

MOTH-EATEN.

BY MARGARET E. SANGLER.

I had a beautiful garment,
And I laid it by with care;
I folded it close with lavender leaves
In a napkin fine and fair.
"It's far too costly a robe,
"For one like me to wear."

So never at morn or evening,
I put my garment on;
It lay by itself under clasp and key
In the perfumed dusk alone,
Its wonderful broderie hidden,
Till many a day had gone.

There were guests who came to my portal,
There were friends who sat with me,
And, clad in soberest raiment,
I bore them company;
I knew I owned the beautiful robe,
Though its splendor none might see.

There were poor who stood at my portal,
There were orphaned sought my care;
I gave them tenderest pity,
But I had nothing besides to spare;
I had only the beautiful garment,
And the raiment for daily wear.

At last, on a feast-day's coming,
I thought in my dress to shine;
I would please myself with the lustre
Of its snifing colors fine,
I would walk with pride in the marvel
Of its rarely rich design.

So out of the dusk I bore it—
The lavender fell away—
And fold on fold I held it up
To the shining light of day.
Alas! the glory had perished
While there in its place it lay.

Who seeks for the fadeless beauty,
Must seek for the useless seals
To the grace of a constant blessing
The beauty that us reveals,
For into the folded robe alone
The moth with its blighting steals.

THE MAN OF THE HOUSE.

BY PANSY.

(Author of "Mrs. Solomon Smith Looking On.")
CHAPTER I.—HIS HOME.

It was a little bit of a room, dingy and dreary. I can't remember that there was a single bright thing in it. The sun only got a chance to look in for about five minutes, just before it went to bed at night; the rest of the time it was around on the other side of the house, where there wasn't a window, nor a chink that it could peep through. You want to know who lived in this house and stayed in this sunless room? Why Reuben Stone's mother and sister Beth. The sister's name was Elizabeth, but she was a little creature, and nobody ever spoke her full name. As for Reuben, being the man of the house, he was apt to be on the street from morning till night, trying to pick up odd jobs. School! Bless you! no, he didn't go to school; his jackets were out at the elbows, and his pants were out at the knees, and his shoes were out at the toes, and in very cold weather, he had nothing extra to wear around him except an old red and green plaid shawl of his mother's; he didn't like to wear that because the boys shouted after him and called him "Dutchy." So in very cold weather, he was apt to plan to do all his errands in the evening when the boys wouldn't notice the shawl. Neither did Beth go to school, for much the same reasons that kept Reuben at home. Besides, she could help; her mother sat, all day long, in that one low chair by that one window, and sewed as fast as she could on boy's shirts for one of the wholesale stores in the city; and Beth could overhaul some of the seams, and hem the edges, and make many stitches in the course of the day to help her mother; so as soon as their bit of housework was done, and you would have been astonished to see what a little time it took to do the housework,—Beth would draw her chair as close to her mother's as she could get it, and they two would sew.

It was getting dark in the room; the sun had looked in, and said good night to them, as if it were in too much of a hurry to stay even as long as usual, and the shadow of

the big barn next to them was creeping further and further over the house. The fire was getting down, too; in fact, they always shut the dampers about the time the sun was expected, so as to save all the coal they could. Beth shivered, and drew her chair away from the window. "Mother," she said, "shan't I open the damper, and let the fire roar, just a minute! It's awful cold here; my hands are blue." Mrs. Stone looked up from her seam with a sigh. "Yes," she said; "of course, it won't do to get cold; the next thing would be a doctor's bill. But we must be as careful as we can, for Reuben said this morning he didn't believe the coal would last until Saturday." Beth opened the dampers, and poked the dull coals a very little, then stooped down before the stove, warming her hands. "I wish we could have something warm for supper, to-night," she said. "Mother, do you remember it is Reuben's birthday?" "Yes, I do," the mother said, shutting her lips tight; "I thought, last week, we would have something warm for his birthday. I meant to have roast potatoes and a little bit of cake; but I couldn't get these shirts done, you know, and so that plan had to be given up." Beth drew a little sigh. "I wish we weren't so awful poor!" she said drearily; "just think! we can't even have baked potatoes for a treat once in a while! Isn't that horrid?"

"We have them for dinner quite often, you know," her mother reminded her. "Oh, yes; I know. But I'd like, now and then, to have something for supper. Just bread and milk! Sometimes I'm ugly enough to be most sorry that Reuben gets a quart of milk a day for taking care of that cow. If he didn't, we'd have to have something else, now and then."

