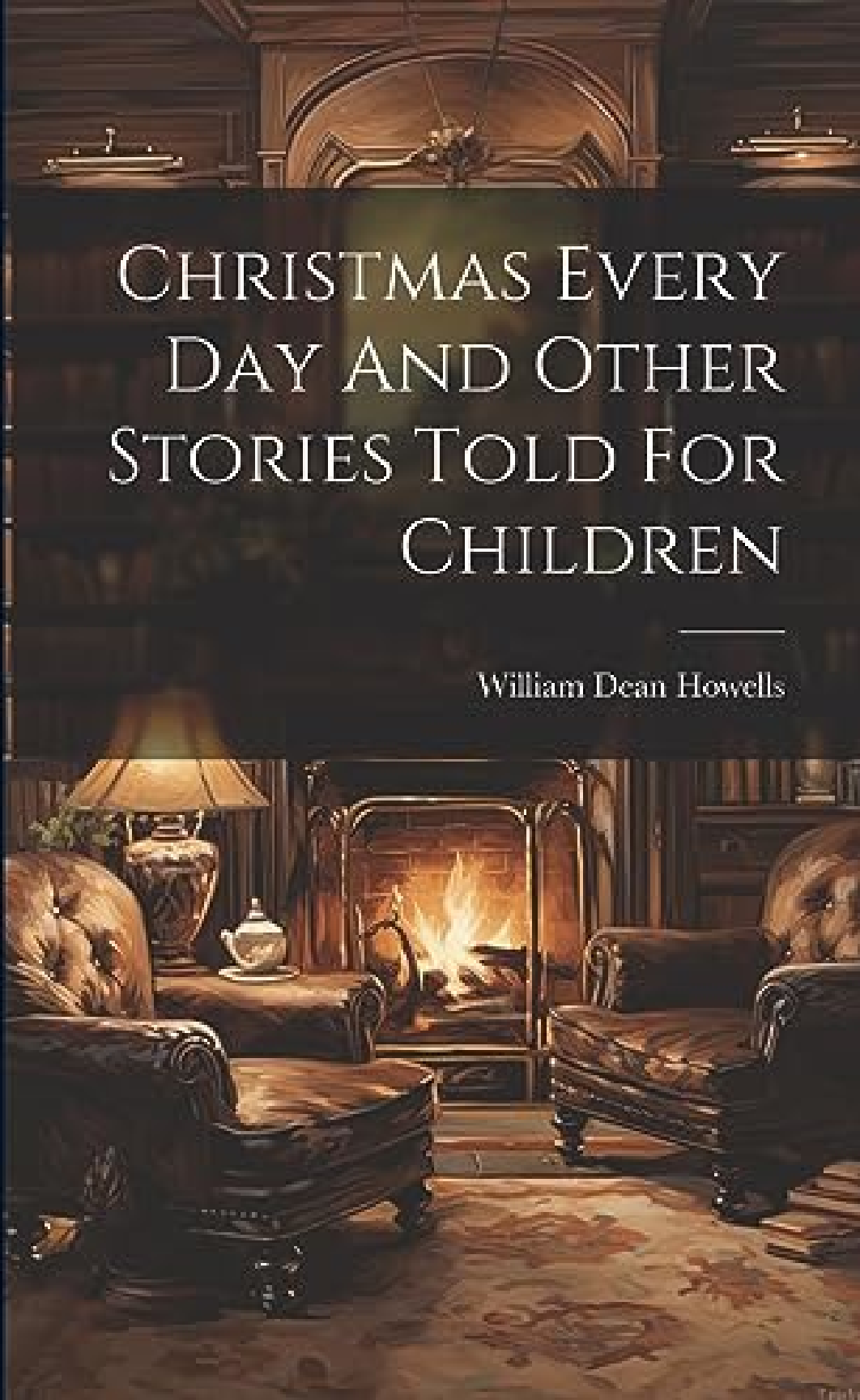
Christmas Every Day And Other Stories Told For Children

William Dean Howells



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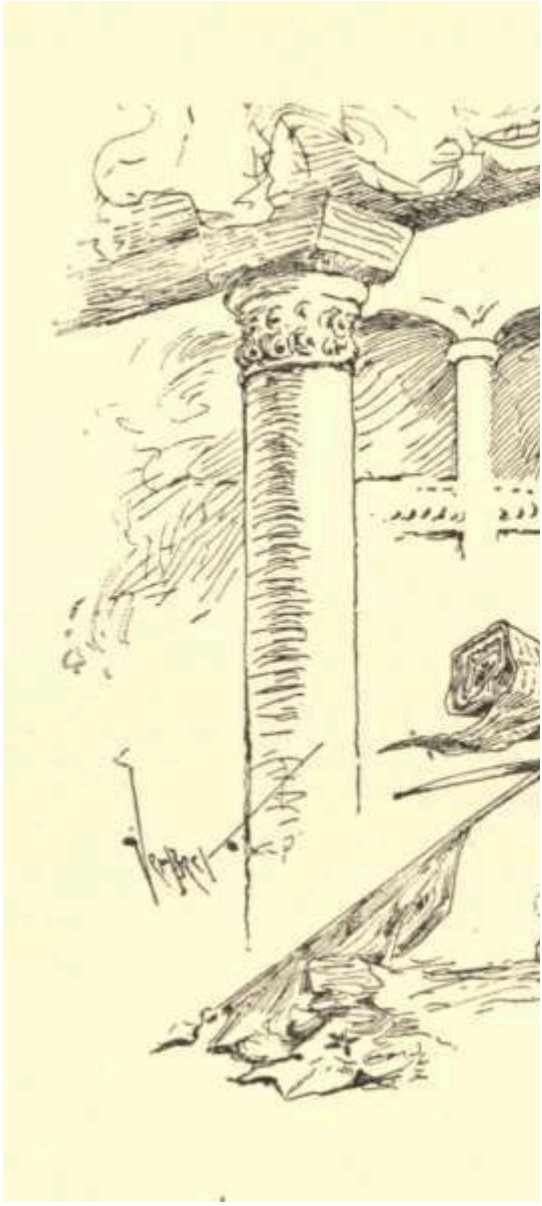
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“HAVING BONFIRES

CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY

AND OTHER STORIES

TOLD FOR CHILDREN

By W. D. Howells



NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

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CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY.

CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY.

The little girl came into her papa's study, as she always did Saturday morning before breakfast, and asked for a story. He tried to beg off that morning, for he was very busy, but she would not let him. So he began:

“Well, once there was a little pig—”

She put her hand over his mouth and stopped him at the word. She said she had heard little pig-stories till she was perfectly sick of them.

“Well, what kind of story *shall* I tell, then?”

“About Christmas. It's getting to be the season. It's past Thanksgiving already.”

“It seems to me,” her papa argued, “that I've told as often about Christmas as I have about little pigs.”

“No difference! Christmas is more interesting.”

“Well!” Her papa roused himself from his writing by a great effort. “Well, then, I'll tell you about the little girl that wanted it Christmas every day in the year. How would you like that?”

“First-rate!” said the little girl; and she nestled into comfortable shape in his lap, ready for listening.

“Very well, then, this little pig—Oh, what are you

pounding me for?”

“Because you said little pig instead of little girl.”

“I should like to know what's the difference between a little pig and a little girl that wanted it Christmas every day!”

“Papa,” said the little girl, warningly, “if you don't go on, I'll *give* it to you!” And at this her papa darted off like lightning, and began to tell the story as fast as he could.

Well, once there was a little girl who liked Christmas so much that she wanted it to be Christmas every day in the year; and as soon as Thanksgiving was over she began to send postal-cards to the old Christmas Fairy to ask if she mightn't have it. But the old fairy never answered any of the postals; and after a while the little girl found out that the Fairy was pretty particular, and wouldn't notice anything but letters—not even correspondence cards in envelopes; but real letters on sheets of paper, and sealed outside with a monogram—or your initial, anyway. So, then, she began to send her letters; and in about three weeks—or just the day before Christmas, it was—she got a letter from the Fairy, saying she might have it Christmas every day for a year, and then they would see about having it longer.

The little girl was a good deal excited already, preparing for the old-fashioned, once-a-year Christmas that was coming the next day, and perhaps the Fairy's promise didn't make such an impression on her as it would have made at some other time. She just resolved to keep it to herself, and surprise everybody with it as it kept coming

true; and then it slipped out of her mind altogether.

She had a splendid Christmas. She went to bed early, so as to let Santa Claus have a chance at the stockings, and in the morning she was up the first of anybody and went and felt them, and found hers all lumpy with packages of candy, and oranges and grapes, and pocket-books and rubber balls, and all kinds of small presents, and her big brother's with nothing but the tongs in them, and her young lady sister's with a new silk umbrella, and her papa's and mamma's with potatoes and pieces of coal wrapped up in tissue-paper, just as they always had every Christmas. Then she waited around till the rest of the family were up, and she was the first to burst into the library, when the doors were opened, and look at the large presents laid out on the library-table—books, and portfolios, and boxes of stationery, and breastpins, and dolls, and little stoves, and dozens of handkerchiefs, and ink-stands, and skates, and snow-shovels, and photograph-frames, and little easels, and boxes of water-colors, and Turkish paste, and nougat, and candied cherries, and dolls' houses, and waterproofs—and the big Christmas-tree, lighted and standing in a waste-basket in the middle.

She had a splendid Christmas all day. She ate so much candy that she did not want any breakfast; and the whole forenoon the presents kept pouring in that the expressman had not had time to deliver the night before; and she went round giving the presents she had got for other people, and came home and ate turkey and cranberry for dinner, and plum-pudding and nuts and raisins and

> oranges and more candy, and then went out and coasted, and came in with a stomach-ache, crying; and her papa said he would see if his house was turned into that sort of fool's paradise another year; and they had a light supper, and pretty early everybody went to bed cross.

Here the little girl pounded her papa in the back, again.

“Well, what now? Did I say pigs?”

“You made them *act* like pigs.”

“Well, didn't they?”

“No matter; you oughtn't to put it into a story.”

“Very well, then, I'll take it all out.”

Her father went on:

> The little girl slept very heavily, and she slept very late, but she was wakened at last by the other children dancing round her bed with their stockings full of presents in their hands.
>
> “What is it?” said the little girl, and she rubbed her eyes and tried to rise up in bed.
>
> “Christmas! Christmas! Christmas!” they all shouted, and waved their stockings.
>
> “Nonsense! It was Christmas yesterday.”
>
> Her brothers and sisters just laughed. “We don't know about that. It's Christmas to-day, anyway. You come into the library and see.”
>
> Then all at once it flashed on the little girl that the Fairy was keeping her promise, and her year of

Christmases was beginning. She was dreadfully sleepy, but she sprang up like a lark—a lark that had overeaten itself and gone to bed cross—and darted into the library. There it was again! Books, and portfolios, and boxes of stationery, and breastpins—

"You needn't go over it all, papa; I guess I can remember just what was there," said the little girl.

Well, and there was the Christmas-tree blazing away, and the family picking out their presents, but looking pretty sleepy, and her father perfectly puzzled, and her mother ready to cry. "I'm sure I don't see how I'm to dispose of all these things," said her mother, and her father said it seemed to him they had had something just like it the day before, but he supposed he must have dreamed it. This struck the little girl as the best kind of a joke; and so she ate so much candy she didn't want any breakfast, and went round carrying presents, and had turkey and cranberry for dinner, and then went out and coasted, and came in with a—

"Papa!"

"Well, what now?"

"What did you promise, you forgetful thing?"

"Oh! oh yes!"

Well, the next day, it was just the same thing over again, but everybody getting crosser; and at the end of a week's time so many people had lost their tempers that you could pick up lost tempers anywhere; they perfectly strewed the ground. Even when people tried to recover their tempers

they usually got somebody else's, and it made the most dreadful mix.

The little girl began to get frightened, keeping the secret all to herself; she wanted to tell her mother, but she didn't dare to; and she was ashamed to ask the Fairy to take back her gift, it seemed ungrateful and ill-bred, and she thought she would try to stand it, but she hardly knew how she could, for a whole year. So it went on and on, and it was Christmas on St. Valentine's Day and Washington's Birthday, just the same as any day, and it didn't skip even the First of April, though everything was counterfeit that day, and that was some *little* relief.

