



THE TIMES.

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Select Poetry.

WE CAN MAKE HOME HAPPY.

Though we may not change the cottage
 For a mansion tall and grand,
 Or exchange the little grass-plot
 For a boundless stretch of land—
 Yet there's something brighter, dearer,
 Than the wealth we'd thus command.

Though we have no means to purchase
 Costly pictures, rich and rare,
 Though we have no silken hangings
 For the walls so cold and bare—
 We can hang them o'er with garlands,
 For flowers bloom everywhere.

We can always make home cheerful,
 If the right course we begin,
 We can make its inmates happy,
 And their trust blessings win;
 It will make the small room brighter
 If we let the sunshine in.

We can gather round the fireside
 When the evening hours are long—
 We can blend our hearts and voices
 In a happy, social song;
 We can guide some erring brother—
 Lead him from the path of wrong.

We may fill our home with music,
 And with sunshine brimming o'er,
 If against all dark intruders
 We will firmly close the door—
 Yet should evil shadows enter,
 We must love each other more.

There are treasures for the lowly
 Which the grandest fail to find,
 There's a chain of sweet affection
 Binding friends of kindred mind—
 We may reap the choicest blessings
 From the poorest lot assigned.

THE FOUNDLING.

WET and dreary. It is mid-winter the scene is Kirklington, on the London and Northwestern; the time, 10-45, just after the night mail had flashed through without stopping—bound for Liverpool and the North. The railway officials—pointmen, signalmen, porters, plate-layers—are collecting preparatory to go off duty for the night.

"Where's Dan?" asked one of the crowd upon the platform.
 "I saw him in the hut just after the 10.45 went through. Can't have come to any harm, surely."

"No; he said he'd seen something drop from the train, and he went down the line to pick it up."

And Dan had picked up something.—It was a basket, a common wicker basket, with a lid fastened down by a string. What did it contain? Refreshments? Dirty clothes? What?

A baby—a child half a dozen weeks old, no more. A pink and white piece of human china as fragile as Dresden, and as delicately fashioned and tinted as biscuit or Rose Pompadour.

"Where did you come across it?" inquired one.

"Lying on the line, just where it fell. Perhaps it didn't fall, perhaps it was chucked out. What matter? I've got it, and got to look after it, and that enough for me. Some day maybe I'll come across those as owns it, and then they shall pay me and take it back."

"Is there nothing about him? Turn him over."

The little mite's linen was white and of fine material, but he lay upon an old shawl and a few bits of dirty flannel.—All they found was a dilapidated purse, a common snap-lock bag purse of faded brown leather.

Inside was a brass thimble, a pawn ticket and the half of a Bank of England note for £100.

"What good's half a bank note to you?"

"Half a loaf's better than no bread."

"Yes; but you can eat one, but you can't pass the other. Won't you catch it from your wife? How'll you face her, Dan? What'll she say?"

"She'll say I done quite right," replied Dan, stoutly. "She's a good sort, God bless her."

"So are you Dan, that's a fact, God bless you too," said more than one rough voice in softened accents. Perhaps the brat'll bring you luck after all."

Winter-tide again six years later, but this season is wet and slushy. Once more we are at Kirklington, a long straggling village, which might have slumbered on in obscurity forever, had not the Northwestern line been carried close by it, to give it a place in Bradshaw and a certain importance as a junction and centre for goods traffic. But the activity was about the station. All the permanent officials had houses and cottages there; in the village lived only the field laborers who worked at the neighboring estate, or sometimes lend their hand for a job of navying on the line. The poor folk had a gruesome life of it, a hand-to-mouth struggle for bare existence against perpetual privation, accompanied by unremitting toil.

A new parson—Harold Teffy—had come lately to Kirklington. He was an earnest, energetic young man, who had won his spurs in an East End parish, and had now accepted this country living, because it seemed to open up a new field of usefulness. He had plunged bravely into the midst of his work; he was forever going up and down among his parishioners, solacing and comforting his parishioners, solacing and comforting preaching manful endurance and truthfulness to all.

