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LITERATURE.

THE BRAVEST BATTLE.

The bravest battle that ever was fought /
Shall I tell where and when?
On the maps of the world you will find it not:
'Twas fought by mothers of men.

Nay, not with cannon, or battle shot,
With sword, or noble pen;
Nay, not with eloquent word, or thought,
From mouths of wonderful men.

But deep in a walled-up woman's heart—
Of woman that would not yield,
But bravely, silently bore her part—
Lo! there is that battlefield!

No marshaling troop, no bivouac song;
No banner to glean and wave!
But, oh! these battles, they last so long—
From babyhood to the grave!
—JOAQUIN MILLER.

A MUTUAL MISTAKE.

Sarah, said Mr. Lyman Cobb, coming in to breakfast from what he called his garden, with half a dozen radishes in his hand—Sarah, I've been talking across the fence to neighbor Kimberly, and he tells me that his henhouse was robbed last night.

Good gracious! said Mrs. Cobb, setting down the coffee pot and turning around with eager interest. Who are the thieves? and how did they get into the henhouse? and how many chickens are stolen?

I don't remember—three or four, or perhaps five or six, or more. I didn't notice particularly.

Just like a man! hearing of a henhouse being robbed, and not noticing how to many fowls were taken!

The matter to us, said Cobb, admiringly surveying the radishes, is rather how to prevent our fowls meeting the same fate. If the thieves could break open Kimberly's poultry house, which is kept locked, they will find no difficulty in getting into ours.

That is true; and my precious Cochins and the pair of Leghorns! What's to be done.

Shoot 'em, pa! bawled Master Tommy Cobb, in eager excitement. I would if I were you.

Cobb looked with parental pride upon his promising heir with the warlike spirit, but shook his head reprovingly.

No, no, Tommy; it wouldn't be right to take a man's life for the sake of a few chickens.

But they're robbers, and robbers ought to be shot, persisted Tommy, Oughtn't they ma?

Come to breakfast, Tommy, and don't talk of such dreadful things, replied his mother. And, Lyman, be sure you don't forget to bring home a padlock this evening for the henhouse. It ought to have been fixed long ago.

I will if I can remember it.
Remember it? True; you never do remember anything that you ought too

See here! I'll make a memorandum of it.

And Mrs. Cobb tied a close, hard knot in one corner of her husband's blue polka-dotted pocket handkerchief—her usual mode of keeping him in mind of any special domestic commission to be executed down town.

Then they sat down to enjoy beefsteak and onions, and the fresh, home raised radishes—so fresh, as Master Tommy exultingly observed, that they tasted of the ground out of which they had just been taken.

That day Cobb came home as usual to dinner, and when questioned by his wife, said he had bought the padlock on his way to his shop, but unfortunately forgot to bring it home.

However, he would do so in the evening, if he came home, which was rather doubtful. Judge Brooks wanted some improvements made in his house, a few miles in the country, and he had proposed to take him out in his buggy this evening to examine it, and bring him back in the morning. So, if he was not at home to supper, his wife need not expect him tonight.

As to the chicken thieves, it wasn't likely that they would make a second attempt in the neighborhood on the very night succeeding the last; so she need not be uneasy on that score.

And if anything should happen in his absence—why, there was the shot gun on the hook in the closet, and she knew how to fire it well enough to frighten the thieves and arouse the neighbors.

Mr. Cobb didn't make his appearance at tea, but sent a message by Joe Kimberly, who had seen him riding off in a buggy with Judge Brooks.

At about 10 o'clock, Mrs. Cobb, who was a strong-minded woman, commenced preparations for retiring.

Despite her husband's assurances, she had all day been haunted by a fear of losing the valuable fowls for which she only last week paid a high price.

And, according to her judgment, it was much more natural that the thieves should repeat their attempt on the night succeeding the first robbery, for the very reason that most people wouldn't expect them to do so.

Therefore, in thinking over the matter, she resolved to go out and secure the henhouse door with a piece of old telegraph wire which had been for some time lying in a corner of the yard—one of a miscellaneous collection of odds and ends belonging to master Tommy's private store.

