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by Juliana Horatio Ewing

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JACKANAPES

DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOT

AND OTHER STORIES

By

JULIANA HORATIO EWING.

[Illustration]

"If I might buffet for my love, or bound my horse for her favors, I could lay on like a butcher, and sit like a Jackanapes, never off!"

KING HENRY V, Act 5, Scene 2.

JACKANAPES

CHAPTER I.

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms--the day
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunder clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse:--friend, foe,--in one red burial blent.

Their praise is hymn'd by loftier harps than mine:
Yet one would I select from that proud throng.
----to thee, to thousands, of whom each
And one as all a ghastly gap did make
In his own kind and kindred, whom to teach
Forgetfulness were mercy for their sake;
The Archangel's trump, not glory's, must awake
Those whom they thirst for.
--BYRON.

[Illustration]

Two Donkeys and the Geese lived on the Green, and all other residents of any social standing lived in houses round it. The houses had no names. Everybody's address was, "The Green," but the Postman and the people of

the place knew where each family lived. As to the rest of the world, what has one to do with the rest of the world, when he is safe at home on his own Goose Green? Moreover, if a stranger did come on any lawful business, he might ask his way at the shop.

Most of the inhabitants were long-lived, early deaths (like that of the little Miss Jessamine) being exceptional; and most of the old people were proud of their age, especially the sexton, who would be ninety-nine come Martinmas, and whose father remembered a man who had carried arrows, as a boy, for the battle of Flodden Field. The Grey Goose and the big Miss Jessamine were the only elderly persons who kept their ages secret. Indeed, Miss Jessamine never mentioned any one's age, or recalled the exact year in which anything had happened. She said that she had been taught that it was bad manners to do so "in a mixed assembly."

The Grey Goose also avoided dates, but this was partly because her brain, though intelligent, was not mathematical, and computation was beyond her. She never got farther than "last Michaelmas," "the Michaelmas before that," and "the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before that." After this her head, which was small, became confused, and she said, "Ga, ga!" and changed the subject.

But she remembered the little Miss Jessamine, the Miss Jessamine with the "conspicuous" hair. Her aunt, the big Miss Jessamine, said it was her only fault. The hair was clean, was abundant, was glossy, but do what you would with it, it never looked like other people's. And at church, after Saturday night's wash, it shone like the best brass fender after a Spring cleaning. In short, it was conspicuous, which does not become a young woman--especially in church.

Those were worrying times altogether, and the Green was used for strange purposes. A political meeting was held on it with the village Cobbler in the chair, and a speaker who came by stage coach from the town, where they had wrecked the bakers' shops, and discussed the price of bread. He came a second time, by stage, but the people had heard something about him in the meanwhile, and they did not keep him on the Green. They took him to the pond and tried to make him swim, which he could not do, and the whole affair was very disturbing to all quiet and peaceable fowls. After which another man came, and preached sermons on the Green, and a great many people went to hear him; for those were "trying times," and folk ran hither and thither for comfort. And then what did they do but drill the ploughboys on the Green, to get them ready to fight the French, and teach them the goose-step! However, that came to an end at last, for Bony was sent to St. Helena, and the ploughboys were sent back to the plough.

Everybody lived in fear of Bony in those days, especially the naughty children, who were kept in order during the day by threats of, "Bony shall have you," and who had nightmares about him in the dark. They thought he was an Ogre in a cocked hat. The Grey Goose thought he was a fox, and that all the men of England were going out in red coats to hunt him. It was no use to argue the point, for she had a very small head,

and when one idea got into it there was no room for another.

Besides, the Grey Goose never saw Bony, nor did the children, which rather spoilt the terror of him, so that the Black Captain became more effective as a Bogy with hardened offenders. The Grey Goose remembered _his_ coming to the place perfectly. What he came for she did not pretend to know. It was all part and parcel of the war and bad times. He was called the Black Captain, partly because of himself, and partly because of his wonderful black mare. Strange stories were afloat of how far and how fast that mare could go, when her master's hand was on her mane and he whispered in her ear. Indeed, some people thought we might reckon ourselves very lucky if we were not out of the frying-pan into the fire, and had not got a certain well-known Gentleman of the Road to protect us against the French. But that, of course, made him none the less useful to the Johnson's Nurse, when the little Miss Johnsons were naughty.

"You leave off crying this minnit, Miss Jane, or I'll give you right away to that horrid wicked officer. Jemima! just look out o' the windy, if you please, and see if the Black Cap'n's a-coming with his horse to carry away Miss Jane."

And there, sure enough, the Black Captain strode by, with his sword clattering as if it did not know whose head to cut off first. But he did not call for Miss Jane that time. He went on to the Green, where he came so suddenly upon the eldest Master Johnson, sitting in a puddle on purpose, in his new nankeen skeleton suit, that the young gentleman thought judgment had overtaken him at last, and abandoned himself to the howlings of despair. His howls were redoubled when he was clutched from behind and swung over the Black Captain's shoulder, but in five minutes his tears were stanch'd, and he was playing with the officer's accoutrements. All of which the Grey Goose saw with her own eyes, and heard afterwards that that bad boy had been whining to go back to the Black Captain ever since, which showed how hardened he was, and that nobody but Bonaparte himself could be expected to do him any good.

But those were "trying times." It was bad enough when the pickle of a large and respectable family cried for the Black Captain; when it came to the little Miss Jessamine crying for him, one felt that the sooner the French landed and had done with it the better.

The big Miss Jessamine's objection to him was that he was a soldier, and this prejudice was shared by all the Green. "A soldier," as the speaker from the town had observed, "is a bloodthirsty, unsettled sort of a rascal; that the peaceable, home-loving, bread-winning citizen can never conscientiously look on as a brother, till he has beaten his sword into a ploughshare, and his spear into a pruning-hook."

On the other hand there was some truth in what the Postman (an old soldier) said in reply; that the sword has to cut a way for us out of many a scrape into which our bread-winners get us when they drive their ploughshares into fallows that don't belong to them. Indeed, whilst our most peaceful citizens were prosperous chiefly by means of cotton, of

sugar, and of the rise and fall of the money-market (not to speak of such salable matters as opium, firearms, and "black ivory"), disturbances were apt to arise in India, Africa and other outlandish parts, where the fathers of our domestic race were making fortunes for their families. And, for that matter, even on the Green, we did not wish the military to leave us in the lurch, so long as there was any fear that the French were coming. [Footnote: "The political men declare war, and generally for commercial interests; but when the nation is thus embroiled with its neighbors the soldier ... draws the sword, at the command of his country.... One word as to thy comparison of military and commercial persons. What manner of men be they who have supplied the Caffres with the firearms and ammunition to maintain their savage and deplorable wars? Assuredly they are not military.... Cease then, if thou would'st be counted among the just, to vilify soldiers."--W. Napier, Lieut. General, _November_, 1851.]

II

[Illustration]

To let the Black Captain have little Miss Jessamine, however, was another matter. Her Aunt would not hear of it; and then, to crown all, it appeared that the Captain's father did not think the young lady good enough for his son. Never was any affair more clearly brought to a conclusion. But those were "trying times;" and one moon-light night, when the Grey Goose was sound asleep upon one leg, the Green was rudely shaken under her by the thud of a horse's feet. "Ga, ga!" said she, putting down the other leg, and running away.

By the time she returned to her place not a thing was to be seen or heard. The horse had passed like a shot. But next day, there was hurrying and skurrying and cackling at a very early hour, all about the white house with the black beams, where Miss Jessamine lived. And when the sun was so low, and the shadows so long on the grass that the Grey Goose felt ready to run away at the sight of her own neck, little Miss Jane Johnson, and her "particular friend" Clarinda, sat under the big oak-tree on the Green, and Jane pinched Clarinda's little finger till she found that she could keep a secret, and then she told her in confidence that she had heard from Nurse and Jemima that Miss Jessamine's niece had been a very naughty girl, and that that horrid wicked officer had come for her on his black horse, and carried her right away.

"Will she never come back?" asked Clarinda.

"Oh, no!" said Jane decidedly. "Bony never brings people back."

"Not never no more?" sobbed Clarinda, for she was weak-minded, and could not bear to think that Bony never, never let naughty people go home

again.

Next day Jane had heard more.

"He has taken her to a Green?"

"A Goose Green?" asked Clarinda.

"No. A Gretna Green. Don't ask so many questions, child," said Jane; who, having no more to tell, gave herself airs.

Jane was wrong on one point. Miss Jessamine's niece did come back, and she and her husband were forgiven. The Grey Goose remembered it well, it was Michaelmas, the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas--but ga, ga! What does the date matter? It was autumn, harvest-time, and everybody was so busy prophesying and praying about the crops, that the young couple wandered through the lanes, and got blackberries for Miss Jessamine's celebrated crab and blackberry jam, and made guys of themselves with bryony-wreaths, and not a soul troubled his head about them, except the children, and the Postman. The children dogged the Black Captain's footsteps (his bubble reputation as an Ogre having burst), clamoring for a ride on the black mare. And the Postman would go somewhat out of his postal way to catch the Captain's dark eye, and show that he had not forgotten how to salute an officer.

But they were "trying times." One afternoon the black mare was stepping gently up and down the grass, with her head at her master's shoulder, and as many children crowded on to her silky back as if she had been an elephant in a menagerie; and the next afternoon she carried him away, sword and _sabre-tache_ clattering war-music at her side, and the old Postman waiting for them, rigid with salutation, at the four cross roads.

War and bad times! It was a hard winter, and the big Miss Jessamine and the little Miss Jessamine (but she was Mrs. Black-Captain now), lived very economically that they might help their poorer neighbors. They neither entertained nor went into company, but the young lady always went up the village as far as the _George and Dragon_, for air and exercise, when the London Mail [Footnote: The Mail Coach it was that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo.... The grandest chapter of our experience, within the whole Mail Coach service, was on those occasions when we went down from London with the news of Victory. Five years of life it was worth paying down for the privilege of an outside place. DE QUINCEY.] came in.

One day (it was a day in the following June) it came in earlier than usual, and the young lady was not there to meet it.

But a crowd soon gathered round the _George and Dragon_, gaping to see the Mail Coach dressed with flowers and oak-leaves, and the guard wearing a laurel wreath over and above his royal livery. The ribbons that decked the horses were stained and flecked with the warmth and foam

of the pace at which they had come, for they had pressed on with the news of Victory.

Miss Jessamine was sitting with her niece under the oak-tree on the Green, when the Postman put a newspaper silently into her hand. Her niece turned quickly--"Is there news?"

"Don't agitate yourself, my dear," said her aunt. "I will read it aloud, and then we can enjoy it together; a far more comfortable method, my love, than when you go up the village, and come home out of breath, having snatched half the news as you run."

"I am all attention, dear aunt," said the little lady, clasping her hands tightly on her lap.

Then Miss Jessamine read aloud--she was proud of her reading--and the old soldier stood at attention behind her, with such a blending of pride and pity on his face as it was strange to see:--

"DOWNING STREET,

"_June_ 22, 1815, 1 A.M."

"That's one in the morning," gasped the Postman; "beg your pardon, mum."

But though he apologized, he could not refrain from echoing here and there a weighty word. "Glorious victory,"--"Two hundred pieces of artillery,"--"Immense quantity of ammunition,"--and so forth.

"The loss of the British Army upon this occasion has unfortunately been most severe. It had not been possible to make out a return of the killed and wounded when Major Percy left headquarters. The names of the officers killed and wounded, as far as they can be collected, are annexed.

"I have the honor----"

"The list, aunt! Read the list!"

"My love--my darling--let us go in and----"

"No. Now! now!"

To one thing the supremely afflicted are entitled in their sorrow--to be obeyed--and yet it is the last kindness that people commonly will do them. But Miss Jessamine did. Steadying her voice, as best she might, she read on, and the old soldier stood bareheaded to hear that first Roll of the Dead at Waterloo, which began with the Duke of Brunswick, and ended with Ensign Brown. [Footnote: "Brunswick's fated chieftain" fell at Quatre Bras, the day before Waterloo, but this first (very imperfect) list, as it appeared in the newspapers of the day, did begin with his name, and end with that of an Ensign Brown.] Five-and-thirty British Captains fell asleep that day on the bed of Honor, and the Black

Captain slept among them.

* * * * *

There are killed and wounded by war, of whom no returns reach Downing Street.

Three days later, the Captain's wife had joined him, and Miss Jessamine was kneeling by the cradle of their orphan son, a purple-red morsel of humanity, with conspicuously golden hair.

"Will he live, Doctor?"

"Live? GOD bless my soul, ma'am! Look at him! The young Jackanapes!"

CHAPTER II.

And he wandered away and away
With Nature, the dear old Nurse.

LONGFELLOW.

[Illustration]

The Grey Goose remembered quite well the year that Jackanapes began to walk, for it was the year that the speckled hen for the first time in all her motherly life got out of patience when she was sitting. She had been rather proud of the eggs--they are unusually large--but she never felt quite comfortable on them; and whether it was because she used to get cramp, and got off the nest, or because the season was bad, or what, she never could tell, but every egg was addled but one, and the one that did hatch gave her more trouble than any chick she had ever reared.

It was a fine, downy, bright yellow little thing, but it had a monstrous big nose and feet, and such an ungainly walk as she knew no other instance of in her well-bred and high-stepping family. And as to behavior, it was not that it was either quarrelsome or moping, but simply unlike the rest. When the other chicks hopped and cheeped on the Green all at their mother's feet, this solitary yellow one went waddling off on its own responsibility, and do or cluck what the speckled hen would, it went to play in the pond.

It was off one day as usual, and the hen was fussing and fuming after it, when the Postman, going to deliver a letter at Miss Jessamine's door, was nearly knocked over by the good lady herself, who, bursting out of the house with her cap just off and her bonnet just not on, fell into his arms, crying--

"Baby! Baby! Jackanapes! Jackanapes!"

If the Postman loved anything on earth, he loved the Captain's yellow-haired child, so propping Miss Jessamine against her own door-post, he followed the direction of her trembling fingers and made for the Green.

Jackanapes had had the start of the Postman by nearly ten minutes. The world--the round green world with an oak tree on it--was just becoming very interesting to him. He had tried, vigorously but ineffectually, to mount a passing pig the last time he was taken out walking; but then he was encumbered with a nurse. Now he was his own master, and might, by courage and energy, become the master of that delightful, downy, dumpy, yellow thing, that was bobbing along over the green grass in front of him. Forward! Charge! He aimed well, and grabbed it, but only to feel the delicious downiness and dumpiness slipping through his fingers as he fell upon his face. "Quawk!" said the yellow thing, and wobbled off sideways. It was this oblique movement that enabled Jackanapes to come up with it, for it was bound for the Pond, and therefore obliged to come back into line. He failed again from top-heaviness, and his prey escaped sideways as before, and, as before, lost ground in getting back to the direct road to the Pond.

