The Garnet Story Book:

Tales of Cheer Both Old and New

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INTRODUCTION

About the middle of the last century there was printed in England a children's story with the attractive title, "The Good Natured Bear." This story, written by Robert H. Horne, was reviewed by William Makepeace Thackeray, who at that time signed his criticisms M. A. Titmarsh. Mr. Thackeray wrote an article entitled "On Some Illustrated Children's Books" for *Fraser's Magazine* in which he made the following comment: "Let a word be said in conclusion about the admirable story of 'The Good Natured Bear,' one of the wittiest, pleasantest, and kindest of books that I have read for many a long day."

A few years ago the editors of this collection of stories found out-of-print copies of "The Good Natured Bear," "The Man of Snow," and "Finikin and His Golden Pippins"—all old-fashioned tales for children. Believing that young readers of to-day will enjoy the good cheer and merry humour of these stories, the editors have included them in this volume with other happy tales which are perhaps much better known.

The excellent humourous stories in the folklore of all nations point out to us that good cheer and merriment were favourite themes of the olden-time story-teller. Some of his rarest treasures were nonsense rhymes, fables, and allegories which enlisted the sympathy of his audience by inducing them to laugh with him. With a merry twinkle in his eye we can hear him addressing the tiniest listeners:

"Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;

The little dog laughed to see such sport
And the dish ran away with the spoon."

Wide-eyed children pressing close to the enchanter were not the only persons in that appreciative audience who smiled at the first picture suggested by the rhyme, laughed with the little dog, and enjoyed with wholesome abandon the merriment called forth by the incongruous surprise of the last line. The story-teller knew the refreshing value of hearty laughter at pure nonsense.

The stories in this collection were written by authors who had the precious gift of knowing how to entertain young readers with narratives of good cheer and happy frolic. Such stories are valuable because they keep alive and develop a wholesome sense of humour. It is perfectly natural for a normal child to laugh heartily at the grotesque antics of a circus clown. But this elemental response to merry fun should be trained and quickened into a rich and varied sense of humour which can laugh with Gareth when Lancelot unhorses him; revel with Puck in Fairyland; and enjoy a merry Christmas with the Cratchits.

THE GARNET STORY BOOK

Oh, for a nook and a story book,
With tales both new and old;
For a jolly good book whereon to look
Is better to me than gold!

OLD ENGLISH SONG.

THE GOOD-NATURED BEAR

RICHARD H. HORNE

The First Evening

ONE Christmas evening a number of merry children were invited to a party at Dr. Littlepump's country residence. The neat white house with blue shutters stood on the best street of the village. Nancy and her younger brother, little Valentine, were the children of Dr. Littlepump, and they had invited several other children to come and spend Christmas evening with them. Very happy they all were. They danced to the music of a flute and fiddle; they ran about and sang and squeaked and hopped upon one leg and crept upon all fours and jumped over small cushions and stools. Then they sat down in a circle round the stove and laughed at the fire.

Besides Dr. and Mrs. Littlepump and the children there were several others in the room who joined in the merriment. First there was Margaret who was seated in the middle of the group of children. She was the pretty governess of Nancy and little Valentine and one of the nicest girls in the village. Then there were Lydia, the housemaid, Dorothea, the cook, Wallis, the gardener, and Uncle Abraham, the younger brother of Dr. Littlepump.

Uncle Abraham was always doing kind things in his quiet way, and everybody was very fond of him. He sat in one corner of the room, with his elbow resting upon a little round table, smoking a large Dutch pipe, and very busy with his own thoughts. Now and then

his eyes gave a twinkle, as if he was pleased with something in his mind.

The children now all asked Margaret to sing a pretty song, which she did at once with her sweet voice; but the words were very odd. This was the song:

"There came a rough-faced Stranger
From the leafless winter woods,
And he told of many a danger
From the snow-storms and black floods.

"On his back he bore the glory
Of his brothers, who were left
In a secret rocky cleft—
Now guess his name, and story!"

"But who was the rough-faced Stranger?" asked Nancy.

"And what was the glory he carried pick-a-back?" cried little Valentine.

"Who were his brothers?"

"Where was the rocky cleft?" cried three or four of the children.

"Oh," said Margaret, "you must guess!"

So all the children began guessing at this song-riddle; but they could make nothing of it.

"Do tell us the answer to the riddle Margaret," they coaxed.

At last Margaret said, “Well, I promise to tell you all about the rough-faced Stranger in half an hour, if nothing happens to make you forget to ask me!”

