THE HEARTHSTONE
DEVOTED TO CHOICE LITERATURE ROMANCE &c.

VOLUME III. GEO. E. DESBARATS, { No. 1, PLACE D'ARMES HILL. MONTREAL, SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1872. TERMS, { $2.00 PER ANNUM. SINGLE COPIES, 5 CENTS. No. 16.

THE EAGLE AND THE WREN

A FABLE.

The birds once met—an ancient story reads—
To choose a monarch. So they each agreed
Whoever highest soared by wit or wing,
Should be proclaimed henceforth their sovereign king.

Upsprang they then with one accord, and through
Their native element like arrows flew;
But highest rose the eagle, who did soar
Until his wearied wings could beat no more;
Nor waiting to be told in other words,
Proclaimed himself the sovereign of the birds.

Between his shoulders, unperceived till then,
Sat perched in quiet ease the little wren,
Who, as the eagle ceased to mount, quick rose
On tiny pinion far above her foes,
And twittered forth the victory at length
Of wit and intellect o'er bulk and strength.

Boston Journal.

For the Hearthstone.

A PERFECT FRAUD.

BY J. A. PHILLIPS.

IT wasn't much of a baby; there was no disguising the fact, that, taken on its real, actual merit as a minute representative of the human race the baby was a fraud. Judged by the abstract standard of babyism, it didn't have a single good point about it; it wasn't chubby; it wasn't red; it hadn't a good temper, and not the slightest outline of the ghost of a hair could be found on its billiard ball like head. Yet at first sight it struck you that it ought to have been an extra first class baby. Nature seemed to have started off with the idea of making it a very marvel of a baby, but somehow or other got disgusted before the job was half over and gave it up in despair, and so the baby was by no means a success. It had a large head; and it looked as if it had started off to be a fine intellectual head; but somehow, the back had grown out so much, and the forehead had grown in so much, and the temples were so flat, that it didn't look very much like a head at all; but more resembled a second class potatoe which had been sat on sideways and had never had a chance to recover itself afterwards.

Then in the matter of bulk; there was lots of incipient bone; nature apparently meant, at first, to make it a big baby and so laid down a good foundation; but for some unknown cause, nature abandoned the idea before the quantity of flesh necessary to cover the outline of bone had been duly considered and, therefore, the baby presented rather a scraggy appearance. Then as to its skin; babies are supposed to be always red, and tender; this baby was more yellow than red; its skin looked rough and resembled a convulsed orange rind with a dash of banana peel rubbed in. It's back was uncertain and seemed liable to give way in the middle at any time; and it's eyes showed a decided tendency to that style of eye known as goggle. I freely confess that I felt heartily ashamed of having to call myself the father of such a burlesque on humanity; but, I couldn't help it; if I could have helped it I would; but, I couldn't; it was the best baby we could get and so there was no use worrying about it. The baby was a fraud and we wanted it to perpetrate a fraud with; and as it was the only one we could get we had to be content with it.

"We," you will say; "Who are 'we'?" "My wife and I" I reply using the title of Mrs. Stowe's last novel. But it wasn't our baby; not a bit of it; if it had been we would probably have thought it "just perfect," as all fathers and mothers do of their first-born. You see this story is all about a fraud I perpetrated and in order that you might understand it better, I will begin at the beginning and tell you how it was that my wife and I came to need a baby which didn't belong to us, and what we wanted to do with it.

My father was a peculiar man; his name was Treynch—Thomas Treynch—, so he said, and so he wrote it; but, I never believed in the y and always wrote my name T-r-e-n-c-h Trench, short; but my father persisted in calling himself Treynch, and pronounced it as if spelt Traynch. This was one of the first differences we had and many more followed, until at the age of eighteen I felt compelled to forsake the paternal roof and go out into the world to carve out my own fortune. I carved and was tolerably successful. Don't think I was "a struggling lawyer"—all the sensation novels now-a-days have struggling lawyers in them—I was nothing of the sort, I went into a Dry Goods Jobbing House and by close attention to business rose in three years to the dignity of a drummer. Perhaps you don't know what a drummer is in connection with the Dry Good trade; then I will tell you; he is a man who travels about from village to village with samples of the goods his employers have for sale and takes orders. He is sometimes called a travelling agent, and sometimes a commercial agent, and when he is a very cheeky fellow he calls himself a commission merchant; but, I started as a drummer, I liked to be known as a drummer and I shall stick to the name although I am not a drummer now. Well, I drummed so successfully that after I had been in the business about four years, I was offered a partnership in a rival jobbing house and accepted it; much to the disgust of my old employers who did not seem to remember that I had become a man and wanted to carve my way and so offered me no inducement to remain with them until it was too late. I was then twenty five and had excellent prospects, so I remembered a little blue eyed beauty about whom I had been very spooney during a long visit to Chicago; and so the next time I went drumming I talked the matter over with her and the result was that when I returned to New York I brought Gerty back with me as Mrs. Arthur Trench, short.

