

Choice Literature.

"Two Pounds Reward!"

BY THE HON. ISABEL PLUNKET.

"Mother, mother! have you heard the news?" exclaimed Stephen Radnor, tumbling almost head foremost into the cottage, where his mother sat beside the hearth, with her foot on the cradle-rocker, and her anxious eyes fixed on the flushed baby-face that lay within.

"Grand news, mother?" exclaimed another and louder voice, as Bruce, Stephen's elder brother, hurried into the cottage after him, pushing Stephen aside. "Hush, hush, boys! quit talking every one of you, and 'be quiet!' poor Mrs. Radnor exclaimed; but not before the little one in the cradle had roused, with a sharp cry, from her short feverish sleep.

"There, I know you would've been and wakened her," the poor mother added, in a kind of despair. "Since ever she dosed off I've been dreading the very minute you'd come in;" and as Mrs. Radnor spoke tears of weariness and vexation fell from her eyes.

"But, mother, listen; it's grand!" Stephen exclaimed again, taking little note of his mother's trouble, and rather glad of the two that the baby was awake now, so that he might tell his news as noisily as he would.

"Ethel has lost her gold watch and chain, with the diamond seal hanging to it, somewhere between the church and Bullfinch Lane."

"And the rector has offered two pounds reward to any one who finds it," Bruce burst in again, determined to have his share in the story somehow. "The rector was down at the school himself to-day."

"There, I knew you would; it's unfair, I say it's awfully unfair. That was the very part I wanted to tell," Stephen muttered, indignantly, and the flush of excitement deepened into passionate red upon his cheek.

"And, mother, listen—listen, mother, I want to tell you something," said little Dick, in a quiet voice, edging up beside his mother, and trying to draw down her ear on a level with his mouth; but Mrs. Radnor must have been sorely tried to-day, for she shook off the gentle little hand that rested on her arm, and withdrew her head from Dick's confidence, whatever it may have been.

"I don't want to hear what one of ye's got to say. Get away to the dresser there and eat the bit that's left for you, and quit talking for the child's sake, I tell you, and who knows when she'll sleep again now." As she spoke, poor Mrs. Radnor rose, and walked up and down the kitchen flags with the wailing child in her arms, whilst for a moment the boys' mouths were closed with the wedges of thick cake-bread and the tins of butter-milk provided for them on the dresser.

But in another moment the storm of young voices rose again, for Stephen had swallowed his meal almost at one bolt, Bruce had stuffed half of his into his pocket, and Dick was too eager and hopeful to do more than taste his own, and stood with his large patient blue eyes steadfastly fixed on his elder brothers, awaiting their word of command.

"Now then, let's off!" exclaimed Bruce, drawing the sleeve of his coat hastily across his well-stuffed mouth. "I'm to take the lead, of course, because I'm the eldest, and then Stephen, and then Dick."

"All right!" Dick answered, quite happily, with a great belief in his big brothers, and an innocent readiness to do anything that he was told; but Stephen did not seem at all so willing to agree to Bruce's suggestion.

"I'm not going with you at all, I can tell you; I'm just going on my own hook. I'll start at the very top of the lane, and turn over every inch of grass, and I'll bet you sixpence I'll find it."

"Find what, boys? Is it a goat you're talking about?" Mrs. Radnor asked, as the wailing cry ceased for a moment in her ear, and she caught some hint of the boys' meaning now.

"The goat, mother; why, whatever put old Jenny into your head!" Stephen exclaimed with a splutter of almost rude merriment, which even his present undisciplined excitement could scarcely excuse.

"It's Miss Ethel's gold watch and chain with the diamond seal, that's what we were telling you of all the time. The rector has offered two pounds reward, and we're going off now to look for it."

"Then there's one of you will have to go and look for the goat, for all that," his mother answered, quietly; for it's loosed its tether since morning, and there's no saying where it's off to by this time. I was only waiting till you'd come home, to send one of you off to find her."

"Oh, but we could not go now, mother!" both the boys exclaimed almost at once, whilst a shade of disappointment and doubt passed over Dick's face.

