

FOURTH

SERIES.—No. 2.

THE
CASKET,

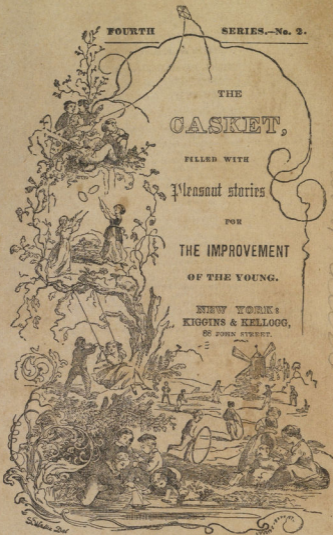
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FOR

THE IMPROVEMENT
OF THE YOUNG.

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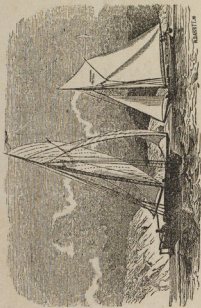
PLEASANT STORIES

FOR

THE INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG.



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K. MARTIN

THE
LITTLE CASKET.

DISOBEDIENCE TO PARENTS—A TRUE STORY

ROBERT, and Henry, and John, were at home for the midsummer holydays.

"Father," said Robert, one fine morning, "may we not take the boat and sail down the river till dinner-time?"

"By no means," said Mr. Johnson, "I could not trust you alone, for fear of some accident. I am pretty sure you would not sit still, and then your danger would be very great."

"Oh yes we will," said Henry, "if you will but let us go; we will be sure to be quiet, and to take care; and there is scarcely any wind this morning."

"I have no objection to your having a sail," replied Mr. Johnson, "but you must not go by yourselves. I forbid your doing so. I will speak to Thomas, the gardener; he knows well how to manage the boat, and shall go with you in about an hour." He then left home for the day.

As soon as he was gone, Robert said, "I am sure I would not wait; the gardener may not be ready all day. I am old enough to manage the boat; I have often been out with my father."

"Yes," said John, "but father forbade our going alone; and so we must not go."

"But how will he know it?" said Robert; "he has gone out, and won't be home till five o'clock. We shall be home long before that time; and if Thomas does not tell him, how will he know? And I can speak to him to say nothing about our having gone by ourselves." They therefore determined to go.

The boat went on very well for some time, as the breeze was but a gentle one.

Then Robert said, "I am glad we have not got the gardener with us, he would have spoiled all our sport, and we can do better without than with him; as if we could not manage a boat, indeed!"

But now the breeze became a brisk gale; and the boat had scarcely enough ballast for the largeness of the canvass. The boys did not pay any attention to this circumstance, as they were busy at play; in an instant, therefore, when they all ran to one side of the boat, it upset, and threw them into the river.

Happily, the gardener missing them, and fearing some accident, hastened down by the side of the river. He had just come up to them as the misfortune happened; and, as he could swim very well, he leaped into the stream, and by great efforts, he saved Henry and John from a watery grave. But disobedient Robert sank, and could not be found. The current bore him down so far, that his body was not seen till several days afterward, when it was brought to his distressed father by a fisherman.

Dear children, remember how Robert was drowned, because he would not do as his father bade him; and do not forget that no good ever did, or ever can, come from disobedience to parents.

ROBERT, AND HIS DOG.

ROBERT EVERING was an active and an energetic boy, who was not afraid of the cold or the rain. He could bear hardship almost as well as a man. His parents had moved into the country, and he had not the playmates and books and amusements that most boys of his age have now. He was obliged to seek for amusement in fishing, or ranging the woods with his dog. There he spent whole days in summer, rambling about, gathering flowers and berries; and in winter, hunting rabbits. He was often known to get up in the morning as soon as it was light, and start off in the snow and cold to hunt with Fido. Sometimes he would be gone all day. A piece of dry bread in his pocket was all he cared for, and Fido fared well on the game they caught. His father used to say that he would as soon trust Robert in the woods, as an old hunter, for he seemed to know every tree for miles around. His mother at first felt uneasy about him; but soon became satisfied that he was safe with his dog; for they were most always together. Where you saw Robert, you might be sure Fido was not far off.

