Sally Ann's Experience

BY

ELIZA CALVERT HALL.

"Sally Ann's Experience," pronounced a little masterpiece of home-spun philosophy and rural character delineation, is the first chapter of Eliza Calvert Hall's new book, "Aunt Jane of Kentucky." (Copyright, 1898, by John Brisbane Walker; copyright, 1907, by Little, Brown, & Co.)

CHAPTER I.

Sally Ann's Experience.

"Come right in and set down. I was jest wishin' I had somebody to talk to. Take that chair right by the door so's you can get the breeze."

And Aunt Jane beamed at me over her silver-rimmed spectacles and hitched her own chair a little to one side, in order to give me the full benefit of the wind that was blowing softly through the white-curtained window, and carrying into the room the heavenliest odors from a field of clover that lay in full bloom just across the road. For it was June in Kentucky, and clover and blue-grass were running sweet riot over the face of the earth.

Aunt Jane and her room together always carried me back to a dead and gone generation. There was a rag carpet on the floor, of the "hit-or-miss" pattern; the chairs were ancient Shaker rockers, some with homely "shuck" bottoms, and each had a tidy of snowy thread or chrochet cotton fastened primly over the back. The high bed and bureau and a shining mahogany table suggested an era of "plain living" far remote from the day of Turkish rugs and Japanese bric-a-brac, and Aunt Jane was in perfect correspondence with her environment. She wore a purple calico dress, rather short and scant; a gingham apron, with a capacious pocket, in which she always carried knitting, or some other "handy work;" a white handkerchief was laid primly around the wrinkled throat and fastened with a pin containing a lock of gray hair; her cap was of black lace and lutestring ribbon, not one of the butterfly affairs that perch on the top of the puffs and frizzes of the modern old lady, but a substantial structure that covered her whole head and was tied securely under her chin. She talked in a sweet old treble with a little lisp, caused by the absence of teeth, and her laugh was as clear and joyous as a young girl's.

"Yes, I'm a-piecin' quilts again," she said, snipping away at the bits of calico in her lap. "I did say I was done with that sort o' work; but this mornin' I was rummagin' around up in the garret, and I come across this bundle of pieces, and thinks I, 'I reckon it's intended for me to piece one more quilt before I die;' I must 'a' put 'em there thirty years ago and clean forgot 'em, and I've been settin' here all the evenin' cuttin' 'em and thinkin' about old times.

"Jest feel o' that," she continued, tossing some scraps into my lap. "There ain't any such caliker nowadays. This ain't your five-cent stuff that fades in the first washin' and wears out in the second. A caliker dress was somethin' worth buyin and worth makin' up in them days. That blue-flowered piece was a dress I got the spring before Abram died. When I put on mournin' it was as good as new, and I give it to sister Mary. That one with the green ground and white figger was my niece Rebecca's. She wore it for the first time to the county fair the year I took the premium on my salt-risin' bread and sponge cake. This black-an'-white piece Sally Ann Flint give me. I ricollect 'twas in blackberry time, and I'd been out in the big pasture pickin' some for supper, and I stopped in at Sally Ann's for a drink o' water on my way back. She was cuttin' out this dress."

Aunt Jane broke off with a little soprano laugh.

"Did I ever tell you about Sally Ann's experience?" she said, as she laid two three-cornered pieces together and began to sew with her slender, nervous old fingers.

To find Aunt Jane alone and in a reminiscent mood! This was delightful.

"Do tell me," I said.

Aunt Jane was silent for a few moments. She always made this pause before beginning a story, and there was something impressive about it. I used to think she was making an invocation to the goddess of Memory.

"'Twas forty years ago," she began, musingly, "and the way of it was this. Our church was considerably out o' fix. It needed a new roof. Some o' the winder lights was out, and the floor was as bare as your hand, and always had been. The men folks managed to git the roof shingled and the winders fixed, and us women in the Mite Society concluded we'd git a cyarpet. We'd been savin' up our money for some time, and we had about twelve dollars. I ricollect what a argument we had, for some of us wanted the cyarpet, and some wanted to give it to furrin missions, as we'd set out to do at first. Sally Ann was the one that settled it. She says at last—Sally Ann was in favor of the cyarpet—she says, 'Well, if any of the heathen fails to hear the gospel on account of our gittin' this cyarpet, they'll be saved anyhow, so Parson Page says. And if we send the money and they do hear the gospel, like as not they won't repent, and then they're certain to be damned. And it seems to me, as long as we ain't sure what they'll do, we might as well keep the money and git the cyarpet. I never did see much sense anyhow,' says she, 'in givin' people a chance to damn theirselves.'

"Well, we decided to take Sally Ann's advice, and we was talkin' about ap-p'intin' a committee to go to town the follerin' Monday and pick out the cyarpet, when all at once 'Lizabeth Taylor—she was our treasurer—she spoke up, and says she, 'There ain't any use app'intin' that committee. The money's gone,' she says, sort o' short and quick. 'I kept it in my top bureau drawer, and when I went for it yesterday, it was gone. I'll pay it back if I'm ever able, but I ain't able now.' And with that she got up and walked out o' the room, before any one could say a word, and we seen her goin' down the road lookin' straight before her and walkin' right fast.

"And we—we set there and stared at each other in a sort o' dazed way. I could see that everybody was thinkin' the same thing, but nobody said a word, till our minister's wife—she was as good a woman as ever lived—she says, 'Judge not.'

"Them two words was jest like a sermon to us. Then Sally Ann spoke up and says: 'For the Lord's sake, don't let the men folks know anything about this. They're always sayin' that women ain't fit to handle money, and I for one don't want to give 'em any more ground to stand on than they've already got.'