"She'll be sure to come home before evening; and there's a lot of boys off this minute to Bullfinch Lane, I'll be bound," Stephen added, as he shot out through the open door to join a crew of his school-fellows who had hurried past the window in the very direction upon which his own heart was bent.

"I'll come back and look for the goat before tea, mother," Bruce said more calmly, with better feelings struggling at heart, but no resolution, no sudden heavenly prayer to give them strength and purpose. "Won't that do?" he added, coming to his mother, and kissing her before he left the house.

"Then I'd rather you went now," Mrs. Radnor answered, not returning his kiss; "for I'll want to milk her for the child's supper, and dear knows what mischief she's up to!"

"All right, mother, you needn't be afraid; I'll be back in lots of time," Bruce replied, confidently. So saying, he left the house, only a little more quietly than Stephen had done, and little Dick followed, as ever, close at his heel.

Poor Mrs. Radnor shook her head sorrowfully at the three children left the house, leaving her to her trouble again alone. She laid the child down in its cradle once more, and began an almost desperate movement of the rockers to and

fro, whilst with the other hand she hid her face in her apron, and cried.

This was the way—this was the way of them all. She had worked, and watched, and wept for each one of them—Bruce, and Stephen, and Dick—in turn through twelve long years to this very hour and day, and yet they'd go off on their own pleasure, and mind her bidding never a word; with the child sick and the goat strayed, and no one to do a hand's turn for her good or bad.

Poor Mrs. Radnor! Her husband had died only a few short months ago. She had not slept these two nights, nor was it likely she could sleep to-night either, with that child's ceaseless cry in her ears; and it was not strange that, in this moment of fresh disappointment and pain, the sad tears should overflow with the sadder thoughts that had awakened them.

There was a slight stir, a slight whiff of summer air in the cottage, as the half-door which Bruce had closed after him opened again; but Mrs. Radnor did not lift her bowed head from her hands, or stay the restless tread of her foot upon the rocker—she was not expecting help or comfort now, whatever fresh sorrow might come.

And yet it was help and comfort too, though Mrs. Radnor's faint heart had not prayed or waited for it.

Mother, listen! listen, mother! I want to tell you something, a low child's voice whispered in her ear, and the touch of a child's hand rested upon her own.

It was Dick, and this time his mother did not shake him off, though neither did she answer him until he spoke again.

"Listen, mother!" Dick whispered, still more faintly in her ear, though the baby's wail had ceased, the older boys were already past the entrance to Bullfinch Lane, and there was no other human voice in the quiet cottage to hear. Dick always whispered when his little heart was full; he whispered when he said his prayers to God at night beside his mother's knee; and he whispered in her ear now.

"Listen, mother, I'm going to look for the goat for you; don't cry, mother," he added, as his mother's silent tears gave way to a loud sob now, and almost frightened him.

But Mrs. Radnor's arms quickly closed round his neck and gathering him up into her bosom, as she had rarely done since the little sickly sister had come to take his old place there, she kissed him many times.

"God bless you, darling," she said, "God bless you; who'd ever have thought of you coming back, poor little lad, all that way; but where's the good of your going away after the goat; how can you bring her home, when it's dead may-be, she is by this time, or down in the gravel pits, just as likely as not."

For a moment Dick looked troubled, but his sweet childish face soon brightened again.

"Never mind, mother, I'll go and look for her, and I'll bring her home, never fear but I will," and Dick almost withdrew himself from his mother's arms, so eager was he, in the strength of his childish faith, to start on his new errand at once.

"Then, God bless you again for a good boy," his mother said, as she put him down, and with her blessing in his ear, and a happy sense of right-doing in his heart, little Dick stepped out of the cottage again.

Mrs. Radnor wiped the last tears away from her eyes now; the baby was unexpectedly asleep, and she drew the cradle out of the sun, into a cooler corner of the house. There was other work to be done, and she felt the courage for it now. God's little messenger had done his work bravely and well, and although Mrs. Radnor had small hopes that he would succeed in bringing back the truant goat she was comforted.

PART II.

Poor little Dick! in those few minutes, from the time he left the cottage with his two brothers until he returned alone, a hard battle had been fought and won. Many thoughts had chased each other through the little pure heart that desired so earnestly to do right.