After a while coal and potatoes began to be awfully scarce, so many had been wrapped up in tissue-paper to fool papas and mammas with. Turkeys got to be about a thousand dollars apiece —

“Papa!”

“Well, what?”

“You're beginning to fib.”

“Well, *two* thousand, then.”

And they got to passing off almost anything for turkeys—half-grown humming-birds, and even rocs out of the *Arabian Nights*—the real turkeys were so scarce. And cranberries—well, they asked a diamond apiece for cranberries. All the woods and orchards were cut down for Christmas-trees, and where the woods and orchards used to be it looked just like a stubble-field, with the stumps. After a while they had to make Christmas-trees

out of rags, and stuff them with bran, like old-fashioned dolls; but there were plenty of rags, because people got so poor, buying presents for one another, that they couldn't get any new clothes, and they just wore their old ones to tatters. They got so poor that everybody had to go to the poor-house, except the confectioners, and the fancy-store keepers, and the picture-book sellers, and the expressmen; and *they* all got so rich and proud that they would hardly wait upon a person when he came to buy. It was perfectly shameful!

Well, after it had gone on about three or four months, the little girl, whenever she came into the room in the morning and saw those great ugly, lumpy stockings dangling at the fire-place, and the disgusting presents around everywhere, used to just sit down and burst out crying. In six months she was perfectly exhausted; she couldn't even cry any more; she just lay on the lounge and rolled her eyes and panted. About the beginning of October she took to sitting down on dolls wherever she found them—French dolls, or any kind—she hated the sight of them so; and by Thanksgiving she was crazy, and just slammed her presents across the room.

By that time people didn't carry presents around nicely any more. They flung them over the fence, or through the window, or anything; and, instead of running their tongues out and taking great pains to write “For dear Papa,” or “Mamma,” or “Brother,” or “Sister,” or “Susie,” or “Sammie,” or “Billie,” or “Bobbie,” or “Jimmie,” or “Jennie,” or whoever it was, and troubling to get the spelling right, and then signing their names, and “Xmas,

18—," they used to write in the gift-books, "Take it, you horrid old thing!" and then go and bang it against the front door. Nearly everybody had built barns to hold their presents, but pretty soon the barns overflowed, and then they used to let them lie out in the rain, or anywhere. Sometimes the police used to come and tell them to shovel their presents off the sidewalk, or they would arrest them.

"I thought you said everybody had gone to the poor-house," interrupted the little girl.

"They did go, at first," said her papa; "but after a while the poor-houses got so full that they had to send the people back to their own houses. They tried to cry, when they got back, but they couldn't make the least sound."

"Why couldn't they?"

"Because they had lost their voices, saying 'Merry Christmas' so much. Did I tell you how it was on the Fourth of July?"

"No; how was it?" And the little girl nestled closer, in expectation of something uncommon.

Well, the night before, the boys stayed up to celebrate, as they always do, and fell asleep before twelve o'clock, as usual, expecting to be wakened by the bells and cannon. But it was nearly eight o'clock before the first boy in the United States woke up, and then he found out what the trouble was. As soon as he could get his clothes on he ran out of the house and smashed a big cannon-torpedo down on the pavement; but it didn't make any more noise than a damp wad of paper; and

after he tried about twenty or thirty more, he began to pick them up and look at them. Every single torpedo was a big raisin! Then he just streaked it up-stairs, and examined his fire-crackers and toy-pistol and two-dollar collection of fireworks, and found that they were nothing but sugar and candy painted up to look like fireworks! Before ten o'clock every boy in the United States found out that his Fourth of July things had turned into Christmas things; and then they just sat down and cried—they were so mad. There are about twenty million boys in the United States, and so you can imagine what a noise they made. Some men got together before night, with a little powder that hadn't turned into purple sugar yet, and they said they would fire off *one* cannon, anyway. But the cannon burst into a thousand pieces, for it was nothing but rock-candy, and some of the men nearly got killed. The Fourth of July orations all turned into Christmas carols, and when anybody tried to read the Declaration, instead of saying, “When in the course of human events it becomes necessary,” he was sure to sing, “God rest you, merry gentlemen.” It was perfectly awful.

The little girl drew a deep sigh of satisfaction.

“And how was it at Thanksgiving?”

Her papa hesitated. “Well, I'm almost afraid to tell you. I'm afraid you'll think it's wicked.”

“Well, tell, anyway,” said the little girl.

Well, before it came Thanksgiving it had leaked out who had caused all these Christmases. The

little girl had suffered so much that she had talked about it in her sleep; and after that hardly anybody would play with her. People just perfectly despised her, because if it had not been for her greediness it wouldn't have happened; and now, when it came Thanksgiving, and she wanted them to go to church, and have squash-pie and turkey, and show their gratitude, they said that all the turkeys had been eaten up for her old Christmas dinners, and if she would stop the Christmases, they would see about the gratitude. Wasn't it dreadful? And the very next day the little girl began to send letters to the Christmas Fairy, and then telegrams, to stop it. But it didn't do any good; and then she got to calling at the Fairy's house, but the girl that came to the door always said, “Not at home,” or “Engaged,” or “At dinner,” or something like that; and so it went on till it came to the old once-a-year Christmas Eve. The little girl fell asleep, and when she woke up in the morning—

“She found it was all nothing but a dream,” suggested the little girl.

“No, indeed!” said her papa. “It was all every bit true!”

“Well, what *did* she find out, then?”

“Why, that it wasn't Christmas at last, and wasn't ever going to be, any more. Now it's time for breakfast.”

The little girl held her papa fast around the neck.

“You sha'n't go if you're going to leave it *so*!”

“How do you want it left?”

“Christmas once a year.”

“All right,” said her papa; and he went on again.

Well, there was the greatest rejoicing all over the country, and it extended clear up into Canada. The people met together everywhere, and kissed and cried for joy. The city carts went around and gathered up all the candy and raisins and nuts, and dumped them into the river; and it made the fish perfectly sick; and the whole United States, as far out as Alaska, was one blaze of bonfires, where the children were burning up their gift-books and presents of all kinds. They had the greatest *time*!

The little girl went to thank the old Fairy because she had stopped its being Christmas, and she said she hoped she would keep her promise and see that Christmas never, never came again. Then the Fairy frowned, and asked her if she was sure she knew what she meant; and the little girl asked her, Why not? and the old Fairy said that now she was behaving just as greedily as ever, and she'd better look out. This made the little girl think it all over carefully again, and she said she would be willing to have it Christmas about once in a thousand years; and then she said a hundred, and then she said ten, and at last she got down to one. Then the Fairy said that was the good old way that had pleased people ever since Christmas began, and she was agreed. Then the little girl said, “What're your shoes made of?” And the Fairy said, “Leather.” And the little girl said, “Bargain's done forever,” and skipped off, and hippity-hopped the whole way home, she was so glad.

“How will that do?” asked the papa.

“First-rate!” said the little girl; but she hated to have the story stop, and was rather sober. However, her mamma put her head in at the door, and asked her papa:

“Are you never coming to breakfast? What have you been telling that child?”

“Oh, just a moral tale.”

The little girl caught him around the neck again.

“*We* know! Don't you tell *what*, papa! Don't you tell *what*!”

TURKEYS TURNING THE TABLES.

TURKEYS TURNING THE TABLES.

“Well, you see,” the papa began, on Christmas morning, when the little girl had snuggled in his lap into just the right shape for listening, “it was the night after Thanksgiving, and you know how everybody feels the night after Thanksgiving.”

“Yes; but you needn't begin that way, papa,” said the

little girl; “I'm not going to have any moral to it this time.”

“No, indeed! But it can be a true story, can't it?”

“I don't know,” said the little girl; “I like made-up ones.”

“Well, this is going to be a true one, anyway, and it's no use talking.”

> All the relations in the neighborhood had come to dinner, and then gone back to their own houses, but some of the relations had come from a distance, and these had to stay all night at the grandfather's. But whether they went or whether they stayed, they all told the grandmother that they did believe it was the best Thanksgiving dinner they had ever eaten in their born days. They had had cranberry sauce, and they'd had mashed potato, and they'd had mince-pie and pandowdy, and they'd had celery, and they'd had Hubbard squash, and they'd had tea and coffee both, and they'd had apple-dumpling with hard sauce, and they'd had hot biscuit and sweet pickle, and mangoes, and frosted cake, and nuts, and cauliflower—

“Don't mix them all up so!” pleaded the little girl. “It's perfectly confusing. I can't hardly tell *what* they had now.”

“Well, *they* mixed them up just in the same way, and I suppose that's one of the reasons why it happened.”

> Whenever a child wanted to go back from dumpling and frosted cake to mashed potato and Hubbard squash—they were old-fashioned kind of people, and they had everything on the table at

once, because the grandmother and the aunties cooked it, and they couldn't keep jumping up all the time to change the plates—and its mother said it shouldn't, its grandmother said, Indeed it should, then, and helped it herself; and the child's father would say, Well, he guessed *he* would go back, too, for a change; and the child's mother would say, She should think he would be ashamed; and then they would get to going back, till everything was perfectly higgledy-piggledy.

“Oh, *shouldn't* you like to have been there, papa?” sighed the little girl.

“You mustn't interrupt. Where was I?”

“Higgledy-piggledy.”

“Oh yes!”

Well, but the greatest thing of all was the turkey that they had. It was a gobbler, I tell you, that was nearly as big as a giraffe.

“Papa!”

It took the premium at the county fair, and when it was dressed it weighed fifteen pounds—well, maybe twenty—and it was so heavy that the grandmothers and the aunties couldn't put it on the table, and they had to get one of the papas to do it. You ought to have heard the hurrahing when the children saw him coming in from the kitchen with it. It seemed as if they couldn't hardly talk of anything but that turkey the whole dinner-time.

The grandfather hated to carve, and so one of the papas did it; and whenever he gave anybody a

piece, the grandfather would tell some new story about the turkey, till pretty soon the aunties got to saying, “Now, father, stop!” and one of them said it made it seem as if the gobbler was walking about on the table, to hear so much about him, and it took her appetite all away; and that made the papas begin to ask the grandfather more and more about the turkey.

“Yes,” said the little girl, thoughtfully; “I know what *papas* are.”

“Yes, they're pretty much all alike.”

And the mammas began to say they acted like a lot of silly boys; and what would the children think? But nothing could stop it; and all through the afternoon and evening, whenever the papas saw any of the aunties or mammas round, they would begin to ask the grandfather more particulars about the turkey. The grandfather was pretty forgetful, and he told the same things right over. Well, and so it went on till it came bedtime, and then the mammas and aunties began to laugh and whisper together, and to say they did believe they should dream about that turkey; and when the papas kissed the grandmother good-night, they said, Well, they must have his mate for Christmas; and then they put their arms round the mammas and went out haw-hawing.

“I don't think they behaved very dignified,” said the little girl.

“Well, you see, they were just funning, and had got going, and it was Thanksgiving, anyway.”

Well, in about half an hour everybody was fast

asleep and dreaming—

“Is it going to be a dream?” asked the little girl, with some reluctance.

“Didn't I say it was going to be a *true* story?”

“Yes.”

“How can it be a dream, then?”

“You said everybody was fast asleep and dreaming.”

“Well, but I hadn't got through. Everybody *except* one little girl.”

“Now, papa!”

“What?”

“Don't you go and say her name was the same as mine, and her eyes the same color.”

“What an idea!”

This was a very *good* little girl, and very respectful to her papa, and didn't suspect him of tricks, but just believed everything he said. And she was a very pretty little girl, and had red eyes, and blue cheeks, and straight hair, and a curly nose—

“Now, papa, if you get to cutting up—”

“Well, I won't, then!”

Well, she was rather a delicate little girl, and whenever she over-ate, or anything,

“Have bad dreams! Aha! I *told* you it was going to be a dream.”

"You wait till I get through."

