

# The Orphans' Friend.

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## THE FIRE DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK CITY.

The Fire Department of New York City, which electricity controls, is the finest and most extensive in the world. Great big London and brilliant Paris have nothing to compare with it. It costs us a good deal of money to keep it going, but we are proud of it, and no one who has seen it at work can fail to admire it. The engines and horses are the best that can be obtained, and the men are skillful and brave. Perhaps you have stood in some street when an alarm of fire has been sent out from one of the boxes. A minute or two afterward a fireman has dashed around the corner, clearing the way for his engine, which has followed along behind at race-horse speed, with bells ringing and a trail of smoke pouring from the chimney,—the wheels a bright scarlet, and every bit of brass-work throwing back the sunshine in blinding rays. Then the hose carriage has come,—a drum on wheels, with hundreds of yards of leather tubing wrapped around it, and a half a dozen men clinging to their seats for their lives, and slipping on their coats as they were whirled onward. It seemed like a calvary charge in a battle, and has stirred your blood with excitement. The busiest man on the thronged street has paused to watch the heroes galloping to their work. The vehicles in the roadway, that were all wedged in together, have drawn aside and left a clear passage in the center.

So, within a few minutes of the time of the alarm, the gallant firemen have reached the burning building, and have scaled the walls and poured torrents of water on the flames, perhaps putting them out in less than half an hour, and perhaps fighting them for the greater part of a day.

The moment the knob in the little house is pulled, all the cog-wheels revolve with a noise like clock-work, and Electricity leaps out of the roof and along the wires with a warning to the engine houses. Away he goes over the highest buildings in the city, up this street, down that street, now along a narrow cornice seventy feet high, then around a church steeple, stopping for the millionth part of a second on a fifth story, then down to the ground, never pausing until he alights at his destination with a crash like the sound of a bad boy tumbling through the roof of a glass house.

And when he arrives there? What then? Well, I will tell exactly what happens then; but before doing that, I must ask you to swallow a few, nice, dry, important facts.

You understand, of course, that no great business attends to itself, and in the Fire Department each man has a particular place and some particular duties assigned to him. The whole city, from the battery Park at one end to Fordham at the other, is divided into districts, each of which has a certain number of alarm-boxes and station-houses in it. The station-houses are occupied by companies of firemen, and are built of brick, three stories high,

with wide green gates in front. The first floor is level with the street, and contains the engine, in the rear of which are stalls for the horses. On the second story there is a sitting room, nicely carpeted and papered, containing a small library and pictures of celebrated firemen on the walls. Above this are the dormitories, with long rows of narrow iron beds, and a wash-room. Altogether, these station-houses look very comfortable, and many boys will, perhaps, consider a fireman's a very desirable life.

Suppose that you and I drop into one quite by chance some afternoon or evening; it matters little what the hour is, for the firemen have no respite, and are on duty all day and all night.

As we enter the house from the street, we are at first impressed with the marvelous neatness of everything. The floors are scrubbed to a degree of whiteness that would do a tidy woman's heart good. The calcimine on the walls is spotless, and a great big brass gong shines like a miniature sun. The engine, standing in the center, is as bright as though it had just come from the builder's hands. Its wheels are painted a flaming scarlet, and every bit of the brass-work is a looking-glass. Yet it was at a fire only last night, and was drenched with water and clouded with smoke. The furnace is filled with fuel, and a brand of cotton soaked in kerosene lies near by, ready to be lighted the moment it is wanted. Perhaps you have not observed the pipe that comes up through the floor. But if you look at the little dial over the furnace, you will see that twenty-five pounds of pressure are registered, which amount of steam is constantly maintained in the boiler by means of this pipe, which is attached to another boiler in the cellar beneath; so that when the engine is called out, and her own fire is lighted, she is immediately ready for use.

