

A Home Picture.

BY FRANCIS D. GAGE.

Ben Fisher had finished his hard day's work,
And he sat at his cottage door;
His good wife Kate sat by his side,
And the moonlight danced on the floor—
The moonlight danced on the cottage floor,
Her beams were as clear and as bright
As when he and Kate, twelve years before,
Talked love in her mellow light.

Ben Fisher had never a pipe of clay,
And never a dram had he;
So he loved at home with his wife to stay,
And they chatted merrily;
Right merrily chatted they on the while,
Her babe slept on her breast,
While a cherub rogue, with a rosy smile,
On his father's knee found rest.

Ben told how fast his potatoes grew,
And the corn in the lower fields;
And the wheat on the hill was grown to seed,
And promised a glorious yield;
A glorious yield in the harvest time,
And his orchard was doing fair,
His sheep and his stock were in their prime,
His farm all in good repair.

Kate said her garden looked beautiful,
Her cows and calves were fat;
That the butter that morning that Tommy
churned
Would buy him a Sunday hat;
That Jenny for a new shirt had made,
And that too by the rule;
That Neddy the garden could nicely spade,
And Ann was ahead at school.

But slowly passed the toil-worn hand
Through his locks of greyish brown—
'I tell you, Kate, what I think,' said he,
'We're the happiest folks in town.'
'I know,' said Kate, 'that we all work hard—
Work and health go together, I've found;
For there's Mrs. Bell does not work at all,
And she's sick the whole year round.'

'They're worth their thousands, so people say,
But I never saw them happy yet;
'Twould not be me that would take their gold,
And live in a constant fret;
My humble home has a light within
Mrs. Bell's could not buy—
Six healthy children, a merry heart,
And a husband's love-lit eye.'

I fancied a tear was in Ben's eye—
The moon shone brighter and clearer,
I could not tell why the man should cry,
But he hitched up to Kate still nearer;
He leaned his head on her shoulder there,
And took her hand in his—
I guess (though I looked at the moon just then)
That he left on her lips a kiss.

Minnie's Present.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

Everybody declared that Uncle Hollingsford would be ruined by his generosity. But this declaration had now been made for a number of years, and still he continued prosperous. His substance was like the widow's cruse of oil—giving only seemed to increase it.

Every stray beggar who approached the farm was invited in, and fed, and warmed, and sent on his way rejoicing; all the poor relations, to the fortieth degree, cultivated a warm friendship for 'Cousin John,' and paid him frequent visits in proof of their esteem; and at Christmas and Thanksgiving times the family circle collected around him was perfectly patriarchal.

This propensity was a subject of never-ceasing uneasiness to Aunt Ruth. She prophesied again and again that they would all come to the poorhouse; but her husband only laughed and said that 'he must give his cups of cold water;' and, as the children grew up, and daughters married, and sons went 'out west,' and all prospered and flourished, and the farm remained unsold, Aunt Ruth wondered more how it happened that they had bread enough, and began to think that there must be some witchcraft in it.

But Uncle Hollingsford had just perpetrated an act, the enormity of which disturbed his domestic peace for a long while; and, sometimes, it seemed doubtful if the sky ever would be cleared. He suddenly took it into his head to look up the widow of a brother who had been dead several years; and knowing that poor Job never had possessed a knack for acquiring worldly goods, he resolved to examine into the condition of his family. Without telling Aunt Ruth of his plans, he went off very quietly by himself—but he returned not as he came.

Aunt Ruth had prophesied that no good would come of this journey; but, when the wagon stopped, and she saw her husband lift out a little girl, she could scarcely believe her own eyes. 'To think that, after raising a family of eight children, and getting them well off her hands, John should go and bring home such a pest as that! It was too much for flesh and blood to stand!' So she looked coldly upon poor Minnie, who shrank back into herself, and eyed her husband severely.

But Uncle Hollingsford could sometimes assert himself, and he did upon this occasion. He had found his brother's widow in delicate health, with several children; and, in order to lighten her burden, he invited Minnie, a pretty child of fourteen, to accompany him home on a visit of indefinite length.

But perceiving that the child's sojourn with them was not likely to prove a very pleasant one, as matters now stood, he approached his wife with a resolute air, and whispered something that had the effect of procuring Minnie a sort of welcome that struck her as not over cordial.

But Uncle Hollingsford had gained his point, Minnie was regularly established at the farm, and if not much noticed by her aunt, she soon became a great favorite with her uncle. And not only with him, but with all who came to the house; for she was a sunny-tempered little thing, making life and gladness wherever she went.