On one occasion, however, during the summer, Robert went to spend a few days with his cousins, at his uncle's who resided in a neighboring town. As he went by stage-coach he necessarily had to leave Fido at home. The coach had just left him about two miles from his uncle's residence, and he had seated himself on a rock for a few minutes to enjoy the beauties of the surrounding scenery, before trudging the rest of the way on foot, when casting his eyes down the road he had just come,

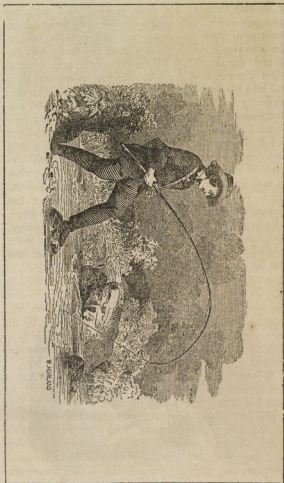


he discovered Fido coming after him on the full run. The dog had missed him, got out of the house, and then, guided by instinct, had run many weary miles, during the heat of the day, to overtake and be with his master.

At another time, Robert went a fishing, and for fear that Fido would frighten away the fish, he shut him up and went without him. But Robert had no luck. The fish would not bite. And at last his hook caught in something on the river-bottom, and in his attempts to pull it out he broke his rod. He attributed his ill luck to his cruelty to Fido in leaving him at home. And he resolved after that he would never again go without him.

When Robert was fifteen years and some months old, he was taken suddenly ill of an affection of the brain, and in a few hours he died.

His friends were so much shocked and distressed by this unexpected event, that no one thought of Fido. Toward evening, Paulina, his sister, going into the room where the corpse was laid, found the poor dog sitting by the coffin, looking earnest-



ly in the face of his dear master, and whining most piteously. He was with difficulty forced from the room, and made several attempts to return. He was restless and uneasy, until the body was removed for burial. The graveyard was several miles distant, and Fido never knew where they had laid his best friend. But from that day he was perfectly worthless—neither coaxing, threats, nor punishment availed to make him of the least service. He never went to hunt afterward. Robert had had a peculiar way of calling him; this was sometimes imitated to see whether he would remember and obey the summons. He would spring up and make several bounds in the direction from which the voice came; but on discovering the cheat, he would walk sorrowfully back to his shed.

Fido lived on in this way for several years. And although of no service whatever, he was most carefully cherished by Paulina for the sake of the love he bore his young master.





I MEAN TO BE A MAN.

A GENTLEMAN once met a little fellow seven years of age, on his way to school with his books under his arm. Stopping the little fellow for a moment, he said to him, "Well, my little boy, what do you intend to be when you grow up?" He had asked the question a great many times before, and some boys told him they meant to be farmers, some merchants, and some ministers. But what do you think was the answer of this little boy? Better than all of them, "*I mean to be a man!*" he said. It matters very little whether he be a farmer, or a merchant, or a minister, if he be a MAN—he will be successful, and be loved and respected. Some persons never become men, but are *great boys* after they have grown up. Ask your parents or teacher, children, what makes a man, and then, like this little boy, resolve to be one.

THE CRUEL BOY.

As a bird was one day flying to seek food for its young ones, a large boy saw it; he had a gun in his hand, and shot the poor thing through its head, and down it fell to the ground. The boy then ran to it, and when he saw that it was dead, he gave it to his dog to eat.

How cruel and wicked it was to kill the poor bird, which never did any harm in all its life; and to take it from its young ones that were in the nest, waiting for it to come back and feed them!

The poor little birds could not think why their dear mother stayed so long from them, and kept chirping and chirping till they were quite tired. At night they grew so cold, for want of their mother to brood over them, that they did not know what to do. There were five in the nest, and two of them were starved to death with cold and hunger, that night. The other three lived till the next morning, when, getting to the edge of the nest to look for their mother, two of them fell out and broke their bones. They lay in great pain for some time upon the ground, but could not move, for they were too young to hop or fly. At last a great hog that was passing by saw them on the ground and eat them up, and so put them out of their pain.

But the other poor little thing that was left in the nest did not die so soon, for it lived all day very cold, and in great pain, from being so hungry for want of food. It kept chirping as long as it had strength to make any noise, in hopes its mother would hear, and come and feed it. Poor thing, she had been shot by the cruel boy, and was dead,



and could not hear it. So, at last, when it was quite tired, it lay still at the bottom of the nest; and in the night it rained fast, and the wind blew, and finally it died of cold, like the others.

