The Orphans' Friend.

VOLUME I. OXFORD, N. C., WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1875. NUMBER 49.

From the Companion.

BRAVE BETTINE.

BY MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

In a pleasant part of New Jersey, near the banks of the broad, blue Delaware, a certain road runs "down country," as the people say thereabouts. It begins at Gloucester, on the river shore, winds out through Westville and Woodbury, runs through the little village of Carpenter's Landing, and then on to the southeast, coming out in some unknown locality beyond the distant horizon.

About half a mile from Carpenter's Landing, near the pine woods and huckleberry swamps, its broad red roof plainly visible from the village hills, stands a wide old mansion, known for many years in that district as the Murray Homestead.

It is a large building, two stories and a half high, with a broad hall running the whole length of the house. On each side of this hall are doors admitting to various rooms, and through it runs the wide staircase leading to the upper chambers.

Under the stairs is a deep closet, provided with a thick door and a strong, heavy lock, and in this closet the family silver, which was very valuable, was kept. Here, also, Uncle John—for it is of some relatives of mine I am writing—kept what surplus money he had in his possession.

Perhaps it was not the safest place in the world to keep valuables, but everybody about the house was trusty, the lock very strong, and the key always in Uncle John's possession. No property ever had been stolen from the house, and therefore, he argued, it was not likely that any ever would be dishonestly taken.

At the time of which I write, besides the family,—consisting of Uncle John, Aunt Lizzie, and the only son and daughter then at home,—there were in the house two honest, faithful serving men. One of these men was named Jacob Van Bromp. He was a German, as his name implies. The other was an American, called Dan. If I ever knew his other name, I have forgotten it. There was also a young German girl, named Bettine Schæffer.

Bettine was a small, slender girl, with a pleasant German face, and an abundance of soft, yellow hair. Her quick motions, neat ways, and quiet energy, made her a great favorite with her employers. And with more than the heads of the household, too. There had been sly glances and smiles, when it was noticed that stout Jacob Van Bromp sat every evening with little Bettine in her neat kitchen. More than one remark was dropped about the future, when Jacob and Bettine would still be employed about the place,—as neither of them could be spared,—but when they would be settled in the cosey little tenant-house just across the garden.

One day uncle had been attending to some business in Philadelphia, and had received sixteen hundred dollars. He intended to leave this money, as he ought to have done, at one of the city banks. But finding himself away down in South Street, he looked at his watch, and as he had only ten minutes in which to catch the last boat across the river, if he went up town to a bank, he would lose the boat, and be obliged to remain all night in the city.

Besides, Dan with the buggy would meet him at the boat on the Jersey side, and if he failed to appear, Aunt Lizzie would be tormented with anxious fears. It did not make any difference, he thought; the money would be safe at home, and he would come to the city again in a day or two. So away trotted Uncle John to catch the ferry-boat, with the money in his pocket.

Once at home, he put it into the locked closet, and thought, as he did so, that he would go back to the city the next day and deposit it in the bank.

The next day there was pleasant company at the house, and Uncle John put off his trip to the city for another day. Jacob and Dan did go to town with the market-wagon and a load of produce, but of course they could not take the money.

That night there were a church fair and supper at Carpentar's Landing, in which Aunt Lizzie was very much interested. So, after supper, all the family went to the village, leaving only Bettine at home.

It was not thought that she would be alone, for Jacob and Dan were expected home with their market wagon every moment, and Bettine had their supper waiting. When the family left the house Uncle John did not think of the money in the closet; and it would not have made much difference if he had, for he thought it was safe there. I said Uncle John had the key in his own possession; but I did not mean that he carried it in his pocket. He always left it in a little drawer in his secretary, so that the silver could be used if it was wanted.

Aunt Lizzie had put away the silver plate that had been used for dinner that day, and had put the closet key in this drawer.

