



**THE TWO ALMANACS—1892-1893.**

A FABLE.

UPON a desk it chanced one day,  
Two almanacs together lay—  
One of the present year, and one  
With date of the old year, just gone—  
When, slightly raising up his head,  
The latter to his neighbour said:  
‘Dear neighbour, for what crime have I  
Deserved my altered destiny?  
My master used to honour me,  
Each moment of the day would he  
Turn over and consult my page.  
But now, alas! in my old age,  
Dishonoured to the dust I’m thrown,  
While he hath eyes for thee alone.’  
The other then, in page and rim  
Quite fresh and new, thus answered him:  
‘Thou art not of this age, my friend,  
And of thine own there is an end.  
Sunday with us, as thou mayest see,  
Is only Saturday with thee.  
Thou art, poor friend, a day too late—  
Thou must blame nothing but thy date;  
And if, thanks to my own, I’m now,  
What thou wert once, yet I must bow  
To the same lot—to have lived my time  
Of twelve months more, my only crime!’  
Thus all things change and pass away  
In this frail world. To outlive one day  
Is to be dead; nothing is wrong,  
And men are charmed, just so long  
As we can serve them. Let us lose  
Our usefulness, and let us abuse  
And call them ingrates. Be content,  
Men of bygone age, of power spent;  
Old servants, veterans, human flowers  
Of withered beauty; lovers, ye  
Who nourish your mistress’ perfidy—  
All are old almanacs.

**TWO SIDES OF A CHRISTMAS STORY.**

BY A YOUTHFUL CONTRIBUTOR.

It was late Christmas morning. The sun was shining in at the window of a large house, on a beautiful little girl asleep in bed. Presently the little girl, whom we will call Helen Lawrence, awoke, and slipping on her dressing slippers, ran across the room to the big fire-place, where her stocking was hanging full. She turned over her gifts, which were a necklace, a ring, a bracelet, a beautiful doll, and many other things with a somewhat discontented look, and then going down to the toe of her stocking, she brought up a little box, in which was a bright half sovereign.

‘Well,’ said she, ‘this is the best thing in my stocking. I can buy that paint-box with it.’

Just then her nurse came in to dress her. When she was dressed she went to her father’s and mother’s room, wished them a merry Christmas, and then went downstairs to wait till they came down.

After breakfast her father said, ‘How would you like to take a ride with your two cousins, Helen?’

Helen answered, ‘Very much indeed, papa.’

They went, and got home just in time to get lunch, and for Helen to get dressed for the Christmas tree at her uncle’s house.

Helen went, had a good time, and came home and went to bed very cross, tired, and not having done a kind thing for anybody poorer than herself.

But now let us raise the curtain on a very different scene. It is early on the same Christmas morning as our first story, and the sun is shining in the window of a little house on a little girl not so pretty as our first, but with a frank, honest look. This little girl, whom we will call Nellie, is still asleep, but she will soon wake. She is awake now. She jumps up, dresses herself, and then running to the stove, where she had hung her stocking the night before without expecting anything in it; but there is a little bit of a doll, some lollies, and in the toe is a little box. She opens it, and in it is a bright new penny. She dances around, and almost screams aloud in her joy. But remembering that her mother is still asleep, she tries not to.

‘Now,’ said she, ‘I will light the fire and sweep the room before mother wakes up.’ After she had done that she went to the cupboard and took from it a little box. She opened it, and took out some money and counted it. ‘One shilling and sixpence,’ she said at last. ‘I can buy some coffee, butter, and two rolls, and still have sixpence left.’ So slipping on her little shawl and hood, she went out-

She returned soon, and putting the coffee on the stove, she began to set the table. Just then her mother woke, and after wishing each other a merry Christmas, sat down to a cheerful breakfast.

After breakfast, her mother said, ‘Why don’t you go take a walk, dearie?’

Nellie answered ‘Oh, yes, I will, and I can look in at the shop windows, too.’ So taking her dollie, and her remaining sixpence, she said, ‘Good-bye, mother,’ and went out.

