Title: Who Spoke Next

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Posting Date: June 7, 2009 [EBook #4033]
Release Date: May, 2003
First Posted: October 17, 2001

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO-8859-1

Produced by Charles Franks and the Online Distributed
Proofreading Team. HTML version by Al Haines.

WHO SPOKE NEXT

BY

MRS. FOLLEN

With Illustrations by Billings and others

THE OLD GARRET

Boys are not apt to forget a promise of a story. Frank and Harry did not fail to call upon their mother for the history of the old musket.

"It appeared to me," said the mother, "that the old musket was not very willing to tell his story. He had a sort of old republican pride, and felt himself superior to the rest of the company in character and importance. When he had made himself heard in the world hitherto, it had always been by one short, but very decided and emphatic word; he despised any thing like a palaver; so he began very abruptly, and as if he had half a mind not to speak at all, because he could not speak in his own way.

"None but fools," said he, "have much to say about themselves—'Deeds, not words,' is a good motto for all. But as I would not be churlish, and as I have agreed, as well as the rest of my companions, to tell my story, I will mention what few things worth relating I can recollect.

I have no distinct consciousness, as my friend the pitcher or the curling tongs has, of what I was before the ingenuity of man brought me into my present form. I would only mention that all the different materials of which I was formed must have been perfect of their kind, or I could never have performed the duties required of me.

My first very distinct recollection is of being stood up in the way I am standing now, with a long row of my brethren, of the same shape and character as myself, as I supposed. This was in a large building somewhere in England. I, like the curling tongs, was at last packed up in a box, and brought to America, but it took a rather larger box to take me and my friends, than it took to pack up him and his friends, with all their thin straddle legs."

Creak went the curling tongs at this personal attack.

"We were brought to this country," continued the old musket, "by an Englishman. Little did he think how soon we should take part against our Fatherland, or he would have kept us at home.

One day, the elder brother of the gentleman who owned our little friend curling tongs came into the shop where I then was, and, after looking at all the muskets, selected me as one that he might trust. As he paid for me, he said to the man, "This is an argument which we shall soon have to use in defence of our liberties."

"I fear we shall," said the shopman, "and if many men are of your mind, I hope, sir, you will recommend my shop to them. I shall be happy to supply all true patriots with the very best English muskets."

My new master smiled, and took me home to his house in the country.

The family consisted of himself, his wife, and three children—two sons and a daughter. The eldest son was eighteen, the second sixteen, and the daughter fourteen. The mistress of the house turned pale when she saw my master bring me in and quietly set me down in a corner of the room behind the old clock.

Presently the two young men entered. The younger shuddered a little when he saw me, but the elder clapped his hands and exclaimed, "That's good! We have got a musket now, and the English will find out that we know how to use it!"

"Pray to God, my son," said his mother, "that we may never have to use it."

The boy did not give much heed to what his mother said, but took me up, examined me all over, and, after snapping my trigger two or three times, pronounced me to be a real good musket, and placed me again in the corner where his father had put me at first.

The next day, my master took me out to try me. I confess I was not pleased at the first charge with which I was loaded. When I felt the powder, ball, wadding and all, rammed down so hard, it was as disagreeable to me as a boy's first hard lesson in grammar is to him, and seemed to me as useless, for I did not then know what I was made for, nor of what use all this stuffing could be. But when my master pulled the trigger, and I heard the neighboring hills echo and reecho with the sound, I began to feel that I was made for something, and grew a little vain at the thought of the noise I should make in the world.

I did not then know all I was created for; it seemed to me that it was only to make a great noise. I soon learned better, and understood the purpose of my being more perfectly.

A few days after this, the family was all astir some time before sunrise. There was a solemn earnestness in their faces, even in the youngest of them, that was very impressive.

At last, my master took me up, put me in complete order, loaded me and set me down in the same place, saying as he did so, "Now all is ready." His wife sighed heavily. He looked at her and said, "My dear, would you not have us defend our children and firesides against the oppressors?"

"Yes," she said, "go, but my heart must ache at the thought of what may happen. If I could only go with you!"

They sat silent for a long time, holding each other's hands, and looking at their children, till, just at sunrise, his brother John, that sleeping child's grandfather, rushed into the house, crying, "They are in sight from the hill. Come, Tom, quickly, come to the church." My master seized me in a moment, kissed his wife and children, and without speaking hastened to the place where the few men of the then very small town were assembled to resist the invaders.

Presently about eight hundred men, all armed with muskets as good as I was, and of the same fashion, were seen. These men had two cannon with them which made a fearful show to the poor colonists, as the Americans were then called.

Our men were about one hundred in number. The lordly English marched up within a few rods of us, and one called out, "Disperse, you rebels. Lay down your arms, and disperse."

Our men did not however lay down their arms. My master grasped me tighter than before. We did not stir an inch. Immediately the British officers fired their pistols, then a few of their men fired their muskets, and, at last, the whole party fired upon our little band as we were retreating. They killed eight men, and then went on to Concord, to do more mischief there.

I felt a heavy weight fall upon me; it was my master's dead body; and so I learned what muskets were made for. His fingers were on the trigger; as he fell, he pulled it, and in that sound his spirit seemed to depart.

The British marched on to Concord, and the poor brave people of Lexington, who had so gallantly made the first resistance, were left to mourn over dead companions and friends.

Soon the eldest son of my master discovered his father among the slain. The poor fellow! I never shall forget his sorrow. He groaned as if his heart would break, and then he laid himself down on the ground by the side of his father's body, and wept bitterly.

One must be made of harder stuff than I am, to forget such a thing as this. I do not ever like to speak of it, or of the painful scene that followed. The poor widow and her fatherless children! It seemed a dreadful work that I and such as I were made to perform.

But there were other things to be thought of then. The British soon returned from Concord, where they had destroyed some barrels of flour and killed two or three men.

In the mean time, the men from all the neighboring towns collected together, armed with all the muskets they could find, and annoyed them severely on their return by firing on them from behind stone walls.

My master's brother took me from the corner where I had been again placed, and joined the party. He placed himself behind a fence by which they must pass, and took such good aim with me that down fell a man every time I spoke.

Other muskets performed the same work. What they did you may judge of, when I tell you that, while two hundred and seventy-three Englishmen fell that day, only eighty-eight Americans were killed. I will not talk of what I myself performed, for I despise a boaster, but I did my share of duty, I believe.

About two months after this, uncle John, as the children called him, came again to

borrow me. He was going to join the few brave men who opposed the British force at Bunker or Breed's Hill.

"Sister," he said, "you will lend me the musket, will you not? I cannot afford to buy one, and we must teach these English what stuff we are made of."

