Beaver & Gephart

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The Old Clock on the Stairs.

Somewhat back from the village street,
Stands the old-fashioned country-seat:
Across its antique portico
Tall poplar trees their shadows throw:
And from its station, in the hall,
An ancient time-piece says to all:
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

Half-way up the stairs it stands,
And points and beckons with its hands,
From its case of massive oak,
Like a monk, who (under his cloak)
Crosses himself, and sighs, "Alas!"
With sorrowful voice to all who pass:
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

By day its voice is low and light;
But in the silent dead of night,
Distinct, as a passing footstep's fall,
It echoes along the vacant hall—
Along the ceiling—along the floor—
And seems to say at each chamber door:
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

In that mansion used to be
Free-hearted Hospitality;
His great fires by the chimney roared:
The stranger feasted at his board;
But, like the skeleton at the feast,
The warning time-piece ceased:
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

Three groups of merry children played;
Three youths and maidens, dreaming, strayed
O precious hours! O golden prime!
And influence of love and time!
Even as a miser counts his gold,
Those hours the precious time-piece told
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

From that chamber, clothed in white,
The bride came forth on her wedding night,
There, in that silent room, below,
The dead lay in its shroud of snow;
And in the hush that followed the prayer,
Was heard the old clock on the stair;
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

All are scattered now and fled:
Some are married—some are dead;
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
"Ah! when shall they all meet again,
As in the days long since gone by?"
The ancient time-piece makes reply:
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

Never here—forever there—
Where all parting, pain, and care,
And death, and time, shall disappear—
Forever there—but never here!
The horologe of eternity
Sayeth this incessantly:
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

A RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION.

"Miriam Green, I am astonished!" said Aunt Jane.

"Oh, but, Aunt Jane, I couldn't help it!" said Miriam, laughing.

But, at the same time. she colored very red, and hung down her pretty head.

There was no denying this offense. It was patent to all the world—or, at least, to all that part of it who might happen to be on the edge of Raven Woods.

There was Miriam Green up in the top of the old oak tree, which reared its proud crest, an Absalom among its gold-leaved brethern, her curls all tangled, her apron filled with treasures of dark-green mistletoe. There was Aunt Jane, standing in the little, open clearing, with hands uplifted, eyes opened in the widest of disapproving glares, and sunbonnet fallen over backward on her shoulders.

"Your frock's all torn!" enunciated the old lady.

"I can easily mend it again."

"And your hair blown into a tangle."

"Oh, Aunt Jane, that is nothing!" pleaded Miriam.

But the old lady would listen to no argument.

"You were sixteen yesterday," said she. "You are old enough to know better. And you shall be made to know better! I will punish you for this piece of inexcusable hoydenism!"

Miriam's blue eyes grew big.

Surely Aunt Jane couldn't shake her, or shut her up in the garret with a page of "Watt's Hymns" to learn, or—worst alternative of all—put her on a short allowance of apple-pie at dinner.

For pretty Miriam was still child enough to regard any of these occurrences as a serious misfortune, and one greatly to be deprecated.

But while she was yet in the agonies of apprehension, the question was definitely determined by Aunt Jane's advancing to the foot of the oak-tree and pulling away the ladder that had served as a means to reach the first bough, a ragged mass of folliage some twenty feet up from the roots. Below that, the trunk extended down as perpendicular and free of side growth as a telegraph pole.

"There!" said Aunt Jane "since you were so anxious to climb the tree after mistletoe, you may remain there and think it over at your leisure. I will come back this evening and put back the ladder."

Miriam uttered a little cry.

"Please, Aunt Jane, don't go off!" she appealed, "I'll never do so any more. Please forgive me, just this once!"

But Aunt Jane was inexorable. With slow majesty, she strode out of the opening and was gone, even while Miriam's piteous voice quivered on the air.

There she sat perched on a horizontal bough, clinging to the taper-trunk of the tree, and swayed to and fro in the gentle October breezes. It had been a most fascinating position a few minutes ago; now it was frightful and perilous in the extremest degree.

Was it an hour was it ten? or possibly only fifteen minutes? Like the Prisoner of Chillion our poor little captive had lost all power of calculating time. But just as the round sun hung like a ball or ornage-flame above the western woods, there was the sound of quick footsteps crashing over fallen twigs and crisp autumn leaves below.

"It's John Ford coming home from hunting," Miriam said to herself, with a quick breath. "Oh, I do hope he won't see me!"

