CHAPTER XIII.

A PLEASANT VISITOR.

"This world is not just what it seems,
Our lives are full of empty dreams,
Of worry, toil and care;
Some do not call till 'tis too late,
Some fear it all for Jesus' sake,
But God will answer prayer."

Towards fall, Mr. Philips came home again, and the boys came up to the farm with him to gather apples to take to the fair. One rainy evening, one of the boys said to his father, "You remember pa, that you promised to tell us sometime how your life was saved another time by a dog, this is a good time to listen to stories, so won't you tell it to us now?"

Mr. Philips said, "All right, though I am not so sure about my life being saved this time, but I know I was frightened some. I think I bought the first thoroughbred bull that was brought into La Crosse County. I exhibited him at the first fair held in the county before the Civil War. He was over two years old and a handsome animal. He was a Devon, and came up the Mississippi River on a steamboat. I knew but very little then about bulls, and when the man, of whom I bought him, said he was perfectly gentle I, of course, believed him because I thought that a man, who had as nice a daughter as he had, would not lie to a young man whom he expected to be his son-in-law. Among my other purchases in La Crosse that day was
a dog, named Frank. His former owner said he was one-half mastiff, one-fourth bull dog and, he guessed, the rest was just dog. After two days acquaintance Frank and I became good friends, and our friendship continued to grow stronger for about six years, when he 'shuffled off the mortal coil' and passed to the reward of all good, faithful dogs.

"When I started to lead my bull home, accompanied by Frank, I felt as important as a young man possibly could, with no more of this world's goods than I then possessed. When I reached Mr. Ridgely's, Uncle Josh came out, as he was always on the look-out for travelers, and looked at the bull and said he was a fine one, then said, 'I wouldn't lead him with that strap in his nose, but instead of it I would have a stout staff with a good strong snap on the end of it.'

"'Oh, he is perfectly gentle, said I.

"'Well,' said Mr. Ridgely, 'my father taught me that it was the gentle bulls that killed people, as the ugly ones are always handled carefully.'

"I had previously found out that Mr. Ridgely was a Democrat, of the Buchanan stripe, and a kind neighbor and I found out that day that he was posted on bulls. I rested and watered the bull there, then went on nearly to the Sharpless creek when, all at once, the gentle bull gave an unearthly bellow and, before I knew what had happened, he knocked me down. It seemed to me like a stroke of lightning. He squared himself off and looked as if he was preparing to finish me, when help came from an unlooked for source, for, quick as a flash, Frank took a part in the melee and seized the bull by one hind foot and, the one-fourth bulldog predominating, he held on, although the bull kept bellowing and trying to kick him away. I still held the strap and was within a few feet of a small burr oak tree. I was on my feet as soon as Frank grabbed him and I told him to get away, and I made for the tree and tied the bull securely to it. I then walked back to Mr. Ridgely's and told him that I had been thinking the matter over and concluded.
that I would follow his advice, so came back to make a staff with which to lead the bull the rest of the way. He helped me make one, and I was particular to have it good and strong, but, mind you, I did not tell him of the time the dog and I had had with the gentle bull. The bull, Frank and I were the only spectators as well as the only participants, so kept the affair a secret among ourselves.

"I have traveled over that road many times since. I have attended farmers' meetings in Campbell and an Institute at Onalaska; have slept several nights at Hartley's and at Sharpless', and in all this time, for forty-five years, I have never been able to find out why that bull acted as he did that day. He walked the rest of the way home with me without the least trouble, and he was so afraid of Frank behind him that he pushed a little all the way. I kept him two years and always handled him myself, and never, in all that time, ever saw him make a bad move. But I never took him out unless Frank was along, and the bull always kept one eye on him, his religion was to 'watch as well as pray.' After I had kept the bull for two years, one day a man came to look at him, and before I knew where he was from I had given him my price and he had paid me for him. I then found that the man came from Illinois where the bull was bred. His sire had proven to be so valuable, that back at his old home they got track of this fellow and came way out here after him. When his heifers began to freshen, especially some that Uncle Jim Gilfillan raised, we found that letting him go was a mistake. But he was a good investment, for what I received for him and what I learned from him was very valuable to me for I have never, since then, had any trouble handling a bull. I have found that the only safe way to care for them is to always be on the lookout and keep them in a safe place; have also found that a good bull should never be discarded because he is ugly, but should be put in a safe place and kept.

