

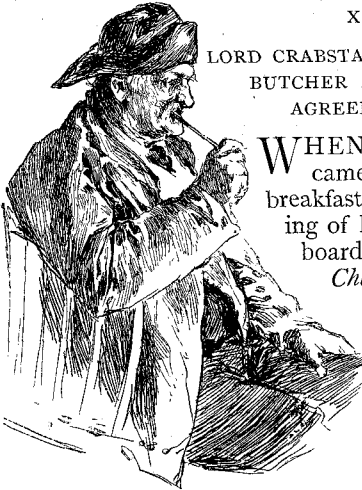
THE "MERRY CHANTER."

BY FRANK R. STOCKTON,

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X.

LORD CRABSTAIRS AND THE
BUTCHER MAKE AN
AGREEMENT.



CAPTAIN BODSHIP.

WHEN Dolor Tripp came on deck after breakfast on the morning of her arrival on board the *Merry Chanter* she was in a state of intense delight with her surroundings. She was going to sea in a ship! She had been on the bay in a

boat, but never on the sea in a ship! And what was this for—and that? And how different the air was, even such a little way from shore!

When Doris told her how we came to own the *Merry Chanter*, and had talked to her about the four captains, and about the butcher, and about Lord Crabstairs, and about the schoolmaster, Dolor Tripp declared that that ship was the most interesting place she had ever been in in her whole life.

She was in no hurry to start, and was perfectly willing to wait for the tide. Being on board the ship was joy enough for the present. She asked questions about every part of the vessel; and although the four captains would have been the proper persons to answer these questions, these experienced mariners were not allowed the opportunity of so doing. Lord Crabstairs and the butcher always happened to be near at hand when Dolor Tripp wanted to know anything; and sometimes both answered her question in the same instant, while sometimes one got a little ahead of the other.

Towards noon, however, I noticed that Dolor Tripp was walking about the after portion of the ship accompanied only by Lord Crabstairs, and soon afterwards I found that he and the butcher had come to an agreement on the subject. A chalk line had been drawn

across the deck midway between the bow and the stern, and it had been settled that Lord Crabstairs should explain to Dolor Tripp everything aft of that line, while the butcher should have the privilege of being her guide over that portion of the schooner which lay forward of the line. By this amicable arrangement annoying interferences would be avoided.

Lord Crabstairs, with his glowing, ruddy face, and his sparkling blue eyes, was in a very good humor as he told his companion everything he knew about the after portion of the ship, and a great deal, I am sure, that he did not know. But want of knowledge did not interfere in the least with the fluency of his merry talk, nor with her enjoyment.

For some time the butcher had been below, but now he came up and informed Doris and me that he had been consulting with Captain Cyrus and getting as much information as possible in regard to foremasts and bowsprits, with their attachments and surroundings, so that when his turn to guide the young woman should come he would be able to give her points that might be depended upon. When he and Lord Crabstairs had tossed up for the two portions into which the ship had been divided by the chalk line he had been very glad that the bow end had fallen to him.

"Passengers," said he, "are mostly at sterns, and bows are newer to them. And, besides, the *Merry Chanter* is on my end, and I intend to come out strong on that dilapidated old party. I think she's the kind of young woman to take to things that are on the romantic."

But he did not intend to begin with her as soon as Lord Crabstairs had finished. No, indeed! He was too deep for that! He would take her when she was fresh, and not so bored with ropes and spars that she did not wish to hear such things even so much as mentioned.

It was yet early in the afternoon, and we were enjoying ourselves idly on deck, some reading, some smoking and talking, and nearly all of us in the shade of the mainsail, which had been partly hoisted to serve the purpose of an awning. Even the butcher was content to gaze quietly out at sea, for in his opinion Dolor Tripp had not yet sufficiently recovered from her ordeal of the morning properly to

enjoy his interesting accounts of the nautical objects forward of the chalk line. Suddenly there came from landward a shrill voice; and the voice cried, "Do — lo — r!"

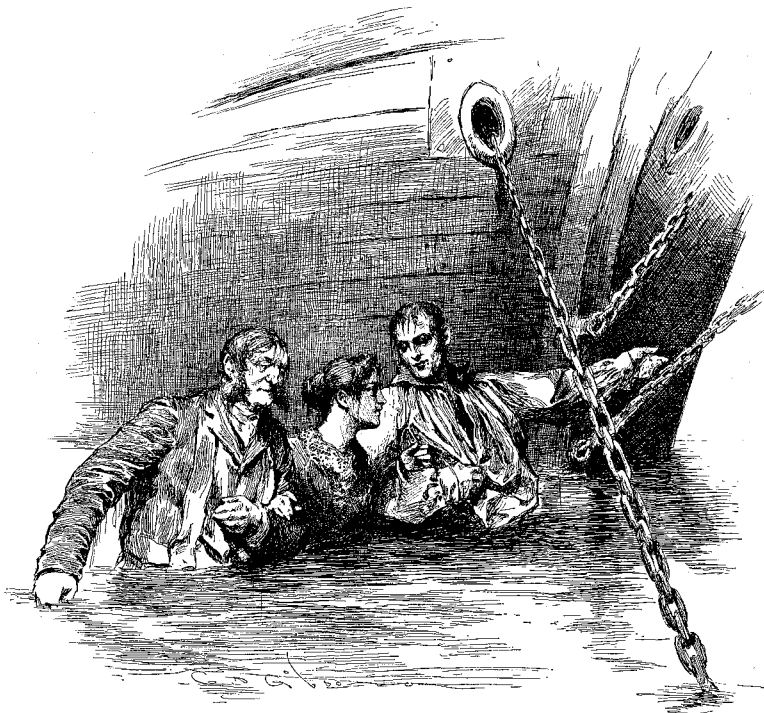
Instantly we all sprang to our feet, bobbed under the boom, and ran for the stern of the schooner. On shore, close to the water's edge, stood a woman in a black-and-white sunbon-

ward, and hailed her sister. "I-do-not-know," she cried. "It-depends-on-flour."

"What-flour?" screamed Lizeth.

Dolor Tripp turned inquiringly. "Minnesota Family Joy," said I, for want of better information to give.

"Min-ne-so-ta-Fam-i-ly-Joy," screamed Dolor Tripp.



THE PROMENADE BATH.

net, who was easily recognized by those who had seen her before as Lizeth of the poultry-yard.

