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The Acton Free Press

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LITTLE BROWN HANDS

They drive home the cows from the pasture,
Up through the long, shady lane,
Where the quail whistles loud in the wheatfield,
That is yellow with ripening grain.
They find, in the thick, waving grasses,
Where the scarlet-tipped strawberry grows,
They gather the earliest snowdrops,
And the firs, crimson bud of the rose.

They toss the hay in the meadow,
They gather the elder-bloom white,
They find when the dusky grapes purple
In the soft-tinted October light.
They know where the apples hang ripest,
And are sweeter than Italy's wines;
They know where the fruit hangs the thickest,
On the long, thorny blackberry vines.

They gather the di[illegible] seaweeds,
And build[illegible] castles of sand;
They pick up the beautiful sea-shells,
Fairy barks that have drifted to land.
They wave from the tall, rocking tree-tops,
Where the oriole's hammock must swing,
And at night-time are folded in slumber
By a song that a fond mother sings.

Those who toil bravely are strongest;
The humble and poor become great;
And from those brown-handed children
Shall grow mighty rulers of State.
The pen of the author and statesman,
The noble and wise of the land,
The sword and chisel and palette,
Shall be held in the little brown hand.
—Mary H. Krout.

Katie Connolly's Wit

By R. E. Harriman

"BEDAD!" said Connolly. "Me Katie thinks wance and acts twice. 'Tis like a flash she is, wid the wit av her."

Katie lived on the flats east of Main Street, among foreigners of many nationalities. Her father owned his house, which was far more than most of the inhabitants of that quarter owned. The house was a cottage of five rooms, and in it Katie had been born sixteen years before. She had been a little mother to her three tiny brothers, as well as to many other children in the neighborhood.

Katie had dark red hair, gray eyes and a slim little body that moved very quickly. Constant practice in running down her three brothers when they strove to escape the bounds set by maternal authority had made her fleet and tireless.

There was an alley behind the cottage; backing on that alley, with its rear wall not twenty-five feet from Mike Connolly's fence, was an old, two-story brick building. It was a poor, shabby, cracked and sagging structure. The city fire department had tried for years to have it torn down, but the owner, who had money and influence, had managed to prevent it from being condemned.

Now he had decided to wreck the old building and erect upon its site a concrete warehouse. In the hope of saving money, he hired an inexperienced man to superintend the task of taking down the old building and instructed him to get laborers for the least possible wage.

The result of emp[illegible] cheap labor was anything exce[illegible]able. The men broke nearly all the glass that they were supposed to save, and some of them stole a considerable amount of the salvage that could be marketed at junk shops.

"'Tis shameful the way thim foreigners do be goin' at the job," said Mike. "'Tis costin' the ould skinflint twice what is fair. I'll not be wapin' over thot, but it fair makes me sick to see things botched."

What with keeping the three children out of danger, helping her mother about the house, and working on a new dress for herself Katie had her hands full; but she ran down to the alley now and then to watch the crew pretend to work. She liked to report to her father at night.

"Why, dad, those men only work when the foreman is right with them and stop as soon as he goes round the corner," she said. "To-day he had them split in three gangs, and all day long, whenever I took a look, one gang was just quitting, one was just starting and one was busy. They kept changing as he went round. The gang he was with was the only one really working any time."

By dint of an incredible amount of urging, the foreman finally had the building stripped, and only the four walls remained. He set eight men along one of the side walls to take the bricks off and drop them down to the ground. Half of the bricks broke when they landed. Katie, who had come down and was peeping in at the wide door that opened on the alley, made bold to speak to the foreman.

"Why don't you make chutes out of that old lumber and slide those bricks down?" she cried. "You're just wasting your wages and more."

"Git, you alley rat!" shouted the exasperated and perspiring foreman. "When I want advice I'll buy it from those that know more than I do, not from kids like you."

"You'll likely be coming to my brother Tim, then," Katie replied. "He's four years old last month."

