

THE CALF PATH.

One day through the primeval wood
A calf walked home, as good calves should;
But made a trail all bent askew,
A crooked trail, as all calves do.

Since then two hundred years have fled,
And, I infer, the calf is dead.

But still he left behind his trail,
And thereby hangs my moral tale.

The trail was taken up next day
By a lone dog that passed that way;
And then a wise bell-weather sheep
Pursued the trail o'er vale and steep.

And drew the flock behind him, too,
As good bell-weather always do.

And from that day, o'er hill and glade,
Through those that old woods a path was made,
And many men wound in and out,
And dodged and turned and bent about,

And uttered words of righteous wrath
Because 'twas such a broken path;

But still they follow—do not laugh—
The first migrations of that calf.

And through this winding woodway stalked,
Because he wobbled when he walked.

This forest path became a lane,
That bent and turned and turned again;

This crooked lane became a road,
Where many a poor horse, with his load,
Toiled on beneath the burning sun,
And travelled some three miles in one.

And thus a century and a half
They trod the footsteps of that calf.

The years passed on in swiftness fleet,
The road became a village street.

And this, before men were aware,
A city's crowded thoroughfare,
And soon the central street was this
Of a renowned metropolis.

And men two centuries and a half
Trod in the footsteps of that calf.

Each day a hundred thousand rout
Followed the zigzag calf about;

And o'er his crooked journey went
The traffic of a continent.

A hundred thousand men were led
By one calf near three centuries dead.

They followed still his crooked way,
And lost one hundred years a day;

For thus such reverence is lent
To well-established precedent.

A moral lesson this might teach,
Were I ordained and called to preach.

For men are prone to go it blind
Along the calf-paths of the mind,
And work away from sun to sun,
To do what other men have done.

They follow in the beaten track,
And out and in, and forth and back,
And still their devious course pursue,
To keep the path that others do.

But how the wise old wood-gods laugh
Who saw the first primeval calf!

Ah! many things this tale might teach—
But I am not ordained to preach.

—Sam W. Foss.

NIGHT WATCHMAN'S STORY.

"What gave me a start in business?" said Jerry Jarman. "Well, I'll tell you.

"In 1883, I was a night watchman. About 2 o'clock one cold morning in March the street had become deserted, and I was able to sit down beneath the tarpaulin shelter and enjoy a pipe and the warmth from the coke fire that glowed in the iron basket which stood against the open side of the hut.

"My occupation called me into various parts of London and the suburbs where sewer age or other road-works were in progress. I was then in Brick Lane, Spitalfields—a locality none of the sweetest or quietest—and my job was no easy one, for the inhabitants were prone to remove, with an eye to firewood any loose timber lying about, and the rougher portion of the community were rather too partial to playing with bricks, which they mirthfully threw at one another's heads, much to my wrath and fear.

"I had just settled down for a quiet hour or two, when a man made his appearance in front of the shelter. He was, perhaps, thirty years old, very thin and pale, with unkempt hair and beard, and shivering in insufficient clothing—what little he had being ragged and old. His teeth were literally chattering with the cold, and he had a frightful hollow, hacking cough, as he asked me, in a lost, forsaken, sort of way:

"Will you let me have a warm?"

"It was against the contractor's rules to permit anyone in the hut, and if the police found such an outcast there they would most likely run him in, but I have a heart, and I could not but take pity on the poor shivering fellow before me.

"Well, it's against the rules, but you do seem cold, old chap, so I suppose I must let you come in."

"Thank you," said the man, coming inside. "Thank you. I am, indeed, very cold."

"He sat down on the rough plank by my side, holding out his emaciated hands toward the fire, and after a little while he evidently felt the benefit of the warmth and shelter.

"Seeing this with satisfaction, I set about heating my can of tea over the fire. I then took some cheese and bread and butter from my basket, and was about to start on my meal, when I caught sight of the poor fellow's eyes looking longingly at the food.

"Are you hungry?" I asked.

"I've had nothing for near upon four-and-twenty hours," was the reply.

"So I divided my meal with the stranger.

"After the repast, the man began nodding and fell asleep. I went out, looked around the works and saw that the lamps were all right, and returned and settled down again, and my guest did not wake up till the rattle and rumble of the traffic for Spitalfields Market got very noisy about 5 o'clock.

"The poor chap shook himself together and thanked me for my kindness, and was evidently making off, but I had been watching him while he was asleep, and had somehow begun to take an interest in him. There was a remnant of better days about the wan,

diseased-looking face, which showed that he was not of the ordinary tramp class. So I restrained him from going.

