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[WHOLE NO. 177

## THE SPINNING WHEEL.

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But oh how long were the days to Hester, as she sat at her monotonous toil, uncheered by the anticipated pleasure of the evening; and how dull, how intolerably tedious were the evenings! Weeks passed on, and rumors of the schoolmaster's attentions to *Jemima* not unfrequently caused her heart to sink like lead in her bosom. Yet what, to her, was *Edward Avery*? And a quick blush would spread over her features.

To crown her trials, Mrs. Eldridge called one day, and requested Hester to take great pains with her spinning, for she had determined to lay by the linen for *Jemima*. "You know, Hester, she gets no time to spin, now that she is so taken up with learning; indeed, we don't wish her to do such druggery—we can well afford to hire it done; but as to this piece of linen—to be sure *Jemima* is close enough on the subject, but if one can believe what other people say, there is no telling how soon she may want it. Mr. Avery, you know, boards altogether at our house now; and though he never even speaks to *Jemima* when I am by, I've no doubt it is done on purpose to blind me—young people are so sly. Mr. Avery is a nice young man, though I can't say but *Jemima* might do better." And here she fairly stopped for want of breath.

For a long time after Mrs. Eldridge departed, Hester sat motionless by her wheel, with her hands crossed on her lap, while the paleness that stole over her features told of a struggle going on, deep, deep beneath the placid surface. From that time the utmost care was bestowed upon her work, for was it not to grace the table of *Edward*?

The winter came to a close, and so did the time during which *Edward* had engaged to fill the office of schoolmaster. Hester had so often said to herself, "He might have called once more at least, to know why I sent him such a message," that she had almost persuaded herself she had just cause to be quiet angry, and was really vexed with herself that she thought of the subject at all; but the more she strove to banish it, the more constantly it recurred to her mind. When the day came which she knew was fixed for his departure, she asked herself again and again, "Will he not come to bid us good-bye?" In the words of the old song,

"How could she think of spinning?" So she put away her wheel, and looked up the road in the direction of the school-house, though she knew he was not there, and down the road in the opposite direction. All day she hurried about the house, arranging, and re-arranging, every thing in it; but it grew dark, and he had not come.—No he was not coming. Why should he wish to see her! She had spoken to him so distantly and coldly when they met at church, or by accident in the street, that—but just then came a gentle tap at the door, and *Edward* entered. Hester raised her eyes; how pale he looked, and sad too, very sad, as if some great trouble weighed on his mind. Her heart, smote her, and it was with difficulty that she requested him to be seated while she called her father.

"Hester," he said, it is you I wish to see. Will you listen to me a few moments?" Hester could not speak; but she sat down and *Edward* continued.

"I scarcely need tell you, Hester, that I love you. You must have seen it during those long evenings that we read and conversed together. When I heard of all your goodness, and saw you so young and beautiful, devoting all your energies to your family—when I sat by you, evening after evening, discovering new and rich treasures of intellect which had lain like hidden gems till I drew them forth, and compared the pure freshness of your feelings with the hacknied world in which I have mingled—is it strange that I love you? But I spoke not of it—I dared not—until—pardon me, Hester, if it was presumption—until the eye that dropped beneath the glance of mine, the blush and the trembling voice, encouraged me to hope. On the very day that I determined to place my happiness at your disposal

for I perceived at once that an enemy had gained your ear. I was too proud to intrude on you unbidden, and should probably have left the village without seeing you: but last night I heard the whole from one, who, I am pained to learn, has been harboring for me a warmer sentiment than it is in my power to return. I pity, and forgive her the injury she would have inflicted on my peace—shall I say yours, Hester?"

He took a hand that was not withdrawn, and as he bent to kiss it, warm tears fell upon his face—such tears as are only shed when the heart is too full for utterance.

It was late that night when *Edward* tore himself away from the cottage of Mr. Wilson, and early the next morning he left the village for his own distant home, while Hester, serious and thoughtful, yet with a deep, calm joy in her heart, moved about the house in the performance of her customary duties.

Every week, during the long summer that followed, a letter arrived at the post office, directed, as the Postmaster said, in the most beautiful hand, but which he would deliver to no one but *Jack Wilson*, who regularly called for it, at the same time dropping very slyly into the box, a small neat packet, bearing the name of *Edward Avery*.

A knowledge of this circumstance converted the last drop of kindness in the heart of the ignorant, conceited and disappointed *Jemima Eldridge*, into gall, which she vented in the bitterest invectives against the innocent Hester. Her temper was soon after still further soured, for her father on making his usual quarterly payment at Mr. Johnston's store discovered that his daughter had purchased, without his knowledge, articles of dress, or rather useless finery to a large amount. Although he could easily have paid it, he resolved to punish her, and insisted that the bird-eyes table linen, which was laid by for her, should go to pay the debt; and had the still greater mortification of hearing Mrs. Johnston say that she should keep it for her own use, as she had never seen a piece of linen so fine and beautifully white and that Hester Wilson deserved a premium for her work.

