

# Nickletown's Wicked Easter Enterprise



ONE day about a month before Easter the Mayor of Nickletown said to the Town Clerk:

"I hear that those people of Pennylville will have an extra big lot of chickens this year. That is very sad, for we will not have much of a market for our eggs."

The Town Clerk thought for a while, and then he said:

"I have an idea. He saddled his mule immediately and rode to Pennylville, where he found the Mayor and the schoolmaster and all the people looking with pride and joy at the fat hens which were walking around everywhere."

"Good day," said the Town Clerk of Nickletown pleasantly. "What fine chickens you have! And what a wonderful lot of them! Too bad! Too bad!"

"Aha!" whispered the Mayor of Pennylville to the schoolmaster. "We are about to learn something important. Let us lead him on." He turned to the Town Clerk of Nickletown, and asked:

"Why is it too bad? You might as well tell us, for we are so wise that we will find it out anyway."

"Why, haven't you heard?" asked the Town Clerk of Nickletown, pretending to be greatly surprised. "All the hens everywhere have been laying overtime this year, and the price of eggs is falling so fast that they will probably be worth nothing at all by Easter."

"How terrible!" said all the people. "What shall we do?"

"Well," said the cunning Town Clerk, "you know that we are always willing to help our neighbors. We will take your hens away if you wish, and thus save you the expense of feeding them."

"That is, indeed, kind in you," said the Mayor of Pennylville, "but you are doing too much for us already. You reduced the price for keeping the moon lit, you know, and we simply cannot accept another favor."

"Our Mayor is quite right," cried all the people. And nothing that the Town Clerk could say had any effect. So he rode away.

As soon as he was gone the Mayor of Pennylville said to the schoolmaster, "Of course we must stop our hens at once from laying any more eggs. There is no greater extravagance than

to spend energy in producing cheap goods."

"Couldn't we eat the eggs ourselves," asked the goose-herd, who was not quite as wise as the other people. "Foolish man," said the schoolmaster. "Don't you know that cheap eggs are never good? Don't you remember the time when we bought a wagon-load of eggs at an auction sale for a

"Well, there is only one thing to do," said the headie. "There is no use in arguing with the chickens about it. They are almost as obstinate as the schoolmaster. We must deceive them. Let us lock them all up together in the town jail, which luckily has no windows at all. In the darkness they will think that it is night all the time, and of course will not try to lay eggs."

"Splendid!" cried the Mayor. "You are almost as wise as I am. I was just on the verge of thinking of something still better, but I will not try now. So the people gathered up all their chickens and drove them to the jail. The headie went in with them, and said that he would stay there till Easter singing slumber songs to keep them asleep as much as possible, so that they would not get impatient or unhappy, for he was very soft-hearted. After the chickens had all been locked up the schoolmaster said:

"I have a wonderful thought. Even if I never had so wise a thought before in all my life, I listen since chickens' eggs are going to be so cheap, there will be a great demand for something better to take their place for Easter. Now I have thought of a great scheme. But let us be wise. Let us keep it secret. I will whisper it to the Mayor, and he will whisper it to the town councilors and they can whisper it to the time when we bought a wagon-load of eggs at an auction sale for a

"Hurray! Wonderful!" exclaimed the Mayor after the schoolmaster had whispered his great thought to him. And all the people cried heartily: "Hurray! Wonderful!" after it was whispered to them.

In the meantime the Town Clerk of Nickletown found that many and many a time even the wisest goose does not know as much as the rest of you people."

"Then there is nothing left for us to do except to steal them," said the Mayor of Nickletown gloomily. "If we have all the chickens think of the price that we will get for eggs!"

So about a week afterward the Mayor and the Town Clerk and the grocer and the butcher and the under-Sheriff and the Constable and about a dozen other of the very best citizens of Nickletown sneaked to Pennylville in the middle of the night and entered the great Pennylville hen-coop.

A few minutes afterward all Pennylville was awakened by terrible screams and yells, and everybody got up and hurried to the coop.

"What is going on in there?" said the Mayor of Pennylville in a trembling voice. "Help! Help!" yelled the men of Nickletown. "We are being killed!"

"After the Mayor and his boys had you get into our coop?" asked the Mayor of Pennylville.

"The men of Nickletown told him, shouting all the time for help. 'Well, I am terribly sorry,' said the Mayor of Pennylville. 'I wish that you had told me beforehand that you were going to steal our chickens, because then it is no wonder that you are getting killed in there, for the birds that you tried to steal are not chickens, but eagles.'"

