



### Mrs. Bunker's Nephew.

BY ELIZA STEVENSON.

It is two years ago this month since Nehemiah Bunker, that was my husband, took the plural into his sides and died, and left me alone, a widder woman with two children in this vale of sin and sorrow. It don't seem no longer ago than yesterday, but it's out in the allmyrnack, and it's out in his tombstun, which cost a hundred dollars, the date, June the 16th, 1886. Pese to his ashes. But that's neither here nor there. Tain't about that I was going to tell you when I tuk my pen in my hand.

Nehemiah died as peaceful as he had lived, and he said to me how lucky it was for me that he didn't plant any more taters in the spring, because there'd be nobody to hoe 'em; an' he sed if he should die how lucky it was for him to die afore the tater bugs got plenty. And he said, with a sad smile, sez he, "You know, Mary Jane, that I allers did hate that tater-bugging business."

Wal, he left me with the farm and the critters, and I have managed as well as I could with Job Stevens, the hired man; but there are times when I sigh for the presence of a kindred soul. No human critter ought to be alone, there are times when the society of a hired man don't satisfy me, I want somebody that I can lay the blame onto when things go wrong, with-out his getting his back up and threatening to pack his trunk and go to work for old maid Jenkins, which has got her front teeth out, and not a spear of hair on her head but what's about.

I've had some lovers since Nehemiah passed away from this mortal scene, but I ain't the woman that is ready to marry anything for the sake of being married, not by a long chalk. I want a man that don't chaw nor smoke, nor drink anything stronger than cider, and that's keeful of his clothes, and that scrapes his feet afore he comes into the house, and that's willing to do his chores and likes to go to meeting.

Last summer I got a letter from Sister-in-law Benton, that lives in Kingston, saying that her son Tommy was a little under the weather from too much study, and the doctor sed his brains was a-growing too fast for his body. It's awful unlucky to have more brains than there's room for in your head, for tain't a common disease, and the doctors hain't learnt to treat it right yet.

Tommy is sixteen years old, and small of his age, and he has got reddish hair and a freckled face, and as mischievous-looking a turned-up nose as ever you saw.

Mrs. Benton she wanted to know if I wouldn't board Tommy a spell, and sort of peart him up on new milk and fresh air, and she wound up in the letter by saying that the dear boy wouldn't give me the least mite of trouble, for he was good as gold and belonged to the Sunday School and could play some onto the violin.

Of course, I wrote back to her to let him come; but I didn't want him, for these are city boys don't take to country manners, and I expected to have a time with him.

The first night he come, he ate a whole mincepie and five doughnuts and four flapjacks for supper, which showed that having too much brains don't strike to your stomach.

Next morning, he was up before anybody in the house, blowing the tin trumpet out of the kitchen window, and he scared old Aunt Sally Walker across the street almost into fits with it—waked her right up out of a sound sleep, and she thought the last day had come.

When I called the cat to breakfast it was missing. Now, I'd had that cat for five years and I'd never knowed it to be absent or tardy to meals. I sarched high and low for him, calling "Dicky! Dicky! Dicky!" till I was as hoarse as a crow; but no Dicky appeared.

Tommy, he sot there whistling and making a tail to a kite out of my religious newspapers, that I've saved up for Sunday reading when it rains so that I can't go to meeting.

"I wouldn't strain myself any more calling of him, if I was you, Aunt Mary Jane," sez he at last, "for I guess he can't come very well. He's got other business that cat has. He's gone to sea in the well."

I flew at that boy and grabbed him by the hairs of his head, and I tuk the poker to him and made him own up that he had blowed the trumpet at Dick and scared him so that he run up the chimney, and the Tommy had cotched him and put him to soak in the well.

I rushed out and peeped down in the well, and there, on the rock that had tumbled down from the curbing, sot poor Dicky with his eyes green as grass and me-you-ing away like all possessed.

"You go down into that well and get that cat, you young scallawag," sez I, "or I swar I'll heave you down," sez I. And Tommy see that I meant it, and he off with his shoes and tuk them big brains of his down into the well in a jiffy. He grabbed the cat, and the cat grabbed him, and it was jest about an equal thing by the time they got into daylight.