Again came the voice across the water: "Dol — or! Are you on that ship?"

Dolor Tripp stood on tiptoe and showed herself well above the bulwarks. "Don't you see me, Lizeth?" she cried.

The distance between the ship and the shore was not great; and as there was but little wind the clear, high voices of the sisters were distinctly heard across the intervening space.

"Where-are-you-going?" cried Lizeth.

"I-am-going-to-Boston," replied her sister.

"How-long-do-you-expect-to-stay?" cried Lizeth.

Dolor Tripp turned to Doris. "How long do you think," she said, "that the ship will stay in Boston? You know I want to come back in it."

"I really do not know," was the answer; "but we shall certainly stay long enough to take on board some barrels of flour."

Then Dolor Tripp turned her face shore-

Lizeth did not immediately resume her questions, but after a few moments' thought she cried, "Why-don't-you-start?"

"There-is-some-thing-the-matter-with-the-tide," replied Dolor Tripp.

Here there was another pause in this high-strung conversation, and several persons on board the *Merry Chantier* looked at one another and smiled.

Lizeth now called out again, "Will-you-get-me-in-Boston-four-yards-of-the-inch-wide-black-and-white-ribbon?"

"I-will!" cried Dolor Tripp. "Does-Al-wilda-know-I've-gone?"

"Yes," called back Lizeth. "She's-begun-painting-you-on-the-dining-room-wall. You-are-stretched-out-drowned-on-the-sea-shore. Your-face-is-all-soaked-and-there's-little-slimy-green-weeds-flappin'-against-it. She-was-just-beginnin'-to-paint-a-puddle-under-you-when-I-came-away. Good-bye!"

"Now, is n't that mean?" said Dolor Tripp, turning a troubled countenance towards us, and then, suddenly recollecting herself, she

called after her departing sister a shrill "Good-bye!"

"I notice," remarked the butcher, as he cast a severe look shoreward, "that she did n't say anything about the weeds and the puddle till she'd got in her black-and-white ribbon."

In order to dissipate from her mind all thoughts of the dismal picture of herself which was in course of creation upon the dining-room wall of her home, the butcher now invited Dolor Tripp to allow him to show her that portion of the *Merry Chanter* which lay forward of the chalk line. The invitation was accepted, and from the general appearance of things forward I think that Dolor Tripp's enjoyment was troubled by no visions of soaked countenances.

The captains were on the forecastle, and as they all knew something about Dolor Tripp or her family, they had frequent snatches of talk with her. Lord Crabstairs and the schoolmaster took to wandering about the bow, but the former never uttered a word. He had agreed that the butcher should take charge of the lady on this part of the ship, and he religiously forbore to speak.

When the butcher and his fair companion leaned over the extreme bow, and he began to describe and descant upon the wooden figure of the *Merry Chanter*, Doris, who had gone forward, requested permission to listen, which being cheerfully granted, we all gathered about the speaker.

It is astonishing how well that butcher talked about our old figure-head. He let himself out splendidly about roaring winds and mountain waves, and driving rain and freezing sleet, and banks of blinding fog, and yet ever that right arm, or what there was left of it, was stuck straight out, and that head was thrown back boldly, and that mouth was open ready for song, or shout, or to take in sea-water, as the case might be.

"He has been through it all, time and again," said the butcher, in conclusion, "and he is ready for it all over again, fair weather or foul, as long as those iron bolts through his body hold him fast to the ship."

"I love him already," cried Dolor Tripp; "and as soon as we begin to plow the waves I am going to stand in front here and see him do those things."

"Of course," remarked Captain Timon, "that will depend on the principal owner"—waving his hand towards Doris. "I have heard her say that she wanted to stand abaft the figure-head when there happened to be a good sea on."

"Oh, there will be room for us both," said Doris, who had already begun to take very kindly to Dolor Tripp.

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XI.

THE PROMENADE BATH.

THE next morning after breakfast Captain Timon made a little speech to the assembled ship's company. "I feel bound," he said, "to tell you all that I've been disapp'inted in the wind and the tide. They are two things, as everybody knows, which won't wait fur no man, but they 're willin' enough to make any man wait fur them, and that 's not what I call the square thing."

"You are right there, Captain," said Lord Crabstairs; "but the rascals have been at it all their lives, and it is too late to try to reform them."

"This schooner," continued the captain, "draws a leetle more water than we thought she did. You see none of us ever sailed in her before, and she draws a leetle more water than we thought she did. And then ag'in there 's a leetle less water in this bay than there generally is at this season. You see when we anchored here to get water out of that spring we did n't know that the ship drew so much and the bay was so low."

"Then," interrupted Lord Crabstairs, "you should get more water out of your spring and pour it into your bay."

Captain Timon joined in the laugh that followed this remark, and then went on:

"What we want is a high wind, pretty nigh to a gale, comin' in from sea along with the flood tide. That will give us enough water to get out of this bay, and then we 're all right. That half-gale from the sou'east is what we 're a-waitin' fur."

"That sort of gale," said the butcher, "most generally comes in the fall of the year."

"That is autumn, is n't it?" cried Lord Crabstairs. "Now, really, that is three months off!"

"If you 'd sailed the sea as much as we have," said Captain Timon, addressing the butcher, "you 'd have known that them gales blows whenever they 've a mind to. That 's their rule; whenever they 've a mind to. Now there 's just two things we can do; and one of them is to get a vessel that don't draw so much water; Cap'n Teel has got one to hire. She 's a sloop, and a good one. He can bring her round here, and we can put our stores into her and sail to Boston without no trouble at all."

At this point there was a general outcry. "Sail in another ship!" cried Doris. "Never! It is not the voyage to Boston I care about; it is the voyage there in our *Merry Chanter*."

I joined in the remonstrance. Lord Crabstairs vowed that he was in no hurry, and could wait for a wind as long as anybody else. And Dolor Tripp asserted with considerable warmth

that if she could not sail behind that bold, wooden singer of the sea she did not wish to sail at all.

The butcher had been gazing intently upon first one and then another of us; and when Dolor Tripp had said her say he spoke out fully and definitely. "I stick to the ship," said he.

The schoolmaster made no remark. He was not now so uneasy as he had been at first, but it was plain enough that he wished to sail away, no matter in what vessel.

