

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

THE ANIMALS IN THE FIRE.

Walter had been out skating and the cold wind which had swept down over the frozen lake had made his toes and fingers tingle, so that when he got home he hurried to get warm. Kneeling down close in front of the coal fire which flamed and crackled in the open fire-place, while his brother and sister looked over the Christmas portfolio pictures, he gazed into the glowing coals in the grate. By and by he climbed up into an arm chair. The heat made him sleepy and he closed his eyes. He opened them in great astonishment a moment later, when he heard a shrill "cock-a-doodle-do" which sounded very close to him. He knew there were no chickens in the room since the chickens were all out on the farm in the country, and he was just beginning to think that he had been dreaming, when he heard that "cock-a-doodle-do" again. This time it seemed to come from in front of him, and he looked into the fireplace, though how a "cock-a-doodle-do" could come from the midst of the fire he didn't know. As his eyes fell on the fire he gave a jump in the air and stared as hard as he could. There, in front of him, perched on a piece of coal, was a comical little rooster.

"Well," said the rooster, "you are the slowest boy to get awake that I ever knew, and I have awakened all kinds of boys in my life. I am the Cock that Crew in the Morn."

"Did the Priest All Shaven and Shorn wake up?" asked Walter eagerly.

"Of course he did," answered the rooster; "else how could he marry the Milkmaid to the Man All Tattered and Torn?"

"Of course!" said Walter. "I might have thought of that."

"We thought of it," said another voice. "We were at the wedding. And a big black and white cat crawled out of a hole in the coals and stood beside the rooster. 'I am the Cat that Caught the Rat,' said he. 'Once upon a time I wore boots, and helped my master to marry the Princess.'"

"Bow-wow-wow!" barked a little dog, which came running from a corner.

The cat jumped nimbly to the top of a big piece of coal, where she put up her back at the dog and made a great hissing noise.

"Oh!" said Walter. "I guess you must be the Dog that Worried the Cat, aren't you?"

"I thought you would know me," barked the dog. "I am the same dog right along. I never belonged to a witen. If a witen came around I would bark at her. Hello! here's the Ugly Duckling. I guess I'll bark at her;" but the wary old duck scrambled off.

"How is it that you are all here?" asked Walter. "I thought you all were dead a long time ago. And I do not see how you can live in the fire."

"Oh, the fire does not hurt us," said the Cock that Crew in the Morn, before any of the others could answer. "And we did not die. We never die; and we live in the fire; not always in this fire, for we like to go about from one place to another, but some of us are here most of the time. You can see us in any fire if you look carefully. The best time to see us is in the evening, just before the lights are lit; then we come out to see what is going on."

"And you'll see something going on now," snapped a red fox, jumping from behind a pile of coals and dashing at the rooster. The rooster dodged to one side and gave a derisive crow.

"Just let that old rooster alone." Hello! here's the Ugly Duckling. I guess growled a deep voice; and Walter, looking into the corner of the fireplace, saw a great bear. "I am the Big Bear who lived in the wood," said Bruin. "Here comes my son, the Little Bear."

"What became of Goldenlocks?" asked Walter of the Little Bear. "Would you have hurt her if you had caught her when she came to your house in the wood and sat in your chair?"

"No," said the Little Bear, laughing; "I would have played with her, and told her where the best berries grew that summer."

"And what fun we do have in summer!" said the Sly Old Fox. "Do you know, Little Bo-Peep was watching her sheep one day, when—"

"Walter! Walter! Come to supper," some one called suddenly, and at the sound of the voice all the birds and beasts scuttled for nooks and crannies in the coals. "I'll tell you that tale another time," said the Sly Old Fox, and dodged into his hole just as Walter's eldest sister came into the room.

"Wake up, Walter; supper is ready," she said, shaking him by the shoulder; but Walter declared that he had not been asleep at all, but was just watching the animals. After supper he went back to the fire, but there were too many people in the room, and although he caught a glimpse of one or two of the animals, none of them came out and spoke to him.

But Walter hopes that sometime in the twilight he will see them all again, and then the Sly Old Fox will finish the story of "how 'Bo-Peep's sheep all ran away."—Henry Holcomb Bennett in St. Nicholas.

THE OLDEST CITY IN THE WORLD

If you were suddenly asked to name the oldest city in the world which is still in a flourishing condition, what would be your answer? In nine cases out of ten the person to whom such a query might be propounded would hark back to Egypt, Greece or Rome. He would be wrong. The oldest city in the world is Damascus.