She was apt to lie awake thinking, and some of her thinks were pretty dismal. Well, that night, instead of thinking and tossing and turning, and counting a thousand, it seemed to this other little girl that she began to see things as soon as she had got warm in bed, and before, even. And the first thing she saw was a large, bronze-colored—

"Turkey gobbler!"

"No, ma'am. Turkey gobbler's *ghost*."

"Foo!" said the little girl, rather uneasily; "whoever heard of a turkey's ghost, I should like to know?"

"Never mind, that," said the papa. "If it hadn't been a ghost, could the moonlight have shone through it? No, indeed! The stuffing wouldn't have let it. So you see it must have been a ghost."

It had a red pasteboard placard round its neck, with FIRST PREMIUM printed on it, and so she knew that it was the ghost of the very turkey they had had for dinner. It was perfectly awful when it put up its tail, and dropped its wings, and strutted just the way the grandfather said it used to do. It seemed to be in a wide pasture, like that back of the house, and the children had to cross it to get home, and they were all afraid of the turkey that kept gobbling at them and threatening them, because they had eaten him up. At last one of the boys—it was the other little girl's brother—said he would run across and get his papa to come out and help them, and the first thing she knew the turkey was after him, gaining, gaining, gaining, and all the grass was full of hen-turkeys and

turkey chicks, running after him, and gaining, gaining, gaining, and just as he was getting to the wall he tripped and fell over a turkey-pen, and all at once she was in one of the aunties' room, and the aunty was in bed, and the turkeys were walking up and down over her, and stretching out their wings, and blaming her. Two of them carried a platter of chicken pie, and there was a large pumpkin jack-o'-lantern hanging to the bedpost to light the room, and it looked just like the other little girl's brother in the face, only perfectly ridiculous.



“THE OLD GOBBLER ‘FIRS'

Then the old gobbler, First Premium, clapped his wings, and said, “Come on, chick-chickledren!” and then they all seemed to be in her room, and she was standing in the middle of it in her night-gown, and tied round and round with ribbons, so

she couldn't move hand or foot. The old gobbler, First Premium, said they were going to turn the tables now, and she knew what he meant, for they had had that in the reader at school just before vacation, and the teacher had explained it. He made a long speech, with his hat on, and kept pointing at her with one of his wings, while he told the other turkeys that it was her grandfather who had done it, and now it was their turn. He said that human beings had been eating turkeys ever since the discovery of America, and it was time for the turkeys to begin paying them back, if they were ever going to. He said she was pretty young, but she was as big as he was, and he had no doubt they would enjoy her.

The other little girl tried to tell him that she was not to blame, and that she only took a very, very little piece.

“But it was right off the breast,” said the gobbler, and he shed tears, so that the other little girl cried, too. She didn't have much hopes, they all seemed so spiteful, especially the little turkey chicks; but she told them that she was very tender-hearted, and never hurt a single thing, and she tried to make them understand that there was a great difference between eating people and just eating turkeys.

“What difference, I should like to know?” says the old hen-turkey, pretty snappishly.

“People have got souls, and turkeys haven't,” says the other little girl.

“I don't see how *that* makes it any better,” says the old hen-turkey. “It don't make it any better for the

turkeys. If we haven't got any souls, we can't live after we've been eaten up, and you *can*."

The other little girl was awfully frightened to have the hen-turkey take that tack.

"I should think she would 'a' been," said the little girl; and she cuddled snugger into her papa's arms. "What *could* she say? Ugh! Go on."

Well, she didn't know what to say, that's a fact. You see, she never thought of it in that light before. All she could say was, "Well, people have got reason, anyway, and turkeys have only got instinct; so there!"

"You'd better look out," says the old hen-turkey; and all the little turkey chicks got so mad they just hopped, and the oldest little he-turkey, that was just beginning to be a gobbler, he dropped his wings and spread his tail just like his father, and walked round the other little girl till it was perfectly frightful.

"I should think they would 'a' been ashamed."

Well, perhaps old First Premium *was* a little; because he stopped them. "My dear," he says to the old hen-turkey, and chick-chickledren, "you forget yourselves; you should have a little consideration. Perhaps you wouldn't behave much better yourselves if you were just going to be eaten."

And they all began to scream and to cry, "We've *been* eaten, and we're nothing but turkey ghosts."

"*There*, now, papa," says the little girl, sitting up

straight, so as to argue better, “I *knew* it wasn't true, all along. How could turkeys have ghosts if they don't have souls, I should like to know?”

“Oh, easily,” said the papa.

“Tell how,” said the little girl.

“Now look here,” said the papa, “are you telling this story, or am I?”

“You are,” said the little girl, and she cuddled down again. “Go on.”

“Well, then, don't you interrupt. Where was I? Oh yes.”

Well, he couldn't do anything with them, old First Premium couldn't. They acted perfectly ridiculous, and one little brat of a spiteful little chick piped out, “I speak for a drumstick, ma!” and then they all began: “I want a wing, ma!” and “I'm going to have the wish-bone!” and “I shall have just as much stuffing as ever I please, shan't I, ma?” till the other little girl was perfectly disgusted with them; she thought they oughtn't to say it before her, anyway; but she had hardly thought this before they all screamed out, “They used to say it before *us*,” and then she didn't know what to say, because she knew how people talked before animals.

“I don't believe I ever did,” said the little girl. “Go on.”

Well, old First Premium tried to quiet them again, and when he couldn't he apologized to the other little girl so nicely that she began to like him. He said they didn't mean any harm by it; they were

just excited, and chickledren would be chickledren.

“Yes,” said the other little girl, “but I think you might take some older person to begin with. It's a perfect shame to begin with a little girl.”

“Begin!” says old First Premium. “Do you think we're just *beginning*? Why, when do you think it is?”

“The night after Thanksgiving.”

“What year?”

“1886.”

They all gave a perfect screech. “Why, it's Christmas Eve, 1900, and every one of your friends has been eaten up long ago,” says old First Premium, and he began to cry over her, and the old hen-turkey and the little turkey chicks began to wipe their eyes on the backs of their wings.

“I don't think they were very neat,” said the little girl.

Well, they were kind-hearted, anyway, and they felt sorry for the other little girl. And she began to think she had made some little impression on them, when she noticed the old hen-turkey beginning to untie her bonnet strings, and the turkey chicks began to spread round her in a circle, with the points of their wings touching, so that she couldn't get out, and they commenced dancing and singing, and after a while that little he-turkey says, “Who's *it*?” and the other little girl, she didn't know why, says, “*I'm* it,” and old First Premium says, “Do you promise?” and the other

little girl says, “Yes, I promise,” and she knew she was promising, if they would let her go, that people should never eat turkeys any more. And the moon began to shine brighter and brighter through the turkeys, and pretty soon it was the sun, and then it was not the turkeys, but the window-curtains—it was one of those old farm-houses where they don't have blinds—and the other little girl—

“Woke up!” shouted the little girl. “There now, papa, what did I tell you? I *knew* it was a dream all along.”

“No, she didn't,” said the papa; “and it wasn't a dream.”

“What was it, then?”

“It was a—trance.”

The little girl turned round, and knelt in her papa's lap, so as to take him by the shoulders and give him a good shaking. That made him promise to be good, pretty quick, and, “Very well, then,” says the little girl; “if it wasn't a dream, you've got to prove it.”

“But how can I prove it?” says the papa.

“By going on with the story,” says the little girl, and she cuddled down again.

“Oh, well, that's easy enough.”

As soon as it was light in the room, the other little girl could see that the place was full of people, crammed and jammed, and they were all awfully excited, and kept yelling, “Down with the traitress!” “Away with the renegade!” “Shame on the little sneak!” till it was worse than the turkeys,

ten times.

She knew that they meant her, and she tried to explain that she just *had* to promise, and that if they had been in her place they would have promised too; and of course they could do as they pleased about keeping her word, but she was going to keep it, anyway, and never, never, never eat another piece of turkey either at Thanksgiving or at Christmas.

“Very well, then,” says an old lady, who looked like her grandmother, and then began to have a crown on, and to turn into Queen Victoria, “what *can* we have?”

“Well,” says the other little girl, “you can have oyster soup.”

“What else?”

“And you can have cranberry sauce.”

“What else?”

“You can have mashed potatoes, and Hubbard squash, and celery, and turnip, and cauliflower.”

“What else?”

“You can have mince-pie, and pandowdy, and plum-pudding.”

“And not a thing on the list,” says the Queen, “that doesn't go with turkey! Now you see.”

The papa stopped.

“Go on,” said the little girl.

“There isn't any more.”

The little girl turned round, got up on her knees, took him by the shoulders, and shook him fearfully. “Now, then,” she said, while the papa let his head wag, after the shaking, like a Chinese mandarin's, and it was a good thing he did not let his tongue stick out. “Now, will you go on? What *did* the people eat in place of turkey?”

“I don't know.”

“You don't know, you awful papa! Well, then, what did the little girl eat?”

“She?” The papa freed himself, and made his preparation to escape. “Why she—oh, *she* ate goose. Goose is tenderer than turkey, anyway, and more digestible; and there isn't so much of it, and you can't overeat yourself, and have bad—”

“Dreams!” cried the little girl.

“Trances,” said the papa, and she began to chase him all round the room.

THE PONY ENGINE AND THE PACIFIC EXPRESS.

THE PONY ENGINE AND THE PACIFIC EXPRESS.

Christmas Eve, after the children had hung up their stockings and got all ready for St. Nic, they climbed up on the papa's lap to kiss him good-night, and when they both got their arms round his neck, they said they were not going to bed till he told them a Christmas story. Then he saw that he would have to mind, for they were awfully severe with him, and always made him do exactly what they told him; it was the way they had brought him up. He tried his best to get out of it for a while; but after they had shaken him first this side, and then that side, and pulled him backward and forward till he did not know where he was, he began to think perhaps he had better begin. The first thing he said, after he opened his eyes, and made believe he had been asleep, or something, was, “Well, what did I leave off at?” and that made them just perfectly boiling, for they understood his tricks, and they knew he was trying to pretend that he had told part of the story already; and they said he had not left off anywhere because he had not commenced, and he saw it was no use. So he commenced.

“Once there was a little Pony Engine that used to play round the Fitchburg Depot on the side tracks, and sleep in among the big locomotives in the car-house—”

The little girl lifted her head from the papa's shoulder, where she had dropped it. “Is it a sad story, papa?”

“How is it going to end?” asked the boy.

“Well, it's got a moral,” said the papa.

“Oh, all right, if it's got a moral,” said the children; they had a good deal of fun with the morals the papa put to his stories. The boy added, “Go on,” and the little girl prompted, “Car-house.”

The papa said, “Now every time you stop me I shall have to begin all over again.” But he saw that this was not going to spite them any, so he went on: “One of the locomotives was its mother, and she had got hurt once in a big smash-up, so that she couldn't run long trips any more. She was so weak in the chest you could hear her wheeze as far as you could see her. But she could work round the depot, and pull empty cars in and out, and shunt them off on the side tracks; and she was so anxious to be useful that all the other engines respected her, and they were very kind to the little Pony Engine on her account, though it was always getting in the way, and under their wheels, and everything. They all knew it was an orphan, for before its mother got hurt its father went through a bridge one dark night into an arm of the sea, and was never heard of again; he was supposed to have been drowned. The old mother locomotive used to say that it would never have happened if she had been there; but poor dear No. 236 was always so venturesome, and she had warned him against that very bridge time and again. Then she would whistle so dolefully, and sigh with her air-brakes enough to make anybody cry. You see they used to be a very happy family when they were all together, before the papa locomotive got drowned. He was very fond of the little Pony Engine, and told it stories at night after they got into the car-house, at the end of some of his long runs. It would get up on his cow-catcher, and lean its chimney up against his,

and listen till it fell asleep. Then he would put it softly down, and be off again in the morning before it was awake. I tell you, those were happy days for poor No. 236. The little Pony Engine could just remember him; it was awfully proud of its papa."

The boy lifted his head and looked at the little girl, who suddenly hid her face in the papa's other shoulder. "Well, I declare, papa, she was putting up her lip."

