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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
Andersen Andersen Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
London Descartes Wells Voltaire Cooke
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Allegories of Life

J. S., Mrs. Adams

Imprint

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I.

THE BELLS.

In the steeple of an old church was a beautiful chime of bells, which for many years had rung out joyous peals at the touch of the sexton's hand upon the rope.

"I'll make the air full of music to-morrow," said the white-haired man, as he lay down to his slumbers. "To-morrow is Christmas, and the people shall be glad and gay. Ah, yes! right merry will be the chimes I shall ring them." Soon sleep gathered him in a close embrace, and visions of the morrow's joy flitted over his brain.

At midnight some dark clouds swept over the tower, while darker shadows of discontent fell on the peaceful chime.

Hark! what was that? A low, discordant sound was heard among the bells.

"Here we have been ringing for seven long years," murmured the highest bell in the chime.

"Well, what of it? That's what we are placed here for," said a voice from one of the deeper-toned bells.

"But I have rung long enough. Besides, I am weary of always singing one tone," answered the high bell, in a clear, sharp voice.

"Together we make sweetest harmony," returned the bell next the complainer.

"I well know that, but I am tired of my one tone, while you can bear monotony. For my part, I do not mean to answer to the call of the rope to-morrow."

"What! not ring on Christmas Day!" exclaimed all the bells together.

"No, I don't. You may exclaim as much as you please; but, if you had common sympathy, you would see in a moment how weary I am of singing this one high tone."

"But we all have to give our notes," responded a low, sweet-voiced bell.

"That's just what I mean to change. We are all weary of our notes, and need change."

"But we should have to be recast," said the low-toned bell, sadly.

"Most certainly we should. *I* should like the fun of that. Now how many of you will be silent in the morning when the old sexton comes to ring us?"

"I will," answered the lowest-toned bell, boldly.

"If part of us are silent and refuse to ring, of what use will the rest be?" said one who had remained quiet until then. "For a chime all of us are needed," she added, sadly.

"That's just the point," remarked the leader. "If all will be still, none will be blamed: the people will think we are worn out and need making over. So we shall be taken down from this tower where we have been so long, and stand a chance of seeing something of the world. For *my* part, I am tired to death of being up here, and seeing nothing but this quiet valley."

A murmur ran from one to another, till all agreed to be silent on the morrow, though many of the chime would have preferred to ring as usual.

The man who had presented the bells to the church returned at midnight, after a long journey to his native valley, bringing with him a friend, almost solely to hear the beautiful chime on the morrow.

As he passed the church, on his way home, the murmuring of the bells was just ceasing. "The wind moves them—the beautiful bells," he said. "But to-morrow you shall hear how sweet they will sing," he added, casting a loving glance up to the tower where hung the bells.

A few miles from the valley, close to the roadside, stood a cottage inhabited by a man and wife whose only child was fast fading from the world.

"Raise me up a little, mother," said the dying boy, "so I can hear the Christmas chime. It will be the last time I shall hear them here, mother. Is it almost morning?"

The pale mother wiped the death-dew from his brow and kissed him, saying, "Yes, dear, it's almost morning. The bells will chime soon as the first ray comes over the hills."

Patiently the child sat, pillowed in his bed, till the golden arrows of light flashed over the earth. Day had come, but no chime.

"What can be the matter?" said the anxious mother, as she strained her eyes in the direction of the tower.

What if the old sexton were dead? The thought took all her strength away. If death had taken him first, who would lay her boy tenderly away?

"Is it almost time?"

"Almost, Jimmy, darling. Perhaps the old sexton has slept late."

"Will the bells chime in heaven, mother?"

"Yes, dear, I hope so."

"Will they ring them for me if—if—I—mother! hark! the bells *are* ringing! The good old sexton has gone to the church at last!"

The boy's eyes glistened with a strange light. In vain the mother listened. No sound came to *her* ears. All was still as death.

"Oh, how beautiful they sing!" he said, and fell back and died.

Other chimes fell on his ear, sweeter far than the bells of St. Auburn.

For more than an hour the old sexton had been working at the ropes in vain. No sound come forth from either bell.

"What can be the matter?" he exclaimed, nervously. "For seven long years they have not failed to ring out their tones. I'll try once more." And he did so, vigorously.

Just then the figure of a man stood in the doorway. It was the owner of the chime. He had gone to the sexton's house, not hearing the bells at the usual hour, thinking he had overslept; and, not finding him, had sought him at the church.

