

The Winstalls of New York

Continued from page 183.

did not like was that she was not a Presbyterian. Mrs. Stuart believed that as a matter of course—it was not a thing to be argued at all—Presbyterianism was the right religion; not one of many good kinds, but the one kind—there was no other fit to be named with it. However, she had taken warmly to Mrs. Erwin before she had made the discovery of her unfortunate religion, and when she did make the discovery she did not abate her friendship. She did not, however, regard Episcopacy with any more favor—she said it was “a religion of bletherin forms.”

We have already been introduced to the little old horse on the farm, and the little old man who had charge of him. The two had very much in common. The horse whose name was Dan, seemed to be an awfully wise and profound horse; he was so steady, demure, and self-contained, taking no interest in the passing trifles of the world. But Dan, like many men, was not so proud and as he looked. In fact Dan had only two ideas in his head, but they were practical ideas. If anything was put before him that he could eat, he knew how to eat it; and if anything was hitched unto him behind, he knew to pull. This was Dan's stock in trade of knowledge, but with it he had managed to get along comfortably to a good old age.

The little old man's name was Tim. Besides attending to Dan, and doing what driving was required, Tim attended to the garden in a pottering kind of way. He also kept the place in a rough kind of order. It was his duty, too, to look after Eleanor, a cow whose acquaintance we shall make by and by. But whatever Tim had to do, his movements were always purely mechanical. He was never agitated; never in a hurry, yet never quite idle; never moving faster or slower; never seemingly interested in anything; never glad nor sorry; neither morose nor gay. He never spoke, except to answer a question, and then he was very chary of his words, realizing, it would seem, that silence was indeed golden. Eleanor, it is true, induced him sometimes to talk more than was his wont; but Eleanor had a peculiar knack of making people talk, and even of saying bad words for which they would be sorry afterwards.

This Eleanor, as already hinted, was the cow of this establishment. She was a cow of small size, but of immense personality. She was of a dark brown color, with black streaks on her sides, and a white streak along her back. Her most striking features were her horns and her eyes. From the immense horns she carried it might seem that she had originally been intended for a deer, but by some mishap came out a cow. But her horns had none of the gracefulness of a deer's horns. They were warped and twisted in and out in every ugly shape. And they still continued to grow, becoming more hideous and ghoulish every year. It seemed, indeed, that Eleanor was putting all her development into her horns. Feed her as you might she kept as poor as a rake, while all the milk she gave was apparently the small quantity only that she could not use up in developing horns. The fact is, that Eleanor was a cow of a most evil and violent temper, who lived only to make trouble in the world. She was at war with everything and everybody. And she was a cow that could not be conciliated. You might treat her with every consideration and kindness, but you could never make her your friend.

When she was angry her eyes would burn as green as a cat's. Such was this vile scrub of a cow who bore the euphonious name of Eleanor.

Between Eleanor and Julius Caesar there was constant war. Julius Caesar was the dog of Briar Farm. He was a dog of very uncertain pedigree, and to every one but Mrs. Stuart the reverse of beautiful. He was a small yellow dog, with uncanny, white bullet eyes, very short black nose, very short legs, and heavy body. It used to be his pastime, to go into Eleanor's paddock, and bark at Eleanor's nose, always keeping very much on the alert, however, not to be caught on her horns. When she made a charge he would nimbly escape, and wheeling around would attack her in the rear. Then she would wheel, and charge again, when he would fall back gradually, but still keeping up his irritating bark. And Julius Caesar had a peculiar bark of his own. The first part of it was a clear, honest bark, but it ended with a vicious snarl, enough to irritate a cow of much better temper than Eleanor's.

Thus the war between these two went on for a long time. But the greatest generals in warfare sometimes make mistakes. It so happened one day that Julius Caesar took too much dinner, and then went into Eleanor's paddock as usual, to have a little fun. At Eleanor's second charge he proved not nimble enough to escape, and the consequence was that he got caught on her horns, and was thrown up. When he fell, Eleanor promptly put her foot on him and broke his leg. With a great effort he escaped to the fence, and his cries soon brought out his mistress who carried him into the house. There she nursed him for days by the fire, and Eleanor had a time of comparative quiet.

