

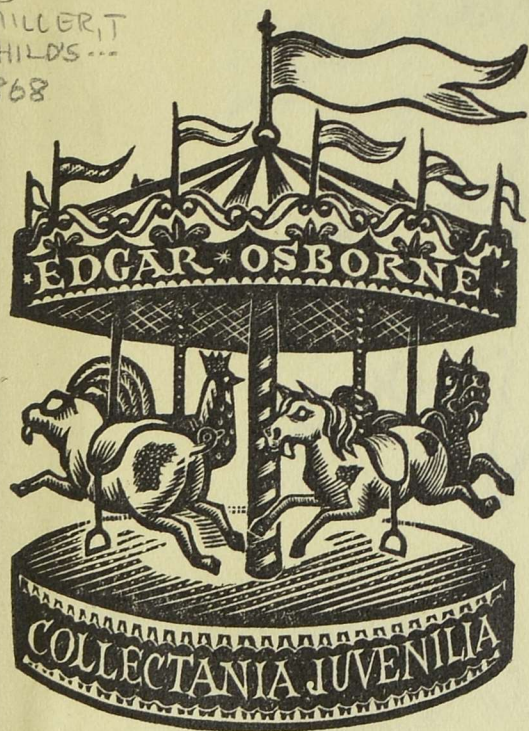
The Child's
Country Story
Book



by
Thomas Miller.

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THE CHILD'S
COUNTRY STORY BOOK.

BY

THOMAS MILLER.

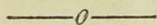


WITH EIGHT COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS.

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1868.

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THE CHILD'S COUNTRY STORY BOOK.

—o—

THE PET LAMB.

 HERE you see the square church-tower, in the picture of the "Sheep and Lamb," stands the pretty village of Greenham, hidden behind the trees. The sheep and lambs that appear so little because they are such a way off are grazing on Greenham Common. The two that are so near you, and the pet lamb, round the neck of which the little boy has placed his arm, are in a small paddock, often called a croft, close, or field, that is separated from the common by a bank, on the top of which the little child sits who

is feeding the sheep. The girl holding the child, and the boy looking over his shoulder, live at Greenham, and have come across the common to ask how Johnny's father is, and to look at his pet lamb. You will notice that Johnny looks very grave and sad, and well he may, for his father has met with an accident, and has not been able to do any work for several weeks, and is so poor that he will be forced to sell his two sheep and Johnny's pet lamb to pay the rent of his cottage. You cannot see the cottage in the picture, nor anything but a bit of the little field that lies at the back of it, in which the boy sits fondling his lamb. That girl is servant in a great farm-house, though she does very little beside looking after the children, and feeding the poultry, for they keep great strong servant girls where she lives, to milk, and brew, and cook, and wash, and clean, and make butter and cheese in the Dairy. She is a girl with a very

feeling heart, and the two boys she has brought across the common are very fond of her, and many a merry romp do they have together.

“So father is not able to get about yet,” she says to Johnny, “and he is going to sell your pet lamb to pay the rent? I am so sorry, Johnny, and wish I were a rich lady; then your lamb should not be sold. But I am only a poor girl, and have but a shilling a week and my victuals.” The tears stood in Johnny’s eyes, and he folded the lamb tighter in his arms, and said, “It’s a deal fonder of me than our Gip, for he runs away from me and barks at everything he sees. It follows me everywhere, and licks my face and hands, and if I pretend to run away and hide myself, it stands and looks about, and bleats for me, just as it used to do when it was quite a little thing and wanted its mammy. Father says I mustn’t cry, he hopes he shall get well soon, and next

Spring I shall have another pet lamb, and he won't sell that until it's a great fat sheep. But I can't help it, and I shall never have another little lamb I shall be so fond of as this; shall I?" And he drew the lamb closer to him and looked very tenderly at it when he said "shall I?" and the lamb went "ba-a-a," as if it said, as well as it could, "no, never;" then it lay down with its pretty head on his arm.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Johnny," said the little boy who stood behind his brother close to the tree; "I'll give you one of my lambs, for father has given me two to do what I like with; then your father can sell it, for it's bigger than yours, and you can still keep your own pet lamb. Come with me, Polly, and help to drive it here, and make it jump over the bank; then you won't cry, will you, Johnny?"

"No," said Johnny, crying harder than ever, for the kindness of the rich

farmer's little son touched Johnny's tender heart as much as the sorrow he felt for the loss of his lamb, which he came to bid farewell to, as the butcher was coming with his cart in the cool of the evening to take it away along with its mother and another fat sheep. ~

Polly, who was a strong girl of her age, at once snatched up the little boy, who was sitting on the bank feeding the sheep, and ran off with him in her arms, to help Charley to drive his lamb off the common—where it was feeding—into the little close, to be in readiness for the butcher, when he came with his cart. They had some trouble with it, for it had not been petted like Johnny's, and Charley had a many pets that he cared more for than he did for his lambs.

When it was driven off the common, and made to jump over the bank into the paddock where Johnny still sat fondling his pet lamb—and not until then—that artful little Polly said “Ought

not you to have asked your father first, Master Charley, before you gave Johnny one of your lambs?"

"What should I ask father for, when he gave them to me to do what I liked with—sell, or give away, or anything?" asked Charley, and there was a proud expression in his handsome face, which brought the colour to Polly's cheeks, and made her feel that she had no right to interfere, though she had "aided and abetted," inasmuch as she had helped to drive the lamb into the little close.

"I shall look out to-night for Butcher Page's white horse," said Charley, "and when he passes our door, cut across the corner of the common, and be here before him, Johnny, and help to drive the sheep and lamb out, and tie yours up to the apple-tree until he's gone. Don't say anything to your father and mother until Butcher Page has gone."

Johnny promised he wouldn't, so went in-doors, his lamb following him, while

the one Charley had given him made himself quite at home and began nibbling away at a little patch of white clover which grew in one corner of the field.

Johnny's father was a hard-working labouring man; but farm-labour is so poorly paid for in most country places, that it is very difficult to save up more than a few shillings against sickness or accidents which often happen unaware, as was the case with him; for the shaft-horse chanced to back suddenly, as he was going to fasten a gate, and the wagon wheel went over his foot and crushed it. He had not been able to work for several weeks, and though his master was kind to him in sending little things from the farm, he knew he must not expect him to pay his rent, and to do that he had to sell his two sheep and Johnny's pet lamb for a few pounds to Butcher Page. He was a kind-hearted man, for as soon as the lamb entered the cottage it went

up to him, and as he patted its pretty head, he sighed heavily, for he felt almost as much troubled at parting with it as did little Johnny.

You will seldom see a dumb animal go up to anybody, of its own accord, that is not kind to all God's creatures. They seem to know who loves them and who does not. Dogs more than any other animals seem gifted with the power of finding out those who are kind, and those who are not. One strange boy shall pat a dog, and he will begin to wag his tail, while he growls if another boy only strokes him. I always like the boy best that the dog is pleased with. Johnny's lamb laid its head on his father's knee, and while he patted it he shut his eyes, as if it were painful for him to look at the pretty creature. Necessity compelled him to part with it. It then went bleating up to Johnny's mother to be noticed, and as she stooped down to kiss it she had to

“button up” her eyes very tight indeed to keep in the tears. Johnny kept his secret faithfully, and said not a word about the lamb his friend Charley had given him.

Instead of running across the corner of the common in the evening, Charley and Polly, with his little brother sitting in her lap, came riding up to the cottage in the cart with the butcher; for Mr. Page had to call at the great farmhouse on his way through Greenham about some fat calves he wanted to purchase of Charley's father. Polly asked if the children might ride with him, for she was very anxious about Johnny's pet lamb, and as she said to Charley, “I shan't feel that it's quite safe until I see Mr. Page drive back without it.”

Johnny's father was too lame to assist in getting the sheep and lamb into the cart, so Polly and Charley drove them out of the small close behind the cottage, while Johnny minded the little

boy, who sat with his tiny arms round the lamb's neck, kissing it and saying "so pitty," for he could not talk plain enough to say "pretty."

"Surely this can't be the same lamb I bargained for a week ago," said the butcher, as he was about to lift it into the cart "why it's got four or five pounds more meat on its back. You must give Johnny this shilling for himself. It's a much fatter lamb than I took it to be," and he gave the shilling for Johnny to his mother, after looking round, and not seeing the boy. Having paid the mother for the sheep and lamb, he drove off, and the poor dumb animals stood quiet, and seemed as happy in the cart as children who are only going away for a drive. How different they would look when put into the shed adjoining the slaughter-house, where so many sheep and lambs had been driven in to be killed

What a blessing it is that we do not

know beforehand what is going to happen to us, for if we did, how wretched we should feel, counting the hours and days until the evil befel us, and living a life of misery all the time. Nor is it ourselves alone that would be made miserable, but our parents and all who love us; so that however painful death may be, it is one of God's greatest mercies not to let us know when death, which comes to all, will come. This is not hard to understand, if you will be very still, and forgetting everything else, think about it.

The two sheep and the little lamb, as they were driven along the pretty country road in the butcher's cart, could have no more thought that they were carried away to be killed, than you would that some terrible accident might happen you, if taken out for a ride.

No sooner had the butcher driven off than Polly ran into the little meadow clapping her hands and exclaiming "All

right, Johnny, he's gone ;" then she stooped down and kissed the pretty lamb, which began to lick her brown sun-tanned cheek, as if to show how grateful it was ; for the few kind words she had uttered were the means of saving it from the butcher's knife.

When the children returned home across the common, and after they had finished their supper of home-made brown bread and rich new milk, Charley went and stood between his father's legs, for the rich farmer was smoking his pipe, and had a jug of ale of his own brewing before him. Charley was deep enough to know that when his father was enjoying his pipe and jug of ale, after the day's labour was done, he was always in a good humour, and while Polly stood fidgeting and watching him, biting the corner of her blue pinafore all the time, and "wishing it was over," Charley looked up with his bold truthful eyes and said, "Please, father, I

gave Johnny Giles one of my lambs to-day to sell to the butcher, so that he might keep his own, which he is so fond of; it's such a pet, and he was crying so, and Mr. Page would have taken it away to-night in his cart, if I hadn't given him mine, for you know Johnny's father is lame, and poor, and can't do any work, and so had to sell his two sheep and—"

"Johnny's pet lamb too," said the farmer, interrupting him, but still stroking Charley's hair while speaking. "Well, Charley, it was your own lamb, to do what you liked with, but I should have liked Johnny's father better if he had sent word to let me know that he had sold your lamb instead of his own."

"Please, sir, he doesn't know that Butcher Page didn't take away Johnny's lamb in the cart," said Polly, rushing to the rescue, "because we kept it in the little croft, and drove Charley's lamb out instead, for little Johnny had been

crying so all day that it made us all sorry to see it."

"I felt sure you had had a finger in the pie, Polly" said the farmer, looking kindly on his little maid, and well knowing how fond she was of his dear children. "And now, sir," continued the farmer, looking at Charley as sternly as he could, while a pleasant smile played about his mouth, plainly showing that the knitted brows were but drawn down in make-believe anger, "this is the way I shall punish you." Polly saw the smile, and knew it was all right and that there would be no punishment at all, though little Charley looked rather frightened. "As you have given one of your lambs away to please yourself, you must give the other away to please me. Drive it into Mr. Giles's little croft tomorrow morning, and as it might miss its mother, let her go with it; then, when the lamb grows to be a sheep, Johnny's father will have two sheep again beside

his pet lamb. Now kiss me, and say your prayers to Polly, and be off to bed."

"Oh, I'm so glad," exclaimed Polly, clapping her hands, while the tears stood in her eyes, as she came up to take Charley away from his father.

"I'm sure you are, Polly, for you've a kind heart," said the farmer, kissing the little maid as well, "and now be off with you," and five minutes after he was busy examining his stock-book, and seeing how many fat bullocks, heifers, calves, sheep, and lambs he had ready for market, and thinking no more of the value of the ewe he had ordered to be driven to the little croft of the lamed labourer, than he did of the second jug of ale he had sent one of his servants to draw from the cask.

Now Polly, though but a poor cottager's daughter, and having only, as she had said, "a shilling a week and her victuals" as wages at the rich farmer's, was a thoughtful little maid, and fearing


that Johnny's father and mother might be unhappy when they found that Charley's lamb had been sold instead of their own, she set off full run to Mr. Giles's cottage before she went to bed, to tell them all about the sheep and the other lamb, which she and Charley were to drive into the close in the morning, and how pleased her good master was at what Charley had done.

Johnny was seated fast asleep on a little rush hassock, with his head on his mother's knee, and one arm round the neck of the pet lamb, which was coiled up before the fire, and when she had made known the good tidings, and kissed both Johnny and his lamb, she started off back as fast as she came, for the bats were already flying about, snapping at the insects, and she heard an owl hooting from the trees that overhung the road she was running along.

