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THE SKELETON'S CAVE.

One pleasant summer morning a party of three persons set out from a French settlement in the western region of the United States to visit a remarkable cavern in its vicinity. They had already proceeded for the distance of about three miles thro' the tall original forest, along a path so rarely trodden that it required all their attention to keep the track. They now perceived through the trees the sunshine at a distance, and as they drew nearer they saw that it came down into a kind of natural opening at the foot of a steep precipice. At every step the vast wall seemed to rise higher and higher; its seams, and fissures, and precipitities, became more and more distinct; and far up, nearly midway from the bottom, appeared a dark opening, under an impending crag. The precipice seemed between two and three hundred feet in height, and quite perpendicular. At its base, the earth for several rods around was heaped with loose fragments of rock, which had evidently been detached from the principal mass, and shivered to pieces in the fall. A few trees, among which were the black walnut and the slippery elm, and here and there an oak, grew scattered among rocks, and attested by their dwarfish stature the ungrateful soil in which they had not taken root. But the wild grape vines which trailed along the ground, and sent out their branches to overrun the trees around them, showed by their immense size how much they delighted in the warmth of rocks and the sunshine. The cedars also here and there had wound its strong rings round and round the trunks and the boughs till they died in its embrace, and then clothed the leafless branches in a thick drapery of its own foliage. Into the open space the party at length emerged from the forest.

"Yonder is the Skeleton's Cave," said one of them, who stood a little in front of the rest. As he spoke he raised his arm, and pointed to the dark opening in the precipice already mentioned.

The speaker was an aged man, of spare figure, and a mild, subdued expression of countenance. Whoever looked at his thin gray hair, his stooping form, and the emaciated hand he extended, might have taken him for one who had passed the Scriptural limit of three score years and ten; but a glance at his clear and bright hazel eyes would have induced the observer to set him down at some five years younger. A broad brimmed planter's hat shaded his venerable features from the sun, and his black gown and rosary denoted him to be an ecclesiastic of the Roman faith.

The two persons whom he addressed were much younger. One of them was in the prime of manhood and personal strength, rather tall, and of a vigorous make. He wore a hunting cap, from the lower edge of which curled a profusion of strong dark hair rather too long for the usual mode in the Atlantic States, shading a fresh colored countenance, lighted by a pair of full black eyes, the expression of which was somewhat indebted to bodily and good humor. His dress was a blue frock-coat trimmed with yellow fringe, and bound by a sash at the waist, deer skin pantaloons, and a deer-skin moccasins. He carried a short rifle on his left shoulder, and wore on his left side a leather bag of rather ample dimensions, and on his right a powder-flask. It was evident he was either a hunter by occupation, or at least one who made hunting his principal amusement; and there was something in his air and the neatness of his garb and equipments that bespoke the latter.

On the arm of this person leaned the third individual of the party, a young woman apparently about nineteen or twenty years of age, slender and graceful as a youthful student of the classic poets might imagine a wood-nymph. She was plainly attired in a straw hat and a dress of russet color, fitted for a ramble through that wild forest. The faces of her two companions were decidedly French in their physiognomy; hers was as decided Anglo-American.

Notwithstanding this difference of national physiognomy, there was nothing peculiar in her accent, as she answered the old man who had just spoken.

"I see the mouth of the cave; but how are we to reach it, Father Ambrose? I perceive no way of getting to it without wings, either from the bottom or the top of the precipice.'

'Look a few rods to the right Emily. Do you see the pile of broken rocks reaching up to the middle of the precipice, looking as if a huge column of that mighty wall had been shivered into a pyramid of fragments? Our path lies that way.'

'I see it father,' returned the fair questioner; 'but when we arrive at the top, it appears to me we shall be no nearer the cave than we now are.'

'From the top of that pile you may perceive a horizontal seam in the precipice extending to the mouth of the cave. Along that line, though you cannot discern it from the place where we stand, is a safe and broad footing, leading to our place of destination. Do you see, Le Maire,' continued Father Ambrose, addressing himself to his other companion, 'do you see that eagle sitting so composedly on a bough of that leafless tree, which seems a mere shrub on the brow of the precipice directly over the cavern? Nay, never lift your rifle, my good friend; the bird is beyond your reach, and you will only waste your powder. The superfluous rains which fell on the highlands beyond are collected in the hollow over which hangs the tree I showed you, and pour down the face of the rock directly over the entrance to the cave. Generally, you will see the bed of that hollow perfectly dry, as it is at present; but during a violent shower, or after several days rain, there descends from that spot a sheet of water, white as snow, deafening with its noise the quiet solitudes around us, and rivalling in beauty some of the cascades that tumble from the cliffs of the Alps. But let us proceed.'

