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At No. 17, Water Street, Saint Andrews, N. B.

TERMS.

12s. 6d. per annum—if paid in advance.

15s. if not paid until the end of the year.

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Inserted according to written orders, or continued

at the discretion of the Editor.

First insertion of 12 lines and under 3s.

Each repetition of 12 lines 2d.

First insertion of all over 12 lines 3d. per line.

Each repetition of 12 lines 1d. per line.

Advertising by the year as may be agreed on.

MISCELLANEOUS.

GENTLE HAND;

OR WORDS FOR THE WISE.

I did not hear the maiden's name; but in

my thought I have ever since called her

"Gentle Hand." What a magic lay in her

touch! It was wonderful.

When and where, it matters not now to

relate—but once upon a time, as I was pass-

ing through a thinly peopled district of coun-

try, night came down upon me, almost un-

warned. Being on foot, I could not hope to

gain the village, towards which my steps

were directed, until a late hour; and I there-

fore preferred seeking shelter and a night's

lodging at the first humble dwelling that pre-

sented itself.

Dusky twilight was giving place to deeper

shadows, when I found myself in the vicin-

ity of a dwelling, from the small uncurtained

windows of which the light shone with a

pleasant promise of good cheer and comfort.

The house stood within an enclosure, and a

short distance from the road along which I

was moving with weary feet. Turning a-

side, and passing through an old-hung gate,

I approached the dwelling. Slowly the gate

swung on its wooden hinges, and the rattle

of its latch, in closing, did not disturb the

air until I had nearly reached the little porch in

front of the house, in which a slender girl,

who had noticed my entrance, stood await-

ing my arrival.

A deep, quick bark, answered, almost like

an echo, the sound of the shutting gate, and

sudden as an apparition, the form of an im-

mense dog loomed in the doorway. I was

now near enough to see the savage aspect of

the animal, and the gathering motion of his

body, as he prepared to bound forward upon

me. His wolfish growl was really fearful.

At the instant when he was about to spring,

a light hand was laid upon his shaggy neck,

and a low word spoken.

"Don't be afraid. He won't hurt you,"

said a voice, that to me sounded very sweet

and musical.

I now came forward, but in some doubt as

to the young girl's power over the beast, on

whose rough neck her almost childish hand

still lay. The dog did not seem by any

means reconciled to my approach, and

growled wickedly his dissatisfaction.

"Gain, Tige!" said the girl, not in a

voice of authority, yet, in her gentle tones,

was the consciousness that she would be

obeyed; and, as she spoke, she lightly bore

upon the animal with her hand, and he turned

away, and disappeared within the dwell-

ing.

"Who's that? A rough voice asked the

question; and now a heavy looking man

took the dog's place in the door.

"Who are you? What's wanted?"

There was something very harsh and forbid-

ding in the way the man spoke. The girl

now laid her hand upon his arm, and leaved

with a gentle pressure, against him.

"How far is it to G—?" I asked; not

deeming it best to say, in the beginning,

that I sought a resting-place for the night.

"To G—?" growled the man, but not

"Yes, it's a long way to G—." I guess

we can find a place for him. Have you had

any supper?"

I answered in the negative.

The woman, without further remark, drew

a pine table from the wall, placed upon it

some cold meat, fresh bread and butter, and

a pitcher of new milk. While these prepara-

tions were going on, I had more leisure for

minute observation. There was a singular

contrast between the young girl I have men-

tioned, and the other inmates of the room;

and yet I could trace a strong likeness be-

tween the maiden and the woman, whom I

supposed to be her mother—browned and

hard as were the features of the latter.

Soon after I had finished my supper, a

neighbour came in, and it was not long be-

fore he and the man of the house were in-

volved in a warm political discussion, in

which were many more assertions than rea-

sons. My host was not a very clear-headed

man; while his antagonist was worthy and

specious. The former, as might be suppo-

sed, very naturally became excited, and now

and then, indulged himself in rather strong

expressions towards his neighbour, who in

stead, dealt back wofully blows that were quite

as heavy as he had received, and a good deal

more irritating.

