



"ANY CHAIRS TO MEND?"

SONG OF THE CHAIR-MENDER.

BY MARY E. ROPES.

'Any chairs to mend? Old chairs to mend!
That's what I sings as I pegs along;
'Any broken baskets? I'll mend 'em all!
That's the second half of my song.

I'm an elderly man, and I think my life
Hain't too many years now left to run;
But though I say it as shouldn't, I'm sure
I can cane a chair with anyone.

'Tain't much of a trade? Oh, don't say that!
It's fair, it's honest, it's needful too;
Even poor folk sit, and they can't afford
Horsehair or down, like the rich of you.

'Hard? Uncertain? The work, you mean?
Well, yes, it's the truth—I can't deny.
Sometimes I'm busy, as busy can be,
And others I've nothin', however I try.

But whatever I does, or doesn't do,
Wherever I goes, in shine or rain,
I tries to take the days as they come,
And make it my dooty not to complain.

'Chairs to mend? Any chairs to mend?
I'll peg 'em firm, and I'll seat 'em nice—
And I never deals in rotten canes
For the pleasure and profit of doin' 'em twice.

Any market baskets with handles loose?
And basket-prams in the prickin' stage?
Any wicker tables wantin' a edge?
Any bars to put in a wicker cage?

Bring 'em out—good cottagers all!
Bring 'em out now I pass your way.
Bring 'em out, now you have the chance,
For I mayn't be passin' another day.

On I goes with a cheerful heart,
Slowly peggin'—peggin' along;
Never lonely, though I'm alone,
And always singin' my old trade song.

But between the verses, I seems to hear
Better words than the best I sing;
My dear Lord speaks to me from His Word,
And makes me as glad as anything.

And I says to myself, 'My honest work,
Though humble, is still my very best;
It's my all, as much as the bigger all
Of them as is better housed and dress'd.'

And all that I have, and am, and can do,
Belongs to a Master good—so good!
And He makes my heart that happy and light,
As I wouldn't change my life if I could.

And I know that when all my chairs is done,
And my basket mendin' is finish'd quite,
So as I needn't trudge no more,
Callin' my trade from morn till night,

I shall hear my Master's voice again,
As I lie on my bed, or sit by the fire,
And I think it will say (and how glad I'll be
To hear the words.) 'Friend, come up higher!
British Workman.

ROB CRAIG'S STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

The house seemed very still that morning. Father Craig had gone to Boston on the early train, and Mother Craig had been called from her breakfast to go to Aunt Phebe Perry, who was surely going to die this time. But Rob did not mind being left. As soon as his breakfast was well swallowed, he took his rifle out of the south porch to give it a cleaning, for he had laid out a famous day's sport.

His mother always looked very sober when the rifle was brought out, for her tender heart was sorely hurt when any little thing came to harm through it; but Rob's favorite uncle had sent it to him the Christmas before, and his father approved of it as one of the ways to make a boy manly. So his mother said very little except now and then to plead gently the cause of those who could not plead for themselves.

So Rob sat there, rubbing and cleaning, whistling merrily, and thinking of the squirrel's nest he knew of, and the rabbit tracks of which Johnny Boullard had told him. He whistled so shrilly that presently a broad-brimmed hat appeared around the corner of the house. There was a little girl under the hat, but you didn't see her at first.

'Sh! Robbie,' she said, holding up a small forefinger. 'Amy Louise is dreadful bad with her head, and I'm trying to get her to sleep.'

'Why don't you put a plantain leaf on her head? Plantain's prime for headaches,' said Rob.

'Would you please get me one, Robbie?' pleaded the trusting little body. 'Mamma said for me not to go away from the house, and Norah is cross this morning.'

Time was precious just then; but this one sister was very dear. So laying down his rifle, Rob ran over to the meadow across the road, and brought back a huge plantain leaf, which he bound carefully upon the head of Amy Louise, quite extinguishing that suffering doll, but to the infinite content of the little girl. Then he went back to the porch, and took up his rifle again, looking admiringly at the shining barrel and polished stock.

'Now, Mr. Squirrel,' he said, 'look out for yourself, for I'll have a crack at you presently.'

And he leaned back against the side of the porch to plan his route; for the day was too hot for any unnecessary steps. Just then he heard a click, and looked around straight into the barrel of another rifle.

'My!' said Rob. 'That's a pretty careless thing to do.'

But the big man holding the rifle did not move, and kept his finger on the trigger. He was a stranger to Rob, and under the circumstances, the most unpleasant one he had ever met.

'Will you please lower your gun! You might shoot me,' said Rob, trying to speak bravely, but with a queer feeling under his jacket.

'That's what I came for,' said the man. 'Came to shoot me?' cried Rob. 'What have I done?'

'Nothing that I know of,' answered the man, indifferently; 'but boys do a great deal of mischief. They steal fruit and break windows and make horrid noises. Besides there are a great many of them, and they might overrun us if we didn't thin them out, now and then.'

Rob was horrified. Without doubt, the man was an escaped lunatic; and right around the corner of the house was Ethel, likely to appear at any minute. Just then the man spoke again.

'Besides, it's necessary to kill, to get food.'

If Rob had not been so frightened he would have laughed as he thought of his wiry little frame, with scarcely a spare ounce on it; but he answered very meekly, 'But I'm not good to eat.'

'No,' said the man, 'you'd be tough eating.'

