

Sunday Reading

NIP'S PRAYER.

Nip lay on her back on the piazza floor watching the flight of the grosbeaks—a wavering line of silver across the blue sky. 'The overflow is a comin'; so many white birds is a sure sign; Granny Jane said so,' she chanted.

She could hear the hoarse moan of the river, its turbid waters swollen out of their deep banks.

'The overflow is comin',' she went on in her sing-song. 'The river is most brimful. The swamp land is all flooded, and the back water is creepin' up, creepin' up over the fields. The deer and snakes is swimmin' out to the front. The grass is all covered; what will the poor rabbits do? The cotton will be all drowned out and won't Popsy be hoppin' mad!'

Popsy, the sole parent of the sallows large eyed child, sat at the other end of the piazza, his chair tipped back, his feet on the rickety balustrade, his pipe in his mouth. As he smoked, he gloomily surveyed the dark torrent before him, on whose swirling current were borne trees, timbers, fences and other debris of the freshet. Presently he got up and went down the walk, lined with jimson weeds, to the river's edge and with a stick measured the depth of the bank that yet remained above the water. It was less than two feet.

'The water rose mor'n two foot since yistiddy mornin',' he told the child who followed him. 'By to-morrow it'll be out of the banks, and all over the front lands as it is over the back.'

'Will it carry off the house, papsy?' asked the child.

'No I reckon not; the old trap looks safe enough on that knoll and perched on them posts,' he answered, indicating the stout cedar pillars on which the house was built. 'But the old stable'll catch it I'm thinking,' he went on, walking down toward the rickety structure at the foot of the elevation, at the window of which appeared the gray, shaggy head of a venerable pony.

'Lucky I sent the stock to the hills, all but Sutter. And a blind old pony don't count for much.'

But he was Nip's pony, and mamsy and Tuck had loved him.

'Please, papsy, put him in the yard,' pleaded the child.

'I will if things look worse; I reckon the stable'll stand, though. It's the back water from the bayou that's workin' the damage. The river mayn't rise no higher, ef it don't rain no mor.' But all the cotton is under water, and it was the best stand I've had in ten years, too; jest my luck! Allers some misfortin comes when—'

A sound like thunder cut short his lamentations. They both looked in the direction whence it came.

'It's Bayou Winsey's banks cavin' in,' said 'Colonel' Weir. 'The old church'll go next, with them fools of psalm singin' niggers in it likely, along with that old scalawag that preaches tar um. There is a big crack in the ground behind the church—clear 'cross the graveyard. I saw it ter-day.'

'Was it clear to mamsy's and Tuck's grave's?' questioned Nip, anxiously.

'I didn't notice pertickler,' answered her father, evading her eyes.

He relighted his pipe and sauntered to the house, calling to Nip that she had better come in, as it looked like rain. But Nip was running rapidly through the cotton field, a broad strip of which was still unsubmerged, in the direction of the old church and burial ground, where the overflow and the caving banks threatened the destruction of her 'holy ground'—the graves of her mother and twin brothers Tuck.

Nip and Tuck the twins had been called by their father, who began it by declaring one day that it was nip and tuck which grew the faster and prettier. The phrase attached itself to them as names. No others were given them. But for their father's opposition the mother would have called them for her own parents in far off Virginia, whom she still loved, although they had cast her off when she, a romantic school girl, had married a man far beneath her socially; his father having been an overseer on her father's plantation in slavery days. The veil of illusion had fallen from the young girl's eyes before she had long been domiciled with her uncongenial husband on his lonely cotton farm.

When her babies came, she clasped them to her throbbing pulses, and felt that God had sent her compensation; a love to fill her lonely life and heal the dull, aching heart. So far as her failing health, undermined by malaria, permitted, she devoted herself to her children, and in turn she

was their idol and oracle. But one hot, rainy summer, when vegetation rioted and human life drooped and failed, the pale mother fell a victim to swamp fever, and was buried in the graveyard behind the old church standing like a stranded vessel among the weeds and cotton. There were no trees about it, no flowers such as the poor young wife loved.

Red river dirt is a sight too vallerble to be wasted on such furbelows,' her husband said.

Two days after his mother was buried, Tuck was laid beside her; and Nip was left alone.