Tommy's face looked like a map of Europe with the rivers drawn in red paint, and that cat was so full of lightning that it fairly hissed rite out of his fur.

Tommy had to lay by the biggest part of that day with his face sneered over with mutton taller, but by night he got round again, and got to cutting up his pranks as bad as ever.

Grandpa Bunker lives with me, and has for several years. He has been dying for twenty odd years with the consumption and the rheumatiz, but he don't seem any nigher to it than he was in the beginning, and I kind of expect that after I'm gone he'll run the farm and keep it in the name. He's awful deaf, though, except when you're a-talking about something you don't want him to know about, and then he'll hear the faintest whisper that ever was, and I've noticed that was a good deal the way with most deaf persons.

Grandpa has an ear-trumpet that he carries round, and as soon as Tommy spied that he seemed bewitched to holler into it. He shouted so loud that he nigh about blowed the top of grandpa's head off, and the old man had to have his head done up in cotton batting and wet in sweet ile for two days, and he was mad enough with that boy to give him fits, I can tell you.

The next day after the cat catastrophe Tommy got grandpa's trumpet and filled it with mustard seed and stopped it up, and grandpa had called a woman that was picking up items for a newspaper, and he tuk his trumpet to hear what she sed and it didn't seem to work.

"Drat the thing," sez grandpa, "it's got stopped up," and he in with the end of his finger and poked out the wool that Tommy had stopped it with and clapped it to his ear, and the mustard seed began to run in like mad.

"Thunder and Mars!" sez grandpa, bouncing out of his chair. "There's spiders in it, spiders, by jinks! an' millions of 'em! Mary Jane! Mary Jane! you scald that trumpet out, it's full of spiders!"

"Good gracious!" cried the woman, gathering up her note book and her pencils. "I was told he was a man of temperate habits, and here he is in a fit of jim-jams."

"Spiders!" yelled grandpa, digging into his ear and pulling out the mustard seed and stamping onto it as mad as could be.

"Land sakes!" sez I, "it is some of the doings of that boy, grandpa do warn yourself and set down—You'll bust your blood vessels and jar all that crockery off from the mantle-tree, and you'll get excited."

By this time the woman caller had got out into the road,

and both of our dogs was to her heels barking like mad, and I expect that Tommy put 'em up to it, for I seen him peeping out from behind the woodshed and grinning to himself.

But when grandpa got it through his head that Tommy had been fooling with that trumpet he was madder than a broke-up setting hen, and, in spite of his rheumatiz, he gave that boy a wallowing.

That Tommy kept me in a stew all the time. When he won't hater one thing he was into another, and when he was out anywhere I expected every minute that he would come in dead or mortally wounded, and then his ma would blame me.

For quite a considerable spell, Cap'en Grimes, from Mill-wood, has been coming over here and dropped in of an evening. The cap'en lost his wife nigh onto two years ago, and he's got as pearly a monument to her grave in the semetery as is there, and it must have cost a good sum. He's wore a weed onto his hat nigh about to the top of the crown; but lately he's had it tuk down a couple of inches, and he seems to have kinder pearted up, and takes an interest in the world once more. The cap'en is well-to-do, and his children is all grown up, and he keeps two horses and ten cows, and he's a man that's well-looking and he's got a good character.

I don't say that I'd marry him, but then there ain't any knowing what I might do if I should sot myself to teasing of me. I'm naturally of an obnoxious disposition, and I never did like to hurt anybody's feelings.

Two or three nights ago, the cap'en drooped in as usual. He kept his overcoat on and his hat in his hand, and sed he couldn't sleep a minute—just as he allers does when he comes in. He's allers just going to go; but he generally stays till eleven o'clock, if not later.

He sot down on the sofa and begun to talk about the weather—that's one of his favorite subjects. There is a good deal to be sed about the weather, you know.

"Tain't so hot as 'twas yesterday," sez he, crossing his legs and sticking his hat onto his knee.

"No," sez I, "it don't seem to be."

"Day afore yesterday was a scorcher," sez he.

