

THE FARMER'S STORY.

MAN'S night, when the stars were in the sky, I used to go out to the great pasture where the sheep browsed all day, and sit and think thoughts I had no words for, and make beautiful pictures for myself in my mind not fine ones, sir. This is what I see the oftenest. A little cottage and a wide fire place, such as they had in my day, a dresser with a row of delfin upon it, four chairs, and a table of pine. When I had these I was to marry Peggy Grey. But when I should have them, and she had her white wedding gown and the house linen, neither of us knew.

She put her sixpences into a red earthen savings bank, and I kept mine in an old glove. For two years we had been waiting and hoping, and were not much nearer than at first. Sometimes I felt down-hearted, and she would cry, but she would never let me see it. And just as I sat in the meadow I knew she sat before the kitchen fire in the house that she lived at service. Simple folks we were, but we had hearts, and felt, perhaps, as deeply as greater folks might.

My master, the farmer, was a close man. He squeezed as much work out of his hands as possible. But it was a steady place, and he paid all he promised; so I staid, never thinking what troublestaying would bring to me—trouble that never would have come but for Mark Hulker. A good-for-nothing fellow he was, a disgrace to the rest of us, and he cheated the master and left his work undone. So after hours, master set me at his stint, and it being indoor work, I kept at it all night. The old man liked that, and set me a new task every night. All the better for me; I thought he would pay me extra, and what was weariness to me, if it only brought me nearer my Peggy. So I counted the hours' work as so many shillings. But when Saturday night came he gave me just my week's work.

"Master," said I, "I've worked over hours every night; you forgot that."

"I hire you by the week," he said—"I'll give you no more than one week's wages. So, if you don't like it there are plenty of strong lads to be had, you are growing lazy." Then he turned his back on me, and Mark laughed. That angered me, and words fell from my lips. We had a quarrel, master and I, and I called him a "niggardly old rascal," and with that he dismissed me from his service.

"At dawn you go," said he. "You've worked to-day, and have a right to your bed at night, but at dawn you go."

I marched out of the room, with words I never should have used, and up to my garret and threw myself on my bed. But I did not mean to stay to be turned out. At midnight, I rose softly, made up a bundle, and climbed out of a window—I cut my hands with the glass of a broken pane, and blood dropped down upon my clothes. But I was too angry to feel the pain; and I bound up the wound with a handkerchief. Then I trudged on, meaning to look for work next day. So I did, but I found none. Then the thought struck me to make my way to —, and see Peggy. It would be a comfort to me whatever came. So I turned my steps in that direction, and kept on until night fell. Then, faint and weary, I lay down under some bushes and fell asleep.

Out of that sleep I was aroused by a shout and a clutch of strong hands. Men stood about me. One shouted my name. They held me fast and bound me.

I struggled, but it was of no use.—Numbers were against my single strength. "What are you? Robbers? I've nothing worth the taking," I said, at last; and when standing still, I saw faces I knew about me—those of the farm hands at my old master's.

"You know well, Jack Malone," said one, "if he did speak an ill-word at last, he was a good man in the main, and you'd worked for him three years. You might have answered him, as you liked, but to try to murder him was too horrible. We didn't think it of you, Jack—we didn't think it."

"Murdered?" I cried, "is old master murdered? Why lay it to me? I swear I never hurt him!"

"If he is not quite dead it's none of your fault," cried another man. "Don't perjure yourself—look at the blood on your clothes."

The blood from my hand was in clots and smeared all over my vest. I feel my heart turn sick when I think of it.

"Master will clear me," I said.

"He says it was you," said one of the men. "At least, he nodded yes, when we asked him if you did it."

"Then old master was not right in his mind," I said. "He'd never be against me."

"After that I heard the whole. Master had paid the men and dismissed Mark.—He had only said 'all right, I am tired of work,' and had eaten breakfast there, and left in sight of all. But I was gone; and when they found that master, who was always up at cock-crow, found him on the floor senseless—they thought him dead at first. He had been robbed of his pocket-book, a watch, and an old-fashioned pin he always wore in his handkerchief—the pointed head of a lady set around with what he used to tell us were pearls—an ornament old than his grandfather.

