









Digitized by Google

Two Stories for my Poung Friends:

THE ERICKSONS.

THE CLEVER BOY; OR, CONSIDER ANOTHER.

RY

MISS FRANCES BROWN.

PATON AND RITCHIE,
3 SOUTH HANOVER STREET, EDINBURGH.
MDCCCLIL

249. W. Hlagle



Che Ericksons.

OST of my young friends have probably heard of Norway, and may know that it is a large country on the extreme north-west of Europe; so situated, that its southern side is nearly opposite the northern coast of Scotland, with part of the great German Ocean and all the Orkney and Shetland Isles between them. They may have read too, how, in old barbarous times, when no books were printed, and none but clergymen could either write or read, there came out of that country a fierce fighting. people, who called themselves Normands, or Northmen; that they conquered many countries,-among the rest, a part of France, which is still called Normandy, because they settled there; and at last England, where their prince,

William the Norman, was crowned king, and built the tower of London almost 800 years ago. The Norwegians were wild and warlike then; they and the Danes, whose country is separated from theirs only by an arm of the North Sea, called the Cattegat, were mostly governed by the same kings; and used to come with ships and soldiers to rob and ruin the seaports and villages along the western coasts of Europe, killing the inhabitants, and carrying off their goods. But those times are long past, and the people of Norway have been for many generations civilized and peaceable men, working in their houses and fields, and attending their schools and churches,-with some good and some bad among them, just like ourselves in Britain.

Norway is, however, a country by no means like ours. The winters are much longer, and the summers much shorter,—with very long nights in the one, and very long days in the other. It is of far greater extent; but has not half so many towns, nor quarter as many people in them. The mountains are far higher, the valleys far deeper. There are scarcely any plains; and the mountain sides are either

made of bare rock, or covered with immense forests of fir and pine, from which the timber that builds our largest ships is cut down, and brought to England. These hills are so high and cold, that the people live mostly in the valleys between them, where their houses are sheltered from the terrible storms of their long winter, and they can cultivate fields and gardens easier than among the rocks and forests; but into most of these valleys run long arms of the sea, which they call Fiords,—a word meaning the same as our Firth; and on the banks of one of them lived the people of my story.

In the district of Eidswold, which is considered the most fertile and cultivated part of Southern Norway, there lies a deep winding bay, or rather salt water lake, called by the natives Gamle Fiord. This name in English, means the Old Firth; and old enough is its fame for shoals of mackerel and herrings, which, as regularly as their seasons arrive, make their way up its calm blue waters, to the joy of the expectant fisherman; yet the way is long from the North Sea, of which the Gamle Fiord is but a branch. It enters



the land through a contracted passage, which seamen call a sound; winds round the base of many a fine wooded hill, and flows through rocky ravines, so deep and narrow, that, to passing boatmen, the cliffs seem almost meeting; and at length, after a course of about forty miles, spreads into a broad lake in the centre of a quiet valley, known by the same appellation. The vale of Gamle Fiord is a long glen running from east to west, and enclosed by two ranges of hills, through which a deep gorge opens at either extremity. On the northern side they rise to mountain height, and are wooded, as far as the eye can reach, with enormous trees of fir and pine. Peasants say that the bounds of that forest have never been explored; for it stretches away over the summits of hills beyond for hundreds on hundreds of miles. Great brown bears are said to inhabit it; and iron mines have been opened and wrought there ages ago; woodcutters go there to fell tall timber, and burners to make charcoal; but neither town nor village has been known from the oldest times.

Between the valley and these ancient woods

there extends a barrier of grey granite crags. rising in some places to the height of 600 feet, and steep as a wall: in others they are less perpendicular. Birds build in their clefts in the summer time, - mosses and mountainplants spring up in their crevices.-and they are seamed by deep channels, down which the mountain streams foam and thunder when swollen by autumn rains; but in the dry months, when these have shrunk to low murmuring rills, the peasants use them as footpaths to the forests. Below that rocky barrier lies a growth of less hardy trees and shrubs, like a continuous coppice, with here and there a tall elder or aspen shooting up amongst them. The natives call it the little forest; and thence the ground slopes down till it meets the narrow beach of sand on which the old firth ripples. The water varies from a quarter of an English mile to three in breadth, being narrowest at the entrance, and widest at the centre of the valley, which is just two Norwegian, or fourteen English miles long. But on the southern side the grounds rise more abruptly to the hills; and they, besides being lower, wear a different aspect

from those on the north,-presenting now groves of hazle and mountain-ash,-again, masses of bare rocks, the characteristic of every Norwegian landscape.—and then broad grassy slopes, on which the sheep find pas-Such is still the valley of Gamle Fiord, and such it looked about sixty years ago, when its entire population consisted of but six families. They were known to each other by the names of their respective heads, as,-Henrick, the pastor, who lived at the head of the valley, close beside the old parish church; Thurkill, the smith, whose forge flamed at the foot of it: Peterkins, the cooper, and Hans, the shepherd, who were esteemed neighbours, for they lived within half a Norwegian mile, -all these were on the southern side: whilst on the northern, there was only Hereward, the owner of the sawmill, whose house stood about midway; and within sight of it, that of the widow Erickson.

Each of these few and scattered habitations was much like the others in appearance and construction. They were large substantial cottages, with wooden walls and roof,—the

former painted dark red, and the latter having an additional covering of turf and thatch, on the corners of which were placed great stones. to prevent its being carried away by the winter tempests. After an old Norwegian fashion, which also prevailed in our own country in former times, the doors were in their gables; the windows were small, with diamond-shaped panes of thick glass, two or three inches in breadth, and set in leaden sashes, but always double, to keep out the frost. They were situated in the middle of the house, as that part only was occupied by the family,-the cow-house being in front, and the granary in the rear. Before every house was a sort of court, and in which there lay a sledge in summer, and a boat in winter, covering a few agricultural implements; for, in addition to their distinguishing crafts, all the men in the valley were both fishermen and farmers. Behind was a garden as large as the owner pleased to cultivate, and beyond that, fields of harley and rye, with patches of hops and meadow ground; the whole enclosed by a double fence about four feet high, of strong deal planks driven deep into the ground, and

fastened together till they grew old and mossy in the lapse of years.

The rest of the valley lay wide and wild. covered with cranberry and juniper bushes. tall fern, and heath, and thyme, and many a hardy plant that bloomed in the northern summer: hares, and squirrels, and foxes found refuge among them, and large birds, such as sometimes, though but seldom, appear in the remotest parts of Britain,-the black-cock. the ptarmigan, and the gier-falcon. Seals and sea-otters lived among the rocks and shallows of the fiord: and at times there came down from the mountain forests a herd of reindeer, or a great elk, as large as an English dray-horse, with antlers like young trees upon its head. These visitors were, however, unwelcome; for their coming, which generally occurred at the approach of autumn, was believed to indicate that the winter had set in with unusual severity in the far northern quarters from which they migrated, and might be expected to follow them. It was on this account that the whole family of the Ericksons looked astonished and somewhat grave on their way to church,

one Sunday morning, when little Clotilde pointed out the footprints of the huge creature close beside the outer fence of their meadow.

"The elk come already, mother, and our hay not cut!" said Olof, a tall, thoughtfullooking boy of seventeen, addressing the widow, a pale sickly woman, who, the neighbours said, had begun to look more strong and cheerful since her eldest son grew tall enough for her to take his arm.

"Well, Olof," said his next sister, Frederika,—she was a robust girl of fifteen, with a ruddy pleasant face, and long fair hair,—"the days are long yet."

"And the sun is warm, I'm sure," said little Clotilde, the youngest of the family, a child of seven, whom she led along by the hand, and they called her sister's picture.

"Hadn't we better cut it down on Monday, mother?" chimed in a breath Christian and Clodimar, the two middle boys; for the Ericksons were just six in number. Christian was thirteen, and Clodimar only eleven; but they stood in age between Frederika and Clotilde, and always walked and worked together.

The widow made no reply to her eldest son; but she cast a doubtful glance on the thin stunted grass of their meadow, and the half-blighted barley field beyond, and then looked round on the trees and sky, as if inquiring from them what chance they had yet with the season.

It was a glorious day, such as the Norwegian summer often presents, especially towards its close; -there was not a breath in the air, nor a cloud in the sky, but a light hazy mist, like the autumnal gossamer of England, hung far away on the summits of the high crags and the tops of the tall pines. The morning was yet early, being scarcely eight o'clock: but all along the valley, emerging from paths among the hills, and crossing the sands of the firth, were to be seen groups of peasants-some on foot, carrying little children-some mounted by whole families at once in light carts, drawn by small shaggy horses not unlike our Shetlands, as most of them had a journey of several hours from the most distant parts of that extensive parish; but all were in their Sunday clothes, and bound for the old church,-the copper vane of which could be seen through the clear air gleaming in the distance.

The Ericksons still stood by their meadow fence; and hard by was their cottage, under the shadow of two tall poplar trees, now in full foliage. It was exactly like the rest I have described in all its appurtenances, but that the farm was of smaller dimensions, the heap of firewood in the court-yard less, the turned up sledge older, the living dependencies of the household fewer, and everything about it indicating more of care and poverty.

It stood on a little knoll or rising ground overlooking the firth. Stretched out at its threshold in the sun lay their house dog, Haco, a large Danish mastiff, who was called from one of the old kings of Norway, and had often drawn their sledge along the smooth ice in winter to church or merry-making, when a horse could not be borrowed for the purpose. Clotilde's squirrel gambolled round the dog, but he was used to it; and, though apparently asleep, kept a watchful eye on half-adozen poultry, who sunned themselves around him. Within sight, browsing on the sward of that wild common, was their Norwegian

cow,-my readers, very unlike the cows of England, having long hair and strange horns. but a tame, sagacious creature,-turned out in the summer days, with a bell about her neck, to seek her food on the slopes and dingles, and come home again at night. sides, the Ericksons had their sheep,-but Hans, the shepherd, had taken them over the firth to graze on the hills; and these were almost their entire possessions, including a small garden, the barley field, and the meadow, on the cutting of which they speculated,till the widow recollected that it was Sunday, and they would be late for church. So the whole family moved on with a unanimous resolution to begin their hay-making on the following day.

Widow Erickson had once been a prosperous and well-to-do dame, as any in the valley. Her husband had been a kind-hearted, hard-working man, noted for an expert farmer, and a daring fisher,—as his fields, though small, bore the best crops, and his boat could take more herrings than any two in the season. He and his wife had lived happily together, till one night, about six years before

the period of my story,—when all the children were young, and Clotilde but a baby,—news came up the firth that the mackerel had stopped in a great shoal at the narrowest part, and the tide was right against them.

It was a night at the beginning of autumn, breezy but clear; and every man who heard the intelligence launched his boat. expecting a glorious take. Poor Christiansuch was Erickson's baptismal name-made ready his light skiff also, kissed his wife and children, and started, with the eldest son of his brother Hereward, promising to return by noon next day, with fish enough to serve both families for the winter. The father of young Hereward was at first unwilling that he should go; for mackerel fishing was considered dangerous, and besides being the only grown boy in his family, his mother was dead, and he was said to resemble her. But the youth was anxious to have part in the enterprise, and Christian persuaded his father to consent. The hopes of the fishermen were, however, doomed to disappointment;-the tide was against them as well as the mackerel, and before they reached their destination, it had

turned, and the fish were going out to sea. A few were taken with much trouble in the creeks and shallows: but Christian said it was hard to go home with so little, and when the rest of the boatmen agreed to return, he and his companion were seen steering down to the mouth of the firth in full pursuit of the mackerel. How they fared there was never precisely known. The night grew dark, and the wind rose to one of those sudden tempests which rend the woods of Norway in the autumnal months, and end only in days of incessant rain. It was believed, from the direction of the storm, that it must have driven them out into the North Sea: the other fishermen all returned in safety; but after weeks of fruitless inquiry, an unusually high tide left on one of the rocks of the firth the remnants of a shattered boat, on which the word Christian could be discerned; and from that day the family were known to the neighbours as that of Widow Erickson.

Little comfort was their nearest neighbour to them, though a near relation too. From the widow's house there could be seen on a clear evening the smoke of Hereward's, her husband's eldest brother. His dwelling and saw-mill stood side by side on the banks of a brawling stream, never known to have been dry, and seldom frozen. Hereward was accounted rich in the valley; he had twice as much land as ever Christian cultivated. besides seven cows, fifteen sheep, a couple of horses, and the saw-mill, which, in a country like Norway, where timber abounds, and onefourth of the people live by wood-cutting. is itself a valuable possession. Hereward's cottage was large, and there was din and bustle without and within it from morning till night, for half the parish came to his mill and sent him apprentices, whom he made useful in harvest and herring time. He had still seven children, and among them two grown up daughters, so notable for management and house-keeping, that young girls were sent to learn from them by everybody within twenty miles who could pay the fees. My young friends, this is a custom peculiar to Norway, and not a bad one, as useful work is always worth learning; but it served to increase at once the wealth of Hereward, and the number of his household. He was, in consequence, a man of some importance: but unfortunately riches do not always make people liberal, and Hereward was of a hard, penurious disposition. The more goods he gathered about him, the less willing he became to spare anything, telling people who asked assistance from him that he was a poor man, who had a large family to provide for, and couldn't afford it. It was believed that all the family were as niggardly as himself, except the poor boy who perished with Christian Erickson. His loss was a terrible stroke to the miller, for hard as the man was, he loved his son, and his other four boys were yet but children; but there are silly and selfish people everywhere, and Hereward was one of these even in his sorrow. He could never forgive Christian for taking, as he said, his boy to be drowned in the North Sea; and on that account absolutely refused to hold any communication with the Ericksons, forgetting, that if he had lost his son, the widow had lost her husband, and the young children their father. Besides, they were not in fault; but some people said the churlish miller made it an excuse to do nothing for

his brother's family; and the poor mother seemed to think so, for she never went near him, nor took any means to overcome his resolution. She had searched and inquired for tidings of her husband from one end of the firth to the other; and when, at length, that miserable token of his loss turned up, she refused to believe it, saying there were more Christians in the world who had boats than her brave Erickson. Some ship might have picked him up at sea, and he might come back. The neighbours said that hope kept up her heart, but he never came. She had been at the best but a weak, slender woman; her eldest boy and girl were then only eleven and nine years old, and the long cold winter of Norway was coming on; but many to whom Christian had been kind and helpful when their cattle were in danger in the wilds, and their boats at sea, did what they could for the Ericksons. Some cut down their barley, others hewed fire-wood for them in the forest, and all sent them presents of fish when they had a good take. The pastor and his wife were most forward in these operations, in addition to which he promised to teach the children gratuitously; for, as in many parts of the north, Pastor Henrick was the schoolmaster of his parish. This was kind; but every one had families of their own to provide for, and the widow told her children that she and they must endeavour to do something for themselves, and depend on no one but Providence.

The winter of Norway, even in the southern parts, is generally eight months in length; and during the greater portion of that time, such is the intensity of the frost, and the shortness of the daylight, that no out-door work can be done. The Norwegian peasant is therefore as busy as a bee during the four summer months, which also include his spring and autumn. In that period every product of the soil must be sown, ripened, and reaped, provender for cattle must be secured, fuel provided, fish caught, and all kinds of clothing and provisions laid up against the cold season. The summer begins in May, and ends at September, and its latter weeks are always the busiest; for after then heavy rains come on, which would destroy the crops; they are succeeded by snow storms which cover the

country sometimes to the depth of six feet, and then the frost converts the surface into solid ice, which thaws only about the end of April.

