

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XVI.]

TORONTO, APRIL 11, 1896.

[No. 14.]



THE BELL OF ATRI.

THE BELL OF JUSTICE.

A beautiful story is told that in one of the old cities of Italy, the King caused a bell to be hung in a tower in one of the public squares, and called it a "Bell of Justice," and commanded that any one who had been wronged should go and ring the bell, and so call the magistrate of the city and ask and receive justice.

And when, in course of time, the bell-rope rotted away, a wild vine was tied to it to lengthen it; and one day an old and starving horse, that had been abandoned by its owner, and turned out to die, wandered into the tower, and, in trying to eat the vine, rang the bell. And the magistrate of the city, coming to see who had rung the bell, found this old and starving horse. And he caused the owner of the horse, in whose service he had toiled and been worn out, to be summoned before him, and decreed that, as this poor horse had rung the "Bell of Justice," he should have justice, and that during the horse's life his owner should provide for him proper food, and drink, and stable.

The poet Longfellow thus tells the story of the Knight of Atri and his steed in verse:

He sold his horses, sold his hawks and hounds,
Rented his vineyards and his garden-grounds,
Kept but one steed, his favourite steed of all,
To starve and shiver in a naked stall,
And day by day sat brooding in his chair,
Devising plans how best to hoard and spare.

At length he said: "What is the use or need
To keep at my own cost this lazy steed,
Eating his head off in my stables here,
When rents are low and provender is dear?
Let him go feed upon the public ways:
I want him only for the holidays."
So the old steed was turned into the heat
Of the long, lonely, silent, shadeless street;
And wandered in suburban lanes forlorn
Barked at by dogs, and torn by brier and thorn.

One afternoon, as in that sultry clime
It is the custom in the summer time,
With bolted doors and window-shutters closed,
The inhabitants of Atri slept or dozed:
When suddenly upon their senses fell
The loud alarm of the accusing bell!
The Syndic started from his deep repose,
Turned on his couch, and listened, and then rose,
And donned his robes, and with reluctant pace,
Went panting forth into the market-place.

Where the great bell upon its cross-beam swung
Reiterating with persistent tongue,
In half articulate jargon, the old song:
"Some one hath done a wrong,
hath done a wrong!"
But ere he reached the belfry's light arcade
He saw, or thought he saw,
beneath its shade,
No shape of human form of woman born,
But a poor steed dejected and forlorn
Who with uplifted head and eager eye,
Was tugging at the vines of briony.

"Domeneddlo!" cried the Syndic straight,
"This is the Knight of Atri's steed of state!
He calls for justice, being sore distressed,
And pleads his cause as loudly as the best."

The Knight was called and questioned,
In reply
Did not confess the fact, did not deny,
Treated the matter as a pleasant jest,
And set at naught the Syndic and the rest,
Maintaining in an angry undertone,
That he should do what pleased him with his own.
And thereupon the Syndic gravely read
The proclamation of the King, then said:
"Prick forth on horseback grand and gay,
But come back on foot, and bega his way;
Fame is the fragrance of heroic deeds,
Of flowers of chivalry and not of weeds!
These are familiar proverbs, but I fear
They never yet have reached your knightly ear.
What fair renown, what honour, what repute,
Can come to you from starving this poor brute,
He who serves well and speaks not merits more

The Knight withdrew abashed; the people all
Led home the steed in triumph to his stall.
The King heard and approved, and laughed in glee,
And cried aloud "Right well it pleaseth me!
Church-bells at best but ring us to the door;
But go not into mass, my bell doth more;
It cometh into court and pleads the cause
Of creatures dumb and unknown to the laws;
And this shall make, in every Christian clime,
The bell of Atri famous for all time.
Aims and Objects of the Toronto Humane Society.

A BOY WORTH HAVING

A few evenings since I heard a lady say to a gentleman caller, laying a hand caressingly upon the shoulder of a boy of ten years:

"This is my little man. He never uses slang, never swears, never said a saucy word to his parents in his life; does whatever he is told, and is a boy his mother can trust implicitly. We are very proud of our baby, I assure you."

"Ah," said the visitor (who is a man of extensive business relations), "that is the kind of boys men are made of!"

And he immediately commenced casting about to see if he had no need of such a boy in his establishment. There were several situations he could offer, but the mother shook her head, smiling, and said:

"No, he is in school now, and I want him to fit himself for the highest position he can reach."

When the visitor was retiring, he said to the happy parents:

"Such a boy is beyond price, and you are rich, indeed, in your possession."

Now, little boys, what do you think of such a boy? A boy who never swears, never uses slang phrases, nor is saucy, nor disobedient, and whom his mother can trust? Did you ever think how much that means?

"Whom his mother can trust?"
Do you know that is the highest recommendation a boy can carry into the world with him. It means so much, and only what is good and worthy of aspiring to.

And this little boy is not a pale, "goody-goody" boy, who exists only in stories. He is a bright, manly little fellow, loves his skates, his marbles, his ball, and, oh, dearly loves to play! And sometimes it is a great trial to leave his sport and run errands that seem always to claim his time.—Exchange.

ALCOHOLIC DEATH RATE.

Dr. Norman Kerr, a distinguished English physician, referring to the death rate from alcohol, says: "Dr. Richardson gave it as his opinion, some time ago, that 'were England converted to temperance, the vitality of the nation would be increased one-third in value; or, in other words, nearly 227,000 lives would be saved to us every year.'" This is a startling statement; but, after careful investigation, Dr. Kerr thinks it much nearer the truth than many were supposed to believe. His own calculations give 200,000 as the number of deaths resulting from drinking, of which 128,000 may be traced to drunkenness, and the rest to more or less moderate uses of alcohol.



THE HORSE PULLING THE BELL OF JUSTICE AT ATRI.

Meanwhile from street and lane a noisy crowd
Had rolled together like a summer cloud,
And told the story of the wretched beast
In five-and-twenty different ways at least,
With much gesticulation and appeal
To heathen gods, in their envious zeal.

Than they who clamour loudest at the door?
Thereupon the law decrees that as this steed
Served you in youth, henceforth you shall take heed
To comfort his old age, and to provide
Shelter in stall, and food and field beside."