"Let me go, Mother," said the eldest boy. "I am old enough now; I am almost nineteen; let me go."

His mother said nothing; she looked at the vacant chair which was called his father's; she considered a while, and then took me and put me into her son's hands.

"God bless you, William," she said, "and bring you back safe to us; but do your duty and fear nothing."

She kissed him, and he left her. I felt William's heart beat bravely as he shouldered me. He was a fine fellow. We were as one. I was proud of him, and he of me. No man and musket did better than William and I, on that never-to-be-forgotten day; but, in the midst of the battle, a shot wounded William's right arm, and he let me fall.

His uncle led him off the field and sent him home to his mother. A countryman, who had nothing but an oak stick to fight with, seized me as I lay on the ground, and here I met with the first mortification of my life—he actually used me to dig with. This was a contemptible feeling in me, and I have since learned to be ashamed of it, and to know that all labor is equally honorable, if it is for a good end. They had not tools enough for making entrenchments, and they actually used the bayonet, of which I had been proud, for this purpose. In the confusion after the battle, I was forgotten. I was left at the bottom of the works in the mud.

It was a hard thing for me to be parted from William, and to feel that I should never be restored to my corner in his mother's room behind the old clock; but I had a conviction that I had taken part in a great work, and I enjoyed our triumphs greatly.

This, you will think, no doubt, was glory enough for one musket; but a greater still was in reserve for me. It is with muskets as with men, one opportunity improved opens the way for another, and every chance missed is a loss past calculation; for every gain that might have grown out of that chance is lost too.

Every one should remember that, as he fights his way through the battle of life; and, when tempted to slacken his fire, think of what the old revolutionary spirit, speaking through my muzzle, taught on that day,—'hold on, and hold fast, and hold out. Never stop, stay, or delay, but make ready!—present!—fire!—and, again and again, make ready!—present!—fire!—till every round of ammunition is gone.'"

Here the dry, rusty, unmodulated tone, in which the old king's arm had, up to this time, spoken, suddenly changed; and it seemed as if a succession of shots had been let off. Then, bringing himself down to the floor with a DUNT off of the little tea chest full of

old shoes, on which he had stood leaning against the brick chimney, exactly as he used to do grounding arms seventy years ago, he quietly dropped back into the drowsy tone of narrative, and proceeded:—

"Yes—never flag nor hang back. The greater the danger, the more do you press up to the mark. So we did at Trenton in the Jerseys, on that most glorious day of my life of which I am now about to tell you.

I must tell you that I had the honor of fighting under General Washington; for I had been marched down to Trenton with a stout-hearted teamster, named Judah Loring, from Braintree, Massachusetts, who, after our battle at Bunker Hill, in that State, picked me up from the bottom of the works, where, for want of pickaxes, I had been, as I told you, serving as a trenching, tool, and made himself my better-half and commander-in-chief. Excuse a stately phrase; but, after the battle of Bunker Hill, I never could screw up my muzzle to call any man master or owner again.

We found only a few thousand men and muskets there, principally from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the Jerseys, with a few companies of New Englanders; and a steadier, sturdier set of men than these last never breathed. They had enlisted for six months only, and their time was out; but they never spoke of quitting the field.

It was now December, in the midst of snow and ice; and not a foot among them that did not come bleeding to the frozen path it trod. But, night after night, the men relieved each other to mount guard, though the provision chest was well nigh empty; and, day after day, they scoured the country for the chance of supplies, appearing to the enemy on half a dozen points in the course of the day; making him think the provincials, as we were scornfully called, ten times as numerous as we really were. But alas, I am old, I find, and lose the thread of my story. It was of Washington I meant to speak.

Nobody could know General Washington that had not seen him as we did, at that dark hour of the struggle. It seemed as if that man never slept. All day he was planning, directing, contriving; and all night long he would write—write—write; letters to Congress, begging them to give him full powers, and all would go well, for he did not want power for himself, but only power to serve them; letters to the generals in the north, warning, comforting, and advising them; letters to his family and friends, bidding them look at him and do as he did; letters to influential men every where, entreating them to enlist men and money for the holy cause.

He never rested; and, with the cold gray dawning, would order out his horse and ride through and around the miserable tents, and where we often slept under the bare heavens, and every heart was of bolder and better cheer as he passed.

His look never changed. It was just the same steady face, whatever went on before it; whether he saw us provincials beaten back, or watched a thousand British regulars pile their arms after the victory at Trenton.

He looked as he does in the great picture in Faneuil Hall, on the right, as you stand

before the rostrum. He stands there, by his horse, just as I saw him before the passage of the Delaware, with the steady, serious, immovable look that puts difficulties out of countenance. It is the look of a man of sense and judgment, who has come to the determination to save the country, and means to transact that piece of business without fail.

I never saw that quiet, iron look change but once. I will tell you about it. It was one of those days after the battle of Trenton, when he tried to concentrate the troops that he had scattered over the country, to bring them to bear upon the British. His object was to show the enemy that they could not keep their foothold.

Between Trenton and Princeton he ordered the assault. The Virginians were broken at the enemy's first charge, and could not be rallied a second time against the British bayonets. General Washington commanded and threatened and entreated in vain.

We of New England saw the crisis, marched rapidly up, and poured in our fire at the exact moment, Judah Loring and I in the very front.

The British could not stand the fire. We gave it to them plenty, I tell you. Judah Loring loaded, and I fired over and over and over again, till it seemed as if he and I were one creature.

A musket, I should explain to you, feels nothing of itself, but only receives a double share of the nature of the man who carries it.

I felt ALIVE that day. Judah was hot, but I was hotter; and, before the cartridge box was empty, he pulled down his homespun blue and white frock sleeve over his wrist, and rested me upon it when he took aim. He was a gentle-hearted fellow, though as brave as his musket.

"She's so hot," says he, doubling his sleeve into his palm, "that I can't hold her; but I can't stop firing NOW!"

I met his wishes exactly, I knew by that word; for he always called every thing he liked, SHE. The sun was SHE; so was his father's old London-made watch; so was the Continental Congress.

General Washington saw the whole;—the enemy, driven back before our fire, could never be brought to look us in the face again. We held the ground;—the Virginia troops rallied;—General Washington took off his cocked hat, and lifted it high, like a finished gentleman, as he was. "Hurrah!" he shouted, "God bless the New England troops! God bless the Massachusetts line!" [Footnote: This was all fact, related by one who was present.] And his steady face flamed and gave way like melting metal.