In summer everybody in Norway works very hard, except the very rich, and they are few in all countries. Think, then, with all the help they received, how many matters pressed on the Ericksons,—living in that thinly inhabited valley, and no house within sight but that of their harsh and penurious uncle. It is wonderful how much most people could do for themselves if they only set about it in earnest. Young as they were, the children had been brought up to be industrious, and now their mother found them all useful in some way. While Christian and Clodimar took care of their little sister, looked after the drying of the hay, and gathered great heaps of boughs and sticks to increase the firewood, Olof and Frederika assisted her in gathering in the turnips, beans, and potatoes grown in their garden, housing the barley, and afterwards thrashing it with a little flail, which the one took up when the other was tired. It was slow work, but finished at last, and they winnowed it in the same fashion; then collected fir bark where the woodcutting had been in the forest, and sent it, together with the barley, on the good pastor's cart to grind at the parish mill, and make more of their winter meal.

It was a wise remark, that nothing gets through the day like business: so to the grieved and troubled, whose days seem long, hard work may be a sort of relief as well as a necessity. Christian Erickson never came back to his wife and children; and though they missed him sore as the nights grew long, and wept over his loss often when they gathered round the evening fire, yet even the mother bore up better through her busy days than those who have more time to spend in mourning. Their first winter was indeed dreary and desolate. They heard the waves thunder on the beach, and the winds roar through the woods, with a strange terror in their solitary cottage, when the man was gone who used to cheer them in the storms. Then came the snow, and shut them up for weeks, covering the very windows till the daylight couldn't enter; but Olof wove nets, Christian

and Clodimar knitted stockings, and Frederika spun with her mother, who told them all stories of their father and her when they were young:-how they lived in a distant valley, and were at school together; what a brave boy he was, and had but two brothers, Hereward and Karl; but the last went to be a soldier, and never returned nor sent them any news, though a traveller once told them he was living, and had grown rich in Drontheim. At last the storms were over: the still clear frost came, and the elder children went with their young companions on the long nights, skating along to Pastor Henrick's school, while neighbours made kind visits to the lonely widow.

Thus things went on till the lengthening days and strengthening sun brought back the pleasant spring. The ice broke in the firth; the streams came foaming from the mountains; the snow cleared away from their garden and fields, and the Ericksons got ready their tools in full preparation for what farmers call getting down the crop. This is no easy task in Norway; almost over the whole country, the soil or mould in which vegetables grow is remarkably shallow, being

rarely more than a few inches above the hard gravel, into which great forest trees strike their roots. but no weaker plant can penetrate. Hence, the plough, so useful in turning up the deep soil of Britain with its long share, is scarcely known to the Norwegian farmer, who employs, instead of it, the spade and hoe.—a much slower and more laborious method: but to work the Ericksons went with one accord. It was Olof's boast that he could do as much as his mother and Frederika both; Christian and Clodimar found out that they could dig; and little Clotilde, now a winter older, got an imitation hoe, and kept herself wonderfully out of harm's way among the garden mould in sunny days. Their neighbours helped them the more cheerfully for appearing so willing to help themselves; and the business of the seed-time was managed as that of the harvest had been. Everbody pitied widow Erickson, because she had to work in the fields, which is not usual for women to do in Norway: but she said it was all she could do for her children, and with the help of Providence, she would do it till the boys grew up, or Christian came back again.

Perhaps they caught the hope from their

mother, but none of the family would ever believe that he was drowned. They prayed together for his safe return every night before retiring to rest. They paused at their work to cast long looks down the firth if ever a boat came in sight. And when a fence was repaired, or a bad corner cultivated, it was a common remark among the children, "How pleased our father will be to see what we have done!"

So season after season passed. Every year made the Ericksons more independent, as the children grew tall and strong; useful exertion and fresh air kept them all in health; the springs were favourable and the harvests good. Their kind neighbours who had all enough of their own to do, saw them gradually able to dispense with their assistance; and long before the time at which my story opens, their affairs were entirely left to their own management. Though poor, they owed nobody anything but thanks for the past; and none in the valley were more respected than the widow and her children.

I left the Ericksons taking their way to church on that bright Sabbath morning. A

long way it was; but as they proceeded, keeping as far as possible from their harsh uncle's house,-for none of the family cared to look that way, though the sun was shining on its well-thatched roof, gilding the great silent mill, and lighting up the stream in front. which that day, at least, ran free from sawdust,-one acquaintance after another joined their company with many a warm shakehands and kind inquiry after their affairs. Among those scattered people, the path to church was almost the only meeting place for friends and acquaintances during the busy months of summer; there they exchanged civilities and the gossip of their glens; but, on the present occasion, the talk was all of a melancholy character, every one spoke of the summer passing away and the crops not yet ripened. The season had been unusually cold: one old peasant had already seen frost on the hill streams; and it was mentioned, as almost equally ominous to the parish, that Pastor Henrick's wife had fallen sick of a fever.

Rounding the top of the firth, at last they came upon the church. It stood in a nook formed by projecting hills, which sheltered it

on the north and east. To the southward sloped up a broad heath now in purple bloom, and on the west extended the long vista of Gamle Fiord. The building was of wood. painted dark red like the peasants' cottages, surmounted by a copper vane; yet it was an ancient edifice, being built before Luther preached in Germany. Many a generation of the parishioners had worshipped there, and many a tempest it had weathered. Round it lay the parish cemetery, full of old trees and graves; and between that and the heath, the pastor's farm and cottage. Two of the good man's sons were pulling away at the bell, suspended between two large elms close by the churchyard gate, and himself was just coming out of the cottage with his Bible under one arm, and his youngest child, who carried the prayer-book with no little pride. by the hand,—while a stranger accompanied him; and the rest of his family-all except the mother and eldest girl-followed close behind. As the good clergyman paced up the gravel walk leading to the church-door, his congregation ranged themselves on either side. A strange sight they would have been for the

church-goers of an English village. Dressed according to the custom of their country.--the women in blue or white linen gowns, with bright coloured handkerchiefs and crimson cotton caps, from beneath which the hair of the young girls fell in long braids, fastened at the end with knots of brilliant ribbon: the men in large coats of blue frieze, with scarlet leather belts, and caps of white hare-skin, which each pulled off while the pastor and his family passed; and all were ready with salutations, and inquiries regarding the Frau, his wife, and the Jon Frau, his daughter,-such being the words for Mrs. and Miss in Norway. He had preached among them for more than twenty years, and assisted many a family in their difficulties, as well as the Ericksons. No wonder that Pastor Henrick and his pious active dame were loved and respected by the whole parish. Now he had a kind reply and a friendly question for every one in turn ;—the substance of the former was, that his wife was very ill indeed, and his daughter had remained at home to wait upon her; and his parishioners followed him into the church,—some, it is to be hoped, thinking of their prayers; some

of Frau Henrick; and many wondering who the stranger could be; for strangers seldom visited Gamle Fiord. When they did come, Pastor Henrick considered it his duty to entertain them, as no inn had ever been heard of in the parish; but they were all informed concerning this traveller as soon as worship concluded,—the pastor introducing him to them as the tax-gatherer of the district, who had come on his annual round to collect the Government dues, and remained at his house as usual.

Now that the fever had found entrance there, if was no longer safe to accommodate the stranger; and he requested that some of the congregation would take him home with them, and shew him all hospitality, as became good Christians and people of Norway. The officer was unluckily disliked in the valley, on account of his peculiar duties. Nobody likes to pay taxes, neither did the parishioners of Eidswold; and they were displeased with him for coming to collect them. Notwithstanding their pastor's recommendation, all remained silent and sullen. No hand was stretched to the traveller with the ex-

pected invitation, till at length Widow Erickson whispered to her eldest boy, "Perhaps the man cannot help being a tax-gatherer; he looks pious and civil, and poor as we are, it is a shame to see a stranger neglected in our valley."

The congregation had by this time risen, and stepping quickly up to the traveller, she said, "Sir, the day is clear, and our cottage not far off,-will you please to come home with us?" Everybody knew that widow Erickson was the poorest in the church, and her invitation fairly took them by surprise. The pastor said nothing, but he looked thankful. Old Hereward muttered something to his daughters about pride and poverty; and Thurkill, the blacksmith, who thought himself quite as rich as the miller, exclaimed half aloud, with a sort of remonstrating look, "He will eat the widow out of house and home. No, Dame Erickson," he added in a higher key, "with your leave the stranger will go home with me."

The blacksmith's invitation was followed by half-a-dozen more from the wealthier part of the audience, either moved by a similar feeling, or put to shame by the widow's example; but it was now the tax-gatherer's turn to shew his spirit. "Thank you, good friends," said he; "but as this kind dame has asked me first, I prefer going to her cottage;" and taking the hand of Clotilde, who fearlessly offered to conduct him, he accompanied the Ericksons home.

It was evening before they reached it; but that was a great time in the cottage: small as were the family means, they had barleybread and cheese, eggs, milk, and butter, with some garden vegetables; and the best were made ready to set before the stranger.

He was a large, weather-beaten man, sensible, serious, and somewhat beyond middle age, for his auburn hair was already sprinkled with grey.

Books and newspapers are yet scarce in Norway, and at the time of my story they were still more so in Gamle Fiord. I have said that a stranger rarely visited that solitary vale. It was at least forty miles from the nearest market town, had no trade, and very few inhabitants; but when it was known that a chance traveller had arrived, especially

in the winter season when their work was over, the peasants were accustomed to bring out their skates and sledges, and hurry in groups to the house in which he lodged, to learn from him what they thought the news and knowledge of the world. Now it was summer time, and no one cared to come near the tax-gatherer, particularly after the reception they had given him. So the Ericksons had all his chat to themselves. When the evening meal was over, and the long twilight lingered on for hours, they sat about the hearth, that blazed and crackled with dry pine boughs, and cast a cheerful ruddy light on the family sitting-room; -it served them for kitchen, parlour, and all, as the old song has it,-vet the apartment was not without neatness and comfort. It had two windows looking into the garden, which almost enclosed the cottage; both were open, just enough to admit the odours of the thyme and northern rose that grew thick below; the hard earthen floor was clean swept, and strewn with the young tops of the fir and juniper. In the centre stood a deal table, white as sand could make it; there was a long bench,

a large chest to contain the Sunday clothes of the family, two chairs for guests, and many stools for family service, all of the same description, besides a row of shelves, the uppermost appropriated to their single Bible, a Norwegian prayer-book, and a chronicle of the province. These included the Ericksons' entire library: and close beside them, as if waiting for his return, was laid up a drinking horn, which their lost father had inherited as an heirloom, made from the trunk antler of the great elk, and trimmed with silver. Wooden and pewter vessels, for domestic use, covered the rest. Close beside the fire was the door of the family sleeping-room,-opposite to it one which led to the court yard, through a passage partitioned off from the cow-house: and through the third, which was not quite on the latch, could be heard the twitterings of innumerable swallows and starlings returning to their rest in the yet empty granary, where they had built their nests by scores, and brought up their young undisturbed,-slits in the walls being left open all summer for their reception, in the fashion of the good Norwegians.

The Ericksons sat about their fire, and the taxman talked to them; his business had made him a traveller for many years through every part of Norway, and he had seen and heard much that was new and strange to them. He told them of Christiania, the capital city,-of its great churches, its fine shops, and the ships from far countries that filled its harbour. The Ericksons were amazed to hear that the town then contained eighteen thousand inhabitants; but the tax-gatherer said he had conversed with seamen, who spoke of towns much larger in England and Germany, though he could not credit their tales. Then he described the brown dwarfish people, with herds of reindeer, amongst whom he had journeyed far away in Lapland: how they lived in tents in summer, and in caves in winter, but sowed no grain, and cultivated neither fields nor gardens, because in that province nothing would grow but the fir tree and the reindeer's moss;-how the winter had set in there already, and the long night of six weeks duration was fast coming on; that the day in summer was of equal length: and he had stood on the North Cape, -- a grey

rocky promontory, which runs far into the sea, and is the most northerly point, not only of Norway, but all Europe,—and saw the great ocean stretching away till it seemed to meet the cold blue sky, while the sun shone brightly on it from the northward, at the hour of twelve, which southern men call midnight.

The family were charmed with his discourse. Olof's grave face became lighted up with wonder and curiosity. Little Clotilde sat on the stranger's knee, and looked silently up in his face, Frederika leant forward to catch every word, and Christian and Clodimar stopped him every minute to ask questions. Dame Erickson herself was interested; but at last a notion crossed her, that a man who had travelled so far must have heard something of her Christian. Doubtless it was a foolish thought of the simple widow; but hope, they say, will hold by straws, and she immediately inquired if in all the taxman's travels he had heard anything of a man and a youth from Gamle Fiord, who had been driven out to sea in the mackerel fishing time, about six years before.

"Was his name Karl Erickson?" said the man, musing a moment.

"No, no, it was Christian!" shouted all the children at once. "Just the image of my brother Christian there," said Frederika. "Only handsomer," rejoined her mother; "a brave good man; you would know my Christian again, stranger, if you had ever seen him."

"He was a little like that boy," said the tax-gatherer, gazing at young Christian till he reddened, and Clodimar looked angry. "But I am sure they called him Karl when he and I got acquainted at Drontheim."

"At Drontheim!" said the widow, suddenly recollecting. "That was my husband's brother;—what did you know of him?"

"He had been a soldier," said the taxman, "in the army of our King Frederick, when he made war on Sweden." (Reader, Norway was governed by the king of Denmark then, though, as your geography will tell you, it is subject to the crown of Sweden now.)

"Aye!" said dame Erickson, "he never cared for staying quietly at home, but always wished to grow great and see the world."

"He saw some of the world," rejoined the

tax-gatherer, "in King Frederick's army, and rose to be a sergeant, till one of his comrades. with whom he quarrelled, stole the colonel's silver fork, and hid it in his knapsack, where it was discovered, and for the supposed theft Karl was dismissed the regiment, and sentenced to serve two years in the government mines. Some months after, the man who had brought all this upon him fell sick, and being afraid to die with that burden on his conscience, he confessed the whole truth. Karl was in consequence liberated from the mines, and would have been re-instated in his rank. but that misfortune made him tired of the army; and with the sum of money which was given him by way of compensation, he went to trade and fish at Drontheim. In that business he was successful, and had, when I knew him, a good provision shop of his own. besides, it was said, some hundred dollars in the bank. He never married, but kept a careful old housekeeper. Drontheim lies far to the north, and its long winters were wearing down his health; yet he told me he could never go back to Eidswold, nor meet his relations, after the disgrace he had suffered."

"Ah! that was poor pride," sighed the widow; "yet he was always kinder than Hereward."

"I tried to reason him out of it," continued the taxman. "But it is now more than a year since I saw him; and when I was at Christiania three months ago, a ship captain brought me intelligence of his death, and also said that his property was kept in trust for his brother Christian's family by an old lawyer with whom he had been intimate; but somehow the place of their residence had been forgotten in Karl's will, and with all the lawyer's advertisements they couldn't be found."

"That's money for us, mother!" said the open-hearted Frederika, who had never seen her uncle, and did not pretend to lament him. "I hope he has left nothing to the Herewards for all their spite."

"The money is far off and uncertain, my girl," answered her mother; "and you ought to remember, that the Herewards are your cousins. Karl dead!" she added sorrowfully. "Well, he was once a good brother-in-law; but, oh! sir, did you hear no word of Christian?"

"Nothing but what I tell you," said the tax-gatherer. "As you say, dame, the money is rather out of reach; but I have heard that the lawyer is a just man, though something of the hardest. A legacy is worth looking after these times; and, with your leave, on my next journey to Drontheim, I will inquire all about it, and let him know where you live."

"If we could all go, mother," said Olof.

"But it is far away, and the harvest must be got in."

"Clodimar and I will go!" cried Christian, starting up; "and you, sir," addressing the taxman, "will shew us the way. Just wait till the hay is cut!"