First—yes, first—the thought of the summer afternoon with Bruce and Stephen in Bullfinch Lane, the search, the excitement, the delight, the gold watch and chain with its diamond seal, the reward, the Belgian canary in a new green cage that Stephen had settled upon buying when the two pounds were his own, the bat and ball and wickets upon which Bruce's heart was set, the shawl for mother, and the red hood for baby, which he had thought of himself—all this passed swiftly through Dick's mind, and then the thought of his mother, and of his little sister's wailing cry, made him lag a few steps behind the other boys, and kick up the dust with his feet; and then another thought came with great power into his heart, which brought him quite to a standstill, and lifted his eyes to the blue sky overhead—the thought of some words which he had heard from the rector in the school to-day, not about Miss Ethel's watch, or the diamond seal, but about the good brave life that a little boy had once lived long ago in a quiet village home, not pleasing himself, but a help to others, and obedient to his mother.

Dick knew that this little boy when he grew up had been called the Lord Christ, the Saviour of the world, and that afterwards He had died a cruel death for sinners, upon a "green hill far away" from His village home. And Dick knew that he could not be quite like Him, but he had determined in school to-day that he would try, and it was this last thought that had made him climb up the stile over which his brothers had disappeared as quickly as he could, and call after them that they were not to wait for him, because he wanted to speak to mother. It was this that had brought him back so lovingly to her side, and it was this thought, too, that made his heart so glad, as he went out amongst the tall ragworts and purple mallows in the paddock behind the house, to search for the straying goat.

But, of course, she was not there, only the deep hole in the centre of the field from which her tether had been dragged; and when Dick looked a little further, a few more loose stones, fallen from the old gap in the wall to the road beneath, showed by what means her escape had been made.

Dick climbed through the gap too, and let himself cautiously down, raising a shlok white cloud of dust about him as his feet touched the road. But as the dust cleared away, Dick saw, to his joy, that the heavy iron spike and long thick rope of the tether had left a straggling track for some distance, at least, along the white road ahead of him.

Dick went on, brave in the consciousness that he was doing right, and that God was with him. He knew that if Jenny were there she would prove a much more mischievous trespasser than he was, and so he did not care if he met old Farmer Ellis himself face to face; and he wanted to get right across this angle of the field to widow Marsden's cottage, for from there Jenny had been bought some time ago, and Dick thought she might have made her way back there; if not, he must only try in the gravel-pits another mile away.

It was a good steep pull through the thick grass to the small white cottage at the other side of the field; but there was something in Dick's heart that made it seem short to-day, and as he knooked at Mrs. Marsden's door he felt almost a certainty of hearing good news from her.

A shrill "come in!" answered his knock, and upon his entering, he found the old woman alone and in bed, with an eager thirsty look in her eyes, and one long thin arm outstretched on the quilt.

"Come in, Dick Radnor, and welcome. And it will be the Lord that has sent you here."

"No," Dick answered, simply, "I came myself, to look for our goat that's been lost since morning, and I thought she might have come here."

"Then I haven't seen her; and it's I that's lost myself for want of a drink of water. Marib's that careless, she left it just out of my reach when she went out this morning, and she'll not cross the threshold again until evening." As she spoke, Mrs. Marsden stretched out her hand again towards a cracked cup in the window, but even the points of the long thin fingers could not reach it and she sank back exhausted again.

Dick climbed up on the foot of the bed, forgetting his purpose for a moment in the sight of the old woman's distress; but the sun was glaring hotly in at the window, and even the outside of the cup was quite warm. That water could not do much towards cooling the poor parched lips.

"This is not fresh," he said, "the well's just here to the back, I will run out and fill it," and without waiting for a reply, Dick hastened round to the rear of the house, and leaning over the little dark well, which was so cool and clear he could almost see the smile on his own happy face reflected in it, he filled a brimming cup for the old woman, and soon placed it with his own hands to her lips.

"Thank God! and thank you, Dick Radnor, and God bless you!" Mrs. Marsden said, as she took a long drink from the cup, and lay back on the pillow again.

"And whilst you were away at the well I heard a knock at the door, that I thought might have been a neighbor, and I was real glad, for the sun was all a-blast, and I wanted the drink badly; but though I sat up in the bed and roared as loud as I could at them, not one lifted the latch, and I'm thinking now 'twas old Jenny herself, for 'twas her knock, if I'd had the sense to remember it."

