THE FIRST SETTLER'S STORY.

WILL CARLETON.

It ain't the funniest thing a man can do—
Existing in a country when it's new;
Nature, who moved in first—a good long while—
Has things already somewhat her own style,
And she do n't want her woodland splendors battered,
Her rustic furniture broke up and scattered,
Her paintings, which long years ago were done
By that old splendid artist-king, the sun,
Torn down and dragged in civilization's gutter,
Or sold to purchase settlers' bread and butter.
She don't want things exposed from porch to closet,
And so she kind o' nags the man who does it.
She carries in her pockets bags of seeds,
As general agent of the thriftiest weeds;
She sends her blackbirds, in the early morn,
To superintend his fields of planted corn;
She gives him rain past any duck's desire—
Then maybe several weeks of quiet fire;
She sells mosquitoes—leeches perched on wings—
To poison him with blood-devouring stings;
She loves his ague-muscle to display,
And shake him up—say every other day;
With thoughtful, conscientious care she makes
Those travelin' poison-bottles, rattlesnakes;
She finds time, 'mongst her other family cares,
To keep in stock good wild-cats, wolves, and bears.

Well, when I first infested this retreat,
Things to my view looked frightful incomplete;
But I had come with heart-thrift in my song,
And brought my wife and plunder right along;
I had n't a round-trip ticket to go back,
And if I had there wasn't no railroad track;
And drivin' East was what I could n't endure;
I hadn't started on circular tour.

My girl-wife was as brave as she was good,
And helped me every blessed way she could;
She seemed to take to every rough old tree,
As sing'lar as when first she took to me.
She kept our little log house neat as wax,
And once I caught her fooling with my ax.
She learned a hundred masculine things to do;
She aimed a shot gun pretty middlin' true,
Although, in spite of my express desire,
Hard work bears hard upon the average pulse;  
Even with satisfactory results;  
But when effects are scarce, the heavy strain  
Falls dead and solid on the heart and brain.

And when we're bothered, it will oft occur  
We seek blame-timber; and I lit on her;  
And looked at her with daily lessening favor,  
For what I knew she couldn't help to save her.

And Discord when he once had called and seen us,  
Came round quite often, and edged in between us.

One night when I came home unusual late,  
Too hungry and too tired to feel first-rate,  
Her supper struck me wrong (though I'll allow  
She hadn't much to strike with anyhow);  
And when I went to milk the cows, and found  
They'd wandered from their usual feeding ground  
And maybe'd left a few long miles behind 'em,  
Which I must copy, if I meant to find 'em,

Flash-quick the stay-chains of my temper broke,  
And in a trice these hot words I had spoke:  
"You ought to've kept the animals in view,  
And drove 'em in; you'd nothing else to do.  
The heft of all our life on me must fall;  
You just lie round, and let me do it all."

That speech—it hadn't been gone half a minute  
Before I saw the cold black poison in it;  
And I'd have given all I had, and more,  
To've only safely got it back in door.  
I'm now what most folks "well to do" would call  
I feel to do as if I'd give it all,  
Provided I through fifty years might reach  
And kill and bury that half-minute speech.

She handed back no words, as I could hear;  
She didn't frown; she didn't shed a tear;  
Half proud, half crushed, she stood and looked  
me over,

Like some one she had never seen before!  
But such a sudden anguish-lit surprise  
I never viewed before in human eyes.  
(’Tis seen it oft enough since in a dream;  
It sometimes wakes me like a midnight scream.)

Next morning, when, stone-faced but heavy-hearted,  
With dinner pail and sharpened axe I started  
Away for my day's work—she watched the door,  
And followed me half way to it or more;  
And I was just a-turning round at this,  
And asking for my usual good-by kiss;  
But on her lip I saw a proudish curve,  
And in her eye a shadow of reserve;  
And she had shown—perhaps half unawares—  
Some little independent breakfast airs;  
And so the usual parting didn't occur,  
Although her eyes invited me to her;  
Or rather half invited me, for she  
 Didn't advertise to furnish kisses free;  
You always had—that is, I had—to pay  
Full market price, and go more'n half the way.  
So, with a short "Good-by," I shut the door,  
And left her as I never had before.  
But when at noon my lunch I came to eat,  
Put up by her so delicately neat—  
Choiceer, somewhat, than yesterday's had been,  
And some fresh, sweet-eyed pansies she'd put in—  
"Tender and pleasant thoughts," I knew they meant—

It seemed as if her kiss with me she'd sent;  
Then I became once more her humble lover,  
And said, "To-night I'll ask forgiveness of her."

