

A BAG WITH HOLES.

Aunt Pratt sat in the south window of the kitchen, knitting. She had a right to sit there, for she paid her board punctually, having "means" as the neighbors said.

What the Potters would have done without her board to help them they could not think—now they had it. Yet before Mrs. Potter's Uncle Ebenezer died they had lived just as many other poor people live. Uncle Ebenezer had never helped his niece at all since he gave her a modest outfit and a hundred dollars in cash when she married Rowley Potter, a young fellow who was getting good wages in the great rifle factory at H.

Louisa was pretty, capable, bright girl then; but that was twenty years ago. Now she was a thin, sallow, fretful woman. Potter still worked in the rifle shop," as they called it, but he had only \$1 a day, more wages than when he was married, and there were four children. Lottie, 18 years old, pretty, pert and vain, worked in a hosiery. Tom, 16, was in a nut and bolt "shop;" Idalla, a girl of 14, was a "cash girl" in Holmes & Harper's great dry-goods store. Tom and Lotty paid their board, "Idy" clothed herself, she could get bargains and remnants so cheap; when she should be promoted into a "sales lady," she, too, would pay like the others. The fourth child, little Davy, was only 10; he went to a public school.

When Aunt Pratt was left a widow, she made up her mind to sell the farm and board somewhere; she had no children, but she did have rheumatism enough to tire her with its aches and stiffness more than a family of the noisiest boys and girls could have tired her. The farm was a good one, well improved, the house and barns in thorough repair, and there were six cows and two horses, as well as plenty of farming implements. She got \$4,500 for the whole. The neighbors said it was worth more; the buyer said it was worth less; so shrewd Aunt Pratt considered the price fair.

Then there was \$1,500 in the Dalton Bank, the slow accumulation of butter money, egg money, the sale of poultry and calves; \$6,000 in all, and every cent of it her own. Squire Hart, of Dalton, who was executor of the will, invested the money in safe ways at 6 per cent. and Mrs. Pratt began to look about her for a home. She knew that Louisa Potter had felt hurt about her Uncle Pratt's will; he only left to her her grandmother's mahogany furniture and the savings bank book in which he had deposited the profits made out of the Friesland hens and the white heifer calf she had left in his hands when she married—a sum amounting to \$100 now.

But Louisa and her husband had expected more, and Mrs. Pratt was a just woman, capable of understanding other people's feelings; so she did not wonder. After much thought and without any suggestion from them, she proposed to come into H. and board with Louisa. So they gave up to her Lotty's front bedroom, and put Lotty in with Ida; and as they cooked and ate in the same room where they sat at evening, Aunt Pratt's rocker, her foot-stool, her small round table and her work-basket were established in the sunny south window, where she could look down into the sky, for this tenement was on a corner, and the Potters had the third story flat.

It was a great change for Aunt Pratt, but she was a woman brought up in the old New England fashion, to do what she perceived to be a duty, however unpleasant and painful, without shrinking or complaint; and she had made up her mind that it was her duty to help the Potters. She missed the fresh air of the farm, the quiet of her own house, the new milk, the sweet butter, the good bread; but she said nothing as she sat, day after day, in her window, knitting or mending, her big Bible open on the stand, and her thoughts very busy with the things around her, as well as with the things that are above. For Aunt Pratt had made a resolution to leave her money in the way it would do her relatives the most good, and she would study them and their customs before she could discover what that way was. She soon found out that they were always in debt. Potter had good wages. Lotty and Tom were off his hands, Ida had only her board given her, and Davy was inheritor to Tom's old clothes and his father's too. It seemed to Aunt Pratt that there must be a leak somewhere that she did not discover at once.

She was reading her bible of course, and one day came upon a verse in the prophecy of Haggai that seemed to explain the situation to her, and opened her eyes. The next day Lotty came in shivering, she had caught a severe cold and huddled over the

cook-stove wrapped in an old shawl, coughed and sighed and scolded all day, till she was too hoarse to speak. "Have you got on your winter flannels?" asked Aunt Pratt, for it was now November.

"Flannels? I guess not. I haven't got any."

"Why, Lotty?"

