

OLIVER AND THE CRYING CHIP

NANCY MILES DURANT

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“One of the freshest chips walking about the pile.”

OLIVER
and
THE CRYING CHIP

By NANCY MILES DURANT

Author of "A Book of Verses," etc.

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OLIVER AND THE CRYING CHIP

CHAPTER I

His feelings were hurt, terribly hurt, so Oliver went to his favorite hiding place, the woodshed, where he could cry if he felt like it. But of course he didn't often do that, for he knew that really big boys, boys of seven or eight, never cried unless they were mashed up in a railroad wreck, or were "took awful bad with the despeption" as cook was sometimes. He didn't know what that was, but he knew it must be pretty bad from the way cook "went on" as he had heard Nurse describe it.

This afternoon when he slipped away to the friendly shelter of the woodshed, he was quite sure that he felt worse than cook ever did, even with "despeption," so he threw himself down on the softest pile of wood that he could find, and cried long and loudly. If you had asked him what he was crying about, he would probably have said, "Nothing, only my feelings is hurt." Oliver was not over particular about his grammar. The truth was his older brothers had been teasing him a bit too much, and teasing was just one form of amusement that he couldn't stand.

After crying awhile he leaned his head on his

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arms and lazily watched a little ray of sunlight which fell through a crack overhead on to a pile of white freshly cut chips, when suddenly he sat up with a jump. Surely he was not mistaken,— one of the chips moved. He leaned over and looked again. Yes, sure enough, there was one of the freshest chips walking about the pile in a very lively way.

“Hello!” he called, “I didn’t know that chips could walk.”

“You didn’t!” snapped the Chip, turning a cross look on him. “Well, maybe you don’t know much about chips.”

“I don’t,” replied Oliver; “I am very sorry if I have offended you, I am sure I didn’t mean to.”

“Maybe you didn’t,” said the Chip in a hurt tone, “but considering how well you know me, it *does* seem strange that you should treat me in such a manner!” and large tears ran down her wooden face.

“Oh!” cried Oliver in distress, for he hated to hurt anyone’s feelings, “I’m so sorry if I’ve said anything to make you feel badly. And of course I know you, if you say so, only I had sorter forgotten. Do forgive me!”

“‘Sorter forgotten,’ indeed!” sniffed the Chip, wiping her eyes.

“What *have* I done?” said Oliver. “Dear Chip, what have I done?”

“Miss Chip, if you please,” snapped the Chip

sharply. "Really, I don't see why because you know me so well you should not treat me with respect," and again tears rolled from her dry looking eyes.

It was all very queer to Oliver; he was very eager to find out how he had hurt the Chip's feelings. So, after a pause, "Dear Miss Chip," he said as politely as he could, "if you will explain to me how I came to know you so well, and what I have done to offend you, I will ask your pardon."

Again the Chip turned a tearful face towards him.

"My dear friend," she replied, "your memory is short. For a long while I have lived most of the time just under your eyes,—if you had ever turned your head over your shoulder. I can't begin to tell you how many times I have found myself rudely knocked off. Gladly would I move, but you insist upon keeping me there; then you get into a quarrel, and I am the one who is hurt. Maybe you do not know that my feelings are easily hurt. That's because I am very sensitive and proud. My whole family are that way."

Before Oliver could say anything more, there was a shrill laugh, and a sharp, thread-like voice chirped out, "Why, of course. She's a chip of the old block! Ha, ha,—see the joke?"

"Who is that?" he asked eagerly.

"It's the Proverbial Pin," replied the Chip.

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“He thinks himself very smart, and has an important air about him that makes me sick.” She finished with a snap.

“I don’t know him,” said Oliver, “and I don’t see him. Where is he, anyway?” He started to get up.

The Chip shrugged her shoulders. “Oh, he’s way up on one of those logs you are lying on. Don’t move, or you might shake him off. Strictly between ourselves,”—she leaned towards Oliver confidentially,—“he is something of a *poseur*.”

Oliver nodded, though he didn’t understand one bit what that meant.

“He loves to talk,” continued the Chip, “but won’t do so until he has first performed his great stunt of dropping into the midst of the audience. Shu—s! He’s going to do it now! See how attentive everyone is?” The Chip looked quite excited, her own grievances forgotten for the moment.

Oliver gazed about him open mouthed. He had thought the Chip and himself the only ones in the woodshed,—now he was surprised to see quite a number of queer looking creatures all grouped about the pile of logs on which he sat. Absolute silence followed the Chip’s remark, and Oliver, looking at the highest point of logs, saw a great big Pin standing on the end of a log of wood. The next moment he dropped on to a little pile of sawdust with a

thud, when he sprang up with a beaming smile, shouting in his thin voice, "Did everyone hear me fall? Then," continued the pin without waiting for an answer, "we can now find out what the trouble is between Miss Chip and Master Oliver."

Oliver felt his face getting red, and wished he could slip away, but already the Chip was beside him, clutching his sleeve and saying in a tearful voice, "You would not think of leaving me now, would you, dear Oliver?"

"Certainly I won't!" he stoutly replied, not knowing what she meant, and feeling quite embarrassed as she laid her bark-crowned head on his shoulder. As she did so an enraged voice exclaimed hoarsely:

"None of that, Miss! None of that! Move, I say, or I'll make you!" and suiting the action to the word a great creature, with frowns and scowls, knocked the poor trembling Chip off Oliver's shoulder.

Instantly his manly blood was up; he was itching for a fight with the rude bully.

"Who are you?" he cried, springing to his feet, beginning to roll up his sleeves.

"He's a first cousin of ours," chirped in two sharp voices. Oliver turned to face a couple of ugly knotted sticks. "His name is Cross Patch," they continued; "if you fight him, you fight us!"

They glared at Oliver. But not to be fright-

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ened, he boldly replied, "Come on, I'll fight all three of you!" and sure enough he found himself the next minute in the thick of a most exciting battle.

He got some pretty hard knocks until the Two Sticks began quarreling, and left off fighting to pommel one another. They were presently separated by the Meat Axe, who was so sharp with them that they sat down, much subdued and rather cut-up.

As soon as Cross Patch saw what had happened to them, and that the Meat Axe was coming to his opponent's aid, he also stopped and slunk away, while everyone cheered Oliver as victor. He had just begun to feel quite proud when again he felt himself touched on the arm and heard a little voice whisper,

"Be as quiet as *I* am, and I'll get you out of all this. Come on!"

"But who are you?" he asked suspiciously, drawing back.

"I am known to children as the Quiet Mouse," replied the small voice, and Oliver found himself looking into two very bright little eyes.

"Of course," continued the voice, "you have often had your mother tell you to be 'as quiet as a mouse'? Well, I am that particular mouse. None ever lived as quiet as I am. I can run across the floor without making any noise. Just listen!"

And away she went, calling in a soft voice, "Come on, come on!"

Not knowing anything better to do, Oliver followed, and found himself presently out in the woods beside two big pine trees, under the branches of which sat two large Bears. At the sight of them he was about to turn and run back, but he felt something on his shoulder, and turning his head, saw the Chip, looking almost pleasant. The bright eyes of the Mouse peered at him from the branches of the pine tree, and suddenly a shrill voice called to him,

"Stop, stop, don't run away! Just keep quiet until I drop, and then I'll explain who they are."

At once there was a sudden silence in the woods; even the birds flying about and singing stopped in mid-air, holding their breath, while there followed a faint sound as the Pin dropped to the ground from a near-by twig.

"Now!" he exclaimed, standing on a grey stone so as to be sure of being seen by everyone, "let me introduce you to two of your best friends, Master Oliver, only you don't always know them, Bear and For-Bear!" He finished with a flourish and a chuckle, as the two Bears got up and bowed solemnly.

Oliver felt very stupid at not being able to say something nice, so stammered rather lamely, "How



Bear and For-Bear

d'ye do? I've heard my mother and father speak of you so often. I'm so glad to meet you."

"Yes," smiled Bear, "your *mother* is a particular friend of mine."

"Yes," echoed For-Bear, "your *father* is an old friend of mine."

"In fact, we are proud to say that we are both old and valued friends of your parents, my boy," finished the two together, bowing again and smiling broadly, as they each laid a kindly but heavy paw on his shoulder.

"We've heard a lot about him," said Bear, winking at the Mouse.

Unfortunately, as he said this he knocked the Chip off Oliver's shoulder, who immediately drew himself up and looked hurt. He felt just the way he did at home when his father made such remarks to his mother, and winked that way. But before he could say anything a wail from the Chip, who lay flat on the ground, caught his ear.

"Oh, oh, oh!" she cried. "Why will you carry me around on your shoulder if I am to be treated in this way? Oh, oh!"

Oliver felt sorry to see the Chip so distressed, but he was also angry at being blamed by her in so unjust a manner.

"I don't want to carry you about on my shoulder," he stoutly declared; "you want to sit there, and when you get knocked off you blame me."