[Illustration]

And at the Pond the Postman found them both, one yellow thing rocking safely on the ripples that lie beyond duck-weed, and the other washing his draggled frock with tears, because he too had tried to sit upon the Pond, and it wouldn't hold him.

CHAPTER III.

... If studious, copie fair what time hath blurred,
Redeem truth from his jawes; if souldier,
Chase brave employments with a naked sword
Throughout the world. Fool not; for all may have,
If they dare try, a glorious life, or grave.

* * * * *

In brief, acquit thee bravely: play the man.
Look not on pleasures as they come, but go.
Defer not the least vertue: life's poore span
Make not an ell, by trifling in thy woe.
If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains.
If well, the pain doth fade, the joy remains.

GEORGE HERBERT.

[Illustration]

Young Mrs. Johnson, who was a mother of many, hardly knew which to pity more; Miss Jessamine for having her little ways and her antimacassars rumbled by a young Jackanapes; or the boy himself, for being brought up by an old maid.

Oddly enough, she would probably have pitied neither, had Jackanapes been a girl. (One is so apt to think that what works smoothest works to the highest ends, having no patience for the results of friction.) That Father in GOD, who bade the young men to be pure, and the maidens brave, greatly disturbed a member of his congregation, who thought that the great preacher had made a slip of the tongue.

"That the girls should have purity, and the boys courage, is what you would say, good Father?"

"Nature has done that," was the reply; "I meant what I said."

In good sooth, a young maid is all the better for learning some robuster virtues than maidenliness and not to move the antimacassars. And the robuster virtues require some fresh air and freedom. As, on the other hand, Jackanapes (who had a boy's full share of the little beast and the young monkey in his natural composition) was none the worse, at his tender years, for learning some maidenliness--so far as maidenliness means decency, pity, unselfishness and pretty behavior.

And it is due to him to say that he was an obedient boy, and a boy whose word could be depended on, long before his grandfather the General came to live at the Green.

He was obedient; that is he did what his great aunt told him. But--oh dear! oh dear!--the pranks he played, which it had never entered into her head to forbid!

It was when he had just been put into skeletons (frocks never suited him) that he became very friendly with Master Tony Johnson, a younger brother of the young gentleman who sat in the puddle on purpose. Tony was not enterprising, and Jackanapes led him by the nose. One summer's evening they were out late, and Miss Jessamine was becoming anxious, when Jackanapes presented himself with a ghastly face all besmirched with tears. He was unusually subdued.

"I'm afraid," he sobbed; "if you please, I'm very much afraid that Tony Johnson's dying in the churchyard."

Miss Jessamine was just beginning to be distracted, when she smelt Jackanapes.

"You naughty, naughty boys! Do you mean to tell me that you've been smoking?"

"Not pipes," urged Jackanapes; "upon my honor, Aunty, not pipes. Only segars like Mr. Johnson's! and only made of brown paper with a very,

very little tobacco from the shop inside them."

Whereupon, Miss Jessamine sent a servant to the churchyard, who found Tony Johnson lying on a tomb-stone, very sick, and having ceased to entertain any hopes of his own recovery.

If it could be possible that any "unpleasantness" could arise between two such amiable neighbors as Miss Jessamine and Mrs. Johnson--and if the still more incredible paradox can be that ladies may differ over a point on which they are agreed--that point was the admitted fact that Tony Johnson was "delicate," and the difference lay chiefly in this: Mrs. Johnson said that Tony was delicate--meaning that he was more finely strung, more sensitive, a properer subject for pampering and petting than Jackanapes, and that, consequently, Jackanapes was to blame for leading Tony into scrapes which resulted in his being chilled, frightened, or (most frequently) sick. But when Miss Jessamine said that Tony Johnson was delicate, she meant that he was more puling, less manly, and less healthily brought up than Jackanapes, who, when they got into mischief together, was certainly not to blame because his friend could not get wet, sit a kicking donkey, ride in the giddy-go-round, bear the noise of a cracker, or smoke brown paper with impunity, as he could.

Not that there was ever the slightest quarrel between the ladies. It never even came near it, except the day after Tony had been so very sick with riding Bucephalus in the giddy-go-round. Mrs. Johnson had explained to Miss Jessamine that the reason Tony was so easily upset, was the unusual sensitiveness (as a doctor had explained it to her) of the nervous centres in her family--"Fiddlestick!" So Mrs. Johnson understood Miss Jessamine to say, but it appeared that she only said "Treachestick!" which is quite another thing, and of which Tony was undoubtedly fond. It was at the fair that Tony was made ill by riding on Bucephalus. Once a year the Goose Green became the scene of a carnival. First of all, carts and caravans were rumbling up all along, day and night. Jackanapes could hear them as he lay in bed, and could hardly sleep for speculating what booths and whirligigs he should find fairly established; when he and his dog Spitfire went out after breakfast. As a matter of fact, he seldom had to wait long for news of the Fair. The Postman knew the window out of which Jackanapes' yellow head would come, and was ready with his report.

"Royal Theayter, Master Jackanapes, in the old place, but be careful o' them seats, sir; they're rickettier than ever. Two sweets and a ginger-beer under the oak tree, and the Flying Boats is just a-coming along the road."

No doubt it was partly because he had already suffered severely in the Flying Boats, that Tony collapsed so quickly in the giddy-go-round. He only mounted Bucephalus (who was spotted, and had no tail) because Jackanapes urged him, and held out the ingenious hope that the round-and-round feeling would very likely cure the up-and-down sensation. It did not, however, and Tony tumbled off during the first revolution.

[Illustration]

Jackanapes was not absolutely free from qualms, but having once mounted the Black Prince he stuck to him as a horseman should. During the first round he waved his hat, and observed with some concern that the Black Prince had lost an ear since last Fair; at the second, he looked a little pale but sat upright, though somewhat unnecessarily rigid; at the third round he shut his eyes. During the fourth his hat fell off, and he clasped his horse's neck. By the fifth he had laid his yellow head against the Black Prince's mane, and so clung anyhow till the hobby-horses stopped, when the proprietor assisted him to alight, and he sat down rather suddenly and said he had enjoyed it very much.

The Grey Goose always ran away at the first approach of the caravans, and never came back to the Green till there was nothing left of the Fair but footmarks and oyster-shells. Running away was her pet principle; the only system, she maintained, by which you can live long and easily, and lose nothing. If you run away when you see danger, you can come back when all is safe. Run quickly, return slowly, hold your head high, and gabble as loud as you can, and you'll preserve the respect of the Goose Green to a peaceful old age. Why should you struggle and get hurt, if you can lower your head and swerve, and not lose a feather? Why in the world should any one spoil the pleasure of life, or risk his skin, if he can help it?

"What's the use'
Said the Goose."

Before answering which one might have to consider what world--which life--whether his skin were a goose-skin; but the Grey Goose's head would never have held all that.

Grass soon grows over footprints, and the village children took the oyster-shells to trim their gardens with; but the year after Tony rode Bucephalus there lingered another relic of Fairtime, in which Jackanapes was deeply interested. "The Green" proper was originally only part of a stragging common, which in its turn merged into some wilder waste land where gipsies sometimes squatted if the authorities would allow them, especially after the annual Fair. And it was after the Fair that Jackanapes, out rambling by himself, was knocked over by the Gipsy's son riding the Gipsy's red-haired pony at break-neck pace across the common.

Jackanapes got up and shook himself, none the worse, except for being heels over head in love with the red-haired pony. What a rate he went at! How he spurned the ground with his nimble feet! How his red coat shone in the sunshine! And what bright eyes peeped out of his dark forelock as it was blown by the wind!

The Gipsy boy had had a fright, and he was willing enough to reward Jackanapes for not having been hurt, by consenting to let him have a ride.

"Do you mean to kill the little fine gentleman, and swing us all on the gibbet, you rascal?" screamed the Gipsy-mother, who came up just as Jackanapes and the pony set off.

"He would get on," replied her son. "It'll not kill him. He'll fall on his yellow head, and it's as tough as a cocoanut."

But Jackanapes did not fall. He stuck to the red-haired pony as he had stuck to the hobbyhorse; but oh, how different the delight of this wild gallop with flesh and blood! Just as his legs were beginning to feel as if he did not feel them, the Gipsy boy cried "Lollo!" Round went the pony so unceremoniously, that, with as little ceremony, Jackanapes clung to his neck, and he did not properly recover himself before Lollo stopped with a jerk at the place where they had started.

"Is his name Lollo?" asked Jackanapes, his hand lingering in the wiry mane.

"Yes."

"What does Lollo mean?"

"Red."

"Is Lollo your pony?"

"No. My father's." And the Gipsy boy led Lollo away.

At the first opportunity Jackanapes stole away again to the common. This time he saw the Gipsy-father, smoking a dirty pipe.

"Lollo is your pony, isn't he?" said Jackanapes.

"Yes."

"He's a very nice one."

"He's a racer."

"You don't want to sell him, do you?"

"Fifteen pounds," said the Gipsy-father; and Jackanapes sighed and went home again. That very afternoon he and Tony rode the two donkeys, and Tony managed to get thrown, and even Jackanapes' donkey kicked. But it was jolting, clumsy work after the elastic swiftness and the dainty mischief of the red-haired pony.

A few days later Miss Jessamine spoke very seriously to Jackanapes. She was a good deal agitated as she told him that his grandfather, the General, was coming to the Green, and that he must be on his very best behavior during the visit. If it had been feasible to leave off calling him Jackanapes and to get used to his baptismal name of Theodore before the day after to-morrow (when the General was due), it would have been

satisfactory. But Miss Jessamine feared it would be impossible in practice, and she had scruples about it on principle. It would not seem quite truthful, although she had always most fully intended that he should be called Theodore when he had outgrown the ridiculous appropriateness of his nickname. The fact was that he had not outgrown it, but he must take care to remember who was meant when his grandfather said Theodore.

Indeed for that matter he must take care all along.

"You are apt to be giddy, Jackanapes," said Miss Jessamine.

"Yes aunt," said Jackanapes, thinking of the hobby-horses.

"You are a good boy, Jackanapes. Thank GOD, I can tell your grandfather that. An obedient boy, an honorable boy, and a kind-hearted boy. But you are--in short, you _are_ a Boy, Jackanapes. And I hope,"--added Miss Jessamine, desperate with the results of experience--"that the General knows that Boys will be Boys."

[Illustration]

What mischief could be foreseen, Jackanapes promised to guard against. He was to keep his clothes and his hands clean, to look over his catechism, not to put sticky things in his pockets, to keep that hair of his smooth--("It's the wind that blows it, Aunty," said Jackanapes--"I'll send by the coach for some bear's-grease," said Miss Jessamine, tying a knot in her pocket-handkerchief)--not to burst in at the parlor door, not to talk at the top of his voice, not to crumple his Sunday frill, and to sit quite quiet during the sermon, to be sure to say "sir" to the General, to be careful about rubbing his shoes on the doormat, and to bring his lesson-books to his aunt at once that she might iron down the dogs' ears. The General arrived, and for the first day all went well, except that Jackanapes' hair was as wild as usual, for the hair-dresser had no bear's-grease left. He began to feel more at ease with his grandfather, and disposed to talk confidentially with him, as he did with the Postman. All that the General felt it would take too long to tell, but the result was the same. He was disposed to talk confidentially with Jackanapes.

"Mons'ous pretty place this," he said, looking out of the lattice on to the Green, where the grass was vivid with sunset, and the shadows were long and peaceful.

"You should see it in Fair-week, sir," said Jackanapes, shaking his yellow mop, and leaning back in his one of the two Chippendale armchairs in which they sat.

"A fine time that, eh?" said the General, with a twinkle in his left eye. (The other was glass.)

Jackanapes shook his hair once more. "I enjoyed this last one the best of all," he said. "I'd so much money."

"By George, it's not a common complaint in these bad times. How much had ye?"

"I'd two shillings. A new shilling Aunty gave me, and elevenpence I had saved up, and a penny from the Postman--_sir_!" added Jackanapes with a jerk, having forgotten it.

"And how did ye spend it--_sir_?" inquired the, General. Jackanapes spread his ten fingers on the arms of his chair, and shut his eyes that he might count the more conscientiously.

"Watch-stand for Aunty, threepence. Trumpet for myself, twopence, that's fivepence. Ginger-nuts for Tony, twopence, and a mug with a Grenadier on for the Postman, fourpence, that's elevenpence. Shooting-gallery a penny, that's a shilling. Giddy-go-round, a penny, that's one and a penny. Treating Tony, one and twopence. Flying Boats (Tony paid for himself), a penny, one and threepence. Shooting-gallery again, one and four-pence; Fat Woman a penny, one and fivepence. Giddy-go-round again, one and sixpence. Shooting-gallery, one and sevenpence. Treating Tony, and then he wouldn't shoot, so I did, one and eightpence. Living Skeleton, a penny--no, Tony treated me, the Living Skeleton doesn't count. Skittles, a penny, one and ninepence Mermaid (but when we got inside she was dead), a penny, one and tenpence. Theatre, a penny (Priscilla Partington, or the Green Lane Murder. A beautiful young lady, sir, with pink cheeks and a real pistol), that's one and elevenpence. Ginger beer, a penny (I _was_ so thirsty!) two shillings. And then the Shooting-gallery man gave me a turn for nothing, because, he said, I was a real gentleman, and spent my money like a man."

"So you do, sir, so you do!" cried the General. "Why, sir, you spend it like a prince--And now I suppose you've not got a penny in your pocket?"

"Yes I have," said Jackanapes. "Two pennies. They are saving up." And Jackanapes jingled them with his hand.

"You don't want money except at fair-times, I suppose?" said the General.

Jackanapes shook his mop.

"If I could have as much as I want, I should know what to buy," said he.

"And how much do you want, if you could get it?"

"Wait a minute, sir, till I think what twopence from fifteen pounds leaves. Two from nothing you can't, but borrow twelve. Two from twelve, ten, and carry one. Please remember ten, sir, when I ask you. One from nothing you can't, borrow twenty. One from twenty, nineteen, and carry one. One from fifteen, fourteen. Fourteen pounds nineteen and--what did I tell you to remember?"

"Ten," said the General.

"Fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and ten-pence then, is what I want," said Jackanapes.

"Bless my soul, what for?"

"To buy Lollo with. Lollo means red, sir. The Gipsy's red-haired pony, sir. Oh, he is beautiful! You should see his coat in the sunshine! You should see his mane! You should see his tail! Such little feet, sir, and they go like lightning! Such a dear face, too, and eyes like a mouse! But he's a racer, and the Gipsy wants fifteen pounds for him."

"If he's a racer, you couldn't ride him. Could you?"

"No--o, sir, but I can stick to him. I did the other day."

"You did, did you? Well, I'm fond of riding myself, and if the beast is as good as you say, he might suit me."

"You're too tall for Lollo, I think," said Jackanapes, measuring his grandfather with his eye.

"I can double up my legs, I suppose. We'll have a look at him to-morrow."

"Don't you weigh a good deal?" asked Jackanapes.

