

Written for the LADIES' PICTORIAL WEEKLY.

Spring.

The snow lies heavy yet on bough and brake,
And all the earth lies in such frozen state,
As one could deem Dame Nature had forgot
How tranced and numb was her poor earth-child's lot
Yet, down beneath the silence of the snow,
Stirring the violet's roots, warm pulses glow.

And first will spread the ever-bright'ning green,
Shot with the dandelions' gold between,
Which even seems a dainty, new-found treasure
In that brief season when the heart's bright measure
Welcomes each common thing with childlike pleasure:
That resurrection fair, the Spring's sweet dawning,
That still beguiles, the weary world transforming.

And then will burst the cloud of snowy bloom,
The cherry blossom shower, that falls so soon;
From out whose pearly heart the whole day long
Breaks yet unchanged the robins' hopeful song.
Oh! Spring still brings such dower of fragrant wealth
As makes even this tired and tearstained earth
Smile with the brightness of her Eden birth.

KATE.

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How the Mortgage Was Paid.



SAW it hanging up in the kitchen of a thrifty, healthful, sturdy farmer in Oxford County, Maine, a bottomless jug! The host saw that the curious thing had caught my eye, and he smiled.

"You are wondering why that jug is hanging up there with its bottom knocked out?" he said, "My wife, perhaps could tell you the story better than I can, but she is bashful and I am not, so I'll tell it."

"My father, as you are probably aware, owned this farm before me. He lived to a good old age, worked hard all his life, never squandered money, was a shrewd, careful trader, and a good cultivator; and as men were accustomed in his day and generation, he was a temperate man. I was the youngest boy; and when the old man was ready to go, and he knew it, the other boys agreed that since I had stayed at home and taken care of the old folks, the farm should be mine, and to me it was willed. I had been three years married. Well, father died, mother had gone three years before, and left the farm to me with a mortgage of \$2,000. I had never thought so much of it before, but I thought of it now and said to Mary, my wife, 'Mary,' said I 'look here. Here's father had this farm in its first strength of soil, with all its magnificent timber, and six boys, as they grew up, equal to so many men, and he had worked early and late, and yet look at it. A mortgage of \$2,000! What can I do? And I went to that jug—it had the bottom in then—and took a stiff drink of Medford rum from it. I noticed a curious look on the face of my wife just then, and I asked her what she thought of it, for I supposed, of course, she was thinking of what I had been talking about. And so she was. Says she:

"Charles, I have thought of this a great deal, and I have thought of a way in which I believe we can clear the mortgage off before five years are ended." Says I, 'Mary, tell me how you'll do it.' She thought a little while, and then she said, with a funny twinkle in her blue eyes,

"Charles you must promise me this, and promise most solemnly and sacredly, promise me that you will never again bring home, for the purpose of drinking for a beverage, at any one time, more spirits of any kind than you can bring in that old jug—that jug that your father has used ever since I knew him, and which you have used since he was done with it."

"Well, I knew that my father used once in awhile, especially in haying time, and in the winter time when we were at work in the woods, to get an old gallon jug filled; so I thought it over, and after awhile told her I would agree to it.

"Now mind," said she, 'you are never, never to bring home as common beverage more spirits than you can bring in that identical jug.' And I gave her the promise.

"And before I went to bed that night I took the last drink out of that jug. As I was turning it out for a sort of a nightcap, Mary looked up and said:

"Charlie, have you got a drop left?"

"I told her there was just about a drop, we would have to get it filled to-morrow.

"And then she said if I had no objection, she would drink that last drop with me. I shall never forget how she brought it out—that last drop! However, I tipped the jug bottom up, and got about a tablespoonful, and Mary said that was enough. She took the tumbler and poured a few drops of hot water into it, and a little sugar, and then she tinkled her glass against mine, just as she had seen us boys do when we had been drinking good luck, and says she:

"Here's to the brown jug."

"Sakes alive! I thought to myself that poor Mary had been drinking more of the rum than was good for her; and I tell you it kind of cut me to the heart. I forgot all about how many times she had seen me when my tongue was thicker than it ought to be and my legs not quite as steady as good legs should be; but I said

nothing, I drank the sentiment, 'to the old brown jug!' and let it go.

"Well, I went out after that and did the chores and went to bed, and the last thing I said before leaving the kitchen, the very room where we now sit, was, 'we'll have the old brown jug filled to-morrow,' and then I went to bed.

"And I have remembered ever since I went to bed that night, as I had a hundred times before, with a buzzing in my head that a healthy man ought not to have. I did not think of it then, nor had I ever thought of it before, but I have thought of it a good many times since, and have thought of it with wonder and awe.