No one lay down to sleep in the beautiful village of Greenham—on that

calm sweet night, when Spring was treading close on the flowery border of Summer—with a more peaceful mind or happier heart than Polly, for she felt that her pity for Johnny's sorrow, caused by the thought of his so soon losing his pet lamb, had also been carried to the heart of little Charley, and that but for the words she had spoken the pet lamb would then have been shut up at the end of the slaughter-house, where no doubt poor lambs were hanging up that had been killed. Pretty things!—how could Butcher Page find in his heart to kill them, so kind a man as he was? And Polly fell asleep while trying to puzzle out whether it was not as sinful to kill a sheep as a little lamb, and wishing that roasted lamb was not so nice to eat as it was, with mint sauce.

THE GREEDY DUCKLING.

LTHOUGH you cannot see her cottage, you can look at a portion of the brook that runs by the end of her garden, in which the old white duck and three of her little ducklings are swimming, while the remainder have left the water and got out on the grass, to be fed. That is the old woman's little granddaughter who is holding the duckling in both her hands, and kissing it, and the other is her companion, who lives over the hill where you see a little morsel of blue sky between the overhanging leaves, and who has come all the way along that footpath to play with her, and feed the little ducklings. If you notice the duck-

ling the granddaughter is petting, you will see it has got its eye on the food in the little girl's hand, and if you could read its thoughts, you would find it was saying to itself, "Oh bother your fuss and stew, I wish you would put me down and let me gobble up some of that nice new bread, before it is all gone. Kissing and patting and nursing me, won't fill my belly, I can tell you, though it's all well enough when I've eaten until I'm full to the very top of my neck, to snuggle to you and be kept nice and warm, while I have a good long nap." You can see by its eye it's a sly little duckling, and though it pretends to be so fond of the child, lying still and such like, yet it's all of a fidget to get down, and quite envies the little ducklings that are feeding out of the other girl's hand. That is the Greedy Duckling.

Now the grandmother is such a funny little old woman, having one leg

shorter than the other, which causes her to go up and down as she walks. The villagers call her Old Hoppity-kick, because when she walks with her horn-handled stick and moves it along, she goes "hop," and when she moves both her feet, she goes "hoppity," and when she pulls up her short leg to start again, she gives a kind of a little "kick" with it; so that what with her long leg, her short leg, and her stick, the noise she makes when she walks rather fast, sounds a good deal like "hoppity-kick, hoppity-kick."

Then she has a sharp hooked nose, not much unlike the beak of a poll parrot, and she wears round spectacles with horn rims, and these she always calls her "goggles;" and beside all this she is hump-backed, and has an old grey cat that is very fond of jumping on her hump, and sitting there when she goes out into her garden, looking about him as well as she does, as if to see how things

are getting on. She talks to her old cat, when she has no one else to speak to, just as she does to her granddaughter.

She came up one day with her stick in her hand, her goggles on, and the grey cat sitting on her hump, where he went up and down, down and up, at every "hoppity-kick" she gave, and stopped to watch her granddaughter feed the ducklings, "Why what a greedy little duckling that is beside you," said granny, pointing to it with her horn-handled stick; "he doesn't seem willing to let his little brothers and sisters have a taste of the food you are giving them, pecking and flying at them, and driving them off in the way he does. I'm sure he's a nasty greedy little duckling, and when he gets big enough I'll have him killed."

"I don't think he's so greedy, granny," replied the little maid, taking him up in both her hands, and kissing him; "it's only because he's so fond of me, and

jealous of the other ducklings when they come close to me. Look how still he lies, and how he nestles up to me. He's very fond of me."

"Humph; fond of you for what he can get, like a good many more in the world," said old Granny Grunt, while the grey cat gave a "mew, mew," as if to say, "right you are, old granny;" then off she went, "hoppity-kick, hoppity-kick," back again into her cottage, the hem of her quilted petticoat making bobs up and down all the way she went.

"You're not a greedy little thing, are you, ducky?" said the little maid to the duckling, kissing it again, when her grandmother and the cat had gone. "It's because you love me so, isn't it? and don't like any of the other little ducklings to be noticed, do you?"

"Oh what a silly Sukey you are," thought the greedy duckling, laying its head on one side of her face, as if to show it was so fond of her it didn't know what

to do. "Do you think I would make such a pretended fuss over you as I do if you didn't give me three times as much to eat as any of the rest of the ducklings get? Not I. I often feel as if I should like to bite a bit off the end of your silly little nose, when you are kissing and fondling me. Do you know I would much rather have my head under the water and be poking about among the mud for worms, little eels, and frogs, and such like things, than have your lips so near me. Why the other day you'd been eating onions, and though I dare say I shall smell strong enough of 'em some day, and sage too, as I've heard your old granny say when I have to be roasted, yet that time won't come yet for a long while, and I don't want to be reminded of my end before it does come. Why don't you empty your old granny's jam-pots, or her honey jar; that smell wouldn't be so bad to bear as onions, Fah!"

Now you begin to see what a deal of truth there was in what old Granny Grunt said, and what a wicked and ungrateful duckling this was, to have such evil thoughts, pretending to be so fond of the little granddaughter all the time. It was quite as bad as if a naughty child after having as many "goodys" given it as it could eat, made fun of the giver behind the back, while before the face it pretended to be all love and honey and sugar. It's deceit, that's what it is, done for what may be got; and if anything, deceit's worse than story-telling, as you pretend to be what you are not, and to feel what you do not, while a story once told is done with, if you don't tell another on the top of it, and have the honesty to confess it was a story when close questioned and you speak the truth. But deceit! it's so dreadfully shocking, it's hypocrisy, and I know not what beside, as you have to keep it up, wear a mask, seem what you

are not. Oh dear! oh dear! I can't say how bad it is, it's so very bad.

Now the Greedy Duckling knew which way the granddaughter came, and used to watch and wait for her, often a good way from the others, when she was coming with food; and if the little girl in the drawn and magenta-coloured bonnet happened to be with her she would say, "Look at the dear little duckling: though it's so fat it can hardly waddle, it couldn't stop till I came, but is so fond of me it's come to meet me." Then she began to feed it, giving it as much as ever it could eat, while the other dear ducklings, that were waiting so patiently by the brook, hadn't even so much as a smell, until that nasty greedy little wretch had been crammed full to the very throat. Let us hope he was often troubled with a touch of the bile as a just punishment for his greediness. He was now so fat that he used to fall asleep on the water, and the wind

blew him on like a floating feather, while his little brothers and sisters were diving, and swimming, and playing, and splashing about, and having such jolly games as made one quite wish to join them on a hot summer's day. This was the first judgment that overtook him for his greediness: he was too fat to play, and if he tried, puffed and blew like a broken-winded horse, and was out of breath in no time; for his liver was not only out of order, but what little heart he had, and that wasn't much, was buried in fat.

He now took to eating out of spite, so that there might be next to nothing left for the other little ducklings. Whether he was hungry or not, he would stand in the centre of the food that was thrown down, and though he couldn't eat it himself, bite and fly at every duckling that attempted to touch a morsel. One of his little brothers one day went at him, and gave him "pepper," I can tell

you ; and when he found he'd met his match, what did the fat artful wretch do but throw himself on his back, quacking out, " You ain't a-going to hit me when I'm down ? "

Now, selfish and greedy although he was, and disliked by the rest of the family, he had a little sister—which was, that dear duckling you see swimming at the front of its mother, as if asking her if it may go out of the water for a little time, and have a waddle on the grass, for it is a most dutiful duckling,—and this little sister was the only one of the family that treated the Greedy Duckling kindly, for she used to say, " Bad as he is, he's my brother, and it's my duty to bear with him. " After a time, when, on account of his selfishness and greediness, the rest of the family had " sent him to Coventry, " which means that they wouldn't have anything to do with him,—neither eat, drink, nor swim with him, nor even exchange so

much as a friendly "quack,"—then it was that he began to appreciate the kindness and self-sacrifice of his little sister, who would go and sit with him for the hour together, though he was too sulky at first even to "quack" to her.

It so happened one day, when his pretty little sister had been talking to him, and telling him how much happier his life would be if he were more social, and how greatly his health would be improved if he ate less, that after saying "I don't care if they won't have me amongst 'em, little Sukey gives me plenty to eat, and I can sleep well enough by myself, and much better than if they were all quacking about me; and though you come and stay with me, I don't ask you, nor I don't want you, and I dare say you only do it to please yourself, and——." But before he could say another word his little sister said "Run, run!" for she had seen a shadow on the grass, and knew that a great

hawk was hanging over them, and they had only just time to pop under the long trailing canes of a bramble, before down the hawk came with such a sweep, that they could feel the cold wind raised by the flapping of his great wings, though he could not reach them, for the bramble; nor did he try to get at them where they were sheltered, for the hawk only strikes his prey while on the wing, picking it up and keeping hold of it somehow, just as Betty does a lump of coal, which she has made a snap at, and seized with the tongs.

“He would have been sure to have had you,” said the little sister, after the hawk had flown away over the trees, “as you stood the farthest out, and are so fat; and I was so near the bramble, he would hardly have had room for the full spread of his wings, if he had made a snap at me.”

“I don’t see that,” replied the Greedy Duckling, “for as I’m so heavy, I think

he would have been glad to have dropped me before he had reached his nest; while as for you, you're such a light bit of a thing, he would have carried you off as easily almost as he would a fly that had settled on his back."

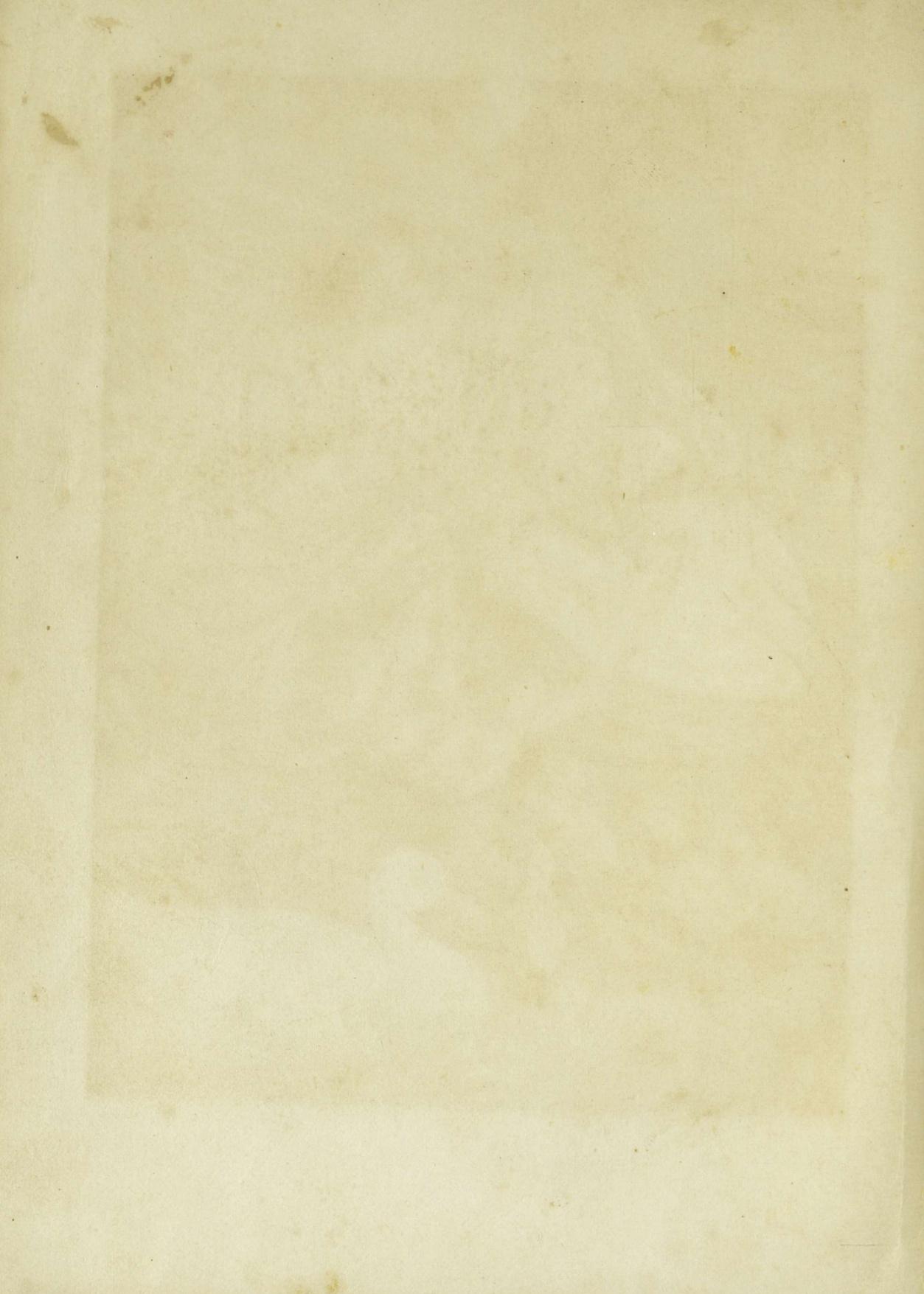
"But supposing he had dropped you after flying with you about six times the height of a tall tree, what use would you have been after you had fallen?" asked the little duckling. "Why, there would have been neither make nor shape in you, but you would have looked like a small handful of feathers somebody had thrown down on the place where oil had been spilt. Our dear old mother would not have known you, for you would no more have looked like what you are now, than a snail that a wagon-wheel had gone over did before it was crushed, when he was travelling comfortably along the rut, and carrying his sharp-pointed house on his back."

