CHAPTER XI.

MOSTLY STORIES.

"But who shall speak for those whose mouths are dumb!
The poor brave brutes, with patient eyes, and feet that go and come
To do our bidding, toiling on without reward or fee
Wearing their very lives away, poor things, for you and me."

It was very lonely, after the auction, for us cows that were left, as there were more horses and colts left on the farm than cattle, and Mr. Philips was away so much that we missed his interesting stories; then, too, I missed Old Nelly and her stories so much. One evening, about a month after the auction, Mr. Philips came to the barn, just after the hired man had finished milking me, and put his arm around my neck and said, "Well, Queen, on my way home from the Farmer's Institute, at Columbus, I stopped at Sparta and took supper with Mr. Kingman. After supper Abe, the hired man, came in, and I asked him how Old Nelly was. He replied, 'All right, she eats good and is making two pounds of butter every day.' I told him I was glad to hear it, for I told Mr. Kingman she could do it. He said, 'We are going out to milk now, and as your train does not leave till eight o'clock, you can go out and see her.' Mr. Kingman went too, as he always liked to talk about his cows. I had forgotten about the electric lights, and wondered why we did not have a lantern, as it was quite dark. The man opened the door and when we were all inside closed it again, when Mr. Kingman reached up over his head and turned on the electric light, and there, as sure as you live, stood Old Nelly! in a nice
box stall, eating as contentedly as she ever did with you. She had nice clean straw bedding and everything comfortable. It was a great contrast to the miserable fare she once had with Hatch. I was real glad to see her, as she is having the best time of her life, now in her old age. She had good ensilage, bran and oil meal twice a day, and she is paying them well for that and her good care she is getting. I wish you could have seen her and seen how contented she looked. She looked around at me and Mr. Kingman said, 'I believe she knows you.' I stepped in beside her, and she looked around and licked my hand and my coat. I tell you, Queen, it pays to be kind to you cows.'

Speaking of Old Nelly's stories, I was reminded of one, she once told me, to-day when one of the neighbor's hogs broke into the orchard and followed us around for awhile picking up all the apples they could find. She said that at one place where she lived, near the village, her owner had a large pasture and took in some of the town cows to pasture by the week. She said, 'Once a man, by the name of Bill Sykes, came into the yard, one evening, where I was being milked, and said to my owner, 'Say Van, do you believe that old preacher, who lives down the road, at the edge of the woods, would steal?'

'My owner replied, 'He hadn't gotter steal for my boys said he gave them all a big lecture, at Sunday school last Sunday, for stealing grapes. What made you ask such a question?'

'Because, said Bill, 'I believe the old cuss is milking my cow for she gives a good mess of milk at night, and I don't get hardly a drop in the morning, and its been going for at least two weeks.'

'Oh,' said my owner, 'I don't believe it is the elder, for he is a real nice old man, and has plenty to live on, and every day his son brings him a pail of milk. I would sooner think it was Tom Roach for he's a born thief, and once stole a widow woman's axe and was caught at it. You'd better watch for Tom some night.'
"One morning, a few days after their conversation, Bill Sykes came into the yard and said, 'Well, Van, I've caught the thief. I got up about an hour before day and started to the corner of the pasture back of your barn, where the cows lay at night. As I went past Tom's house I saw he had a light, and when I got into the lot, where I could see the elder's house I saw he had a light too. So I said to myself I'll go over by the edge of the woods and lay and watch, and I'll get one of them fellers sure. After laying there shivering for a while, just as day was breaking, there came one of your old big hogs, down along the fence, and walked in among the cows that were lying down, and coming up to my old cow he rooted around her a little, when the old fool got up and the hog sat down on his haunches and began sucking her, as her bag hung rather low so he could easily reach it. It was such a comical sight that I just sat there and looked at him and laughed till he had sucked her plumb dry and walked off as contented as a hog could.'

"My owner said, 'I am glad you found out who the real thief is, and I had rather pay you for the milk, if you'll allow me pay for the hog's time milking, than to have you send him to the reform school, for I want to sell him in a few weeks.'

"'All right, said Bill, 'but you need not charge me for two week's pasturing. But I am mighty glad that I have found out who the real thief is. I don't care about Tom, but for heaven's sakes don't tell the elder for he is a good neighbor. We didn't guess as well as the city chap I read about the other day, did at the state fair. This chap stood looking at a fine steer when a couple of farmers came up and joined him. All three praised the steer, then the city chap said 'I wonder what he weighs?'

"'Well,' said one of the farmers slowly, 'it should be easy enough to guess pretty nigh his weight.'

"This farmer, you see, was an expert cattle raiser. He could, without difficulty, guess a herd of cattle's weight within a few pounds, but the city chap scoffed at him. 'Guess its
weight! Ha, ha,' he sneered, 'you couldn't guess its weight any more than I could.'

