CHAPTER VIII.

SOME OF OLD NELLY’S STORIES

Be kind to dumb creatures, nor grudge them your care,
God gave them their life, and your love they must share;
And He, who the sparrow’s fall tenderly heeds,
Will lovingly look on compassionate deeds.”

After the assessor had gone, Old Nelly said, “I don’t think that man knows very much for he said he had assessed the cows all alike—at twenty dollars apiece; and I know, from what I have heard men say, who come and look at us and talk to Mr. Philips about us, that you would sell for four or five times as much as I would. And, when they would tell how valuable you were and how handsome, it made me jealous of you when you first came here. She said jealousy was a bad thing, for a man once owned her who was jealous of his wife and made her life miserable. She used to help him and the hired man milk the cows. He used to get mad and talk very abusive and swear awfully at her, especially when he came home from town and she told him he had been drinking. One evening he came home the worse for liquor and his wife said to him,

‘Men whiskey drink and never think
That their wives at all can tell it;
They don’t suppose that a woman’s nose
Was ever made to smell it.’

“It made him so angry that he called her a vile name and told
her to go to the Devil and she said, 'No, I don't want to go there, and I won't, for there will be too many whiskey drinkers there, but I will go to the house, and you can do the milking yourself.'

"After she had gone to the house, he told the hired man that she was a fool and not fit to milk a cow; that she was always sticking her nose into his business, and that she always found fault whenever he went to town and took four or five drinks of beer or whiskey, which he said he had a right to do if he paid for it. But I know he told a falsehood when he said his wife was not fit to milk a cow, for both of them had milked me and she was much the better milker of the two. When she milked me, she was so kind and tender, I gave all the milk I could, but when he milked me, he was so rough and ugly, I gave as little as I could.

"The hired man then began to talk to him and said, 'I'll tell you what's the truth Davis, you are not fit to have as good a woman for a wife as you've got, you don't deserve it. I never thought she was a fool, except once, that was when I heard she had married you, for she knew you were a drinker before she married you. You are farming on shares, so you can't afford to spend your hard earned money for strong drink at saloons, for I know that the saloon keepers live better and dress better than you do and you are helping them to do it, and you know it.'

"'I guess that's true, said Mr. Davis, but it's none of your business how much I spend at the saloons.'

"'Yes, it is my business,' said the hired man, 'for if you keep on doing as you have for the last three or four weeks you won't be able to pay me my wages in the fall. You feed your cows so poorly and milk them so irregularly, that your cream check grows smaller each month.'

"This made Mr. Davis still angrier and he said to the man, 'I didn't hire you to give advice, but to work, and if that is the way you feel about getting your pay and your right to meddle
in my business, I have no further use for your services, so the sooner you quit the better.’

"The man said, 'All right, just suit yourself about the matter.'

"The man quit work and took Mr. Davis' note for his pay, and as the man had loaned him fifty dollars, that spring, he took a mortgage on four of us cows to secure the payment of the note and the borrowed money. In the fall we were sold to satisfy the mortgage, and I went to a place even worse than that one was.

"A horse-trader, by the name of Jim Hatch, bought me, so he could have milk for his wife and three little children. It was getting cold weather and he had a poor barn. He had two poor horses and everytime he went away from home he came back with a different horse than he went away with. Sometimes he would stay away so late at night that he would not come to the barn until morning, when I would go without milking and all three of us without anything to eat. When it got colder the stalls were never cleaned out, and the droppings behind us froze, so our fore feet were much lower than our hind ones. It was not long till I gave so little milk that he quit milking me altogether. One morning his wife came to the barn where he was harnessing his horses, to go after a load of wood, he said, as they had none to burn, and said to him, 'Jim, we haven't any flour and the children need shoes. I think you had better quit trading horses and gambling and go to work. Deacon Smith is hiring a lot of wood hauled to the railroad and he will give you a job, I know, if you only show a disposition to work.'

"In reply, he said, 'Who told you I was gambling?'

"She said, 'A neighbor told me that you and her husband went to the back room of a saloon every night and gambled.'

"'I gambled before you married me,' he said, 'and you knew it.'
"'Yes,' she replied, 'I know I did, but you promised to quit it, but haven't kept your word.'

"'Well, he said, 'A woman has a hard time of it to reform a man after she marries him, and she hadn't ought to expect to do it.'

"'Well,' she said, 'I will tell you just what it is, Jim Hatch, there is one of two things you can choose: You must quit gambling or I will quit you and take my children and go home to my father, for he says I can come. He did not want me to marry you, as he knew you gambled and said that gamblers always came to a bad end. I do hope that if my girls live to grow up they will not marry gamblers.'

"As soon as Mr. Hatch had gone away, the eldest girl put a little shawl over her head and walked a mile, without over-shoes, through the snow, to her grandfather's, who came with his team and took his daughter and the other two children home with him.