“Oh! we shall not forget to ask,” said Nancy.

There was now a silence for a few minutes as if the children were all thinking. Uncle Abraham, who sometimes went to bed very early, slowly rose from his chair, lighted his candle, carefully snuffed it (and, as he did so, his eyes gave a twinkle), and walking round the outside of all the circle, wished them good-night, and away he went to bed.

About eight o’clock in the evening, when the snow lay deep upon the ground, a very stout gentleman in a very rough coat and fur boots got down from the outside of a carriage which had stopped in front of Dr. Littlepump’s door. In a trice all the children crowded around the windows to look at the carriage and the gentleman who had got down.

Besides his very rough coat and fur boots, the stout gentleman wore a short cloak, a hunting cap, and a pair of large fur gloves. The cap was pulled down almost over his eyes, so that his face could not be seen, and round his throat he had an immense orange-coloured comforter.

The carriage now drove on, and left the stout gentleman standing in the middle of the street. He first shook the snow from his cloak. After this he began to stamp with his feet to warm them. This movement looked like a clumsy dance in a little circle and all the children laughed. The next thing he did was to give himself a good rubbing on the breast and he hit it so awkwardly that it looked like a great clumsy paw on some creature giving itself a scratch. At this

the children laughed louder than before. They were almost afraid he would hear it through the windows. The stout gentleman next drew forth an immense pocket handkerchief and with this he began to dust his face, to knock off the frost, and also to warm his nose, which seemed to be very large and long and to require great attention. When the children saw the gentleman do this they could keep quiet no longer; all burst out into a loud shout of laughter.

The stout gentleman instantly stopped, and began to look around him in all directions, to see where the laughing came from. The children suddenly became quiet. The stout gentleman turned round and round, looking up and down at the windows of every house near him. At last his eyes rested on the three parlour windows of Dr. Littlepump's house, which were crowded with faces. No sooner had he done this than he walked towards the house with a long stride and an angry air.

In an instant all the children ran away from the windows crying out, "Here he comes! Here he comes!"

Presently a scraping was heard upon the steps of the door, then a loud knock! The children all ran to their seats and sat quite silent, looking at one another. There was a loud ringing of the bell.

"I am sorry," said Mrs. Littlepump, "that the stout gentleman is so much offended."

"I don't know very well what to say to him," said Dr. Littlepump.

Again came the ringing of the bell!

Not one of them liked to go to open the door.

Margaret rose to go and little Val cried out, “Oh, don’t you go, Margaret, dearest; let Wallis go.” But when Margaret promised to run away as soon as she had opened the door, she was allowed to go. Both Nancy and Valentine called after her, “Be sure to run back to us as fast as ever you can.”

The children sat listening with all their ears. Presently they did hear something. It was the snap of the lock, the creaking of the door, and a scrambling noise. Margaret came running back into the room quite out of breath, crying out, “Oh, such a nose! Such a dirty face! Don’t ask me anything!”

There was no time for any questions. A slow, heavy footstep was heard in the hall, then in the passage, then the parlour door opened wide and in walked the stout gentleman with the rough coat! He had, indeed, an immense nose,—both long and broad and as dark as the shadow of a hill. He stepped only a pace or two into the room and then stood still, looking at Dr. Littlepump, who was the only other person who ventured to stand up.

“I believe I have the honour,” said the stout gentleman, making a low bow, “I believe I have the honour of addressing Dr. Littlepump.”

The doctor bowed but said nothing.

The stout gentleman continued, “If I had not known it was impossible that anyone so learned as Dr. Littlepump could allow anybody to be insulted from the windows of his house, I should have felt very angry on the present occasion. It may have made merriment for our young friends here; but it is a serious thing to me.”

“Sir,” said Dr. Littlepump, “it grieves me that your feelings should have been hurt by the laughter of these children. But, sir, I can assure you no harm was meant by it. This is holiday time, and, though you appear to be a foreign gentleman, yet you are no doubt also a gentleman who has seen much of the world, and of society.”

“No, sir; no, Mr. Doctor!” exclaimed the stout gentleman, “I have not seen much of society. It is true, too true, that I am a foreigner, in some respects, but from society the misfortune of my birth has excluded me.”

“Oh, pray, sir, do not concern yourself any further on this matter,” said Mrs. Littlepump, in a courteous voice.

