

THE ANT AS AN ENGINEER.

The pastry was delicious, and I wanted it myself. So I put it in the pantry on the very lowest shelf. And to keep it from the insects, those ants red and small, I made a river round it of molasses, best of all.

But the enemy approached it, all as hungry as could be.

And the captain with his aid-de-camp just skirmishing round to see whether they could for this river, or should try some other plan.

And together with his comrades he around the liquid ran.

To his joy and satisfaction after traveling around, the place where the molasses was narrowest he found;

Then again he reconnoitred, rushing forward and then back,

Until he spied some loosened mortar in the wall around a tack.

He divided then his forces, with a foreman for each squad,

And he marshaled the whole army, and before him each ant trot;

His directions were all given; to his chiefs he gave a call;

While he headed the procession as they marched off up the wall.

Every ant then seized his plaster, just a speck and nothing more,

And he climb'd and tagged and carried till he'd brought it to the shore;

Then they built their bridge, just working for an hour by the sky,

After which they all marched over and all fell after eating pie.

—[St. Nicholas.

MAGGIE'S WEDDING GIFT.

BY AMELIA E. BARR.

"A man's hat in his hand never did him any harm, Stephen, and I wish, dear, you had been a little more civil to Uncle Joseph."

"Nonsense, Maggie, darling, and I am not going to pretend I do."

"His ways are very good ways. No one can say wrong of Uncle Joseph, Stephen."

"That is just it; they are too good. I rather think I am old enough to know what I am doing, and what I want. I have a good farm, I don't owe a penny, and I never mean to ask a favor except of you, or of my own hands. If I palavered over Joseph Hawick, he would be the very first to say I wanted the trifles of money he may have saved."

Maggie sighed, and then looked up into Stephen's handsome face and smiled. Stephen, of course, was right; a man with such eyes and such a figure could not, in love's sight, be wrong. He was brave and confident, too, and had that way of assertion which only very cool and sensible people can resist.

Uncle Joseph sighed, too, but it was a different sigh from Maggie's. He loved his niece with a wise and tender affection, and she had not chosen the husband that he would have chosen for her. Stephen Gray was indeed "well-to-do," and had a fair character, but the keen old man saw radical defects in it.

"He listens to no one but himself, and he bears no advice but a flatterer's," said Joseph, "besides, Maggie, he is so proud, that I am afraid he's bound to have a tumble."

"But, uncle, he has a big heart, and he's a good farmer, and even you can see that he is the handsomest man in the Dale."

"That is all true, girl, but God does not measure men by inches."

However, in spite of all disaffection, Maggie Hawick's wedding with Stephen Gray came off with great and widespread hospitality. Joseph Hawick had been for forty years the physician and friend of all the Dale families, rich and poor, and not one of them missed an invitation. The gentry feasted in the oak-raftered parlor, and the shepherds and cotters in the big barn. But all were merry and full of good wishes for the pretty bride and her handsome husband.

The number of the bridal presents Maggie received testified to it. Stephen's sideboard and buffet would be bright with silver tokens, and his press full of snowy damask and fine-spun linens and blankets. But, upon the whole, it rather mortified him. He could not feel the loving kindness that sanctified the gifts, and the obligation was not pleasant to the self-sufficient young man. He had assured Uncle Joseph voluntarily, and with rather unnecessary pride, that he wanted nothing with Maggie, neither gold nor gear nor land; and yet, for all that, he looked rather anxiously for the old man's offering.

Joseph Hawick was believed, in spite of his eccentric attentions to poor patients, to "have money," and Stephen felt that a handsome check on Kendal Bank or a few government bonds would not be out of place; for he had been at some expense in refurbishing the old farm-house, and he was very anxious to try some new scientific experiments with his worn-out land.

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But Maggie said nothing about her uncle's present, and Stephen was far too proud to ask her, until nearly a year after their marriage. But one day he had a long talk with old Squire Thwaites about "high farming," and then the two men drifted into the discussion of some scheme for the draining of Druid's Moss. Then Stephen, thinking it all over as he smoked his pipe by the blazing inglenook, had a wild thought of the harvest of the rich alluvial soil and fabulous wheat-fields growing where men now caught leeches or shot wild fowl.

If he only had money! If he only had one thousand pounds in cash! Thwaites and he would buy and drain the Moss. He sat dreaming over the project and counted the acres and bushels over and over, until he began to look upon Druid's Moss the one thing upon the earth to be desired.

"Maggie," he said, suddenly, to the little wife, sewing and gently rocking herself beside him, "Maggie, what did Uncle Joseph give you for a wedding present? You never told me."

"I thought you would not like it, Stephen."

"Very likely, not, but nevertheless, what was it?"

"A Bible."

