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Buds and Blossoms,

AND

Stories for Summer Days and Winter Nights.

THE LOST LETTER.



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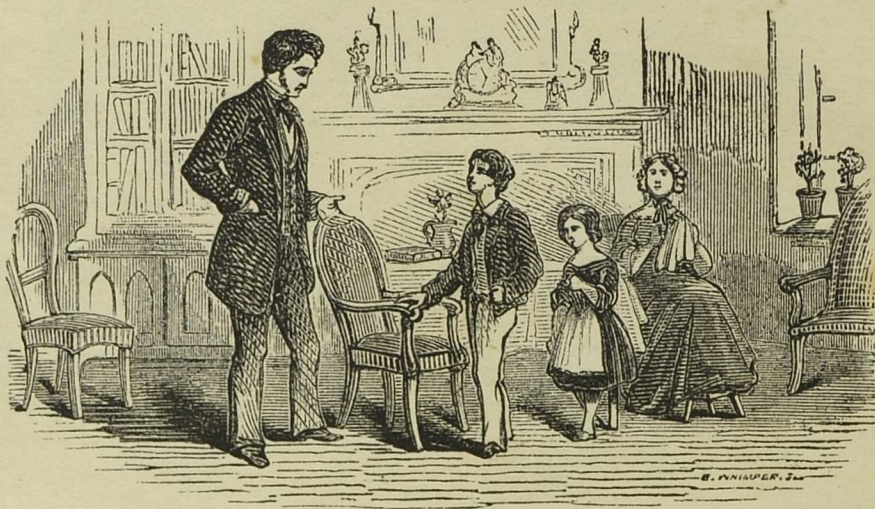
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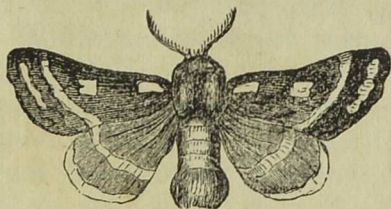
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What!" exclaimed Beechcroft, starting round, and facing his son sternly, "what!"

THE
LOST LETTER.



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The Lost Letter.



'I'M QUITE certain of it mother; quite, *quite* certain,' repeated William Beechcroft earnestly and steadily, fixing his full dark eyes frankly upon those now regarding him so intently, 'and you know that I would'nt say that if it were not true.'

'No Willie, not intentionally, I'm sure, but you might be mistaken, and have taken the letter to a wrong house.'

'It is impossible; I remember everything about it so well; and besides, it is so very lately, that even if I were generally forgetful, I hav'nt had time to forget.'

'Well, it is a very sad and puzzling thing. I don't know what to advise, or to do; we must wait until your father comes in, and consult him.'

'That won't be long then, for here he is, just turning into the street with Mr. Morris,' cried little Jane, who kneeling on a high chair, was looking through the window; 'I think he's going with

him—no, he isn't, they're shaking hands, and now here comes father by himself,' and rushing out, the happy child ran to open the door for the parent so dearly loved, and so eagerly watched for, and while he kisses her, and resigns to her charge the hat and stick, of which she was the especial guardian, we will introduce ourselves to him, his wife, house and family, and learn who, and what, and where they are.

First then, the house.

If my young readers are 'townsfolk,' they must often have noticed in the neighbourhoods where they live, large waste pieces of ground, at the ends of new streets, or roads, fenced round with broken palings, upon which nothing grows but rank grass and weeds, and on the nearest side of which fronting the public way, is a tall black post supporting a flat board, on which is painted in great white letters, "To be Let for building—for particulars apply——". Well, after a time they have seen the post and board removed further down; the waste ground marked out into long narrow slips, and the masons and carpenters at work. Then springs up almost by magic, they will scarcely remember how, the stories rise so fast, house after house, untill at last the post and board vanish altogether, the waste ground is waste no longer, but fronted with broken lines of bright red, or white stucco houses, bearing such names as "Albert

Place," "Pleasant Row," (Oh, the miserable Pleasant Rows I have seen) or "Victoria Terrace," the windows of which seem equally divided between those that show bills of "To Let," and those that already let, are grand in white curtains and flower pots.