She shrunk close to the trunk of the tree, and tried to seem as much like a big bunch of mistletoes as possible. But it was useless. John Ford's keen eyes were too well used to woodcraft and all pertaining to it, to overlook her. He stopped short at the entrance to the glade.

"Miriam Green!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said the girl, laughing a little hysterically. "Zaccheus he—"

"And I am Zaccheus, and now I can't get down."

"Oh!" said Mr. Ford. "The ladder fell, did it?"

"Y-yes," said Miriam, turning very red. "The ladder fell down."

"I'll put it up for you," said Ford.

"Do!" said Miriam, laughing to herself, as she thought of Aunt Jane.

He swung the ladder promptly up against the trunk of the tree.

"Now, it's all right," said he. "I'll just go over to see that the dogs hayen't frightened Mrs. Morey's young turkeys, and wait for you outside the woods.

In five minutes Miriam Green was by his side, rosy and breathless, still clinging to her aproufol of mistletoe.

"Oh, I am so much obliged to you!" said she, earnestly.

"What will Aunt Jane say?" said Miriam, involuntarily.

"She'll be very much alarmed, won't she?"

"No," confessed Miriam. "She—that is—Oh, Mr. Ford, I can't deceive you about it!"

And she told him all.

"Of course, it was very wrong to disobey her," she added, "but—"

"My poor little Miriam! My sweet frightened darling!" cried John Ford passing his strong arm around her waist. "She was a perfect dragooness to torment you so!"

"But I belong to her," said the girl, innocently. "I have no other home but her house."

"Then belong to me, henceforward," he said, tenderly looking down into her blue, limpid eyes. "Surely, you cannot have failed to discover how deeply I love you! Hereafter you are mine!"

Miriam Green, young as she was, had often dreamed of the pathway in which love should come to her, but it had never seemed like this!

"But," she stammered, "what will your uncle say?"

"What should he say?" calmly retorted her lover. "Ford Court is mine. My uncle is only my beloved and honored guest. Besides, he loves me so genuinely that my happiness cannot but be his. And—But what is this?"

They had by this time reached the solid stone wall which divided the grounds of Ford Court from the woods, and there perched up on its height—a feminine Stylites—was Aunt Jane, with a basket in her hand, half full of the barberries which she had gathered from the huge bushes that made a scarlet-dotted screen inside, while stretched prone on the grass at the foot of the wall lay old Major Ford's monster bloodhound, Gelert. He looked around and wagged his tail slowly at the sight of John, but did not stir otherwise.

"Aunt Jane," said Miriam, "what are you doing on top of the wall, there?"

"I—I only wanted a few barberries to put in my cucumber pickles," stammered Aunt Jane ready to burst into tears. "And—and I didn't suppose there was any harm in gathering them here. I've picked pecks and pecks of barberies off them very bushes and nobody said a word. And I was just reaching up for the finest, when up comes a cross old savage and asks me what I mean by stealing fruit, and leaves me here with this horrid, snarling brute to watch me—just as if I was a tramp—while he goes for a constable! I never was so treated in my life! And, the more I try to jump off, the more the dog shows his teeth at me, and growls. He'd tear me in pieces if I stirred a foot in any direction, I do believe!"

"My Uncle Ford," whispered John to Miriam. "He is a positive monomaniac on the subject of fruit thieves? The park bristles with man-traps, and there is a dog chained under every apple-tree on the premises. But it's too bad that he should have taken your aunt for one of the village purloiners! Gelert? come here this instant sir! I assure you, Miss Green" (to Aunt Jane, who between her fatigue was on the verge of fainting,) "my uncle will be the most grieved of any one, when he learns what a misapprehension he has been laboring under. Allow me to help you down. Take care—don't spill the barberries!"

"Dear Aunt Jane!" soothed Miriam, receiving the old lady in her arms, "how frightened you must have been!"

"Oh, Miriam, forgive me!" sobbed the old lady behind her sunbonnet. "I—I didn't know how dreadful it was, or I never, never would have pulled the ladder down and left you there! It's a righteous retribution on me, that's what it is!"

"Oh, aunty, don't fret about that said Miriam, radiantly. "It's all right now. Mr. Ford came along and put up the ladder again, and—and I'm engaged to be married to him! Don't look so surprised, Aunt Jane! I know I've told it in a jerky sort of way, but it all happened as naturally as possible. Didn't it, John?"