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He stopped, red in the face, for the two Bears were looking at him gravely, and slowly shook their big heads.

“I see what it is,” said Bear; “you and the Chip will have to make a compact to be friends.”

“Yes,” added For-Bear. “If the Chip will promise not to get on your shoulder, you can promise that she will never get knocked off,—see?”

“That looks as if he were going to ‘shake me,’” snapped the Chip, sitting up very briskly.

“Not at all,” said Bear; “he’s only going to keep you from getting hurt.”

The Chip sniffed and looked disdainful, and Oliver felt too embarrassed to speak. In the silence that followed the Proverbial Pin dropped again in their midst.

“Anyone but a wooden image would understand that,” he remarked in a would-be clever tone.

The Chip started to answer him, when the Quiet Mouse spoke up in a soft and gentle voice,

“Come, Oliver, you’re the man; be generous, and do the square thing. Admit you’ve always rather enjoyed carrying the Chip around on your shoulder, and thought it manly and fine to fight anyone who knocked her off. There are lots of other shoulders that the Chip can rest on. Anyone as popular as you are, Madam,”—here the Mouse bowed gallantly to the Chip,—“cannot fail to be so accommodated.”

Oliver was grateful to the Mouse for getting him out of his difficulty so well, and hastened to show his appreciation by shaking hands with the Chip.

“Well,” said Bear heartily, slipping his arm through Oliver’s, “I am glad to see you two friends, and yet apart!” And he laughed, a big, friendly laugh.

“And so am I,” echoed For-Bear, taking his other arm.

The Mouse ran silently ahead, calling softly,

“Come on, good people, follow me, or we’ll be late for lunch with Good-as-Gold.”

CHAPTER II

By this time it seemed quite natural to Oliver to find himself seated at a big mushroom table beside a forest stream, surrounded by the creatures whom he now called his friends. On either side of him sat the two Bears, while the Mouse, the Chip, and the Proverbial Pin were there also.

His host, Good-as-Gold, was a queer looking chap. One could not exactly describe him. He was rugged and shiny in spots. Of course, Oliver knew that he wasn't really *gold*; but everyone assured him that he was *just as good*, so he didn't worry about his looks, especially as he was kindly in his manner, cheery of voice, and best of all, gave his guests a fine dinner. He seemed to get on with every one, making them all feel as if they were lovely and good and sweet.

The company were just in the midst of the jolliest sort of time, when suddenly it grew damp and chill.

The sun seemed to go under a cloud, and the merry-makers grew so quiet that the Proverbial Pin, falling off his seat, made such a noise that everyone jumped.

Oliver looked around and saw coming from the stream which ran near by a most strange and scary creature. It was tall and broad and thin and square, with wooly sides that dripped water. It had skinny legs and big, soft, heavy-looking feet, and its head looked for all the world like a huge sponge from which peered out a pair of mean, soapy looking eyes.

“What on earth is that?” he whispered, snuggling up to warm, comfortable Bear.

“It is the Wet Blanket,” said For-Bear, with a look of disgust. “Try not to notice him.”

But the newcomer had no idea of not being seen, and although he had not been invited to join the party, Good-as-Gold in his usual courteous way invited him to be seated and offered him some of the dessert.

“No, thank you, none for me,” said the Wet Blanket in a disagreeable voice; “that sort of stuff never agrees with me. I can’t see why on earth people want to eat such mixtures! And what the fun is of eating out-of-doors anyway, beats me. The food gets cold, and the red bugs bite, and everyone looks frowsy, and nothing is comfortable. For my part, give me plenty of water, and everything home-like and wet and soggy, as I’m used to.” And he sniffed in a superior way, and crossed one leg over the other, as he settled himself against a near-by rock.

He looked as if he had no idea of moving, so the Quiet Mouse ventured to say softly:

“Since you will not eat anything, won’t you take a glass of wine?”

“Well, I don’t care if I do,” replied the Wet Blanket; “though I suppose it’s home-made stuff and pretty poor. As for me, I never get anything but French wine.”

“Isn’t this a pretty spot for a picnic?” ventured Oliver politely.

“Pretty enough,” grunted the Wet Blanket; “but horribly damp. *I* should have chosen a drier place.”

The Chip showed signs of great uneasiness, and For-Bear, seeing that she would presently be making snappy remarks, tried to smooth things out.

“Lovely weather we are having,” he remarked, with his big smile.

“Well, it depends upon what you call lovely,” said the Wet Blanket, looking up at the sunny sky through the trees; “probably the Chip likes it,—dry and warm. A wet Chip can’t kindle a flame, as the old saying is, and our young lady friend is fond of sparking, or is it sparring?” and he gave a soggy laugh.

“*You’d* extinguish any spark of romance!” snapped the Chip. “I didn’t come here to be insulted!” she finished tearfully, getting up and flouncing away.

“Oh!” cried Good-as-Gold. “That’s too bad! Come back, Miss Chip! No one meant to hurt your feelings, I’m sure.”

“Of course not,” assented the Wet Blanket gruffly. “You can come back, Madam; I’m going. I only stopped in on my way to visit the Flounder, who is as flat as usual. I’m just going over to cheer him up a bit. If there is one thing I *do* believe in it’s *cheerfulness*. I always look on the bright side, and think it’s a great pity other people don’t do the same. Well, good-day; hope you’ll enjoy yourselves.”

He moved slowly off, then stopped and turned around, saying,

“You’d better start home. I think I hear thunder, and this time of year thunderstorms are very dangerous. Good-bye again! Next time be sure and choose a drier place, and let me order your wine for you,—that home-made stuff is no good at all!”

As he disappeared, everyone heaved a sigh of relief, and if Bear and For-Bear had not been present, there is no saying how many disagreeable remarks would have been made. Even Good-as-Gold voted the Wet Blanket a horrid bore, and as for the Chip, she said that *his* was the one shoulder she would never care to rest on, since she was sure that she would be knocked off all the time.

Although it had been mid-day when they sat down

to lunch with Good-as-Gold, it seemed to get dark quite suddenly, and immediately Oliver found himself wandering along a country road. He felt lonely and hungry in spite of Good-as-Gold's lunch, and sat down on a stone beside the road, wondering if they were all eating supper in the nursery dining-room now, and if they were having his favorite kind of jam. He wished he were there, and was just beginning to cry when he saw the Chip beside him.

"Your family don't seem to look after you much," she said.

Oliver suddenly felt hurt that no one seemed to care about him; he also felt hungrier than ever before, and told the Chip so.

"Hungry already!" she exclaimed. "That's because boys never eat at the right time. However, I'll help you out if I can. Come with me over to the Magic Photographer's; he has 'the stuff that dreams are made of,' and really when it's made into 'dough' it's not bad at all."

So up the road they went until they reached a house, on the steps of which sat a queer little old man, smoking a long pipe and blowing clouds of smoke of different colors into the air.

"Well, I never saw that before!" exclaimed Oliver.

"What?" asked the Chip. "Why, smoke is all sorts of colors."

"That isn't smoke," the little old man said slowly.



“Those are bad things to see when you smoke.”

“Those are dream pictures. Men often see them when they are smoking. You are too young, I think; but sit here beside me and try this little pipe, and tell me what you see.”

He made room beside him on the step, and gave Oliver a funny little pipe which he lighted from his big one. After one or two puffs he asked kindly,

“Well, what do you see in the smoke of your pipe, my boy?”

“I see things to eat,” replied Oliver; “cake and candy and icecream and nuts and chewing gum and all sorts of fine things.”

The little man laughed.

“Those are bad things to see when you smoke, and show that you are too young to do it, as I said. You should smoke after you’ve had all you want of such things. Come in my house,” he added, “and I’ll give you some supper and then show you my workrooms.”

Although Oliver felt half starved, the more he ate the hungrier he felt. However, he was a very polite little boy; he put down his knife and fork when the old man did, and followed his host into the big room which he called his “picture gallery.” There his eyes nearly popped out of his head with delight. All about the cream-colored walls were arranged pipes and cigars of different sizes,—some in groups, others single,—and as the little old man lighted one after the other, wonderful pictures appeared in

the air. Many of them Oliver did not understand, and although some of the pictures of ladies were very pretty, he liked best the ones of dogs and guns and fishing parties, of woods and fields and boats on sunny waters. He clapped his hands with delight when he saw his father and pet uncle in the fields near home with dear old Pat, their faithful pointer.

“Old Man,” he said, after he had gone all round the room, “I don’t see any cigarette pictures. Why is that?”

“The pictures from cigarette smoke don’t amount to much and don’t last,” replied the old fellow. “Cigar smoke gives good pictures, and pipes best of all. They are pretty and peaceful and restful, while those from cigarettes are more like Nightmares.”

“What are Night Mares anyway?” Oliver asked earnestly.

But before the Old Man could reply, the door of the picture gallery burst open, and in rushed the Merry Lark.