"Well, then," now continued Captain Timon, "as none of you seems to want to leave the schooner, there 's another thing you can do. You can just make yourselves comfortable and wait fur the gale with a flood tide. Some of you can take the boat and go fishin'; some of you can walk about on shore; and if any of you wants to hire a horse you can do it over there in the village. If there 's a special high tide when you are not aboard we 'll just run the schooner out into deeper water and fire a gun and wait fur you."

This plan was instantaneously agreed upon, and to prove that we were perfectly contented with the *Merry Chanter*, we all set about to amuse ourselves.

Lord Crabstairs went to look after his poultry. These were mostly scattered about the deck, none of them having courage to fly overboard; but some had gone out on the bowsprit, and the truant cock was still in the rigging. His master had vainly endeavored to coax him down, and was obliged to scatter his corn on the maintop, where it was contentedly pecked up. Doris applied herself to the care of her little chicks and their mother; three of the captains went ashore in the boat; the butcher was making some remarks to me in regard to the improbability of the schooner's moving from her present position without leaving behind her her hold, her paving stones, and her barnacles; and what Dolor Tripp was looking at in the water I do not know, but suddenly her little boots in which she was standing tip-toe slipped backward, and in an instant she disappeared over the side of the vessel.

I gave a shout and rushed for the spot where she had been leaning over the bulwark. Doris, startled by the great splash, was by my side in a moment. Looking down with pallid faces we saw below us what appeared like the surface of a boiling pot some five feet wide. Out of the tossing turmoil of the water now arose the dripping head, shoulders, and arms of Dolor Tripp, who had succeeded in struggling to her feet and who stood upright, puffing and blowing the water from her mouth, wildly waving her hands, and endeavoring to scream.

In the next instant there were two great splashes, and the butcher and Lord Crabstairs

went overboard. Each of them went under water for an instant, and then emerging upright they swashed towards the dripping maiden and each took her by an arm.

"You are as safe now," exclaimed Lord Crabstairs, sputtering as he spoke, "as if you were high and dry on shore."

"Unless we sink in the sand," said the butcher.

But Dolor Tripp paid no attention to similes and suppositions. "Oh, get me out!" she cried. "Get me out!"

Those of us who were on deck soon discovered that it would not be easy to get her out. There was one broad ladder with hand-rails by which we descended into or ascended from the one boat which belonged to the *Merry Chanter*, and this ladder had been taken ashore in the boat by the three captains who had gone for fuel, and who proposed to use it when sawing off such lower branches of trees as might be small enough to suit their purpose. The idea that anybody might want the ladder while they were gone never entered the minds of these wood-cutting mariners.

Captain Teel, who was left on board, was not very fertile in expedients. He proposed hauling up the young woman by means of a rope; and when the butcher declared that if this were done she would be cut to pieces by the barnacles, the captain suggested that if a spar were put out at an angle, with one end held down to the bottom and the other resting on the side of the vessel, she might climb on board without touching the barnacles.

This proposition meeting with no approval, the captain stated that the proper thing to do was to put a block-and-tackle out at the end of a boom and haul her up that way, but that as he was the only seaman on board he did not like to undertake this job by himself. He might put a barrel of fish on board that way, but it would take a good deal of careful hauling and steering to prevent a dangling young woman from getting bumped. He rather guessed that the boat would be back pretty soon, and that the best thing to do would be to wait for it.

This seemed like hard lines for Dolor Tripp, and I suggested that the three should wade to shore.

"They can't do that," said Captain Teel. "The water is deeper nearer shore than it is just here. If they go a dozen yards from the schooner it will be over their heads. We 've made soundin's."

"I suppose," said Doris to the group in the water, "that you will have to wait till the boat comes; but you ought to walk about to keep from taking cold."

"Very good," said Lord Crabstairs; and re-

leasing his hold upon Dolor Tripp, he offered his arm in the usual fashion. The butcher, on her other side, did the same, and the three began their walk through the water.

"You can go all around the ship," said Captain Teel, "if you don't get too far away from her, and I guess you'll find the bottom pretty hard and smooth."

The tide was very low, the water being not more than waist-deep for the men and below the shoulders of Dolor Tripp; but it was quite deep enough to make walking a very slow performance. But as the young woman put perfect faith in the ability of her protectors, and as the two men were greatly pleased to have this opportunity of aiding and protecting her, the spirits of the little party recovered their usual level as they pushed their way through the water. On deck Doris and I, with Captain Teel and the schoolmaster, kept pace with them, the latter carrying a plank which he intended to hurl to or upon Dolor Tripp in case of danger, such as a tidal wave or an attack by sharks.

"I like it ever so much!" cried Dolor Tripp to Doris. "It is a promenade bath. The water is warm and lovely."

Reaching the bow of the ship, Dolor Tripp looked up at the Merry Chanter.

"I never expected," she said, "to be under him and look at him from the sea. I wonder if I could climb up to him by this anchor-chain?"

"Don't try it, miss," said Lord Crabstairs. "If you ever climb up to anybody, don't let it be to a wooden-headed old party like that."

"When it comes to that sort of thing," said the butcher, "the climbing will be the other way."

Perhaps Dolor Tripp did not understand this remark, for she made no answer to it. As they moved on she said:

"How gently these little waves lap up against us! Does either of you gentlemen believe in mind waves?"

"I don't know what they are," answered the butcher.

"If you mean a wavering of the mind," answered Lord Crabstairs, "I have had it often; particularly when I bought my last cow. I wavered between Alderney and Ayrshire for nearly a month, and, after all, I bought a Devon."

"Oh, it is n't anything like that," said the young woman. "It is a sort of understanding between minds that are far away from each other. It comes along in a sort of airy waves something like these ripples, I suppose, and the thoughts and feelings of one friend go to another ever so far off."

"Oh, I know what it is!" cried Lord Crab-

stairs. "You can do it with snails. You go to China and take a she-snail with you, and I stay here with a he-snail, or vice versa. I can go to China with either and you can keep the other —"

"Do they have to be a married couple, to begin with?" interrupted the butcher.

"What! The people?" cried Lord Crabstairs.

"No, the snails," said the butcher.

"Yes," replied the other. "I forgot to say they must be a pair, so that there shall be a sympathy between them." Then, again addressing the lady, "You have one snail and I the other one, and we've got the whole world between us. Whichever of us wishes to communicate with the other takes a pin and jabs his or her snail, as the case may be, and in that very same instant the other snail wiggles."