"Well, poor folks can't have everything. I'd got to have a winter suit, and there was such a lovely one at the Boston store; a satin petticoat, with drapery of camel's hair—imitation, I mean, but awfully pretty—and a real splendid basque with satin vest and gilt buttons; only \$20. I tell you, Aunt Pratt, it was a swell and no mistake; but I couldn't afford soft flannels after that."

"Is it a thick dress?" queried Aunt Pratt.

"No, not so very; not so thick as this shop dress; but I don't mind that. I ain't cold-blooded."

"And your shoes, are they thick?"

"Oh, they're just cheap boots; thick soles do cost so. My best ones are French kid with lovely high heels. They can't have thick soles."

"And have you got a warm petticoat?"

"Mercy! I don't want to be all humped up with things. I've got an old felt skirt and a striped cambric for every day, and four white ones, trimmed with edging."

Aunt Pratt shook her head.

"A hole in the bag! A hole in the bag!" she said sadly.

"Why, what upon"—but a fit of coughing stopped the words and left Dotty's chest so sore she did not finish her question.

She was so ill that night a doctor was sent for—a young man round the corner, just beginning practice, therefore cheaper than a man of experience. He at once proceeded to bilater his patient and give her antimony. Low delirium set in, and for six weeks Lotty was unable to leave her bed, and for a month more she could not go to work. Bills came in to twice the amount of the blue dress's price, and could not be paid.

"Oh, what a hole in the bag!" sighed Aunt Pratt.

When Lotty was a little better, her father came in one noon with a hand-bill given to him in the street—a flaming advertisement of the "Black Crook" performance.

"Say, Lou, don't you want to go to this to-night? It's a month o' Sundays since we've had a lark; let's go," he said, tossing the play bill into his wife's lap.

"Oh, pa," screamed Idalla, "take me. Oh, do! Now won't you?"

"N'm too," screamed Davy, who had a hoarse cold.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Potter. "I don't want two babies taggin' at my heels. Somebody's got to stay with Lott."

"Why, there's Aunt Pratt," said Ida.

"Maybe she'd like to go; would you Aunty?" asked Potter, blandly. He had a mind to keep the right side of a woman with "means."

"Me said the old lady with a stern reproof in her voice and face. "Me go to such a place? No indeed!"

"Well, well! everybody to their mind. I like a bit of fun first rate, now and then. We go quite considerable, first and last; a body must be amused."

"O, father!" put in Mrs. Potter, urged by the whispered teasing and cross faces of Ida and Davy, "do take them children along! Ida hasn't been nowhere since Lott was took sick; and Davy's only a boy. Let him have a good time while he can; his troubles will come fast enough before long. Now, do let 'em go."

"Well, I guess they can. Lott won't want 'em if Aunt Pratt's here."

So at night he came home with four tickets to the performance, a bag of peanuts and a paper of candy, and they set out to enjoy themselves, Tom had announced at noon that he was "goin' to take his girl."

Aunt Pratt groaned in spirit. "Ar other hole in the bag, and a big one!" she said to herself.

When would the doctors' bill and the debts at the drug store and the grocer's ever be paid?

Aunt Pratt had always lived in the country and been honest. She had no experience of the class who crowd our theaters, minstrel show halls and circuses, who buy cheap finery and expensive, poor beer and bad butter, but never pay their rent or lay up one penny in all their lives.

As spring came on Aunt Pratt noticed one day that Potter looked disgusted with his dinner, and Lotty left hers untasted. No wonder! Aunt Pratt could not eat it herself. The potatoes were poor and boiled to a watery, insipid mass; the calves' liver fried to a black, leathery substance; the bread old and dry, and the turnips rank and unsavory.

"I say, Pa!" exclaimed Tom, "we're all gettin' spring poor. I don't care a hang for my vittles. Let's have a dozen of lager, that'll set us all up."

So the lager came, was used up, and another dozen ordered, and then another; but the appetites did not improve—nor the cooking. At last the beer seller refused to fetch more, unless what he had brought them was paid for.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" sighed Aunt Pratt. "What a hole in the bag!"

Next day she said to her niece: "Lowsy, will you let me buy and cook the dinner to-morrow? I'll make you a present of all the vittles I get, if you will."