"Chiefly waistcoats," said the General, slapping the breast of his military frock-coat. "We'll have the little racer on the Green the first thing in the morning. Glad you mentioned it, grandson. Glad you mentioned it."

The General was as good as his word Next morning the Gipsy and Lollo, Miss Jessamine, Jackanapes and his grandfather and his dog Spitfire, were all gathered at one end of the Green in a group, which so aroused the innocent curiosity of Mrs. Johnson, as she saw it from one of her upper windows, that she and the children took their early promenade rather earlier than usual. The General talked to the Gipsy, and Jackanapes fondled Lollo's mane, and did not know whether he should be more glad or miserable if his grandfather bought him.

"Jackanapes!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I've bought Lollo, but I believe you were right. He hardly stands high enough for me. If you can ride him to the other end of the Green, I'll give him to you."

How Jackanapes tumbled on to Lollo's back he never knew. He had just gathered up the reins when the Gipsy-father took him by the arm.

"If you want to make Lollo go fast, my little gentleman--"

"_I_ can make him go!" said Jackanapes, and drawing from his pocket the trumpet he had bought in the fair, he blew a blast both loud and shrill.

Away went Lollo, and away went Jackanapes' hat. His golden hair flew out, an aureole from which his cheeks shone red and distended with trumpeting. Away went Spitfire, mad with the rapture of the race, and the wind in his silky ears. Away went the geese, the cocks, the hens, and the whole family of Johnson. Lucy clung to her mamma, Jane saved Emily by the gathers of her gown, and Tony saved himself by a somersault.

[Illustration]

The Grey Goose was just returning when Jackanapes and Lollo rode back, Spitfire panting behind.

"Good, my little gentleman, good!" said the Gipsy. "You were born to the saddle You've the flat thigh, the strong knee, the wiry back, and the light caressing hand, all you want is to learn the whisper Come here!"

"What was that dirty fellow talking about, grandson?" asked the General.

"I can't tell you, sir. It's a secret."

They were sitting in the window again, in the two Chippendale arm-chairs, the General devouring every line of his grandson's face, with strange spasms crossing his own.

"You must love your aunt very much, Jackanapes?"

"I do, sir," said Jackanapes warmly.

"And whom do you love next best to your aunt?"

The ties of blood were pressing very strongly on the General himself, and perhaps he thought of Lollo. But Love is not bought in a day, even with fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and ten-pence. Jackanapes answered quite readily, "The Postman."

"Why the Postman?"

"He knew my father," said Jackanapes, "and he tells me about him, and about his black mare. My father was a soldier, a brave soldier. He died at Waterloo. When I grow up I want to be a soldier too." "So you shall, my boy. So you shall."

"Thank you, grandfather. Aunty doesn't want me to be a soldier for fear of being killed."

"Bless my life! Would she have you get into a feather-bed and stay there? Why, you might be killed by a thunderbolt, if you were a

butter-merchant!"

"So I might. I shall tell her so. What a funny fellow you are, sir! I say, do you think my father knew the Gipsy's secret? The Postman says he used to whisper to his black mare."

"Your father was taught to ride as a child, by one of those horsemen of the East who swoop and dart and wheel about a plain like swallows in autumn. Grandson! Love me a little too. I can tell you more about your father than the Postman can."

"I do love you," said Jackanapes. "Before you came I was frightened. I'd no notion you were so nice."

"Love me always, boy, whatever I do or leave undone. And--God help me--whatever you do or leave undone, I'll love you! There shall never be a cloud between us for a day; no, sir, not for an hour. We're imperfect enough, all of us, we needn't be so bitter; and life is uncertain enough at its safest, we needn't waste its opportunities. Look at me! Here sit I, after a dozen battles and some of the worst climates in the world, and by yonder lych gate lies your mother, who didn't move five miles, I suppose, from your aunt's apron-strings,--dead in her teens; my golden-haired daughter, whom I never saw."

Jackanapes was terribly troubled.

"Don't cry, grandfather," he pleaded, his own blue eyes round with tears. "I will love you very much, and I will try to be very good. But I should like to be a soldier."

"You shall, my boy, you shall. You've more claims for a commission than you know of. Cavalry, I suppose; eh, ye young Jackanapes? Well, well; if you live to be an honor to your country, this old heart shall grow young again with pride for you; and if you die in the service of your country--GOD bless me, it can but break for ye!"

And beating the region which he said was all waistcoats, as if they stifled him, the old man got up and strode out on to the Green.

CHAPTER IV.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."--JOHN XV. 13.

[Illustration]

Twenty and odd years later the Grey Goose was still alive, and in full possession of her faculties, such as they were. She lived slowly and carefully, and she lived long. So did Miss Jessamine; but the General

was dead.

He had lived on the Green for many years, during which he and the Postman saluted each other with a punctiliousness that it almost drilled one to witness. He would have completely spoiled Jackanapes if Miss Jessamine's conscience would have let him; otherwise he somewhat dragooned his neighbors, and was as positive about parish matters as a ratepayer about the army. A stormy-tempered, tender-hearted soldier, irritable with the suffering of wounds of which he never spoke, whom all the village followed to his grave with, tears.

The General's death was a great shock to Miss Jessamine, and her nephew stayed with her for some little time after the funeral. Then he was obliged to join his regiment, which was ordered abroad.

One effect of the conquest which the General had gained over the affections of the village, was a considerable abatement of the popular prejudice against "the military." Indeed the village was now somewhat importantly represented in the army. There was the General himself, and the Postman, and the Black Captain's tablet in the church, and Jackanapes, and Tony Johnson, and a Trumpeter.

Tony Johnson had no more natural taste for fighting than for riding, but he was as devoted as ever to Jackanapes, and that was how it came about that Mr. Johnson bought him a commission in the same cavalry regiment that the General's grandson (whose commission had been given him by the Iron Duke) was in, and that he was quite content to be the butt of the mess where Jackanapes was the hero; and that when Jackanapes wrote home to Miss Jessamine, Tony wrote with the same purpose to his mother; namely, to demand her congratulations that they were on active service at last, and were ordered to the front. And he added a postscript to the effect that she could have no idea how popular Jackanapes was, nor how splendidly he rode the wonderful red charger whom he had named after his old friend Lollo.

* * * * *

"Sound Retire!"

A Boy Trumpeter, grave with the weight of responsibilities and accoutrements beyond his years, and stained, so that his own mother would not have known him, with the sweat and dust of battle, did as he was bid; and then pushing his trumpet pettishly aside, adjusted his weary legs for the hundredth time to the horse which was a world too big for him, and muttering, "'Tain't a pretty tune," tried to see something of this, his first engagement, before it came to an end.

Being literally in the thick of it, he could see less or know less of what happened in that particular skirmish if he had been at home in England. For many good reasons; including dust and smoke, and that what attention he dared distract from his commanding officer was pretty well absorbed by keeping his hard-mouthed troop-horse in hand, under pain of execration by his neighbors in the melde. By-and-by, when the newspapers

came out, if he could get a look at one before it was thumbed to bits, he would learn that the enemy had appeared from ambush in overwhelming numbers, and that orders had been given to fall back, which was done slowly and in good order, the men fighting as they retired.

[Illustration]

Born and bred on the Goose Green, the youngest of Mr. Johnson's gardener's numerous off-spring, the boy had given his family "no peace" till they let him "go for a soldier" with Master Tony and Master Jackanapes. They consented at last, with more tears than they shed when an elder son was sent to jail for poaching, and the boy was perfectly happy in his life, and full of *_esprit de corps_*. It was this which had been wounded by having to sound retreat for "the young gentlemen's regiment," the first time he served with it before the enemy, and he was also harassed by having completely lost sight of Master Tony. There had been some hard fighting before the backward movement began, and he had caught sight of him once, but not since. On the other hand, all the pulses of his village pride had been stirred by one or two visions of Master Jackanapes whirling about on his wonderful horse. He had been easy to distinguish, since an eccentric blow had bared his head without hurting it, for his close golden mop of hair gleamed in the hot sunshine as brightly as the steel of the sword flashing round it.

Of the missiles that fell pretty thickly, the Boy Trumpeter did not take much notice. First, one can't attend to everything, and his hands were full. Secondly, one gets used to anything. Thirdly, experience soon teaches one, in spite of proverbs, how very few bullets find their billet. Far more unnerving is the mere suspicion of fear or even of anxiety in the human mass around you. The Boy was beginning to wonder if there were any dark reason for the increasing pressure, and whether they would be allowed to move back more quickly, when the smoke in front lifted for a moment, and he could see the plain, and the enemy's line some two hundred yards away.

And across the plain between them, he saw Master Jackanapes galloping alone at the top of Lollo's speed, their faces to the enemy, his golden head at Lollo's ear.

But at this moment noise and smoke seemed to burst out on every side, the officer shouted to him to sound retire, and between trumpeting and bumping about on his horse, he saw and heard no more of the incidents of his first battle.

Tony Johnson was always unlucky with horses, from the days of the giddy-go-round onwards. On this day--of all days in the year--his own horse was on the sick list, and he had to ride an inferior, ill-conditioned beast, and fell off that, at the very moment when it was a matter of life or death to be able to ride away. The horse fell on him, but struggled up again, and Tony managed to keep hold of it. It was in trying to remount that he discovered, by helplessness and anguish, that one of his legs was crushed and broken, and that no feat of which he was master would get him into the saddle. Not able even to stand

alone, awkwardly, agonizingly unable to mount his restive horse, his life was yet so strong within him! And on one side of him rolled the dust and smoke-cloud of his advancing foe, and on the other, that which covered his retreating friends.

He turned one piteous gaze after them, with a bitter twinge, not of reproach, but of loneliness; and then, dragging himself up by the side of his horse, he turned the other way and drew out his pistol, and waited for the end. Whether he waited seconds or minutes he never knew, before some one gripped him by the arm.

"Jackanapes! GOD bless you! It's my left leg. If you could get me on--"

It was like Tony's luck that his pistol went off at his horse's tail, and made it plunge; but Jackanapes threw him across the saddle.

"Hold on anyhow, and stick your spur in. I'll lead him. Keep your head down, they're firing high."

And Jackanapes laid his head down--to Lollo's ear.

It was when they were fairly off, that a sudden upspringing of the enemy in all directions had made it necessary to change the gradual retirement of our force into as rapid a retreat as possible. And when Jackanapes became aware of this, and felt the lagging and swerving of Tony's horse, he began to wish he had thrown his friend across his own saddle, and left their lives to Lollo.

When Tony became aware of it, several things came into his head. 1. That the dangers of their ride for life were now more than doubled. 2. That if Jackanapes and Lollo were not burdened with him they would undoubtedly escape. 3. That Jackanapes' life was infinitely valuable, and his--Tony's--was not. 4. That this--if he could seize it--was the supremest of all the moments in which he had tried to assume the virtues which Jackanapes had by nature; and that if he could be courageous and unselfish now--

He caught at his own reins and spoke very loud--

"Jackanapes! It won't do. You and Lollo must go on. Tell the fellows I gave you back to them, with all my heart. Jackanapes, if you love me, leave me!"

There was a daffodil light over the evening sky in front of them, and it shone strangely on Jackanapes' hair and face. He turned with an odd look in his eyes that a vainer man than Tony Johnson might have taken for brotherly pride. Then he shook his mop and laughed at him.

[Illustration]

"_Leave you?_ To save my skin? No, Tony, not to save my soul!"

CHAPTER V.

Mr. VALIANT _summoned. His will. His last words._

Then, said he, "I am going to my Father's.... My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it." ... And as he went down deeper, he said, "Grave, where is thy Victory?"

So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

BUNYAN'S _Pilgrim's, Progress_.

[Illustration]

Coming out of a hospital-tent, at headquarters, the surgeon cannonaded against, and rebounded from, another officer; a sallow man, not young, with a face worn more by ungentle experiences than by age; with weary eyes that kept their own counsel, iron gray hair, and a moustache that was as if a raven had laid its wing across his lips and sealed them.

"Well?"

"Beg pardon, Major. Didn't see you. Oh, compound fracture and bruises, but it's all right. He'll pull through."

"Thank GOD."

It was probably an involuntary expression, for prayer and praise were not much in the Major's line, as a jerk of the surgeon's head would have betrayed to an observer. He was a bright little man, with his feelings showing all over him, but with gallantry and contempt of death enough for both sides of his profession; who took a cool head, a white handkerchief and a case of instruments, where other men went hot-blooded with weapons, and who was the biggest gossip, male or female, of the regiment. Not even the Major's taciturnity daunted him.

"Didn't think he'd as much pluck about him as he has. He'll do all right if he doesn't fret himself into a fever about poor Jackanapes"

"Whom are you talking about?" asked the Major hoarsely.

"Young Johnson. He--"

"What about Jackanapes?"

"Don't you know? Sad business. Rode back for Johnson, and brought him in; but, monstrous ill-luck, hit as they rode. Left lung--"

"Will he recover?"

"No. Sad business."

"What a frame--what limbs--what health--and what good looks? Finest young fellow--"

"Where is he?"

"In his own tent," said the surgeon sadly.

The Major wheeled and left him.

* * * * *

"Can I do anything else for you?"

"Nothing, thank you. Except--Major! I wish I could get you to appreciate Johnson."

"This is not an easy moment, Jackanapes."

"Let me tell you, sir--_he_ never will--that if he could have driven me from him, he would be lying yonder at this moment, and I should be safe and sound."

The Major laid his hand over his mouth, as if to keep back a wish he would have been ashamed to utter.

"I've known old Tony from a child. He's a fool on impulse, a good man and a gentleman in principle. And he acts on principle, which it's not every--some water, please! Thank you, sir. It's very hot, and yet one's feet get uncommonly cold. Oh, thank you, thank you. He's no fire-eater, but he has a trained conscience and a tender heart, and he'll do his duty when a braver and more selfish man might fail you. But he wants encouragement; and when I'm gone----"

"He shall have encouragement. You have my word for it. Can I do nothing else?"

"Yes, Major. A favor."

"Thank you, Jackanapes."

"Be Lollo's master, and love him as well as you can. He's used to it."

"Wouldn't you rather Johnson had him?"

The blue eyes twinkled in spite of mortal pain.

"Tony _rides_ on principle, Major. His legs are bolsters, and will be to the end of the chapter. I couldn't insult dear Lollo, but if you don't care----Whilst I live----which will be longer than I desire or deserve----Lollo shall want nothing, but----you. I have too little

tenderness for----my dear boy, you're faint. Can you spare me for a moment?"

"No, stay--Major!"

"What? What?"

"My head drifts so--if you wouldn't mind."

"Yes! Yes!"

"Say a prayer by me. Out loud please, I am getting deaf."

"My dearest Jackanapes--my dear boy----"

"One of the Church Prayers--Parade Service, you know----"

"I see. But the fact is--GOD forgive me, Jackanapes--I'm a very different sort of fellow to some of you youngsters. Look here, let me fetch--"

But Jackanapes' hand was in his, and it wouldn't let go.