"Well, as I don't care much about



LEIGHTON, BROS

DUCK AND DUCKLINGS.



until she goes out, or I shall have another taste of that horn-handled stick of hers ; then if she hits me fairly on the leg, I shall have to go hoppity kick as she does. I should like to finish that lot very much, it's so good. Oh how comfortably I could sleep after in my little nest under the step ! I'll keep a sharp eye on old Granny and her cat."

The cat had been blamed for many things it had never touched, which the Greedy Duckling had gobbled up, and as he sat washing himself on the hob, which was beginning to be warm, Granny having lighted a fire to heat the oven, he spied the duckling under the table, and kept his eye on him without seeming to take any notice at all.

"I shall be having the cat lapping up all this custard, if I don't put it somewhere out of the way," said the grandmother, "it will be the safest here ;" and she put it into the oven without quite shutting the door, then went out to get

some more wood to put under the oven, which was hardly warm.


“I shall have time enough to finish that lot before old Granny comes back, for she has the wood to break into short pieces,” said the Greedy Duckling, who had seen her put the custard into the oven; so he just put out his wings and went in after it, and began pegging away at the custard, for it was a big oven and there was plenty of room.

“I’ve been blamed often enough for things you’ve stolen and eaten, and I’ll get out of that,” said the cat; “for though I know you’ll be out of the oven and hiding somewhere the instant you hear her hoppity kick on the cottage floor, yet if she looks at the custard before she shuts the oven door, and finds half of it eaten, she’ll say I’ve had it.” So saying the cat made a spring from off the oven on to the floor, and while doing so, his hinder legs caught the oven door, and with the force of the spring shut it to

with a loud clap and a click, for the handle always caught when the door was pushed too sharp.

Away ran the cat, and in came old Granny with the sticks, which she began to shove under the oven, until in time it was so hot that she couldn't take hold of the handle to turn her custard without holding it with the dish-clout. "Why, I declare, if it isn't burnt to a cinder!" exclaimed old Granny, as she threw open the oven door: when there was such a smell of burnt feathers and fat, as nearly knocked her down; for the fat duckling first ran all to dripping, which ran all over the oven bottom, and then got burnt black, it was so hot; and she never could, nor never did, nor never will make out what it was that made her oven in such a mess and spoilt her custard, nor what became of her Greedy Duckling.

THE DONKEY'S FOAL.

HE donkey which you see standing knee-deep in the long grass and fern, and watching intently the girl and boy who are making its little foal look quite smart with a wreath of flowers and a red handkerchief, has great cause to be suspicious, as it lost its foal for full a fortnight, and went everywhere it could think of, in search of it, for miles round the common on which they grazed. Now it so happened, that one day a parcel of boys, who were out for their half-holiday, having come from the school in the village, where you see the old church-tower, commenced chasing the donkey and foal on the common; and having

caught the mother, they had a ride on her back, just so long as she pleased to carry them, and not a moment longer; for no sooner had she made up her mind that she would not carry one of them a yard further, than down went her head, and up went her hinder legs, and off the boy shot, where she left him sprawling on the green sward, amid the laughter of his companions. The pretty foal they did not chase, for they were not cruel boys, but fed it with cakes and other good things they had bought out of their pocket-money. Nor were they so unfeeling as to attempt to get on its back, well knowing that it was not strong enough to carry even the least boy amongst them. There was scarcely a boy but what had mounted the old donkey, and been thrown; even those who were artful enough to throw their arms round her neck, for she had a knack of almost raising herself upright—when she got her head under her fore,

feet, and her hind-legs in the air. She was not a vicious donkey, and the boys believed that she quite enjoyed the fun of throwing them over her head, as much as they did that of seeing one another thrown; for the soft turf of the common was like an air cushion to fall on. Still, it was tiring work for the old donkey, and when she laid down at night, she fell asleep without any rocking I can tell you, and slept so soundly, that she never missed her foal, when it got up to stretch its long legs, and look about in the twilight, perhaps to see if it could find anybody to feed it with more cakes.

There was a little market-town about four miles from the village you see marked out by the square church-tower in the picture; and one little old woman who had been to market to sell her butter and eggs, stopped to have "a dish of tea" with another old woman, whom she had supplied with half a

pound of butter a week for many long years. Having known each other so long you may be sure they found plenty to talk about, for they were great gossips. Who was ill, and who was well, who had got up in the world, and who had gone down, who was going to be married, and who was going to be buried; how this baby got over the measles, and that got through cutting its teeth; how bad Billy's ringworm had been; and how Sally wouldn't be pitted at all after the small-pox; and how the drunken tinker had been beating his wife again, and much more of a similar nature, kept them so long over their tea, that when the old butter-woman turned round to look at the clock, she could hardly see what time it was, without getting out of her chair, and going up to see at what figures the clock-hands pointed. "Bless my heart alive!" exclaimed the little old butter-woman, tying on her bonnet, "Why it's getting

dark, and I've got above four miles to walk, and two of them over that great lonesome common, where one seldom sees a soul, unless it be a gipsy. I must stir my old stumps and be off, and I thank you kindly for the nice dish of tea you have made me." So saying, she fastened her shawl with a great pin, and away she went with her butter-basket on her arm, and the few groceries and other things in it, which she had purchased out of the money she had received for her butter and eggs.

Now, old as she was, she had wasted a good deal of time in gossiping, much more than she need have done; and had taken two more cups of tea than she would have taken had she made tea for herself at home in her little thatched cottage: the consequence was it was nearly quite dark when she reached the common, and she couldn't see a tree, nor a bush, until she was almost near enough to run the end of

her poor old nose into them. She passed a rookery, and heard a rook and his wife quarrelling, because he had, in turning himself, nearly pushed his old woman out of the nest. The noise they made had awakened their neighbours, who had poked their black heads over the edges of their nests and threatened "to get up and pitch into 'em, if they kicked up such a row, disturbing the baby rooks."

"I hope there's nothing amiss up there," said the old butter-woman to herself; "it's so dark, and they speak such an unknown tongue, that there's no knowing what they are saying, nor what they are talking to; they almost make me tremble at times, even when it's daylight, as they look out at me from the corners of their wicked eyes. Oh, deary me, what's that?"

It was the donkey's foal, who having heard her footsteps on the common, came trotting behind her, and though

she could hear well enough, it was too dark to see, and every time she stopped to turn round and look, it stopped, and when she moved on again, it moved too.

“It’s nothing human,” said the old woman to herself, while she was all of a tremble, “it has too many feet for that. Happen it’s the same A-polly-onion that smelt so strong of fire and brimstone, and stopped Christian in the Pilgrim’s Progress, when he had to fight it. What can a poor old woman do? If I had the courage to bang my butter-basket about its head, why one of its sharp horns would run into it, and there it would stick. I’ll try to say my prayers, and not think about it.” The little old butter-woman remembered that to pray becomingly she must kneel down, and then she thought that while kneeling that which was behind her might come up and leap on her back, and so carry her off without her once seeing what it

was like. Still, she thought it would be better to be carried away while praying, than any other way ; so down she knelt in the middle of the footpath that led across the common. While she said her prayers, the little foal didn't stir a step, but stood as still as a mouse when it is peeping out of its hole, and sees a cheese-paring on the floor, almost within reach, yet is not sure whether the cat is on the look-out or not.

No sooner had she said "Amen," risen from her knees, and jogged on a few steps again, than she heard the same "trot-ti-ty, trot-ti-ty," behind her, and this time she felt certain that it sounded nearer than it had done before.

"I can't have prayed aright," said the little old butter-woman, "and I haven't confessed my sins, which our parson says we must do, if we hope to obtain forgiveness. I am a very wicked old woman. I sold Nanny Nettleship six penny-worth of eggs, and told her they

were fresh-laid when they weren't; for my brown-speckled hen had been sitting on them, and had forsaken her nest, and I greatly fear there was an unhatched chicken inside every egg; and she said she had to throw all her pancake-batter away, when she broke them up into it. Oh! I am a very wicked old woman, though I only got sixpence. And I mixed lard with that last churning of butter, and told my customers, that my cow had been feeding on daisies and lilies of the valley, and that was why my butter was so white. And now, Garden angel, please don't let A-polly-onion carry me off this time, and I'll never sell any more addled eggs for new-laid ones, nor mix lard with my butter. Never! world without end. Amen."

"Now," thought the little old woman, "it will be very hard lines to be carried off after making a clean breast of it, for I don't know anything else I've done wrong, unless it be paying the butcher

that bad sixpence, which Nanny Nettle-ship paid me for the bad eggs, and which I couldn't give her back, when I found they had spoilt all her pancakes. If I was but across the common, and had shut the great white gate behind me, I shouldn't feel so much frightened as I do, for I should soon be near the church, and I might run into the porch and sit down there, for evil-spirits don't often go to church I believe, though we are all evil-spirits so far as that goes; but they don't go with their prayer-books in their hands; at least we don't see 'em."

She mustered courage to stop and look back once more, and her eyes,—now inured to the gathering darkness, and better able to see objects through it, than any one would be just coming out of a lighted room,—had a dim view of the foreshortened outline of the foal, as it stood still before her, its long ears sticking up like two

great horns ; the form of its large head visible and projecting out over its chest, as never did human head, in imagination or picture.

“ Oh, deary me, it's very shocking, and my poor old husband will be expecting me to get his supper ready, and I shall perhaps soon be miles high, sitting between its horns, with my butter-basket on my arm, and my groceries of no use where I am going, for I don't suppose they make tea up there? Oh, how I wish I was home and seated in my arm-chair with my spectacles on, and my good Holy Bible before me, I would never sell any more addled eggs for new-laid ones, nor tell stories about the pretty flowers, that don't wash nor iron, nor toil nor spin ; nor never pay away another bad sixpence, when I really knew it was a downright bad one. But it's coming nearer, and I'll have a run for it ; once get the white gate open I'll leave it on the full swing and it may

knock the evil thing down, should it come up, while the gate is swinging."

So off she set, full run, and after her the little foal came full trot; she pulled open the great white gate that shut out the common, and sent it back with all her strength causing it to swing to and fro, over the catch and back again several times without the "sneck" catching in the hollow cut that held it fast. "I'm all right, praise to my Garden angel," said the old woman, now aloud; "the gate has knocked it down, and I feel quite fresh again, after that last bit of a prayer." And on she ran faster than ever: but no sooner had the gate stopped swinging and closed with a loud snap, than she again heard the same footsteps following her, and now seeming closer than ever, showing that whatever it was it had passed safely through the gate. Still the little old woman kept on running, though she blowed like a pair of bellows without a spout, and felt a stitch

coming in her side, and had lost one of her shoes, and the pin out of her shawl, and was forced to hold it with one hand to keep it on, while "pitty-pat, pitty-pat," came the little foal behind her, closer than ever. On she went down the village street, neither shouting nor shrieking, for she felt she hadn't strength for that; past the light that fell across the road from the blacksmith's forge, through the glow thrown from the scarlet curtain drawn over the parlour window of the Old Red Lion; then she came to her dear old cottage, saw a light at the window, hit the door with her basket, called out "John, John," and sank down before the door.

Old John came to the door with his spectacles on, his short pipe in his mouth, and the candle in his hand, and great was his surprise to find his old wife lying before the door all doubled up like a bundle of clothes somebody had thrown down in a hurry, while

behind her stood the pretty little foal, looking amazed, as if it couldn't make it out no how.

"Oh, John, help me up, I've had such a fright, something so dreadful followed me all the way across the common, and I heard it close to me when I called on you," were the words the old butter-woman uttered, one at a time, and with many a long pause and groan between.

"Why, thou'rt a deal more scared than hurt, my old wench," said her husband, helping her up; "it seems the little foal that's standing there had taken a fancy to thee, as almost all dumb things do. There isn't much to be scared at in that, is there?" and he went up and patted it on the face, while it rubbed its head against him, and the old woman looked very foolish, for she saw at a glance that it was the same she had looked at when she turned round and it stood foreshortened, as painters call it,

full before her with its ears up, just before she set off running.

"Oh, how silly I've been," said the old butter-woman, "making promises I would never sell any more stale eggs, nor never again do this, that, and the other; why I declare I've been a greater donkey than that little thing which scared me so."