"Horrible!" cried Dolor Tripp. "If I had to do that I would never communicate."

"I don't believe it hurts them," said Lord Crabstairs. "The least little bit of a prick will do. And we could get up a jab alphabet: one short jab, a long jab, two short jabs, with a rest between them—three long jabs, a rest and a short jab, and so on."

"I never would do it," said Dolor Tripp, firmly. "I would n't even watch wiggles that were made by pins in China."

The butcher did not wish to be left out of this conversation. "That must be pretty much the same thing," he said, "as is the case with the legs of frogs. You catch a dozen frogs and put their hind legs on a plate, all skinned and ready to be cooked, arranged in a circle with their toes pointing out like the spokes in a wheel, and then you sprinkle some salt on them and every one of those legs begins to kick. If you never saw it before you'll drop the plate."

"That is not like my snails at all!" cried Lord Crabstairs. "A person in China could n't sprinkle salt on frog-legs here. If he were near enough to do that he might as well talk. I don't see any sense in that sort of thing, even allowing that your frog-legs do kick."

"I don't see any sense in the other sort of thing," said the butcher, "even if your snails do wiggle."

At this Dolor Tripp declared that her correspondence should always be either by letter or by telegraph; and she began to wonder when the boat would return. We all strained our eyes shoreward, but nothing could be seen of the nautical wood-cutters, and the three in the water were obliged to continue their stroll around the vessel.

Captain Teel now made a joke which for some time had been resolving itself into form in his mind. "She calls it a promenade bath,"

he said with a subdued giggle, "but to me it looks a good deal more like a promenade baptize. That butcher in his shirt looks just like a minister with a pair of uncommon sinners."

I had noticed that every time the party passed under the bow the butcher looked very attentively at his disengaged arm, which hung down by his side. Having caught my eye, he now turned back a little and held up his hand with his forefinger and thumb separated about two inches. He then pointed towards the surface of the water and then let his arm drop again.

The meaning of this pantomime was very plain to me. He had been measuring the depth of the water by some mark on his sleeve, and the tide had risen two inches. He wanted me to know that he was getting uneasy. I began to grow uneasy also. I would have been better pleased had not the butcher always chosen me as the recipient of his forebodings.

But there was no reason for anxiety, for, as the hour for dinner drew nigh, the three captains emerged from the woods, two of them carrying the ladder and the other a bundle of sticks. Dolor Tripp and her companions were then near the bow of the vessel, and concealed from view of the persons on shore. By the time the boat had nearly reached the schooner the three water-walkers came around the bow, and there never were more astonished mariners than our captains when they beheld the three heads and shoulders which apparently floated towards them. Captain Cyrus, who held the tiller, was so startled that he nearly fell overboard, and in their sudden consternation the two others allowed a few words of the swearing variety to escape from their lips—the first we had heard from them since they had entered our service.

"Now you see," said Lord Crabstairs to Dolor Tripp, "if those sailors had taken a snail with them and we had had a snail, we could have let them know what was the matter, and they would have turned back immediately and taken us out of the water. Every ship should carry a lot of snails in case the people on board get separated."

The butcher shrugged his shoulders, but evidently saw no way of bringing his frogs' legs to the fore.

Our friends were soon on board and in dry clothes; and when the butcher appeared on deck he took me to one side and remarked: "As I was walking round this ship I made up my mind it would n't be long before her barnacles grew down into the sand bank—that is, if they grow that way; and when that happens, and taking into consideration the seventy cart-loads of paving stones in her hold, she'll

have a pretty strong foundation. But of course there's no use saying anything of that kind to the ladies, especially if they're beginning to feel as if they'd like to be getting on to Boston."

XII.

DOLOR TRIPP TAKES US UNDER HER WING.

THE gloomy remarks of the butcher in regard to the permanency of the *Merry Chanter's* position had a certain effect upon me. I did not agree with him, for I had full faith in the knowledge and experience of our skipper, and believed that when the exceptional gale and the exceptional tide came along together our ship would float off the sand bank and sail out of Shankashank Bay. But the continual allusions of the butcher to our barnacles and our seventy cart-loads of paving stones could but depress me. It would require such a very high tide and such a very strong gale to move us. As we had started for Boston, I wanted to go there.

Doris, to my surprise, appeared to have become reconciled to the delay. Of course, as she had started for Boston, she wanted to go there; but, as she several times remarked, she did not wish to be unreasonable. She knew there were many delays connected with voyages on sailing vessels, such as calms, head winds, and the like, and she supposed the cause of our present detention was equivalent to a calm. With this view Captain Timon coincided.

She had begun to feel at home in Shankashank Bay, and so long as she had to stay she determined to make the best of it. And in this resolve she was joined by the rest of the ship's company.

Lord Crabstairs could sing a good song, and he sang a great many. The butcher had a deep and earnest voice, and with this he joined in choruses. The rest of us also did our duty in this line according to our abilities. The schoolmaster conducted spelling-bees; Doris told stories, which she did excellently well; and I delivered one lecture on "The Analysis of Lava." The only person, however, who appeared to be much interested in the subject was Lord Crabstairs, who inquired if there were any old volcanoes near Boston. I think this question was inspired by a glimmer of hope in regard to the lifting of the hereditary debts of his family; for when I told him that there were no volcanoes, new or old, near the port to which we were bound, he fixed his eyes upon the back of Dolor Tripp, and I am sure gave no further thought to lava.

On the second day after the water promenade a picnic on shore was proposed; and immediately after dinner the two ladies, with myself, the butcher, Lord Crabstairs, and the

schoolmaster, went on shore. The latter declined at first to be of our party, for fear that Mrs. Bodship might catch sight of him; but as the butcher lent him a gown and a high silk hat, he was convinced that he might go with us without danger of being recognized—at least at a distance. He took with him the sandpiper in its cage; for although the bird was well on its way to recovery, he considered it not yet able to take care of itself.

Our plan was to go some distance inland, eat our supper at an appropriate rural spot, and, returning to the shore at the close of the day, take a moonlight row on Shankashank Bay. This was to be long or short according to our pleasure, and when it was over we would return to the *Merry Chanter*. We invited any of the captains who chose to accompany us, but they all declined. The exceptional gale might come in with the tide, and in that case they should all be on board to take the schooner out into deeper water.