'And my clothes wouldn't be worth anything to you,' said Rob, glancing quickly over his worn suit.

'No,' with indifference. 'But I came out for a day's sport, and you're the first game I've seen, and I may as well finish you and look farther. I saw some small tracks 'round here,' and again that horrible click.

'Oh,' cried poor Rob, 'don't shoot me! I'm the only boy my poor father and mother have, and they'd miss me dreadfully.'

'Pshaw!' cried the other. 'They wouldn't mind much; and besides I'm coming round in a day or two to shoot them.'

'Shoot my father and mother?' gasped Rob. 'You wouldn't do such a wicked thing!'

'Why, yes, I would,' laughed the dreadful man. 'They are larger and better looking than you, and their clothes are worth more. I've had my eyes on this family for some time, and I may as well begin now.'

It seemed to Rob as if his heart stopped beating. Then he cried out, 'Please, please don't kill me. I'm so young, and I want to live so much.'

The big man laughed derisively. 'Do you think I shall find any game that doesn't want to live? What do you suppose I own a gun for, if I'm not to use it?'

Somehow, even in his terror, this argument had a familiar sound. Just then the big man took deliberate aim. Rob gave one look at the landscape spread out before him. It was so pleasant and life was so sweet. Then he shut his eyes. Bang!

When he opened his eyes he saw only the old south porch, with the hop tassels dancing and swinging, and his rifle fallen flat on the floor. It was all a horrid dream from which his fallen rifle had wakened him. But the first thing he did was to peep around the corner of the house to assure himself of Ethel's safety. Yes, there was the broad-brimmed hat flapping down the garden walk, attended by the cat and her two little kittens and lame old Beppo, the dog.

Rob did not take up his beloved rifle. Resting his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands, he sat looking off over the fields, while a serious thinking went on under his curly thatch, and his thoughts ran something like this:

'I wonder if the birds and squirrels feel as frightened as I did. I guess they do, for sometimes, when I only hurt and catch them, their hearts are just thumping. And how cowardly that big man seemed coming out to shoot me—so much smaller! But I'm a great deal bigger than the things I shoot, and we don't use them in any way. Mother won't wear the birds' wings nor let Ethel, and we don't eat them. I guess I've had a vision, a sort of warning. Oh, what if that dreadful man had found Ethel! and Rob went around the corner of the house.'

The procession had just turned, and was coming toward him.

'How is she?' he asked, nodding toward the afflicted Amy Louise, hanging limply over her little mistress's shoulder.

'She's ever so much better. I think she would be able to swing a little if I hold her,' with a very insinuating smile.

'Come along, then, little fraud,' laughed Rob, turning toward the swing.

'But aren't you going shooting, Robbie?'

'No,' said Rob, with tremendous emphasis.

When Mrs. Craig came home, tired and sad, in the middle of the afternoon, instead of the forlorn little girl she expected to find wandering about, there was a pleasant murmur of voices on the south porch, where Rob sat mending his kite, while Ethel rocked gently to and fro, with Amy Louise and both kittens in her lap.

'You didn't go hunting, then, Robert?' said his mother.

Robert shook his head, without giving any reason; but that evening, as Mrs. Craig sat at twilight in her low 'thinking chair' by the west window, there was a soft step behind her, a quick kiss on the top of her head, and a note dropped into her lap, and the note said:

'I will never again kill any creature for sport. ROBERT ANDERSON CRAIG.'

And Robert Anderson Craig is a boy who will keep his word.—*Hester Stuart, in Congregationalist.*

THE LARGEST MAN now in the service of her majesty Queen Victoria, is Lieut. Sutherland, who is eight feet four inches high and weighs 364 pounds.

THE BORROWED BABY.

BY SUSAN TEALL PERRY.

That nice old gentleman over the way
Came into our house quite early to-day,
And he said to mamma, "My wife sent me here
To borrow something;" then he looked very queer.

"It is not sugar, molasses, or tea,"
He said, as he pointed his finger at me;
"It's that little lass she wants me to bring.
Wife's growing feeble and childish this spring,
The weather's been bad, she couldn't get out;
She sees this little girl running about,
And fancies she's like our lassie who died.
'Twould do her good if she'd just step inside."
And then mamma whispered low in my ear:
"Will you be lent for this morning, my dear?
That poor old lady is lonely and sad,
With no little girl to make her heart glad;
You'll be a great comfort to her, I know."
I said to mamma, "Of course I will go."
I was just as happy as I could be
With that dear old lady who borrowed me,
I sat in her little girl's rocking chair
And held her doll with its long flaxen hair,
While she told about her little girl's ways,
How happy she was in all her plays;
And I spoke the prettiest piece I knew
About "a dear baby with eyes of blue,
With chubby hands and cunning toes
And dainty mouth as sweet as a rose."

When I said I must go she asked a kiss,
I gave her ten, for I knew she must miss
Her dear little girl. What mamma would be,
I'm sure I'm can't tell, if she didn't have me!
And I'll go often; I told her I would,
It's one way, you know, that I can do good.
I'll ask her how she is getting along,
And stop sometimes to sing her a song,
Or read her a story—her eyes are quite weak—
I'll give her kisses, and loving words speak.
I'm so very glad that old lady sent
This morning to see if I would be lent,
And I'll ask the good Lord to bless each day
That poor lonely mother over the way.
—*Christian at Work.*