"I will tell you all about it," said the schoolmaster proudly.

"Take us out first, we implore you!" cried the men of Nickletown. "Help! Help!"

"No," said the schoolmaster. "It was such a wonderful thought that I am sure you will be interested when I tell you. So I will explain it to you first."

The men of Nickletown continued to shout for help, but the schoolmaster said: "You were very kind to warn us about the price of hen's eggs. We locked the hen-coop up in the mountains and into the hen-coop to get Eagle-Easter-Eggs. Was not that a wonderful idea? Of course, we did not know that you were coming to steal them, otherwise we would have put up a sign to explain about it to you."

"Well, let us take them out now," said the Mayor.

"Hold on," said the lamp-lighter of Pennylville. "Eagles are birds of prey, are they not? Now, I should like to know from your esteemed schoolmaster if they will not feel so angry at losing their prey that they may refuse to lay eggs for us?"

"I will look it up at once in my natural history book," said the schoolmaster.

"Of course, if it is going to annoy our eagles to interfere with them, now our good friends of Nickletown will, no doubt, see the point in the matter, and will be willing to stay in the coop till Easter. We cannot afford to lose the great profit that there is in eagle eggs this year."

"No!" cried the men of Nickletown. "We cannot stay in here any longer. The eagles are trying to pick our eyes out. They have already torn nearly all the hair out of our heads. Let us and we will pay you for the loss of the eggs."

"Well," said the people of Pennylville, "that is perfectly fair. Of course, you can have your eggs if you like. If you will pay us a thousand dollars we will let you out."

"Horror!" groaned the Mayor of Nickletown. "But there is no other way. We will pay it."

And so, although the eagles did not lay a single egg for Easter, the people of Nickletown found that many and many a time even the wisest goose does not know as much as the rest of you people."



THEY DROVE ALL THEIR CHICKENS TO THE JAIL.

mere song, and that they all turned out to be spoiled!"

"Oh, no, no," she cried, "it's different among the things! Only somebody said the more you know the more you'd enjoy what you saw. Please, I'll not read another word if you're going to talk about staying at home!"

There were calls to be made and farewells said, and the days slipped swiftly by. At last the trunks were packed and gone and the last things were ready for the suitcases and bags. Jean and Mrs. Stewart had moved in and Mr. Du Fay was coming up for the dinner.

It was a jolly meal, and if any one felt at all sad when the dinner was over, there were very small lumps in two small throats when Isobel and Jean bade each other good-bye at the carriage door, but they were quickly swallowed in laughter and promises to write, picture postals at least, and a letter now and then.

The next day the Stricklands found themselves in New York on a beautiful smiling Spring day, and they heartily enjoyed the gaily dressed crowds, the pretty shops and the lovely parks.

The following morning Isobel was gazing up at the ocean monster that was to carry them away over seas. Its size and staidness filled her with a profound respect. She mounted the long gangway, and looked about her at the deck at the polished brass and the neat officers with their white duck and blue and gold.

It was very, very fascinating. The fresh sea air stung her eyes, and the great bay lay stretched before her glittering like diamonds and sapphires.

Her father called her to go below to see the staterooms and she sped after him down the stairway. There were two adjoining rooms and one of them had a really brass bed in it, just like home, and a tiny bathroom opening from that. She was glad that her own room had a bureau for she wanted to be perfectly sure she was on the sea. However, it was very beautiful and very comfortable, and Isobel's heart was full of pleasure and delight at each of the new experiences.

For nearly an hour people came and went, then the warning bell and the cry of "All Ashore" sent flocks of them down the gangway, and there was bustle and stir, the big plank swung up to the ship, sailors ran to and fro, officers gave sharp commands, the band began to play, handkerchiefs and flags waved, people called good-byes and then, with a splash, the ship slipped slowly along the dock. Then a puffing, conceited little tug was attached to the monster and drew it out into the stream and away down the bay.

For the next hour Isobel never left the railing, so fascinated was she by the wonderful sights, the towering city, the darting craft, the forts, the Liberty, the glimmering spire, blue and white.

At last her father touched her arm. "Luncheon, dear," he said, "and get your postals ready for the pilot to take off at the Hook. What's the matter?" he added, seeing tears in her eyes.

