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A NEW VERSION
OF AN OLD STORY

"The daily work was done
And home came Karl"

BY ELIZABETH MILROY

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A NEW VERSION
OF AN OLD STORY

BY ✓
ELIZABETH MILROY
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A New Version of an Old Story.

THE daily work was done, and
home came Karl,
Worn and a mite too much in-
clined to snarl.
He found the supper got, the
floor was swept,
For careful was the wife, her
house well kept.
Now here is something queer
beneath the sun;
To thoughtless men, a woman's
work when done,

A New Version of an Old Story.

As easy seems as rolling off a
log.

If you so think, good sirs,
you're in a fog.

But this mistake our honest
farmer made,

So when they down to supper
sat, he said

To Barbara, "Of women
'twould take ten,

I'm sure, to do the work of
two good men."

Up spake the wife: "Now,
father, let me go

A New Version of an Old Story.

To-morrow in your place the
field to mow,
While you within the house
my place shall take,
To sweep and scrub and churn
and stew and bake.”
The farmer laughed, “A fool-
ish woman you;
I’ll rest me in the house with
naught to do;
Your brow will throb beneath
the burning sun,
Your back will ache until the
day is done.”

A New Version of an Old Story.

The morning came and up they
rose. Then forth
Went Barbara to the fields, and
nothing loth,
Karl set to work. The sweep-
ing soon was done
'Mid clouds of rising dust.
"Pho, this is fun,
This keeping house; I can do
it to a turn.
Now, while I smoke my pipe,
I think I'll churn."
The churn was brought, the

A New Version of an Old Story.

churn which Barbara's
hand
Had scoured as whitê as any
in the land.
But ere the day was done—
loth am I to tell
Of dire mishaps that churn
that day befell.
“Did he scald the churn?” I
hope he did,
And that he washed the dasher
and the lid.
Yet while this hope in charity's
expressed,

A New Version of an Old Story.

I leave it to the conscience in
the breast
Of any man whoever yet kept
house,
To say, with hand on heart,
he doth suppose
'Twas done. He churned and
churned and churned, until
He almost deemed he trod the
treading mill;
Nor yet discerned the golden
butter roll.
His mouth was parched, his
face glowed like a coal.

A New Version of an Old Story

Quoth he, "I'll to the cellar's
depths descend
For a mug of ale, and that,
perchance, will lend
Me strength this tiresome, toil-
some task to end."
'Twixt cup and lip are slips.
Ere he had quaffed
With wonted zest his favorite,
foamy draft,
He heard above his head an
ominous sound,
And rushing up the steps, to
his horror found

A New Version of an Old Story.

The churn upset and piggy
paddling in the cream.

Karl, nigh hysterics, scarce
suppressed a scream.

And now fierce anger burns
within his soul,

An anger he desired not to con-
trol.

He chased the pig from the
churn and thro' the door,

All round the room, o'er Bar-
bara's snowy, sanded
floor.

A New Version of an Old Story.

The pig was fat, Karl lean;
and tho' it feigned
To run three ways at once,
he vantage gained.
His wrath grew fierce, his temper
reached white heat,
By one fell blow it lay dead at
his feet.
No time had he to think it ill
or good
That he had robbed himself of
winter's food,
Because in dumb surprise, the
hapless man

A New Version of an Old Story.

Beheld too plain the spigot in
his hand.

More quickly than he came he
hastened down

The cellar-way, where he was
like to drown

Himself in tears and ale—
'twas all run out—

A riddance good, say I. He
looked about,

And finding still another jar of
cream,

Carried it up and began to
churn again.

A New Version of an Old Story.

This time the farmer did not
weary grow
With his work, before he heard
a gentle low
From the back shed, where,
waiting for her food
The cow in ruminating
patience stood.
What could he do? A good
half mile away,
And high noon coming on, the
pasture lay.
The cottage close against the
hill did lean,

A New Version of an Old Story.