Well, in the end house of one such row of dwellings as we have described, lived Mr. Beechcroft, his wife, and their three children, the eldest and youngest of whom were the speakers above.

Mr. Beechcroft was foreman at a large carpet factory, very close to the house he had lately taken, and to which he had removed from his pleasanter country cottage, in order to be nearer his occupation.

From childhood he had been in the service of his present master, (Mr. Westhead) first in one capacity and then in another, trusted, respected, and beloved—for servants can be as well and truly loved as great or richer people can, if only they will strive to deserve it—and when upon his appointment to the position of foreman he married the head nurse of his master's family, a young woman equally prized with himself, two happier and more deserving people than William Beechcroft and his wife could not have been found.

They had three children. The oldest a fine frank, honest boy of now twelve years old, was a great favourite with Mr. Westhead, and by his desire, William was sent to the Free Grammar

School of the town, with a promise that if he conducted himself properly, and made fair progress there, he should when he reached the age of fourteen, either be received into the counting house of the factory, or apprenticed to any other business he preferred.

Two years of this probation were yet to expire, but the boy behaved so well, and bore such a steady character, that,— during the holidays, half-holidays, or any other time when he felt himself that he had leisure to spare from the necessary duties of preparing for school, he was always a welcome visitor at the factory, where Mr. Westhead loved to see him, and where he was frequently employed in such little offices as he was able to fulfil.

Upon one of these occasions the circumstance had occurred, respecting which he was now to consult his father, who entered the sitting-room exclaiming, ‘ Well Willie my boy, how is it we did not see you at the factory to day? the hands had nearly been at play waiting for the yarn that master sent you to order last week, and which I told you to go after before school this morning. He’s been sadly put out about it, but luckily a shipping order came in by post, and took all the men I could set on, and drove the thought out of his head till to night, as he was going away, and then when he passed through my office he bade me send you down to Jackson’s again, and say that if the yarn wasn’t in by breakfast time to-morrow, he

wouldn't have it. It's a shame for the man to behave so, seeing what a friend master's been to him. I never thought he'd turn out in this way, though I always say it's a bad plan to advance money, or pay for work before it's done. It's not master's way either, only he knows that Jackson's short, and thought I dare say ten pounds would be a help to him. But ingratitude's the way of the world, so make haste with your tea lad, and go to Jackson with the message.'

'I have been father,' said the boy; 'I went this morning as you told me, and again this afternoon.'

'Well, and what was the excuse?'

'I couldn't see Mr. Jackson this morning, but just now when I went up he was quite sharp, and denied ever having Mr. Westhead's letter at all.'

'What!' exclaimed Beechcroft, starting round, and facing his son sternly, 'What?'

'He said I was an impudent young vagabond to come to him with such a tale; for that he had had no order from Mr. Westhead, since the mulberry yarn two months ago.'

'Nor any money?'

'No; he said he'd had nothing.'

'And what did you say?'

'He would not give me the chance to say much, for he went into such a passion, and ordered me off the ground there and then.'

'Why didn't you come straight to me at the factory directly you left him?' inquired Beechcroft,

fixing his eyes so earnestly upon the boy, as to make him change colour, though his voice was as steady as before, when he answered.

‘Because I thought you would be come home to tea, and I should lose time; besides I wanted to tell mother first.’

‘That she might help you out of the scrape, eh sir?’

‘No,’ replied William boldly, ‘for I was in no scrape. I gave the letter faithfully as I was bid, and if there is anything wrong, it is not with me father.’

‘I am sure of that Willie,’ interposed Mrs. Beechcroft, ‘I am certain you have done no wilful wrong, but couldn’t you have made a mistake?’

‘No, mother.’