My father and I had never got on well together and my taking my own future into my keeping had not improved his feeling towards me. When I left him he swore that he would never give me a dollar as long as he lived, nor leave me one when he died and I knew him well enough to feel quite sure he would keep his word. He was in business in Boston and owned dozens of "brown stone fronts" in that City; his name was good on change for "any amount" and he could probably have raised half a million of dollars as easily as the next man; but not one cent of that money would I get, and I felt sure of it. I did not care much about it for myself, but when a man commits matrimony he begins to feel important and thinks about "providing for his family," and so I began to think it hard that all this money should be left to strangers or some public institution, for I was an only son and had no near relatives but my father. I sometimes met my father during my business visits to Boston or his to New York; we were very polite to each other, generally dined together and invariably had a dispute on some subject or other—we never agreed with each other on any topic—and we were sure to part bad friends, to meet again next time with polite coolness on both sides. When I got married I thought at first I would take Gertry to Boston and introduce her to my father; but, on consideration I concluded to write to him; I did so; this is the answer I got;

DEAR SIR,—I always thought you a fool, now I am perfectly certain of it. What does a man in your position, travelling half the time, want with a wife? You are only saddling yourself with a useless expense and providing a pretty little doll for some coxcomb to flirt with while you are away. You'll be having a family too, I suppose, but don't fancy I shall support them. My determination with regard to the disposition of my property remains unchanged; and I shall probably endow the deaf and dumb institute with it. Deaf and dumb people always appear to me to be very sensible folks. I shall have the pleasure of seeing you on my next visit to New York and will discuss your folly with you if you so desire.

Very respectfully yours,
THOMAS TREYNCH.

Of course, I was furious. I expected to be called a fool; but, the gratuitous insult to Gerty was more than I could stand; I wrote an angry reply, received one equally angry in return and the upshot of the affair was that we had a regular quarrel, our customary visits of politeness were dropped and we did not meet for over a year.

When Gerty and I had been married about a year we had a baby. That *was* a baby. You can take my word for it, it was the prettiest, chubbiest, sweetest, most intelligent——well, never mind it was our baby, and that was sufficient to prove it was the finest baby ever seen. Poor little fellow he ought to have been good for he did not last long; the angels got jealous of us, and after lending him to us for two months they came one night and took him away. The doctor said it was the croup, but I knew better, the angels wanted him and they just took him.

Poor Gerty, it almost broke her heart; but she bore up as well as possible under the circumstances and would have got quite over it I believe if it hadn't been for the fraud which followed Harry's death; and this is how the fraud came to be perpetrated. About a month after baby's birth, I received an extraordinary letter from my father. He said he had seen the announcement of baby's birth in the papers and wished to congratulate me. He expressed his pleasure at its being a boy and said he had recently come to the conclusion that he had made a mistake when he took the rash vow about the disposition of his property; still it was a vow and he could not change it, with regard to my children, however, it was different, he had made no vow about them and felt at liberty to change his mind. He went on to say that he had lately purchased a plantation in Demerara and proposed to go out there in the course of five or six weeks and that before he did so he would be in New York for a day or two and would call on me so that he might see the baby before he went. He said he wanted to see the baby before he made his will as, if he did not think it likely to make a good man he would think again about the disposition of his property. Of course, I felt well pleased at the good prospects of my boy and used to sit and look at him thinking how bright a future he had before him. Then the baby died and all my bright, beautiful castle tumbled to the ground. Then the devil put the idea of the fraud into my head and I practised it. I knew my father well enough to know that he would make his will in favor of the Deaf and Dumb Institute if he knew the boy was dead; because he would think that he had not kept his oath unless he put it beyond any chance that I should personally inherit any of his fortune, which I might do if he made an open will in favor of my children so long as I had none and may never have any. Then the fraud got more and more impressed on my mind; I would borrow a baby; I would pass it off as mine; my father would make his will in favor of my infant son and my next infant son would do quite as well. You see the fraud quite knocked the law of the case out of my head and it never occurred to me that the will might be contested. So I decided on the fraud. It took a long time before I could persuade Gerty to join me in the plot, but, finally she consented and it was only left to find the baby.

But, there came the rub; I thought it would be only necessary to advertise in the N.Y. *Herald* for a "fine male child two months old, to adopt," to be perfectly inundated with babies; but there I made a mistake. The baby market was in a very uncertain condition, girls were plentiful but boys were scarce. Day after day passed and I returned home without having found the necessary baby; at last it got to be the morning before my father's arrival and still no baby; matters were getting desperate. That morning's post brought me a letter offering the much desired baby. I rushed off to secure it and returned with it in about an hour. Gerty screamed when she saw it and declared she would never own to being the mother of such a wretched little specimen of humanity as that. We had gone too far to go back now and after a hearty cry Gerty consented—as she generally did to any proposal of mine—to own the little monster; it being strictly agreed that the baby was to be disposed of as soon as my father left; and, so the fraud was duly installed in his position as "our baby."

The next day my father arrived and I took him home to dinner. I confess I felt very nervous and his first words did not at all reassure me.