Ah, what a set of men were those! I felt the firm trip-hammer of all their pulses beat through the whole fight, for we stood in platoon, shoulder to shoulder. I felt my kindred with every one of them. They had more steel in their nerves and more iron in their blood

than other men. Not a man cared a straw for his life, so he saved from wrong and bondage the lives of them that should come after him.

That day's work raised hope in every man's heart through the land. Said I not well that it was the most glorious of my life?

I have but little more to say. I have said more than I meant to, more perhaps than was wise to say of my own glory. But the thought of those brave days of old makes one too talkative.

I must tell you, however, how I at last came here. Judah Loring brought me home safe; he was a very honest fellow, and seeing the initials scratched on my butt-end, and 'Lexington' underneath, he went there on purpose to find to whom I belonged.

My friend William claimed me, and I was again placed behind the old clock in the little parlor. His mother looked very calm, and almost happy, but not as she once did; she sighed heavily when William brought me home. William's wound in his arm healed after a while, but his arm was disabled. By great self-denial and exertion, his mother had got him into college, and he was to be a schoolmaster.

The sight of me was painful to this good woman, and she gave me to uncle John who kept me safely and, on the whole, honorably till his son placed me here.

There is one disgrace I have met with which, in good faith, however unwillingly, I ought to mention. Uncle John used me to kill skunks occasionally. This there was no great harm in doing, only he should not have talked about it. I disliked, it, however, exceedingly.

Once, I am told, when he was in the South, some southern gentleman, for some trifling offense, challenged him.

Uncle John was told that he, as the party challenged, might choose his weapons.

"Well," he said to his enemy, "if you will wait till I can send for my skunk gun, I am ready for you."

I have since, I do hate to say it, been called the skunk gun repeatedly. To be sure, no one that has any reverence in his nature speaks of me in this way. Uncle John had not much, but his son, the father of that little girl, treats me with due respect, and forbids them to call me the skunk gun.

I was once the defender of liberty, and am ready to be so again. I was not made to kill skunks, those disgusting little animals. I hate to think of them.

Pardon me for keeping you listening to me so long; I have done. I wish to hear now what that respectable-looking broadsword has to say. We two ought to be friends."

"I was born a gentleman," said the broadsword. "I was always considered the sign, the symbol of one. Not many years since, a sword was so essential to the character of a

gentleman that a man without one by his side, was, in fact, not considered a gentleman.

My master, who was also yours, Mr. Curlingtongs, was one the officers in the company of Cadets at its first formation. He had the honorable title of Major, and all his best friends called him Major. Little did I think once that I should be condemned to the disgrace of spending my old age in a garret with crooked curling tongs, broken pitchers, old baize gowns, noseless tea-kettles, old crutches, a foot stove, and, worse than all, a spinning wheel.

My only peers here are the venerable musket and the respectable wig. Even they have seen too much hard service to be able fully to appreciate the feelings of a gentleman who has been brought up as I have. The degradation the musket especially endured, in being used as a spade by such a very common sort of person as Judah Loring—a degradation of which, far from being ashamed, he seems actually proud; all this, I say, my friends, makes a wide separation between us never to be forgotten or got over."

"I'm agreed, the further off the better," growled the musket. The old wig also gave a sort of contemptuous hitch, that seemed to say, he agreed with the musket.

"I consider myself," resumed the broad-sword, "to be a perfect gentleman. I have never denied myself by any sort of labor. I have been considered something to show, something to be used only as a terror to evil doers.

It strikes me that I really made the Major; he never could appear in his company or perform his duties without me; his queue was not more essential. He was not a Major without me. Every one feared me when they saw my shining blade out of its scabbard, and it was really amusing occasionally to see the effect I produced. There have been swords that have done bloody work, but I have never been so defiled.

The Boston Cadets, you know, are the Governor's body guard, and such is the anxiety of people sometimes to see a real live governor when he has on his governor's dress and character, that the women and children crowd around him so that he can hardly find room to move and breathe. At one of these times of great pressure, my master took me out and flourished me round bravely. O, how they all scampered! just like a flock of frightened geese, merely at the sight of me. Such is the effect of my mere appearance. To be sure, the Major laughed whenever he told this story. I know not why, for it is perfectly true.

Once, when all the men in the family were gone away,—it was since we have lived in the country,—the children were in the upper chamber, and the doors were open below, and they saw a frightful-looking beggar coming up the avenue; he was lame and had a patch over his eye. He looked terrible; but one of the girls ran for me, and took me out of the scabbard, and shook me at him out of the window, and screamed out to him to go off; whereupon he turned about and hobbled off as fast as he could.

One of the little girls said she did not believe there was any harm in the poor beggar, and that she would go down and let him in, and give him something to eat, but the biggest boy shook me at her for only saying so, so as to dazzle her eyes and frighten her, and she

became silent and remained where she was.

Many such feats I have performed, too many to relate. Children, to be sure, especially big blustering rude boys, have occasionally played tricks with me. When they play Bombastes Furioso they come for me."

"All right," said the musket.

"These little rogues have gapped my fine edge, and one good-for-nothing scamp used me to cut down cabbages, but, as he came very near cutting down his younger brother at the same time, he was sent to bed supperless by his father. I have really never performed any drudgery. Like Caesar, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.'"

At these words, there was a sort of scornful laugh from every venerable person in the garret. Even the old baize gown shook with merriment; this vexed the sword so completely that he stopped speaking; and, notwithstanding their entreaties, would not resume the story or speak another word.

There was a deep silence, for a few moments, which was broken, at last, by the old wig, who called upon the warming pan to tell her story; the warming pan obeyed, and spoke as follows:—

"I pass over my early life. Time was when I was thought much of in this family. Early in the autumn, I was rubbed and polished till you could see your face in me.

On the first cold night, some nice walnut wood embers were carefully put into me; I had the pleasure and honor of being passed up and down my mistress's bed till it was well warmed, and this service I performed for her constantly till the warm weather returned.

When any one in the family was ill, I was employed on the same service for him or her; or when guests came to pass the night, I performed this office for them, and this was all apparently which my existence was for. A very monotonous life I led, to be sure, but I am of a quiet nature and care not for much variety.

I remember only one or two things which occurred beyond this dull routine; these I will relate and then give place to some more interesting speaker.

One day, I was suddenly seized upon by one of the maids, and carried out into the orchard, when she began beating me with an iron spoon, and making as much noise as she possibly could; presently others of the family joined with tin pans and kettles, and such a babel of sound you never heard; this, I found afterwards, was to stupefy a swarm of bees and make them alight which, at last, they did. Then one of the men with a handkerchief over his face, and with gloves on, swept the bees into a new hive, and put it by the side of the old ones.

After this bruising, I was hung up upon my accustomed peg, but my brazen face still shows the marks which Dolly's iron spoon left on me that morning.

