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JACK'S HOUSE

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It was only a plain, snug little house, rising slowly from the small, neatly fenced lot, and gradually assuming house-like proportions; but Content watched its daily growth with a wonderful light of satisfaction in her brown eyes. She could see it plainly from Aunt Prissy's little shop window, looking down the quiet road and across a field white with daisies; and she loved to watch the sea of bending blossoms, and whisper softly to herself, "The path that leads to it is all pure white."

"Grownin' finely ain't it?" said Miss Prissy, cheerily, dusting and arranging the bright silk handkerchiefs, skeins of yarn, boxes of needles, jars of candy and the rosy cheeked apples that decorated the show window, even while she looked beyond them at the new building. "It's goin' up slick as a new pin."

"Yes, yes," returned Uncle Joachim, shaking his head; "if there only don't come a hard wind and blow it over, or a heavy rain to flood the cellar, or somebody set it a-fire, mebby. There's no tellin'—never no tellin' in this uncertain world!"

"La, Joachim," said Miss Prissy, nimbly mounting the counter and pursuing conversation and a spider-web together, "we hain't had a drop of rain this three weeks, and it's just what we're needin'. As for winds, 'twould take something more'n common to blow such walls as them down."

"I don't know 'bout that—don't know," answered Uncle Joachim, unconvinced. "It blew a pretty smart breeze last night, and I could feel our house shake. Thought very likely our roof would be carried away afore mornin'—more'n likely. I went up to the garret to-day and tied a rope to the rafters and then hitched the other end fast to the old spinnin' wheel; but it's doubtful if that'll save it—doubtful."

Content laughed softly, but Uncle Joachim heard it.

"Don't make fun of solemn things, child; don't never do that," he said, reprovingly. "I knew a man once that ridiculed the idee of any burglars ever breakin' into his house, and the very next day his brother had his pockets picked. A good many folks have a good many things happen to 'em, and it's best to be prepared."

"Well," commented Miss Prissy, briskly, "I must say for't, I'm 'bout as well prepared for pickpockets, as for anything I know of. Nobody 'd make much out of my pockets, unless they was sufferin' for a pair of steel-bowed spectacles and an old brass thimble. There comes the mail," she added, as a rusty, dusty horseman stopped at the door. "Content and me'll tend to it, Joachim, dear; you're feelin' poorly to-day, I know, and you'd better sit still."

He had no idea of doing anything else; but it was a pleasant fiction of Miss Prissy's that "brother Joachim" was always just about to do something useful and energetic—a belief that had never died out in all the twenty years that she had taken care of him. Father, mother, sister, all were gone but these two and the sister's orphaned child, Content, a bonny, winsome maiden, who had come like sunshine to the quaint, quiet old house.

Uncle Joachim sat in his easy chair, with gaze that wandered afar off, mourning over the hills that were not leveled, the valleys that never would be filled up and the mountains that would not come to Mohammed. He had no time nor strength to spare in helping to do the daily work and bear the little daily trials, because he was holding himself as a sort of reserve corps against the terrible calamities that never came. But Miss Prissy's keen and kindly eyes could, fortunately, see nearer home—even to the sewing of buttons on brother Joachim's coat, the mending of rents in his linen, and the necessity of providing for three meals a day. So she whisked about, always busy, worked and planned, turned and darned; made over her dresses wrong side up and inside out, contrived neat caps out of nothing, and collars out of what was left. She took care of the small store that was also the village postoffice, and looked after the diminutive garden besides, all the whole family grateful, and in-

nocently pitying any "poor lone women folks that hadn't any man to help or perfect 'em."

The arrival of the mail was always a pleasant little ripple in the day's still current, and Content and Aunt Prissy sorted the small bundle with some good natured guessing and neighborly sympathy—hoping this for Mrs. Grey was from her sailor boy, and that the one for Deacon Cole would bring good word from his sick daughter. Content was listening with deepening color meanwhile for a step that was sure soon to come.

"Any letters for me, Miss Prissy?" asked Jack Howard's clear, hearty voice.

"Not one," answered Content, laughing up into the blue eyes that did not look particularly disappointed. In fact, Jack's correspondence was not immense; but it was a satisfaction to know whether there was anything or not—a great satisfaction, one would have said, seeing how regularly he came and the way in which he lingered.

