

THE JININ' FARMS.

By EUGENE FIELD.

YOU see Bill an' I wuz jest like brothers; wuz raised on jinin' farms; he wuz his folks' only child, an' I wuz my folks' only one. So, nat'ril like, we growed up together, lovin' an' smypathizin' with each other. What I knowed, I told Bill, an' what Bill knowed, he told me, an' what neither on us knowed—why, that warn't wuth knowin'!

If I hadn't got over my braggin' days, I'd allow that, in our time, Bill an' I wuz jest about the sparkinest beaus in the township, leastwise, that's what the girls thought; but, to be honest about it there wuz only two uv them girls we courted. Bill an' I, he courtin' one an' I t'other. You see, we sung in the choir, an' as our good luck would have it, we got sot on the sopranner an' the alto, and bimeby—oh, well, after beauin' 'em round a spell—a year or so, for that matter—we up an' married 'em, an' the old folks gin us the farms, jinin' farms, where we boys had lived all our lives. Lizzie, my wife, had always been powerful friendly with Marthy, Bill's wife; them two girls never met up but what they wuz huggin' an' kissin' an' carryin' on, like girls does; for women aint like men—they can't control themselves an' their feelin's like the stronger sex does.

I tell you, it wuz happy times for Lizzie an' me and Marthy an' Bill—happy times on the jinin' farms, with the pastures full uv fat cattle, an' the barns full uv hay an' grain, an' the twin cottages full uv love an' contentment! Then when Cryus come—our little boy—our first an' only little one! why, when he come, I wuz jest so happy an' so grateful that if I hadn't been a man I guess I'd have hollered—maybe cried—with joy. Wanted to call the little tyke Bill, but Bill wouldn't hear to nothin' but Cryus. You see, he'd bought a cyclopeedy the winter we wuz married an' had been readin' in it uv a great foreign warrior named Cryus that lived a long spell ago.

"Land uv Goshen, Bill!" sez I, "you don't reckon the baby'll ever get to be a warrior?"

"Well, I don't know about that," sez Bill. "There's no tellin'." At any rate, Cryus Ketcham has an uncommon sound for a name; so Cryus it must be, an' wen he's 7 year old I'll gin' him the finest Morgan colt in the deestrick."

So we called him Cryus, an' he grew up lovin' an' bein' loved by everybody.

Well, along about two years ago—or, say eighteen months or so—after Cryus come to us a little girl baby come to Bill and Marthy, an' of all the cunnin' sweet little things you ever seen that little girl baby was the cunnin'est an' sweetest! Looked just like one of them foreign crockery figures yer buy in city stores—all pink an' white, with big brown eyes here, an' a teeny, weeny mouth here, and a nose an' ears, you'd have bet they wuz wax—they wuz so small an' fragile. Never darst hold her for fear I'd break her, an' it liked to skeered me to death to see the way Marthy an' Lizzie would kind uv toss her round an' trot her—so—on their knees or pat her—so—on the back when she wuz colicky like the wimmin folks sez all healthy babies is afore they're 4 months old.

"You're goin' to have the namin' uv her," sez Bill to me.

"Yes," sez Marthy, "we made it up atween us long ago that you

should have the namin' uv our baby like we had the namin' of yourn.

Then, kind uv hectorin' like—for I was always a powerful tease—I sez: "How would Cleopatry do for a name? Or Venus? I have been readin' the cyclopeedy, myself, I'd have you know!"

An' then I laffed one on them provokin' laffs uv mine—oh, I tell ye, I was the worst feller for hectorin' folks you ever seen! But I meant it all in fun, for when I suspicioned they did'nt like my funnin' I sez: "Bill," sez I, "an' Marthy, there's only one name I'd love above all the rest to call your little lambkin, an' that's the dearest name on earth to me—the rame uv Lizzie, my wife!"

That just suited 'em to a T, an' always after that she wuz called leetle Lizzie, an' it sot on her, that name did, like it was made for her an' she for it. We made it up then—perhaps more in fun than anything else—that when the children growed up, Cryus an' leetle Lizzie, they should get marr'ed together, an' have both the farms an' be happy, an' be a blessin to us in our old age. We made it up for fun, perhaps, but down in our hearts it wuz our prayer just the same, an' God heard the prayer an' granted it to be so.

They played together, they lived together; together they tended the deestrick school an' went huckleberrin'; they wuz huskin's an, spellin' bees an' choir meetin's an' skatin' an' slidin' down hill—oh, the happy times uv youth! an' all those times our boy Cryus and leetle Lizzie went lovin'ly together!

What made me start so—what made me ask of Bill one time: "Are we a-gettin' old Bill?" That wuz the Thanksgivin' night when, as we set around the fire in Bill's front room, Cryus come to us, holdin' leetle Lizzie by the hand, an' they asked us could they get marr'ed next Thanksgivin' time? Why, it seemed only yesterday that they wuz chicks together! God! how swift the years go by when they are happy years!

"Reuben," sez Bill to me, "le's go down cellar an' draw a pitcher uv cider."

You see, that bein' men, it wuzn't for us to make a show uv ourselves. Marthy an' Lizzie just hugged each other an' laffed an' cried—they wuz so glad! Then they hugged Cryus and leetle Lizzie an' talk an' laff? Well, it did beat all how them women folks did talk and laff, all at one time! Cryus laffed, too, an' then he said he reckoned he'd go out an' throw some fodder in to the steers, an' Bill an' I—well, we went down cellar to draw that pitcher uv cider.

It aint for me to tell now uv the meller sweetness uv their courtin' time; I couldn't do it if I tried. Oh, how we loved 'em both! Yet! once in the early summer-time, our boy Cryus he come to me and said: "Father I want you to let me go away for a spell."

"Cryus, my boy! Go away?"

"Yes, father; President Linkern has called for soldiers; father you have always taught me to obey the voice of duty. That voice summons me now."

"God in heaven," I thought, "you have given us this child only to take him from us!"

But then came the second thought: "Steady, Reuben! You are a man; be a man! Steady, Reuben; be a man!"

"Yer mother," sez I; "yer mother—it will break her heart!"

"She leaves it all to you, father."

"But—the other—the other, Cryus—little Lizzie—ye know!"

"She is content," sez he.

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