



THE TWO FOOLS.

HERE is a story of a lord who kept a fool or jester to make sport for himself and his friends. One day he gave him a staff, and told him to keep it until he found another greater fool than himself, and then give it to him.

He kept the staff some time, until the lord was taken sick, and was nigh to death. While his friends were coming round his sick bed, among them appeared the fool, and as he stood beside this bed, the lord told him he must shortly leave him.

"And whither art thou going, my lord?"

"To another world," was the reply.

"And when wilt thou return; within a month?"

"No," answered the lord.

"And when, then, my lord?"

"Never."

"Never? Then what provision hast thou made for thy journey whither thou goest?"

"None, whatever."

"None at all! Ah! here, take thy staff, then," said the jester. "Going away never to return more, and no provision for thine entertainment there! Take thy staff again, for surely I never will be guilty of such great folly as this."—*The Little Christian.*

THE MYSTERIOUS WAY.

"O," said the lawyer, "I shan't press your claim against that man; you can get some one else to take the case, or you can withdraw it, just as you please."

"Think there isn't any money in it?"

"There would probably be some little money in it; but it would come from the sale of the little house that the man occupies and calls his 'home.' But I don't want to meddle with the matter, anyhow."

"Got frightened out of it, eh?"

"Not at all."

"I suppose likely the fellow begged hard to be let off?"

"Well, yes, he did."

"And you caved in, likely?"

"Yes."

"What in creation did you do?"

"I believe I shed a few tears."

"And the old fellow begged you hard, you say?"

"No, I didn't say so; he didn't speak a word to me."

"Well, may I respectfully inquire whom he did address in your hearing?"

"God Almighty."

"Ah, he took to praying, did he?"

"Not for my benefit in the least. You see, I found the little house easily enough, and knocked on the outer door, which stood ajar, but nobody heard me, so I stepped into the little hall, and saw through the crack of the door a cozy sitting-room, and there on the bed, with her silver head high on the pillows, was an old lady who looked for all the world just as my mother did the last time I ever saw her on earth. Well, I was on the point of knocking, when she said: 'Come, father, now begin; I'm all ready.' And down on his knees by her side went an old, white-haired man, still older than his wife, I should judge; and I couldn't have knocked then for the life of me. Well, he began. First he reminded God that they were still His submissive children, mother and he, and no matter what He saw fit to bring upon them they should not rebel at His will. Of course, 'twas going to be very hard for them to go homeless in their old age, especially with poor mother so sick and helpless, and, oh, how different it all might have been if only one of the boys had been spared! Then his voice kind of broke, and a thin, white hand stole from under the coverlid, and moved softly over his snowy hair. Then he went on to repeat that nothing could be so sharp again as the parting with those three sons—unless mother and he should be separated! But at last he fell to comforting himself with the fact that the dear Lord knew that it was through no fault of his own that mother and he were threatened with the loss of their dear little home, which meant beggary and the almshouse—a place they prayed to be delivered from entering, if it could be consistent with God's will. And then he quoted a multitude of promises concerning the safety of those who put their trust in the Lord. In fact, it was the most thrilling plea to which I ever listened. And at last he prayed for God's blessing on those who were about to demand justice."

The lawyer then continued, more slowly than ever: "And—I—believe I'd rather go to the poorhouse myself to-night than to stain my heart and hands with the blood of such a prosecution as that."