

RAGS!

Through the shady woods, where sweet flowers blossomed in wild luxuriance, and twisted creepers made an almost impassable barrier, went two children, slowly but surely fighting their way along.

Now and then a ray of sunlight glinting through the trees fell across these pretty bare heads and lovely dusky faces.

The dresses of rich cream embroidery were gathered about the waist by delicate pink ribbons; bows of the same rosy hue held back their thickly-clustered curls; tiny worked socks and pink kid shoes completed toilettes fit for any young princess.

But Zoe and Fay Marchmont were not princesses, only two very wilful, thoughtless little girls, who, having escaped from their vigilant eyes, had just brushed baby to sleep, had run on and on, until, once in the woods all remorse fled in the delight of chasing the bright-winged butterflies.

"Are you tired?" Zoe asked presently, turning to her younger sister.

"No, not very; but Zoe, will nurse be dreadful angry?"

Zoe laughed saucily. She did not care what anxiety their absence might be causing to those at home; a feeling of reckless joy, of intense freedom had taken possession of her.

The pathway became less closely together as they neared the end. When at last the children stepped out into the open road, both paused in silent wonder.

"Do you know the way? Shall we be home soon?" Fay inquired eagerly; for in spite of her former denial, she did begin to feel a trifle weary.

"Oh, yes; we only have to go straight up this road; don't you remember?"

Fay did not remember ever having passed that way before; but she was too obedient and yielding to say so.

Hand-in-hand, eagerly ever exchanging a word, the children wandered along, still hoping to shortly reach their home.

Presently voices fell on their ears—loud, gruff voices such as they rarely heard before. Momentary terror made them pause for one instant, then Zoe, with firm steps, marched on.

"There are some people in that field; suppose we go and ask them if we are going the right way?"

"Very well," Fay agreed wearily, though she shrank timidly behind her sister as they neared the huge tent standing in the field.

A party of rough-looking women were washing at a tiny clear spring, shouting to each other all the while; a young sunburnt child lay rolling on the grass, filling the air with their joyous cries.

Zoe dragged poor frightened Fay close to the big tent, near where a tall young girl stood, one brown arm flung around the shaggy neck of a gentle-eyed donkey.

Her pretty face attracted Zoe, and she gazed wonderingly at the long masses of red-brown hair, which fell carelessly about the gipsy's shoulders; her surprised eyes were full of interest, as the two children approached her.

"Well," she exclaimed, sharply, trying in vain to make her voiceless harsh; "what do you want?"

"Is this the way to Marchmont Grange?" Zoe asked.

The girl laughed scornfully, and dashed the clustering hair from her eyes.

"I say, mother," she cried, mockingly, "here are two ladies who have lost their way. Do you know the place they want?"

"Wait a moment, Meg, don't frighten the poor mites," one of the women answered, and wringing the linen she was washing she spread it upon the grass, and hurried towards them.

With arms akimbo she scanned the children closely for several seconds.

"What are you doing here? Why are you alone?" she asked.

Zoe smiled, and drew Fay into greater prominence by one swift jerk.

"We wanted to go for a walk by ourselves but now I don't know which is our road; could you show us?" she said, gravely.

"Which way did you come?"

"Through the woods."

The gipsy hesitated, and for a moment her anxious glance was riveted upon the beautiful coral necklaces and shining gold bracelets worn by the little sisters. That look soon changed to an expression of gentle compassion.

"You ought not to have come out alone; you might have been robbed and murdered in that lonely wood. Hurry back now, there's dear children, or your mother will break her heart at your loss."

"Are we to go again through the woods?" Zoe asked, pathetically.

"I'm afraid so; I don't like your going by yourselves, but there's no help for it. Run off, dears, it is getting late."

They turned to obey her, but Fay started back with a stifled shriek, clinging with all her force to Zoe.

PRAISE.

Perhaps men are more delicate in this exercise than anything else it becomes us to render to God. Prayer is something we are impelled to by the very unbearable of our circumstances at times, and always by our felt wants. Non-praying men ejaculate a prayer often in their extremity; it is rare, however, to hear them say, "Thank God." How surprised as well as grieved we should be, if we could for a little while, from a heavenly standpoint observe the stream of thought and word that constantly flows from earth to heaven. Would it not be a decidedly muddy stream, colored, as it would be, by the murmuring of the cursings, the lusts that fill so large a place in earth's daily life? How small would be the proportion of that stream which consisted of the pure waters of love, thankfulness and praise. Yet who does not perceive, that in greater volume, a hundred fold, than that which rises from the multiplied fens of busy earth, should be the blessed cloud of incense from praising hearts?