"'I don't say I could guess its weight precisely,' said the farmer, 'I say I could guess near it.'

"'Well, I'm a greenhorn,' scoffed the city chap, 'but here's ten dollars that I can guess as near to that steer's weight as you can.'

"'I'll take your bet, young man,' said the farmer quietly. The other farmer held the stakes. 'You guess first,' said the city chap.

"'Well,' said the farmer calmly and slowly, 'I guess he weighs 1,975 pounds.'

"'I guess the same,' said the city chap, 'now give me the money.'

"'What?' gasped the others.

"'Why,' said the city chap, 'I bet I'd guess as near as you, and I've done it. I've guessed the same; so now, give me the money.' You see, Van, he bet on a certainty.'"

One evening last spring, when Mr. Philips and the boys had been working all day among the apple trees, a dirty looking man came into the barn where we cows were being milked. He appeared to be greatly excited, and asked if he could stay all night. He said that one of his horses had tired out coming up the hill and could go no farther. Mr. Philips asked him where he left his team and wagon, and the man said he had left them out in the road, when Mr. Philips said, "Well, go and get them and drive up to the barn, and if you can put up with our accommodations you can stay." After he had gone for his team the boys guessed he was a peddler, but, when he came back and unhitched his poor horses, it was found that he had eight calves in his wagon. They were from four to eight weeks old, and as soon as the wagon stopped they began bleating for something to eat. Mr. Philips showed him where to put his horses and said to him, "How far have you driven today."

"Well," said the man, "I drove out from La Crosse this
morning to Midway, then to Holmen, then through Long Coulee to Barclay’s mill, an’ from there over the hills to Burr Oak, then over the ridge to Mindoro, an’ from there here. An’ I drove into good many houses to buy dose calves, an’ want to go to Salem, but dat hoss he play out, guess he no good.”

“My goodness, man!” said Mr. Philips, “I don’t wonder that the poor horse is played out. You have driven over forty miles, and have a heavy load too for live animals, like calves, draw heavily. Where did you begin to buy calves?”

In response to the question the man said, “I buy de first one near Holmen, an’ I buy all de time since ven I can. Most farmers want to keep der calves.”

Mr. Philips said, “We have not much milk to spare, but will put our calves on short allowance tonight and let you have the rest of it to feed those hungry calves.”

“But,” said the man, “I never feed dose calves, for we kill some of dem to-morrow night and some next morning, an’ dey dress much better ven dey be not much full.”

“My gracious!” said Mr. Philips, “What cruelty for a civilized land to allow! I don’t suppose, then, that you want any supper either, do you?”

“Oh, yes,” replied the man, “by golly I does, I’m hungry like de devil. I no stop to feed de horses nor eat any dinner today.”

“Mr. Philips said to him, “Why, you are worse than a heathen, you are not fit to own or drive a horse. If the women folks will give you some supper its all right, but I won’t tell them to, as we have had our supper, and you don’t deserve any.”

Of all the doleful noises, anyone ever heard, was the bleating of those poor calves, all night long, for something to eat. It made me think of the little girl I heard one of the boys telling about. She was traveling with her mother, in a sleeping car, and when it came time for her to go to bed she said, “I guess it isn’t any use to say my prayers tonight, mamma.”

“Why not, my darling,” said her mother.
“Cause,” the little girl replied, “with all this noise God couldn’t hear a word I said.”

The next morning, after breakfast, the man hitched up his team and started off. One poor horse could hardly walk out to the wagon. After he was gone Mr. Philips came to where I was standing and said, “Well I am glad they have gone. I know you heard those poor calves begging for their supper all night, and were sorry for them. It makes me feel bad to know that such cruelty exists, and I will not keep another outfit like that if I can help it. The cities have laws to prevent such cruelty, but there is no one to look after such things in the country. Every humane man ought to be appointed a deputy constable and arrest and fine such inhuman wretches. And it is appalling to think what our country will come to, with such men raising children and teaching them, by their example, such cruelty.”

In a few days, after this occurrence, we had another odd visitor. We had come up from the pasture early, as one of the cows had a young calf in the barn and came up to see it, and the rest of us followed her, as we knew we would find some feed in our boxes. I stood near the barn, where I could see a man driving his team up from the road. I saw that one horse was lame and a stream of blood was flowing from one of his feet. He called to one of the boys and said, “Oh, come quick! my hoss he bleed to deat—oh, dear!”

One of the boys ran to the house for their mother and another one out to the field for their father who came running to the barn. When Mr. Philips got there, Mrs. Philips was tearing an old flannel shirt into strips, and one of the boys was winding them around the cut foot, and the horse was staggering from the loss of blood. Mr. Philips said to the man, “Why, Benjamin, what is the matter now?”

