

waited, with an impatient grunt, for Bill to begin. It was amusing to see how highly she relished these rough but acceptable attentions, shutting her eyes, as if oblivious of all outward things, even of the feeding-trough, dropping her ears in perfect repose, stretching out her legs, and abandoning herself entirely to the soothing influence. Every one was satisfied that Nancy's skin became cleaner and whiter under this treatment, even to the putting on of a silky brightness. Uncle Benny was sure that she was improving under it, that he gave Bill great credit for having undertaken the labor of two or three curryings daily.

Bill also kept the pen in order. Having been provided with a clean, dry bed, she kept that clean herself; for it is the instinct of a well-bred pig to keep his nest in good order, if a nice dry one be given him, with adjoining space for other purposes. In this useful duty Bill was not dismayed by the occurrence of a drizzling, muddy day. On the contrary, as the boys on such occasions generally had the most time to spare, so Bill spent his holidays in Nancy's pen, scraping and piling up the supernumerary contents, and putting in fresh litter. Of course his boots got so muddy, that, when going in to meals, the girls regarded him as an object of suspicion; and when he happened to stand too close to a hot stove, especially when his clothes were damp, the exhalations became so pungent as very justly to expose him to the most damaging imputations. But he was proof against all the slurs thrown out at such times. If his boots had been in the pig-pen, his heart had been there also.

Uncle Benny required all that Nancy consumed to be charged against her in a separate account, so that the boys should know whether she really did eat her head off, as her namesake in the house had spitefully predicted she would. There was no getting for her even a mouthful of kitchen slop; Miss Nancy had been so stung by having her name undervalued, that she was careful to throw all to her father's long-legged hogs. But as a sort of equivalent for this manifestation of hostility, the boys picked up numerous odds and ends about the place for Nancy's benefit, such as they had never before thought of saving. When they saw a stray cabbage leaf or turnip lying about, or a nubbin of corn, they put it into their pockets until they had a chance of giving it to her. Though it was still cold weather with no green things about, yet they were often surprised at the variety of trifles they could find when thus on the lookout for them. Between these three caterers, Nancy had quite a luxurious time of it, even though spitefully cut off from the run of the kitchen.

Uncle Benny watched the behavior of the boys toward their new pets, as the winter wore away be-

came more and more gratified at the beneficial influence which the care of them was exercising on their habits. He considered it a great gain for a very small outlay. Nor did he fail to remind Mr. Spangler of the important fact, going into particulars which compelled him to admit that these little concessions had done the boys much good. It was a hard thing for him to give up the convictions of a lifetime, but he did it nevertheless,—though sometimes winding up with a request that the old man would wait till the year's end, and see how the experiment would result.

As Bill was devoted to Nancy, he was up in advance of the other boys, and off to her pen to give her breakfast. One morning early in March, on reaching it in the performance of this pleasing duty, he was confounded by seeing ten young pigs in the hogshed. There was too much grunting and squealing around Nancy to permit her to hear Bill's step as he came up to the pen, nor did she happen to see him. So he stood for a moment, surprised beyond anything within his memory, gazing at the joyful sight, then turned back to the house, routed the other boys out of their beds, and ran shouting up to the girls with the glorious news that Nancy had ten pigs! No news-boy ever cried out the tidings of a great victory over the "Rebels" with such voluble glee, as when Bill ran stamping down stairs with the news. He thundered even at Uncle Benny's door, then opened it, and told him also what had taken place.

Of course it created a great sensation, and very soon the whole family was gathered around Nancy's pen. There was no denying the thing; Nancy had brought the boys ten pigs,—nine plump little fellows and a runt. Even Mr. Spangler came out before he got breakfast to see if it could be so, and if the pigs looked any better than a litter which had fallen to his lot the week before.

As to the boys, they were pleased beyond measure. Nancy came grunting and sniffing toward the spectators, as if the matter were a great relief to her also, and behaving as though a good warm breakfast, with plenty of it, would not come amiss. Altogether it was a noisy and lively scene, and appeared to give general satisfaction. But its real interest lay in the single fact that Nancy belonged to the boys. Had she been one of Spangler's drove, no one would have felt much concern about the matter but herself. It also went far toward establishing another point,—that when the boys of a farmer's family are permitted to interest themselves in any little independent operation of their own, the family itself is pretty certain to become interested also.

That very day the boys were to quit school for the winter; so they hurried off to the school-house