

# ST. NICHOLAS.

VOL. II.

FEBRUARY, 1875.

No. 4.

## THE STORY OF A PARROT.

BY HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH.

SOME forty years ago, there lived in the quiet town of East Haverhill, Massachusetts, a much respected Quaker family by the name of Whittier. They were hard-working, thrifty farmers, and their home was known to all the poor in that section; no one was ever turned away from their door unpitied, unclothed, or unfed.

Even the Indians had respected Grandfather Whittier in the stormy times of the Indian war. His house had stood near a garrison, but he would accept of no protection from the soldiers. He did not believe in the use of weapons; he treated the savages kindly; they owed him no ill-will, and the benevolent old man tilled fields in safety, and feared no harm.

Among Mr. Whittier's children was a boy named John, who had a very feeling heart and a quick mind. He was a hard-working farmer lad, who knew more of the axe, the sickle and hoe than the playthings of childhood. Indeed, New England children had but a glimpse at the sunniness of youth in those hard times; no long daisied walks, stretching far into life, they could call their own.

His early education consisted of a few weeks' schooling for a number of winters in the district school. A queer sort of a school it was,—kept in a private house. The schoolmaster was a kind, good man, and he did not ply the birch very vigorously, like most of the schoolmasters in these old times. He was more like Oliver Goldsmith, who used to govern his school by giving the children sugar-plums and telling them wonderful stories.

John loved him, and spoke a kind word for him when he became a man.

In the library there is a beautiful poem called "Snow-Bound,"—a very good poem for good people to read. Now the boy lived in just such a home as is described in that poem, and his boyhood was passed among just such scenes as are pictured there. You may like to read it some day, so we need not try to tell what has been told so well.

He was a poet in boyhood. He did not know it. There are many poets who do not. He loved to love others and be loved; he could see things in nature that others could not see,—in the woods and fields; in the blue Merrimac; in the serene sky of the spring, and the tinges of the sunset. He had but few books,—perhaps no books of poetry, for music and poetry his father classed among the "vanities" which the Bible denounced. But there was much poetry in the Bible; his "Pilgrim's Progress" was almost a poem; and nature to him was like a book of poems, for there was poetry in his soul.

He used to express his feelings in rhyme; how could the boy help it? He one day wrote one of these poems on some coarse paper, and sent it privately to a paper called the *Free Press*, published in the neighboring town of Newburyport.

The editor of the paper, whose name was Garrison—William Lloyd Garrison, you may have heard the name before—found the poem tucked under the door of his office by the postman, and noticing that it was written in blue ink, was tempted



to throw it into his waste-basket. But Mr. Garrison had a good, kind heart, and liked to give every one a chance in the world. He read the poem, saw there was true genius in it, and so he published it.

Happy was the Quaker farmer boy when he saw his verses in print. He felt that God had something in store in life for him—that he was called in some way to be good and useful to others. He wrote other poems, and sent them to Mr. Garrison.

They were full of beauties—these poems. Mr. Garrison one day asked the postman from what quarter they came.

“I am accustomed to deliver a package of papers to a farmer-boy in East Haverhill. I guess they come from him.”

Mr. Garrison thought he must ride over to East Haverhill and see.

So he went one day, and found a slender, sweet-faced farmer-boy working with his plain, practical father on the farm. The boy modestly acknowledged that he had written the poems; at which his father did not seem over well pleased.

“You must send that boy to school, Friend Whittier,” said Mr. Garrison.

Friend Whittier was not so sure; but the good counsel of the Newburyport editor, in the end, was decisive. The boy was sent to the academy.

John is an old man now, almost sixty years of age. He lives at Amesbury, near the beautiful Merrimac, that he loved in youth. Almost every boy and girl in the land can repeat some of the poems he has written.

He has no wife and children, yet his home is cheerful and social, and is open to the stranger, like his father's and grandfather's of old.

In common with most men of genius, he is very fond of pets, and, among these favorites, little animals and birds have their place. It is of one of these household pets that we have a story to tell.

She was a parrot, and she belonged to that respectable branch of the parrot family named Polly. Polly succeeded, among her master's favorites, a smart little bantam, who once had the freedom of the house, and who perished, we think, in an unequal contest with an evil-disposed cat.

Polly, too, had the freedom of the house at times, and used to sit on the back of the poet's chair at his meals, and the two sometimes held very profound and confidential conversations together.