I went home over-early on that eve,  
Having contrived to make myself believe,  
By various signs I kind o'knew and guessed,  
A thunder-storm was coming from the west.  
(’Tis strange, when one sly reason fills the heart,  
How many honest ones will take its part:  
A dozen first-class reasons said 'twas right  
That I should strike home early on that night.)

Half out of breath, the cabin door I swung,  
With tender heart-words trembling on my tongue;  
But all within looked desolate and bare;  
My house had lost its soul,—she was not there!  
A penciled note was on the table spread,  
And these are something like the words it said:

"The cows have strayed away again, I fear;  
I watched them pretty close; don't scold me, dear.  
And where they are, I think I nearly know:  
I heard the bell not very long ago...  
I've hunted them for all the afternoon;  
I'll try once more—I think I'll find them soon.  
Dear, if a burden I've been to you,  
And haven't helped you as I ought to do,  
Let old-time memories my forgiveness plead;  
I've tried to do my best—I have, indeed.
Darling, piece out with love the strength I lack,
And have kind words for me when I get back."

Scarce did I give this letter sight and tongue—
Some swift-blown rain-drops to the window clung,
And from the clouds a rough, deep growl proceeded:
My thunder-storm had come, now 'twasn't needed.

I rushed out-door. The air was stained with black:
Night had come early, on the storm-cloud's back:
And everything kept dimming to the sight,
Save when the clouds threw their electric light;
When, for a flash, so clean-cut was the view,
I'd think I saw her—knowing 'twas not true.

Through my small clearing dashed wide sheets of spray,
As if the ocean waves had lost their way:
Scarce a pause the thunder-battle made,
In the bold clamor of its cannonade.

And she, while I was sheltered, dry, and warm,
Was somewhere in the clutches of the storm!
She who, when storm-frights found her at her best,
Had always hid her white face on my breast!

My dog, who'd skirmished round me all the day,
Now crouched and whimpering, in a corner lay:
I dragged him by the collar to the wall,
I pressed his quivering muzzle to a shawl—
"Track her, old boy!" I shouted; and he whined,
Matched eyes with me, as if to read my mind,
Then with a yell went tearing through the wood.

I followed him, as faithful as I could.
No pleasure-trip was that, through flood and flame;
We raced with death; we hunted noble game.
All night we dragged the woods without avail;
The ground got drenched—we could not keep the trail.

Three times again my cabin home I found,
Half hoping she might be there, safe and sound;
But each time 'twas an unavailing care:
My house had lost its soul; she was not there!

When climbing the wet trees, next morning-sun
Laughed at the ruin that the night had done,
Bleeding and drenched, by toil and sorrow bent,
Back to what used to be my home I went.
But as I neared our little clearing-ground—
Listen!—I heard the cow-bell's tinkling sound.
The cabin door was just a bit ajar;
It gleamed upon my glad eyes like a star.
"Brave heart," I said, "for such a fragile form!
She made them guide her homeward through the storm!"

Such pangs of joy I never felt before.
"You've come!" I shouted, and rushed through the door.
Yes, she had come—and gone again. She lay
With all her young life crushed and wrenched away—
Lay, the heart-rains of our home among,
Not far from where I killed her with my tongue.
The rain-drops glittered 'mid her hair's long strands,
The forest thorns had torn her feet and hands,
And 'midst the tears—brave tears—that one could trace
Upon the pale but sweetly resolute face,
I once again the mournful words could read,
"I've tried to do my best—I have, indeed."

