”

On hearing this, Aldegunda sobbed till she burst the strings of her hat, and the boy had to tie them afresh.

“I won’t marry you at all if you cry,” said he.

But at that she only cried the more, and they went away bickering into the green lanes.

As to the old man, he had heard nothing; and when the dog licked his withered hand, he smiled.

Many a time did the boy return with his playmate to try and get the Talking Dog. But the Dog always

asked if he had yet got all that he wanted, and, being an honourable child, the boy was too truthful to say that he was content when he was not.

“The day that you want nothing more but me I will be your dog,” it said. “Unless, indeed, my present master should have attained perfect happiness before you.”

“I am not afraid of that,” said the boy.

In time the Mayor died, and his widow moved to her native town and took her son with her.

Years passed, and the Blind Man lived on ; for when one gets very old and keeps very quiet in his little corner of the world, Death seems sometimes to forget to remove him.

Years passed, and the Mayor's son became a man, and was strong and rich, and had a fine black charger. Aldegunda grew up also. She was very beautiful, wonderfully beautiful, and Love (who is blind) gave her to her old playmate.

The wedding was a fine one, and when it was over the bridegroom mounted his black charger and took his bride behind him, and rode away into the green lanes.

“Ah, what delight !” he said. “Now we will ride through the town where we lived when we were children ; and if the Blind Man is still alive, you shall give him a silver crown ; and if the Talking

Dog is alive, I shall claim him, for to-day I am perfectly happy and want nothing."

Aldegunda thought to herself—"We are so happy, and have so much, that I do not like to take the Blind Man's dog from him;" but she did not dare to say so. One—if not two—must bear and forbear to be happy even on one's wedding-day.

By and by they rode under the crab-tree, but the seat was empty. "What has become of the Blind Man?" the Mayor's son asked of a peasant who was near.

"He died two days ago," said the peasant. "He is buried to-day, and the priest and chanters are now returning from the grave."

"And the Talking Dog?" asked the young man.

"He is at the grave now," said the peasant; "but he has neither spoken nor eaten since his master died."

"We have come in the nick of time," said the young man triumphantly, and he rode to the churchyard.

By the grave was the dog, as the man had said, and up the winding path came the priest and his young chanters, who sang with shrill, clear voices—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

"Come and live with me, now your old master is gone," said the young man, stooping over the dog. But he made no reply.

“I think he is dead, sir,” said the gravedigger.

“I don’t believe it,” said the young man fretfully. “He was an Enchanted Dog, and he promised I should have him when I could say what I am ready to say now. He should have kept his promise.”

But Aldegunda had taken the dog’s cold head into her arms, and her tears fell fast over it.

“You forget,” she said; “he only promised to come to you when you were happy, if his old master were not happier first; and, perhaps,—”

“I remember that you always disagree with me,” said the young man, impatiently. “You always did do so. Tears on our wedding-day, too! I suppose the truth is that no one is happy.”

Aldegunda made no answer, for it is not from those one loves that he will willingly learn that with a selfish and imperious temper happiness never dwells.

And as they rode away again into the green lanes, the shrill voices of the chanters followed them—  
“Blessed are the dead. Blessed are the dead.”



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