As Nellie was walking along, she saw a little girl just her size crouched down in the corner of a door-step. When Nellie came up to her, she said, ‘Oh, you poor little thing, what is the matter?’ She got no answer, so she asked again, ‘Are you hungry?’

‘Awful!’ was the answer. Nellie thought for a second, and then said, ‘Come in here and get something to eat.’

They went in together, and when they came out Nellie said:

‘Have you any home?’

‘Dunno,’ was the answer. ‘You poor little thing.’ She stopped a second, and then began again. ‘Here is sixpence for you to get some dinner with; it is all I have, or I would give you more. Good-bye.’

‘Good-bye,’ was the answer. ‘Thank you for the money.’

‘You are very welcome,’ and Nellie was off. She ran home as fast as she could, to tell her mother all about what had happened.

That evening Nellie did not go to any Christmas tree, but spent a quiet and happy evening with her mother, talking about what had happened that day and reading the little Bible. At half-past eight Nellie went to bed very tired and very happy, and having done one kind thing to somebody poorer than herself.

The little author of this story is eleven years old.

**A NAVAL BATTLE FOR CLEVER BOYS.**

THE amusing experiment of a small naval battle can be made with white chalk and the ordinary table vinegar. Model, say, a dozen chunks of chalk to the resemblance of ships, planking the bottoms evenly, and using matches for masts, smoke-stacks, and turrets. The rival forces you can distinguish by colouring the enemy’s ships with black ink, leaving your own white. Having placed them in a pan or plate close to an imaginary dividing line, pour a good quantity of vinegar between the chalk sticks. Instantly you will hear an audible seething, like the hissing of shells in actual warfare, while ships as if puffing up steam will begin to move forward in slow revolutions, leaving behind them streaks of foam such as are observed in the wake of moving vessels. When meeting at the dividing line, they will have attained quite a respectable speed, bumping and cutting together in the endeavour to push one another farthest from the dividing line. The engagement often proves an exciting one. Of course, the side has won which has the larger number of ships nearest the centre after the affray.

The chemical solution of this seeming mystery is quite simple. Chalk being largely carbon, combines with the acid of the vinegar in carbonic acid—the same gases that cause the effervescence of most mineral waters. The gases rise to the surface of the vinegar in small bubbles of sufficient strength to cause the current which turns the chalk.

Since the patriotic youth will want to see New Zealand boats win, it will be well for him to remember that the best quality of chalk contains the largest proportion of carbon. It will also prove of advantage to plane the chalk carefully, so as to permit it to glide easily.

**QUITE LEGAL.**

A CERTAIN English labourer who was noted for his great size and strength once thought of an original fashion of avoiding toll. The incident is described in the ‘Autobiography of an English Gamekeeper.’

The labourer was going along the road mounted on his donkey, which was a good-sized animal, when he came to a turnpike gate.

‘How much do you charge for my donkey to walk through?’ he asked the pikeman.

‘Twopence,’ was the reply.

‘And how much do you charge for carrying a parcel through the gate?’

‘Nothing.’

‘Whoa! whoa!’ cried Josiah; and quietly dismounting, he deliberately slipped his head under the donkey, seized his forelegs with his hands, lifted him off the ground, carried him through the gate and set him down on the other side.

‘Get up, Neddy!’ he cried, getting on the donkey’s back, and off they went, well content.

**FOR A SUMMER EVENING.**

‘DISTRACTION,’ or ‘Spider web,’ is a game in which each member of the party writes numbers, from one up to one hundred, in every direction over a sheet of paper, upside down, or, in fact, in every way but straight. The papers are then passed about, and each one must scratch off the number on his neighbour’s paper, but must do it in order, two being marked only after one, three after two, etc. The one who first reaches one hundred wins the game, and receives a prize.

**TOO SLIPPERY.**

SEA captains have many adventures, and the stories of their wonderful escapes seldom lose by repetition. Many years ago pirates cruised up and down the English Channel, to the great peril of the merchantmen. The story is told of a Captain Davis, who was noted for his quick wit as well as for his skill in navigation, that he was returning from Ireland with a cargo consisting mainly of butter.

