

## THE OLD ROOFTREE.

"Hello, Jim! Where have you been lately?" shouted a broker the other evening to a portly, finely dressed man in the corridor of the St. James. The gentleman stopped, shook hands with his friend, and replied, "I've been home to see my old father and mother, the first time in sixteen years, and I tell you, old man, I wouldn't have missed that visit for all my fortune."

"Kinder good to visit your boyhood home, eh?"

"You bet. Sit down. I was just thinking about the old folks, and feel talkative. If you have a few moments to spare, sit down, light a cigar, and listen to a story of a rich man who had almost forgotten his father and mother."

They sat down, and the man told his story.

"How I came to visit my home happened in a curious way. Six weeks ago I went down to Fire Island fishing. I had a lunch put up at Crook & Nash's, and you can imagine my astonishment when I opened the hamper to find a package of crackers wrapped up in a piece of newspaper. That newspaper was the little patent inside country weekly published at my home in Wisconsin. I read every word of it, advertisements and all. There was George Kellogg, who was a school-mate of mine, advertising hams and salt pork, and another boy was postmaster. By George! it made me homesick, and I determined then and there to go home, and go home I did.

"In the first place I must tell you how I came to New York. I had a tiff with my father and left home. I finally turned up in New York with \$1 in my pocket. I got a job running a freight elevator in the very house in which I am now a partner. My haste to get rich drove the thoughts of my parents from me, and when I did think of them the hard words that my father last spoke to me rankled in my bosom. Well, I went home. I didn't see much change in Chicago, but the magnificent new depot in Milwaukee I thought was an improvement on the old shed that they used to have. It was only thirty miles from Milwaukee to my home, and I tell you, John, that train seemed to creep. I was actually worse than a school boy going home for vacation. At last we neared the town. Familiar sights met my eyes, and, darn it all! they filled with tears. There was Bill Lyman's red barn, just the same; but, great Scott! what were all of the other houses? We rode nearly a mile before coming to the depot, through houses where only occasionally I saw one that was familiar. The town had

grown to ten times its size when I knew it. The train stopped and I jumped off. Not a face in sight that I knew, and I started down the platform to go home. In the office door stood the station agent. I walked up and said: 'Howdy, Mr. Collins?'

"He stared at me and replied, 'You've got the best of me, sir.'

"I told him who I was and what I had been doing in New York, and he didn't make any bones in talking to me. Said he: 'It's about time you came home. You in New York rich, and your father scratching gravel to get a bare living.'

"I tell you, John, it knocked me all in a heap. I thought my father had enough to live upon comfortably. Then a notion struck me. Before going home I telegraphed to Chicago to one of our correspondents there to send me \$1,000 by first mail. Then I went into Mr. Collins' back office, got my trunk in there and put on an old hand-me-down suit that I used for fishing and hunting. My plug hat I replaced by a soft hat, took my valise in my hand and went home. Somehow the place didn't look right. The currant bushes had been dug up from the front yard and the fence was gone. All the old locust trees had been cut down and young maples were planted. The house looked smaller somehow, too. But I went up to the front door and rang the bell. Mother came to the door and said: 'We don't wish to buy anything to-day, sir.'

"It didn't take me a minute to survey her from head to foot. Neatly dressed, John, but a patch and a darn here and there, her hair streaked with gray, her face thin, drawn and wrinkled. Yet over her eyeglasses shone those good, honest, benevolent eyes. I stood staring at her and then she began to stare at me. I saw the blood rush to her face and with a great sob she threw herself upon me and nervously clasped me about the neck, hysterically crying: 'It's Jimmy, it's Jimmy.'

"Then I cried, too, John. I just broke down and cried like a baby. She got me into the house, hugging and kissing me, and then she went to the back door and shouted 'George!'

"Father came in in a moment and from the kitchen asked, 'What you want, Car-line?'

"Then he came in. He knew me in a moment. He stuck out his hand and grasped mine, and said, sternly, 'Well, young man, do you propose to behave yourself now?'

"He tried to put on a brave front, but he broke down. There we three sat, like whipped school children, all whimpering. At last supper time came and mother went out to prepare it. I went into the kitchen with her.