Summer, too, passed away—and one bright, frosty morning in early autumn, when the yellow leaves of the large walnut tree by the door came pattering down like rain, a plain yet handsome carriage was seen descending the hill, at the foot of which nestled the village. Hester's heart beat quick and quicker, as it came nearer. Yes! it has stopped, and a gentleman springs lightly out. It is certainly *Edward Avery*, and yet how different! The threadbare suit of rusty black, which composed the outer man of the whilome schoolmaster, had been superseded by garments of the finest material and modern fashion, but the change in his personal appearance was still more striking. His truly noble countenance, beaming with health and happiness, seemed, to Hester at least, more interesting than the pale, melancholy features of the invalid schoolmaster.

"May God bless you, Hester!" said Mr. Wilson, as a week afterwards she stood by the same carriage, leaning on the arm of *Edward*, habited in a neat riding dress, and looking as *Jack* declared, for all the world like a born lady. "May God bless you and make you a blessing to your husband as you have been to your father. Do not cry, Hester," he continued, his own tears falling fast; "Molly is now large enough to fill your place. Come back soon and see us." And amid the weeping farewells of those to whom she was so dear, the carriage drove off.

How lovely did the house appear, when Mr. Wilson, after closing the shutters to keep out the glare of the sun, sat down by the hearth, and felt that the light and joy of his dwelling were gone. Nothing but the prospect of her happiness could have consoled him for the loss of his good and dutiful child. Molly went to the little room which she had shared with her sister, and throwing herself on the bed, wept till she went to sleep, from which she awoke determined to be to her father and brothers what Hester had been, and if she did not always succeed, it was not because she forgot the example. *Henry* strolled away into the fields, but *Jack* marched

was the only son of a rich widow lady, away of in some city, he forgot where; how he studied so hard to try to become a lawyer that his mother feared he was in a consumption, and the doctors said he must give up his books and go into the country; so merely for the exercise, and not because he could not be idle, he had taught their school. "And you see," said *Jack*, "that if he was to travel over the Confederate States, he could not find a better, no, nor handsomer wife than our Hester. But I must go home, and see if Molly knows how to get supper." And away he ran to conceal the tears which he thought might be considered a disgrace to his manhood.

Hester was indeed the wife of a talented young lawyer, and the virtues which raised her from an humble station, ennobled and adorned the higher one she afterwards filled. Her husband became a wealthy, influential man, and with his consent, she bestowed many benefits on her family. The wheel that had been the instrument of effecting so much good, was preserved with an affection almost amounting to veneration. One of the daily lessons of Molly, who lived with her after the death of their father, was taken on that spinning wheel, and it was given to her by Hester, on her wedding-day, as a token that industry is the surest road to respectability and happiness.

Hester is gone, and Molly, a white-haired woman, alone remains waiting in patient hope for a meeting in that world where "the weary are at rest," while she cherishes with the gratitude of a younger heart the memory of a sister's love.

What I have related, my dear girl, is strictly true, Hester Wilson was my own, almost idolized sister, and you will no longer wonder that I love to sit and spin on this wheel, which is the very same she used, so many—many years ago. The aged may well be excused for some old-fashioned ways, when they are all that connect them with the past, like a staff on which memory leans as she retraces the devious path of life."

Night had thrown her sable veil over the silvery locks of the aged, and the fair curls the young, ere Mrs. Mason concluded; and bidding them good night, she closed the door of her sleeping apartment, and besought Him who giveth the increase, that the seed she had scattered might bring forth fruit, even an hundred fold.

## HOW TO MAKE SALTPETRE.

The process of making Saltpetre from the earth of the limestone caves in the Southern Confederacy is so simple that any one residing in the neighborhood of a cave in a limestone rock—and nearly all the caves are in such rock—can without any expense make at least a few pounds of the salt every day, and with assistance could make it a very profitable business at the price which Government is now paying. To furnish the practical information required, in plain language, to such persons, so as to enable each one to add to the production of an article so indispensable to the military operations of our country, now struggling for its free existence, induces the writer to publish these notes; he would earnestly appeal to his countrymen who may live near any cave, to put themselves, if need be, to some inconvenience, in order to aid in the invaluable production. We cannot be too thankful that this gigantic war was entered upon with large supplies of ammunition and the materials for its fabrication, but little of which has yet been expended; but in a contest of such magnitude, where we have to supply the fiery food for some two thousand mouths of large dimensions—some of which consume not less than three-fourths of a keg of powder at each charge—it will readily be seen that the most abundant stores must fail sooner or later, unless care be taken in time to replenish the demands of consumption. Our supplies of sulphur—and of course, charcoal—are probably ample for the entire war, even if it be of long duration, and the amount of saltpetre in the earth of the Southern caves, to be had for the washing, is abundantly sufficient to meet all demands for an indefinite period of time.

