



The Family Circle.

THE CAPTAIN'S WELL.

BY J. G. WHITTIER.

[The story of the shipwreck of Captain Valentine Bagley on the coast of Arabia, and his sufferings in the desert, has been familiar from my childhood. It has been partially told in the singularly beautiful lines of my friend Harriet Prescott Spofford, on the occasion of a public celebration, at the Newburyport Library. To the charm and felicity of her verse, as far as it goes, nothing can be added, but in the following ballad I have endeavored to give a fuller detail of the touching incident upon which it is founded.—J. G. W.]

From pain and peril, by land and main,
The shipwrecked sailor came back again—
Back to his home, where wife and child,
Who had mourned him lost, with joy were wild,
Where he sat once more with his kith and kin,
And welcomed his neighbors thronging in.

But when morning came he called for his spade
"I must pay my debt to the Lord," he said.
"Why dig you here?" asked the passer-by;
"Is there gold or silver the road so nigh?"

"No, friend," he answered; "but under this sod
Is the blessed water, the wine of God."
"Water! The Powow is at your back,
And right before you the Merrimack,
And look you up, or look you down,
There's a well-sweep at every door in town."

"True," he said, "we have wells of our own;
But this I dig for the Lord alone."
Said the other; "This soil is dry, you know,
I doubt if a spring can be found below;
You had better consult, before you dig,
Some water-witch, with a hazel twig."

"No, wet or dry, I will dig it here,
Shallow or deep if it takes a year.
In the Arab desert, where shade is none,
The waterless land of sand and sun,
Under the pitiless, brazen sky
My burning throat as the sand was dry;
My crazed brain listened in fever-dreams
For splash of buckets and ripple of streams;
And, opening my eyes to the blinding glare,
And my lips to the breath of the blistering air,
Tortured alike by the heavens and earth,
I cursed, like Job, the day of my birth.
Then something tender, and sad, and mild
As a mother's voice to her wandering child,
Rebuked my frenzy; and, bowing my head,
Prayed as I never before had prayed:

"Pity me, God! for I die of thirst;
Take me out of this land accursed;
And if ever I reach my home again,
Where earth has springs, and the sky has rain,
I will dig a well for the passers-by,
And none shall suffer with thirst as I."

"I saw, as I passed my home once more,
The house, the barn, the clms by the door.
The grass-lined road, that riverward wound,
The tall slate stones of the burying-ground,
The belfry and steeple on meeting-house hill,
The brook with its dam, and gray grist-mill,
And I knew in that vision beyond the sea,
The very place where my well must be.

God heard my prayer in that evil day;
He led my feet in their homeward way,
Till I saw at last, through a coast-hill's gap,
The city held in its stony lap,
The mosques and the domes of scorched Muscat,
And my voice leaped up with joy thereat;
For there was a ship at anchor lying,
A Christian flag at its mast-head flying,
And sweetest of sounds to my home-sick ear
Was my native tongue in the sailor's cheer.
Now the Lord be thanked, I am back again,
Where earth has spring, and the skies have rain
And the well I promised, by Oman's Sea,
I am digging for Him in Amesbury."

His good wife wept, and his neighbors said:
"The poor old captain is out of his head."
But from morn to noon, and from noon to night,
He toiled at his task with main and might;
And when at last, from the loosened earth,
Under his spade the stream gushed forth,
And fast as he climbed to his deep well's brim,
The water he dug for followed him;
He shouted for joy: "I have kept my word,
And here is the well I promised the Lord!"

The long years came, and the long years went,
And he sat by his roadside well content;
He watched the travellers, heat-oppressed,
Pause by the way to drink and rest,
And the sweltering horses dip, as they drank,
Their nostrils deep in the cool, sweet tank,
And grateful at heart, his memory went
Back to that waterless Orient,
And the blessed answer of prayer, which came
To the earth of iron and sky of flame.

And when a wayfarer, weary and hot,
Kept to the mid-road, pausing not
For the well's refreshing, he shook his head;
"Ho don't know the value of water," he said;
"Had he prayed for a drop, as I have done,
In the desert circle of sand and sun,
He would drink and rest, and go home to toll
That God's best gift is the wayside well!"
—*Band of Hope Review.*

"HAVE YOU SEEN MOSE-S?"

BY EVELYN RAYMOND.

(Continued.)

Not only he, but all his fellow-miners,
Listened with the utmost attention.
Finally, one who appeared to be a leader
among them cried out, excitedly: "See
here, traveller! that thar boy hain't spoke
nary word sence ever he come inter camp,
but thar ain't no better ner no handier
critter 'bove groun' 'an what he is; an'
I'll tell ye what we'll du. You can sic' on
ter him with 'Mose-s,' er any dern thing
ye've a min' ter, an' ef ye kin git anything
outen him we'll b'lieve the yarn ye've be'n
telling, an'll fix him up to go 'long back
with ye ter that thar loony daddy o' his'n.
Ef ye carn't—we'll 'low this ain't thar chap
ye're a-lookin' fer, an' keep him 'mongst
us er spell longer. What d'ye say, boys?"