"I cannot stay so long, my little man, and the way is far; but something must be done," replied the tax-gatherer.

Over that something, the group round the fire deliberated till it was quite dark; and the result of their council was, that as the widow and her eldest son had neither time nor money sufficient for the journey, Pastor Henrick should be requested to write a letter on their behalf to the legal gentleman at Drontheim, which the tax-gatherer undertook to deliver

safe,—such a thing as a post-office being yet undreamt of at Gamle Fiord.

The family said their evening prayer, and retired to rest by the light of dry fir splinters -the candles of the Norwegian peasantry. Christian and Clodimar resigned their bed to the stranger; but took care he should not know it, and laid themselves quietly down on a bundle of fern, shaken out beside the hearth. Early next morning, when the woodlark was singing in the topmost boughs of the old poplar, they were all in the meadow, and the tax-gatherer on his way to collect dues for the king. By noon he returned for Olof and his mother, who accompanied him to Parson Henrick's house, where they told the news he had brought, and requested the letter. Glad was the pastor to hear of the promised good fortune: and, saving that Providence had rewarded the widow for her hospitality to one without friends, the good man penned the following primitive epistle:-

To the Respected Counsellor who holds in trust the Property of Karl Erickson.

HONOURED SIR,—Having heard from the

bearer, whom I believe to be an honest taxman, that you have cause to inquire for the family of Christian Erickson, brother of Karl, deceased, I certify, that they and their mother are yet residing in my parish,—Christian himself being supposed drowned, though his widow will not believe it. For further particulars, please apply to the bearer, and accept the good wishes of yours faithfully,

PASTOR HENRICK of Gamle Fiord.

Furnished with this letter, and the entire dues of the valley, the taxman took his departure early the following day. Among the hospitable Norwegian peasantry, who see travellers only as news-bringing rarities, it is considered unbecoming either to offer or accept anything for a stranger's entertainment. But the taxman knew that Dame Erickson was poor,—she had paid her tax with the only dollar in her possession—long and well had it been kept for the purpose,—and when parting from Christian and Clodimar, who conveyed him some distance to ask questions about Drontheim, he presented each of them with a Norwegian song-book; but when the brothers



-

opened their treasures in full display to the household, out of every book dropped a dollar note. Reader, the said notes were about four shillings value, and the brothers had never seen so much money to call their own; but they could not help fearing that the generous taxman had utterly robbed himself, and Clodimar hoped he did not imagine they were greedy.

As for Christian, he stood gazing at his note, and debating with himself, whether it should be laid out in fine things for his mother and sisters when the winter traders came up the valley, or reserved for paying the family expenses to Drontheim; but at last it occurred to him, that he and his brother's united wealth might enable them to go round the world in search of their father, like the Greek boy, Telemachus, of whose travels he read at Pastor Henrick's school. "Lay it by, my boy," said his mother; "who knows but it may be the beginning of your fortune, though the taxman was too good to part with so much."

"Ha! mother, we'll call him the taxman no more," cried Clodimar, who had been turning over his book; "here is his name:" and the

boy read, "Earnest gives this book to Clodimar Erickson, and hopes he will learn to sing the songs of our Gamle Norge." These words signify Old Norway, the name by which all the Norwegians call their country; just as we say "Merry England," and sometimes "Old England" too. But, speaking of names, the reader must observe, that though among us everybody has a surname, such is not always the case in Norway; and those in use are, for the most part, formed by adding the word son, to the Christian name of some ancestor; as Erickson,-that is, the son of Erick. Our similar names, Johnson, Thomson, and the like, are supposed to have been brought into Britain long ago by Norwegian and Danish invaders. Sometimes whole families are, in a manner, called by their father's Christian name. The Ericksons spoke of the Herewards and the Henricks, just as we would discourse of the Smiths and Browns. But to return to my story.-When the notes had been sufficiently admired, and Earnest's generosity praised by all parties, Christian and Clodimar deposited them safely at the bottom of their division of the family

chest; and many an evening was enlivened by reading over the songs, some of which their mother taught them to sing to sweet old airs, long known among the valleys.

Weightier concerns, however, demanded their attention;—the summer had been brief and backward, and day by day the signs of an early winter became more evident; hares and foxes were observed to grow white, as many wild birds and quadrupeds do at the approach of the snow in those northern climates; delicate plants in the copses and dingles faded and shed their leaves: flights of ptarmigan in their winter plumage began to arrive; and a herd of reindeer were seen in the early morning passing between the cliffs and pines; the skies to grow darker and threatening; the winds cold and strong; and heavy fogs came rolling down from the mountains. like seas of vapour, hours before sunset. The Ericksons wrought hard with the hav. It had grown thin and short, and they could not get it dried in these misty evenings. At last, the mist changed into rain, long deluging nights and days, that poured without intermission, leaving the hay one mass of rubbish, and beating down their half-ripened barley.

These were troubled days with the family, though they watched for every fair hour, and put in practice all the rustic arts they knew to save the miserable remains of their harvest: but the fair hours were few and far between. the days rapidly shortened, and labour as they would, neither hay nor barley could be got sufficiently dry for storeage. Their neighbours, however willing, had no time to assist them, their own better crops being in danger: and half the harvest of Eidswold was lost that year by the continuous rain. It ceased one evening about the end of September, the sky looked clearly red at sunset, and Olof said they would have good weather at last; but the same night, the snow came down,-not as it comes to us in Britain, in feathery flakes, but like a flood of dry white ashes, which continued for days together, and lay fathoms deep in the hollows. It was a sad sight for the Ericksons when they rose in the morning and saw the drifting mass halfway up their windows.

"The snow, mother !" cried Olof, who, being



the eldest, thought it his duty to get up first; but came back with the intelligence to his mother's bedside.

"Snow!" said the widow. "Then God help us; for the winter's come, and we have neither bread nor fish."

"Never mind, mother," said Christian, as he thrust on his clothes,—for the resting-places of the family were, in old Norwegian fashion, divided only by a brown woollen curtain;— "you know the dollar notes are safe in the chest, and"—

"And there's lots of money for us at Drontheim," chimed in Frederika.

The widow said nothing to discourage her children; but her terrors were too true. The snow was succeeded by frost of such duration and intensity, that it changed not only the surface of the ground, but that of the firth, to firm ice; and when the latter was sufficiently strong to afford safe passage, the shepherd's eldest son came skating over to inform the Ericksons that half of the sheep under his father's care had perished in the snow storm, and theirs among the number. He added, that the bodies might be found when the

snow melted in spring, and all the neighbours had lost as well as they. Dame Erickson said it was a fearful season; and after sharing in their breakfast, the young man went on his way to communicate a similar piece of news to old Hereward the miller.

Now that the winter was with them in earnest, the widow bestirred herself to reckon up their resources. The remnants of their garden vegetables had been safely gathered into the granary; there was also a small portion of ill-dried hay for the cow; barley they had none; their last year's meal was entirely exhausted, and the state of the harvest had prevented the boys, as well as many of their neighbours, from taking part in the herring fishing, which, indeed, gave but poor returns in Gamle Fiord that season; but they had secured a sufficient stock of fire-wood, and that, with the garden produce, and especially the cow, was the only dependance of the family. A poor dependance; but they tried to make the most of it. The younger children dried hay by the fire for poor "Curlycoat," as they called their shaggy, but useful little cow. They collected the refuse of their meager

meals, and boiled it up with pounded fir bark, by way of evening messes for her and Haco. Olof took down his father's old gun, and used all his arts to put it in repair, in hopes of finding some game which the frost had driven from their haunts; and Frederika enlarged on the probability of his shooting a great elk, while she and her mother spun the last of their wool, intending to sell the yarn to the winter traders.

Readers, winter is the play time of Norway. When the long frost has fairly set in, with brief days, and clear, cold nights, all manner of festive assemblies are held, friends go to visit each other, taking their way along the frozen firths and rivers, equipped with skates and snow-pole. The former are not of our British shape, but light boards of about six feet long. pointed at each end, and strapped to the feet at the middle. The latter is a strong staff, with a sharp iron point, which they plant firmly in the snow, to prevent their sliding backward when ascending a hill;-that must be done slowly; but over level ground the Norwegian skater passes like the wind. Hardy hunters thus provided venture into the great

forests; and traders from the towns come up the fiords with their sledges, like boats, drawn by horses, and sometimes reindeer, containing all manner of foreign commodities, which they barter with the inhabitants for furs, fish cheese, or any kind of country produce. These doings make winter a lively time in the remotest valley, especially at the days of Christmas, whose coming the Norwegians celebrate with all the good cheer and amusements they can muster. But that was a dull winter in Eidswold. The failure of their harvest made every one poor and close; few had anything to spare, and nobody thought of the Ericksons.

However the poor family thought of themselves, as we have seen, to some purpose; and hoped to get over the hard times without asking for help, or telling their losses. Olof found the gun beyond his skill; but he went down with it to Thurkill's forge, where all the hardware work of the parish was done. It was a busy time there; sledges were to be repaired, snow-poles pointed, and many a gun put in order as well as Olof's. Besides, the roaring fire and the red sparks from the

anvil looked bright and cheerful through the keen frost; and the blacksmith never wanted work or company. But he repaired Olof's weapon completely for reading to him and his three grown-up sons-who had never gone to school, because their father could not spare them-an old saga, or poem, about the ancient kings of Norway and their wars; and every peasant that came to the forge laid down his goods and listened. The blacksmith gave him a small supply of ammunition also; and, furnished with pole and skates, out went Olof to try his fortune in hunting. There are young men in England who go to hunt for sport,and a barbarous sport it is, which consists in inflicting pain and death on any living thing; but with Olof it was a necessary expedient. to eke out the scanty provisions of the family. The game was scarcer than he expected. At the close of the first day, he brought home one large white hare, on which the household feasted, and his mother made the young hunter a new cap of its skin; the next, he obtained a prize in the shape of a great black cock; and rose in high spirits on the third morning, for the shepherd's sons had told him

that they traced a reindeer on the hills; and he had arranged to go with them and have a shot at it. That day all went on as usual in the cottage: but when the evening was closing in, there was no sign of Olof. The supper was kept back for him; the mother left her wheel, and took long looks from the open door on the wide white valley and the rising moon: but still he didn't come. Christian and Clodimar wrapped their cloaks about them, and said they would go over the firth, and ask for news from the shepherd; but scarce were they half-an-hour gone, when the loud bark of poor Haco was heard at the door, followed by the sound of a sledge bell, which alone proclaims the approach of that wheelless vehicle; and rushing out, the mother and sisters saw by the broad moonlight the pastor's sledge, in which some one lay covered with the good man's lamb-skin cloak, while he acted as driver, and the shepherd's two sons, with Christian and Clodimar, brought up the rear.

"My son!" said the widow, as Olof flung off the cloak with one hand, and tried to rise, but couldn't. "I'm not hurt; it is nothing at all," said the brave boy; "only just a fall.

Help me up, and I will be well enough tomorrow." But the shepherd's sons carried him into his bed by the pastor's directions: and that worthy man explained to his mother how, in the early part of the day, he had got a severe fall, by his snow-pole giving way when in the act of climbing a steep hill, by which his right arm had been broken on the ice, and he feared some internal injury was sustained also. The pastor had, like many of his brethren in remote Norwegian parishes, some knowledge of surgery, and was, indeed, the only physician his people knew. He had therefore been called to Olofa assistance, as he was to everybody's: and having done all he could for the boy, particularly in setting the broken bone, he also brought him home in his sledge, with a small present of meal, and many consolatory words to the family.

It was late before the pastor left them. Olof insisted that he would be well next day; and the widow thanked Providence that her boy's life was spared. But days and nights passed on; and though Pastor Henrick, who visited him as regularly as the sun set, said

he was going on as well as one could expect, poor Olof's recovery was painfully slow. Times with the family grew more pinching than ever, though Christian and Clodimar now went out with the gun, and many promises to their mother not to venture beyond the valley. The game was rapidly disappearing; and it was a lucky day in which they could find a rabbit or a heathfowl. The best of everything was reserved for Olof; but he could scarcely be induced to eat anything, the poor boy was grave and quiet even in health, and now he spoke little, but fretted and pined away in his bed, thinking of the poverty of the family and the burden he was to them. One morning, about ten days after his injury. Christian and Clodimar, who now made it their business to get up first, went. as usual, to supply "Curlycoat" with some of their well-saved hay; but what was their surprise to find the creature stretched out in her place, and positively refusing either to rise or eat. They offered her a drink, and many other inducements, but in vain; and were at last obliged to wake their mother and Frederika on the subject. The cow was

literally the family's last stake, and everything was done for her that they could think useful. At last the shepherd, who was considered an authority in such matters, was consulted; but poor Curlycoat's end had arrived. Whether owing to inferior food, or the rigours of the early winter, the shepherd declared her beyond his skill, and the faithful creature looked up at her kind mistress, and died with a low moan, just as Pastor Henrick, with his good dame, for whose recovery there had been a general thanksgiving in the parish some weeks before, came down in their sledge to visit Olof. The pastor was grieved to hear of their loss, and took occasion to inquire more particularly than he had yet done, regarding the family supplies. Overwhelmed by her late misfortune, and the wretched prospects of her household for the winter, poor Dame Erickson acknowledged, for the first time, the whole extent of their poverty: that they had not a month's provision on the most meager calculation; but, she added, the boys might shoot something; besides, they had each a dollar; and if she and her children could manage to subsist to the arrival of

the winter traders, they might get news of the legacy, and some neighbour, perhaps old Hereward, who was said to have a store, might give them meal on credit till the spring came in, and the money could be got from Drontheim.

Kindly and simple as the pastor was, he could not forbear smiling at the widow's plan. The traders were indeed the bearers of all news and letters to those secluded valleys; but what if the taxman could not succeed in finding the Drontheim counsellor, whose very name he did not remember? or what if the whole story were a mistake, and there was, after all, no legacy for the Ericksons? But here the frank and prudent Frau Henrick came to their assistance.

"Husband," said she, "you know that our supply of wood is rather scanty this year, and our garden did not yield well. I have a lot of wool too on hand, which my daughter Hilda and I were prevented from spinning by the fever; now, Dame Erickson, as you have plenty of firewood, and only some garden vegetables, which would be a poor support for the children in this cold winter,

bring all with you and come to our house; you are welcome to share of our roof and our provisions. The wood will help to keep us all warm; you and the girls will do what you can at the wheel; we will nurse Olof among us; and as I hear their uncle wants help now, he might be glad to have Christian and Clodimar; and if that does not please him, boys," she continued, stroking down Clodimar's yellow hair, "you will be welcome to stay with us till spring comes again; and if there be no legacy at Drontheim, perhaps another cow, and seed for a new harvest, might be gathered among the neighbours." "Do come, dame," rejoined the pastor, who, though it promised a heavy tax on his own store, approved of his wife's offer, and wished to overcome the widow's scruples; "the wool could never be spun in time without you, and the firewood will be a great help to 118."

The widow was averse to leaving the cottage where she had spent so many happy years, struggled so bravely with misfortune, and waited so hopefully for Christian's return; though a sad suspicion grew up among her latter calamities, that probably the neighbours were right, and he might never come back. But the Henricks' proposal was now their only chance for life; it also promised better accommodation for her sick boy; and the good woman was especially reconciled to it by the pastor's last observations, which held out a prospect of usefulness rather than dependance. Olof rejoiced over the arrangement, chiefly because it would secure a winter's comfort for his poor mother and sisters; and poured out his thanks to the good pastor, mingled with many declarations of what would be done on his recovery, and how soon it should take place.