“Come on!” he cried, catching Oliver by the arm and dragging him off. “Do stop dreaming, and let’s get busy and make a night of it. Come with me, and I’ll give you a fine time.”

Oliver would have stopped to say good-bye to the Old Man, but suddenly the picture gallery and everything in it faded away, and he found himself in a cosy room with bright lights, sitting at a table

with the Merry Lark and a lot of his friends. Much to his disgust the Chip was there too, but the Lark and his friends were making such a noise that if the Proverbial Pin were present, no one knew it. The Chip was on the shoulder of first one gay fellow and then another, and seemed to be constantly getting herself and others into a quarrel. Oliver almost got into a fight with the Merry Lark. They had a lot to eat, and the Larks had been drinking much more than Oliver had ever seen anyone do,—even at Christmas dinner at home, when he watched the grown-ups and waited for dessert.

Finally he ventured to ask the Merry Lark why he had such a long bill,—“ I always thought Larks had little beaks like most birds.”

“ There’s where you’re mistaken!” replied the Merry Lark crossly. “ We fellows have bills and big ones, too,— they go with this sort of life, just as songs go with canary birds. What would people do if they bought a canary and got no song? Well, in the same way, who’d feel they’d had a Lark if there was no bill attached to it, eh? ”

But Oliver couldn’t answer him, as he didn’t know what to say. He was just puzzling his brain to know what he meant, when suddenly into the room rushed some *terrible, terrible* looking creatures. He was so scared that he would have screamed, but he was knocked down and a big gray hand was put over his mouth, while one of the



“‘We’re on a Spree,’ replied the Merry Lark gaily.”

creatures sat on his chest. There's no telling what would have happened next if the Merry Lark had not grabbed him and flown out of the door with him, and, panting with excitement, he suddenly found himself in the queerest kind of thing. It looked something like an automobile, a little like a hay wagon, just a bit like a Pullman car, and rather like a boat. It was soft to sit on, and went very fast, but bumped so it made your head ache, and wobbled around like a boat in a gale.

He held on with both hands while the Merry Lark cried, "Faster, faster! The faster the funnier! — Hurrah!"

"What — what — what is this, and where *are* we going?" gasped Oliver.

"We're on a Spree, and we are going to the Isle of Fun and Frolic," replied the Merry Lark gaily.

"But I don't want to be on a Spree!" cried Oliver. "I have heard my Papa say many things about Sprees, and they're bad and wicked. Our butler got on one once, and he was awful sick, and Papa sent him to the police station. I want to get off, I tell you! You're a bad fellow! Help! Help!"

"Sure, I'll help you!" cried a hearty voice, and the next moment he found himself in the comfortable arms of old Bear, while the Merry Lark flew off, laughing uproariously.

“My, but I’m glad you turned up,” sighed Oliver. “That fellow almost did for me.”

“He’s a rough fellow when he gets too gay,” said the Bear; “but he’s quite harmless as a rule, and everyone likes him once in a while.”

“Who were those dreadful creatures that rushed into the room and broke up our supper party, I wonder?” asked Oliver. “My, but it makes me feel shivery to think of them!”

“Those were Night Mares,” explained Bear. “They make war on the Merry Larks all the time. They are not as dangerous as they look, but I agree with you they make one shivery. They never disturb breakfast or luncheon parties or nursery tea parties, but generally come after hearty dinners or late suppers with lots of indigestible food that small children, or even grown-ups, shouldn’t eat.”

CHAPTER III

While they were talking, Oliver found himself walking through the woods with Bear and his other friends, who quite suddenly, but naturally, had joined them. It was moonlight, and everywhere was almost as bright as day. Presently they came into a large open space, made by an old clearing half filled with dead stumps of trees,—a dreary, marshy sort of place. One large stump near the middle attracted Oliver's attention because of two curious looking things which were running around it. One of them looked so much like an everyday boy that Oliver called out, "Hello!" But he had no sooner gotten the first half of the word out than a queer looking creature arose from behind the stump and Oliver drew back against the Bears, frightened. It looked just exactly like the pictures on the cans of "the highest grade of devilled ham," horns, tail and all.

The moment he showed himself above the stump, the other creature that looked like a boy waved a stick over his head and rushed at him, beating him as hard as he could. Around and around the stump they both went, the boy shouting something over and over, and the other laughing.

“What *are* they doing?” asked Oliver, so curious that he forgot his fears.

“That boy,” explained the Mouse softly, “is doing what all boys do sometimes, only he has done it so often that it has grown to be a habit with him, and he can’t stop it. Doubtless, my dear Oliver, you’ve done the same thing sometime or other yourself.”

The company all looked at Oliver and smiled.

“Done what?” asked Oliver, blushing and beginning to guess.

“Why, ‘beating the devil around the stump’ instead of being quite outspoken and honest,” said Bear gravely.

“Oh, I shall *never* do that again!” cried Oliver, quite innocently giving himself away, and when everyone laughed, he wondered why, though he felt his face growing very red. But apparently no one noticed that, and Bear drew him along, saying,

“Here we are at the Cave of the Dumps, which I am sure you will find interesting. But it is a very gloomy and depressing place, so we won’t linger long.”

They had been walking as he spoke, and now in front of them, behind a clump of dead trees, loomed, black and forbidding, the mouth of a cave. Oliver hardly dared to look in, but tipping gingerly after the Mouse, he peeped in half fearfully. The Cave was quite large, and dimly lighted by a pale blue

light. Inside, seated all about were queer little blue creatures that looked something like the figure he had just seen the boy beating around the stump.

“What place is this, and who are they?” he asked the Mouse in a whisper.

“Those are the Blue Devils,—almost everybody knows them,” whispered the Quiet Mouse. “They come here when they get out of sorts,—that’s why the cave is called ‘Dumps.’”

“Why don’t the poor things come out?” he asked kindly Bear.

“Because they don’t want to, my dear,” he replied. “Maybe you have never met a real true and true ‘Blue Devil.’ That kind go to the Cave of the Dumps just because they want to, and sit down and won’t move. They think they are sort of martyrs and really enjoy being miserable. You might stand outside all day and argue with them, make funny remarks, laugh and try to cheer them up,—but no, indeed; they’ll only look more wretched than ever. Sometimes they come here just to have a big crying fit. Do you see that stream that runs through the Cave with white rocks forming the banks?” Oliver nodded. “Well,” continued the Bear, “that’s supplied entirely with the tears that the Blue Devils shed. The rocks are made from the salt of the dried-up tears. Some of the Blue Devils like to see how big they can make that stream.

The moment they enter the cave they sit by it and let their tears run in it."

"How awfully silly of them!" exclaimed Oliver.

"Step inside," said For-Bear, giving Oliver a gentle push, "and see how it makes *you* feel."

"Oh, shucks!" exclaimed Oliver stoutly; "I'd like to see anything of that sort make *me* cry!"

And he boldly walked in the cave and sat down beside a poor little snivelling devil. But what was his dismay when he suddenly found the tears running down his cheeks, and the next moment he and the little Blue Devil were clasped in one another's arms, both crying hard.

"Poor Boy!" whispered the Blue Devil; "you certainly have a hard time. Your friends don't treat you right, and no one understands you."

"You are right," wailed Oliver dismally, "and I do my best, and try and try and try."

"Your mother and father are real mean to you!" said the Blue Devil.

"And no one knows how I am teased and scolded!" sobbed Oliver.

"I don't see how you stand it!" said the Blue Devil.

"There isn't any fun in anything," replied Oliver, tears still running down his face.

There is no telling how long he would have remained in the Cave of the Dumps if a cheery, strong voice hadn't called out,



AB. Betanwood

“Poor boy!” whispered the Blue Devil.”

“Come, Oliver; brace up, and get out of this.” And his arm was given a mighty tug, and he found himself safely landed in the midst of the cool, green forest.

It was morning now, and the sun was shining gaily. Oliver looked around to see who had helped him out of the cave, but no one was in sight. At first he thought himself alone, but the next moment the Proverbial Pin dropped near him, and said,

“The rest are waiting for you at the Inn, and it’s near dinner time, so we must hurry. Why on earth did you waste so much time in the direction of the Cave?”

“I didn’t mean to do so, and I am sorry,” said Oliver sadly.

“Oh, everybody goes there after being with the Merry Lark. But I’m glad you’re out; it’s a mean place to be.”

“Who is that chap that helped me out?” asked Oliver eagerly.

“That’s the Bracer. He helps anyone that needs help, and especially those that get into the Cave of the Dumps. You see, the Blue Devils pretend to be friends of those who go into the Cave, but really they are mean, selfish creatures who delight to see others as unhappy as they are, so they hold on tight to you if they once get you in their hands.”

“Well, I shan’t forget the Bracer,” sighed Oliver,

“only I do wish I could see him to thank him. Do you know where he is?”

