

THE FOLLOWS

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THE FOOLISH CHICKEN.

There was a round pond, and a pretty pond too;
About it white daisies and buttercups grew.
And dark weeping willows, that stooped to the
ground,
Dipped in their long branches, and shaded it
round.

A party of ducks to this pond would repair,
And feast on the green water-weeds that grow
there;
Indeed the assembly would frequently meet
To talk over affairs in this pleasant retreat.

One day a young chicken, who lived thereabout,
Blood watching to see the ducks pass in and
out;
Now standing tall upward, now diving below,
She thought of all things she should like to do
so.

So this foolish chicken began to declare,
"I've really a great mind to venture in there.
My mother's oft told me I must not go nigh,
But really, for my part, I cannot tell why.

"Ducks have feathers and wings, and so have
too,
And my feet—what's the reason that they will
not do?
Though my beak is pointed, and their beaks are
round,
Is that any reason that I should be drowned?

"So why should not I swim as well as a duck?
Suppose that I venture, and when try my luck,
For," said she, spite all that her mother had
taught her,
"I'm really remarkably fond of the water.

So in this poor ignorant animal flew,
And found that her dear mother's cautions were
true;
She splashed, and she dashed, and she turned
herself round,
And heartily wished herself safe on the ground.

But now 'twas too late to begin to repent,
The harder she struggled, the deeper she went,
And when every effort she vainly had tried,
She slowly sank down to the bottom, and died.

The ducks, I perceived, began loudly to quack,
When they saw the poor fowl floating dead on
her back,
And by their grave looks it was very apparent
They discoursed on the sin of not minding
parent.

For the Favorite.

HARD TO BEAT.

A DRAMATIC TALE, IN FIVE ACTS, AND A PROLOGUE.

BY J. A. PHILLIPS,
OF MONTREAL.

Author of "Fry's Bad to Worse," "Out of the
Snow," "A Perfect Fraud," &c.

ACT V.

THE WAGES OF SIN.

SCENE III.

AN UGLY BABY.

Time, June twenty-fourth, eighteen hundred
and seventy-one; place, Mrs. Griffith's bedroom
in her father's house.

The mortal remains of Harry Griffith were
assigned to their mother earth with but scant
ostentation; few followed the corpse to the grave
and only one heart mourned for the one it had
so loved.

Annie bore up well under the news of the doc-
tor's death; she gave way to no violent grief,
but her melancholy grew deeper, and deeper,
and she seemed to be slowly, but surely fading
away. She grew more and more quiet in her
habits, and even Charlie Morton seemed to have
lost his power to amuse and interest her. Their



"AN UGLY BABY."

drives together were discontinued, and she
never sang or played now; indeed she tried as
much as possible to avoid being left alone with
Charlie, and he, seeing that his visits troubled
her, came less and less frequently. And so the
long, dull, winter passed away, the brief spring
came and went, and the glorious summer robbed
the earth in its mantle of green, and bedecked it
with myriads of gorgeous flowers.

Mr. Howson tried to induce Annie to go to
the seaside, or to accompany him on a trip to
Europe; but she steadily refused:

"Let me die here, in the old house, father,"
she said. "I know I shall not live long now, and
I would like to end my days under the roof
where some of the happiest, and some of the
saddest hours of my life have been spent."

With the summer came the quiet bustle and
preparation incident to the advent of a little
stranger. Mysterious garments of a nondescript
character were being busily prepared; a subdued
sort of preparation was going on; a splendid
cradle with wonderful mountings and gorgeous
curtains was placed in Annie's room; old Dr.
Heartyman, the family physician, called fre-
quently and it was perfectly evident that an
important event was at hand.

At last one morning early, when the first faint
streaks of daylight were fighting for the mas-
tery over night and darkness, a "little, feeble
spirit struggled its way into the world and looked
at it out of the pale grey eyes of a little girl.

"What an ugly baby," exclaimed the doctor
involuntarily when the red little specimen of
humanity was presented to him. "I never saw
a greater little fright."

"Nor I," answered the nurse, "it's the most
awfullest looking baby I ever seed."

They had both spoken very low, but Annie's
quick ear had caught the words, and a hot flush
suffused her face as she called in a weak low
voice from the bed:

"Let me see it."

Very tenderly she took the little form in her
arms and a strange feeling thrilled through her
as she pressed her baby to her bosom for the
first time. Long and earnestly she gazed on its
red, swollen little face, and a few warm tears
fell on it as she thought of its father lying in a
nameless grave.