"I wasn't, any such thing!" said the little girl. "And I don't care! So!" and then she sobbed.

"Now, never you mind," said the papa to the boy. "You'll be putting up *your* lip before I'm through. Well, and then she used to caution the little Pony Engine against getting in the way of the big locomotives, and told it to keep close round after her, and try to do all it could to learn about shifting empty cars. You see, she knew how ambitious the little Pony Engine was, and how it wasn't contented a bit just to grow up in the pony-engine business, and be tied down to the depot all its days. Once she happened to tell it that if it was good and always did what it was bid, perhaps a cow-catcher would grow on it some day, and then it could be a passenger locomotive. Mammas have to promise all sorts of things, and she was almost distracted when she said that."

"I don't think she ought to have deceived it, papa," said the boy. "But it ought to have known that if it was a Pony Engine to begin with, it never could have a cow-catcher."

"Couldn't it?" asked the little girl, gently.

“No; they're kind of mooley.”

The little girl asked the papa, “What makes Pony Engines mooley?” for she did not choose to be told by her brother; he was only two years older than she was, anyway.

“Well; it's pretty hard to say. You see, when a locomotive is first hatched—”

“Oh, are they hatched, papa?” asked the boy.

“Well, we'll *call* it hatched,” said the papa; but they knew he was just funning. “They're about the size of tea-kettles at first; and it's a chance whether they will have cow-catchers or not. If they keep their spouts, they will; and if their spouts drop off, they won't.”

“What makes the spout ever drop off?”

“Oh, sometimes the pip, or the gapes—”

The children both began to shake the papa, and he was glad enough to go on sensibly. “Well, anyway, the mother locomotive certainly oughtn't to have deceived it. Still she had to say *something*, and perhaps the little Pony Engine was better employed watching its buffers with its head-light, to see whether its cow-catcher had begun to grow, than it would have been in listening to the stories of the old locomotives, and sometimes their swearing.”

“Do they swear, papa?” asked the little girl, somewhat shocked, and yet pleased.

“Well, I never heard them, *near by*. But it sounds a good deal like swearing when you hear them on the up-grade on our hill in the night. Where was I?”

“Swearing,” said the boy. “And please don't go back,

now, papa."

"Well, I won't. It'll be as much as I can do to get through this story, without going over any of it again. Well, the thing that the little Pony Engine wanted to be, the most in this world, was the locomotive of the Pacific Express, that starts out every afternoon at three, you know. It intended to apply for the place as soon as its cow-catcher was grown, and it was always trying to attract the locomotive's attention, backing and filling on the track alongside of the train; and once it raced it a little piece, and beat it, before the Express locomotive was under way, and almost got in front of it on a switch. My, but its mother was scared! She just yelled to it with her whistle; and that night she sent it to sleep without a particle of coal or water in its tender.

"But the little Pony Engine didn't care. It had beaten the Pacific Express in a hundred yards, and what was to hinder it from beating it as long as it chose? The little Pony Engine could not get it out of its head. It was just like a boy who thinks he can whip a man."

The boy lifted his head. "Well, a boy *can*, papa, if he goes to do it the right way. Just stoop down before the man knows it, and catch him by the legs and tip him right over."

"Ho! I guess you see yourself!" said the little girl, scornfully.

"Well, I *could*!" said the boy; "and some day I'll just show you."

"Now, little cock-sparrow, now!" said the papa; and he laughed. "Well, the little Pony Engine thought he

could beat the Pacific Express, anyway; and so one dark, snowy, blowy afternoon, when his mother was off pushing some empty coal cars up past the Know-Nothing crossing beyond Charlestown, he got on the track in front of the Express, and when he heard the conductor say ‘All aboard,’ and the starting gong struck, and the brakemen leaned out and waved to the engineer, he darted off like lightning. He had his steam up, and he just scuttled.

“Well, he was so excited for a while that he couldn't tell whether the Express was gaining on him or not; but after twenty or thirty miles, he thought he heard it pretty near. Of course the Express locomotive was drawing a heavy train of cars, and it had to make a stop or two—at Charlestown, and at Concord Junction, and at Ayer—so the Pony Engine did really gain on it a little; and when it began to be scared it gained a good deal. But the first place where it began to feel sorry, and to want its mother, was in Hoosac Tunnel. It never was in a tunnel before, and it seemed as if it would never get out. It kept thinking, What if the Pacific Express was to run over it there in the dark, and its mother off there at the Fitchburg Depot, in Boston, looking for it among the side-tracks? It gave a perfect shriek; and just then it shot out of the tunnel. There were a lot of locomotives loafing around there at North Adams, and one of them shouted out to it as it flew by, ‘What's your hurry, little one?’ and it just screamed back, ‘Pacific Express!’ and never stopped to explain. They talked in locomotive language—”

“Oh, what did it sound like?” the boy asked.

“Well, pretty queer; I'll tell you some day. It knew it had no time to fool away, and all through the long,

dark night, whenever, a locomotive hailed it, it just screamed, ‘Pacific Express!’ and kept on. And the Express kept gaining on it. Some of the locomotives wanted to stop it, but they decided they had better not get in its way, and so it whizzed along across New York State and Ohio and Indiana, till it got to Chicago. And the Express kept gaining on it. By that time it was so hoarse it could hardly whisper, but it kept saying, ‘Pacific Express! Pacific Express!’ and it kept right on till it reached the Mississippi River. There it found a long train of freight cars before it on the bridge. It couldn't wait, and so it slipped down from the track to the edge of the river and jumped across, and then scrambled up the embankment to the track again.”

“Papa!” said the little girl, warningly.

“Truly it did,” said the papa.

“Ho! that's nothing,” said the boy. “A whole train of cars did it in that Jules Verne book.”

“Well,” the papa went on, “after that it had a little rest, for the Express had to wait for the freight train to get off the bridge, and the Pony Engine stopped at the first station for a drink of water and a mouthful of coal, and then it flew ahead. There was a kind old locomotive at Omaha that tried to find out where it belonged, and what its mother's name was, but the Pony Engine was so bewildered it couldn't tell. And the Express kept gaining on it. On the plains it was chased by a pack of prairie wolves, but it left them far behind; and the antelopes were scared half to death. But the worst of it was when the nightmare got after it.”

“The nightmare? Goodness!” said the boy.

“I've had the nightmare,” said the little girl.

“Oh yes, a mere human nightmare,” said the papa. “But a locomotive nightmare is a very different thing.”

“Why, what's it like?” asked the boy. The little girl was almost afraid to ask.

“Well, it has only one leg, to begin with.”

“Pshaw!”

“Wheel, I mean. And it has four cow-catchers, and four head-lights, and two boilers, and eight whistles, and it just goes whirling and screeching along. Of course it wobbles awfully; and as it's only got one wheel, it has to keep skipping from one track to the other.”

“I should think it would run on the cross-ties,” said the boy.

“Oh, very well, then!” said the papa. “If you know so much more about it than I do! Who's telling this story, anyway? Now I shall have to go back to the beginning. Once there was a little Pony En—”

They both put their hands over his mouth, and just fairly begged him to go on, and at last he did. “Well, it got away from the nightmare about morning, but not till the nightmare had bitten a large piece out of its tender, and then it braced up for the home-stretch. It thought that if it could once beat the Express to the Sierras, it could keep the start the rest of the way, for it could get over the mountains quicker than the Express could, and it might be in San Francisco before the Express got to Sacramento. The Express kept gaining on it. But it just zipped

along the upper edge of Kansas and the lower edge of Nebraska, and on through Colorado and Utah and Nevada, and when it got to the Sierras it just stooped a little, and went over them like a goat; it did, truly; just doubled up its fore wheels under it, and jumped. And the Express kept gaining on it. By this time it couldn't say ‘Pacific Express’ any more, and it didn't try. It just said ‘Express! Express!’ and then ‘'Press! 'Press!’ and then ‘'Ess! 'Ess!’ and pretty soon only ‘'Ss! 'Ss!’ And the Express kept gaining on it. Before they reached San Francisco, the Express locomotive's cow-catcher was almost touching the Pony Engine's tender; it gave one howl of anguish as it felt the Express locomotive's hot breath on the place where the nightmare had bitten the piece out, and tore through the end of the San Francisco depot, and plunged into the Pacific Ocean, and was never seen again. There, now,” said the papa, trying to make the children get down, “that's all. Go to bed.” The little girl was crying, and so he tried to comfort her by keeping her in his lap.

The boy cleared his throat. “What is the moral, papa?” he asked, huskily.

“Children, obey your parents,” said the papa.

“And what became of the mother locomotive?” pursued the boy.

“She had a brain-fever, and never quite recovered the use of her mind again.”

The boy thought awhile. “Well, I don't see what it had to do with Christmas, anyway.”

“Why, it was Christmas Eve when the Pony Engine started from Boston, and Christmas afternoon when

it reached San Francisco."

"Ho!" said the boy. "No locomotive could get across the continent in a day and a night, let alone a little Pony Engine."

"But this Pony Engine *had* to. Did you never hear of the beaver that clomb the tree?"

"No! Tell—"

"Yes, some other time."

"But how *could* it get across so quick? Just one day!"

"Well, perhaps it was a year. Maybe it was the *next* Christmas after that when it got to San Francisco."

The papa set the little girl down, and started to run out of the room, and both of the children ran after him, to pound him.

When they were in bed the boy called down-stairs to the papa, "Well, anyway, I didn't put up my lip."

THE PUMPKIN-GLORY



The papa had told the story so often that the children knew just exactly what to expect the moment he began. They all knew it as well as he knew it himself, and they could keep him from making mistakes, or forgetting. Sometimes he would go wrong on purpose, or would pretend to forget, and then they had a perfect right to pound him till he quit it. He usually quit pretty soon.

The children liked it because it was very exciting, and at the same time it had no moral, so that when it was all over, they could feel that they had not been excited just for the moral. The first time the little girl heard it she began to cry, when it came to the worst part; but the boy had heard it so much by that time that he did not mind it in the least, and just laughed.

The story was in season any time between Thanksgiving and New Years; but the papa usually began to tell it in the early part of October, when the farmers were getting in their pumpkins, and the children were asking when they were going to have any squash pies, and the boy had made his first jack-o'-lantern.

“Well,” the papa said, “once there were two little

pumpkin seeds, and one was a good little pumpkin seed, and the other was bad—very proud, and vain, and ambitious."

The papa had told them what ambitious was, and so the children did not stop him when he came to that word; but sometimes he would stop of his own accord, and then if they could not tell what it meant, he would pretend that he was not going on; but he always did go on.

"Well, the farmer took both the seeds out to plant them in the home-patch, because they were a very extra kind of seeds, and he was not going to risk them in the cornfield, among the corn. So before he put them in the ground, he asked each one of them what he wanted to be when he came up, and the good little pumpkin seed said he wanted to come up a pumpkin, and be made into a pie, and be eaten at Thanksgiving dinner; and the bad little pumpkin seed said he wanted to come up a morning-glory.

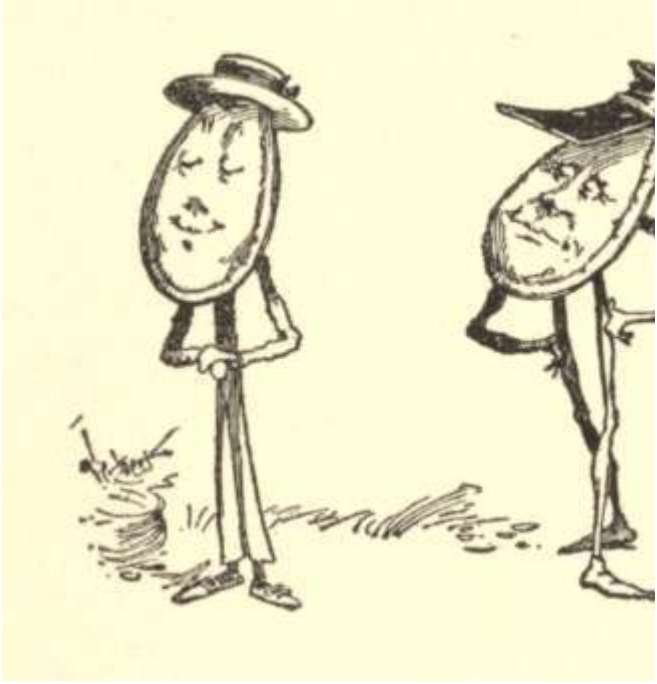
"'Morning-glory!' says the farmer. 'I guess you'll come up a pumpkin-glory, first thing *you* know,' and then he haw-hawed, and told his son, who was helping him to plant the garden, to keep watch of that particular hill of pumpkins, and see whether that little seed came up a morning-glory or not; and the boy stuck a stick into the hill so he could tell it. But one night the cow got in, and the farmer was so mad, having to get up about one o'clock in the morning to drive the cow out, that he pulled up the stick, without noticing, to whack her over the back with it, and so they lost the place.

