

tient, and told it to wait with patience until the warm sun came and gave it strength.

"Let me lean against you and grow strong, I pray," pleaded the weakling to the bamboo; but the proud beauty shook off the clinging tendrils of the helpless one, and would have none of it, and the little stranger, faint and sick at heart, fell on the ground and crawled to the foot of the willow-tree to die. But the willow called to it to take heart, saying, "Just clasp your tender tendrils in my bark, and hold on to me," and the stranger did so.

"Day by day it grew in strength and beauty, wrapping its soft green limbs around the old willow. One day a great mass of buds showed themselves among this green foliage, and the bamboo sneered, crying: "what are those ugly lumps that are now coming among your leaves? Is it a plague that you have brought so near me?" But the next day the sun shone on the buds and they burst open, and the old willow was one great blaze of glory from the ground right up to its topmost height.

"That night the man who owned the ground said to his workmen: "Clear a space around the old willow; cut down and burn all that is in the way; for the gods have sent us this lovely thing, and we must protect it." And one of his hired men said: "Shall we spare the bamboo? It is straight and tall and strong." "Not so," replied the master. "Japan is full of bamboos as straight and as tall, but a willow crowned with such beauty as this no man hath seen." And the thing was done, even as the owner had commanded.

When the damsels heard this tale, they rose and took their water-jars and went away, all abashed, because they knew that their false pride had been rebuked.—London 'Daily News.'

Two Good Fat Hens.

"Do you take this car for a hen-yard? No live stock rides inside I tell you," growled the burly conductor on an electric car on a crowded city street. "Out with you!" And he pushed roughly out upon the platform a bent old woman, muffled in a ragged shawl. The other passengers glanced up curiously to see what the live stock could be, and perceived that the old lady was carrying by the legs a pair of live, speckled hens.

"No, ma'am; no live stock, I tell you. Cold on the platform? Well, I guess if I can stand it, you can." And in a moment more the withered, bowed figure, nervously clutching its heavy and protesting burden, was shut out into the biting wind and stinging sleet of a late December afternoon.

"Did you ever!" exclaimed a fashionable dressed woman, who sat fondling against her seal-skin coat a tiny lap-dog, adorned with a huge blue bow. Her neighbor, a young girl of about fifteen, with a thick braid of brown hair falling down over her trig frieze, jacket, assented eagerly.

"It's dreadful."

The fashionable woman put up her eyeglasses to stare out at the cowering little figure on the platform. "The idea of her trying to force her way into the car with those disgusting hens. The conductor should have put her off at once to pay her for her impudence."

For a moment the girl with the brown braid stared open-mouthed at the speaker, then with flashing eyes she blurted out, "That wasn't what I meant a bit!" and, springing to her feet hurried to the back of the car. Opening the door, she stepped out into the blast. The conductor reached up to pull the strap, but she shook her head and pointed to the old woman.

"It's dreadful making her stand out here in the cold."

"I've got me orders," said the man, gruffly.

"Why are hens worse than dogs? There's a little dog inside."

"Next stop Felton street," shouted the conductor, turning an obdurate back.

The girl laid her hand on the bent, thinly clad shoulder. "Give me the hens," she said. But the old woman sprang back with a look of terror. Was she first to be thrust out into the cold and then robbed?

"Saints preserve us!" she gasped.

"I mean let me hold them and you sit inside. There, do let me—why you are not afraid I should steal your hens, are you? Look at me. I don't look like that kind of a person, do I?"

The old woman let her watery eyes rest a moment on the pretty, fresh face bent so sympathetically over her own, and her hand relaxed its tight clutch on the yellow legs of the fowls.

"The provision man give 'em to me," she said. "I was workin' there. Me ould man do be fair crazy about hins. He's been sick. I've got rheumatic bad meself."

"I've never had rheumatism in my life," replied the girl, "and my coat is thicker than your shawl. Come, let me hold them. How far are you going?"

"To Ash street, Evansville," said the old woman, naming an humble suburb.

"All right; go inside."

And in a moment more the fowls changed hands. The girl shrunk back a little as she took hold of the queer, yellow clams, but she nodded bravely through the pane at the wrinkled, grateful face in the warm car.

"Bless her! The saints be good to her! The angels watch over her, and keep that little lamb from harm." These invocations, to the accompaniment of the swish of the sleet on the panes and the rattle of the casements, made the other passengers in the car fix their eyes now on the girl outside, now on the old woman within.