And now I marked again the power of

that maiden's gentle hand. I did not notice

her movement to her father's side. She was

there when I first observed her, with one

hand laid upon his temple, and lightly

smoothing the hair with a caressing motion.

Gradually the high tone of the dispute sub-

sided, and his words had in them less of per-

sonal rancour. Still, the discussion went on;

and I noticed that the maiden's hand, which

rested on the temple, when unimpeded, moved

words were spoken, resumed its caressing mo-

tion. The instant there was the smallest per-

ceptible tone of anger in the father's voice,

it was a beautiful sight; and I could but look

on and wonder at the power of that touch, so

light and unobtrusive, yet possessing a spell

over the hearts of all around. For, as she

stood there, she looked like an angel of peace,

gentle as still the turbulent waters of human

passion. Sadly out of place, I could not but

think her amid the rough and rude; and yet,

how more than they; need the softening and

humanizing influences of one like the Gentle

Hand.

Many times more during that evening, did

I observe the magic power of her hand and

voice—the one gentle, yet potent as the o-

cean.

On the next morning, breakfast being over,

was preparing to take my departure, when

my host informed me that I would wait for

half an hour he would give me a ride in his

wagon to G—, as business required him to

go there. I was very well pleased to accept

of the invitation. In due time the farmer's

wagon was driven into the road before the

house, and I was invited to get in. I noticed

that the horse as a rough looking Canadian. As

the farmer took his seat by my side, the fa-

mily came to the door to see us off.

"Dick!" said the farmer, in a peremptory

voice, giving the rein a quick jerk as he

spoke.

But Dick moved not a step.

"Dick! you vagabond get up!" And the

farmer's whip cracked sharply by the pony's

ear.

It availed not, however this second appeal.

Dick stood firmly disobedient. Next the

whip was brought down upon him, with an

impetuous hand; but the pony only reared up

a little. Fast and sharp the strokes were

next dealt, to the number of a half-dozen.

"The man might as well have beaten his wa-

gon, for all his end was gained.

A stout lad now came out into the road,

and catching Dick by the bridle, jerked him

forward, using at the same time the usual

man's language on such occasions, but Dick

met this newly with increased stubborn-

ness, playing his fore feet more firmly, and

at a sharper angle with the ground. The im-

patient boy now struck the pony on the side

head with his clenched hand, and jerked cru-

elly at his bridle. It availed nothing, how-

ever, Dick was now to be wrought upon by

any such arguments.

"Don't do so John!" I turned my head as

the maiden's sweet voice reached my ear.

She was passing through the gate into the

road, and, in the next moment, had taken

hold of the lad and drawn him away from the

animal. No strength was exerted in this;

she took hold of his arm, and he obeyed her

wish as readily as if he had no thought be-

yond her gratification.

And now that soft hand was laid gently on

the pony's neck, and a single low word spoken.

How instantly were the tense muscles

relaxed—how quickly the stubborn air van-

ished.

"Poor Dick!" said the maiden, as she stroked

his neck lightly, or softly patted it with a

child-like hand.

"Now, go along, you provoking fellow!"

she said, in a half-clinging, yet affectionate

voice, as she drew upon the bridle. The

pony turned towards her, and rubbed his head

against her arm for an instant or two; then

pricking up his ear, he started off at a light

cheerful trot, and went on his way as freely

as if no such incident had ever entered his

suborned head.

What a wonderful power that hand pos-

sessed! said I, speaking to my companion,

as we rode away.

He looked upon me for a moment, as if my

remark had occasioned surprise. Then a

light came into his countenance, and he said,

briskly:

"She's good! Everybody and everything

loves her."

Was that, indeed, the secret of her power?

Was the quality of her soul perceived in the

impression of her hand, even by brute beasts?

The father's explanation was doubtless, the

right one. Yet have I ever since wondered

and still I wonder, at the potency which lay

in that maiden's magic touch. I have seen

something of the same power, showing itself

in the loving and the good, but never to the

extent as instanced in her, whom, for a bet-

ter name, I must still call "Gentle Hand."

A gentle touch, a soft word. And how

few of us, when the will is strong with its

purpose, can believe in the power of agencies so

apparently insignificant. And yet all great

influences effect their ends silently, unobtru-