There was a brief and bitter silence.

"Pon my soul I can only remember the little one at the end."

"Please," whispered Jackanapes.

Pressed by the conviction that what little he could do it was his duty to do, the Major--kneeling--bared his head, and spoke loudly, clearly, and very reverently--

"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ--"

Jackanapes moved his left hand to his right one, which still held the Major's--

"--The love of GOD."

And with that--Jackanapes died.

CHAPTER VI.

[Illustration]

"Und so ist der blaue Himmel grösser als jedes Gewolk darin, und dauerhafter dazu."

JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

Jackanapes' death was sad news for the Goose Green, a sorrow justly qualified by honorable pride in his gallantry and devotion. Only the Cobbler dissented, but that was his way. He said he saw nothing in it but foolhardiness and vainglory. They might both have been killed, as easy as not, and then where would ye have been? A man's life was a man's life, and one life was as good as another. No one would catch him throwing his away. And, for that matter, Mrs. Johnson could spare a child a great deal better than Miss Jessamine.

But the parson preached Jackanapes' funeral sermon on the text, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it;" and all the village went and wept to hear him.

Nor did Miss Jessamine see her loss from the Cobbler's point of view. On the contrary, Mrs. Johnson said she never to her dying day should forget how, when she went to condole with her, the old lady came forward, with gentle-womanly self-control, and kissed her, and thanked GOD that her dear nephew's effort had been blessed with success, and that this sad war had made no gap in her friend's large and happy home circle.

"But she's a noble, unselfish woman," sobbed Mrs. Johnson, "and she taught Jackanapes to be the same, and that's how it is that my Tony has been spared to me. And it must be sheer goodness in Miss Jessamine, for what can she know of a mother's feelings? And I'm sure most people seem to think that if you've a large family you don't know one from another any more than they do, and that a lot of children are like a lot of store-apples, if one's taken it won't be missed."

Lollo--the first Lollo, the Gipsy's Lollo--very aged, draws Miss Jessamine's bath-chair slowly up and down the Goose Green in the sunshine.

The Ex-postman walks beside him, which Lollo tolerates to the level of his shoulder. If the Postman advances any nearer to his head, Lollo quickens his pace, and were the Postman to persist in the injudicious attempt, there is, as Miss Jessamine says, no knowing what might happen.

In the opinion of the Goose Green, Miss Jessamine has borne her troubles "wonderfully." Indeed, to-day, some of the less delicate and less intimate of those who see everything from the upper windows, say (well behind her back) that "the old lady seems quite lively with her military beaux again."

[Illustration]

The meaning of this is, that Captain Johnson is leaning over one side of her chair, whilst by the other bends a brother officer who is staying with him, and who has manifested an extraordinary interest in Lollo. He bends lower and lower, and Miss Jessamine calls to the Postman to request Lollo to be kind enough to stop, whilst she is fumbling for something which always hangs by her side, and has got entangled with her spectacles.

It is a two-penny trumpet, bought years ago in the village fair, and over it she and Captain Johnson tell, as best they can, between them, the story of Jackanapes' ride across the Goose Green; and how he won Lollo--the Gipsy's Lollo--the racer Lollo--dear Lollo--faithful Lollo--Lollo the never vanquished--Lollo the tender servant of his old mistress. And Lollo's ears twitch at every mention of his name.

Their hearer does not speak, but he never moves his eyes from the trumpet, and when the tale is told, he lifts Miss Jessamine's hand and presses his heavy black moustache in silence to her trembling fingers.

The sun, betting gently to his rest, embroiders the sombre foliage of the oak-tree with threads of gold. The Grey Goose is sensible of an atmosphere of repose, and puts up one leg for the night. The grass glows with a more vivid green, and, in answer to a ringing call from Tony, his sisters, fluttering over the daisies in pale-hued muslins, come out of their ever-open door, like pretty pigeons from a dovecote.

And, if the good gossips, eyes do not deceive them, all the Miss Johnsons, and both the officers, go wandering off into the lanes, where bryony wreaths still twine about the brambles.

* * * * *

A sorrowful story, and ending badly?

Nay, Jackanapes, for the end is not yet.

A life wasted that might have been useful?

Men who have died for men, in all ages, forgive the thought!

There is a heritage of heroic example and noble obligation, not reckoned in the Wealth of Nations, but essential to a nation's life; the contempt of which, in any people, may, not slowly, mean even its commercial fall. Very sweet are the uses of prosperity, the harvests of peace and progress, the fostering sunshine of health and happiness, and length of days in the land.

But there be things--oh, sons of what has deserved the name of Great Britain, forget it not!--"the good of" which and "the use of" which are beyond all calculation of worldly goods and earthly uses; things such as Love, and Honor, and the Soul of Man, which cannot be bought with a price, and which do not die with death. "And they who would fain live happily EVER after, should not leave these things out of the lessons of their lives."

DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOT.

* * * * *

PREAMBLE.

A summer's afternoon. Early in the summer, and late in the afternoon; with odors and colors deepening, and shadows lengthening, towards evening.

Two gaffers gossiping, seated side by side upon a Yorkshire wall. A wall of sandstone of many colors, glowing redder and yellower as the sun goes down; well cushioned with moss and lichen, and deep set in rank grass on this side, where the path runs, and in blue hyacinths on that side, where the wood is, and where--on the gray and still naked branches of young oaks--sit divers crows, not less solemn than the gaffers, and also gossiping.

One gaffer in work-day clothes, not unpicturesque of form and hue. Gray, home-knit stockings, and coat and knee-breeches of corduroy, which takes tints from Time and Weather as harmoniously as wooden palings do; so that field laborers (like some insects) seem to absorb or mimic the colors of the vegetation round them and of their native soil. That is, on work-days. Sunday-best is a different matter, and in this the other gaffer was clothed. He was dressed like the crows above him, _fit excepted_: the reason for which was, that he was only a visitor, a revisitor to the home of his youth, and wore his Sunday (and funeral) suit to mark the holiday.

Continuing the path, a stone pack-horse track, leading past a hedge snow-white with may, and down into a little wood, from the depths of which one could hear a brook babbling. Then up across the sunny field beyond, and yet up over another field to where the brow of the hill is crowned by old farm-buildings standing against the sky.

Down this stone path a young man going whistling home to tea. Then staying to bend a swarthy face to the white may to smell it, and then plucking a huge branch on which the blossom lies like a heavy fall of snow, and throwing that aside for a better, and tearing off another and yet another, with the prodigal recklessness of a pauper; and so, whistling, on into the wood with his arms full.

Down the sunny field, as he goes up it, a woman coming to meet him--with _her_ arms full. Filled by a child with a may-white frock, and hair shining with the warm colors of the sandstone. A young woman, having a fair forehead visible a long way off, and buxom cheeks, and steadfast eyes. When they meet he kisses her, and she pulls his dark hair and smooths her own, and cuffs him in country fashion. Then they change burdens, and she takes the may into her apron (stooping to pick up fallen bits), and the child sits on the man's shoulder, and cuffs and lugs its father as the mother did, and is chidden by her and kissed by him. And all the babbling of their chiding and crowing and laughter comes across the babbling of the brook to the ears of the old gaffers gossiping on the wall.

Gaffer I. spits out an over-munched stalk of meadow soft-grass, and speaks:

"D'ye see yon chap?"

Gaffer II. takes up his hat and wipes it round with a spotted handkerchief (for your Sunday hat is a heating thing for work-day wear), and puts it on, and makes reply:

"Aye. But he beats me. And--see there!--he's t'first that's beat me yet. Why, lad! I've met young chaps to-day I could ha' sworn to for mates of mine forty years back--if I hadn't ha' been i't' churchyard spelling over their fathers' tumstuns!"

"Aye. There's a many old standards gone home o' lately."

"What do they call _him?_"

"T' young chap?"

"Aye."

"They _call_ him--Darwin."

"Dar--win?" I should know a Darwin. They're old standards, is Darwins. What's he to Daddy Darwin of t' Dovecot yonder?"

"He _owns_ t' Dovecot. Did ye see t' lass?"

"Aye. Shoo's his missus, I reckon?"

"Aye."

"What did they call her?"

"Phoebe Shaw they called her. And if she'd been _my_ lass--but that's nother here nor there, and he's got t' Dovecot."

"Shaw? _They're_ old standards, is Shaws. Phoebe? They called her mother Phoebe. Phoebe Johnson. She were a dainty lass! My father were very fond of Phoebe Johnson. He said she allus put him i' mind of our orchard on drying days; pink and white apple-blossom and clean clothes. And yon's her daughter? Where d'ye say t' young chap come from? He don't look like hereabouts."

"He don't come from hereabouts. And yet he do come from hereabouts, as one may say. Look ye here. He come from t' wukhus. That's the short and the long of it."

"_The workhouse!_"

"Aye."

Stupefaction. The crows chattering wildly overhead.

"And he owns Darwin's Dovecot?"

"He owns Darwin's Dovecot."

"And how i' t' name o' all things did that come about!"

"Why, I'll tell thee. It was i' this fashion."

* * * * *

Not without reason does the wary writer put gossip in the mouths of gaffers rather than of gammers. Male gossips love scandal as dearly as female gossips do, and they bring to it the stronger relish and energies of their sex. But these were country gaffers, whose speech--like shadows--grows lengthy in the leisurely hours of eventide. The gentle reader shall have the tale in plain narration.

NOTE--It will be plain to the reader that the birds here described are Rooks (*_corvus frugilegus_*). I have allowed myself to speak of them by their generic or family name of Crow, this being a common country practice. The genus *_corvus_*, or *_Crow_*, includes the Raven, the Carrion Crow, the Hooded Crow, the Jackdaw, and the Rook.

SCENE I.

One Saturday night (some eighteen years earlier than the date of this gaffer-gossiping) the parson's daughter sat in her own room before the open drawer of a bandy-legged black oak table, *_balancing her bags_*. The bags were money-bags, and the matter shall be made clear at once.

In this parish, as in others, progress and the multiplication of weapons with which civilization and the powers of goodness push their conquests over brutality and the powers of evil, had added to the original duties of the parish priest, a multifarious and all but impracticable variety of offices; which, in ordinary and late conditions, would have been performed by several more or less salaried clerks, bankers, accountants, secretaries, librarians, club-committees, teachers, lecturers, discount for ready-money dealers in clothing, boots, blankets, and coal, domestic-servant agencies, caterers for the public amusement, and preservers of the public peace.

The country parson (no less than statesmen and princes, than men of science and of letters) is responsible for a great deal of his work that is really done by the help-mate--woman. This explains why five out of the young lady's moneybags bore the following inscriptions in marking-ink: "Savings' bank," "Clothing club," "Library," "Magazines and

hymn-books," "Three-halfpenny club"--and only three bore reference to private funds, as--"House-money"--"Allowance "--"Charity."

It was the bag bearing this last and greatest name which the parson's daughter now seized and emptied into her lap. A ten-shilling piece, some small silver, and twopence halfpenny jingled together, and roused a silver-haired, tawny-pawed terrier, who left the hearthrug and came to smell what was the matter. His mistress's right hand--absently caressing--quieted his feelings; and with the left she held the ten-shilling piece between finger and thumb, and gazed thoughtfully at the other bags as they squatted in a helpless row, with twine-tied mouths hanging on all sides. It was only after anxious consultation with an account-book that the half-sovereign was exchanged for silver; thanks to the clothing-club bag, which looked leaner for the accommodation. In the three-halfpenny bag (which bulged with pence) some silver was further solved into copper, and the charity bag was handsomely distended before the whole lot was consigned once more to the table-drawer.

Any one accustomed to book-keeping must smile at this bag-keeping of accounts; but the parson's daughter could never "bring her mind" to keeping the funds apart on paper, and mixing the actual cash. Indeed, she could never have brought her conscience to it. Unless she had taken the tenth for "charity" from her dress and pocket-money in coin, and put it then and there into the charity bag, this self-imposed rule of the duty of almsgiving would not have been performed to her soul's peace.

The problem which had been exercising her mind that Saturday night was how to spend what was left of her benevolent fund in a treat for the children of the neighboring work-house. The fund was low, and this had decided the matter. The following Wednesday would be her twenty-first birthday. If the children came to tea with her, the foundation of the entertainment would, in the natural course of things, be laid in the Vicarage kitchen. The charity bag would provide the extras of the feast. Nuts, toys, and the like.

When the parson's daughter locked the drawer of the bandy-legged table, she did so with the vigor of one who has made up her mind, and set about the rest of her Saturday night's duties without further delay.

She put out her Sunday clothes, and her Bible and Prayer-book, and class-book and pencil, on the oak chest at the foot of the bed. She brushed and combed the silver-haired terrier, who looked abjectly depressed whilst this was doing, and preposterously proud when it was done. She washed her own hair, and studied her Sunday-school lesson for the morrow whilst it was drying. She spread a colored quilt at the foot of her white one for the terrier to sleep on--a slur which he always deeply resented.

Then she went to bed, and slept as one ought to sleep on Saturday night, who is bound to be at the Sunday School by 9.15 on the following morning, with a clear mind on the Rudiments of the Faith, the history of the Prophet Elisha, and the destinations of each of the parish magazines.

SCENE II.

Fatherless--motherless--homeless!

A little work-house-boy, with a swarthy face and tidily-cropped black hair, as short and thick as the fur of a mole, was grubbing, not quite so cleverly as a mole, in the work-house garden.

He had been set to weed, but the weeding was very irregularly performed, for his eyes and heart were in the clouds, as he could see them over the big boundary wall. For there--now dark against the white, now white against the gray--some Air Tumbler pigeons were turning somersaults on their homeward way, at such short and regular intervals that they seemed to be tying knots in their lines of flight.

It was too much! The small gardener shamelessly abandoned his duties, and, curving his dirty paws on each side of his mouth, threw his whole soul into shouting words of encouragement to the distant birds.

"That's a good un! On with thee! Over ye go! Oo--ooray!"

It was this last prolonged cheer which drowned the sound of footsteps on the path behind him, so that if he had been a tumbler pigeon himself he could not have jumped more nimbly when a man's hand fell upon his shoulder. Up went his arms to shield his ears from a well-merited cuffing; but fate was kinder to him than he deserved. It was only an old man (prematurely aged with drink and consequent poverty), whose faded eyes seemed to rekindle as he also gazed after the pigeons, and spoke as one who knows.

"Yon's Daddy Darwin's Tumblers."

This old pauper had only lately come into "the House" (the house that never was a home!), and the boy clung eagerly to his flannel sleeve, and plied him thick and fast with questions about the world without the workhouse-walls, and about the happy owner of those yet happier creatures who were free not only on the earth, but in the skies.

The poor old pauper was quite as willing to talk as the boy was to listen. It restored some of that self-respect which we lose under the consequences of our follies to be able to say that Daddy Darwin and he had been mates together, and had had pigeon-fancying in common "many a long year afore" he came into the House.

