
Little Ferns
for
Little
Fanny's
Friends.

LITTLE FERNS

FOR

FANNY'S LITTLE FRIENDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"FERN LEAVES FROM FANNY'S PORTFOLIO."

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CRAZY TIM.

WHAT in the world is that?—a poor old man, almost bent double, drawing a little wooden horse upon the pavement, and laughing and talking to it as if he were seven years old, instead of seventy! How white his hair is; and see—his hat is without a crown, and one of the flaps of his coat is torn off. Now one of the boys has pelted him with a stone, that has brought the blood from his wrinkled cheek; another asks him "how much he will take for his hat," while all the rest surround him, shouting, "Old crazy Uncle Tim—old crazy Uncle Tim!"

Come here, boys, won't you?—and let poor Uncle Tim go home, while I tell you his story.

Uncle Tim used to be the village shoemaker, hammering away at his lap-stone in that little shop with the red eaves, as contentedly as if he owned a kingdom. He always had a pleasant smile and a merry story for his customers, and it was worth twice the money one paid him, to see his sunshiny face and hear his hearty laugh.

But the light of Uncle Tim's eyes was his little daughter Kitty. Kitty was not a beauty. No—her little nose turned right up, like a little dog's; her hair was neither soft nor curly; and her little neck and arms were almost as brown as the leather in her father's shop;—still, everybody loved Kitty, because she had such a warm, good heart, and because she was so kind to her honest old father.

Uncle Tim had no wife. She had been dead many years. I shouldn't wonder if Uncle Tim didn't grieve much, for she was

a very cross, quarrelsome, disagreeable person, and made him very unhappy.

Little Kitty was his housekeeper now, although she was only seven years old. She and her father lived in a room at the back of the shop, and Uncle Tim did the cooking, while Kitty washed the dishes, made the bed, and tidied up the small room with her own nimble little fingers. When she had quite done, she would run into the shop, steal behind her father, throw her chubby brown arms about his neck, and give him a kiss that would make him sing like a lark for many an hour after.

While his fingers were busy at his lap-stone he was thinking —not of the coarse boots and shoes he was making, but of little Kitty—how he meant to send her to school—how he meant she should learn to read and write, and know a great deal more than ever he did, when he was young—and how he meant to save up all his money in the old yarn stocking, till he got enough to put in the bank for Kitty,—so that when he died she needn't go drifting round the world, trying to earn her bread and butter among cold, stony-hearted strangers.

Uncle Tim found some time to play, too. When it came sundown, he and Kitty, and the old yellow dog, Jowler, would start off on a stroll. It was very funny to see little Kitty fasten down the windows with an old nail, before she started, like some old housekeeper, and put the tea-kettle on the left-hand corner of the fire-place, and take such a careful look about to see if everything was right, before turning the key. When they got out into the fields they both enjoyed the fresh air as only industrious people can. Every breath they drew seemed a luxury; and as to Uncle Tim, I don't know which was the younger, he or Kitty. I am sure he went over fences and stone walls like a squirrel; and as to Kitty, her merry laugh would ring through the woods till the little birds would catch it up and echo it back again.

Then, when they reached home, they had such a good appetite for their brown bread and milk. Oh! I can tell you, Uncle Tim and Miss Kitty wouldn't have thanked Queen Victoria for the gift of her sceptre, they were so happy.

One day Kitty asked Uncle Tim to let her go huckleberrying. She said she knew a field where they were "as thick as blades of grass." Uncle Tim couldn't go with her, because Sam Spike, the blacksmith, was in a hurry for a pair of boots to be married in, and of course Sam couldn't wait for all the huckleberries in creation; so Tim stayed at home, humming and singing, and singing and humming, while Kitty tied on her calico sunbonnet, slung her basket on her little brown arm, and trudged off with her dog Jowler.

Jowler was very good company. Kitty and he used to have long conversations about all sorts of things. Kitty always knew by the way he wagged his tail whether he agreed with her or not. When any other dog came up to speak to him, he'd look up into Kitty's little freckled face, to see if she considered the new dog a proper acquaintance, and if she shook her head, he'd give him a look out of his eyes, as much as to say, "It's no use," and trot demurely on after Kitty.

Well, Jowler and she picked a quart of huckleberries, and then Kitty started for home, Jowler carrying the basket in his mouth part of the way, when Kitty spied any flowers she wished to pick. When she had plucked all she wanted she concluded to take a shorter cut home across the fields, and down on the railroad track. So they trotted on, Kitty singing the while.

By and by they reached the track. Kitty looked—there were no cars coming as far as she could see. To be sure there was a curve in the road just behind her, (round which the eye couldn't look,) but she wasn't afraid. Just then Jowler dropped the basket and spilt her huckleberries. Kitty was so sorry,—but she stooped down to gather them up, when a train

whisked like lightning round the curve on the road, and poor little Kitty was crushed to death in an instant!

Jowler wasn't killed—faithful Jowler,—he trotted home to Uncle Tim, who sat singing at his work, and leaped upon him, and whined, and tugged at his coat, till Uncle Tim threw down the blacksmith's boots and followed him, for he knew something must be the matter. Perhaps Kitty had fallen over a stone wall, and lamed her foot—who knew! So Jowler ran backwards and forwards, barking and whining, till he brought Uncle Tim to the railroad track.

Was that crushed mass of flesh and bone little Kitty?—his Kitty?—all he had in the wide earth to love?

Uncle Tim looked once, and fell upon the earth as senseless as a stone. Ever since he has been quite crazy. All he cares to do is to draw up and down through the road that little wooden horse that Kitty used to play with, hoping to coax her back to him.

Poor old Tim! Would you throw another stone at him, boys? Would you hunt the weary old man through the streets like some wild beast? Would you taunt, and sneer, and shout in his ears, "Old crazy Tim"—"Old crazy Tim"? Oh, no—no! Pick a flower and give him, as Kitty used; take his hand—poor, harmless old man—and walk along with him; maybe he'll fancy that you are little Kitty, (who knows?) and smile once more before he dies. Poor Uncle Tim!