"Where are you off to?" I asked him.

The man looked at me as if in wonderment at my question.

"To the streets," he replied simply.

"I put a few more questions to him, showing him I wished to be friendly, and got him to tell me his story.

"Shortly it was that he had been a clerk in a merchant's office. His young wife died in childbirth, and his own health had given way so that he had lost his situation, and had been unable to obtain other employment. He had no relatives or friends, and had gone from bad to worse, till he had become an outcast of the streets; but, as he woefully put it, he had not long to live, so it didn't matter. 'I'm in about the last stage of consumption now,' he said, 'and shall soon be out of my misery.'

"I was a bachelor then, living alone, and I quickly determined to offer the poor chap a shelter for a day or two at all events, and as soon as the workmen arrived and I was off duty, my strange companion started off with me to my lodgings.

"For over six weeks I housed and fed George Rankin, for that was my guest's name.

"Bit by bit he told me his history and struggles, but it is not necessary for me to mention them, except that his father had been a miser; a miser in a small way no doubt, but a miser nevertheless. He had turned George out of doors soon after his mother's death—she was practically starved to death, George said. The lad was then only 14 years old, and he had never seen his father since.

"I got a neighboring dispensary doctor to see my friend. He gave me some physic to relieve his cough, but declared that it was quite hopeless to attempt to save him, and in the seventh week poor George Rankin died.

"The day previous to his death he gave me a paper which he took from the lining of his coat, where it had been sewn up.

"You have been a good friend to me," he said. "About the only friend I ever had, and I can't repay you for your kindness except by giving you this. I don't know whether it will be any good to you or not. I had a mind to destroy it, but I thought I had better not. It is a letter from my father which he wrote shortly before he died. Although he never did his duty by me, he evidently kept an eye on me, and knew my whereabouts to some extent.

"Read it out loud to me," George added, 'so that I know you can make it out.'

"I took the letter and read:

"George—I am not likely to live many days, and I am thinking about my money. I can't take it with me. I would if I could. I daresay you have no love for me, and I would not let you have it, but it is a pity anybody else should get it. You think I have done more for you than my father did for me. I gave you an education—that is more than I got. I do not wish to see you, but after I am dead you will receive this letter. I have arranged to have it posted to you. You will find my money hid in the top garret at 27 Yorkham street, Old Kent road, where I shall die. I will not tell you where it is hid. It will be a little exercise of your patience to find it. You were always an impatient young wretch, and I would not let you know where it is at all, but I would rather you had it than anybody else.

YOUR FATHER.

"The letter was written in very faint ink, in a crabbed, illiterate handwriting, but I made it out fairly well.

"I got that letter," said George, 'in October last, and went to the address he gave me. I managed to get into the garret where he had lived, and having rented it for a fortnight, searched everywhere I could think of. I had the floor boards up, and looked and felt up the chimney and tried every conceivable place, but I could find no trace of any money or anything else, and as I had no means to pay the rent, I had to give it up. I have not told a soul about it, as I meant to try again some day, but I shall never have another chance now, so if you care to start on a wild goose chase, you can, and anything you may find you are welcome to.'

"After I had buried George Rankin I turned my attention to the hidden money. I am not, I hope and believe, a covetous fellow, but I thought that if I could find it, I might as well have it, and as I had been in a carpenter's shop for a year or two when a boy, I knew a little of building, and could handle the tools fairly well. I therefore started off to the Old Kent Road.

"Yorkham street is in a very poor neighborhood, the houses being let out in tenements of one and two rooms each. I found No. 27, and arranged to rent the attic at half a crown a week.

"On the Monday I moved a bed, a table and a few chairs to my new abode, leaving the rest of my belongings at my old lodgings, and I set to work to try and find the miser's hoard.

"Day after day I persevered, trying every bit of the room's subbase, but like poor George Rankin, I could find nothing. I had the boards up one at a time, sounded the walls, and went half way up the chimney, but all to no purpose, and I had quite made up my mind that the old miser had played a hoax on his son, when I determined, as a last resource, to consult a detective sergeant at the East End who was a friend of mine.

"I knew the sergeant could be trusted, and I saw him and told him all.

"Sergeant Green listened patiently to my tale and carefully read the letter which George had received from his father.

"You have tried the place all over and found nothing?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, 'I have, and if you can help me, and we find the money, you can have whatever share you like to name.'