And then followed congratulations and explanations and finally the humble apologies of Major Ford, a testy old gentleman of sixty odd years who just then arrived on the scene, accompanied by the village constable.

"I'm sure I beg a thousand pardons!" said Major Ford. 'But how was I to know? I'm a stranger in these parts; you know, and half the fruit-trees were stripped last night."

And Aunt Jane received his acknowledgement in frigid silence.

"A lady is a lady," she said to her niece, afterward," even if she has climbed on a stone-wall to gather barberries! And no one but a semi-barbarian could mistake her for anything else!"

And Miriam Green was too happy in her own new born felicity to argue the questions with her aunt.

Varieties of Beggars.

Each city has its own style. The Venetian child is noted for persistence in simple asking with a whine. The Florentine has quite as great staying quantities, with a more artistic whine and more eloquence in his tone, and can show sores to better advantage than the others. The Florentine is an artistic vagabond who begs by rule. He makes no mistakes. He is got up with special reference to begging, and he is as keen at it as a Wall street broker is at his trade He looks hungry, he acts hungry, he shivers as naturally as though he was perishing with cold, and when you pass by without responding to his appeal he looks at you with reproachful eyes half full of tears, as though you had committed the unpardonablesin of which he was the victim.

The Roman beggar attempts to wheedle you out of a copper by sheer, good-natured impudence. He will commence with a whine of famine, but being looked squarely in the face will abandon the role of the starving sufferer and take on that of the buffoon. He will limp and whine for a minute and then burst out into a laugh and then turn a handspring. He follows you as long as either of the others, and is quite as annoying, but he does it in a different way.

The Roman beggar has, it must be confessed, a certain financial ability which cannot be too much admired. He never begs of an Italian, for he knows it avail him nothing, the etiquette being as it was in the old days of highway robbery in England, the highwayman never stopping one of his profession. The farthest they go in this with each other is, the beggar will come into a resturant where an Italian is taking an economical breakfast on coffee and bread, and modestly ask for what sugar he does not use in his coffee. In restaurants so many lumps of sugar are given for each portion of coffee, and it is the regular thing to put any surplus there may be in the pocket. As this is inconvenient the good-natured man will give the extra lumps to the fortunate beggar who may happen in at the right time. Two or three lumps of sugar is quite a find for these pickers-up of unconsidered trifles, and by haunting the cafes all the morning, and from 4 in the afternoon a very fair living is obtained.

Not the horse he wanted.—The Michigan man who counted the number of grains of wheat in a quart measure and then competed in a prize guess of a Detroit clothing firm for a fine horse, was disappointed when he found that the prize was only a clothes-horse. He has brought suit to recover the value of a live animal.

A CONGRESSMAN'S EARLY LIFE.

There is a member of the present Congress, representing a district in California whose early life was spiced with more dangerous experiences than fall to the lot of most mortals.

He began life by being born in Arkansas; and he possessed for a father one of those ideal squatters of that early day, whom Colonel Faulkner, in his "Arkansaw Traveler," has impressed upon the mind of the country.

Of course, when this embryo Congressman was born, he and his mother had to have the dry corner of the cabin; while the old man hunted coons, played the fiddle, and slept under the leaks.

However, if water was scarce in this corner, milk was plenty; and he thrived and soon got big enough to crawl over on the old man's side of the house, and knock blazes out of the fiddle with the fire shovel.

For this he got thrashed—and the fight became general—resulting in the father getting licked by the aroused female of that palatial residence in the ten-acre clearing of the Commonwealth of Arkansas.

This naturally made the proud spirited pioneer sulky; and hanging up the demoralized fiddle, he took down his old rifle and strode away into the deep forest for a "b'ar," or a "catermount," or something he could manage—taking with him seven of the dogs, and leaving a large, fierce one to guard the cabin and help the wife tackle any prowling enemy that might happen along.

It was a wise precaution, without which that particular Congressional District in California, mentioned above, would to-day be represented by another man.

That afternoon, about three o'clock, the future statesman crawled out at the cabin door, into the bright sunshine and laughed and crowed, while his mother was working indoors and the dog lay asleep by the ash hopper.

A panther which had approached the clearing, saw the child; and creeping nearer and nearer, it suddenly pounced upon the baby, and, seizing it by the shoulder, turned to fly.

Of course the youngster supposed it was some more than fiddle business, and he squalled lustily, startling both his mother and the dog.