"What an ugly little beast," he said as soon as he saw the baby lying on Gerty's lap dressed in all the bravery of laces and muslin peculiar to babydom.

I perfectly agreed with him. I never felt more ashamed in my life; and the tears started into Gerty's eyes as I tried to stammer out something about its being "the best we could do," or something else equally imbecile.

My father seemed rather sorry that he had spoken so bluntly and patted Gerty kindly on the head and told her not to mind an old man who never thought any baby pretty.

After dinner my father sat for a long while talking to Gerty and playing with the baby; he was evidently taking a great fancy to Gerty and seemed to have got over his first antipathy to the little fraud.

The next three weeks were terribly trying to Gerty; the fraud behaved shamefully; there was only one strong point about the animal and that was his lungs; they were wonderfully developed and for those three weeks he yelled, on an average, about twelve hours out of the twenty four. The way he kicked poor Gerty and pulled and hauled her made my heart bleed for the poor thing. But the most extraordinary thing was my father's conduct; he staid over from day to day prolonging his stay from three days, the original limit, to three weeks.

He was actually getting fond of the baby!!

The first time I noticed this was the third day of his stay when he asked if he might be allowed to hold his "grandson." He strutted about as proud as a turkey cock holding the baby very awkwardly, the little fraud screaming like the mischief all the while. He would sit for half an hour at a time watching the fraud yell and kick; he delighted in being allowed to hold it and almost screamed with pleasure when he actually saw the baby washed. He would walk it about for hours and the little wretch would keep quieter with him than with anyone else. I never shall forget one night the little wretch commenced to scream just after we went to bed and after he had been yelling for an hour, my father came into my room and asked to be allowed to walk him about.

"IT WAS A TOUCHING SIGHT, VIEWED FROM UNDER THE BEDCLOTHES.

It was a touching sight, viewed from under the bedclothes, to see that noble old man in his long dressing gown and list slippers, without any socks and evidently uncomfortably cold about the legs, walk that baby up and down for nearly an hour until he had got him asleep.

At last my father made up his mind that he must start for Demerara. He expected to be absent about a year and the day before he started he executed his will and did something I do not think he ever did before in his life, he made a speech. We were sitting in the parlor after dinner when he asked to have the baby, and, after a turn or two about the room he stopped in front of Gerty and I and said, very solemnly:

"Arthur, I am very glad I came to see you before I left the country. I am an old man and Demerara is not a very healthy place; I may never return; but I shall take away with me more pleasant memories than have been crowded into so short a space of time for many years. I confess I was prejudiced against your wife before I saw her; bless her little soul, I love her now as if she was my own daughter. As for 'my grandson'"——here that young imp began to squall and it was fully ten minutes before he could be quieted. When peace was restored my father continued: "As to my grandson, I do not attempt to deny that I was greatly disappointed at first; his appearance is against him; his development of bone is excellent, but in flesh he is very faulty; there are also points about his head and face which are objectionable, and he cannot be called a pretty baby. But, I have heard it said that ugly babies made the best looking men and women; and, arguing on that hypothesis I expect he will be the handsomest man of his time. I have taken a great fancy to that boy; and I hope, and expect that he will become a second Demosthenes or Daniel Webster; he certainly possesses the capacity as far as length of wind is concerned. I have made that boy *my heir*; any other children you may have you will have to provide for yourself. My will is scarcely in exact keeping with my vow, Arthur—and I may here say that I deeply repent that vow—but, I believe it will fill the general tendency of my oath. The whole of my fortune is left in trust to my old partner Bangs, and Doctor Allspice, until Harry comes of age when he will come into one half unreservedly; the other half not to be paid him until his mother's death, which God grant may not be for years to come." He laid his hand affectionately on Gerty's head and continued: "Yes, Arthur, I have left your wife a life interest in one half my fortune which will give her an income of over $25,000 a year. It is almost the same as leaving it to you, and, therefore I doubt whether I have kept my oath as strictly as I ought to have done; but, if I have erred it has been on the right side and I hope and believe God will forgive me."

I had never heard my father make such a long speech and I was naturally much affected. I deeply repented the trick I had played him and was on the point of confessing it, when the little fraud set up a tremendous squall and my father taking the baby in his arms walked up to the nursery with it and did not come down again that night.

The next day he sailed for Demerara.

I had intended to get rid of the horrid baby as soon as my father had gone; but, hard as it had been to get him it was still harder to get rid of him, and it was nearly three months before I could induce an old woman in New York to "adopt" him, by giving her $500. I then wrote a long, sorrowful letter to my father informing him of the death from small pox of my precious son—I am confident I called him precious—and descanted at some length on the grief of Gerty, who expected ere long to again become a mother.

It was two months before I got an answer. My father expressed himself very kindly about Gerty and showed sincere sorrow at the death of his grandson. He sent a lot of West India knickknacks to Gerty, and told me he had executed a new will leaving his whole fortune to be equally divided amongst any children we might have; Gerty to enjoy the same half life interest; and, in the event of her dying without children, all his fortune was to be devoted to