

STORIES  
POETRY

## The Inglenook

SKETCHES  
TRAVEL

## THE KNIGHTS OF THE SNOWY FLEECE.

Howard closed his book, saying: "What splendid fellows the Knights of the Golden Fleece were! I suppose even the boys were brave when they might some times become knights. There's no such chance nowadays."

"But a boy can be brave now, and a knight, too, if he will," his mother said, adding with a smile: "If it keeps on snowing, you'll have a chance to be a Knight of the Snowy Fleece, and that takes considerable courage."

Howard knew that for he had not found it easy to get up early and shovel out paths. There was plenty of it to do next morning, for the snow was deep on all the walks. As he slowly flung it from the front steps, Charley Wade came out of the house across the street with his shovel and called grumblingly: "This is only the beginning of our all-winter job! I wish it would fall in the road."

"But the road would have to be cleared, you know," Howard laughed, "Doesn't it look pretty in the run, so white and fleecy?"

He suddenly remembered what his mother had said, and an idea popped into his head. He plunged across the street through the snow. "Say, Charley, let's be knights—Knights of the Snowy Fleece! We can go on knight errantry, helping folks; there's plenty of it. It takes old Mr. Blake half a day to clear his walks when the snow is like this, and sometimes it makes him sick. We can—"

"So we can, easy!" Charley interrupted, eagerly. "Knights of the Snowy Fleece? How splendid! Come on!"

They joined forces, talking happily, and soon the walks at both places were clear. It took only ten minutes for each to consult his mother, and then, with shovels on their shoulder, they marched away.

Round the corner Joe Williams was pottering at his walk. "Knights! Hurrah, but that's fine!" he cried, when they had explained. "And we'll have to be it all winter. There's Stacy Arnold just getting out of work; let's tell him."

So two more knights immediately joined the Order of the Snowy Fleece. They made short work of Joe's walk, and then the four fared forth in search of adventure and renown.

They halted at Mr. Blake's, and attacked the fluffy enemy so vigorously that he soon retreated, beaten. They hardly listened to the thanks of the old people, but shouting, "We're going to do it all winter!" hastened on their conquering way.

Widow Brown's little girl was trying to sweep a path to the well; the knights set to, and again achieved a victory, answering the widow's thanks with the assurance that they would look after the walks every time it snowed. They pressed on and halted uncertainly in front of a house set back from the street with a very exclusive air.

"They haven't anybody to help them," Stacy said, "and haven't much money to hire with."

"And Miss Lizzie's poorly, and Miss Katherine has to do everything; my mother said so," Joe added.

"They don't like boys very well, but I guess that's because they haven't any at their house and don't know much about them," said Howard. "Let's clear the walk in front of the house, and we can ask them to let us do the rest."

Miss Katherine opened the door when they knocked, and surveyed, with surprise, the four knights who stood in line bearing their arms proudly.

"The snow is so deep this morning that we came to clear your walks for you. We're Knights of the Snowy Fleece, ma'am," said Howard, bravely.

"Accept my grateful thanks, kind sirs, for coming to the rescue of damsels in distress. We are surrounded by the enemy and there is so much of him this morning that I had not dared to venture forth," Miss Katherine gravely curtsied in stately style while she made this speech.

"Oh, Miss Katherine, have you read about the knights?" Howard cried, delightedly.

"Indeed I have, and admired them very much," she replied. "But I think I like these new-fashioned knights just as well! What a pretty name you have! 'Knights of the Snowy Fleece!' That makes snow-shoveling fun. I've a great mind to help you on the back walks."

"Oh, no! Let us do it, please, and all winter, too," said Joe.

"Many thanks! It's a pleasure to be rescued by brave knights any time," she laughed.

"You see, it was just because we didn't know her," Stacy said, as they fell busily to work.

They assented, and marching on, charged upon the snow piled on the walks of a neighbor who had a long way to go to his work, and whose family of children were too small to chore.

It wasn't long till all the boys in the neighborhood were Knights of the Snowy Fleece, with a "grip" and a "password."