They found nothing around me, of course, but the quarrel and my cut hand made the case hard against me. The master dying as they thought him, had been able to speak at odd times; and said that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, I was the assailant. It was dark, to be sure, but in the struggle he felt that the man wore a cap, and I was the only hand who had anything but a straw hat. Besides he came from the inner passage and down the stairs, and did not break in through door or window, as a burglar would have done. And I was the only missing member of the household. So I lay in prison with this awful charge upon me, until they knew whether master would live or die; and my greatest grief was for Peggy.

"Keep it from her," I begged them, "until she must know it."

And they were kind and did; and her letters were sent to me in prison. It was a weary time, and the one drop of comfort in it came with those letters. I had had five from her when, at the end of one came this:

DEAR JACK:—I never hide anything from you, and I do not want to boast of my conquests, a thing I'd never do; but just to let you know I keep no secrets to myself, I must tell you what has happened. Our master has hired a man, a lazy fellow, that I disliked at first sight, Mark Hulker by name, and what should he do but take a notion to me, or pretend to do so, trying his best to sit up with me after his work hours, and following me about wherever I go of a holiday. Then he tries to make me like him by telling me how rich he is. Four hundred dollars he has laid by, he says, and a gold watch like a gentleman. The other Sunday I was dressed for church, and up he walks. "Why, Peggy," says he, "you've no pin to your collar." Said I, "I can't afford money for finery." Then says he, "Now, how lucky it is that I've one to give you," and he pulls a pin from his pocket. "Jack, I couldn't help looking at it. It was a lady's portrait, with hair all white—though she was young—like an old woman's. He said it was powered as they done it in old times; and a pink dress—and no bigger than a silver quarter altogether. How he came by such a thing, goodness knows! But of course I wouldn't have it. Says he; 'Now do take it, Peggy. I want to keep company with you, and now you know the truth.' So says I: 'I want neither your company nor your presents, and please remember that hereafter!' It was rough, I know, but I hate him so. And I was none too rude, for he bothers me yet as much as ever. Though you know if he were ever so good and handsome, I am your own Peggy, and think of no one else."

When I read that, you could have knocked me down with a feather. The pin was the one the old farmer had lost, and I knew it, and it was Mark who was the thief, and who had tried to murder him.

I sent for the lawyer who was to take my side, and who had all along believed me innocent. I gave him the letter.

"It's old master's pin," I said, "What shall I do sir?"

"And he said—"You can do nothing, my poor fellow, but wait and hope, and have a clue now, and I'll follow it up."

Then he went away, and afterwards I heard what he did. He went to the place where Peggy lived, and took her out of the dangers of the eaves-droppers, and told her all that had happened. The brave girl trembled and wept, but she spoke out: "He's innocent," she said. "I'd not believe him guilty if an angel told me he was."

And the lawyer said, out of his heart, though she was but a serving lass—"He's worthy of you, Peggy Grey. I do believe, and that's saying a good deal."

Then he asked her about the pin, and the two had a long talk. It ended in Peggy bursting into tears, and promised to do anything and everything he asked, if he would but tell me why she did it.

He told me afterwards, and it was hard work for little Peggy with her honest heart. Bless her. She turned herself around and made a different creature of herself, and she tried to make Mark Hulker think she had been coquetting all the while, and oh how she cried when she told me that she let him kiss her, and put his arm around her waist.—But she gained her end by it.

One night my good old lawyer and two other men, were shut up in the pantry with Peggy's master, and she dressed in her best and waited for Mark Hulker.—That night she had promised Mark to take his pin, and if he proved he had the money he bragged of, to marry him; and Mark was as merry as could be, and a little the worse for liquor.

"Now, lass, said he, 'a promise is a promise. There's the money to count and the watch to look at, and the pin to wear. Now, you'll have me.'"

And just then the pantry door opened behind him, and a hand came down on his shoulder.

"We have you, my fine fellow," said a voice; and then there arrested him; for the money, the watch, and the pin were old master's."