One feat, however, I performed, which I should think might put our friend the sword to the blush. I did do something in defence of our native land in the hour of her danger; he it seems did nothing in his whole life but play gentleman.

Our cook Dolly was a brave woman, and, during the Revolution, once or twice she was left quite alone in the house, and every thing was put under her care.

Upon one of these occasions, she was up stairs, and thought she heard some one in the house; she came down very softly, and saw a man in the pantry helping himself to the silver; he was so much occupied, and she moved so softly, that he did not see or hear her. I was hanging in the entry close by where she passed; she took me down very softly, came up behind the soldier,—for such he was,—and gave him a good box on the ear with me, instead of her hand. This scared him so effectually that he threw down the silver, and scampered off after his companions who were in the stable looking for horses which they meant to take for themselves. Dolly, in the mean time, caught up the silver, ran out of another door into a wood near the house, where she hid herself and the silver till the enemy were gone.

These are all the events of my life that I remember. After my master's and mistress's death, I was sent up garret to be put among the useless old things, such as gentlemen's broadswords, broken pitchers, noseless tea-kettles, &c. The reason for this is not that I am worn out, but because the age is so much wiser that they have come to the conclusion that cold beds are more healthy than warm ones; so here I am left to rust out with the rest of my fellow-sufferers. Perhaps my cousin foot stove may have something more interesting to relate. I have done."

The foot stove seemed half inclined not to speak; but, after a little urging, she said, in a whining tone,

"Every one knows that I was made to be trodden under foot and to be abused. There was, to be sure, a period of my life somewhat more respectable.

Many years ago, I was regularly, during the cold weather, brightened up and put in nice order every Saturday, and on Sunday taken to church; for then the churches were cold, and, without me well filled with blazing coals, my mistress could not have borne to listen for more than an hour to the good minister's sermon.

Sermons at that time were sermons indeed; and the people got their money's worth of preaching.

I was indeed, at that time, a great favorite in the house. All the old people cared for me especially, and I was kept often in the parlor, and, when I was cold, the children were allowed to sit upon me, but never to abuse me. But this is a capricious, changing, cheating, vain world, and foot stoves are not thought much of nowadays. The churches are warmed all over, so that foot stoves are not needed, and so I never go to church; indeed, in my broken-down state of health, it would hardly be safe for me to do so. I am not even used at home, if it is possible to do without me: and then, if I ever am brought down stairs, a

long apology is made for my looks.

The truth is, my life has not been a happy or desirable one. I have had much to suffer. One happy moment I had. The dear lady to whom I first belonged had long wished to have a stove, but was prevented from buying one because she would not spend money on herself for any thing if she could possibly do without. Her husband, who was the owner of the curling tongs, when he knew this, determined to get her a stove; and, on the very day when she burned his hair in her efforts to learn to dress it as well as the hair dresser, he purchased me for her.

I was the very best stove in the shop; and, when he presented me to her, he said, "Now, my dear, in revenge for your burning my head, I will heap coals of fire not on your head, but under your feet, especially when you go to church; so beware lest I burn your feet as you did my head."

This pretty attention of her husband's pleased her so much that she kept me in sight for many days. When shall I forget how soft and light her pretty, neatly dressed feet felt, the first time she used me?

For a long while I was her stove alone; but after a time, all sorts of feet were put upon me, and life grew common and tiresome.

After my mistress's death, I was much neglected, for wise folks said foot stoves should not be used. At last, the cook, who was no invalid, and did not care for doctors, took me up, and soon began to consider me as her property, and kept me in the kitchen.

One day, however, the farmer's boy brought in some heavy logs of wood, and threw them down carelessly. One fell upon me, and smashed me up, leaving me as you now see me. Here I remain shattered and forsaken—nothing but an old broken foot stove that nobody cares for.

I hope that those stout, good-looking and-irons will now tell their story. They look to me just as upright and stiff and strong as when I first saw them in our dear master's chimney corner. To be sure, they are not so bright and shining as they were then, but they look, in all other respects, just as they did then, and life has fallen lighter on them than on your poor humble servant, the foot stove."

The andirons were now called upon to entertain the company. "We have always had the comfort and blessing of living together," said one of them. Indeed we should not be good for any thing apart. A pair of andirons belong together as much as the two parts of a pair of scissors. So we have never been lonely. We have had much to be thankful for. We are, to be sure, called 'the old dogs.' The name sounds disagreeable, and is hard to bear; but we are made of good Russia iron, and can endure a good deal.

Time was when the old dogs were essential to the warmth and comfort of the family, but they went out of fashion. Modern improvements, as they are called, sent us away from the cheerful domestic hearth to this old dusty garret, and spiders weave their webs

over our very faces; but, like other DOGS, we had our day.

What article of furniture in the old-fashioned snug parlor was so essential as we? How could the fragrant hickory and birch sticks have sent their cheering light and warmth over the faces of the happy family circles without our support?

The tea-kettle, genial and comely as it always was while it had a nose, was still but an occasional visitor. We were always there. We listened to the early morning prayer which the good man offered, on every new day, to the Giver of all good. We were present when he lifted his earnest voice of grateful joy, for the blessings of loving friends and healthy children, who made their quiet life an Eden of peace and goodness.

We were present too when sorrow came, softened by religious faith—by trust in a loving Father.

We heard when, again and again, the news that another child was born was sounded through the house with a sweetly solemn joy, like the voice of an angel proclaiming anew peace on earth and good will to men.

How many secrets we have listened to! How many love scenes we have witnessed! How many ringing shouts of laughter have we heard! How many unbidden tears have we seen flow! What stories we might tell! But it would not be right for us to tell all we know. I suppose the good old couple, as they sat of winter evenings over the embers, when the children were gone to bed, never thought of our telling what we heard.

One trick that the boys planned in our hearing, and the punishment they got for their roguery, I will tell you about, if you are not tired of our story."

"Go ahead," shouted the musket, with a bounce.

"There were five boys in the family. One of them, a little fellow of ten years of age, was foolish enough to be afraid of the dark. His brothers resolved to cure him, and took the worst way possible, which was, to give him something to be frightened at.

On the upper shelf of a closet in the room in which they slept was a very large bundle. They determined to tie a string to the bundle, and, before George went up to bed, to tie the other end of the string to the latch of the door, so that, when he opened it, this bundle would come thundering down, and, as they said, give him something to be scared at.

The man servant heard of the plan as he was lighting the lamps while the boys were talking it over. He had a particular fancy for George and told him.