The next evening at just dusk a man went by the barn
driving very fast, and was so drunk that he had to sit on the bottom of the wagon. After he turned the first corner the wagon rattled so loudly that Mr. Philips, thinking the team had run away, took a lantern and followed after the man. When he came to the corner he found that the wagon had run over a stump and thrown the man and seat out. The man laid with his neck across the seat and blood was running out of his nose and mouth. Mr. Philips could not rouse him, so came back and went to the house and told a man, by the name of Hans, who was stopping there, to harness his team and go with him to get Grayman and take him home, as he was afraid his neck was broken. They hurried to where he was, and when they began to lift him into the wagon they discovered that he was not as dead as he might be. He struck right and left and started for home. Hans walked by his side to steady him and one of the boys drove the team; but after going about forty rods Grayman balked and would not go any farther, so all of them stopped. Hoxie, one of the boys, was holding the lantern when Grayman began to swear, and struck one of the horses, then started to strike Hoxie who started for the house at a two-forty gait with Grayman following, and, for a while, it was hard to tell which one was ahead, but the pace was too fast for Hoxie and he fell down and the lantern went out. Grayman then stopped, but Hoxie jumped up and never halted until he was safe in the house and the door shut. About that time Grayman’s wife and her father made their appearance on the scene. When Grayman’s team came home without him his wife was frightened and feared something serious had happened to him, as she felt sure he was drunk, as he very rarely ever came home from town sober, so she came in search of him. They persuaded him to go home with them. He struck at his wife then started for home. Another convincing evidence of the evils of the liquor traffic.

The next day a Mr. Harris came to visit Mr. Philips and look at his orchard. He came early in the morning before we
had gone to the pasture, as we had been fed a good lot of apples and had not been in a hurry eating them. Mr. Philips said that Mr. Harris lived at La Crescent, and was one of the oldest horticulturists in Minnesota, and was a man of excellent habits; that he neither drank strong drink, used tobacco or profane language, which was a great contrast to the man we tried to do a kindness for last night. When Mr. Harris saw us cows he said, “Say, Philips, I have got one of your cows and she is the best cow I ever owned. She is the grade cow, Lizzie, that you sold to Mr. Kingman a year ago. I gave him the same he gave you for her, but I would not sell her for twice that amount. She is so good and kind that I can’t see why a man would want to sell her.”

Mr. Philips said to him, “If you had been in the apple business and paid interest as long as I have you would sell anything you had, except your wife and children and thoroughbred cows to get out of debt.”

“That’s the reason you sold her, is it?” said Mr. Harris, “Well, I heard in La Crosse that you had to pay a debt for your old partner, in Milwaukee, that cost you over two thousand dollars.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Philips, “it cost me over three thousand, and just at a time when I was raising and educating my six children; but I am thankful that I have something left, and it will be a lesson to my four boys not to sign any man’s note unless they get value received for it.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Harris, “it will not only be a lesson to your own boys, but to every boy in our broad land who reads it; it will teach them to be careful what they sign, to keep out of debt and not pay out as much money for interest as you and I have done. But, after all, Philips, you and I have much to be thankful for. To begin with we both chose a useful, healthful and, to some extent, profitable business, that of horticulture. But, of course, a visit to your place and mine show that we both experimented too much; trying and testing new fruits and
new varieties; trying to do too much to benefit others and not enough to benefit ourselves."