He had seen me climb one of the windows, and so dressed himself in clothes like mine, and made his plans to throw suspicion upon me.

My Peggy brought the good news first, brought it into the cell, and threw herself, weeping, into my arms, crying out, "you're free, darling; free and clear, thank Heaven."

They did not hang Mark, for master after while got better, and in the end quite well. But they pushed him for the robbery, and for something he had done of the same kind before ever he came to master's.

And as for the old man, when he was well he was so sorry for the charge he had made against me, (though he had honestly believed me guilty, as I well knew), that he made me a present of a little farm, and stocked it for me. And he gave the wife Peggy her outfit; and here we are, as happy as the sheep in the meadow yonder, or the bees in the hive hard by.

UNCLE TIM'S CAT.

IN introducing Uncle Tim Smith, allow me to say that no man in Western Oxford, Maine, was better known in his day. He was an honest, poor, hard-working man, and his only failing—if failing it could be called—was the telling of big stories. I am sure, however, that in one respect, his memory became so warped that he religiously believed his wonderful relations to be true. He was the first man to put a spade into the soil of the first and only farm I ever owned, and thereafter he did much work for me.

"Talking about cats," said Uncle Tim, "put me in mind of a cat I once owned. Let me tell you about her. She was a Maltese—one I got of Charles Baker—and what that cat didn't know wasn't worth knowing. Here's one thing she did:

"In the spring of '46 I moved into the little old house down on the Crooked river. We put our provisions down cellar, and the first night we made up our beds on the floor. But we didn't sleep. No sooner had it come dark than we heard a tearin' and a squeakin' in the cellar that was awful. I lit a candle and went down. Jerusalem! Talk about rats! I never saw such a sight in all my born days! Every inch of the cellar bottom was covered with 'em. They ran up onto me, and they run over me. I jumped back into the room and called the cat. She came down and looked. I guess she got there about ten minutes, lookin' at them rats, and I was waitin' to see what she would do. By-in-by she shook her head, and turned about and went up stairs. She didn't care to tackle 'em."

"That night, I tell ye, there wasn't much sleep. In the morning I called for the cat, and couldn't find her. She'd gone. I guessed the rats had frightened her, and to tell the plain truth, I didn't much wonder. Night came again, and the old cat hadn't shown herself. Says Betsy Ann to me—says she—'Tim if that old cat don't come back, we'll have to leave this place, the rats 'll eat us up.' I didn't believe she'd left us for good and all."

"Just as Betsy Ann was puttin' the children to bed, we heard a scratchin' and a wailin' at the outside door. I went and opened it, and there stood our old Mal-tee on the door-step, and behind her a whole army of cats, all paraded as regular as ye ever saw soldiers! I let our old cat in, and the others followed her. She went right to the cellar door and scratched there. I began to understand. Old Mal-tee had been out after help. I opened the way to the cellar, and she marched down and the other cats tramped after her in regular order—and as they went past me I counted fifty-six of 'em."

"Ge-whittaker! If there wasn't a row and a rumpus in that ere cellar that night, then I'm mistaken! The next mornin' the old cat came up and caught hold of my trousers' leg, and pulled me towards the door. I went down and saw the sight. Talk about yer Bunker Hill, and yer Boston Massacres! Mercey! I never saw such a sight before nor since. Betsy Ann and me, with my boy Sammy was all day at hard work as we could be, cleanin' the dead rats out of that ere cellar! It's a fact—every word of it!"

**What is a Carat?**  
The Scientific American explains this word thus: The carat is an imaginary weight, that expresses the fineness of gold, or the proportion of pure gold in a mass of metal; thus, an ounce of gold is divided into 24 carats, and gold of 22 carats fine is gold of which 22 parts out of 24 are pure, the other two parts being silver, copper, or other metal; the weight of 4 grains, used by jewelers in weighing precious stones and pearls, is sometimes called diamond weight—the carat consisting of 4 nominal grains, a little lighter than 4 grains troy, or 74 1-16 carat grains being equal to 72 grains troy. The term or weight carat derives its name from a bean, the fruit of an Abyssinian tree, called *Kwara*. This bean from the time of its being gathered varies very little in its weight, and seems to have been from a very remote period, used as a weight for gems and pearls.