"And where do you think she's gone now?" Dick asked, eagerly, awaking to hope again at Mrs. Marsden's words, and pushing back the thick fair hair from his heated brow.

"It's 'mazing fond of the church was Jenny," the old woman answered, half to herself, as it seemed; "the rector's got a young plantation up there, and I'd no peace between him and her till I parted her. You'd best look after her there, Dick Radnor, I'm thinking; and God bless you for coming, my boy, whether he sent you or no!"

So saying, the old woman turned sleepily round on her side, and Dick left the cottage quietly, making straight across the fields for the rector's plantation, with fresh courage at heart, and a double blessing in his ear.

If it had been only for this—only for poor old widow Marsden in her loneliness—he was glad he had given up the expedition to Bullfinch Lane; he was glad, even if old Jenny could not be found, that he had come this way.

But "this way" was the hardest bit of it all, for the fields were full of prickly thistles, and Dick's stockings were short, not like the other boys, and he had to skirt all round three sides of the two large fields where the thistles did not grow, or at least, not so thickly, and very tired and almost disheartened he was before he reached the little brown brook across which there was a short cut by stepping-stones into the rector's plantation.

Once indeed, it must be told, our little hero sat down on the very edge of the thistles, with the sun and dust in his eyes, and prickles in his bare legs, and a great fear in his heart that he was going to give it up and take to crying instead; but only two large tears rolled out of his eyes, carrying away the dust and weariness with them; a kind black cloud passed over the sun, making the whole air a moment pleasant and cool, and Dick took heart again, as a distant sound of plaintive bleating fell upon his ear.

He sprang up. It was Jenny! he knew it was, their own Jenny, though the sound of her voice was more sad and troubled than it was wont to be.

"Jenny, I'm coming to you; here I am!" Dick exclaimed, plunging first through the water, and then through the thick uncut grass of the plantation towards the church in pursuit of her.

There she was, indeed, poor Jenny, in her old and favourite haunt among the young spruce fir trees close to the porch, but she could not reach the pale green shoots or pink tassels to-day, for her long tether was twisted in hopeless tangles about a fallen stump, and poor Jenny was prancing around on her hind-legs, butting at it with her horns in vain efforts to be free, and uttering every now and then the plaintive bleat which had guided Dick through the plantation to her side.

"Poor Jenny, poor old Jenny!" he exclaimed, throwing his arms round her neck in the first impulses of his excitement and delight, and kissing her brown cheek; but Jenny was in no mood for coaxing just yet, and batted at him severely. It was not until Dick began working at the other end of her chain that she seemed to understand that he had come to her help, and then she danced eagerly towards him on her hind legs again, and rubbed her brown nose in turn against the child's fair cheek.

It was some time before Dick's anxious fingers could untwist the tangled chain, and then the heavy stake had to be pulled with quite a wrench from under the fallen wood; and then—what then? What was it that danced and sparkled and burned in the sunlight under Dick's eyes, sending the crimson colour to his cheeks and a rush of glad startled thoughts to his heart? What was it set his hands trembling with almost a sense of fear as the heavy stake fell from them and he stooped towards the ground? Was it possible—was it right—could it be, that such happiness had fallen to his share?

Yes, more it lay, just where it had fallen in the long uncut grass—Miss Ethel's gold watch and chain, with the diamond seal almost concealed by the fallen wood, just under old Jenny's brown nose, which must have grazed it at least a hundred times.

Dick could scarcely believe it; he lifted up the unlooked-for golden treasure with doubt and trembling and joy; he heard, in a kind of dream, the sound of boy's voices—loud-raised, passionate voices—drawing near, and he stuffed watch and chain and all inside the breast of his little holland waistcoat, with almost the air of a thief.

He did not want to meet them just now; he did not want them to know yet; he could not feel quite sure quite happy about it all, until he had run home by the way he had come, until he had climbed up into his mother's arms again, and laid his treasure there.