Before the badgered foreman could think of a retort, Katie was back in her own yard. That afternoon she noticed with a grim smile that the chutes were in use. "[illegible]'re quite welcome to the advice I gave ye!" she called to the foreman. "I see ye made use of it." [illegible]

She was gone befo[illegible] he could turn round and muster [illegible] scanty wits. From that time on, it was an everyday affair for Katie to give him a word or sentence of advice.

The hand-picking method was too slow and costly to suit even the incompetent foreman; and so he had the laborers cut channels down through the walls at each corner. Then began the labor of pushing and pulling the front and side walls into the centre.

At last nothing was standing except the back wall on the alley. It stuck up against the sky, a ragged, irregular ruin. In accordance with the city laws, the wall was seventeen inches thick for the first story and thirteen inches thick for the second story. A wide doorway opened on the alley, and above it were six windows with a brick pilaster four feet wide between each pair, except in the centre, where the pilaster was six feet wide.

Since the narrow alley did not give room enough for using jackscrews and struts, the foreman decided to pull the wall over by main strength. He set a ladder up on the inside, carried two timbers out into the alley and leaned them against the wall opposite the ladder, to counteract his weight, and then climbed the ladder with a rope. After many futile tries, while his entire crew stood idle and watched him, he managed to paw the rope round the six-foot centre pilaster and to tie it in a bowline.

Gathering his full crew at the street front opposite the alley, he ordered them to take hold of the long rope. Then, because only a few of the men knew English, he stood at one side and indicated by swaying his body and extending his arms that he wanted them to pull with a rythmic swing that would make the wall rock with increasing force and yoldening sweep. When he felt sure that they all understood, he gave the word to begin.

Careful as he had been to act out the motions, he found that several of the men had not grasped his meaning. Many of the laborers were new to the job, for his crew was a shifting one; indeed, only a few of the men that had helped to pull down the side walls were left. The green hands were of about a dozen minds as to the proper way to pull; some tried a short, sharp jerk, others lay back on the rope in a long, steady heave. The foreman raged up and down the line.

Raging did no good, and he had to go through his pantomime again. His objurgations carried to the kitchen where Katie was working. Looking out she saw the wall sway a little.

"I'll bet he hasn't not a watchman in the alley," she said to herself as she ran out. "Some of the kids will get hurt."

She had guessed right in regard to the foreman's negligence. The alley held a company of small children, who stood below the rocking brick pile, craning their necks to watch it move. She herded them off to one side out of harm's way, and stationed herself to give warning to any and all who might enter the alley.

Meanwhile the boss had managed to separate those who understood what he wanted from those who did not. The first contingent started the swing. One at a time he ordered the other to take hold easily, until they all had caught the rhythm. Then he told them to put their weight into it. The wall began to sway in and out, farther and farther

"Swing—slack, swing—slack! In—out, keep—time, make—her go!" shouted the foreman in tones that could have been heard five blocks away. His body swung in unison with the men as he watched the top of the wall.

Out in the alley, Katie's quick eyes noticed one thing. The wall brought up with a shorter jerk when it went in than it did when it went out toward the alley. The pilasters, set in the wall to stiffen it, were bracing against the in pull, and the upper part was rocking outward too far.

"In a few more jerks he'll be having the whole business filling the alley and smashing the fences," said Katie to her little brother. "I'll warn him."

Running across to the yard next the wrecked building, she called to the foreman. He gave her one impatient glance and turned again to his men. She screamed shrilly at him four times but he paid no attention to her. With a shrug she whirled and ran back.

"He's that taken up with his own smartness he won't listen to me," she said to the children. "Keep back or he'll kill you."

The jagged wall was rocking now until it seemed that it must drop at any moment. The men were getting more weight into the pull now. Katie saw two cracks start to open, zigzagging out from the corners of the sections that the rope encircled. Watching the wall, she stood fascinated.

"Look, Katie! Oh, look quick!" said a child, tugging at her skirt.

She glanced down, then followed the line of the pointing finger, and her heart leaped. Coming down the alley from the west were two children, the older barely five years old. Their feet were flying as they raced, and they gave no thought to danger. Katie screamed at them, but unfortunately she chose the wrong moment to scream. The children stopped directly under the swaying brick wall, opposite its gaping doorway.

