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An Interesting Story.

THE DARK HOUR BEFORE DAY.

"It's no use, Becky," said the little lame cobbler, dropping his head upon his hands and looking as he felt, the personification of despair, "I've offended the Lord somehow, and he won't let me have a chance to keep a home over your heads. I know I'm not all I ought to be, and I'm punished."

Becky went across the room and patted her husband on the back:

"Now, don't take on, Nick, don't," she said, "that can't be, for He that knows all, knows how good you are. Better times 'll come. They're sure to; and you'll be rewarded for all your patience yet. The darkest hour is just before day."

The cobbler shook his head.

"I've gin up hope," he said. "What with the rent and the bill for the medicine It was like me to get sick just at the worst, and no work coming in—and [illegible] tempting folks from our shabby basement, even for the mending of their old shoes. I'm crushed down. Why, you are as thin and white as a ghost. You haven't tasted meat this week, Becky."

"No more have you," said Becky.—"But la, why, there is folks thinks meat unhulsome; wegetarians, Nick, they call 'em; where I lived out once, I saw one of them."

"Did you say bread was unhulsome too?" asked Nick. "Oh, gal, I wish I'd left ye living out at service. Rosy and bright and happy; but I meant to do better, I said. If I was an able-bodied man, I'd work somehow and somewhere, but its the last or nothing with me. Becky, why didn't you take Tim Rolf, the wheelwright, and send the little limping cobbler about his business?"

"I didn't like Tim," said Becky, "and I just knew how nice and cozy we'd be together. Never a quarrel, Nick. And how we used to go to Hoboken and have lemonade in the garden, and come home after dark an afternoon, and how we used to go to church on Sunday morning in clothes as good as any one."

"Used," sighed poor Nick.

"Why, it can't be all up hill," said Becky. "I haven't time to go out galvanting now, but la, I don't miss it.—We're steady married folks now, you know."

"Oh, Becky," said the cobbler, "you try to keep up heart, but you know it's come to starving."

They looked at each other, and then Becky put her arms about her husband. She did not weep upon his bosom; she was so big and so strong, and he so small and frail, that it only seemed natural to reverse matters. She hugged him up to her shoulder and covered his head over with her apron, and put her cheek down outside the bundle thus made, and soothed and patted him as if he had been a baby. But she cried, too, and the apron was wet through in no time.

It was a bad state of things. No money, no food, no fire, and water at its coldest. The children sent to school breakfastless for the sake of the warmth and comfort of the school-house. No work to be had; the little cobbler as helpless as man could be, except at his trade, and Becky's washing stopped, for Heaven only knows how long, by a great felon in the palm in her right hand. But Becky loved the queer little mortal—she stopped crying first, and kissed him between the eyes—great, frightened blue eyes, that seemed made for crying.

"You stay home, and mind the place," she said, "I'm going out awhile. Perhaps there'll be a bit of luck—who knows."

She put on her bonnet and shawl—such a thin little shawl—which had been used for an ironing cloth, and had an iron shape scorch between the shoulders—and took up a basket.

The cobbler looked at her.

"Becky," he said, hoarsely; "Becky," she knew just what he meant.

"The little children, Nick," she said; "we could starve—but them poor little critters. Nick, it won't seem like begging when it's for them."

And when the door shut behind her—and poor Nick limped after her, as though to stop her; then paused, and fairly flung himself upon the floor, wishing he were under the ground beneath it.

"God forgive the man that marries a woman to starve her," he sobbed. "Why if I'd known it would have come to this, I'd never have courted her. It's time I was dead."

Perhaps being a strange, impulsive little fellow, there might have been a tragic end to this scene, but that the children came in from school, and began to cry—partly at the sight of their prostrate father, and partly because of hunger—and Nick forgot himself to do what he could for them.

He had no dinner, but he had a great deal of love to give them, and some pieces of red kid. And the fact that mother and the basket were gone together, impressed them with the hope of provisions.

Meanwhile, Beeky had gone a begging. It would be horrible, no doubt, she thought to take food from strangers—but she found that there was one thing even more terrible—not to take it.