This Bettine knew. Supper was waiting, and, as I have said, she expected Jacob and Dan every moment. It grew dark, and the men did not come. Then Bettine began to feel anxious; but it was for them, not for herself. The time passed. It was almost eight o'clock, and they did not come. Could they have missed the boat? Perhaps one of the horses was lame, and they had been obliged to walk slowly.

Bettine pushed the teapot nearer the fire. Then she went and locked all the doors except the door at the back of the house. When she returned to the kitchen, she put up the curtains, so that her lamp might light the tired men home, and then took her work and sat down to sew.

Presently the clock struck eight. Bettine felt really alone, and looked out at the window, black with the darkness outside, with a sigh. Just then she heard footsteps upon the kitchen porch. She sprang up and threw open the door, eager to welcome the long-expected men. Instead of Dan and Jacob, in walked a tall, heavily bearded man, who shut and locked the door, and spoke to Bettine, who stood trembling with surprise and fear.

"Well, my pretty gal, anybody to home but you?"

"No," spoke up Bettine, "but I expect the men every minute."

"Then I must make haste. I see you've got supper ready. I haint eat a bite to-day, so I'll just take some."

Bettine, hoping something to eat was all he wanted, told him to help himself, and stood on one side of the room, shaking with fright while he ate.

Hurriedly eating everything within his reach, the man turned to her again, and said, roughly,

"Hark ye, my gal, I don't want to hurt you; I happen to know there's a heap of money and silver traps in this here house, and that's what I come for. Now you jest tell me where they are, and I won't hurt you, but I may have to if you don't. Come, now, tell quick."

"I will not!" bravely cried the trembling Bettine, who spoke English with only the slightest German accent.

"You won't?" said the man, taking a pistol from his vest. "Looky here, then, I'll have to make you. Come, now, you can't help yourself, and you can't save the things. I don't want to hurt you, but if you won't tell, as sure as you stand there I'll shoot you, and then hunt till I find 'em! Come, now, I aint foolin." Tell quick, before some one comes, and I have to shoot you, anyhow!"

Poor Bettine saw in his eyes that the ruffian would do as he said, so she faltered out, "The things are in the closet under the stairs, but it's locked."

"Where's the *key*, then?" demanded the ruffian.

Perhaps, thought poor Bettine, if she told where the *key* was, and he went to get the things, the men would come before he could pack them. How she prayed that they might come, as she pointed to the drawer where the *key* was kept.

"Get it!" ordered the man.

Bettine, not daring to disobey, went to the drawer and took the key. The man snatched it from her. Then he gave it back.

"Go and open the closet!" he ordered.

Bettine led the way to the closet. As she put the key in the lock, a thought struck her which thrilled her through and through. Then came a dizzy, faint feeling. O, if she only, only, only, *could!* If she could only do what she dared!

She turned the key and opened the door.

'Hold the light and follow me!' said the villain, his eyes gleaming as the light fell on the sparkling, glittering treasures before him.

But the instant he was fairly inside the closet, Bettine, quick as lightning, dropped her lamp, shut the closet door, locked it, shot the upper and lower bolts, and sank, half-fainting, upon the floor.

The man, finding himself caught, like a rat in a trap, threw his great strength against the door, raving, cursing, stamping and *kicking*, until, stout as she knew the door to be, Bettine feared he would burst it open. She dragged herself up, picked up the lamp, which luckily was neither broken nor extinguished, set it on a chair, and with all her slender might pushed a large old-fashioned mahogany dining-table, which stood near against the door. Not satisfied with this, she rushed into the wood-shed, brought the heaviest sticks and logs of wood she could carry, and built upon the heavy table a barricade almost to the top of the door. Then she dropped upon the floor again, trembling with excitement and terror to await the coming of some member of the family.

Fortunately, she did not wait long! Very soon steps and voices were heard. This time Bettine knew them. She struggled to her feet just as, guided by the light, Jacob and Dan came to the back hall door. Darting towards them, she fell, speechless, into the stout arms of the astonished Jacb!