"Well," replied Isobel, with a quick gulp. "I'm awfully glad we're going, but I'm gladder we're coming back some day. It's so good to be an American!"

answered Uncle Tom, "and I'm afraid I can't stay long enough to tell you a good story. Well, just tell me a little bit of a story. One that's not very long you know."

"All right, then. I'll tell you a story, but it isn't going to be very long. I'll tell you about the time I killed a rabbit on the run while out shooting partridges. The funny part of the story is that I killed the rabbit without firing a shot and without moving a finger."

"Killed a rabbit without even moving?" repeated Jimmie, in astonishment.

"Yes," replied Uncle Tom, "without moving and without even intending to do it. I'll tell you the story. I was out shooting partridges one day when I found I had come off without my gun. I had good luck, too, and so I was forced to put all the birds I killed in my coat pockets. By the time I started home I was loaded down with every pocket stuffed full of dead birds. They made a heavy weight and pulled down on me so I could scarcely walk."

"On the way home I heard something come rattling through the briar thicket behind me, and turned round to see what it was."

"At that moment a full-grown rabbit burst from the thicket at full speed. Just as he passed me the weight in my pockets pulled the top button off my coat. It flew out, struck the rabbit just behind the ear, and killed it stone dead. The rabbit dropped right in its tracks. I picked it up and added it to my pile of game. I had rabbit stew for supper that night."

## Aunt Sarah and Quacks.

Aunt Sarah was an old colored mammy who looked for a family down South. The youngest member of the family was a big Muscovy drake, a great big bird whose quack could be heard a mile, and so Harry called him "Quacks."

"Quacks" was devoted to Harry, but he had an especial fondness for Aunt Sarah. Perhaps this was because she often threw out scraps from the table and Quacks gobbled it eagerly. Aunt Sarah could not walk around in the yard without having the old duck quacking contentedly at her heels.

Quacks caught sight of her at once and flew straight for her, quacking delightedly. Aunt Sarah heard him, but could not see him because of the big pile of plates she was carrying. Quacks slipped down in front of her feet. The result was that Aunt Sarah tripped over him, and fell with a thud and a crash of tin pans.

Aunt Sarah sat up and shook gently with laughter.

"Dear ter gracious!" she exclaimed. "De hyer of drake 'pear ter be so fou'er me, rockin' I'll ha'p marry him!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Tabby Cat, "I must insist that you take an umbrella with you though it is not raining, for you have a little umbrella with you, and it will be raining cats and dogs."

"But think! If a bull pup should rain on you, I don't say dear, that would suit you just

without having the old duck quacking contentedly at her heels.

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# THE FLATBOAT BOYS A STORY OF PLUCK AND LUCK

## Chapter VI.

ONE of the men seized Harry and the other ran out to look for Ned, but at that moment a bump was felt against the side of the boat, followed by the sound of voices. The fellow who had seized Harry let go, and the other came rushing back, and then Ned and five men crowded into the little cabin.

No one spoke for a minute, and then one of the strangers said: "Moses Drake and Jim Williams, I am Sheriff Penfield, of Jackson, Tenn., and I have warrants for your arrest."

"What's the charge?" asked Drake. "Stealing that flatboat down there."

"We never stole her, and if you lay a hand on us, it'll be at your peril."

That was big talk from a couple of men who had nothing but knives, while the Sheriff and his four men had revolvers when there was considerable excitement.

appearance of the Sheriff they would have been overpowered in a minute.

"You have come out of this better than you know," said the Sheriff. "These men have been thieves and robbers for years, and both have been in prison. That boat belonged to an old man at Jackson, and was partly loaded with slaves. He was sleeping aboard of her, and I have no doubt that he is now at the bottom of the river with a stone tied to his neck. If they had overpowered you, they'd have tied you hand and foot and flung you overboard. I want to take them to Memphis first, and perhaps you won't object to letting us go down with you. It's a moonlight night, and we know the river, and there'll be no danger."

The boys were only too glad to leave the spot and to have the company of the officer and his men, and "The Boy Partners" was cast loose to drift down to the city. She reached it about daylight, and when the Sheriff had taken his prisoners there was considerable excitement.



THE FELLOW IS LYING DOWN IN A DRUNKEN SLEEP.

ers. They covered the two scoundrels and demanded their surrender, and after a little more bluster they had the handcuffs on them.