"Keep thy good promises, my old wench, then thou wilt not be so easily scared in future," said her husband; "I told thee at the time it was very wicked to sell Nanny those eggs that had been sat upon. It's quite bad enough to injure any one through a mistake, and when we don't intend it; but to do so wilfully, and for gain, is downright wickedness; and if something had come to thee and followed thee across the common, that oughtn't to come near a Christian, instead of this pretty little ass's foal, why thy own conscience must have told thee that it was nothing more

than thou deserved ; and it did so I'll be bound. The kettle is boiling, and a dish of tea will do thee a world of good after such a fright ; so go in and make thyself one, while I put up this little foal in the cowhouse, and make up a bit of a bed for it, and give it some supper. It will be all right, as Crumpeltyhorn is out at grass."

Now the little foal became so great a favourite that the old woman used to let it come into the cottage and feed it out of her hand ; and though she soon found out who was the right owner, she did not want to part with it ; and that was why it was missing for a whole fortnight. Then, as people will gossip in a country place, it soon became known how frightened the old woman had been, and what she had done when it followed her across the common in the dark, and all about the addled eggs, and the bad sixpence, and the lard ; for her husband said a confession was

nothing unless everybody knew it, and as he was a good old man, and did not approve of the things his wife had done, he talked about them, as he said, "to shame her, and make her better."

And I must tell you that it is our evil conscience which accuses us when we have done wrong, and makes us fancy a-many things which we feel we deserve, though they may not happen to us ; and this it was that caused the little old butter-woman to believe that something evil was following her, though it proved to be only an ass's foal. As to ghosts and such-like things, coming to frighten people, such tales are all stories, though we believe in the existence of the soul in a future state, as we do in heaven itself ; but there is something too grand and God-like in a spiritual existence, to be degraded to such purposes as we read of in ghost stories.

And now I must tell you that my story of the Donkey's Foal is founded

on a poem by Robert Bloomfield, who wrote "The Farmer's Boy," and that he called it "The Fakenham Ghost," and my reason for telling the story as I have done, is that he keeps the secret of the foal to the end of the poem, and tries to make you believe all through that it was a ghost or a goblin which followed the old woman. Very simply and very prettily does Bloomfield tell the story in poetry, and as I should like you to read it, I have here printed it in justice to his genius, though I disapprove of the little foal being made a goblin of, and wish you had been let into the secret at the beginning, so that you might commence it by laughing at the fears of the old woman.

THE FAKENHAM GHOST.

THE lawns were dry in Euston Park—
Here truth inspires my tale,—
The lonely footpath, still and dark,
Led over hill and dale.

Benighted was an ancient dame,
And fearful haste she made
To gain the vale of Fakenham,
And hail its willow shade.

Her footsteps knew no idle stops,
But follow'd faster still ;
And echo'd to the darksome copse
That whisper'd on the hill,

Where clam'rous rooks, yet scarcely hush'd,
Bespoke a peopled shade ;
And many a wing the foliage brush'd,
And hovering circuits made.

The dappled herd of grazing deer
That sought the shades by day,
Now started from her path with fear,
And gave the stranger way.

Darker it grew ; and darker fears
Came o'er her troubled mind ;
When now, a short quick step she hears
Come patting close behind.

She turn'd ; it stopp'd !—nought could she see
Upon the gloomy plain !
But as she strove the sprite to flee,
She heard the same again.

Now terror seized her quaking frame ;
For when the path was bare,
The trotting Ghost kept on the same !
She mutter'd many a prayer.

Yet once again, amidst her fright,
She tried what sight could do ;
When through the cheating glooms of night,
A monster stood in view.

Regardless of whate'er she felt,
It follow'd down the plain !
She own'd her sins, and down she knelt,
And said her prayers again.

Then on she sped ; and hope grew strong,
The white park gate in view ;
Which pushing hard, so long it swung
That Ghost and all pass'd through.

Loud fell the gate against the post—
Her heart strings like to crack :
For much she fear'd the grisly ghost
Would leap upon her back.

Still on, pat pat, the goblin went,
As it had done before :—
Her strength and resolution spent,
She fainted at the door.

Out came her husband much surprised :
Out came her daughter dear :
Good-natured souls ! all unadvised
Of what they had to fear.

The candle's gleam pierced through the night,
Some short space o'er the green ;
And there the little trotting sprite
Distinctly might be seen.

An ass's foal had lost its dam
Within the spacious park,
And simple as the playful lamb,
Had follow'd in the dark.

No goblin he : no imp of sin,
No crimes had ever known.
They took the shaggy stranger in,
And rear'd him as their own.

His little hoofs would rattle round
Upon the cottage floor,
The matron learn'd to love the sound,
That frighten'd her before.

A favourite the Ghost became,
And 'twas his fate to thrive :
And long he lived and spread his fame,
And kept the joke alive.

For many a laugh went through the vale,
And some conviction too,
Each thought some other goblin tale,
Perhaps was just as true.



LEIGHTON, BROS.

GEESE AND GOSLINGS.

you see, is a large flock as long as a good-sized street, for they walk behind one another singly, never in couples, on their way home, though the little goslings cluster together and get along anyhow. There is not room in the picture to show you the long white streaky line of geese, which the Little Gooseherd is driving before her, the foremost of which has nearly reached the village. Every now and then when she waves the branch to make them move on, they poke out their necks towards her, and make a loud hissing noise, which she is quite used to.

Very often for days together the Little Gooseherd never sees a living soul, from morning to night, in that wild marsh-land where she is watching the geese; nothing but her geese and goslings feeding around her; and were you near, and were to listen, the only human sound you would hear, would be her voice shouting to the geese when they

were wandering too wide, or singing some pretty hymn she had been taught at the Sunday-school during her only day of rest. She has a little shed, a farmer's son made her of sods, or turf, covered in with long goose-grass, and into that she creeps when it rains, while numbers of the geese get round her as close as they can ; for though they are fond of water, they do not like standing out in the rain for long together. She leaves the village early in the morning with a large piece of bread tied up in her little cotton handkerchief—on which is printed the history of Joseph and his Brethren—and with her brown jug filled with milk, which before she has emptied it she fills up again, very often with water, to make it last, so that it is scarcely even coloured with milk at dinner-time. She has her tea when she gets home, and her breakfast before she starts, and now and then two slices of bread and treacle, along with her day's

bread. She has no father, and as she has a good many brothers and sisters, who all work, she joins in the labour cheerfully, and brings home her eighteen-pence on a Saturday night with a smile, when she has a halfpenny out of it, to put in her money-box. Her Sunday-school teacher tried to get a penny a month from her to support the Missionaries, but the little girl said she couldn't spare so much, so gave a halfpenny: perhaps she thought, left to herself all day in those lonely marshes, it would be quite as much charity to instruct her, as the Blacks. The girl with the child in her arms is a nursery-maid at a farmhouse in the village, and often comes to meet her little sister when she drives home her flock of geese in the evening.

Do you not wonder what she does to pass the time away in that vast solitude, with no one to speak to, or play with, no other companions save the geese and goslings, and the wild animals

and birds, that feed and fly around her? I can tell you. Excepting in dull or rainy weather, she never feels sad nor lonely, for she is of a happy nature, carrying about her, what, for a better expression, is called the "sunshine of the heart," which is a joyous happiness within her, that finds pleasure in everything. During the season she could show you a score of plovers' nests, made on the ground, in some of which would be eggs or young ones; and though the plovers, with their beautifully tufted heads, would hover around her by scores, crying "pee-wit, pee-wit," all the time, yet they would settle down on their nests again, almost as soon as her back turned, as if they knew well that she wouldn't harm either themselves or their young ones. On the ground also, the skylarks make their nests, and it is her delight on a sunny day, to lie down on the grass and, shading her eyes with her old straw hat, watch them as they

go singing into the sky, until they seem no bigger than bees, and are sometimes lost to sight, they soar so high ; and she can tell you how many hundreds she has counted to herself, during the time a skylark first started from the ground singing, until it came back again to its nest, which is often several minutes. Then there are no end of water-rats in the streams that flow through the marshes, and she will tell you to keep very still, and move very softly, and lead you up to the edge of one of the brooks, when if you look down you will see the pretty little animals swimming about, and nibbling at the green leaves on the branches which touch the water, for they live only on vegetables and water, not even indulging in little fishes. There are no end of rushes growing in these marshes, and unless you saw her at work, you wouldn't believe how beautifully the Little Gooseherd can plait them. She can make herself a pretty green belt, or

a cap of open-work, even a pretty cage that would hold a bird; though the only thing she ever weaves together out of the green rushes, that she can sell, are little mats to stand dishes on; and sometimes, when she can find anybody who wants them, she will make a set of these, big and little, six in a set, and get threepence for them. The thread she uses to sew the plaits together in an oval form, is green rushes, and very neat do they look when finished.

One great event in her almost changeless life, was when two gentlemen came with guns to shoot grebe, as the wings were wanted for the hats of some wealthy young ladies, and are considered the most beautiful ornaments that can be worn. Grebes are scarce birds, and though they heard that a few had been seen in the marshes, they were unable to find one, after having hunted about for three or four hours. The little maid stood watching them from a dis-

tance, and wondering to herself what they were doing, not without suspicion, seeing that they had dogs and guns, that they intended shooting some of the geese she had the care of. One of the dogs came up to her, and after smelling about, reared up, and nearly stood on a level with her head. She was not at all afraid, but began to pat him on the back, having first filled her little jug, and offered him a drink.

“The very thing we wanted,” said one of the gentlemen, sending her to refill the jug, where the water was clear as crystal; he then put something into it out of a flask, and drank it off at a draught, sending her to fill it again for his friend. “Did she know where there were any grebes?” She shook her little head—she had never heard the name before, then asked what they were like. The young lord, who had promised to get the wings for his sisters’ hats, described them, simply and clearly.

She listened attentively, asked one or two questions, then, while her face lighted up with a smile of intelligence, said, "I know; you'll find plenty swimming about on Bulrush Mere." She led the way as far as to where they could see the tops of the tall black bulrushes standing in the water, then went back to watch her flock of geese, which were very much frightened when they heard the sportsmen firing at the grebes. In about an hour they came back, having shot several birds, and again she supplied them with water.

"And now, my little maid, as we are indebted to you for showing us where to find the grebes, and supplying us so bountifully with such pure water, you must accept this to buy you a new dress for Sundays;" and he placed a sovereign in her little brown hard hand, telling her to mind and not lose it. She thanked him very prettily, and soon plaited herself a little purse of rushes to keep it in,

for she knew its value, having once been sent to the public-house for change, when her mistress had sold some of her geese ; and as she was a ready reckoner, said, " Why it's as much wages as my mistress pays me in three months for minding the geese."

Now it was rumoured in the village, that the old woman, who owned the flock of geese, was very rich, and a very great miser ; and it was well known that she never changed a shilling unless she was fairly forced, and would make almost any kind of shift rather than send out for change. She had even gone so far as to send the Little Gooseherd home on a Saturday night with only a portion of her wages, to prevent herself, as she said, " from breaking into half-a-crown." Still the old woman was very honest, and though it seemed to grieve her to part with her money, she never owed anything for long ; for if she said " I will pay as soon as I have to get change,"

she kept her promise. One or two of the village tradesmen who knew her odd ways, always took care to be prepared with plenty of change, though, unless it was a largish sum she had to pay them, they could never get her to change a sovereign. Sometimes at Michaelmas, and just before Christmas, she received a deal of money, after selling as many as two or three dozen of her fat geese to a single customer, who bought them to sell again. But she never kept much money in the house for long; and everybody knew she had gone to the Bank with it, when they saw her start off after breakfast in her red cloak and coal-scuttle-shaped old bonnet, with black mittens drawn on her arms; for the little market-town in which she banked was five miles off, and that made her always start early. The clerks in the Bank said she never had a cheque-book in her life, and that if she wanted to draw any money out—which she seldom did, unless it was to

buy a cottage or a bit more land—she went to the Bank and asked for it, and had it put down in her banking book, which she signed, and took home with her. Neither would she, if ill, send for a doctor, but gather herbs out of her large old-fashioned garden, and make herself all sorts of drinks,—“doctress herself,” as she used to say; “for she knew better than any doctor could do, what was the matter with her.” She had not a relation in the world.

The old woman had long been a sufferer through an affliction in her eyes, and as usual, refused to see a doctor, but rubbed them with this, and bathed them with that; put on poultices, and wore shades, and got so bad in the course of time, that she couldn't see whether the money she took for her geese was good or bad, and dared not venture out so far as the Bank, for fear of being run over on the road. The little maid who had been her gooseherd, was by this time a

fine big girl, and the old woman had now to depend upon her for everything, and a faithful servant she proved; for at last the old woman became totally blind.

