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LITERATURE.

ROBIN'S RETURN.

Robin on the tilting bough,
Red-breast rover, tell me how
You the weary time have passed
Since we saw and heard you last.

"In a green and pleasant land,
By a summer sea-breeze fanned,
Orange-trees with fruit are bent;
There the weary time I've spent."

Robin rover, there, no doubt,
Your best music you poured out;
Piping to a stranger's ear,
You forgot your lovers here.

"Little lady, on my word,
You do wrong a true-heart bird!
Not one ditty would I sing,
'Mong the leaves or on the wing,
In the sun or in the rain;
Stranger's ear would list in vain.
It I ever tried a note,
Something rose within my throat.

"T was because my heart was true
To the North and spring-time new;

My mind's eye a nest could see
In yon old forked apple-tree!"

Edith M. Thomas, in St. Nicholas for June.

THE SPINSTER'S BOY.

Miss Abigail Burr was a little brown old maid, who lived in a little brown old house with her cat, Debby, and her woman of all work, Prudence, sharp of tongue, long of visage, brown-r and older than the mistress herself. There was nothing of grace, nor beauty, nor sweetness about Miss Abigail's life; everything was dry, and hard, and husky. Indeed, some people were so uncharitable as to say that her heart was like a very much dried-up kernel in a nut-shell, and would rattle if she was shaken hard enough. But I never hardly believed that. I always said there was a soft spot in Miss Abigail's heart, to be found when the time came to find it.

One spring twilight a boy opened Miss Abigail's garden gate, and walked up the path between the rows of straggling lilacs. He was not a boy who lived about Capertown, or he would not have ventured, I am sure, for Prudence's sake, besides having nothing to venture for. He was unkempt, starved looking specimen of humanity. His coat was a world too large and patched at the elbows, and his trousers were a world too short and patched at the knees. His hat was minus of brim, and through a hole in the crown nodded a little tuft of hair which had once been brown, but was wofully faded. He went straight up to Miss Abigail's porch steps. Miss Abigail was sitting on the porch in her high-backed rocking chair so intent on binding off her stocking heel that she heard neither the click of the gate latch nor the footstep on the hard-trodden path, nor she did not look up until the boy's figure interposed itself between her work and the fading sunset light.

He doffed his tattered hat-crown.
If you please, ma'am will you—may I have something to eat?

It was not at all a tramp's manner of asking, there was a manliness in the voice which Miss Abigail could not help but notice. Perhaps that was the reason she looked at the boy so sharply before she answered. In that moment, Prudence, tall and angular, stood in the door, with a shawl thrown over her head and her right hand swathed in cotton.

"I'll have to get Jonas Barrow's man to do the milkin', she said. I can't, I've burned my hand that bad."

The boy looked up quickly. "Can't I—could I milk for you?"

As I have intended to say, Prudence did not like boys, and that she sometimes expressed her dislike in a very forcible manner many of the village urchins could testify. Now she surveyed this boy standing by the porch steps, from his brown feet to his brown head not forgetting the little faded tuft, in dumb astonishment.

You may let him try, Prudence, said Miss Abigail, thinking somewhat dubiously of the nervous, mouse-colored Alderney out in the yard.

I chored on a farm all last summer, explained the boy, eagerly, glancing from mistress to maid. I want some supper and I'll be glad to do something to pay for it.

Well you ken try it, said Prudence, after a momentary deliberation. It's better'n begging a favor, anyhow.

She led the way to the kitchen, and took a shining tin pail from the dresser. Here's the milk pail, she said to the boy, who stood waiting, an' the cow is in the yard yonder. Pay-day come when the work is done.

And Prudence smiled grimly as she went about setting out a lunch of bread and butter and cold meat. She felt morally certain that the flighty Alderney heifer, used only to woman kind, would be much more likely to spread a pair of bovine wings and fly away than allow herself to be milked by a boy.

"He can't do it," she said to Miss Abigail, who presently brought her knitting work to the kitchen. "The heifer'd send him sky-high."

But he could and he did. Soon he appeared in the doorway, his pail brimming with snowy foam.

"Well, I never," ejaculated Prudence. "You didn't think I could?" said the boy, smiling brightly.