He tried the ropes himself, but with no more success than the sexton.

"What can it mean?" he said, as he turned sorrowfully away.

It was a sad Christmas in the pleasant valley. To have those sweet sounds missing, and on such a day,—it was a loss to all, and an omen of ill to many.

The next day, workmen were sent to the tower to examine the bells. No defect was perceptible. They were sound and whole, and no mischief-making lad, as some had suggested, had stolen their tongues.

The bells were taken down and carried to a distant city to be recast.

"There! didn't I tell you we should see the world?" said their leader, after they were packed and on their way.

"I don't think we are seeing much of it now, in this dark box," answered one of the bells.

"Wait till we are at our journey's end. We are in a transition state now. Haven't I listened to the old pastor many a time, and heard him say those very words? I could not comprehend them then, but I can now. Oh, how delightful it is to have the prospect of some change before us!" Thus the old bell chatted to the journey's end, while the other bells had but little to say.

Three days later they were at the end of their long ride, and placed, one by one, in a fiery furnace. Instead of murmurs now, their groans filled the air.

"Oh, for one moment's rest from the heat and the hammer! Oh, that we were all at the sweet vale of St. Auburn!" said the leader of all their sorrow.

"How sweetly would we sing!" echoed all.

"It's a terrible thing to be recast!" sighed the deepest-toned bell; and he quivered with fear as they placed him in the furnace.

At last, after much suffering, they were pronounced perfect, and repacked for their return.

The same tone was given to each, but the quality was finer, softer, and richer than before. The workmen knew not why—none but the suffering bells, and the master hand who put them into the furnace of affliction.

They were all hung once more in the tower—wiser and better bells. Never again was heard a murmur of discontent from either because but one tone was its mission. In the moonlight they talk among themselves, of their sad but needful experience, and of the lesson which it taught them,—as we hope it has our reader,—that each must be faithful to the quality or tone which the Master has given us, and which is needful to the rich and full harmonies of life.

II.

THE HEIGHT.

There was once an aged man who lived upon an exceeding high mountain for many years; but, as his strength began to decline, he found the ascent so tedious for his feeble steps that he went into the valley to live.

It was very hard for him to give up the view from its lofty height of the sun which sank so peacefully to rest. Long before the sleepers in the valley awoke, he was watching the golden orb as it broke through the mists and flung its beauties over the hills.

"This must be my last day upon the mountain top," he said. "The little strength which is left me I must devote to the culture of fruit and flowers in the valley, and no longer spend it in climbing up and down these hills, whose tops rest their peaks in the fleecy clouds. I have enjoyed many years of repose and grandeur, and must devote the remainder of my life to helping the people in the valley."

At sunset the old man descended, with staff in hand, and went slowly down the mountain side. Such lovely blossoms, pink, golden, and scarlet, met his eye as he gazed on the gardens of the laborers, that he involuntarily exclaimed, "I fear I have spent my days not wisely on yonder mountain top, taking at least a third of my time in climbing up and down. Richer flowers grow here in the valley; the

air is softer, and the grass like velvet to the tread. I'll see if there is a vacant cottage for me."

Saying this, he accosted a laborer who was just returning from his toil: "Good man, do you know of any cottage near which I can rent?"

"Why! you are the old man from the mountain," exclaimed the astonished person addressed.

"I am coming to the valley to live. I am now seeking a shelter."

"Yonder," answered the man, "is a cottage just vacated by a man and wife. Would that suit you?"

"Anything that will shelter me will suit," was the answer. "Dost thou know who owns the house?"

"Von Nellser, the gardener. He lives down by the river now, and works for all the rich men in the valley."

"I'll see him to-night," said the old man, and, thanking his informant, was moving on.

"But, good father, the sun has already set; the night shades appear. Come and share my shelter and bread to-night, and in the morning seek Von Nellser."

The old man gladly accepted his kind offer. "The vale makes men kindly of heart and feeling," he said, as he uncovered his head to enter the home of the laborer. A fair woman of forty came forward, and clasped his hand with a warmth of manner which made him feel more at ease than many words of welcome would have done.

The three sat together at supper, and refreshed themselves with food and thought.