"So we agreed to say nothin' about it, and all of us kept our promise except Milly Amos. She had mighty little sense to begin with, and havin' been married only about two months, she'd about lost that little. So next mornin' I happened to meet Sam Amos, and he says to me, 'Aunt Jane, how much money have you women got to'rds the new cyarpet for the church?' I looked him square in the face, and I says, 'Are you a member of the Ladies' Mite Society, of Goshen Church, Sam Amos? For if you are, you already know how much money we've got, and if you ain't, you've got no business knowin'. And, furthermore,' says I, 'there's some women that can't keep a secret and a promise, and some that can, and I can.' And that settled him.

"Well, 'Lizabeth never showed her face outside her door for more'n a month afterward, and a more pitiful-lookin' creatur' you never saw than she was when she come out to prayer-meetin' the night Sally Ann give her experience. She set 'way back in the church, and she was as pale and peaked as if she had been through a siege of typhoid. I ricollect it all as if it had been yesterday. We sung 'Sweet Hour of Prayer,' and Parson Page prayed, and then called on the brethren to say anything they might feel called on to say concernin' their experience in the past week. Old Uncle Jim Matthews begun to clear his throat, and I knew, as well as I knew my name, he was fixin' to git up and tell how precious the Lord had been to his soul, jest like he'd been doin' every Wednesday night for twenty years. But before he got started, here come 'Lizabeth walkin' down the side aisle and stopped right in front o' the pulpit.

"'I've somethin' to say,' she says. 'It's been on my mind till I can't stand it any longer. I've got to tell it, or I'll go crazy. It was me that took that cyarpet money. I only meant to borrow it. I thought sure I'd be able to pay it back before it was wanted. But things went wrong, and I ain't known a peaceful minute since, and never shall again, I reckon. I took it to pay my way up to Louisville, the time I got the news that Mary was dyin'.'

"Mary was her daughter by her first husband, you see. 'I begged Jacob to give me the money to go on,' says she, 'and he wouldn't do it. I tried to give up and stay, but I jest couldn't. Mary was all I had in the world; and maybe you that has children can put yourself in my place, and know what it would be to hear your only child callin' to you from her death-bed, and you not able to go to her. I asked Jacob three times for the money,' she says, 'and when I found he wouldn't give it to me, I said to myself, "I'm goin' anyhow." I got down on my knees,' says she, 'and asked the Lord to show me a way, and I felt sure he would. As soon as Jacob had eat his breakfast and gone out on the farm, I dressed myself, and as I opened the top bureau drawer to get out my best collar, I saw the missionary money. It come right into my head,' says she, 'that maybe this was the answer to my prayer; maybe I could borrow this money, and pay it back some way or other before it was called for. I tried to put it out o' my head, but the thought kept comin' back; and when I went down into the sittin'-room to get Jacob's cyarpetbag to carry a few things in, I happened to look up at the mantelpiece and saw the brass candlesticks with prisms all 'round 'em that used to belong to my mother; and all at once I seemed to see jest what the Lord intended for me to do.

"'You know,' she says, 'I had a boarder summer before last—that lady from Louisville—and she wanted them candlesticks the worst kind, and offered me fifteen dollars for 'em. I wouldn't part with 'em then, but she said if ever I wanted to sell 'em, to let her know, and she left her name and address on a cyard. I went to the big Bible and got out the cyard, and I packed the candlesticks in the cyarpetbag, and put on my bonnet. When I opened the door I looked up the road, and the first thing I saw was Dave Crawford comin' along in his new buggy. I went out to the gate, and he drew up and asked me if I was goin' to town, and said he'd take me. It looked like the Lord was leadin' me all the time,' says she, 'but the way things turned out, it must 'a' been Satan. I got to Mary just two hours before she died, and she looked up in my face and says, "Mother, I knew God wouldn't let me die till I'd seen you once more."'"

Here Aunt Jane took off her glasses and wiped her eyes.

"I can't tell this without cryin', to save my life," said she; "but 'Lizabeth never shed a tear. She looked like she'd got past cryin', and she talked straight on as as if she'd made up her mind to say jest so much, and she'd die if she didn't git to say it.

"'As soon as the funeral was over,' says she, 'I set out to find the lady that wanted the candlesticks. She wasn't at home, but her niece was there, and said she'd heard her aunt speak of the candlesticks often; and she'd be home in a few days and would send me the money right off. I come home, thinkin' it was all right, and I kept expectin' the money every day, but it never come till day before yesterday. I wrote three times about it, but I never got a word from her till Monday. She had just got home, she said, and hoped I hadn't been inconvenienced by the delay. She wrote a nice, polite letter and sent me a check for fifteen dollars, and here it is. I wanted to confess it all that day at the Mite Society, but somehow I couldn't till I had the money right in my hand to pay back. If the lady had only come back when her niece said she was comin', it would all have turned out right, but I reckon it's a judgment on me for meddling with the Lord's money. God only knows what I've suffered,' says she, 'but if I had to do it over again, I believe I'd do it. Mary was all the child I had in the world, and I had to see her once more before she died. I've been a member of this church for twenty years,' says she, 'but I reckon you'll have to turn me out now.'

"The pore thing stood there tremblin' and holdin' out the check as if she expected somebody to come and take it. Old Silas Petty was glowerin' at her from under his eyebrows, and it put me in mind of the Pharisees and the woman they wanted to stone, and I ricollect thinkin', 'Oh, if the Lord Jesus would jest come in and take her part!' And while we all set there like a passel o' mutes, Sally Ann got up and marched down the middle aisle and stood right by 'Lizabeth. You know what funny thoughts people will have sometimes.