He is now paying a round of parochial visits, accompanied by an old college chum who is spending Christmas with him.

"Yonder," said Teffy, pointing to a thin thread of smoke which rose from some gaunt trees into the sullen, wintry air, "yonder is the house—if, indeed, it deserves, so grand a name—the hovel, rather, of one whose case is the hardest of all the hard ones in my unhappy cure. This man is a mere hedger and ditcher, one who works for any master; most often for the railway, but who is never certain of a job all the year round. He has a swarm of young children, and has just lost his wife. He is absolutely prostrated—aghast probable at the future before him, and his utter incapacity to do his duty to his motherless little ones. Jack!" cried the parson, stopping short suddenly, and looking straight into his companion's face. "I wonder whether you could rouse him? If you could only get him to make a sign; to cry or laugh, or to take the smallest interest in common affairs. Jack, I believe you're the very man. You might get at him through the children—that marvelous hanky-panky of yours—those surprising tricks—a child takes to you naturally at once. Try and make friends with these. Perhaps when the father sees them interested and amused he may warm a little, speak perhaps, approve, perhaps smile, and in the end give in. Jack, will you try it?"

Jack Newbiggin was by profession a conveyancer, but nature had intended him for a new Houdin or a Wizard of the North. He was more than half a professional by the time he was full-grown. In addition to the quick eye and the facile wrist, he had the rarer gifts of the suave manner and the face of brass. He had even studied mesmerism and clairvoyance, and could upon occasion surprise his audience considerably by his power. They entered the miserable dwelling together. The children—eight of them—were skirmishing all over the floor. They were unmanageable, and beyond the control of the eldest sister, who was busied in setting out the table for the midday meal; one other child of six or seven, a bright-eyed, exceedingly beautiful boy, the least—were not nature's vagaries well known—likely to be born among and belong to such surroundings, stood between the legs of the man himself, who had his back to the visitors and was crouching low over the scanty fire.

The man turned his head for a moment, gave a blank stare, then an im-

perceptible nod, and once more he glowered down upon the fire.

"Here, little ones, do you see this conjurer? he's a conjurer. Know what a conjurer is, Tommy?" cried the parson, catching up a mite of four or five from the floor. "No, not you; nor you, Sarah, nor you, Jackey"—and he ran through all their names.

They had now ceased their gambols and were staring hard at their visitors—the moment was propitious; Jack Newbiggin began. He had fortunately filled his pockets with nuts, oranges and cakes before leaving the parsonage, so he had half his apparatus ready to hand.

The pretty boy had very soon left the father at the fire, and had come over to join in the fun, going back, however, to exhibit his share of the spoil, and describe voluminously what had occurred. This and the repeated shouts of laughter seemed to produce some impression on him. Presently he looked over his shoulder, and said—but without animation.

"It be very good of you, sir, surely; very good for to take so kindly to the little chicks. It does them good to laugh a bit, and it ain't much they've had to make 'em laugh, lately."

"It is good for all of us, now and again, I take it," said Jack, desisting, and going toward him—the children gradually collecting in a far off corner and comparing notes.

"You can't laugh, sir, if you're heart's heavy; if you do, it can be only a sham."

While he was speaking he had taken the Bible from the shelf, and resuming his seat began to turn the leaves slowly over.

"I'm an untaught, rough countryman, sir, but I have heard tell that these strange things you do are only tricks, ain't it so?"

Here was, indeed, hopeful symptoms! He was aroused, then, to take some interest in what had occurred.

"All tricks, of course, it all comes of long practice," said Jack, as he proceeded to explain some of the processes, hoping to enchain the man's attention.

"That's what I thought, sir, or I'd have given you a job to do. I've been in want of a real conjurer for many a long day, and nothing else'll do. See here, sir," he said, as took a small, carefully folded paper from between the leaves of the Bible; "do you see this?"

It was half a Bank of England note for £100.

"Now, sir, could any conjurer help me to the other half?"

