

The professor was looking through his glasses straight before him with a serious air.

"Isn't there anything more that you would like?" she asked, turning to him.

"Thank you, no," he replied. "I was just thinking," he added, rather primly, "as I looked at the empty place, that nature abhors a vacuum, and it would be rather pleasant to have Tom's merry face opposite me."

"I would be a great thing for the pies, anyway," remarked Uncle Zekiel. "They're just spilin' for him," and he walked out heavily to stable the horse, lock up the barn, and chop the firewood.

About eight o'clock that evening they all gathered in the old-fashioned sitting-room, around the cheerful open fire, for the evening was cool. The professor sat at his own little table, writing a very learned article on "The Higher Education"; Aunt Mary was quietly knitting a warm and cosy-looking red mitten—not a very large one—and Uncle Zekiel was busy trying to find out from the columns of the village paper which party was going to save the country in the coming elections. It was perfectly "quiet," and they were enjoying "peace." Not a sound broke the silence until a cricket, thinking itself alone, came out on the hearth and chirped a little.

"There!" said Aunt Mary, "I'm thankful to hear something. Seems as if we're having a funeral here, nowadays."

Uncle Zekiel looked over the top of the paper and caught her furtively wiping away a tear.

"Now, now, Mary, that'll never do," said he, soothingly. "What's gone wrong to-day?"

"Oh, I don't know what is the matter," she replied. "Perhaps I'm nervous. But it's dreadful lonesome."

Uncle Zekiel arose, and, laying aside the paper, walked up and down the room with his hands clasped behind him, as he was in the habit of doing when meditating any serious project, such as going into town, or running down to the seaside for a day or two.

"Mary," said he, after a few turns, "I'm going off to-morrow on some business, an' I guess I'd better run down to Sandwich an' bring that boy home with me next day."

Aunt Mary's face went through a kaleidoscopic change, and came out beaming like a full moon.

"That's the very best thing you can do, Zekiel," said she. "Bring him home to-morrow afternoon, and I'll have just the best supper for him. Seems as if I'd been living for the last week in a kind of deaf and dumb asylum."

The professor looked up from his learned theme with a gratified air.

"Yes," said he, with his characteristic primness of expression, "it would indeed be exceedingly agreeable to see Master Tom's beaming countenance once more at our evening repast."

But Tom! What a delightful time he was having at Sandwich! Nobody said "Don't" to him from morning till night. He had often thought that had he been the author of that famous little volume, "Don't," and founded it on his own experience, it would have been as large as Johnson's Dictionary. He took such deep, full breaths of freedom, with no one to criticise every moment.

Mr. Saunders, whose son Tom was visiting, was a glass-blowing philosopher, perfectly devoted to his calling, a department which gave him frequent opportunities for the meditation which all philosophers love. He believed that children had altogether too much pruning and nagging, and used to say to Aleck, his eldest boy:

"Look here, Aleck, you do what you think is right to-day, and if you make any mistakes, come to me and we will see what we can do about it."

The plan seemed to have worked well so far, but then Aleck Saunders was a remarkably good boy naturally, and needed little pruning.

On the Friday of Uncle Zekiel's unexpected advent, the two boys had been all over the glass works. It was one of Mr. Saunders's leisure days, and instead of

"philosophising," he went over the works with them, explaining every process, and Tom had even been allowed to blow something that came out looking like the "missing link" between a cow and an elephant.

He had just come out, his brown curls all blown about by the salt sea breeze, and was proudly displaying this nondescript animal to Mrs. Saunders and the children, when Uncle Zekiel opened the gate.

Down dropped the glass memento, shivering into fragments, while Tom flew down the walk to meet his uncle. "Oh, Uncle Zekiel!" he cried, catching hold of his brown hand, "is anything the matter with Aunt Mary?"

Tom had no mother, and he loved Aunt Mary dearly, in spite of her fault-finding.

"Yes," replied Uncle Zekiel, with a cheerful air, "she's pretty bad."

"What is it?" asked Tom, anxiously.

"Well," replied Uncle Zekiel, "I don't exactly know the name o' the disease, but the symptoms is that she's dreadful lonesome without the company of a certing boy called Thomas Croft."

"You don't mean it, uncle!" cried Tom, with an air of incredulity.

"Mean it?" She says the house is like a deaf an' dumb asylum an' she can't stand it nohow, so I hed to come down after you."

Tom's lip quivered, and two great tears gathered in his eyes and glistened on his cheeks like shining diamonds. He threw his arms around Uncle Zekiel's neck and gave him a good hug.

"Uncle," said he, "I never was so happy in my life! I thought I was nothing but a bother to her," and then dashed off behind the house, that no one might see the tears he could not repress. Then he sat down upon a stone, wiped his eyes, and gave up his dark schemes of emigration as soon as he was old enough.

They went home the next afternoon, and what a supper Aunt Mary had for them! Roast chicken, double the usual quantity, Tom's favorite strawberry preserves, and a crisp apple "turnover" laid close by his plate.

They were all very gay and happy together, as Tom ate with undiminished appetite, and related the adventures of the week.

Aunt Mary looked around with a beaming face.

"Well," said she, as they sat back from the table, "this is something like livin' again. I should hev had the dyspepsy myself in another week."

"Yes," said the young professor, "while there is often a serious incompatibility between youth and maturity, yet it must be confessed that the presence of the young at the festal board is extremely exhilarating."

But "that boy" Tom jumped up so hastily that his chair fell back with a loud crack—nobody said, "Don't, Tom"—and then he went round to Aunt Mary's chair, leaned over and softly kissed her faded cheek.

"I'm so glad to be at home again," he said.—*The Quirer.*

Words of Wisdom

Who is a wise man? He who reaches truth by way of error. Who is a foolish man? He who abides with error. He to whom God sends a happy day should not prepare an unhappy night for himself.

He who serves God has a good master.

He is a happy man who can rejoice with them that rejoice.

It is fine for a man to reach the heights by his own strength, but finer still to reach them by his own weakness.

Where the avaricious man has harvested, the gleaner has no chance.

That which cannot be abused is of no use.

He who acquires wisdom and does not make use of it is like unto the man who ploughs a field and forgets to scatter seed upon it.