Kent News

SATURDAY, - - - JAN. 16, 1897.

The Gipsy Minstrel!

"I can pipe, too, said the child.

Do you know how a child's eyes look when he has just learned how beautiful this world is, when he feels his wings like a bird, ere the heritage of the sons of toil has diminished them? So Tim's eyes looked that winter night. He opened the door of the smithy, where the members of the village orchestra sat at practice round the blazing forge. Every man paused, instrument in hand, at the sound of the fearless, shrill young voice.

Then, smiling, Tim shut out the drifting snowflakes and stepped into their midst. The small feet were shoeless and dark as the earthen floor on which they stood. The clothes he wore hung round his slim form in grotesque tatters. But above the tatters rose a face such as God sends into the dark world now and then. Noble were the features, the sweep of the blue eyes were clear and grand, the curve of the lips were proud, yet sweet. From the beautiful brown hair tawny and sun-kissed, on which the glistening snow shone like stars.

The men had scarcely time to look at the child when, raising his pipe to his lips, he began to play. The wonderful eyes shone, the slim, brown fingers obeying the impulse of the grand soul imprisoned in tiny Tim. Strong men laid aside their instruments and clasped horney hands to listen; here and there a face shadowed, now and then a tear was furtively wiped away.

Tim smiled as he took his pipe away from his lips and his eyes turned wistfully to the blazing fire. They made way for him; they entertained him as if he had been of royal estate. A small three-legged stool was his throne, and he sat there, pipe clasped close, as happy as a king. He told them whence he came, as far as he knew.

"Over the hills," he said; "far, far over the hills."

They called him Piper Tim in the caravan; never another name. He had always piped.

Then he laughed and stretched his thin brown hands with joy to the blaze. He could tell nothing more; he belonged to the "tinker band," and the sound of music had drawn him so that he lingered to listen while the caravan went on its way "over the hills."

The smith's wife admired the child's lovely face; his tatters brought tears to her eyes; woman like, she gave him something to eat and to drink. Then they sat once more amazed while he played on his pipe, ere, with laughing farewell, he went off into the darkness. That night the smith sat long dreaming by the red logs in his forge. He sighed as he turned in at the cottage door, where his wife waited him by the fire.

"How would it ha' been," he said, "gin we'd kept the little chap, the piper? Our barin would just ha' been about his age gin the Lord spared him."

There was a note of anxious query in his tones. But the starved mother's heart in the woman cried out:

"El, but I've been sitting here seein' the bony face of the barin in the firelight. I thought o' him out there in the darkness an' the shaw wi' the tinkers folk. God keep and guide him. I wish ye'd spoken sooner Keep him! Would I no', wi' you' bonny face, you blithe e'en!"

"When he comes back again," the smith said, as he drew his chair to the hearth and his wife with a glad smile echoed his words.

The schoolmaster placed his old violin tenderly in the corner that night. He smiled a little bitterly as he thought of his gray hairs and his many years of plodding, then of Piper Tim.

"He played as a bird sings," he thought, "really, his heart is full of music."

Then he trimmed his lamp and sat down to his books.

But the boy's face smiled from every page; the free, fearless voice shone in the crackling flames. The schoolmaster flung aside his book, and was back in the old days, when the hills, and the stars, and the sunshine had been his book, a maiden's eye his heaven and the world a world of wonders. He looked at the empty chair of his dead wife and he thought of sons and daughters far away.

"If I had kept the lad," he mused aloud. "I could have made a man of him, have saved him from the tinker's life; he would have filled my empty home."

Long he dreamt, then a smile of resolution curved his lips.

"When he comes again," he said.

And Piper Tim?

He went on his way that night, turning again and again to look at the long, bright gleams that fell on the snow from the forge fires. He knew his people were camping in the mountains, and to the mountain and darkness he turned his face. There was singing in his heart, there was always singing there, so he went on his way merrily. Up, up, through the blinding snow, neither cold nor weary for the singing in that heart of his, he watched always for the gleam of the red camp-fire. But he beheld never a spark.

The stars shone out serenely. Tim raised his face to them; they smiled into their own twin stars, his eyes. Yet still there was no camp-fire.

Tim, growing sore, sat down in the sheltered cranny of rock. He raised his pipe to his lips. He played a tune that began brave and ended softly, and more softly still. Tim was asleep. The snow flakes fell like bristling stars; the dawn smiled over the hills, but Tim piped never again.

Little reckoned the tinker band that one child less crouched to the fire, one brown hand less stretched to the steaming pot. When the musicians meet in the smithy on winter nights and the wind shakes queer melodies from trees and mountains, the men look at each other, and sometimes a light breaks over rugged faces. "Sounds like a tune from Piper Tim," say they.

Occasionally a strange presence seems to fill the place. The smith and the schoolmaster raise eager faces, words tremble on their lips—but ah! the fancies that are ever aslumber in dreamers' hearts have been stirred by the wind's song and the shadow of the dancing flames.

OLD BILLS IN THE ILIAD.