"Just like him; and we had two family ones to begin with, not to speak of the little ones you have in almost every room."

"In the same way, Stephen, people gave us napkins enough for three generations, and silver mugs enough to serve all our friends. Uncle's Bible was by no means an ordinary one."

"How now?"

"It has been in the Hawick household since A. D. 1616, and contains the may register for more than two hundred years. I am the last of our branch; Uncle thought I would like to have it. It

is a queer old book with great brass clasps. I made uncle two solemn promises over it."

"What were they?"

"That I would never part with it under any circumstances, unless it was to give it back in his charge, and—"

"Well, what else?"

"That when every other source of help and comfort failed me I would go to it—don't look so angry, Stephen."

"I think I have good cause to be angry; it is like a prophecy of ill fortune. Why should he foresee sorrow for you?"

"And why should he suppose that you would need help and comfort? I could not give you! If he had given you a thousand pounds it would have been more to the purpose."

Maggie looked quickly up. She had never heard such a sentiment from Stephen's lips before. Then she laughed gayly.

"A thousand pounds, Stephen! Why, what on earth should we do with so much money?"

"Buy and drain Druid's Moss, Maggie."

Maggie drew her eyebrows together and looked wondering at Stephen, who had risen and was pacing the floor with rapid, thoughtful steps.

"Why, love," she said anxiously, "what can you mean? The Druid's Moss! What is that worth?"

"A few leeches and wild birds now, Maggie, but acres and acres of golden wheat and rich meadow-grass; if it is drained, I was talking to Thwaites about it to-day. Both our uplands are worn out; the Moss lies between us. I would give five years of my life to own half of it and may sufficient to drain and cultivate it."

"How much money would do, Stephen?"

"A thousand pounds. I could drain part, and then save the proceeds to drain the rest. But where could I get the money?"

"I was thinking of Uncle Joseph. Would you let me ask him?"

"Nothing is so wonderful as the growth of a master passion. In a few hours, the desire for this particular piece of land had strengthened itself so that Stephen began to consider whether it might not be worth while to let his wife go borrowing for him; and the longer he talked, the more eager he became; so that, at last, Maggie felt hurt to see what a trifle he made of her feelings and of the risk Joseph Hawick would run.

However, next day she went to see the old man, and, as they sat together over their tea and crumpets, said:

"Uncle Stephen wants to join Squire Thwaites in buying the Druid's Moss."

"What for? To raise cranberries?"

"Uncle! Why they talk of great wheat-fields and meadows."

"It will need a sight of draining, and that means a sight of money. I should think Stephen had idle cash sufficient."

"He wants to borrow it."

Joseph's face clouded.

"Wonders never cease. I thought Stephen Gray would starve before he would borrow or owe money."

"Don't cast up the past, uncle. Stephen thinks that if he could borrow a thousand pounds he would make it ten in a very few years; and, uncle, I came to-day to ask you to lend him it."

"You came a useless journey, Maggie, forby me don't like that pride that makes others stoop for its conceit."

"Squire Thwaites said you had plenty of money in Kendal Bank."

"If I had money I'd never trust it in any bank; but I make no more than I need now. I am getting an old man, Maggie."

"Stephen will be sorely disappointed."

"He has no cause to be so. I told him you would have no fortune, and he quite scorned at the thought of money with you. He had his choice between you and Kate Crofts, with the Crofts' man at her will."

The old man was quite gloomy after this talk; and Maggie was almost glad to escape from the silent heart-throbs to the bustle of her own busy farm and the noisy welcome of her husband.

Stephen took the refusal very proudly, but the idea had now become paramount, and Joseph Hawick's refusal had only made him the more determined to carry out the project. He had a fierce struggle with his pride and his independence, but the next day he went to Kendal and made arrangements to raise the money by a mortgage on the farm that had been uninhabited for six hundred years.

In a few weeks all arrangements had been made, the Moss had been bought, surveyed and divided, and the partners in its drainage went to work. It soon proved itself a drainage of two kinds. After many hundreds of pounds had been spent to very little purpose, more experienced surveyors had to be sent for, and entirely new means and machinery used. "Too much had been thrown into the Moss to abandon the project, and yet the constant cry for "money" was fast exhausting the patience and purse of both Squire Thwaites and Stephen.

The former more able to bear his loss, became, after two years' labor, quite indifferent, talked of the affair as hopeless, and was half angry with Stephen for persisting. But something like desperation animated the young farmer, for he had so far mortgaged his home and estate that their redemption was hopeless if the Moss failed him.

Poor Maggie, to help her two babies to care, strove to help him by taking upon herself labors she was totally unfit for; and she rapidly broke down between the unusual physical strain and the constant, anxious worry regarding Stephen. All her husband's life dwindled down to those damp, black acres or rich mud. Maggie got to hate the name and shudder at the sight of Druid's Moss, and with that touch of superstition always lingering in north-country minds, she half feared it had bewitched him; for he worked them through long days, until he even notice the children; while every pound he could get was hopelessly sunk in its treacherous depths.