Already Jenny was far ahead of him, dragging her chain and heavy stake after her. She had had enough of wandering for to-day; she was tired of pulling and twisting, and running round and round on her hind legs ceaselessly. She was just as anxious as Dick to get home; indeed it was all he could do to get up to her, and lay hold of the iron stake, to prevent its catching in the underwood, and causing fresh delay.

Then on they went together, Jenny frisking along like quite a young goat, in all the gladness of freedom, Dick following, almost breathless, behind, one hand holding her chain, the other tightly held inside his holland waistcoat over the hidden treasure.

Oh, what a happy triumphant procession it was—splash through the cool brown stream again, on through the prickly thistles, in for one moment to Mrs. Marsden's cottage to shout "all right!" into her poor bewildered ears, on through the pasture, and down through the dusty road almost at a canter, faster and faster as Dick drew near to his mother, and Jenny drew near to the quiet paddock which she had forsaken that morning.

Baby was still asleep; Mrs. Radnor was in the doorway, knitting a pair of long grey hose which were to cover Dick's legs in the winter. In a moment he was in her arms, with his mouth close to her ear, and his hot flushed cheek against hers.

"Listen, mother! Mother, listen! I've found it!" Mrs. Radnor was proud and well pleased with her boy, as old Jenny clattered round to the paddock, and one heavy burden of doubt and fear rolled off from her troubled spirit; she thanked and blessed him many times in an instant, and scolded him almost as quickly, as her lips touched his burning cheeks, and her cool hand pushed back the mats of fair hair from his forehead.

But when he drew out his folded hand from his bosom, and showed Miss Ethel's watch and chain, and the diamond seal hanging to it, Mrs. Radnor was silent. She, too, felt as if it were almost too much, too great good fortune to have come in their way, too great a blessing to have fallen to their share. It was not for some time that she seemed quite to understand it, and then Dick's simple story and child-like faith brought back strength to her own weary and heavy-laden heart, beyond the worth of gold; and she and Dick had a happy hour together, before the other boys came in, white with heat and dust, and churlish with disappointment.

"It's unfair; I say it's awfully unfair!" Stephen muttered, angrily, striding out of the cottage again, as the whole truth broke upon him; and as he spoke, the gold of Miss Ethel's watch and chain dimmed under little Dick's eyes, as he stared down at them.

But the cloud soon passed away, for Bruce, who was older and braver than Stephen, drew near to Dick, and, putting his arms round his little brother's neck asked him, coaxingly,

"What will you do with the money, Dick—with the grand two pounds, old boy?" And then poor little Dick had his first sweet taste of pure unalloyed pleasure as he told Bruce that mother had said that she thought the two pounds would buy the Belgian bird in the new cage, and the bat and ball, and the red hood for baby, and pay next week's rent, and have a good many shillings over; and Dick whispered to Bruce, though he did not tell his mother, that with these good shillings he intended to buy the nice grey knitted shawl for her that he had seen in the village shop window.

Bruce was greatly pleased; and Stephen—who was not half such a bad fellow after all, and really fond of his little brother—came in soon, with his temper greatly improved, and an armful of ivy for Jenny. Baby woke up from her sleep in a good temper, too, as if she knew all about it; and that was a very happy night in the cottage, and Dick was the happiest there, with a pure unselfish smile on his face, and a pure unselfish joy in his heart, for although the rector lived five miles away, and the two pounds could not be claimed until to-morrow, already Dick had his reward, for he had done the thing that was right; he had not pleased himself, but he had helped others, and been obedient to his mother, and Dick felt as if he wanted nothing more, for "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."

Scientific and Useful.

BURNED COFFEE AS A DISINFECTANT.

In the case of bad odors in a dwelling house there are few things more efficacious than burnt coffee. An ounce of coarsely ground, previously roasted, coffee on a pan of hot coals gives off a pleasant, penetrating odor, which will remain for a long time when the windows are open.

BUCKWHEAT BREAD.

Very wholesome and palatable bread may be made of buckwheat flour with less trouble than pancakes, and without any smoke to pester the house, or burnt grease to affect digestion. To one quart of butter-milk add a tablespoonful of soda, and flour enough to make a thin batter; put in an egg, if convenient, and bake in a quick oven.

PEACH PIE.