Suddenly a shy-looking, poorly-clad boy of sixteen rose and let himself out at the rear door. Every eye followed him. The passengers seated next the back windows pressed their faces to the glass. The boy was not then alighting. He was talking to the sweet-faced angel of mercy. What he said only the conductor could hear.

"Let me take them," he stammered awkwardly enough.

"Oh, I don't mind it out here, thank you."

"It's too cold for you. Let me take the hens."

"But it's way to Evansville."

"All, right," and, pulling the tied-up claws out of the girl's small, gloved hand, the boy threw open the door of the car.

"Sit ye down, darlint," said the old woman, making room beside her. Then, anxiously, "Is he an honest boy, do you be thinkin'?"

"Oh, I'm sure he's honest."

But hardly were the words out of her mouth before the girl opened wide eyes of horror. The boy—the courteous, frank-faced boy—had, without warning, and the car rattling along at full speed, sprung from the platform.

"My hins! my good fat hins! Stop the car! Oh, the black-hearted thafe!"

The whole company was now in commotion, and even the conductor himself pulled the strap to give the boy a chance to repent and again board the car. No, he was nowhere to be seen.

The city streets were by this time left behind, and the track was running through a dirty, untidy suburb. Only a few figures, eager to be out of the bitter wind, were hurrying along the sidewalks. The lad and the speckled hens had vanished as completely as if the earth had opened to swallow them up. Hobbling to

the door, the old woman was for getting off to pursue the thief; but a kind-looking man with gray hair held her back,

"Why, the young jailbird's off half a mile by this time," he said. "Now see here, ma'am, you just sit quietly down again!"

"My hins! my good fat hins that the provision man give me! And the ould man at home do be just crazy about—"

"Yes, yes, I know; but you sit right down here again beside this nice young lady. Don't you cry, little girl; we're going to make it all right. We're going to make up a purse—"

"An' sure, and the ould man and me never yit had to ask a penny of nobody in charity. Oh, the speckled feathers of 'em, and the good fat breasts! No, no takin' other folk's money in charity, I tell ye."

"Charity? Who's talking of charity? You come from Evansville, don't you? Well, didn't they make up a purse for Father Carroll last Easter? You're one of Father Carroll's parishioners, I'll bet a nickel, and gave your bit, too, I know. Of course. There now! Bless you! I wish some one would make up a purse for me in this car. I wouldn't refuse it. But, no, they won't not a one of them! It's you that are the favorite! Jerusalem, but the hat's getting heavy!"

Amid sympathetic laughter the hat had gone the rounds, and even the lady with the lap-dog had given generously. It was a goodly pile that was emptied into the apron of the lamenting old lady, who, dazed and miserable, hardly seemed to realize her good fortune.

"And himself so fond of hins," she murmured. "Ash Street!" shouted the conductor.

Sweeping up the coins and bills, the girl with the brown braid thrust them into the pocket of the old woman and took her by the arm.

"I will go home with you," she said.

Five minutes later, in a bare but tidy kitchen, the heroine of the afternoon's adventure was pouring out to the 'ould man' the whole story. Then the money was brought forth and counted, and the girl with the brown hair was blessed first by one and then by the other, and then by both of the simple, honest pair. Then the old woman began bustling about the kitchen, hospitable and important.

"And its a cup o' tay you must be takin' wid us. Sure it's early yet and your mother—bless the day she bore ye!—won't be worryin'. Draw up to the stove, darlint, and stick those little bits of pretty feet of yez into the oven. And what'll your name be, if I might be so bould to ask?"

"Anne Greyson."

"Anne! And is it strong or wake you'll be takin' your tay, dear?"

It was fully an hour before Anne could tear herself away from the cosy kitchen. As she was putting on her coat, some one knocked on the door, and, the old man opening it, in rushed, panting and shamefaced, the boy with the speckled hens. At his side bounded a great dog.

"'Tis the thafe himself!" cried the old woman.

The boy, crimson from confusion, no less than from the buffets of the storm, burst out in eager denial.

"I knew you'd think so, but it was my dog Merlin."

"Him stole the hins?"

"No, no; I mean he'd been stolen a whole fortnight; and all of a sudden, as I was standing out on the platform, I saw him under a lamp-post—poor fellow, you ought to see him when he isn't half starved, he's a beauty—and I forgot all about the old hens, and J just jumped off and made a beeline for that lamp-post."