George said nothing, but, just before the time when he thought Tom would go up to the bedroom to set the trap, went up himself, tied the string to the latch of the door, having previously put a tin pan and wash basin on the top of the bundle, then put the old cat in the closet, and came down stairs.

"When do you go to bed, George?" said Tom.

"At the usual time," said George, quietly. Up ran Tom to prepare the entertainment for his brother, and opened the door fearing nothing—bang slam came great bundle, tin kettle and wash basin, and out jumped the great black cat, howling and spitting at the racket.

Tom forgot he was the big brave boy, and scampering, like lightning, down stairs, he slipped, fell, and was brought in faint from fright, and with a bleeding nose.

His father inquired what had frightened him so. George told what he had done.

His father blamed him severely.

"Blame us, father," said the other boys.

"It is only the biter bitten," said Tom. "I am justly punished. I was the oldest, and I only am really to blame. It is all right that I suffered instead of poor George."

Then their father gathered them around him, and told them stories of the evil consequences he had known follow from being severely frightened.

The children all promised him never to commit such a fault again; and I believe they kept their word.

"But I am too long, and am growing prosy."

"So you are," bounced the musket.

"An ugly, impertinent contrivance, called a grate, was introduced in lieu of us—black, dirty coal was burned instead of beautiful oak and walnut, to warm the dear family. We were no longer of any use. Poetry went away with the andirons, sentiment and refinement are obsolete, and here we stand, the head and foot-stones, as it seems to me, at the grave of the dear old-fashioned buried past.

"I have done. Please, friend tea-kettle, favor us with your experiences."

"My story has nothing extraordinary in it," said the tea-kettle. "Like most of my friends, I have had my ups and downs in the world.

I had the honor of being made in the mother country. I am of the very best of tin; what there is left of me is still pretty good. When that little girl's parents were married, I first took my place in the family, and contributed my part to the adornment of the kitchen closet. I was kept as bright as silver, and was carried, twice a day, into the parlor, and set upon some red-hot coals, where I used to sing my morning and evening song to the happy family I served.

Erelong, an ugly upstart of a grate took the place, as you know, of the dear old

andirons, and I was banished with them from my happy place.

After this, I was rarely used. When any one was ill, and hot water was wanted to be kept upstairs, I was called for. My nature is a kindly one, so I sang away just as merrily as if I had not been somewhat neglected.

For this sweetness of temper I had my reward; for once my kind mistress took me up, and said as she looked at me, "I do love this tea-kettle. It discourses to me eloquent music. It tells the story of the early days of my happy married life. It reminds me of the precious hours we passed talking over so many pleasant things that we enjoyed, or that we hoped for, while there it sat on the coals singing away a sort of sweet cheerful accompaniment to our talk, as if it understood all we said. We understand each other, you dear old thing."

In my visits up stairs, I often heard amusing stories told by the nurse to the poor invalid of whom she had the charge, when he was getting better, and such an indulgence as to hear stories was allowed him.

Once, when one of the boys—it was little Jonathan—was recovering from an attack of scarlatina, and was very fidgety and uncomfortable, nothing but some kind of story would keep him quiet in his bed.

It so happened that the good nurse was a sort of family friend, and had been a great deal in the house of Jonathan's cousin, a very roguish boy who was always getting into some kind of scrape.

Jonathan was never satisfied with hearing of Ned's frolics. One I will relate. "At one time," said the nurse, "his father had been ill for some days, and the order of the house was to be very quiet, as sleep was essential to the recovery of the invalid. Now poor Ned was rather in the habit of making a good deal of noise everywhere, but he loved his father, and was very anxious not to disturb him. In the house, he could not avoid making some little noise; so he passed much of his time out of doors, wandering about alone when he could find no playfellow.

At last, Ned remembered that he had some money left of his last allowance for pocket money. This was a rare thing; usually Ned's money burned in his pocket so that there was no comfort for him till it was spent for something or other. Often—it must be told in Ned's favor—his pocket money was given to some poor little boy or girl whom he saw in the street, or who might happen to come to his father's house to ask charity. Ned's father, though not rich, gave him pocket money, that Ned might be able to give for himself if he had the inclination so to do. Well, it so happened that neither charity, nor sugar-plums, nor any other sweet thing had taken off Ned's money; he had as much as seventy-five cents in his pocket, and, for the want of something better to do, he went into a shop, called, in the country town in which they lived, a 'Variety Shop.'

'Variety Shop' was a just and proper name for such an assemblage of every thing ever devised for the convenience and inconvenience of human beings. There were caps after

Parisian fashions for ladies, and there, not far off, were horse nets and blankets. There were collars after the newest patterns for gentlemen, and yokes for oxen. There were corsets and Noah's arks, salt fish and sugar almonds, Chinese Joshes and Little Samuels, accordeons and fish horns, almanacs, Joe Millers, and Bibles, toothpicks and churns, silver thimbles and wash tubs, penknives, tweezers and pickaxes, Adams and Eves in sugar, and Napoleons in brass. In short, what was there not in that shop?

Ned entered, and his eyes were dazzled with the show and the variety. He had some money in his pocket, and spend it now he began to think he must; the fire burned very hot in that little pocket of his, it must be put out. Somewhere or other it must go, that troublesome seventy-five cents.

Now what did Ned want of toothpicks, or churns, or horse blankets, or collars, or caps, or yokes, or thimbles, or tubs? A little Samuel his aunt had given him. A Chinese Josh had a charm for him. He would look at it.

The shopman, who had once been a pedler, saw the state of things with Ned, and resolved to relieve him of that burning trouble in his pocket, if possible. The man was an honest fellow, and meant to give Ned his money's worth. But an exchange was no robbery, and he was convinced that it would be better for both sides if something in his Variety Shop should go to Ned, and Ned's money should go into the money drawer.

After Ned had looked some time at the Josh, and had half made up his mind to take it, and had motioned away all the sugar monsters and Noah's arks and bronze Napoleons and even the penknives, the shopman said, "You have not looked at my fancy fowls, young gentleman; I should like you would see them before you decide what you will have of my variety this morning. That is quite a new article which I have just received."

Ned was not used to being called young gentleman. He was nothing but a boy. Of course, he went to look at the new article, after this. Every one but him and the shopman had left the shop. It was very quiet, and, just as the shopman had finished speaking, a cock, who was in a crate in the corner, set up the loudest crowing that Ned had ever heard, and with a decidedly foreign tone.

In a moment, Ned made up his mind that cock he would have. His father had given him leave to keep fowls, and he already had a cock and three hens of a fine breed.

"What's the price of that fellow?" said he; "he's a real buster; he'll wake us all up early enough in the morning."

"A dollar, and cheap enough, too," said the shopman; "but, as it's you, and I know your family, you shall have it for that."