Eventually it was agreed that their removal would be accomplished on the following day,—the pastor promising to summon a few assistants for that purpose, and accompany the boys to their uncle's house, that old Hereward might be induced to receive them the more kindly.

That was a sad night for the Ericksons, when the pastor and his dame were gone, and they thought of leaving their own hearth, for how long none could tell; but there was no choice: go they must; and the mother said she trusted that Providence would help them back again.

The next day all were alert to collect their goods and chattels. Pastor Henrick's house was larger and better furnished than theirs; but crowding up is thought no inconvenience in the north, and the Ericksons were proud of how much they could take with them. Towards evening, the pastor arrived, true to his promise, with some neighbours and their sledges. The cottage fire was extinguished, the outer door secured, and, sad of heart, though thankful, the whole family, with their entire stock, including old Haco and the squirrel, which poor Clotilde carried in her arms, were conveyed to Pastor Henrick's house.

As I have said, it was a cottage like their own, but something larger, and now pretty well filled, being inhabited by the pastor, his wife, his mother-in-law, his daughter, seven sons, two orphan nephews whom he had adopted, and all the Ericksons. At one end of the large family sitting-room, which also did duty for a kitchen, were the wheels

and cards continually at work on the much talked of wool: and in the other, a few-shelves of books, covered with a dark brown curtain, having room behind it for the pastor's chair, a small writing table, and a lamp, constituted at once his study and library. Moreover, the good man's school was kept by his own fireside on the long winter nights; and he congratulated Christian and Clodimar on being now nearer it than ever. Fran Henrick received them with her wonted kindness: and Hilda, who had no sister, warmly welcomed the girls. The rest of the day was spent in arranging their goods and quarters. Next morning, Frederika and her mother were spinning side by side; Clotilde was making herself generally useful. Olof, reclining on a low settle which the aged grandmother occupied close beside the fire, was endeavouring to make her hear an old Norwegian hymn; and Christian and Clodimar. determined to work for their own living if possible, set out, with many good advices from their mother, in the pastor's company, to the house of old Hereward.

The mill was shut up and silent by its

frozen stream, and the miller sat smoking in the corner of his wide chimney when they arrived. A great wood fire blazed before him. and on the other side were his two notable daughters, with their apprentices, three young girls from a distant valley, hard at work, with cards and wheels, while all the boys sat round making nets and baskets, a stock of which old Hereward always sold to the winter traders. He welcomed the pastor and his nephews drily: asked them to sit down, and inquired after the news, which Pastor Henrick immediately gave him in a relation of the Ericksons' misfortunes. "The rest of the family have come to live with us," said the good man, "and I hope you have room for your nephews this hard winter; they are good boys, and willing to work, I'm sure."

"Indeed we are, uncle," cried Christian; "only try us."

"No doubt, no doubt!" interrupted old Hereward; "but don't depend on me. I'm a poor man, and have a large family of my own. You know, pastor," he continued, putting on a rueful countenance, "what I have lost by the Ericksons already." The pastor was about to remonstrate, when the sound of bells came loudly up the valley, and Hereward's youngest son, who had gone to the door, rushed in, shouting that the winter traders were come.

"Perhaps they have news for us," thought the brothers, as they ran out, followed by the miller's household; for the coming of the traders was a great event in the valley. Up the level ice of the firth swept a long line of sledges, some drawn by horses, some by reindeer, but all filled with men, or piled up with goods. In front of each sat the driver in his grey wolf-skin cap and cloak, shaking the reins, from which dozens of small bells were tinkling, while larger ones about the necks of the horses sounded at every step. Behind, groups of men, women, and children, every one laden with something to sell, came skating along from distant hamlets. scarce less filled than their own brought up the rear. All the neighbours gathered to the spot, as the winter traders were known for many a year to take their station just in front of the mill. Everybody lent what assistance they could. In a short time the sledges were arranged in two long lines on the ice, with a narrow passage between them, at one end of which was pitched a large tent for the accommodation of the cattle; at the other, one for the men, where a large fire was lighted, and two of their wives, who had accompanied them, were busy cooking from the provision sledge. Every man removed the covering from his own goods, and the market commenced as usual.

Business was opened by the master of trade. such being the title of a sort of captain whom the traders elected from among themselves to preside over their long journeys, and take care of the news' bag. It was a great leather sack, stuffed with all manner of packets, and now produced from the bottom of his sledge: dozens of eager faces, besides those of Pastor Henrick and the brothers, crowded round the sturdy trader as he quietly unfastened the innumerable straps and buckles with which it was secured, and proceeded to distribute the contents. Many were the commissions which those trusty travellers fulfilled by means of the news' bag. For one, there was a packet of garden seeds; for another, a

letter from distant friends; locks of guns, pieces of finery, and small valuables sent for repair in the former season,—all were given to their respective owners. At last came a book for the pastor; but no letter for the Ericksons.

"Have you really no news for us, sir?" cried Christian as he saw the bag emptied. "None, my boy," said the master of trade. who remembered the family. "But how is your mother? and why is it that we saw no smoke from your cottage when coming up the firth?" It was a sad story for Christian to relate how they had lost their crop and their cow: how Olof had been hurt on the ice, and gone with their mother and sisters to the kind pastor's house, while he and his brother came in search of work and shelter to their hard-hearted uncle; he also explained to the trader's satisfaction all the taxman had told them, and their hopes regarding the Drontheim legacy. The pastor assisted with all his might, and every trader seemed interested: but none of them could give the least intelligence, or had even seen the taxman. "Well. my children," said the master of trade, "if your uncle won't take you, never mind the old hunks; I have no boys of my own, and want a couple of smart lads to help me; so if your mother has no objection to let you travel, I'll promise to find you food and clothes, and a dollar apiece every season, if you are faithful, and deserve it. Besides, we are going to Drontheim in the course of the winter, and we'll see about the legacy."

Christian and Clodimar clapped their hands in concert at this promise; they thanked the master of trade, and earnestly begged the pastor to go home with them immediately, and ask their mother's consent. The poor boys believed, that not only might they reach the Drontheim legacy on their travels, but perhaps find their father, and bring him home with them to live happily again in their own old cottage. Pastor Henrick tried to reason them out of this notion as they proceeded to his house, saying, that their father was long at rest, that the traders led a hard life, and travelling had many dangers; yet he advised the widow not to oppose their going, as the boys were anxious for it, and the master of trade seemed more kindly than old Hereward.

The widow's spirit was wearied, though not broken, by her many reverses. Now that the last hope of that winter was gone, she knew that all either her or the girls could do, would be but a trifling return to the good pastor for their maintenance; and as this was the only prospect her sons had to earn their own living, after balancing the matter for some minutes in her mind, and wiping away some large tears with the corner of her apron, she said she would speak with the master of trade, and let them go. The traders generally remained for a week in the valley, during which a sort of fair was held; people came from all quarters to buy and sell with them. On the second day, the firth was covered for a considerable distance with tents, fires, and stands of goods; scores of people were bustling about; friends were meeting; and every hour there arrived groups of skaters, or heavily laden sledges;among them that of Pastor Henrick, containing his good dame and the widow Erickson, with bundles of yarn and other saleable productions heaped round them-the eldest son acting as driver; and the younger portion of the household, including Christian and Clodimar, with their two sisters, under the pastor's own escort, came skating along to the fair.

It was a gay and a bustling scene in that clear winter day. There was not, indeed, so much of shows and gingerbread as an English fair can boast; but besides the things to be bought and sold, there were tents, where young people danced to the music of violins; and temporary tables beside the fires, where old people whose markets were satisfactory, treated each other to good dinners, cooked upon the spot, and too many of them drank brandy. The same fair had been held, year after year, in Gamle Fiord as long as its oldest inhabitant could remember; and, readers, far greater assemblies of the kind take place every winter on the frozen rivers beside large northern towns,such as the winter fairs of Germany and Russia; and the like has occurred even on British rivers in seasons of extraordinary frost.

That was a pleasant day for the Ericksons and all their friends. Frau Henrick disposed of her yarn to her heart's content; the widow and Frederika realized a helping trifle out of their industry; and the master of trade

agreed to take Christian and Clodimar on the terms he had promised, telling their mother that all the neighbours had given him a good account of them, and he would consider them as his own sons till their return to the valley on the following winter.

The remaining days were passed by Christian and Clodimar in getting ready their clothes. with the help of their mother and sisters. Their stock was neither large nor fine: but travelling in such intense cold requires a deal of warm garments; and had my readers seen them on the morning of their outset-equipped with large snow boots of untanned deer-skin, having the hairy side turned in, a couple of heavy woollen frocks, worn one above the other, and reaching almost to the ankle, fur caps, and each a lamb-skin cloak, presented by the good Frau Henrick-they must have thought them perfect bundles of clothes; but all were necessary as a defence against the frost. Olof wept sore because he could not accompany his brothers, and entreated Christian to take his cap, made from the skin of the white hare he had brought home with so much triumph just before his accident.

All the Henricks bade them a kind farewell. and warned the brothers not to forget them among the great things they should see. The pastor gave them his blessing, together with the prayer-book in which he had taught them to read, many wise and pious counsels, and a red leather purse containing some Norwegian coins, which amounted to a few shillings of our money. Christian sometimes feared it was wrong, but, by agreement between him and Clodimar, he placed the said coins, together with the dollar notes given them by old Earnest, between the leaves of his mother's prayer-book where they knew she most frequently read, and took the pastor's purse empty in his pocket, while the good man got ready his skates and snow-pole, and set out with the widow and her daughters, to see them as far as the starting place. Little Clotilde held all the way by Clodimar's hand; Frederika talked to Christian; and the widow said nothing, but kept looking at her sons.

It was almost mid-winter, and the days were scarcely five hours long; the sun looked large and low in the sky, as he looks when near his setting in English summer evenings; a cold grey light lay on the glittering ice of the valley, on the cliffs that seemed like piles of crystal, and the dark pine woods beyond. When they reached the fair ground, all the neighbours had assembled to take leave of the traders; the latter were harnessing their horses and reindeer; their tents were struck, and packed up: their sledges heaped, if possible, higher than on their arrival, with the goods they had bought; but the master told Christian and Clodimar there was room for them on the top, bid their mother not fear, for he would bring them safe back, as sure as his name was Wolfried Knudson.

"Mother dear, don't forget us," said Christian, "when the summer comes, and you and all the rest go back to our old cottage!" The widow kissed and blessed them; Frederika and Clotilde took a brave farewell, for all were determined not to trouble the traders with their sorrow; and the boys jumped up as directed, and took their seats, with the leather bag which held their summer things between them. The pastor's last words were, that he hoped they would be good boys; and away went the sledges with a jingle of bells, and

a shout for good luck from all the neighbours as they swept down the firth. Their mother and sisters looked after them till they were out of sight, and then turned sorrowfully homeward with the pastor. There they all fell to work as usual: the pastor taught his school, the women spun together, and Olof's broken arm grew stronger day by day. But let us follow Christian and Clodimar.

Joyful as the young brothers had been to go, when they could no longer see their people, and the spire of the old church was fading in the distance, truth obliges me to confess, that they covered their faces with their hands, and wept together like babes. But this did not last long. Christian recollected that the traders might see them, and Clodimar thought that they might find their father; so they wiped up their tears, and began to look about them.

On, on went the sledges, without a sound but that of the chiming bells, and sometimes a verse of an old Norwegian song from one of the traders to beguile the way. Wolfried had told them they were bound for Christiania, and the boys speculated largely on the wonders of the great city; but nothing could they see around them but the high wooded mountains, the frozen waters, and, here and there, the smoke of a distant cottage rising through the still frosty air. Night came down as it comes in the Norwegian winter,-long and bright, with a clear, cold moon and stars. It was many a mile to the nearest post-house; but the travellers paused, as the moon rose, in the shadow of a tall fir wood, to give a hard barley cake—a stock of which they carried for the purpose-to each of their horses and reindeer; and half-adozen men, the boys being helpers, broke the thick ice from a small spring, to let the cattle drink. A distribution of rve bread and brandy was then made among the company. Those who had driven through the day resigned that duty to others; and thus they proceeded, till the solitary post-house was reached at midnight.

It was a sort of substitute for an inn—a large cottage situated by the lonely wayside. The honest peasant to whom it belonged had retired to rest, with all his family, except the eldest boy, who sat scouring his gun by the



blazing fire; and he welcomed the travellers to put up their animals, and supply them with provender, which they themselves carried, to cook their own provisions in the common room, where they had also the privilege of sleeping under their cloaks on bundles of barley straw. These hardy doings were by no means so strange to the brothers of my story as they would have been to some voung gentlemen of England. Christian and Clodimar slept soundly on the barley straw till they were roused by the master's hand-It was his duty to wake the company with that instrument in the grey of the winter dawn. Then they prepared their own breakfast, mounted the sledge' which they had helped to harness, and were not a little proud to be entrusted with the reins. Wolfried was a frank kindly man, but he specially liked useful people; and the boys had already gained his good graces, as well as those of all the company, by their cheerful obliging habits. He told them of the terrible snow storms he had encountered in his many travels, and how his wife and two young children had died of the fever in Christiania long ago.

when he was far off on a journey to Finmark. So they travelled on for two more days and nights, stopping to sleep at the post-houses, till about noon in the fourth day, the lessening woods, and more frequent cottages, warned them that they were approaching Christiania.

The capital of Norway is scarcely as large as an English fourth-rate town, and was still less at the period of my story; yet, when the brothers caught sight of its tall spires rising over the snowy valley, where it stands at the top of Christian Fiord, a long firth, with many arms and windings,-when they saw the great houses which its rich men had built for themselves on every pleasant spot in the neighbourhood, and the number of sledges and travellers that seemed pouring to and from it, their wonder rose to a height which greatly amused the traders, and became almost boundless when fairly within the city. They had never seen a town before. Perhaps it has not been so with any of my readers. Living in our rich and populous Britain, they have doubtless visited some great town; yet, even to them, Christiania would have presented a strange and curious

scene. The houses, many of them built of wood, with high pointed gables turned to the street, and very few chimneys, owing to the use of stoves; the streets smooth with solid ice, and filled with people in queer winter dresses: the better classes scarcely shewing their noses through fur cloaks and wrappers: and the gaily painted sledges, with merry companies and sounding bells, meeting one at every turn, just like our cabs and coaches. There were also to be seen men from all the northern nations of Europe, in the dresses of their respective countries. Small Laplanders. wrapped in the skins of reindeers; tall, quietlooking Finns; Russians, Danes, Swedes, and Germans; men from Friesland, with the old Dutch dress and iron skates: and strangers. whom the traders spoke of as seamen from the great islands of Britain.

All these the brothers saw, and much besides that was new and wonderful to them;—the shops, the warehouses, and the public buildings, which Wolfried pointed out and explained as soon as he had his goods stored up, and they had all refreshed themselves at the traders' inn. It was a large old timber

house of four stories, with a court-yard at the side, and the street door in the gable. The lower flat was entirely stores and stables, and those above were divided into many rooms of better and worse quality, which were charged for accordingly. Wolfried had an apartment on the attic, with a small stove, a double skylight, a bed for himself, and a low settle for the boys. Their meals were taken in a common room with the traders; but all day, and part of the long night, they were hard at work, helping Wolfried in a sort of cellar below, which served the company for a general warehouse. There the poorer class of shopkeepers came to purchase the country produce they had brought; and the brothers were kept continually busy, opening bags and bales, tying up parcels, and running at every call. All the customers praised their smartness; and Wolfried said they would become great traders themselves in time. It might be that both were too fond of praise, or that they worked too hard at times to gain an occasional hour for rambling about Christiania, and seeing its wonders, to tell at Gamle Fiord. Perhaps the close atmosphere

of the town, so different from the fresh country air to which they had been accustomed, told on the youngest boy; for Clodimar fell sick.