“Oh, he’s always around,” said the Pin, “only he hasn’t time to waste on people who really don’t need him, you know. He’s terribly busy all the year round, but getting people out of the Cave of Dumps is the hardest work he has, and it takes lots of time.”

“Why did you all leave me in there?” said Oliver, in rather a hurt tone.

“Because we couldn’t get you out,” replied the Pin pointedly. “Bear and For-Bear begged you to come with them, but you didn’t even hear them.”

Oliver looked ashamed, but before he could ask any more questions, they came out of the woods on to a smooth white road on the side of which stood a very pretty house.

“Come in with me,” called Bear from the door; “I want to show you something. Our friend can walk on, and we’ll catch up with him later.”

It was cheery inside, and Oliver gave a sigh of relief.

“What is the name of this place?” he asked Bear, who had greeted him kindly, without mentioning the Cave of the Dumps.

“This is called the Inn of Good Resolutions,” replied the big fellow with a smile. “You see,” he went on, “every one feels that they must stop here a while when they leave the Cave. And they generally leave records here of resolves never to go in

the Cave again, or speak to a Blue Devil. I say *leave* their records here, because, as a rule, they really do that! Just leave them here and forget all about them. Come in and see."

Bear led Oliver into a large room which he saw was filled with papers of all sizes and kinds, with writing on them. Some looked very old, black, and dingy, while others were quite new. *He was surprised to see his own name on one.*

"Why!" he exclaimed; "who put that here?"

"Ho, ho," chuckled Bear in his kindly way; "that's the good resolution you made when you left the cave just now."

"But I never wrote it; I only *thought* it!" exclaimed Oliver puzzled.

"Just so," explained the Bear. "You see," he went on, "there's a very wonderful machine here which writes down everybody's good resolutions; it not only writes down the good resolves, but also what made one go to the Blue Devils. Now," he continued, lowering his voice, "you see this wonderful machine has put on paper what made you blue, and I fear you would feel ashamed if you could see it in black and white. But let us have a look at it."

Oliver was beginning to feel very badly, and Bear had just taken the paper in his paw to open it, when both were startled by the sound of a heavy fall, followed by a squeal and a helpless flapping of

wings. He peered out and called excitedly to Bear,

“Come here, quick! Oh, do come; something is hurt, and oh,—it is the queerest thing I ever saw!”

Oliver was very much excited and could hardly wait until Bear lumbered slowly across the room, when he made way for him at the window.

“Humph!” he growled, as he looked down on the ground; “just as I expected. The sneaking scoundrel!”

This was severe from Bear, and Oliver looked up at him in surprise.

“Follow me,” said his shaggy friend, “and I’ll show you who this is. Served him right to get such a drop!” he muttered, as he hurriedly left the room, followed by the curious boy.

Outside they stopped, and Bear, taking a long stick, punched the object lying huddled together under the window.

“Get up! you horrid creature!” he growled, and Oliver, watching with bulging eyes, saw a bat-like thing drag itself slowly up and sit down on the edge of the stone gutter. It was certainly very ugly looking, and made him think of a bat with a monkey’s face. Two mean, sly little eyes moved from side to side under a low, wrinkled forehead; cruel, thin brown lips half covered its sharp yellow teeth. But its ears were the queerest things about this curious creature. They were enormous, and

moved backward and forward as though they were always listening to something.

“Are you hurt?” enquired Oliver politely, afraid that he had seemed rude in staring so hard.

“Of course he’s not hurt!” broke in Bear gruffly. “It served him right; he probably didn’t hear anything good of himself.” And taking Oliver’s arm he led him away, saying, “Come on, my boy; ’twill do you no good to talk to so low a creature. Come into the house again, and I’ll show you the wonderful instrument I was speaking of awhile ago.”

Oliver followed, though he would liked to have had one more look at the bat-like thing in the gutter.

“What is its name?” he asked Bear, pointing to the little dark object they were leaving.

“Oh, of course; I forgot you don’t know. You’ve heard the name, however, very often,—that is the Eaves Dropper.”

“Why!” exclaimed Oliver, “I’ve heard of him often and often. Nurse used to tell me that ‘Eaves Droppers never hear any good of themselves,’ but I never knew that they looked like that. *Why* do they?”

Bear smiled and squeezed Oliver’s arm in a friendly way.

“I see that you think every one in this part of the world must have a reason for looking as they do. Well, you are quite right, my dear boy. Now the

Eaves Dropper looks the way he does because of the way he sneaks around in the dark,— which accounts for his bat-like appearance,— and hangs on to the eaves, leaning over near to windows and doors. His enormous ears have grown so large because he's always listening at cracks to things not meant for him to hear. And his cruel sneering lips are caused by always having to pretend either that he has not heard, or that he isn't hurt by what he hears. He generally hears something unpleasant about himself, or else he drops off his perch and gets hurt in that way. He is a mean, low character! He carries about gossip and scandal and then lets the Little Bird get blamed for it. You have heard people say, 'A Little Bird told me'? Well, half the time it isn't the Little Bird at all,— but the Eaves Dropper. Just wait until you meet the Little Bird, and you'll see the difference."

They were walking away from the Inn while they talked, as Oliver noticed to his tardy surprise, and now he exclaimed:

"Oh, my! You never showed me that wonderful machine."

"Tut, tut! Too bad!" said Bear, turning around hastily. "Come, let's hurry, and maybe we can overtake the Inn. But you know good resolutions are very hard to catch up with once you let them go."

Bear forthwith started to run, Oliver following

as fast as he could. But the smooth road that they had so easily traveled awhile ago had now mysteriously disappeared, and in its place was the thick underbrush of the woods.

Bear stopped, mopping his brow, puffing and panting.

“I’m afraid that we will not get to the Inn again to-night,” he sighed.

“And we never had any dinner!” chimed in Oliver ruefully.

CHAPTER IV

As he spoke he felt something prick him on the arm, and there beside him stood the Proverbial Pin.

“Hello,” said Oliver; “where did you drop from?”

“I fell out of old Bear’s fur coat,” replied Pin. “I’ve been all the time with you folks, only you never knew it. When I found the old fellow was going on, I thought I’d stay with you.”

Then for the first time Oliver found that Bear had disappeared, but everything happened so queerly that he thought nothing of it.

“Want to go fishing?” asked the Pin pleasantly.

Oliver pricked up his ears. This sounded home-like and natural.

“Sure,” he agreed heartily.

“Well, here’s the place,” said the Pin, and Oliver was hardly surprised to find a sprawling brook at his feet.

“But I have no line or hook or bait,” he exclaimed, “so I can’t fish after all.”

“Oh, I’ll fix you all right,” said the Pin cheerfully. “Take this stick here on the ground beside you, and tie this string on it, so,” he went on, suiting the action to the word.

“Where did the string come from?” enquired Oliver.

“Oh, the Chap who always has two strings to his bow left it here just now. We must hurry and use it before he comes back for it.”

“But how about a hook and some bait?”

“Oh, I’ll just bend myself in half, and hold this grub in my hands, so. And now, quick, throw me in, and I’ll catch you a fish.”

Oliver was so excited that almost before the Pin finished speaking the line flew over the water and the Pin sank out of sight. In a moment the line was jerked violently, and when Oliver pulled it in, there, sure enough, was a big glittering fish, struggling in the Pin’s embrace.

In great excitement they both tried to hold the fish down on the grassy bank, but every minute it grew bigger and *bigger* and BIGGER, until finally it got so big that it slapped them both flat on their backs and dove into the water, with a gay “Ta-ta!”

Oliver sat up and rubbed his face, then laughed.

“Well, what do you think of that?” he said.

“I should call it a fish story, if I hadn’t been here myself,” answered the Pin.

“I don’t think I care to fish any more,” said Oliver.

“All right,” said the Pin, “let’s go over there and watch the Society Angler.”

“Who’s that, and what’s he doing?”

“ Oh, he’s fishing for compliments, and says he doesn’t care whether he gets anything or not; but you bet he does. He uses big chunks of taffy for bait.”

“ I shouldn’t think he would catch a thing with that kind of bait,” said Oliver.

“ Every now and then he catches an old flounder or sheephead, but mostly he gets left.”

As the Pin finished speaking, a big fish stuck his head out of the water and called out,

“ Come in, won’t you,— the water’s fine. I’m not as sheepish as I look, and I can show you lots of interesting things. Come in.”

And without thinking it in any way a strange thing to do, Oliver stepped into the stream and instantly found himself at the bottom, walking on a sandy beach with all sorts of strange creatures floating around him. The sand was covered with every kind of seashell, crabs and crawfish. Caves of beautiful rocks were on every side, with red coral and many sea flowers covering them.

“ This is the Sea King’s Palace,” said the Sheephead, pointing to a beautiful big cave in front of them.

“ I thought Sea Kings only belonged in fairy stories,” said Oliver.