The man said, “Oh, dear, poor Billy, he soon die! I had a load of salt for Hanson, and my team he back down hill over your wire fence, and Billy he cut his foot—Oh, mine God! he
die now, pretty soon—Oh, my dunder, such bad luck. I'd rader some man give me fifty dollars dan have Billy cut hiself so—Oh dear!"

The man then began to cry like a baby, when Mr. Philips said to him, "There is no use making such a fuss about it and calling it luck because it is all your own fault. If you hadn't been drunk it would not have happened. If you would keep sober when you go to town you would not have such luck."

"I was not much drunk," replied the man, cause I got some left," and he took a bottle half-full of whiskey out of his pocket, and Mr. Philips said, "Well, don't drink any more, you had better give it to Billy, for he needs it more than you do."

The blood was still running as the bandages did not stop it, and Mr. Philips told one of the boys to run to the house and get a pail two-thirds full of flour. As soon as the boy came with the pail of flour they stood the horse's foot in it and packed the flour over the cut, which stopped its bleeding. The man walked around wringing his hands and said, "Oh, dear! I have such luck I believe I go dead. Only a little while ago my team he run away in La Crosse, and my boy he fall out de wagon and broke his arm, dat cost me fifteen dollars, took all my load of potatoes to pay the doctor."

"There was no luck about it," said Mr. Philips, "for you were drunk when the team ran away, and while the doctor was caring for the boy the police had you locked up in the station to sober up. Now, Ben, if you will let whiskey and other strong drink alone you will not have such luck."

In about an hour the horse was so he could walk around, and the man wanted to borrow a wagon to drive home. Mr. Philips said, "No sir, I will not loan you a wagon because that horse is not able to help draw one four miles, and a sober man would not want him to do it. But we will help you to get on the back of the other horse, and you can lead Billy, and you must go very slow or the cut will start bleeding again, you must be at least four hours going from here home."
When the man was all ready to start he was very profuse with his thanks, and said that he would pay Mr. Philips for the shirt and the flour, and the time he had lost caring for the horse, but he had lost all of his money. Mr. Philips said to him, "Never mind, it is all right, that will be counted for humanity's sake."

The horse got well, but the man lost the use of him for four weeks. Not long after the accident Mr. Philips found out how it happened. He said that Ben was drunk when he left Salem and kept getting drunker all the way to the foot of the hill. There he stopped and sang a while, then started up the hill, still singing. When near the top he stopped the horses, as he was in the habit of doing, to give them a rest, when he stopped singing and fell into a drunken sleep. Another man, driving a team, came up the hill behind Ben and stopped, and, in order to pass on up the hill, he drove Ben's team off to one side of the road, where they stood, for about an hour, while Ben was dreaming. When he awoke his vision was not very clear, but he saw that he was out of the road. He pulled the horses towards the road, then tried to back into the track, but when the wagon got started, instead of going into the road, it went down the hill and, Ben, the horses and seven barrels of salt with it, over the wire fence, where the horse's foot caught in the lower wire and was cut under the fetlock. Luckily, for the whole outfit, the wagon was stopped by coming in contact with a white oak tree, which probably saved them from going into eternity, for it was thirty rods to the foot of the hill and very steep too. So after all, luck was in Ben's favor instead of against him. That evening after we cows were milked Mr. Philips said to the boys, "I wonder where Ben and Billy are by this time. I hope Billy is not dead yet, for it will be hard on Ben to buy another horse. Perhaps Jim McKinley would help him as he once went Ben's bail when Paul Johnson had him bound over to keep the peace." Mr. Philips then said, "Here, boys, is a good parody in this paper, in favor of keeping chick-
ens. I guess you had better get an incubator and try it. I'll read it to you." Mr. Philips read:

Tell me not in broken measures
Modern farming does not pay,
For a farm produces chickens,
And the hens—do they not lay?

Eggs are high and going higher,
   And the price is soaring fast,
Every time we get to market
   It is higher than the last.

Not a coop but it produces
Every day an egg or two.
So the farmer gains his millions
   Even though his hens be few.

Every egg is very precious,
   And the hens are held in awe,
When a hen begins to cackle
   Then the farmer goes "Haw, haw."

In the broad and busy farmyard
Struts a rooster now and then,
But the shrewd, bewhiskered farmer
   Only notices the hen.

Trust no rooster, howe'er showy
   Be the feathers in his tail,
Pay attention to the biddies,
   And your wealth will never fail.

Lives of farmers all remind us
   We may roll in wealth some day,
If we hustle to the market
   With the eggs our pullets lay.