Thus there was an end to five pretty young birds, that all died in so dreadful a way, because a wanton, cruel, and wicked boy shot their poor mother. We hope our young readers will remember this story, whenever they are tempted to kill or injure the harmless birds or insects that God has made.

THE BROTHERS.

ABEL and Willy Dale were resting themselves one afternoon under the shade of a large tree, when all at once Willy cried out, "Why, Abel, if there isn't our red cow in the wheat-field yonder."

"What, in Farmer Dobson's field? Yes, so she is; well, I wonder how she came there."

"Oh," said Willy, "she is always in mischief, that cow. I wonder mother does not sell her; she is more trouble than good I'm sure; she is always straying out of her own field."

Abel laughed.

"What are you laughing at, Abel?"

"I was thinking, Willy," answered Abel, "that our red cow is something like you."

"Like me!" said Willy, while his cheeks grew as red as fire, "like me."

"Yes," said his brother, still laughing, "like you, Willy; you know why. The cow is alway"



in mischief, and so are you; and when she is wanted she never can be found, and when mother wants you to go on errands for her, you are always half a mile off."

"Well, and if I am, it's no business of yours, Abel," began Willy very sharply; but he stopped short, for he remembered that it was wrong to say the angry words that came to his lips. It was a hard struggle; but Willy conquered at last, and went on more gently, "I know I'm not so steady as you, Abel, but you're older, you know; and I mean to try to think more, and perhaps in time, I shall get to be more like you. But now let's go and drive the cow into her own field, and then we'll run home, for it's nigh upon five o'clock."

These two little boys were the children of a poor widow, living in the village of Langmead, who had recently lost her husband, and who worked hard to support herself, her two boys, a little girl six years old, and an infant of eight or nine months. Abel was ten, and Willy eight years old; they were both good boys in the main, though as you may have found out already, Willy was apt to be careless and giddy, and Abel perhaps prided himself rather too much upon his greater steadiness; and though he always meant to speak kindly to his brother, and to give him good advice, yet he did not do it in the best way; he laughed at him sometimes rather provokingly. Willy was angry now and then at this, but he was very good tempered, and the brothers were too fond of each other ever really to disagree.

After a long chase, the truant cow was driven home to her field; and Abel and Willy had seated themselves in the porch of their mother's cottage,



with their suppers in their hands; their mother with her two younger children was seated under a tree, on the green in front of the cottage, enjoying the balmy evening air, when a neighbor's child ran hastily up to the house, and begged Mrs. Dale to go directly to her mother, who she said, "was taken with a fit." Mrs. Dale told Abel to run for the doctor; and having charged Willy to take the greatest care of his little sister, and not to leave her for a moment, she with her infant in her arms, went at once to her neighbor's cottage.

When Willy had finished his supper, he made a ball of cowslips for little Clara, and while she sat on the floor playing with it, he began to plat a lash for a new whip which his uncle had given him. Presently he missed some of his string; and, looking round he saw his little puppy had got hold of it, and was playing with it in the garden. Out he ran after it, and forgetting all about his sister, chased the puppy round and round the garden, and into the field at the back of the house. It was

some time before he could catch him; and while he was untwisting the string which had wound itself round the puppy's head and fore-paws he heard a shout, and saw Abel coming across the field to him.

"Oh, Willy," he cried, "what have you done with Clara? Mother told you not to leave her a moment.

"Clara," exclaimed Willy, "oh, I forgot all about her."

"Oh dear, oh dear," cried Abel, "if she should have got down to the pond! Run, Willy, run."

Willy threw down his string, and they both set off running as fast as they could, when, just as they came in front of the house, they saw a little figure standing at the edge of the pond. They both shouted; the child was frightened, turned round, lost her footing on the slippery ground, and rolled down the bank into the water.

Struck with horror, Abel stood still, screaming, "O mother, mother, Clara's drowned, drowned."

For a moment Willy stopped too; then, without saying a word, he rushed forward and jumped into the pond, caught hold of his sister's frock, and dragged her to the edge of the water. By this time Abel's screams had brought some of the neighbors to the spot. The children were carried home and put into bed, and were mercifully saved even from catching cold.