Mrs. Deforest Buys a Torn Volume for Twenty Cents and Finds $500 in Bank Bills in it.

Mrs. Pearl Deforest, No. 203 West Forty-sixth street, is a collector of odd and ancient books, and when passing an old book shop, near the Post Office, on Wednesday afternoon she felt an attack of bibliomania, and went inside. For some reason she purchased the second volume of the Iliad, though she had never felt any particular liking for Homer. The dealer asked 20 cents for it. It had no title page, and therefore the date of publication and the place where the book was printed could not be found.

She took her purchase home, and when she and her husband were examining it she suddenly exclaimed;

"There's a piece of paper pasted inside the back cover with some of the leaves. I'm sure something's there, for in buying it I felt sure the book had a strange value."

Hot water was brought and the pasted leaves were carefully taken apart. Between them were found five $100 bills of the Bank of Savannah of 1858.

Inside of the front cover was a label reading, "Hudson Literary Society." There was no name on the fly leaf, nor was there any clue by which the past ownership could be traced. Mr. and Mrs. Deforest decided that the bills coul be of no value now, and up to last evening had taken no measures to find out.

The Little Armchair.

Nobody sits in the little armchair:
It stands in a corner dim;
But a white-haired mother, gazing there,
And yearningly of him,
Sees through the dust of long ago
The bloom of the boy's sweet face,
As she rocks so merrily to and fro,
With a laugh that cheers the place.

Sometimes he holds a book in his hand,
Sometimes a pencil and slate;
And the lesson is hard to understand,
The figures to calculate;
But she sees the nod of the fathers's head,
So proud of his little son,
And she heard the words so often said,
"No fear for our little one."

They were wonderful days, dear sweet days,
When a child with sunny hair
Was here to scold, to kiss and to praise,
At her knee in the little chair.
She lost him back in her busy years,
When the great world caught the man,
And he strove away past hopes and fears
To his place in the battle's van.

But now and then in a wishful dream,
Like a picture out of date,
She sees a head with a golden gleam
Bent over a pencil and slate;
And she lives again in the happy day,
The day of her young life's spring,
When the small armchair stood just in the way
The centre of everything.

THERE are lots of people even now, who would not object to the burning of witches if they were allowed to select the witches.

A man always shuffles around and looks uncomfortable when his wife talks about things that happened on their honeymoon.

THE needle is true to the pole; but that is only natural. That which has never been reached is always apt to be an object of desire.

VERY often when we think we are impressing people with our smartness, we are only making a reputation for being disagreeable.

SOME smiles are like the ruddiness of certain apples, which is owing to a centipede or other creeping thing, coiled up at the heart of them.

AFTER all a man's household goods have been carted around the streets on a moving van he feels as though the neighbors had taken an unfair advantage of him.

THE woman who fusses and scolds and slaps the children for an hour before Sunday-school time is often the same one who sits in the parlor all the evening with blinds up and plays hymns on the melodeon.

"I DON'T see what's the use of my bothering my head learning to write," quoth Tom. "It's a great deal more fun using a type-writer, and you don't get your clothes all over ink."

PLANTED OYSTERS.

What Has Been Accomplished by One Enterprising Grower.

The Crisfield (Md.) Times, Jan. 2, says:

"We have seen oysters caught by our neighbor, Mr. Wm. Ellinger, of Fox Island, Va., from his planted oyster bed. several mighty facts are to be noted in connection with Mr. Ellinger's labor in oyster planting:

"First.—The oysters spoken of were raised on bottoms which were entirely devoid of growth at the time he planted the shells upon which the oysters caught and grew.

"Second.—If Mr. Ellinger had not utilized these barren bottoms, they would have remained a waste and a void, with no profit to any one.

"Third.—What Mr. Ellinger has done can be accomplished by any one who will labor as he did.

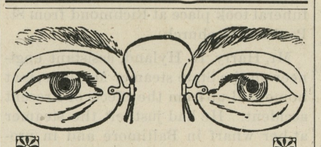
"Fourth.—If we follow the example set by Mr. Ellinger we shall all be prosperous and make our State flourish as she never has before.

"Fifth.—We ought to do so out of gratitude to the beneficent Creator, who, even after we have recklessly wasted the substance He gave us, still places it in our power through our labor and intelligence to cultivate the bottoms we have made a waste, thereby enabling us in spite of our past disregard for His bounty to recover that through our own fault we have lost.

"Mr. Ellinger has accomplished a fine result in spite of obstacles which would have induced the majority of men to have given up in despair, We congratulate him—he should be regarded by our people as a friend, if not a benefactor, and we state without reserve that any man or set of men who may hereafter molest or steal his oysters should be regarded as a public enemy, not only to be frowned down, but detected and punished by the law.

"Our people have a common interest in stopping piracy and plunder and firmly plant their feet on the resolve that property in oysters shall be protected as all other property is. If they do this and carry it out we shall all prosper.

"We stand for oyster planting and the protection of planted oyster beds. We must make our living out of oysters; politics will not give us bread or meat."



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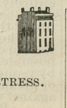
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