"Run! Run, Peter! Run, Johnny!" she called; but, panic-stricken now, they stood still.

At that instant the foreman added the strength of his arm to the rope and the two diagonal cracks ran higher. The part above the rope bent inward and suddenly dropped with a crash. The rope fell slack, and the pulling crowd tumbled over one another.

At the instant of the break, which tore a great gap from the tops of the windows upward, the wall was inclined inward to the greatest distance it had yet reached. It came back on the return swing without the control of the rope, and it carried beyond its former line. The joint that marked the junction of the first-story wall with the wall of the second story opened along the entire building. For a long second the upper section balanced uncertainly, then a shuddering whisper of bricks grinding on mortar ran through the air, and it started downward.

The two children still stood, looking up in horror, unable to move; but Katie, with a cry, dropped her head forward and started like a sprinter. Straight forward under the falling thousands of bricks she raced, with her feet flying faster than they ever had down before. Her hands went out before her and she ran low, like a greyhound when he sights his quarry. Her right hand closed on the upper arm of Johnny, her left gripped Peter by the scruff, and she shot through the open doorway in the wall, and was safe on the inside. Behind her the falling wall thundered into the alley.

The crash of the falling wall followed Katie's flight so closely that she had not yet paused in her plunge when the back rush of air blew her hair about her eyes. Standing just inside the doorway, she looked back at the cloud of dust that rose. Then she looked at the frightened foreman, who was running toward her.

"'Tis well there's them that has more wit than you!" she cried. "Ye neve' put a watchman to keep the alley clear. But for meself these two kids would now be the thick of a pancake."

TRADE SECRETS

For many years in Hong-Kong the industry of vermilion-making, entirely in the hands of the Chinese, has been an important one. The factories at Hong-Kong have invisible trade secrets. The manufacture of this pigment is among the foremost of the colony's industries. There are something like one hundred small plants for the manufacture of vermilion in Hong-Kong and Kowloon. The raw material comes from Australia, and the vermilion is prepared altogether by what is known as the wet method. The Chinese made artificial cinnabar long before Europe was a civilized country, and to this day there are trade secrets in the vermilion industry.

UNIVERSAL CRITICS

There are some people with a fatal insight for seeing how other folks should manage their affairs. They can point out without the least difficulty, the mistakes of the world in general, from an order of the Premier, down to the style of hat worn by the stenographer in the next office. The people who can point out every one's mistakes, frequently show a singular blindness regarding their own. Just as soon as you find yourself elected to assume the office of universal critic, you may be sure that you yourself are open to criticism, and the sooner you turn your gaze in the direction of your own weaknesses, the better for you.

HOW HE FOUND A HOME

It was a red-letter day" in Harold's life when he was told that he was to have an outing—two weeks in the country. Whether he was Harold Brown or Harold Jones or Harold Smith or Harold something else I do not know. He was known in the slums simply as Harold. He had been an orphan as long back as he could remember. His home—if the wretched back room in which he lived could be thus designated—was in the most dismal part of the slums. He shared it with an old rag collector, who had no love for him, but was glad to give him bed and board for his assistance. Harold's bed was a bundle of rags (as was his employer's), and his board—for the greater part—scraps. "Old Jake," the rag collector, made life lively for Harold in one respect, cursing at him and calling him vile names, and even at times using a lash. Could you have seen the boy's emaciated and bruised body you would have wept. Could you have known of the sorrow and longing in his heart it would have made your's ache. But at last there came a break in the dark clouds over Harold's head. He had been asked to go to the country. The old rag collector would not consent to Harold's going, but as he had no claim on the child the latter was taken from him. For the first time in his remembrance he was thoroughly cleansed and neatly dressed. It was then he, in company with nine other children and a caretaker, left the city in a trolley car. At 3 o'clock they reached the terminus of the road, where there were carriages in waiting.

