

A TEMPERANCE TALE.

A mouse fell into a beer vat, poor thing, and a cat passing by saw the struggling little creature. The mouse said to the cat—

"Help me out of my difficulty."

"If I do I shall eat you," said the cat.

"Very well," replied the mouse; "I would rather be eaten by a decent cat than drowned in such a horrible mess of stuff as this."

It was a sensible cat, and said—

"I certainly shall eat you, and you must promise me on your word of honour that I may do so."

"Very well, I will give you the promise. I promise."

So the cat fished the mouse out; and, trusting to the promise, she dropped it for an instant to clean her own mouth of the abomination of the vat, thinking she had better do so before she took a meal off the mouse.

The mouse instantly darted away and crept into a hole in the corner where the cat could not get him.

"But didn't you promise me I might eat you?" said puss.

"Yes, I did," replied the mouse; "but, don't you know that when I made that promise I was in liquor?"

And how many promises made in liquor have been broken!

They were of many kinds—kings, queens, and famous people, country scenes, and, not least, delightful pictures of animals, drawn by Mr. Harrison Weir, to illustrate anecdotes.

I took the pictures as they came, and the little one listened with great attention to my account of each and all. But after a while she turned her winsome little face, and said in the most polite way, "Please would you never mind telling me about the fine ladies and gentlemen, and tell me all about the doggies and things?"

Like every tender-hearted and right-minded wee maiden, she loved dumb animals, doggies being deservedly first favourites, and would rather hear about their wise-like doings than about all the royal finery in the world.

So we confined our attention to the "doggies and things," and were very happy until we came to the very tail end of our animal tales. Then my little maiden was distressed that there were no more; so I looked amongst some unprinted papers, and found two letters, written years ago to my own little folks, from Heidelberg, and in 1874. They were vastly delighted with them at the time, and my small friend opened her large eyes wider, and clapped her hands and laughed as I read them to her. This made me think perhaps some other quite small girls would like them too. That is, if there are any children left young enough! For, alas! the small people go to school so very soon, and learn so many "ologies," and talk so wisely themselves, that sometimes I feel ever so much younger than my own little friends. I cannot imagine them doing the foolish things that I did, as a child; with my garden for instance, I can remember sowing seeds and planting cuttings, and turning the ground over a couple of days afterwards, to see if the seeds were springing, or gently drawing up the cutting to see if there were signs of a root! How a child of the same age would curl her lips and turn up her bit of a nose now at the idea of my being such a simpleton! And, old as I am, how very small I should feel if she did so!

Well, in the hope that there are some children left young enough to laugh at a little true incident told in the shape of a nonsense story, I will write two such, and send them to THE GIRL'S OWN, for that is the paper read by all the nice young people, and all the still-young old ones.

The first will just be a copy of portions of those two letters—"A Mouse's Tale," the other a proper "Doggie Story."

LETTER I.—LONG TAIL, ESQUIRE, IS INTRODUCED.

MY DARLING CHILDREN,—Once upon a time a gentleman mouse lived with Mrs. Mouse and a charming family of four small mice in this old city of Heidelberg, where we are now staying. He was a very good sort of fellow, only he was rather inclined to express a better opinion of his human neighbours than they deserved. This is not at all a common fault amongst human animals, for



A NEW USE FOR BEES.—The anger of bees was once turned to profitable purpose. A small privateer, with forty or fifty men, having on board some hives made of earthenware and full of bees, was pursued by a Turkish galley manned by five hundred seamen and soldiers. As soon as the latter came alongside, the crew of the privateer mounted the rigging with their hives and hurled them down on the deck of the galley. The Turks, astonished at this novel mode of warfare, and unable to defend themselves from the stings of the enraged bees, became so terrified that they thought of nothing but how to escape their fury; while the crew of the small vessel, defended by masks and gloves, flew upon their enemies sword in hand, and captured the vessel almost without resistance.



TWO CHAPTERS FOR THE LITTLE PEOPLE.

By RUTH LAMB.

CHAPTER I.

A MOUSE'S TALE.

I WAS sitting one day with a dear little girl on my knee, amusing her by telling her stories about the pictures in a book before us.

they are apt to think and speak evil of their mouse neighbours, and to keep them at as great a distance as possible.

Mr. Mouse—or to give him his proper title, Long Tail, Esq.—was fond of rambling, and often nearly frightened his loving wife and family into fits by not making his appearance at meal-times. When he did drop in home, he would brush away Mrs. Long Tail's tears with the tips of his whiskers, and assure her that her fears on his account were perfectly absurd. "Had he dined or taken tea?" as the case might be. "Of course he had. That excellent giant, Mr. Smith, a near relative of John Bull, Esq., had laid a luxurious meal for him on his dining-room carpet. He only wished that domestic engagements had permitted his dear wife to accompany him, that she too might have shared the sumptuous provisions with him."

Seeing him safe and sound and in such high spirits, Mrs. Long Tail smiled cheerfully, and tried to make home as pleasant as possible, in order that her husband might be induced to stay there. She talked of the children's beauty, bade him notice what a fine curve the eldest boy-mouse's tail had, and how bright the baby's eyes were getting. But no matter what their wives do, some husbands will run and find amusement outside the domestic circle. Long Tail was most kind-hearted, and a devoted husband and father, but he liked to take frequent excursions in search of adventures.

One evening he told Mrs. Long Tail that he was "off for a stroll," and he said it in such a manner that she knew he meant, "You need not say a word against it, for go I shall."

The wife kissed him tenderly, and as she turned away to draw her paw across her eyes, she murmured in a broken voice, "You will not be late, dearest, will you?"

"Of course not. But do not sit up for me. Remember, you have lost a good deal of sleep since baby has been cutting her teeth. Take care of your health for my sake and the children's," and blowing kisses right and left to her and the little ones, away went Long Tail, looking his handsomest.