We rambled about two miles inland, and our little excursion was enjoyed by all of us until we were preparing to return to the shore after having eaten our supper. Then a sudden rain-storm burst upon us, and we ceased to enjoy the excursion. Hastily gathering up our baskets and wraps, we ran for the nearest house; but as this was about a quarter of a mile away, we were well wet before we got there.

Even when we reached it we found it a poor place of refuge. It was a very small house, and there was nobody at home but a boy and girl, who, I am sure, would not have admitted us if we had knocked at the main door. But as we rushed pell-mell into the kitchen from the back of the house, they had no option in regard to our entrance. The girl, however, locked the door of the front or best room so that we should not go in there with our wet feet and clothes, and we were obliged to bestow ourselves as well as we could in the little kitchen, in which there was one chair. There was no fire, and the girl declared there was no need of making one until her mother came home with the supper, and that now she would not come until the rain was over. Had we been able to discover any fuel we would have made the fire ourselves; but as we saw none, we merely stood about and grumbled.

The heavy clouds, which had come up so fast from behind the woods in which we had supped, brought darkness upon us at least an hour before we expected it, and the rain continued to fall steadily. When we had spent half an hour or more in the dismal little kitchen Dolor Tripp spoke up.

"It will never do to stay here," she said. "We shall take our deaths of cold. Our house is not a mile away, and the best thing we can

do is to go there. We are so wet now that we might as well be wetter, and when we get there we can warm and dry ourselves and stay until the rain is over."

This suggestion was accepted instantly, and heaping coals of fire upon the heads of the youngsters by giving them some small change, we tramped out into the storm. Dolor Tripp declared that dark as it was she knew she could find the way, for the road to her house was a moderately direct one, having but few turns; and, supported by Lord Crabstairs and the butcher, she led the way.

The road might have been direct enough and smooth enough if we could have kept in the middle of it; but the sides on which, without intending it, we did most of our walking were very rough, and as we frequently ran against the fences on either side, Dolor Tripp declared that she believed that the roads were a good deal narrower by night than by day. But during our slow and stumbling progress we cheered ourselves with two reflections—we were getting nearer and nearer to a sheltering roof, and the exercise was keeping us from taking cold.

After walking for what seemed to me a very long time, Dolor Tripp remarked that she believed that she had passed a fork in the road where we should have turned to the right, and that we must go back a little. We went back; but after stumbling and splashing and peering about for nearly a quarter of an hour, our guide said that she now believed we had not passed the fork, and we might as well keep on.

We kept on and on and on, and at last we came to a fork,—which the butcher discovered,—and then we turned to the right. The rain now began to slacken, the clouds grew a little thinner, and a diluted and shadowed moonlight enabled us better to find our way. I asserted that I believed it would be well to change our course, and, instead of going to the Tripp house, turn shoreward and get back to the schooner as soon as possible.

This proposition, however, met with no favor. The others declared that as the road to the shore would from this point lead us over fields and sand hills we should be lost, and should miserably perish; whereas, from the Tripp house to the boat-landing we all knew the way, which, moreover, we need not take until we had dried ourselves and rested.

We therefore pressed on; and as we could now see the roadway, which, although sloppy, was comparatively smooth, we made fair progress, and after a time the house of our destination loomed up dark before us. As we made our way to the front gate Dolor Tripp remarked: "Of course they are abed and asleep, for they

always go to bed early, and the gate must be locked."

"But I hope they will get up and open it," said I.

"Not Alwilda and Lizeth," she said. "You would n't think that if you knew them. They would n't unlock the gate after dark, even if they were up; and as to getting out of bed to do it, they'd let Queen Victoria stand here and wait till morning."

For some time I had been in a bad humor, and I now felt very much provoked. "It might have been well," I said, "if you had thought of all this before you brought us here."

"I did, partly," said Dolor Tripp. "That is, I thought it would be just as well that they should be in bed and asleep when we got here, for I know Alwilda will talk dreadfully to me about going to Boston, and perhaps talk me out of it; but I did n't happen to think that if they were not up we might not get in."

"There is no need bothering about the gate," quickly spoke up the butcher. "I can make an opening in this fence and not hurt it, either. And when we get inside the yard I expect we can find some window or door unfastened. There always is in country houses."

Dolor Tripp replied that if he did not hurt the fence she thought that would be a good plan, and in a few minutes the butcher had felt along the fence and found a place where the pales were somewhat loose, by reason of age. He and Lord Crabstairs then pulled five or six of them from their bottom fastenings and pushed them to one side, so that the party easily entered.

The butcher enjoined us to make as little noise as possible. It was natural that he should not wish to wake up a woman who might talk Dolor Tripp into not going to Boston. Then he said he would go by himself round the house and try the shutters and doors.

"You need n't do that," said Dolor Tripp. "There is n't a door or a window on the lower floor that is n't bolted, or locked, or barred, or screwed up."

There was a little murmur among us. The rain had almost ceased, but we were tired, wet, and miserable, and what we wanted above all things was to rest ourselves before a fire. The situation was disheartening, and as for Doris and me, we did not care whether the sisters were wakened or not so that we got in and were warmed.

"I'll knock at the door," said I, "and make some one come down and open it."

Dolor Tripp held up a warning hand. "Don't do that," she said. "Alwilda has a gun. I've thought of a way to get in. Do you see that pine tree at the corner of the house? That is the tree that I expected the burglars

to climb up when I used to sit and watch for them. And if a burglar could do it, I should think some one else could; and then he could easily push up the sash of that window and get in, and go through the room into the hall and down the stairs, and take down the bar from this door and unlock it, and let us in."

"I'll do it!" said the butcher the moment she had finished speaking; and without delay he advanced towards the tree.

"I would climb up and go in myself," said Lord Crabstairs, "but I am not sure that I understand these American houses."

The butcher took off his gown, which clung to him like a wet shroud, and casting it upon the grass he began to ascend the tree. This he did easily and rapidly, the horizontal branches affording him convenient hold for foot and hand. Very soon he was inside the house, and we listened anxiously, fearing that we might hear a noisy stumbling and the report of Alwilda's gun. But we heard no noise at all; and after what seemed an unnecessarily protracted period of waiting, the front door quietly opened.

"I did n't strike the stairs at first," whispered the butcher, "and I went too far along that upper hall; but when I came against a door that was partly open I knew I was wrong, and turned back."

