

"My Feather Canoe."

A STORY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

Written for Progress.

I suppose, dear reader that when a child, you have read or listened to the story of "The Feather Canoe", how a certain king had a feather canoe which possessed the wonderful advantages, that it could either sail on the water or fly through the air; the only propelling power required, bring the will of its occupant. Seated in it, one could be almost instantly, transported to any desired point of the universe on which they fixed their minds. It was a story that, when a child, I loved to listen to. It held a certain fascination for me, and in my solitary movements I used to let my mind dwell upon it. As I grew older I used to love to repeat it to others, and often do so to the present day. When a boy I formed a habit of imagining that I was the possessor of such a canoe and when ever I was alone I would seat myself within it and sail away. Wonderful indeed, were the journeys I travelled and the scenes I viewed. My canoe possessed one advantage which was not claimed for that of the kings. I could leave the earthly body of mine, unconscious of all its surroundings, sailing away at the woodpile or hoeing potatoes in the field, while I was far away reveling in ecstasies of delight in the wonders of the scenes around me. Yet I was always connected by a wireless telegraphy to the body wielding the saw or hoe, so that if anybody approached or interrupted its work I would immediately return. Though I have often been so far away, or so deeply interested in the scenes before me, that, I have been told by those who had interrupted me, that they had been standing by my side for some moments, and had twice spoken to me, and only by laying their head on my arm thereby making me aware that I was in telegraphic connection with some body other than my own—were they able to attract my attention. I was vexed when thus interrupted. I had no knowledge of the flight of time, and was always surprised when my stomach would telegraph me that it was time to eat, or the growing darkness would warn me that it was night. And in returning to my earthly habitation and looking over the work my automatic body had performed, I was also surprised

at the size of the woodpile, or at the number of rows hoed; far greater than when I was compelled to remain with it. For then, I would grumble at the size of the sticks, or the length of the rows, at the number of knots or weeds, at the heat of the sun or the delay of the noon hour. And I would have to take innumerable rests and find excuses to visit the house. But when I was away in my canoe, my body was never conscious of any of these things, never stole away to play ball or go swimming with the other boys. Thus you see, my feather-canoe was indeed a very beneficial acquisition to me, and in very many ways has proved a blessing. It went a long way further than any other power for keeping me out of bad company, for when "at home," as I said, I was always grumbling at my lot, and I had a tendency to choose the worst boys in town as my companions. But, when away on those trips I was always accompanied by a companion who was pure and good, a congenial kindred spirit; though we used to quarrel considerably—that is—I used to be sulky and cross, and would contradict and argue. And we used to

strive with each other to see which of us would guide the canoe, for you see it would only be guided by the strongest mind of the two. I would want to go one way and he would urge the other, I would get mad and stick to my own opinion, filled with a false pride in my will power, in spite of his pleading, and the fact that I knew he was right. But when with my other companions I was the acknowledged leader in every expedition and if any of them did not choose to do as I wished, they might go off by themselves, and I rebelled against

being led at all times by the will of this quiet speaking companion—even while in my heart I loved him and felt only contempt for the others. So in my stubbornness, I would issue sharp, angry commands to the canoe, causing it to turn abruptly in its course. But he would ever remain the same, speaking in gentle, pleading tones of love; and yet, so firmly, that the canoe would gradually swing in the direction he wished, and I would give in, and allow him to guide it wherever he wished. I would sit quiet, and under the influence of the beauties and wonders of the scenes he would point out, and the sweet tones of his voice, as he described them and explained their meanings, the rebelliousness would fade away from my heart, and I would gaze and listen with feelings of peace and happiness, mixed with yearnings that I might go on forever in this way; in loving communion with this friend, free from the wickedness and temptations of earth.

And, when it was time for me to return to earthly duties, he would talk very seriously about the sinfulness of the life I was leading, pleading with me to shun my evil companions and give up my bad habits. Many times, after returning to one of these trips, with tears streaming from my eyes, my whole body racked with sobs of remorse and repentance, I have promised him that I would do as he wished. I was called by everyone "A very strong willed boy" and though I gloried in the title, I knew that it was a false one, as false as the pride I took in having my own way and in domineering over the boys, most of whom were older than I and excelled me in physical power. I was headstrong, a boaster and a coward. For though I possessed an unusual power of influence over others I used that influence in leading them into sin and wickedness, even while my own heart's desires were to do right. I was afraid of ridicule, of the sneers of those big boys, who held me in their power. Agents of the evil one they knew, as well as I, that I was a poor weak minded boy. They knew me as I knew myself, and they made a tool of me to meet their ends. And though I