But the nitre is still in the earth, and it behooves us to extract it in time, before we commence to feel a pressure in this direction. It is true we are receiving daily from a few caves what would be considered a very large amount in ordinary times, but the times are extraordinary, and hence require extraordinary supplies; thus the individual who makes a pound of saltpetre every day, contributes in fact more to the ultimate success of his coun-

try than he who makes a ton of saltpetre every year. Gunpowder is made of three-fourth parts of nitre (purified saltpetre), fourteenth parts of charcoal and ten parts of sulphur, all by weight; hence the nitre is much the largest portion of gunpowder material, requiring consequently the largest daily supply.

The crude saltpetre from the caves—called *grough saltpetre* in commerce—requires to be purified before it can be used for gunpowder, and for this purpose government has established a refinery at Nashville, capable of refining daily 5000 pounds of *grough saltpetre* into pure nitre, as white as snow, and ready for the powder mills. In the extensive Government Powder Works, now in course of rapid erection in Georgia under the direction of the writer, over five tons of saltpetre will be refined each day, if required, and converted into gunpowder.

## ARTICLES WANTED TO MAKE SALTPETRE ON A SMALL SCALE.

One ordinary iron pot for boiling; three or four tubs, pails, or barrels cut off; two or three small troughs; some coarse bags or a wheelbarrow to bring the earth from the cave, and four strong barrels with one head in each—empty vinegar, whiskey or pork barrels are very good—are about all the articles required for a small saltpetre manufactory. To these, however must be added some ash barrels to make potash lye, as it is better that this should be made at the same time and place, the ashes from the fire under the pot for boiling, assisting in the production.

## HOW TO PROCEED

First bore a hole about the size of the finger through the head or end of each barrel near one side, and fit a wooden plug in each hole—then set the barrels on some pieces of timber near each other, the heads down, and the hole of each projecting over the timber. Put some twigs into the bottom of each barrel, and on these place straw or hay about half a foot thick when pressed down; then, having brought some of the earth from the cave, and broken up all the lumps, fill each barrel full without pressing it down. Put the plugs into the holes tightly, and fill up each barrel with as much water (hot water is best in winter) as it will hold; allow the whole to remain until next day, then pull out the plugs, having placed a tub or pail under each, and pour all the water from the first barrel into the second barrel, and all the water or liquor which drains from this barrel must be poured on top of the earth the third barrel and finally the liquor which drains from this last barrel must be poured into a tub or other vessel. Now having previously made some strong lye from wood ashes, pour a small stream of it into the tub and stir it well; immediately the clear liquor will become muddy, and as long as the lye continues to curdle or cloud the liquor, it must be poured in; of course you will have to wait now and then for the liquor to settle to see if it requires more lye. No more must be used than is necessary, for it not only wastes the lye, but is an impurity which the refinery must afterwards get rid of. We will suppose that the proper quantity of lye has been used, and the liquor allowed to settle or drain through cloth until it becomes clear; it is then poured into the pot and boiled away until a drop taken up by the end of a stick becomes hard or solid when let fall upon cold metal or a plate.

The liquor is now to be dipped out of the pot and poured into a cloth placed over a tub or barrel, and allowed to strain through into the tub below and become cold. As soon as the liquor begins to cool, crystals of saltpetre will commence forming, and when cold, the liquor left—called mother liquor—must be poured off from the saltpetre back into the pot with the fresh liquor for boiling, as it still has considerable saltpetre in it. There will be found at the bottom of the pot after the liquor is dipped out, when the boiling is completed, some earthy salts, which, after draining, can be thrown away as impurities; if, however, some long needle-shaped crystals should be seen in it when cold, it contains some saltpetre, and about a quart of hot water should be added, and then poured off after a time when it will have dissolved all the saltpetre left among the earthy salts; this wash water can then be put back into the pot after the impurities shall have been cleared out.

The saltpetre, formed by the foregoing process, must be first allowed to drain well, and then placed on cloths stretched before the fire or out in the sun to dry; when the drying is completed, it is to be put into snaks or barrels, and is ready to be transported to the nearest ordnance officer, who will pay for the same on receiving the bills of its shipment on the railroad.

If the crystals of saltpetre are wet and brown, and will not keep dry, it is because too much lye from the wood ashes has been used; this can be removed by nearly filling a tub or barrel with the saltpetre and pouring cold water on it, as much