“ It doesn’t do to think too much about some things,” replied the Sheephead; “ if one did, there would be no surprises left.”

“That sounds very sensible,” said Oliver thoughtfully.

“Well, just so it *sounds* sensible, it will pass,” the Sheephead said; “sounds are the foundations of sentiments, but maybe you are too young to know what that means.”

Before Oliver could answer, they had entered the cave, which was so brightly lighted that he asked if it was electric light, and found that it was the phosphorescent glow from hundreds of fish floating in the ceiling of the cave.

“They have the hardest job in the King’s court,” explained the Sheephead; “they must always be bright, it doesn’t make any difference how blue or gloomy they feel. Whenever a fish gets melancholy he is given that job to cure him. Over there is the conservatory,” he continued; “it is filled with sea anemones of every color. And there, way back in that dark corner, is the King’s pantry. In it are kept the crabs, lobsters, oysters, and fish that the King eats. It is considered the most fashionable and exclusive place in the Palace, and every day hundreds of applicants are turned away.”

“I shouldn’t think any one would want the job of being eaten,” exclaimed Oliver.

“That’s because you’ve never tried it,” proudly answered the Sheephead. “Think of what an honor it is to be assured that you agree with your King. Only those are admitted to the royal pantry who

the chef is sure will agree with the royal digestion."

"But after they've been roasted and broiled, how would they know whether they'd agreed with the King or not?" persisted Oliver.

"You're very stupid," said the Sheephead; "of course if any one roasts another, it's a sign they don't agree; but down here there are no fires, so no one gets roasted. Aspirants to the royal taste are simply gobbled up whole."

Oliver was about to say that he had always been told at home that it was very vulgar to gobble your food, but was interrupted by the entrance of the King followed by a great crowd of fish of all kinds in gorgeous, brilliant colors. He had expected to see something like a merman, but the King was rather small in comparison to his big body guard, and wore a simple red robe. He seated himself on his white coral throne, and Oliver found himself making his best dancing school bow before him.

"How do you like it down here?" asked the King.

"I think it's splendid," replied Oliver.

"You must say 'Your Majesty,'" croaked the Sheephead in his ear.

"That would sound ridiculous," said Oliver, pushing the Sheephead away.

"Ridiculous things are often all right if people are only good-natured," smiled the King.

Oliver felt ashamed.

“I didn’t mean to be rude,” he stammered.

“Half the fun in life is ruined by the ‘didn’t means,’” the King said kindly.

“I beg your pardon, your Majesty,” said Oliver quickly.

“That’s all right,” said the King. “I see you are a kind, well-mannered boy. I’ll sing you a song which I wrote myself, and I hope you’ll remember it.”

Whereupon a curious shaped instrument was handed to him by a pompous old lobster. It was made of a shell with a handle of pink coral. Instead of playing it as Oliver expected, the King handed it to him, remarking,

“Hold that to your ear, and you’ll hear the music to my song.”

He did as he was told, and heard the sweetest strains of music. Then the King began in rather a sing-song voice :

“Oh, ridiculous things are often right
 If good-nature paves the way,
 And laughter makes silly things bright,—
 For who’s really clever, pray?

“The person who tries to be very deep,
 And solemnly talks all day,
 Misses lots of fun, awake or asleep,
 Never having a chance to get gay.

“ To write a book that shocks every one,
 Of course, may often pay,
 But to cause a smile by making a pun
 Is by far the nicer way.

“ To ask to a ball, or dine or wine,
 People who bore you flat
 Some folks seem to think is very fine,
 But I know I could beat that pat.

CHORUS

“ For ridiculous things are often right
 If good-nature paves the way,
 And laughter makes silly things bright,—
 For who's really clever, pray? ”

The song trailed off into silence, and Oliver, who was very drowsy, turned to look for the Sheephead, when he found himself floating on top of the water, with his head pillowed on top of the big creature.

“ Hello! ” he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes, “ where's the King and everybody? ”

“ My dear boy, ” replied the kindly fellow, “ their singing was so soothing that you went to sleep, and I brought you up here, as it is decidedly bad to sleep under the water. ”

“ How do you all get on, then? ” asked Oliver.

“ Ah, ” said the Sheephead, winking one eye slowly, “ no one has ever caught a fish napping yet.

That's a secret. But there's a friend of yours waiting on the bank for you."

And sure enough, there sat Bear patiently waiting, his back against a big tree, his little eyes fixed sadly on the stream.

Oliver waved his cap to him and scrambled ashore, then turned and held out his hand to the Sheephead. It didn't seem at all strange to find his clothes quite dry.

"Good-bye," he said, "and thank you ever so much for giving me such a fine time, and,"—he added quickly, "I'm sorry I was rude. I didn't mean—, that is, I hope you'll forgive me."

The Sheephead smiled broadly, showing all his teeth.

"I'm glad you enjoyed yourself," he said; "and I think you learned something, too." He waved a fin and disappeared under the water.

Oliver hastened to Bear, who seemed delighted to see him and gave him a good hug.

"My," he said with a sigh of relief, "I am glad you turned up. I was almost afraid the fishes had eaten you."

Oliver laughed. "No danger of that; I'm afraid I would not *agree* with the King." Bear looked puzzled, but Oliver went on, "But I am hungry enough to eat them or anything else."

"I'm with you," said Bear. "I'm as hungry as my great-grandfather, the Hungry Bear."

Oliver was just about to ask him if that was how the saying "hungry as a Bear" started, when they heard some one call, "Hello! Hello!"

CHAPTER V

“Come up and have supper with me,” said a cheerful voice; and looking up, Oliver saw a little bird in the tree over their heads. He was a gay looking little fellow, with sparkling eyes, and head cocked spryly on one side. Oliver was so used to doing out of the way things by this time that it seemed quite natural to follow Bear as he slowly climbed the tree.

Once up, he found that a bird’s nest, although it looks small from the ground, is really quite big when you get in it. It was cosy and homelike, with well cushioned sides that made a very comfortable resting place.

Bear, ’tis true, had to sit in the big branches just outside, but as the Bird had no family, Oliver and himself had all the nest to themselves.

He listened, amused, to many tales the Little Bird told him, but while his host chatted away about this or that, and told lots of funny stories about the forest folk that caused Bear to chuckle so that he nearly fell out of the tree, Oliver never heard a mean or disagreeable remark.

“Are you ‘the Little Bird’ that people often speak of?” he asked presently.

The Bird gave a little "Ha, ha!"

"Why, of course I am, and your friends Bear and For-Bear know me well. But don't, for goodness sake, get me mixed up in your mind with the Early Bird fellow! I flatter myself that I am at least honest, while he is a great old fraud. He thinks it sounds fine to be thought such an early riser when as a matter of fact he's a lazy old chap, and the *Worm is the early riser*, as every one knows. I have no patience with the Early Bird. Suppose he does get breakfast a bit earlier than the rest of us,—it's because he can't sleep in the morning. He and his friend, Miss Busy Bee, are two dyspeptic old gossips. Have you met her? No? Well, I'll bet she knows all about *you!* She buzzes around all day long because she can't keep still. She likes people to think she is a great worker when, if the truth were known, she does nothing. But there! I musn't get ill-natured. I have wanted to meet you for a long time to tell you that I know what's going to happen to-morrow!" He ended triumphantly, with his head on one side, looking gaily at Oliver.

"What's going to happen?" he asked eagerly.

"Why, don't you know? To-morrow is your birthday, and you are to have a fine party. All your friends will be there. Don't tell anyone that I told you, for it is a secret, you know."

Oliver was just about to tell the Little Bird that



“ Are you “ the Little Bird ” that people often speak of? ” ”

he had made a mistake in thinking that the next day was his birthday, when suddenly the Proverbial Pin dropped into the nest, exclaiming,

“Hurry, hurry! You’ll be late for the party! The Chip is almost flying into pieces, the Quiet Mouse is getting noisy, and even For-Bear is growling a bit. So do hurry and come along!”

No sooner had he finished speaking than Oliver found himself hurrying through the woods beside the Pin, with the Bear panting behind him.

It was dark beneath the trees, and the walking rough, and Oliver felt very tired. He stumbled against the outspreading roots of a great oak tree and heard a deep voice call,

“Who? Who?”

“It’s me,” replied Oliver, too weary to use good English. “Who are you?”

“Who — Who —?” said the deep voice.

“Oh, shucks,” exclaimed the Pin; “that’s the Stupid Owl. An awful bore. Don’t stop to listen to him.”

But Oliver was in no hurry, so when a door opened in the side of the tree and a big, fluffy old owl invited him in, he stepped inside, calling to the Pin and Bear that he’d only be a minute, “so please wait.”

Once inside, he was surprised to find himself in a little library just like the one at home.

A fire glowed cheerily in the grate, and he

seated himself in a big armchair and shut his eyes, — it was all so comfortable and nice.