But brave little Bettine did not faint. Very soon she told her story. Leaving Jacob to guard Bettine and her prisoner, Dan mounted a swift horse and rode to the village for Mr. Murray and the officers. In a very short time, though it seemed long to the watchers, the whole family returned. Bettine's barricade was taken down. The villain knew that resistance would be useless against so large a number of men, and when the door was opened allowed himself to be secured. It is enough to say of him that he was taken next day to the city, found to be an old offender, and sent to meet the punishment due his many crimes.

Of our brave little Bettine, I can say that no daughter of the house was made more of or more petted than she; and she had the modesty and good sense to appreciate and be grateful for it, without being spoiled by it.

The men had been detained in Philadelphia because one of the horses had been taken *sick*. In the spring, when Bettine and Jacob were married, Uncle John made them a present of a cosy little house, and the lot on which it stood, saying that Bettine's courage had saved him so much more than the worth of it, that it was only what she well deserved.

And the last I heard of Jacob and Bettine Van Bromp, they were still living there, happy, thrifty and industrious.

Pearls and Pearl Fishing.

The best pearls in the world are those found in the oyster banks of Ceylon. Up to within a few months, however, the business of pearl-diving at Ceylon had ceased for a long period. In the year 1864, the oysters which bore this gem in their many-colored shells suddenly disappeared; and they did not return to the old home of the pearl fishery until the summer of the present year.

The divers had to seek a livelihood elsewhere, either in their occupation of pearl-getting in the waters of Bahrein, Tuticorin, or the West Indies or in some other field of labor.

It is a pleasant fact to the fashionable ladies of Europe and America, as well as to the poor pearl-divers, that the supplies of the unrivaled Aripo pearl have been resumed. They are far more beautiful in hue and lustre, and larger in size, than the pearls gleaned from any other seas.

Like diamonds, rubies and emeralds, pearls differ very widely in price; the qualities affecting their price being size, shape, and purity and brillancy of lustre.

Seed pearls, dull in hue and round in shape, are cheap; on the other hand, there exists in Europe—perhaps set in some imperial or royal crown—a pearl about two inches and a half long and three-quarters of an inch wide, pear or tear shaped, which was sold for nolless a sum than five hundred and fifty thousand dollars. A pear-shaped pearl of good lustre costs in London fifty dollars if it weighs over eighty grains, and twenty dollars if below fifty grains.

It may be added that the color of pearls, which are pink, black and gray, as well as white, does not greatly affect their value.

Great nicety and delicacy are required in boring this frail and delicate gem. The Hindoos are the most skilful in the work. It is said that there are only three men in London who are abled to perform it. The hole drilled in the pearl is so very small that a human hair passed through it, grazes each side of it.

INTERESTING FACTS.—Hats so common now, were first invented in 1404. Algebra was first introduced in England by the Saracens in 1412. Paper made of linen rags was the production of the year 1417. To England is accorded the honor of the invention and use of the musket, in 1421. A very useful, if not a great invention, was that of pumps, in 1425. Diamonds were first cut and polished in 1439. In 1441 printing was invented by Faust, a German. Most persons are familiar with the traditional letters carved on the bark of a tree, the embryo types that were designed to merge into the grand art which is so prolific in practical benefits to the entire human race. England was slow to seize upon this new discovery, and it was not until 1474, a lapse of thirty-three years, that the art of printing was introduced into that country by Caxton. As a natural sequence engraving on wood followed in 1460, and engraving on copper in 1480.

A SWEET TEMPER.—No trait of character is more valuable in woman than a sweet temper. Home can never be made happy without it. It is like a flower that springs up in our pathway, reviving and cheering us. Let a man go home at night wearied by the toils of the day, and how soothing is a word dictated by a good disposition! It is sunshine falling on his heart. Study, then, to acquire and retain a sweet temper; it is more valuable than gold; it captivates more than beauty and retains all freshness and power.