The old man led the party to the pile of rocks which he had pointed out to their notice, and began to ascend from one huge block to another with an agility scarcely impaired by age. They could now perceive that human steps had traditionally trod that rough path before them; in some places the ancient moss was effaced from the stones, and in others their surfaces had been worn smooth. Emily was about to follow her venerable conductor, when Le Maire offered to assist her.

'Nay, uncle,' said she, 'I know you are the politest of men, but I think your rifle will give you trouble enough. I have often heard you call it your wife; so I beg you will wait on Madame Le Maire, and leave me to make the best of my way by myself. I am not now to take my first lesson in climbing rocks, as you well know!'

'Well, if this rifle be my spouse,' rejoined the hunter, 'I will say that it is not every wife who has so devoted a husband, nor every husband who is fortunate enough to possess so true a wife. She has another good quality—she never speaks but when she is bid, and then always to the point. I only wish for your sake, since I am not permitted to assist you, that Henry Danville were here. I think we should see the wildness of the paces that carry you so lightly over those rocks a little chastised, while the young gentleman tenderly and respectfully handed up this rude staircase, too rude for such delicate feet. Ah, I beg pardon, I forgot that you had quarrelled. Well, it is only a lover's quarrel, and the reconciliation will be the happier for being delayed so long. Harry is a worthy lad and an excellent marksman.'

The ecclesiastic was the first of the party who arrived at the summit. He pointed out to his companions the peculiarities of the scenery; he expatiated on the flowery beauty of those inchoate tawtes and on the lofty growth, and the magnificence and variety of foliage which distinguish the American forests, so much the admiration of those who have seen only the groves of Europe.

As they proceeded, the great height at which they stood, and the steepness of the rocky wall above and below them, made Emily often grow pale as she looked down. A few rods brought the party to a turn in the rock, where the path was narrower than elsewhere, and precisely in the angle a portion of the ter-mination which they walked had fallen, leaving a chasm of about two feet in width, through which their distance from the base was fearfully apparent. Le Maire was evidently perplexed, but Emily, when she arrived at the spot, shrank back and recoiled against the rock.

'I fear I shall not be able to cross this chasm,' said she, in a tone of alarm. 'My poor head grows giddy from a single look at it.'

'Le Maire will assist you, my child,' said the old man, who walked behind her.

'With the greatest pleasure in life,' answered Le Maire; 'though I confess I little expected that the daughter of a clear-headed Yankee would complain of being giddy in our situation. But this comes of having a French mother, I suppose. Let me provide a convenient station for Madame Le Maire, as you call her, and I will help you over.' He then placed his rifle against the rock, where the path immediately beyond him grew wider, and advancing to the edge of the chasm, held forth both hands to Emily, taking hold of her arms near the elbow. In doing this he perceived that she trembled.

'You are as safe here as when you were in the woods below,' said Le Maire, 'if you would but think so. Step forward now, firmly, and look neither to the right or left.'

She rejoined, answered he good naturedly, 'that had you been of as solid a composition as some ladies with whom I have the honor of an acquaintance, Madame Le Maire here would most certainly have been a widow. I understood my own strength, however,' added, for on this point he was somewhat vain, 'and if I had not I should still have been willing to risk something rather than to lose you. But I will take care, Emily, that you do not lead me into another scrape of the kind. When we return, I shall, by your leave, take you in my arms and carry you over chasm, and you may shut your eyes while I do it, if you please.'

They now again set out, and in a few moments arrived at the mouth of the cavern they had come to visit. A projecting mass of rock impended over it, so low as not to allow in front an entrance to a person upright, but on each side it receded upwards in such a manner as to leave two high narrow openings, giving it the appearance of being suspended from the cavern roof. Beneath it the floor, which was a continuation of the terrace leading to the spot, was covered in places to a considerable depth with soil formed by the disintegration of the neighboring rocks, and traversed by several fissures nearly filled with earth. As they entered by one of the narrow side openings, Emily looked up to the crag with a slight shudder. 'If it should fall!' thought she to herself; but a feeling of shame at the fear she had lately manifested restrained her from uttering the thought.