"How are you to-day, Uncle Joachim?"

"Hard to say—hard to say. Don't feel as if I knew nothin' sure about myself even. I felt such a burnin' heat early this mornin' that I didn't know but I was goin' to be took right down with a fever, and sence then I had such a shivery-shaky spell as if I might be goin' to have a stroke of palsy. Either of 'em is likely enough; might one of both on 'em carry me off any time," concluded Uncle Joachim.

"Oh, I hope not," replied Jack, consolatory, but alarmed, as he followed Content to the sunny portico.

A trysting place that portico had been for many a day. There the house across the daisy field had just been planned, and the promise given that made it not "mine," but "ours." Room by room, window by window, it had been dreamed and talked of, larger and fairer than it now could be in reality, but that only Jack and Content knew. Jack was skillful and energetic; he had laid up some five or six hundred dollars, and that was not all.

"You see, Content," he had said, gaily, when they talked of it in the spring time, with the old apple tree showering its pink blossoms around them where they stood—"you see, there is that work for Regan, if it succeeds, and I think it will. It is some sort of a pumping apparatus, you know. He had got the idea in his head, but wasn't workman enough to carry it out, and so he came to me. I dug into it until I fancied I knew what he wanted, and improved upon it a little, maybe. I've spent all the time I could give, evenings and odd hours, on it for nearly five months now, sometimes doing and sometimes undoing; but Regan is to pay me \$3000 if it works as he expects it to. He thinks I can do it."

"I think so, too," said Content, remarked Jack, thoughtfully. "But we won't say anything to any one about it yet a while, until we are sure. There is no need, for we have enough for a little home, even without that."

Uncle Joachim and Aunt Prissy were not very worldly wise. They thought, or Miss Prissy did, that love and even the smallest home promised considerable material for happiness; and her eyes twinkled with tears and smiles behind her old spectacles while, in one breath, she wondered how she was "ever goin' to do without Content," and in the next if they "hadn't better be huntin' up rags to cut for a carpet for Content's floor—against she has one."

Uncle Joachim was as nearly congratulatory as he knew how to be, but deprecatory also.

"I don't see why you two shouldn't stand as good a chance for comfort as anybody, s'posin' there is any such thing, which is doubtful," he said. "Any way, 'tis risky, very risky; like as not you won't enjoy yourselves. It'll be a great affliction to have Content leave us, but it'll be a load off my mind to know she's safe out of the house. It's a dangerous place to live in, this is, keepin' a post office as we do. 'Counts of folks robbin' the mails keep comin' all the time, and I've just a feelin' that ours 'll be robbed, too, some night, and we all murdered in our beds."

"Dear me! I shouldn't think it would be worth while," exclaimed Aunt Prissy, unselfishly, scanning the matter in the light of a speculation. "Our mail! Why, I don't believe there's ever more'n ten dollars in the whole on't at one time, and mostly there ain't anything."

"That don't make no difference, Prissy—no difference," persisted Uncle Joachim, with a doleful shake of the head. "You don't know the sight of wickedness there is in this world. I tell you there's plenty of folks that would do 'most anything for ten dollars."

"Well, well," succumbing to superior wisdom, "maybe it's so; but it does seem dreadful low wages for any human being to do such work as that for. I s'pose there comes some time for most all of us, though, when the Evil One comes along our road and asks what we'll sell ourselves for. If we're willin' to do it at all, I don't know as it matters much about the price."

As the days passed by, and Jack's "prize-work," as he laughingly called it, bade more and more fair to prove successful, he and Content conjured golden plans for the fair little home kingdom it should bring them—how they would add to this and beautify that—talking it over, evening after evening, in the soft twilight.

"It's just about done," said Jack, one day, stopping for a moment at the door. "Regan wants me to take it down to the old stone quarry and try it. It's a sort of quiet place, and there's always water there, you know; so I guess I'll go this afternoon."

"Oh, I do hope it will be all right! just what you expect of it!" exclaimed Content.

"Bid it good speed, then," he said, with a hopeful smile, turning away down the narrow garden path, while the sweet fact watched him from the door-way.