A few days before Harold was asked to go to the country an old couple sat on the porch of a small house talking earnestly. They had outlived their children and found life lonely. The old man was rheumatic and often really needed young hands to help him with the chores.

"Samuel," said his wife, "the Hunts are going to take fresh air children—did you know it?"

"Yes, 'Liza, Tom Hunt told me about it to-day, and there are two going to Silas Greer's, two girls, Tom said. I wish we could take a boy," wistfully.

"Do you really mean it, Samuel?" her face lighting up. "Would you like to take a boy?"

The old man laughed softly.

"I'd like to have a boy around for a week or two just to see how it would seem, and I'd like to give that boy a good time. I'd like some poor little homeless chap—an orphan—who does not know what a good time means."

The face lighted up for a moment and then the light faded.

"But it won't do," he added, "it won't do."

"What don't do?" the old lady asked.

"It won't do to take a boy. It would make too much extra work for you—cooking and so on."

"I'd like the extra work," was the answer; "I'd like to cook for a hungry boy."

Her face glowed at the thought. He caught the glow.

"Would you?" he said, "then let the boy come."

And the boy came—it was Harold. Samuel Swift sent the message out through the agency of Tom Hunt.

"Ask for a boy who has never had a good time," was the message.

Perhaps there had never been a more surprised boy than Harold was when the Swift welcomed him. He had not looked for a welcome, but when the Swift's welcomed him. He gentle but close clasp and the old woman kissed his cheek and smiled upon him, a new world dawned. A lump came into his throat and choked him so that he could not find his voice, but when the lump disappeared joy was born. The Swifts were not rich, but they were in "comfortable circumstances," to use an old-fashioned phrase. They owned the small cottage in which they had lived all their married lives and the few acres of good land around it. They always had the best of food. Best of all they were truly good, and it was characteristic of them both to be ever ready and willing to lend a hand to any one in trouble. The moment they looked into the face of their small guest they knew that life had been hard to him. Had a guest come to them from the upper walks of life he would not—in fact he could not—have received better treatment nor a warmer welcome than Harold did. The boy's heart went out to them in the first love he had ever felt. They saw it in his eyes and heard it in his voice and they felt happier than they had felt for years. A small, pleasant room next to their's was Harold's. When the boy was stretched out in the soft bed it seemed that the old world had passed away. The simple, sweet old home was—to him—the most beautiful place in all the beautiful new world into which he had come. It could not have seemed so beautiful had it not come after a life in the slums. The boy's heart was full of joy and gratitude. After the restful sleep in the peaceful room came the call to breakfast. On the bed of rags there had been a kick to awaken him. Now as he dressed he heard a bird sing outside the window and he felt the sweet breath of new-mown hay as the soft wind touched his pale cheeks.

And, oh, that morning greeting, in the cosy kitchen—when the breakfast table was laid! He would never forget it—never. Then there was the breakfast—bacon and newly-laid eggs, toast and coffee with real cream. In all his poor, little dreary life Harold had never—until the night before—sat down to a table to eat.

The two weeks seemed to have wings. It was morning—blessed morning and then it was night. How to describe the time between night and morning I do not know except to say that it was all joy—pure joy. If the boy had been the Swifts' own grandson he could not have pleased them better. After the first morning he was never called. He awakened when he heard the old folks stirring. By the time Mr. Swift was dressed, he was with him feeding the chickens and pigs and hunting for fresh eggs in the barn. Before the first week ended the old folks felt as if years had rolled off their shoulders. The young lad whom they were helping was helping them. His great love for his new friends made him long to help them in any way that he could. Old Mrs. Swift said he was the handiest boy she had ever known. At the breakfast table one morning old Mr. Swift remarked:

"It doesn't seem as if it was two weeks since you came here, Harold, but it is."

The young face that had become so dear to the old folks clouded.

"Oh," the boy cried out, "oh! it's the day to go—isn't it?" and the bright world said it seemed to darken.

"To go where?" questioned Mr. Swift.

"Back to the—slums."

"It is time for us to tell you that we love you and want you to stay with us all the time," said the dear old man.

"And," put in the dear old lady, "if you could call us grandpa and grandma we'd like it."