She had a boy now for her gooseherd; and I do think I ought all through to have called the girl a "gooseherdess," as we call a female who looks after sheep a shepherdess. If so, ought I not to have said the old woman was considered to be a "miseress" instead of a miser, by the villagers? The young maiden had now to look after the house, do the washing, cook the old woman's victuals, and even take her money to the Bank. She had been a hard mistress to the little maiden while she looked after her geese, often putting water to her milk before she sent her out to the marshes with her flock, though she kept a cow at that time, and had so much milk that she gave it to her pigs. No doubt the old woman often thought of these things

as she sat blind in her cottage, and heard the faithful servant moving about doing her household duties; for it was part of the agreement that she was to find the milk the little maiden took with her to drink while watching the geese in the wild marshes; and during all the years she guarded the flock she never lost but one little gosling, and that fell from the bank into a brook, and was drowned: for the stream was running very strong, and carried it away. Often and often the blind woman sat and thought what a faithful little servant her maid had always been, and what a hard mistress she was at times.

And now she had a deal of money in the Bank, and land and houses, which she could not see, nor even find her way to, unless she was led. The little maid had taught herself to read and write, and had to sign all the receipts for rent, and other things; and the old woman had no relation in the world that

she knew of, to whom she could leave her wealth.

“I think, Hannah,” she said one day, “I shall sell all my geese, for Jack doesn’t look after them as you used to do. I know he tells stories when he says a fox ran off with one, and another flew away, and two others were stolen by gipsies. None of these things ever befell the flock when they were under your care; and I have heard of him having fires in the turf shed, and other boys with him, and I do believe they’ve been roasting some of my fattest geese, and Farmer Hewitt says, when he crept into the shed one day, there was quite a strong smell of roast goose; and that he found a saucepan in which apple-sauce had been made; and that his finest apple-tree had been nearly stripped the night before.”

It was quite true Jack and his companions had been roasting and eating the old woman’s geese; for one boy

who was caught stealing sage, onions, and potatoes out of a garden, confessed to all : and Jack ran away from the village, and left the geese to take care of themselves.

So after a good deal of bargaining, Farmer Hewitt bought all the flock, and made one of his little sons his gooseherd ; and the old woman, as they say in the country, "lived on her means."

What a change was that from what the little maiden had been compelled to endure when she spent the long day in the wild marshes, where the plover went wailing above her, and the geese were ever babbling and hissing around, while milk and dry bread was her only food for days, and very often she had hardly a bit of shoe to her feet, and her dear mother was too poor to buy her a new pair, and the old ones were so bad, that the village cobbler couldn't mend them any more, he said.

Now she dressed quite neatly when her work was done, and sat down and had tea and hot short-cakes with her blind mistress ; was a teacher at the Sunday-school, and could afford to give money for both missionaries and tracts, and was, beside, one of the prettiest girls in the village. Farmer Hewitt's son, who was a fine young man, and two years older than herself, was always coming to ask questions about the geese and how to manage them, and one day when he was gone, the blind woman said, "I do believe, Hannah, his inquiries about the geese are only excuses for coming to see you. But he's a worthy young man, and a good son."

Then the old woman was taken very ill, and confined to her bed, while Hannah nursed her with as much affection as if she had been her own mother. Before she died she left all she possessed to Hannah, excepting a few sums she gave to charities, and after the

funeral her maiden became mistress of the house, and kept a servant; and though many young men tried to get acquainted with her, and she was civil to all, yet she cared for none so much as Farmer Hewitt's son, and never forgot how he had made a shed for her of turf and sods, to shelter in from the rain, when she was a poor little girl, and had to mind the large flock of geese. In time they were married. It was at Michaelmas; and every poor cottager in the village was presented with a fat goose the evening before her wedding-day, and plenty of potatoes, sage, and onions, and apples, with an order on the public-house for as much ale as they could drink.

I need not say how kind she was to her family after she came into so great a fortune, and how the people who thought they were conferring a great boon on her mother when they left her a tract, now sat down and took tea with her.



LEIGHTON, BROS.

RABBITS.

THE LITTLE RABBIT-KEEPERS.

WHEN the brother of the children nursing the rabbits went to sea as cabin-boy with his uncle, his sisters promised that they would look well after his pets while he was away; that they should be kept clean, and have plenty of suitable food, and be let out of their hutches at least once a day, to run about in that portion of the garden which he had parted off from the rest with palings, and which they all called the Rabbit Warren. As there was a wall on one side, and behind the rabbit-hutches, and the palings, which you cannot see in the picture, were a good height, and put pretty close together, and the girls went into the Warren

through a little gate, the rabbits could not get into the other portion of the large garden, if they tried ever so, unless they burrowed underground. Attending to the rabbits two or three times a day, was a pleasant link between the absent brother and his little sisters, as every time they went to the hutches, they thought of him, for they were always called Johnny's rabbits; and whenever he wrote home, he inquired how they were getting on; and as the eldest sister could write very prettily, she had always a deal of news to send to him about them; how many young ones this doe had had, and how soon the other was expected to kindle, and how one of the old bucks had got to the spotted doe's young ones, and killed every one.

Now this dark-coloured old buck was a downright bad one,—a bad father, a bad husband, and bad in everything—one of those kind of rabbits which, if he

had been a man, would have taken to drinking, and have spent every farthing he could "rap and ring" together on himself, without caring what became of his wife and family. He had to be put in a separate hutch before the does kindled, for the instant he saw one beginning to pull the down off her breast to make a nest for her young ones, he began to chase her about, to stamp his feet, and when the doe fondled and nestled over them, he used to go on dreadfully, if he could get near her, and say in his way, "Why don't you bundle those little brutes out, and make them eat bran and oats, the same as I'm forced to do? Don't tell me about their having no teeth yet; there's plenty of teeth to be got; why not take them to a dentist—he would make every one of 'em a set in a brace of shakes. Then you must nearly strip yourself of down for them, instead of leaving it on to keep me warm of a night. Do you

think I haven't got my feelings as well as they have?—Little? I know they are little, not even fit to stew, or boil, or roast, or make a pie of; and that is what rabbits were sent into the world for, unless they get old and tough as I am; then their duty is to see that the rabbits under them keep their places, as I make you keep yours, madam.—Better be dead, had they, than for me to go on so with them? I'll do anything to oblige; just get up, and let me have them one at a time, and I'll send my sharp buck-teeth through their necks in a crack.—Cruel wretch am I? and it will come home by me some day or another, will it? It won't be your brother, nor your old father, nor your cousin either, that will give it me. I would fight the whole three, one down, and the other come on. I could lick a warren-full of such like any morning before breakfast. Look how I made your old dad run and squeak the other day. I wish I

could get out ; I would leave you all to it. I have tried to dodge through that little wicket-gate once or twice, but the girls were too quick for me. Once I got my tail trapped ; but I shall slip out before I've done, when we are left to run about while they go to fetch us more vegetables."

One day he did slip out, and as the palings were put wide apart in the big garden, he had no difficulty in making his way into the fields. He found nothing there nicer than the little girls fed him with, for the garden was well stocked with everything that rabbits ought to eat ; such as parsnips, carrots, turnips, celery, and cabbages—nothing that he cared even to taste of, excepting a little patch of clover, and that he had a few nibbles at.

But while he was sitting under a hedge near the wood, he saw something looking at him with a very long body, short legs, and a bushy tail, and before

he had time to ask it "what o'clock it was, or inquire the nearest way home," it made a spring, bit into his neck, and though he had still strength enough to run a few yards, it never loosed its hold, but hung on, and kept tearing away at the rabbit's neck, and would have hung on if he had run a long mile ; for it was a ferret that killed him.

Another time a pretty white doe with pink eyes made her escape, and went so far that she couldn't find her way back for a day or two ; for she went across the fields, and through the wood, and over the hills and far away, until she reached a great wild moorland, on which grew hundreds of brambles and gorse-bushes, while acres of it were covered with purple heather ; and at one end, where it was woody, there was a large rabbit-warren, on which lived hundreds of wild grey rabbits, and not a single white one among the whole number.

“My stars and garters, but the sight of you’s good for sore eyes; who are you; and where did you come from?” inquired a grey old grandmother, who sat washing her face in the sunshine with her paws, at the entrance of her burrow.

“I’m a rabbit like yourself,” answered the pink-eyed doe, “and I came out of my hutch a long way off, to get a mouthful of fresh air, and have a bit of a change. Do you live here?” and she peeped into the great dark hole, at the far end of which was the grandmother’s nest.

“Yes, that’s my home,” answered the grandmother, still keeping on washing herself, “and a pretty large family you’ll find if you please to step inside. What with sons and daughters, and grandchildren, and great great grandchildren, there are some scores of us; not all living in one apartment understand, for though this is our chief entrance there

are several others leading to the burrows, that have been made for the convenience of our increasing families ; you would quite lose yourself in our underground streets, there are so many turnings, and we haven't had the gas laid on yet, though we have the water, when it rains, for then it comes on a little too strong at times. I'm a widow myself ; my old buck was killed two years ago by a weasel, who broke into our burrow while we were in bed, sucked the very life out of him, then curled itself up and went fast asleep. While he was asleep, about fifty of us set to work, and blocked up the whole of the long passage that led to my chamber. About three weeks after, we made a new opening and peeped in ; he hadn't left a morsel of my old man, excepting his nails and tail, and was as dead himself as he ever would be, until the eggs the burying-beetles had laid in him were hatched, then there might be a stir in him."

“I see you don’t wear a widow’s cap,” said the white doe; “I suppose you’ve left it off?”

“I never put it on,” said the grandmother; “you see you can’t get these long ears to look like a chignon, however much you may try; and they don’t look at all elegant poking out of a cap.”

“That’s very true,” replied the white rabbit, “and though I hadn’t the happiness of knowing your old buck, I’m very sorry he came to such an untimely end. Do you leave the entrance to your house open all night as it is now?”

“Yes, always,” answered the grandmother; “for you see, a main street, as I may call it, is not readily blocked up, though we have narrow courts and alleys that are not easily found, and are rather difficult to get into; these we sometimes stop up, making ourselves other outlets not so exposed as this

sometimes under a gorse-bush, or beneath a bramble or thorn. We take all the care we can of our families, but polecats, weasels, martens, and ferrets, lead us a sad life, and if you reason with them, they say 'We must live,' though for my part I cannot see the necessity of their living at all."

"But surely you have somebody to look after you, and see that these savages do not eat you up rump and stump?" said the white rabbit. "If it were not the case I should fancy they would come and take up their quarters amongst you altogether and lie in the middle of you, eating one bed fellow on the right for supper, and breakfasting on the one on the left before he was well awake. Such a state of things would be dreadful."

"Yes, we have keepers who destroy as many of these vermin as they can," replied the old grey rabbit; "but their protection in the end is something like

getting out of the frying-pan into the fire ; for they come with dogs and guns, and kill and carry off as many as a hundred of us at a time. Twenty-one of my sons and daughters, all fat and in the prime of life, were killed and carted off in one day. No wonder I have so much grey about me as you see. If I wasn't very tough indeed, I should have given up cocking my tail months ago ; but they do not care to waste shot and powder on me now. But talking is hungry work, and as there is a nice turnip-field close by, we'll just run across and get a mouthful of supper, then I'll take you home with me and give you a shake-down until morning."

So the white doe lay down in the burrow of the wild rabbits, and she hadn't been in bed long before she heard something steal in very softly, then a sharp nose touched her and she felt a puff of hot breath on her neck, but whether it was that she had the

flavour of a tame rabbit about her or what, she never knew, for the next instant she heard the old grandmother scream out "Murder." She only raised one cry, and then she was as still as a stone. The white doe darted out, frightened enough, you may be sure, and set off running, she never knew where, nor how she found her way home; for rabbits, like many other things, when they are affrighted, do what they couldn't do at other times. And next morning the girls were delighted to find her hiding under a gooseberry-bush, and she was as pleased as Punch to be taken up and placed again in the little warren, as it was called, to be fed and cared for, and out of the reach of weasels, ferrets, polecats, and martens, who spend all their day in killing poor rabbits, and then eating them.

In her next letter, the eldest sister told her brother about the old buck getting out, and never coming back,

and how the white doe with pink-eyes was missing for two days and a night, and how tired she seemed when she found her way home again. She also told him how little Nelly had got to the hutches unknown to any of them and had given the young rabbits so much green meat that they had become pot-bellied, and that she just made the discovery in time enough to save them, by giving them dry food, with only a few sow-thistles, and dandelions. After a time they received a letter from their brother, stating that they might have the rabbits to sell, or do what they liked with, as he was going to India, and did not know when he should be back, and that he had sent them a live parrot that could talk, and a lot of beautiful shells, and splendid flowers made of feathers, and that a young midshipman they knew was bringing them over, and when he called, they were to give him the finest buck and doe they had

got, for his little brother, who was fond of keeping rabbits.

The girls knew the young gentleman well who was coming over with the promised presents, for he had been in partnership with their brother in keeping rabbits, and that had caused a friendship to spring up between them which was likely to last. To well-regulated minds nothing is more pleasing than the remembrance of youthful friendships, even in old age, for they bring back the happy spring-time of life, and we seem to live over again those pleasant times when care and trouble left no more impression behind, than a summer shower does on the dried-up ground, which it only spots for the moment. When those two youths met in China, it seemed like being at home again; when they talked about their rabbits, and the pleasant walks they used to have in search of food for them; of places they visited in early spring

that were golden with primroses, and perfumed with purple violets, and where lilies of the valley made a white light beneath the budding underwood. Then there was the pleasure of buying, selling, and exchanging the prizes they had won at rabbit shows, the improvements they had made in their food, and hutches, as is shown in our picture, where everything looks as clean as a new pin. Nor was this all, other youths of their acquaintance had purchased rabbits, and, following their example, had kept them clean and healthy and well housed, thus finding occupation during what otherwise might have been hours of idleness.