Door after door was slammed in her face. Once a dog was set at her, or she thought so. Professional beggars had made themselves nuisances to many people, and how were they to know when real poverty asked alms. Men whom they had pitied as paupers proved to be owners of real estate. Cripples and blind men whom they had aided, were found to have bound up strong limbs and glued their eyes together—so they were hard upon real distress, and refused it broken bread.

At six that evening Becky stood at a street corner, with one crust in her basket—no more.

Beyond, lay a pawnbroker's shop, and Becky looked at its golden balls, and her wedding ring. She had worn it fifteen years, and it was thin and frail, but pure gold. Through all, she had kept it until now. Must it go? The thought was worse than begging.

Becky took a step forward, another back. Then she began to cry a little.—Nick's ring, that he put on her hand so long ago—oh, dear! oh, dear!

But she grew brave again, and walked into the shop, and pawned the ring! It was not much they gave for it, but it would buy supper, and perhaps Nick wouldn't notice, and perhaps she could get it back. That was a very faint idea, perhaps, however.

A woman was in the pawnshop, as she waited, bargaining with the proprietor over a suit of little girl's clothing—costly things, out of place in her hand. Becky noticed this saying to herself that they were never fairly come by. But she had forgotten all about it, when, coming out of the baker's, a little voice fell on her ear, and looking down, she saw a barefoot child, in wretched rags, sobbing piteously.

Becky was soft of heart; but, in poor quarters, crying children are common enough, and her own were waiting for the loaves in her basket. She walked on hastily, and so upset the toddler. Then Becky needs must stop and pick her up.

"Why don't you go home to your mother this night-time," she said, "and not stand here to be knocked known.

And a little silver voice of a thread answered:

"I can't find mamma. I can't find my home. Where is mamma! Oh, mamma!"

Becky knelt down. A white head of crumpled curls, and a pair of blue eyes, swimming in tears, she could just make out.

"I'll take ye home—only say where," she said.

But the child could tell nothing. It was plainly lost. Becky took it in her arms, and made inquiries at the corner-grocery, where she bought a slice of ham; but no one knew the child. It was growing late, too, and Becky could not leave it to its fate.

"I'll take it home," she said, "to-morrow finds its folks."

So, then the cobbler and his children in their juvenile views of such matters, opinioned that they had another little sister.

"It's a poor lost child," said Becky.—"I'm going to keep it to-night. Its parents are poorer than we are; you can see that by its bare feet and only one little frock—poor thing! Now hold her, Nick, while I cook supper. I didn't beg it, Nick—so don't fret."

And then, keeping her ring-finger out of sight, Becky fried the ham, and made the gravy, and cut the bread, and sent for two cents worth of milk—which, judiciously diluted, made a quart of milk and water, and tried to be very cheerful.

The lost child cried, but Becky fed it, and soon coaxed it to talk; then came a story of a blue dress, and a nasty woman.

The youngest who had chewed the red kid, acted as interpreter. Soon it was discovered that some person described as nasty, had taken away the child's blue dress and other garments, and had whipped her.

Becky listened intently.

"That dress was blue, Nick," she cried, "I knew it wasn't hers—a tipsy, ragged woman; and folks that own them don't come pawning. I——"

Then she paused—the secret was out. Nick's eye had glanced toward her wedding ring, and back again to her face.

"O, Becky!" he cried. "Becky, we didn't think——"

Becky flushed scarlet.

"I didn't mean to tell," she said, "but now it's out; I'm married—all the same, thank God. It was at the pawnshop I saw the blue dress."

And she told them of the woman whom she had watched, and of her suspicions.

"The child has been stolen, Nick," she said. "It's a genteel child, you can see; and if we can but find its name out, we may save some one trouble we've never had. Think of one of our little one's being gone all night, Nick."

The baby's name seemed to be Minnie Smith—though M. S. might be anything else; and putting the children all to bed, all in a row, like the little Orges in fairy tales, save that they had no crowns on. Nick and his wife started off to the pawnbrokers.

