The Port Tobacco Times

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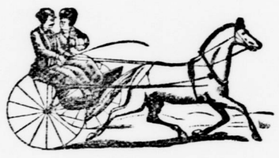
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Poetry.

THE GRATEFUL MERMAID.

A DANISH LEGEND

The fisherman drew in his nets to the shore,
And in them a prize never caught before.

Two fair, white arms waved wildly in air,
And a beautiful, pleading face was there.

The fisherman held his blade on high,
And cried: "Vile sorceress you must die!"

"O! fisherman, fisherman, hold your hand!
'Tis I, your mistress, that now command."

"My Lady, my Lady, you do not know
That this is a mermaid—the sailor's woe.

"With voice and with beauty she lures him on,
Till he leaps in her arms, and his soul is gone.

"Ah! many a sailor, both good and brave,
Through her seductions has found his grave."

"Justice is well, yet let her live!
Sweetly 'tis nobler that we forgive.

"Go, take her out to her home in the sea,
And set the repentent mermaid free!"

The lady's commands could not be gainsaid,
And the fisherman, 'gainst his will, obeyed.

To the sea he returned her, a mile from shore,
And he saw the mermaid's face no more.

* * * * * * *

A terrible storm arose that night,
And the wild winds raged in their angry might.

High in the air the billows were tossed,
And many a ship was wreck'd and lost.

My lady wept, on her bended knee,
And pray'd for her lord, who was out at sea.

She heard the winds and the waves loud roar,
And she pray'd that her lord might return once more.

She heard a footstep upon the stair!
O! joy to my lady—her lord was there.

Her prayer was answered—her heart was blest;
Again she was clasped to her loved one's breast.

He told her how the good ship went down;
How, hope forsaken, he thought to drown;

When, suddenly, from the rolling wave,
Two strong, white arms came forth to save.

The fearful waters they led him o'er,
And bore him in safety upon the shore.

And, e'er he could thank her, she sadly smiled,
And vanished away in the billows wild.

"Now, Heaven be praised!" did his lady say,
"For the merciful deed that I did this day!

"I saved the life of this brave mermaid;
Now her debt of gratitude is paid."

Then she told the story with joyous tears;
And it gladdened their lives in after years.

Justice is well; but, say what you will,
Mercy is better and nobler still!

—*George Bridgeye.*

HIRAM WAYFIELD'S WAY.

"Why, Father Wayfield! What in this world be you doin'?" "I'm mindin' my own business, madam, 'f ye want ter know; 'n' that's more'n yu c'n say!"

"Wall! I sh'd jest like t' know what business you've got to build sech a shanty, right under my parlow winder, as ye might say! What's the thing fur, anyhow?"

"It's for the pigs, Mrs. Wayfield; I've kept um cooped up in the cubbyhole long enough. Now, seein's your business here seems to be done, suppose'n ye turn right round 'n' see 'f ye can't find some in your proper place—the house!"

Mrs. Wayfield stood aghast. Have the pigs in the old garden! That was a little too much to be believed!

"O papa!" called out Hope, from the parlor door. "You don't really mean it?"

Hope was nineteen, and everyone who had known the father needed no one to explain that she was his child. Her mouth had the same firm lines, her high forehead had the same slope, and her black eye the same flash. "Smart as all creation," the neighbors said--given to witty repartee and bubbling good humor, if nothing crossed her; but the indomitable will of the father had been reproduced in the girl, and they were alike self-sufficient and independent.

"Wal ef I don't mean it, then! I don't—that's all! Guess I hain't the sort of man, tho', that has t' go inter the house an' ask the woman folks when I e'll breathe, n'r where I s'll keep my hogs!"

"Hiram Wayfield! Ye don't mean to say t'at you'r a goin' to turn this beautiful garden into a pig pen?" gasped the irate wife.

"That's jest what I m an ter say!"

"Good gracious! as ef 'twant enough t' see such an old bungalow right next t' parlor an' bedroom! But no! It seems 't yew want them pigs right under yer nose, a squealin' an grunting' and breedin' typhoid fever. Pretty place to invite comp'ny into, that parlor 'll be, won't it? And there's them rose bushes, an' that sparagus. What ye goin' t' do with them?"

"As for the comp'ny, ef they don't like it, they ain't obleeged to stay. Folks ought to know better 'n to go roardin' round amongst the farmers in summer time, anyway. As to them rose bushes--I don't know's I care what becomes of them. Ye can't eat em, nor sell um, nor ye can't wear um; an' I guess likely them pigs 'll meller up the dirt around um some."

Hope felt that she could not have it so.