There was no doubt about its being an ugly
baby; the head was of immense size, misshapen,
with curious bumps in some places and queer
indentations in others, as if it had been sat on; as
for features, if a baby can be said to have any,
they were decidedly bad. It would not be per-
fectly true to say that it had no nose, but really
that organ was so small that at first sight it
seemed to be wanting; the deficiency in the
nasal department, however, was more than
made up in the mouth which was so large that
when it cried—which it did as soon as it was
born—its head appeared to open in half on a
hinge, and be in great danger of falling off. The
body was most disproportionately small, thin
and attenuated, that it was quite a wonder to
find that such a frail form could contain such
excellent lungs, for it could cry with great
strength and persistence.

It certainly was an ugly baby; every one who
saw it said so, everyone but the one who had
given it birth; to her it was the perfection of
beauty, the embodiment of grace and loveliness.
Laugh at a mother's pride in her first-born if
you will; but there is a subtle essence of poetry
in the pride a mother takes in the appearance

of her offspring which we men cannot fully un-
derstand.

"You ought to be ashamed to call her ugly,"
Annie said, as indignantly as her weak condi-
tion would permit, "she has the very image of
her father, and no one could call him ugly."

This was said in a sort of general way to both
the doctor and the nurse, and they accepted it
jointly by simply bowing their heads in ac-
knowledgment.

Very ugly was the baby, and very cross and
feeble it proved also; it scarcely could be said
to have enjoyed good health from the hour of
its birth; it appeared to have come into the
world without enough vitality to keep it alive,
and before it was ten days old, Dr. Heartyman
declared that, although it might live for a few
days longer, he did not believe there was any
hope of its being reared.

Annie was extremely weak, but anxiety for
her child seemed to give her temporary strength,
and in three weeks she was out of bed. Very
pale, and thin and feeble she was, but her heart
was bound up in her baby, and she managed for
its sake to keep up well. She never forgot the
words used by the doctor and nurse at the
child's birth, and used to sit for hours and
hours looking at the fragment of humanity and
repenting to herself, "she is just like her papa,
she isn't ugly at all."

On the twentieth of July the baby was seized
with a severe attack of croup. Dr. Heartyman
was sent for; he saw at once there was no hope
and he tried, in the gentlest and kindest way to
prepare Annie for the worst.

"It is a very severe attack, my child," he said,
"and few babies of her age could withstand it,
even if they were strong and hearty, she is
very weak and so—"

"Oh no, no, doctor!" she exclaimed covering
her face with hand, "don't say she must die,
don't tell me there is no hope, must everything
I love die, and I be left alone? Oh, my darling,
she continued passionately, throwing herself on
her knees by the cradle and taking the nurse
form in her arms, "would to God we could die
together! If you might go I would that I could go
with you. It seemed like a ray of sunlight
when you came to brighten the darkness of my
life—you are all I have to remind me of him,
and you are so like him. Oh! stay with me, or
let me go with you. And they called you ugly
—you did, doctor didn't you?—my beautiful
little baby, and now you must die. Oh! doctor
you cannot call her ugly anymore for in a short
while she will be one of God's white robed
angels, and they are all beautiful. My poor
little darling, they called you an ugly baby."

"She is the prettiest child I ever saw in my
life," blurted out Dr. Heartyman, with tears
standing in his eyes, and great sobs coming up
in his throat, "I never saw such a pretty baby.
She is the image of her mother."

"You think so?"

"Yes."
It was a lie, Dr. Heartyman, a gross, palpable
lie, and you ought to have been ashamed of
telling an untruth at your time of life; you
knew it was an ugly little brat, but the bright,
happy smile which for a moment lighted up the
mother's face, the look of gratified pride and
pleasure satisfied you. You had touched the
key note of her heart and let in a ray of sun-
shine on one who was weighed down with care
and sorrow; you had gratified a harmless and
pardonable pride, and had, for the moment,
lightened the burden of care pressing joyfully on
a tired heart.

Yet it was none the less a lie, doctor; but, I
think that when the recording angel looked into
your heart and saw the goodness and purity of
your intention, he either did not record that sin
against you, or dipped his pen in the sympa-
thetic ink of mercy so that the record would
quickly fade away.

The baby died that night.

Annie never recovered the shock of her baby's
death; she did not appear to have any special
disease, she simply seemed to fade away. It
was painfully evident that she was sinking, that
she was daily losing strength and going, slowly,
but surely to the grave. It was in vain that the
most eminent physicians were called; in vain
that every effort which affection could prompt,
and money procure, was made to rouse and
interest her; Annie's interest in this life was
almost over, she cared but little for this world
now and had placed her hopes in the life beyond
the grave where she fondly hoped to be united
again to those two loved ones who had gone
before her.

The sun was shining to rest on a warm July
(Continued on page 205.)