Then they are such pretty things, and so sensitive of kindness, following those who attend to them everywhere, and I am sure those two girls who are holding them on their knees, feel greater pleasure in petting them, than they would in nursing a great inanimate doll

—that has neither sense nor feeling—no matter how fashionably it may be dressed. A block of wood or a mass of wax carved or modelled into a doll, cannot nestle against you, snuggle to you, and show by a many pretty endearing ways how fond it is of you, as a dear little rabbit does, that is warm and soft. Of course there are good and bad among rabbits, as there are among other things; and you cannot be expected to have much love for such brutes as the buck we have described, who killed his young ones, and did nothing all day long but blow his wife up sky high; and nobody would feel sorry to see such as he, cut up and put into a pie with some nice slices of ham and hard-boiled eggs, and while he was there to have him well peppered, and at every bite you make at him, when he's thoroughly done, to say "Ay, you brute you see what you've come to, for treating your wife and children, as you did; I'll give

you a little more mustard, and instead of grieving for you, and eating you in sorrow, I quite enjoy picking your old bones, for after all you really are a fine-flavoured rabbit."

Then you see if rabbits were not killed and eaten, as they lay almost as many young ones in the course of a year as hens do eggs, why there would soon be such millions upon millions of them, that we shouldn't be able to move without treading on them; and to be compelled to trample them to death, would you know be much worse, than making them into pies, or cramming them with nice veal stuffing, or boiling them with a piece of pickled pork, or a knuckle of ham, and serving them up with plenty of parsley in the melted butter. What a dreadful thing it would be to have to walk over miles and miles of rabbits, to have the beds covered with young ones, and not a chair to sit down on; and that soon would be the


case those say who reckon by calculating-machines, and nothing less will do, for if a doe lays ten young ones at a time, three times a year, and next year all the thirty lay ten apiece three times, why, in seven years—there! it would be almost as easy to count all the daisies you see in May, in a twenty-acre field, or all the stars you see on a bright frosty night. Oh, deary me! it would quite make your head ache; and the only way to get at it is, to get a great wheel covered with figures, and turn it round as fast as you can for a month or two, then, if you could make anything of it, you might get some faint idea of how many rabbits there would be in ten years, if they all lived, and an Act of Parliament passed, fining everybody a thousand pounds, that made a rabbit-pie. I leave you to get your slate and pencil and make this calculation, for I can't.



LEIGHTON, BROS.

GOAT AND KID.

GOAT AND KID.

 HIS poor goat used to stand for hire, harnessed to a little chaise on Kennington Common, before that place was changed into a park as you see it now. The goat and chaise were all the means the poor boy to whom they belonged had of obtaining a living. He was a poor little fellow nearly bent double, for his back was so weak, he couldn't have stood up straight if you had given him a thousand pounds, and was therefore unfit for hard work ; neither had he either father or mother to help him, nor any one who cared for him, excepting a poor old aunt, who got a living by taking in a little washing, and going out to scrub

and clean. With the poor old aunt the little cripple lived, paying her what he could for his board and lodging. There were two or three other little carriages, drawn by goats, plying for hire on the common as well as his, before it was made into a park; but as he was deformed, the ladies who let their children have a ride, generally hired his goat and chaise in preference to any other. In winter, he earned nothing, though he might even then be seen at times, taking home the linen his aunt had washed, in his goat chaise. In fine weather, as he would tell you, "he did very well indeed," for some of the ladies who hired his chaise, paid him more than he charged, which was a penny a ride each, across the common and back; and he often had two little passengers, and could make two journeys an hour with ease. Still, he had a good deal to put up with at times, for the other boys who were in the same line were jealous,

calling him "Old Humpty Dump," and such-like names, and telling the ladies and nursery-maids who came with their children, "that his goat was lame, and hadn't a go in him; and his chaise would break down before he got half-way across, and only theirs were the little fellows to go." The poor pale-faced little cripple only smiled, and never replied to their abuse, and his patience and forbearance met with a reward, for some of the ladies wouldn't hire their carriages, even while he was engaged, but waited until he had discharged his fare, telling his tormentors "that they were bad boys, and they would not encourage them." One little fellow who plied on the common, whose name was Isaac, though he was always called Ike, was never unkind to him, and got many a fare through his recommendation; for a good word from one respected, goes a long way at times, and is often of the greatest service.

But if the boys were jealous of him before, there was hardly any bounds to their rage when one winter the goat had a little kid, which by the time spring had somewhat advanced, was strong enough to come out, and trot up and down the common beside its mother. It was a dear little pet, and as it scarce took up any room at all, some of the children wouldn't ride, unless they had it in the chaise with them, and it was so pretty to see it folded in their arms and to hear it bleat, as if it said, "I'm all right, mother, but I'm ashamed of riding when you have to draw me." Then the mother would bleat in reply, as if she said, "I don't mind it a bit, my dear, for I know you are in safe hands, and I am sure to get a piece of bun or something or another, for letting you ride with the children; then while I'm eating it, you can get out, and have a little drop of you-know-what, for I've plenty of milk for you."

And many a bit of something nice did the goat get through having the kid ; and many a long rest too, for their mothers were just as well pleased to pay for the time the children played with it on the grass, as they were for their riding.

Now, there was one lady who lived on Denmark Hill who used to come when there was service at Kennington Church on the week-days, as well as Sundays, and who used to bring her little boy with her—you see him in the picture holding on by the ring fastened to the goat's collar,—and always on the week-days let him have a ride in the goat chaise, when the weather was fine. Sometimes the little boy rode all the way down the Camberwell New Road, and as far as the Fox-under-the-Hill, which was near to where the lady lived ; and when the little cripple took her boy all that distance, she always gave him a shilling, which was quite as much as

she would have had to pay if she had hired a cab ; and although the lady kept her own carriage, she rarely had it brought out, for that short distance, unless in rainy weather. This lady took a great interest in the poor boy, and it was through her that he gave up plying on a Sunday, and never came out on that day with his goat and chaise, but always went to church. He used to wait at the church door until she came out of a Sunday, and no doubt he had been told to do so, and she never missed putting something in his little thin, skinny hand. I believe in my own mind that she thought he couldn't live long, for he had always a cough on him, which used to get worse and worse. So great an interest did she take in him, that one day she gave him a message to tell his aunt to call on her, which she did ; and ever after the aunt and nephew dined with her servants on a Sunday ; and on a Saturday night he

took his goat and kid to run in the large park-like field that belonged to her mansion, and took them away on Monday morning. She was a kind-hearted lady, and used to let many of the poor children that went to the church school come and play in her immense ground. You see some of them in the picture sitting down near the dog and sheep, while her little boy is leading the goat about, with the kid before it.

You could not believe, unless you saw it, that there is such beautiful scenery so near London as in those park-like grounds which slope down from behind the mansions on Denmark Hill, all facing the sunny south, and fronting Norwood; while Dulwich nestles among the trees in the green valley that lies between the two ranges of hills. What the grounds are like which slope down behind this lady's mansion, you may see by looking at the picture, though the great garden is higher up the hill, and

nearer the house. There was neither Crystal Palace nor railroad to be seen at the period of which I am writing, for though the Brighton line was then open, it was, as now, hidden by the Norwood hills, and not a rail was laid down in the beautiful green valley.

It was the winter after he had done so well, through having his little kid, that the poor boy became so ill, he was confined to his bed. It was a comfort to him to know his goat and kid were so well provided for during that cold winter, for the lady had given them shelter in her own stables, where, so to speak, "they lived in clover." She sent her own doctor to attend on him; and when he said there was no chance of the poor fellow recovering in the stifling air among the Lambeth potteries, where he lived with his aunt, she had him removed to her own mansion, and placed in a beautiful chamber that overlooked her own grounds, and the

range of hills opposite. And when he was unable to sit up, she had his bed removed near the window, so that he could lie on his side, and overlook all the beautiful scenery that stretched out before him, and see a vast expanse of sky, with its ever-changing clouds, some of which at times went gliding by like the white sails of great ships sailing over a blue sea. And as the weather got finer, and the spring began to show her first green buds, the lady's little boy would bring out the goat and kid, and so place them that he could see where they stood from his window. He would have liked to have gone down to them, but was too weak for that, though the lady promised that if God spared him until summer weather set in, he should be carried down stairs for an hour or so in the middle of the day, and sit out in the warm sunshine, with his goat and kid; and she kept her promise.

The goat knew him again, and

would rest her head on his knee, and seemed to look as if she sympathised with him, and knew that he was very ill, bleating pitifully as if she said, "Never mind, you did your duty, and have nothing to reproach yourself with, and were always very kind to me and my dear kid, though it seems now to care more for the lady's little boy than it does for you, for he feeds it a great deal oftener than is good for its health, and thinks it ought to eat everything that he does. Only fancy him giving it the other day a great piece of jam-tart! But they are very kind to us all here, and I feel at times as if it was very wicked for me to be living here on the best of everything, and doing no work, when I know the other poor goats are toiling on the common, for Ike called to inquire after you the other day, and I exchanged a few bleatings with his goat at the door, and she told me that those boys who were so unkind to you

were always asking her master if you were better. I thought she looked rather thin, poor thing! and she said Ike didn't seem to have the same spirit in him that he had before you were ill, and that a great many ladies inquired after us, and that is some comfort, you know, for it shows we are much respected. She also said her greatest trouble was one little fat butcher's boy who would drive himself, and was always whipping her, no matter how fast she went; and that though she tried to control her temper, she knew that he would irritate her so much some day, that she should lose all command of herself, and when he got out run full butt at him, and send him spinning in the air like a shuttlecock. That there were a great many children's schools now come for an airing on the common, and some of the stingy governesses wanted him to put four of the children in the chaise at once, and give them a

ride for the same as he charged for two, but that she always struck against such meanness and imposition, and wouldn't stir a stump until a couple of them were taken out, and that Ike encouraged her for so doing, telling the ladies that I was only licensed to carry two."

So like a good goat she bleated out all the news she could pick up to amuse him, and if he didn't understand what she said, nobody else did.

Poor little fellow! the goat seemed to be a great comfort to him; and he would sit in the sunshine on a soft air cushion for the hour together, and fall asleep with his arms around its neck, while the unfeeling kid was gamboling about with the lady's little son, and seeming to have no pity at all for her poor dying master.

I do believe that the goat knew he was ill, and not likely to recover; for animals have a knowledge of things, that to the wisest of us are a mystery

at times ; nor can we ever know how they obtained it. The goat knew he rested best when he fell asleep with his arms around her ; and the coachman often remarked that she never stirred head or foot while he slept, as if she knew that doing so would awaken him : that he had come up softly, and offered her the daintiest of food, and she would not touch it, but seemed to look out of her eyes as if she reproached him ; and that was the only part of her that showed she was alive, so still did she lie.

One day, while they were basking in the sunshine together, the goat jumped up suddenly, and began bleating so pitifully that the coachman said “the cry seemed to pierce him to the very heart : that through some strange foreboding he knew what had happened before he got out of the coach-house ; and that when he came up, he saw the poor boy had fallen back in the sunshine dead.”

For a whole week after his death, that goat never touched a mouthful of food, but went and laid down in the darkest corner of the stable, and buried herself in the straw.

As the churchyards were then open for interments, he was at his own request buried in that of Kennington ; for he said, "When the other boys that drive the goat-carriages come and peep between the iron railings at my grave, they may think of me, and fancy I am still looking down upon them, and be all the better for it."

They asked for permission to join the funeral train with their carriages and goats ; and several other boys who knew the deceased, and were in the same line, fell into the procession, so that the string of goat-carriages extended a long distance ; and as the goats kept bleating to and answering one another, it was quite affecting,—it was indeed. The Nanny-goat and kid walked at the

head of the procession, with crape round their necks ; and there were those who said that if his goat could only have walked on her hind legs, and have carried a white handkerchief in one of her fore-paws, she might almost have passed for a very old Christian that had never been shaved, she looked so very grave and sorrowful.

The wealthy lady had several designs submitted to her for his monument, but as she wished to show him with his goat and chaise, in marble, it was difficult to give it a classical appearance. One artist had represented him as standing up in his chaise ; but as his hump-back had been retained, which caused his poor little head to lean forward, he had neither the appearance of an Ancient Briton in his war chariot, nor a Roman conqueror in a triumphal car. Another showed the goat coiled up at his feet, but the horns quite spoilt the effect ; and when the artist struck

them out, there was nothing in creation that the model looked like. But the right man came at last; for an eminent sculptor one day happened to dine with the lady, and while she talked about the poor boy, described how he died, and the difficulty she had in obtaining a design for a group that would perpetuate his memory, the great sculptor said, "I will model the boy for you asleep with his arms enfolding his goat, though it will be more in keeping on the spot where he died, if you place it there instead of over his grave." So he and his goat exist in marble, and many a tear has been shed over it by those who have admired the skill of the workmanship, and heard the story of the poor boy's life. The coachman says "it is so natural, that the goat has only to bleat to make it alive."