Louisa consented, much astonished, and Aunt Pratt came back from market with two pounds of solid beef—a coarse piece, it is true, but cheap and fresh. She bought a few onions, a carrot and one small stalk of celery, the whole cost 36 cents. Then she prepared a stew, and paring the potatoes put them in cold water till it was time to add them;

the celery, two onions, half a carrot sliced thin, was put in with the beef, which she had cut into pieces of perhaps two inches square. Salt and pepper were sprinkled in liberally, and as she put on her stew before breakfast and let it simmer all morning, adding the sliced potato at 11 o'clock, it was well done by noon.

"George! how good the dinner smells!" ejaculated Tom.

"Got roast turkey Lou?" inquired Potter, sniffing and smelling.

Even listless Lou wanted some dinner that day; the rest recovered their appetites—without any more lager!

"I wish the land you learn cookin' of Aunt Pratt!" said Potter.

"I wonder if I have sewed up that hole?" thought Aunt Pratt.

But she had not. Louisa was too old to learn new tricks, as we say about dogs; she continued to buy the best meat and cook in the worst way, and still the money leaked from that hole in the bag.

"Hullo, Tom!" said Potter one Sunday morning, as Tom sauntered into the room with a half-smoked cigar in his mouth. "Ain't you toney?"

"Why, that cigar smells like a rose!" Aunt Pratt wondered what sort of rose had an odor like tobacco.

"It had ought to," sentimentally remarked Tom. "Them fellers cost me 5 cents apiece by the hundred."

"Well, I kin put up my pipe so fur; but you young fellers have got to have your fling. I reckon. By'n-bye you'll fall back on brier wood and nigger head."

"Another hole in the bag," murmured Aunt Pratt, who had patiently darned Tom's threadbare socks and patched his worn shirts for him every week for months.

"Well, here I be!" shouted Potter as he came in one Monday morning about 10 o'clock.

"Why, what has fetched you home?" inquired his wife.

"Oh, our fellows have struck; we're goin' to have less work and more pay; them darned capitalists have overrode us long enough; we're bound to have our share of the dollars we make, now I tell you!"

"For the mercy's sake!" ejaculated Louisa.

Where are you going to work now?" dryly asked Aunt Pratt.

"Why, back again as soon as the bosses come to terms."

"But supposin' they shouldn't."

"Oh, they've got to, can't lose their contracts, no way; we've got 'em where the hair's short."

"But supposin' they hold out for a month's or six weeks?"

"Oh, we get allowance out of the assessments; we ain't going to starve."

"Who's paying them assessments?"

"The fellers what have got money laid away; they're taxed for the general good; so much a week till the strike's over."

"Be you assessed?"

"Lord! do you think I've got a cent in the bank? Four children and starving wages. What's \$3 a day with four in the family, an' clothes an' rent, an' vittles, an' light, an' fuel, an' doctors, an' Lord knows what all?"

"A bag with holes!" ran through Aunt Pratt's mind as she looked back on the past six months.

Weeks passed on; the "bosses" were not only firm but hired other men in the striker's places and went on with contracts. Potter sulked, and lounged and swore, and made his pipe and himself a daily nuisance in the house. Before long Aunt Pratt discovered that the assessments were decreasing, and alarmed lest Potter should insist on sharing her small property among his brood, on communistic principles, she quietly withdrew herself one day to an Old Ladies' Home, where the payment of a small sum insured her peaceful and pleasant home for life, and from her retreat she gave much aid and comfort to the women of the Potter family, but refused any to the two men.

"I can't waste my pittance on beer and tobacco!" she said sharply; and she meant what she said. When she died, her money was all left to the Home where she lived, to endow two free admissions, the three women of the Potters to have the preference.

"I have lived, said the document, after the terms of the bequest," to see what the Bible meant where it says in Haggai, i. 6. "Ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink, ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put in a bag with holes; and I will not leave behind me any dollars to go into that bag."

"Old crank!" said the disappointed Potter, when the lawyer finished reading.

"Who? Haggai?" politely inquired that gentleman.—Rose Terry Cooke.

A Great Philanthropist.

