

THE OLD GRIST MILL.

By the brook beneath the hill Stands quiet and gray the old grist mill. Spring mousies on its stone steps grow; The brook flows on with a silent throw; The pond near by is broad and deep; And the water-lily leaves are green; The lily pads spread gray and green, The lily white add gold between; The water-wheel turns round and round.

Among the reeds the muskrat dives; And swift "the swallow homeward flies;" The reed sits in cedar trees; When the sun goes down the swift and clear; The children by the school-house play, Where shimmering shadows soft by gray; And the long, low, wavy, green trees, Is whispering through the willow leaves; While grinds the mill with rumbling sound; The water-wheel turns round and round.

The squirrel in the nut-tree plays; The leaves now ring their southern way; With many a shout the school-boys run; The brook flows on with a silent throw; The pond near by is broad and deep; The farmer to the old grist mill; The lily pads spread gray and green, The lily white add gold between; The water-wheel turns round and round.

Long have we been in the same place; The road goes wide to rain and sun; With cobble stones the walls are hewn; The marsh-wren builds among the reeds; The night winds brought the leaves down; The sun goes down the children grow; The farmers sleep where the wild flowers grow; When ground the mill with rumbling sound; And the water-wheel turns round and round.

TOM'S CHOICE.

We had just finished breakfast. Tom laid down the egg-spoon he had been playing with, and looked across at mother.

"Aunt Anne, I think I'll take a wife," he said, "as I might have said, 'I think I'll take another cup of coffee,'" said mother sharply. "Take a wife?" repeated mother, by no means receiving the information tranquilly as it had been given. "What for?"

"Well, I don't know," answered Tom, thoughtfully. "It's a notion I've got in my head somehow."

"All nonsense!" said mother, sharply.

"Do you think so?" said Tom, apparently doubtful, but not in the least put out.

"Think so? I know it. What in the world can you want of a wife? After all these years we have lived so comfortably together, to bring home somebody to turn the house upside down! And, then, what is to become of that poor child?"

"A rival!" repeated mother, with unfeeling briskness.

"Yes, a young fellow—yonger by a good deal than I am," and Tom's face assumed an absurd doleful look. "He is a fool! Who is going to be your wife?"

"Why, May, of course," answered Tom.

"May!" and then, after a pause of inexpressible astonishment, it was mother's turn to laugh. "Do you mean to say, Tom, it was that child you were thinking of, who else could it be?" said Tom sharply.

"Well," said mother, "I ought to have remembered you never did do anything like anybody else. But, still, why in the world do you go to work in such a roundabout way?"

"I wanted to see how you took to my idea," said Tom.

"And how do you suppose we were to guess your idea meant May?" mother asked.

"Who else could it be?" repeated Tom, falling back on what he evidently found unanswerable argument. It was no use talking to him. Mother gave it up with a shake of the head.

And you won't want another home, then?" And Tom suddenly set mother off again. Tom joined with her, and altogether I don't think we ever passed a merrier evening than that one that made us acquainted with the whole, Aunt Anne, I should like to try the experiment."

Mother smiled grimly, but Tom was so evidently bent on his "experiment," as he called it, that she gave up the argument.

"You can dance if you are ready to pay the piper," she said shortly.

"And you, how soon do you mean to be married?"

Tom's face fell a little at this question.

"Well," said he, "I can't say exactly. I suppose we will have to be engaged first."

"What?" said mother, opening her eyes; "why, you never mean to say, Tom, you don't spook her to her yet?"

"Not yet," said Tom, cheerfully. "Time enough for that, you know, after I had spoken to you."

"Well," she said, "if it was anything else, I should say he was cracked; but you were never like other people, and never will be, Tom Dean. But, at least, you have fixed on the lady!"

"Oh, yes," answered Tom; "but if you don't mind, Aunt Anne, I would rather not say anything more, at least yet; for—if anything should happen, it wouldn't be pleasant for either party, you know."

With which veiled reference to his possible rejection, Tom took his hat and left the room.

Our household was rather queerly put together. There is no particular reason why I should have been it at all, for I was not really related to Tom, nor even to his mother. I had been brought up in a home where we were as dear to each other as any mother and daughter could be. She was the second wife of my father, who, like most ministers, had been richer in grace than in goods, and left us at his death with very little to live on. Then it was that Tom Dean had come forward and insisted on giving a home to his mother, and to me, to the best of his ability, to the end that she might not be a burden to him. He had seen a dozen times in his life before, that was exactly like Tom—"queer Tom Dean," as his friends were fond of saying, "who never did anything like anybody else."

I suppose, in spite of his clear head for business, there is no denying that he was whimsical; but I am sure, when I thought of his ungratefulness, that he had a mind to say, "What is it, May?"

"Tom," said I, "still surer now he had made his mind up, and more resolved to set him right, "I want a place."

"A place?" repeated Tom, puzzled, as well he might be by this sudden and indefinite announcement; "what kind of a place?"

"I don't know," I said, "for indeed my idea was the vaguest. I thought you might, being in the way of those things. 'Not pray, Tom,' I went on quickly, 'don't pray, Tom, I'm discontented—on anything of that sort.' The truth is, ever since I left off school I have wanted something to do, and had it in my mind to speak to you about it."

With this I looked at Tom, fearing he would be vexed; but he did not look vexed; only preoccupied.

"I do know of a place, as it happens," he said, "and I want to tell you about it."

"How very nice!" I exclaimed.

"But soon can I have it?"

"I am concerned," said Tom, and with that he turned and looked at me, and directly I met his eyes I knew somehow, all in a moment, what it was he meant; and I knew, too, both that I could not have passed all my life with Will Broomley, and that I wanted something to do, and had it in my mind to speak to you about it."

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