The man was good-natured, and looked at the garments. They were marked, M. S.

"I'm right, then," said Becky. "They are the child's and they have been stolen. And if we can find its poor mother we'll save more than any but a mother can tell."

"But think of all the Smiths," said the pawn-broker. "There's thousands of 'em."

"And thousands," said Becky. "But these men—meaning the police—they may know."

And out went Nick and Becky, to question the guardians of the night, until, at last, despairing of an answer, they were turning homeward, when a blaze of light from an open door fell over them, and they saw on the steps a weeping woman and a tall, handsome man.

"Hush, we will find her if she is alive," said the man.

"My precious little Minnie," cried the woman.

Then Nick and Becky gave a sort of cheer in union.

"It's them," said Becky; "them certain sure. Oh, mum, if your name is Smith, and you've lost a little girl, we've found her."

And then the cobbler and his wife was pounced upon, and the story told.

In half an hour the six little Orges, without crowns, were aroused from their slumbers by an arrival in their midst, and the odd baby was taken out, to their distress and consternation, for they had counted on keeping her.

And Nick and Becky forgot their own troubles in the parent's joy. And Nick said it was like poetry, and Becky said it was like a play!

And so it was—one with a happy ending—what did the lady do but beg and pray Becky to tell her what she would like best, and Becky confessed that to have her wedding-ring back was the hope of her life; and this led to the cause of its pawning and all the story of poverty and sorrow. Then the dark hours ended and day broke; and there was food and fire; and as it happened, that baby, Minnie's father needed just such an honest man for work as poor Nick could do, he gave the place to the cobbler; and from that day there was enough and to spare in the little home, because of the simple goodness shown to baby Minnie.

"So it's never time thrown away to do a kindness to any one," says Becky, often; somehow you are always rewarded for it. If I'd left the little lost beggar's child, as I thought it, in the street, and never stopped to care for it—as I might have done in such trouble—where would Nick have been and the children and me this night? Not that I did anything but what a Christian ought, but see how we were paid for it."

Selected Poetry.

From the Home Journal.

SAPPHO'S DYING SONG.

BY W. H. K.

I.

I am kneeling all alone
At affection's altar-stone.

While I strike my harp again
Half in joy and half in pain,

Ere I break its golden strands
With my weak and weary hands.

II.

Kneeling dreamily alone
At affection's altar-stone,

Starry eyes and nut-brown hair
Haunt my vision everywhere,

And a dear voice drifts to me
Over waves of memory.

[illegible] eye, and pure,
child-like smile; hands and feet well-proportioned, not too small, are outlines easily discriminated and constitute a safe, reliable character. A cheerful woman, one who will not make mountains of mole hills; who can find something bright and beautiful everywhere; who has pretty feminine resources, and knows how to devise ways and means to make others happy and content about her, is a jewel of inestimable worth.

The voice (not for singing) is a great indicator of character. Beware of those high, sharp tones of voice, as well as too low and hesitating, the first belongs to a shrew, and the last to deceit and imbecility.

Cheerfulness of temper, candor that rejects every species of falsehood, and owns to the truth at any peril; tenderness to be detected by fondness for and faithful care of pets, rather than by outward expressions; purity, instinct in thought and action; intelligence to appreciate all that is noble and good; and health, sound and elastic, are traits to insure duty as a wife and happiness in a household.

HINDRANCES TO MARRIAGE.—*The Lady's Own Paper*, in commenting upon the discussion that has taken place on the increasing "disuse of marriage," observes: "Viewing the whole subject fairly, it would appear that, however the blame may be bandied about, the main cause why marriages are becoming less and less frequent amongst the upper and middle classes is, that society is more exacting than it was; we are not content, whether male or female, with the same style of living as the past generation; men are unwilling to commence where their parents commenced, and so society becomes hollow and unsatisfactory; men die before their time by fast living, and maidens are deprived of the household joys for which the true womanly nature pines. Possibly the enhanced price of provisions in the present day, as compared with the past, may also have some bearing on the subject."