"Mercy!" gasped Dolor Tripp. "That was their room!"

We all now entered, and the butcher gently closed the door behind us. There was an unshuttered window at the other end of the hall through which came enough dim light to enable us faintly to discern one another and surrounding objects.

"I'll go first," whispered Dolor Tripp, "and take you to the old part of the house."

So saying she led us, all stepping as softly as we could, to a transverse hall, and along this to a large open door, through which we passed and went down three steps into another hall. This was very short; and opening a door at the end of it Dolor Tripp ushered us into a large room, into which the moonbeams, now grown brighter, came through a small unshuttered window high up in the wall.

Dolor Tripp, who seemed to be used to doing things in semi-darkness, took down an iron candlestick from the mantelpiece, and asked if anybody had a match. One was immediately produced by Lord Crabstairs and the candle was lighted.

"Now," said she, holding the light above her head, "this is the kitchen of the old house. Part of the old house was torn down to make room for the new one, which is pretty old itself, but this kitchen was left. If some one will close that door we shall be entirely shut off from

the rest of the house, and then we need not be so particular about keeping quiet."

I did not care a snap whether this part of the house was old or new, but I saw before me a great old-fashioned fireplace with some charred logs lying upon the iron andirons, and at one end of the hearth a pile of firewood. This was what we had come for. We fell to work, and in ten minutes a great fire was blazing and crackling, the wet wraps of the ladies were removed, and we all were gathered around the hearth, which fortunately was large enough to accommodate the six of us. It is astonishing how the genial heat dried our shoes and clothes and raised our spirits.

The schoolmaster and the butcher sat at the corners of the fireplace, and they were very well placed indeed. The former took off his gown and hung it on a crane that extended from one side of the great fireplace. He wished to have it dry enough to put on when he went out. It was not probable that Mrs. Bodship would be rambling about the country at night, but he wanted to feel quite safe.

"Now, then," said Doris, "if we only had some good hot tea we ought to be perfectly happy."

"And something to eat," added Lord Crabstairs. "I, for one, am half famished."

"You can have both tea and something to eat," said Dolor Tripp. "We have used this kitchen as a storeroom for the things we buy in quantities. In that cupboard is a box of tea, and there is sugar and salt and spices, and a barrel of flour."

"We can't do anything with flour and salt without waiting ever so long," said Doris.

"I feel as if I could eat them without baking," said Lord Crabstairs.

"You need n't do that," said Dolor Tripp. "I can go quietly to the other end of the house, where the pantry is. There is always something to eat there. But first let us boil the kettle. If you, sir, will move your gown a little farther to the back of the crane there is a kettle here which we can hang over the fire."

Under her direction the butcher, with as little noise as possible, pumped some water from a cistern under the kitchen, and when the kettle was filled and over the fire the two ladies got down some cups, saucers, and a tea-pot from the shelves of a dresser which seemed to be filled with old-time pottery.

Then Dolor Tripp started to go to the pantry. "I will blow out the candle," she said, "and take it with me. Then I will light it when I get there. They are very hard to wake, but a light passing through the house might do it. You folks won't mind sitting here in the firelight?"

Of course we did not mind, and Doris offered to go with her. The two opened the kitchen door and went out into the little hall. In a moment they returned.

"What do you think," said Doris, in an excited undertone; "the door at the top of the steps that leads into the main building is fastened, and we cannot open it!"

In great surprise we all rose to our feet and looked towards Dolor Tripp that she might tell us what to think. "Is there a spring-lock on the door?" I asked.

"No," said she, "there is no spring-lock, and we did not close the door after us. We shut only this kitchen door. But I know who did it," she added, quietly. "It was the ghost. It is one of its ways to lock and bolt doors."

XIII.

THE PIE GHOST.

"THE ghost!" exclaimed Doris, with a quick grasp upon the arm of Dolor Tripp.

"I was sure of it!" said the butcher, looking straight in front of him and speaking very decidedly. "I saw something white moving in the front hall as I came down the stairs. I knew it for a ghost, but I did n't say anything, for I did n't suppose it would meddle with six people."

"Fiddle-faddle!" said Lord Crabstairs. "There are no such things as ghosts." And with this opinion I coincided. The schoolmaster said nothing. He resumed his seat at the side of the fireplace and rearranged his gown upon the crane, so as to expose all parts of it to the heat. It might be necessary to put it on suddenly.

"There is no mistake about this ghost," said Dolor Tripp. "If you will all sit down till the kettle boils I will tell you about it."

We resumed our seats in front of the fire, and the butcher put on some fresh sticks.

"It has been in this house," said Dolor, still holding the unlighted candle, "ever since I first came here, a little girl only ten years old. I soon began to see it, though I don't believe it often saw me."

"Did n't it frighten you nearly to death?" asked Doris.

"No," replied the other. "At first I thought it belonged to the house just as much as any of the other queer things which I found here, and there seemed to be no reason why I should be frightened at one thing more than another."

"What did your sisters say about it?" asked Doris.

"They did n't say anything," replied the other. "I soon began to believe that they did n't know anything about it, and I was afraid

that if I told them they would have something done to drive it out of the house."

We all looked at her in amazement. "And you did not want that?" asked Lord Crabstairs.

"No, indeed," replied Dolor Tripp. "I used to like to watch for it. I would go into different parts of the house at night and watch for it, hoping it would come by. Sometimes weeks and weeks would pass without my seeing it, and then I would get a glimpse of it on two or three nights in succession."

"What did it look like?" asked Doris.

"Its head was light or whitish, and below it gradually melted down into darkness."

"That was it," said the butcher. "That is exactly like the thing I saw."

"And you never, never told your sisters," said Doris, "that they were living in the house with a ghost?"

"No, indeed!" replied Dolor Tripp. "You see, before we came here we lived in a horrid little house in the town, and when it was decided by the court that this place belonged to us nobody was so glad as I was. So, as I told you, I did not want Alwilda and Lizeth to do anything to drive the ghost away; but what I was most afraid of was that they might find that they could n't get rid of it, and would go away themselves. I would n't have that happen for anything in the world."

"And so," said Doris, "as the burglars would not come you did n't want to lose the visits of a ghost."

"Perhaps so," replied Dolor Tripp. "And now the kettle is boiling, and we can have some tea, if we can't get anything else."