Le Maire produced from his hunting-bag a roll of tinder, and lighting it with a spark from his rifle, kindled in a few moments a large pitchpine torch. The circumstance which first struck the attention of the party was the profound and solemn stillness of the place. As the three went forward they passed through a heap of dry leaves lightly piled, which the winds of the last autumn had blown into the cave from the summit of the surrounding forest, and the rustling made by their own steps sounded strangely loud amid the death-like silence. A spacious cavern appeared to their sight, the roof of which near the entrance was low, but several paces beyond it rose to a great height, where the smoke of the torch ascending, mingled with the darkness, but the flame did not reveal the face of the vault.

They soon came to where, as Father Ambrose informed them, the cave divided into two branches. 'That on the left,' said he, 'soon becomes a low and narrow passage among the rocks; this on the right leads to a large chamber, in which lie the bones from which the cavern takes its name.'

He now took the torch from the hand of Le Maire, and turning to the right, entered his companions into a lofty and wide space of the cave, in one corner of which he showed them a human skeleton lying extended on the rocky floor. Some decayed fragments, apparently of the skins of animals, lay under it in places, and one small remnant passed over the thighs, but the bones, though they had acquired from the atmosphere of the cave a greenish yellow hue, were seemingly unmouldered. They still retained their original relative position, and appeared as if never disturbed since the sleep of death came over the frame to which they once belonged. Emily gazed on the spectacle with that natural horror which the remains of the dead inspire. Even Le Maire, with all his vivacity and garrulity, was silent for a moment.

'Is anything known of the manner in which this poor wretch came to this end?' he at length inquired.

'Nothing. The name of Skeleton's Cave was given to this place by the aborigines; but I believe they have no tradition concerning these remains. If you look at the right leg you will perceive that the bone is fractured; it is most likely the man was wounded on these very cliffs either by accident or by some enemy, and that he crawled to this retreat where he perished from want of attendance and from famine.'

'What a death!' murmured Emily.

The ecclesiastic then directed their attention to another part of the same chamber, where he said it was formerly not uncommon for persons benighted in these parts, particularly hunters, the pass the night. 'You perceive,' added he, 'that this spot is higher than the rest of the cavern, and drier also; and indeed no part of the cavern is much subject to moisture. A bed of leaves on this rock, with a good blanket, is no bad accommodation for a night's rest, as I can assure you, having once made the experiment myself many years since, when I came hither from Europe. Ah, what have we here? coals, brands, splinters of pitch-pine! The cave must have been occupied very lately for the purpose I mentioned, and by people too who, I dare say, from the preparations they seem to have made, passed the night very comfortably.'

'I dare say they did so, though they had an ugly bed-fellow yonder,' answered Le Maire; 'but I hope you do not think of following their example. As you have shown us, I presume, the principal curiosities of the cave, I take the liberty of suggesting the propriety of getting as fast as we can out of this melancholy place, which has already put me out of spirits.'

The good priests, though by no means participating in Le Maire's haste to be gone, mildly yielded to his entreaties, particularly as they were seconded by Emily, and they accordingly prepared to return. On reaching the mouth of the cave, they were struck with the change in the aspect of the heavens. Dark heavy clouds, the round summits of which were seen one beyond the other, were rapidly rising in the west; and through the gnarled blue haze which suffused the sky before them, the sun appeared already shorn of its beams. A sound was heard afar, of mighty winds contending with the forest, and the thunder rolled at a distance.

'We must stay at least until the storm is over,' said Father Ambrose; 'it would be upon us before we could descend these cliffs. Let us watch it from where we stand above the tops of these old woods: I can promise you it will be a magnificent spectacle.'