off from the gang, and declared my intentions to do right, that many would have followed my leadership in this as they had in doing wrong, for it was my influence that held them. The really bad boys knew this, that through me they held many others. Thus I kept these real desires buried in my heart and none ever suspected me of being other than a hard bad boy, while I suffered agony of heart in secret. So, when I would strive to do as I had promised, and shunning my old companions, would try to associate with good boys, they would shun me, and their parents would forbid them going in my company and would drive me away if I ventured near their homes. They knew me only as the ring leader of the worst boys in town. They knew my influence over others and feared for their boys. They knew nothing of my desires to do right, and I was too cowardly to take an honest open stand and declare my intentions to the world. So, though for a time, I would keep away by myself, spending most of my time with my solitary companion in the canoe, yet my old companions would seek me out, or lay in wait for me as I passed along the street, and I would again join them. And then, in despair, would plunge in sin, deeper than before; outstripping even the worst of the gang. My solitary friend would hover near me, whispering warnings and admonishments in my ear, but I would turn away from him and drive him away. Then, sick of life, and wishing only to die, I would steal away in solitude to the hay loft, or to the woods, and throw myself down in agony and despair. Though my solitary friend would follow me and try to whisper to me, I would not listen but would drive him away, burying my face in my hands, I would give away to uncontrolled, passionate moanings and grief. After a time, the whisperings would cease, and having spent out the full torrent of my grief, thinking that he had left me, I would enter my canoe, leaving my body laying face downward, and gradually sail away from my earthly surroundings. But, in the frame of mind that I was in, I could not guide my canoe to the clear silvery lakes, to the smooth flowing rivers, or through the pure blue skies over flowery fields and green woods, as my companion and I had been wont to do while sailing together. The wind howled across the waters of the lakes; the waves rolled and tossed my frail canoe about and dashed it against rocky banks. The river rushed over shoals of ragged rocks; over dams and cataracts. I was whirled around and around in seething whirlpools. And when I attempted to direct the course of my canoe upward, the sky was filled with dark

times; I could see myriads of naked forms sitting on the hot stones around the sides writhing in agony, their tongues protruding from their mouths; while around them danced thousands of grinning, black, fiends pointing their fingers at them, and forcing them further down the sides. While fresh arrivals were constantly being dragged in, over the edges of the pit. As far down as I could see, I saw these forms clinging to the sharp edges of the rocks; but I could see no bottom. I could hear the wailing of the victims and the demoniac Ha! Ha! of the fiends. Suddenly I would hear the voice of my friend; "Cut the connection with your earthly body and you will at once be cast into the pit."

I started! "How did you know I was here?" I thought I had driven you away from me forever; that you had cast me off as unworthy of your love and friendship. "I will never leave you or forsake you if you will only do as I say," comes the tender whisper.

"Oh; I cannot! I cannot! I have tried, and tried, no one believes in me; no one cares for me; I am too weak—I'm too late, too late!"

"Look up" comes the whisper, and on raising my eyes, I would find that he had guided my canoe from the mouth of the pit.

The smoke and darkness was gone, and we were floating in a pathway of dazzling glorious light. Following it upward with my eyes. I beheld immense walls of jasper, beyond which, rising high in the air, I could see domes of crystal palaces, from which the light was reflected in beautiful colors, filling the sky above with a glorious radiance. In the walls, was a great arched gateway with the gates thrown open wide, through which the glorious light, with which the place was filled, streamed forth; forming a pathway to the earth beneath. I followed it downward with my eyes to the scene on which it shone. It was the scene of the Saviour as He prayed and wept in the Garden of Gethsemane. I beheld the drops of blood, and His agony as He prayed; "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." I beheld the lock on his face as he approached His sleeping disciples, and heard His voice as he said "The Spirit in deed is willing, but the flesh is weak." The path of light shifted upon another scene, and I saw it was the scene of the trial of Christ before Pilate. I cannot take the space to describe the scenes that followed or how I felt as I gazed upon them. I saw them as they smote him with their hands and spat upon him—as they placed the crown of thorns upon his brow—saw the drops of blood, as they trickled down his face, saw him as he staggered beneath the weight of the cross. I watched them as they nailed him to the cross. I hardly

forth on the earth again. "Oh, how can God permit the light of heaven to ever shine upon the earth again! I cried." "How can man,—who knows that it was through the great love of God for him, that he gave His Son to thus suffer and die that he might be saved, refuse to love him and do His will!"