And now I'm mostly done; my story's o'er;
Part of it never breathed the air before.
"Tisn't over-usual, it must be allowed,
To volunteer heart-history to a crowd,
And scatter 'mongst them confidential tears,
But you'll protect an old man with his years;
And where'er this story's voice can reach,
This is the sermon I would have it preach:

Boys, flying kites haul in their white-winged birds;
You can't do that way when you're flying words
"Careful with fire, I'l," is good advice we know:
"Careful with words," is ten times doubly so.
Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead,
But God himself can't kill them when they'er said!
You have my life-grief: do not think a minute
'Twas told to take up time. There's business in it.

It sheds advice: who'er will take and live it,
Is welcome to the pain it costs to give it.
THE LIGHTNING-ROD DISPENSER.

WHICH this railway smash reminds me, in an underhanded way,
Of a lightning-rod dispenser that came down on me one day;
Oiled to order in his motions—sanctioninous in his mien—

Hands as white as any baby's, an' a face unnatural clean;
Not a wrinkle had his raiment, teeth and linen glittered white,
And his new-constructed neck-tie was an interesting sight!
Which I almost wish a razor had made red that white-skinned throat
And that new-constructed neck-tie had composed a hangman's knot
Ere he brought his sleek-trimmed carcass for my women folks to see,
And his buzz-saw tongue a-runnin' for to gouge a gash in me.
Still I couldn't help but like him—as I fear I al'ays must,
The gold o' my own doctrine in a fellow-heap o' dust;
For I saw that my opinions, when I fired them round by round,
Brought back an answerin' volley of a mighty similar sound.

I touched him on religion and the joys my heart had known;
And I found that he had very similar notions of his own!
I told him of the doubtings that made sad my boyhood years;
Why, he'd laid awak' till morning with that same old breed of fears!

I pointed up the pathway that I hoped to heaven to go:
He was on that very ladder, only just a round below!
Our politics was different, and at first he galled and winced;

But I arg'ed him so able, he was very soon convinced.
And 'twas gettin' tow'r'd the middle of a hungry summer day—
There was dinner on the table, and I asked him, Would he stay?

And he sat down among us—everlastin' trim and neat—
And he asked a short crisp bles'in' almost good enough to eat!

Then he fired up on the mercies of our Everlastin' Friend,
Till he gi'n the Lord Almighty a good, first-class recommend;
And for full an hour we listened to that sugar-coated scamp—

Talkin' like a blessed angel—eatin' like a blasted tramp!

My wife—she liked the stranger, smiling on him warm and sweet;
(It al'ays flatters women when their guests are on the eat!) And he hinted that some ladies never lose their youthful charms,

And caressed the yeartin' baby, and received it in his arms.
My sons and daughters liked him—for he had progressive views,
And he ches'ed the cud o' fancy, and gi'n down the latest news:

And I couldn't help but like him—as I fear I al'ays must,
The gold of my own doctrines in a fellow-heap o' dust.

He was chiselin' desolation through a piece of apple-pie,
When he paused and gazed upon us, with a tear in his off eye,
And said, "O happy family!—your joys they make me sad!
They all the time remind me of the dear ones once I had!
A babe as sweet as this one; a wife almost as fair;
A little girl with ringlets, like that one over there.
But had I not neglected the means within my way,
Then they might still be living, and loving me to-day.

"One night there came a tempest; the thunder peals were dire;
The clouds that marched above us were shooting bolts of fire;
In my own house I was lying, thinking, to my shame,
How little I had guarded against those bolts of flame,
When crash!—through roof and ceiling the deadly lightning cleft,
And killed my wife and children, and only I was left!

"Since then afar I've wandered; and naught for life have cared,
Save to save others' loved ones whose lives have yet been spared;
Since then it is my mission, where'er by sorrow tossed,
To sell to worthy people good lightning-rods at cost.
With sure and strong protection I'll clothe your buildings o'er;
'Twill cost you—twenty dollars (perhaps a trifle more;
Whatever else it comes to, at lowest price I'll put;
You simply sign a contract to pay so much per foot)."

I—signed it! while my family all approvin', stood about;
The villain dropped a tear on't—but he didn't blot it out!
That self-same day, with wagons, came some rascals great and small;
They hopped up on my buildin's just as if they owned 'em all;
They hewed 'em and they hacked 'em—agin' my loud desires—
They trimmed 'em off with gewgaws, and they bound'em down with wires;
They hacked 'em and they hewed 'em and they hewed and hacked 'em still,
And every precious minute kep' a running up the bill.