"Well," said Green, 'there may be something in it or there may be nothing—but I am inclined to think there is something. If we find the money it may be much or little. Suppose we say that you shall give me a third, but that it shall be no more than £20. I did not, at the moment catch his meaning, and I told him so.

"Why, what I mean is," said he, 'suppose we find £30, I am to have £10. If we find £60 I am to have £20, but that's the limit. If we find £600 I am only to have £20.'

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"Right you are," I cried. "You are very fair, and I agree."

"We then went to my attic and recommenced operations.

Green questioned me closely as to where I had searched.

"Well, I think it must be either in the window, the door or the ceiling," he said at last. "You have not had the window out?"

"No," I replied, 'I haven't.'

"We got the sashes out and opened the box of the casement frame, but it was quite empty, and it took us some hours to re-instate the window.

"Green then carefully tapped the stiles and framework of the door and tried them with a gimlet, but without effect.

"The ceiling was now the only chance. It was plastered all over except the roof joists, which projected below the plaster; and the whole of the ceiling, like the walls, was covered with a thick coating of white-wash.

"Green took the gimlet again, and kept boring holes every few inches in the sides of the joists one by one. He had arrived at the last joist next the window, and I was getting quite hopeless, when the gimlet met some obstruction. He quickly removed it and tried again, an inch or two farther off. The gimlet struck again, and again; and again.

"It's here, I believe," cried Green.

"I had been looking on patiently as I could, for I thought it was impossible for any money to be concealed in the joists, but I gave a little 'Hurrah!' and started scraping the whitewash off the bottom of the joist. Only the solid wood presented itself.

"Meanwhile Green had continued his borings and had marked off a piece of joist about four feet long as containing something that prevented the gimlet from entering more than half an inch into the wood. With a quarter-inch gouge he then cautiously made a small hole, and lighting a match, he said: 'I can see some paper.'

"We then scraped the sides of the joist, and found that on the side opposite to that which Green had been boring, a piece of wood had been let in and screwed up like a cover or lid. We quickly had the screws out, and, prying out the movable piece of wood, we disclosed a hollow channel, evidently cut with great labor, with a penknife in the joist. It was four feet, six inches long, and just large enough to hold a sovereign on edge.

"This channel was filled with a row of rouleaux, containing £20 each. There were thirty-six rolls, making £720, and the papers they were wrapped in proved to be bank notes. Ten pound notes were around twenty of the rolls and five pound notes around the remaining sixteen, making £280 more. In all there was exactly £1,000.

"Poor George!" I cried, 'what a pity he did not find it. It might have saved his life.'

"We replaced the side of the joist and, with the money in my pocket, we adjourned to Green's home and I had a jolly evening with him and his wife.

"The sergeant wanted only to take £20, as he had agreed, but I insisted on his having £100, and he and his wife saw I was so upset when they refused, that they ultimately gave way, and I went home with a light heart and a heavy pocket containing £900.

"Sergeant Green always declares it was the best day's work he ever had or is likely to have. He and I are great friends now, and all the youngsters call me Uncle Jarman when I go to spend an evening there.

"It gave me my start in business. I threw up my job of night watchman and set up as a green grocer and fruiterer, and I have now, as you know, several of the best ready-money businesses in that line in London."

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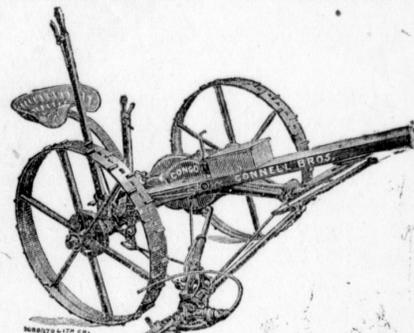
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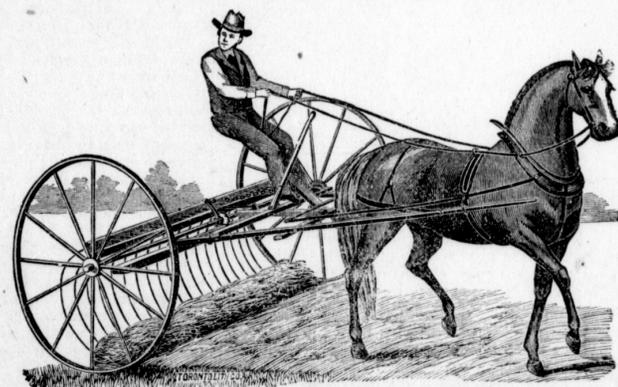
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