‘No, indeed,’ interrupted his father. ‘What mistake could he make? Either he took the letter or he did not. I hope he didn’t lose it and now tells a lie because he’s afraid to confess. Jackson would never dare be such a rogue as to steal the money, and it would be nothing else taking in the letter, and then denying it.’

During this speech Willie stood with a swelling heart and deathly countenance, not daring to reply to his father, or justify himself further, while his mother sad and sorrowful listened silently, fearing to increase the evil by interference, for although a most kind and affectionate parent, yet Beechcroft was a very strict one, and expected the most im-

PLICIT truth and obedience from his children. She knew, therefore, that he would sift this mysterious affair to the bottom, and although he might suspect Willie of carelessness, and subsequent falsehood to hide it, he would not punish until assured of it.

It was hard to bear, to see her darling boy, whom she truly believed to be innocent, stand there like a culprit, but Mrs. Beechcroft was a good and wise woman, and having striven to bring up her children to honour their parents, was not so foolish as to defeat her own instructions, and the Lord's commandment, by teaching them disrespect to their father by her own example. She knew, also, that out of darkness GOD can make light, and that her child's character was safe in His hands, who never forsakes those that put their trust in Him.

She waited patiently, therefore, and silently notwithstanding Willie's miserable face, and the suggestive whispers of little Jane, that she should speak for him.

Many minutes the silence lasted; to those who watched it seemed an hour, until at length Beechcroft, who was a just and not a hasty man, and had been thinking the matter over, raised his eyes, and again looking at his son, asked,

'When you went the first time to Jackson's, whom did you see?'

'A young man who looked like a clerk.'

'What did you say?'

‘I asked for Mr. Jackson, and he said he was engaged, but he would give him any message.’

‘And then?’

‘I offered to wait till he was at liberty, but the young man said he might be busy all day, and that if I’d brought an order I’d best leave it, as it would save time.’

‘And then?’

‘I gave him the letter. Mr. Westhead hadn’t told me to give it to Mr. Jackson himself, and I thought it would do as well to deliver it to a clerk there, as at other places where he sends me.’

The boy’s statement was clear and plain, without a shade of hesitation or fear. He might—being human—be mistaken, but he was evidently telling the truth, as far as he knew it.

His father felt it, and his tone was less severe as he continued.

‘And when you went to Mr. Jackson’s to-day, did you see him or the young man?’

‘Him. The first time I went a boy answered me, and said his master was out, and the next time I saw Mr. Jackson himself.’

‘Well, and then what took place?’

‘I told him I had come from Mr. Westhead to know why the yarns ordered a week ago wern’t sent in, and that if they were not delivered to-day he would not have them at all. He looked astonished for a minute, and then said he had received no order. I said that must be a mistake, for that

I myself had brought Mr. Westhead's letter down, and given it to the clerk. With that he flew into a terrible rage, told me I was a little lying vagabond, for that he had no clerk, and bid me go off the premises or he'd make me.'

'And did you go?'

'Not at the first bidding, for I wanted to convince him, but he called the boy, and asked him if he had a clerk, or whether he'd been playing the fool, and calling himself one, and so getting a letter from me. But the boy said, No; that there was no clerk, and that he'd never seen me until that very morning when I came down to ask for Mr. Jackson. Then his passion grew worse and I got frightened, and persisted, and said that there *was* a clerk, and that I did give him the letter, which had money in it, and that if Mr. Jackson would go to the factory, he would hear and know that I spoke the truth.'

'Well?'

'He wouldn't listen to a word, but bid me be off, asking if I thought his character lay at the mercy of such a little wretch as me.'

At this moment, and before any comment could be made, Mr. Morris, the friend who had walked nearly home with Beechcroft, rapped at the door, and coming in, was soon put into possession of the circumstances which had occurred to disturb the peace of a family generally so very quiet and happy.