"I have only seventy-five cents," said Ned, "and shall have no more till next week, when I have my allowance. If you will trust me, and are willing to wait, I will take the rooster."

"Suppose the critter was to die afore then," said the shopman, "would you pay all the same?"

"To be sure," said Ned; and the bargain was settled.

The shopman advised him not to take the cock away before dark. Ned agreed to wait till then. Just before his bed time, he went for Chanticleer, and brought him as quietly as possible to the house. He was afraid to put the new master of the poultry yard on the roost with the old cock, lest they should fight in the morning; so he carried his treasure softly up to his own bedroom in which was a large closet where he had prepared a temporary roost. The cock, who was very tame, as he had been always a pet, made no fuss, but went to sleep on his new roost. So did Ned in his comfortable bed.

Now it so happened that this large closet was between Ned's bedroom and that of his father who, as we have before mentioned, had been seriously ill, and who particularly demanded quiet. All the first part of the night the sick man had been tossing all out, very uneasy, till about three o'clock in the morning, when he fell into a sweet sleep. His wife, weary with anxiety and watching, was trying to get a nap in the easy chair, when, suddenly, close by them, as if in the very room, came an indescribable screech, an unearthly, long, shrill cock-a-doodle-do yell, such as only a fancy feathered biped can perform.

The poor invalid screamed with horror, and his wife would have screamed too, had she not thought first of her dear patient.

In a moment, all the household had left their beds to learn the cause of the horrid noise. Every one ran to the sick man's door, to listen if it was from there that the frightful noise came. When the door was opened, there stood all the terrified family, and, among the rest, poor Ned with the culprit in his arms.

"It's only my new fancy rooster in my closet," said he; "I never thought of his crowing. Poor father and mother, I am so sorry! O, dear! dear! what shall I do? I'll carry him right down, this minute; and I never, dear father, will do such a thing again. Who'd a' thought of his crowing so early? and then he's such an awful buster when he crows. Do look at him."

Ned's father was the best tempered man that ever lived, and he was really getting well; so, after a minute or two, he burst into a fit of laughter at the droll group assembled in his room, with poor Ned in the midst of them in his night shirt. As soon as Ned heard his father laugh, he scampered off on his bare feet, with his fancy rooster in his arms, covering its head with his shirt to keep down the crowing. He shut the creature up in the cellar, where it shouted and screeched till morning."

Some of my most amusing recollections are of the queer scenes and conversations at which I was present, when my kind mistress lent me to a farmer's wife. This woman was in the habit of depending, as far as possible, upon her neighbors for any little conveniences she fancied, and did not like to pay the cost of. Usually she managed to do

without such a nice tea-kettle as I really was; but, when she had company, she regularly came in for me. This was her usual way of asking for me, after saying good morning: "All your folks pretty well?"

"Yes, we are all very well," was the answer usually.

"Well, then, I spose you've nothin' agin my havin' your kittle this arternoon. I expect Deacon Fish and his wife, and tew darters to an arely tea; and I'm kind o' used to that ere kittle o' yourn, and can't somehow git along without it; and I han't yet got none of my own, you see."

She, of course, always had me to entertain her company; she knew she should get me; and, as she went away, she always said something about how pleasant and right it was to be neighborly.

After a few years, some one of her relations gave her a nice tea-kettle. She brought it in to show to my mistress. I was hissing away at the time for breakfast, which was hardly over when she entered. After she had shown her kettle to every one, and satisfied herself that it would bear a comparison with me, she said,—

"Now, at last, I've got a kittle o' my own; and I'll never borry nor lend agin as long as I live in this here vale o' tears."

Not long after this, a careless girl left my rival on the fire till the bottom was burned through, and the kettle was ruined.

The next time the good woman came, her speech ran somewhat thus; "I spose you was to meetin' last Sabbath."

"Yes."

"Well, if you was, I guess you heerd how the minister told us to be good to one another—to be neighborly, and help folks along. Now I guess as how I told you once that I shouldn't neither borry nor lend. Now I ain't tew old to larn and mend my ways, and I mean to deu as the parson says, and lend and borry all the days of my life; so maybe you'll lend me that ere kittle."

But I must tell you about one of these visits I made to this peculiar neighbor. When she came in for me that day, she looked full of business and earnestness, and, before she was fairly seated, she began to tell her errand.

"I have come," she said, "to invite you all to a rag bee, every one on ye—men folks and all, because they can cut and wind and be agreeable, and hand round cups and sarcers and things to eat, if they can't deu nothin' else; so now you must all come and bring your thimbles and scissors and big needles, and, ef you've no objections, I'll jest take the tea-kittle now, as I'm goin' straight home."

My mistress, who was the kindest person that ever lived, promised to go to the rag

party. She wished to please and aid this selfish woman, for she was her nearest neighbor."

"Pray, dear mother, tell us what a rag bee is," said Harry.

"At the time when our tea-kettle was in its prime, we had no woollen or cotton factories in this country. Our carpets all came from Europe, from England most of them, and poor people could not afford to buy them. Families were in the habit of carefully saving all their woollen pieces, all their old woollen clothes; not a scrap was lost.

When a large quantity of these old woollen pieces was collected, it was a custom in the country to invite all the neighbors to come in, and aid the family in cutting these fragments up into narrow strips, about an eighth of an inch wide, and then sewing the strips together, and winding them up into large balls. This was used for what the weavers call the warp or the filling of the carpet. The woof was made of yarn, spun usually in the house from wool taken from the backs of their own sheep, and colored with a dye made from the roots of the barberry bushes, or the poke weed, with the aid of a little foreign indigo, or perhaps logwood. A sufficient variety of colors could be manufactured to produce a very decent-looking carpet.

The weaving of this homemade carpet was done also in the neighborhood. There were always looms enough to weave, for a moderate price, all the carpets required in the place. At that time, there was usually a carpet only in what was called the sitting room, or, as the country people called it, "the settin room." The rest of the house had bare floors; perhaps, in the houses of the richest of the country people, a bit of carpet by the bed side.

But I must tell you what else the tea-kettle said. "I went, or rather was carried," said she, "to the rag party. The good lady who borrowed me, I must say for her, did brighten me up famously. "There," said she, as she gave me the last touch with her rubbing cloth, "ef it ain't as bright as our Lijah's cheeks a Sabberday mornins!"

The country hour for dining was twelve o'clock, and the rag party was invited to come at two. Accordingly, all the women of the place with whom Mrs. Nutter had any acquaintance that did or did not authorize an invitation, were assembled in her best parlor, to take part in the rag bee.