The owl was a solemn-looking old chap, and though he did not crack any jokes or say anything funny, he did not seem stupid to Oliver. Maybe he was feeling rather quiet himself, or a bit drowsy in front of the warm fire. However it was, he enjoyed his new friend.

“Did it ever strike you that when you feel dull yourself is just the time that the other fellow seems stupid?” enquired the Owl in a hoarse voice.

“I expect that’s so,” said Oliver, yawning.

“Are you good at conundrums?” asked the Owl after a pause.

“I don’t know,” hesitated Oliver.

“Then of course you are,” put in the Owl, continuing; “now this is an English conundrum: ‘When is an ’owl not an ’owl?’ When it’s a screech.’ See?”

“I don’t think much of that!” exclaimed Oliver, suddenly sitting up.

“I think that’s quite bright,” said the Owl solemnly. “Now, I’ll ask you another which I made up myself: ‘Why is an owl one of the cleverest creatures in the world?’”

“I didn’t know it was,” said Oliver.

“Because,” continued the Owl, exactly as though Oliver hadn’t spoken, “because it doesn’t need to have any light thrown on the subject.”

“What subject?” asked Oliver.

“*Any* subject,” replied the Owl solemnly.

Oliver didn't see what he meant, and was very near dozing, when a heavy knock shook the door, and the Bear's deep voice was heard calling him.

He suddenly remembered his friends outside, and ran out, saying goodnight very hastily to the Owl, who never moved and seemed sound asleep. Out in the cool night air he stretched himself and laughed, and then told the Bear and the Pin how sorry he was to have kept them waiting.

The Bear grunted, almost out of humor, while the Pin couldn't resist pricking his arm just a wee bit.

“Why, I always thought that Owls were very wise,” said Oliver.

“My dear boy, that is an old mistake which has never been corrected,” the Pin remarked, as if he knew what he was talking about. “As a matter of fact, he is just an old bluffer.”

“What's that?” inquired Oliver.

“A Bluffer is a person who keeps quiet when he does not know a thing, and looks so wise that everyone thinks he knows it all. Most wise people are quiet, but all quiet people aren't wise,” the Pin finished grandly.

“He told me some conundrums,” said Oliver; “but now I can't remember them, somehow.”

“Stupid people always ask conundrums, and

silly ones make puns," said the Pin crossly. "I'm sure we don't want to hear them."

"Oh, well," said kindly Bear, "you know the old saying,

" 'A little nonsense then and now
Is better far than wits that row.' "

Oliver was just going to tell Bear that he hadn't said the lines quite right when he tripped and fell, and kept on falling, *falling*, FALLING.

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If anyone had told him, he would never have believed it possible that he could fall down an *ant's hole*, but that's just what happened. He landed on a nice soft pile of sand at the bottom, none the worse for his tumble.

It was light and warm, and he sat up and looked around to find himself in quite a good-sized cave with many little passages running off from it in different directions. Presently there came swarming from these, hundreds of little ants almost tumbling over him, which he did not like, when there hastened up two ants in color and size very different from the others. They were large and handsome, wearing neat dresses and black silk aprons, with white ruffles in the necks and wrists of their grey dresses. Their eyes looked very big behind gold rimmed spectacles, and large white mob caps covered their heads.

“Go back to the nursery, children!” they cried in shrill voices, and commenced getting the little ants together, driving them off through the different passages.

They were back again in a moment and stood staring at Oliver.

“Can we do anything for you?” one of them finally said.

“Yes,” he replied a trifle awkwardly, “I just dropped in to see the lady of the house a minute.” For the life of him he couldn’t think of anything else to say.

“I’ll call one of them,” said the ant who had spoken first, and off she went very briskly, followed more slowly by the other two, who turned their heads several times to look at Oliver. It wasn’t long before he heard a pleasant voice saying,

“How d’ye do! Can I do anything for you?” and turning round, looked into a pair of such kind eyes that he lost his heart to the speaker at once. She was different again from the other ants,—any one could tell by her lovely dress and the lace scarf about her head that she was a perfect lady.

“Are you the lady of the house?” inquired Oliver politely.

“I am one of them,” she said. “Won’t you sit down?” And then for the first time Oliver noticed the comfortable sofa at hand, and seated himself beside the lady Ant.



“Go back to the nursery, children!”

He told her how he had fallen down the hole in the ground. She smiled and shook her head.

“Too bad, poor boy,” she exclaimed. “You see, our elevator is out of order; I’m so sorry.”

“Well, anyhow, I’m glad I got here,” said Oliver gallantly, adding, “say, are all those your children I saw just now?”

“No,” said the Ant; “they are my nieces and nephews, but they are just like my own, I am so fond of them.”

“What do you do all day down here, ma’am, and what do the little ones do?” asked Oliver, still curious.

“Oh, we have lots to do. The children have school in the morning and learn how to dig and carry grains of sand, food, and all sorts of useful things. Then the nurses have to look after them; the workers are busy all day cleaning; and the hunters go out after provisions; and so on. Each one has his or her special work. I am always busy, as I find the children all come to me when their mothers are out or at work about the house.” She paused and looked at Oliver kindly. “Have you an aunt, my dear?”

“Yes,” replied he quickly, “and I certainly do love her!”

“They are pretty nice to have when a boy needs some little things, such as a bit of advice, or some small change,” put in the ant, smiling slyly.

“They are nice all the time,” said Oliver stoutly.

“I am sure your aunt loves you dearly,” said his companion earnestly; “and I hope you are very nice to her.”

Oliver looked down, remembering some occasions on which he hadn't been very nice to his kind aunt. When he looked up the pleasant face of the lady Ant had faded almost away. Though he put out his hand to hold her and called her, she disappeared entirely, and he found himself sitting under a haystack, with the sun shining brightly on the close-cropped grass of a meadow that stretched before him.

CHAPTER VI

While he was wondering what had become of the Ant, and feeling rather lonely, he watched a little white lamb that was grazing a few yards from him. He was attracted by the very white wool of the little creature, and by the fact that there was a blue ribbon around its neck, hanging from which was a little fan. That seemed to him to be so odd that he jumped up and ran to the Lamb, asking why she had a fan instead of a bell around her neck.

“That is to fan the Elephant with,” replied the Lamb in a gentle voice. And when Oliver looked puzzled, she added, “If you care to come with me, I’ll take you to our dancing school. It’s just about time for it to begin.”

They had walked but a short distance when they came to a big hall, which Oliver saw at a glance was crowded with a regular menagerie of animals. Monkeys were chasing one another up and down the slippery floor, holding each other’s tails and screaming and chattering with glee and mischief. Two or three giraffes sat sedately against the wall, watching some little giraffes who were practising steps for the minuet.

In one corner a beautiful young leopard was pos-

ing with a great show of vanity in a Spanish dance, with a black lace scarf on her head fastened over one ear with a red rose. Every few steps she rattled castanets. In another part of the room a good-natured hippopotamus smiled blandly while she watched with pride her buxom cub dancing the Highland Fling, and before a big looking-glass at the end of the hall a magnificent peacock strutted up and down with mincing steps.

There was such a din and noise that Oliver could hardly hear the Lamb's voice when she pulled his sleeve and told him to follow her. He found himself in a far corner where sat a sorry-looking Elephant. He was sitting on a stool with his head bowed over his knees, crying. He looked so sad that Oliver forgot how ridiculous it was to see an Elephant crying, and in his kindest voice he asked what the trouble was. The poor creature looked up, tears as big as a bucket falling from his eyes.

"You are very kind," he said in a sobbing voice, "almost as kind as the Gentle Lamb,— you've heard of the Gentle Lamb, haven't you?" he went on in a more cheerful tone.

"I met a Lamb just now," said Oliver, looking around to see what had become of his companion of a few minutes before, but she was not in sight.

"Every boy and girl has heard of the Gentle Lamb," said the Elephant. "I am very fond of her," he sniffled; "indeed, I don't know what I'd do

without her. The dancing master is so cross with me, and I try so hard, and *can't* get the step right, and oh! oh! oh! . . .” He burst into tears and started rocking himself back and forth, rolling his eyes in a most alarming manner.

Oliver was frightened, fearing that he'd have a fit or faint or go into hysterics, and was just about to call someone when the Gentle Lamb appeared beside the great cry-baby and began to fan him with the little fan she had tied round her neck with the blue ribbon.

“He's so nervous, poor fellow,” she murmured, “and his feelings are very easily hurt. You see he is studying for the stage, and is here learning a Grecian dance. He is sure he could easily do it, but the dancing master keeps calling him awkward, which he naturally feels very much.”

The Elephant got slowly up.

“If you would like me to do so, I'll dance for you,” he announced.

Oliver was anxious to see him dance, but suddenly there was a terrific explosion, and the next minute he felt himself sailing through the air.