Emily, though she would gladly have left the cave, could say nothing against the propriety of this advice; and even Le Maire, notwithstanding that he declared he had rather see a well-loaded table at that moment than all the storms that ever blew, preferred remaining to the manifest inconvenience of attempting a descent. In a few moments the dark array of clouds swept over the face of the sun, and a tumult in the woods announced the coming of the blast. The summits of the forest waved and stooped before it, like a field of young flax in the summer breeze—another and fiercer gust descended—another and stronger convulsion of the forest ensued. The trees rocked backward and forward, leaned and rose, and tossed and swung their branches in every direction, and the whirling air above them was filled with their leafy spoils. The roar was tremendous—the noise of the ocean in a tempest is not louder—it seemed as if that innumerable multitude of giants of the wood is raised a universal voice of wailing under the fury that smote and tormented them. At length the rain began to fall, first in large and rare drops, and then the thunder burst over head, and the waters of the firmament poured down in torrents, and the blast that howled in the woods fled before them as if from an element that it feared. The trees again stood erect, and nothing was heard but the rain beating heavily on the immense canopy of leaves around, and the occasional crashings of the thunder, accompanied by flashes of lightning, that threw a vivid light upon the walls of the cavern. The priest and his companions stood contemplating this scene in silence, when a rushing of water close at hand was heard. Father Ambrose showed the others where a stream, formed from the rains collected on the highlands above, descended on the crag that overhung the mouth of the cavern, and shooting clear of the rocks on which they stood, fell in spray to the broken fragments at the base of the precipice.

A gust of wind drove the rain into the opening where they stood, and obliged them to retire further within. The priest suggested that they should take this opportunity to examine that part of the cave which, in going to the skeleton's chamber, they had passed on their left, observing, however, that he believed it was no otherwise remarkable than for its narrowness and its length. Le Maire and Emily assented, and the former taking up the torch which he had stuck in the ground, they went back into the interior. They had just reached the spot where the two passages diverged from each other, when a hideous and intense glare of light filled the cavern, showing for an instant the walls, the roof, the floor, and every crag and recess, with the distinctness of the broadest sunshine. A frightful crash accompanied it, consisting of several sharp and deafening explosions, as if the very heart of the mountain were rent asunder by the lightning, and immediately after a body of immense weight seemed to fall at their very feet with a heavy sound, and a shock that caused the place where they stood to tremble as if shaken by an earthquake. A strong blast of air rushed past them, and a suffocating odor filled the cavern.

Father Ambrose had fallen upon his knees in mental prayer, at the explosion; but the blast from the mouth of the cavern threw him to the earth. He raised himself, however, immediately, and found himself in utter silence and darkness, save that a livid image of that insufferable glare floated yet before his eyeballs. He called first upon Emily, who did not answer, then upon Le Maire, who replied from the ground a few paces nearer the entrance of the cave. He also had been thrown prostrate, and the torch he carried extinguished. It was but the work of an instant to kindle it again, and they then discovered Emily extended near them in a swoon.

'Let us bear her to the mouth of the cavern,' said Le Maire; 'the fresh air from without will revive her.' He took her in his arms, but on arriving at the spot he placed her suddenly on the ground, and raising both hands, exclaimed with an accent of despair, 'The rock is fallen! the entrance is closed!'

It was but too evident—Father Ambrose needed but a single look to convince him of its truth—the huge rock which impended over the entrance had been loosened by the thunder-bolt, and had fallen upon the floor of the cave, closing all return to the outer world.

Before inquiring further into the extent of the disaster, an office of humanity was to be performed. Emily, was yet lying on the floor of the cave in a swoon, and the old man, stooping down and placing her head in his lap, began to use the ordinary means of recovery, and called on Le Maire to assist him. The hunter, after being spoken to several times, started from his gloomy reverie, and kneeling down by the side of the priest, aided him in chafing her temples and hands, and fanned her cheek with his cap until consciousness was restored, when the priest communicated the terrible intelligence of what had happened.

Presence of mind and fortitude do not always dwell together. Those who are most easily overcome by the appearance of danger often support the calamity after it has fallen with the composure.—Le Maire had presence of mind, but he had not learned to submit with patience to irremediable misfortune; Emily could not command her nerves in sudden peril, but she could suffer with a firmness which left her mind at liberty to employ its resources. The very disaster which had happened seemed to inspire her mind and her frame with new strength. The vague apprehensions which had haunted her were now reduced to certainty; she saw the extent of the calamity, and felt the duties it imposed. She rose from the ground without aid and with a composed countenance, and began to confer with Father Ambrose on the probabilities and means of escape from their present situation.

In the mean time, Le Maire, who had left them as soon as Emily came to herself, was eagerly employed in examining the entrance where the rock had fallen. On one side it lay close against the wall of the cavern; on the other was an opening of about a hand's breadth, which appeared, so far as he could distinguish, to communicate with the outer atmosphere. He looked above, but there the low roof, which met the wavering flame of his torch, showed a collection of large blocks firmly wedged together; he cast his eyes downwards, but there the lower edge of the vast mass which had fallen lay imbedded in the soil; he placed his shoulder against it, and exerted his utmost strength to discover if it were moveable, but it yielded no more than the rock on which it rested.