In the stalls behind the front apartment three plump, well-groomed horses are securely haltered, with the pet name of each written in golden letters over his bed. Some of the firemen, who are mostly young, wiry, and muscular, are in the parlor overhead, reading or playing dominoes. Others are chatting in the rear yard.

Although the station is on a noisy thoroughfare, it is as quiet as a church within, and an overfed kitten is coiled up in tranquil sleep on the door-mat. But a surprise is in store for us, and when it comes it shakes our nerves.

Crash! The roof seems to be falling in. Crash! crash! crash! again and again. The three horses come galloping out of the stable one after the other, and stop short in front of the engine and hose-carriage. The men leap about like bounding Arabs. There is a rattle of harness; the drivers spring to their seats, and the wide doors fly open. Ready!

And the captain of the station, who has been standing quietly in a corner with his watch in his hand, comes toward us, who are dumbfounded, and smilingly says

to us: "Exactly thirteen seconds, gentlemen!" What on earth does he mean? Simply that, in order to show us what his men could do, he gave a false alarm, and that a little more than a quarter of a minute after Master Electricity had sounded the gong, every man was at his place, horses were harnessed, and all things were ready for a fight with the flames.

Whenever the knob in the little houses on the telegraph-poles is pulled, the same things occur in at least four engine-houses. The moment the hammer of the gong falls, which it does when touched by that marvelous fellow Electricity, it disengages the horses from their halters by a connecting iron rod, and they, trained to their duties, spring to their places with as much eagerness as the men. The same signal tells exactly where the fire is, and within ten minutes four engines are on the spot, sucking water from the mains and throwing it eighty or ninety feet high.

If the knob is pulled a second time, four more engines are called; and if again, four more; and by repeating the call, all the engines in the city may be brought to the ground.

Doesn't all this recall the story of Jack the Giant-killer to your mind? Electricity is Jack, who, although such a bit of a fellow, has the power to command this great giant of the Fire Department.—*St. Nicholas for March.*

## CHEMISTRY FOR GIRLS.

BY E. THOMPSON, D. D.

Something that every woman should read. This is properly styled a utilitarian age, for the inquiry, "What profit?" meets us everywhere. It has entered the temples of learning, and attempted to thrust out important studies, because their immediate connection with hard money profits can not be demonstrated. There is one spot, however, into which it has not so generally introduced itself—the female academy—the last refuge of the fine arts and fine follies. Thither young ladies are too frequently sent, merely to learn how to dress tastefully and walk gracefully, play, write French and make waxen plumes and silken spiders—all are pretty, but why not inquire, "What profit?"

I take my pen, not to utter a dissertation on female education, but to insist that young ladies be taught chemistry. They will thereby be better qualified to superintend domestic affairs, guard against many accidents to which households are subject, and perhaps be instrumental in saving life. We illustrate the last remark by reference merely to the subject of poisons.

The strong acids, such as nitric, muriatic and sulphuric, are virulent poisons, yet frequently used in medicine, and the mechanic arts. Suppose a child in his rambles among the neighbors, should enter a cabinet shop, and find a saucer of *aqua fortis* (nitric acid) upon the work-bench, and in his sport, seize and drink a portion of it. He is conveyed home in great agony. The physician is sent for, but ere he arrives the child is

a corpse. Now as the mother presses the cold clay to her breast and lips for the last time, how will her anguish be aggravated to know that in the medicine chest, or drawer, was some calcined magnesia, which, if timely administered, would have saved her lovely, perchance her first and only boy. Oh! what are all the bouquets and fine dresses in the world to her, compared with such knowledge?

Take another case. A husband returning home, on a summer afternoon, desires some acidulous drink. Opening the cupboard, he sees a small box, labeled 'salts of lemon,' and making a solution of this, he drinks it freely. Presently he feels distress, sends for his wife, and ascertains that he has drunk a solution of oxalic acid, which she has procured to take stains from linen. The physician is sent for; but the unavoidable delay attending his arrival is fatal. When he arrives, perhaps he sees upon the very table on which the weeping widow bows her head, a piece of chalk, which, if given in time, would certainly have prevented any mischief from the poison.

