

about the latter quality—a leader in all boyish sports, known to everybody as a lively lad; but, though engaged in many an act called “mischievous” by those who had forgotten that they were malicious in his conduct. Of course he got a bad reputation; and, when anything was done for which an author was wanted, it had become a sort of fashion with the neighbors to say that it was “one of Ike’s tricks.” Many a time was this said as an excuse for their own boys, in whom they could see no wrong except what they had caught, as it were like the measles; and so Ike had to bear all the ills that were his own, and theirs too. But he didn’t care. Who ever knew a boy that was morbidly sensitive, or cared a continental copper what people said about him? He lives in a world of his own,—a sort of Ishmael on a small scale. And this name applies very well; for Ishmael means “God who hears,” and He cares for the human boy, whatever any may say, and all the boy’s eccentricities harden in good time into manly character.

In due time Mrs. Partington packed up her furniture and other portable goods, and left for her new home. The good dame went with the last load, sitting with the driver on the front seat; while Ike, astride of a trunk on the hind part, threw chunks of coal from a new basket at a dog which came smelling round the waggon as if from a wish to know what it all meant. Mrs. Partington waved her umbrella in farewells, which were cordially returned, until an intervening corner shut the scene from her view, perhaps forever.

he spot which she had chosen for her new abode was named Clam Corner by general usage, because of the many clams to be found there on the shore. “The Creek,” however, was the polite name it bore. Her house was on the bank of the creek, which was a beautiful stream—what there was of it—flowing in from Rapid River. The river also bore an Indian name, which signified “Fish Water;” and although its name may not be found on any map, it was regarded by those who lived near it as the grandest river in the world.

The “Corner” was part of Rivertown, a populous city; and there was quite a settlement along the bank of the creek; and, of the houses composing this, Mrs. Partington’s was one of the neatest. An orchard consisting of one scattering tree sloped back from the cottage to the water’s edge; and the view from the back windows extended as far as the eye could reach, including the little village of Grace, on the opposite bank, an

old graveyard on the right, and on the left the creek, with deserted brick-works in the distance. The convenience of water made it a fine place for a boat in summer; and one could see that in winter there must be a grand chance to skate there, if the water froze over, which seemed very probable. There was considerable of a hill at no great distance, promising rare coasting; and nearer, on a little rise of the land, an old cellar, which some one had dug out many years before, and, failing to build over it, had left for the accommodation of frogs, in summer, to hold free concerts in.

The reputation of Mrs. Partington [and Ike had reached the “Corner” before they did; and their coming caused a stir that it had not experienced for a long time. The boys regarded Ike as an important addition to their numbers; and they flocked round, thick as bees, to welcome him. They were all “hail fellow, well met,” in ten minutes.

Ike’s reputation had also reached the ears of Mr. Grum, a rough and disagreeable person who lived in the house next to the cottage of Mrs. Partington; and he was prejudiced against him from the start. He was living alone, with his niece for a house-keeper, his wife being dead, and his children grown up and moved away; and he saw trouble ahead from this newcomer. He was out in his front yard—a fine green lawn—the next morning after the new arrival, and watched Ike, not very pleasantly, as he came along whistling with a switch cutting off the heads of the weeds along the path.

“Hallo!” cried he gruffly, or Grumly, “what’s your name?”

“Ike Partington, sir,” replied the boy, as he spoke stripping the leaves from a green twig that struggled through Grum’s fence.

“Well, let that bush alone, and see that you behave yourself.”

“I’ll try, sir.”

“You’d better. Don’t let us have any of your city pranks here. If I catch you in any mischief about my place, I’ll take your hide off. Do you hear?”

“Yes, sir,” kicking at a mullein-root.

“Be sure you keep away from this grass. If you step your foot on it, I’ll take a whip to you. Do you hear?”

“Yes, I ain’t deaf.” And then he for the first time looked at the grass, and thought, that, of all things in the world, he just then would like to play circus on the grass, and stood looking at it so earnestly that Grum told him to go home; and he went, giving a defiant look at the old man, who thought he saw mischief in that boy. Ike didn’t care for his threats; and all day long