"Well, I felt so relieved. It popped into my head all at once that we didn't need the Lord after all; Sally Ann would do jest as well. It seemed sort o' like sacrilege, but I couldn't help it.

"Well, Sally Ann looked all around as composed as you please, and says she, 'I reckon if anybody's turned out o' this church on account o' that miserable little money, it'll be Jacob, and not 'Lizabeth. A man that won't give his wife money to go to her dyin' child is too mean to stay in a Christian church anyhow, and I'd like to know how it is that a woman that had $800 when she married has to go to her husband and git down on her knees and beg for what's her own. Where's that money 'Lizabeth had when she married you?' says she, turnin' round and lookin' Jacob in the face. 'Down in that ten-acre medder lot, ain't it?—and in that new barn you built last spring. A pretty elder you are, ain't you? Elders don't seem to have improved much since Susannah's times. If there ain't one sort o' meanness in 'em it's another,' says she.

"Goodness knows what she would 'a' said, but jest here old Deacon Petty rose up. And says he, 'Brethren,'—and he spread his arms out and waved 'em up and down like he was goin' to pray—'Brethren, this is awful! If this woman wants to give her religious experience, why,' says he, very kind and condescendin', 'of course she can do so. But when it comes to a woman standin' up in the house of the Lord and revilin' an elder as this woman is doin', why, I tremble,' says he, 'for the church of Christ. For don't the Apostle Paul say, "Let your women keep silence in the church"?'

"As soon as he named the 'Postle Paul, Sally Ann give a kind of snort. Sally Ann was terrible free-spoken. And when Deacon Petty said that, she jest squared herself like she intended to stand there till judgment day, and says she, 'The 'Postle Paul has been dead ruther too long for me to be afraid of him. And I never heard of him app'intin' Deacon Petty to represent him in this church. If the 'Postle Paul don't like what I'm sayin', let him rise up from his grave in Corinthians or Ephesians, or wherever he's buried, and say so. I've got a message from the Lord to the men folks of this church, and I'm goin' to deliver it, Paul or no Paul,' says she. 'And as for you, Silas Petty, I ain't forgot the time I dropped in to see Maria one Saturday night and found her washin' out her flannel petticoat and dryin' it before the fire. And every time that I've had to hear you lead in prayer since then I've said to myself, "Lord, how high can a man's prayers rise toward heaven when his wife ain't got but one flannel skirt to her name? No higher than the back of his pew, if you'll let me tell it." I knew jest how it was,' said Sally Ann, 'as well as if Maria'd told me. She'd been havin' the milk and butter money from the old roan cow she'd raised from a little heifer, and jest because feed was scarce, you'd sold her off before Maria had money enough to buy her winter flannels. I can give my experience, can I? Well, that's jest what I'm a-doin',' says she, 'and while I'm about it,' says she, 'I'll give in some experience for 'Lizabeth and Maria and the rest of the women, who, betwixt their husbands an' the 'Postle Paul, have about lost all the gumption and grit that the Lord started them out with. If the 'Postle Paul,' says she, 'has got anything to say about a woman workin' like a slave for twenty-five years and then havin' to set up an' wash out her clothes Saturday night, so's she can go to church clean Sunday mornin', I'd like to hear it. But don't you dare to say anything to me about keepin' silence in the church. There was times when Paul says he didn't know whether he had the Spirit of God or not, and I'm certain that when he wrote that text he wasn't any more inspired that you are, Silas Petty, when you tell Maria to shut her mouth.'

"Joe Taylor was settin' right in front of Deacon Petty, and I reckon he thought his time was comin' next; so he gets up, easy-like, with his red bandanna to his mouth, and starts out. But Sally Ann headed him off before he'd gone six steps, and says she, 'There ain't anything the matter with you, Job Taylor; you set right down and hear what I've got to say. I've knelt and stood through enough o' your long-winded prayers, and now it's my time to talk and yours to listen.'

"And bless your life, if Job didn't set down as meek as Moses, and Sally Ann lit right into him. And says she, 'I reckon you're afraid I'll tell some o' your meanness, ain't you? And the only thing that stands in my way is that there's so much to tell I don't know where to begin. There ain't a woman in this church,' says she, 'that don't know how Marthy scrimped and worked and saved to buy her a new set o' furniture, and how you took the money with you when you went to Cincinnati, the spring before she died, and come back without the furniture. And when she asked you for the money, you told her that she and everything she had belonged to you, and that your mother's old furniture was good enough for anybody. It's my belief,' says she, 'that's what killed Marthy. Women are dyin' every day, and the doctors will tell you it's some new-fangled disease or other, when, if the truth was known, it's nothin' but wantin' somethin' they can't git, and hopin' and waitin' for somethin' that never comes. I've watched 'em, and I know. The night before Mary died she says to me, "I could die a heap peacefuler if I jest knew the front room was fixed up right with a new set of furniture for the funeral."' And Sally Ann p'inted her finger right at Job, and says she, 'I said it then, and I say it now to your face, Job Taylor, you killed Marthy the same as if you'd taken her by the throat and choked the life out of her.'

