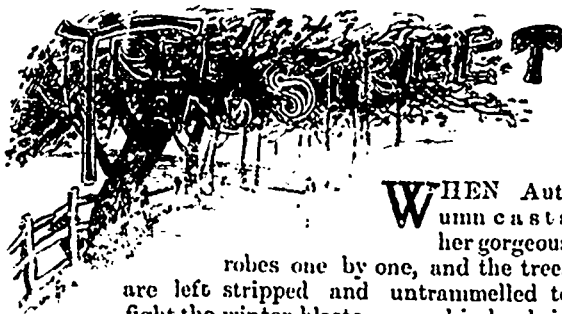
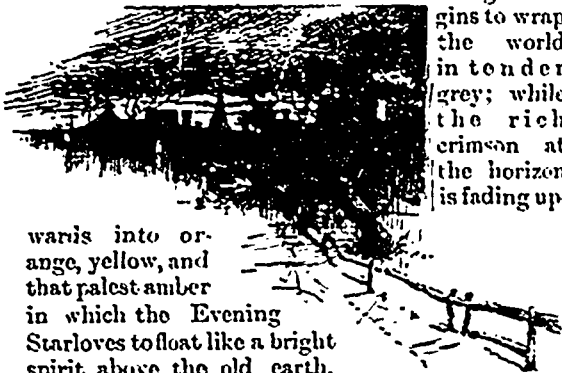




WHEN Autumn casts her gorgeous robes one by one, and the trees are left stripped and untrammelled to fight the winter blasts, as a ship hauls in her canvas at the approach of a tempest, she does not leave the trees thus bereft wholly without charm. Rising erect and graceful against the deep blue of the sky with its great soft white clouds, there is something inexpressibly lovely about them; something that we did not get when summer was at its height, and they were clad in the cool delicious green which is so grateful to the eye, when the streets lie palpitating in the glare and heat of noonday; something we did not get when they cast their weird shimmering lights and shadows upon the pavements while the moon drenched them with light and the gentle winds stirred restlessly in the leaves.

Now we see the delicate lines and curves which mean so much in nature; the branches and twigs to which the myriad leaves clung through wind and shower, making shelter for little feathered creatures and insects who fluttered away with the leaves. They are like beautiful human forms; clad after the custom of mortals, they are a delight to the eye with their hidden though suggested lines; but lovely and pure as God made them, they are the supreme work of His hands. And next to this love for the "human form divine" surely comes our admiration for trees, those forest people "with green heads" which make the world so fair a place for mortals to dwell in.

And just at this season, when at evening the sun has dropped "below the verge," and before twilight begins to wrap the world in tender grey; while the rich crimson at the horizon is fading up-



wards into orange, yellow, and that palest amber in which the Evening Star loves to float like a bright spirit above the old earth, there is no more beautiful sight in life than the trees in their naked loveliness against this background of exquisite color. And this delight is ours, evening after evening, without money and without price.

It is only to step out into our streets—our westward streets—and follow their long lines that vanish into the sunset, against which tower or spire or dome stands out in dark beauty; the trees, with every branch and twig traced in lovely detail, take on a new sorcery; indeed, the things which we regard as utterly prosaic in the broad search light of day become enchanted. The old city dump carts rumbling along, their big red wheels and blue boxes toned down with sprinklings of ashes and drawn by heavy horses, whose harness is lit here and there with bits of brass; the trolley, cyclop-like, rushing past with clang and flash; these things surely become unreal, mysterious, picturesque things at twilight. Even the telegraph poles with their tall crosses succumb to the magic and the street becomes a *via rinatium*.

As we pass further on, the colors fade in the far west and the electric light leaps mysteriously and silently from one great globe to another—the

Evening Star throbs and glows at the approach of darkness and the lesser stars begin to "swarm like bees," there is a sound of many feet on the pavements, the toilers going home; voices fall clearly and softly on the still air and Night restful and calm falls carressingly upon the weary old earth; and the trees like sentinels keep watch with the stars.



—NEMO.

HOW WE KILLED THE RAT.

By Florence Stuart Garston.