"I don't believe I'd take the trouble to quarrel with the only luxury we have," Mrs. Stone said, gravely; and Beth laughed, and began to clear off the little table, and put three plates and three cups on it. "If you could have a cup of tea once in a while, I don't believe I'd mind about the rest so much," she said, after bustling about in silence for a few minutes.

"Oh, well, I do once in a while, you know. We had tea on thanksgiving day, and again on Christmas. What are you talking about?"

Beth tried to laugh again, but the mention of Christmas made her remember that the first day of the year was very near. "Just think!" she said, to-morrow will be New Year's eve! I don't believe there is another family in this town who are not planning to go somewhere, or have company, or do something nice on New Year's. Mother, I can't help it; I think it is just awful to be so poor! Mrs. Stone had no answer to this; sometimes it seemed hard to her, not to know what her children would have next to eat, or whether they would have anything; but she had lived long enough to know that it would do no good to fret about it. Beth went about the room in silence after that, until the little table was set with its loaf of bread and pail of milk, then she found new cause for trouble. Mother, what do you suppose can keep Reuben so? It is ever so much later than he generally comes.

CHAPTER II.

REUBEN'S QUARTER.

What kept Reuben was this: It had been what he called one of his "unlucky" days. The errand boys, and news boys, and all other boys who had regular positions had been on hand, and nobody seemed to want anything carried anywhere, though the streets were full of people, with their arms full of bundles. It was getting near sunset, the time when he generally went home to get orders about the errands for the night, and he had but five cents in his pocket. He knew just how much, or rather how little flour, coal, and potatoes, there were in the house, and he knew that his mother had no money. He had hoped to have a grand day for business, and bring home at least twenty cents, and here it was, even worse than usual. Reuben Stone was ten years old, and rather a tall boy for his age; but he rubbed his worn-out jacket sleeve across his eyes, and made up his mind that this was a pretty hard world to live in. Generally, he managed to keep cheerful enough to whistle most of the time, but to-night, he kept his lips shut tight, and trudged along with his head down.

"Halloo!" shouted a man from across the street. Reuben looked up. A man with a horse and sleigh standing in front of

of Parker's grocery was beckoning to him. He clipped over the snowy road in haste. "Do you know enough to hold a horse, my boy?" the gentleman asked him; a young gentleman with a pleasant face, and a wicked-looking horse he was trying to hold.

"I rather think I do, sir," Reuben said, cheerily.

"Well, then, attend to this one; he is hungry and cold, and determined to go home, before I am ready to have him."

Reuben took hold of the bridle, and the young man went into the store. What a hurry that horse was in, to be sure! He stepped forward a little, and finding himself held, tried going backward; then he stood on his hind feet for a change; then he made plunges forward as though he were going to jump over Reuben and a carriage in front of him, and vanish. Reuben tugged at the bridle, and danced backward or forward according to the motions of the horse, but held on firmly, all the while giving the horse good bits of advice. "Come now, you don't get along any faster to pay for all that. Might as well stand still, and look about you, and take comfort. You will get home just as soon as you will to prance around in this way like an idiot. Oh, you can't go! You may jerk as hard as you like, and I shan't let go; not if I know myself; but you are a spunky fellow now, as I ever saw. My! ain't it getting cold, though! I don't wonder you dance; good way to keep warm. I guess that master of yours is going to buy out the grocery and set up in business. Here he comes; good for him! I'm glad, and I guess you are."

"Well," said the young man, "I made quite a stay of it, didn't I? And you and Spunk had lively times, I'll venture. Isn't that a good name for this troublesome fellow? Here's a quarter, my boy. It'll pay you well for your trouble. Go ahead, Spunk."

A quarter of a dollar for holding a horse a few minutes! Reuben considered that good pay. In fact he believed himself to be rich. "It certainly wasn't often he earned twenty-five cents in five or ten minutes!"

