

THE ROCK-A-BY LADY.

The rock-a-bye lady from Hushaby street
comes stealing: comes creeping;
The poppies they hang from her head to her
feet.

And each has a dream that is tiny and fleet—
She bringeth her poppies to you, my sweet,
When she findeth you sleeping!

There is one little dream of a beautiful drum—
"Rub-a-dub!" it goeth;

There is one little dream of a big sugar-plum,
And, lo! thief and fast the other dreams come
Of pogons that hang and tin tops that hum,
And a trumpet that bloweth!

And doilies peep out of those wee little dreams
With laughter and singing;

And boats go a-floating on silvery streams,
And the stars peek-a-boo with their own misty
gleams;

And up, and up, where the mother moon
beams.

The fairies go winging!

Would you dream all these dreams that are
tiny and fleet?

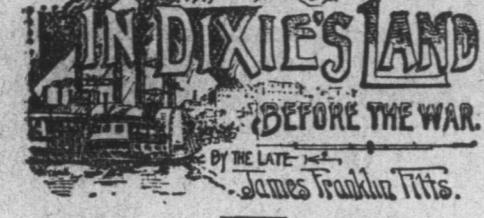
They'll come to you sleeping;

So, shut the two eyes that are weary, my
sweet.

For the rock-a-bye lady from Hushaby street,
With poppies that hang from her head to her
feet,

Comes stealing: comes creeping.

—Chicago Record.



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CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED.

The restraint and discipline to which I was subjected brought on an explosion that winter. It was soon after my twenty-first birthday. I had been waiting a little for my austere guardian to inform me that I was no longer under his direction, when I was resolved by hook or crook to make my way to Mississippi. In the meantime I resolved upon a little unwanted personal liberty. A young people's sleighride to a tavern up in a gap of the mountains, with a supper and a dance, had been projected. I well knew it would be fruitless to ask permission; so I resolved to attend by means of that expedient which the sailors call "taking French." In other words, I climbed out of my chamber window at nine o'clock, when the family were asleep.

Disaster attended our homeward way in the early hours of the morning. The harness broke; delay attended its repair; it was long after daylight when we reached the village. I know that my clandestine absence must have been discovered, and I resolved to put a bold face on the matter. The deacon's family were at breakfast when I walked in.

The tyrant at the head of the table glared wrathfully upon me.

"Where have you been, sir?"

"Up at Snediker's, with the sleighing party."

"Wretched youth! Your depravity is astounding. I will see you in the woodshed after breakfast."

I made no reply, but ate with considerable composure, while the commiserating glances of the deacon's big boys sought my face. Sad experience told them what was coming.

The meal over, the deacon indulged in a long addendum of thanks for what we had received, mingled with pious denunciations of the depraved conduct of one of the family. He rose from the table and, with a motion to me, marched out into the woodshed. I followed promptly.

He reached down a great hickory limb from the shelf and, bending, and tying it in his hand, he addressed me with a sternness that was seasoned with a savage kind of glee as he anticipated the diversion he was about to provide for himself.

"Dorr Jewett, take off your coat. I have too long neglected my duty. The devil is clamoring for your immortal soul. I will chastise the adversary out of you. Take off your coat."

I snatched up a heavy oak stool that stood by and put myself on the defensive.

"If you lay a hand on me I'll knock your brains out!" I cried.

He fell back, astagh. I suppose the idea of resistance to his authority never entered his head.

"What do you mean, you young imp?" he stammered.

"I mean what I say. I've done nothing to be punished for; if I had, your authority over me was at an end some weeks ago. You old canting hypocrite, I defy you to touch me!"

My blood was up, and I said more than I had at first intended to. He saw that I would surely break his head if he should advance on me, and



he did not attempt it. But never was man in a greater rage! His leathery face almost turned green.

"Out of my house, you young reprobate—you spawn of Bellal!" he squeaked, in a voice shaking with fury.

"I will go with pleasure. Will you send my trunk over to the tavern?"

"Yes. Clear out!"

"I want those books you took away from me."

"Take all your traps and leave!"

I turned on my heel and went into the dining-room. Bidding the family good-bye, I put on my cap and went over to the tavern. I had not a cent in my pocket.

CHAPTER V. THE TAMING OF A LAND SHARK.

I had no definite plan as to how I was to accomplish my darling wish of going to Mr. Bostock. The landlord was a clever sort of man who thoroughly disliked the deacon, and, as he had been quite friendly with my father, it occurred to me that I could claim his hospitality for a little while, till I could get the means to pay him. I found him alone, and briefly described what had happened. I thought he would go into convulsions. His fat sides shook with laughter.

"Well, now, that's glorious! The best thing I've heard for a year. Tried to tick you, did he? Would you really have knocked him down with the stool?"