True to Arkansas principles, that dog buckled in on the panther, quicker than a flash, and closed on its throat. He had fought this kind of animal before, and he knew just where to take hold.

Dropping the child, which was not hurt, the panther made a fierce fight with the dog, and was just on the point of gaining the mastery, when the woman rushed out with the gun, and, being rather used to such business, stuck the muzzle behind that panther's shoulder, pulled the trigger, and the powder did the rest.

That Arkansas family had a dead panther on their hands, but a live baby, when the grateful father returned with a lot of coons and other game, and joy and peace again reigned.

But killing panthers and other game that way, soon made life too tame in that locality; and our Congressman's parents, with all their dogs, moved up on the Missouri river, near where Kansas City now stands.

This new location afforded another luxury—catfish—which may account for the aforesaid Congressman being a little fishy in politics.

Aside from this, life did not so much differ from the old home.

They lived by that huge, treacherous Missouri river, and the old man kept a dug-out of the largest size.

It was well he had the boat—for one night they woke up and thought they could feel the cabin shake, and the water splashed against it; and two minutes afterward the father had waded out waist deep in water to where the boat was chained to a tree. Hastily returning to the cabin door, he placed his wife and four year old boy in it, and vigorously paddled for high land through the timber.

In ten minutes more the log cabin had plunged into the whirling, muddy waters, that were sweeping everything before them.

It was the same old story of the treachery of that river. Suddenly rising, it had cut its way through, back of the cabin, and, undermining the soil, had swept the entire clearing away, with hundreds of acres of heavy timber A narrow escape for the gentleman from California.

Homeless, and with only three dogs for a fresh start in life, our restless pioneer struck out for the Far West, and eventually drove down in the mountain regions, near the headquarters of the Arkansas river.

It was beautiful summer when he stopped and built his cabin; it was beautiful white winter when he turned his back on it, with his little five year old boy in his arms, and wintered in a cave.

This was the saddest episode of all his rugged life. The father had gone hunting up on the mountain side, where he could look down and see his little cabin nicely sheltered in a nook under the cliff. Silently the snow began to fall, hard and fine as sand, and so fast and thick that it shut out every view, and forced the hunter to take refuge in a cave, which he had previously found and prepared for emergencies.

Here the continual fall of snow forced him to remain for two days, in dread suspense as to the fate of his wife and child.

On the third day he found the storm abated, but saw to his horror that the snow had been blown from the mountain, and had drifted in the valley, until no vestige of his cabin could be seen above its white surface.

As the mountain sides were almost bare of snow, he hastily descended and began the search for his little home.

At last he saw an opening in the snow, which was the chimney-top of the cabin. Through it he quickly descended, and saw a sight that froze his heart. The poor heroine of that lone cottage, the wife and mother, had stripped the bed and herself of clothing to save the life of her child; and there lay the little fellow, all bundled up in a ball of clothing, asleep; while on the bed lay the mother—asleep, too—the sleep that knows no waking.

The father dug a grave beneath the dirt floor of the cabin, buried his wife and, taking the boy, went back to the cave, where there was plenty of fuel and food, and remained until spring.

When the weather once more grew warm, he wandered away, with the restless spirit of the pioneer.

Then the gold fever struck him, and he rushed to California; and then the camp fever struck him, and he passed in his checks—leaving an orphan who has fought his way through to Congress.

The Lime-Kiln Club.

(Detroit Free Press.)

"I will now remark to dis club," said Brother Gardner, as he opened the meeting, "dat de Hon. Jawback Johnson, of Opelika, has arrove. He reached Detroit two days ago on de roof of a freight car, an' in a somewhat carniverous condition, an' as he knocked on de doah of my cabin at midnight I looked frew de winder an' put on a pa'r o' brass knuckles afore I dared step out an' ax his name an' bizness. I has filled him up wid meat an' tater, lent him a clean shirt dat buttons behind an' a suit of cloze, an' I would furder remark dat he 'pears to be a pusson of transparent intelligence an' resplendid polish. Let us listen to him wid anxus interest and careless observashun."

The committee on reception then donned their white gloves and claw-hammer coats and disappeared in search of the stranger. They found him shivering with stage-fright in the ante-room, and it was only after Giveadam Jones had threatened to loosen the top of his head that he consented to enter the hall. Once in he braced up, however, and after reaching the platform and swallowing three peppermint drops and a glass of water he seemed to recover his native confidence and to forget that one end of his collar was loose and sawing away at his chin.