The next morning, when Willy awoke, it was some time before he could remember what had happened; but when the recollection of it came upon him he hid his face in his mother's lap, and sobbed out, "Oh mother, pray forgive me! Thank God, Clara's safe!"

"I do indeed thank God that he has saved my child from such a death," said the poor mother, "but oh, Willy, my child, I can never trust her with you again."

She then talked to him very seriously, showing him the danger into which his thoughtlessness and inattention had led him, and how very nearly he had cost his little sister her life. He thought of this, and of the fright which he had given his mother; it was more than the little fellow could bear; and catching little Clara in his arms, he kissed her again and again, and promised, while the tears ran down his cheeks, that he would try with all his might to mind what was said to him for the time to come; and he kept his word. The events of that day seemed to have given him the steadiness and thoughtfulness of several years. Old habits of carelessness were not broken through at once; but from that day he began really to try to amend them; and in time, he became as steady, as trustworthy, and as careful and obedient as his brother.

The lesson of this day was not lost either upon Abel. He could never think without shame that he had done nothing to save his sister, and that she might have been drowned if Willy had been as helpless as himself; and after this, he was never known to laugh at his brother's faults, or boast that he was wiser or steadier than Willy.



THE ARABS AND THE CAMEL-DRIVER.

"GRANDFATHER," said Harry, "I wish you would be so good as to give Lucy and me one of your old sort of puzzles."

"My old sort of puzzles, my dear! What do you mean?"

"Such questions, I mean, as you used to ask us sometimes when we were sitting round the fire last winter."

"Oh, pray do, grandfather," said Lucy. "But whatever it is," added Harry, "let there be along with the question some little story."

In a few minutes, their grandfather began as follows:—

"Three Arab brethren of a noble family were travelling together for improvement. It happened one day, that their road lay across a great plain of sand, where there was little else to be seen except a few tufts of grass. Toward the close of the day, they met a camel-driver, who asked them if they



had seen a camel that he had lost, and could give him any account of it.

“‘Was not your camel blind of an eye?’ said the elder brother. ‘Yes,’ said the camel-driver. ‘It had a tooth out before?’ said the second brother. ‘And it was lame?’ said the third. ‘Very true,’ replied the man; ‘pray tell me which way it went.’—‘Did it not carry,’ ask the Arabian, ‘a vessel of oil and a vessel of honey?’—‘It did indeed,’ answered the camel-driver; ‘pray tell me where you met it.’—‘Met it! We have never seen your camel,’ they replied.

“The enraged camel-driver could not believe this; he charged them with having stolen his camel, and brought them before the prince. From their manner, and the wisdom of their answers to the questions which the prince asked them upon other subjects, he was persuaded that they were above committing such a theft. He set them at liberty; but requested that before they departed, they would tell how they could possibly hit upon so many cir-

cumstances that were true, without ever having seen the camel.

"The brothers could not refuse to comply with so just a request; and after thanking him for his clemency and kindness, the eldest spoke thus:—

"We are not magicians, nor have we ever seen the man's camel; all we know of him was discovered by the use of our senses and our reason. I judged that he was blind of an eye, because'—

"Now, Harry and Lucy, explain, if you can, the methods by which the three brothers guessed that the camel was blind of an eye, and lame of a leg, that he had lost a front tooth, and was laden with a vessel of oil and another of honey."

Harry asked whether there was anything in the camel-driver himself by which they judged. "No, there was nothing in or about him."

"I wish you would help us a very little, grandfather," said Lucy.

"Do you not recollect telling me this morning that you knew your father's horse had been at the door, though you did not see it?"

"By the tracks—oh, yes!" cried Lucy; "no other horse ever comes up that gravel-path; and as the Arabians were travelling on a sandy desert, probably they had seen no other tracks but of that one camel. But how did they know that he was lame of one leg?"

"The camel would put the lame foot down more cautiously than the others," said Harry, "and the trace of that foot would be always less deep than those of the other three."

The blind eye was a more difficult question. Lucy thought the camel might have swerved more to one side than to the other; or perhaps the foot-

steps might show places, where he had started out of the path, and always on the same side. A few other guesses were made, but nothing more was found out this evening.

The next morning, Lucy said she had thought of the camel and the three brothers the moment she waked; but the more she thought, the more she was puzzled. She was just going to add, "Grandfather, I give it up," but Harry advised her to have patience a little longer. It happened, at this instant, that her mother was helping her to some honey; a drop fell on the tablecloth, and a bee, which was flying about the room, settled upon the sweet spot.