"Indeed I should, if he'd come within reach of it."

"But did you really and truly call him a canting old hypocrite?"

"What are your proofs?"

"You'll know in due time."

He hesitated, then said, with an effort:

"You haven't any proof. I'll talk with you no more about it."

I thought the game was lost, but I resolved to play it to the end.

"Very well," I said. "You defy me to make a criminal complaint against you. I will do it at once."

"What for?"

"Why—he's your guardian; or was. Hasn't he ever said anything to you about the state of your account, or given you any money?"

"Never. What do you mean?"

"The old shark! He's trying to swindle you, as he has some other orphans."

As soon as the landlord's indignation had cooled, he gave me an explanation that surprised me. He said that the mortgage on which my father's farm was sold was small in amount, and that the farm sold well. There was a surplus, which had been paid into the hands of Deacon Halleck, as my guardian.

Tom Brough, the lawyer's clerk, was here last night, talking about it. He says that, with a liberal allowance for your board and for guardian's fees, the deacon ought to have five hundred dollars for you."

"Five hundred dollars?" I faltered.

"How am I to get it?"

"Ah—there is the trouble! I suppose Tom Brough has no business to blab the secrets of the office; but when he has a glass in, he'll tell me anything. He says that Deacon Halleck has made a great deal of money out of estates, and defrauded many widows and orphans, by large bills, delays and all kinds of law-obstacles. He says that is just what will happen to you. No matter, Dorr; I'll stand by you. I'll get some lawyer or other to take your case, and you can stay with me till it's decided."

I sat pondering on this revelation.

"It'll take time," I said.

"Yes—of course."

"And perhaps the deacon might make it appear that he don't owe me anything."

"He's capable of swearing to anything; and you'll have to take your chances with him, of course. But I don't follow him up."

"He's rich and has position and influence; I'm nobody!" I said, continuing to pile up the obstacles.

"You have friends, I tell you! Just take my advice!"

"Thank you, Mart, I believe I'll try another way first."

"What way?"

A sudden inspiration had seized me.

"I can't tell you; it's between the deacon and me; I'm going right back to see him."

It was not more than an hour from the time that I left the home of my late guardian when I entered it again. There was a little den off the dining-room where deacon kept a desk, the pigeon-holes of which were filled with his notes, leases and mortgages. I knew his habits, and relied upon finding him here at that hour. He looked up from some accounts that he was poring over, and scowled as he saw me.

"What brings you back here?" he demanded.

"I was in too great a hurry to leave, just now. I've come back to have a settlement with you."

He turned sharply, and faced me.

"What do you mean?"

"I want you to account to me as my late guardian. It's my belief that you are as much as five hundred dollars coming to me."

A contemptuous smile curled his thin lips.

"You're getting along famously, indeed! What other gossip have you heard over at the tavern?"

"Will you settle with me?"

"Look here—you impudent jackanapes! There is nothing to settle. The very small amount of money that came to me for you after the sale of the farm has been more than consumed by my charges for board, washing and care. You owe me money yourself."

"I shall put my claim in the hands of a lawyer."

"Go ahead," he said, defiantly.

"Well, Deacon Halleck—that's the end of that business, for the present. You'll hear from my lawyer in due time. There's something else I want to talk about."

He turned his back upon me, and busied himself again at his desk.

"Your barn was burned last December."

He wheeled his chair sharply about.

"What of that?"

"I know who set it afire."

"You do?"

"Yes."

His defiant manner was gone; the wrinkles of his face quivered and he had hard work to return my steady look.

"Well—" and then came a pause.

"Who did it?"

"You did it."

He jumped up, strode to and fro, shook his fist at me and poured out a torrent of words.

"You rascally young liar! What do you mean, coming here and insulting me with such a ridiculous story? Do you suppose you can blackmail me—in this way? I'll have you arrested—"

"I'll have you arrested."

He did not attempt it. But never was man in a greater rage! His leathery face almost turned green.

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"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU YOUNG IMP?"

His wrath, and his fears, too, as his face plainly showed, choked his words I quietly took a chair.

"I'd advise you to take it cool, sir! You'll remember we've done talking about my claim; we are on another subject now. I merely say to you that I have the evidence that you burned your own property to realize a large insurance on it. I shall go from here to a magistrate and make complaint. If you know of any reason why I should not you had better state it."

He sat down and stared hard at me. He tried hard to conceal his thoughts; but I saw plainly that his mind was halting between fear and bluster.

"Preposterous!" he muttered.

I said nothing.

"Who do you expect to believe this silly story?"

"I refuse to discuss that. It will be time to talk about that when my proofs are presented."

"What are your proofs?"

"You'll know in due time."

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