

Singing Kettles.

The Japanese, who know so well how to add little unexpected attractions to everyday life, manufacture, in a great variety of forms, iron tea-kettles which break into song when the water boils. The song may perhaps be as agreeable as the notes produced by some of the insects which the Japanese also treasure for their music. The harmonious sounds of the tea-kettles are produced by steam bubbles escaping from beneath their thin sheets of iron fastened close together nearly at the bottom of the kettles. To produce the best effect some skill is required in regulating the fire. The character of the sounds varies with the form of the kettle. These singing kettles have been used for many centuries.—Detroit 'News'

The Penny Plants.

(Isaac Ogden Rankin, in the 'Congregationalist'.)

There was once a little old man who lived in a house on the edge of a wood. His wife was dead and his son had gone to the wars, and so the little old man lived all alone.

Now and then he had word from his son, who promised to come home some day to help his father. Sometimes the neighbors would come in to see how he did. But when the day's work was done the little old man sat in his little kitchen by his little fire, cooked his little supper and ate it all alone.

His farm was but a little farm, and other work was hard to find. His crops were poor, and as the days went on the little old man grew ragged and hungry and thin, for there was no one to look after his clothes or bake his bread or smile across the hearth when he came in—and that is worst of all to bear.

At last he grew so lonely that he had strange thoughts by day. And his son never came to help and cheer him. So he became like a child again.

One day, when he opened the leather bag which he had for a purse and poured the money out, five pennies rolled across the table; and that was all he had.

'Ho!' said the little old childish man, 'I have so few pennies left I shall have to plant them and perhaps the penny plants will grow.'

So he went out into the shed and took down his hoe. Then he put the pennies back into the bag and put the bag into the pocket of his ragged coat, took his torn hat down from the nail and started out to plant the five pennies. But because his own crops had failed that year, he would not plant them in his own field, but left the wood behind him and went down the road looking for a place where there was plenty of sun and plenty of water, where it was not too wet and not too dry, and where the cows could not eat off the penny plants when they began to grow. For he was a shrewd and wise old man, in spite of all his childishness.

Down the road a little way he found a place that seemed just right for penny plants, opposite a shoemaker's shop. But just then the shoemaker came to the door, wringing his hands and crying out that his trade was spoiled.

'What's the matter, Cobbler?' said the little old man.

'O,' said the cobbler, 'the king has ordered fifty pairs of hunting boots and I have the leather all cut out, but I can't finish them, for I forgot to buy the wax to wax the thread and I haven't a penny left.'

'Is that all?' said the little old man, who had a pitying heart. 'I was just going to plant a penny here. Take it and buy what you need and finish the boots for the king.'

So the shoemaker took the penny and the little old man trudged on. But because now he had only four pennies left, they were precious to him, and he looked for a long time before he found a place which he thought would be a good one for penny plants to grow. At last he found just the place he wanted, neither too wet nor too dry. But it was close beside a tailor's door.

Now the tailor had his troubles, too, and stood in the door shaking his head and groaning like a child with an aching tooth.

'Ay, you Tailor!' cried the little old man. 'What ails you this fine day?'



He that
loveth
pleasure
shall be
a poor
man.

Proverbs
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—'Sunday Reading for the Young.'

'Alas!' cried the tailor, shaking his head until the tears dropped down. 'The king has ordered a hundred hunting coats and the cloth is all cut, but I haven't a penny left to buy the thread.'

'O, well!' said the little old man. 'I was going to plant a penny here, but if you need it so much for thread, it is yours. Hurry up the king's coats and stop your crying.'

So he took the second penny out of the bag and gave it to the tailor and went on. But because he had only three pennies left, they were very precious, and he looked for a long time for a good place to plant the next.

At last he found a sunny place, neither too wet nor too dry, close beside a hatter's shop. But the hatter stood by his door lamenting, and the kind heart of the little old man made him call out,

'Now then, Hatter, what's the matter?'

'O!' said the hatter, 'the king has just ordered a hundred hats with cocks' feathers, and I have cut out the cloth and pulled the feathers, but I have broken my needle, and I haven't a penny left to buy one.'

So the little old man took out his dear third penny, and gave it to the hatter to buy a needle to sew on the cocks' feathers, and went slowly down the road looking for just the right place to plant his fourth penny.

He found it just beside a baker's door, but as he was lifting his hoe to dig, the baker in his white cap and apron, with the flour on his hands and nose, came out to see; and he looked to the little old man as if he had lost his last friend.

'Ho, Baker!' cried the little old man. 'What makes you wear so sour a face?'

'Alas!' cried the baker, with his face as

long as his shovel. 'The king has ordered a hundred loaves of bread for the hunting dinner and I have mixed the dough, but I haven't a penny left to buy matches to light the fire to heat the oven.'

Now the little old man had just two pennies left, and they were very, very dear to him. For if he gave these away, where would he get the penny plants to pick the pennies from to buy him clothes, and shoes, and patch the big leak in the roof? Would you have given the baker one of your two pennies to buy matches to light the fire to heat the oven to bake the bread for the king?

The little old man had a kind heart after all, but for a minute he could not speak, for he wanted the fourth penny so much to grow into a penny plant; and this was such a good place for it to grow beside the baker's door! But when he thought of the hundred loaves of bread that would be spoiled for want of a match to light the fire to heat the oven, he opened his bag, took out a penny to give to the baker and said:

'Here is a penny to buy matches to light the fire to heat the oven to bake the bread; and God bless the batch!'

Now the poor little old man had just one penny left, and he went on down the road looking for a good place to plant it. It must be the best place of all, and the little old man was a long time about the search. But at last he found the very place, just opposite a carpenter's shop, and he let his hoe fly to soften the soil and make a deep bed for the penny to grow. He took out the bag and looked at the dear last penny in his hand and thought of all the pennies it might bring—enough to keep him till his son came home—