"But the two little pumpkin seeds, they knew where they were well enough, and they lay low, and let the rain and the sun soak in and swell them up; and then

they both began to push, and by-and-by they got their heads out of the ground, with their shells down over their eyes like caps, and as soon as they could shake them off and look round, the bad little pumpkin vine said to his brother:

"'Well, what are you going to do now?'

"The good little pumpkin vine said, 'Oh, I'm just going to stay here, and grow and grow, and put out all the blossoms I can, and let them all drop off but one, and then grow that into the biggest and fattest and sweetest pumpkin that ever was for Thanksgiving pies.'



TWO LITTLE PUMPKIN SEEDS.

"'Well, that's what I am going to do, too,' said the

bad little pumpkin vine, ‘all but the pies; but I'm not going to stay here to do it. I'm going to that fence over there, where the morning-glories were last summer, and I'm going to show them what a pumpkin-glory is like. I'm just going to cover myself with blossoms; and blossoms that won't shut up, either, when the sun comes out, but 'll stay open, as if they hadn't anything to be ashamed of, and that won't drop off the first day, either. I noticed those morning-glories all last summer, when I was nothing but one of the blossoms myself, and I just made up my mind that as soon as ever I got to be a vine, I would show them a thing or two. Maybe I *can't* be a morning-glory, but I can be a pumpkin-glory, and I guess that's glory enough.’

“It made the cold chills run over the good little vine to hear its brother talk like that, and it begged him not to do it; and it began to cry—

“What's that?” The papa stopped short, and the boy stopped whispering in his sister's ear, and she answered:

“He said he bet it was a girl!” The tears stood in her eyes, and the boy said:

“Well, anyway, it was *like* a girl.”

“Very well, sir!” said the papa. “And supposing it was? Which is better: to stay quietly at home, and do your duty, and grow up, and be eaten in a pie at Thanksgiving, or go gadding all over the garden, and climbing fences, and everything? The good little pumpkin vine was perfectly right, and the bad little pumpkin would have been saved a good deal if it had minded its little sister.

“The farmer was pretty busy that summer, and after the first two or three hoeings he had to leave the two pumpkin vines to the boy that had helped him to plant the seed, and the boy had to go fishing so much, and then in swimming, that he perfectly neglected them, and let them run wild, if they wanted to; and if the good little pumpkin vine had not been the best little pumpkin vine that ever was, it *would* have run wild. But it just stayed where it was, and thickened up, and covered itself with blossoms, till it was like one mass of gold. It was very fond of all its blossoms, and it couldn't bear hardly to think of losing any of them; but it knew they couldn't every one grow up to be a very large pumpkin, and so it let them gradually drop off till it only had one left, and then it just gave all its attention to that one, and did everything it could to make it grow into the kind of pumpkin it said it would.

“All this time the bad little pumpkin vine was carrying out its plan of being a pumpkin-glory. In the first place it found out that if it expected to get through by fall it couldn't fool much putting out a lot of blossoms and waiting for them to drop off, before it began to devote itself to business. The fence was a good piece off, and it had to reach the fence in the first place, for there wouldn't be any fun in being a pumpkin-glory down where nobody could see you, or anything. So the bad little pumpkin vine began to pull and stretch towards the fence, and sometimes it thought it would surely snap in two, it pulled and stretched so hard. But besides the pulling and stretching, it had to hide, and go round, because if it had been seen it wouldn't have been allowed to go to the fence. It was a good thing there were so many weeds, that the boy was too lazy to pull up, and the

bad little pumpkin vine could hide among. But then they were a good deal of a hinderance, too, because they were so thick it could hardly get through them. It had to pass some rows of pease that were perfectly awful; they tied themselves to it and tried to keep it back; and there was one hill of cucumbers that acted ridiculously; they said it was a cucumber vine running away from home, and they would have kept it from going any farther, if it hadn't tugged with all its might and main, and got away one night when the cucumbers were sleeping; it was pretty strong, anyway. When it got to the fence at last, it thought it was going to die. It was all pulled out so thin that it wasn't any thicker than a piece of twine in some places, and its leaves just hung in tatters. It hadn't had time to put out more than one blossom, and that was such a poor little sickly thing that it could hardly hang on. The question was, How can a pumpkin vine climb a fence, anyway?

“Its knees and elbows were all worn to strings getting there, or that's what the pumpkin thought, till it wound one of those tendrils round a splinter of the fence, without thinking, and happened to pull, and then it was perfectly surprised to find that it seemed to lift itself off the ground a little. It said to itself, ‘Let's try a few more,’ and it twisted some more of the tendrils round some more splinters, and this time it fairly lifted itself off the ground. It said, ‘Ah, I see!’ as if it had somehow expected to do something of the kind all along; but it had to be pretty careful getting up the fence not to knock its blossom off, for that would have been the end of it; and when it did get up among the morning-glories it almost killed the poor thing, keeping it open night and day, and showing it off in the hottest sun, and not giving it a bit of shade, but just holding it out where it could be

seen the whole time. It wasn't very much of a blossom compared with the blossoms on the good little pumpkin vine, but it was bigger than any of the morning-glories, and that was some satisfaction, and the bad little pumpkin vine was as proud as if it was the largest blossom in the world.

“When the blossom's leaves dropped off, and a little pumpkin began to grow on in its place, the vine did everything it could for it; just gave itself up to it, and put all its strength into it. After all, it was a pretty queer-looking pumpkin, though. It had to grow hanging down, and not resting on anything, and after it started with a round head, like other pumpkins, its neck began to pull out, and pull out, till it looked like a gourd or a big pear. That's the way it looked in the fall, hanging from the vine on the fence, when the first light frost came and killed the vine. It was the day when the farmer was gathering his pumpkins in the cornfield, and he just happened to remember the seeds he had planted in the home-patch, and he got out of his wagon to see what had become of them. He was perfectly astonished to see the size of the good little pumpkin; you could hardly get it into a bushel basket, and he gathered it, and sent it to the county fair, and took the first premium with it.”

“How much was the premium?” asked the boy. He yawned; he had heard all these facts so often before.



TOOK THE FIRST PREMIUM AT THE COUNT

“It was fifty cents; but you see the farmer had to pay two dollars to get a chance to try for the premium at the fair; and so it was *some* satisfaction. Anyway, he took the premium, and he tried to sell the pumpkin, and when he couldn't, he brought it home and told his wife they must have it for Thanksgiving. The boy had gathered the bad little pumpkin, and kept it from being fed to the cow, it was so funny-looking; and the day before Thanksgiving the farmer found it in the barn, and he said,

“‘Hollo! Here's that little fool pumpkin. Wonder if it thinks it's a morning-glory yet?’

“And the boy said, ‘Oh, father, mayn't I have it?’

“And the father said, ‘Guess so. What are you going to do with it?’

“But the boy didn't tell, because he was going to keep it for a surprise; but as soon as his father went out of the barn, he picked up the bad little pumpkin by its long neck, and he kind of balanced it before him, and he said, ‘Well, now, I'm going to make a pumpkin-glory out of *you*!’



"'HERE'S THAT

"And when the bad little pumpkin heard that, all its seeds fairly rattled in it for joy. The boy took out his knife, and the first thing the pumpkin knew he was

cutting a kind of lid off the top of it; it was like getting scalped, but the pumpkin didn't mind it, because it was just the same as war. And when the boy got the top off he poured the seeds out, and began to scrape the inside as thin as he could without breaking through. It hurt awfully, and nothing but the hope of being a pumpkin-glory could have kept the little pumpkin quiet; but it didn't say a word, even after the boy had made a mouth for it, with two rows of splendid teeth, and it didn't cry with either of the eyes he made for it; just winked at him with one of them, and twisted its mouth to one side, so as to let him know it was in the joke; and the first thing it did when it got one was to turn up its nose at the good little pumpkin, which the boy's mother came into the barn to get."

"Show how it looked," said the boy.

And the papa twisted his mouth, and winked with one eye, and wrinkled his nose till the little girl begged him to stop. Then he went on:

"The boy hid the bad pumpkin behind him till his mother was gone, because he didn't want her in the secret; and then he slipped into the house, and put it under his bed. It was pretty lonesome up there in the boy's room—he slept in the garret, and there was nothing but broken furniture besides his bed; but all day long it could smell the good little pumpkin, boiling and boiling for pies; and late at night, after the boy had gone to sleep, it could smell the hot pies when they came out of the oven. They smelt splendid, but the bad little pumpkin didn't envy them a bit; it just said, 'Pooh! What's twenty pumpkin pies to one pumpkin-glory?'"

"It ought to have said 'what *are*,' oughtn't it, papa?"

asked the little girl.

“It certainly ought,” said the papa. “But if nothing but it's grammar had been bad, there wouldn't have been much to complain of about it.”

“I don't suppose it had ever heard much good grammar from the farmer's family,” suggested the boy. “Farmers always say cowcumbers instead of cucumbers.”

“Oh, *do* tell us about the Cowcumber, and the Bullcumber, and the little Calfcumbers, papa!” the little girl entreated, and she clasped her hands, to show how anxious she was.

“What! And leave off at the most exciting part of the pumpkin-glory?”

The little girl saw what a mistake she had made; the boy just gave her *one look*, and she cowered down into the papa's lap, and the papa went on.

“Well, they had an extra big Thanksgiving at the farmer's that day. Lots of the relations came from out West; the grandmother, who was living with the farmer, was getting pretty old, and every year or two she thought she wasn't going to live very much longer, and she wrote to the relations in Wisconsin, and everywhere, that if they expected to see her alive again, they had better come this time, and bring all their families. She kept doing it till she was about ninety, and then she just concluded to live along and not mind how old she was. But this was just before her eighty-ninth birthday, and she had drummed up so many sons and sons-in-law, and daughters and daughters-in-law, and grandsons and great-grandsons, and granddaughters and great-

granddaughters, that the house was perfectly packed with them. They had to sleep on the floor, a good many of them, and you could hardly step for them; the boys slept in the barn, and they laughed and cut up so the whole night that the roosters thought it was morning, and kept crowing till they made their throats sore, and had to wear wet compresses round them every night for a week afterwards."

When the papa said anything like this the children had a right to pound him, but they were so anxious not to have him stop, that this time they did not do it. They said, "Go on, go on!" and the little girl said, "And then the tables!"

"Tables? Well, I should think so! They got all the tables there were in the house, up stairs and down, for dinner Thanksgiving Day, and they took the grandmother's work-stand and put it at the head, and she sat down there; only she was so used to knitting by that table that she kept looking for her knitting-needles all through dinner, and couldn't seem to remember what it was she was missing. The other end of the table was the carpenter's bench that they brought in out of the barn, and they put the youngest and funniest papa at that. The tables stretched from the kitchen into the dining-room, and clear through that out into the hall, and across into the parlor. They hadn't table-cloths enough to go the whole length, and the end of the carpenter's bench, where the funniest papa sat, was bare, and all through dinner-time he kept making fun. The vise was right at the corner, and when he got his help of turkey, he pretended that it was so tough he had to fasten the bone in the vise, and cut the meat off with his knife like a draw-shave."

