

WHEN NUTS ARE RIPE.

The frost king comes by stealth at night,
Painting the leaves in colors bright,
With magic wand, in imphish glee,
He breaths upon each shrub and tree:
O'er hickory, walnut and the oak—
He sheds a variegated cloak,
And as they open their sleepy eyes
His breath comes thick from chilly skies.

The morning sun, in mild reproof,
Sweeps from the fences and the roof
The crystal footsteps of that raid;
He smiles upon each leaf and blade,
And welcomes to his genial rays
The friendship of a mystic haze,
While voices through the hill and dell
Echo clear as silver bell.

Glad, golden days! O, mystic haze—
And all the swelling symphonies
Of ringing shout and childish mirth—
The brown nuts pattering to earth;
The scolding of a saucy jay,
Ah, glories of an autumn day!
Of earthly paradise a type—
The frost-crowned woods when nuts are ripe.

—Good Housekeeping.

EPHRAIM DODD'S NIECES.

BY PAULINE WESLEY.



UMBERTON people felt a certain pity for Mr. and Mrs. Ephraim Dodd when the two orphan daughters of Mr. Dodd's younger brother came from a Western home and took up their abode with the old couple; but Ephraim and Susan Dodd were honestly delighted with this sudden addition of their nieces to the family circle.

Mrs. Dodd soon began to talk to her neighbors with complacency about the responsibility of bringing up girls, and when her back was turned her friends shook their heads, saying: "It's a shame! In their old age, too, when they were just beginning to take a little comfort!"

The girls were tall, pretty, strong and vivacious. Their names were Martha and Evelina. Each had brown hair, a delicately tinted face and large gray eyes that looked at people in a friendly, unabashed way. Martha was thirteen years old when she arrived—two years older than her sister—and before she had passed her sixteenth birthday Ephraim decided that she must go away to a better school than Lumberton afforded. It was a sad day for the Dodds when a small leather trunk bumped to the railway station behind one of Uncle Ephraim's ox teams.

Ephraim, Evelina and her Aunt Susan clung to Martha with a frantic earnestness in saying good-by, and then stared at one another tearfully when the train whirled weeping Martha and her belongings away from Lumberton.

On the way back to the farm Mrs. Dodd and Evelina sat on a board placed across the cart-railings, and Ephraim walked beside them, directing his oxen. After a while he spoke solemnly:

"Taint that I ain't got confidence in Martha," said he. "I think she'll turn out fast-rate; but if there is any meanness in her nature, or any hidden dust in the corners of it, we'll know it before long. She's started out on the tustin' times of her life."

"Mersey," Mrs. Dodd exclaimed, dashing a tear from her eye, "how you talk, Ephraim! You make cold shivers run all over me!"

"I think she'll turn out fast-rate," the old man repeated; "but she aint been tested yet, an' now she's a-goin' to be. The city aint the country, an' their ways aint our ways."

Evelina sat rigidly erect and gazed at the oxen through a screen of tears, while the three, moving along autumn-tinted country roadsides, went slowly home. There was great vacancy in the farmhouse. They felt it every day.

Longing for Martha, they eagerly read and re-read the letters which she sent regularly once a week, written in an uncertain girlish hand abounding in little curves. She told all about her studies and her teachers and her friends, sometimes even specifying the day's bill of fare, or the color of a classmate's eyes.

Ephraim read all the letters aloud on Saturday evenings, piecing them together like a continued story, and Mrs. Dodd and Evelina listened. It brought the writer very near to them. They always felt breathlessly interested.

After Martha had returned home for two visits, she was allowed to spend a long vacation with one of the school-girls in her city home. Then the letters, arriving oftener than before, took on brighter tints, and gave glimpses of a luxuriant town-house—vastly different from the Dodd homestead, with its wooden "wing" and air of humble thrift.

Ephraim Dodd read these letters in a serious, faltering voice while Evelina and her aunt listened rather anxiously, knowing his troubled thoughts. The faded comfort of their old sitting-room somehow touched them with a wistful foreboding. Would it seem dingy to Martha! Might not her new surroundings teach her to despise the simple homelife of Lumberton village?

rugs. There are oceans of cushions everywhere. I never saw such a beautiful room."

When Evelina read the alluring paragraph, her heart was filled with a sudden longing. She believed that Martha would surely cherish her home, in spite of its limitations, if the room where she slept could be made a little less unlike that city boudoir.

Now Evelina Dodd had an energetic mind and active hands. The following noon she gently broached the subject of her meditations to her Uncle Ephraim and his wife.