"As for ghosts," interjected Lord Crabstairs, "I never have believed in them, and never shall. But I do know that I am as hungry as a wolf; and if you'll allow me, miss, I'll push open that door, no matter who fastened it on the other side, and I'll go with you to the pantry, or anywhere else where there's bread and meat, and defend you against all comers, ghost or otherwise."

"Oh, you must not do that!" exclaimed Dolor Tripp. "The door would be broken, and Alwilda and Lizeth would surely wake up."

"As for believing in ghosts," said the butcher, "a good deal depends upon who does the believing. If you've never had a chance of seeing ghosts, sir, you are out of the race."

The candle was now lighted, and cups of hot tea were served by the ladies. I hurriedly drank a cup and then began to consider the situation. I went to the door at the top of the steps and tried it, thinking perhaps there might be a mistake in regard to its being fastened. But there had been no mistake. It was locked, and the key was on the other side. I did not

like to be fastened up against my will in any place or by any agency.

I now insisted that we should leave this place without delay, by a window if there was no other outlet, and make our way to our boat.

"Oh, you can't get out," said Dolor Tripp, "until he unfastens the door. The window sashes are all nailed and screwed fast, and the outside shutters and that back door are padlocked. Alwilda and Lizeth are very particular about having this kitchen secure from burglars. But you need n't worry. That door will be opened before long. The ghost always does that after making you wait a little while."

"I think it is rather jolly," said Doris, "to have a ghost for a jailer, though I can't really say I should like to have him come in and bring us a jug of water and a loaf of bread."

"If he will do that," said Lord Crabstairs, "I'll believe in him; although I don't care for the water, and should like him to fetch some meat or cheese with the bread."

Doris suddenly turned towards the schoolmaster. "What have you done with the sandpiper?" she said.

The butcher started. "You are not thinking of eating him?" he asked.

"Oh, no," said Doris, with a laugh. "We have not got so low as that yet, although I must admit that I also am awfully hungry. But talking of things to eat made me think of the bird, and I wondered what had become of it."

"I left the cage," said the schoolmaster, "just outside by the front door. I put my hat over it to keep the rain off the sandpiper."

Lord Crabstairs smote his knees with his hands and laughed. "Why, man," he cried, "that tall silk hat has blown forty miles across country by this time!"

The butcher looked at him severely. "That's all right!" he said. "I should like to know how it could get out of this yard with such a high fence and no gate open. I don't believe it's raining, anyway; so you may feel sure, ma'am, that the sandpiper is comfortable."

At this moment there was a little noise at one of the windows, and, turning my eyes in that direction, I saw the lower sash raised a couple of inches. I was about to spring towards the window when Doris, who had followed my glance, caught me by the coat.

Instantly we all rose to our feet, and as we looked at the window, beyond which we could see nothing, something like a young moon began to protrude itself through the opening under the sash. In a moment the lunar apparition had greatly increased in size and was a half-moon.

Dolor Tripp now made a quick step forward. "Keep back, all of you," she said. "I know



THE PIE GHOST.

what it is." And going to the window she took hold of the moon, and, drawing it into the room, she held it up to us in all the glory of its fullness.

"A pumpkin pie!" exclaimed Doris.

We gathered about it. It was of the largest size and as yellow as gold. "Oh, delicious!" cried Doris. "Somebody get a knife."

"But where did it come from?" I asked.

"From the ghost, of course," replied Dolor Tripp. "That is one of its ways. It leaves pies about. Several times when it has locked me into a room I've just waited quietly until I found the door unfastened, and there outside, just where I would n't step into it, there would be a little pie."

"A lovely ghost!" cried Lord Crabstairs. "I am converted. I believe in him. But this is n't a pie, it's a tart. Pies are made of meat."

"No, they are not," said the butcher; "at least, not punkin pies. I should think I ought to know what things are made of meat."

"And I ought to know what things are made of fruits and vegetables," retorted Lord Crabstairs. "That is a tart!"

"I'll toss up to see who is right," said the butcher.

"Done!" said Lord Crabstairs, producing a penny.

"Heads!" cried the butcher.

It was tails.

"All right," said the butcher. "I'll take some of it, but all the same I never imagined

that I should live long enough to eat punkin tart!"

Dolor Tripp quickly cut the pie into six parts, but I would have none of it. I do not believe in ghosts, and will not eat food brought by them. I went to the window and endeavored to raise the sash higher, but could not do so. With all my strength I could not increase the width of the narrow aperture. One of the shutters was open, but the shadow of the main building and a growth of evergreen bushes made everything dark immediately outside.

I left the window, and walking quietly out of the kitchen into the little hall, I again tried the door at the top of the steps. To my delight it was unfastened. I stepped gently back, and looking in at the kitchen door I caught the eye of the butcher, who was finishing his piece of pie. Without attracting the attention of the others, who were making some fresh tea, he came to me.

I whispered to him to follow. We went up the steps, and through the door. We groped our way along the passage, turned into the main hall, opened the front door, and went out.

"It is no ghost," I said. "Let us go around the house and catch him!"

"I began to have my doubts," said the butcher. "The pie was too real."

As quietly as possible we walked along the front of the house and around the end of it,

returning by the back towards the old kitchen. The moon gave us light enough to see our way until we reached the shaded corner by the window; but when we had slowly and gently pushed through the evergreens we found ourselves in almost total darkness, the little light that came from the candle within amounting to almost nothing. But although we could not expect to see an approaching figure, we might hear one, and we stood silently and waited.

But we did not wait long. Down from some region above came a light, misty spot like a will-o'-the-wisp. When it was about five feet from the ground it moved towards the kitchen window. I do not know what the butcher thought, but at this moment it occurred to me that perhaps after all it might be well not to interfere with this apparition. We really had no right to interfere and we were ourselves intruders upon the premises. And whether it were a ghost, or a man, or a woman, there was something in my nature, naturally sensitive, which prompted hesitation before actively interfering with the pursuits of another.

But I had no time properly to revolve this subject in my mind. The butcher reached out one hand and took me by the coat-sleeve. Following the impulse thus given I moved with him towards the window, our feet making no noise upon the soft grass.

Against the faint light in the room, on the side of the window where the shutter was opened, we could see the top of a strangely formed head raised just high enough above the window-sill to enable its owner to look inside. The ghost was watching our friends!