Make a crust half puff paste, cover your pie dishes; have ready pared and quartered ripe peaches, put a layer of them in the dish, sprinkle thickly with good brown sugar, roll out another crust, double it over and cut a row of slits through the centre; wet the edges of the lower crust, press lightly on the edges, trim closely around the dish with a knife dipped in flour, and bake in a quick oven half or three-quarters of an hour.

WASHING FLANNELS.

The best way to wash flannels nicely and without shrinking, is to wash in cold water; rub on as little soap as possible, but leave soap in the water while washing, or if necessary make a suds in a dipper by cutting up soap in warm water. In winter take the chill off the water. As fast as they are washed throw them in blue-water; leave fifteen or twenty minutes, put a little soap in water, wring hard, shake and dry in shade. Have both waters same temperature, and do not alter the temperature by drying in the sun or house.

THE RIGHT TIME FOR PAINTING.

The *Technologist* states that paint that is applied to the exterior of buildings in autumn or winter will endure twice as long as when applied in early summer or in hot weather. In the former it dries slowly and becomes hard, like a dry surface, not easily affected afterward by the weather, or worn off by the beating of storms. But in very hot weather the oil in the paint soaks into the wood at once, as in a sponge, leaving the lead nearly dry and ready to crumble off. By painting in cold weather you will also escape the annoyance of flies, which invariably collect in warm weather on fresh paint.

INHALATION OF OXYGEN FOR DISEASES.

The *Gazette Medicale de Paris* states that M. Tamin-Despalle, in a paper read before the Academy of Sciences, says that a patient of his was attacked with severe cerebral congestion at two in the afternoon. He fell, and, on recovering himself, found that the whole of the right half of the body was paralyzed. The pulse was 82 and the face livid. He had taken a hearty meal about half an hour before. M. Tamin-Despalle, in view of all the indications which the case presented, thought he ought not to bleed, or administer an emetic. He ordered inhalations of pure oxygen. After the first few inspirations the patient felt better, and the power of motion and sensibility returned in the paralyzed side. At seven o'clock in the evening, having taken in all about eight quarts of pure oxygen, he was well.

DIGITALIS IN FEVER.

A writer in *The Dublin Medical Journal* asserts that in the treatment of fever—typhus and other forms—too much reliance has been placed on alcoholic stimulants; that the percentage of cases requiring such stimulants is a low one; and that, while the administration of them by physicians must depend, as regards quality and kind, entirely on the condition of the patient, still the utmost caution is required, in view of the present limited knowledge of their physiological action. In digitalis, however, he says there is possessed a powerful cardiac stimulant, which, while it gives force to the heart, does not do so at the expense of the system, but rather is a conservative agent, controlling expenditure and limiting waste of vital action; though of course the fact is to be borne in mind that a large number of cases will recover without any specific treatment, save that care which provides for the wants of the system and secures the patient from the risks of complications. The digitalis appears to be indicated in the early periods of many cases of typhus in which there is a rapid pulse and high temperature range.

PLANTS AS SANITARY SCOUTS.

A London journal raises the question, "How comes it that such a well-known and sensitive plant as the camellia suffers so much in so many living-rooms and windows, that many have given it up for these purposes?" and proceeds to answer it thus: "It is an easy matter to remove the plants and to substitute others of less value. But might it not be far wiser to inquire into the causes of the leaves turning yellow, and the buds dropping off, as they frequently do in living-rooms and window gardens? It is not, in fact, more than probable that the causes that injure such plants as camellias also injure the human occupants? What are the chief causes that turn the leaves of plants yellow in living-rooms, or make their buds fall? They are chiefly these: gas and fire-dried atmosphere, sudden draughts and extreme alternations of temperature. Are these more sanitary or less injurious to men than to plants? They are more mischievous to us than to plants. The parched atmosphere of our rooms is a constant irritation to weakly or diseased lungs. It dries up the natural juices of the body, excites thirst, and causes exhaustion, and perhaps one of the most grateful and wholesome changes that could be effected in our dwelling-houses would be the generalizing, by some skillful means, of our gas, lamp, and fire-burnt atmosphere, that delicate women and children inhale all day and all night long. The plants cannot stand it with impunity, neither can we."