And so these two made friendship over such matters as will bring man and boy together to the end of time. And the old pauper waxed eloquent on the feats of Homing Birds and Tumblers, and on the points of Almonds and Barbs, Fantails and Pouters; sprinkling his narrative also with high sounding and heterogeneous titles, such as Dragons and Archangels, Blue

Owls and Black Priests, Jacobines, English Horsemen and Trumpeters. And through much boasting of the high stakes he had had on this and that pigeon-match then, and not a few bitter complaints of the harsh hospitality of the House he "had come to" now, it never seemed to occur to him to connect the two, or to warn the lad who hung upon his lips that one cannot eat his cake with the rash appetites of youth, and yet hope to have it for the support and nourishment of his old age.

The longest story the old man told was of a "bit of a trip" he had made to Liverpool, to see some Antwerp Carriers flown from thence to Ghent, and he fixed the date of this by remembering that his twin sons were born in his absence, and that though their birthday was the very day of the race, his "missus turned stoopid," as women (he warned the boy) are apt to do, and refused to have them christened by uncommon names connected with the fancy. All the same, he bet the lads would have been nicknamed the Antwerp Carriers, and known as such to the day of their death, if this had not come so soon and so suddenly, of croup; when (as it oddly chanced) he was off on another "bit of a holiday" to fly some pigeons of his own in Lincolnshire.

This tale had not come to an end when a voice of authority called for "Jack March," who rubbed his mole-like head, and went ruefully off, muttering that he should "catch it now."

"Sure enough! sure enough!" chuckled the unamiable old pauper.

But again fate was kinder to the lad than his friend. His negligent weeding passed unnoticed, because he was wanted in a hurry to join the other children in the school-room. The parson's daughter had come, the children were about to sing to her, and Jack's voice could not be dispensed with.

He "cleaned himself" with alacrity, and taking his place in the circle of boys standing with their hands behind their backs, he lifted up a voice worthy of a cathedral choir, whilst varying the monotony of sacred song by secretly snatching at the tail of the terrier as it went snuffing round the legs of the group. And in this feat he proved as much superior to the rest of the boys (who also tried it) as he excelled them in the art of singing.

Later on he learned that the young lady had come to invite them all to have tea with her on her birthday. Later still he found the old pauper once more, and questioned him closely about the village and the Vicarage, and as to which of the parishioners kept pigeons, and where.

And when he went to his straw bed that night, and his black head throbbled with visions and high hopes, these were not entirely of the honor of drinking tea with a pretty young lady, and how one should behave himself in such abashing circumstances. He did not even dream principally of the possibility of getting hold of that silver-haired, tawny-pawed dog by the tail under freer conditions than those of this afternoon, though that was a refreshing thought.

What kept him long awake was thinking of this. From the top of an old walnut-tree at the top of a field at the back of the Vicarage, you could see a hill, and on the top of the hill some farm buildings. And it was here (so the old pauper had told him) that those pretty pigeons lived, who, though free to play about among the clouds, yet condescended to make an earthly home--in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE III.

Two and two, girls and boys, the young lady's guests marched down to the Vicarage. The school-mistress was anxious that each should carry his and her tin mug, so as to give as little trouble as possible; but this was resolutely declined, much to the children's satisfaction, who had their walk with free hands, and their tea out of teacups and saucers, like anybody else.

It was a fine day, and all went well. The children enjoyed themselves, and behaved admirably into the bargain. There was only one suspicion of misconduct, and the matter was so far from clear that the parson's daughter hushed it up, and, so to speak, dismissed the case.

The children were playing at some game in which Jack March was supposed to excel, but when they came to look for him he could nowhere be found. At last he was discovered, high up among the branches of an old walnut-tree at the top of the field, and though his hands were unstained and his pockets empty, the gardener, who had been the first to spy him, now loudly denounced him as an ungrateful young thief. Jack, with swollen eyes and cheeks besmirched with angry tears, was vehemently declaring that he had only climbed the tree to "have a look at Master Darwin's pigeons," and had not picked so much as a leaf, let alone a walnut; and the gardener, "shaking the truth out of him" by the collar of his fustian jacket, was preaching loudly on the sin of adding falsehood to theft, when the parson's daughter came up, and, in the end, acquitted poor Jack, and gave him leave to amuse himself as he pleased.

It did not please Jack to play with his comrades just then. Pie felt sulky and aggrieved. He would have liked to play with the terrier who had stood by him in his troubles, and barked at the gardener; but that little friend now trotted after his mistress, who had gone to choir-practice.

Jack wandered about among the shrubberies. By-and-by he heard sounds of music, and led by these he came to a gate in a wall, dividing the Vicarage garden from the churchyard. Jack loved music, and the organ and the voices drew him on till he reached the church porch; but there he was startled by a voice that was not only not the voice of song, but was the utterance of a moan so doleful that it seemed the outpouring of all his lonely, and outcast, and injured feelings in one comprehensive howl.

It was the voice of the silver-haired terrier. He was sitting in the

porch, his nose up, his ears down, his eyes shut, his mouth open, bewailing in bitterness of spirit the second and greater crook of his lot.

To what purpose were all the caresses and care and indulgence of his mistress, the daily walks, the weekly washings and combings, the constant companionship, when she betrayed her abiding sense of his inferiority, first, by not letting him sleep on the white quilt, and secondly, by never allowing him to go to church?

Jack shared the terrier's mood. What were tea and plum-cake to him, when his pauper-breeding was so stamped upon him that the gardener was free to say--"A nice tale too! What's thou to do wi' doves, and thou a work'us lad?"--and to take for granted that he would thieve and lie if he got the chance?

His disabilities were not the dog's, however. The parish church was his as well as another's, and he crept inside and leaned against one of the stone pillars, as if it were a big, calm friend.

Far away, under the transept, a group of boys and men held their music near to their faces in the waning light. Among them towered the burly choirmaster, baton in hand. The parson's daughter was at the organ. Well accustomed to produce his voice to good purpose, the choirmaster's words were clearly to be heard throughout the building, and it was on the subject of articulation and emphasis, and the like, that he was speaking; now and then throwing in an extra aspirate in the energy of that enthusiasm without which teaching is not worth the name.

"That'll not do. We must have it altogether different. You two lads are singing like bumblebees in a pitcher--border there, boys!--it's no laughing matter--put down those papers and keep your eyes on me--inflate the chest--" (his own seemed to fill the field of vision) "and try and give forth those noble words as if you'd an idea what they meant."

No satire was intended or taken here, but the two boys, who were practicing their duet in an anthem, laid down the music, and turned their eyes on their teacher.

"I'll run through the recitative," he added, "and take your time from the stick. And mind that OH."

The parson's daughter struck a chord, and then the burly choirmaster spoke with the voice of melody:

"My heart is disquieted within me. My heart--my heart is disquieted within me. And the fear of death is fallen--is fallen upon me."

The terrier moaned without, and Jack thought no boy's voice could be worth listening to after that of the choirmaster. But he was wrong. A few more notes from the organ, and then, as night-stillness in a wood is broken by the nightingale, so upon the silence of the church a boy-alto's voice broke forth in obedience to the choirmaster's uplifted

hand:

"_Then_, I said--I said----"

Jack gasped, but even as he strained his eyes to see what such a singer could look like, with higher, clearer notes the soprano rose above him --"Then I sa--a--id," and the duet began:

"Oh that I had wings--O that I had wings like a dove!"

Soprano--"Then would I flee away." _Alto_--"Then would I flee away." _Together_--"And be at rest--flee away and be at rest."

The clear young voices soared and chased each other among the arches, as if on the very pinions for which they prayed. Then--swept from their seats by an upward sweep of the choirmaster's arms--the chorus rose, as birds rise, and carried on the strain.

It was not a very fine composition, but this final chorus had the singular charm of fugue. And as the voices mourned like doves, "Oh that I had wings!" and pursued each other with the plaintive passage, "Then would I flee away--then would I flee away----," Jack's ears knew no weariness of the repetition. It was strangely like watching the rising and falling of Daddy Darwin's pigeons, as they tossed themselves by turns upon their homeward flight.

After the fashion of the piece and period, the chorus was repeated, and the singers rose to supreme effort. The choirmaster's hands flashed hither and thither, controlling, inspiring, directing. He sang among the tenors.

Jack's voice nearly choked him with longing to sing too. Could words of man go more deeply home to a young heart caged within workhouse walls?

"Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I flee away--" the choirmaster's white hands were fluttering downwards in the dusk, and the chorus sank with them--"flee away and be at rest!"

SCENE IV.

Jack March had a busy little brain, and his nature was not of the limp type that sits down with a grief. That most memorable tea-party had fired his soul with two distinct ambitions. First, to be a choir-boy; and, secondly, to dwell in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot. He turned the matter over in his mind, and patched together the following facts:

The Board of Guardians meant to apprentice him, Jack, to some master, at the earliest opportunity. Daddy Darwin (so the old pauper told him) was a strange old man, who had come down in the world, and now lived quite

alone, with not a soul to help him in the house or outside it. He was "not to say _mazelin_ yet, but getting helpless, and uncommon mean."

A nephew came one fine day and fetched away the old pauper, to his great delight. It was by their hands that Jack despatched a letter, which the nephew stamped and posted for him, and which was duly delivered on the following morning to Mr. Darwin of the Dovecot.

The old man had no correspondents, and he looked long at the letter before he opened it. It did credit to the teaching of the workhouse schoolmistress:

"HONORED SIR,

"They call me Jack March. I'm a workhouse lad, but, sir, I'm a good one, and the Board means to 'prentice me next time. Sir, if you face the Board and take me out you shall never regret it. Though I says it as shouldn't I'm a handy lad. I'll clean a floor with any one, and am willing to work early and late, and at your time of life you're not what you was, and them birds must take a deal of seeing to. I can see them from the garden when I'm set to weed, and I never saw nought like them. Oh, sir, I do beg and pray you let me mind your pigeons. You'll be none the worse of a lad about the place, and I shall be happy all the days of my life. Sir, I'm not unthankful, but please GOD, I should like to have a home, and to be with them house doves.

"From your humble servent--hoping to be--

"JACK MARCH."

"Mr. Darwin, Sir. I love them Tumblers as if they was my own."

Daddy Darwin thought hard and thought long over that letter. He changed his mind fifty times a day. But Friday was the Board day, and when Friday came he "faced the Board." And the little workhouse lad went home to Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE V.

The bargain was oddly made, but it worked well. Whatever Jack's parentage may have been (and he was named after the stormy month in which he had been born), the blood that ran in his veins could not have been beggar's blood. There was no hopeless, shiftless, invincible idleness about him. He found work for himself when it was not given him to do, and he attached himself passionately and proudly to all the belongings of his new home.

"Yon lad of yours seem handy enough, Daddy;--for a vagrant, as one may

say." Daddy Darwin was smoking over his garden wall, and Mrs. Shaw, from the neighboring farm, had paused in her walk for a chat. She was a notable housewife, and there was just a touch of envy in her sense of the improved appearance of the doorsteps and other visible points of the Dovecot. Daddy Darwin took his pipe out of his mouth to make way for the force of his reply:

"_Vagrant!_ Nay, missus, yon's no vagrant. _He's fettling up all along._ Jack's the sort if he finds a key he'll look for the lock; if ye give him a knife-blade he'll fashion a heft. Why, a vagrant's a chap that, if he'd all your maester owns to-morrow, he'd be on the tramp again afore t' year were out, and three years wouldn't repair the mischief he'd leave behind him. A vagrant's a chap that if ye lend him a thing he loses it; if ye give him a thing he abuses it----"

"That's true enough, and there's plenty servant-girls the same," put in Mrs. Shaw.

"Maybe there be, ma'am--maybe there be; vagrants' children, I reckon. But yon little chap I got from t' House comes of folk that's had stuff o' their own, and cared for it--choose who they were."

"Well, Daddy," said his neighbor, not without malice, "I'll wish you a good evening. You've got a good bargain out of the parish, it seems."

But Daddy Darwin only chuckled, and stirred up the ashes in the bowl of his pipe.

"The same to you, ma'am--the same to you. Aye! he's a good bargain--a very good bargain is Jack March."

It might be supposed from the foregoing dialogue that Daddy Darwin was a model householder, and the little workhouse boy the neatest creature breathing. But the gentle reader who may imagine this is much mistaken.

Daddy Darwin's Dovecot was freehold, and when he inherited it from his father there was, still attached to it a good bit of the land that had passed from father to son through more generations than the church registers were old enough to record. But the few remaining acres were so heavily mortgaged that they had to be sold. So that a bit of house property elsewhere, and the old homestead itself, were all that was left. And Daddy Darwin had never been the sort of man to retrieve his luck at home, or to seek it abroad.

That he had inherited a somewhat higher and more refined nature than his neighbors had rather hindered than helped him to prosper. And he had been unlucky in love. When what energies he had were in their prime, his father's death left him with such poor prospects that the old farmer to whose daughter he was betrothed broke off the match and married her elsewhere. His Alice was not long another man's wife. She died within a year from her wedding-day, and her husband married again within a year from her death. Her old lover was no better able to mend his broken heart than his broken fortunes. He only banished women from the Dovecot,

and shut himself up from the coarse consolation of his neighbors.

In this loneliness, eating a kindly heart out in bitterness of spirit,
with all that he ought to have had--

To plough and sow
And reap and mow--

gone from him, and in the hands of strangers; the pigeons, for which the Dovecot had always been famous, became the business and the pleasure of his life. But of late years his stock had dwindled, and he rarely went to pigeon-matches or competed in shows and races. A more miserable fancy rivalled his interest in pigeon fancying. His new hobby was hoarding; and money that, a few years back, he would have freely spent to improve his breed of Tumblers or back his Homing Birds he now added with stealthy pleasure to the store behind the secret panel of a fine old oak bedstead that had belonged to the Darwyn who owned Dovecot when the sixteenth century was at its latter end. In this bedstead Daddy slept lightly of late, as old men will, and he had horrid dreams, which old men need not have. The queer faces carved on the panels (one of which hid the money hole) used to frighten him when he was a child. They did not frighten him now by their grotesque ugliness, but when he looked at them, _and knew which was which_, he dreaded the dying out of twilight into dark, and dreamed of aged men living alone, who had been murdered for their savings. These growing fears had had no small share in deciding him to try Jack March; and to see the lad growing stronger, nimbler, and more devoted to his master's interests day by day, was a nightly comfort to the poor old hoarder in the bed-head.

As to his keen sense of Jack's industry and carefulness, it was part of the incompleteness of Daddy Darwin's nature, and the ill-luck of his career, that he had a sensitive perception of order and beauty, and a shrewd observation of ways of living and qualities of character, and yet had allowed his early troubles to blight him so completely that he never put forth an effort to rise above the ruin, of which he was at least as conscious as his neighbors.