Harold could not speak, but in his loving big brown eyes there was an expression that made them strangely beautiful. His lips quivered and his eyes filled with tears. Presently he arose from the table and—throwing his arms around first Mrs. Swift's neck then Mr. Swift's—he cried out "Grandma! Grandpa!"

After that, life grew still more beautiful in that humble home. The lovely summer passed away. There were no bird songs now, no green grass or sweet flowers, but the joy was there to stay. In November "grandpa" had a severe attack of rheumatism, but he did not seem to mind it much.

"For, said he, smiling, "I have a pair of hands that I call blessed hands—they do so much for us old folks."

It was a "picture beautiful" to see Harold doing the chores those cold days. He fed the chickens and pigs, cut up turnips for the cow, cared for the turkeys that grandma was fattening for Thanksgiving and looked after things generally as if he were the man of the house. As for grandma, he helped her in various ways, looked out for the wood and water, peeled potatoes and apples.

Over and over he told himself joyfully, "It's home—home—my home and there and they love me and I love them. Dear old grandma and grandpa!"—Earnest Gilmore.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

From the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, June 2, 1898

The gravelling of Mill Street roadbed is being extended this week from Elgin Street eastward.

About thirty of our local cyclists paralleled the principal streets, took a few turns around the park and a run out to Ranhockburn School, after which they were entertained at the home of the Misses Nelson.

Company C, Lorne Rifles, are parading at the armory here on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. Col. Sergt. W. J. Moore is the company's instructor.

The annual conference of the Methodist Church is in session in Guelph. A number of the members of the congregation here intend driving to Guelph to attend the Conference ordination service on Sunday.

The first baseball match of the season was played in the park on Saturday between the east end and the town resulting in victory for the east end.

DIED

OWENS—Drowned, at Guelph, on Thursday, May 26, John, only son of William Owens, Mount Forest, aged 22 years.

WALLACE—Drowned, at Guelph, on Thursday, May 26, Thomas Benjamin, second son of Hugh Wallace, Nassagaweya, in the 22nd year of his age.

CONCEALED WEAPONS

"Isn't that a sword cane you've got there, Sam?"

"No, sah. Dat ain't no sorde cane, sah."

"Well, it looks like one. Sam, you know it's against the law to carry a sword cane."

"Well, I ain't breakin' no lo', sah. Dat cane I take where I goes I' cullud balls, sah. It ain't no sorde cane; it am a razor cane, sah."

WHEN IT RAINS

It isn't raining rain to me,
Clouds of gray engulf the day,
And overwhelm the town;
It isn't raining rain to me,
It's raining roses down.
It isn't raining rain to me,
It's raining clover bloom,
Where any buccaneering bee
May find a bed and room.
A health, then to the happy soul,
A fig for him who frets;
It isn't raining rain to me,
It's raining violets.
It's raining daffodils,
In every dimpling drop I see
Wild flowers on the hills.

THE GOLDEN GLOVES FAMILY

Dorothy sighed a great big sigh as she laid her book of fairy stories on the table. Aunt Margaret, who was visiting Dorothy's house, smiled understandingly, for Aunt Margaret had read every one of those very fairy stories herself when she was a little girl. "I used to sigh for wishing rings, Dorothy," she said, "and for seven-mile boots and for golden gloves too. I never did find a wishing ring or a pair of seven-mile boots, but I did find the golden gloves."

"Really and truly golden gloves, Aunt Margaret?" asked Dorothy eagerly. "Can you wear them all the time?"

"When I put them on, they stay until I do or say something that is unkind. Then they fall off, and I have to put them on again."

"O, that's just like the fairy stories. Do you suppose I shall ever find any if I look and look?"

"Throw up your hands," said Aunt Margaret, "and I will put a pair of golden gloves on them."

Dorothy laughed gleefully as her two little hands went up quickly.