The sky was wondrously blue above his head that day, and the whole earth marvelously fair in the golden sunlight. Every rustle of the leaves, every bird-note, seemed to him most perfect music as he passed down the old road that led to the disused quarry, bearing his precious burden. It was a quiet spot, not without its own lonely beauty in the gay shelving rocks and the masses of broken stone that lay at their feet. Moss had grown upon some of these, and trailing vines from the green beyond had found their way thither, rejoicing in the clear water that Jack had selected for his purpose. The place suited him altogether, and as he carefully proceeded with his experiment, and trial after trial assured him that his work was well done, he leaned back upon one of the rude pillars near him, glad to enjoy in that congenial solitude and silence the first delicious moment of success.

"Hallo! Why, is that you, Jack?" said a rather uncertain voice near him; and he started suddenly from his reverie to find that Uncle Joachim had approached unobserved. "Didn't know but you was a highwayman, or escaped convict, or somethin', when I seen you down here all alone. What you got there? Some new-fangled water-wheel or somethin', I s'pose. Well, well; you young folks always think you can turn the world upside down with some grand new plan or 'nother, but you never do it."

"Maybe not; I don't think I'd care to try, for the side that is up now pleases me well enough. What brings you here, uncle?"

"Well," answered the old man, fumbling his way over the rocky, uneven mass about him, "I just thought I'd come down here and look round for a good, big, hefty stone. I tell you what 'tis Jack, I don't feel a mite safe about them mail robbers. You see we open the trap-door nights, and put the mail-bag right down into the cellar; and I've been a-thinkin' if we had one of these heavy stones hitched on to the under side of the door, so's two or three men couldn't raise it, 'twould be safer."

"But I don't see how you are going to raise it yourself then," objected Jack.

"Well, I can't tell exactly," said Uncle Joachim, somewhat discomfited, but persevering. "We'll have to think some way, for if anybody got down there to rob, and just touched off some powder down there, why, they could blow us all to flinders—to flinders, Jack!"

The young man watched with an amused smile for a moment or two, as he wandered about near by examining one stone after another, then forgot him in his own occupation. A train

went thundering by on the heights above, and the old man paused in his search to watch it.

"Dear! how these rocks crack now and then!" he exclaimed, as a sudden, sharp sound fell upon his ear.

Jack started and looked up with a thrill of horror as his quick eye detected the rapidly widening fissure that was separating a mass of overhanging rock from the main wall.

"Uncle Joachim!" he shouted.

But before the warning cry had left his lips the old man, too, had seen, and turned to fly, but stumbled and fell.

In the brief moment that followed a rush of conflicting thoughts swept through Jack's mind. Should he catch up his treasure and bear that to a place of safety at all hazards? It was the first, the natural impulse. But his old companion—could he leave him? Must he make so great a sacrifice for him! Was that worn-out, useless life worth so costly a price—the hardly won fruit of toilsome months, his brightest hopes for the future? Ought he—dare he—to calculate the worth of any human life, however weak?

Thought lives in a region above time. It was but an instant that he paused irresolute in the sharp, fierce struggle; then he sprang to the old man's side, raised him up, and, half dragging, half carrying, bore him away with the speed and strength that only such an hour can know—hurrying up the sloping bank until a deafening crash behind them told that they were safe.

They paused then, exhausted, and sank down upon the ground to survey the scene. A great mass of broken stone covered all the place where they had stood, and Jack's model was crushed to atoms and buried beneath it.

"Well, well," murmured Uncle Joachim, tremulously breaking the solemn silence that had succeeded the dying echoes, "that was a narrow chance, and I'd never have got away but for you, Jack. I'm 'bliged to you, I really am; though, seein' as somethin' is sure to happen some time, I don't know as 'twould have made much difference—only for the women folk; 'twould have been a great loss to the women folks. More'n likely I'll be sick for a week or two now. Jack"—as a sudden thought struck him—"why, Jack, you left that jimcrack of yours down there, didn't you? Kind of a p'ly to have it smashed up, though I s'pose it wasn't of much use."

Jack turned his eyes from the ruin and looked at him with a strange smile on his pale face. How little he knew of all the hopes and plans that had been, or could comprehend the value of that which he so carelessly called worthless! And yet, perhaps he himself could as little understand this work of the great Creator beside him, of comprehend His purpose in even this seemingly feeble and useless life that he had saved. There was nothing of contemptuous pity in the gentleness of Jack's voice as he said:

"Hain't you better go home now, Uncle Joachim? I will go with you."