"Well, I got up the next morning and did some work about the barn, then came in and ate some breakfast not with such an appetite as a farmer ought to have, and I could think even then that my appetite began to fail me. However, after breakfast I went out and hitched up the horses, for to tell the truth I felt the need of a glass of spirits, and I had not a drop in the house. I got hitched up and then came in for the jug. I went for it in the old cupboard, and took it out, and—

"Did you ever break through the thin ice on a nipping cold day, and find yourself in an instant over your head in the freezing water? The jug was there but the bottom was gone! Mary had been and taken a sharp chisel and hammer, and with a skill that might have done credit to a master workman, she had chipped the bottom clean out of the jug, without even breaking the edge or the sides! I looked at Mary. And then she burst out. She spoke. Oh! I have never heard anything like it since. Said she 'Charles! there's where the mortgage on this farm came from. It was brought home in that jug, two quarts at a time. And there's where all the debt has been. And that's where your clear skin, and your clear pretty eyes are going. And in that jug my husband your appetite is also going. Let it be as it is, dear heart! And remember your promise to me.'

"And she threw her arms around my neck and burst into tears. She could speak no more.

"And there was no need. My eyes opened as though by magic. In a single minute the whole scene passed before me. I saw all the mortgages of all the farms in our neighborhood, and I thought where all the money had gone. The very last mortgage father had ever made had been to pay a bill held against him by the man who had filled his jug for years. Yes, I saw it all, as it passed before me—a fitting picture of rum, rum, rum, debt, debt! and in the end Death? and I returned my Mary's kiss, and said I:

"Mary, my own, I'll keep my promise, I will—so help me heaven!"

"And so I have kept it. In less than five years, as Mary had said, the mortgage was cleared off; my appetite came back to me; and now we've got a few thousand dollars out at interest. There hangs the old jug, just as we hung it up that day; and from that time there hasn't a drop of spirits been brought into the house, for a beverage, which the bottomless jug would not have held.

"Dear old jug! we mean to keep it, and to hand it down to our children for the lesson it can give them—a lesson of life—of a life happy, peaceful, prosperous and blessed."

And as he ceased speaking, his wife, with one arm drawn tenderly around the neck of her youngest boy, murmured a fervent "Amen!"

S. RICE.

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A Peep into a Southern Kitchen.

There is no more interesting sight to unaccustomed eyes than the interior of a Southern kitchen, the old-fashioned one of Antebellum days *bien entendre*. Before the open door (for who ever knew a negro to close a door) roll and tumble a merry crowd of half-clad picaninnies, who greet the new-comer with wide-mouthed grins of welcome; it is always an exception when darkies are not pleased to meet visitors, whether of their own sombre hue or white persons, another characteristic of this singular race is that of considering it a mark of true gentility to be ailing in health, it is not *en regle* with them to be "quite well, thank you." No, their greetings take this form.

"Good ebenin', brudder Fox, how you do dis ebenin'?"

"I'se only jes' tollable, tank you brudder Crab, how you all do?"

"We's mighty porely all ob de we uns, I hab de mis'try in de back pow'rful bad."

In this peculiarity it is needless to state that they in a great measure imitate the white people, whom they have always been accustomed to consider their superiors in all respects, and among whom, owing to the prevalence of chills and fevers together with many diseases incident to warm climates, there is much debility and illness. But to return to the cabin which, built a few feet to the rear of the family mansion as all Southern kitchens are, will surely repay a friendly visit. Within the open door-way stands the Chloe Queen of this Rembrandt interior, attended by her court of dark hued imps, whose faces guiltless of too close acquaintance with soap and water are shinning with grease and beplastered with molasses. A few energetic cuffs to right and left disperse the motley crew, and off they scamper to resume "operations on the turf" outside, their gleaming ivories showing in a farewell grin, as they depart amid a chorus of war whoops and a perfect circus of heel and toe gymnastics. The way thus cleared you can pursue your investigations; the ceiling with its smoke-dried beams is low, the floor, unlike the well scoured planks of northern latitudes, is formed of ordinary red brick kept bright by weekly applications of a paste made of powdered brick-dust mixed with water; a clay floor beaten hard and smooth is occasionally met with, but it is the exception, for the presiding genius of the culinary region delights in the bright crimson of her floor. Opposite the door yawns the great fire-place with its swinging crane and helter skelter array of bake-kettles, old-fashioned spiders and the large pot which is flanked on either side by smaller kettles; beside the chimney sit, on the one side a stone