They all agreed to the experiment.
The spokesman, toning his voice as if
the handsome dish-washer were deaf, bawled
out: "Look a-here, Numby!"

The lad desisted from his unfitting task
and lifted his great blue eyes toward the
speaker's face. That his brain was not
wholly without intelligence was evident
from the fact that he had learned the title
his protectors had given him, and that he
paid no attention when he was not ad-
dressed.

The miner raised his grimy hand and
beckoned. Laying his towel softly down
—a peculiar quietude accompanied all his
movements—"Numby" obeyed. He came
slowly up to the circle and stood just out-
side its limits, looking mutely from face
to face as a dog might have done, yet with-
out a dog's inquiring interest.

"Tackle him, stranger," said some one
with eager curiosity.

Fixing his eyes upon the vacant face,
and putting all my will into my low-pitched
voice, I spoke to him: "Mo-ses! Mo-ses!"

The blue eyes ceased wandering and fas-
tened themselves upon my lips. A pro-
found hush fell over the circle. There is
no man either so stolid or so sensitive as
the frontiersman. If there is any psycho-
logical principle involved in the fact that
the wish of every miner present was for
"Numby" to find his way back to his own
identity, I do not know it; but this I do
know—each would have sacrificed a frag-
ment of his own intelligence to augment
that of the poor lad before us. This may
have helped—no human sympathy is wasted
—and certain it is that there had come over
the fair, boyish face a new expression.

I rose and went to his side. Taking his
hands in my own, I repeated as distinctly
and impressively as I could: "Mo-ses—
Mose-s!"

A slow, faint flush, lovelier than any
maiden's blush could be, stole up into the
blonde cheek of the poor wail. "Moses,
your father—wants—you!"

The color deepened, but some of us
could not see it for the mist that veiled our
eyes.

We had been two days on our homeward
journey, and I had become intensely ab-
sorbed in the mental experiment which I
was making. The same gentle docility
which had characterized the lad's father
during his intercourse with me at Boom-
ville was manifest in my fellow-traveller.
I was trying to discover the path to the
hidden intelligence of Moses, and to lead
him with me.

We stopped for a noon rest by the bank
of a little stream, and the boy lay at my
feet as a child might have done, and it was
then and there that I found the coveted
clow.

I needed to sleep, but was wakeful. To
facilitate the matter I began idly to repeat
a Latin conjugation—the old familiar jin-
gle: "*Amo, amas, amat; amamus, amatis,*
amant."

There was a strange sound from the lad
as of suddenly catching his breath, then
his hand clutched mine, and the long-sil-
ent voice took up the refrain: "*Amabo,*

amabas, amabat; amabamus, amabatis
amabant."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at my feet I
could not have been more startled. Had
the thunderbolt brought me a fortune I
should not have been so glad.

When we came within sight of Boom-
ville another period of days had elapsed,
and the random beginning had led to
blessed results. I could scarcely restrain
my impatience to find poor "Pop," and
was sanguine even of his future. All
things seemed now possible. I had not
only "seen Mose-s," but I had brought
him back sound in body and hourly gaining
in mind. Fortunately, the passage of a
swift-riding cow-boy, who halted and fed
with us, enabled me to send a message to
the landlady of the "Eureka" concerning
my happy "find" and its results. I wished
the "city" to be prepared, that no un-
toward shock might undo the work which
had already been accomplished for "Moses."

But I was destined to a surprise. That
kindly, clannish soul, "from 'round Contoc-
cook" welcomed her compatriot with more
than granite force; she literally fell upon
my neck and wept.

Corson, the veterinary, in fact the only
physic dealer of any sort in the place, took
immediate possession of the returned
Moses, and after profuse promises that the
newly-awakened brain should not be over-
taxed, carried the lad away in triumph.
The landlady then ushered me into her
little parlor, and into the presence of a
gracious, sweet-faced woman with soft gray
hair and a general air of culture and refine-
ment that could only have been acquired
at either "Cawncord" or "Bawston."

"This is him!" my friend explained,
by way of introduction, and with a total
disregard of her early advantages, which
was barely excusable on the ground of
superabundant Western emotion—"This
is him—himself!"

"Mrs. Dow has forgotten to tell you
who I am," said the sweet-faced woman,
coming toward me with extended hands
and a smile upon her grief-marked features.

"There is no need, I think, dear ma-
dam," I answered, grasping the slender
fingers. "You are—Moses's mother."

"Yes; and eternally beholden to Moses's
saviour."

"But that was a mere chance—a happy
one, I grant you. Your husband—"

"Lies on the bed in the room yonder.
Will you believe that the days of miracles
are past when I tell you, as I do, that he
also is restored to a comprehension of much
that has befallen him? Not all, of course;
but the rest will come—must come. Do
you, who have done so much, care to hear
our whole, simple story?"