That promising youth was already in bed and asleep; and his mother, throwing her husband's coat around her shoulders, went on her errand without disturbing him.

It was a dark night, and Mrs. Cobb, making her way cautiously to the henhouse, commenced fastening the wire in one of the door staples.

She had just done this to her satisfaction, when, happening to look around, she perceived a lark figure creeping stealthily along the garden fence toward where she stood.

It was just as she had foreseen. Here were the chicken thieves.

For an instant her heart failed her and her impulse was to flee to the house; but the next, at the thought of being basely robbed of her valuable Cochins, her spirit rose in indignation. She would save her fowls or perish!

So quickly arming herself with the stout stake which served as a prop to one of the roosts, the heroic woman encoined herself just within the door and their lay in wait for the thieves.

She had not long to wait. A man's figure approached; there was some fumbling with the wire attached to the staple, and the door, which Mrs. Cobb had closed after her, was softly opened, and a head thrust in.

Now was her time. With a tremendous thwack the stake descended on the intruding head; there was a half strangled cry of surprise and rage; and the next moment two figures were grappled together in fierce combat, striking, choking, gasping, scratching and finally rolling on the floor of the poultry house while all the fowls added to the tumult with a fearful cackling and screaming.

The thief was holding Mrs. Cobb down on the ground with one hand and with the other defending himself from her fingers, which were vigorously clawing his face and tearing out handfuls of hair.

Her first attack had somewhat dazed him, and she was just realizing this advantage and exulting in prospective victory when she discovered, to her dismay, that there was more than one antagonist in the field.

A loud report, as of a gun or pistol

was heard, and Mrs. Cobb felt a sudden sharp pain in her wrist, like the prick of a red hot needle.

At the same instant her unseen enemy uttered a howl, and as he loosened his hold of her the heroic woman struggled to her feet, dashed through the door way, and never paused till she reached the house, where sinking exhausted upon the nearest chair, she fainted dead away.

When Mrs. Cobb recovered consciousness she found the room full of neighbors, men and woman, and recognized her husband's voice, broken by dismal grunts and groanings.

'Yes, I was just in time. I found them already in the henhouse, and had a desperate tussle with them. I was just getting the advantage when one of them fired, and the rest ran off. There were three or four of the rascals at least.'

'A dozen of them!' said Mrs. Cobb, faintly. 'But, Lyman, I didn't know that you were there. You must have gotten there after I left.'

'You, Sarah? Why, you don't mean to say that you were mixed up in the fuss?'

I guess I was. One of the villains nearly killed me, but I got hold of a handkerchief around his neck and would have strangled him, only—only—hysterically—one of them shot me.

Here she held up her wrist, from which drops of blood were oozing.

It is not much, said Mr. Kimberly, examining it—only a graze of a bird-shot; the same sort that hit you, to Cobb, who was gingerly stroking down the calf of his leg.

But how did it all happen? said Mrs. Kimberly, curiously, while Master Tommy, who had just entered, pressed eagerly forward with wide-open mouth and eyes.

Why, you see, commenced Cobb we had started for the country when the buggy broke down, and I thought it best to walk to town. I stopped a Cousin Mulby's—ugh!—to supper. Go home little after 9. Thought I heard a noise at the poultry-house and crept up and put my head in at the door when—ugh!—one of the rascals knocked me down with a club. I grappled him, and had just got him down, and was about to secure him, when another shot me. I think that fellow in his desperation must have torn half the hair out of my head, added Cobb, slowly and tenderly pressing his hand over the red-hued locks remaining.

'I paid them back for it,' said his wife, exultantly. 'Why, when I ran in the house, I had a handkerchief and a handful of hair that I had torn off the wretch that was choking me.'

'And I brought off a coat that I stripped from the villain who was pulling my hair!' said Cobb, vindictively. 'We shall be able to identify them by these things.'

Here he held up a coat; and Mrs. Cobb, after a little search on the floor, exhibited a handful of red hair and a blue, polka-dotted handkerchief, with a knot tied in one corner of it.

Everybody gazed at those familiar tell-tale articles and then gazed at each other. Mr. Kimberly was the first to speak.