churn, on the other a "crook" containing buttermilk, a lid-lifter for the removal of the covers to the bake-kettles, and a long iron rod with a small cross-piece on one end, used to rake out the beds of glowing coals, complete the "furniture" of the fire-place. A table large and square, a wooden trough three feet in length by two in width called a "mixing board," and used in the manufacture of different kinds of bread stuffs, a rolling pin and a biscuit beater, and a marble slab, constitute the utensils of this unique kitchen. A biscuit beater is a wooden stick, flat and larger at one end than the other like an oar, this and the marble slab are used in making the famous beaten biscuit of the Southern *cuisine*. As a general thing the utmost disorder prevails in these kitchens, the besom of confusion sweeps the dishes from their proper place on the table to the floor, pans, buckets, kettles and skillets, hob-nob in close proximity in all manner of unlooked for places. Nothing is where it ought to be, and everything is where it ought not to be. Yet out of this "confusion worse confounded" what toothsome repasts are evolved! More orderly kitchens may be found elsewhere, but not more delicious cooking; the viands served therefrom may have been evolved from chaos, but they are fit for the delectation of ye gods.

RUTH ARGYLE.

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How Nellie Camnay Succeeded.

Generally speaking, life with Nellie Camnay for the past few years had not been a success. Her father dying suddenly, she found that the father's salary had been their all, and when it ceased but little save home and furnishings were left for the widow and daughter. Two years more and the place had been sold, the mother a victim to consumption, and Nellie was alone. Fairly educated she was, but not educated to do any particular thing well, save house work, in which she had been well taught, and excelled. The prejudice which young American girls generally have against doing housework was in her case unusually strong. Added to this she was not strong enough to do the work for a family even had she been willing to undertake it. She went to board with a cousin and tried the usual resort of most girls forced to depend on their own exertions, she entered a store. The salary was sufficient to pay her board only. Her employer died, the store was sold and she was obliged to seek another situation. Another was found but after a few months the store "changed hands." The new incumbent had a friend of his own who wanted the place, and once more she was crowded out. Her next experience was in the large dry goods store of a city. Here her strength soon failed, and she was sick for several weeks. Then came a friend with the suggestion, "Why don't you make cake at home and sell it?" Now this seemed to Nellie something very like an impossibility. To be sure there were many such things advised in the papers. But what chance had she poor and almost unknown in a large city. That she could make good cake she was very sure. Her cake had always been highly praised by guests in the dear old home, at picnics, fairs, suppers, and in the happy days now so far in the past, her cooking had always been sought. And how she did love to cook. No "poor luck" for her. Everything was always weighed and measured with scrupulous exactness. No "guess work" and no failures there. "How fine," she thought to herself, "it would be to earn my living by doing something that is mere play." But who would purchase? How was she to find even a single customer? Finally she made a small loaf and took it to the lady who had made the suggestion, asking if she would show it to some of her friends when not too much trouble. The lady did more than that. She cut it in small nice-looking slices, wrapped them in white paper and having an extended acquaintance took the slices to her friends who did or would be most liable to purchase cake. It was decided to charge about fifteen cents for a sheet of frosted sponge cake above the actual cost of materials. Other cakes were sold by the pound. People were interested in the story of the young girl and gave orders first as a means of encouragement. Soon they ordered because they found the cake cheaper and better than could be made at home. Soon pies, cookies, doughnuts, etc., were demanded and supplied. Now to make this like a story, she should have grown rich in a short time. Well, this is a true story and she isn't rich yet. But she has found a pleasant means of being self-supporting, with time to enjoy some of the luxuries of life and means to purchase them.

INEZ REDDING.

A Prohibitionist.

A prohibitionist went into a Texas saloon under the influence of liquor and asked a prominent politician to treat.

"You can't be thirsty again; you've just had a drink," said the politician.

"Of course (hic) I'm not thirsty," was the indignant response of the suffering prohibitionist. "If I don't drink schepten when I'm thirsty what 'vantage have I got over a beast in the field?"

Suits to Hire.

Miss Pinkerton.—"Miss Pinkerly told me the other night that she had never seen you in the same suit twice.

Cleverton.—"That's strange. I didn't know before that I had such a variety."

Miss Pinkerton.—"She was speaking of dress suits."

Mrs. O'Brien.—"Good marnin', Mrs. McCabe. An' phwat makes yez look so sad?"

Mrs. McCabe.—"Shure, Dennis was sint to th' penitentiary fer six months."

Mrs. O'Brien.—"Well, shure, don't worry. Six months will soon pass."

Mrs. McCabe.—"Shure, that's phwat worries me."