To find my soft-spoke neighbor, did I rave and rush and run;
He was suppin' with a neighbor, just a few miles farther on.
"Do you think," I loudly shouted, "that I need a mile o' wire
For to save each separate hay-cock out o' heaven's consumin' fire?
Did you think, to keep my buildin's out o' some uncertain harm,
I was goin' to deed you over all the balance of my farm!"

He silenced me with silence in a very little while,
And then trotted out the contract with a reassuring smile;
And for half an hour explained it, with exasperatian' skill,
While his myrmidons kep' probably a runnin' up my bill.
He held me to that contract with a firmness queer to see;
'Twas the very first occasion he had disagreed with me!
And for that 'ere thunder story, 'ere the rascal finally went,
I paid two hundred dollars, if I paid a single cent.

And if any lightnin'-rodist wants a dinner dialogue
With the restaurant department of an enterprising dog,
Let him set his mouth a-runnin' just inside my outside gate,
And I'll bet two hundred dollars that he won't have long to wait.
FALLS OF MINNEHAHA.
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

OMEWARD now went Hiawatha;
Pleasant was the landscape round him,
Pleasant was the air above him,
For the bitterness of anger
Had departed wholly from him,
From his brain the thought of vengeance,
From his heart the burning fever.

Only once his pace he slackened,
Only once he paused or halted,
Paused to purchase heads of arrows
Of the ancient Arrow-maker,
In the land of the Dacotahs,
Where the Falls of Minnehaha
Flash and gleam among the oak-trees,
Laugh and leap into the valley.

There the ancient Arrow-maker
Made his arrow-heads of sandstone,
Arrow-heads of chalcedony,
Arrow-heads of flint and jasper,
Smoothed and sharpened at the edges,
Hard and polished, keen and costly;
With him dwelt his dark-eyed daughter,
Wayward as the Minnehaha,
With her moods of shade and sunshine,
Eyes that smiled and frowned alternate,
Feet as rapid as the river,
Tresses flowing like the water,
And as musical a laughter;
And he named her from the river,
From the waterfall he named her,
Minnehaha, Laughing Water.

Was it then for heads of arrows,
Arrow-heads of chalcedony,
Arrow-heads of flint and jasper,
That my Hiawatha halted
In the land of the Dacotahs?

Was it not to see the maiden,
See the face of Laughing Water
Peeping from behind the curtain,
Hear the rustling of her garments
From behind the waving curtain,
As one sees the Minnehaha
Gleaming, glancing thro' the branches,
As one hears the Laughing Water
From behind its screen of branches?

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR.
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

BETWEEN the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence;
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine,
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all?

I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And moulder in dust away!
IF WE KNEW.

If we knew the woe and heartache
Waiting for us down the road,
If our lips could taste the wormwood,
If our backs could feel the load;
Would we waste the day in wishing
For a time that ne'er can be?
Would we wait with such impatience
For our ships to come from sea?

If we knew the baby fingers,
Pressed against the window pane,
Would be cold and stiff to-morrow—
Never trouble us again;
Would the bright eyes of our daring
Catch the frown upon our brow?
Would the print of rosy fingers
Vex us then as they do now?

Ah! these little ice-cold fingers!
How they point our memories back
To the hasty words and actions
Strewn along our backward track!
How these little hands remind us,
As in snowy grace they lie,
Not to scatter thorns but roses,
For our reaping by and by.

Strange we never prize the music
Till the sweet-voiced bird has flown;
Strange that we should slight the violets
Till the lovely flowers are gone;
Strange that summer skies and sunshine
Never seem one-half so fair
As when winter's snowy pinions
Shake their white down in the air.

Lips from which the seal of silence
None but God can roll away,
Never blossomed in such beauty
As adorns the mouth to-day;
And sweet words that freight our memory
With their beautiful perfume,
Come to us in sweeter accents
Through the portals of the tomb

Let us gather up the sunbeams,
Lying all around our path;
Let us keep the wheat and roses,
Casting out the thorns and chaff;
Let us find our sweetest comfort
In the blessings of to-day;
With the patient hand removing
All the briars from our way.