“Well!” exclaimed the well-known voice of the Chip, “I had begun to think we were not to meet again, and don't suppose we would if I had not been flung up into the air when the house blew up. It's fortunate we all lit in this balloon, isn't it?”

Then for the first time Oliver, looking about, saw that he was in a big balloon with the Elephant, the Gentle Lamb, and his two old friends, the Chip and the Pin. There was a mischievous looking monkey aboard, too, who seemed to be managing the trip.

“What made the dance hall blow up?” he inquired of that person.

“Well, you see, the Laughing Hyena got funny and hid a piece of dynamite in the Elephant’s trunk, and the Elephant got mad with the dancing master because he called him awkward, and he threw his trunk at him, thinking it was empty, and — Kerlaw! Boom! Poof! — And here we are.”

“But how did we get in this balloon?”

“Oh, we all just fell in,” replied the monkey carelessly.

Before Oliver could ask any more questions the Pin cried out,

“We’re about to bump into the trees! Quick! throw out your ballast!”

The monkey looked helpless, bit his nails, and chattered his teeth nervously.

“Hurry!” called the Pin.

“Quick!” screamed the Chip.

The Gentle Lamb commenced to fan the Elephant, who was weeping.

“We haven’t anything to throw out,” giggled the Monkey.

“Throw out your trunk!” yelled the Pin to the Elephant.

“It was lost in the explosion,” moaned the big creature, weeping harder than ever.

They were scraping the tops of the trees and all gave themselves up for lost, when a sudden current of air carried the balloon away. Up, up, up they went until everything below them was lost to view. Now they grew more frightened than ever.

“Oh!” cried Oliver, “I don’t like this at all. My stomach’s fainted! It’s worse than going on a Spree!”

“Let some of the gas out,” advised the Pin.

But the monkey didn’t know how, and was too scared to move anyhow. The Elephant was in hysterics, the Gentle Lamb looked ready to faint, and the Chip was clinging to Oliver’s shoulder, weeping and scolding.

The Pin finally called to all to “Sit tight!” and climbing into the rigging, coolly proceeded to make a hole in the gas bag. In a few minutes they were rapidly descending towards the green forest. The monkey disembarked first and swung himself down by the guide rope. When they got near the top of a big tree, Oliver could wait no longer, so jumped and landed safely in the big cool branches, and slid

down to the ground. He lay stunned for a few seconds, and when he opened his eyes there stood the queerest looking rabbit he'd ever seen.

CHAPTER VII

It was just like the rabbits he found on the breakfast table Easter morning. Oliver stared at him.

“How d’ye do,” said the queer looking creature. “I’m the Easter Rabbit, and you look very much like an Easter boy, but I hope you are not.”

“Why?” asked Oliver, forgetting to tell his name.

“Because that kind of boy always pulls an Easter Rabbit’s head off as soon as he sees one.”

“How wicked!” exclaimed Oliver. “I shouldn’t think of pulling your head off. That’s cruelty to animals, and I belong to the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.”

“Oh, then you are all right,” said the Easter Rabbit; “and if you want to you can come with me, and I’ll show you my Egg Factory.”

“I didn’t know eggs were made in a factory; I thought they were just laid,” said Oliver, as they walked along.

“We make them first and lay them around afterwards,” explained the Easter Rabbit. “Here we are. Now come in, and you’ll see how it’s done.”

The room they entered looked like an enormous



“‘I’m the Easter Rabbit.’”

kitchen, bright, clean, and sunny, filled with large tables at which were rabbits in caps and aprons, some busy rolling into shape the egg paste, while others colored and decorated the candy eggs. At one end of the room was a big stove, around which were several more rabbits, stirring huge pots of sugar and stuff, and ladling it out to those who stood ready with bowls. It was a busy scene, and the air smelt so nice and sweet that Oliver's mouth watered.

"I would let you taste some," said the Easter Rabbit, "but it's against the rules to let any one have an Easter egg until Easter morning. However, I'll put one in your pocket, if you'll promise not to eat it till Easter. Now, this is a *thirteenth* egg, and has a magic charm in it."

"What's that?" asked Oliver.

"I'll explain," said the Easter Rabbit. "Every thirteenth egg has inside it a tiny little letter which tells you how you can get to the Easter Egg Factory. Of course, you see no one has ever yet known about the Thirteenth Egg, so you will be the first boy to find out about it. But remember," he added very seriously, "if you eat this egg before Easter, you won't see the little letter, and you'll never find out how to get back here."

"I promise," said Oliver; "that is, I'll try."

The Easter Rabbit laughed and winked at the others, then picked out a beautiful blue, white, and

gold egg, and slipped it into Oliver's pocket. He was so busy peeping at it from time to time that he hardly had eyes for anything else.

He vaguely remembered going through room after room, full of eggs of every kind and color heaped up in piles, but none of them as beautiful as the one in his pocket. Finally the Easter Rabbit took him out into a big yard where the grass was as smooth and green as a velvet carpet, and there all over the lawn were nests made of fuzzy green stuff like fringe, and filled with lovely pink, blue, purple, yellow, green, and speckled eggs.

In one corner of the yard were a lot of funny looking little chickens and ducks. The Easter Rabbit gave Oliver a bag of tiny round candies and told him to feed them.

"Why, they eat this as if it were corn!" he exclaimed, as he threw handful after handful on the grass and watched the chickens and ducks gobble it up.

"That's their regular food," explained the Easter Rabbit. "You know," he continued, "they all have to be filled for Easter, and it would take dreadfully long to do it in any other way, so we feed them with candy every now and then, and by Easter they are up to the brim."

"Where do they come from?" asked Oliver.

"Ah, that's a secret," whispered the Easter Rabbit, close to his ear. "That's a secret, and I can

only tell you on condition you can answer this conundrum: How many *lays* make a *lie*?"

Oliver was puzzling his wits to find an answer, when suddenly the Easter Rabbit seized his arm screaming, "Oh, oh! here comes Jack Frost! He'll crack all the eggs if we don't chase him out. Help me to run him away!"

So off they went after what looked to Oliver like an old tramp in a suit of white pajamas, with long white hair and a flowing beard. They ran after him as fast as they could go, the Easter Rabbit shouting and throwing eggs at him in his excitement. Oliver was getting pretty tired, and was glad when the Easter Rabbit suggested that they should sit down and rest.

Hardly had they seated themselves, however, when they saw Jack Frost starting towards them again. He looked very raggerty and ugly, and Oliver felt cold shivers running up and down his back, while the Easter Rabbit appeared frozen stiff. There's no telling what would have happened if there had not appeared a strange and beautiful creature at the very moment when Jack Frost was about to pounce on them. Oliver hadn't time to think whether it was a gentleman or a lady, he was so surprised at what happened. The lovely creature, glistening in a green and white robe covered with crystal drops like dew, its hair shining like sunlight, its face like a pink rose, raised a great

wand and held it over Jack Frost, who crouched close to the ground, not daring to move. Presently Oliver noticed that from the green wand there was falling a fine spray of water beneath which Jack Frost was slowly melting away. As the last of him trickled over the grass, the beautiful spirit began singing like a little bird and flew away through the trees.

When it was out of sight Oliver gave a gasp.

“Who was that?” he asked the Easter Rabbit, who had recovered and was sitting up, looking as lively as usual.

“That’s the April Shower, and she surely did us a good turn, though I’ll bet old Jack Frost will be back again just when we don’t expect him. Horrid thing! He thinks himself very killing, but I never could stand him.”

Then suddenly turning to Oliver, he asked pleasantly,

“Won’t you have some candy? Help yourself, only be sure and put my head on straight when you get through.” And to Oliver’s surprise the Easter Rabbit pulled off his head and showed himself filled up to the brim with the same kind of little candies that they had fed the Easter Ducks and Chickens on.

Oliver helped himself and hastened to replace the Easter Rabbit’s head carefully.

“Thank you very much,” he said.



“Beneath which Jack Frost was slowly melting away.”

“Thank *you*,” replied the Easter Rabbit, “for putting back my head so nicely. Some children put it on backside first, which is very awkward. And now I must be going,” he continued, “so good-bye till Easter. Here’s a Jack o’Lantern who’ll take you through the forest.”

Then the Easter Rabbit went hopping off through the trees, and Oliver turned towards his new acquaintance.

He was a queer looking little chap like a Brownie. In his head he held a lantern which gave a bright, twinkling light. Oliver was glad of that, as it was getting well on towards dusk.

“Where are we going?” he asked.

“To find the bag of gold at the end of the rainbow,” replied the Jack o’Lantern briskly.

“I don’t see any rainbow,” said Oliver.

“That’s because you never looked. It’s right overhead, where it’s been ever since the rain this afternoon. See,” and he pointed to the sky, and there, sure enough, was a great rainbow beginning to fade now in the sunset glow.

“Is there really and truly gold at the end of it?” asked Oliver.