LITTLE THINGS.—The preciousness of little things was never more beautifully expressed than by B. F. Taylor in the following:

Little words are the sweetest to hear; little charities fly furthest, and stay longest on the wing; little lakes are the stillest, little hearts the fullest, and little farms best tilled. Little books are the most read, and little songs the most loved. And when nature would make any thing especially rare and beautiful, she makes it little,—little pearls, little diamonds, little dews.

Everybody calls that little, which he loves best on earth. We once heard a good sort of a man speak of his little wife. We saw her, and she weighed two hundred pounds! We were surprised! But then it was no joke; the man meant it. He could put his wife in his heart, and have room for other things besides; and what was she but precious, and what was she but little?

I had quaffed the cup of hate
And my life was desolate.

Only in my dreams I knew
Aught of tender hearts and true;

Oft I yearned to be at rest
With my harp across my breast,

And beyond the sunset skies,
In the vales of Paradise,

Realize my golden dreams
Where eternal morning gleams!

IV.

Suddenly across my way
Shone affection's sunny ray,

As thy starry eyes divine
Gazed with tenderness in mine,

Till a perfect, perfect rest
Nestled in my aching breast.

Every day was consecrate
To affection born of fate,

While our heart-beats for a time
Syllabled a joyous rhyme,

And I felt no more oppressed
With the burden of unrest.

V.

Came our parting morn at last,
And my sunny dream went past

With the waves of destiny
Wafting thy frail barque from me,

As I knelt me all alone
At affection's altar-stone.

VI.

Starry eyes and nut-brown hair
Haunt my vision everywhere.

And a dear voice drifts to me
Over waves of memory,

As I strike my harp again
Half in joy and half in pain,

Ere I break its golden strands
With my weak and weary hands,

Kneeling dreamily alone
At affection's altar-stone.

"GOOD-FOR-NOTHING."

What are you good for, my brave little man?
Answer that question for me, if you can—
You, with your fingers as white as a nun,
All the day long with your busy contriving,
Into all mischief and fun you are driving:
See if your wise little noddle can tell
What you are good for—now ponder it well.

Over the carpet, the dear little feet
Came with a patter to climb on my seat;
Two merry eyes, full of frolic and glee,
Under their lashes looked up unto me;
Two little hands, pressing soft on my face,
Drew me down close in a loving embrace;
Two rosy lips gave the answer so true—
"Good to love *you*, mamma; *good to love you*."

The fervid summer swells and beats
Through everg pulse of air,
And life, and light, and labor are
Around us everywhere.

Selected Miscellany.

WHO SHOULD MARRY.

In the March number of the *Herald of Health*, Mrs. E. Oakes Smith has an article on "Choosing a Wife," from which we make a few extracts:

It is not wise to marry a woman of a different religious faith, nor one far removed from your own social rank; nor an ignorant woman.

Do not marry a woman with thin lips and a glib tongue.

Do not marry a sentimental woman, who is sure to run into the lackadisical one; let her love sentiment, high, noble sentiment, but beware of the sentimental.

Do not marry one of the delicate, die-away women, who are sure to degenerate into invalids, and take a pride in their feebleness.

Only handsome men and women ought to marry. Those having a *mens sana in corpore sano*. Let others look the matter squarely in the face, and admit that their imbecilities, their diseases, their unhandsome looks, their discordant minds, ought not to be perpetuated; and let them go to work manfully to make the best of themselves by eschewing marriage. Let them be honest, hearty old maids and bachelors, earning money for the good of others. Teaching, and farming, and helping on good wholesome ideas.

The true, good, and handsome men and women adapted to marriage ought to be treated with distinguished honor in the world, as benefactors of the race as foreshadowing that beautiful future when we shall be hardly lower than the angels and covered with glory and honor.

One reason why it is well to marry a pretty woman in preference to a plain one, is that the former is more free from jealousy and discontent than the latter.—Being better satisfied with herself, she is more likely to be pleased with others.