"Mary Embry, Job's sister-in-law, was settin' right behind me, and I heard her say, 'Amen!' as fervent as if somebody had been prayin'. Job set there, lookin' like a sheep-killin' dog, and Sally Ann went right on. 'I know,' says she, 'the law gives you the right to your wives' earnin's and everything they've got, down to the clothes on their backs; and I've always said there was some Kentucky law that was made for the express purpose of encouragin' men in their natural meanness—a p'int in which the Lord knows they don't need no encouragin'. There's some men,' says she, 'that'll sneak behind the 'Postle Paul when they're plannin' any meanness against their wives, and some that runs to the law, and you're one of the law kind. But mark my words,' says she, 'one of these days, you men who've been stealin' your wives' property and defraudin' 'em, and cheatin' 'em out o' their just dues, you'll have to stand before a judge that cares mighty little for Kentucky law; and all the law and all the Scripture you can bring up won't save you from goin' where the rich man went.'

"I can see Sally Ann right now," and Aunt Jane pushed her glasses up on her forehead, and looked with a dreamy, retrospective gaze through the doorway and beyond, where swaying elms and maples were whispering softly to each other as the breeze touched them. "She had on her old black poke-bonnet and some black yarn mitts, and she didn't come nigh up to Job's shoulder, but Job set and listened as if he jest had to. I heard Dave Crawford shufflin' his feet and clearin' his throat, while Sally Ann was talkin' to Job. Dave's farm j'ined Sally Ann's, and they had a lawsuit once about the way a fence ought to run, and Sally Ann beat him. He always despised Sally Ann after that, and used to call her a 'he-woman.' Sally Ann heard the shufflin', and as soon as she got through with Job, she turned around to Dave and says she: 'Do you think your hemmin' and scrapin' is goin' to stop me, Dave Crawford? You're one o' the men that makes me think that it's better to be a Kentucky horse than a Kentucky woman. Many's the time,' says she, 'I've seen pore July with her head tied up, crawlin' around tryin' to cook for sixteen harvest hands, and you out in the stable cossetin' up a sick mare, and rubbin' down your three-year-olds to get 'em in trim for the fair. Of all the things that's hard to understand,' says she, 'the hardest is a man that has more mercy on his horse than he has on his wife. July's found rest at last,' says she, 'out in the graveyard; and every time I pass your house I thank the Lord that you've got to pay a good price for your cookin' now, as there ain't a woman in the country fool enough to step into July's shoes.'

"But, la!" said Aunt Jane, breaking off with her happy laugh—the laugh of one who revels in rich memories—"what's the use of me tellin' all this stuff? The long and the short of it is, that Sally Ann had her say about nearly every man in the church. She told how Mary Embry had to cut up her weddin' skirts to make clothes for her first baby, and how John Martin stopped Hannah one day when she was carryin' her mother a pound of butter, and made her go back and put the butter down in the cellar; and how Lije Davison used to make Ann pay him for every bit of chicken feed, and then take half the egg money because the chickens got into his garden; and how Abner Page give his wife 25 cents for spendin' money the time she went to visit her sister.

"Sally Ann always was a masterful sort of woman, and that night it seemed like she was possessed. The way she talked made me think of the Day of Pentecost and the gift of tongues. And finally she got to the minister! I'd been wonderin' all along if she was goin' to let him off. She turned around to where he was settin' under the pulpit, and says she, 'Brother Page, you're a good man, but you ain't so good you couldn't be better. It was jest last week,' says she, 'that the women come around beggin' money to buy you a new suit of clothes to go to Presbytery in, and I told 'em if it was to get Mis' Page a new dress, I was ready to give; but not a dime was I goin' to give toward puttin' finery on a man's back. I'm tired o' seein' the ministers walk up into the pulpit in their slick black broadcloths, and their wives settin' down in the pew in an old black silk that's been turned upside down, wrong side out, and hind part before, and sponged and pressed, and made over till you can't tell whether it's silk, or caliker, or what.'

"Well, I reckon there was some o' the women that expected the roof to fall down on us when Sally Ann said that right to the minister. But it didn't fall, and Sally Ann went straight on. 'And when it comes to the perseverance of the saints and the decrees of God,' says she, 'there ain't many can preach a better sermon; but there's some of your sermons,' says she, 'that ain't fit for much but kindlin' fires. There's that one you preached last Sunday on the twenty-fourth verse of the fifth chapter of Ephesians. I reckon I've heard about a hundred and fifty sermons on that text, and I reckon I'll keep on hearin' 'em as long as there ain't anybody but men to do the preachin'. Anybody would think,' says she, 'that you preachers was struck blind every time you git through with the twenty-fourth verse, for I never heard a sermon on the twenty-fifth verse. I believe there's men in this church that thinks the fifth chapter of Ephesians hasn't got but twenty-four verses, and I'm goin' to read the rest of it to 'em for once, anyhow.'

"And if Sally Ann didn't walk right up into the pulpit same as if she'd been ordained, and read what Paul said about men lovin' their wives as Christ loved the church, and as they loved their own bodies.

"'Now,' says she, 'if Brother Page can reconcile these texts with what Paul says about women submittin' and bein' subject, he's welcome to do it. But,' says she, 'if I had the preachin' to do, I wouldn't waste time reconcilin'. I'd jest say that when Paul told women to be subject to their husbands in everything, he wasn't inspired; and when he told men to love their wives as their own bodies, he was inspired; and I'd like to see the presbytery that could silence me from preachin' as long as I wanted to preach. As for turnin' out o' the church,' says she, 'I'd like to know who's to do the turnin' out. When the disciples brought that woman to Christ there was not a man in the crowd fit to cast a stone at her, and if there's any man nowadays good enough to set in judgment on a woman, his name ain't on the rolls of Goshen Church. If 'Lizabeth,' says she, 'had as much common sense as she's got conscience, she'd know that the matter o' that money didn't concern nobody but our Mite Society, and we women can settle it without any help from you deacons and elders.'