“It was the drumstick, I suppose, papa?” said the boy. “A turkey's drumstick is all full of little wooden splinters, anyway.”

“And what did the mamma say?” asked the little girl.



“CAUGHT HIS TROUSERS O

“Oh, she kept saying, ‘Now you behave!’ and, ‘Well, I

should think you'd be ashamed!' but the funniest papa didn't mind her a bit; and everybody laughed till they could hardly stand it. All this time the boys were out in the barn, waiting for the second table, and playing round. The farmer's boy went up to his room over the wood-shed, and got in at the garret window, and brought out the pumpkin-glory. Only he began to slip when he was coming down the roof, and he'd have slipped clear off if he hadn't caught his trousers on a shingle-nail, and stuck. It made a pretty bad tear, but the other boys pinned it up so that it wouldn't show, and the pumpkin-glory wasn't hurt a bit. They all said that it was about the best jack-o'-lantern they almost ever saw, on account of the long neck there was to it; and they made a plan to stick the end of the neck into the top of the pump, and have fun hearing what the folks would say when they came out after dark and saw it all lit up; and then they noticed the pigpen at the corner of the barn, and began to plague the pig, and so many of them got up on the pen that they broke the middle board off; and they didn't like to nail it on again because it was Thanksgiving Day, and you mustn't hammer or anything; so they just stuck it up in its place with a piece of wood against it, and the boy said he would fix it in the morning.

"The grown folks stayed so long at the table that it was nearly dark when the boys got to it, and they would have been almost starved if the farm-boy hadn't brought out apples and doughnuts every little while. As it was, they were pretty hungry, and they began on the pumpkin pie at once, so as to keep eating till the mother and the other mothers that were helping could get some of the things out of the oven that they had been keeping hot for the boys. The pie was so nice that they kept eating at it all

along, and the mother told them about the good little pumpkin that it was made of, and how the good little pumpkin had never had any wish from the time it was nothing but a seed, except to grow up and be made into pies and eaten at Thanksgiving; and they must all try to be good, too, and grow up and do likewise. The boys didn't say anything, because their mouths were so full, but they looked at each other and winked their left eyes. There were about forty or fifty of them, and when they all winked their left eyes it made it so dark you could hardly see; and the mother got the lamp; but the other mothers saw what the boys were doing, and they just shook them till they opened their eyes and stopped their mischief."

"Show how they looked!" said the boy.

"I can't show how fifty boys looked," said the papa. "But they looked a good deal like the pumpkin-glory that was waiting quietly in the barn for them to get through, and come out and have some fun with it. When they had all eaten so much that they could hardly stand up, they got down from the table, and grabbed their hats, and started for the door. But they had to go out the back way, because the table took up the front entry, and that gave the farmer's boy a chance to find a piece of candle out in the kitchen and some matches; and then they rushed to the barn. It was so dark there already that they thought they had better light up the pumpkin-glory and try it. They lit it up, and it worked splendidly; but they forgot to put out the match, and it caught some straw on the barn floor, and a little more and it would have burnt the barn down. The boys stamped the fire out in about half a second; and after that they waited till it was dark outside before they lit up

the pumpkin-glory again. Then they all bent down over it to keep the wind from blowing the match anywhere, and pretty soon it was lit up, and the farmer's boy took the pumpkin-glory by its long neck, and stuck the point in the hole in the top of the pump; and just then the funniest papa came round the corner of the wood-house, and said:

"'What have you got there, boys? Jack-o'-lantern? Well, well. That's a good one!'

"He came up and looked at the pumpkin-glory, and he bent back and he bent forward, and he doubled down and he straightened up, and laughed till the boys thought he was going to kill himself.

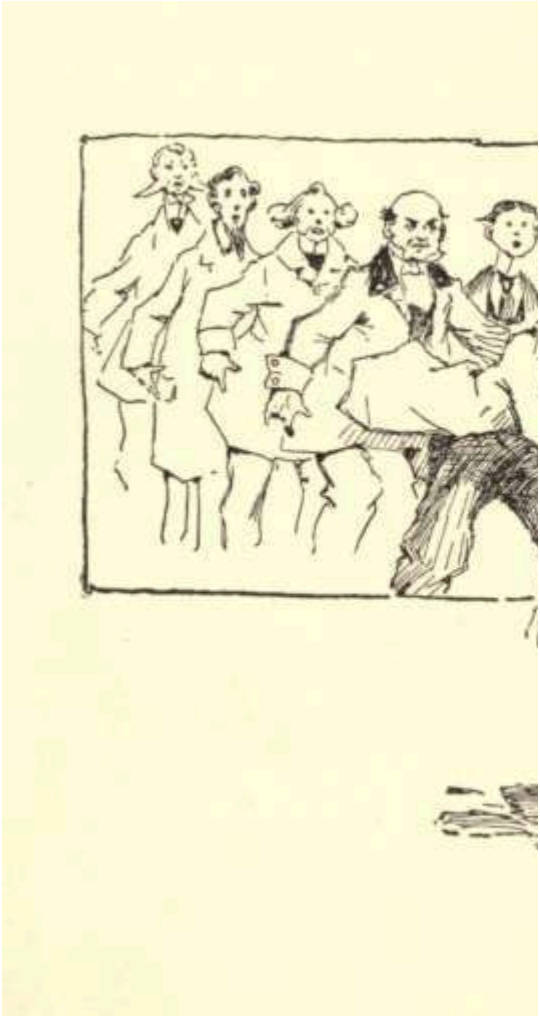
"They had all intended to burst into an Indian yell, and dance round the pumpkin-glory; but the funniest papa said, 'Now all you fellows keep still half a minute,' and the next thing they knew he ran into the house, and came out, walking his wife before him with both his hands over her eyes. Then the boys saw he was going to have some fun with her, and they kept as still as mice, and waited till he walked her up to the pumpkin-glory; and she was saying all the time, 'Now, John, if this is some of your fooling, I'll *give* it to you.' When he got her close up he took away his hands, and she gave a kind of a whoop, and then she began to laugh, the pumpkin-glory *was* so funny, and to chase the funniest papa all round the yard to box his ears, and as soon as she had boxed them she said, 'Now let's go in and send the rest out,' and in about a quarter of a second all the other papas came out, holding their hands over the other mothers' eyes till they got them up to the pumpkin-glory; and then there was such a yelling and laughing and chasing and ear-boxing that you

never heard anything like it; and all at once the funniest papa hallooed out: ‘Where's gramma? Gramma's got to see it! Grandma'll enjoy it. It's just gramma's kind of joke,’ and then the mothers all got round him and said he shouldn't fool the grandmother, anyway; and he said he wasn't going to: he was just going to bring her out and let her see it; and his wife went along with him to watch that he didn't begin acting up.

“The grandmother had been sitting all alone in her room ever since dinner; because she was always afraid somehow that if you enjoyed yourself it was a sign you were going to suffer for it, and she had enjoyed herself a good deal that day, and she was feeling awfully about it. When the funniest papa and his wife came in she said, ‘What is it? What is it? Is the world a-burnin' up? Well, you got to wrap up warm, then, or you'll ketch your death o' cold runnin' and then stoppin' to rest with your pores all open!’

“The funniest papa's wife she went up and kissed her, and said, ‘No, grandmother, the world's all right,’ and then she told her just how it was, and how they wanted her to come out and see the jack-o'-lantern, just to please the children; and she must come, anyway; because it was the funniest jack-o'-lantern there ever was, and then she told how the funniest papa had fooled her, and then how they had got the other papas to fool the other mothers, and they had all had the greatest fun then you ever saw. All the time she kept putting on her things for her, and the grandmother seemed to get quite in the notion, and she laughed a little, and they thought she was going to enjoy it as much as anybody; they really did, because they were all very tender of her, and they wouldn't have scared her for anything, and

everybody kept cheering her up and telling her how much they knew she would like it, till they got her to the pump. The little pumpkin-glory was feeling awfully proud and self-satisfied; for it had never seen any flower or any vegetable treated with half so much honor by human beings. It wasn't sure at first that it was very nice to be laughed at so much, but after a while it began to conclude that the papas and the mammas were just laughing at the joke of the whole thing. When the old grandmother got up close, it thought it would do something extra to please her; or else the heat of the candle had dried it up so that it cracked without intending to. Anyway, it tried to give a very broad grin, and all of a sudden it split its mouth from ear to ear."



“‘N

“You didn't say it had any ears before,” said the boy.

“No; it had them behind,” said the papa; and the boy felt like giving him just one pound; but he thought it might stop the story, and so he let the papa go on.

“As soon as the grandmother saw it open its mouth

that way she just gave one scream, ‘My sakes! It's comin' to life!’ And she threw up her arms, and she threw up her feet, and if the funniest papa hadn't been there to catch her, and if there hadn't been forty or fifty other sons and daughters, and grandsons and daughters, and great-grandsons and great-granddaughters, very likely she might have fallen. As it was, they piled round her, and kept her up; but there were so many of them they jostled the pump, and the first thing the pumpkin-glory knew, it fell down and burst open; and the pig that the boys had plagued, and that had kept squealing all the time because it thought that the people had come out to feed it, knocked the loose board off its pen, and flew out and gobbled the pumpkin-glory up, candle and all, and that was the end of the proud little pumpkin-glory.”

“And when the pig ate the candle it looked like the magician when he puts burning tow in his mouth,” said the boy.

“Exactly,” said the papa.

The children were both silent for a moment. Then the boy said, “This story never had any moral, I believe, papa?”

“Not a bit,” said the papa. “Unless,” he added, “the moral was that you had better not be ambitious, unless you want to come to the sad end of this proud little pumpkin-glory.”

“Why, but the good little pumpkin was eaten up, too,” said the boy.

“That's true,” the papa acknowledged.

“Well,” said the little girl, “there's a great deal of

difference between being eaten by persons and eaten by pigs."

"All the difference in the world," said the papa; and he laughed, and ran out of the library before the boy could get at him.



BUTTERFLYFLUTTERBY AND FLUTTERBYBUTTERFLY.



One morning when the papa was on a visit to the grandfather, the nephew and the niece came rushing into his room and got into bed with him. He pretended to be asleep, and even when they grabbed hold of him and shook him, he just let his teeth clatter, and made no sign of waking up. But they knew he was fooling, and they kept shaking him till he opened his eyes and looked round, and said, “Oh, oh! where am I?” as if he were all bewildered.

“You're in bed with *us*!” they shouted; and they acted as if they were afraid he would try to get away from them by the way they held on to his arms.

But he lay quite still, and he only said, “I should say *you* were in bed with *me*. It seems to be my bed.”

“It's the same thing!” said the nephew.

“How do you make that out?” asked the papa. “It's the same thing if it's enchantment. But if it isn't, it isn't.”

The niece said, “What enchantment?” for she thought that would be a pretty good chance to get what they had come for.

She was perfectly delighted, and gave a joyful thrill all over when the papa said, “Oh, that's a long story.”

“Well, the longer the better, *I* should say; shouldn't you, brother?” she returned.

The nephew hemmed twice in his throat, and asked, drowsily, “Is it a little-pig story, or a fairy-prince story?” for he had heard from his cousins that their papa would tell you a little-pig story if he got the chance; and you had to look out and ask him which it was going to be beforehand.

“Well, I can't tell,” said the papa. “It's a fairy-prince story to begin with, but it may turn out a little-pig story before it gets to the end. It depends upon how the Prince behaves. But *I'm* not anxious to tell it,” and the papa put his face into the pillow and pretended to fall instantly asleep again.

“Now, brother, you see!” said the niece. “Being so particular!”

“Well, sister,” said the nephew, “it wasn't my fault. I *had* to ask him. You know what they said.”

“Well, I suppose we've got to wake him up all over again,” said the niece, with a little sigh; and they began to pull at the papa this way and that, but they could not budge him. As soon as they stopped, he opened his eyes.

“Now don't say, ‘Where am I?’” said the niece.

The papa could not help laughing, because that was just the very thing he was going to say. “Well, all

right! What about that story? Do you want to hear it, and take your chances of its being a Prince to the end?"