"No, I didn't," admitted Prudence; and straightway, in her astonishment she added to his fare a segment of rhubarb pie.

"Wasn't there a bit of cheese left from tea?" asked Miss Abigail.

Prudence thought there was, and while she was fetching it from the cellar the boy gave himself a healthy scrubbing from the pump, coming in from his ablutions fresh and ruddy as a rose. He was very hungry, there was no doubt of that. He looked at Miss Abigail with a deprecating smile as Prudence carried off the bread-plate for third replenishing.

"I'm pretty hungry," said he. "This is the first bite I've had since morning, and it does taste so good to me."

To be sure it did. Miss Abigail thought of a little brother who died years and years before, ere his tender feet began to feel the pricks in life's path. How strange that the sight of this little vagrant, satisfying his craving at her kitchen table, should bring to her remembrance the child who had so early put off the mortal for the immortal.

Presently when the boy had finished his repast, he laid his knife and fork across his plate with methodical precision which pleased Miss Abigail to see, and he glanced from Prudence, standing near with her arms akimbo, to Miss Abigail.

Thank you for my supper, said he. Maybe I'd best be getting along. You don't want a boy to work, do you?"

"A boy—to work!" echoed Prudence. Did I ever!

No, we don't, said Miss Abigail, shortly. And then—it was strange enough that she could not help thinking again of that little life which had blighted in the bud so long before.

How far are you going? she asked.

I don't know, ma'am.

And where did you come from? inquired Miss Abigail.

Trescott, ma'am. My mother died there three months ago. There was a pathetic quiver in his voice.

And then, with little questioning, he told his simple story. His name was Barry Olmstead, and he was twelve years old. He lived in Trescott a long time—he and his mother; they were very poor, but they had kept a little home together. His mother had taken in sewing, and he had worked for the neighboring farmers summers, and gone to school winters. And he had been

happy, for all they were so poor, until—mother died.

"Then I stopped with Deacon Staples a spell; he said he wanted to try me. But they were going to bind me out to him, and so I ran away."

None to blame, nuther, interposed Prudence, with a great deal of emphasis. I've seen old Staples down to Trescott. He's that mean he'd skin a mouse for the hide and taller.

I've been trying along for a chance to work, continued the boy, smiling faintly. He was very near to tears now, but he held them back sturdily. But there don't anybody seem to want me.

Miss Abigail was moved more than she would have cared to own by this recital; even to her, who had lived for herself so long, there was something indescribable pitiful in the thought that this little wanderer was battling alone with the world, buffeted by fortune, drifting here and there as chance might dictate. It had grown dark now—the lamps had long since been lighted, and there were mutterings of distant thunder in the air.

It's going to rain, said Miss Abigail. You needn't go to-night; you may sleep in the stable loft.

Barry thanked her.

The storm broke with great violence and while Miss Abigail listened to the sharp peals of thunder and the pouring of the rain against the windows, she thought of the lonely little wayfarer in the stable loft with a new, strange throb of pity.

Morning came, merry with bird songs, and glistening with myriads of rain drops, Prudence was up betimes, but, early as it was, she heard the sound of an axe in the woodshed; and when she opened the door Barry smiled at her from his post by the chopping block.

I don't think I paid enough for my supper—I eat such a lot, he said, so I split some kindlings; and I'll milk for you this morning if you want me to.

Prudence brought the milk-pail without a word. But when she had prepared Miss Abigail's morning meal, she made ready a good substantial breakfast for Barry. When he had eaten it he took up his hat crown.

Go out the way you come in, said Prudence, 're else you'll bring bad luck.

Barry gave a little incredulous laugh, but he went out to the porch. Miss Abigail was there, taking deep breaths of the fresh air, and she bade him a kind 'good-morning' as he went off the step and down the path between the lilacs, exuberant in growth but meagre in bloom.

I wonder why my lilacs do not flower more freely? said Miss Abigail to Prudence, who followed him to the door. I dunno, answered Prudence.

Barry heard and turned.

I guess it's because you leave the old blossoms on, he said hesitatingly. Mother used to say I must pick the blossoms off one year if I wanted any the next.