"Well, I reckon Parson Page thought if he didn't head Sally Ann off some way or other she'd go on all night; so when she kind 'o stopped for breath and shut up the big Bible, he grabbed a hymn-book and says:

"'Let us sing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."'

"He struck up the tune himself, and about the middle of the first verse Mis' Page got up and went over to where 'Lizabeth was standin', and give her the right hand of fellowship, and then Mis' Petty did the same; and the first thing we knew we was all around her shakin' hands and huggin' her and cryin' over her. 'Twas a reg'lar love-feast; and we went home feelin' like we'd ben through a big protracted meetin' and got religion over again.

"'Twasn't more'n a week till 'Lizabeth was down with slow fever—nervous collapse, old Dr. Pendleton called it. We took turns nursin' her, and one day she looked up in my face and says, 'Jane, I know now what the mercy of the Lord is.'"

Here Aunt Jane paused, and began to cut three-cornered pieces out of a time-stained square of flowered chintz. The quilt was to be of the wild-goose pattern. There was a drowsy hum from the beehive near the window, and the shadows were lengthening as sunset approached.

"One queer thing about it," she resumed, "was that while Sally Ann was talkin', not one of us felt like laughin'. We set there as solemn as if parson was preachin' to us on 'lection and predestination. But whenever I think about it now, I laugh fit to kill. And I've thought many a time that Sally Ann's plain talk to them men done more good than all the sermons us women had had preached to us about bein' 'shame-faced' and 'submittin'' ourselves to our husbands, for every one o' them women come out in new clothes that spring, and such a change as it made in some of 'em! I wouldn't be surprised if she did have a message to deliver, jest as she said. The Bible says an ass spoke up once and reproved a man, and I reckon if an ass can reprove a man, so can a woman. And it looks to me like men stand in need of reprovin' now as much as they did in Balaam's days.

"Jacob died the follerin' fall, and 'Lizabeth got shed of her troubles. The triflin' scamp never married her for anything but her money

"Things is different from what they used to be," she went on, as she folded her pieces into a compact bundle and tied it with a piece of gray yarn. "My son-in-law was tellin' me last summer how a passel o' women kept goin' up to Frankfort and so pesterin' the legislatur', that they had to change the laws to git rid of 'em. So married women now has all the property rights they want, and more'n some of 'em has sense to use, I reckon."

"How about you and Uncle Abram?" I suggested. "Didn't Sally Ann say anything about you in her experience?"

Aunt Jane's black eyes snapped with some of the fire of her long-past youth. "La! no, child," she said. "Abram never was that kind of a man, and I never was that kind of a woman. I ricollect as we was walkin' home that night Abram says, sort o' humble-like: 'Jane, hadn't you better git that brown merino you was lookin' at last County Court day?'

"And I says, "Don't you worry about that brown merino, Abram. It's a-lyin' in my bottom drawer right now. I told the storekeeper to cut it off jest as soon as your back was turned, and Mis' Simpson is goin' to make it next week.' And Abram he jest laughed, and says, 'Well, Jane, I never saw your beat.' You see, I never was any hand at 'submittin'' myself to my husband, like some women. I've often wondered if Abram wouldn't 'a' been jest like Silas Petty if I'd been like Maria. I've noticed that whenever a woman's willin' to be imposed upon, there's always a man standin' 'round ready to do the imposin'. I never went to a lawbook to find out what my rights was. I did my duty faithful to Abram, and when I wanted anything I went and got it, and Abram paid for it; and I can't see but what we got on jest as well as we'd 'a' done if I'd a 'submitted' myself."

Longer and longer grew the shadows, and the faint tinkle of bells came in through the windows. The cows were beginning to come home. The spell of Aunt Jane's dramatic art was upon me. I began to feel that my own personality had somehow sliped away from me, and those dead people, evoked from their graves by an old woman's histrionism, seemed more real to me than my living, breathing self.

"There now; I've talked you clean to death," she said, with a happy laugh, as I rose to go. "But we've had a real nice time, and I'm glad you come."

The sun was almost down as I walked slowly away. When I looked back, at the turn of the road, Aunt Jane was standing on the doorstep, shading her eyes and peering across the level fields. I knew what it meant. Beyond the fields was a bit of woodland, and in one corner of that you might, if your eyesight was good, discern here and there a glimpse of white. It was the old burying ground of Goshen Church, and I knew by the strained attitude and intent gaze of the watcher in the door that somewhere in the sunlit space between Aunt Jane's doorstep and the little country graveyard, the souls of the living and the dead were keeping a silent tryst.

THE LONELY HONEYMOON.

You know dees Joe dat use' to go
For work weeth me, signore?
He's marry, yestaday, you know,
An' gon' for Baltimore;
An' so deesgusta man like Joe
You nevva see bayfore!

Eh? No, da girl's all right, my frand;
Dat's mak' eet harder, too.
Ha! wait an' you weell ondrastand—
I tal eet all to you.
You see, dees Joe long time ago
Gat Rosa for hees mash,
An' evra seence he worka so
For mak' an' save da cash,
Baycause he want gat marry soon
An' mebbe takin', too,
Dees—w'at you calla—"honeymoon,"
Like 'Mericans do.
Wan day he tak' fi'-dollar note
An' go to steamsheep store
An' buy two teecket for da boat
Dat sail for Baltimore.
An' den he tal me: "Shut your mout'
An' justa looka wise.
Dees theeng ees no for talka 'bout;
Eet gona be su'prise."
So, w'en dey marry yestaday
He smile so proud, signore,
W'en he ees keess her cheek an' say:
"We sail for Baltimore!"
Ah! den, my frand, so sadda sight
You nevva see, O! my!
Poor Rosa she ees gat so white
An' ees baygeen to cry.
"Ees dees," she says, "a weddin' treep?
Sooch fooleeshness you speak!
I no can stand eet een a sheep,
Da sea ees mak' me seeck."
Poor Joe, he swear an' den he keess,
An' coax an' beg her so,
For theenk of all dat she weell meess—
But no, she weell no go.
"O! Rosa mia!" Joe ess cry,
"Your heart eet ees a stone,
For dat you mak' me say 'good-by'
An' tak' da treep alone!"