On the last page of his interesting recollections George W. Child's writes:

"If asked what, as the result of my experience, is the greatest pleasure in life I should say, doing good to others. Not a strikingly original remark perhaps, but seemingly the most difficult thing in the world is to be prosperous and generous at the same time. During the war I asked a very rich man to contribute some money to a certain relief fund. 'Childs,' he said, 'I can't give you anything. I have worked too hard for my money.' That is just it. Being generous grows on one just as being mean does. The disposition to give and to be kind to others should be inculcated and fostered in children. It seems to me that is the way to improve the world and make happy the people who are in it."

A DETECTIVE'S STORY.

Two men sat together in the rear seat of a smoking car on one of our railroads and chatted familiarly of the ups and downs of a miner's life the topic being suggested by a landscape dotted with coal-breakers and furrowed with coal roads.

The freedom and interest of their conversation did not seem to be dampened by the fact that the younger of the two carried a revolver, while his companion wore a pair of those uncoveted articles of jewelry which are known in criminal circles as "bracelets."

The few persons who had observed them learned from the confidential brakeman that they were a noted detective and his prisoner on the way to trial. As far as ages went the pair might have been taken for father and son, the fine gray head of the one contrasting strongly with the crisp brown curls of his captor.

What crime had been committed the brakeman did not know, but hazarded a conjecture that it "must have been a pretty hard one, or George Munson wouldn't have took the trouble to put them things on his wrists."

Presently the brakeman and the conductor satisfied the joint demands of etiquette and curiosity by stopping to exchange a few words with the detective; the former then perched himself up the coal-box directly behind the prisoner, and the latter dropped magnificently into the seat in front. The train was sweeping around a curve and past a ruined trestle on the hillside at which both of the passengers looked with some interest.

"Remember that place," said the older man.

"So do I," responded the younger; "I was born there. Came near being buried there, too." He resumed after a moment's pause.

"How was that?"

"It's a pretty long story," said the detective, "but I guess we'll have time for it between this and the next station. Way up there on the slope is the little settlement where I made my debut, so to speak; from it to the bottom of the hill there used to be a gravity road—a long, winding track reaching from the settlement down to the top of a bank wall of earth where a slide occurred the year I was born. On both sides of the track grew saplings that had sprung up since the disaster (what I am telling you occurred five years later), and they crowded the road and hung over the old rusty rails on which the coal cars used to run. You must remember that the houses were built near the mouth of the pit—that was one of the first mines worked in this country, and one of the first to be abandoned. Time I am telling about some men were walking up the track, and a lot of children playing near the top, climbing in and out of an old car which had lain there since it made its last trip with the broken spraggs still in its wheels."

"The men were miners, all but one of them, who questioned his companions about their work and the country they lived in. He was evidently a stranger."

"Presently, as they talked, a shout from the top of the slope attracted their attention, and they looked up just in time to see the car begin to move slowly down the grade."

"There was an impatient exclamation from the oldest man in the party. 'Them brats is always up to some mischief,' he said. 'They have started that old thing off at last; I've been expectin' to see it go at any time this five year. They'll be breaking their necks yet with their tomfooling.' And another of the group added: 'We must dust out of this lively, unless we want to get our necks broke; she'll either jump the rail or go to pieces at the bottom; lucky there ain't no one aboard of her.'"

"The stranger was looking anxiously up at the approaching runaway. His quick eye had caught sight of something round and golden above the car rim."

"'There's a child in that car,' he said quietly."

"It was a second or two before his companions realized the awful meaning of that statement. A child! That was as if he said that in a few moments some one—perhaps one of themselves—would be childless."

"With one impulse they turned to look at the broken rails at the edge of the fault. Shuddering, they fixed their eyes again on the approaching mass, then hopelessly at each other. They could not dream of stopping the progress of the car. But, quick as thought almost, the stranger took hold of a sapling and bent it down till it nearly touched the track. 'Hold on,' he said to one of the men, 'it will help to check her.' A rod further down another and then a third and fourth were held in the same way. So four of the party waited for a few breathless seconds, while the two remaining ones hurried further down; but one more effort and the car was upon them. The first obstacle was whipped out of the hands of the strong man who held it and the car rushed on to the second with hardly lessened force. Again the barrier was brushed aside, but this time the speed of the old wreck was perceptibly less. By the time the fifth obstruction was reached the newcomer was able to clamber aboard and throw the child into the arms of his companion, but before he had time to save himself the old track had regained something of its momentum and was plunging on toward the precipice."