"How did you come by it?" Jack asked at once.

"I'll tell you, sir, shortas I can make it. Conjurer or no conjurer, you've got a kindly heart, and I'm main sure that you'll help me if you can."

Dan then described how he had picked up the basket from the 10.45 Liverpool express.

"There was the linen; I've kept it.—See here; all marked quite pretty and proper, with lace round the edges, as though the mother loved to make the little one smart."

Jack examined the linen; it bore a monogram and crest. The first he made out to mean H. L. M., and the crest was plainly two hammers crossed and the motto, "I strike"—not a common crest—and he never remembered to have seen it before.

"And this was all."

"'Cept the bank note. This was in a poor old purse, with a pawn ticket and a thimble. I kept them all."

Like a true detective, Jack examined every article minutely. The purse bore the name Hester Georgian in rude letters inside, and the pawn ticket was made out in the same name.

"I cannot give you much hope that I shall succeed, but I will do my best.—Will you trust me with the note for a time?"

"Surely, sir, with the greatest of pleasure. If you could but find the other half it would give Harry—that's what we call him—such a grand start in life; schooling and the price of binding him to some honest trade."

Jack shook the man's hand, promised to do his best and left the cottage.

When Jack Newbiggin got back to the parsonage he found that his host had accepted an invitation for them both to dine at the "Big House," as it was

called, the country seat of the squire of the parish.

They were cordially received at the "Big House." Jack was handed over forthwith to his old friends, who, figuratively, rushed into his arms. They were London acquaintances—no more—of the sort we meet here and there and everywhere during the season, who care for us, and we for them, as much as for South Sea Islanders, but whom we greet with rapturous effusion when we meet them in a strange place. Jack knew the lady whom he escorted in to dinner as a gossip dame, who, when his back was turned, made as much sport of him as of her other friends.

"I have been fighting your battles all day," began Mrs. Sitwell.

"Was it necessary? I should have thought myself too insignificant."

"They were talking at lunch of your wonderful knack in conjuring, and some one said that the skill might prove inconvenient—when you played cards, for instance."

"A charitable imputation! With whom did it originate?"

"Sir Lewis Mallaby."

He was shown a grave, scowling face upon the right of the hostess—a face like a mask, its surface rough and wrinkled, through which the eyes shone out with baleful light, like corpse candles in a sepulchre.

"Pleasant creature! I'd rather not meet him alone on a dark night."

"He has a terrible character, certainly. Turned his wife out of doors because she would not give him an heir. It is this want of children to inherit his title and estates which preys upon his mind, they say, and makes him morose and melancholy."

Jack let his companion chatter on. It was his habit to get all the information possible about any company in which he found himself, for his own purposes as a clairvoyant; and when Mrs. Sitwell flagged he plied her with artless questions, and led her on from one person to another, making mental notes to serve him hereafter. It is thus, by careful and laborious preparation, that many of the mysterious feats of the clairvoyant conjurer are performed.

When the whole party was assembled in the drawing-room after dinner a chorus of voices, headed by that of the hostess, summoned Jack to his work.—There appeared to be only one dissident—Sir Lewis Mallaby—who not only did not trouble himself to back the invitation, but when the performance was actually begun was at no pains to conceal his contempt and disgust.

The conjurer made the conventional plum pudding in a hat, fired wedding rings into quarter loaves, did all manner of card tricks, and juggled on conscientiously right through his repertoire.—There was never a smile on Sir Lewis' face; he sneered unmistakably. Finally, with an ostentation that savored with rudeness, he took out his watch, a great gold repeater, looked at it, and unmistakably yawned.

Jack hungered for that watch directly he saw it. Perhaps through it he might make its owner uncomfortable, if only for a moment. But how to get it into his hands. He asked for a watch; a dozen were offered. No, none of these would do. It must be a gold watch, a repeater. Sir Lewis Mallaby's was the only one in the room, and he at first distinctly refused to lend it. But so many earnest entreaties were addressed to him, the hostess leading the attack, that he could not in common courtesy continue to refuse. With something like a growl he took his watch off the chain and handed it to Jack Newbiggin.