"O, father! don't!" she cried. "I'll give you ten dollars if you wont!"

"Feel mighty important jest because you've been knockin' around in that old straw shop a little, don't ye? Make it ten thousand, an' ye couldn't bluff me off from carryin' out what I've begun. I'll hev my way, if ye be headstrong!"

"O father! I don't want you to do it! Now just think!"

"I can't help what ye don't want, an' what's more, I don't care!"

Hope had become as angry as her father.

"That's just it!" she cried. "You don't care a snap about your own folks; but if that drunken old Jones should happen along and raise some objection, you'd consider his opinion worthy of some consideration. If I'd only known what you meant to do, I'd have asked you to do it, and then I'd been sure you wouldn't! Well, go ahead! If you don't get enough of it before you get through, then my name ain't Hope Wayfield! I hope you'll be tormented just about to death with the nasty things, and I believe you will. Come mother, come in. Let him get all the comfort he can out of it. I guess he will find that I can be as hateful as he can, if I set out!" And she slammed the door on the white heat of her father's reply.

Not a word was spokon in the kitchen, unless it may have been a species of "wooden swearing," as Hope and her mother went about their work with more than usual vigor. At last Mrs. Wayfield remarked,—

"Hope, I'm sorry you spoke so to your father. I know 'twas awful aggravatin'; but he's your father, an' you ought to be more respectful; an' I'd ought to know mor'n to begin on him the way't I did myself."

"Mother, I shall never forget this as long as I live! It might not be right for me to talk so to him, but my Wayfield spunk was up; and as for honoring him—if there's a particle of honor for him in my heart, just now, I don't know where it is."

"Hush, Hope! You know he has good traits, an' you will remember them when this cloud passes over. An' you must not forget that you are a chip of the old block, an' need to watch over yourself."

Have my readers ever tried their hands at driving pigs? If so, they will experience a thrill of compassion for the farmer as he attempted to install his porcine property in its new abode, and will be ready to echo his damp satisfaction when, after a half hour's chasing of the creature he succeeded in getting one of them safely corraled. Hope and her mother, who, in different circumstances, would have volunteered their services, if not called upon, watched his trials with a kind of grim satisfaction. But where now were the other two pigs? He hurried round, hither and thither, and at last heard a series of satisfied grunts under the barn floor.

"My stars!" said he to himself. "There they be, a fillin' themselves up on that salpetre, most likely, an' not a soul to help me git um out for love nor money. An' how to git um out—that is the question! Why don't that young sass box show herself? But I won't please her so much as to call her 'specially, as I don't b'leeve she'd come 'f I did. She'll have to be taken down a peg or tew, or there'll be no livin' with her. Shoo! shoo! git out o' this!" he cried, as he seized a mallet and went hastily to tearing up the boards.

But the pigs scampered away—here, there, and everywhere except the one particular place which would let them out. In fact, Mr. Wayfield began to hope they wouldn't find it at present, for it had occurred to him to get some swill and take it to the opening, and coax them out. Arrived at the "swill room," he found the pails empty, and, not to humiliate himself by asking his wife to skim some milk, he took his pail along to the milk-room, and quickly emptied into it what seemed a pan of buttermilk. On his way he seized a rope to be used in case of need.

But when he reached the barn, the exasperating creatures were nowhere to be seen or heard. He rapped on the pail with a stick—a signal that was won't to rouse them, when "tired nature's sweet restorer" had made them for a time oblivious of the pangs of hunger—but it met with no response. After chasing about with pail and slip noose, keeping up a continual rapping for another half hour or so, he discovered a serpentine trail down through the tall meadow grass, and following it up he found the truants, very intent on exploring the slimy ditch.

Rap! rap! rap! went the signal, and that time with so good effect that they both started pell mell for the pail. But the speckled one had made a little miscalculation on the distance, and the surplus momentum would have carried him far beyond our friend's cow hides but for th unfortunate fact that the space between them just then happened to be insufficient. In consequence of this, Mr. Wayfield very suddenly found himself sprawling in the ditch, on top of the unfortunate pig, while the black mud covered him one second, overlaid the next by the buttermilk which the other animal had tipped over in his face.

A confused idea of the queer figure he would cut mingled with a determination to "lasso that scoundrel" now he had him.

This he very easily did. "But after all," thought he, "I believe I could carry him, if I set about it, easier."

Grasping him in his arms, he started for the new sty.

"Plague on that girl!" he muttered. "Wish she'd kept her plaguey tongue still!"