The boys had been in luck. They could not have got hold of their rifles to defend themselves, and but for the sudden appearance of the Sheriff they would have been overpowered in a minute.

ment. The boys were asked to make affidavits as to what happened up at the boat, and police-men, reporters and citizens talked with them.

Among the latter was a merchant who had once been robbed by Moses Drake, and he felt so good over the man's capture that he shook hands with Ned and Harry, and said:

"You boys did not capture the villains, but if you had not been there with your boat they would have seen the Sheriff coming and got away into the woods. I feel so good over it that I am going to give you \$50 apiece."

"The boys did not want to take it, but the merchant persisted, and when they returned their thanks, when he found what the cargo of their boat was, he gave them the name of a buyer in New Orleans who would do honestly by them. Before they resumed their voyage they hired a colored man to make up a crew of the three. They had been advised to do this, in order that they might drift at night and thereby save at least two weeks in making the rest of the voyage."

The name of the colored man was Sam, and he professed to know every foot of the river down to its mouth. To drift at night one must be at the steering oar, and one at the bows as lookout all the time, while the third one sleeps. Things went smoothly for five days after leaving Memphis. No accident of any sort occurred, and the colored man had showed himself to be reliable and watchful. It was on the evening of the fifth day that he took the skiff and pulled off to a raft. He said he wanted to ask the rafterman about a certain spot in the river a few miles ahead, but when he returned to the boat the boys smelled whisky on his breath and suspected that he had a bottle with him.

He would be on the lookout that night from 8 to 12, and if he drank too much there was no telling what might happen. The boys talked the matter over between themselves, and it was finally decided to do nothing to Sam unless it could be seen that the liquor was affecting him.

He must have suspected what they were talking about, for he said:

"Boys, you needn't be afraid of my getting drunk. I met a man on the raft I knew, and I took just one small drink with him for old times' sake. I brought none away with me."

He made his statement so earnestly that it was believed at once, and Harry turned in to sleep for four hours, while Ned took the oar and Sam went to the bows to act as lookout. It was no longer moonlight. They had to keep a lantern burning and the horn at hand.

When Ned took the oar he knew that Ghost Island was only a few miles below. He had been told by boatmen to be sure and take the left-hand channel in passing it, and he gave Sam the word. A faint mist rose from the water, and this added to the darkness prevented any one from seeing the length of the boat. Ned had to steer as he got down the river.

There were two steamers coming up, and there was a raft ahead of them, and the boat was veered to port or starboard as Sam directed. Half an hour after the second steamer passed Ned saw a third, but she seemed so far away to his left.

"Don't you hear that steamer, man?" he called out to Sam.

There was no answer. He called again and again, but got no word. He could hear the steamer and he could hear two horns blowing, but the noises were so far away to his left that he became scared and let go the oar long enough to run into the cabin and arouse Harry.

"Run forward and see what's the matter with Sam," he said, when he had given Harry a vigorous steamer horn blast.

"The fellow is lying down in a drunken sleep!" shouted Harry a moment later.

"Then we have taken the wrong channel and may be in trouble any minute!" (To Be Continued.)

# Isobel Starts on a Voyage Across the Atlantic

IT WAS decided at last. Isobel, her mother and her father were to go abroad for the summer.

There had been a great many things to be thought of before the decision could be reached. First, could Mr. Strickland leave his business. But Mr. Strickland said he wouldn't be a slave, and that was settled. Second, what would be done about Isobel's school? Then Miss Damon came forward and declared that Isobel's record was so good that a little tutoring and a few examinations when she came back in the Fall would enable her to go on with her class. And that was disposed of. Third, what should be done with the house? Mrs. Strickland said she thought it would be fine if Mrs. Stewart and Jean and Mr. de Fay could come in for the summer and keep the maids to take care of them and everything else.

Mrs. Stewart was delighted. She said she would either rent or buy her apartment, and that the big cool house

would be the finest summer vacation she had had for years. That was the best settlement of all, for Jean was so happy, and Isobel was jubilant to think that her dear third-story room would hold the friend she loved so much.

There was a good deal to be done after all these items were out of the way, for the house had to be put in its summer clothes and winter things of all descriptions packed away. Then the family had to have steamer rugs and steamer clothes, and guide books and glasses and pocket cameras.

Isobel was very busy in school and had to go to the dentist's and in between times she read books about the places she was going to see. She was very ambitious in this direction, and gathered in her room volume after volume, so many indeed that if she had even been able to look at the pictures in them she would have done well.