"I suppose we'll have to; won't we, sister?"

"Yes, we'll leave it all to you, uncle," said the niece; and she thought she would coax him up a little, and so she went on: "I know you won't be mean about it. Will he, brother?"

"No," said the nephew. "I'll bet the Prince will keep a Prince all the way through. What'll *you* bet, sister?"

"I won't bet anything," said the niece, and she put her arm round the papa's neck, and pressed her cheek up against his. "I'll just leave it to uncle, and if it *does* turn into a little-pig story, it'll be for the moral."

The nephew was not quite sure what a moral was; but at the bottom of his heart he would just as soon have it a little-pig story as not. He had got to thinking how funny a little pig would look in a Prince's clothes, and he said, "Yes, it'll be for the moral."

The papa was very contrary that morning. "Well," said he, "I don't know about that. I'm not sure there's going to be any moral."

"Oh, goody!" said the niece, and she clapped her hands in great delight. "Then it's going to be a Prince story all through!"

"If you interrupt me in that way, it's not going to be any story at all."

"I didn't know you had begun it, uncle," pleaded the niece.

“Well, I hadn't. But I was just going to.” The papa lay quiet a while. The fact is, he had not thought up any story at all; and he was so tired of all the stories he used to tell his own children that he could not bear to tell one of them, though he knew very well that the niece and nephew would be just as glad of it as if it were new, and maybe gladder; for they had heard a great deal about these stories, how perfectly splendid they were—like the Pumpkin-Glory, and the Little Pig that took the Poison Pills, and the Proud Little Horse-car that fell in Love with the Pullman Sleeper, and Jap Doll Hopsing's Adventures in Crossing the Continent, and the Enchantment of the Greedy Travellers, and the Little Boy whose Legs turned into Bicycle Wheels. At last the papa said, “This is a very peculiar kind of a story. It's about a Prince and a Princess.”

“Oh!” went both of the children; and then they stopped themselves, and stuffed the covering into their mouths.

The papa lifted himself on his elbow and stared severely at them, first at one, and then at the other. “Have you finished?” he asked, as if they had interrupted him; but he really wanted to gain time, so as to think up a story of some kind. The children were afraid to say anything, and the papa went on with freezing politeness: “Because if you have, I might like to say something myself. This story is about a Prince and a Princess, but the thing of it is that they had names almost exactly alike. They were twins; the Prince was a boy and the Princess was a girl; that was a point that their fairy godmother carried against the wicked enchantress who tried to have it just the other way; but it made the wicked enchantress so mad that the fairy godmother had to

give in to her a little, and let them be named almost exactly alike."

Here the papa stopped, and after waiting for him to go on, the nephew ventured to ask, very respectfully indeed, "Would you mind telling us what their names were, uncle?"

The papa rubbed his forehead. "I have such a bad memory for names. Hold on! Wait a minute! I remember now! Their names were Butterflyflutterby and Flutterbybutterfly." Of course he had just thought up the names.

"And which was which, uncle dear?" asked the niece, not only very respectfully, but very affectionately, too; she was so afraid he would get mad again, and stop altogether.

"Why, I should think you would know a girl's name when you heard it. Butterflyflutterby was the Prince and Flutterbybutterfly was the Princess."

"I don't see how we're ever going to keep them apart," sighed the niece.

"You've *got* to keep them apart," said the papa. "Because it's the great thing about the story that if you can't remember which is the Prince and which is the Princess whenever I ask you, the story has to stop. It can't help it, and *I* can't help it."

They knew he was just setting a trap for them, and the same thought struck them both at once. They rose up and leaned over the papa, with their arms across and their fluffy heads together in the form of a capital letter A, and whispered in each other's ears, "You say it's one, and I'll say it's the other, and then we'll have it right between us."

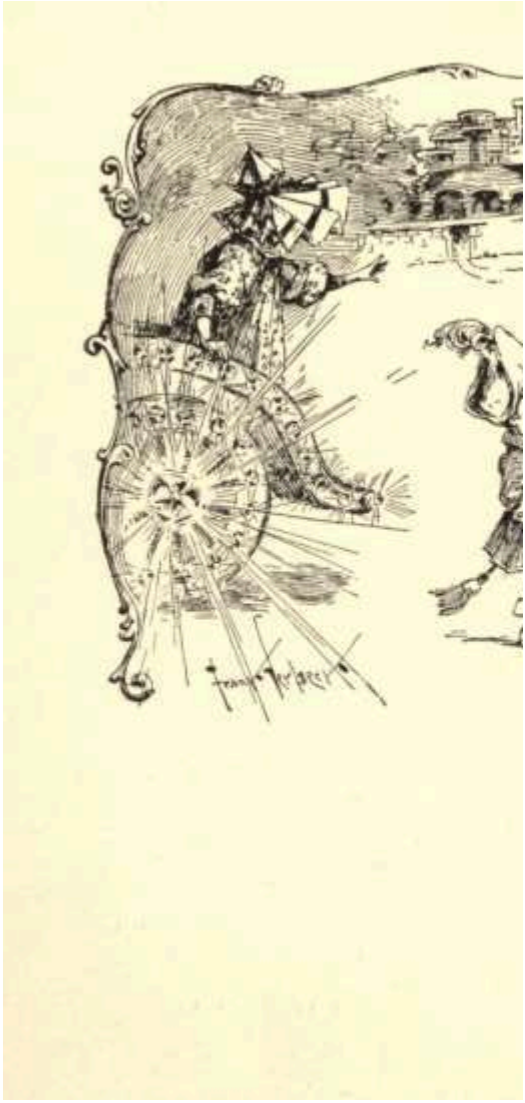
They dropped back and pulled the covering up to their chins, and shouted, “Don't you tell! don't you tell!” and just perfectly wriggled with triumph.

The papa had heard every word; they were laughing so that they whispered almost as loud as talking; but he pretended that he had not understood, and he made up his mind that he would have them yet. “A little and a more,” he said, “and I should never have gone on again.”

“Go on! Go on!” they called out, and then they wriggled and giggled till anybody would have thought they were both crazy.

“Well, where was I?” This was another of the papa's tricks to gain time. Whenever he could not think of anything more, he always asked, “Well, where was I?” He now added: “Oh yes! I remember! Well, once there were a Prince and a Princess, and their names were Butterflyflutterby and Flutterbybutterfly; and they were both twins, and both orphans; but they made their home with their fairy godmother as long as they were little, and they used to help her about the house for part board, and she helped them about their kingdom, and kept it in good order for them, and left them plenty of time to play and enjoy themselves. She was the greatest person for order there ever was; and if she found a speck of dust or dirt on the kingdom anywhere, she would have out the whole army and make them wash it up, and then sand-paper the place, and polish it with a coarse towel till it perfectly glistened. The father of the Prince and Princess had taken the precaution, before he died, to subdue all his enemies; and the consequence was that the longest kind of peace had set in, and the army had nothing to do but keep the

kingdom clean. That was the reason why the fairy godmother had made the General-in-Chief take their guns away, and arm them with long feather-dusters. They marched with the poles on their shoulders, and carried the dusters in their belts, like bayonets; and whenever they came to a place that the fairy godmother said needed dusting—she always went along with them in a diamond chariot—she made the General halloo out: 'Fix dusters! Make ready! Aim! Dust!' And then the place would be cleaned up. But the General-in-Chief used to go out behind the church and cry, it mortified him so to have to give such orders, and it reminded him so painfully of the good old times when he would order his men to charge the enemy, and cover the field with gore and blood, instead of having it so awfully spick-and-span as it was now. Still he did what the fairy godmother told him, because he said it was his duty; and he kept his troops supplied with sudsine and dustene, to clean up with, and brushes and towels. The fairy godmother—"

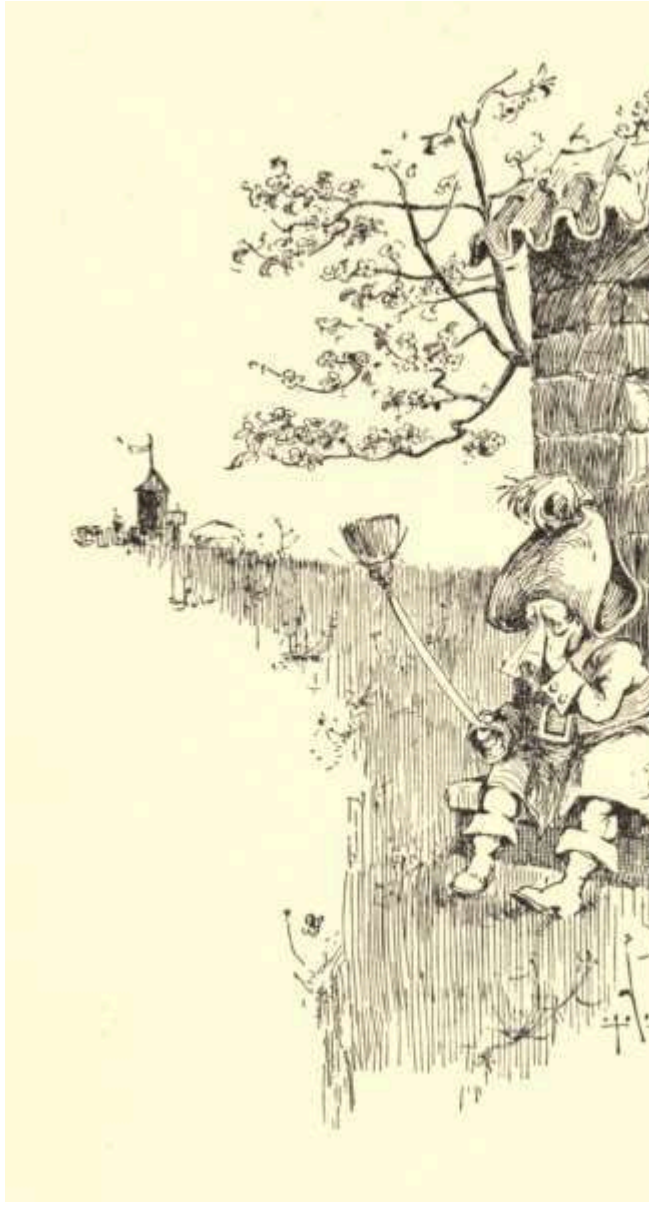


“‘I

“Excuse me, uncle,” said the nephew, with extreme deference, “but I should just like to ask you one question. Will you let me?”

“What is it?” said the papa, in the grimmest kind of manner he could put on.

“Ah, brother!” murmured the niece; for she knew that he was rather sarcastic, and she was afraid that something ironical was coming.



“THE GENERAL-IN-CHIEF USED TO GO BEHIND THE

“Well, I just wanted to ask whether this story was

about the fairy godmother, or about the Prince and Princess."

"Very well, now," said the papa. "You've asked your question. I didn't promise to answer it, and I'm happy to say it stops the story. I'll guess *I'll* go to sleep again. I don't like being waked up this way in the middle of the night, anyhow."

"Now, brother, I hope you're satisfied!" said the niece.

The nephew evaded the point. He said: "Well, sister, if the story really isn't going on, I should like to ask uncle another question. How big was the fairy godmother's diamond chariot?"

"It was the usual sized chariot," answered the papa.

"Whew! It must have been a pretty big diamond, then!"

"It was a *very* big diamond," said the papa; and he seemed to forget all about being mad, or else he had thought up some more of the story to tell, for he went on just as if nothing had happened. "The fairy godmother was so severe with the dirt she found because it was a royal prerogative—that is, nobody but the King, or the King's family, had a right to make a mess, and if other people did it, they were infringing on the royal prerogative.

"You know," the papa explained, "that in old times and countries the royal family have been allowed to do things that no other family would have been associated with if they had done them. That is about the only use there is in having a royal family. But the fairy godmother of Prince—"

“Butterflyflutterby,” said the niece.

“And Princess—”

“Flutterbybutterfly,” said the nephew.

“Correct,” said the papa.

The children rose up into a capital A again, and whispered, “He didn't catch us *that* time,” and fell back, laughing, and the papa had to go on.