He was an old man, and much esteemed by all his friends for the scrupulous integrity of his dealing, and the truth of his language. He had travelled much in his youth, and from seeing a great deal of the world, had become cautious and wary, *but not suspicious*; had learned how much further even here, truth goes than falsehood; how much happier and more contented good actions make a man, than bad ones; that wickedness, if it prospers for a time, fails ultimately; and that to be at peace with God and man is better than all the wealth of the Indies.

He was very fond of children, and the little Beechcrofts were great favourites. To him, therefore Willie looked with confidence for a strong opinion in his behalf. But as I have said, Mr. Morris was very cautious, and shy of speaking positively, even when the circumstances of a case were far clearer than any he had now to hear, and one by one, he made Willie repeat the facts of the story he had told before, and which our readers already know.

The repetition appeared to enrage Beechcroft, much more than the first telling had done, and although he said little, his wife knew by his bent brows and pale countenance how much his anger was excited, although whether against his son or Mr. Jackson, she could not tell. All uncertainty, however, was speedily over, for the tale once more told, he rose from his seat, and bidding Willie get

his cap, declared that he would go down to Mr. Westhead instantly.

‘For whether the boy has lost the letter, and is telling a falsehood to hide it, or whether Jackson has got hold of it, and wants to deny it, master is the proper person to know the whole at once. I’ll have no concealments ; the case looks odd all through to me, and though Will’s my son, and I never caught him in a lie yet, still his part isn’t as clear to my eyes as I should like. It doesn’t stand to reason that Jackson should deny having a clerk if he has one, because it is a thing so easily found out. Nor does it look likely that a man just started in the world, with scarcely anything but his character to depend upon, should lose it and all his prospects for the sake of ten or twenty pounds ; it isn’t likely.’

‘No, and as far as that goes, it isn’t likely that Willie, whom we all know to be a steady, truthful boy, should make up such a plausible tale as he has just told us, and then go boldly to the very man and place he tells it of, to repeat what would so very soon be detected, when he knows that if he had lost the letter, and came directly to you, it might have been traced, or payment of the note stopped.’

‘No, it’s an unlikely story altogether, from beginning to end, and as I can’t make it out, I’ll take the lad to master ; it’s his money and his business, and he’s the fittest person to say what step should be taken.’

‘Hadn’t you better see Jackson first? He seems to have been in a passion when the boy went to him, and the memory of an angry man is not always to be trusted. He may have forgotten something, or if not, and he and Willie were to meet calmly, the boy might find that he had been mistaken.’

‘Mistaken! Why, my good friend, how is it possible that he *could* be mistaken? As I said just now, either he took the letter, or he did not; if he did, Jackson’s a rogue and ought to be found out and punished, and if he did not, he knows it very well, and there’s no mistake in the matter.’

‘May be so. May be so. At any rate sit down quietly a bit, and think the business over, something may strike you or Willie, and depend upon it, nothing is ever well or wisely done that’s done in a hurry. Hasty words and rash deeds make strife oftentimes, but never mend it; and many a bitter sorrow never cured through life, has been done under the impulse of a sudden resolve, not “repented of until too late.”’

‘Aye, that’s very true, but I hate concealments, I’ve always been candid and straightforward with my master, and please God I always shall be, whether in respect to myself, or my belongings.’

‘But tea is ready,’ said Mrs. Beechcroft, ‘have that first, and then make up your mind. Mr. Morris, you’ll stay and take a cup with us?’

‘Yes, and thank you too, for to tell you the

truth my little maid has got a holiday, and though I dined at a chop-house in the town, I don't fancy tea at coffee-shops, or such places, and I'm old bachelor enough, not to like going without it.'

Not very well pleased with an arrangement which compelled him to delay his visit to Mr. Westhead for a short time, Beechcroft resumed his seat, and exercising a strong control over himself, tried to give his best attention to his visitor, and the duties of hospitality. The attempt, however was not successful, he became thoughtful and moody, gazing every now and then upon Willie with an expression of dissatisfaction and doubt, which made his wife's heart ache.