The huge kitchen-fire burned all the more brightly for the snapping cold that reigned without; and the kitchen itself sent forth a steam of savory viands infinitely refreshing to a hungry palate. It was almost breakfast-time; and punctual as the clock, the gaunt figure of Ichabod Poole strode into the kitchen, and sank into the accustomed seat by the chimney corner.

Of all Hollingsford's proteges, this was the one with whom Aunt Ruth had least patience. For ten years he had not missed a morning, unless detained by illness; and yet he always came in with the same observation that 'as he happened to be passing by, he tho't he would just drop in.'

Ichabod had been a respectable farmer; but being what the country people called 'thrifless,' he had suffered things to go to wreck and ruin, until there remained to himself and wife only the dilapidated-looking red cottage, and the small strip of land around it. People said that breakfasts and dinners were doubtful at the red cottage, and suppers almost unheard of; and it was maliciously whispered that Ichabod was very much inclined to be 'neighborly' at meal-times.

He always went to uncle Hollingsford's for breakfast; but, upon being invited into the dining-room, invariably observed that 'there was no occasion,' 'wife would be expecting him at home,' etc. This was a regular part of the performance, and it required considerable exertion to dislodge him from the chimney-corner. Aunt Ruth scarcely attempted to smother her indignation, when, after declaring that 'he didn't want anything,' 'he want hungry,' etc., he would sit down to the plentiful table, and sweep off all before him.

The family was broken up and scattered, and sons and daughters would return to visit the home of their childhood, so changed, that they could scarcely be recognized; but there was Ichabod in just the same seat, and just the same words in his mouth, as when they left him three years ago. Everybody said that it was a perfect farce; but Uncle Hollingsford was immovable, and insisted upon treating Ichabod with politeness.

It was the morning after Minnie's arrival, and here uncle desired her to inform Mr. Poole that breakfast was ready. This she did very sweetly; and Ichabod, making a feint of rising, replied—

'I was just going, my dear—time that I was off, long ago. Stop to breakfast! Oh, no, thank you—my wife will be waiting for me.'

Minnie returned to the dining-room, and innocently repeated what she supposed to be Mr. Poole's refusal. To her great surprise, her uncle laughed out, and her aunt had a very queer expression about the mouth.

'Waiting, what?' she exclaimed, in a tone of cutting sarcasm, 'Maybe they're going to have fritters for breakfast, and they'll be spoiled—he'd better go.'

'Come, come, wife,' replied Uncle Hollingsford, when he had stopped laughing, 'this is too bad—they can't help being poor.'

'Yes, they can help it,' said Aunt Ruth, tartly, 'just as well as you, or I, or anybody else can help it. They needn't quarter themselves on their neighbors, at any rate—I should think he'd be ashamed of himself!'

Minnie was again dispatched to the kitchen with an imperative summons to Mr. Poole. She soon returned with his answer—

'He said there was no occasion.'

Laughing more heartily than ever at Minnie's innocence and perplexed look, Uncle Hollingsford went to the kitchen, as he had done for ten years, and marched Ichabod Poole into breakfast. Minnie was astonished at the rapid disappearance of the viands; but Ichabod had taken quite a fancy to the child, and regarded her very benignly.

As he went home that morning, he began revolving, in his own mind, a plan for her benefit. John Hollingsford was a good sort of a fellow, and as he had now taken breakfast there several times, (1) he believed that he would make the child a present, by way of testifying his gratitude. Christmas was rapidly approaching, and it would be an agreeable surprise.

Bright and early, Christmas morning, Ichabod made his appearance with a covered basket, and in the basket there was a Maltese kitten. Minnie was enraptured; her heart fairly overflowed with love to all sorts of pets, and the kitten was a perfect little beauty. Just the right size to be graceful—it was plump and sleek, and the very color to wear a blue ribbon around its neck.

After gratefully thanking Mr. Poole, Minnie displayed her triumph; but, at sight of the kitten, Aunt Ruth's cup of wrath was overflowing. She couldn't bear the sight of a cat—she detested cats—it would always be putting its little, dirty nose into the milk and cream—and it was just exactly like Ichabod to give a present that would soon eat its own head off!

Minnie looked as frightened as though she had actually expected to see the kitten perform this feat, and cast an imploring look at her uncle, when Aunt Ruth muttered something about sending it back where it came from.

'Oh, no,' replied her husband, 'I have too much respect for Ichabod's feelings to do that, and the little animal will be a great comfort to Minnie. You remember Whittington and his cat?' he continued, 'perhaps this one will bring us good luck.'

Aunt Ruth looked very disdainful, and

scarcely spoke to Minnie all day. But Minnie was used to these fits, and became too much absorbed in her kitten to feel troubled about anything.

'Well,' exclaimed Aunt Ruth, 'I hope you are satisfied, now! I told you that it would come to this; and I'm only surprised that it didn't come long ago!'