His dissertation, which lasted nearly an hour, began by showing the advantages of truth, then after wrestling with the evils of ambition, the necessity of econemy, he struggled with the disagreeable subject of industry, causing many a scowl on the faces of his auditors, and concluded as follows:

"I thank you with consummate airnestness for de skillful manner in which you have evaded your attention to my cubersome remarks, an' I hope dat de seed thus sown on stony ground may sprout up an' yield seventy-five bushels to de acre.

When the speaker had been escorted from the hall Brother Gardner said:

"De man who dares to pint out our faults am a friend, an' let us receive his criticisms as such. If I should diskiver dat any of you war' lyin' in wait inde alley to slug the Hon. Jawback Johnson as a reward of merit it am very probable dat de orator wouldn't be de only man hurt. We will now abdicate."

A rolling stone gathers no moss, but a rolling-pin in the right hands will garner considerable hair.

HUMOROUS.

A colored individual who went down on the slippery flags at the corner of Woodward auenue and Congress street scrambled up and backed out into the street and took a long look towards the roof of the nearest building. "You fell from that third-story window!" remorked a pedestrian who had witnessed the tumble. "Boss, I believes yer!" was the prompt reply; "but what puzzles me am de queshun of how I got up dar an' why *I* was leanin' out ob de winder!"—*Detroit Free Press.*

She Renewed.

One of the Detroit sanitary police was the other day wandering over a box-full of dead cats in an alley off Seventh street, when he heard oaths and yells and the sounds of conflict in a a house near by. As he entered the yard, a man and a woman burst open the side door and rolled down the steps on a heap, kicking and clawing with right good will. "What's the trouble here?" asked the officer, as he pulled them apart.

"There, I'm glad you happened along!" exclaimed the man, as he jumped up. "The old woman and me have had a despute for the last fifteen years as to when Christopher Columbus discovered America. Maybe you know."

"It was in 1492," replied the officer.

"Just what I said—just the date I had!" cried the husband, as he danced around. "Now then, old woman, will you give up?"

"Never!"

"You won't?"

"Not an inch! I said 1490, and I had your neck across the edge of the step! We agreed not to bite or scratch and I prefer to renew the conflict rather than take a stranger's figures! come in the house!"

The officer waited at the gate until he heard two chairs smashed down and a dozen yells, and then he resumed his rounds with a growing conviction that Columbus would ultimately be two years ahead in that house.

An Ornament to the Profession.

A student applied the other day to one of the district courts for admission to practice. An examination committee of one was appointed by the Judge to ascertain his qualifications. The examination began with:

"Do you smoke, sir?"

"I do, sir!"

"Have you a spare cigar?"

"Yes."

"Now sir, what is the first duty of a lawyer?"

"To collect fees."

"Right. What is the second?"

"To increase the number of his clients."

"When does your position toward your client change?"

"When making a bill of costs."

"Explain."

"We are then antagonistic. I assume the character of plaintiff and he becomes the defendant."

"A suit decided, how do you stand with the lawyer conducting the other side?"

"Cheek by jowl."

"Enough, sir. you promise to become an ornament to your profession, and I wish you success. Now, are you aware of the duty you owe me?"

"Perfectly."

"Describe it."

"It is to invite you to drink."

"But suppose I decline?"

Candidate scratches his head.

"There is no instance of the kind on record in the books."

"You are right; and the confidence with which you make the assertion shows you have read the law attentively. Let's take a drink, and I'll sign your certificate."

How Alligators Eat.

An alligator's throat is an animated sewer. Everything which lodges in his open mouth goes down. He is a lazy dog, and, instead of hunting for something to eat, he lets his vituals hunt for him. That is, he lies with his great mouth open, apparently dead, like the 'possum. Soon a big bug crawls into it, then a fly, then several gnats, and a colony of mosquitoes. The alligator don't close his mouth yet. He is waiting for a whole drove of things. He does his eating by wholesale. A little lizard will cool himself under the shadow of the upper jaw. Then a few frogs will hop up to catch the mosquitoes. Then more mosquitoes and gnats light on the frogs. Finally a whole village of insects and reptiles settle down for an afternoon picnic. Then all at once there is an earthquake. The big jaw falls, the alligator slyly blinks one eye, gulps down the entire menagerie, and opens his great front door again for more visitors.