At last Mr. Morris who had observed all, and endeavoured by every means to enliven and cheer his friends, said

'I see, Beechcroft, that talk of what we will, your mind always comes back to this mystery, which, considering Willie's share in it, is but natural. I wish, though, you would look at it a little more cheerfully, and remember how often difficulties quite as great are smoothed and explained away, and how often for want of thinking of this in time, life and character have been sacrificed to a mistake.'

'A mistake !' repeated Beechcroft angrily, 'how you do harp on that, if you will just show me how it is possible for there to be a mistake, I'll thank you ?'

‘Oh I can’t do that ; if I could, all our troubles would be at an end. If I may venture my advice, it is that you and Willie go to Mr. Jackson at once. I’ll sit and bear Mrs. Beechcroft company the while, for I shall not be much less anxious to know all about the matter than she will.

It was getting dusk when William and his father reached the dyer’s, and were asked into the room where he and his wife were at tea. At the first glimpse of the boy Mr. Jackson flushed scarlet with rage, and broke out into a violent expression of fury, desiring him instantly to quit the house, but upon Beechcroft’s interference in a calm determined voice, and perfectly self-possessed manner, he became cooler and more disposed to listen quietly, although he still persisted in asserting that Willie was a wicked little vagabond, who was either inventing the entire story, or having lost the letter, was trying to screen himself at the expense of other people.

‘We shall see that presently, Mr. Jackson,’ replied Beechcroft, ‘anyhow I hope so ; for though the boy’s my son, and I love him as most fathers do, yet I’m not one to hide his fault at another man’s cost, any more than I would a stranger’s. I know Mr. Westhead sent the letter, for I saw it, and I know that Willie was sent with it. Besides

this I know nothing ; but please God, if it is to be known, I will know before I go to sleep this night. So now Willie tell your story.'

The tale was short and very clear, and in spite of himself Mr. Jackson listened first silently and then eagerly. It needed but very little knowledge of human nature, to see that the boy was telling the truth.

'Well,' said he at last, 'this is the strangest business I ever heard of ; the lad don't seem to be telling a lie, but I am ready to swear that I never had the letter, and everybody knows that I have no clerk ; so what can have become of it is a mystery.'

'It is indeed ; but nevertheless, it must be fathomed. Do you never have anybody about, who acts as a clerk when you're busy, or not at home ?'

'No, nobody. It is'nt often I am out, and when I am, my wife takes orders. You're sure you haven't made a mistake in the house my boy ?'

'Quite sure ; I know it very well. Mr. Lane, the dyer lived here before ; besides I stood waiting a long time at the yard door, before any one came to answer me, for there seemed a great bustle in the place, as if a feast or something was going on ; and I had plenty of time—'

'Stop, stop ; a feast ?' interrupted Mrs. Jackson earnestly, 'what day do you say it was ?'

'Tuesday week.'

'Tuesday week, why that was baby's christening !'

surely none of the folks played the boy a trick,' exclaimed the woman turning to her husband.

'Likely enough; can you describe the young man, Willie?' asked his father.

'Yes he was rather tall, about as tall as you, and fresh coloured, with big whiskers and very white looking teeth, and he spoke rather snappish as if he were in a hurry.'

'And his dress, his dress?' cried Mrs. Jackson eagerly.

'I don't remember what colour his coat was, but he had white trousers on, and a blue waistcoat, with white flowers on it.'

'And a Jim Crow hat?'

'Yes.'

'Then it was George, your brother George, as sure as life,' replied Mrs. Jackson, addressing her husband; 'he was bustling about dreadfully that day you know, and would just as likely take the letter and put it in his pocket, and forget all about it, as not.'

'Where does he live?' asked Beechcroft, 'I'll go to him at once.'

'No need, no need,' answered Mr. Jackson, 'he's coming here this evening on business, and we may look for him any minute, you'd better wait here.'