This was but poor consolation for a man who had just been confiding to his wife the story of his misfortunes, and Uncle Hollingsford looked into the fire and sighed. But all attempts at consolation, unless they came in the shape of bankbills, would have proved unavailing; for Uncle Hollingsford, led away by his generous heart, had indorsed largely for a neighbor in distress, and the neighbor had gone down, dragging his benefactor with him; and now the friend of so many unfortunates, saw himself threatened with a sheriff's sale, and he and his wife driven forth, in their old age, from the home which had sheltered them for so many years.

Where were all those whom he had helped out of similar difficulties? Those who had eaten at his table, and slept beneath his roof in the days of his prosperity? His wife asked this in a cold, cutting tone, that made him wince, for man's ingratitude is hard to bear.

'It is strange,' said Uncle Hollingsford, musing, 'that father left no more money. There was little beside the stock, and everybody was surprised at it—he was always so saving.'

'If you had copied him in that respect, it would be better for us now,' replied Aunt Ruth.

Uncle Hollingsford shook his head. He did not dwell upon his father's weakness, but everybody knew his miserly disposition; and even in his last moments he groaned at the idea of parting with his cherished possessions. When he died, people said that there would be gold and bank bills found in broken teapots and the toes of old stockings; but, as very few such discoveries were made, they puzzled over it in much perplexity.

Perhaps it was this example before his eyes that led his son to the opposite extreme; for certain it was that no two could be more unlike.

It was a mild day, and Minnie, accompanied by her kitten, had gone to the old garret, whose mysterious nooks she loved to explore; and there she could have a romp with kitty, in the full enjoyment of being beyond the reach of Aunt Ruth's reprimand.

Uncle Hollingsford had been very grave of late; and half-anticipating something dreadful, she scarcely knew what, Minnie leaned listlessly against the rough beams, and watched the gambols of the Maltese kitten, who seemed challenging her to participate in the fun. But Minnie was thinking of other things; and she fixed her large melancholy eyes on the blue sky, that seemed so near the garret window, and wondered if Uncle John was in want of money. She had overheard some words, that led her to suspect this; and she began to think that she might go and teach school, or do something to help him.

Kitty was making a terrible scratching against the boards, and Minnie endeavored to call her off. She really believed that she had discovered a mouse—it would be horrible to see her kill and eat it, like other cats—she should not love her a bit after that—and Minnie tried to pull her away.

But kitty was very busy scratching something out from under a board; and, having put in one velvet paw, she succeeded in dislodging a dark-colored roll, that was certainly not a mouse, nor anything else alive.

Minnie examined it with trembling fingers, and found bank-bills to the amount of \$5000! With glowing cheeks, and eyes sparkling with excitement, she rushed into the room where her uncle sat buried in his gloomy thoughts; and, paying no attention to her aunt's exclamation of 'Marion Hollingsford! go back this instant, and shut the door!' she placed the soiled and crumpled notes in his listless hands.

'Where did you get these?' said he, so calmly that Minnie feared he cared very little about them.

But when the story was told, Minnie and her pet were both lifted in Uncle Hollingsford's arms, and his tears rained down upon the bright curls, as he whispered—

'Minnie, do you know that you and kitty have saved your old uncle from being turned upon the world? Ruth,' said he, looking reproachfully at his wife.

It was foreign to Aunt Ruth's nature, but she gave way, for once, and folded Minnie in the first warm embrace that she had ever bestowed upon her.

'I wish that Ichabod Poole was here,' said Uncle Hollingsford. 'Had it not been for his somewhat unwelcome present, this money would still have been lying idle. I should really like to see him.'

'Can't you wait until to-morrow morning?' said Aunt Ruth, so drily that it extorted from her husband the first hearty laugh he had indulged in for a long while.

The farm, of course, was not sold; and the very singular manner in which it had been preserved traveled about like wild-fire, and Minnie and her kitten became objects of the greatest curiosity. Ichabod now began coming to dinner, on the strength of his gift; and if he had taken up his residence there altogether, Uncle Hollingsford would, doubtless, have made him welcome.

Time passed on; the kitten had grown into a cat, and Minnie had become a young lady. Her cousins laughingly declared that she had entirely superseded them in the affections of their parents; and a stranger would certainly have supposed that she was the pet daughter of the house.

One day, an advertisement, to the following effect, appeared in 'The Village Organ,' published in the small town near which the Hollingsfords lived.

'Lost, on Thursday last, a Maltese cat, with a blue ribbon around its neck. On returning the same at the office of 'The Organ,' or Westlake Farm, the finder will be suitably rewarded.'