“Madam,” said the stout gentleman, “you are too kind. It is such very amiable persons as yourself, that reconcile me to my species—I mean, to the human species. What have I said? Not of my species would I willingly speak. But in truth, madam, it is my own knowledge of what I am, under my coat, that makes me always fear my secret has been discovered. I thought the children with their little, quick eyes, always looking about, had seen who it was that lived under this rough coat I wear.”

So saying the stout gentleman put one of his fur gloves to his left eye and wiped away a large tear.

“Then, my dear sir,” said Mrs. Littlepump, “do take off your coat, and permit us to have the pleasure of seeing you take a seat among us round the stove.”

“Oh, ye green woods, dark nights, and rocky caves hidden with hanging weeds, why do I so well remember ye!” exclaimed the stout gentleman, clasping his fur gloves together. “I will relieve my

mind and tell you all. My rough coat, the companion of my childhood, and which has grown with my growth, I cannot lay aside. It grows to my skin, madam. My fur gloves are nature's gift. They were bought at no shop, Mrs. Littlepump. My fur boots are as much a part of me as my beard. Lady, I am, indeed, a foreigner, as to society; I was born in no city, town, or village, but in a cave full of dry leaves and soft twigs. The truth is, I am not a man—but a *Bear*!"

As he finished speaking he took off his comforter, coat, and cap—and sure enough a Bear he was, and one of the largest that was ever seen!

In a very soft voice, so as scarcely to be heard by anyone except the children who had crowded around her, Margaret began to sing:

"There came a rough-faced Stranger
From the leafless winter woods."

The children heard Margaret sing, and ventured to look up at the Bear. He continued to stand near the door, and as he hadn't the least sign of anything savage in his appearance, their fear began to change to curiosity. Two of the youngest had hidden themselves in the folds of Mrs. Littlepump's dress, and little Val had crept under the table. But when these found that nothing was going to happen, and that the other children did not cry out or seem terrified, they peeped out at the Bear,—then they peeped again. At about the seventh peep they all three left their hiding places and crowded in among the rest—all looking at the Bear!

"I trust," said Dr. Littlepump, "that this discovery—this casting off all disguise—produces no change in the nature and habits you have

learned in civilized society. I feel sure that I am addressing a gentleman, that is to say, a most gentlemanly specimen of bear."

"Banish all unkind suspicion from your breast, Mr. Doctor," said the Bear. "No one ever need fear from me a single rude hug,—such as my ancestors were too apt to give."

"Oh, we feel quite satisfied," said Mrs. Littlepump, "that your conduct will be of the very best kind. Pray take a seat near the fire. The children will all make room for you."

The children all made room enough in a trice, and more than enough, as they crowded back as far as they could and left a large open circle opposite the stove.

The Bear laid one paw upon his grateful breast and advanced towards the fireplace.

"Permit me to begin with warming my nose," he said.

As the door of the stove was now closed, the Bear bent his head down, and moved his nose backwards and forwards in a sort of a semi-circle, seeming to enjoy it very much.

"As my nose is very long," said he, "the tip of it is the first part that gets cold because it is so far away from my face. I fear it may not seem a well-shaped one, but it is a capital smeller. I used to be able, when at a distance of several miles, to smell—ahem!"

Here the Bear checked himself suddenly. He was going to say something about his life at home in the woods that would not be thought very nice in Dr. Littlepump's parlour. But he just caught himself up in time. In doing this, however, his confusion at the moment had made him neglect to observe that a part of the stove

was again red hot. He came a little too close and all at once burnt the tip of his nose!

The children would certainly have laughed, but as the Bear started back he looked quickly round the room. So everybody was afraid to laugh.

“And you have, no doubt, a very fine ear for music,” said Mrs. Littlepump, wishing to relieve the Bear from his embarrassment.

“I have, indeed, madam, a fine pair of ears, though I know too well that they are rather large as to size,” said the Bear.

“By no means too large, sir,” answered Mrs. Littlepump.

“If the whole world were hunted through and through,” said the Bear, “I’m sure we should never find any other lady so amiable in speaking graciously to one of the humblest of her servants as Lady Littlepump.”

“We shall be proud, sir, to place you in the list of our most particular friends. You are so modest, so polite, so handsome a Bear.”

As Mrs. Littlepump finished this last speech, the Bear looked at her for a moment—then made three great steps backwards, and made a deep bow. His bow was so very low, and he remained so very long with his nose pointing to the floor that all the children were ready to die with laughter. Little Val fell upon the floor trying to keep his laugh in, and there he lay kicking, and Margaret, who had covered her face with her handkerchief, was heard to give a sort of a little scream; and Nancy had run to the sofa, and covered her head with one of the pillows.