That Jack was not the neatest creature breathing, one look at him, as he stood with pigeons on his head and arms and shoulders, would have been enough to prove. As the first and readiest repudiation of his workhouse antecedents he had let his hair grow till it hung in the wildest elf-locks, and though the terms of his service with Daddy Darwin would not, in any case, have provided him with handsome clothes, such as he had were certainly not the better for any attention he bestowed upon them. As regarded the Dovecot, however, Daddy Darwin had not done more than justice to his bargain. A strong and grateful attachment to his master, and a passionate love for the pigeons he tended, kept Jack constantly busy in the service of both; the old pigeon-fancier taught him the benefits of scrupulous cleanliness in the pigeon-cote, and Jack "stoned" the kitchen-floor and the doorsteps on his own responsibility. The time did come when he tidied up himself.

SCENE VI.

Daddy Darwin had made the first breach in his solitary life of his own free will, but it was fated to widen. The parson's daughter soon heard that he had got a lad from the workhouse, the very boy who sang so well and had climbed the walnut-tree to look at Daddy Darwin's pigeons. The most obvious parish questions at once presented themselves to the young lady's mind. "Had the boy been christened? Did he go to Church and Sunday School? Did he say his prayers and know his Catechism? Had he a Sunday suit? Would he do for the choir?"

Then, supposing (a not uncommon case) that the boy had been christened, said he said his prayers, knew his Catechism, and was ready for school, church, and choir, but had not got a Sunday suit--a fresh series of riddles propounded themselves to her busy brain. Would her father yield up his everyday coat and take his Sunday one into weekday wear? Could the charity bag do better than pay the tailor's widow for adapting this old coat to the new chorister's back, taking it in at the seams, turning it wrong-side out, and getting new sleeves out of the old tails? Could she herself spare the boots which the village cobbler had just re-soled for her--somewhat clumsily--and would the "allowance" bag bear this strain? Might she hope to coax an old pair of trowsers out of her cousin, who was spending his Long Vacation at the Vicarage, and who never reckoned very closely with his allowance, and kept no charity bag at all? Lastly would "that old curmudgeon at the Dovecot" let his little farm-boy go to church and school and choir?

"I must go and persuade him," said the young lady.

What she said, and what (at the time) Daddy Darwin said, Jack never knew. He was at high sport with the terrier round the big sweet-brier bush, when he saw his old master slitting the seams of his weather-beaten coat in the haste with which he plucked crimson clove carnations as if they had been dandelions, and presented them, not ungracefully, to the parson's daughter.

Jack knew why she had come, and strained his ears to catch his own name. But Daddy Darwin was promising pipings of the cloves.

"They are such dear old-fashioned things," said she, burying her nose in the bunch.

"We're old-fashioned altogether, here, Miss," said Daddy Darwin, looking wistfully at the tumble-down house behind them.

"You're very pretty here," said she, looking also, and thinking what a sketch it would make, if she could keep on friendly terms with this old recluse, and get leave to sit in the garden. Then her conscience smiting her for selfishness, she turned her big eyes on him and put out her small hand.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Darwin, very much obliged to you indeed. And I hope that Jack will do credit to your kindness. And thank you so much for the cloves," she added, hastily changing a subject which had cost some argument, and which she did not wish to have reopened.

Daddy Darwin had thoughts of reopening it. He was slowly getting his ideas together to say that the lad should see how he got along with the school before trying the choir, when he found the young lady's hand in his, and had to take care not to hurt it, whilst she rained thanks on him for the flowers.

"You're freely welcome, Miss," was what he did say after all.

In the evening, however, he was very moody, but Jack was dying of curiosity, and at last could contain himself no longer.

"What did Miss Jenny want, Daddy?" he asked.

The old man looked very grim.

"First to make a fool of me, and i' t' second place to make a fool of thee," was his reply. And he added with pettish emphasis, "They're all alike, gentle and simple. Lad, lad! If ye'd have any peace of your life never let a woman's foot across your threshold. Steek t' door of your house--if ye own one--and t' door o' your heart--if ye own one--and then ye'll never rue. Look at this coat!"

And the old man went grumpily to bed, and dreamed that Miss Jenny had put her little foot over his threshold, and that he had shown her the secret panel, and let her take away his savings.

And Jack went to bed, and dreamed that he went to school, and showed himself to Phoebe Shaw in his Sunday suit.

This dainty little damsel had long been making havoc in Jack's heart. The attraction must have been one of contrast, for whereas Jack was black and grubby, and had only week-day clothes--which were ragged at that--Phoebe was fair, and exquisitely clean, and quite terribly tidy. Her mother was the neatest woman in the parish. It was she who was wont to say to her trembling handmaid, "I hope I can black a grate without blacking myself." But little Phoebe promised so far to out-do her mother, that it seemed doubtful if she could "black herself" if she tried. Only the bloom of childhood could have resisted the polishing effects of yellow soap, as Phoebe's brow and cheeks did resist it. Her shining hair was--compressed into a plait that would have done credit to a rope-maker. Her pinafores were speckless, and as to her white Whitsun frock--Jack could think of nothing the least like Phoebe in that, except a snowy fantail strutting about the Dovecot roof; and, to say the truth, the likeness was most remarkable.

It has been shown that Jack March had a mind to be master of his fate, and he did succeed in making friends with little Phoebe Shaw. This was

before Miss Jenny's visit, but the incident shall be recorded here.

Early on Sunday mornings it was Jack's custom to hide his work-day garb in an angle of the ivy-covered wall of the Dovecot garden, only letting his head appear over the top, from whence he watched to see Phoebe pass on her way to Sunday School, and to bewilder himself with the sight of her starched frock, and her airs with her Bible and Prayer-book, and class card, and clean pocket-handkerchief.

Now, amongst the rest of her Sunday paraphernalia, Phoebe always carried a posy, made up with herbs and some strong smelling flowers. Countrywomen take mint and southernwood to a long hot service, as fine ladies take smelling-bottles (for it is a pleasant delusion with some writers that the weaker sex is a strong sex in the working classes). And though Phoebe did not suffer from "fainty feels" like her mother, she and her little playmates took posies to Sunday School, and refreshed their nerves in the stream of question and answer, and hair oil and corduroy, with all the airs of their elders.

One day she lost her posy on her way to school, and her loss was Jack's opportunity. He had been waiting half-an-hour among the ivy, when he saw her just below him, fuzzling round and round like a kitten chasing its tail. He sprang to the top of the wall.

"Have ye lost something?" he gasped.

"My posy," said poor Phoebe, lifting her sweet eyes, which were full of tears.

A second spring brought Jack into the dust at her feet, where he searched most faithfully, and was wandering along the path by which she had come, when she called him back.

"Never mind," she said. "They'll most likely be dusty by now."

Jack was not used to think the worse of anything for a coating of dust; but he paused, trying to solve the perpetual problem of his situation, and find out what the little maid really wanted.

"'Twas only Old Man and marygolds," said she. "They're common enough."

A light illumined Jack's understanding.

"We've Old Man i' plenty. Wait, and I'll get thee a fresh posy." And he began to reascend the wall.

But Phoebe drew nearer. She stroked down her frock, and spoke mincingly but confidentially. "My mother says Daddy Darwin has red bergamot i' his garden. We've none i' ours. My mother always says there's nothing like red bergamot to take to church. She says it's a deal more refreshing than Old Man, and not so common. My mother says she's always meaning to ask Daddy Darwin to let us have a root to set; but she doesn't often see him, and when she does she doesn't think on. But she always says there's

nothing like red bergamot, and my Aunt Nancy, she says the same."

"_Red_ is it?" cried Jack. "You wait there, love." And before Phoebe could say him nay, he .was over the wall and back again with his arms full.

"Is it any o' this lot?" he inquired, dropping a small haycock of flowers at her feet.

"Don't ye know one from t'other?" asked Phoebe, with round eyes of reproach. And spreading her clean kerchief on the grass she laid her Bible and Prayer-book and class card on it, and set vigorously and nattily to work, picking one flower and another from the fragrant confusion, nipping the stalks to even lengths, rejecting withered leaves, and instructing Jack as she proceeded.

"I suppose ye know a rose? That's a double velvet. [Footnote: Double velvet, an old summer rose, not common now It is described by Parkinson.] They dry sweeter than lavender for linen. These dark red things is pheasants' eyes; but, dear, dear, what a lad! Ye'd dragged it up by the roots! And eh! what will Master Darwin say when he misses these pink hollyhocks And only in bud, too! _There's_ red Bergamot: smell it!" [Footnote: Red Bergamot, or Twinflower; _Monarda Didyma_.]

It had barely touched Jack's willing nose when it was hastily withdrawn. Phoebe had caught eight of Polly and Susan Smith coming to school, and crying that she should be late and must run, the little maid picked up her paraphernalia (not forgetting the red bergamot), and fled down the lane. And Jack, with equal haste, snatched up the tell-tale heap of flowers and threw them into a disused pig-sty, where it was unlikely that Daddy Darwin would go to look for his poor pink hollyhocks.

SCENE VII.

April was a busy month in the Dovecot. Young birds were chipping the egg, parent birds were feeding their young or relieving each other on the nest, and Jack and his master were constantly occupied and excited.

One night Daddy Darwin went to bed; but, though he was tired, he did not sleep long. He had sold a couple of handsome but quarrelsome pigeons, to advantage, and had added their price to the hoard in the bed-head. This had renewed his old fears, for the store was becoming very valuable; and he wondered if it had really escaped Jack's quick observation, or whether the boy knew about it, and, perhaps, talked about it. As he lay and worried himself he fancied he heard sounds without--the sound of footsteps and of voices. Then his heart beat till he could hear nothing else; then he could undoubtedly hear nothing at all; then he certainly heard something which probably was rats. And so he lay in a cold sweat, and pulled the rug over his face, and made up his mind to give the money

to the parson, for the poor, if he was spared till daylight.

He was spared till daylight, and had recovered himself, and settled to leave the money where it was, when Jack rushed in from the pigeon-house with a face of dire dismay. He made one or two futile efforts to speak, and then unconsciously used the words Shakespeare has put into the mouth of Macduff, "All my pretty 'uns!" and so burst into tears.

And when the old man made his way to the pigeon-house, followed by poor Jack, he found that the eggs were cold and the callow young shivering in deserted nests, and that every bird was gone. And then he remembered the robbers, and was maddened by the thought that whilst he lay expecting thieves to break in and steal his money he had let them get safely off with his whole stock of pigeons.

Daddy Darwin had never taken up arms against his troubles, and this one crushed him.

The fame and beauty of his house-doves were all that was left of prosperity about the place, and now there was nothing left-- nothing! Below this dreary thought lay a far more bitter one, which he dared not confide to Jack. He had heard the robbers; he might have frightened them away; he might at least have given the lad a chance to save his pets, and not a care had crossed his mind except for the safety of his own old bones, and of those miserable savings in the bed-head, which he was enduring so much to scrape together (oh satire!) for a distant connection whom he had never seen. He crept back to the kitchen, and dropped in a heap upon the settle, and muttered to himself. Then his thoughts wandered. Supposing the pigeons were gone for good, would he ever make up his mind to take that money out of the money-hole, and buy a fresh stock? He knew he never would, and shrank into a meaner heap upon the settle as he said so to himself. He did not like to look his faithful lad in the face.

Jack looked him in the face, and, finding no help there, acted pretty promptly behind his back. He roused the parish constable, and fetched that functionary to the Dovecot before he had had bite or sup to break his fast. He spread a meal for him and Daddy, and borrowed the Shaws' light cart whilst they were eating it. The Shaws were good farmer-folk, they sympathized most fully; and Jack was glad of a few words of pity from Phoebe. She said she had watched the pretty pets "many a score of times," which comforted more than one of Jack's heartstrings. Phoebe's mother paid respect to his sense and promptitude. He had acted exactly as she would have done.

"Daddy was right enough about yon lad," she admitted. "He's not one to let the grass grow under his feet."

And she gave him a good breakfast whilst the horse was being "put to." It pleased her that Jack jumped up and left half a delicious cold tea-cake behind him when the cart-wheels grated outside. Mrs. Shaw sent Phoebe to put the cake in his pocket, and "the Measter" helped Jack in

and took the reins. He said he would "see Daddy Darwin through it," and added the weight of his opinion to that of the constable, that the pigeons had been taken to "a beastly low place" (as he put it) that had lately been set up for pigeon-shooting in the outskirts of the neighboring town.

They paused no longer at the Dovecot than was needed to hustle Daddy Darwin on to the seat beside Master Shaw, and for Jack to fill his pockets with peas, and take his place beside the constable. He had certain ideas of his own on the matter, which were not confused by the jogtrot of the light cart, which did give a final jumble to poor Daddy Darwin's faculties.

No wonder they were jumbled! The terrors of the night past, the shock of the morning, the completeness of the loss, the piteous sight in the pigeon-house, remorseful shame, and then--after all these years, during which he had not gone half a mile from his own hearthstone--to be set up for all the world to see, on the front seat of a market-cart, back to back with the parish constable, and jogged off as if miles were nothing, and crowded streets were nothing, and the Beaulieu Gardens were nothing; Master Shaw talking away as easily as if they were sitting in two armchairs, and making no more of "stepping into" a lawyer's office, and "going on" to the Town Hall, than if he were talking of stepping up to his own bedchamber or going out into the garden!

That day passed like a dream, and Daddy Darwin remembered what happened in it as one remembers visions of the night.

He had a vision (a very unpleasing vision) of the proprietor of the Beaulieu Gardens, a big greasy man, with sinister eyes very close together, and a hook nose, and a heavy watch chain, and a bullying voice. He browbeat the constable very soon, and even bullied Master Shaw into silence. No help was to be had from him in his loud indignation at being supposed to traffic with thieves.

When he turned the tables by talking of slander, loss of time, and compensation, Daddy Darwin smelt money, and tremblingly whispered to Master Shaw to apologize and get out of it. "They're gone for good," he almost sobbed: "Gone for good, like all t' rest! And I'll not be long after 'em."

But even as he spoke he heard a sound which made him lift up his head. It was Jack's call at feeding-time to the pigeons at the Dovecot. And quick following on this most musical and most familiar sound there came another. The old man put both his lean hands behind his ears to be sure that he heard it aright--the sound of wings--the wings of a dove!

The other men heard it and ran in. Whilst they were wrangling, Jack had slipped past them, and had made his way into a weird enclosure in front of the pigeon-house. And there they found him, with all the captive pigeons coming to his call; flying, fluttering, strutting, nestling from head to foot of him, he scattering peas like hail.

He was the first to speak, and not a choke in his voice. His iron temperament was at white heat, and, as he afterwards said, he "cared no more for yon dirty chap wi' the big nose, nor if he were a _ratten_ [Footnote: _AnglicØ_ Rat.] in a hay-loft!"

"These is ours," he said, shortly. "I'll count 'em over, and see if they're right. There was only one young 'un that could fly. A white 'un." ("It's here," interpolated Master Shaw.) "I'll pack 'em i' yon," and Jack turned his thumb to a heap of hampers in a corner. "T' carrier can leave t' baskets at t' toll-bar next Saturday, and ye may send your lad for 'em, if ye keep one."