And so they did, two long weary hours, during which poor Willie could think of nothing but his mother's anxiety, and the chance that perhaps,

after all, Mr. George Jackson's arrival would not clear him from suspicion. At last, just as Mr. Beechcroft had risen to go, the outer yard door banged to, and in a few minutes the wished for visitor entered whistling; he stopped short, however, when he observed the singular glances cast upon him by all the party.

The moment Willie saw him he exclaimed 'Yes that's the person I gave the letter to, father,' upon which the young man, bewildered with his reception, and the strange exclamation, turned sharply to the boy, asking what he meant.

'Let me tell you, sir,' said Beechcroft, quietly, 'please to be seated, and then I'll try and explain. First then, may I ask if you remember this boy, and whether he gave you a letter for your brother last Tuesday week, when you were here at the christening?'

'A letter! what sort of a letter? I get scores of letters every day.'

'Most likely, sir, but this was a money letter, and an order.'

'No,' replied the young man, considering; 'No, I don't remember any such letter.'

'Oh, but indeed, sir,' broke in Willie, 'do think a bit longer; don't you recollect my asking for Mr. Jackson, and your saying he was engaged; and when I offered to wait, you said he might be busy all day, and that if I'd brought an order, I'd better give it you?'

‘Yes, to be sure I do ; but whatever I did with the letter I know no more than the man in the moon, unless—stay : surely I emptied my pockets that night in your room Edward, before we began to dance ?’

‘Very likely,’ cried Mrs. Jackson, rising hastily, ‘I found a lot of papers and rubbish on the table, and put them into a drawer ; I’ll go and fetch them down, what a mercy I did not throw them into the fire, as I thought to do at first.’

The few minutes of Mrs. Jackson’s absence was an anxious time ; for although Willie, feeling himself justified, stood proudly by his father’s side, once more able to look boldly up, he yet felt that he would willingly relinquish all the éclat of his position, so that he might rush away out of the room, and bear the glad news to his mother.

At length, however, a hurried foot crossing the floor was heard overhead, then a glad exclamation, and running fast down stairs, Mrs. Jackson put the identical letter, with its unbroken seal, into Willie’s hand, crying.

‘There my poor boy, there it is ; you have suffered enough through our carelessness, so you ought, at least, to have the reward of having the letter once more in your own hands, and giving it up in public.’

‘Thank you ma’am,’ cried Willie, his face glowing with happiness, ‘I’m very glad to see it again but more glad that it has all come out, and father and Mr. Jackson know that I told the truth.’

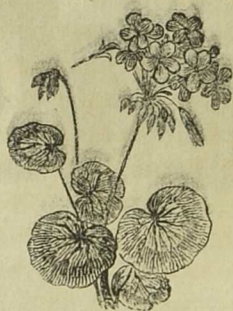
‘Aye lad,’ returned Beechcroft, ‘and it’s been a lesson to me that I sha’nt easily forget, always to have patience, and search things to the bottom, before I accuse or punish any one, especially when things look as mysterious as this business has done, and the truth don’t show plain at once.’



They hastened back with the good news. The happy countenances of both father and son told Mrs. Beechcroft at a glance that all was right. The explanation was equally gratifying to little

Jane and Morris. William's character had been fully and honourably vindicated. He was as good and truthful as they had always believed him to be—they could respect him as much as they loved him.

Not less pleased was Mr. Westhead, when informed about the LOST LETTER and how it was found, and that Willie had proved both dutiful and truthful, and was deserving of the kindness, he had always shown him.



GARDEN WORTHIES.