We do not esteem that friend very highly who brings us nothing but a constant succession of complaints, who never comes to say, "I enjoyed your last kind visit." "Thank you for your gift, it helped me so much." "It repeats the story of old woes, or discourses on some new, real or fancied, sorrow that has come into his life. It seems right and fitting to us that acknowledgment should be made of blessings we have bestowed, and we place that nature low down in our estimation which can not perceive the obligation. There are such men with whom the law of life is, "Take all, give back little or nothing." And sad to say, the Chief God of the universe experiences just this treatment at the hands of very many men and women. We are not deficient in prayer, after a certain fashion, but we are woefully deficient in the exercise of praise. It was a prominent characteristic of the early Christians that they "ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." It would be a blessing of the first magnitude if this same spirit was present in every modern Christian breast. When shall we arrive at that point, in a Godly life, that the most common thought of the heart shall be, not, "It is too bad," or "It is a great pity," but "Praise God." That is what the heavenly mind will produce, that is what you ought to aim at.

But, some say, in order to praise we must have something to praise for, and how can a heart that is burdened fall to utter a groan, rather than a word that implies pleasure? Notice that in their mental exercises men often act as if they had two eyes with separate and distinct functions, the one capable of seeing only that which is pleasant, the other adapted to seeing only the disagreeable. Now in exercising this power, we are accustomed to close one eye whenever we use the other, so that unmingled sadness or unmingled joy is the felt emotion filling the soul. This is the secret of your being unable to praise God heartily in the worst day of your life as you have been wont to do. You have closed, while you have opened wide the opposite door. Have you never felt rebuked when you have gone to the bedside of pain and have been greeted with a smile? Perhaps that very morning the temporary disappointment of a shower had driven from your face its smiles, and from your heart the thought of praise.

Can the poor rheumatic sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," while you can walk, and run, and even dance, think you are too much afflicted to sing any song of joy? Thus to other people's sorrows shame us in our fancied troubles.

In this department of the Christian life, as in all other departments, we ought to be learners. Learn to praise! Why that ought to be spontaneous and absolutely free-hearted. Yes, it will be when you have planted the seed of praise deep in your nature and have learned to keep your heart's door of blessing always open. Do you teach the voice to sing, and can you not teach the heart the language of praise? In vain shall we attempt to please God perfectly while our devotions consist in a constant repetition, "Grant, Lord—Grant, Lord," while we forget to say, "Thanks and praise unto thee for thy many mercies." The characteristic of heaven is it revealed to us in praise. Let us wake up to the fact how far we are from heaven, if this is not the characteristic of our life.

Whether are you going, brother? If you are nearing a land of spices, you should be able to catch some of its perfume on the breezes that come from his shores, and should have the heart to say, "How glad I am for this refreshment!" To sing, "Nearer to Thee" is one thing, to have the experience is quite another thing. Warbling is not always praising. We have many warblers, how many of them are praising hearts? Count that day a dark one, and an unworthy one, in which your thoughts have not mounted to the throne of God laden with the sweet incense of praise.

A True Picture.

The words quoted below were written 2450 years ago. Is there anyone who will read such an accurate description of man and say that the words are not inspired? With all the accumulated wisdom of modern times we do not believe that such a perfect picture of humanity could be drawn.

"There is none upright among men; they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

Lived Better

"How's time, Billings?"

"Good."

"That so?"

"Yes, I'm living better than I ever lived before."

"Ah, I see. Your wife is keeping boards?"

"The best of them is a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge."

"Trust ye not in a friend; put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom."

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THE TOMBS.

A Look into the Great Prison of the Metropolis.

What is called the Tombs consists of three prisons. The oldest one is the place where criminals of the most hardened sort are kept. It is a long, high, narrow dungeon with four rows of cells, one above the other, and numbering 144 altogether. A box stands at the main entrance and an armed guard protects it. Inside two other guides are stationed. A winding staircase leads to the top of the building, connected with a platform at every floor which extends all around the tier of cells. The first floor is used entirely for maniacs and condemned prisoners. The right side has borne for many years the title of "Murderers' Row." Padded cells for persons afflicted with homicidal maniacs, a hospital cell where sick persons are treated, and a penitentiary cell for disciplinary cases occupy the rest of the floor. On the second tier criminals whose offenses are serious but not of the capital grade are kept. These are felons of all kinds. Above them are misdemeanants. When the old Tombs is full, it will hold 288 persons. Its usual census contains about 130 names. It is doubtful if a city prison could be conducted on a better or more humane principle than prevails here. The discipline is necessarily strict but not severe. All the work is done by the convicts who are there for comparatively light offenses, usually ten-day prisoners. These are permitted to take the first 'help' at the tables and allowed to eat in comfort. As they could have no possible desire to run away, their term being short and the penalty of attempted escapes being severe, they roam about doing their work without much interference.