It is better to marry a full-sized woman than a little one, for the meanness of stature is apt to go through the character also. A certain roundness of contour; a composure and self-poise, devoid of heaviness or sluggishness; an elastic buoyancy, a bright uppish look, more of pride

SOME REMARKS ON MEN.

BY JOSH BILLINGS.

THE SUSPICIOUS MAN—Suspicion, a little of it, is most as good as wisdom, but it is one of them kind of diseases that men are not to have small. It is like the measles—if they have it, they have it all over.

A suspicious man is most always a cunning man; and a cunning man is generally a rogue.

What the happiness of a suspicious man consists in I never could tell. It is certainly not in friendship, for he is afraid to trust his own brother; it cannot be in conversation, for he believes every man lies; nor in affection, for he looks upon the artlessness, even of children, as the germs of fraud.

If a man is born with this trait, it is always the stoutest one he has got, and about the only one; for suspicions are like sheep sorrell, a vinegary weed, that runs every generous plant out of the soil.

If a man learns to be suspicious, it only proves that he has been to bad schools, where not much of anything else was taught.

Nobody but a fool would lay aside all caution to undertake to go through this world like a lamb frisking his tail; but nobody but a rogue would learn any more suspicion than he was actually obliged to.

THE WISE MAN—Wisdom is a six-horse team, with a careful driver on the box. Yea! a wise man is an iron-clad elephant chewing his cud.

But this world is full of wisdom that never comes out of its hole; that always roosts on the top limbs of a tree and hoots at the wayfaring men, but cannot show him out of the wilderness.

These kind of wise men are like old guide boards at the crotch of the roads with the lettering all washed off—wooden prophets, worse than the news.

Wisdom is made out of faith and virtue and truth, seasoned with toil and experience, and scented with modesty. This kind of wisdom is full as glorious as it is scarce.

But experience, without doubt, is the boss school-master of worldly wisdom.—He is the one who taught Adam and wife their first lesson, and he has never been out of a job since. His school keeps all day Saturdays, and Sundays too, and has but one vacation in it, and that is when all hands are asleep.

But say what you will, wisdom is a rare bird, anyhow. There is lots of folks that can show you the mule that kicked them last, but it takes one of your classical scholars, one of your blooded wisdomers to point out the mule that is going to kick next.

Get wisdom, my friends, whenever it is in the market, for she is a harp with 1200 strings.

THE EFFEMINATE MAN—The effeminate man is a weak poultice.

He is a cross between a root beer and ginger pop, with the cork left out of the bottle over night.

He is a fresh water mermaid lost in a cow pasture, with his hands filled with dandelions.

He is a tea-cup full of whipped sily bub—a kitten in pantaletts—a sick monkey with a blonde mustache.

He is a vine without any tendrills—a fly drowned in sweet oil—a paper kite in a dead calm.

He lives like the butterflies—nobody can tell why. He is as harmless as a cent's worth of spruce gum, and as useless as a shirt button without any buttonhole.

He is as lazy as a bread pill, and has no more hope than a last year's grasshopper.

He is a man without any gall and woman without any gizzard.

He goes through life on his tiptoes and dies like cologne water spilt on the ground.

Can't Rub it Out.

"Don't write there," said a father to his son, who was writing with a diamond on the window.

"Why not?"

"Because you can't rub it out."

Did it ever occur to you, my child, that you are daily writing that which *you* can't rub out?

You made a cruel speech to your mother the other day. It wrote itself on her loving heart, and gave her great pain.—It is there now, and hurts her every time she thinks of it. You can't rub it out.

You whispered a wicked thought one day in the ear of your playmate. It wrote itself on his mind, and led him to do a wicked act. It is there now; you can't rub it out.

All your thoughts, all your words, all your acts are written in the book of God. The record is a very sad one. You can't rub it out.

Mind me! What you write on the minds of others will stay there. It can't be rubbed out anyhow. But, glorious news! what is written in God's book can be blotted out. You can't rub it out, but the precious blood of Jesus can blot it out if you are sorry, and will ask him.

Go, then, O my child, and ask Jesus to blot out the bad things you have written in the book of God.