He had not been out very long when a pirate was seen coming down upon him. In vain all sails were spread, every moment brought the pirate nearer.

The men were at their wits’ end, but the captain knew a trick or two. He ordered his men to take off their boots and stockings, and directed that a score of butter barrels be brought on deck.

In a few minutes the barrels had been knocked to pieces, and the butter was thickly spread all over the deck and outside the ship. Not a rope nor a spar that was not slippery. Even without their boots and stockings the sailors could scarcely keep on their legs.

On came the pirate, not dreaming how smoothly he was to be received. Captain Davis assumed an air of submission, and allowed the enemy to come alongside quietly.

But lo! when they jumped over, fully armed, with pistol in one hand and sword in the other, they slipped about and tumbled over each other on the buttered deck like so many rats.

One fellow shot head foremost down into the cabin, where he was immediately set upon by the boy; another slid across the deck, and shot out into the sea by an opposite port-hole.

Not one of them could stand on his feet, and as pirates are generally superstitious, an idea seized them that the ship was possessed of the devil. They hurried back into their own vessel, cast loose, and Captain Davis got safely into port at the expense of a few pounds of butter.

**HINTS FOR BOYS.**

A GENTLEMAN advertised for a boy to assist him in his office, and nearly fifty applicants presented themselves before him. Out of the whole number he selected one, and dismissed the rest.

‘I should like to know,’ said a friend, ‘on what ground you selected that boy without a single recommendation?’

‘You are mistaken,’ said the gentleman; ‘he has a great many: He wiped his feet when he came in and closed the door after him, showing that he was careful; gave up his seat to that lame old man, showing that he was kind and thoughtful; he took off his cap when he came in, answered my questions promptly and respectfully, showing that he was polite and gentlemanly; he picked up a book which I had purposely laid upon the floor, and replaced it on the table, while all the rest stepped over it or shoved it aside, and he waited quietly for his turn, instead of pushing or crowding, showing that he was honest and orderly. When I talked with him, I noticed that his clothes were carefully brushed, his hair in nice order and his teeth as white as milk; and when he wrote his name I noticed that his finger-nails were clean, instead of being tipped with jet, like that handsome little fellow’s in the blue jacket. Don’t you call these things letters of recommendation? I do; and I would give more for what I can talk about a boy by using my eyes ten minutes than all the letters of recommendation he can give me.’

**LIVES IN A GLASS HOUSE.**

THE King of Siam, according to the *London News*, has chosen a unique and effective method of keeping cool. He has recently had built for himself, by a Chinese architect, a pavilion of glass. Walls, floors and ceiling are formed of slabs of different thicknesses of glass, joined by impervious cement.

By one door only can the king enter, and this closes hermetically when he comes in, and ventilator valves in tall pipes in the roof open, as does also a sluice besides a large reservoir in which the glass house stands.

The transparent edifice then becomes submerged, and the king finds himself in a cool and perfectly dry habitation, where he passes the time in a manner pleasing to himself.

**A SUGGESTION.**

‘PAPA,’ said Willie, ‘little brother is a month old to-morrow, isn’t he?’

‘Yes.’

‘Let you and me give him a birthday present.’

‘Very well. What shall it be?’

‘Let’s buy him a wig. He needs that more’n anything.’

**HARRY’S LETTER FROM THE COUNTRY**

TO HIS FATHER IN TOWN.

DEAR PAPA,—The country is awfully nice—

They say that the fishing is fine; Although I’ve been asked to go out once or twice, I could not, for I have no line.

Please send me one down, and a long pole also;

When I don’t go fishing, you see, The pole can be used in the orchard below To knock down the fruit from the tree.

We are going to get up a baseball match,

But haven’t a ball or a bat, You might send me some, and as I hope to catch, I need a glove, mask, and a hat.

They’ve got a good place for a tennis-court here,

And all that we need is a net. Some racquets and balls (the make of this year)— Now, papa, please do not forget.

If you will send these things at once by express,

I know we can have lots of fun; We all send our love—mamma, baby and Bess— Good-bye, From your loving SON.