"I do care to hear it—greatly."

"My husband had not the advantage of
the education we desired to give our son,
and we both erred, as many ambitious
parents have done, in urging a brain which
too late we saw was not as strong as we
had fancied it. The tension was so great
that just before our dear boy was to have
been graduated he broke down utterly.
The best physicians said that his only hope
lay in a complete change of life and sur-
roundings; so his father brought him West,
and, hoping for his restoration, sheltered
the lad's pride by withholding his name.

"Everything was going well until the
passage of that cyclone. You know the
rest. But you do not know how long has
been my search for my dear ones. I knew
that Mr. Penniman intended to change his
residence from time to time, as he saw
Moses wearying of any; and I never heard
when he came here."

There was a feeble call from the bed-
room, and the sweet-faced woman went to
answer it.

"And, indeed, it was the Lord guided
her to this very door!" exclaimed the land-
lady, wiping away her ready tears, and con-
tinuing the tale: "The stage drove up and
out she stepped. There sat 'Pop,' and
when he clapped eyes on her he sprang
up wild like and pushed his hair off his
forehead, as if that would help him to re-
member. Then he gave an awful cry and
fell down in a faint. When he came to
again she was with him, and he's been get-
ting clearer and clearer ever sence. It's
stranger than a story out of a book; but
Corson, he allows that it was the shock of
seeing her so sudden that brought Mr.
Penniman to his senses. But I'm kind of
dreading to have her and Moses meet.

The poor woman has gone through trouble
enough, Lord knows, and if he shouldn't
happen—"

There was a noise outside the door, and
we looked toward it to see Jim Corson
enter from the street leading his temporary
charge, who had been entrusted to his care
in accordance with the landlady's urgent
advice that his longing mother should be
duly "prepared."

There was a stir, also, from the bed-room
way, and a rustle of woman's garments.
The landlady hid her face upon my shoulder,
and I turned away my eyes.

For a moment an intensity of silence—
then a low cry: "Moses, my son!"

Almost at once the answer: "Mother—
why, mother!"

It was the gladdest sound I ever heard.
—*Frank Leslie's Illustrated.*

WHERE DID HE GET IT.

BY KATE DOORIS SHARP.

My little boys were playing "horsey"
the other morning when a little fellow
looked over the fence and said politely:

"May I come into the yard and play a
while?"

"Oh yes; certainly, Johnny, come right
in," and in came Johnny.

I will explain here that the new-comer
was a neighbor's child, who for a variety
of mischief had, at one time or another,
been summarily requested to make himself
scarce. He was not really a suitable play-
mate, but he made his request so prettily,
it could not be in any one's heart to refuse
him.

After awhile little Johnny asked: "May
your little boys come up to my house to
play?"

Dozens of times have little boys asked
me that question, and I have invariably,
but oh! so reluctantly, answered "No."

It is tiresome to "stay around" and keep
your eye on little fellows while they play.
It is often irksome to suggest games for
their amusement, something or other to
keep them busy and interested, to tell lit-
tle stories that will mold their minds and
manners while pleasing at the same time.
But then I always assure myself that while
my children are with me I know what they
are doing.

Presently some voices were heard in the
alley:

"Johnny! Johnny! come here!" Johnny
ran to the fence and I heard a voice say:
"Come along we're going to play saloon.
We'll give you some of this beer."

"Is it beer?" asked Johnny, anxiously.

"Well, lookey here if 'tain't," and the
boy opened the patent stopper with a pop;
up flew the foam, and the little boy, Char-
lie, who carried the bottle, took a drink.

As this was highly interesting, I went
over to the fence to investigate. The
boys with the beer—there were two of
them and they carried three bottles of
genuine beer—began to withdraw. They
were about seven or eight years of age,
respectively.

"Why, Charlie," said I to the boy with
the open bottle, "where did you get that?"

"We won't tell," he answered sullenly.

"And, Jimmie, what are you going to
do with those bottles?" to the other boy.

"We're going around to a stable, to
keep saloon," said Jimmie.

"And have you got out a license to go
into the business?" but Jimmie and Charlie
laughed and ran out of sight. After this
things seemed to grow dull for Johnny,
and he soon ran after the boys with the
beer. He apparently knew where the boys'
saloon could be found, but he would not tell.

Where did those boys get the beer?
Wouldn't you like to know? Evidently
some one is trying to raise a crop of drunk-
ards. And as I turned to my little inno-
cents who went on playing their simple
games, ignorant of the delights of keeping
"saloon," I felt fully compensated for all
the care I had given them.

Mothers. If there is to be a thorough
work of temperance and reform wrought in
the land, that work must begin with you.
Where are your little boys? where are
your girls? If they are off on the streets,
you know not where, be sure that the seeds
of all evil will find root in their tender
hearts. Make home a pleasant place for
them and teach them to hate wickedness.
"Train up a child in the way he should
go, and when he is old he will not depart
from it."—*Presbyterian Observer.*