The Richest Banker in the World.

At all times in the haunts of business, especially on 'Change, Nathan Rothschild was a marked object. There he stood, day after day, leaning against his pillar, on the right hand entering from Cornhill. He was a monarch on 'Change; and the pillar in question may be said to have been his throne—but in his case, a solid one of granite. No consideration would induce him to do business anywhere else, so devotedly attached was he to that particular spot. There, with his back resting against the pillar, and with note-book in hand, he was always to be seen, during the usual hours of business, entering into transactions of great extent with the merchants and capitalists of all countries.

Little would a stranger, who chanced to see the money potentate of the world standing on the spot in question, have fancied, from his personal appearance, what an important influence he exerted on the destinies of Europe. No one could be more unpropossessing than he—just such a man as the boys in the street would have thought a fine subject for a "lark," unless, indeed, they had been deterred by the lowering expression or sullen aspect of his countenance. He always looked sulky, never indulged in a smile, nor even relaxed the rigidity of his muscles. In private, his intimate friends mention that he occasionally made an effort to smile, but never with any marked success, his smiles at best being hardly more than a species of spoiled grin.

His countenance wore a thoughtful aspect, but his whole appearance was rather that of a stupid, clownish-like farmer of the humbler class. His features were massy. He had a flat face, its conformation being peculiarly characteristic of the faces of the Jewish race of people. His features seemed to be huddled together, without anything like regularity in them. His nose had a good deal of the cock-up form. His mouth was rather large, and his lips thick and prominent. His forehead was more than an average height, considering the altitude of his face. His hair had something like a darkish hue, and was generally short. His complexion was pale, except where it was slightly tinged with color by the weather. He was short and thick; though, being considerably under the general height, it is possible his portly, and corpulent aspect generally, may have made him appear shorter than he really was. He usually was to be seen in a great coat of a dark brown color; and as he paid but little attention to his personal habiliments, his tailor had no difficult customer to please—that is, in respect to taste and style, though not on the question of price.

It was one feature in Nathan's conduct, when on 'Change, that he never, except when engaged in business, entered into any conversation whatsoever with any of the multitude surrounding him. There he stood, apparently as deeply lost in thought, and with as melancholy a countenance as if he had been alone in the "vast wilderness" of shades referred to by Cowper, or been the "Last man" described by Campbell. Whether his reserve was constitutional, or whether it arose from the pride of purse, or whether from the magnitude of the matters which must have been ever occupying his mind—or from the conjoint operation of these three—can only be surmised.—*Packard's Monthly.*

STRIKE THE KNOT.—"Strike the knot!" said a gentleman one day to his son, who, tired and weary, was leaning on his axe over a log which he had in vain been trying to cleave. Then, looking at the log, the gentleman saw how the boy had hacked and clipped all around the knot without hitting it. Taking the axe, he struck a few sharp blows on the knot, and split the log without difficulty. Smiling, he returned the axe to his son, saying—

"Always strike the knot."

That was good advice. It is a capital maxim to follow when you are in trouble. Have you a hard sum to do at school?—Have you got to face a difficulty? Are you leaving home to live for the first time among strangers? Strike the knot!—Look your trouble in the eye, as a bold lion hunter looks in the face of the lion. Never shrink from a painful duty, but step right up and do it. Yes, strike the knot, boys and girls, and you will always conquor your difficulties. Strike the knot, and crack it goes.

☞ A curious case of somnambulism occurred at Richford, Vt., a few nights ago. Alvin Goff, of that village, got up in his sleep, dressed himself, spoke to his son-in-law and obtained permission to take his horse to go after his (Goff's) cow, which he said had broken out of the pasture. He then harnessed the horse, and after driving a mile hitched it to a fence while he started on an imaginary pursuit after the cow. But she was terribly obstinate, he thought, and after chasing her a long distance, he sat down to rest, and then came to himself. He found his horse hitched, and his cow, which had caused him so much anxiety and fatigue, safe in the pasture.

☞ Plough or not plough, you must pay your rent.