One evening, to their surprise, they all were invited to Miss Katherine's where they popped corn and pulled taffy. When they went away Miss Lizzie, who painted presented each one with a snowy badge on which was a knight in full armour, with the colors of his "lady fair" on his arm—Selected.

## YE ALSO HELPING.

Once a little stream was heard complaining. "What is the use," it said, "of my flowing this short distance year in and year out? I'm not needed to water this little valley, for the rain falls in abundance and blesses the grass and the flowers. The trees sink their roots deep and lift their branches high, and the birds come and sing to them and nest in them and man rejoices in their shade. As for me, the thick growing underbrush and the low hanging branches of trees shut out my view. I flow over the rough stones and they hurt me. I'm tired and helpless and ready to die." Just then a woodman came along. He cleared out the undergrowth and cut down the low hanging branches, and the little stream saw the mighty river flowing by, bearing proud vessels on its bosom. And ere it could recover from its amazement, the river cried: "Ah, little stream, how happy you should be. For you are one of my many little friends that make it possible for me to carry commerce from port to port and bless the life of man." Then the little stream returned to its task humbled and rejoiced—its life tributary to that greater life of which it formed a part.—H. K. Denlinger.

The ancient Thracians believed that it was a sadder thing to be born than it was to die; and therefore upon the advent of a little child into this world they met to lament its unhappy lot and to recount the many ills to which it would be subject in life. But at death they met to rejoice over its freedom from life's ills and to felicitate each other on its unalloyed bliss in the life beyond.

## THE LAND O' THE LEAL.

The claim is made that the song was written by Burns on his deathbed, writes Mr. D. M. Henderson, in the Scottish American Journal, as a tribute to his wife, and that she sent it forth anonymously, changing the "Jean" to "John." Is this at all credible? Would not Jean Armour have been proud of such a tribute? and would it not have rejoiced her heart to have her name go down to all posterity thus beautifully linked to her great husband? To this there can be but one answer, and such a theory of the origin of the song will not stand one minute's calm reflection.

What is this song—"The Land o' the Leal"? It is almost a hymn. If we should hear it sung as a solo in church some Sunday morning few among us would be shocked. As we listen to the words of calm, unwavering faith a vision of a realm of future blessedness and peace opens to us; as we hear words of comfort and cheer spoken, not by the living to the dying, but by the dying to the living, we are moved to say—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." "The Land of the Leal" is the expression of a mind thoroughly imbued, and in sympathy, with the orthodox conception of the future life and the ministry of angels, and assured that for it death is the entrance to eternal happiness. It is not belittling Burns' religious nature to say that he was not given to expressing himself in conventional phrases, and was by no means so orthodox as the wording of this song would indicate. And what, as a plain historical fact, was Burns' state of mind upon his deathbed? He was indulging in no dreams of heaven; no angels appeared to him beckoning him upward, but the blue devils of poverty and care were hounding him. Not the "bonnie bairn" gone before filled his thoughts, but the helpless handful his Jean would now have to fend and battle for alone. "Your task is near done now, Jean!" Oh, if he could have thought that his mind might have been easier—but the pitiful letters he wrote to friends at the time showed that he, at least, was not blind to the facts.

I do not know if Lady Nairne wrote the song—she was a likely person to do it, but no argument built on the "letter that killeth" will establish a claim for Burns' authorship.

## A PERFECT SOAP.

In his fascinating book, "New Games and Amusements," Meredith Nugent gives a scientific recipe for a soap-bubble solution which will produce remarkable bubbles. In the astonishing tricks which he describes and pictures, the bubbles are not blown with pipes but with funnels or cornucopias. Here is his recipe:

Fill a quart bottle half full of distilled or soft water, and sift into it four-fifths of an ounce of pure Castile soap powder. Allow the powder to dissolve thoroughly, then add one-third of a pint of pure glycerin, mix thoroughly and let stand until all bubbles have disappeared. Use the solution in a temperature of sixty-five or seventy degrees. After the solution has been used a few times, or if it fails to produce satisfactory bubbles, it may be freshened up by adding a little more glycerin. With this solution gorgeous bubbles can be made which will last from five to thirteen minutes. By heating the water in the first place, the solution can be made in a very short time.