'I think, neighbors,' he said, gravely—'I think there's been something of a mutual mistake here. There have been no chicken thieves in reality but only an unfortunate meeting in the dark between our good friends here and—'

But Mr. Cobb indignantly interrupted: 'I don't see how you can say that Mr. Kimberly, when you yourself heard the shot fired, and have seen with your own eyes the wounds made. How do you account for that?'

Mr. Kimberly made no verbal reply, but turned and gently pushed forward Master Tommy Cobb, who, finding himself thus abandoned, as it were, at the bar of justice, instantly burst into a fearful howl.

'So it was you, Tommy, was it?' said Cobb, more in sorrow than in anger.

But Tommy saw a gleam in his mother's eyes, which warned him too surely of what awaited him in the near future.

'I followed her,' he pleaded, pointing with extended finger to his maternal parent; 'and I saw her knock down pa with the henhouse pole, and seen pa awalloping of her on the ground, and I hadn't shot, they would a-killed each other. But I didn't mean to hurt 'em; I jest did it for fun.'

Here the neighbors began hastily to depart, with rather curious expressions of countenance, and the family were left to their usual domestic privacy.

There were some mutual accusations and reproaches, ending in a plentiful shower of tears from Mrs. Cobb, and a

remorseful acknowledgement on the part of her husband that he alone was too blame. Then, Mrs. Cobb, having extorted this confession, dried her eyes, carefully dressed his and her own wounds, and whipped Tommy, who went to bed that night a sadder and wiser boy, though even in his dreams living over again the exquisite delight of his first shot with a loaded gun.

When the family had at last retired and the house was still, Mrs. Cobb's last waking words were:

'I would rather have lost every fowl that we have, and a hundred Cochins into the bargain, than that this ridiculous affair should have been exposed to the neighbors. We shall never hear the last of it.'

And so far they never have.

THE PODUNK SOCIETY MEETING.

Podunk people liked their minister. They were proud of his abilities. They did not desire to be mean. They wished to get the Gospel cheap. They would have been better suited if they could have had it 'without money and without price.' The brethren assembled, and chose Deacon Noah Higgins as Moderator. He was the most influential member. Somewhat narrow-minded and set in his way, he was sound at the core, and had great weight among the people. Deacon Joel made quite a lengthy speech. The times were hard; it was a purty close year; he didn't have eight hundred dollars to live on. Ministers' folks should be more economical. With writin' and boarders the parson must be laying up money. Deacon Joel was worth fifty thousand dollars, and not a chick or child in the world. He paid twenty dollars towards the salary. Uncle Daniel said if their minister wished to write for the papers, and his wife take boarders, he had no objection, but they ought to be relieved of paying so large a salary. He proposed it be reduced one hundred dollars. No one had the courage to propose this before, but now the bull was taken by the horns, and the meeting was well under way. One brother said the minister never visited him; he wanted a man who would stay all day and spend the night. Another remarked that he saw the minister playing lawn tennis with some of the young people. He was greatly grieved. Somebody else thought a clergyman should not wear blue flannel. So the word went about. The Society meeting is the safety-valve for chronic croakers and penurious members. Many would be ashamed of their remarks if they ever recalled them.

After they had expressed their minds quite freely, John Hicks got up and spoke as follows: 'My friends, you seem to be quite ready to part with our minister. Indeed, I should advise him to go where he will be better appreciated. He can command a large salary. He is an unusual preacher. He has a family of children to educate. You have not one honest thing against him. You wish to drive a sharp bargain and make a hundred dollars. Our young people all like him because he is one of them. I wonder he can afford even blue flannel with your penurious policy. If you reduce the salary you will lose your minister, and deserve to.' John Hicks was a young man, the superintendent of the mill. He paid seventy-five dollars on the subscription. The clear common sense of his remarks struck home. The meeting began to look at the other side of the question. They had never seriously thought of losing him. They had tried him a good deal. They would not see his like again if he left them. Deacon Higgins had said nothing through all the discussion. That he had kept up a powerful thinking was evident by the expression on his comely face. He never talked unless he had something to say.