'It is all over with us,' said he at length; dashing to the ground the torch, which the priest, approaching, prudently took up before it was extinguished; 'it is all over with us; and we must perish in this horrid place like wild beasts in a trap.—There is no opening, no possible way for escape, and not a soul on the wide earth knows where we are, or what is our situation. Then turning fiercely to the priest, and losing his habitual respect for his person and office in the bitterness of his despair, he said, 'This is all your doing—it was you who decoyed us hither to lay our bones beside those of that savage yonder.'

'My son,' said the old man.

'Call me not son—this is no time for cant. You take my life, and when I reproach you, you give me fine words.'

'Say not that I take your life, said Father Ambrose mildly, without otherwise noticing his reproaches; 'there is no reason as yet to suppose our case hopeless. Though we informed no person of the place to which we were going, it does not follow that we shall not be missed, or that no inquiry will be made for us. With to-morrow morning the whole settlement will doubtless be out to search for us, and as it is probable that some of them will pass this way, we may make ourselves heard by them from the mouth of the cavern. Besides, as Emily has just suggested, it is not impossible that the cave may have some other outlet, and that the part we were about to examine may afford a passage to the daylight.

Le Maire caught eagerly at the hope thus presented. 'I beg your pardon, father,' said he, 'I was hasty—I was furious—but it is terrible, you will allow, to be shut up in this sepulchre, with the stone rolled to its mouth, and left to die. It is no light trial of patience merely to pass the night here, particularly,' said he, with a smile, 'when you know that dinner is waiting for you at home. Well, if the cave is to be explored, let us set about it immediately; if there is any way of getting out, let us discover it as soon as possible.'

They again went to the passage which diverged from the path leading to the skeleton's chamber. It was a low, irregular passage, sometimes so narrow that they were obliged to walk one behind the other, and sometimes wide enough to permit them to walk abreast. After proceeding a few rods it became so low that they were obliged to stoop.

'Remain here,' said Le Maire, 'and give me the torch. If there be any way of reaching daylight by this part of the cavern, I will give an account of it in due time.'

Father Ambrose and Emily then seated themselves on a low bench of stone in the side of the cavern, while he went forward. The gleam of his torch appearing and disappearing showed the windings of the passage he was treading, and sometimes the sound of measured steps on the rock announced that he was walking upright, and sometimes a confused and struggling noise denoted that he was making his way on his elbows and knees. At length the sound was heard no longer, and the gleam of the torch ceased altogether to be descried in the passage.

'Father Ambrose!' said Emily, after a long interval. These words, though in the lowest key of her voice, were uttered in such a tone of awe, and sounded, moreover, with such an unnatural distinctness in the midst of that stillness, that the good father started.

'What would you, my daughter?'

'This darkness and this silence are frightful, and I spoke that you might reassure me by the sound of your voice. My uncle is long in returning.'

'The passage is a long and intricate one.'

'But is there no danger? I have heard of death lamps in pits and deep caverns, by the mere breathing of which a man dies silently and without a struggle. If any poor uncle should never return!'

'Let us not admit to ourselves such possible evils, while a real calamity is impending over us.' The cavern has been explored to a considerable distance without any such consequence as you mention to those who undertook it.'

'God grant that he may discover a passage out of the cave! But I am afraid of the effect of a disappointment, he is so impatient—so impetuous.'

'God grant us all grace to submit to his good pleasure,' rejoined the priest; 'but I think I hear him on the return. Listen my child, you can distinguish sounds inaudible to my dull ears.'

Emily listened, but in vain. At length, after another long interval, a sound of steps was heard, seemingly at a vast distance. In a little while a faint light showed itself in the passage, and after some minutes Le Maire appeared, panting with exertion, his face covered with perspiration, and his clothes soiled with the dust and slime of the rocks. He was about to throw himself on the rocky seat beside them without speaking.

'I fear your search has been unsuccessful,' said Father Ambrose.

'There is no outlet in that quarter,' rejoined Le Maire sullenly. 'I have explored every winding and every cranny of the passage; and have been brought up at last, in every instance, against the solid rock.'