Then he went out of the gate, closing it carefully behind him, and along the moist highway.

That's a very uncommon boy, said Miss Abigail, looking after him with serious eyes.

Yes, assented Prudence, he's clever 'nough little chap—for a boy.

To think of his knowing about the lilacs, continued Miss Abigail, meditatively. I must cut off all the flowers this spring.

And he got a mess of milk from the heifer as I could have done myself with a well hand, Prudence went on.

Yes, he would have been handy about milking and getting wood for you, said Miss Abigail.

And bringing the letters from the post-office, proceeded Prudence. It's a good piece over to the village in muddy walking.

So it is, said Miss Abigail.

She gazed reflectively along the road which wound serpentine to the little hamlet a mile away. Barry was climbing the hill a mere pitiful, lonely speck in the distance, as he was a mere insignificant atom in the great body of humanity. Miss Abigail's eyes filled.

W might have kept him, she said.

Tain't too latey it! put in Prudence.

The two women looked into each others eyes.

For answer Prudence strode to the road, and sent a long, quivering cry after Barry.

Boy!

But the little figure they were watching plodded steadily on.

Gimme the old tin horn 'outen the kitchen, Miss Abigail! called Prudence, excitedly.

Miss Abigail, staid spinster that she was, without a thought of the ludicrousness of the proceeding, ran to the

kitchen, snatched the horn from the nail, and ran out with it to Prudence. And Prudence put it to her lips and blew a blast so long and loud that it startled the birds into silence and set the echoes ringing from hillside to hillside.

He c'n hear that if he c'n hear anything, she muttered.

He did. He stopped. Prudence flourished the horn in frantic excitement. There was a moment of suspense, and then Prudence turned to Miss Abigail, standing by the gate,—

He's a coming back.

When Barry, breathless with the haste he had made, reached the cottage, Miss Abigail was waiting on the porch.

We made up our minds to keep you, she said, so long as you are obedient and don't give too much trouble.

Oh, thank you, ma'am! cried Barry. Indeed, I'll try to please you.

I am sure he has succeeded, for the lilacs have been in bloom three times since that morning, and he is with Miss Abigail yet, growing tall and strong and manly as the years go by. He tills the bit of a farm, which had lain so long unimproved, and in winter attends the village school, where he is in excellent repute. He is, withal, so faithful and hopeful and kind, that Prudence is fain to apothegmatize the horn after this fashion:—

Harnsome is as harnsome does; an' you're deservin' of a bed o' velvet, old horn, for the good deed you done that day.

THE GRASS WIDOW'S MEMORY.

She looked like a well-preserved grass widow, says the San Francisco Wasp, as she fluttered up to the counter of the license clerk at the City hall and said sweetly:—

I should like to know the name of the man I married in '75; wasn't it Skinderly?

The—er—what? asked the clerk.

The gentleman who was my husband the winter of '75 and '76. I know it was Skin—something. He was my second husband only, and I've got a horrid bad memory. Just look in the S's, please.

Married since then, eh? said the clerk, skimming his ledger.

Why, of course—three times. I was originally from Chicago, you know. My second husband was a tall blonde, I think. Yes, I'm quite positive.

First name? asked the clerk.

That's just it. I don't think I ever heard his first name. I always called Pet.

I met him at Santa Cruz and we were married the same week. He was a nice sort of a fellow, and weren't divorced until late in the spring, I believe. I see by this paper that a man named Skinderly—Azariah Skinder—died in the East the other day, leaving considerable property. Now, do tell me that was the name of my second husband—that's a nice man.

Here it is, said the clerk. No, it was Skinderson, George B. Sorry.

Dear, dear, what a pity.

Married now, ma'am!

Not just now. Divorced last month. You see my last hubby couldn't play cribbage and I fairly dote on it. Play cribbage?

Very fond of it, said the clerk.

How nice! Here's my card. Drop in this evening and we'll have a nice sociable time, and with a pensive smile the fascinating misfit floated out.