Ike, who was so kind to the poor cripple, was constantly calling at the lady's residence to see how the goat and

kid got on ; and as he seemed partial to horses, the coachman, at the wish of his mistress, made the boy useful about the stables, though his principal employment was to look after her son when he went riding about the grounds on his beautiful long-tailed pony. "Sitch a place for grub!" Ike said one day to the goat-drivers on the common ; " I goes to the beer-barrel when I likes, and the cook says to me, ' When you wants a snack, Ike, you knows where the safe is, and there's allos plenty of cheese and cold meat in it.' Mother had to let my waistcoat out at the back," and he took his loose coat off to show the boys how fat he was getting.

As for the poor old aunt, she had been so much about the lady's mansion during her nephew's illness, and was so kind, patient, and grateful, and tried to make herself useful in the kitchen in every way she could, that the lady removed her from the poisonous, bone-

boiling, and pot-burning air of Lambeth, and took her into the house altogether, letting her have for a sleeping-room the pretty chamber where the poor boy used to lie for hours together looking at the picturesque landscape from the window. Ike, who had always been a bit of a rhymster, wrote an epitaph on his poor friend, which the cook thought "very pretty," the coachman "very clever," the aunt "very affecting," and the lady "very true." It was as follows :—

No more will he drive his chaise ;
He's gone to sing his Maker's praise,
Where angels have wings for coats :
He's not gone among the goats,
But to pastures where the sheep
Through the palings of Heaven peep.
That we may do the like,
Is the prayer of his friend Ike.





LEIGHTON, BROS.

FOWLS.

THE COCK OF THE WALK.



YES, little boy, having tasted it myself, and approved of it, I will permit you to throw a portion of that cake to my wives and children, nor need you have any dread of my flying at you, or giving you a stroke with my spur. You may look on, little girl, but you had better not put the child down, as his bare legs are rather tempting, and some of my ladies might take a fancy to peck at them; and though I am the cock of the walk, and have no one to interfere with me, I do not like to chastise them for every trifling fault they commit, as it is beneath the dignity of a gentleman of any standing and descent to do so."

Having thus spoken, he flapped his wings, stretched himself, shook out his hackles, then, with his chest well thrown out, went strutting up and down the gravel walk, timing the jerk of his arched tail to his footsteps, and looking every inch the swell that he was proud of being.

While he was strutting about as if all the world belonged to him, a cock crowed from a great distance ; at first he took no notice, but after holding his head aside as if to make sure that his ears had not deceived him, he turned to the speckled hen, which was the wife he generally consulted, and said, " Mary Ann, my dear, as you have the sharpest hearing, may I take the liberty of asking your opinion as to whether I shall answer yonder distant crowing or not. You are a good judge of sounds ; do you think it was a real gentleman who called ? If you do, common courtesy requires me to answer."

After giving one of her chickens a peck, and saying, "Be still you little brat, will you?" the speckled-hen listened very attentively, turning round to try both ears, then she said, "No, sir, it is not a gentleman who called, but a common barn-door fellow, who drops his aitches; I should not return the call." All his wives called him, sir, excepting the little brown hen nearest the boy's leg. She called him anything that came readiest to her tongue, and never stopped to select her words.

"That isn't the call of a common barn-door cock," said the little brown hen, "it's mealy-grey, that lives up at the mill-house, the very same fellow that came over and gave somebody you know such a licking last week, as sent him to roost with his comb bleeding. He is a real game-cock, if there ever was one, and bears the Banhiva brand about him. From his manner of calling, he seems to me to want to know if

he thrashed the party quite enough, or they would like him to come over and give them a little more; he seems to wish for a speedy answer too, and crows more angrily every time. As you know the party, had you not better crow and just tell him they've had quite enough of it, and will feel obliged to him not to give them another licking? that if he does they shall feel compelled to send two or three of their wives to him, and that they are only cock of the walk, so long as they have a parcel of women to domineer over?"

"I didn't speak to you, madam impertinence," said the cock, looking down upon her with withering contempt, "and it will be quite time enough to give your opinion when you are asked for it; you know well enough that when the gentleman at the mill attacked the party alluded to, they were under the doctor's hands, undergoing a course of medicine, and were far from well. I

was told so ; but, instead of taking the party's word, as one gentleman ought to do another's, he said he didn't believe it, and should come over and judge for himself, and feel the party's pulse. He did so, and the consequence was a disagreement."

"And you call such a licking as you never had before in your life, a disagreement, do you?" thought the little brown hen to herself, though she didn't say so, and she was the only one present, when the cock of the mill gave her haughty lord and master such a thrashing, which I don't think she was very sorry for, as he had given her a peck an hour or two before, for picking up a worm, which the speckled hen was making a snatch at.

Now the cock of the walk thought the best thing he could do was to change the subject, lest by dwelling upon it too long, the rest of his wives should begin to suspect that he was the

party that had been licked ; for he had always impressed upon their minds that he had no equal for courage, and he knew that if it were once discovered that he had run away from mealy-grey, his authority would be lessened. He had proof of this in the little brown hen, who saw his defeat, and though to a certain extent she kept his secret, still she was always tantalizing about "the party" who had been thrashed, and, as her language and conduct showed, she had no longer any fear of him, and he believed very little respect, though he had threatened what he would do when he found her by herself in the fields outside their walk, if she openly disgraced him. And he looked daggers at her when he made the threat.

On the present occasion, as before stated, he thought it best to change the subject, and began by pretending to take a great interest in the younger members of his family, to all of whom



LEIGHTON, BROS.

DONKEY AND FOAL.

he gave names, teaching them by his peculiar crowing to understand him, though the little things could only just lisp. "William," he said, addressing a young cockerell, "I am astonished at your want of manners; how rude you are, sir, to go and pick up that little beetle before your sister, even running to get it first, like the greedy fellow you are, when you saw it was in her walk, and I have told you no end of times, to keep a line while pecking, and never to step aside from it, especially when with your sisters. The ladies first, always; that has been my motto through life." And he went strutting up and down the walk, while the little white hen whispered to her companion, "He always was quite the gentleman."

The next instant, the challenge from the mill came clearer, louder, and more defiant than before; the cock of the walk heard it, and his comb and wattles turned quite pale.

“You are not looking at all well, sir,” said one of the little white hens; “my sister and I have our nests in a hay-rack in the stable, where we live in the greatest of peace, never having any one to disturb us, unless it be some rat in the night, eating up the corn that is left in the manger. I think, sir, if you were to creep in behind us, you would be so well covered up by the hay, that no one would be likely to disturb you. And were that rude gentleman at the mill, who is so clamorous in his inquiry, even to call, he would never be so rude as to intrude upon ladies, when he found they were taking their siesta.”

“Thank you kindly,” said the cock of the walk, bowing to both the white hens, who were perfect ladies, and highly accomplished. “I will avail myself of your kind offer; and as my head aches, and I have got a slight cold in the chest, and a little inflammation in my throat, I think it will be better to

take a little rest for a time than straining myself to reply to that low-bred person, who breaks up our rural tranquillity by his incessant crowing."

"I am sure you are perfectly right, as you always are, and I can but admire your discretion," said the white hen, making a most graceful curtsy.

"And that is the better part of valour," added the little impudent brown hen, cocking up her head. "And I think, fair lady," she added, bowing to the pretty white hen, "the half of that broken egg-shell lying there, might be put on his head for a night-cap, and if tied under his wattles with that bit of dirty tape you might make a perfect cure of him between you, if you get him to bed at once. By the way, should the cock of the mill call to inquire after the party that you and I have the honour of being acquainted with, shall I present your compliments and say that you are laid up with a dreadful toothache, and

that when better you will be most happy to wait upon him at any time and place he may please to appoint?"

I shall not write down the reply that the cock of the walk made, but it caused the two white ladies to raise their eyes in amazement, after exchanging glances with each other; for it was not such language as you would expect from a gentleman, as he threatened to kick her crinoline if she didn't take herself off at once.

It tries the temper of even a very good-natured person to keep on shouting to any one within hearing, and receive no answer, and as the cock of the mill was rather hot tempered, he got quite angry at calling so long to the cock of the walk, and getting no reply. "He's a-sulking," said the cock of the mill, after the third time of crowing; "He can't forget it," said he, after the fourth crow; "He bears me malice," he continued, after the fifth; "He's afraid of me," he

added, after the sixth ; “ He’s treating me with silent contempt,” said he, after the seventh crow ; “ I’ll not put up with it, but go at once and see what he does mean,” said the cock of the mill, after crowing again several times. So saying, he flew over the palings, ran across the home-field, mounted the five-barred gate, and, shutting his eyes, gave one of his loudest crows, listened a moderate time, and receiving no answer, flew and ran across the rest of the fields, and alighted in the centre of the walk, amid the speckled hen and her chickens.

“ What might be your pleasure, sir ?” said the speckled hen, marching up to him boldly, with her head well up, her chest thrown forward, and every feather all of a quiver, showing it was only by a great effort of temper she was able to keep them down, while her little chickens clustered around her.

“ Oh, I merely called to inquire about the state of your husband’s health,” said

the cock of the mill, a little bit out of countenance, for he knew from experience, that a lady with all her children about her, was rather a dangerous subject to be uncourteous to, as upon the slightest provocation, as he well knew from experience, she was pretty sure to make rather free use of her pointed beak, and he saw that the speckled hen had a very sharp one.

"I don't believe you," replied the speckled hen, who had a rare spirit of her own; "you came with no such intent. I heard the insulting language you made use of, and I can tell you the sooner you take yourself off, the better it will be for you." And she raised all her feathers in an instant, and began to beat her wings, while there was a fire in her eye, which, like a warning beacon, gave notice of danger to all who came near her.

"I never in my life raised spur, beak, or claw against a lady," said the cock of

the mill, drawing back, "for I know it would be considered cowardly by every thorough-bred game-cock were I to disgrace myself, and I should be crowed down by them. But I'll tell you what I do, madam: I always look up to a husband for satisfaction when the wife has misconducted herself towards me, and I never let him rest until he gives it;" so saying, he turned round, and began to peck about the walk as if it belonged to him.

The little brown hen, though some distance off, heard every word that had been said, and came pecking her way up to the cock of the mill, and when he saw her, he said softly, "Where is he?"

"Hiding himself in the hay-rack behind the nests of the white hens, in the stable," whispered the mischief-making brown hen; "he has got a night-cap on, and his wattles tied up: you never saw such a Guy in your life."

"I should very much like to see him," said the cock of the mill.

So you shall, if you'll keep on pecking away behind me, and seeming to take no notice of anything or anybody, while you follow me," said the little brown hen. "Come into the stable after me, and when you see me stop and begin to scratch up the straw, that will be the rack facing me, in which he is hidden."

"All right, peck away," said the cock of the mill, following her, "I'll have a peep at him, never fear, by some means or another; and if I am the cause of throwing him into a good steaming perspiration, it will do him no harm, I hope."

So he followed the little brown hen into the stable, and when she began to scratch among the straw, he left off pecking, and looked up at the hay-rack, where he saw the two white ladies sitting on their nests, and he knew from

the motion of the straw that the cock of the walk, who was hidden behind them, was all of a tremble.

“ I congratulate you ladies on possessing so beautifully clean and airy a residence, which your graceful presence so much adorns ; only to look at your state of tranquillity suggests repose, and makes one repine at the very thought of the crowing and cackling in the straw-yard. One feels almost a wish to be an invalid, to be watched over by such beauty as yours, and confined to such an abode of peace,” and he bowed very low.

The cock of the walk heard every word, while he fairly shook in his shoes.

“ Yes, gallant sir, we are very peaceful, and very contented up here,” said one of the white ladies, rising up in her nest and curtsying ; “ but I am sorry to say my sister does not feel very well to-day—her nerves are a little out of order.”

“ I am exceedingly grieved to hear of

it," said the cock of the mill, "and as I have had great experience in such cases, I should strongly advise her to make an effort, get up, and take a little gentle exercise."

"You are very kind, sir," replied the other sister, "and I should like it very much, but am really afraid that I have hardly strength enough to get down to day, I feel so weak."

"I never allow a lady to express a longing for anything in my presence that I am able to procure her, and as to getting down it will be quite a pleasure to me to alight with you on my back;" so saying, and without giving her time to reply, the cock of the mill flew up over the heads of the white hens into the rack, and came down behind them with all his weight on the top of the cock of the walk.

"Oh! murder, help! you'll kill me!" crowed out the cock of the walk, raising his head with the white shell on it for

a night-cap ; “ this would be very dangerous treatment to a person in robust health, to come jumping on him with all your weight, as you have on me, when I’m suffering under scarlet fever.”