As in almost all prisons, so in the Tombs, there are persons wearing the prison garb who are not in actual confinement. I saw an old woman there who was arrested 20 years ago. She is now a confirmed rheumatic, all bent with age and pain and scarcely able to get in and out of the invalid chair where her days and nights were spent. Her face has drawn tranquil and beneficent in its expression. Years ago she committed a great crime to save her husband from disgrace. The jury refused to convict her and she was discharged. She stayed on in the Tombs, gradually securing the confidence of the keepers until the last sight of her friends—or they lost sight of her. She made herself useful to the matrons and declares now that her last days, albeit three feet of rock separate her from freedom, are the happiest she has ever spent.

An old silver-headed man is there, too, whose step and bearing have not lost their dignity despite his suffering and laborious work. He looks as if he might be eighty years old, but the keeper told me that he was scarcely sixty. No one knows much about him now except good old Matron French, who has been there thirty-six years, and they say the Tombs is not a healthy place), and Deputy Warden Finley, whose record is nearly as long. They never answer questions about the old man, for they would not hurt the old man's feelings for the world. I heard, however, that he had killed a man at the behest of a human tigress many years ago. This old man was tried and convicted. He got a new trial and was reconvicted and got a reversal again. He has never since been tried and there he remains, sad, bowed, but still showing traces of his former grace and strength, sawing and cutting and driving nails, while his heart is being torn with the teeth of a relentless memory.—N. Y. Tribune.

True but Remarkable.

"Yes, I'm from Dakota," he said meekly, as he got into conversation with a man on an Eastern train.

"Ah, is that so? I am thinking of going out there myself to invest in some farming land."

"We have some very fine land."

"I understand, but are not some of the stories they tell of its fertility exaggerated?"

"Why, my friend I am sorry to say some of them are downright untruths."

"That's what I thought. Now what is the most remarkable instance of the fertility of Dakota soil which ever came under your observation?"

"Well I believe the case of my pump might go at the head of the list."

"What was it?"

"I dug a well about forty feet deep the first season I was there and put down a wooden pump. It happened it was made out of a small cottonwood log which was a little green and the soil at the bottom of that well, forty feet from the surface, was so fertile that the pump took root, and it also grew up and branched out, and now while my children play in a swing attached to one of the branches I pump water through the hole which still remains in the trunk."

Joys of Pisciculture.

A farmer in the western part of this county built a dam across a creek flowing through his land and made a lake of a piece of low ground. One day last fall, while skirting this lake, he came across a man who was seated on a log with three fish lines out, and he hailed him with:

"Hello, stranger, what are you doing?"

"Fishing," was the brusque reply.

TRAVELING WITH DEAD MEN.

"Did you see the item in the papers about a man being found alive in a coffin on a baggage car?" inquired a baggage-man on the Rock Island road of a Chicago Herald writer. "Well, I don't believe it is true. One of the most curious things about the handling of boxes containing corpses is that you are always thinking that you feel the body moving. I've handled thousands of corpses in my time, and I could never get over that feeling. Many's the time it has taken all my courage and will-power to keep from jumping for a hatchet and going to work ripping a coffin box to pieces, 'cause it seemed just as if the man inside must be alive. I suppose it comes from a sort of morbid fear that the corpse may be alive, which leads a man to imagining all sorts of things. I've handled boxes that appeared to me there was a live calf inside—a squirming around, or a great big snake moving backward and forward. You've looked at the bodies of dead men, haven't you, and imagined you could see their breasts heave as if they were breathing? Well, it is in that way that juggernauts think they feel the bodies moving inside the coffin cases. Let me tell you that it is no fun to ride all night in a car, through a wild section of country, with six or eight dead men as your only companions. Of course, we get used to it, and don't mind it so much after awhile, but human nature is human nature, and I venture to say that there's not a man in the business who wouldn't prefer five men to dead ones as traveling companions."

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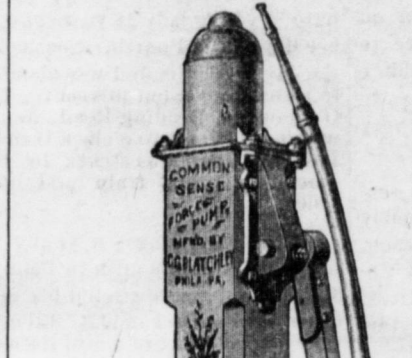
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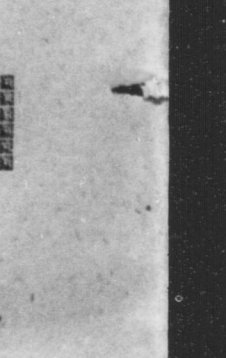
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