"Well, the man jumped just as they reached the edge, just before his

vehicle shot over into the air, but he had very little time to choose his ground, and so landed, as luck would have it, on the only heap of stones in sight. The others picked him up for dead and carried him up to the settlement, where the miners held a regular wake over him. But he came to life in the middle of the festivity—the obsequies, I mean—and found that he was only crippled for life."

"The miners—folks not easily moved, were enthusiastic about the affair, and gave such testimonials as they could to show their gratitude and appreciation. One of these expressions took the form of a souvenir signed by every man in the place, and stating in very grandiloquent language what the poor fellow had done. His quick wit seemed to them more wonderful than his courage and devotion, in a community where neither quality is unusual at all."

"The man who takes his own life in his hand every day, and has frequently to fight for the life of some companion values a 'brainy' action. In the box of the testimonial was a purse of fifty dollars and a curious old gold cross, that had been treasured by the brother of the lad who was saved as his one piece of finery. On it was rudely engraved these words:

"Given by the miners at the Notch to the man who risked his life for a child."

"That was all. The poor fellow went away and would have been forgotten, only that the old miners told the story sometimes to their children."

The prisoner was looking out of the window. The conductor rustled around as though ashamed of the interest he had shown in the story—a story no doubt was pure fiction. Only the brakeman gave away to his sympathy, and asked whether the man had ever been found."

"Not that I know of," replied the detective.

"And was you the boy what he saved?"

"I was the kid."

"And you never heerd tell what became of the man—what would you do if you shud come across him some time?" Evidently the brakeman had an imagination which was trying to assert itself.

"Oh! I'd try to even the thing up somehow. I suppose common decency would demand that. I'd treat him as well as I know how."

"Look here," said the prisoner, turning from the window with an apparent effort to change a conversation which for some reason had not seemed to interest him—"look here, old man, I've got a little keepsake that your story just reminded me of, and if I could get at it I'd ask you to take charge of it for me till—till this thing is over. If you'll put your hand in there and pull out that bit of ribbon; so—"

The conductor almost jumped out of his seat. "Blamed if it ain't the cross that you've just been telling about," he shouted.

A month later the detective was under a cross-examination by the conductor and brakeman.

"Yes, he was a bad lot. Oh, yes, he didn't have a leg to stand upon. The facts were all as clear as day. All true about the cross and the rest of it? Just as true as gospel. What had he been doing? Throwing bombs the last thing. Punished? Well, to tell you the truth, they won't be apt to punish him till they catch him again, I guess. Fact is he got away from me somehow that same night. Who, me? Oh, no, I'm not on the force any more. I've been bounced."

—Lowell (Mass.) Courier.

A Forcible Preacher.

While it is doubtful if Sam Jones' sermons will go in Boston, there is no doubt that his style has a certain degree of force. For instance, in Charlotte, N. C., the other day, he said, among other things: "I'd rather be a lowdown chain gang negro than one of your little infidels. You won't be in hell two minutes before you'll be hopping around in the fire and yelling: 'What a mistake I made.' I have some respect for Bob Ingersoll, because he can get \$200 a night for his lecturing. But some of these little fellows are infidels for nothing, pay \$2 to hear Ingersoll and board themselves. I understand you are all running 'society' here pretty lively. Society! A pair of 75 cent slippers and a \$1.25 wasp bonnet lets you into it. There is no manhood, no womanhood in it. The fruits of society, so-called, are the dude and the dudine. If you don't like what I'm saying, just get up on your hind legs and slide out."

Adding to Death's Horrors.

"Civilization has added a new horror to death," a gentleman whose daughter died recently remarked the other day. "The number of men in New York City whose livelihood depends upon how far a mourning family can be impressed or can be lugged into acceding to their demands grows constantly. The very moment we put the crape upon our door-bell the house was besieged by agents of lively stables who wanted to furnish us with carriages at less than the regular rates, by runners for undertakers' supplies, and vendors of tombstones, artificial wreaths, obituary verses, and every other conceivable device bearing upon death. People are particularly sensitive in a moment of bereavement, and on that account they should be in some measure protected from the attacks of these sharks. You can have no idea of the amount of misery they cause. I suppose nothing can be done about it, but it seems to me that it ought to be a fit subject for legislative consideration."—New York Sun.