'There is no alternate, then,' said the ecclesiastic, 'but to make ourselves as tranquil and comfortable as we can for the night. I shall have the honor of installing you in my cold bed-chamber, where, if you sleep as soundly as I did once, you will acknowledge to-morrow morning that you might have passed a worse night. It is true, Emily, that one corner of it is occupied by an ill-looking inmate, but I can promise you from my own experience that he will do you no harm. So let us adjourn to the skeleton's chamber, and leave to Providence the events of the morrow.'

To the skeleton's chamber they went accordingly, taking the precaution to remove thither a quantity of the dry leaves which lay heaped not far from the mouth of the cave, to form couches for their night's repose. A log of wood of considerable size was found in this part of the cavern, apparently left there by those who had lately occupied it for the night; and on collecting the brands and bits of wood which lay scattered about they found themselves in possession of a respectable stock of fuel. A fire was kindled, and the warmth, the light, the crackling brands, and the ever-moving flames, with the dancing shadows they threw on the walls, and the waving strains of smoke that mounted like winged serpents to the roof and glided away to the larger and loftier apartment of the cave, gave to that recess lately so still, dark, and damp, a kind of wild cheerfulness and animation, which, under other circumstances, could not have failed to raise the spirits of the party. They placed themselves round that rude hearth, Emily taking care to turn her back to the corner where lay the skeleton. Father Ambrose had been educated in Europe, he had seen much of men and manners, and he now exerted himself to entertain his companions by the narrative of what had fallen under his observation in that ancient abode of civilized man. He was successful, and the little circle forgot for awhile, in the charm of his conversation, their misfortune and their danger. Even Le Maire was enticed into relating one or two of his hunting exploits, and Emily suffered a few of the arch sallies that distinguished her in more cheerful moments to escape her. At length, Le Maire's hunting watch pointed to the hour of ten, and the good priest counselled them to seek repose. He gave them his blessing, recommending them to the great preserver of men; and then laying themselves down on their beds of leaves, they endeavored to compose themselves to rest.

(To be continued.)

Faithfulness in Little Things.

BY ELIZA A. CHASE.

"Is Mr. Harris in inquired a plainly, but neatly dressed boy of twelve or thirteen, of a clerk, as he stood by the counter of a large bookstore.

The well-paid clerk regarded the boy with a supercilious look and answered, "Mr. Harris is in, but he is engaged."

The boy looked at the clerk hesitatingly, and then said, "If he is not particularly engaged, I should like much to see him."

"If you have any business to transact, I can attend to it," replied the clerk,—"Mr. Harris cannot be troubled with children like you."

"What is this, Morley?" said a pleasant-looking, elderly man, stepping up to the clerk; "what does the boy want?"

"He insisted on seeing you, though I told him you were engaged," returned the clerk, a little abashed by the manner of his employer.

"And what would you have with me my lad?" inquired Mr. Harris kindly.

The boy raised his eyes, and meeting the half scornful glance of the clerk, said timidly, "I wish you to look at the bill of some books which I bought here about three months since. There is a mistake in it which I wish to correct."

"Ah, my boy, I see," replied Mr. Harris, "you have overpaid us, I suppose."

"No, sir," answered the boy. "On the contrary, I purchased some books which are not charged in the bill, and I have called to pay you for them."

Mr. Harris folded his arms across his breast, regarded the boy earnestly for a moment, and then asked, "When did you discover the mistake?"

"Not until I reached home," replied the lad.—"When I paid for the books I was in a great hurry, fearing the boat would leave before I could reach it, and I did not examine the bill."

"Why did you not return and rectify the mistake?" asked the gentleman in a tone slightly altered.

"Because, sir, I live some distance from the city and have not been able to return until now."

"My dear boy," said Mr. Harris, "you have given me great pleasure. In a long life of mercantile business, I have never met with an instance of this kind before. You have acted nobly and deserve a recompense."

"I ask no recompense," returned the boy, proudly. "I have done nothing but my duty, a simple act of justice, and that deserves no reward but itself."

"May I ask who taught you such noble principles?" enquired Mr. Harris.

"My mother," answered the boy, bursting into tears.

"Blessed is the child who has such a mother," said Mr. Harris, with much emotion, "and blessed is the mother of such a child. Be faithful to her teachings, my dear boy, and you will be the staff of her declining years."

"Alas, sir," sobbed the boy, "she is dead. It was her sickness and death which prevented me from coming here before."