OUR house had long been infested with rats. We had poisoned them, caught them in traps, and, in fact, tried every known manner of exterminating them, still they courageously refused to leave us.

One old fellow of immense size and remarkable boldness, just lived in our kitchen, ate our provisions, and ran across our feet, until he became known to all as *the rat*.

The audacity he exhibited was surprising. If discovered in the pantry gnawing a choice cake left thoughtlessly uncovered, he would look calmly at us out of glittering black eyes, nor attempt to run, unless we made a dash at him—which the female portion of the household never did. We generally called for father or rushed for the hired man, and by the time either arrived the old fellow was gone.

It is my belief that he knew the names of every one in the household, and regulated his movements accordingly.

If we opened a door suddenly at night, we saw his eyes gleaming from some dark corner; once we found him coiled in mother's wooden rocker.

Jenny called him the Ancient Mariner, which fitted him and his effect upon us so well that it was generally adopted.

All efforts to catch or to kill him proved futile, and we began to feel that this was a plague that we were obliged to endure.

One evening, however, our youngest sister came running in. "Oh, mother," she cried, "come quick; the rat is in the bag of flour in the pantry." Whereupon we all rushed to the spot in eager haste.

Father was away and there was only mother and we three girls at home, so before we entered the pantry it was thought better to decide on some plan of action, lest we scare the rat and let him escape. First we decided that the flour which was in the bag would have to be sacrificed. There was not very much, but "enough for a good batch of bread," said mother, mournfully. "However, he's in it now, so it will have to be thrown out, anyway."

"Well," said Jenny, the discoverer, "he won't be in it."

"No," said mother, "that's true. One of you girls go in and gather up the mouth of the bag and hold it tight, till I get something to hit it with."

"Go on, Jenny," said I, "you found him." But Jenny flatly refused.

"Well, Mary, you go."

"I won't," said Mary, "you know I'm scared to death of rats; go yourself, if you are so mighty brave."

"Girls," said mother, "one of you go at once and hold that bag. Do you suppose that rat is going to sit there all day waiting to be caught?"

So, as neither of the others showed any signs of relenting, I pushed the door open gently and peeped in.

Sure enough, there he was. Although it was getting dusk, I could see his huge body bulging out one side of the bag.

I cautiously reached out and gathered it into my hands, when he gave a lunge over to the other side. Jenny gave a scream and, slamming the door shut, held it fast.

"You little coward," I called, "open that door this minute. You would not care if he ate me alive, so long as you were safe yourself."

Jenny opened the door, and, though she looked rather ashamed, did not venture inside until she had glanced into every corner.

By this time mother had hunted up the hammer, which was, she said, the only thing she felt sure was hard enough to kill him with one blow.

"For," she said, "I don't want to torture the poor thing. I'd like to kill it the first time I hit it. Here, suppose you hit it and let me hold the bag."

We were about to make the exchange when Mary broke in, "Look here, if you go changing around like that you'll let it out; you had better tie a string around the mouth of the bag, for he's sure to run up that way when you go to hit him."

I hadn't thought of that possibility and was very glad of the suggestion, though of course I did not say so.

Mary was soon on hand with about five yards of good stout string, we used it all and tied it



in a good many knots. Then we were ready for the execution.

"Better light a lamp, Jenny."

"Now then, all ready; hit hard, mother."

"Yes, for goodness' sake don't miss him."

Mother raised her arm to strike, then drew back. "Dear me," she said, "the handle to the hammer seems so short, I have to get so near it, to the rat, I mean," she added.

"Better take a stick of wood," said Jenny. So off she went to the woodshed to find one. She brought back the longest one she could find, a regular saw-log in size.

"It's funny he keeps so still," said Jenny.

"Stupid, he's too frightened to move," said Mary.

"Now, girls," said mother, "get out of the way, put the lamp where I'll get a good strong light, and," to me, "whatever you do, don't let go of the end of the bag."

She gathered all her strength, raised the stick as high as possible and it fell with a force which ought to have killed an ox.

There was a crash and a shriek from the girls, and mother had literally smashed to atoms our old blue tea-cup, which someone had used to dip up flour, and dropped into the bag.

FLORENCE STUART GARSTON.