I listened very attentively for I liked to hear Mr. Harris talk, as he had a very pleasant voice and such a kindly face, and I knew he was a kind man the first time he put his hand on me, and when he said, "Well, bossy, they say your name

J. S. HARRIS

One of the Fathers of Minnesota Horticulture.

is Queen Vashti, and you are well named for you are surely fit to be a queen, and I am glad that Mr. Philips knows enough to keep you and not sell you as he did your companions, Old Nellie and Lizzie. Mr. Kingman, who is well posted on cows, said of them to me, 'Old Nelly made, for me, two pounds of butter a day all winter, and she knew a whole lot too, and Lizzie, here, though not quite so good, is as good an all-round
cow as I ever saw, and you will make no mistake if you buy her,' and I did not for she is a first-class cow if she is only a grade. Mr. Kingman likes to talk about cows, and always gives good advice about buying them and about caring for them after you buy them. He says that if one can't afford to get a thoroughbred to get the next best, a good grade, but to be profitable they must have good, kindly care and be well fed. He said there was one axiom he always tried to indelibly impress upon the minds of everyone who kept cows; that is ‘that a scrub cow with good care and well fed is more profitable than a thoroughbred cow with poor care and poorly fed.’ I believe it is true and shall preach the same gospel whenever I have a chance.”

Mr. Philips interrupted Mr. Harris at this point in his talk and said, “Hold on a bit, Harris, I know it is hard to stop either you or me from talking in a Horticultural meeting, and there are some thin skinned people who dread to see us get up, but now I want you to stop and let me talk a little while. You say that we chose an honorable and useful business, but what was far better than choosing a good business, you must remember, was that we chose good women for wives; women whose greatest and noblest ambition has ever been to make their homes happy—And what greater tribute can be paid any woman? To think of what a blessing our wives have been to us inspires me to make a little parody of a few lines of a favorite poem of mine:

‘Lives of poor men oft remind us
What a debt we owe our wives,
The best of women stand behind us
And make something of our lives.’”

“That is good,” said Mr. Harris, and, like the little story I heard you tell, the other day, at the Campbell meeting, it is true. You told about two men who made a small bet that each could make the best rhyme. One of them said, ‘I, John Sylvester, hugged your sister.’ Then the other man said,
‘That’s good, but I can beat it, I, Ben Johnson kissed your wife.’

‘Why,’ said the first man, that is no rhyme.’

‘No, I know it ain’t,’ said the latter man, ‘but it’s the truth.’

“I tell you Harris,” said Mr. Philips, “when men can do as a New England man once did, who put on his wife’s tombstone, after sixty years of married life, this inscription, ‘she always tried to make home happy’ it speaks volumes for their wives. He might have said of her that she was beautiful and an ornament in society; or he might have said that she was talented, charitable and a devout church member and still not have been able to say she always made home happy. What virtues this woman must have possessed; how self-denying she must have been,—especially if her husband was a horticultural experimenter—how tender and loving; how mindful of the wants of others. Her husband did not have to look for pleasure in public places, and her children when away did not dread to return for her life had taught them that the dearest spot on earth was home.”

“Hold on,” said Mr. Harris, “I like your talk, but I came to see your orchard, so turn your cows out and let’s go to work.”

“All right,” said Mr. Philips, “but I have given you a good true lecture, and know that I have described my wife’s home life and think I have, also, described yours. And I want to tell you that the longer I live the more firmly I believe that women are ‘the power behind the throne,’ and that nothing of any moment ever transpires without a woman in it. Here is a little stanza that just expresses my idea, now listen to it, then we will go to work:

‘They talk of woman’s sphere,
   As if it had a limit!
There is no place in earth or heaven,
There is no task to mankind given,
There is not a blessing or a woe,
There is not a whispered yes or no,
There is not a life, or death, or birth
That has a feather’s weight of worth
Without a woman in it.’”

“Well,” said Mr. Harris, “that is the best thing I ever heard,—now let’s be off for the orchard.”