Corrosive sublimate is the article generally used to destroy the vermin which sometimes invest our couches. A solution of it is laid upon the floor in a tea-cup, when the domestics go down to dine, leaving the children upstairs to play; the infant crawls to the tea-cup and drinks. Now what think you would be the mother's joy, if having studied chemistry, she instantly called to recollection the well ascertained fact, that there is in the hen's nest an antidote to this poison? She sends for some eggs, and breaking them, administers the white. Her child recovers, and she weeps for joy. Talk to her of novels—one little book of natural science has been worth to her more than all the novels in the world.

Physicians in the country rarely carry scales with them to weigh their prescriptions. They administer their medicines by guess, from a tea-spoon or the point of a knife. Suppose a common case. A physician in a hurry leaves an over-dose of tartar-emetic, (generally the first prescription in case of billious fever,) and pursues his way to another patient, ten miles distant. The medicine is duly administered, and the man is poisoned. When the case becomes alarming, one messenger is dispatched for the doctor, and another to call in the neighbors to see the sufferer die. Now there is, in a canister in the cupboard, and on a tree that grows by the door, a remedy for this distress and alarm—a sure means of saving the sick man from threatened death. A strong decoction of young hyson tea, oak bark, or any other astringent vegetable, will change tartar-emetic into a harmless compound.

Vessels of copper often give rise to poisoning. Though this metal undergoes but little change in a dry atmosphere, it is rusted if moisture be present, and its surface becomes covered with a green substance—carbonate or the protoxide of copper, a pois-

onous compound. It has sometimes happened that a mother has, for want of knowledge, poisoned her family. Sour-kraut, when permitted to stand for some time in a copper vessel, has produced death in a few hours. Cooks sometimes permit pickles to remain in copper vessels, but they absorb poison.—*The Church Union.*

## WHO ROB ORCHARDS!

In a certain village in the far West was an atheist. He was a great admirer of Robert Dale Owen and Fanny Wright, but he could see no beauty or excellence in the Sun of righteousness.

This man of course, never entered any place of worship. Indeed, in the fruit season he was specially busy on Sunday in defending his orchard from his great enemies, the woodpecker and the idle, profligate persons of the village, who on that day made sad havoc among his apples and peaches.

One day, while at work with his son-in-law—an atheist, like himself, although a more kind and courteous gentleman—as a pastor of a congregation was passing, he very rudely accosted the ministers:

"Sir, what is the use of your preaching? What good do you do by it? Why don't you teach these fellows better morals? Why don't you tell them something about stealing in your sermons, and keep them from robbing my orchard?"

To this the minister pleasantly replied:

"My dear sir, I am sorry that you are so annoyed, and I should most willingly read the fellows who rob your orchard a lecture on thieving, but the truth is, they are all so like you and the major here that I never get a chance."

"Good, good," replied the major, laughing; on which the elder atheist, blushing a little, and in an apologetical tone, said:

"Well, well, I believe it is true enough; it is not the church-going people that steal my apples."—*Kind Words.*

## SECRET OF HAPPINESS.

An Italian bishop, who had struggled through many difficulties without repining, and been much opposed without manifesting impatience, being asked by a friend to communicate the secret of his always being happy, replied, "It consists in a singly thing, and that is, making a right use of my eyes." His friend in surprise, begged him to explain his meaning. "Most willingly," replied the bishop. "In whatsoever state I am, I first of all look up to heaven, and remember that my great business is to get there. I then look down upon earth, and call to mind how small a space I shall soon fill in it. I then look abroad in the world, and see what multitudes are, in all respects, less happy than myself. And thus I learn where true happiness is placed, where all my cares must end, and how little reason I ever had to murmur, or to be otherwise than thankful. And to live in this spirit is to be always happy."