“ Scarlet fever ! Why, that’s catching !” exclaimed the cock of the mill, in great alarm. And without another word he flew down from the hay-rack, out of the door, and over the fields back to the strawyard of the mill, and never again paid a visit to the cock of the walk.

So, you see, though mealy-grey was as brave as a lion, and could lick any game-cock in the neighbourhood, and give him a pound in weight, he was frightened at only a shadow ; and even supposing the other cock had got some complaint that was contagious, why he showed far less courage than those pretty white hens, who had not half his strength, and were much less able to bear the burden of suffering. All this the cock of the mill ought to have

thought of, but he ran away leaving an impression on the minds of the little white hens, that he was at heart a very great coward; which he was not, so far as brute-courage went.

Had the cock of the walk, instead of only shamming, really been smitten with the pip, those white hens would have nursed him through it all, though while doing so they might have cast every feather, and ended by being as naked as if they were trussed.

As for the cock of the walk, though he was a regular Master Bounce amongst his hens, and tried all he knew to make them believe that his equal never crowed, yet having once found his conqueror, he was as much afraid of a second licking, as a chicken is of a peck from its mother. Some fowls would have come for a fight as regularly as they did for their food, and never cried "die" if they had been defeated every time.



LEIGHTON, BROS.

COW AND CALF.

OLD BETTY'S COW AND CALF.



THE cow and calf in that beautiful park which you see in the picture, belonged to a poor old woman, whose necessities compelled her to sell them, as soon as the little calf was able to walk the two miles which lay between her cottage and the next market town. It was a great trouble to her to part with the cow, as it had been her chief means of support ever since she was a widow ; but there was no help for it, as the little croft at the back of her cottage had been purchased by a railway company, which came so close, that the foot of the embankment touched the hedge which divided the small field that afforded pasturage for her

cow, from her little bit of a garden. Her husband had been a very hard-working man, and out of his ill-paid labour, and through the humble way in which they lived, had saved up enough to buy the cottage and morsel of garden-ground, which was now the widow's own freehold; while the little field belonged to the Squire who owned the hall and park, and he had let her keep the cow in it, without taking any rent of her, as she was a poor old widow. Now the new railway swept all the way down one side of his great park, and took in a many little fields which lay behind the cottages, the whole length of the village street, and for miles beyond it. Though the Squire would be paid many thousands of pounds for his land, he would much rather have been without the money, if his estate had been left untouched, for he was very rich, and liked best to see his tenants cultivating their farms, as had been done through

many generations, but as he said, "I cannot help myself, the railway company have got an act of Parliament, and power to take the land at a fair valuation, and very thankful I am they have not come across my park." He was a good, kind landlord, as his forefathers had also been, the proof of which was shown through some of the farms having been cultivated by the same families for above two hundred years, without a change of name among the tenants, the last born son tilling the same acres as his great great grandsire ploughed and sowed in the reign of Charles.

The old woman locked her cottage door, and left the key with a neighbour, who promised to keep her fire in, and have her kettle boiling by the time she returned from market, as she said "she should like a dish of tea most of all things in the world," and off she set, driving before her very gently her cow and calf. She was nearly two hours

going the two miles, for if the cow took a fancy to a mouthful of road-side grass, or the little calf wanted its milk bottle, she waited patiently until both had finished, when off they started again. The old woman was well known and greatly respected, for, like her husband, she had led a blameless life, and many a "good morning, Betty," and inquiries after her health were given by the people who passed her on their way to market; and to those who came from a greater distance, and loitered a minute or two to gossip with her, she told all about the loss of her little paddock, and the new railway company, and why she was forced to sell her cow and calf, and they hoped she would meet with a good customer.

As what was called the "Beast-market" was in an open space at the back of the little town, she had not to drive her cow and calf through the crowded market-place, but by what was

known as "the backway," where cattle always stood to be sold, and pens were put up for the pigs and sheep. When the toll collector came round, Betty offered him twopence, as she knew that the market toll was a penny a-head for all cattle, and a halfpenny a-head for pigs and sheep.

"I shan't take for the little 'un, Betty," said the tollman, patting the calf, "as I see it hain't been weaned, so mustn't charge for babies, you know. Farmer Furley asked me if I saw a nice milch cow to let him know, and that he shouldn't mind if there was a calf. When I've collected my tolls, I shall see him at the White Hart, where he puts up, as I always meet the market-treasurer there to pay in my money. I'll send him round, shall I?"

"I'll be greatly obleeged to thee," said Betty, who never said oblige, "if thou wilt, for I know Farmer Furley's a fair-dealing gentleman. My poor old

man used at one time to work on his farm."

The market-collector got Betty a little stool from somewhere or another, and fetched her half-a-pint of the best ale from the Rising Sun opposite, so she sat down and munched the bread and butter which she had brought with her and "quite enjoyed her gill of ale," as she told a neighbour.

Men learned in the good qualities of cattle came and looked at her cow, walked round and felt it, asked how old the calf was, and then inquired the price, which was twenty guineas, as the cow was of a first-rate breed, none better. One farmer offered her nineteen guineas, but Betty said, "no, she must have twenty." The farmer said they were worth it, but it was more than he ever paid, as he bought to sell again, but he would stick to his offer after the market was over, so that if she hadn't sold them, she could drive them

round to the Old Black Bull, and have her money, if she had no better offer.

Betty thanked him kindly, and promised to do so, if she could not get twenty, as she had nowhere to keep them, if she drove them home again. Soon after Farmer Furley came up, shook hands with Betty, and as he knew the cow was first-rate, and all about it, he only examined the calf, and saying "I'll have them, Betty; will you have notes or gold?" pulled out his great yellow money bag, in which he kept both gold and silver, then his pocket-book, from a great pocket inside his waistcoat, and giving her eleven sovereigns and two five pound notes, called to one of the drovers to drive them gently to his farm, and went his way. No receipt was given or asked for; such is the custom in our old English market towns, and tens of thousands are paid in the same way, in the course of a year. When Betty got home, she found her

kettle boiling, and having bought herself a nice twopenny tea-cake at the pastry-cook's, and having toasted and buttered it well, she sat down and enjoyed her good strong dish of tea. While sipping her tea, Betty began to think how she must eke out her very limited income. "It wasn't much I ever made from the milk," said Betty to herself, "for that's not a very marketable thing in a village, where any well-to-do farmer will almost give anybody a jugful that likes to fetch it. But I did very well at times with my butter, for she was a good milker. Well, that's gone now, and I must make the most I can of my bit of a garden. The currants and gooseberries always bring in a few shillings when I take them to market, though they are a goodish weight to carry, and my plums and damsons I can always sell. I must try and get a little early spring stuff in, such as lettuces, radishes, onions, and mint; they are very market-

able, though I fear that nasty high railway embankment will rob me of a good deal of sunshine, as it faces the south. It isn't much longer I shall want a crust to gnaw, for I've only three teeth left, and when they are gone I must sop my bread, if I can get any to sop,—and I've never yet known the want of it, thanks to God, though I've lived over my threescore years and ten, and have been a stirring woman all my life, excepting when I've had the rheumatics very bad indeed. Well, well, I've parted with my old cow, as I have with many other friends I hope to meet hereafter."

On the following morning, Betty lay in bed a little later than usual, for she had now no cow to milk, and the journey to market and back had made her feel rather more tired than before. "Why, bless me, whatever can that be?" said Betty, stopping with the stay-lace in her hand, in the midst of her dressing; for though there was no whale-bone in

her stays, they were well padded, and, as Betty said, "after wearing a thing for fifty years, and getting used to it, it is hard to leave it off altogether:" so she made up the stiffness with padding, given to them formerly by whale-bone; "not that there's much left that was in them when I was a young lass, and they were new," Betty used to say, "for they're much of a muchness with Jackey Thrift's old knife, that had had three new blades and two new handles to it." So she finished lacing her stays, and was just slipping her gown over her head, when she stopped with her arms out of the sleeves to listen once more, and say, "Why, whatever can it be?" "Boo, boo, boo," was the answer. "Goodness gracious me!" said Betty peeping out of her chamber window. "If my old cow hasn't come back again, and brought the calf with her."

It was true enough, the cow had found her way back in the night, and

was seen soon after daylight lying down with her calf beside her at the front of Betty's cottage, by the Woodman, who went early to his labour.

A neighbouring farmer was not only kind enough to put the cow and calf into his field, but as he had to send a load to the market town where Betty had sold it, and Farmer Furley did not live more than a mile beyond, he told his man to go on and tell him where they were, and to send for them on the following day, as they had better rest a night.

How they had found their way back, the cow only knew: one thing was clear enough, there was a toll-gate close to the market town, at the end of the road which led past Mr. Furley's farm, and the toll-man said he was called up to open the gate for the mail-coach as usual about midnight, and he remembered seeing the cow and calf rush through while the gate was open; that

he tried to drive them back, but could not overtake them. So they must have waited until the toll-gate was opened for the London mail, or have gone some miles round, to have got home.

Betty was sorry for the trouble it caused to both her kind neighbour, and to Farmer Furley, though I do believe in her heart she was glad to see her cow again; for she said to the woman who kept her fire in, and boiled her kettle, "It shows I'd been kind to the poor dumb creature, or it wouldn't have wanted to come back again to me, would it?"

After a day or two's rest, they were driven back, and put into another field, with a very high old hawthorn hedge all round it, and left there, with the strong five-barred gate securely locked. All was of no use, before the end of the week, they were back again; for she managed to break through where a tree grew in the hedge, and the branches

had been thinned a little, to let the tree grow clear up.

Three times did this occur, and one day it was talked about at the farmers' dinner, in the White Hart, where the Squire himself sat at the table.

"She's a sweet pretty cow," said Farmer Furley, "and comes off a good breed. But she'll soon neither have milk, nor much flesh on her bones, going over the space of ground that she does nearly every night. I must sell her to somebody that lives too far off for her ever to find her way back. I don't see what else I can do."

"Look you!" said the Squire, "there's about thirty of us here; let's buy Old Betty's cow, and give it her back. I'll not only be my five pounds to head the subscription, but I'll let it feed rent-free in the low park, and she may put it up in one of my sheds in winter. The poor old woman had enough to do to make both ends meet when she had

her cow, and how she'll get on without it, I don't know." It was a short speech, but to the purpose, and as Mr. Furley offered his sovereign, twenty pounds were raised in a few minutes, and handed over to him, and Betty had her cow and calf back again, and went on the following market-day to thank the gentlemen in the market-house, after they had dined, when they made her have a glass of wine.

As there was a foot-road across the lower park, leading to another village, the children were permitted to walk about and play in it, and as Betty's cow was very quiet, and had been a good deal talked about, through the journeys she had made to reach home again, after she had been sold, the cow found a great many admirers; for she was so good-tempered as to even let the children sit upon her when she was lying down; as you see in the picture.

Now, what Betty in her short-sighted-

ness had grieved over, and thought a great trouble, which was the railway that cut off her little field, proved to be the best thing that had ever happened to her, for it took her milk every morning to a large town about twenty miles away, in less time than she could have carried it to the little pottering market town, where she sold her cow and calf. Then she obtained such a price for it, and the Squire was so kind as to offer her pasturage in the lower park for nothing, that she bought another cow, a capital milker, for very little money, as it was in a poor state at the time. But it soon improved on the rich feeding the park afforded, and gave more milk than the one Farmer Furley had bought of her. So she kept on adding to her stock by the Squire's advice, that she was able at last to send up eight great cans of milk, holding many gallons each, twice a day to a milk-seller, in the large manufacturing town, by the railway.

Then she was able to keep a milk-maid, who did all her household work as well, and that is her you see sitting milking the red-and-white cow, a little beyond the sheep and great tree in the park, and who is called "Cherry-cheeked Patty."

The calf you see is not the one old Betty drove to market: that is now a cow and gives milk, and this one lying down is its little sister, and will also give milk in another year or two.

"I'm sure I often feel very sorry, and quite ashamed of myself, when I think how I used to grumble and growl like a dog with a sore throat, because the railway had cut off my bit of a croft," said Betty one day to her old neighbour. "How true that line is in the hymn-book which says something about the clouds that hang threatening over our heads, bringing down blessings when they pour with rain. Just so with the railway, Sally, isn't it? I dreaded it, and

talked against it, and wished it at the deuce, and farther; and now it pours out my milk into a large town twenty miles off, and is a blessing to all who can afford to buy it—and famous milk it is.”

“It was just so with me when my little Billy had a stiff neck,” said Sally: “I went on so about it, for he couldn’t move it the least, but had to go with his head all on one side, as if it had been half chopped off, and could never be made straight any more. But when I asked the doctor, as he was a-going by, to look at it, so that he mightn’t charge for a visit: ‘It’s the greatest blessing that could have happened him,’ says he. So it was; for you see, Betty, it was like you with the railway—and Billy’s never had a day’s illness since.”

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