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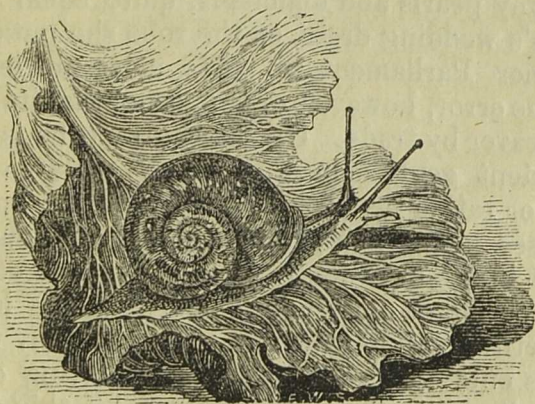
The Snug Old Gentleman.

THIS is a personage of very retired and quiet habits, who has never at any time made a noise in the world, and yet whom we cannot become acquainted with, without feeling for him respect and interest. He is proverbially *slow*; and yet if people would only think so, it is much better to be slow in his kind of way, than to be *fast* in another sense. He always stays at home, and was never on any occasion known to pay a visit from his own house—which is strange, because some near relations of his have no houses at all! His house is most curiously contrived—spiral in fact, with a wide entrance, (for the old gentleman is rather stout), and has no door; but when he wants to be snug, he has only to bring his house (for it is moveable) up to the garden wall or the trunk of a tree, and he can fix it against it in such a manner, that the entrance is closed up as completely as if it had a dozen doors. The old gentleman is not at all rheumatic, for he likes damp weather better than

dry, and when the evening dews fall, or just after a shower, he will sally forth—we fear we must say *creep* forth—to dine or sup off a cabbage or a lettuce; for he is a strict vegetarian, and has very much the same taste in vegetables as ourselves. The strangest thing of all, however, about this individual is his house;—how from infancy to old age its owner contrives to increase it in proportion as his own body increases. It is formed of a sort of mortar, made half of lime and half of a kind of animal glue, and of this—always keeping to the original spiral plan, he adds from time to time, tiny additions, always to the *edge* of the entrance—or in other words, to his door-posts, which, soft at first, hardens in the air until the new part is as strong as the old. When the master of the house has attained maturity and has done growing, he then finishes off the entrance of his house most neatly, rounding it off with a kind of cornice, and then making the whole house so solid with additional coats of plaster inside, that a toss over the garden wall will not disturb its inmate; or even should its walls get a crack, the owner being his own mason, can easily repair the damage at little or no expense.

With our old friend's love of retirement, it is very difficult, I must say, to get a glimpse of himself, though his house is often seen. Rude children will sometimes knock at his walls, and tell him if he does not 'come out of his hole,' they will beat

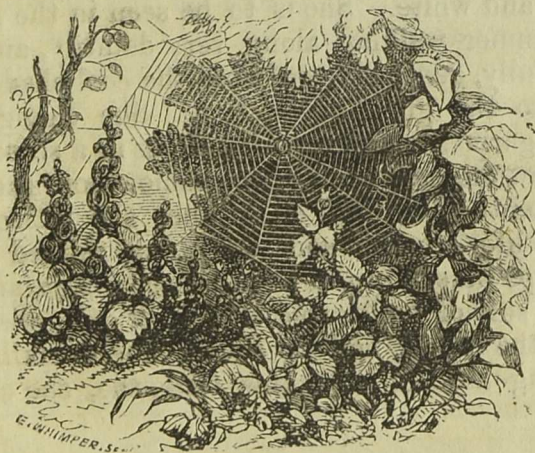
him as 'black as a coal.' But instead of doing this, only watch your opportunity when the old gentleman is going to his dinner, or taking a walk, and you will be sure to admire his stately and dignified pace, his soft skin and searching eyes—even if you cannot manage to pick up any of the silver he scatters in his path as he goes along, you will have plenty of time to look at him; for he is certainly slow—*very* slow!



The Nimble Weaver.