The proprietor of the Beaulieu Gardens was not a man easily abashed, but most of the pigeons were packed before he had fairly resumed his previous powers of speech. Then, as Master Shaw said, he talked "on the other side of his mouth." Most willing was he to help to bring to justice the scoundrels who had deceived him and robbed Mr. Darwin, but he feared they would be difficult to trace. His own feeling was that of wishing for pleasantness among neighbors. The pigeons had been found at the Gardens. That was enough. He would be glad to settle the business out of court.

Daddy Darwin heard the chink of the dirty man's money, and would have compounded the matter then and there. But not so the parish constable, who saw himself famous; and not so Jack, who turned eyes of smouldering fire on Master Shaw.

"Maester Shaw! you'll not let them chaps get off? Daddy's mazelin' wi' trouble, sir, but I reckon you'll see to it."

"If it costs t' worth of the pigeons ten times over, I'll see to it, my lad," was Master Shaw's reply. And the parish constable rose even to a vein of satire as he avenged himself of the man who had slighted his office. "Settle it out of court? Aye! I dare say. And send t' same chaps to fetch 'em away again t' night after. Nay--bear a hand with this hamper, Maester Shaw, if you please--if it's all t' same to you, Mr. Proprietor, I think we shall have to trouble you to step up to t' Town Hall by-and-by, and see if we can't get shut of them mistaking friends o' yours for three months any way."

If that day was a trying one to Daddy Darwin the night that followed it was far worse. The thieves were known to the police, and the case was down to come on at the Town Hall the following morning; but meanwhile the constable thought fit to keep the pigeons under his own charge in the village lock-up. Jack refused to be parted from his birds, and remained with them, leaving Daddy Darwin alone in the Dovecot. He dared not go to bed, and it was not a pleasant night that he spent, dozing with weariness, and starting up with fright, in an arm-chair facing the money-hole.

Some things that he had been nervous about he got quite used to, however. He bore himself with sufficient dignity in the publicity of the Town Hall, where a great sensation was created by the pigeons being let

loose without, and coming to Jack's call. Some of them fed from the boy's lips, and he was the hero of the hour, to Daddy Darwin's delight.

Then the lawyer and the lawyer's office proved genial and comfortable to him. He liked civil ways and smooth speech, and understood them far better than Master Shaw's brevity and uncouthness. The lawyer chatted kindly and intelligently; he gave Daddy Darwin wine and biscuit, and talked of the long standing of the Darwin family and its vicissitudes; he even took down some fat yellow books, and showed the old man how many curious laws had been made from time to time for the special protection of pigeons in Dovecots, very ancient statutes making the killing of a house-dove felony. Then 1 James I. c. 29 awarded three months' imprisonment "without bail or main price" to any person who should "shoot at, kill, or destroy with any gun, crossbow, stone-bow, or longbow, any house-dove or pigeon;" but allowed an alternative fine of twenty shillings to be paid to the churchwardens of the parish for the benefit of the poor. Daddy Darwin hoped there was no such alternative in this case, and it proved that by 2 Geo. III. c. 29, the twenty-shilling fine was transferred to the owner of birds; at which point another client called, and the polite lawyer left Daddy to study the laws by himself.

It was when Jack as helping Master Shaw to put the horse into the cart, after the trial was over, that the farmer said to him, "I don't want to put you about, my lad, but I'm afraid you won't keep your master long. T'old gentleman's breaking up, mark my words! Constable and me was going into the _George_ for a glass, and Master Darwin left us and went back to the office. I says, 'What are ye going back to t' lawyer for?' and he says, 'I don't mind telling you, Master Shaw, but it's to make my will.' And off he goes. Now, there's only two more things between that and death, Jack March! And one's the parson, and t' other's the doctor."

SCENE VIII.

Little Phoebe Shaw coming out of the day school, and picking her way home to tea, was startled by folk running past her, and by a sound of cheering from the far end of the village, which gradually increased in volume, and was caught up by the bystanders as they ran. When Phoebe heard that it was "Constable, and Master Shaw, and Daddy Darwin and his lad, coming home, and the pigeons along wi' 'em," she felt inclined to run too; but a fit of shyness came over her, and she demurely decided to wait by the school-gate till they came her way. They did not come. They stopped. What were they doing? Another bystander explained, "They're shaking hands wi' Daddy, and I reckon they're making him put up t' birds here, to see 'em go home to t' Dovecot."

Phoebe ran as if for her life. She loved beast and bird as well as Jack himself, and the fame of Daddy Darwin's doves was great. To see them put up by him to fly home after such an adventure was a sight not lightly to be forgone.

The crowd had moved to a hillock in a neighboring field before she touched its outskirts. By that time it pretty well numbered the population of the village, from the oldest inhabitant to the youngest that could run. Phoebe had her mother's courage and resource. Chirping out feebly but clearly, "I'm Maester Shaw's little lass, will ye let me through?" she was passed from hand to hand, till her little fingers found themselves in Jack's tight clasp, and he fairly lifted her to her father's side.

She was just in time. Some of the birds had hung about Jack, nervous, or expecting peas; but the hesitation was past. Free in the sweet sunshine--beating down the evening air with silver wings and their feathers like gold--ignorant of cold eggs and callow young dead in deserted nests--sped on their way by such a roar as rarely shook the village in its body corporate--they flew straight home--to Daddy Darwin's Dovecot.

SCENE IX.

Daddy Darwin lived a good many years after making his will, and the Dovecot prospered in his hands.

It would be more just to say that it prospered in the hands of Jack March.

By hook and by crook he increased the live stock about the place. Folk were kind to one who had set so excellent an example to other farm lads, though he lacked the primal virtue of belonging to the neighborhood. He bartered pigeons for fowls, and some one gave him a sitting of eggs to "see what he would make of 'em." Master Shaw gave him a little pig, with kind words and good counsel; and Jack cleaned out the disused pigstys, which were never disused again. He scrubbed his pigs with soap and water as if they had been Christians, and the admirable animals regardless of the pork they were coming to, did him infinite credit, and brought him a profit into the bargain, which he spent on ducks' eggs, and other additions to his farmyard family.

The Shaws were very kind to him; and if Mrs. Shaw's secrets must be told, it was because Phoebe was so unchangeably and increasingly kind to him, that she sent the pretty maid (who had a knack of knowing her own mind about things) to service.

Jack March was a handsome, stalwart youth now, of irreproachable conduct, and with qualities which Mrs. Shaw particularly prized; but he was but a farm-lad, and no match for her daughter.

Jack only saw his sweetheart once during several years She had not been well, and was at home for the benefit of "native air." He walked over the hill with her as they returned from church, and lived on the

remembrance of that walk for two or three years more. Phoebe had given him her Prayer-book to carry, and he had found a dead flower in it, and had been jealous. She had asked if he knew what it was, and he had replied fiercely that he did not, and was not sure that he cared to know.

"Ye never did know much about flowers," said Phoebe, demurely, "it's red bergamot."

"I love--red bergamot," he whispered penitently. "And thou owes me a bit. I gave thee some once." And Phoebe had let him put the withered bits into his own hymn-book, which was more than he deserved.

Jack was still in the choir, and taught in the Sunday School where he used to learn. The parson's daughter had had her own way; Daddy Darwin grumbled at first, but in the end he got a bottle-green Sunday-coat out of the oak-press that matched the bedstead, and put the house-key into his pocket, and went to church too. Now, for years past he had not failed to take his place, week by week, in the pew that was traditionally appropriated to the use of the Darwins of Dovecot. In such an hour the sordid cares of the secret panel weighed less heavily on his soul, and the things that are not seen came nearer--the house not made with hands, the treasures that rust and moth corrupt not, and which thieves do not break through to steal.

Daddy Darwin died of old age. As his health failed, Jack nursed him with the tenderness of a woman; and kind inquiries, and dainties which Jack could not have cooked, came in from many quarters where it pleased the old man to find that he was held in respect and remembrance.

One afternoon, coming in from the farmyard, Jack found him sitting by the kitchen-table as he had left him, but with a dread look of change upon his face. At first he feared there had been "a stroke," but Daddy Darwin's mind was clear and his voice firmer than usual.

"My lad," he said, "fetch me yon tea-pot out of the corner cupboard. T' one wi' a pole-house [Footnote: A _pole-house_ is a small dovecot on the top of a pole.] painted on it, and some letters. Take care how ye shift it. It were t' merry feast-pot [Footnote: "Merry feast-pot" is a name given to old pieces of ware, made in local potteries for local festivals.] at my christening, and yon's t' letters of my father's and mother's names. Take off t' lid. There's two bits of paper in the inside"

Jack did as he was bid, and laid the papers (one small and yellow with age, the other bigger, and blue, and neatly written upon) at his master's right hand.

"Read yon," said the old man, pushing the small one towards him. Jack took it up wondering. It was the letter he had written from the workhouse fifteen years before. That was all he could see. The past surged up too thickly before his eyes, and tossing it impetuously from him, he dropped on a chair by the table, and snatching Daddy Darwin's

hands he held them to his face with tears.

"GOD bless thee!" he sobbed. "You've been a good maester to me!"

"_Daddy_," wheezed the old man. "_Daddy_, not maester." And drawing his right hand away, he laid it solemnly on the young man's head. "GOD bless _thee_, and reward thee. What have I done i' my feckless life to deserve a son? But if ever a lad earned a father and a home, thou hast earned 'em, Jack March."

He moved his hand again and laid it trembling on the paper.

"Every word i' this letter ye've made good. Every word, even to t' bit at the end. 'I love them tumblers as if they were my own,' says you. Lift thee head, lad, and look at me. _They are thy own!_... Yon blue paper's my last will and testament, made many a year back by Mr. Brown, of Green Street, Solicitor, and a very nice gentleman too; and witnessed by his clerks, two decent young chaps, and civil enough, but with too much watchchain for their situation. Jack March, my son, I have left thee maester of Dovecot and all that I have. And there's a bit of money in t' bed-head that'll help thee to make a fair start, and to bury me decently atop of my father and mother. Ye may let Bill Sexton toll an hour-bell for me, for I'm a old standard, if I never were good for much. Maybe I might ha' done better if things had happened in a different fashion; but the Lord knows all. I'd like a hymn at the grave, Jack, if the Vicar has no objections, and do thou sing if thee can. Don't fret, my son, thou'fet no cause. Twas that sweet voice o' thine took me back again to public worship, and it's not t' least of all I owe thee, Jack March. A poor reason lad, for taking up with a neglected duty--a poor reason--but the Lord is a GOD of mercy, or there'd be small chance for most on us. If Miss Jenny and her husband come to t' Vicarage this summer, say I left her my duty and an old man's blessing; and if she wants any roots out of t' garden, give 'em her, and give her yon old chest that stands in the back chamber. It belonged to an uncle of my mother's--a Derbyshire man. They say her husband's a rich gentleman, and treats her very well. I reckon she may have what she's a mind, new and polished, but she's always for old lumber. They're a whimsical lot, gentle and simple. A talking of _women_, Jack, I've a word to say, if I can fetch my breath to say it. Lad! as sure as you're maester of Dovecot, you'll give it a missus. Now take heed to me. If ye fetch any woman home here but Phoebe Shaw, I'll _walk_, and scare ye away from t' old place. I'm willing for Phoebe, and I charge ye to tell the lass so hereafter. And tell her it's not because she's fair--too many on 'em are that; and not because she's thrifty and houseproud--her mother's that, and she's no favorite of mine; but because I've watched her whenever t' ould cat 's let her be at home, and it's my belief that she loves ye, knowing nought of _this_" (he laid his hand upon the will), "and that she'll stick to ye, choose what her folks may say. Aye, aye, she's not one of t' sort that quits a falling house--_like rattens_."

Language fails to convey the bitterness which the old man put into these last two words. It exhausted him, and his mind wandered. When he had to

some extent recovered himself he spoke again, but very feebly.

"Tak' my duty to the Vicar, lad, Daddy Darwin's duty, and say he's at t' last feather of the shuttle, and would be thankful for the Sacrament."

The Parson had come and gone. Daddy Darwin did not care to lie down, he breathed with difficulty; so Jack made him easy in a big armchair, and raked up the fire with cinders, and took a chair on the other side of the hearth to watch with him. The old man slept comfortably and at last, much wearied, the young man dozed also.

He awoke because Daddy Darwin moved, but for a moment he thought he must be dreaming. So erect the old man stood, and with such delight in his wide-open eyes. They were looking over Jack's head.

All that the lad had never seen upon his face seemed to have come back to it--youth, hope, resolution, tenderness. His lips were trembling with the smile of acutest joy.

Suddenly he stretched out his arms, and crying, "Alice!" started forward and fell--dead--on the breast of his adopted son.

* * * * *

Craw! Craw! Craw! The crows flapped slowly home, and the Gaffers moved off too. The sun was down, and "damps" are bad for "rheumatics."

"It's a strange tale," said Gaffer II., "but if all's true ye tell me, there's not too many like him."

"That's right enough," Gaffer I. admitted. "He's been t' same all through, and ye should ha' seen the burying he gave t' old chap. He was rare and good to him by all accounts, and never gainsaid him ought, except i' not lifting his voice as he should ha' done at t' grave. Jacks sings a bass solo as well as any man i' t' place, but he stood yonder, for all t' world like one of them crows, black o' visage, and black wi' funeral clothes, and choked with crying like a child i'stead of a man."

"Well, well, t' old chap were all he had, I reckon," said Gaffer II.

"_That's_ right enough; and for going backwards, as ye may say, and setting a wild graff on an old standard, yon will's done well for DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOT."

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 that 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 honorable 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-bye 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 grave-digger.

"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."

"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 a 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 plumcake 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-bye 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 a while 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-bye 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 anyone 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 old red 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 neighbor 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 neighbor, 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 cornfield."

"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 cornfield, 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 TRINITY FLOWER.

A LEGEND.

"Break forth, my lips, in praise, and own
The wiser love severely kind:
Since, richer for its chastening grown,
I see, whereas I once was blind."

The Clear Vision, J. G. Whittler

In days of yore there was once a certain hermit, who dwelt in a cell, which he had fashioned for himself from a natural cave in the side of a hill.

Now this hermit had a great love for flowers, and was moreover learned in the virtues of herbs, and in that great mystery of healing which lies hidden among the green things of God. And so it came to pass that the country people from all parts came to him for the simples which grew in the little garden which he had made before his cell. And as his fame spread, and more people came to him, he added more and more to the plat which he had reclaimed from the waste land around.

But after many years there came a spring when the colors of the flowers seemed paler to the hermit than they used to be; and as summer drew on their shapes became indistinct, and he mistook one plant for another; and when autumn came, he told them by their various scents, and by their form, rather than by sight; and when the flowers were gone, and winter had come, the hermit was quite blind.