THE WISDOM OF ECONOMY.—Look most to your spending. No matter what comes in, if more goes out you will be poor always. The art is not in making money, but in keeping it; little expenses, like mice in a barn, when they are many, make great waste. Hair by hair the head get bald; straw by straw the thatch goes of the cottage; drop by drop by drop the rain comes into the chamber. A barrel is soon empty if the tap leaks but a drop a minute.

When you mean to save begin with your mouth; there are many thieves down the red lane. The ale-jug is a great waste. In all other things keep within compass. In clothes choose suitable and lasting stuff, and not tawdry fineries. To be warm is the main thing never mind the look. Never stretch your leg further than the blanket will reach, or further than the cold. A fool may make money, but it needs a wise man to spend it. Remember it is easier to build two chimneys than to keep one going. If you give all to back and board, there is nothing left for the saving bank. Fare hard, and work while you are young, and you will have chance of rest when you are old.

BE ADVISED, GIRLS.—It is perfectly natural that you should be fond of Jack or Harry, but don't display that fondness too openly. The old fashioned process of courting is still proper; but it should be confined to the parlor, the sitting-room, the ice-cream saloon or the moonlight promenade. And don't make all the opportunities yourself; let the young man do a little of the planning. The fruit that hangs high is always coveted most. If you cannot hold a lover without constantly throwing yourself in his way, let him go. There are plenty of good fellows—honest fellows upright fellows—to be had if you only manage them properly. The low light in the parlor, the single chair, the good-bye at the door, are still as effective as they were one hundred years ago.

Don't try to hold the young men against their will. The more you do that the more they won't be held. If they appear to grow cold you should appear to grow colder. If they appear to grow careless of you, you should appear to grow more careless of them. When they relent you should relent, when they soften you should soften, when then ask forgiveness you should forgive, when they—but why pursue it? Tact will teach you how to achieve the desired end without in the least lowering your womanhood.

HAS A MARRIED MAN ANY RIGHTS.—I say! said a friend, the other day, you are an old hand at it. I only got married the other day, and don't understand much about the business. But has a married man any rights when he once assumes the hymeneal responsibilities.

Rights? Yes, lots! He's a right to pay all the bills, to—

Stop! I mean this. Let me give you an instance. Every box and drawer and portmanteau, and in fact every available receptacle of every description is stuffed full of my wife's property, and when I want to put away a few cuffs and collars—

Hold hard! I know what you mean. Listen, young man; if your bedroom were two hundred yards long, and lined from the floor to the ceiling with drawers and you wanted a place to stow away a couple of shirts, you couldn't find a nook that wasn't filled with hairpins, frizzes pads, scent-bottles, old gloves, powder-puffs and things. So just accept the inevitable. Wrap your personal property in an old newspaper or some brown paper, and hide the parcel under the bed.

He smiled loudly and ironically, and passed on, a wiser if not a better man.

PACK THE LUNGS WITH AIR.—Deep breathing and holding of the breath is an item of importance. Persons of vitality find an uninterrupted succession of deep and rapid respiration, so distressing that they are discouraged from persevering in the exercise. Let such persons take into the lungs as much air as they can at a breath and hold it as long as they can, and they will find a grateful sense of relief in the whole abdominal region. Practice will increase ability to hold the breath and the capacity of the lungs! After a time the art may be learned of packing the lungs. This is done by taking and holding the long breath and then forcing more air down the trachea by swallows of air. The operation may be described by that of a fish's mouth in the water. To those who have never learned it will be surprising to what extent the lungs may be packed. Caution at first is needful, but later practice will warrant large use of the treatment. The whole thoracic and abdominal cavities will receive immediate benefit and continuance and temperance in eating, good air and right exercise, will bring welcome improvement.

If the fences around the mowing fields were not put in order in April they should no longer be neglected, and the stones, sticks other obstructions to the mowing machine should be removed before the grass get high enough to cover them. A few hours spent in protecting mowing field from being injured by stray cattle saves much loss as well as some hard feeling toward a neighbor who has permitted his cattle to stray beyond their proper enclosure. When barn manure has been spread on a mowing field during the winter, particular attention should be given to the breaking up of all lumps that the frost has not pulverized. This work should have been done in April, but if it was neglected it should be done at the latest, before the first week in May.