IN a remote corner of the garden lives a most ingenious and industrious little weaver. It is quite worth your while to find him out, if only for the sake of admiring his web. Nothing could be more delicately or more skilfully woven; and if you should chance to see it on a dewy morning when the sun is shining on it, you will find it adorned with tiny pearls and diamonds, quite equal to the Queen's wedding dress, or the robe she puts on to open her Parliament in. We must not lead you into the error, however, of supposing that its maker is a weaver by trade. On the contrary, he is an independent gentleman who merely weaves these webs, or rather *nets*, for his own particular sporting purposes. He lives, in fact, entirely on game caught in his own nets. He makes one of these nets, spreads it out where plenty of game is to be had, retires on one side, and waits patiently till his prey is entangled in it, and then darting out he seizes it, kills it, and eats it. All this is very clever; and our sportsman, in encounters with fierce creatures, larger even than himself, after a good tussle with them, almost always comes off victorious. But what we would have you observe, is the extraordinary manner in which these game

nets are formed. Attached to his body, the nimble weaver has four little bags of thread, and in these bags are thousands of tiny holes, out of which come the tiny threads, which as they run out, are spun together and make one thread. Strong though delicate is it, for it will easily support the weaver's own body; and should he want to go down stairs, he never thinks of walking, for he has only to let himself down by his rope from whatever height he may be, and when he wants to return, haul himself up by it again. A thousand holes are in each bag—so out of these four bags 4,000 threads come as he runs to make up the—great thick cable! No: to make up the exquisitely fine delicate line with which our wonderful weaver weaves his web.

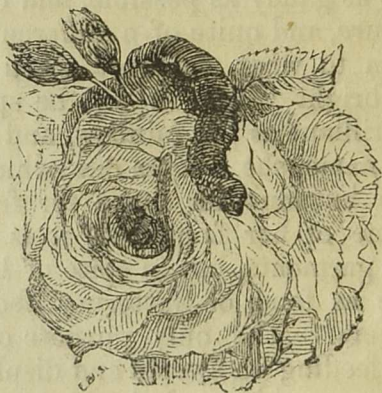


Madam Changeable.

THIS is a very fine lady! When we first know her and her companions in their early life, we cannot but observe the great variety of colours and patterns that they wear, and this peculiarity is observable in after life. The lady I particularly speak of, has a great partiality for yellow, especially stripes and spots of yellow alternately with brown and green and white. She is to be seen in the garden in summer walking along very daintily, and even gracefully, generally preferring the cool shade of foliage to the glare of the sun. She changes her outer garments two or three times in a season, but the new one is always of the same colours and patterns as the old, until all at once she retires from public life—chooses some very nice retired corner—wraps herself up in a plain brown suit, and falls into a sort of half-torpid state as if quite disgusted with the world, neither eating nor drinking, nor walking abroad. At this time, too, she changes

her name. You might fancy that all this was the result of old age, and that, beginning to prepare for her end, she had made up her mind to retire from the bustle and vanities of life, and give herself up to reflection and meditation; but no such thing! Madam Changeable is all this time only preparing for a return to life more gay, more volatile, and more of the fine lady than ever. On some fine sunny day she comes forth again, and nothing can be more devoted to pleasure than she becomes. Her dress is as gaudy as possible, and of the most delicate texture, and quite of a different fashion in cut and form to what she wore when young. If not all of a bright yellow, it will be spotted with colours as brilliant as the rainbow, and again assuming a new name, she adopts one which all over the world is but another name for frivolity and gaiety. Some of her family do, it is true, wear sober brown garments, but in spite of looking graver, will be as fond of fluttering about as their gaudier sisters. The only purpose of their life seems to be feeding on sweets and displaying their finery in the sunshine:—but not to do them injustice, we must confess, that they *do* perform one of the duties of life. They take into consideration the future well-being of their children, and before they end their lives of dissipation, take care to place their offspring in such situations as will secure their future maintenance and support; and then they die, and nothing more is seen of Madam

Changeable, unless it should happen that some one should have taken a great fancy to the last dress she appeared in, and instead of letting her die a natural death, seized her and stuck a sharp spear through her body, and putting her into a glass case, sent her to be exhibited in a museum of curiosities!



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