But alas! gravitation seemed to possess an unusual amount of attraction for that struggling, muddy object; and but for the rope he must have lost him several times, notwithstanding his affectionate grip; and when he deposited his slimy burden with his mate, with a "Confound the women, anyway!" the perspiration dropped from his face in buttermilk hue, and taking out the bandana, he essayed to rub down his throbbing temples.

Convulsed with laughter, Hope watched him start off again, and "Oh, what a looking object!" she ejaculated.

No trace of his squealer could he find in the neighborhood of the ditch. Here and there he ran.

"No doubt but the devil's entered into the swine—an' the women too—I swum for't!" panted he.

"Mother, mother!" laughed Hope. "It is most too bad to let him skite around so for nothing. He has gone off hunting after that pig that went in after him when he put in the speckled one! Did you see him?"

"No, no, child! I didn't! I didn't." And the tears rolling down Mrs. Wayfield's face met the irrepressible laughter that illicited them.

"Call him to dinner, Hope! Call him to dinner. I couldn't blow that horn now to save me!"

Hope blew a vigorous blast; but Hiram was not the kind of man to stop for dinner till that rascal was penned—not he!

Still he searched and listened.

"Where in the name of common sense has that pesky critter gone. Like as not he's somewhere round by the pen by this time; I'll go an' see." And there, side by side, he found the three tired adventurers, sleeping as composedly as if nothing like trouble existed in this mortal world.

"That beats the Dutch! How in natur' did that tarnal little rascal git in? Well, he's all right now, which I ain't. How will I ever face them women in such a plight?"

He went slowly in at the back way, drew off his overalls, and, after a thorough application of soft soap and hard water, he donned an unlaundered shirt that he pulled from the clothe's basket, and presented himself at the dinner table with the secret hope that "them women folks had been so busy, or perhaps, so mad," that they had not taken the time or the pains to witness his misfortunes.

Not a word was spoken; but the mongrel expression on his face (so suggestive of a dog that had conquered in a fight, but expected to be punished when his master discovered that he had been fighting) proved too much for Hope's would-be dignity and she found it impossible to restrain an occasional little explosive laugh.

"Here, Hope," said her mother, "take this bowl an' go into the milk room, an' git some cream for the puddin' out of that ten quart pan. I skimmed it off from last night's milk, afore I run it up for the cheese, an' it's jest as sweet as the mornin's cream would be."

Glad of an [illegible] moment, she took the bowl [illegible] peared almost immediately.

"There isn't any cream in the pan," she said; "it's gone."

"Gone! A good deal it's gone!" Here, give me the bowl. I shouldn't think ye could see an inch from yer nose."

"Cream!" exclaimed the man, inadvertently. "Then it wasn't buttermilk, after all! I thought—"

"Buttermilk would be splendid on minnit puddin', wouldn't it? We don't happen to be in the buttermilk business jest now, but I can give ye some whey if ye want it. I prefer sweetened cream myself," and out she went. "Hiram Wayfield!" said she, on her return, "that ar cream is gone, an' yer know where it went to, or I'm a sinner. There's a round place on the floor, jest the size of the big swill pail, with spatters of cream all round it, an' I b'leeve yer know how they come there."

Hiram's flushed face grew a trifle redder.

"Ha! ha! ha! laughed Hope, whose sense of injury vainly strove to repress her keen sense of humor. "I'll bet anything, mother, that he took it out and fed it to the pigs!"

"No, I didn't take it out an' feed it to the pigs, ye imperdent hussy! But"—with struggling forces contending for the mastery in the corners of his mouth—"I'm grandly mistaken if them an pigs didn't feed it to me! There's some things it won't do to be too certain about in this world," he added, and the universal laugh that followed restored good nature so completely that the restraint passed entirely away.

But there was little comfort for any of the family that summer, on account of that "thorn in the flesh." Mother and daughter knowing by experience that argument would be worse than useless, schooled themselves to preserve a wise silence on the subject, even when prints of small feet in an adjoining ruined beet bed, and among the demoralized pea vines, immediately pointed out the marauders. Indeed, I fear that Hope was rather glad than otherwise, and enjoyed her father's unspoken indignation. Many a sly laugh did she tuck in her sleeve at his unconscious sniff when odors unlike the fragrance of roses greeted him through the open windows of the dining room, and so well did she enjoy his discomfiture, that the keen edge of her own bitterness was dulled.

As for him, after that first outbreak, his obstinacy would not allow him to turn his back, or yield his point. Yet, through an uneasy sense of having over reached, or the uninspiring influence of persistent, though unspoken opposition, he failed to complete the convenient arrangements he had originally planned. So through the summer the trough reposed without a pedestal on the unstable surface of the airy pen; night and morning he scrambled over the wall, to deposit in its capacious precincts the contents of the pails.