Never was a child more forlorn and neglected than Nip. If it had been the boy who survived, his father would have taken him to the 'store,' a little rough board building near the house, whence he dispensed drinks and provisions to the negro hands. But a girl! 'Colonel' Weir confessed he did not know what to do with a girl. And so Nip was left to her own devices, with only such care as Granny Jane, the rheumatic old negress who superintended the menage, could give her in the intervals between the cooking of bacon, corn pone and sweet potatoes that formed the staple meal in the Weir household.

Nip lay in the weeds and looked up at the clouds, and mumbled dreams that came to her; founded on the stories her mother had told her of her own girl life and those she had spelled out in a few old picture books. Her recreations were riding the pony, Sutter, to the swamp to drive up cows; following the half wild turkey hen 'Sadie' to find her ingeniously hidden nest, and nursing her pets, a chicken whose broken leg she had splintered, a rabbit she had rescued from the dogs and a screech-owl that had been wounded by a pistol ball shot by her father one night when it was uttering its 'warning of death' cry from the eaves of the store.

But the graves of her dead were the lonely child's dearest haunt. Here she brought her cherished possessions—shells, the little brown pitcher with a dog for its handle, a china cup and a porcelain doll's head she had found in the debris from the river; the covers of the Bible out of which her father had torn the leaves in a fit of drunken rage against his wife because she read it so often.

On each grave she planted a yellow jessamine from the swamp. The vines had covered the mounds, and reaching up, clasped the wooden board that marked the graves, hiding their ugliness. A sharp pang rent the child's heart when she saw the crevice in the ground her father had spoken of. Yes, it took in the graves. They were close behind the church; and the crack, coming from the edge of the bayou's bank, ran just behind the smaller mound. When the ground caved in, the church and the grave would go. The church had been built in the angle made by Bayou Winsey and Red River; too close to the river from the first, considering the crumbling nature of the alluvial soil, whole acres of which gave way sometimes and slid into the river; but the rich soil was grudged for any other purpose than to grow the precious staple.

Nip flung herself upon her mother's grave, crushing the odoriferous blooms of yellow jessamine, and sobbed as though her heart would break. It was some time before she was conscious that a meeting was going on in the church.

The plantation negroes, idle because of the overflow, had met to pray that no more rain should fall, that the waters might recede. 'For thou holdest the waters in thy hand, O Lord, and we know it thou takest our homes from us here, that we have a home not made with hands in heaven; a mansion in the skies, where we will be with our dear ones who've gone before.'

Nip recognized the impassioned tones as those of 'Brother Taylor,' the white preacher who taught the negro school. The words repeated themselves in her brain, meaninglessly at first, but 'a mansion in the skies, with the dear ones gone before,' grew into a consciousness that they were especially intended for her.

'O, dear Mr. God, please, sir, take me to your mansion in the skies, where Tuck and mamsy is. I'm so lonesome. Nobody

wants me. Please, mamsy, beg God to let me come to you.'

The slender body shook with the intensity of the prayer. It did, indeed, seem as though nobody wanted her. She lay there on the damp vines until the wild, plaintive voices of the negroes singing the doxology had ceased; until the dull daylight crept into darkness and the rain began to fall. She rose at last, hardly conscious that her limbs ached beneath her calico skirts. It gave her no surprise to find the house in darkness when she reached home; so frequently was she absent from the regular meals, that now her father had gone to bed without a thought as to his child's whereabouts. She heard his deep, regular breathing as she passed his half shut door, and went on to her little 'shed room' that adjoined his chamber.

She groped her way to the bed and felt for the night gown she had hung on the head rail that morning; unbuttoning her wet garments, she let them drop to the floor; then she stooped and wiped her bare feet upon them before creeping into bed, where she lay with wide open eyes fixed upon the curtainless window on which the rain beat.

Hour after hour passed. Her nervousness increased with the rain, that now fell in a downpour. She pictured to herself the pony, Sutter, shut up in the old stable with its rotten post foundations that might be even now undermined by the flood. She could stand it no longer; she sprang out of bed and made her way to the piazza. A cry of dismay broke from her lips as she saw the yard covered with water; the banks had overflowed.

'Papsy, papsy,' she cried shrilly, 'papsy Sutter will be drowned ef you don't get him out quick!'

But the whiskey 'Colonel' Weir had imbibed as a night cap rendered his sleep lethargic.

The anxious fear for her pony's safety made the child desperate. She caught up the long night gown in her hands, and waded out to where a black bulk cut the leaden sky line in two. The water was waist high when she reached the stable door; nevertheless they were steady little fingers that passed quickly over the boards in search of the chain that fastened the door. At last she found and unloosed it. 'Sutter, Sutter!' she called. 'Cobe, cobe, pony.'