"'When Mr. Hatch came home that night and found his wife and children gone, he was furious and when he came into the barn gave me a kick in my side. He fed us all the hay there was, and I know I could have eaten every bit of it myself and then not had enough to satisfy my hunger. The next morning, two men came into the barn, and one of them said he was a constable and told the man with him that he would sell me to him for twenty dollars; and that he had sold the horses for seventy-five dollars. He said Jim got into a row, the night before, with some gamblers and nearly killed one of them, for which he was put in jail, and he was ordered to sell his stock. The man who bought me said I was a very poor cow for twenty dollars, but he knew that Jim Hatch had paid thirty dollars for me. He said he worked on the railroad section and would pay for me the next pay-day. The constable said, 'That's all right, I know you will do it, because you neither drink or gamble.'

"The man untied me and led me home with him,—and oh, what a change it was to me! He took me into a nice warm
barn, as warm as a house, where I found plenty to eat and
good care—a great change, wasn’t it? I found out that my
new owner’s name was Mike Sullivan. He would water and
feed me every morning before he went to his work, but, best
of all, his wife milked me. She did it so carefully and was so
kind to me. At noon, instead of letting me go all day without
anything to eat, as Jim Hatch did, she would bring me out a
nice mess of potatoes, turnip or apple parings, and always gave
me a little hay and a drink of water, and would say, ‘I am so
sorry to see you so poor, it is too bad that Jim Hatch ever got
hold of you.’ She said to a neighbor, ‘He was a poor stick. I
have known him ever since he was a boy. His father was a
drinking man and spend all his evenings at a saloon, until the
town voted not to license any more saloons because a poor
man’s horse fell into a well, back of a saloon, and got killed and
the town that granted the license had to pay the man for his
horse, although he left the horse standing out in the cold, near
the well, till after midnight, while he was in the saloon drink-
ing. It made the tax-payers mad to have to pay for the horse,
so they voted no license. But Jim’s father had his whiskey
just the same, though not so much of it, as he had to keep it in
the house and his wife, being the boss, wouldn’t let him have
only two drinks a day. He said he once had a hard time dur-
ing a strike, by his wife being boss, as she told him if he didn’t
go to work she would break his neck, and the union men told
him if he went to work they would kill him, so to save his life
he had to hide out from all of them. When Jim had to go to
jail, his poor mother was nearly heartbroken and she cried and
felt so bad that her brother, who is a rich farmer, bailed him
out, when Jim ran away and her brother had to pay the bail.
But Jim was not all to blame. His father was most to blame
for not training him right. He never sent Jim to school, and
would let him spend his time fishing and hunting. Jim would
shoot chickens and little birds just for the fun of it; he would
rob bird’s nests and do all kinds of cruel things; then he began
to steal things and was sent to the reform school for two years, and, their neighbors said, was not much better when he came home from there. His father set him the example of spending his evenings in saloons, which he has followed till it has brought him to ruin and disgrace, where all men, who patronize saloons, are brought to sooner or later. The liquor traffic causes more crime and suffering in the world than all other evils combined. Abraham Lincoln gave a true description of it, he said, 'The liquor traffic is a cancer on society, eating out its vitals, and threatening destruction. There must be no attempt to regulate the cancer; it must be eradicated, not a root must be left behind; for until this is done, all classes must continue in danger of becoming victims of strong drink. If the liquor traffic is a cancer, are not those who keep it up, whether by their sales or by their example, cancer planters?'

'The neighbor said, 'Every word of what Lincoln said is true, so is what you said about Jim Hatch not being trained right when a child.'

'Mrs. Sullivan then said, 'I tell my boys to go to school every day and not miss one, for, as the Arabs say, 'a lost day or a lost opportunity never returns.' I tell them they must be kind to their schoolmates, and obedient and kind to their teacher and, I guess, they are for one of them goes without his apple every morning so he can take it to his teacher. And I teach them to be kind to all animals and not throw stones at dogs and cats, or rob birds' nests and kill birds.'

'I thought Mrs. Sullivan told the truth about her three boys, for every time they came to the barn they would smooth my hair and pat my neck, and the largest boy would take a curry-comb and say, 'Well Old Nelly we don't keep any horse, so I'll curry you.' I felt awful good and was something I had not been used to in the last two places where I had lived. I found out, as I have since I have been here, that all people are not bad; that there are lots of good people, who have been well brought up and educated right. Why, only the week before
you came, I heard Mr. Philips tell a man, who came to buy some apple trees, that one of his boys, last fall, made a trap and set it out by the straw stack and caught six quails and two partridges for fear some hunter or cats would kill them. He built a nice pen out of lath and covered it with brush, so it would seem to them like being out in the woods, and kept them in it and had the man who took care of the cows during the winter, feed them every day until spring, when he turned them out to hatch their young in the woods, as God intended they should. He then said, ‘I have no fear of that boy’s future for a boy that is as kind to animals and birds and, also, to his mother as he is will never do anything bad, and will, if he lives, make a good, kind husband and a good citizen.’