But look again said my friend." I looked, and from the earth I saw a form ascending the path of light. As He passed, I could see the marks on his hands and feet, and as he arose, I heard a burst of music which made the air tremble with its melody; and through those golden gates, I saw the hosts of heaven, with harps in their hands and with a glorious song of welcome upon their lips, descend to meet Him. O the longing I felt to join that glorious band as they escorted him up through those gates into the presence of His Father! How I would have loved to behold that meeting! Again my eyes were blinded for some time with tears, when again I raised them, I could see numberless white robed beings winging their way up and down the path of light, to and from the earth beneath. These seemed to go forth in pairs and returned in threes; while just within the gates I could see countless multitudes with harps in their hands and could hear their heaven voices, mingled with the music of the harps, as they sang, "Glory be to God on high," I followed with my gaze, some of those who were going to the earth in pairs. I saw them enter some mansion, some cottage, some hovel; from each of which they would emerge supporting a third form between them. I would follow them as they ascended, and each time they did so, as they approached the gates, I heard a great burst of music, and hosts of angels would go forth to meet them, and bear the new one away up to the throne in the centre, from whence all the glorious light seemed to radiate; for it was so bright that I could not look upon it. I could see streets of pure shining gold, grooves of beautiful trees, green field and lovely flowers, a beautiful shining river, silvery lakes and glorious fountains.

I fixed my gaze upon the faces of the assembled hosts, and I saw there, many of those I loved on earth among them the face of my mother and she seemed to smile upon me with a yearning look. I stretched forth my arms and cried "O mother, ask God to forgive me, and to let you come and take me with you, He knows that I love Him. He knows that I hate the sinful life I'm living. He knows I yearn to be good. He knows how weak I am. Ask Him to forgive me and take me away from temptation; I am not fit to live." But the whisper came; "He who is not fit to dwell on earth, is far less fitted to dwell in heaven; rather ask God, to make you fit to live, and then you will be fit to die. If you ask Him for strength He will not allow you to be tempted more than you are able to bear."

But, this is not an autobiography of my life, it is only a true story of my "Feather Canoe." 'Tis a treasure I greatly prize; in it I have spent the best hours of my life, and learned my most valuable lessons. It has been a power in staying my steps in the paths of sin and in the redeeming and forming of my character. And even now, a man grown, when employed at labor that requires the use of my hands only, I often leave my earthly body automatically performing its duties, while I enter the canoe and fly away in contemplation of scenes, far remote from my bodily surroundings. Or when, at the close of the day, tired and worn, weary and sad at heart, I leave my body, sitting in the chair before the fire, or lying upon the bed, to obtain its rest and peace of mind and soul, in sweet communion with my old, my well tried friend, as we sail in the canoe together—allowing him to be guide, he directs our course to those scenes best suited to still my murmurings against my lot; and if the editor will permit me I will try to describe, in a future article, some of the scenes I have viewed while being guided by him. ALKIN.

Mr. Duffy—"Mrs. Kelly, it pains me to inform yez that yure hoosband has jist bin blowed oop boi a doinamotte-catridge. We found his head in wan lot, an' his body in another lot, and his legs in another lot, and his arms an' fate in another lot."

Mrs. Kelly (proudly)—"Begorra! that's Mike all over."

Weary Ruggles—"I guess de religious people hev done us at last."