There was a quick movement of the apparition; the butcher had seized it. In the next instant I also laid hold of it. Within my grasp I felt an arm, a human arm quite firm and solid. Not a word was spoken; there was no struggle, no noise. Silently the butcher and I pulled our captive away from the window, through the overhanging evergreen boughs, and out into the moonlight.

There we discovered that we held a man, quite a small man, with a white cap on his head.

"Well, now," said he, looking from one to the other of us, "you have caught me, have n't you? And I must say you did it pretty neat. I knew it was risky, foolin' with sech a big party, but for the life of me I could n't help it. Never sech a chance turned up before in this house!"

"But who are you?" said I.

"You are a stranger to me," replied the little man, "and you would n't know who I was if I told you. Now, this gentleman knows me, and I know him."

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed the butcher, "that you are —"

"Yes, I am," interrupted the other.

"And you are the ghost?"

"Now, tell me," asked the little man, "did she take me for a ghost? I always hoped she would, but I could n't help feelin' sort of on-certain about it."

"She certainly did," answered the butcher.

"That 's what I call real jolly!" said our prisoner, rubbing his hands. "Let's go in, and have it all out. I guess I've served my time as a spook, and might as well come down to the level of common people."

As the butcher had released his hold of our prisoner, I did so likewise. The little man now started off, and went around the house to the front door. We followed, and he led us into the hall and along the passage to the kitchen. Entering abruptly he stopped near the door, and exclaimed in a cheery voice, and without removing his cap: "Now, ladies and gentlemen, here 's your ghost! What do you think of him?"

The party had been anxiously discussing our absence, and Lord Crabstairs and the school-master were about to start out to look for us. They now all stood in amazement, gazing wide-eyed at the new-comer.

Suddenly Dolor Tripp stepped forward. "Griscom Brothers!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said the little man, "I am Griscom Brothers."

"In the name of common sense," said Doris, "please tell me what you two are talking about? Is this the pie ghost?"

"Yes, madam," said Griscom Brothers. "And not only pie but bread, both wheat and Boston-brown, with rye to order; cakes of all kinds, especially home-made ginger; and family bakings and roasts on reasonable terms. In a word—Griscom Brothers."

"Of the village over here," added Dolor Tripp, in further explanation.

"Griscom Brothers," said the butcher, in a tone of confident affirmation.

All this was as surprising to me as it was to the others. As for Lord Crabstairs, he stood up very straight with his feet wide apart, and stared at Griscom Brothers.

"Now, really!" he exclaimed. "It is Brothers, is it? And the ghost of a baker besides!"

"No, sir," spoke up quickly the little man. "I may be a baker ghost, but I'm not the ghost of a baker; not yet."

"Are you two in one?" asked Lord Crabstairs. "If not, where is the other one of you?"

"My brother," said the little man, "who, with me, gave our business its firm name, is not now living."

"Then," said Lord Crabstairs, "Griscom Brothers is half dead, and has a right to be a half ghost."

"Aha!" said the little man. "That's about right. Half the time I'm a baker, and half the time a ghost. And now, then, if you folks care to hear all about it, I'm ready to talk."

"Care to hear!" said Dolor Tripp. "I'm on pins and needles to hear!"

The fire was now built up afresh, and again we placed ourselves on our chairs, stools, and boxes about the hearth, Griscom Brothers

having a place in the middle, between Dolor Tripp and Doris. I happened to notice that in this arrangement the schoolmaster was left out, and was standing back of our half-circle. But as the schoolmaster was evidently a humble-minded person and did not appear to object to his position, I thought it wise not to disturb the company by interrupting the story which the baker had just begun.

(To be continued.)

Frank R. Stockton.

A GOD OF THE AZTECS.

[The Aztecs chose a youth without blemish, gave him a palace and household, and worshiped him as a god for a year, and then sacrificed him to the god he represented.]

MY fawn, my bride of an hour,
Dark as a dusky cloud,
Lithe-limbed, shadowy-browed,
Why do you droop and cower
As the languid lilies nod
With the weight of the sunset shower?
Is it sad, my fawn, my flower,
To be the bride of a god?

Have you left the garden gloom,
To be sad here for my sake—
To sit in the pillared room,
With your tender, tearful gaze;
Have you left the garden ways
And the women half awake—
My silent, statuesque women—
As cool and calm as the lake
That they lave the languid limb in?

Do you find me fair, my flower,
That you look with troubled eyes—
Fashioned without a flaw
For a god and a sacrifice?
I walk in the morning hour
And the people gather in awe,
The people gather and gaze
As I walk in the crowded ways;
The flowers are on my head,
The flowers are under my feet;
I touch my lute in the street,
And the throng with the lute are led.

Do you shrink from the scent of the flowers?
Do you start at the lute's soft sound?
Do you count the passing hours—
The hours of my pomp and pride—
Do you think of the day, my bride,
That the circling stars bring round,
The day when my feet shall ascend
Where the altar-stone is laid—
The day when my hand shall rend
The lute whereon I have played—
When I lay my godhood down
With the robes that the god arrayed,
And part my blossoming crown,
And fling the flowers to the gale

From the temple tops, for a token
That the pride of man shall be broken,
And the beauty of man shall fade,
And the life of man shall fail—
When we wind with steps unsteady
Up the sides of the pyramid,
When we wind, now seen, now hid
From the eyes of the gazing city—
While the black-robed priest stands ready
With the sullen fire in his eyes,
With the knife for the sacrifice—
The priest who has outlived pity?

Do you start, and tremble, and shiver
As you lie on my heart, my bride?
Do you fancy how it will quiver
As it quivers against your own,
Rent from the shuddering side,
Held up to the sun on high—
Cast on the altar-stone?
And is it so sad, my bride,
To have been a god—and to die?
I am fair, my flower, my fawn,
I am strong and supple and slim—
I must die in my perfect dawn,
With the bowl of life at the brim,
Ere the foot can gather a stain
From the earth it has scarcely trod,
Or the eye begin to dim,
Or the blood begin to wane
From body, and brow, and limb
That have borne the name of a god!

My heart shall break on the altar,
And yours shall break for this!
I will drain your love like wine,
At the single draught of a kiss,
And grow too strong to falter
For the thought of the things I miss;
And upon your lips resign
The less for the larger bliss—
The smiles that might have been mine
For one of your tender tears,
And a life of common years
For a year of the life divine!

Helen Thayer Hutcheson.