‘He, also, told the man a story of two boys he knew in a western village. He said, ‘One day I met a little boy, on a village street, and he was crying piteously. I said to him, ‘What is the matter little boy, what are you crying about?’ He said, ‘I was out to Mr. Elwell’s, and he gave me two tame doves for pets. When I got to town I stopped to see some boys play marbles; when one of the boys, bigger than me, asked me what I was going to do with them birds, I told him I was taking them home for pets. He took them away from me and said, ‘I’ll tame them for you.’ Then he took some shingle nails out of his pocket and drove one through both bird’s heads into a door, as high as he could reach, and left them to struggle till they were dead.’

‘I told the little boy not to cry for a boy who would do such a wicked, cruel thing would never amount to much, and would grow up to be a cruel, wicked man.’

‘Mr. Philips said he watched the outcome of those two boys. The boy who was mourning the horrible death of his doves, after he finished his studies at school, learned telegraphy and worked his way up to a high position in railroad employ, which he held until his death. The boy who so cruelly killed the doves, did not go to school, and went from one thing to an-
other, and from bad to worse until his wife and daughters left him for his cruel treatment of them, and now he is almost an outcast.

"Mr. Philips then said, 'Parents should teach their children, especially the boys, that it pays to be good and kind. The early training and teaching of a good Christian mother influences the whole future life of a child; nothing is more effective and enduring, and if her teachings are supplemented by the precepts and example of a good, wise father the children, as a rule, grow up to be useful members of society.' Old Nelly said she believed what Mr. Philips said was true, as she had heard the hired men tell what a good Christian woman Mrs. Philips was, and how well she trained her children. That she taught them to be kind and helpful to their parents and to each other and to everybody, and not to expect or receive pay for every little favor they did anyone; that the two girls were several years older than the four boys and were lots of help to their mother, and helped her teach the boys to be good and kind. And I think they follow their teachings well for they are always so kind to every living creature on the farm. She said, 'The boys would often tell the men what their mother taught them and some of the little stories she would tell to illustrate the precepts so they would remember them. One day, when the hired men were talking about the good and bad saloons in town, one of the boys said, 'Mother says there is no such thing as a good saloon, that they are all bad, and very bad. She says that we boys must never go into a saloon, not even once, nor stand in front of one and look in at the door or window to see what is going on in there, as it might tempt us to go in; that we must shun even the appearance of evil and if we ever feel that we would like to go into a saloon, to see what the men do there, to always repeat this little verse to ourselves, which will keep us from going into such a bad place. I will tell it to you so you can repeat it when you want to go into a saloon and maybe it will help you to stay away from them. It says:
'Vice is a monster of such hideous mein,
    That to be hated, needs but to be seen;
But seen too oft', familiar with its face,
    We first endure, then pity, then embrace.'

The boy said, 'My mother also says we must do all the good we can in the world, even though we are not able to do only a little for though we are not saved by our works; they are counted to us for righteousness. I will tell you the nice little story she read to us to illustrate her meaning. She said: 'Once there was a man, by the name of Mr. Durham driving along the dusty road, looking in all directions for a stream of water, or even a house where he might refresh his tired and thirsty horse with a good drink of water. While he was thinking and wondering, he turned a sharp bend in the road, and saw before him a comfortable looking farm house, and, at the same time a boy, ten or twelve years old, came out into the road with a small pail, and stood directly in front of him.

'What do you want, my boy?' said Mr. Durham, stopping his horse, 'would your horse like a drink?' said the boy respectfully.

'Indeed, he would,' said Mr. Durham, 'and I was wondering where I could obtain it.'

'Mr. Durham thought little of it, supposing, of course, the boy earned a few pennies in this manner, and, therefore, he offered him a bit of silver, and was astonished to see him refuse it. 'I would like you to take it,' he said looking earnestly at the boy, and observing for the first time that he limped slightly.

'Indeed, sir,' said the boy, 'I don't want it. It is little enough I can do for anyone; I am lame, and my back is bad, sir, and my mother says, no matter how small a favor may seem, if it is all we are capable of, God loves it as much as He does any favor, no matter how much larger it may be; and this is the most I can do for others. You see, sir, the distance from
Maysville is eight miles to this spot, and I happen to know there is no stream crossing the road in that distance, and the houses are all some distance from the road, and so, sir, almost everyone passing here from that place is sure to have a thirsty horse that I can give a drink of water.'

"Mr. Durham looked down into the gray eyes that were kindling and glowing with the thought of doing good to others, and a moisture gathered in his own eyes, as a moment later he drove on, pondering deeply upon the quaint little sermon that had been delivered so innocently and unexpectedly."

Old Nelly told such good, interesting stories that I was always glad to have her tell them, and enjoyed them very much.