But this kind of life was monotonous, and so Julius Caesar, as soon as he was able, limped out to see Eleanor. He knew very well not to go inside the fence, but he deliberately barked at her for an hour or so, until he felt tired. Then he retired to the house to rest, in due time returning, and increasing his barking spells day by day, until he found he could keep it up quite steadily. Then he ventured inside the paddock carrying the warfare into the enemy's country. But Julius Caesar, not having had so much exercise of late, was not so smart, or perhaps he was not so cautious as he used to be. It so happened, at any rate, that in one of his attacks on Eleanor's rear she let go her hind foot, and struck him plump in the eye. This was a worse defeat than the former one, Caesar lost his eye completely, and when he was ready for action again he trusted himself no more inside Eleanor's fence. But he kept up his barking all day long, going to the house only for his meals. And, whether it was because of his additional ugliness, or his unmitigated barking, Eleanor got more and more irritated. She would snuff and toss her horns, and stamp, while her green eyes would glow with fury. Her whole manner said as plainly as words, “Oh, if you would only come inside the fence!”

“Well, this is a world of contrasts. If there was war outside the Briar house, there was much peace and harmony within. Mrs. Erwin helped Mrs. Stuart in her various duties, and the two had a very congenial time. Sometimes Dan would be hitched to the carriage, and Mrs. Stuart would drive her friend over as much of the country as Dan's moderate pace would take them in an afternoon. It was a slow way of seeing the world but quite satisfactory under the circumstances.

Mr. Erwin devoted the forenoons for the most part to study, while Mr. Stuart would talk with his mother, or fish in the stream, as he used to do when a lad. In the afternoon the two gentlemen would generally take a ramble over the country, or lounge and talk on the veranda. Yes, we say these earnest men lounged. The gift of lounging is a great gift, and one to be cultivated by those devoted to wearing, intellectual work. It came to be understood at Briar Farm that all might go where they pleased during the day, but that the evening claimed the whole company for social intercourse. Thus all our friends had a peaceful, happy, restful time.

Mr. Stuart and Mr. Erwin had opportunity now for many interchanges of thought. On the first favorable occasion Mr. Stuart asked his friend if he had seen the bishop, and how the sermon had fared at his hands.

“Yes,” said Mr. Erwin, “I saw him two days ago, and read him my sermon. He received it on the whole quite favorably. What he most fears now is that I have forgotten much of what I learned at the Seminary. So I have to brush up a little, and take an Examination before getting deacon's orders. But I think I can do all that is required. I shall have to be a deacon, as you know, before I can be a priest. Of course I would rather get more quickly to practical work. But I take this temporary delay as a just penalty for wasting so many years.”

“Well, now that you have got a start,” said Mr. Stuart, “I have no doubt you will reach the goal. I hope you may settle in New York in due time. It would be pleasant if our friendship could be continued at close range.”

“Yes, that would be fine,” said Mr. Erwin, but I must not set my mind upon it. I would like to be quite free wherever the divine call may come from. Your church believes in such a call doesn't it?”

“Oh, surely,” said Mr. Stuart. “At least we profess to. I wish we believed in it more, and looked for it more.”

“Do you know,” said Mr. Erwin, “since I became acquainted with you I have had the idea that if I were not an Episcopalian I would like to be a Presbyterian.”

“And I have had the idea,” said Mr. Stuart, “that if your way had not been made quite plain in your own church you might unite with ours.”

“I had not thought of that,” said Mr. Erwin, “but perhaps I might have done so had the occasion required it. Of course I naturally prefer my own church, having been brought up in it. But isn't it a happy feature of this age that the different churches understand each other better, and that there is a growing spirit of unity among them?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Stuart, “that is the most hopeful feature of our time. We are drawing closer together. We have spiritual, if we have not organic unity.”

“By the way,” said Mr. Erwin, “I was much interested in that idea of yours about equalizing the salaries of your ministers. I think that idea is fundamentally right though in our own church the practice is so different. But tell me would you favor absolute equality?”

“As near absolute as we could get,” replied Mr. Stuart, “I do not mean absolute technically, but really; that is equality of comfort, as near as possible. If the city is more expensive to live in than the country, for instance, that ought to be taken into account. And a married man ought to have more than a single man. And if a man has a family he ought to have more than one who has none. We would have to discrim-