The sweetest face is but the rounded cushion with which health covers a grinning skeleton.

Selling a Horse Jockey.

IN a certain small town on the Mississippi lived a man who made horse-trading a business. He bought up horses for a city market, and was considered pretty good on a trade.

One day, a long, lean, queer, green-looking specimen of the Western country arrived at the dock with a boat-load of horses. He inquired for the horse-jockey.

"Daddy sent me down with some horses," he said, in a half-idiotic tone.

"Who's he?"

"Daddy."

"What do you want for your horses?"

"Daddy said you could set yure price," was the response.

"Let me go down and look at your horses," said Brown, and accordingly they were soon at the boat.

Brown examined the horses and, named the price he would give for this one and the country bumkin made no objection, although some of the others were not any more than one half the real price of the animal. One of the bystanders gently suggested to the green countryman that he was being cheated, but he returned:

"Daddy said Brown would set the price himself," and so Brown had it all his own way.

At last they came to another animal, which did not look much superior to the rest.

"I must have more for that anermel," said the fellow. "Daddy says he can run some."

"Run!" says Brown, "that nag can't run worth a cent."

"Daddy says so, and daddy knows."

"Why, I've got one up to the stable that would beat it all hollow."

"Guess not," said the fellow. "Let's try 'em. I'll bet the whole boat-load of losses on 'em."

Brown smiled.

"I'll stake five thousand dollars against your boat-load," said Brown winking to the crowd, "and these men," selecting two "shall hold the stakes."

Brown's five thousand was entrusted to one, and the other went on board the horse boat.

One of the crowd started to remonstrate with the poor idiotic fellow, but he only responded:

"Golly! dad told me that he could run some, and daddy ought to lose 'em if he was such a tarnaal fool as to tell me that, when he couldn't."

Brown's sleek racer was brought down and Brown mounted him. The countryman led out his animal and climbed on his back, looking as uncomth and awkward as the horse he proposed to ride.

The word was given, and they started amidst the laughter of the crowd. At first Brown was ahead and it looked as though the poor fellow was to be badly beaten, when suddenly his horse plunged forward and the horse jockey was left far behind. Such going had not been seen in those parts for a long time, and poor Brown was crestfallen, as the cheers of the bystanders fell on his ears.

"I'll take the spondulix," said the countryman riding up. "Dad was right. The anermel can get round a little."

Brown tried to say it was all a joke, but the fellow would have his money.

"I guess I won't trade to-day," he said, as he put it in his old rough, leath-pocket-book. "I'll go back to daddy."

In vain Brown tried to induce him to trade but he pushed off his boat, resolutely saying, "I'd rather go back, and tell daddy?"

Brown was completely "sold" for he knew at once that the green countryman was a leetle shrewder than people imagined him, and had just come there purposely to win his money from him.

Next time he did not ridicule a horse that "daddy" said "could run some."

Hunting Help.

THE trials of a young widower up in Wyndham county, Va., in trying to get 'help' are easily told by an exchange: At last, almost discouraged, he drew up in front of a small dwelling among the hills, and asked the customary question: "Can you tell me where I can get a woman to do the work in a firm house?"

"Where are ye from?" asked the old man, viewing the handsome horse and buggy with a critical air. "My name is —, and I am from —." "Oh, yes! I've heard of you; you lost your wife a spell ago. Wall, I've got six gals—good gals, too, and you may take your pick among 'em for a wife; but they wouldn't none of 'em think of going out ter work. I should full as lieves you should take Hannah, because she is the oldest, and her chance ain't quite so good, seein' as she's nigh-sighted, and can't bear very well; but if you don't want her you can take your pick of the others." Our friend went in, selected the best looking one, drove to the Justice's and was married, and carried his bride home that very night, having secured a permanent and efficient housekeeper, who who proves thus far in every way satisfactory, with no question of wages, and no limit to the work she is expected to do.

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