One morning, about a fortnight after their arrival, when rising, he whispered to Christian that his head ached dreadfully; but he went to work as usual. Towards noon the pain increased; and though the boy tried to hold out, his master at length observed that something was wrong. Poor Clodimar answered to his inquiries, with tears, that he could no longer sit up.

"Well, never mind my boy," said the good trader; "go to bed, and I'll warrant you'll be better to-morrow." Hour after hour Christian stole up to see his brother. He brought cold water, and even snow, to relieve his burning head; but all in vain. Clodimar couldn't sleep, and grew worse and worse till nightfall, when Wolfried at once sent for a doctor, who prescribed some medicine; but said, he feared it was the commencement of a fever. The innkeeper took alarm at this news, and said he would not have the business of his house endangered by a contagious disease. There was then no fever hospital

in Christiania,—such charitable institutions being much scarcer over all Europe than they are at present; but, by persuasion of the traders—who were themselves much afraid of the fever—and the promise of repayment from Wolfried, Clodimar was removed to an old lumber room, at the end of a long passage in the lower story, where the only furniture allowed was a poor bed and an old stove; and none but the doctor would venture to come in.

"I'll take care of my brother," said Christian; "we'll live and die together, and they won't forget us at Gamle Fiord."

It was a long sore sickness, and a weary watch he had in that solitary room. Being out of sight, the boys were often forgotten; but, though almost half-starved at times himself, Christian never allowed his brother to want for anything that he could either do or find. The sick-room light was a splinter of pinewood, and his bed a bundle of straw beside the stove, from which the faintest sound would rouse him; for day-light, there was a small window looking into a dingy court. But the doctor came often, and was kind; yet

Clodimar grew worse and worse; and one night when his mind was wandering, and he talked strangely of their own people in the far valley, Wolfried came to the window, and told Christian that he must set out next morning with his company for Drontheim; but he had paid for their maintenance a month at the inn, and would surely send them word about the legacy.

Christian's heart sunk within him, and it was not without some tears that he thanked his master for all the kindness he had shewn to them, and begged him not to delay long in sending them news from Drontheim, and advising them what they should do when the month was over.—"I will return by that time, and the doctor has promised to look after you and your brother. Should he want anything besides, buy it with that," said the trader, raising the sash to slip in a dollar; "and Providence protect you, my brave boy," added Wolfried, running off as fast as he could for fear of infection.

Christian felt still more desolate when the traders had departed, though none of them ever ventured to enter the room. It was

consolatory to think there were some people he knew in that strange city; but now he and his brother were alone in Christiania. What is called the turn in his brother's fever, came at last. He had been long asleep, and Christian, worn out with watching, threw himself down upon the straw about an hour, when the day began to break, and there came a sound of bells from every church in the city. "What's that. Christian?" said Clodimar feebly;-he hadn't spoken a word for days.-"'Tis the bells, dear," said Christian; "this is Christmas morning;"-and the boys sighed together. They knew how Christmas was welcomed far away by their own old firth, and how merrily the bell, hung between the frosted elms, was chiming in the ears of Olof and their young sisters. "My mother will mind us when they go to church," said Christian; and he listened to the mingled din of steps and voices that rose from the streets and lanes. They keep Christmas merrily in Norway; but the young Ericksons were poor, and they had no friends to remember them in the festivity. So the holidays passed on, and Christian watched by his sick brother in that dark dull room; yet, in spite of poverty and miserable accommodation, from that day Clodimar recovered.

His recovery was slow; and when at last he could creep out of bed, it grieved Christian's heart to see how pale and hollow the once rosy cheek had grown, and how his vellow hair had fallen away. He escaped the fever; but many hardships, and attendance on his brother, had made him almost as thin and pale; and the two could do little but crouch about the stove, thinking how rapidly the month for which Wolfried had paid was passing away, and still no news or sign of his return. As for the doctor, he had many richer patients, and perhaps forgot his promise to their master. He came one day and found Clodimar up, said he would soon be quite well, advised him to take care of catching cold, and never visited them again. However, things were better with them, as they had lately found a friend in the inn. Its owner was a churlish bustling man, who cared for nothing but his business and the profit it brought him; his wife was a saving hardworking woman; and both toiled early and

late to make a fortune for their only son. Master Frederick. He was a boy about Clodimar's age, with a discontented look, and very red hair. His father never expected him to do anything,—his mother had spoiled him to such a degree, that he would not go to school in winter, but idled about the house, playing with the stable boys, and troubling the older servants. Christian had lately assisted him to release his dog from the fangs of a larger one which had attacked it in the court-vard, and a sort of friendship grew up between them. Master Frederick barely remembered a friend longer than a fortnight, -there were always new ones to be found at the inn; but he told his mother a great deal about the Ericksons, and they received more attention in consequence.

It was now a new year; the days were lengthening, though the great frost still continued. Clodimar, wrapped in all the clothes his brother could spare in addition to his own, stole out sometimes to breathe the cold fresh air, and see the gay streets; but the month expired, and brought no news of Wolfried. Christian was going to watch for the post



with some faint hope of intelligence, when, on crossing the court-yard, he observed the inn-keeper and all his people busy in harnessing a number of sledges for a party of gentlemen who seemed impatient to set out. The owner of the house was in far the greatest hurry, and seeing he required assistance, Christian ran up and gave him all the help he could, while his own son leant lazily out of an upper window, wrapped in a fur-trimmed cloak, and smoking a long German pipe. "What's your name, my active lad?" said the innkeeper, as he made his last bow to the departing customers.

"Christian Erickson, sir," said the boy.

"Oh! yes," continued the busy man, "I recollect, you are one of the boys Wolfried Knudson left at my house. How is your brother?"

"Much better, sir," said Christian, who seldom got an opportunity of speaking to that great man; "and I wish I could get work to do, for we are very poor, and our master has not come back."

"Well 'tis a pity you should want employment," said the innkeeper, "and I turned off two stable boys this morning. The young rascals made faces at Frederick. Here, Hans," he continued, addressing a great rough Finn, who acted as hostler, "take this boy to help you, and his brother too when he gets strong enough. Let them have their victuals in the kitchen; and make yourself useful," said he, with a warning look at Christian as he turned into the house.

Useful enough was poor Christian made, and Clodimar too, as soon as he was able. The boys were willing to work, though it was for no wages; but they were allowed to sleep in the old lumber room, to get their meals when the servants were done, and sit in a spare corner at the great kitchen fire in the evening. All about the house found business for them of every variety, from scrubbing the pots to scouring the harness; yet the boys grew gradually strong and healthy as the winter wore away; Clodimar's hair began to grow, and his bright colour returned; they did not forget Gamle Fiord, but sang its songs together at their work. Everybody liked the Ericksons; and Master Frederick found no fault, but that they had no time to play with him. The language and oaths heard about the inn-yard at times, were, indeed, far different from the simple friendly talk of Pastor Henrick's parishioners: but the brothers remembered how their good pastor had warned them against the evil they might hear, and their mother prayed that they might learn only what was good. They had kept Wolfried's dollar through many temptations to spend it on the fine and good things which everywhere met their eyes; and now every week added something to the little store, from rich or liberal travellers, to whom the boys rendered many a service. All was dropped into the pastor's purse, to be carried home to their mother; and happy were they, on counting the contents one night about the beginning of spring, to find that the stock had increased to three dollars and a-quarter.

The frost now broke up, with high winds and heavy rain; skates and sledges could no longer be used on the streets of Christiania,—which looked as if a muddy river had been turned upon them,—and all the citizens kept within doors. But those days past, the sun again shone out, the snow was gone, the trees

began to bud, the surrounding fields looked green, and the brothers knew that spring was come at Gamle Fiord also. There was bustle now about the quays and dock-yards; for the ice was cleared from the harbour, and foreign ships began to arrive. Clodimar and Christian went there when they had time, because the inn-keeper had told them, that some ship from Drontheim might bring intelligence of their master. They had got leave to go one sunny afternoon, which proved the most eventful of their days.

Whilst standing together on the pier, gazing at a great strange vessel,—which a seaman told them was an English whaler that had been frozen up all winter in the Greenland seas, and called at Christiania on its homeward passage, for repairs and water,—Frederick came running up with a face full of importance; his father had just got a letter from Wolfried Knudson, and he liked to tell news. The trader and his company had been in trouble all winter; they could not get their goods sold; and the whole of their horses and reindeer had died of a disease then raging among the Drontheim cattle. Wolfried was a good

sort of a man; but in his own difficulties he had forgotten the poor strange boys whom he left in a much worse plight in the inn; and at last wrote to inquire after them;—saying also, that he had ascertained the truth of the taxman's story; that Earnest himself had been in the city, but left it three weeks before his arrival, everybody said, in company with the lawyer to whom Karl's property had been entrusted, and no one could give the least account of what direction they had taken.

"Did he not speak of sending for us?" cried Christian, in bitter disappointment.

"Not he, indeed!" responded Frederick with a swagger. "There is quite enough on his hands, I imagine; but come home, for you're wanted in the stable."

During the narration, the three had been moving towards the inn, and at this moment reached an unoccupied corner near the wharf, where small traders were in the habit of setting up their booths in the summer time.

"Come in, my handsome boys; come in, and try your luck!" cried a shabby-looking fellow in front of an open shed, where two cunning Danes had set up a sort of gaming-

table, with the words, "Profit" and "Loss" alternately chalked on its surface; and the play consisted in twirling round a piece of painted wood, in shape resembling an inverted nine-pin, then allowing it to fall of itself on the table; and according to the word nearest the pointed end, the player received double his stake, or one of the Danes swept it into an open drawer.

"Isn't it beautiful?" cried Frederick; and just as he spoke, a grown boy of his acquaintance walked out, swinging a silk purse over his finger.

"Have you won, Wolfgang?" said Frederick.

"Only ten dollars," said the boy, giving his purse another swing; "I have long wished for a pony, and this will buy it. Won't you trv a turn?"

"I have no money about me," said Frederick, searching his pockets, and almost crying with vexation. "Wolfgang, will you lend me some? -But no, run to my mother, Christian, and tell her for any sake to send me a quarter-dollar."

"She won't give it for gaming, sure?" said Christian.

"Gaming, indeed!" said Frederick. "What

do you know about such matters, who never had a farthing of money in all your life?"

"Oh! yes, look we have," cried Clodimar—who delighted in carrying the purse—as he pulled it out; "Christian and I have here whole three dollars and a-quarter."

"You'll make your fortune, boys!" cried Wolfgang; "that will bring just six dollars and a-half clear profit."

"But we might lose," said Christian.

"No fear of that," answered Wolfgang.

"They say nobody loses," echoed Frederick.

"Nine dollars and three-quarters to take home," whispered Clodimar. "O Christian, that would buy another cow!"

"But I don't like to play," said Christian, half persuaded.

"You must play though, or lend me the money, and then I'll win it all myself!" cried the little tyrant of the inn; and poor Christian stepped up to the table.

"Room for that handsome young gentleman who comes to try his luck. There's good fortune in his face," said the cunning old Dane, with his hands on the knob of the drawer. In full persuasion of carrying home nine

dollars and three-quarters, while Clodimar debated whether they should buy a cow or barley with the sum, Christian took up the nine-pin, deposited the pastor's purse on the table, and twirled the instrument of fraud. He watched it, in breathless expectation, spin round, and veer from one side to another till it fell.

"There, my fine fellow!" cried the Dane; "better luck the next time; you see it's lost!" and he swept the purse into the drawer. Poor Christian had seen it point to "Loss," and now he could scarcely see at all with perfect desperation;—all their savings gone! 'twas a heavy punishment for his folly.

"Oh! sir, sure you won't keep the purse too?" cried Clodimar. "We got it from our pastor; and what would he say, to hear that it was lost in gaming?"

"Stand off and leave room if you wont take another trial," cried a large rough man, who smoked at the back of the shed. "Your pastor, indeed! I'll warrant you stole it, purse and all."

"No, we never stole anything," cried Clodimar, while his eyes flashed with anger;

"and if I were bigger, I would fight you, for saying such a thing of my brother and me."

"Get out this minute, or I'll give you to the watchman!" thundered the Dane, while Frederick and Wolfgang both ran away; and as he approached to put his threat in execution, in walked a party of strange-looking seamen.

"Noble English gentlemen!" cried the man of the drawer, "this is the place to make your fortunes;" and his colleague attempted to collar Clodimar, but Christian sprang to the rescue. The fierce Dane struck at him; but one of the Englishmen caught him by the neck, and another seized his arm, exclaiming, in good Norwegian, "Fie! you wicked fellow; what have the children done?"

"They're a couple of young pickpockets," said the Dane, still holding Clodimar fast.

"A gentleman cannot walk the street in peace for them."

"It's not true, sir; it's not true!" cried Christian. The faces of the two friendly seamen reminded him of those in his own valley, and he knew they were not English. "We're honest boys, and work for our own victuals."

"We never picked anybody's pocket!" shouted Clodimar, with a torrent of tears. "Ask the innkeeper. Ask the trader Wolfried. Ask Pastor Henrick, and all the neighbours at Gamle Fiord."

"Let them go !" cried the seamen at once, giving the Dane such a shove as sent him to the other end of the shed, and all the Englishmen gathered round them.

"Boys, what do you know about Gamle Fiord?" said the elder man.

"Oh! sir," said Christian, "we were born there. Our father was Christian Erickson, a good man, and a brave fisher; but he and our cousin Hereward went out after the mackerel, seven long years ago, and never came back. The neighbours all said he was drowned; but my mother didn't believe it; and we wrought hard and lived together till last winter; but we lost our crop and our cow, sir; and my brother broke his arm on the ice. Pastor Henrick took all the rest home; and as our uncle wouldn't take us, we came away with the winter traders."

When Christian had reached this part of the story, he perceived that the seaman's face was strangely altered, and he kept looking first at him, and then at his brother. At last, throwing an arm round each, he drew them to him, and said, in a low voice, "Boys, is your mother alive yet?"

"She is! she is!" cried the amazed brothers; "and Olof, and Frederika, and Clotilde. The pastor is kind to them all."

"Will none of the noble Englishmen try their luck?" cried the old Dane. But the Englishmen laughed at him, and all walked out, following the two Norwegians, who almost carried the boys between them,—the one exclaiming, "I'm your father!" and the other, "I'm your cousin Hereward!"

How Christian and Clodimar laughed and cried,—how they danced, and sung, and told stories, both at once, about Gamle Fiord, and all that had happened to them, my readers may imagine. Also, how they wondered, when their father told them that Hereward and he had been carried out to the ocean by the ebbing tide, and picked up, on the second day, by a Russian vessel, bound for the far Aleutian isles, where they killed the great sea-cow for its teeth, and a ship came, once

in the three years, from Archangel, to carry home the ivory. How they had been sealhunters there; and, when at length they obtained a passage homeward, were shipwrecked on the Greenland coast, and spent a winter among the wild Esquimaux, till the English whaler came and took them on board. How they had harpooned the great black whale off Spitzbergen, and were surrounded by the floating icebergs, when steering southward with full sail, and ten thousand barrels of oil: but the ice broke at last, and the spring came, and they had steered for the harbour of Christiania, where the ship had been for some days; and the good English captain, whom they had served well in the Greenland seas, promised to pay them both off, that they might go with a timber-merchant's agent, in his lighter, up their own firth to the valley.

All the English seamen knew the story of their Norwegian comrades; so they pressed them to bring the boys on board, in a boat which lay close to the pier, and pulled away to the vessel, giving three cheers for the prodigal sons, as they called Christian and Clodimar. The captain heard the noise, and came up from his own cabin to inquire what it meant. Hereward was the first to explain. He spoke English well; and the story interested his commander so much, that he asked after every particular. Bitterly ashamed were the brothers, when they came to relate how the pastor's purse had been lost in gambling.