The poet is a pious man. We have seen the little Quaker church to which he goes regularly on Sundays and Thursdays for silent worship; it is a quiet rural fane, and seems like a little school-house in the wood. Polly, who had been badly brought up, became demure and well-behaved

immediately after her adoption; so, for a time, the poet and Polly were in perfect sympathy.

One Sabbath day, Polly, who had doubtless heard much about large views from the poet's learned visitors, thought that she would take a somewhat larger view of the world. So, as the people were going to church, she climbed upon the top of the house, and sat upon the ridge-pole. It then occurred to her, that, having reached a more exalted sphere of thought and action, she would behave well no more. She had been in bad company before she had fallen in with her new friends, and her memory was very good.

So Polly began to denounce the people going to church in very shocking language. She was doing the poet great scandal, and exciting marked public attention, when her astonished master appeared, rake in hand, and proceeded at once to administer discipline by bringing her down from her high position and subjecting her to plain Quaker discipline.

Polly was in disgrace for a time, but she succeeded in re-establishing her character again, though it was not thought certain that her goodness would be able to withstand very grave temptation.

One day, Polly succeeded in reaching the house-top again, and began to congratulate herself on the recovery of her former high position and freedom. She reached the top of the chimney this time, and was seen tilting up and down and trying her wings, as though preparing to launch out into the air on a long voyage of discovery. Suddenly, she was gone. Where? No one had noticed which direction she had taken. No one had heard her shout of triumph in the glad, sunny air. But Polly was gone.

The news flew through the village that the parrot had left her home, and become a very stray bird. The children looked for her in the fields, and the farmers in the woods; every one tried to keep ears and eyes open day and night, but nothing of Polly was seen or heard. The poet's house was no longer filled with quiet gladness, for the inmates all pitied the bird when night came on, and imagined that she was far away in the woods, hungry and out in the cold. Two days passed and no tidings were brought of the wandering bird. The neighbors began to think that, like one of Shakespeare's heroes, she had died “and made no sign.” On the third night, when two young persons, as we have heard the story, were sitting in one of the rooms in the cottage, they were startled by a sound, as though some evil-disposed intruder had concealed himself in the fire-place. An investigation was determined upon; the fire-place was opened, and lo! “Poor Polly!”



She was a very damaged bird. She had fallen down the chimney when just about to soar to the skies, and, landing in a very dark place, probably thought that there had been an eclipse of the sun, or that night had come on in some manner not accounted for in her limited astronomy. She maintained silence three days; she had nothing to say.

Polly's high aspirations were blighted from that hour. She was a discouraged, disappointed bird.

She grew silent and pined away, and, like other bold adventurers who have been brought plump down when just about to launch out on the breezes of fame, she died of her bruises and of a broken heart.

Her decline was marked with sincere regret, and there was a sorrowful tenderness in her master's tone, as he watched her in these adverse and altered days.

POOR POLLY!



## EIGHT COUSINS.

BY LOUISA M. ALCOTT.

### CHAPTER III.—UNCLES.

WHEN Rose woke next morning, she was not sure whether she had dreamed what occurred the night before, or whether it had actually happened. So she hopped up and dressed, although it was an hour earlier than she usually rose, for she could not sleep any more, being possessed with a strong desire to slip down and see if the big portmanteau and packing-cases were really in the hall. She seemed to remember tumbling over them when she went to bed, for the aunts had sent her off very punctually, because they wanted their pet nephew all to themselves.

The sun was shining, and Rose opened her window to let in the soft May air fresh from the sea. As she leaned over her little balcony, watching an early bird get the worm, and wondering how she should like Uncle Alec, she saw a man leap the

garden wall and come whistling up the path. At first she thought it was some trespasser, but a second look showed her that it was her uncle returning from an early dip into the sea. She had hardly dared to look at him the night before, because whenever she tried to do so she always found a pair of keen blue eyes looking at her. Now she could take a good stare at him as he lingered along, looking about him as if glad to see the old place again.

A brown, breezy man, in a blue jacket, with no hat on the curly head which he shook now and then like a water-dog; broad-shouldered, alert in his motions, and with a general air of strength and stability about him which pleased Rose, though she could not explain the feeling of comfort it gave her. She had just said to herself, with a sense of relief, "I guess I *shall* like him, though he looks as if he made people mind," when he lifted his eyes to