At length the Bear raised his head. He looked very pleasant even through all that rough hair. Turning to Dr. Littlepump, he said, “Mr. Dr. Littlepump, the extreme kindness of this reception of one who is a stranger wins me completely. If you permit me, I will tell you the whole story of my life.”

At this speech everybody said, “Do let us hear the Bear’s story!”

It was agreed upon, with many thanks from Dr. and Mrs. Littlepump. They placed a large chair for the Bear in the middle of the room. The Doctor took down Uncle Abraham’s Dutch pipe, filled it with the very best Turkey tobacco and handed it to the Bear. After carefully lighting it and taking a few whiffs, and stopping a little while to think, the Bear told the following story:

“I was born in one of the largest caves in a forest. My father and mother were regarded not only by all other bears, but by every other animal, as persons of some consequence. My father was a person of proud and resentful disposition, though of the greatest courage and honour. But my mother was one in whom all the qualities of the fairer sex were united. I shall never forget the patience, the gentleness, the skill, and the firmness with which she first taught me to walk alone—I mean to walk on all fours, of course; the upright manner of my present walking was learned afterwards. As this infant effort, however, is one of my very earliest recollections, I will give you a little account of it.”

“Oh, do, Mr. Bear,” cried Margaret. And no sooner had she uttered the words, than all the children cried out at the same time, “Oh, please do, sir.”

The Bear took several long whiffs at his pipe and thus continued:

“My mother took me to a retired part of the forest, and told me that I must now stand alone. She slowly lowered me towards the earth. The height as I looked down seemed terrible, and I felt my legs kick in the air with fear of I know not what. Suddenly I felt four hard things, and no motion. It was the fixed earth beneath my legs. ‘Now you are standing alone!’ said my mother. But what she said I heard as in a dream. My back was in the air, my nose was poking out straight, snuffing the fresh breezes, my ears were pricking and shooting with all sorts of new sounds, to wonder at, to want to have, to love, or to tumble down at,—and my eyes were staring before me full of light and dancing things. Soon the firm voice of my mother came to my assistance, and I heard her tell me to look upon the earth beneath me, and see where I was.

First I looked up among the boughs, then sideways at my shoulder, then I squinted at the tip of my nose, then I bent my nose in despair, and saw my fore paws standing. The first thing I saw distinctly was a little blue flower with a bright jewel in the middle,—a dewdrop. The next thing I saw upon the ground was a soft-looking little creature, that crawled alone with a round ball upon the middle of its back. It was of a beautiful white colour with brown and red curling stripes. The creature moved very, very slowly, and appeared always to follow two long horns on its head, that went feeling about on all sides. Presently, it approached my right fore paw, and I wondered how I should feel, or smell, or hear it, as it went over my toes. But the instant one of the horns touched the hair of my paw, both horns shrank into nothing, and presently came out again, and the creature slowly moved away in another direction. I wondered at this strange action—for I never thought of hurting the creature, not knowing how to hurt anything. While I was wondering what made the horn think I should hurt it, my

attention was suddenly drawn to a tuft of moss on my right near a hollow tree trunk. Out of this green tuft looked a pair of very bright, small, round eyes which were staring up at me. I stood looking at the eyes, and, presently, I saw that the head was yellow, and all the face and throat yellow, and that it had a large mouth.

‘What you saw a little while ago,’ said my mother, ‘we call a snail. And what we see now we call a frog.’

The names, however, did not help me at all to understand. Why the first should have turned from my paw so suddenly, and why this creature should continue to stare up at me in such a manner puzzled me very much. I now observed that its body and breast were double somehow, and that its paws had no hair upon them. I thought this was no doubt caused by its slow crawling which had probably rubbed it all off. Suddenly, a beam of bright light broke through the trees and this creature gave a great hop right under my nose and I, thinking the world was at an end, instantly fell flat down on one side and lay there waiting!”

At this all the children laughed; they were so delighted. The Bear laughed, too, and soon went on with his story.

“I tell you these things,” he said, “in as clear a manner as I can, that you may rightly understand them. My dear mother caught me up in her arms, saying, ‘Oh, thou small bear! thou hast fallen flat down, on first seeing a frog hop.’

The next day my mother gave me my first lesson in walking. She took me to a nice, smooth, sandy place in the forest, not far from home, and setting me down carefully, said, ‘Walk.’ But I remained just where I was.