Poor Mrs. L. T. ! In spite of the ir junction she could not close her eyes, though like the obedient little wife she was, she went to lie down at the usual time. She heard all the large clocks in Heidelberg strike the hours and the quarters up to four in the morning, and then, feeling dreadfully alarmed at the continued absence of her spouse, she could lie still no longer. She managed to put baby down; for the dear little thing had been restless, upset, no doubt, as babies are apt to be, by their mamas' troubles, and listening with one ear lest it should wake again, she strained the other to catch the first sound of her husband's returning footsteps.

It was just half-past four when she discerned—O blessed sight!—her husband. He was alive, but how sadly different from the handsome spruce Long Tail of a few hours before! He dragged himself wearily along, as if scarcely able to move. His coat bore marks of wet; his tail—the beauty and length of which had ever caused him to be distinguished above his fellows—was dragged, and there were traces of suffering in every feature.

Mrs. Long Tail rushed to meet and support him. She did not begin to ask questions before he had breath or strength to answer, or say, "Where have you been? Who have you been with?" or remark derisively, "A pretty pickle you are in! Nice company you must have chosen in place of me!" Like a dear, loving little wife as she was, Mrs. L. T. was so glad to see her husband back again that she quite forgot to scold him for being late, if she had ever intended to do so. And further, she was quite certain in her own

mind that Long Tail's present hapless condition was his misfortune, and not the result of any fault on his part. All the gossips in Mouseland could not have induced her to listen to a word against her husband, and I should not have liked to be the one that made such an attempt.

So Mrs. L. T. brought out some tempting bits, put aside from supper, coaxed him to eat, and then insisted that he should lie down and rest, before he even explained the cause of his sad condition.

Was she not a model little wife?

Poor Long Tail! He was deeply touched by her patience and tenderness, and only too glad to follow her wise advice. He embraced her affectionately, then, still holding her paw in his, he sank into a deep sleep. So, as Mrs. L. T. must wait until her husband wakes for an account of his adventures, you, darlings, must wait for me to explain what this story means in my next letter.

LETTER II. (Written from Rorschach two days later.)

Did you not wonder, my darlings, what I meant by that last letter, with its tale and "Tail?"

Very early on Monday morning last, and before it was light, I was roused by hearing a queer sound like a little rushing noise, and then as if water were running down somewhere in the bedroom. Almost at the same moment I heard papa call out from his couch at the other side of the room, "What noise is that? Surely, water must be running in at the open window!"

I jumped out of bed and went to the window, but there was no sign of rain, and the floor underneath was quite dry. Then I obtained a light, and on looking towards the wash-stand I saw a small fellow sitting on his hind legs, and with his two forepaws held up in a beseeching fashion. His eyes were so bright, and he had such a frightened look, that I felt quite sorry for him.

Can you guess who he was, children? No other than that roving mouse, Long Tail, Esq., of whom I told you in my last letter. He had wandered into the Grand Hotel de l'Europe, in order to dine again at the expense of John Bull's relative, Mr. Smith. Having been startled by the entrance of a cat, he had rushed upstairs and concealed himself in our bedroom, of which the door happened to be open, for the chambermaid was arranging it for the night.

She closed the door after her, and Long Tail was safe from the cat. But he found no way of getting out, and was not a little concerned at the anxiety which his loving wife would suffer during his prolonged absence. When we came into the room matters were not improved, for we only opened the door to close it again immediately.

After all was still and the room dark, Long Tail began to run round in the hope of discovering some cranny by which he might escape. By some unfortunate mischance he slipped into the wash-basin when he only intended to drink, and the noise we heard was caused by his jumping wildly up the sides and then falling back again into the water. Of this there was enough to make him feel very wet and miserable, but not sufficient to drown him, so long as he propped his forepaws against the side of the basin.

Long Tail looked at me and I looked at him, feeling the while not a little puzzled what to do with this uninvited guest.

I told papa, and he first said, "Leave him where he is;" then, "Take him by the tail and drop him out of the window."

But when I saw his pitiful wee face I said "No" to both proposals for disposing of the hapless Long Tail.

There was a deep, smooth, white earthen-

ware pail in the room, so taking hold of mousie I dropped him into it, thinking that he would be safe there until morning, when I would set him free in the garden. I gave him a piece of flannel for a bed, for he was wet, and the earthenware would be a cold couch for the shivering thing. Then, with a comfortable conscience, I put out the light and returned to my own resting-place.

In the morning I went to look for my captive, but Long Tail, Esq., was gone.

How he scaled the high smooth walls of his prison, how he found a way out, is more than I can tell. You know he did get out, and he did find his way, for we left him sleeping off his fatigues, watched by his loving wife, having arrived at home just after half-past four in the morning.

You would, of course, like to know what Long Tail said when he awoke refreshed after a sleep of many hours. With tears streaming from his eyes and running down to the tips of his whiskers, he told Mrs. L. T. that his roaming days and nights were over. He related all that had befallen him, and avowed his determination to act like a family mouse for the future.

To this day he delights the young people with stories of his adventures and escapes. He still alludes kindly to the two-legged giants called men and women, and believes in the good feelings of the latter towards him. But he objects to the male giants who wear hats, coats, and trousers, because it was a creature who called himself a man that would have had him left to drown, or thrown him out of the window at the risk of breaking his bones.

P.S.—It seems probable that Long Tail got out of his earthenware prison by means of the lace curtain which, in passing, I had swept, over the pail and left hanging inside. I had also opened the window wider to ascertain if rain were falling. Before I did so there was a mere crack. He descended to the ground by means of a spout, and was thus enabled to rejoin his family.

(To be concluded.)