Tyre and Sidon have crumbled on the shore; Baalbec is a ruin; Palmyra is buried in a desert; Nineveh and Babylon have disappeared from the Tigris and the Euphrates. Damascus remains what it was before the days of Abraham—a centre of trade and travel—an isle of verdure in the desert; "a presidential capital," with martial and sacred associations extending through thirty centuries.

It was near Damascus that Saul of Tarsus saw the light above the brightness of the sun; the street which is called Strait, in which it was said "he prayed," still runs through the city.

The city which Mohammed surveyed from a neighboring height and was afraid to enter because it was given to man to have but one paradise, and for his part he was resolved not to have it in this world, is today what Julian called the "Eye of the East," as it was in the time of Isiah, "the head of Syria."

From Damascus came the damson, our blue plums, and the delicious apricot of Portugal called damasco; damask, our beautiful fabric of cotton and silk, with vines and flowers raised upon a smooth bright ground; the damask rose introduced into England in the time of Henry VIII.; the Damascus blade, so famous the world over for its very keen edge and wonderful elasticity, the secret of whose manufacture was lost when Tamerlane carried the artist into Persia; and that beautiful art of inlaying wood and steel with gold and silver, a kind of mosaic engraving and sculpture united—called damascening—with which boxes, bureaus, and swords are ornamented.

It takes more than willingness to be nothing to make you amount to something.

A good many sermons are like up-to-date crackers—mighty little nourishment done up in much flourishment.

THE NEW STATESMANSHIP.

"I see a new statesmanship arising. The old guard with both parties must go." These words of ex-president Taft at the recent session of the Manitoba Conference are undoubtedly true, and constitute the most hopeful feature of our provincial public life.

A more splendid opportunity for the development of a great nation was never afforded any people than is given to us in this great West, and though Manitoba is small in extent as compared with Ontario or the new-born provinces, she has vast resources and immense possibilities. We have a magnificent stage upon which to play our part. Behind us lie centuries of civilization from whose experience we may gather wisdom. Beacon-lights are kindled, warning us from rocks and shoals where many a gallant vessel of national power and promise has met its doom. Through the history of nations runs the truth, written in terms of tears and blood, that "the wages of sin is death." Civilizations of former days have experimented with unrighteousness and the result is written upon their tombs. If anything is evident to us, this should be, viz, that the eternal laws of righteousness cannot be violated or ignored with impunity. If we fail to find the path to power and permanence, we are without excuse.

Hitherto these things have not weighed with us as they should. In the conduct of public affairs we have had politicians enough, but of high-souled statesmen there has been a great dearth. There has been a disposition to regard the resources of the province as a fair field for exploitation by those entrusted with the key to public property. The party juggernaut has rolled ruthlessly over the quivering forms of personal honor and political truth; and the virgin soil of this prairie province has been stained with the blood of every high principle slain in sacrifice to the exigencies of a wretched partisan career.

It surely is a great humiliation to every patriotic Manitoban to confess, as he must, that in these respects we have been growing worse. Things were deplorable enough in the early days of this province when the premier and his colleagues did not blush to spend their evenings in some log shanty on the banks of the Red, exercising themselves in jigs and lings to the ragtime accompaniment of some superannuated fiddler, in company with absolute half-breed women. That debauchery however was personal and in those days amusements were scarce. But today more refinement exists and the social and commercial advancement of the province affords opportunities for other forms of indulgence. The vices of our political leaders are more intellectual, more calculated, therefore farther-reaching and more cruel. The greed of gain, the lust of power, the opportunities of office, the pride of party and the regard for rank, are the demons which today transform men into beasts of prey and venomous aeps.

"The darkest hour is just before the dawn." At last the veil of night begins to withdraw and the stars to pale. A new statesmanship looms on the horizon. Soon we hope to see the mountain peaks flame and the landscape catch its true colors. Wild beasts that plunder by night seek their lairs when morning dawns. It shall be so in our political life.

It is little enough to believe that centuries of Christian teaching was sufficiently leavened the Anglo-Saxon moral consciousness to render impossible a continuation of exposed political intrigue and spoliation. The demand for a new order of things is clamant, and is finding a response in the new statesmanship now being engendered in the young blood of this province. Men