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## THE OAK AND THE VINE.

Being dull and fated with my pressing care  
And just a little bit the worse for wear,  
One summer's morn I thought I'd take a stroll

In quest of cheer to tune my troubled soul  
I chose a path of solitude to find  
The peace I craved to ease my weary mind  
To make me for awhile forget my woe—  
Life's common ills that all are born to know  
The course I traversed led me to a grove  
Bedecked with flowers of unsurpassing love,

Where birds of plumage, gay with happy song,  
Lent lustre to the paths I strode along.

At length I reached an opening in the wood  
Where two lone trees, like friends together stood.

The one an august, handsome, stately pine  
Beside whose boughs a slim oak did recline.

Methought, O oak, how great thy risk of harm,  
More than thy mates, in time of sweeping storm;

But I had reason soon to know and see  
The foolish thought that thus had flattered me.

A change came on, the weather sultry warm,  
Had bred the cloud that brews the sudden storm;

The wind began to howl, the storm descend  
The thunder seemed the very air to rend,

Till blinding wind and dust, with furious rush,  
Drove me for shelter to a clump of brush.

For one long hour the storm did rage and groan,  
And make the trees and shrubs with anguish moan;

Their leaves and limbs flew wildly in the air;  
The frightened birds chirped notes of sad despair.

From where I sat I clearly could descry  
The two lone trees the tempest well defy;

The oak's top branches bent and lashed the ground,  
The pine's proud spears made many a strange rebound;

At last, tired of its struggles with the blast  
A crash declared the pine's proud glory past.

The calm restored, I left my hiding-place  
To scan its prostrate form of love and grace

Which stood so stately but an hour before.  
Its roots now upwards turned, torn to the core,

While, by its side, the oak that swept the ground  
Remained intact, without a scar or wound

Can it be so, I questioned, that this oak!  
So slender, unpretentious, stood the shock  
That smote the mighty pine and laid it low  
That e'en the place it stood I scarcely know?

But so it was; the storm its work had done  
The gallant pine its earthly race had run.

A sacred feeling seemed to touch my mind—  
My thoughts reverted back to human kind;  
I thought of many friends whom I had known,  
Whom, in an evil hour, were overthrown;

Whose lofty genius seemed to reach to heaven;  
Yet, by some gust of fate, was racked and riven

Till all the glory of their noble heart  
A prey became to evil's treacherous art.

But, such is life, with men as well as trees—  
The one who seems our promise most to please,

Who spreads his branches wide and reaches high,  
As if he could a world of storm defy.

Is stricken down the first, while, like the oak  
The one unthought outlives the tempest's shock.

Genius may tower, its branches may extend  
But, like the tree, its safety will depend

Upon the roots and soil in which it grows  
To nerve it for the blast that rudely blows.

These roots and soil are faith in God and heaven;  
The living sap is grace divinely given.

I reached my home that night as dark began  
My soul refreshed, a wiser, better man.

I must confess my stroll was one of joy,  
My meditations those of sweet employ.

The moral of the oak and fallen pine  
Has helped me more my life to God resign.

The joyous notes of birds and frugal bees  
Went much and far my troubled breast to ease.

The love and fragrance of the smiling flowers  
Waked visions fond of future brighter hours.

Truly, indeed, there is in nature's store  
A calm of peace to reach the bosom's core;

No better way can bliss be understood  
Than walk with God in paths of solitude.

J. CRYSTAL.

## GOSSIP.

On the supposition that flies and mosquitoes, and, in fact, every created being, fills some niche in the great structure of nature, and that they are created to

meet some useful end, I presume that the gossip and scandal-monger have their uses as well as abuses. If they accomplish naught besides, they teach us to be patient under criticism and discreet in our bearing toward the rest of humanity. They are a sort of preventive agent, and in some cases have remedial powers; because were it not for the gossips and scandal-mongers there are some who might take advantage of their freedom from attack and not toe the line of irreproachable conduct, as they do now. Herein is the preventive mission of the gossip. The remedial effect is in placing an obstacle in the way of a repetition of misdoing. All men and women have in their inner life that irrepressible monitor called a conscience. That man or woman who is without it is not worthy of the name. They are no different from the brute, which has no perception of right or wrong, and their conscience is something that in all properly constituted persons does not become seared. It is active, and asserts itself wherever there is wrong-doing in contemplation.

But, granting that the gossip and the scandal-monger have their uses with some of the other pestilential vermin of the universe, in each one what a sacrifice of honor and respect and dignity do we see! It is a brutal act to mock and exaggerate the shortcomings of others. It is heartless and wicked to spread the report of misdoing when it is just as much the wickedness of one to err as the other. There is no infallibility in this world, and with this truth in one's mind, how is it possible that one should make of himself a judge of the conduct of others? To be a woman gossip is bad enough, but a male gossip has no right to exist and to enjoy the pleasures of this life. A man should be in better business. We can partly overlook the sin of scandal-mongering in the weaker sex, because with a great many women time hangs heavily upon their hands, and it is certainly very true that "an idle brain is the devil's own workshop." Society is to blame for this listlessness on the part of many women and their consequent mischievous acts. If it were the fashion to work in place of dawdling and lolling, there would be less time to devote to our neigh-