"I might kind of chirk it up, and give it a sort of stylish look," she remarked, blushing.

Ephraim Dodd pondered some time before he answered. "Taint that I don't think she'll like us the way we are as well as ever," he said, awkwardly. "But it's in case she shouldn't; in that case it might be wiser to fix things up a little fancier, an' if you're mind to do it Evelina, I'll help you."

Mrs. Dodd had strong faith in Martha, yet possibilities loomed disagreeably as she thought of her husband's words, and she secretly worried in the midst of the sewing and planning which began almost immediately. "I shouldn't care 'bout the house or ourselves," she confided to Ephraim, "so much as I would if Martha happened to get to settin' herself up above Evelina. I couldn't bear to see Evelina's feelin's hurt."

Mr. Dodd kept his thoughts to himself as he joined in the efforts which were gradually transforming one of the old-fashioned sleeping-rooms above stairs.

Remarkable changes, indeed, were being made. It was well that Evelina possessed no knowledge of the havoc worked by her loving zeal. For the massive old-fashioned furniture of Martha's room could not be adapted well to modern taste in decoration. The plain mahogany bedstead was out of keeping with a fantastic spider-shaped object which Ephraim Dodd manufactured in the woodshed, and awkwardly fastened into place above the bed.

He stood on a step-ladder to do this, while Evelina and her aunt held the hammer and nails, crying, "Oh, do be careful!" or, "Ephraim Dodd, you'll certainly break your neck!"

The poor room, with its furniture of another era, really looked abused, but Martha Dodd's relatives gazed with satisfaction over their efforts. They were obliged to make their purchases at a country store whose supplies were not abundant, yet in the end they felt that their labors were repaid.

After the canopy's frame had been draped with blue denim and white mosquito netting, Mrs. Dodd and Evelina stood and admired it from afar. They believed that Martha would be pleased.

Martha Dodd came back to Lumberton in midsummer, a time which always found the place full of verdant beauty. She was carried to the farm in a shining buggy, recently purchased. Her Aunt Susan and Evelina stood smiling in the yard, and showed greetings upon her, before Ephraim could help her out of the carriage. Afterward, they sent her upstairs alone, in order to surprise her more completely.

Martha closed the door and remained in the room for some time. She sat down on a sofa, and stared about her in a bewildered manner. When she descended to the expectant group in the sitting-room her cheeks were flushed and she was smiling.

"Whoever thought to do it?" she asked; "who spoke of it first?" "Evelina," Ephraim answered, red with pleasure.

"Ah, 'twas lovely of you all," Martha said, and she went over to Evelina and put her arms around her.

"How did you manage it?" she questioned again. "Who made the canopy?"

"Uncle Ephraim," replied the delighted child; and every one laughed as Martha embraced her uncle affectionately. He tried to get away, but she caught him and clung to him. Her face was radiant.

"You've been so kind!" she cried; "but, uncle, you needn't have done it. I liked it the way it was. Didn't you know I liked it?"

A fortnight later Martha's friend, Dorothy Rundle, accompanied by her two sisters, accepted invitations to spend a fortnight at Miss Dodd's home. On the day of their arrival a county fair was being held in the next town, and Mrs. Dodd watched some neighbors' vehicles fly past the door with a good deal of interest.

"If 'twasn't for company comin'," she said to the girls, "I might have gone myself. I aint been to a fair for three years."

To her surprise Martha seized the stray idea almost eagerly. The girl talked to her uncle so earnestly about the matter that he resolved to take his wife and Evelina to the gaily decorated grounds and stay the entire day. Thus the house chanced to be comparatively still when four girls entered merrily and rushed up the stairs to Martha Dodd's "boudoir."

"Why, what in the world!" Bertha Rundle exclaimed wonderingly, as soon as she had surveyed the room.

Two old people and a girl trundling over the turnpike road were two far away to hear the peals of laughter that suddenly rang through the house. "O Martha Dodd," said one of the girls, "it's the funniest sight I ever saw in all my life."

checked herself and the girls looked at her.

"Why did they do it?" Dorothy asked at last. Martha gazed out of the window before she answered.

"They did it," she said, slowly, "because they love me. I wrote about your room, and they hoped to make this something like it. My little sister Evelina—" she paused.

The listeners drew nearer and stood around her in a little circle. "They did the best they knew how," she continued, "and I like my room as well as Dorothy's. The canopy is ugly, but when I wake and look up at it, I think how their love covers me night and day; so you see it's a pleasure."