"Yes," sez I, "that's what I thought."

Then the cap'en sot still for full five minutes; then he began to twirl his hat round on his finger, and finally he lost his hold of it, and it went bounding down into the fireplace and rolled up in the ashes. But he didn't seem to notice it.

"Mary Jane!" sez he, as excited as though a bee had stung him.

"What is it?" sez I, thinking maybe he'd dropped a stitch in his back.

"Mary Jane!" sez he, more fidgety then ever.

"Well, cap'en?" sez I.

And then he hepped up and grabbed me round the waist and sot me down onto the sofa beside of him, and I swar, afore I could lift a finger to stop him, that man kissed me, and his breath smelt of doughnuts and cheese.

"Land of liberty, Cap'n," sez I, "what do you mean?" And just then I heard a green and we both of us looked up, and, my soul and body! there stood a great, tall, white finger right in front of me, and it was flapping in the air.

"Land Massy!" yelled the cap'en, struck all of a heap by the sight.

"Gracious goodness!" sez I, "tis an apparatus from the other world!"

"Who and what art thou?" sez the cap'en, getting behind the sofa and shaking like one with the ager.

"I am the spirit of your first wife," sez an awful holler voice, "and if you have anything to do with that widder there, I'll haunt you to your dying day," and the ghost made a dive at the cap'en.

The cap'en he jumped rite out of the window and smashed up two pots of geraniums that sot there and busted the bird cage, and I didn't have no more sense than to foller him, and my back has had the plumage in it ever since. We both run as hard as ever we could, and I grabbed the cap'en by the coat-tail, and he kicked out at me jest like a vicious colt, for he thought I was the ghost.

"Let me alone, Sally! Let me alone!" he yelled back at me. "I'll have the weed put back as wide as 'twas before, and I'll swar by the holy breemstick that I'll never look at a widder agin!" Only let me alone, Sally!

How fur we should have run, I can't say, but Deacon Roberts was a-digging a sular for a new house, and that happened to be in our way, and as we didn't turn out for anything and neither did the sular, we went rite into it, and there we was.

When we come to ourselves, we managed to get out, and we agreed not to say nothing about it, but that boy, Tommy, met us with a lantern, jest as we agreed, and we'd agreed, and sez he as cool as could be:—

"Here's your hat, cap'n, and you're old enuff, both of ye, not to be scared by a boy dressed up in a white night-gown. If I was a-courting a girl, I shouldn't be bluffed off that way. And he charged off a-whistling up the road."

The cap'en hain't called here since, but I've sent that Tommy home. His brains is too active for these regions. And I am afraid that the cap'en's feelings was so hurt that he won't dare to come agin. I shall ride over to his place some day to swap a setting of eggs and see how he is.

The following clever parody on "The Charge of the Light Brigade" I met with some years ago. I am sorry I do not know from whose pen it came:—

#### THE VILLAGE CHOIR.

(Some distance after Tennyson.)

"Half a bar, half a bar,

Half a bar onward!

Into an awful ditch

Choir and precentor hith

Like a mass of pitch—

They led the Old Hundred.

Trebles to left of them,

Tenors to left of them,

Basses in front of them,

Bellowed and thundered.

Oh! that precentor's look,

When the sopranos took

Their own time and hook

From the Old Hundred!

Screamed all the trebles here,

Boggled the tenors there,

Raising the parson's hair,

While his mind wandered.

Theirs not to reason why

This psalm was p'tched too high;

Theirs but to gasp and cry

Out the Old Hundred.

Trebles to right of them,

Tenors to left of them,

Basses in front of them,

Bellowed and thundered.

Stormed they with shout and yell;

Not wise they sang, nor well—

Drowning the sexton's bell,

While all the church wondered!

Dure the precentor's glare,

Flushed his pitchfork in air,

Sounding fresh keys to bear

Out the Old Hundred.

Swiftly he turned his back,

Reached he his hat from rack,

Then from the screaming pack

Himself he sundered.

Tenors to right of him,

Trebles to left of him,

Discords behind him,

Bellowed and thundered.

Oh! the wild howls they wrought:

Right to the end they fought

Some tune they sang, but not,

Not the Old Hundred!"