It was pitiful, too, to see the bare uplands of the farm that were once white with mountain-sheep; and the great barns and byres nearly empty, that had once been full of Normandy farm-horses and dewy-lipped Alderneys. But things got worse and worse, and in the middle of a dreary winter, just before the birth of her third child, Uncle Joseph died. Fifty pounds to defray his funeral expenses was nearly all the money found; but he left Maggie his house and furniture, and with his last breath reminded her of old Bible.

"You'll be needing it soon, Maggie dear, I know; don't forget me when you come to that day."

These were his last words, and Maggie pondered them that evening as she sat, silent, beside her sleeping child.

It was hard to sell the dear old home, but Stephen would hear of nothing else; so the doctor's house went into the market; the quaint furniture was scattered all over the Dale and the money went into Druid's Moss.

"It only put off the evil day, Squire Thwaites abandoned his improvements:

he would throw no more good money after bad, he said; but Stephen, with a determination that many thought a kind of madness, worked away.

And really, in the fourth year, it looked as if he would succeed. A portion that had been finished produced such a crop as made the farmers round the craggy hills doubt their own eyes. Stephen was jubilant; what could be done for two acres could be done for two hundred. He had proved his position, and was more enthusiastic than ever over his idea.

But Maggie was almost hopeless. She was beginning to suffer for very necessities; strange, hard men came with authority about her home, and Stephen loosed so ill and haggard and was so irritable that her cup was full of sorrow. One gloomy afternoon, when it rained so heavily that work was impossible, she ventured to try to reason with and comfort the gloomy man, looking dolefully across the empty farm-yard toward the great, flat, dreary Moss.

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"It will be a sight of draining, and that means a sight of money. I should think Stephen had idle cash sufficient."

"It will soon be over, my dear Maggie," he said. "To-morrow I am going to Kendal, to get another five hundred pounds, if I can, upon the farm ploughing and the remnant of the stock. I am sure, if I get it, to put the whole Moss under wheat this year, and that will practically save us. If I don't, I have lost my estate and all these years' labor, and we shall leave this place, beggars, within a month. You know the worst now, Maggie."

The next day, amid the driving storm, she watched her husband make his last desperate effort. She turned and looked upon the pleasant room, with her three children playing unconsciously about it; then she fled upstairs, and, falling down upon her knees, poured out all her heart in passionate, pleading prayer. As she rose, with streaming eyes, Uncle Joseph's last words flashed across her mind.

Stephen had given her a new meaning for her. She unlocked her drawer, and lifted the old brass-bound book carefully and tenderly out.

"It has comforted my fathers and mothers for many a generation," she said softly. "I will see what it will do for me." And she unclasped it with a prayer: "I was brought low, and He helped me."

They were good words, and she read the whole psalm through and turned the leaf. A Bank-of-England bill for one hundred pounds fell at her feet. She lifted it as though it had fallen from heaven, and commenced to turn, with eager, trembling fingers, the well-worn pages. One after another, bills fluttered into her lap until, from between the boards of Uncle Joseph's wedding-gift, she had taken eight thousand eight hundred pounds.

Can any one guess how she prayed again, and with what a radiant face she met the cross, wretched man that, half-drowned with the storm, walked, about sunward, up to the heartstone?

"Stephen! Stephen!" she cried joyously. "Never look sad again! Uncle Joseph's wedding-gift has saved us!"

And she spread the money before him. Maggie was right; the money saved Stephen every way. He bought Thwaites out; he paid off all claims on his home; he restocked his farm, and triumphantly finished the draining of Druid's Moss.

Maggie's fortune was oddly given, but the eccentric old man did not judge far amiss. His wedding gift was blessed as he intended it should be—in two ways—for Maggie and Stephen learned to love it, not only for the material help it had brought them in their extremity, but also for the promise of the far more exceeding and abundant riches which it promises and provides for. —[The Ledger.

The Cat in Thibet.

The cat is treated by Thibetans with the most marked attention and forbearance. Even when it spills milk, breaks or destroys any valuable object, or kills some pet bird, it is never whipped or beaten in any way, but merely chidden and driven away by the voice; while she had the money saved Stephen every way. He bought Thwaites out; he paid off all claims on his home; he restocked his farm, and triumphantly finished the draining of Druid's Moss.

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The Sad ELEVATOR BOY.

Old Lady—Don't you ever feel sick going up and down in this elevator all day?

Elevator Boy—Yes'm.

"Is it the motion of going down?"

"No'm.

"The motion of going up?"

"No'm.