A nice-looking, sensible set of folks they were, and, if I could remember all they said, I am sure you would think it very amusing. One of the subjects that I now think of was introduced by a pair of very old breeches.

"Where," said Mrs. White, "did you get such a pair of horrid, old, scrimpy, frightful things as them? Why, the knees are patched with blue, and the seats with red, and they are so very small, and yet so long—who did they belong to?"

Mrs. Nutter hesitated for a moment; at last, she seemed to muster courage, and to be determined to speak the whole truth.

"Well," said she, "ef I must tell the treuth, them are breeches come off of a scarecrow. It stands to reason that none of us could ever have worn 'em. This here's the way I got 'em. My husband bought Mr. Crane's piece that jined on to ourn, and I made him throw in the scarecrow, cause I meant to have a rag party; and I reckon that you'll get a good many strips out on 'em, though they be so patched like."

"I wonder," said one of the party, a fine, rosy, jolly-looking girl, "I wonder if these are not the ones which they say old Scrimp the miser changed with a scarecrow; and, after the exchange, old Scrimp looked so smart that people thought he was going to be married."

"Did you ever see any one so lean favored as he is?" asked one of the company. "Folks say he's so thin that he turns in his hat, but that ere don't seem likely."

Another of the company now looked up from her work, showing, at the same time, the nice strips she had been cutting. "I can't believe," said she, "all the stories they tell of old Scrimp's miserly ways. They say that he almost lives upon samples."

"Lives upon samples? What does that mean? I never heard of such a thing. What kind of victuals is samples?"

"Why, Lois Ward, don't you know what a sample is? Why, he goes to a shop, and he asks for samples of all the different kinds of sugar, and so of tea and coffee, and he makes these last a great while, and then he goes to another, and does the same thing; and, when he thinks they know his tricks, he walks clear over to another town after samples; and so he lives upon almost nothing. They say that he keeps all his money in an old boot hanging up in his cellar, because he thinks no robber would think to look in an old boot after money."

"They tell me," said another, "that he kills cats for their skins, and that he goes out o' nights with a long pole to kill skunks, and roasts them to get their grease, because skunk's grease is mighty powerful for men and beasts sometimes, and sells for a good deal, 'cause there ain't many folks willing to undertake the nasty varmints."

"Do you know what Beckey Cross said about him? She said that he was nothing but skin and grief, and that he never made any shadow. But poor Scrimp, though he is such a miser, has a heart, and can do a very kind thing."

"How did you find out that, Miss Dolly?" said the rosy-cheeked girl. "Did he ever ask you to take care of his heart? if such a thing could be found. Perhaps it is your fault that poor Scrimp is nothing but skin and grief."

Miss Dolly drew herself up, and looked in a very dignified manner at the young village belle. "I never kept company with Mr. Scrimp, and never should wish to with such a thread paper of a man as him; but I stick to it, he has a heart, and I'll tell you how I diskivered it. You know poor Mrs. Fowler, whose house is just out of the town, near two miles from old Scrimp's. I was there to see the poor woman the other day. You know her husband was killed last winter by the falling of a tree before the woodcutters thought it

was ready to fall. You know she has one little boy, who she sets every thing by, and they are pretty poor, though the parish does help them.

I sat with her some time, and heard all her troubles and misfortings. At last, she spoke of all the kind things she'd had done for her by different people; among others, she told me of a kind act of old Scrimp's.

"One day," says she, "my little boy, only four years old, did not, as usual, come in at supper time. I went out to look for him in the wood where he goes to play; but he was not there. Night came on, and no Willie. I was half crazy with fear. I was at my wits' ends. I had forbidden him to go to the village, but I concluded he had disobeyed me; and so, at last, I sot out in that direction, though I'm so lame I can't walk fast.

Well, she said she hadn't gone far before she met Mr. Scrimp leading her little boy home. He had found the child, after dark, crying in the street. He knew who was his mother, and where she lived, and he took hold of the little fellow's hand, carried him to the bakers, bought him a roll for supper, and was leading him home to his mother. He insisted upon the poor widow's taking his arm, and he went back with her to her cottage, and left a quarter of a dollar on her table when he went away."

"Now," said Miss Dolly, as she finished, "hain't Mr. Scrimp got a heart? and, as for his living on samples, I don't believe a word of such a ridiculous story. You see he's got a kind of habit o' saving, and he's so thin he don't want much, and he's nobody to spend for; but I tell you he has got a heart, and a good one, when you come at it."

This was a specimen of the conversations at the rag parties. At five o'clock in the afternoon, the tea table was spread, and such loads of bread and butter, cake, cheese, and what they called sweet sarse and apple trade you never saw. The farmers and their sons, as many as could be spared from work, put on their best coats, and helped hand about the tea and good things. At nine exactly, they all went home, leaving many large balls, nicely sewed, of filling for the intended new carpet.

Early in the morning of the next day, I was brightened up again, and sent home, when my dear mistress saw me put up on a high shelf among valuable things not often used, but always well cared for. As I said before, she seemed really to love me, and often said, as she looked at me, "I hope no harm will come to, my precious old tea-kettle."

Now I come to the painful part of my story, of which, even now, I hate to think. With all this love and consideration for me, my mistress made one fatal mistake. She allowed those same boys, who used the curling tongs to get a bone out of the pig's throat, to take me with them when they went into the woods to pass a day and night, and have a frolic, as they called it.

The boys made a huge fire, and put me on it, and I boiled some water for them, and did my duty well. But, after they had satisfied their thirst with the good tea I had enabled them to make, they forgot your humble servant, and left me on the coals.

The water all evaporated, and I was left to the fury of the fire; my pleasant song turned into a groan, a scream, in fact; my nose could not stand the fire; it dropped into the ashes; and here I am, the wreck of what I was, with this ghastly hole in me which you see.

To be sure, the boys were sorry enough for their carelessness; but that did not mend my nose. I am kept here by my mistress for the same reason that she keeps the old pitcher and other useless things, as memorials of happy days past and gone."

The tea-kettle was silent. Without any preface, the spinning wheel began to whirl and whiz, and whiz and whirl, and grumble and rumble, and buzz and buzz, and made altogether such a sleepy sound, as she told her story, which was, I guess, what the sailors call a long yarn, that she put me into such a sound sleep, that I could no longer hear any thing distinctly, and lost her story altogether."

"But, dear mother," said Frank, "I hope you woke up so as to hear the history of the old cloak, and the comical coat, and the wig."

"I will see," she answered, "what more I can remember of those dreamy times which I passed in my dear mother's attic, the palace of my early days."

One very rainy Sunday, the noise of the children was too much for the older and graver part of the family, who wished to read and be quiet; and my mother advised me to take my book, and go up to my parlor.