### THE QUIET HOUR.

#### "Personal Friendship with Christ."

"I would converse with Thee from day to day,  
With heart intent on what Thou has to say,  
And through my pilgrim-walk, where'er befall,  
Consult with Thee, O Lord! about it all.  
Since Thou art willing thus to condescend  
To be my intimate, familiar friend,  
Oh! let me to the great occasion rise,  
And count Thy friendship life's most glorious prize!"

In the New Testament, the Christian's relation to Christ is represented as a personal acquaintance with Him, which ripens into a close and tender friendship. He invited men to come to Him, to break other ties, and attach themselves personally to Him. He claimed the full allegiance of men's hearts and lives: He must be first in their affections, and first in their obedience and service. \* \* Christian faith is not merely laying our sins on the Lamb of God and trusting to his one great sacrifice: it is the laying of ourselves on the living, loving heart of one whose friendship becomes thenceforward the sweetest joy of our lives.

The disciples first learned to know Christ in His disguise, with His Divine glory veiled \* \* \* It was as if a royal prince should leave his father's palace for a time, and in disguise dwell among the plain people as one of themselves, winning their love, and binding them to him in strong personal friendship, and then, disclosing his royalty, should lead them to his palace, and keep them about him ever after as his friends and brothers, sharing his rank and honors with them. The friends Christ won in His lowly condescension He did not cast off when He went back to His glory; He lifted them up to share His heavenly blessedness. It is in the same way that Christ now saves men. He wins their love and trust by the manifestation of His love for them, and then exalts them to the possession of the privileges which belong to Himself as the Son of God. Anyone whose life is knit to Christ in love and faith is lifted up into the family of God. Some one has represented this truth in this way: A vine has been torn from the tree on which it grew and clung, and lies on the ground: it never can lift itself up again to its place. Then the tree bends down low until it touches the earth. The vine unclasps its tendrils which have twined about frail and unworthy weeds, and feebly reaching upward, fixes them upon the tree's strong, living branches. The tree, again lifting itself up, carries the vine with it to its natural and original place of beauty and fruitfulness, where it shares the tree's glory. This is a parable of soul-history. We were torn from our place, and lay perishing in our sins, clinging to earth's treacherous trusts. We could never lift ourselves up to God. Then God Himself stooped down in the incarnation, bending low to touch these souls of ours; and when our hearts let go earth's sins and its frail, false trusts, and lay hold never so feebly, by the tendrils of faith and love, upon Christ, we are lifted up, and become children and heirs of God.

But how may we form a personal acquaintance with Christ? How is it possible to have more than a biographical acquaintance with Him? If He were a mere man, nothing more than this would be possible. It were absurd to talk about knowing St. John personally, or forming an intimate friendship with St. Paul. We may learn much of the character of these men from the fragments of their story which are preserved in the scriptures, but we can never become personally acquainted with them until we meet in the other world. With Christ, however, it is different. The church did not lose Him when He ascended from Olivet. He never was more really in the world than He is now. He is a present, living Saviour; and we may form with Him an actual relation of personal friendship, which will grow closer and tenderer as the years go on, deepening with each new experience, shining more and more in our hearts, until at last, passing through the portal which men misname death, but which really is the beautiful gate of life, we shall see Him face to face, and known Him even as we are known. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

TO BE CONTINUED.

Is the work difficult? Jesus directs thee.  
Is the path dangerous? Jesus protects thee.  
Fear not, and falter not; let the word cheer thee!  
All through the coming year He will be with thee.

F. R. Haverghal.

"The openings of the streets of Heaven are on earth."

Jesus near—all is well; nothing seems difficult. When He is absent, all is hard. When He does not speak in us, comfort is worthless; but if He speaks *one word*, great is the comfort felt \* \* \* Would not the loss of Him be greater loss than if the whole world went from you? What, without Him, can it give you? He who finds Jesus finds a treasure rare, a jewel above all others. And he who loses Him is losing, ah, so much!—much more than all the world. Without Him man is but a beggar; with Him a prince.

Thomas A. Kempis.