With a whinny of recognition the little animal rushed out, striking the side of the door with such force that the frail structure tottered. With a cry of terror Nip turned to follow her pony, who had run past toward the house; but it was too late, the stable toppled forward, burying the child beneath it. God wanted Nip.—Observer.

Fear and Blessing.

When the angels came with their 'Good tidings of great joy,' the first effect on the listening shepherds was to frighten them. If the sky had been full of ghosts, they would not have been more alarmed, and perhaps that is what they thought was the fact. When Jesus came walking on the water in the midst of the storm which threatened His disciples with shipwreck, they, too, were scared, and thought they beheld a ghost. But how changed was their feelings when His loving voice uttered the assuring words: 'Lo, it is I; be not afraid!' People are often frightened in these days at the coming of Heaven's messengers with good tidings. Many a great blessing comes to us in unexpected guise, and when we first see it we are alarmed. We should have such abiding faith in the kindness of God toward us, and in his ability to care for us, that we shall know that no harm can come in this world. Christmas should teach us to have hope not fear, of God's providence. The new mercies of God that shall come every morning are more than a match for the new trials we shall have to confront.

The Skylark.

'He's got a good, broad cap, strong face, a nice full breast. I'll warrant him, said the dealer. The creature thus summed up was not a pony nor a dog, but an English skylark. Brave little fellow, he was caught in some snare on his native

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meadow, and has traveled in his jail across land and sea, and is now put into a brown-paper bag, to be carried as unceremoniously as a pint of peanuts to a dark restaurant on a narrow street; but he will not lose his courage. Give him six inches of turf on the bottom of his cage and a glint of sunshine at the window, and he will stand on his tiptoes and sing until all the street will catch something of the heavenly enthusiasm of his music. Men and women who love Christmas, and have caught the Christmas spirit in their hearts, should carry it with them into all the dark places of life, sweetening and blessing and inspiring as they go.

Training Birds to Sing.

In a little town in New Jersey there is a man who has a bird-training organ. It stands as high as an old-time clock, and the air is forced through the pipes by means of weights similar to the weights in a clock's works. The singers that are being trained are kept in cloth covered boxes with the curtains pulled down. They learn to sing best in the dark.

They will learn to sing all the tunes played by the organ. They become so trained in the music taught them that they seldom improvise. Just as the mocking-bird imitates by nature such tunes as he hears, the canary will sing any tune he is schooled in. The Lord is teaching us to sing the heavenly songs. Many of them we must learn in the dark. We should also be careful to choose such associations as will not interfere with the divine tunes of the Christian life in which we are seeking to perfect ourselves.

The Czar's Ideal Symbolized.

A statue symbolizing the Czar's ideal of universal disarmament is now being displayed in copy all over Paris through photographs and plaster casts. Its title is 'Temps Futurs' ('The Future'); the sculptor's name is Belloc. 'Temps Futurs' represents a robust artisan transforming the murderous weapons of war into the traditional ploughshare and pruning-hook, the emblems of peace. The dream of the Emperor of Russia thus finds expression in marble while awaiting its actual materialization by the great powers of the world, when the magnificent armies shall be disbanded, and their members enter upon the honorable joy of an honest but laborious toil for their daily bread. That day will surely come when the angelic prophecy of 'Peace on earth, good will to men,' will be realized.

Never Give up.

If your motive is high enough and you are doing honest work worthy of being crowned, then never despair. Lady Butler, the artist, whose 'Roll-Call' made her famous, sums up the early vicissitudes of that picture thus: 'Rejected and damaged rejected; accepted; accepted and skied.' Many a man has been rejected and damaged; but refusing to accept the verdict, has gone on, only to be rejected again; but steadfastly persevering, he has been finally accepted, and found his place in the skies.

CATARRAH CAN BE CURED.

Catarrh is a kindred ailment of consumption, long considered incurable, and yet there is one remedy that will positively cure catarrh in any of its stages. For many years this remedy was used by the late Dr. Stevens, a widely noted authority on all diseases of the throat and lungs. Having tested its wonderful curative powers in thousands of cases, and desiring to relieve human suffering, I will send free of charge to all sufferers from Catarrh, Asthma, Consumption, and nervous diseases, this recipe, in German, French or English, with full directions for preparing and using. Sent by mail by addressing, with stamp, naming this paper, W. A. Noyes, 920 Powers Block, Rochester, N. Y.