He retired early to the nice apartment assigned him, and lay awake a long time, musing on the past and the present. "Ah, I see," he said to himself, "why I am an object of wonder and something of awe to the people of the valley. I have lived apart from human ties, while they have grown old and ripe together. I must be a riddle to them all—a something which they have invested with an air of veneration, because I was not daily in their midst. Had it been otherwise, I should have been neither new nor fresh to them. How know I but this is God's reserve force wherewith each may become re-

freshed, and myself an humble instrument sent in the right moment to vivify those who have been thinking alike too much?"

He fell asleep, and awoke just as the sun was throwing its bright rays over his bed. "Dear old day-god," he said, with reverence, and arose and dressed himself, still eying the sun's early rays. "One of thy golden messengers must content me now," he said, a little sadly. "I can no longer see thee in all thy majesty marching up the mountain side; no longer can I follow thee walking over the hill-tops, and resting thy head against the crimson sky at evening; but smile on me, Sun, while in the vale I tarry, and warm my seeds to life while on thy daily march."

The old man went from his room refreshed by sleep, and partook of the bread and honey which the kind woman had ready for him. Then, thanking them for their hospitality, he departed.

The laborer and wife watched him out of sight, and thought they had never seen anything more beautiful than his white hair waving in the morning breeze.

At dusk a light shone in the vacant cottage, and they sent him fresh cakes, milk, and honey for his evening meal.

Ten years passed away. The old man had cultured his land, and no fairer flowers or sweeter fruits grew in the valley than his own. He had taught the people many truths which he had learned in his solitary life on the mountain, and in return had learned much from them. He faded slowly away. The brilliant flowers within his garden grew suddenly distasteful to him. He longed to look once more on a pure white blossom which grew only at the mountain top. With its whiteness no flower could compare. There were others, growing half way up, that approached its purity, but none equaled the flower on the summit.

"I should like, of all things," answered the old man, when they desired to know what would most please him,—"for he had become a great favorite in the valley,—to look once more upon my pure white flower ere I die; but it's so far to the mountain top, none will care to climb."

"Thou *shalt* see it!" exclaimed a strong youth, who was courageous, but seldom completed anything he undertook, for lack of perseverance.

The old man blessed him. He started for the mountain, and walked a long way up its side, often missing his footing, and at one time seeking aid from a rotten branch, which broke in his grasp and nearly threw him to the base.

After repeated efforts to reach the summit, he found a sweet, pale blossom growing in a mossy nook by a rock.

"Ah! here it is—the same, I dare say, as those on the mountain top. So what need of climbing farther? What a lucky fellow I am to save so many steps for myself!" and he went down the mountain side as fast as he could, amid the rank and tangled wood, with the flower in his hand.

Day was walking over the meadows with golden feet when he entered the cottage and placed the blossom exultingly in the old man's palm.

"What! so quick returned?" he said. "Thou must have been very swift—but this, my good young man, never grew on the mountain top! Thee must have found this half way up. I remember well those little flowers—they grew by the rocks where I used to rest when on my journey up."

The crowd who had come to see the strange white flower now laughed aloud, which made the youth withdraw, abashed and much humbled. Had he been strong of heart, he would have tried again, and not returned without the blossom from the mountain top. Many others tried, but never had the courage to reach its height; while the old man daily grew weaker.

"He'll die without setting eyes on his flower," said the good woman who had given him shelter the night he came to the valley. She had not the courage to try the ascent, but she endeavored to stimulate others to go to the top and bring the blossom to cheer his heart. She offered, as reward, choice fruits and linen from her stores; but all had some excuse, although they loved the old man tenderly: none felt equal to the effort.

Towards noon, a pale, fragile girl, from a distant part of the vale, appeared, who had heard of his desire, and stood at the door of his cottage and knocked.

"What dost thou wish?" he asked from within.

"To go to the mountain for the flower and place it in thy hand," she answered, as she entered his room and meekly stood before him.

"Thou art very frail of body," he replied, "but strong of heart. Go, try, and my soul will follow and strengthen thee, fair daughter."

She kissed his hand, and departed.

The morning came, and she returned not. The end of the second day drew nigh, and yet she came not back.

"Pooh, pooh!" exclaimed one of a group of wood-cutters near by the cottage. "Such a fool-hardy errand will only be met by death. The old man ought to be content to die without sight of his flower when it costs so much labor to get it."

"So think me," said his comrade, between the puffs of his pipe; "so think me. Our flowers are pretty, and good 'nough, too. Sure, he orter be content with what grows 'round him, and not be sending folk a-climbing." This said, he resumed his smoking vigorously, and looked very wise.