"The rugs are funnier," Bertha remarked finally, in order to break the silence, and her sisters smiled, but they did not laugh again, in the same way. They began to feel an interest in Evelina, and this increased through the happy days which marked their stay in Lumberton.

Ephraim Dodd's generous heart warmed as Martha's city company bade him a reluctant good-by on the station platform. The eldest Rundle girl shook his hand cordially. "Well," Mr. Dodd, said she, "we've had about the pleasantest visit we ever had. And when Martha comes to see us again, we want Evelina to come, too."

The old man blushed, and Martha nearly interrupted his stammering thanks. "I'll stay at home and let Evelina go," she explained. "We shan't leave Aunt Susan and Uncle Ephraim alone."

That evening, Ephraim unburdened himself to Mrs. Dodd, a little remorsefully. "We needn't have felt no uneasiness 'bout Martha," he declared. "She's turned out first rate; she'll stand any amount of tustin', an' so will Evelina."

Mrs. Dodd laughed tremulously, as she extinguished the sitting-room lamps.

"No," was the answer, "she aint goin' to hurt anybody's feelin's—Marthy aint."—Youth's Companion.

Parasol Ants.

The Kew Bulletin says that the Government of Trinidad has passed an ordinance for the extermination of parasol ants, so far as its power extends. The pest has become unbearable. In fact, from the nature of things, wherever this ant is found, a growing civilization must wage war to the death with it. For the creature strips trees of their leaves, which it neatly trims to the size and shape of a three-penny bit and carries to the nest. An army of acedoma cephalotes at work is one of the strangest sights in tropical America. The column may be followed for a mile, three or four inches in width, a serried mass of ants each carrying aloft upright as a flag its green disk. They will strip a large tree of which they fancy the leaves in twenty-four hours. But nature has limited their ravages in the way which Darwin and Wallace teach us to respect. Many species of trees are quite protected against them by peculiarities which we cannot detect. Many inches in width, a serried mass of ants will not attack them if they have a choice. But the enterprising foreigner brings his useful fruits and plants from every quarter of the world, and establishes them in the domain of the acedoma. Then there is joy un-mixed. With unprotected fruit in abundance the ants multiply as they never could before. So the Trinidad authorities have made a law that the warden of any district may authorize a land owner who "suffers, or is likely to suffer," from their ravages, to enter any neighbor's ground and destroy the nests—if he can, be it understood. And any one obstructing such proceedings when duly authorized by the warden becomes liable to a fine of \$50 or imprisonment for three months, with or without hard labor.

An Elevator For Cats.

It has been such an everyday convenience to be hoisted in an elevator car at railroad speed, to the tenth floor of a high office building, that one regards it as a matter of course. It has remained for an East Weymouth (Mass.) couple, however, to apply the principle of the elevator to the feline economy of the household with gratifying results. Mr. and Mrs. G. live in upper apartments; therefore Mr. G. had to go down and upstairs every time their half-grown kitten was put out of doors or let in. This became monotonous, so one day Mr. G. placed the cat in a basket, tied a rope to the handle and lowered the cat, Paul-like, to the ground. The cat evidently grasped the situation at once, for since that time she has rarely been let in or out of the door, but has made her perpendicular pilgrimages with all the gravity of an old business man. The most remarkable circumstance is that she now gets into the basket as it rests on the ground beneath the window and mews lustily until taken in. If there were a set of electric buttons for her to push, "up once, down twice," she would probably learn the combination. As it is she is the cause of a mild little sensation in the town, and is as proudly exhibited by her owner as would be the feline heroine of the balad, which in ancient number is declared to have returned.—New York Telegram.

The British Empire.

Roughly speaking, the British empire extends over one continent, 100 peninsulas, 500 promontories, 1000 lakes, 2000 rivers, and 10,000 islands. The Assyrian empire was not so wealthy as this; the Roman empire was not so populous; the Persian empire was not so extensive; the Spanish empire was not so powerful.

THE MERRY SIDE OF LIFE.

STORIES THAT ARE TOLD BY THE FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

A Race of Strong Men—An Old Tale—A Precedent—His Vocation—A Difficult Question, Etc., Etc.

Let Sandow his blankets fold up,
For his wonderful strength is vain,
One man in the West can hold up
A bank and a railroad train.
—Atlanta Constitution.

A DIFFICULT QUESTION.

"They say a giraffe sells for five thousand dollars."
"That's a good deal of money for a giraffe. How much is that a yard on the average?"