New turfed with sods which
 now were fresh and green
With "rain upon the roof."
 Could he but lead
His cow where she on that *high*
 grass might feed!
Seized by this happy thought
 he led the cow
To the well for water, but
 grown wiser now
By late experience—well could
 he learn
In that dear school—he should-
 dered up his churn

A New Version of an Old Story.

And carried it along. But oh,
 . alas,
Dear me, what grief! for so
 it came to pass
That when he stooped to lift
 the bucket o'er
The curb, adown the well the
 cream did pour.
To tear his hair Karl's fingers
 fairly ached;
That sweet relief stern Fate
 denied. He lacked
The time; besides 'twas slip-
 pery, full of cream

A New Version of an Old Story.

Which down his spine ran in
a trickling stream.
And now, the transit of the
cow to aid,
From hill to cot a short wide
plank is laid.
Then coaxingly, o'er this im-
promptu bridge
The wondering beast he led,
quite to the ridge
Of cottage roof, and then on
festive thoughts intent,
His steps he to the nether re-
gions bent.

A New Version of an Old Story.

Arrived, a new dilemma he
confronts,
A quandary, which more than
all the brunt's
He yet had borne did poor
Karl disconcert,
For here is truth which none
may controvert;
This thought, it oft perplexes
womankind,
But yet does seldom cross
man's stronger mind.
"What shall we eat this day?
What drink?"

A New Version of an Old Story.

Dismayed, he scratched his
head to help him think.
No butter could he have, that
well he knew,
But could he not within the
minutes few
That yet remained, one whole-
some dish prepare?
And that his board might not
appear too bare,
That dish he'd flank with side
supply of jam,
Preserves and pickles, apple
sauce, sliced ham

A New Version of an Old Story.

From thrifty Barbara's store.

So said, so done;

Good haste he made to hang
the kettle on

The crane. And now the por-
ridge must be made,

Then next, and quickly too, the
table laid.

But fearing lest the cow should
idly stray

From pasture field and wander
far away,

To cottage roof he clambered
toilsomely,

A New Version of an Old Story.

Tied round her horn a rope
secure, which he
Into the chimney dropped, then
going down,
Fast to his leg the other end
he bound.
Sore pressed, he preparation
made to dine
And "dragged at each remove"
a tightening line.

Meanwhile the wife toiled on.
As Karl had said,

A New Version of an Old Story.

The sun beamed down upon her
bended head.

Upon her heated brow, in
beaded drops,

The moisture lay as she with
steady steps

And swinging arm, the cool,
crisp grass laid low.

And now the dew has dried
some hours ago.

And passed the freshness of
the early morn,

And with it friendly Robin's
cheery song—

A New Version of an Old Story.

From somewhere in the vault
of blue around,
Or near or far, rang out the
dissonant sound
Of weary locust's arid rune.

Now wound
The curling smoke from cot-
tage chimney-top,
Of dinner Barbara cherished
sanguine hope;
Tho' with pinchings of a
healthful appetite

A New Version of an Old Story.

Was mingled soon the fear that
 all's not right
With yon housekeeping man
 within the home,
Else, why to dinner doth not
 summons come?
Around the field another swath
 she laid,
Then, anxious, saw the smoke
 from chimney fade,
But no, it rises now anew in
 jets
From either side. Ah, some-
 thing surely frets

A New Version of an Old Story.

The fire. Across her shoulder
then her scythe
She deftly flung, and stepping
free and lithe,
Soon reached the house, but
paused in dire affright
Confronted by a most astounding
sight.
Adown the cottage wall poor
Bossy hung,
Suspended by a rope in mid-air
swung.
She looked in vain for Karl,
no Karl could see;

A New Version of an Old Story.

No time to look for Karl, yet
where was he?

Oh, haste! with one sweep of
the gleaming scythe

She cleft the rope on which
the cow did writhe.

Karl downward dropped. His
heated head he laved

In porridge pot. Be glad the
oatmeal's saved

By absence! The water, long
since cool,

Refreshed him as 'twere sylvan
shaded pool.

A New Version of an Old Story.

With vision cleared forever-
more, he went
To his work next day, forever-
more content.



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