“Sure,” replied the Jack o’Lantern; “at both ends, but we can’t go to but one end at a time unless you go one way and I another, and as you don’t know the way, you’d get lost, so come with me,—and we must hurry!”

Whereupon the Jack o'Lantern caught Oliver by the hand and started out at flying leaps and bounds. How he managed to keep up Oliver didn't know, but somehow he found himself leaping and bounding through the woods and then out over the meadow and marsh with the Jack o'Lantern's light twinkling between them, the rainbow getting nearer and nearer, bigger and bigger and brighter and brighter, until, lo and behold, with a final leap they landed right at the foot of it. It was a glorious sight, this giant rainbow of splendid shining colors, going right up from the ground into the sky! Oliver was so busy looking at it, and walking back and forth through it that he would have forgotten all about the gold if Jack o'Lantern hadn't called to him,

"Come on and help. If we don't get it before the rainbow fades out we'll not be able to find it."

So he went to work with the Jack o'Lantern, who was digging away in the ground, and presently they came to a big stone that they rolled away, and there in plain view beneath it lay a bag so full of gold that it was bursting out on every side!

"Hurry, hurry!" panted the Jack o'Lantern; "the rainbow's almost gone. You catch hold of one end of the bag and I'll take the other, and we'll pull it up. Now,—one, two, *three!*"

But alas! pull and tug as hard and long as they could, they could not budge the bag of gold an inch,



A.B. Peterson

“A bag so full of gold that it was bursting.”

and while they were panting and pulling and hauling, the rainbow disappeared, and instantly with it the gold treasure!

“Now, look what your laziness has cost us!” cried the Jack o’Lantern angrily.

“It’s not my fault,” replied Oliver, equally cross. “We couldn’t lift it, that’s all!”

“It was your fault, too,” said Jack o’Lantern, ready to cry. “You’re always just a little too late about everything. You’d get better marks in school, if you weren’t.”

“Oh, shut up,” cried Oliver rudely, feeling his temper rise.

“Shut up yourself,” returned Jack o’Lantern.

And the next minute they were at each other and in the thick of a fight. A terrific jab from Jack o’Lantern!

“There, I’ve smashed that old Easter Egg, and I’m glad of it!” cried he.

Biff, bam, crash!

“And there goes your old lantern!” cried Oliver, furious over the loss of his present from the Easter Rabbit.

There was a sudden stop to the fight, as with the lantern broken they found themselves in the dark.

“Now, we’re lost!” exclaimed Oliver, and he burst into tears.

“Don’t be such a baby; you’re not lost at all,” said a cross voice, and there stood the Chip.

“ You never would have gotten into a fight if you hadn’t let that horrid Jack o’Lantern knock me off your shoulder,” she continued, crying.

“ I didn’t know you were there,” said Oliver, feeling quite relieved at the sight of an old friend again.

“ You never do know it,” snapped the Chip.

“ Come, now, don’t quarrel ! ” interposed a kindly voice ; and to Oliver’s delight he saw Bear and For-Bear, the Pin, the Quiet Mouse, the Little Bird, in fact all his friends gathered round him, and the next moment he found himself beside a long table, brightly lighted and covered with all sorts of good things to eat. Even the Jack o’Lantern joined the festive crowd, and Oliver recognized the Old Sheep-head, the Gentle Lamb, the Awkward Elephant and many others.

CHAPTER VIII

“Well!” exclaimed Bear, “here you are at last. We thought you were lost. Come, Oliver, and sit at the head of the table, as this is your birthday party.”

So Oliver seated himself in a big chair before a table piled so high with parcels of various sizes that his eyes fairly bulged with excitement. But what was his surprise when old Bear said with a smile,

“Now, Oliver, give the presents to your guests. You will find their names written quite plainly on each one.”

Tears of disappointment filled his eyes, but a sniffing sound from the Chip beside him made him turn angrily towards her.

“Do stop crying; you make me sick!” he exclaimed.

“Stop crying yourself,” she whispered, “and give me my present. It’s a bucket, I know, because I bought it myself.”

“Then how can I give it to you if you bought it yourself?” asked Oliver crossly.

But here For-Bear interrupted and said pleasantly,

“Everyone is waiting for you to give them their presents. You know your birthday is the time to remember those who have been kind and pleasant to you during the past year.”

This was certainly a new way of celebrating his birthday, but he wanted to be polite, so he took up a nice looking package, all wrapped in white paper and tied with red ribbon, and read:

“For the Proverbial Pin, with the hope that he’ll always stick close to his friend Oliver.”

When it was opened, amid great excitement, there was a lovely soft cushion. The Pin was delighted, and standing in it, bowed to Oliver, exclaiming,

“Thank you, Oliver. May you get into all the good things of life as easily as I get into this!”

And he disappeared up to his head in the soft red velvet. And that was the last Oliver saw of him.

The next package was very large and contained two fine fur coats, one for Bear and one for For-Bear. They were perfectly enchanted with such handsome presents, and after being helped into them, thanked Oliver heartily and said while they held his hands,

“Dear Oliver, may the comfort of bearing with others and the warmth of forbearance ever be yours!”

And then they slowly walked away, much to Oliver's regret.

But he had not time to get blue, for his other friends were waiting for their gifts. There was a round heavy package for the Quiet Mouse, who gave a squeak of delight upon opening it, displaying a splendid cheese!

"Oh, Oliver, how can I thank you!" he said. "It has always been the dream of my life to own a *whole big cheese!* My dear friend, may fortune be good to you, and may your larder never be empty!"

Whereupon the Quiet Mouse scampered away, rolling the great cheese before him.

The next bundle was marked in big letters "For the Little Bird, and contained a bundle of fine, clean straw, all ready for building into a beautiful new nest.

"My dear Oliver, how on earth did you know that my old house leaked?" chirped that worthy, hopping round his new possession, head cocked on one side, bright eyes shining with pleasure. "A thousand thanks," he continued, "and may you never want for a roof over your head!"

With that he flew away, bearing his present with him.

As the guests crowded around him, Oliver found himself standing on his chair, handing out one parcel after another, faster and faster. A pair of

scales for the Sheephead, a pipe for the old Dream Man, spectacles for the Owl, a trunk for the Elephant, a box of eggs for the Easter Rabbit, an electric light bulb for the Jack o'Lantern, and so on.

As each guest received his gift he disappeared, and soon Oliver found himself alone at the now empty table. He felt rather sore that all his friends had left him, when he heard the sound of crying and turned to find the Chip, handkerchief to her eyes, her head leaning against his shoulder.

"Do go away!" he exclaimed.

"You — you — you never gave me any present!" she replied with a fresh burst of tears.

"Well, look at me; I never got a thing, and it's my birthday," said Oliver sulkily.

"You're so greedy," snapped the Chip. "Haven't you gotten twelve new months since your last birthday, and started on twelve more. That makes twenty-four presents. You're hard to please!"

Oliver was very angry because he thought that the Chip was making fun of him, and when he felt something tickling him, he struck out right and left. Turning around he saw, not the Chip, but a tall yellow straw standing beside his chair, grinning in a most aggravating manner.

"And who are you?" he asked, forgetting his grievance against the Chip.

"I am the Last Straw," replied a wisp-like voice.

“Well, you just leave me alone, or I’ll do for you!” exclaimed Oliver hotly.

And there is no telling what would have happened if just then Bear and For-Bear had not suddenly appeared and stepped in between them.

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The next moment Oliver opened his eyes to see his two brothers standing over him in the woodshed, each one holding him by the arm, and shaking him vigorously.

“Wake up! Wake up!” they cried. “You’ll be late for supper!”

Oliver sat up, dazed, rubbing his eyes. “Where’s the Chip and all the others?” he asked sleepily.

His brothers laughed.

“You don’t know how you have been going on in your sleep! Fighting us when we tried to wake you up, and telling us that you’d do for us!” laughed one.

“The only way that we waked you up at last was by tickling you with a straw,” said the other.

But Oliver was still too dazed to be angry.

“Well, that sure was a funny dream!” he said, as he scrambled to his feet and followed his brothers into the house.

Later, after the finest supper he thought he had ever eaten, he told them all about it.

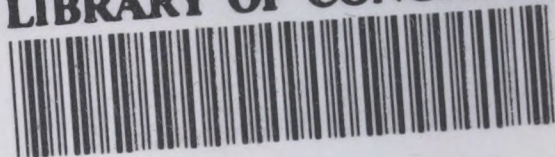
“I wish that I had seen the queer instrument that recorded people’s thoughts,” he said ruefully,

“and, oh, dear! if only I hadn’t lost the Thirteenth Egg that the Easter Rabbit gave me; and if we could only have gotten out that bag of gold before the rainbow faded away!” He sighed, then added: “That was a queer birthday party, but it was fine!”

“To-morrow is your birthday; you can have a party just like it,” smiled his mother.

“I’m afraid the Chip would cry and spoil everything,” said Oliver laughingly, as he went off to bed.

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