The aged man of the mountain was passing rapidly away. The kind neighbors laid him for the last time on his cot, and sat tearfully around the room. Some stood in groups outside, looking wistfully towards the mountain; for their kind hearts could not bear to see him depart without the flower to gladden his eyes.

"The girl's gone a long time," remarked one of the women.

"The longer she's gone, the surer the sign she's reached the mountain top. It's a long way up there, and a weary journey back. My feet have trod it often, and I know all the sharp rocks and the tangled branches in the way. But she will come yet. I hear footsteps not far away."

"But too late, we fear, for your eyes to behold the blossom, should she bring it."

"Then put it on my grave—but hark! she comes—some one approaches!"

Through the crowd, holding high the spotless flower, came the fair girl, with torn sandals and weary feet, but with beaming eyes. The old man raised himself in bed, while she knelt to receive his blessing.

"Fair girl,"—he spoke in those clear tones which the dying ever use,— "the whiteness of this blossom is only rivaled by the angels' garments. Its spotless purity enters ever into the soul of him who plucks it, making it white as their robes. To all who persevere to the mountain top and pluck this flower, into all does its purity, its essence, enter and remain forever. For is it not the reward of the toiler, who pauses not till the summit is gained?"

"Oh! good man, the mountain view was so grand, I fain would have lingered to gaze; but, longing to lay the blossom in thy hand, I hastened back."

"Thou shalt behold all the grandeur thy toil has earned thee. Unto those who climb to the mountain summit, who mind not the sharp rocks and loose, rough grass beneath their tread,—unto such shall all the views be given; for they shall some day be lifted in vision, without aid of feet, to grander heights than their weary limbs have reached."

The old man lay back and died.

They buried him, with the flower on his breast, one day just as the sun was setting. Ere the winter snows fell, many of the laborers, both men and women, went up the mountain to its very top, and brought back the white blossoms to deck his grave.

The summit only has the view, and the white flower of purity grows upon it. Shall we ascend and gather it? or, like the youth, climb but half the distance, and cheat our eyes and souls of the view from the height?

III.

THE PILGRIM.

One sultry summer day a youthful pilgrim sat by the roadside, weary and dispirited, saying, "I cannot see why I was ordered to tarry beside this hard, unsightly rock, after journeying as many days as I have. Something better should have been given me to rest upon after walking so far. If it were only beside some shady tree, I could wait the appearance of the guide. My lot is hard indeed. I do not see any pilgrim here. Others are probably resting beneath green trees and by running brooks. I will look at my directions once more;" and she drew the paper from her girdle and read slowly these words: "Tarry at the rock, and do not go on till the guide appears to conduct you to your journey's end." She folded and replaced the paper with a sigh, while the murmur still went on: "It's very hard, when beyond I see beautiful green trees, whose long branches would shelter me from the burning sun. How thirsty I am, too! My bread is no longer sweet, for want of water. Oh, that I could search for a spring! I am sure I could find one if permitted to go on my journey. If the rock was not so hard I could pillow my head upon it. Ah me! I have been so often told that the guide had great wisdom, and knew what was good and best for us pilgrims; but this surely looks very dark."

Here weariness overcame the pilgrim, and involuntarily she laid her head upon the rock; when, lo! a sudden spring was touched, and the waters leaped, pure and sparkling, from the hard, unsightly spot. This was the guide's provision for his pilgrim. It was no longer mystical why he had ordered her to tarry there.

When she had drank, and the parched throat was cool and the whole being refreshed, the guide appeared rounding a gentle curve of the road, and bade her follow him through a dense forest which lay between the rock and the journey's end. The steps of the pilgrim now were more firm, for trust was begotten within her, and the light of hope gleamed on her brow—as it will at last upon us all, when the waters have gushed from the bare rocks which lie in the pathways of our lives.

At last we shall learn that our Father, the great Guide, leads us where flow living waters, and that he never forsakes us in time of need.

IV.

FAITH.

"Children," said a faithful father, one day, to his sons and daughters, "I have a journey to take which will keep me many days, perhaps weeks, from you; and as we have no power over conditions,—such as storms, sickness, or any of the so-called accidents of life,—I may be detained long beyond my appointed time of absence. I trust, however, that you will each have confidence in me; and, should illness to myself or others detain me, that you will all trust and wait."