Christmas and Duty.

The first Christmas message came to the shepherds while they were on duty keeping watch over their flocks. If they had deserted the sheep that night, how great would have been their loss. The best things always come to us in the path of duty. He who goes steadily on, doing the best he can in the place where he is, living with high motive and doing the unromantic deed in the romantic spirit, is in the line of promotion in God's world.

Not For His Eyes.

'Sweet, do you love me as well as you did this time yesterday?' tenderly murmured the young bridegroom, leaning toward her.

'Rather better, I think, dear,' softly answered the young bride.

'Then I'm happier than I was yesterday,' he rejoined. 'And I didn't think it was possible!'

Whereupon the hard featured old bachelor in the seat directly behind them went forward into the smoking car.—Chicago Tribune.

WONDERFUL SUCCESS

Not One Failure on the Part of Dodd's Kidney Pills.

When Used in the Treatment of Kidney Diseases—They Cure Even Where Physicians Have Given the Patient up to Die.

SHOGOMAC, N. B., Jan. 9.—There are, perhaps, not more than three or four subjects, upon which all members of a community hold the same opinion.

Everyone knows that death comes to us all, for instance. That is a subject that admits of no argument.

There is another question on which every person resident in this district agrees. That is that Dodd's Kidney Pills are a positive unfailing cure for all forms of Kidney Disease; that there is no other medicine within the reach of man that can cure these complaints; and that Dodd's Kidney Pills have never been known to fail in any case of Kidney Complaint.

Of course the people of this district could not possibly hold different opinions. Dodd's Kidney Pills have had such wonderful success, that no other conclusion could be reached.

Every time they have been used they have effected a thorough and permanent cure, no matter how hopeless the case had seemed—and in several instances the patients had been given up by their physicians. Not once have they failed.

An idea as to the esteem in which our people hold this great medicine, can be gained from the following statement made by Mr. Charles Shaw, one of our wide-awake merchants. He says: 'Dodd's Kidney Pills are more appreciated and have done more good than any other medicine we sell. They give the very best results, when used as a blood purifier, and tonic.'

Any victim of Kidney Disease should begin the use of Dodd's Kidney Pills at once. They are sold by all druggists at fifty cents a box; six boxes \$2.50, or sent, on receipt of price, by The Dodds Medicine Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

Paid for her Vanity.

A curious story comes from Monte Carlo, the heroine of which lost a large sum through excusable female vanity. She entered the gaming saloon while a former friend of hers was winning in a sweeping style that seemed to break the bank.

'I am so glad to see you here, Prince, and in such luck too!' she exclaimed. 'Do tell me a lucky number; it is sure to win, for you are now in the vein.'

The Prince generously placed a pile of gold lions before the vivacious lady, whose beauty had successfully defied the effects of thirty-six winters, and said—

'Put it all on the number of your years, an' reap a golden harvest.'

The lady reflected, hesitated, and then placed the pile on twenty-seven. An instant later the croupier sang out—

'Thirty-six red wins!'

'Heavens!' muttered the lady as she fainted away; 'thirty-six is exactly my age!'

Trapped Him.

One must be unusually quick-witted to endure the cross-examination of a skilful lawyer without discomfiture. In an action for payment of a tailor's account, a witness swore that a certain overcoat was badly made, one of the sleeves being shorter than the other.

'You will,' said the lawyer, slowly rising to cross-examine, 'swear that one of the sleeves was shorter than the other?'

'I will,' said the witness.

'Then, sir,' thundered the lawyer quickly with a flash of indignation, 'I am to understand that you positively deny that one of the sleeves was longer than the other?'

Started into a self-contradiction by the suddenness and impetuosity of this thrust, the witness said—

'I do deny it.'

A storm of laughter ensued. After it had died away, the lawyer said meaningly—

'Thank you, sir. I've no more questions to ask.'

RHEUMATIC STING.

South American Rheumatic Cure Sways the Wand and Suffering Ceases in a Trice.

Mr. A. S. Kennedy, 44 Sussex Ave., Toronto, says: 'I had been attacked very frequently with acute muscular rheumatism, afflicting my shoulders and arms. I used South American Rheumatic Cure and found immediate relief after a dose or two. My family have used this remedy with the most satisfactory results. I think it truly a very efficacious remedy for this very prevalent ailment.'

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