"I say, captain," said an old seaman, who stood by smoking, "have you any objections to half-a-dozen of us bearing a hand and bringing back the lads' money from that piratical Dane?"

"None in the world," said the captain; but, that moment, a boat came alongside, and a voice was heard inquiring if the young Ericksons were on board.

"Here we are, and we have found our father!" shouted Christian, who knew it to be that of an old watchman to whom he had often brought a light for his pipe when on duty near the inn.

"And I have found your money?" said the watchman, as he stepped on board, and handed to Christian the pastor's purse, with

all the dollars in it. He then related how a row had been raised in the shed by Master Frederick, whom Wolfgang-now discovered to be the old Dane's nephew and assistanthad enticed back to try his luck with a pair of his father's silver buckles. Of course Frederick lost, and roared about foul play. Some by-standers took his part, others went against him, and the consequence was a quarrel, which the watch had to settle by taking Danes and all into custody; but not till the table was overturned, and the contents of the drawers scattered about, among which the watchman found the purse; and having seen it with the boys, he traced them out, and came to restore it, on the principle that one good turn deserves another.

The father thanked the watchman warmly, and asked him to join him at the inn, to which he intended proceeding as soon as his sons had sufficiently seen the vessel. It was a great sight for them, that gallant ship with all its rigging and cargo. They had heard Pastor Henrick speak with the travellers who came to Gamle Fiord of the English;—how their ships were seen in every sea, and

their flag on every shore; and seeing the great ship, was, to their simple minds, like seeing England itself. The captain was a strict, but good-natured man. He allowed them to admire everything to their hearts' content, paid their father and Hereward their wages down, (Christian and Clodimar had never seen so many dollars,) and afterwards treated them, as the boys were wont to tell, with real wine in his own cabin.

A happier party never stepped on shore from that old whaler. At the inn they found Master Frederick rather out of sorts, from having been sent home with a sharp rebuke from the magistrate, and the loss of the silver buckles, which totally disappeared in the fray; but Wolfgang and the Danes were committed for three months to the house of correction, as rogues and vagabonds. The news concerning his stable-boys had already reached the innkeeper, and he congratulated them in a most friendly manner, especially when the elder Christian ordered a good dinner for them and the watchman. Over that dinner the tale of the Drontheim legacy was discussed, and Wolfried's letter read. It contained only what Frederick had told them; and the father said, he would have gone to Drontheim if Karl had been still living; but now he would go home to his family.

Another day was spent in the purchase of necessaries for home,-seeds, provisions, a new boat; and out of the remnants of his hardwon dollars, Christian provided a Sunday coat for himself and each of his boys,-not forgetting Olof,-and gowns of printed linen for their mother and sisters. They left a kind message for Wolfried at the inn, and, in the evening, went on board the lighter.—a small vessel, manned by the agent and three sailors, and bound for the old firth to purchase mountain-pine. A voyage round the rocky coasts and winding bays of Norway is pleasant on the sunny days and dewy nights of spring. The wind was with them; and the father recognized, like old unforgotten friends, every creek and headland on their way to Gamle Fiord. It was a glorious morning when they sailed up the firth, calm and bright like that on which my story began; but the first flush of summer was on the woods and hills. Christian and Clodimar stood on the deck,

with each a hand of their father, who, after many hardships, looked still a robust handsome man in his English sailor's dress. They welcomed every place of old resort as it neared upon them. There was the church spire, the smoke of scattered cottages, the copse where they gathered wild strawberries. and the pool where they watched for the coming of the wild duck. At last came the dark outline of their uncle's mill, and the cottage they had left in so much sorrow; but a blue smoke was rising from its chimney, and two fine cows, and a Danish horse, broused on the sward beyond. The lighter hauled up, and the father jumped on shore, followed, in a rush, by Christian, Clodimar, and Hereward. It was their mother they saw spinning slowly under the poplar tree: but her face was turned away to look at Frederika and Clotilde, who were planting flowers in the garden, while Olof delved lustily beside them.

"Mother, dear, we are come home, and we have found out father!" shouted the boys in a breath. But, readers, great joy can never be described; and my story for the juveniles



"It was their mother they saw, spinning slowly under the poplar tree."—See Page 96.

has reached its close. I will only add, by way of explanation, that the prosperous state in which they found their family, was owing to the fact of their having received the longpromised legacy. Earnest had been delayed by sickness on his journey to Drontheim; but at last recovered, and found out the counsellor, to whom he gave Pastor Henrick's letter, and told all he knew about the Ericksons. From his narrative the counsellor learned. that the pastor had been his fellow-student and dear friend, years ago, at the University of Karlstadt, and being independent of business, he determined to pay him a visit, as the winter season makes travelling easy in Norway. To Gamle Fiord, accordingly, the counsellor travelled, having engaged Earnest to escort him, and carried with him Karl's entire property, in money and necessary goods for the poor cottagers. He arrived safe; and all the neighbours assisted in, what they called, setting up the widow Erickson, as soon as spring commenced. The counsellor still remained with Pastor Henrick; and both had been meditating plans of inquiry after the boys.

What merry-making there was in the valley of Gamle Fiord to welcome the long lost fisherman! How the pastor shared their joy, as he had done all their difficulties; and even the penurious old miller made a feast for the return of his son, at which he became reconciled to his brother's family, and said, he was sorry he had not taken the boys, as they would have been useful at the mill when his last apprentice ran away. All these matters are still remembered in the valley. Also how Earnest the taxman settled there, and Wolfried built a cottage beside his in the following spring. That the parish of Eidswold has gradually grown more populous and cultivated since, is no less true. And I have written this tale to shew my young friends how things go on in Norway, and that it contains, like all other countries, good and bad, wise and foolish people, and homes to which sorrow and joy can equally find an entrance. just like that of the Ericksons.

THE CLEVER BOY;

OR,

Consider Another.

N one of the midland counties of England, about ten miles from its assize town, there stands an old, but still substantial and comfortable manor-house, known in the neighbourhood as Beechwood Hall. Architects say, that, from the fashion of the building, it must have been erected almost three hundred years ago; and travellers on the adjacent highway remark it as a great square house, with pointed gables, tower-like chimneys, and wide bow windows. There is a lawn in front, and a garden of more than common extent behind; but they, as well as the house, are surrounded by a grove, consisting chiefly of tall beeches, (most of them far older than the building.) except on the south,

where a small rivulet, crossed by a rustic bridge, separates the lawn with its green gate and paling from the public road. The green sward is always kept smooth as velvet, and planted here and there with clumps of the China rose. The back of the house is covered with thick ivy, the front with sweetbriar and honeysuckle, and from the gate a gravel walk leads straight to an old-fashioned porch, with stone seats in it before the door.

Exactly so did the place look on the day of our story,—a lovely morning at midsummer, when the old beeches were in full foliage, and bird and bee out among them, the roses in bloom, and the woodbine bursting into flower. There was the promise of a sultry day in the warm air and brilliant sun, though the house clock had only struck eight; and in the porch sat Mr. and Mrs. Sommers, looking earnestly out for the coming of expected guests along the quiet road.

Mr. and Mrs. Sommers were a somewhat stately-looking pair, though their hair had long been grey; both were serious, but cheerful; they had resided in that manor-house for more than thirty years, but had no children,

and kept few servants. Indeed, their domestics had grown from youth to age with them, and now consisted of two staid women, who, the neighbours said, had been cook and housemaid time out of mind at the Hall: a discreet elderly man, called Jones, who drove them to church and looked after things in general; old Reuben, the gardener, and young Reuben, his grandson. All these had lived so long in their service that they felt like one family, and might now be seen looking out from different points of the house and grounds, no less anxiously than their master and mistress, for the coming company. That day was known to them for many a year as one on which the established quiet of the Hall was broken for a week by the young relations of Mr. and Mrs. Sommers, who came by annual invitation to enjoy themselves there in the prime of the season; and it was an understood matter, that the festivities should never close without a regular distribution of presents. At no other period throughout the year might young voices be heard in Beechwood Hall. Though Mr. Sommers and his wife had lived so long there, it was not their own property, but belonged to a rich cousin, who, having inherited a much larger estate besides, thought it a poor old place, and allowed them to live in it ever since their marriage, by way of caretakers. Their income was small, and they were well content with the quiet manor-house, and the tall trees and old-fashioned gardens about it; but their rich cousin passed his youth partly in London, and partly in the great cities of the Continent; and being what is called gay, spent his money at gamingtables, race grounds, and other scenes of extravagant folly, till only a remnant of his large property and Beechwood was left him. When things came to this pass, he was somehow disappointed; -- whether in a great office which he expected from Government, in a rich lady whom he hoped to marry, or at finding himself no longer able to make the figure he had done among rich and fashionable people, nobody knew for certain,-his former acquaintances had these different reports concerning him. But they soon forgot that he was alive at all, for he retired to the old manor-house, and ever after gambled away his time, thinking himself wonderfully sick

and unlucky, though the property that still remained to him would have made many a family rich; and the two doctors who came to see him every week from the county town, knew there was nothing wrong with him, but the want of some occupation.

He had allowed, or rather requested the Sommers to live on at Beechwood, knowing he would be solitary without them; but among other whims and odd ways which Sir Richard had learned, as idle people are apt to do, one was, that he could not or would not suffer the presence of children or young people at the Hall, saving they made a noise, and disturbed his head. Mr. and Mrs. Sommers, though fond of seeing their young relations about them, were therefore obliged to satisfy their rich cousin-who, with all his faults, had been kind to them-by inviting the latter only at midsummer, when Sir Richard went to take the benefit of the hay season, for what he called his complaint, at a small property still remaining to him in Kent.

This custom had been now established for years at Beechwood. The Sommers had a few relations with families, and they all lived at



a considerable distance from one another; but as sure as the midsummer vacations came round, and the testy old gentleman set out with his valet Williams, who was known to be almost as cross as himself, letters of invitation were received at every house, and a merry party assembled at Mrs. Blewitt's, which happened to be the nearest, from whence they proceeded in one company to Beechwood.

It was for their arrival the inhabitants of the manor-house were on the look-out. They generally came early, and breakfast had been laid in the great oak parlour for more than the usual number, as, besides the elders of the respective families, Mrs. Blewitt's only son, Edward, who had long resided with his grandfather in London, and had just come down to spend that vacation with his mother; and Mr. Crossland's eldest son, Frank, who was allowed a few weeks to visit his family from his uncle's iron foundry in Sheffield, where he had been apprenticed, were to be of the party.

Of these new comers, the first was far the more notable boy. Great reports of Edward Blewitt's cleverness and scholarship had, from time to time, reached his relations. It was

said he had seen the great world of London; that his grandfather had spared no expense on his education; that all his teachers had pronounced him an undoubted genius; and now that he was fairly among his country friends, the medals and prizes he had won at school did not excite more admiration than his witty sayings and the clever things he could do to amuse them. As for Frank Crossland, nobody saw anything remarkable about him, only Mrs. Sommers wondered if he had grown much taller, and if he were as goodnatured as ever, by way of conversation, when the clock struck nine, and no company appeared.

"I hope he is, my dear," said Mr. Sommers, straining his eyes once more along the highway; "but really I am growing hungry what can keep them so late?"

"You know Mrs. Blewitt was never an early riser, and it is long since she has been here. I think we had better wait a little," replied Mrs. Sommers. "Are they coming, Reuben?" she continued, addressing a boy clothed in coarse fustian, whose ruddy face and thick auburn curls glistened in the morn-

ing sun as he came running to the porch, followed by a rough Scotch terrier. It was Reuben Watkins, the gardener's grandson, and his dog Spring, reputed the best rat-catcher in the parish.

"Please ma'am, yes," said Reuben in answer to his Mistress; "Spring and I has been up at the old thorn tree, and we sees a yellow chaise and Farmer Johnston's Whitechapel cart; but I thinks there's only old folks in them"

As the boy spoke, the yellow chaise and Whitechapel cart became visible. In a few minutes more they had crossed the rustic bridge, and amid the hospitable welcomes of all Beechwood, there alighted from the first, Mrs. Blewitt and her maid Sally, Mr. Seymour and his two maiden sisters; while Mr. and Mrs. Crossland, with farmer Johnston and his eldest daughter Lucy, descended from the second vehicle.

Mrs. Blewitt was the widow of a merchant, who had been considered great in the county town, partly because his business was large for so small a place, and partly because he had still richer connexions in London. Mr.

Blewitt had been twice an alderman, and once a mayor of the town. He kept a fine house, a carriage, and a retinue of servants. But human life and riches are equally uncertain. He was thrown from his gig one day in a country excursion, and killed on the spot; and when friends and creditors assembled to examine his affairs, it was found, that after paying his debts, nothing remained to the family but a small country house which he had purchased, about five miles from the town, and a little annuity settled on Mrs. Blewitt. In that country house she had lived ever since her husband's death, with her confidential maid Sally, and two little delicate girls, named Emma and Laura,-Mr Blewitt's father, who was an old merchant in London, having taken, and promised to provide for, her son Edward. Being a vain weak-minded woman, her time was entirely spent either in lamenting her fallen fortunes, or endeavouring to prove herself a fine lady in the eyes of her neighbours at Rosemary Cottage, as she called the house, by way of giving it a genteel name. She was a distant relation of Mr. Sommers, but claimed much nearer kindred with Sir Richard, though that whimsical gentleman never acknowledged any relative who couldn't be of use to him; yet now that Edward had turned out so clever, it was Mrs. Blewitt's belief that, if Sir Richard could only see the boy, he would certainly make him his heir.

Sally was a cunning servant, who humoured her mistress' whims, flattered her follies, and gathered gossip to amuse her; for which Mrs. Blewitt thought her so useful, that she would go nowhere without her, saying she could never do without a maid to dress her.

Mr. and the Misses Seymour kept the principal school of a small town in the adjoining shire; the brother taught the boys, the sisters the girls; and between them, they brought up three orphan nephews and a niece, whose father and mother had died and left them without provision. Miss Grace and Miss Die, as they were named, were two precise single ladies, much given to reproving in a small way, and always afraid of cold, but painstaking and kindly. Their brother, who had been baptized Porson for a famous Cambridge professor, was devoted to learning, and

especially Latin and Greek, on which account Mrs. Blewitt hoped he would admire Edward.

That good lady had often wondered to her maid why Mr. and Mrs. Sommers associated with such vulgar people as farmer Johnston and his family, (though nearer relations than herself,) because they kept a market garden; but the chief subject of her astonishment was, how they could think of keeping company with the Crosslands at all, when their father kept a brazier's shop in the outskirts of the county town, where he was obliged to work early and late; and their mother had to mend and darn continually for a horrid tearing set of boys and girls. The Crosslands were indeed the poorest of the party, for their family was large and their means small; but all their friends and neighbours spoke of them as a good-natured industrious family. Farmer Johnston, though rather rough in his manners, was an upright respectable man: and his daughter Lucy had managed the house and dairy, besides looking after her two little sisters, ever since her mother's death, which happened when she was a very voung girl.

To Mrs. Sommers' earnest inquiry for the



young people of the party, Mrs. Blewitt took upon herself to reply, "They're all coming," said she; "but Edward, the dear boy, is so full of spirit, he would have his sisters and all the little girls packed into our old carriage. What work there was scrubbing it last night! Our neighbour, Mr. Smith, was kind enough to lend him a couple of horses; and he is driving them along himself in the London fashion."

"All but my girls," said Mr. Crossland with a sly look; "and they're coming with Frank and the boys in Farmer Johnston's waggon."