'Brethren,' said the Deacon, 'I hold in my hand the resignation of the Rev. John Moorhouse. The gossip of the last few months has not failed to reach his ears. He is a sensitive and conscientious man. He desires to relieve the Church of the burden of raising eight hundred dollars a year. If I had not believed in the good sense of this Society, I should have read this resignation at the beginning of the meeting. We have obliged our pastor to steal hours from his sleep to earn money to support his family. His good wife has become a kitchen servant to educate her children. This church represents half a million dollars. We cannot afford to be so mean. Brethren, I move this resignation be not accepted, and that we raise one thousand dollars for our minister's salary, and that he be asked to be regularly installed.'

There was silence for a moment, silence

that could be felt. Some looked ashamed, a few angry, others pleased. But they were taking it in. Deacon Noah Higgins spoke with authority. He was a force, a godly man. He had said as he sat down, 'I will double my subscription, but it may be too late. There was a committee to hear him preach last Sabbath, and they were greatly pleased.' Then the people took it in. It is strange how precious a thing grows if someone else wants it. Podunk people knew what they had got, and they knew their duty. The resolution was passed, a committee appointed to wait on the minister, and the meeting adjourned.

Podunk church did not receive its just deserts, for the parson strayed; but the people had learned a needed lesson.

BLEEDING THE FARMER.—There is no other industrial pursuit than agriculture which is so burdened with alleged improvements for which patents have been secured. The farmer's soul is vexed with claims for royalties from an endless variety of people who demand money for devices for which patents have been secured unjustly. Fences, wells, churns, gates, harrows, clevises and a great variety of simple tools and devices which are used by farmers; and even methods of pruning, laying down trees and vines for winter protection and now an old method of making drains have been patented and the use of them is denied to the public. The worst of it is that the majority of these claimants are farmers themselves and do their best to tax their brother farmers without any adequate return being made and moreover it causes and encourages litigation and wastes hard earned money. This is a matter which needs reforming, and farmers should combine to insist upon a deliverance from this irritating and costly nuisance.

THE MECHANIC.—A young man began visiting a young lady recently, and was very well pleased with her. One evening it was quite late when he called, and the young lady inquired where he had been.

'I had to work to-night,' he said.
'What! do you work for a living? she inquired in astonishment.

'Certainly; I am a 'mechanic'!

replied the young man.

'I dislike the word 'mechanic'!

and she turned up her pretty nose.
That was the last time the young man visited the young lady. He is now a wealthy man, and has the nicest little wife in the city. The young lady who disliked a mechanic is now the wife of a miserable fool—a regular loafer—and the miserable girl is obliged to take in washing to support herself and children.

You dislike the name of mechanic, eh?—you, whose brothers are but well-dressed loafers. Any girl is to be pitied who is so silly as to think less of a man because he is a mechanic.

Very many people know the benefit of lemonade before breakfast, but know that it is more than doubled by taking another at night also. The way to get the better of the bilious system without blue pills or quinine is to take the juice of one, two or three lemons, as appetite craves, in as much ice water as makes it pleasant to drink, before going to bed. In the morning, on rising, at least a half hour before breakfast, take the juice of one lemon in a goblet of water, this will clear the system of bile with efficiency, without any of the weakening effects of calomel or congress water. People should not irritate the stomach by eating lemons clear; the powerful acid of the juice, which is always most corrosive, invariably produce inflammation after awhile, but properly diluted so that it does burn nor draw the throat it does its medical work without harm, and when the stomach is clear of food, has an abundant opportunity to work over the system thoroughly.

COULDN'T GET ENOUGH.—New York Times: "Mr. Featherly," said young Bobby, "who was Oliver Twist?"

"Oliver Twist," Oliver Twist," explained Featherly, indulgently, "was a character created by Dickens. You must read the book when you get a little older and then you'll know all about him."

"Was he anything like you?"

"Like me? Oh, no."

"How's that, Clara?" inquired Bobby, turning to his sister. "Didn't you tell Mr. Featherly in the hall last night that he was like Oliver Twist, always wanting more?"