When we cows came up from the pasture that evening I was glad to see that Mr. Harris was still there, because I felt sure that he would come to the barn again in the evening, and I could hear him talk some more. Mr. Philips said Mr. Harris was the president of the Minnesota Horticultural Society, and I said to myself, “Any society ought to prosper with such a man for president.” Sure enough, after supper, both of them came to the barn and talked a long time. Mr. Harris said he would stay all night and go with Mr. Philips to West Salem in the morning. Mr. Harris said, “I want to tell you Philips that I have been highly entertained here and have learned a lot. To see your top-grafted trees so full of apples shows to me that the work is a success. You have a grand place for a young man to learn a great deal before he plants an orchard. I believe you have done more experimental work here than any single individual in your state, and your state ought to pay you a pension for what you are doing. You have a great opportunity here for a young man to start in and reap the benefit of your experience, and it is, also, a good place for a young man to learn much about breeding and caring for dairy cattle. I think your plan of giving your heifer calves milk until they are over a year old is a good one and I am going to try it, and if I live I am coming here again my first opportunity.”

Early the next morning, after Mr. Harris and Mr. Philips had gone, the boys were at the barn, waiting for us cows to eat our apples so they could turn us out into the pasture, when one of them read a story to the hired man about President Lincoln and some motherless kittens—also a story about a boy that tried to drive a little kitten to a wagon—it said the boy made a cute little wagon, and a nice little harness out of some strips of
cloth and strings for lines and then he hitched the kitty in the
little shafts, and tried to drive it and to make it pull the wagon,
but the kitty would not pull a bit but just laid down and cried,
then the boy took a switch and switched it to make it pull as he
had seen men in town whip their horses to make them pull,
but instead of pulling the kitty only cried harder. His sister
just then came on the scene, and saw what the boy was doing,
and she said, "Don't do that, I have heard my pa say that a
cat was the hardest animal in the world to learn to drive and to
pull anything, as a man in Georgia once offered a prize of five
hundred dollars for a man who could break and drive six cats to
a little wagon. Several tried it, but no one was found who
could do it." The girl said, "Now stop whipping the poor
kitty, it is cruel, for the kitty don't know what you want it to
do, and God did not make cats to draw wagons, like horses.
Now if you will take the harness off the kitty I will tell you a
story I read about President Lincoln, who was said to be one of
the kindest presidents we ever had. On one occasion when
the President visited General Grant, at his headquarters, Gen.
Porter, who was General Grant's secretary at the time said
that three tiny kittens were crawling about the tent. Their
mother had died, and the little wanderers were expressing their
grief piteously. Lincoln picked them up, took them on his lap,
stroked their soft fur and murmured: 'Poor little creatures,
you'll be taken good care of,' and turning to Bowers, said,
'Colonel, I hope you will see that these little motherless waifs
are given plenty of milk, and treated kindly.' Bowers replied,
'I will see Mr. President, that they are taken in charge by the
cook of our mess and are well cared for.'

"Several times during his stay Lincoln was found fondling
those kittens. It was a curious sight at an army headquarters,
upon the eve of a great military crisis in the nation's history;
to see the hand which had signed the commissions of all the
heroic men who served the cause of the Union, from the gen-
eral-in-chief to the lowest lieutenant, tenderly caressing three
tiny stray kittens. It well illustrates his kindness, which was mingled with the grandeur of his nature.'

The girl then told her brother that if he wanted to grow up to be a good and great man and be honored and respected like Lincoln, he must always be kind to every living creature and not abuse any helpless animal—as he had done his kitty. The hired man said to Mr. Philips’ boy, ‘That was a good lesson for that little chap and probably he would never have thought of whipping his cat if he had not some time seen men whipping their horses when the load was too heavy.’ He said, ‘I wish I could read the papers as you boys can, but my father tried to have me learn a little English, and then sent me a while to Norwegian school, but most of the time he kept me at home watching cattle and doing other work, so that between work and learning two languages, I cannot read or write either well enough to do any kind of business, in any language. I tell you boys, I think a man should be educated to do business in the country he lives in, and then he can do something. Your father is educating you boys and learning you how to care for cattle and horses, and raise, graft and care for apple trees so that when you grow to be men you can easily find a good job, while I suppose I will have to grub and work for some one else all my life and may be die on the town as old man Bemis did.