One Saturday afternoon her father came up to her room and found her flat on her stomach with her nose in a big volume about "Rome, the Etern-



Isobel and Jean bade each other goodbye at the carriage door.

# Why Jean Had to Have the Easter Flower



"PLEASE, COULD I HAVE ONE FLOWER?" SAID JEAN.

"Please, could I have one flower?" said Jean, in a small voice.

"Get out of the way! Didn't you hear? You've no business here."

"I only wanted one," he said to himself, as he looked out on the dazzling mass of bloom. Surely it would not be wrong to take just one flower, to make his mother-er.

He waited till the men had turned their backs, then darting out, he clutched the nearest flower, and ran with it swiftly up the aisle toward the door.

But he was not quick enough. A rough hand grasped his shoulder:

"Here, you young scamp, just you walk back with that flower, you're right if the Dominie sends you to jail."

The tall man in black heard the noise and came toward them.

"What's the matter, Marvin? Have you got a convert?"

"A thief, yer reverence—he's after the flowers."

The tall man stooped and looked at Jean with a kindly eye. Jean looked straight up into them, and was not afraid.

"Leave him to me, Marvin," said the tall man, and he sat down in a pew, holding Jean's hand.

"What was the flower for, boy?"

"For my mother."

"Did she want you to steal it?"

"No, she didn't know I was comin'. I asked for it first."

"And Marvin wouldn't give it to you?"

"No, M—, sir. And mother—she's sick, mother is; and I heard her say she would get well if she had a flower to smell. She used to smell lots of 'em when she was little, and—I just HAD to have one for her."

"Come with me," said the tall man. "Together they went up to the chancel rail. Here, there and everywhere the man took a blossom, till his hands were full—daffodils, narcissus, lilies, violets and one great velvety red rose. He piled them all in Jean's arms.

"Take them to your mother, boy. Where do you live? I will call Monday. Perhaps we can make her well."

"And Jean's mother did get well—in the country, where the tall man found them a home. And Jean saw the daffodils get well that very Spring, and there is a little girl in the house where they live who dances through the garden hand in hand with Jean. She is so like a daffodil with her crown of golden hair that Jean is not sure but she may be a fairy."

JEAN was hurrying, hurrying down the little dirty alley that beautiful Easter morning. Oh, he must hurry very fast, indeed, for his mother was ill and he must get back as quick as possible. She had heard the bells ringing their joyful peals at dawn that morning, and again when Jean was up and had come to her bedside to lay his cool little hand on her hot forehead; and he had heard her say:

"Flowers? I thought I smelled them. No, there are no flowers here. It is so long since I have seen a flower."

"I'm long flowers, mother. They have them at the big shop in the wide street, and they have them in the church today, too."

"Ah, Jean, boy, if you could only see them growing in the garden. The pretty Spring daffodils and the narcissus and the lily of the valley, and the brave little crocus that used to peep through the ground before the snow was fairly off in the fence corners. You've never been in the country."

"No, mother."

"And you've never seen the daffodils growing. Some day when I am well I will take you to the park away up beyond at the big shop in the wide street, and you'll see them—all a bank of gold, Jean, with the wind blowing them and making them dance like fairies."

"I've seen a fairy, mother. Jimmy Coyler's one, made of tissue paper. He got it off the Christmas tree 'cause they made a mistake and thought he was a girl. He pulls a string and it comes down. Will the daffodils be like that?"

"No, that's not the kind, son. Real fairies you cannot see unless you are very good. But we shall not see fairies in the park—only flowers, that are the nearest like them of anything. Flowers!—and oh, they smell so sweet. It seems to me that if I could smell the Spring flowers again I should get well."

JEAN slipped off the bed where he had perched. He had thought of something. He could make his mother well! Think of it! Well, again! Then she could work and they need not go hungry.

So Jean hurried, hurried out of the alley, and down the street to where the

# THE BEARS AND THE MATTRESS



"Ha! Ha!" said Ajax to Jewel, his chum. "This mattress is certainly quite lum-it-tum; Upon it, reposing, we'll sleep and we'll dream Of feasting on honey of bees, served with cream. My only fear is, that in slumber so deep, Some villain may clip off our claws while we sleep; With a mattress like this, to save one from harm, Powers ought to throw in a good burglar alarm. Everyone talks of it—isn't it funny— POWERS—the store that saves you money."