The next week 'The Organ' contained the following answer: 'The finder of the Maltese cat, advertised in last Saturday's Organ, is extremely anxious to retain it—what would the owner consider a sufficient inducement for parting with the animal?'

Minnie was perfectly indignant, both at the insult, and at being separated so long from her pet; so she sat down and wrote: 'If the finder of the Maltese cat does not immediately restore her to her rightful owner, he or she will be searched out and exposed before the community.'

When the paper containing this threat appeared, it brought a reply from the culprit in person. Aunt Ruth was looking forth from the sitting-room window, when she suddenly exclaimed—

'What on earth is that handsome stranger coming here for? I declare,' she continued, 'if he hasn't got Fortuna in his arms! This was the name the kitten had received on that memorable day when it saved the Westlake farm.'

'Run, Minnie,' continued her aunt, 'and take him into the parlor.'

Minnie opened the door with a heightened color and a somewhat elevated head, for the offer of buying her favorite was still fresh in her mind. The visitor, a handsome man of thirty-five, with an air of foreign travel, doffed his hat with a lowly obeisance to the beautiful apparition before him; and, perhaps, he too felt conscious of his misdemeanor, for he was decidedly embarrassed as he followed Minnie into the room.

'I hope,' said he, with a smile that disarmed all Minnie's indignation, in spite of herself, 'that you will pardon my unintentional rudeness? I expected to find in the owner of the cat, some indignant old lady, or thoughtless boy, to whom a few dollars would prove an irresistible allurements; and, as I had taken a great fancy to the animal, I concluded to try the experiment.'

'And I,' replied Minnie, frankly, 'expected to see, in the finder of Fortuna, a disagreeable, pure-proud individual—but whether lady or gentleman I could not decide.'

The half compliment conveyed in this answer, brought a look of gratitude from the visitor that made Minnie wish she had not said it; but, just as an awkward crisis was approaching, Uncle Hollingsford entered the room, and politely saluted the stranger, whom he recognized as the new proprietor of a handsome country-seat on the other side of the village.

The visitor introduced himself as Mr. Emlay, and at once entered into an easy and agreeable conversation with the master of the house. The story of the kitten was told and commented upon; and the stranger learned, by adroit questions, that Uncle Hollingsford's circumstance were by no means flourishing. He immediately expressed his want of an agent to oversee his place, which he pronounced to be sadly neglected, and acknowledged himself totally unqualified for the office. He did not lose sight of Minnie's speaking eyes, which rested upon her uncle almost beseechingly—this was just the thing for him, it would require so little labor—but Uncle Hollingsford was not the one to recommend himself, and Mr. Emlay was obliged to ask him point blank.

After a while it was all arranged; and the stranger departed with a warm invitation to renew his visit.

'Fortuna again!' exclaimed Uncle Hollingsford, as he related to his wife this fresh piece of luck. But Aunt Ruth glanced at Minnie in a very significant manner, and looked little disposed to give the cat much credit this time.

'If Ichabod was here now, I could almost give him a hug,' continued the old man.

'He will be here to-morrow morning,' replied Aunt Ruth, as drily as ever.

Uncle Hollingsford entered at once upon his 'agency,' which turned out to be very little beyond a name and a salary; and Mr. Emlay availed himself to the fullest extent of the invitation to renew his visit.

'Miss Minnie,' said he, quite suddenly, one evening, 'do you remember that, when advertising your cat, you promised that "the finder would be suitably rewarded?"'

Minnie looked surprised at this address, and endeavored to escape from the window.

'I left it altogether to your generosity,' continued Mr. Emlay, gravely, 'but I have, as yet, received nothing.'

Minnie stammered out something about not wishing to insult him; but he replied very coolly that it was not too late to make reparation.

The next moment Minnie's hand was imprisoned in both of his; and, as she did not withdraw it, he acknowledged himself 'suitably rewarded.'—[Graham's Magazine.]

THE RUSSIAN ROYAL FAMILY.—Alexander the Second is a slight well-made man, above the middle size, but nothing approaching the Jove-like proportions of the late emperor. His face is quite German, with a mild, almost saddened, expression, but full of thoughtfulness and intelligence.

His majesty's close application to business, which is well known, may affect his looks, but certainly he has by no means the appearance of robust health. He drove up to the palace in an open carriage without the slightest parade, and received into his own hands the petitions of a number of poor women who were permitted thus to approach the fountain head of authority.

This custom, which puts one in mind of the Arabian Nights, is only followed in certain cases, as it must be obvious that, if general, it would occupy the entire time of the emperor. As his majesty received them there was not the slightest appearance of hauteur on his part, nor of undue servility on that of his fair petitioners, who simply curtsied in a business-like off-hand way, and retired much more com-