I always liked to be there, and to be by myself, with only the society of my friend the cat who was perfectly docile and obedient to me. I took Pilgrim's Progress, my favorite book, and was soon very comfortably seated in my great old-fashioned arm chair. Puss was by my side in the chair, for there was plenty of room for us both.

O, that Puss, a famous cat she was. She was of a beautiful Maltese blue, with a very nice white handkerchief on her breast, a white ring for a necklace, and four white feet. She once met with an adventure worth relating.

A young harum scarum Italian was a friend of my mother's, and was often at our house. A young lady, to whom he was much devoted, had a fancy for cats. He resolved, at the Christmas season, to gratify this taste of hers, as well as his own love of all sorts of vagaries.

Christmas fell on Monday. On that morning, the young lady received an elegant package which contained, wrapped up in seven papers, carefully sealed, a picture of a great black cat, with fiery eyes, long whiskers, and a flaming red tongue, The young lady was a good deal astonished, you may believe.

The next morning, she found in her breakfast cup the prettiest little sugar cat you can imagine. She asked all the family who had played her the trick, but no one knew.

On Wednesday morning, when the house-maid opened the window to sweep the

drawing room, as she always did at seven o'clock, a small, soft bundle came flying in at the window, and fell in the middle of the floor. The bundle was directed to Miss Mary, and contained a large rag cat, with a painted face, and with little bunches gathered up for nose and ears.

Inquiries were in vain. No one had seen the daring hand that tossed the rag pussy into the window. The lady's suspicions did not fall upon the Italian, because he had made her think that he was out of town.

Early on Thursday morning, came a great double knock and ring at the house door. So loud and long was the noise that the servant, a little, scary old man, thought the house was coming down. With trembling hand, he opened the door, when a black man, six feet high, delivered a huge box. The two men together had to take it in, it was so clumsy, though the weight was not much. In answer to the old man's inquiries as to who sent it, &c., the black only pointed to his mouth and ears, significantly, to intimate that he was deaf and dumb. On the top of the box was marked in red chalk "Miss Mary—."

As soon as she came down, she was led to the box. It was opened with some difficulty. Inside was a quantity of cotton wool, and scattered about in the wool were little packages of soft paper, and inside of each was a little china cat. When all were taken out, the young lady found herself the possessor of a white china cat with gold ears and gold collar, and five little china kittens of various colors.

It did no good asking questions, and the poor young lady resigned herself to her fate.

The part of the house in which Miss Mary slept was a sort of wing. The only room there with a chimney was hers. The roof communicated with a shed, so that it was not difficult for a good climber to get at the chimney.

On Friday morning, Miss Mary was awakened by a rattling in the chimney corner where, to her amazement, was a "Noah's ark" dangling by a string. She took hold of it, and drew it out of the chimney.

"This must be meant for one of the little children," thought she. But no; the ark bore her name. On opening it, she discovered that it was a collection made from many arks, a cat having been culled from each. So there were cats of many sizes, and all painted as red as they could be. They made a long procession of red cats.

On Saturday morning, the young lady awoke very early, but found nothing in her chimney corner. Although the weather was very cold, she went out, as was her custom, to walk in the garden before breakfast. There was a high wall on the side of the garden next the street. She walked down by the side of this wall towards a little arbor at the bottom of the garden. Just as she reached the arbor, she was startled by a squeak from the top of the wall, and something fell just at her feet. Taking the thing up, she perceived that it was a toy cat with a mewing arrangement underneath. It had been carefully wrapped up, but the paper was broken in the attempt to make it mew at the top of the wall. The lady burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter; but, in answer to her laugh, came a dismal mewing

from the other side of the wall; and, as she walked towards the house, at every few steps, a yowling toy cat jumped over, and fell at her feet.

The next day was Sunday, and the lady said, "I shall be left in peace to-day, I think all the different kinds of cats must be exhausted."

On going to her writing table, after breakfast, she found a little package lying on some note paper. It was very heavy, and was directed to her in a hand she did not recognize. It proved to be a most beautiful Paris bronze cat paper weight. The cat had her paw on a bird, and looked so life-like that it was almost painful to see her.

"I am now in a state," said Miss Mary, "to arrange a cat museum."

So she took all the cats, and placed them, in the order of their appearance, in a recess on one side of the room. There were picture cat, rag cat, China cats, ark cats, yowling cats, bronze cat.

The next morning was New Year's Day. The young lady passed it in quiet. No cats invaded her repose. She began to think the eruption of cats was beginning to subside. Vain hope! Her tormentor was busy enough.

On Sunday evening, he arrived at our house in the country. He came to spend the night.

"My dear E.," said he to me, "you must lend me a cat. I have sent Miss Mary—every kind of cat except a live one, and now I must send that too. I am going to make you dress up your favorite blue kitten."

At first, I refused; but, on his promise that the kitten should be treated with the greatest care and consideration, I agreed. I made her a gown of yellow satin coming down over her legs. The tail went through the gown and helped to keep it on. That tail was the gaudiest part of all, being wound with gold lace, and bearing at the tip a gay, flourishing bow. I made for pussy beautiful pettiloons of dark-red glazed cambric, and shod her with black morocco boots. Her cap was made of paste-board, tall and peaked, trimmed with gay ribbons, and surmounted by a cock's feather. A coral necklace with a locket was put about her neck; and then poor pussy was complete, and shone in her whole brilliancy Her patience was a shining example. Not a mew nor a growl at all the often-repeated fittings and tryings on. She purred kindly all the time.

Her carriage was a bandbox, big enough to avoid crushing the cap and tail, with a hole cut in the cover for ventilation; and Miss Pussy set off for town.

"A whole day gone, and no cat!" exclaimed Miss Mary—, as the family rose from tea. "The joke is over now, whatever it was."

No sooner were the words spoken than a rousing knock and ring startled the silence, and a bandbox appeared covered with brilliant red letters spelling, "This side up with

care," and several other phrases with the same meaning. "Open carefully" stood prominent among them. The direction was, of course, to Miss Mary. With careful hand, she raised the lid, when the cat, tired of long confinement, bewildered by the sudden light, and scared by the roars of laughter that greeted her, leapt from the box, and sped around the room like lightning. The dress held on well, while she galloped about like a gayly caparisoned circus pony. At last, she took a leap and fell into the midst of her predecessors. Rag cats, China cats, Noah's cats, yowling cats were upset and dashed to pieces.

At this moment, the author of all the nonsense poked his head into the door. "My dear Miss Mary, I trust I have, at last, satisfied your taste for cats. I hope you like your New Year's gifts."

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