Women in The Treasury.

About one-sixth of the six thousand clerks employed in the Government offices at Washington are women. There are a greater number employed in the Treasury than in any other department.

In 1861, a Miss Douglas was appointed, through Secretary Chase's influence to a position in the Treasury. She was put to cutting money and handled the scissors so skillfully that regular appointments of women were made in 1862 while General Spinner was Treasurer. Miss Kellar, who was appointed at that time still holds her position.

About 1864 a machine was invented for cutting the money, and then the women were put to counting money. There were one hundred and eighty employed in this way until the fractional currency was discontinued, and they were gradually discharged, until now there are but forty in this department. They receive salaries ranging from \$1,200 to \$1,800.

Mrs. Rosenberg who came into this Department in 1863 still retains her position, which is one of the best, and she is an expert at the work of putting into shape mutilated money.

Mrs. H. L. Wright and Miss Hoey are the most efficient experts in counterfeit money.

Mrs. Fitzgerald, has been at the desk twenty-five years, in the Comptroller's office, where all the bank notes come for redemption.

Miss Van Vranken and Miss Halston, both of New York, are employed in the law division, and among other duties they prepare briefs in compromise cases.

Miss Seavey, who is also in the law division, receives a salary of \$1,800, and directs the work of a number of clerks. She is said to have done much to advance the condition of women in the employment of the government. She believes that work dignifies women, and that women must take that ground which will improve the state of their sex; therefore those under her immediate care are among the best in the Treasury.

The daughter of Corporal Tanner occupies the position of private secretary to Mr. Huston and receives \$1,800 salary.

Snakes in the Capitol.

Des Moines Register.

The night watchman at the state-house was the victim of an attack of snakes a few days ago and made Iowa's beautiful marble halls resound with his horrified shrieks. The thing happened in this wise: The watchman carries a master key and makes it his duty to inspect all of the state-house offices, carrying a lantern with him on his rounds. It was near midnight when he entered the office of the agricultural secretary. When he got to the middle door he saw a huge snake stretched out before him. The fierce eyes and the darting tongue struck terror into the heart of the man who was looking for burglars. He rushed out and informed his partner of the night-watch. He told the story to the second man, who did not believe a word of it, or pretended not to.

"There are no snakes here; you must be drunk."

"I tell you I saw him basking on the carpet, and if the beast is an inch long he is six feet and over."

The two men, hugging each other close, proceeded to the spot. "When two ride on a horse one must ride behind," says Dogberry. In this case each man was anxious for the other one to go first. But they went in, and, after hunting for a while, they found the reptile coiled up under an office lounge. The men were horrified and rushed out of the office to call Secretary Shaffer.

"You fellows must be drinking," replied the secretary; "there is no snake in my office."

Other men were called in to explain the mystery. Finally ex-Chief of Police Beall was found, and he explained that he had captured a large bull snake, nearly six feet long, and, knowing that Mrs. Shaffer is in the habit of collecting Iowa curiosities, he had put the reptile in a box and set it down in the office after Mr. Shaffer had gone home. The snake tired of imprisonment, had broke open the box and escaped to strike terror into the hearts of the watchmen. "It is such an odd place to find a snake," said the watchman, after he got over his nervousness, "that really I didn't know whether I had the delirium tremens or not, but I guess I hadn't."

An Audacious Thief.

For audacity, the record of James Johnson, alias "Jersey Jim," "H. B. Barton," "E. A. Hobbs," and several other aliases, will probably equal that of any other notorious criminal known to the police. Last week he entered one of the large hotels in this city and stole a package of letters, including one belonging to Alfred H. Torrell, general agent of the Michigan Central railroad, and containing his annual passes over numerous railroads and a frank which entitles him to the free use of the Western Union Telegraph company for one year.

These useful articles Mr. Johnson placed in his wallet, which he lost, however, while on his way from Philadelphia to Trenton. On discovering his loss he deliberately inserted numerous advertisements requesting their return, and offered a liberal reward to the finder. It was these notices that led to his arrest by the Trenton police.—Philadelphia Record.