Mr. and Mrs. Sommers looked serious at that explanation; but the company entered the house, agreeing to wait half-an-hour for the young people. News and chat of all sorts passed among the relations; but Mrs. Blewitt could speak of nothing except her son Edward.

"I'm sure he'll be a bishop or something great yet," said she, shewing round the gold medal which her boy had won at the Greek class, and she had brought in her pocket for that purpose. "Mr. Smith says he wont be surprised to see Edward a Lord Chancellor."

"I trust he will be a good man also," said Mr. Sommers.

"Aye, aye, cousin," chimed in Farmer Johnston, "goodness is the main thing. What do you think, Tom?"

"I," said Mr. Crossland, whom he addressed, "really think that there's my son Frank with the waggon,—boys and girls all in it, and the rest walking, I declare! Where can Edward be?"

"My precious boy!" cried Mrs. Blewitt, rushing out as the whole company now perceived the waggon approaching driven by Frank Crossland, and filled by the girls and younger boys,—the holiday frocks of the latter sadly spattered and torn, and all the larger boys marching in a troop behind.

"Don't take the historicks, ma'am—pray don't!" cried Sally, as she met her mistress half-way to the gate, where the children were by this time alighting. "Master Edward's all safe inside; but he has got his nose scratched a bit, and his new shirt stained, so he does not like to be seen."

"Get him another immediately out of the travelling trunk," cried the mother. "Oh! Edward darling, what has happened? where

is the carriage?" she continued, as with his silk pocket handkerchief to his face her son appeared out of the waggon, from which Frank Crossland and all the company and servants were now assisting the little girls.

"It's in the ditch yonder!" cried Edward, no ways abashed. "The dirty old crazy thing, the wheel came off it and upset us all just when I was driving in Derby style at yon rough place beside the church. Catch me in such an old rumble again. But I must change this horrid shirt;" and he disappeared under the conduct of Sally.

Edward's tale was verified, though in far different tones, by all the little girls, most of whom had been crying, for though fortunately no serious accident had occurred by the overturning of the carriage, frocks were torn, faces scratched, and a dirty tumble in the ditch had been the lot of most; besides being obliged to wait, all draggled and terrified, on the road till Frank came up with the waggon,—which Edward had left far behind, saying, "They shouldn't go at such a humdrum rate,"—when the larger boys, by his advice, gave them their places, and walked the rest of the way to Beechwood.

The two maids, assisted by all the ladies, found much to do in composing and comforting Edward's passengers. His mother and Sally's attentions were entirely devoted to him, though Mrs. Blewitt might have learned from the looks of the company that her clever boy had fallen considerably in general esteem. But they met so seldom at the Hall, that relatives as they all were, no one cared to spoil the pleasure of the season further by speaking on that unpleasant subject; and even Mr. Sommers was glad when, the commotion being fairly over, they all sat down to breakfast. It was laid, as we have said, in the great parlour of the manor-house,-a large apartment, ceiled, wainscotted, floored, and furnished with dark polished oak, in the old English fashion, and lighted by wide bay windows, which were full of flowers and looked out upon the lawn. Many a party had been held there; and pictures of ladies and gentlemen in queer antiquated costumes, decorated the walls. But there was one arrangement in that room which had the charm of novelty for the junior guests, for at its long tables old and young sat down together. The former have been already described; but children

have looks and ways of their own as well as grown people. There sat the three little Seymours, pale timid boys, with light brown hair. and looks always directed to their aunts and uncle, as if they stood in constant fear of reproof; and their sister Harriet, an exactly dressed old-spoken girl, who took upon her to reprove the boys also, because she was the eldest. Next came the red sun-burned faces of Farmer Johnston's two girls, looking shy because the company were yet strange to them. and afraid they shouldn't behave well. Beside them, in well-plaited hair, and wonderfully fine frocks, sat Mrs. Blewitt's delicate fretful-looking children,-neither Laura nor Emma being yet quite consoled on account of their tumble in the ditch. Then came all the Crosslands, five boys and two girls,—from little Kate, who was just turned of four, to Frank, who was almost fourteen,-a row of cheerful rosy-faced creatures; all the younger ones apt to look at their eldest brother as if they had a sort of trust in him. Frank was tall for his years; hard work and the smoke of a foundry had already darkened the boy's fair complexion, and roughened his hands; but he had a cheerful intelligent look; and all his acquaintances knew that Frank was not easily frightened.

Edward Blewitt had just taken his seat beside him. He was by this time washed and dressed, so as to present no trace of the accident but a slight scratch on the nose, over which his mother had wailed sufficiently. Edward was indeed a handsome genteel-looking boy, with fine dark eyes and hair, very white hands, and such beautiful London-made clothes as never had been seen before at Beechwood.

Frank Crossland and Edward Blewitt had been early school-fellows, notwithstanding the difference in their parents' means. It was Mr. Crossland's aim to give his children a good education, and he sent them to the best school in their native town, which was of course attended by the son of the great merchant. Being both keen scholars, and of the same age, Frank and Edward were soon noted as rivals in the class. Many a contest had they for the head of it, and Frank was generally believed to be the cleverest boy of the two; but the country school could not afford such fine prizes or opportunities for distinction as the London seminary, at which

Edward's grandfather placed him; and in the grand account of his successes there, the homely ones of young Crossland were entirely lost sight of by his relations. Besides. with all his talents, not to speak of the fine prophesies which schoolmaster and usher made concerning the figure he would cut in some of the learned professions, if properly sent to college, Frank was taken from school just a year before, told what was really true, that his father had no money to expend on his education, there were so many little brothers and sisters to provide for, and he must go to an iron foundry in Sheffield, in which his uncle was a poor working partner, and learn to make steam-engines. Frank had set his heart on being a great physician; most young heads have some dream of greatness, though few ever reach it with even the best opportunities. He had read of Sir Astley Cooper. and Abernethy,-of Doctor Jenner, who discovered vaccination, and thought what great and good things himself might do; but when his father explained matters, Frank saw there was no other chance for him, and taking comfort in the thought that England was a free country, and no one could keep him from

college when he had earned the money, he went cheerfully to work among the din and smoke, and wild sights of the iron foundry.

Far different were Edward's prospects. We have said his grandfather was a considerable merchant, and must add that his relatives thought him somewhat hard and saving. He was a wonderfully active old man, who managed his own business though almost seventy, and seldom left town, being intent on making and laying up money: but he had taken a fancy to Edward, promised to educate him for any of the learned professions he chose, and make the boy his heir in case he behaved well. Edward was naturally quick in learning, ready-witted, lively, and handsome; he was steady in application too; his teachers spoke highly, and his relatives were proud of him. But young Blewitt had one fatal fault, which grew with all his years and good fortune,-for he could think of nobody but himself. He was not what is called an ill-natured boy, nor given to positive mischief; but to his own ease or convenience, and more especially to the display of his activity, wit, or learning, Edward would have sacrificed the feelings and comfort of his best

friends. His mother and grandfather were too much occupied with his medals and prizes to notice this growing deformity of character. which had been already exemplified in some degree to the manor-house company by the affair of Mrs. Blewitt's carriage. That mishap Edward had by this time got over, all but the mortification of seeing his old rival. Frank, whom he rather despised for working in a foundry, so manifestly applauded for his share in the transaction. The seniors of the party were however to remain but a very few days at Beechwood, with the exception of Mrs. Blewitt, who had little business at home: and Edward determined to astonish them, and eclipse Frank entirely by the immediate display of his accomplishments,for the excursion was nothing to him without praise and admiration. Accordingly, he set himself to say smart things, tell wonderful anecdotes, and talk of the sights he had seen in London; and having picked up a good deal of that kind, he had soon listeners enough among the country party. His mother was as vain as her son could be, and she went on reminding him of this and that good thing, and calling every one's attention to Edward's

sayings and stories, till nobody could get in a word but the clever boy.

After breakfast, the company adjourned to a great old summer-house in the garden. was made of painted wicker-work, covered with the climbing rose, and curiously decorated with porcelain tiles in the floor, and quaint carvings on its walls. Gladly would the young people have examined these, and rambled away through the manor-house and grounds; but Mrs. Blewitt recollected a charming passage in the Pleasures of Hope which Edward could recite, and all must stay to listen. After that performance, he read the Greek hexameters by which the great gold medal had been gained. Then a translation from the Georgics, which won the first prize in the previous season; next, he had a Latin exercise to shew Mr. Seymour: after which his mother reminded him of two fashionable songs; and when they were sung in succession. Edward recollected that he had seen the House of Commons, and could give an imitation of one celebrated member whom he had heard speaking. At first every one admired the boy's abilities and learning; much that they heard was strange and new to them;

Digitized by Go

but as he went on, his young companions began to wish for an opportunity of shining in their turn, as most people can do in some way or other. Farmer Johnston and his little girls also recollected that the latter could repeat "The Busy Bee" line about; the old Misses Seymour were particularly desirous that their nephews should be heard reciting Gray's Elegy in parts; and Miss Harriet was prepared to eclipse her brothers with "To be, or not to be, that is the question." which most of our readers well know as Hamlet's soliloguy. Even Frank Crossland felt that he could tell surprising stories about the foundry. All his little brothers and sisters had learned something to repeat at the Hall; and if the little Blewitt's had dared, they would have broken in upon Edward's Latin exercise with-

"Ere around the huge oak that o'ershadows you mill,
The wild ivy had dared to entwine,"—

which they had practised singing in chorus for the last fortnight. But everybody by this time was tired,—all the seniors, except Edward's mother, had heard enough of cleverness for one morning; and Mr. Sommers dismissed the assembly, by sending the girls

and poys to amuse themselves about the house and grounds, promising to hear what every one had to say in the evening, and reminding them of what the young are apt to forget, that there should be other days to shew what they could do at Beechwood. the prospect of that summer day's amusement, the disappointments of the morning were soon forgotten, as they scattered away in groups over the wide garden ground. It had many an old curiosity besides the summer-house. There was a strange sun-dial, a quaintly sculptured fountain, and statues representing the four seasons, stood one at each corner of a great parterre. Reuben, the gardener .-- a strong and kindly old man, who had worked there in all weathers for thirty years,-had a pride of his own in the thick old hedges, diamond-shaped parterres, and foreign flowers. not to speak of the tool house, in which he kept two tame owls for catching mice, all manner of scare-crows, and snares for the hares and rabbits that came to eat his flowers in winter. Beyond the garden was an orchard, whose trees were laden with fast ripening fruit; and beyond that the grove extended far over the hill to the border

zed by Google

of a wild moorland. Woodpigeons built by thousands in its deepest shades. There were banks there now covered with the wild strawberry, and dingles where the clusters of the hazel-nut hung brown at the close of autumn.

Things went on well for some time while the young people rambled about the garden and orchard. By way of rendering their visit more agreeable. Mr. Sommers made it a rule that they should be left as much as possible to their own devices for amusement. Old Reuben, to whom most of their faces had been known from year to year, shewed them, as usual, the wonders of his domain; and never did a season pass without adding to the gardener's stock of curiosities. The last. and as the boys thought most important addition, was a large snare for foxes, so cunningly contrived, that by the slightest or most accidental pressure on a hidden spring, a trap door under the intruder's feet fell, and it was precipitated into a deep pit, where it was sure to be caught by a strong wire gin. The trap was old Reuben's own invention, and was placed in a remote corner of the orchard, hard by a small gate opening on a by-path

in the grove, which was always kept locked. Reuben had set it there on account of certain foxes which had lately begun to infest the neighbourhood of Beechwood, and were apt to make their inroads at that particular corner, because the fence was low and rather decayed. It cost him a full half-hour to shew his young visitors how the fox was to be caught by night, when that animal generally prowls for prey; and how the trap was to be fastened in the day-time, lest some one should step on the spring.

"It's true, children," said the old man, "that few ever come here except myself and Sir Richard. He is from home, and has the key of that gate with him; but my memory's getting short, and I might walk in myself; so might some of you for that matter. Just take my advice, and let the machine alone."

All promised they would; and having made the trap safe, old Reuben went about his own concerns. But the fox-snare had taken possession of Edward's mind. He wished to see over again how the spring acted, and how the gin caught; and at length took an opportunity to slip away and examine the whole to his own satisfaction, while the boys were

Digitized by Google

trying a game on the bowling green, and the girls, under the conduct of Miss Harriet, playing the flowers of May on the grass beside the fountain. Edward unfastened the spring, looked into all its movements, opened and closed the trap-door at least a dozen times, till, being at length satisfied with the sight, the boy discovered that he had utterly forgotten the gardener's method of making all fast, and tried in vain to recall it. While exerting himself for that end, he was suddenly startled by the voice of young Reuben shouting, "Master Edward! Master Edward!" through the orchard.

Edward did not wish to be seen at the trap after the gardener's injunction, and far less did he wish that his own failure in the fastening process should be known; so, leaving the snare fully set, with a half thought that he would come back some other time to make all right, he ran towards young Watkins, exclaiming, "Here I am! what's wanted?"

Reuben had nevertheless been near enough to guess what he was about; but Edward's flushed face warned the boy that a secret was intended, and Reuben had learned to make no remarks on his betters, at least within their hearing; so he respectfully informed Master Blewitt that an early dinner was laid for him and his young companions in the summerhouse, and the rest were impatient, as they had been allowed to go and gather wild strawberries in the grove that afternoon.

Edward considered the gathering of wild strawberries rather beneath him, and told Frank Crossland plainly enough that he thought it extremely low. But the lesser boys and all the girls were delighted at the prospect, and in high hopes of the quantity they should bring home to their friends in the evening, when young and old were to have tea together in the great oak parlour. Accordingly, as soon as the early dinner was discussed, they were all equipped with baskets,—every article of that shape about the manor-house being put in requisition. Mr. Sommers committed the care of the little ones to Frank and Edward as the most grown boys of the party; Reuben Watkins went with them by way of assistant; the Misses Seymour gave general admonitions against damp places and pools; and Miss Harriet promised to take charge of her own brothers and the little girls, who arranged themselves under her commanded

Digitiza

but little Kate Crossland, who set forth in triumph mounted on Frank's shoulder. They were a merry company in the heart of the old woodland, whose deep shadows protected them from the glare of the summer's sun. Thev heard the stockdove coo among the thick leaves, the squirrel leaped from bough to bough across their path, and the timid hare started from their very feet; wild strawberries were found in abundance on many a bank, for Beechwood was famous for that fruit throughout the district, and they gathered with all their hearts: for some time even Edward helped now one and then another, as nothing could induce him to take a basket. length, getting deeper in the wood, they came upon a smooth green space in the midst of tall trees, with a small but bright spring in the centre; on its mossy margin one and all set down their baskets, and resolved to rest.

"You have gathered a deal now," said Edward, "and the day is long yet, hadn't we better have a play?"

"Wouldn't this be the place to do 'Robin Hood and his merry men?" rejoined Frank Crossland.

"Pooh!" said Edward; "that old childish

thing! It might do well enough if one knew no better; but I saw a beautiful thing in the Christmas Pantomime at Drury Lane. It was made out of the old ballad of the 'Babes in the Wood.' I remember the play every morsel, and I'm sure we could act it. You'll be the cruel uncle, Frank."

Had Master Blewitt respected the feelings of his companion, and spoken of his favourite game with more civility, he might have carried his own point; but now Frank's spirit and temper were roused by his tone of scorn and grandeur.

"I'll be nobody's cruel uncle," said he; "and I don't care what you saw at Drury Lane. My father always says the theatre is a bad place for young people, and I'm not going to be a player!"

"Very well, Master Puritan!" cried Edward, his eyes flashing with anger; "you'll be preaching by and by, I dare say! What does your father know more than brass candlesticks, I wonder?"