His eyes sparkled, and he rubbed his blue hands together in glee, as he slipped the quarter into his dearest pocket. "If I were sure mother would like it," he said, talking to a curb-stone, "I'd have a regular treat to-night; I'd get a quarter of a pound of tea and some sugar, and may be a bit of butter. That would make Beth open her eyes. But I don't know as I'd better, seeing we are most out of coal, and well, everything else, and that plaguey rent has got to be paid again so soon. When I'm a man there is one thing I won't do. I won't pay a cent of rent to anybody. People shall pay me rent, then. Won't that be jolly? Well, come on, trotties, you and I better run home. We're rich, we are! we've done well, to-day, and needn't work any more." Whom do you suppose he was talking to, then? Nothing of less importance than his two feet! I don't know but almost as soon as he was born, certainly as soon as he could begin to talk, Reuben had let people know that he wanted a pony. There was nothing in life that he so much longed for, to this day. When he was a little bit of a fellow, just running alone, he played that his feet were a pair of ponies, that he was the owner and driver; and that they trotted with him, wherever he ordered them. This notion went with him all through his ten years of life; he didn't talk much about the ponies before people, now-a-days, unless occasionally to mother and Beth. But the fancy pleased him all the same, made him feel less lonely, and the distance he had to travel seemed less long. So he was in the habit of talking to them a great deal, and ordering them in a very horseman-like manner. "Come, Trotties, we are half a mile from home, and behind time; you must step up briskly. Let's take another look at the quarter, to be sure it is safe, and then we'll be off. If there should be a hole in that pocket!" He dived his hand down, felt carefully among the strings and bits of treasures, brought up the piece of money, and stepped under the glare of a street lamp that had just been lighted, stared hard at the money, rubbed his eyes, said "What under the sun, moon, and stars does this mean?" looked again, turning it round and round, and over and over; then he said slowly, drawing a long breath before he spoke, "As sure as my name is Reuben Watson Stone, that fellow made a mistake, and this is a ten-dollar gold piece!"

CHAPTER III.

A RACE WITH "SPUNK."

For as much as two minutes, Reuben stood staring at that ten-dollar gold piece uncertain what to do. Not that he had the slightest temptation to keep the gold piece, provided he could find the owner. It is true he thought, "How jolly this would be to spend, all for ourselves!" but then he had no more idea of spending it than he had of trying to fly. Reuben wasn't one of those boys who are honest simply because they have no temptation to steal. He would as soon have thought of going into the grocery and taking money from the drawer, as he would have thought of putting that gold piece in his pocket without trying to find the owner. "We are honest, if we are poor," he had heard his mother say, many a time, and he knew that he was honest. So, though he stood in doubt, it was all about how to find the owner of the gold piece. "I might as well try to find a needle in a hay-stack!" he muttered, as he turned the shining thing over. He knew almost nothing about hay-stacks, and I don't know that he ever hunted for a needle in his life, but he had often heard his mother use that expression when she was having a hopeless search for something, so it came to mind now.

"That Spunk went like the wind. Where does he live, and how far is it? that is the question. He went vent up North, street I know that much. Well, there is nothing for it but to try a race after him. So turn about, Trotties; too bad! you want to go home, don't you? So do I, but there is no help for us; race along now, and see if we haven't got spunk enough to overtake that spunky little pony; maybe he has had to stop half a dozen times."

Away they went, Reuben and the Trotties, speeding up North street; Reuben's eyes turning to the right and left as he ran, hoping to see the little brown horse, standing before another store or house. Nothing of him to be seen. The Trotties slackened their speed after a little, and their owner began to have a hopeless feeling that he was having his race away from home for nothing. There were so many corners that the brown horse might have turned, or, if he had sped on his way, he was far beyond reach, resting comely in some barn perhaps, this very minute.

"We may as well go home, first as last," said Reuben, coming at last to a stand-still. "What a stupid thing it was not to find out where that brown horse lived! He looked knowing enough to tell me, if I had asked him. How I wish I could find him. I hate to have ten dollars in the house, that don't belong there, and not know where to take it. I don't believe I can ever find him, and it will be about a dozen years before mother will let me spend it. Well, Trotties, shall we turn about and trot home? You don't know where the brown horse is, do you? Halloo! there he is this minute, just turning away from Dunlap's. Hold on there, mister, I say! Can't you wait?" and he was off in pursuit. But the brown horse was ahead and meant to keep so; though the Trotties did their best, he was, in a very few minutes, lost among a snarl of horses, and wagons, and street cars, and Reuben stood in front of Dunlap's store, rubbing his cold hands together, no wiser than he was before. A sudden thought came to him and he dashed into the store to inquire the name of the man with the brown horse, describing him as well as he could.

"Don't know him," said the busy clerk, "stranger I guess. How many pounds did you say?" This question was for the man he was waiting on, so Reuben turned and went out. Now he might surely go home with a clear conscience. He had done his best and failed.

"If he is a stranger," he told himself, "it's no ways likely that I'll ever find him, and mother might as well use the money first as last. If I could only make her think so, I'd go and pay that rent a whole quarter at a time. I'd like to know what the agent would think of that! I've a great mind to go pay him, and get his old receipt, and say nothing to mother about it, then I'd give it to her New Year's morning for a present. I wonder if there would be anything so very bad about that! I've half a mind to do it. I could tell her all about it, afterwards. But I guess I won't; she don't like to be told about things afterwards, she likes beforehand better. Trotties are you afraid you will freeze while I

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