A DOUBTING HEART.

ADÉLAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

WHERE are the swallows fled?
Frozen and dead
Perchance upon some bleak and stormy shore.
O doubting heart!
Far over purple seas
They wait, in sunny ease,
The balmy southern breeze
To bring them to their northern homes once more.

Why must the flowers die?
Prisoned they lie
In the cold tomb, heedless of tears or rain.
O doubting heart!
They only sleep below
The soft white ermine snow
While winter winds shall blow,
To breathe and smile upon you soon again.

The sun has hid its rays
These many days;
Will dreary hours never leave the earth?
O doubting heart!
The stormy clouds on high
Veil the same sunny sky
That soon, for spring is nigh,
Shall wake the summer into golden mirth.

Fair hope is dead, and light
Is quenched in night;
What sound can break the silence of despair?
O doubting heart!
The sky is overcast,
Yet stars shall rise at last,
Brighter for darkness past,
And angels' silver voices stir the air.
**EXCELSIOR.**

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

The shades of night were falling fast,  
As through an Alpine village passed  
A youth, who bore, mid snow and ice,  
A banner with a strange device,  
Excelsior!

His brow was sad; his eye beneath,  
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath;  
And like a silver clarion rung,  
The accents of that unknown tongue—  
Excelsior!

In happy homes he saw the light  
Of household fires gleam warm and bright;  
Above, the spectral glaciers shone;  
And from his lips escaped a groan,  
Excelsior!

"Try not the pass!" the old man said;  
"Dark lowers the tempest overhead.  
The roaring torrent is deep and wide!"—  
And loud that clarion voice replied,  
Excelsior!

"Oh! stay," the maiden said, "and rest  
Thy weary head upon this breast!"  
A tear stood in his bright blue eye;  
But still he answered with a sigh,  
Excelsior!

"Beware the pine-tree's withered branch!  
Beware the awful avalanche!"  
This was the peasant's last good-night;—  
A voice replied far up the height,  
Excelsior!

At break of day, as heavenward  
The pious monks of St. Bernard  
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,  
A voice cried through the startled air,  
Excelsior!

A traveler,—by the faithful hound,  
Half buried in the snow was found,  
Still grasping in his hand of ice,  
That banner with the strange device,  
Excelsior!

There, in the twilight cold and gray,  
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay;  
And from the sky, serene and far,  
A voice fell, like a falling star,—  
Excelsior!

**PADDY'S EXCELSIOR.**

WAS grown dark so terrible fashl,  
Whin through a town up the mountain  
there pushed  
A broth of a boy, to his neck in the snow;  
As he walked, his shillalah he swung to and fro,  
Saying: "It's up to the top I am bound for to go,  
Be jabbers!"

He looked mortal sad, and his eye was as bright  
As a fire of turf on a cowld winther night;  
And niver a word that he said could ye tell  
As he opened his mouth and let out a yell,  
"It's up till the top of the mountain I'll go,  
Onles covered up wid this bodthersome shnow,  
Be jabbers!"

Through the windows he saw, as he thraveled along,  
The light of the candles and fires so warm,  
But a big chunk of ice hung over his head;  
Wid a snivel and groan, "By St. Patrick!" he said,  
"It's up to the very tip-top I will rush,  
And then if it falls, it's not meself it'll crush,  
Be jabbers!"

"Whisht a bit," said an owld man, whose hair was as white  
As the shnow that fell down on that miserable night;  
"Shure ye'll fall in the wather, me bit of a lad,  
Fur the night is so dark and the walkin' is bad."  
Bedad! he'd not lisht to a word that was said,  
But he'd go to the top, if he went on his head,  
Be jabbers!

A bright, buxom young girl, such as likes to be kissed,  
Axed him wouldn't he stop, and how could he resist?  
So shnapping his fingers and winking his eye,  
While shmiling upon her, he made this reply—  
"Faith, I meant to kape on till I got to the top,  
But, as yer shwate self has axed me, I may as well shtop  
Be jabbers!"