"My father is an honest man. If he is a brazier it is no shame," said Frank fiercely. "And I'll not play with any one who would cast up his trade to me!"

"Neither will we, brother," cried all the little Crosslands, with scarlet faces, seizing their little baskets; for they were high-spirited children, and could not bear a disrespectful word of their kind father. So off they went, under Frank's command, to gather strawberries for themselves in another part of the Farmer Johnston's two girls were, with difficulty, persuaded from accompanying them by Miss Harriet, who looked up to Edward as far the most genteel; and when the Crosslands were fairly out of hearing, that young gentleman expatiated on their lowness. because their father kept a brazier's shop, and Frank worked in a dirty foundry.-all. in short, that he had heard his foolish mother say, forgetting that people are respectable only in proportion as they behave well in the station which Providence has assigned them, till the little Seymours and Johnstons really began to think them something very bad and mean, and were quite willing to join with Edward in his grand London play.

Most of our readers are acquainted with the sad old ballad of the "Babes in the Wood." The play, as Edward had said, was made from it; and he assigned his little company their parts with great authority, being now in his element, as he had the ordering of all things.

"Miss Harriet," said he, "you'll be the wicked uncle, and live in a great castle under yon elder bush. Reuben Watkins and Bobby Seymour will be the two hired ruffians.-Killchild and Badthought. My two little sisters will be the lovely babes, who must be taken far away and left to perish down yonder where the woodpigeons live. Freddy and Harry Seymour will be the robins, and run far farther off, to come back and cover them with leaves when they lie down to die in each other's arms. I'll be the king of the fairies, who brings the babes to life, and makes the wicked uncle give up their money,-for that's all that makes the play better than the ballad. The two Johnstons will be my attendantfairies; and we'll keep our court down yonder among the tall foxgloves."

Miss Harriet and everybody else were pleased with this arrangement. Edward taught them all their speeches, which he partly composed and partly remembered, being really an ingenious boy. Miss Harriet established her castle under the elder bush; the court was set up in the foxglove dingle,

Digitized by Google

and the two little Blewitts were sent off in the charge of Reuben and Bobby Seymour—each looking as like a hired ruffian as he could—to a rather distant and dark place of the old wood, where they were to act the forsaken babes; while Fred and Harry ran as fast as they could to be far out of sight before them, and come back with a sufficient quantity of leaves in the character of the robins.

Edward kept the little Johnstons busy gathering flowers, boughs, and rushes, which they manufactured into decorations for himself as king of the forest fairies, being well accustomed to weave all manner of garlands in their father's meadows. He had promised his sisters to appear very soon after they were fairly covered with leaves, neither babes nor robins wishing to stay long in the dim and solitary shade; but being now equipped in a crown of wild roses and foxglove bells, with a robe of rushes and a hazel wand. wreathed with the woodhop for a sceptre, Edward could not help wishing to see how he looked, and knowing that the spring would serve for a mirror, he ran back to have a peep. The image in the water delighted the boy's vanity, and made him wish there were

Digitized by Google



"Edward could not help wishing to see how he looked, and knowing that the spring would serve for a mirror, he ran back to have a peep."—See Page 130.

more company present; at the same time, his sylvan equipments reminded him of another play, which he had also seen in a pantomime, called, "The Wild Knight," and full of fauns and satyrs, which Edward now thought much finer than the "Babes in the Wood." "What a pity," said he to Bobby and Reuben, who had, by this time, returned and made their speeches to Miss Harriet where she sat, wicked-unclelike, under the elder bush,--" what a pity that I did not recollect it sooner! These things would just serve for the wild knight,-a great character. Stand all of you round and I'll shew you how he comes in." The cruel uncle, ruffians, and all, clapped their hands and shouted in unfeigned glee as Edward strutted round the green in imitation of the wild knight in the pantomime. Then he danced like him. with Reuben for a satyr, and was proceeding to give them a description of the entire play, when Miss Harriet reminded him of the poor children who were waiting far off in the woodpigeons' dell.

"Just in a minute," said Edward. But he went on for half-an-hour more, till Miss Harriet again interrupted him, saying, she was sure the children would be frightened.

"Dear me, what a fuss girls do make!" said Master Blewitt. "If you think they'll be afraid, run you and the Johnstons, and tell them I'm coming."

"But that will spoil the play," said the little girls timidly.

"Oh! never mind," said Edward. "It's a dull thing, and I'm tired of it now."

Away ran Miss Harriet; for with all her love of authority, she was a really good-natured girl, and could not think of her brothers and the little Blewitts being so frightened. The Johnstons ran after her. Bobby Seymour followed them; and no one remained but Reuben Watkins, who, having never seen anything of the kind before, stared in admiring astonishment on Edward. That made the vain boy utterly forget himself.

"We'll play them a nice trick, Reuben," said he; "you and I will run away to you green lane among the trees where they can't disturb us. I'll dress you out as a satyr, and we'll come back and surprise them all."

Reuben was a simple and not very sensible boy at best, and being now dazzled with the clever young gentleman, he obeyed his directions without a thought, and darted after him, with his unfailing companion Spring at his heels, to the distant lane. When there, Edward observed that the grassy path wound through the wood to the spot they had reached, which was much nearer the manor-house, and from that point it seemed to run strait in the direction of the orchard.

"Lauk, sir!" said Reuben, in reply to his inquiry where it led, "this is Sir Richard's way; it goes right to the little gate in the orchard fence; he often comes home by it and surprises Master and Misses."

"What a queer creature he must be!" said Edward. "Now for the satyr's trim. These old crooked boughs will make you first-rate horns!"

As Edward spoke, he broke a curved and withered stick into shapes resembling the short horns of a goat, and directing Reuben to tease up his hair and make it as rough as he could, he inserted them in his own scarlet pocket handkerchief, which was firmly bound about Watkins' brow. While concluding this operation, the round and sunburnt face of the gardener's grandson looked so comical, that Edward burst into laughter, exclaiming, in him

usual uncivil fashion, "Ha, ha! Reuben! that face of yours looks as if it were just made for horns!"

Though poor and clownish, Reuben Watkins did not like to hear his face despised more than other boys; and pulling the sticks and handkerchief off his head, he flung them as far as he could away.

"What do you mean, sir?" said Edward, assuming, what he thought, a grand air.

"I wont be a satyr; and I wont have horns!" answered Reuben;—"that's what I mean. My face is my own; so it is."

"I wish you joy of it, then," said the unfeeling boy.

"It's just as good as some folk's," returned young Watkins, who could say a spiteful thing when provoked. "I never likes noses like needles."

"Take that for your impertinence," said Edward, striking him with his fist; for though he had given the first insult, his unreasonable pride could not endure the natural return; but, though a gardener's grandson, Reuben Watkins was an English boy, and he repaid the blow with a sound box on Master Blewitt's ear. This was the signal for a regular battle. The two boys were pommelling each other, Spring barking with all his might. Edward threatening what he would do, and Reuben vociferating at the top of his voice, "Down, Spring, down, and let us fight fair!" when there came in sight Frank Crossland, with the whole troop of little brothers and sisters behind him, who, having got their strawberry baskets quite filled, had chosen that way to go home, by way of crowning the evening's exploits with a climb over the orchard-fence, and astonishing their friends in the great oak parlour. There were more than they bent on surprises that evening. The two combatants saw the Crosslands, though both were too angry to mind their advance; but they did not see what Frank perceived,-namely, two gentlemen rapidly approaching by the same path through the trees. One was old and very stout, with a grey head, from which he had pulled the hat, as it seemed, on account of heat and fatigue; for he was evidently worn out with the walk. The other was a tall thin man, carelessly dressed, and carrying a cane, which he shook at the fighting boys, where

within call, shouting, "Stop, you little ruffians! What's this you're about?"

At the sound of his voice, Reuben retreated with a handful of Edward's hair; but Master Blewitt was not to be interfered with by a shabily dressed man; and seizing a large sharp stone, which lay by the way-side, he cried, "There's for you, commander of the faithful!" and flung it at the stranger.

"O Edward!" cried Frank Crossland, thrusting his basket before the coming stone, which, the next instant, shivered the osier handles, sending the sweet ripe strawberries in a shower over the lane.

With a shout that he would teach him, and, we are sorry to say, a curse, the man of the cane bounded at Edward, who flew before him, sending back many a laugh of defiance; but Frank, who followed at a distance in terror for his uncivil companion, saw the man gain upon him every step; while the old gentleman, who had now come up, blessed his stars how fast Richard could run. Frank saw them reach the orchard-fence. He saw Edward bound over it; but, in a moment, his pursuer was over too; and then there came a cry of pain and terror, which made the

young Crosslands leave baskets, strawberries, and all, and Frank dart with all his speed into the orchard.

The senior company at the manor-house were assembled in the great parlour, with the tea equipage set forth, and a general expectation of the young people's return, as the evening was now far advanced, when Sally, who had been seeking her own private amusement through the garden grounds, burst in, shouting, "Gardener! coachman! cook! come all of you's; and, oh! Mrs. Blewitt, marm, keep up your spirits, for Master Edward's catched in the fox's trap at the corner of the orchard."

There was an immediate rush after Sally, who led the way, still beseeching her mistress not to take the "historicks;" and the first sight that great lady got, on reaching the scene of action, was her clever boy standing up to his chin in a deep dirty pit, while Frank Crossland endeavoured to get his feet out of the gin, and Sir Richard Sommers unlocked the fence gate to admit Edward's grandfather, (old Mr. Blewitt,) and all the little Crosslands.

Edward had never found time to return

and regulate the trap. In fact, he had forgotten its existence; and when pursued over the fence, he inadvertently stepped on the spring, and fell into the pit, to the amazement of Sir Richard,—for such was the gentleman with the cane.

On his way to Kent, he had chanced to stop some time in London, and met the old merchant, to whom he had been obligated in a money transaction in the last of his fashionable days. The acquaintance between them was renewed; and after a deal of coaxing on old Blewitt's part—who had somehow found time for the excursion-he agreed to return with him to Beechwood, without warning, and see how the young party looked,-of course the old gentleman meant his grandson in particular; and having arrived that evening at a part of the high road where a ford led over the rivulet to the entrance of Sir Richard's way, they sent on Williams with the carriage to the nearest inn, and agreed to walk through the wood by way of variety, and giving a surprise to all the company at the Hall. By that chance they came upon Reuben and Edward in the midst of their fierce battle; and all that we have related subsequently occurred; but just as old Reuben, whom Mr. Sommers loudly summoned from his work in a distant part of the garden, reached the spot, Frank's efforts were crowned with success; and he assisted in lifting Edward out of the pit, with one ankle severely bruised by the gin, and the other sprained by the fall.

The lamentations of Mrs. Blewitt were so loud over her son, that she never remembered his little sisters, till they, with Farmer Johnston's girls, Miss Harriet, and all the Seymours, with weary feet, and empty baskets, reached the house,-having wisely returned home, when they found themselves forsaken in the wood, and the twilight fast falling. The little robins had got their feet wet when gathering leaves, and that was a subject of terror and exclamation to their aunts. Laura and Emma Blewitt had both caught a cough from lying so long on the damp ground, and they were immediately taken up stairs, where Mrs. Blewitt and Sally had now the entire family to take care of. Amid the general complaints of her son. poured forth by Miss Harriet, Reuben Watkins, and Sir Richard, the widow's indignation was loud against the gardener. Nobody but him, she affirmed, could have left the trap so carelessly; but young Reuben would not hear his grandfather blamed. "It was just himself, Master," cried he, stepping boldly up with his still scratched face, to Mr. Sommers. "I seed him when you sent me to bid him come to dinner."

A hard task, indeed, had the good-tempered master and mistress of the mansion in examining the various causes of quarrel and complaint; but they heard and inquired patiently into all, as story after story turned out against Edward Blewitt; and Sir Richard, whose race had somewhat moderated his anger, gave his verdict, that, in consideration of the accident, the boy should be allowed to remain at the Hall till he was recovered, and then be packed, as he expressed it, bag and baggage, without delay.

"I am sorry to say he deserves it," said Mr. Sommers; "for such a day I never knew at the manor-house."

"If I had not seen it with my own eyes I wouldn't have believed it," said old Mr. Blewitt, as he sat down quite exhausted. "After gaining so many prizes, to shame us all!"

"Frank, you and your brothers have got noble basketsful," said Mr. Sommers, addressing young Crossland; "but you didn't tell me why you separated from Edward in the wood?"

"Because he spoke despisingly of my father for keeping a brazier's shop," said Frank, who would willingly have kept that tale to himself, thinking there were charges enough against Edward.

"And I suppose you help with the brasses?" said Sir Richard, smiling.

"No, sir, if you please," said Frank, "I'm apprenticed to an iron foundry."

"Ah!" said Sir Richard with a pitying look; "why did such a clever handsome boy as you choose such a business?"

"I did not choose it, sir," said Frank, turning his fair honest face full upon him; "I wished to go to college, but"——

"But why didn't you go, my boy?" said the now friendly baronet.

"Because, sir," said Frank in a lower tone, "my father could not afford it."

"Then I can," said Sir Richard, raising his voice till it was heard over the Hall. "You did me a good turn to-day with that basket

of strawberries, for which I hold myself bound to pay the expenses of your education. Choose your own profession, and my judgment deceives me if you don't make a figure in it."

Frank tried to make a suitable speech, and he got out, "Thank you, sir,"—at which the company laughed long and loud; but Sir Richard directed their mirth to another subject, by saying, in reply to Mr. and Mrs. Crossland's acknowledgments, that he had a right to do something for Frank, as the boy had lost a basket of strawberries by him.

From that day all his friends remarked that the baronet was a new man; perhaps he discovered how much good he could vet do. Perhaps his chase after Edward convinced him that he was not so sick after all, for the two doctor's visits were given up, and his young relatives who behaved well, were always welcome to Beechwood. After all the mishaps of that day, there was a capital evening in the oak parlour. The Misses Seymour got over their fears concerning Fred and Harry's feet. The Crosslands' strawberries were eaten with general applause; and everybody was well pleased but Mrs. Blewitt and her family. When the fox-trap

affair was explained, she had fallen into great indignation because Reuben Watkins would not be punished for boxing her son. Sally affirmed that her "mistress would certainly go off in historicks if the gardener's grandson was not immediately locked up:" but as Edward's grandfather and every one else agreed with Mr. Sommers, that there was nobody to blame but Master Blewitt, she thought it better to say no more about the business, and get home as fast as they could. As for Edward, he was so much mortified, that he could scarcely look at the surgeon who had been sent for to examine his sprain. Luckily it was not serious, and they all went home next day in the yellow chaise, including poor little Emma and Laura, to whom their grandfather. made some pretty presents he had brought with him from London, and that comforted them; but the old gentleman was so thoroughly ashamed of his grandson, that he told his mother, the boy might remain with her at least for that year; and as Reuben Watkins made no secret of the battle with him, and the fall into the fox-trap, Mrs. Blewitt's clever boy became the laughing-stock of the parish. In the same season, Frank Crossland left the

والمراجع والمنافض والمرافطية يتهيرون والمنطوب والمراجع

Digitized by Google

foundry for Eton College; and the rest of their excursion-time was passed in peace and pleasantness by the visitors at Beechwood Hall.

But now, my young readers, we will close this tale with Mr. Sommers' parting observation when speaking of Edward Blewitt's mishaps:—"My dear little friends," said he, "though the reward of well-doing is not always to be looked for in this poor and passing world, it has pleased the wise Disposer of all events, that even small selfishness and injustice should often bring down their own punishment; and some fox-trap is generally stumbled upon by those who, in the midst of their own whims or interests, will not stop to consider another."



echwoi

vill cha obser Blewit

said b is I

)OF **20**

河湖