O! lonely honeymoon, an' O!
So sadda man, signore,
Dat gotta leave hees wife an' go
Alone for Baltimore!
So hearta-broka man like Joe
You nevva see bayfore.

—T. A. Daly, in Catholic Standard and Times.

NOT BUILT FOR FIGHT.

Two Fat Men Furnished a Lot of Fun for the Spectators.

From the Chicago Record-Herald.

When two fat men get to "scrapping" something interesting is sure to follow. This happened on Wabash avenue the other day. Something occurred, and they threatened, in street Anglo-Saxon, to "lick" each other. After a few words they came to blows, but every blow fell short, and they spent their time in beating the wind. Their hats found a resting place on the sidewalk; they aimed fiercely at each other, and grew hot and wheezy. Spectators thronged about, and smiled and shouted at the fiery, futile efforts, and the anger of the combatants grew in proportion to their unsuccess and the public's enjoyment.

If Isaac Watts had been present, he would have revised his juvenile poem to read:

"But, fat men, you should never let
Your angry passions rise;
Your pudgy hands were never made
To bang each other's thighs."

A policeman with a lurking smile stood near.

"Hit him again!" called out a street Arab in contempt.

"Never touched him!" called out another.

"Wer den Schaden hat brauch fur den Spott nicht zu sorgen," commented a sympathetic German.

"Why don't you stop them?" asked a spectator, addressing the amused officer.

"They'll never hurt each other," smiled back the policeman. He was mentally measuring the combatants' arms and girth.

However, the crowd was increasing, and the policeman concluded he had to maintain order, so he spoke up with official grandeur:

"Quit y're battin' the air!"

A few more ineffective blows, and the pugilists picked up their hats, growled softly about "gettin' even some day," and shuffled off, amid the cheers of law-abiding citizens.

HISTORIC CARRIAGE.

Vehicle Owned by Gen. Knox in Washington's Day Still in Use.

From the Boston Herald.

The private carriage of Maj. Gen. Henry Knox, of Thomaston, who was first Secretary of War under Washington, is in the possession of Frank B. Hills, first selectman of Thomaston, Me. Not only is it one of the most historic vehicles in the United States, but it is also probably the oldest able-bodied private carriage in existence on the continent.

In spite of its 125 years, a quaint, substantial vehicle it is. Gen. Knox probably had it made in Boston, for there were no carriage builders in Thomaston in those early days, and, as Gen. Knox operated a packet line of small sailing vessels between Boston and Thomaston, it would have been easy for him to have the carriage brought to Thomaston. Many thousands of miles has this vehicle rolled since the day it left the maker's hands. Gen. Knox used it to drive over his vast estate in Maine, and when he died on October 25, 1806, it went among the possessions of his estate which were sold. The father of Alden Gay, of Thomaston, bought the vehicle, and it remained in use with the Gay family until Mr. Hill purchased it.

It is by no means a relic in the sense of something that has become useless. The historic carriage is in good condition to this day, and Mr. Hill occasionally takes a ride in it. Not only does it run easily, but it is a decidedly comfortable carriage. To use an old expression, Gen. Knox's carriage was "built upon honor"—that is to say, the whole body and wheels and axles are of the best. The whiffletree is of iron, and there is a step on either shaft to enter the carriage. Its upholstering is of the finest material, for in the old colonial days the carriages of the gentry were elaborate affairs. The dasher is covered with whole calfskin, it has a "boot," and is fitted with most of the conveniences which are used in the carriages of to-day.

A Witty Painter.

From Harper's Weekly.

While Fritz Thaulow, the distinguished Dutch artist, who died the other day, was serving his turn on the International Jury of Awards of the Carnegie Institute, provisions for his stay in Pittsburg were made at a hotel which accommodates guests on either the American or the European plan; the dining-rooms a la carte and table d'hote are separate. For his first dinner Thaulow stepped to the entrance of the American room and was instantly met by the attentive head waiter, who inquired, respectfully:

"European, sir, or American?"

"European!" responded the astonished Thaulow.

"The other side, sir, if you please."

"Oh, very well! I sit mit mine own people."

The thing that most delighted Fritz Thaulow during his stay in Pittsburg was the elaborate provisions furnished for bathing, and made necessary by the Pittsburg atmosphere. Thaulow fairly reveled in his porcelain and marble tub, the tesselated pavement, and silvered plumbing. One night Mrs. Henry Frick had him to dinner. In a lull of the conversation he turned to his hostess with the thought uppermost in his mind.

"You take a bath effry day?" he blurted.

It was admitted.

"I beat you!" cried Thaulow, with a boy's delight. "I take two."

Courtship of Crockett

Won "Polly" Findley's Hand.

"We're lost, boys, sure as shootin'!" said Davy Crockett to his dogs. "If we'd only stuck to the open trail and not followed off after that bear we'd have been home by now. What will my good Quaker, Master Kennedy, do when he sees me? Send me packing, perhaps. And all because I ran away to a shooting match, and then got lost like a fool on my way home."