"What is your name?" inquired Mr. Harris.

"Edward Delong."

"Have you a father?"

"No sir. My father died when I was an infant."

"Where do you reside?"

"In the town of Linwood, about fifty miles from this city."

"Well, my boy, what are the books which were forgotten?"

"Tacitus, and a Latin Dictionary."

"Let me see the bill. Ah! signed by A. C. Morley. I will see to that. Here, Mr. Morley, called Mr. Harris, but that functionary was busily engaged in waiting on a customer at the opposite side of the store, bowing and smiling in the most obsequious manner.

"Edward," continued the kind hearted Mr. Harris, "I am not going to reward you for what you have done, but I wish to manifest my approbation of your conduct in such a manner as to make you remember the wise and excellent precepts of your departed mother. Select from my store any ten books you choose, which, in addition to the ten you had before, shall be a present to you; and henceforth, as now, my boy, remember and not 'despise the day of little things.' If ever you need a friend, call on me, and for my mother's sake I will assist you."

When the grateful boy left the store, through his own tears he saw the moistened eyes of his kind benefactor.

Edward Delong wished for knowledge, and though the scanty means of his mother could hardly satisfy his desire, by diligence and economy he had advanced far beyond most boys of his age. By working nights and mornings for a neighbor, he had amassed, what seemed to him a large sum of money, and this was expended in books.

Scarcely was he in possession of his treasures, when his mother sickened and died. His home was now with a man who regarded money as the chief end and aim of life, and severe and constant physical labor as the only means of obtaining that end.

For two years Edward struggled with his hopeless condition. Toil, toil, early and late, was his doom, and to his oft expressed wish of obtaining an education, his employer answered, "Learnin' never made corn grow, or tilled a field, and what is the use of it. I can only read and write, and there aint a richer man in the place, not excepting Squire Morrison, with all his high larnt notions."

"Is Mr. Harris in," inquired Edward, as he again entered the store of that gentleman.

"He is engaged," replied the polite clerk.

"Will you wait a moment, and he will be at liberty?"

"Did you wish to see me" asked Mr. Harris of the boy, whose thoughts were so intense that he had not noticed the approach of his friend.

"Mr. Harris!" exclaimed Edward, and it was all he could say.

"My noble Edward!" said the old man. "And so you needed friend. Well you shall have one."

Five years from that time Edward Delong was the confidential clerk of Mr. Harris, and in three more a partner in the firm. The integrity of purpose which first won the regard of his benefactor, was his guide in after life. Property crowned his efforts, and happiness blessed his heart—the never-failing result of faithfulness in "little things."

Agricultural Premiums.—The North Carolina State Fair, held at Raleigh, lately, awarded E. Whitman & Co., of Baltimore, nineteen different premiums for agricultural machinery and implements, the whole amounting to $200. In each case the premium was for the best implement of its kind on exhibition.

Acquittal.—The case of the State against J. L. Bufkin, charged with stealing a negro of James F. Gamble, was tried yesterday, and after being argued before the jury, by Mr. J. M. Rutland and Mr. J. H. Bills for defence, and Mr. Dirkins, State Solicitor on the prosecution, a verdict of acquittal was rendered.—*Winnsboro Register.*

Gutta Percha for Horse Shoes.—A Philadelphia mechanic has constructed a horse shoe in such a manner that it requires no nails, and can be put on by any one without the aid of a blacksmith. Attached to the shoe is a flange extending around the hoof, and at the back of the horse's foot is a joint, held in its place by a screw which allows the shoe to open and close so as to accommodate itself to the size of the hoof. Between the hoof and the plate is a layer of gutta percha, for the purpose of preventing injury to the hoof arising of the horse by concussion while running over hard roads or streets. The mechanism is very simple, and the application of gutta percha a new and ingenious idea.

A Quaker neatly popped the question to a fair Miss recently, as follows: "Humph, yes and verily, Penelope, the spirit moveth and moveth me wonderfully to become thee to cleave unto me flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone." "Humph, truly, Obediah that it is not good for a man to be alone, lo! and behold, I will sojourn with thee."

Republican Meetings, and very large ones too, were held on *Sunday night* in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, and the Tabernacle and Church of the Puritans in this city. The speakers were Revs. Henry Ward Beecher, Joseph P. Thompson, and Dr. Cheever. Mr. Beecher was applauded.—*N. Y. Express.*