HIS VOCATION.

She—"Weren't you surprised that Wildrake should make a surgeon?"
He—"Not in the least. I can't remember when he wasn't given to cutting up."—Judge.

AN OLD TALE.

Clara—"Do you know, people are actually beginning to call me an old maid."
Maud—"You mean that you are just beginning to hear them."—Vogue.

HELLO!

"Really," remarked Mrs. Brown-Jones, "telephone people are awfully polite."
"In what way?" growled Mr. Jones.
"Why, they always return a call as soon as it is made."

A PRECEDENT.

Briggs—"Say, old man, I want you to introduce me to your club."
Griggs (doubtfully)—"They are very particular, old fellow, whom they admit."

Briggs—"But you got in."—New York Herald.

NOT LIKE BRIDGET.

Wife (away on a trip)—"I don't believe Bridget wrote that letter that I received this morning."
Husband—"Why, it tells you all about everything at home."

Wife—"Yes, I know; but it's signed 'Your obedient servant.'"

THE QUESTION ANSWERED.

"Are receiverships entitled to be classed as marine craft?" asked Snickers.
"No," replied Spatta. "They come under the designation of sub-marine craft. They relate to concerns which have gone under."—Judge.

CIRCUMVENTING A BORROWER.

Spatto—"Why did you ask Mullins to lend you ten dollars just after you overheard him asking Snodgrass for that amount and failing to get it?"
Bloombumper—"That's just the reason I asked Mullins. If I hadn't he'd have been to me next trying to borrow."—Judge.

MOTHER FAIRER THAN THE FAIR DAUGHTER.

"Did Parlow marry that Wilkins girl?"
"No. After he saw her mother he swore he'd never have a woman like that for a mother-in-law."
"Why, I thought her mother was a very charming woman."
"She was. That's why Parlow jilted the daughter for the mother."—Harper's Bazar.

DOLLARS WITH WINGS.

Her Small Brother—"Let me look at one of your dollars, Mr. Gottschalk, will you? One of them that's got wings?"
Her New Admirer—"I have no money with wings. What a queer idea."

Her Small Brother—"Hah. I heard sis tell me that she intended to make your dollars fly when she got you. How kin they fly if they ain't got no wings?"—Buffalo Courier.

BIRDIE WAS DISAPPOINTED.

"Miss Birdie, do you know that you have robbed me of my peace of mind—that on your account I cannot sleep?" said Dudley Canesucker to Miss Birdie McGinnis, Dudley being a boarder with the McGinnis family.
"This is so sudden; however, you had better speak to my mother, Mr. Canesucker," replied Birdie, simpering.

"Speak to your mother! I thought it was you who banged that blamed piano in the parlor until I o'clock every night."—Texas Sittings.

EQUAL TO THE OCCASION.

"Why do you wish me to be your wife?"
"Because I love you—love you to distraction."

"Did you say that to Mamie Jones when you proposed to her?"
"How could I?"
"Why couldn't you?"

"Because she has neither beauty, dignity, grace, amiability nor refinement. These are the qualities that inspire ardent attachment, and you are the only girl I know who possesses them in a superlative degree. Need I say more?"
He had said enough.—New York Press.

A RISING MARKET.

"Yes," said the old man, addressing his young visitor, "I'm proud of my girls, and should like to see them all comfortably married; and as I've made a little money, they won't go to their husbands penniless. There's Mary, twenty-five years old, and a real good girl. I shall give her a thousand dollars when she marries. Then comes Bet, who won't see thirty-five again, and shall have two thousand; and the man who takes Eliza, who is forty, will have three thousand with her."

The young man reflected a moment or so, and then nervously inquired, "You haven't one about fifty, have you?"—Tit-Bits.

AN APPEAL TO HER BEST FEELINGS.

"I haven't always been as you see me now, ma'am," said Reckless Ragsey, addressing Mrs. Goodson, who was hanging out her clothes in the yard.

"I should hope not," said the lady, as she removed a clothespin from her mouth and cast her eyes on the tattered garments of the gentleman who accosted her.

"No, ma'am, no," he added; "I was once as well dressed as most of 'em."
"And what brought you to your present condition?" she asked.

He drew a deep sigh, placed his hand upon his heart and said:
"Disappointment in love, ma'am."
He had struck the right spot, touched her woman's heart. Going to the house, she brought him out a plate of corned beef and cabbage, which he caused to disappear so rapidly as to show that if his heart was lacerated his stomach was still in splendid order.—New York Press.