All at once both dogs gave tongue savagely, the hair on their backs rising with anger, says the Youth's Companion.

"What's this? What's this, boys?" cried Davy eagerly. He bent down, his eyes shining as he saw deeply printed in the soft earth the deep footmark of a bear, the greatest of all the game animals in that region.

"A bear," cried Davy, "and fresh! Why, boys, what do you mean by leaving a fresh trail?"

The ardor of the young hunter gave courage to the two hounds, which for the moment had hesitated to pursue so large a beast. They gave tongue now musically and presently disappeared in the dense thicket of cane and briers. Davy plunged on after as best he might, and was not far behind when he heard the hoarse roaring challenge of the two dogs.

"Bayed up!" he gasped, running on now as swiftly as his long legs would carry him. "They've stopped him at last."

Took to a Tree.

He did his best to get near enough for a shot, but he had at the moment only a glimpse of a big black body moving through the cane, the dogs snapping at its flanks and heels. Davy was too good a hunter to risk a chance shot, and so he pushed on. Suddenly, as he hurried on through the thicket, there came directly in front the scream of a woman's voice. At this sound the bear turned and came back toward him.

Seeing the young hunter, the great creature, now in confusion, concluded it would be safest to take to a tree. It did so, climbing the great trunk with a swiftness incredible for an animal of its bulk, all the while whining and protesting, half in anger and half in uneasiness. The dogs jumped up at the foot of the tree, baying loudly, but the bear looked down in safety from his perch on a great limb.

"Oh, you're safe enough now!" cried Davy, exultantly. He could have easily shot the animal, but was too tired and out of breath to hasten matters. Moreover, he was curious to discover whose voice it was that had turned back the bear. "Hello! hello, there!" he cried. "Who are you? Come this way! It's safe here."

Young Girl Appears.

As he called he edged over toward the sound of the voice, but still kept his eye on the bear, even when he heard footsteps breaking through the cane. There paused at sight of him a young girl, hardly more than seventeen years old. She looked at him half in fear, half in relief. The blood flew to Davy's face.

"I didn't know, ma'am—miss, I mean," he stammered; and then, with eagerness, "But there's your bear. There he is, treed, all right."

The girl, pale from fright, half smiled as she now approached. "Are you afraid?" she said.

"Yes, I reckon I'm scared a good deal."

"Why, he can't hurt you now; he's up a tree."

"He? Oh, that?" said Davy, with a jerk of his thumb. "I didn't mean the bear. I'm scared of you. What are you doing here in the woods all alone? Are you lost?"

"No," she replied. "I reckon you're lost yourself, or you'd know it's only a couple of miles to our house. I'm out after the cows."

"Well," said Davy, dropping the stock of his long rifle to the ground, "I've got no cows, but here's a fine bear that belongs to me. If you need any bear meat, you can have it. Just watch."

As he spoke, he raised the long brown barrel of the rifle slowly to the level of his eye, the bear meanwhile being busily engaged looking down at the dogs, as it half stood and half lolled in the forks of the great oak tree.

There came the sharp, keen report of the rifle, and the great black animal slowly sank down to the limb on which it stood, then clinging with its arms to the limb, swung half out and under, gripping with its remaining force to preserve itself. Suddenly, its muscles relaxing, it came down more than fifty feet, turning over in midair, and striking the earth with a great crash. At once the dogs were upon the dead body, growling and biting furiously at their fallen foe.

Went Home with Her.

"Gracious me!" said the mountain girl, now fairly free from her fright. "That was a good shot."

"Humph!" grunted Davy. "I reckon if I can hit a half-dollar at 40 yards I ought to hit a thing as big as a loghouse up in a tree."

"Now I'll go home," said the girl.

"You won't till I go along," said Davy, grown bolder. "I'm lost."

"Where do you live?"

"I work at old man Kennedy's, the Quaker."

Davy removed the bear's hide, rolled it up and swung it across his shoulders.

"Are you a married man?" said the girl, gazing at him frankly.

"Why?"

"Well, now, you know, I can't be walking through the woods with a married man. What's your name?"

"Crockett, Davy Crockett. My dad lives over toward the Abingdon road. We're not rich, but we eat three meals a day, and no man needs more. I found my dad owed Quaker Kennedy $60. I've been working out that note for dad."

"But you didn't tell me whether you're a married man or not."

"Married? How could I get married while my dad's in debt?"

"Well, I'm glad of that." The girl gave a sigh of relief.

"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know."

Not His Fault.

"If I'm not married it's not my fault. A man ought to be honest. There came a schoolma'am down at the Quaker's. I 'lowed to marry that girl sure. She told me she was engaged to her cousin. When I heard that it was worse than war, pestilence, or famine to me, but I couldn't help myself."

"My, that was pretty bad!" said the girl, laughing.

"Well, that's not all," continued Davy eagerly. "I knew another family full of mighty pretty little girls. Right soon I found another one that I loved as much as I had the Quaker girl. She 'lowed she'd marry me quick as I got out of debt. We had the day all set. It was on a Thursday, and it wasn't long ago, either. Well, on a Saturday, just before I was to be married, I got so wolfish for another shootin' match that I stole away, just as I did to-day, and I never did come back for two days. When I did my girl's sister told me that another fellow had got out a license and that my girl was goin' to marry him instead of me! Now if you ask me if I'm a married man or not I reckon I must say I'm not, but it certainly isn't my fault."

The girl's face clouded with sympathy, and her eyes grew soft as she turned toward the tall young man.

"Why, that was an awful thing for a girl to do," said she, with indignation. "That wasn't right. I'm mighty sorry for you."