But the occupants of the quasi garden seemed happy enough, and throve in the freedom that the large walled enclosure gave them, till one day a monstrous stone, which their inquisitive noses had been gradually undermining, fell upon Speckle, and pinned him there. When the others were fed at night, he was found dead.

The next morning, for reasons best known to himself, Mr. Wayfield gave the survivors a new home near the barn.

To tell the truth, I believe he was actuated by a superstitious dread least the well remembered curse should extend to the others if they remained there, and it was very evident that he had had "enough of it;" but he had had his "way!"

The Hare in the Moon.

There is a common superstition against pointing the finger at the new moon; and in Swabia children are not allowed to make the shadow figure of a hare on the walls with their fingers, in imitation of the hare sometimes supposed to be visible in the moon. This latter custom is curious, because in China, India and Ceylon there is also thought to be a hare in the moon, and in connection with definite traditions. In Indian mythology, the god of the moon carries a hare; in Ceylon the story is that the hare, meeting Buddha in a wood, bade him light a fire, and then proceeded to jump into it, for her to be cooked for his benefit; whereupon Buddha snatched the good animal from the flame and translated him to the moon. And the Chinese hold that the hare's figure was placed in the moon to commemorate the action of the Ruler of Heaven, who once changed himself into a hare to assuage the pangs of a hungry traveler. Some such story must underlie the Swabian custom, which, like other customs in connection with the moon, is sometimes thought to be a survival of the old system of moon worship. But how came it that the sun and moon were ever worsnipped at all? Is it not, with greater probability, because human attributes were once ascribed to them with fear and dread, than because they were regarded as the symbols of light, or fire, or heat? From the belief in their humanity to belief in their divinity, the transition would be natural and obvious, and, in fact, on no other theory can we understand all the propitiatory sacrifices connected with their worship. Would the Mexicans have offered their horrible human sacrifices merely to the symbols of light and heat?—*Gentleman's Magazine.*

He Was Some Lunatics.

A saloon-keeper on Gratiot street sat at his door the other afternoon wondering why it was that so many men in Detroit preferred buttermilk to beer, when two strangers came along. One of them placed a penny on the side-walk, placed his right heel on the penny, and then bent over to see how far he could reach and mark the flagstone with a nail. As he reached out he lifted his heel off the penny, and the other man picked up the coin, slipped it into his pocket and winked at the saloonist. "That's a long reach," said No. 1, as he straightened up. "Yes, but you lifted your heel off the cent." "No, I didn't." Bet you a dollar!" "I'll take it." "Hold on, shentlemens," said the beer seller, as he rose up; "I like to make some bets myself." "I bet you $2 my heel is on a penny," said No. 1. "I take dot bet awful queek," replied the saloonist, and a couple of $1 bills were handed to No. 2. No. 1 sat down on the walk, pulled off his shoe and held it up that the saloon-keeper might see a penny screwed fast to the heel. He replaced his shoe after a moment, rose up and bowed courteously, and the pair walked off. They were at least half a block away before the victim recovered sufficiently to say: "Vhell! vhell! I pays taxes in two wards und goes twice to Chicago, but yet I vhas some lunatics who ought to be led around mit a rope!"—*Detroit Free Press.*

PEBBLES.

The dime museum woman, who writes with her toes must make a great many foot-notes.

You must see about seats for the new opera, Fishy, said Mrs. Fishwhacker to Mr. F. I saw the librettos at the books ore today. (Horatii Flacci Opera.)

No sooner is the Reichstag dissolved in Germany than the Landtag is opened, and we dare say Rugeg and Bobtail will be along presently.

M. L. Holbrook has written a book on "How to Strengthen the Memory." He omits the most fashionable of strengtheners, that of tying a string about the forefinger.

Mr. Whistler wore yellow gloves, carried a yellow stick, and showed at his breast pocket a note of yellow on the occasion of the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery Exhibition in London.

Dr. George Frommann, the celebrated linguist, is dead. At one period of his life he was able to converse with entire facility in forty nine languages, including dialects. Latin he spoke as rapidly as German.

Having Great Larks.

"What was the great racket I heard in your woodshed after you got home from fishing last night?" asked one Estelline small boy of another. "It was me swingin' the buggy whip for fun," the other replied. "But I heard somebody jumpin' around, too." "Oh, that was pa, seeing if he could jump over the wash boiler and two tubs." "But who was it yelled so like thunder?" "Why, every time he made an extra high jump he would holler kinder in fun, you know."