Lucy started with delight on observing this, and exclaimed, "Harry, Harry, I have found it out; the vessel of honey leaked—the drops of honey fell on the sand—and the brothers observed the little collection of bees, or insects, which has settled on them. I am right, for grandfather smiles. As to the oil, some of that might have been spilled by the jolting of the camel. The loss of the tooth is all that now remains, so I leave that to you, Harry."

"I remember," said Harry, "grandfather in the beginning of his story, told us, that there were a few tufts of grass on the road; the hungry camel—for no doubt he was hungry in the desert—might have bitten these, and one of the sharp-eyed brothers might have seen, that in each bite a few blades of grass stood up higher than the rest, because of the gap left by want of the tooth."

"Now we have it all right," said Lucy; "and we were very little helped, considering"—

"But I wish we had not been helped at all," said Harry



THE HONEST POOR MAN.

ONE evening a poor man sat by the wayside waiting the return of his son, a little boy of six years, whom he had sent to the baker to buy a loaf of bread. The boy soon returned with the loaf, which the father took and broke it, and gave half to his boy. "Not so, father," said the boy, "I shall not eat until after you. You have been at work hard all day for small wages, to support me, and you must be very hungry; I shall wait till you are done."—"You speak kindly, my son," replied the pleased father; "your love to me does me more good than my food; and those eyes of yours remind me of your dear mother who has left us, who told you to love me as you used to do; and indeed, my boy, you have been a great strength and comfort to me; but now that I have eaten the first morsel to please you, it is your turn now to eat."

"Thank you, father; but break this piece in

two, and take a little more, for you see the loaf is not large, and you require much more than I do."—"I will divide the loaf for you, my boy; but eat it, I will not; I have abundance; and let us thank God for his great goodness in giving us food, and in giving us what is better still, cheerful and contented hearts. He who gave us the living bread from heaven, to nourish our immortal souls, how shall he not give us all other food which is necessary to support our mortal bodies?"

The father and son thanked God, and then began to cut the loaf in pieces, to begin their frugal meal. But as they cut one portion of the loaf several large pieces of gold of great value fell out. The little boy gave a shout of joy, and was springing to grasp the unexpected treasure, when he was pulled back by his father. "My son, my son!" he cried, "do not touch that money; it is not ours."—"But whose is it, father, if it is not ours?"—"I know not, as yet, to whom it belongs; but probably it was put there by the baker, through some mistake. We must inquire."—"But, father," interrupted the boy, "you are poor and needy, and we have bought the loaf, and the baker may tell a lie, and——"

"I will not listen to you, my boy. We bought the loaf, but we did not buy the gold in it. If the baker sold it to us in ignorance, I shall not be so dishonest as to take advantage of him; remember Him who told us to do to others as we would have others do to us. The baker may possibly cheat us. I am poor, indeed, but that is no sin. If we share the poverty of Jesus, God's own Son, oh! let us share, also, his goodness and his trust in God. We may never be rich, but we may always be

honest. We may die of starvation, but God's will be done, should we die in doing it! Yes, my boy, *trust God, and walk in his ways, and you shall never be put to shame.* Now, run to the baker, and bring him here; and I will watch the gold until he comes."

So the boy ran for the baker. "Baker," said the old man, "you have made some mistake, and almost lost your money;" and he showed him the gold, and told him how it had been found. "Is it thine?" asked the father; "if it is, take it away."—"My father, baker, is very poor, and——" "Silence, my child; put me not to shame by thy complaints. I am glad we have saved this man from losing his money." The baker had been gazing alternately upon the honest father and his eager boy, and upon the gold which lay glittering upon the green turf. "Thou art, indeed, an honest fellow," said the baker. "Now, I will tell thee about the gold: A stranger came to my shop some days ago, and gave me that loaf, and told me to sell it cheaply, or give it away, to the most honest poor man whom I knew in the town; so I sold it to the boy, to take to thee. The loaf with all its treasure—and, certes, it is not small!—is thine, and God grant thee a blessing with it!" The poor father bent his head to the ground, while the tears fell from his eyes. His boy ran and put his arms around his neck, and said, "I shall always, like you, my father, trust God and do what is right; for I am sure it will never put us to shame."

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