A curious, old-fashioned watch it was, which would gladden the heart of a watch-collector—all jeweled and enamelled, adorned with crest and inscription—an heirloom, which had probably been in the Mallaby's family for years. Jack looked it over curiously, meditatively, then suddenly raising his eyes, he stared intently into Sir Lewis Mallaby's face, and almost as quickly dropped them again.

"This is far too valuable," he said, courteously; "too much of a treasure to be risked in any conjuring trick; an ordinary modern watch I might replace, but not a work of art like this."

And he handed it back to Sir Lewis, who received it with ill-concealed satisfaction. He was as much pleased, prob-

ably at Jack's expression of probable failure in the proposed trick as at the recovery of his property.

Another watch, however, was pounded up into a jelly and brought out whole from a cabinet in an adjoining room, and this trick successfully accomplished, Jack Newbiggin, who was completely on his mettle, passed on to higher flights. He had spent the vacation of the year previous in France as the pupil of a wizard of European fame and had mastered many of the strange feats which are usually attributed to clairvoyance. There is something especially uncanny about these tricks, and Jack's reputation rapidly increased with this new exhibition of his powers.—Thanks to his cross-examination of Mrs. Sitwell at dinner, he was in possession of many facts connected with the company, although mostly strangers to him; and some of his hits were so palpable happy that he raised shouts of surprise, followed by that terrified hush, which not uncommonly succeeds the display of supernatural powers.

"Oh, but this is too preposterous," Sir Lewis Mallaby was heard to say, quite angrily. The continued applause profoundly disgusted him. "This is the merest charlatanism. It must be put an end to. It is the commonest imposture. These are things which he has coached up in advance. Let him be tried with something which upon the face of it he cannot have learned beforehand by artificial means."

"Try him, Sir Lewis; try him yourself," cried several voices.

"I scarcely like to lend myself to such folly to encourage so pitiful an exhibition."

But he seemed to be conscious that further protest would tell in Jack's favor.

"I will admit that you have considerable power in this strange branch of necromancy if you will answer a few questions of mine."

"Proceed," said Jack, gravely, meeting his eyes firmly and without flinching.

"Tell me what is most on my mind at the present moment."

"The want of a male heir," Jack replied promptly, and thanked Mrs. Sitwell in his heart.

"Pshaw! You have learned from Burke that I have no children," said Sir Lewis boldly, but he was a little taken aback. "Anything else?"

"The memory of a harsh deed that you now strive in vain to redeem."

"This borders upon impertinence," said Sir Lewis, with a hot blush on his cheek and passion in his eyes. "But let us leave abstractions and try tangible realities. Can you tell what I have in this pocket?" He touched the left breast of his coat.

"A pocketbook."

"Bah! *C'est va sans dire*. Every one carries a pocket book in his pocket."

"But to you?" asked several of the by-standers, all of whom were growing deeply interested in this strange duel.

Sir Lewis Mallaby confessed that he did, and produced it—an ordinary morocco leather purse and pocketbook all in one.

"Are you prepared to go on?" said the Baronet haughtily to Jack.

"Certainly."

"What does this pocketbook contain?"

"Evidence."

The contest between them was now a outrance.

"Of facts that must sooner or later come to light. You have in that pocketbook links in a long chain of circumstances which, however carefully concealed or anxiously dreaded, time, in its inexorable course, must bring eventually to light. There is no bond, says the Spanish proverb, which is not some day fulfilled, no debt in the long run that is not paid."

"What ridiculous nonsense! I give you my word, this pocketbook contains nothing—absolutely nothing—but a bank of England note for \$100."

"Stay!" cried Jack Newbiggin, facing him abruptly, and speaking in a voice of thunder. "It is not so—you know it—it is only the half!"

And as he spoke he took the crumpled paper from the hands of the really stupefied baronet. It was exhibited for inspection—the half of a Bank of England note for one hundred pounds.

There was much applause at this