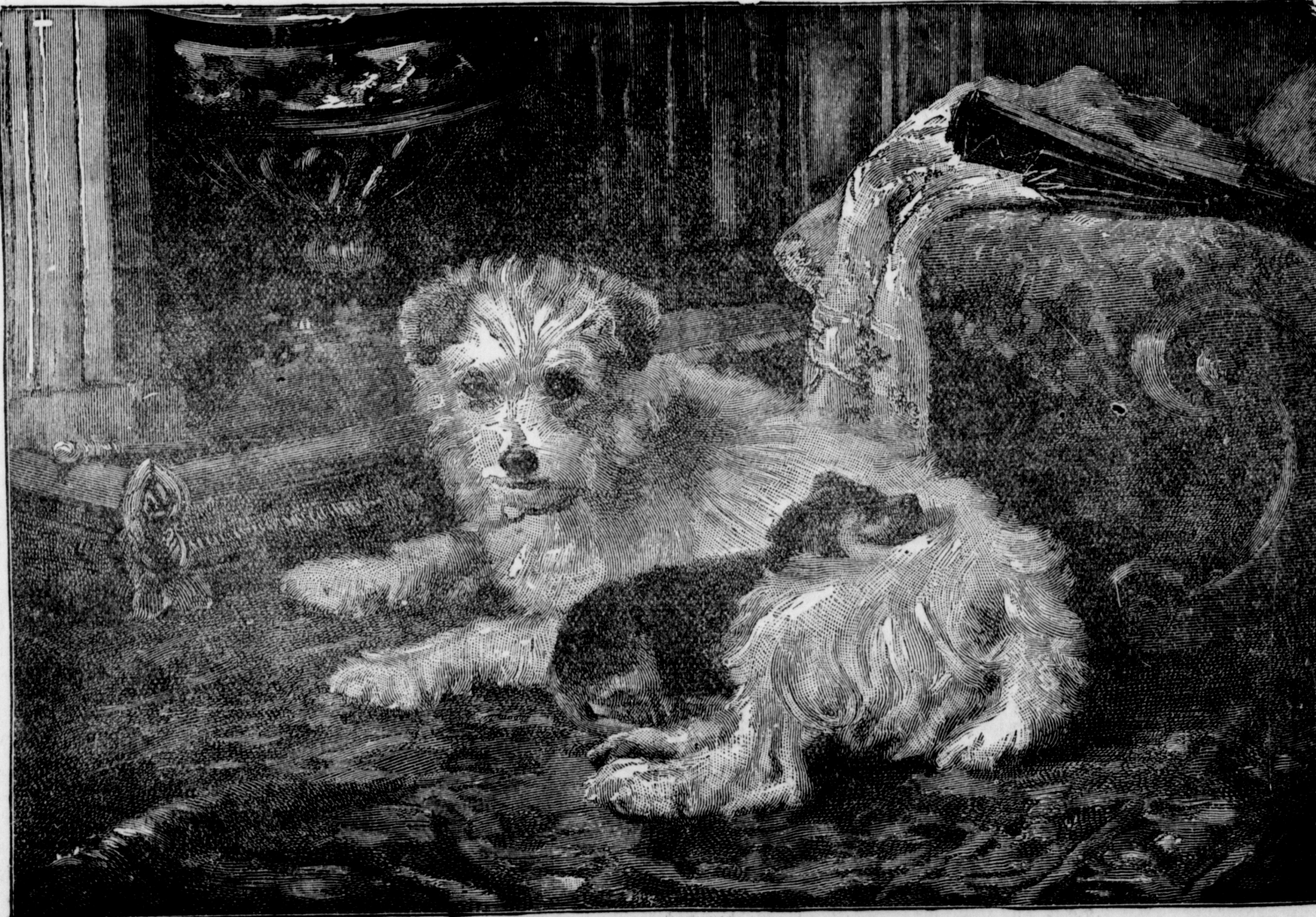
Wandering Willie—"How's dat pard?"

Weary Ruggles—"W'en I realize dat I've fed me face on nuthin' but a piece o' col' mince since dis time yisterdy, de horrible suspicion cums over me dat I'm keepin' Lent."

"I think the Sunday Horror has missed a great chance lately."

"Yes? To what do you refer?"

"It has so far failed to print a life size picture of the Klondike mosquito."



PRIVILEGED CHARACTERS.

nor could raise up courage enough to speak before them of my desires to do right or to assert my independence of them, yet they were aware of my having such desires, and knew my weakness. They held me by fear of their ridicule, and by flattering me, making me leader of the gang. There were many younger boys and a few of the large boys, who, like myself, had been blessed with good home teaching, who were good at heart, and had the same desires that I had. But, like myself, they were led on by fear of ridicule. I have no doubt that if I had cut

heavy clouds, while the thunder rolled, and lightning flashed, about me. I shivered in terror. I could see no light in any direction. Not a ray of hope. I wished to break the connection with my earthly body forever. As I was thinking of doing so, I felt my canoe rapidly sinking downward. Down—down, it went! the air grew hot about me, clouds of smoke mixed with sulphuric fumes seemed to envelope me. At length it stopped and on peering downward through the smoke, I saw that I was floating or hanging over the mouth of an immense pit. I could feel the suffocating

removed my eyes from His face, through-out it all—so full of love and gentle weakness. He would lift His eyes up so those open gates around which hovered countless hosts of shining angels. I watched them as they mocked him as he hung upon the cross, and when the gates above were closed and the light no longer shown upon him I heard His cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"

I sat in the canoe and wept in the darkness. Again, comes the whisper "Look up" when I did so, the gates were once more open wide, and the glorious light streamed