Now in the hamlet below there lived a boy who had become known to the hermit on this manner. On the edge of the hermit's garden there grew two crab trees, from the fruit of which he made every year a certain confection which was very grateful to the sick. One year many of these

crab-apples were stolen, and the sick folk of the hamlet had very little conserve. So the following year, as the fruit was ripening, the hermit spoke every day to those who came to his cell, saying:--

"I pray you, good people, to make it known that he who robs these crab trees, robs not me alone, which is dishonest, but the sick, which is inhuman."

And yet once more the crab-apples were taken.

The following evening, as the hermit sat on the side of the hill, he overheard two boys disputing about the theft.

"It must either have been a very big man, or a small boy to do it," said one. "So I say, and I have my reason."

"And what is thy reason, Master Wiseacre?" asked the other.

"The fruit is too high to be plucked except by a very big man," said the first boy. "And the branches are not strong enough for any but a child to climb."

"Canst thou think of no other way to rob an apple-tree but by standing a-tip-toe, or climbing up to the apples, when they should come down to thee?" said the second boy. "Truly thy head will never save thy heels; but here's a riddle for thee:

"Riddle me riddle me re,
Four big brothers are we;
We gather the fruit, but climb never a tree.

"Who are they?"

"Four tall robbers, I suppose," said the other.

"Tush!" cried his comrade. "They are the four winds; and when they whistle, down falls the ripest. But others can shake besides the winds, as I will show thee if thou hast any doubts in the matter."

And as he spoke he sprang to catch the other boy, who ran from him; and they chased each other down the hill, and the hermit heard no more.

But as he turned to go home he said, "The thief was not far away when thou stoodst near. Nevertheless, I will have patience. It needs not that I should go to seek thee, for what saith the Scripture? _Thy sin_ will find thee out." And he made conserve of such apples as were left, and said nothing.

Now after a certain time a plague broke out in the hamlet; and it was so sore, and there were so few to nurse the many who were sick, that, though it was not the wont of the hermit ever to leave his place, yet in their need he came down and ministered to the people in the village. And one day, as he passed a certain house, he heard moans from within, and

entering, he saw lying upon a bed a boy who tossed and moaned in fever, and cried out most miserably that his throat was parched and burning. And when the hermit looked upon his face, behold it was the boy who had given the riddle of the four winds upon the side of the hill.

Then the hermit fed him with some of the confection which he had with him, and it was so grateful to the boy's parched palate, that he thanked and blessed the hermit aloud, and prayed him to leave a morsel of it behind, to soothe his torments in the night.

Then said the hermit, "My Son, I would that I had more of this confection, for the sake of others as well as for thee. But indeed I have only two trees which bear the fruit whereof this is made; and in two successive years have the apples been stolen by some thief, thereby robbing not only me, which is dishonest, but the poor, which is inhuman."

Then the boy's theft came back to his mind, and he burst into tears, and cried, "My Father, I took the crab-apples!"

And after awhile he recovered his health; the plague also abated in the hamlet, and the hermit went back to his cell. But the boy would thenceforth never leave him, always wishing to show his penitence and gratitude. And though the hermit sent him away, he ever returned, saying,

"Of what avail is it to drive me from thee, since I am resolved to serve thee, even as Samuel served Eli, and Timothy ministered unto St. Paul?"

But the hermit said, "My rule is to live alone, and without companions; wherefore begone."

And when the boy still came, he drove him from the garden.

Then the boy wandered far and wide, over moor and bog, and gathered rare plants and herbs, and laid them down near the hermit's cell. And when the hermit was inside, the boy came into the garden, and gathered the stones and swept the paths, and tied up such plants as were drooping, and did all neatly and well, for he was a quick and skilful lad. And when the hermit said,

"Thou hast done well, and I thank thee; but now begone," he only answered,

"What avails it, when I am resolved to serve thee?"

So at last there came a day when the hermit said, "It may be that it is ordained; wherefore abide, my Son."

And the boy answered, "Even so, for I am resolved to serve thee."

Thus he remained. And thenceforward the hermit's garden thrived as it had never thriven before. For, though he had skill, the hermit was old and

feeble; but the boy was young and active, and he worked hard, and it was to him a labor of love. And being a clever boy, he quickly knew the names and properties of the plants as well as the hermit himself. And when he was not working, he would go far afield to seek for new herbs. And he always returned to the village at night.

Now when the hermit's sight began to fail, the boy put him right if he mistook one plant for another; and when the hermit became quite blind, he relied completely upon the boy to gather for him the herbs that he wanted. And when anything new was planted, the boy led the old man to the spot, that he might know that it was so many paces in such a direction from the cell, and might feel the shape and texture of the leaves, and learn its scent. And through the skill and knowledge of the boy, the hermit was in no wise hindered from preparing his accustomed remedies, for he knew the names and virtues of the herbs, and where every plant grew. And when the sun shone, the boy would guide his master's steps into the garden, and would lead him up to certain flowers; but to those which had a perfume of their own the old man could go without help, being guided by the scent. And as he fingered their leaves and breathed their fragrance, he would say, "Blessed be GOD for every herb of the field, but thrice blessed for those that smell."

And at the end of the garden was a set bush of rosemary. "For," said the hermit, "to this we must all come." Because rosemary is the herb they scatter over the dead. And he knew where almost everything grew, and what he did not know the boy told him.

Yet for all this, and though he had embraced poverty and solitude with joy, in the service of GOD and man, yet so bitter was blindness to him, that he bewailed the loss of his sight, with a grief that never lessened.

"For," said he, "if it had pleased our Lord to send me any other affliction, such as a continual pain or a consuming sickness, I would have borne it gladly, seeing it would have left me free to see these herbs, which I use for the benefit of the poor. But now the sick suffer through my blindness, and to this boy also I am a continual burden."

And when the boy called him at the hours of prayer, saying, "My Father, it is now time for the Nones office, for the marygold is closing," or "The Vespers bell will soon sound from the valley, for the bindweed bells are folded," and the hermit recited the appointed prayers, he always added,

"I beseech Thee take away my blindness, as Thou didst heal Thy servant the son of Timaeus."

And as the boy and he sorted herbs, he cried,

"Is there no balm in Gilead?"

And the boy answered, "The balm of Gilead grows six full paces from the gate, my Father."

But the hermit said, "I spoke in a figure, my son I meant not that herb. But, alas! Is there no remedy to heal the physician? No cure for the curer?"

And the boy's heart grew heavier day by day, because of the hermit's grief. For he loved him.

Now one morning as the boy came up from the village, the hermit met him, groping painfully with his hands, but with joy in his countenance, and he said, "Is that thy step, my son? Come in, for I have somewhat to tell thee."

And he said, "A vision has been vouchsafed to me, even a dream. Moreover, I believe that there shall be a cure for my blindness." Then the boy was glad, and begged of the hermit to relate his dream, which he did as follows:--

"I dreamed, and behold I stood in the garden--thou also with me--and many people were gathered at the gate, to whom, with thy help, I gave herbs of healing in such fashion as I have been able since this blindness came upon me. And when they were gone, I smote upon my forehead, and said, 'Where is the herb that shall heal my affliction?' And a voice beside me said, 'Here, my son,' And I cried to thee, 'Who spoke?' And thou saidst, 'It is a man in pilgrim's weeds, and lo, he hath a strange flower in his hand.' Then said the Pilgrim, 'It is a Trinity Flower. Moreover, I suppose that when thou hast it, thou wilt see clearly.' Then I thought that thou didst take the flower from the Pilgrim and put it in my hand. And lo, my eyes were opened, and I saw clearly. And I knew the Pilgrim's face, though where I have seen him I cannot yet recall. But I believed him to be Raphael the Archangel--he who led Tobias, and gave sight to his father. And even as it came to me to know him, he vanished; and I saw him no more."

"And what was the Trinity Flower like, my Father?" asked the boy.

"It was about the size of Herb Paris, my son," replied the hermit. "But instead of being fourfold every way, it numbered the mystic Three. Every part was threefold. The leaves were three, the petals three, the sepals three. The flower was snow-white, but on each of the three parts it was stained with crimson stripes, like white garments dyed in blood."

[Footnote: *Trillium erythrocarpum*. North America.]

Then the boy started up, saying, "If there be such a plant on the earth I will find it for thee."

But the hermit laid his hand on him, and said, "Nay, my son, leave me not, for I have need of thee. And the flower will come yet, and then I shall see."

And all day long the old man murmured to himself, "Then I shall see."

"And didst thou see me, and the garden, in thy dream, my Father?" asked

the boy.

"Ay, that I did, my son. And I meant to say to thee that it much pleaseth me that thou art grown so well, and of such a strangely fair countenance. Also the garden is such as I have never before beheld it, which must needs be due to thy care. But wherefore didst thou not tell me of those fair palms that have grown where the thorn hedge was wont to be? I was but just stretching out my hand for some, when I awoke."

"There are no palms there, my Father," said the boy.

"Now, indeed it is thy youth that makes thee so little observant," said the hermit. "However, I pardon thee, if it were only for that good thought which moved thee to plant a yew beyond the rosemary bush; seeing that the yew is the emblem of eternal life, which lies beyond the grave."

But the boy said, "There is no yew there, my Father."

"Have I not seen it, even in a vision?" cried the hermit. "Thou wilt say next that all the borders are not set with heart's-ease, which indeed must be through thy industry; and whence they come I know not, but they are most rare and beautiful, and my eyes long sore to see them again."

"Alas, my Father!" cried the boy, "the borders are set with rue, and there are but a few clumps of heart's-ease here and there."

"Could I forget what I saw in an hour?" asked the old man, angrily. "And did not the holy Raphael himself point to them, saying, 'Blessed are the eyes that behold this garden, where the borders are set with heart's-ease, and the hedges crowned with palm!' But thou wouldst know better than an archangel, forsooth."

Then the boy wept; and when the hermit heard him weeping, he put his arm round him and said,

"Weep not, my dear son. And I pray thee, pardon me that I spoke harshly to thee. For indeed I am ill-tempered by reason of my infirmities; and as for thee, GOD will reward thee for thy goodness to me, as I never can. Moreover, I believe it is thy modesty, which is as great as thy goodness, that hath hindered thee from telling me of all that thou hast done for my garden, even to those fair and sweet everlasting flowers, the like of which I never saw before, which thou hast set in the east border, and where even now I hear the bees humming in the sun."

Then the boy looked sadly out into the garden, and answered, "I cannot lie to thee. There are no everlasting flowers. It is the flowers of the thyme in which the bees are rioting. And in the hedge bottom there creepeth the bitter-sweet."

But the hermit heard him not. He had groped his way out into the sunshine, and wandered up and down the walks, murmuring to himself, "Then I shall see."

Now when the Summer was past, one autumn morning there came to the garden gate a man in pilgrim's weeds; and when he saw the boy he beckoned to him, and giving him a small tuber root, he said,

"Give this to thy master. It is the root of the Trinity Flower."

And he passed on down towards the valley.

Then the boy ran hastily to the hermit; and when he had told him, and given him the root, he said,

"The face of the pilgrim is known to me also, O my Father! For I remember when I lay sick of the plague, that ever it seemed to me as if a shadowy figure passed in and out, and went up and down the streets, and his face was as the face of this pilgrim. But--I cannot deceive thee--methought it was the Angel of Death."

Then the hermit mused; and after a little space he answered,

"It was then also that I saw him. I remember now. Nevertheless, let us plant the root, and abide what GOD shall send."

And thus they did.

And as the Autumn and Winter went by, the hermit became very feeble, but the boy constantly cheered him, saying, "Patience, my Father. Thou shalt see yet!"

But the hermit replied, "My son, I repent me that I have not been patient under affliction. Moreover, I have set thee an ill example, in that I have murmured at that which GOD--Who knowest best--ordained for me."

And when the boy oftentimes repeated, "Thou shalt yet see," the hermit answered, "If GOD will. When GOD will. As GOD will."

And when he said the prayers for the Hours, he no longer added what he had added beforetime, but evermore repeated, "If THOU wilt. When THOU wilt. As THOU wilt!"

And so the Winter passed; and when the snow lay on the ground the boy and the hermit talked of the garden; and the boy no longer contradicted the old man, though he spoke continually of the heart's-ease, and the everlasting flowers, and the palm. For he said, "When Spring comes I may be able to get these plants, and fit the garden to his vision."

And at length the Spring came. And with it rose the Trinity Flower. And when the leaves unfolded, they were three, as the hermit had said. Then the boy was wild with joy and with impatience.

And when the sun shone for two days together, he would kneel by the flower, and say, "I pray thee, Lord, send showers, that it may wax

apace." And when it rained, he said, "I pray Thee, send sunshine, that it may blossom speedily." For he knew not what to ask. And he danced about the hermit, and cried, "Soon shalt them see."

But the hermit trembled, and said, "Not as I will, but as THOU wilt!"

And so the bud formed. And at length one evening before he went down to the hamlet, the boy came to the hermit and said, "The bud is almost breaking, my Father. To-morrow thou shalt see"

Then the hermit moved his hands till he laid them on the boy's head, and he said,

"The Lord repay thee sevenfold for all thou hast done for me, dear child. And now I pray thee, my son, give me thy pardon for all in which I have sinned against thee by word or deed, for indeed my thoughts of thee have ever been tender." And when the boy wept, the hermit still pressed him, till he said that he forgave him. And as they unwillingly parted, the hermit said, "I pray thee, dear son, to remember that, though late, I conformed myself to the will of GOD."

Saying which, the hermit went into his cell, and the boy returned to the village.

But so great was his anxiety, that he could not rest; and he returned to the garden ere it was light, and sat by the flower till the dawn.

And with the first dim light he saw that the Trinity Flower was in bloom. And as the hermit had said, it was white, and stained with crimson as with blood.

Then the boy shed tears of joy, and he plucked the flower and ran into the hermit's cell, where the hermit lay very still upon his couch. And the boy said, "I will not disturb him. When he wakes he will find the flower." And he went out and sat down outside the cell and waited. And being weary as he waited, he fell asleep.

Now before sunrise, whilst it was yet early, he was awakened by the voice of the hermit crying, "My son, my dear son!" and he jumped up, saying, "My Father!"

But as he spoke the hermit passed him. And as he passed he turned, and the boy saw that his eyes were open. And the hermit fixed them long and tenderly on him.

Then the boy cried, "Ah, tell me, my Father, dost thou see?"

And he answered, "_I see now!"_ and so passed on down the walk.

And as he went through the garden, in the still dawn, the boy trembled, for the hermit's footsteps gave no sound. And he passed beyond the rosemary bush, and came not again.

And when the day wore on, and the hermit did not return, the boy went into his cell.

Without, the sunshine dried the dew from paths on which the hermit's feet had left no prints, and cherished the spring flowers bursting into bloom. But within, the hermit's dead body lay stretched upon his pallet, and the Trinity Flower was in his hand.

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 gray home-spun, 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

behavior 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 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 Kyrkegrim when thou art turned preacher, and the preacher sits on the judgment seat? Not so, little Miss! 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 labors! 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 labors 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-bye 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.

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