“The fairy godmother thought she would try to bring up the Prince and Princess rather better than most Princes and Princesses were brought up, and so she said that the only thing they should be allowed to do different from other people was to make a mess. If any other persons were caught making a mess they were banished; and there was another law that was perfectly awful.”

“What-was-it-go-ahead?” said the nephew, running all his words together, he was so anxious to know.

“Why, if any person was found clearing up anywhere, and it turned out to be a mess that the royal twins had made, the person was thrown from a tower.”

“Did it kill them?” the niece inquired, rather faintly.

“Well, no, it didn't *kill* them exactly, but it bounced them up pretty high. You see, they fell on a bed of India-rubber about twenty feet deep. It gave them a good scare; and that's the great thing in throwing persons from a high tower.”

The nephew hastened to improve the opportunity which seemed to be given for asking questions.

“What do you mean exactly by making a mess, uncle?”

“Oh, scattering scraps of paper about, or scuffing the landscape, or getting jam or molasses on the face of nature, or having bonfires in the back yard of the palace, or leaving dolls around on the throne. But what did I say about asking questions? Now there's another thing about this story: when it comes to the exciting part, if you move the least bit, or even breathe loud, the story stops, just as if you didn't know which was the Prince and which was the Princess. *Now* do you understand?”

The children both said “Yes” in a very small whisper, and cowered down almost under the clothing, and held on tight, so as to keep from stirring.



“THE YOUNG KHAN AND KHANT ENTERED T

The papa went on: “Well, about the time they had got these two laws in full force, and forty or fifty thousand boys girls had been banished for making a mess, and pretty nearly all the neat old ladies in the kingdom had been thrown from a high tower for cleaning up after the Prince and Princess

Butterflyflutterby and Flutterbybutterfly, the young Khan and Khant of Tartary entered the kingdom with a magnificent retinue of followers, to select a bride and groom from the children of the royal family. As there were no children in the royal family except the twins, the choice of the Khan and Khant naturally fell upon the Prince—"

"Butterflyflutterby!"

"And the Princess—"

"Flutterbybutterfly!"

"Correct. It also happened that the Khan and the Khant were brother and sister; but if you can't tell which was the brother and which was the sister, the story stops at this point."

"Why, but, uncle," said the little girl, reproachfully, "you haven't ever told us which is which yourself yet!"

"I know it. Because I'm waiting to find out. You see, with these Asiatic names it's impossible sometimes to tell which is which. You have to wait and see how they will act. If there had been a battle anywhere, and one of them had screamed, and run away, then I suppose I should have been pretty sure it was the sister; but even then I shouldn't know which was the Khan and which was the Khant."

"Well, what are we going to do about it, then?" asked the nephew.

"I don't know," said the papa. "We shall just have to keep on and see. Perhaps when they meet the Prince and Princess we shall find out. I don't suppose a boy would fall in love with a boy."

“No,” said the niece; “but he might want to go off with him and have fun, or something.”

“That's true,” said the papa. “We've got to all watch out. Of course the Khan and the Khant scuffed the landscape awfully, as they came along through the kingdom, and got the face of nature all daubed up with marmalade—they were the greatest persons for marmalade—and when they reached the palace of the Prince and Princess they had to camp out in the back yard, and they had to have bonfires to cook by, and they made a frightful mess.

“Well, there was the greatest excitement about it that there ever was. The General-in-Chief kept his men under arms night and day, and the fairy godmother was so worked up she almost had a brain-fever; and if she had not taken six of aconite every night when she went to bed she *would* have had. You see, the question was what to do about the mess that the Khan and Khant made. They were visitors, and it wouldn't have been polite to banish them; and they belonged to a royal family, and so nobody dared to clean up after them. The whole kingdom was in the most disgusting state, and whenever the fairy godmother looked into the back yard of the palace she felt as if she would go through the floor.



“SHE WAS G

“Well, it kept on going from bad to worse. The only person that enjoyed herself was the wicked enchantress; *she* never had such a good time in her life; and when the fairy godmother got hold of the

Grand Vizier and the Cadi, and told them to make a new law so as to allow the army to clean up after royal visitors, without being thrown from a high tower, the wicked enchantress enchanted the whole mess, so that the army could not tell which the Prince and Princess had made, and which the Khan and Khant had made; they were all four always playing together, anyway.

“It seemed as if the poor old fairy godmother would go perfectly wild, and she almost made the General crazy giving orders in one breath, and taking them back in the next. She said that now something had got to be done; she had stood it long enough; and she was going to take the case into her own hands. She saw that she should have no peace of her life till the Prince and Princess and the Khan and Khant were married. She sent for the head Imam, and told him to bring those children right in and marry them, and she would be responsible.

“The Imam put his head to the floor—and it was pretty hard on him, for he was short and stout, and he had to do it kind of sideways—and said to hear was to obey; but he could not marry them unless he knew which was which.

“The fairy godmother screamed out: ‘I don't *care* which is which! Marry them all, just as they are!’

“But when she came to think it over, she saw that this would not do, and so she tried to invent some way out of the trouble. One morning she woke up with a splendid idea, and she could hardly wait to have breakfast before she sent for the General-in-Chief. Her nerves were all gone, and as soon as she saw him, she yelled at him: ‘A sham battle—to-day—now—this very instant! Right away, right away, right

away!’

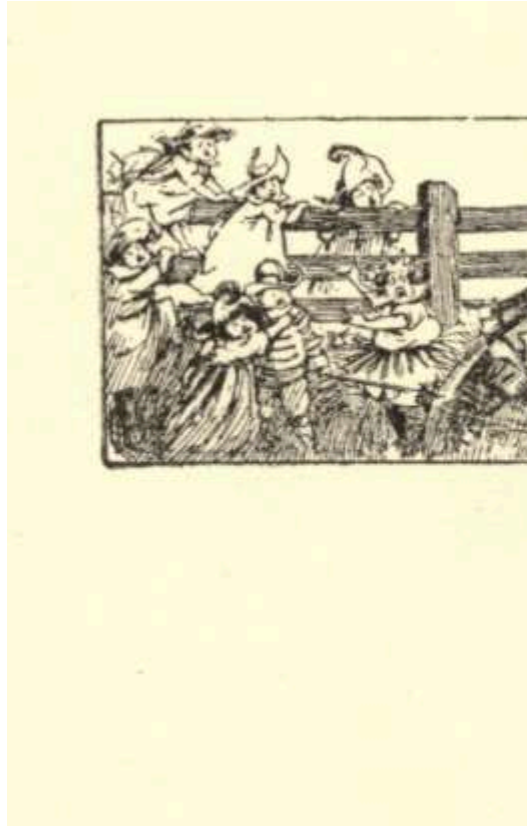


“T

“The General got her to explain herself, and then he understood that she wanted him to have a grand

review and sham battle of all the troops, in honor of the Khan and Khant; and the whole court had to be present, and especially the timidest of the ladies, that would almost scare a person to death by the way they screamed when they were frightened. The General was just going to say that the guns and cannon had all got rusty, and the powder was spoiled from not having been used for so long, with the everlasting cleaning up that had been going on; but the fairy godmother stamped her foot and sent him flying. So the only thing he could do was to set all the gnomes at work making guns and cannon and powder, and about twelve o'clock they had them ready, and just after lunch the sham battle began.

“The troops marched and counter-marched, and fired away the whole afternoon, and sprang mines and blew up magazines, and threw cannon crackers and cannon torpedoes. There was such an awful din and racket that you couldn't hear yourself think, and some of the court ladies were made perfectly sick by it. They all asked to be excused, but the fairy godmother wouldn't excuse one of them. She just kept them there on the seats round the battle-field, and let them shriek themselves hoarse. So many of them fainted that they had to have the garden hose brought, and they kept it sprinkling away on their faces all the afternoon.



“THEY F

“But it was a failure as far as the Khan and the Khant were concerned. The fairy godmother expected that as soon as the loudest firing began, the girl, whichever it was, would scream, and so they would know which was which. But the Khan and Khant's father had been a famous warrior, and he had been in the habit of taking his children to battle with him from their earliest years, partly because his wife was dead and he didn't dare trust them with the careless nurse at home, and partly because he wanted to harden their nerves. So now they just clapped their

hands, and enjoyed the sham battle down to the ground.

“About sunset the fairy godmother gave it up. She had to, anyway. The troops had shot away all their powder, and the gnomes couldn't make any more till the next day. So she set out to return to the city, with all the court following her diamond chariot, and I can tell you she felt pretty gloomy. She told the Grand Vizier that now she didn't see any end to the trouble, and she was just going into hysterics when a barefooted boy came along driving his cow home from the pasture. The fairy godmother didn't mind it much, for she was in her chariot; but the court ladies were on foot, and they began to scream, ‘Oh, the cow! the cow!’ and to take hold of the knights, and to get on to the fence, till it was perfectly packed with them; and who do you think the fairy godmother found had scrambled up on top of her chariot?”

The nephew and niece were afraid to risk a guess, and the papa had to say:

“The Khant! The fairy godmother pulled her inside and hugged her and kissed her, she was so glad to find out that she was the one; and she stopped the procession on the spot, and she called up the Imam, and he married the Khant to Prince—”

The papa stopped, and as the niece and nephew hesitated, he said, very sternly, “Well?”

The fact is, they had got so mixed up about the Khan and the Khant of Tartary that they had forgotten which was Butterflyflutterby and which was Flutterbybutterfly. They tried, shouting out one the one and the other the other, but the papa said:

“Oh no! That won't work. I've had that sort of thing tried on me before, and it *never* works. *I* heard you whispering what you would do, and you have simply added the crime of double-dealing to the crime of inattention. The story has stopped, and stopped forever.”

The nephew stretched himself and then sat up in bed. “Well, it had got to the end, anyway.”

“Oh, *had* it? What became of the wicked enchantress?” The nephew lay down again, in considerable dismay.

“Uncle,” said the niece, very coaxingly, “*I* didn't say it had come to the end.”

“But it has,” said the papa. “And I'm mighty glad you forgot the Prince's name, for the rule of this story is that it has to go on as long as any one listening remembers, and it might have gone on forever.”

“I suppose,” the nephew said, “a person may guess?”

“He may, if he guesses right. If he guesses wrong, he has to be thrown from a high tower—the same one the wicked enchantress was thrown from.”

“There!” shouted the nephew; “you said you wouldn't tell. How high was the tower, anyway, uncle? As high as the Eiffel Tower in Paris?”

“Not quite. It was three feet and five inches high.”

“Ho! Then the enchantress was a dwarf!”

“Who said she was a dwarf?”

“There wouldn't be any use throwing her from the tower if she wasn't.”

“I didn't say it was any use. They just did it for ornament.”

This made the nephew so mad that he began to dig the papa with his fist, and the papa began to laugh. He said, as well as he could for laughing: “You see, the trouble was to keep her from bouncing up higher than the top of the tower. She was light weight, anyway, because she was a witch; and after the first bounce they had to have two executioners to keep throwing her down—a day executioner and a night executioner; and she went so fast up and down that she was just like a solid column of enchantress. She enjoyed it first-rate, but it kept her out of mischief.”

“Now, uncle,” said the niece, “you're just letting yourself go. What did the fairy godmother do after they all got married?”

“Well, the story don't say exactly. But there's a report that when she became a fairy grandgodmother, she was not half so severe about cleaning up, and let the poor old General-in-Chief have some peace of his life —or some war. There was a rebellion among the genii not long afterwards, and the General was about ten or fifteen years putting them down.”

The nephew had been lying quiet a moment. Now he began to laugh.

“What are you laughing at?” demanded his uncle.

“The way that Khant scrambled up on top of the chariot when the cow came along. Just like a girl. They're all afraid of cows.”

The tears came into the niece's eyes; she had a great many feelings, and they were easily hurt, especially her feelings about girls.

“Well, she wasn't afraid of the cannon, anyway.”

“That is a very just remark,” said the uncle. “And now what do you say to breakfast?”

The children sprang out of bed, and tried which could beat to the door. They forgot to thank the uncle, but he did not seem to have expected any thanks.

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