"Thumbs first," said Aunt Margaret as she rubbed Dorothy's thumb just as if she were putting on a glove, while she said one word as a fairy godmother would have said a magic word. The word she said was "do." Then she rubbed Dorothy's first finger on that, and said another word. The second word was "unto." Then came the second finger and all the other fingers of that hand, and then the thumb and all the fingers of the other hand. When Aunt Margaret had slipped a word on each finger, she made a motion as if she were pulling a glove up, first on the left hand and then on the right hand, as she said the last two words. The word she put on Dorothy's fingers and pulled up over her arms were: "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you."

Dorothy looked a bit disappointed. "O auntie," she said. "I thought you meant really and truly golden gloves."

"These are really and truly golden gloves, little girl; and if you will wear them all the time and get everybody else in the world to wear them, this old world will be a much more wonderful place to live in than fairland."

When Dorothy was ready to go out to play, she came up to Aunt Margaret. "I am going to try playing in golden gloves this afternoon," she said. "Please put them on for me again. I'm afraid they came off when I grabbed my storybook from Freda."

Aunt Margaret took Dorothy's two little hands and put the golden gloves on them again.

Then Dorothy went to play at Mary's house. Mary was her best friend. As she ran through the gate in the high hedge she heard something say, "Me-ow, me-ow." She saw a kitten with its head caught in the fence. "I'm in such a hurry! I s'pose somebody will come along and get that cat loose directly," she thought as she ran on. She stopped suddenly and looked at her hands. Then she ran across the grass, pushed the hedge back and gently lifted the kitten out.

"I think I'm going to like my gloves," she said to the kitten as it rubbed up against her feet and purred gratefully.

Dorothy and Mary played all the games they loved best. While they were blowing soap bubbles, Dorothy saw Mary's grandmother looking and feeling all around for something.

"She's just lost her glasses again," said Mary. "She's always losing them. Come on and play. She'll find them directly."

Dorothy looked down at her hands. "I'm sure my gloves will come off if I do not find grandmother's glasses; because, if I were a grandmother, I know what I should want a little girl to do unto me." So she laid down her bubble pipe and found the glasses.

When grandmother held her hand a minute and said, "Thank you, dearie," Dorothy had such a happy feeling in her heart she thought: "O, I know I'm going to love my gloves."

As Dorothy was going home, she passed the fruit stand on the corner. Some boys were teasing Camilla, the little Italian girl whose father had the fruit stand. Camilla's black eyes flashed angrily. As she turned quickly her foot slipped and she fell into a puddle of water. The boy who was teasing her clapped his hands and shouted:

"O my, what a muddle,
Boo Camilla in the puddle!"

Everybody laughed—everybody except Dorothy. She started to laugh too, for Camilla did look funny sitting right flat down in the street; but then thought: "O my gloves. I'm sure I shouldn't want any one to laugh unto me." So she went right over to Camilla and put her arm about her and helped her up. Somehow every one stopped laughing, and a little bird sang a happy song in Dorothy's heart: "Golden gloves are the very best gloves of all."

That evening Dorothy told Aunt Margaret and mother and father and her big brother Harold all about her golden gloves. Father said: "Have you an extra pair in mom's size Dorothy?" Dorothy slipped down from her chair and put a great big pair of golden gloves on father's hands.

"I might be able to use a pair myself," said Harold. So Dorothy put a pair on his hands. Mother and Aunt Margaret held up their hands too, and Dorothy put golden gloves on them.

The happiest family to be found anywhere is the Golden Gloves Family. Their home is more wonderful than fairyland, and sunshine follows them always along the trail of the golden gloves. Mrs. E. C. Cronk, in Sunday School Times.

THINGS TO FORGET

If you would increase your happiness and prolong your life, forget your neighbor's faults. Forget all the slander you have heard.

Forget the peculiarities of your friends, and remember only the good points which made you fond of them.

Blot out, as far as possible, all the disagreeables of life; they will come, but they will grow larger when you remember them, and the constant thoughts of any acts of meanness, or worse still, malice, could only tend to make you more familiar with them.

Obliterate everything disagreeable from yesterday; start with a clean sheet for to-day, and write upon it, for sweet memory's sake, only those selected things which are lovely.