EASY ENOUGH.

In a certain church in Ireland a young priest was detailed to preach. This occasion was his first appearance, and he took for his text: "The Feeding of the Multitude."

He said, "They fed ten people with ten thousand loaves of bread and ten thousand fishes."
An old Irishman said, "That's no miracle; bedad, I could do that myself," which the priest overheard.

The next Sunday the priest announced the same text, but he had it right this time. He said, "And they fed ten thousand people on ten loaves of bread and ten fishes."

He waited a second and then leaned over the pulpit and said, "And could you do that, Mr. Murphy?"
Murphy replied, "And sure, your reverence, I could."

"And how could you do it?" said the priest.
"And sure, your reverence, I could do it with what was left over from last Sunday."—Tit Bits.

WISE WORDS.

Every noble activity makes room for itself.
Custom is often only the antiquity of error.

Accuracy of statement is one of the first elements of truth.
There is not one wise man in twenty that will praise himself.

The actions of men are the best interpreters of their thoughts.
Against disease the strongest fence is the defensive virtue, abstinence.

The books that help you most are those that make you think the most.
A blockhead cannot come in, nor go away, nor rise, nor stand like a man of sense.

A lazy man is necessarily a bad man; an idle is necessarily a demoralized population.

No man can be provident of his time who is not provident in the choice of his company.
It is very hard to believe that a thing is rightly done when it is not done our way.

One who is contented with what he has done will never become famous for what he will do.
Cities force growth and make men talkative and entertaining, but they make them artificial.

There cannot be a greater rudeness than to interrupt another in the current of his discourse.
More persons, on the whole, are humbugged by believing in nothing than by believing too much.

Caught a Big Alligator on Their Hook.

Last Sunday Claude Fowler, Alex. and Henry Stephenson, Irving Westervelt, Willie Lyons and Kimberlin went out to the pump house to spend the day on the banks of the Neuces River. Claude Fowler and Alex. Stephenson got in a skiff and went trolling for alligator gars. Fowler was at the oars and Stephenson was handling the line when suddenly the boat gave a lurch that almost threw them both out. Something had got fastened on the hook, which they imagined was a sure enough whale, so, telling Stephenson to "give him line," Fowler at once pulled for the shore. The shore being gained, the fishermen began pulling in the line to see what was on the other end of it. It proved to be a monster alligator, the large hook having in some way become fastened to one of his forelegs.

After pulling the 'gator to the shore they were unable to land him for fear of breaking the line, so they called to some Mexicans, who came to the rescue with a rope. The alligator was then roped, after which it was but an easy matter to land him. He lashed the ground and the air furiously with his tail, but it did no good, and he was soon securely tied to a stont sapling, after which he was dispatched with a rifle ball. The 'gator measured twelve feet and seven inches in length, and was able to drown and devour a good-sized calf.—Corpus Christi (Texas) Caller.

Choosing the Less of Two Evils.

There is in Vienna a musician who plays in the orchestra and loathes the music of Johannes Brahms. Although he ridicules openly this music, he is constantly with Brahms; he walks with him, he haunts his rooms, he sits in the restaurant with him. When asked the reason of this contradiction, he answered with a smile: "It is true I hate Brahms's music; but when I am with him he cannot compose."—Boston Journal.

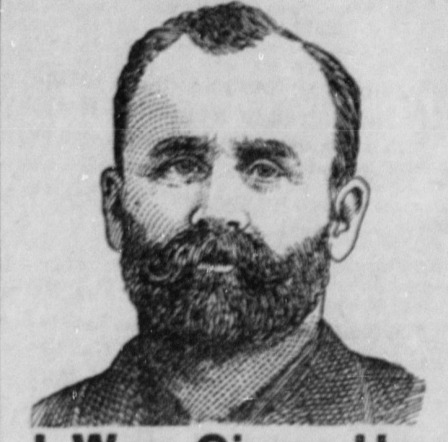
Sixty Miles of Locusts.

The African Steamship Company's steamer Winnebah has had a most unusual experience when steaming between the latitudes of Cape Verd and St. Louis, Senegal. For sixty miles the vessel steamed through locusts, which were so thickly packed together on top of the water that they completely covered the surface for miles around; indeed, they appeared to be lying on the sea as far as the eye could reach. The locusts had, no doubt, been blown from the Morocco coast into the sea. They resembled gigantic grasshoppers, and one which was secured was five inches in length. Of course, all the locusts had been drowned, but those on board the Winnebah did not see any on the wing.

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