"We will, father!" shouted a chorus of voices, which was music to his ears.

With a fond embrace to each, he left them. Slowly he walked down the winding path which led from his home. He heard the voices of his children on the air long after he entered the highway—voices which he might not hear, perchance, for many months. Sweeter than music to his soul were those sounds floating on the summer air. Over the hill and dale he rode till night came on, and then, before reposing, he lifted his soul to heaven for blessings on his household.

With the sun he arose and pursued his journey. The summer days went down into autumn; the emerald leaves changed their hues for gold and scarlet; ripe fruits hung in ruby and yellow clusters from their strong boughs; while over the rocks, crimson vines were trailing. Slowly the tints of autumn faded. Soon the white frosts lay on the meadows like snow-sheets; the days were shorter and the air more crisp and chill. Around the evening fire the household of the absent parent began to gather. While summer's beauties abounded they had not missed him so much, but now they talked each to the other, and grew strangely restless at his long delay.

"Did he not tell us," said the eldest, "that sickness or accident might delay him?"

"But he sends us no word, no sign, to make us at rest."

"The roads may not be passable," replied the brother, whose faith as yet was not dimmed. "Already the snow has blocked them for miles around us, and we know not what greater obstacles lie beyond. No, let us trust our father," he added, with a depth of feeling which touched them all; and for a few days they rested in the faith that he would come and be again in their midst. But, alas! how short-lived is the trust of the human heart! how limited its vision! It cannot pierce the passing clouds, nor stretch forth its hand in darkness.

Together they sat one evening, in outer and inner darkness,—again in the shadows of distrust.

"He will never return," said one of the group, in sad and sorrowing tones.

"My father will come," lisped the youngest of them all,—the one on whom the others looked as but a babe in thought and feeling.

"I am weary with watching," said another, as she went from the window where she had been looking, for so many days, for the loved form. "Our father has forgotten us all," she moaned, and bowed her head and wept.

There was no one to comfort; for all were sad, knowing that naught but a few crusts remained for their morrow's food—and who would provide for the coming days? Lights and fuel too were wanting, and winter but half gone. Even the faith of the eldest had long since departed, and he too had yielded to distrust.

"My father will come," still whispered the little one, strong in her child-trust, while the others doubted.

"It's because she's so young, and cannot reason like us," they said among themselves.

"Perhaps God can speak to her because she is so simple," said one of the household with whom words were few.

They looked at each other as though a ray of sunlight had flashed through their dwelling. Something akin to hope began to spring in their hearts, but died away as the chilling blasts came moaning around them.

Three days passed, while the storm raged and threatened to bury their home beneath the heavy snows. There was no food now to share between them. The last crumb had been given the child to soften her cries of hunger.

"I can stand this no longer," said the eldest, wrapping his garments around him, and preparing to go forth to find labor and bread for his brothers and sisters. "Ah, that I should ever have lived to see this day!"—he murmured—"the day in which we are deserted and forgotten by our father."

The sound of murmuring within now mingled with the sighing of the winds without. He stepped to the door; but for an instant the fierce blasts drove him back—yet but for an instant. "I will not add cowardice to sorrow," he said to them, in reply to their entreaties not to go in the storm. With one strong effort he faced the chilling sleet, which so blinded him that he could not find the path which led to the highway; yet he went bravely on, till hunger and chill overcame him, and he could no longer see or even feel. He grew strangely dizzy, and would have fallen to the ground, but for a pair of strong arms which at that instant held him fast. He was too much overcome to know who it was that thus enfolded him; but soon a well-known voice rose above the wind and the storm,—he knew that his father's arms were about him, and he feared no more. In the hour of greatest need the father had come. There, in that hour of brave effort, he was spared a long exposure to the wintry blast. A carriage laden with food, fuel, and timely gifts, for each, was already on the road, and would soon deposit its bounties at the door of those whose faith had deserted them.

What a happy household gathered around the father that night! There was no need of lamps to reveal the joy on their faces, and the darkness could not hide the tears which coursed down their cheeks. The little one awoke shouting, in her child-trust, "My father has come! me knew him would!"

And they called her Faith from that hour.

The only alloy in the joy of the others was, as the kind father explained to them the causes of his delay, that they had not trusted him with the faith of the little child; and when he told them of the strange people he had been among, who needed counsel and in-