He told Content the story that day—only Content ever knew it all—and she listened with the light that shone through her tearful eyes growing brighter at every word. "Sorry but so glad!" she said, not so paradoxically but Jack could understand it.

"It was hard to decide for a minute, though it seems a shame even to say it now," Jack said, honestly. "But I couldn't sell myself, you know, and so a good many of our hopes and plans are ended for a long while to come, Content."

"But Jack, dear," answered Content, softly, "I think our work often reaches farther than we know. It may be in building our earthly houses we are building for our heavenly homes as well, and some things that crowd and cramp these may make those all the fairer."

So Jack's house is only a little one, but Content thinks Uncle Joachim speaks more truly than he knows when he calls it "well built;" and watching it from over the blooming meadow, she sees more than the daisies, and murmurs to herself, as if the words were set to inward music, "The path that leads to it is white—clean and white, thank God!"—Good Literature.

The London Alhambra has a novel dog act. The dogs perform in conjunction with a ventriloquist, and so appear to talk.

Geronimo, the noted Apache chief, has learned to read, and can write his name. He is exceedingly proud of his accomplishment.



Diminution of glaciers within a half-century has been noted in Spitzbergen, Iceland, Central Asia, the Rockies and Alaska.

A European inventor has converted the spokes of an automobile into whistles, which are operated by the air action. The whistles are controlled by a series of small rubber balls in connection with the spokes, and produce a peculiar whistling noise, easily heard above the sound of traffic.

Several rivers of Australia's interior sink into the earth and are lost. A recent discovery in the district of Eucla shows that they form subterranean lakes twenty-five or thirty feet below the surface, and these lakes, if they prove to contain sufficient potable water, are expected to lead to the development of new territories in the arid region in which they occur.

Oxygenated water at twelve volumes is pronounced by M. A. Renard the best preservative of milk. Added directly after milking, in the proportion of two to three per cent, it decomposes in six or eight hours into water and oxygen, leaving no foreign substance as do borax or salicylic acid, and effecting no change like boiling or freezing. The antiseptic action persists long enough to prevent alteration.

A new vegetable for table use is the Crambe tatarica, an umbelliferous plant resembling sea kale. The sweet roots, raw and cooked, are eaten by Tartars and Cossacks, and for these and the sprouts also, it is recommended for cultivation by a prominent member of the Academie de Cuisine of Paris, who declares that it is finer in flavor than asparagus and cauliflower, which it suggests. The roots are boiled in salt water and seasoned in butter, a salad of young leaves and slices of root being another dainty luxury.

Paper Wedding Party.

A paper-gowned bride and a bridegroom wearing a suit of paper cut after the conventional full dress pattern, were the principles at a wedding celebration this evening at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. L. H. Helling.

Mr. and Mrs. W. N. Eichberg, the young couple in question, will re-enact the scene to-morrow and their guests, who will number about fifty, will wear costumes of paper in honor of the young couple's marriage.

There will be a mock wedding ceremony. Mrs. Eichberg wearing a bridal gown of white tissue paper, and having a long veil of the same, perforated to represent tulle.

Even the bridal bouquet, a shower of white blossoms, will be of paper.—Chicago Telegram to the Philadelphia Inquirer.

It Melted the Sheriff.

Sheriff Mays, of McKeen County, went to Kane to sell the belongings of Charles Mahood in a suit for debt. Mrs. Mahood, with tears in her eyes, told the sheriff how hard luck had come to her husband and herself and concluded by saying that her little child was then in a dying condition. The sheriff went to the child's bedside and saw the woman's pitiful story verified. The little one expired while the officer was in the house. Then, instead of proceeding according to law, the generous sheriff circulated a subscription paper which he headed with a donation of his own. Soon he succeeded in raising a fund sufficient to meet the obligations of Mahood and the threatened legal execution did not take place.—Bradford Era.

Triumph For the English Tongue.

An English speaking nation has grown up on the west side of the Atlantic which has done, and is doing more than the parent country to give the tongue a world vogue. Two-thirds of the people who speak English live in the United States. The industrial and commercial conquests which this country is gaining tell in favor of its people's tongue. A century ago French, Spanish and German were far ahead of English in the number of persons who used them as a vehicle of speech. But in the lapse of time English has passed all of them and is spoken by more people to-day than is any other civilized tongue.—Chicago Journal.