"It made me sick," said Davy. "Still, I got over it. Tell me, what's your name?"

"Polly. Polly Findley."

"Polly Findley," said Davy. "You must be the same family that the Dutch widow over near the Quaker's has been telling me about so long. She and her daughter told me that they'd introduce me to a little Irish girl who'd make me plumb forget these other two. I won't lie to you, but I will say that half of what they told me is true, and maybe the other half will be some day. I'll tell you right now that you're a heap handsomer than either of those others. And I like mighty well the way you act about bear."

Wanted a Home.

"Well, we're on the right trail home now," said Polly. "I'll take you there."

"Home," said Davy Crockett, as if half talking to himself. "Home—that's a mighty fine word. I've got no home. My dad hasn't been just as good always as he ought to have been, and he drank up what his children ought to have had for schoolin'. Why, I never have been to school but three or four months. I can hardly write my name. Yet here I am, just longin' for a home. I want to get out of debt. Why, you know, I'd give my rifle here if the old Quaker would take it and call the note square. I want to go to school, and I want to have a home.

"Miss Polly," and he turned toward her suddenly, "you don't know me yet. This sort of life won't do for me. Davy Crockett's not going to be satisfied to hoe corn all his life, or just to go huntin' and never have a bigger ambition than that. I'd like to be a soldier, but there's no war that I can get into just yet. Some day I'm going into the legislature, and after that I'm going to Congress."

Miss Polly laughed at him merrily. "My,' said she, "you've got a mighty good opinion of yourself, haven't you?"

Two months later Davy Crockett, still clad in moccasins and buckskins, stood before the father of Polly Findley.

"Mr. Findley," he was saying, "I've got a motto that I'm going to follow all my life. Once I knew a fellow who thought the house was on fire. He took a running jump out the window and landed on a stump and broke his leg. He ought to have looked. So I says to myself, 'Look before you leap.' Now I'm willin' to jump into most any kind of trouble or difficulty, but I'm going to look ahead first. I've looked ahead about this girl Polly and about you all, and I'm not scared about where I'm going to land. Maybe I've made my mistakes, Mr. Findley, but I'm goin' to marry Polly, and I've just come to tell you all about it."

Gave His Consent.

Mr. Findley looked at the tall and earnest young man and presently gave a chuckle.

"Davy," said he, "I haven't a thing against you. You're as straight as a string—don't conceal a thing. You're the best shot in this neck of woods, and you're not scared. I notice at a house-raisin' you always carry your end of a log, and you don't shirk. If any fellow is good enough for my Polly I reckon you are, but you've got to see her mother first." The two looked at each other with a certain uneasiness.

"I'd rather face the biggest bear in the hills," said Davy, "but I reckon I'll go ahead."

So presently, indeed, he found Polly's mother and approached her with equal directness.

"Ma'am," said he, "I just 'lowed I'll tell you I'm goin' to marry Polly next Thursday if some other fellow doesn't get her before then."

There long remained memory in all that countryside of the tongue-lashing which the voluble Mrs. Findley gave this presumptuous suitor. She pointed out to him that he was too young to marry; that he had no family, no property, no prospects. Yet through it all Davy made the same straightforward and manly answer.

"What you say is true, ma'am," said he. "I've got no knife or fork or plate to put in my cabin. I've got not even a rifle, for I threw in my rifle to finish paying off that note of my dad's to old man Kennedy. I'll be married in my moccasin feet, and when Polly takes me, that's all she does take. But she can spin, and when I need a shirt she can make it. I'll get a rifle somewhere. Polly says she'll teach me how to read an' write better than I do. I tell you, ma'am, you can't stop me an' Polly. You can't stop us gettin' married, and you can't stop us gettin' on. I'm sure I'm right, an' now I'm goin' ahead."

Mother Gives In.

And so, indeed, Davy Crockett did go ahead. Polly's mother for a time remained unappeased, but the young suitor told Polly that on the following Thursday he would bring a horse for her, and that she must then be ready to leave. The young mountain girl was as plucky as her wooer and agreed to this.

To the last hour Mrs. Findley remained "hostile," as Davy expressed it, but relented at last, as she saw her daughter about to leave her. Then she called the young people into the house, told Davy to send for the parson, and so the wedding went off merrily at Polly's home.

And Polly's mother from that time on was kind. It was she who gave the young couple two cows and calves to add to their scanty stock on the small farm which Davy rented near by. Good Quaker Kennedy likewise came to their assistance and gave Davy an order on the country store for $15 worth of goods. "This fixed us up pretty grand," said Davy.

Such was the start in life of Davy Crockett. He got his schooling in great part from the kindly tuition of the mountain girl who in this abrupt fashion became his wife. She was his faithful companion when, a few years later, they took their two little sons and all their household goods, and, packing everything upon two young horses, started across the mountains to Lincoln County, where Davy took up land of his own at the head of the Mulberry fork of the Elk River.

This removal was the first step outward and upward of Davy Crockett, later one of the world's famous figures—Davy Crockett, the soldier, the bear hunter, the legislator, the Congressman; a man who never denied his lowly birth or his own ignorance, but who never ceased to study and to learn; who scorned any political creed which did not tally with his own ideas of honor and truthfulness, and who finally, far away from the State which bore him, met his death, like a man and a gallant gentleman, in that fight which made the Alamo of old San Antonio one of the earth's sacred shrines of heroism.

Child Sold for a Shilling.

From the London Chronicle.

An instance of a child being sold for a shilling was brought to the notice of the Leeds coroner last week, and a written agreement as to this sale was produced in court.