

THE
VINE-STALK;

AND

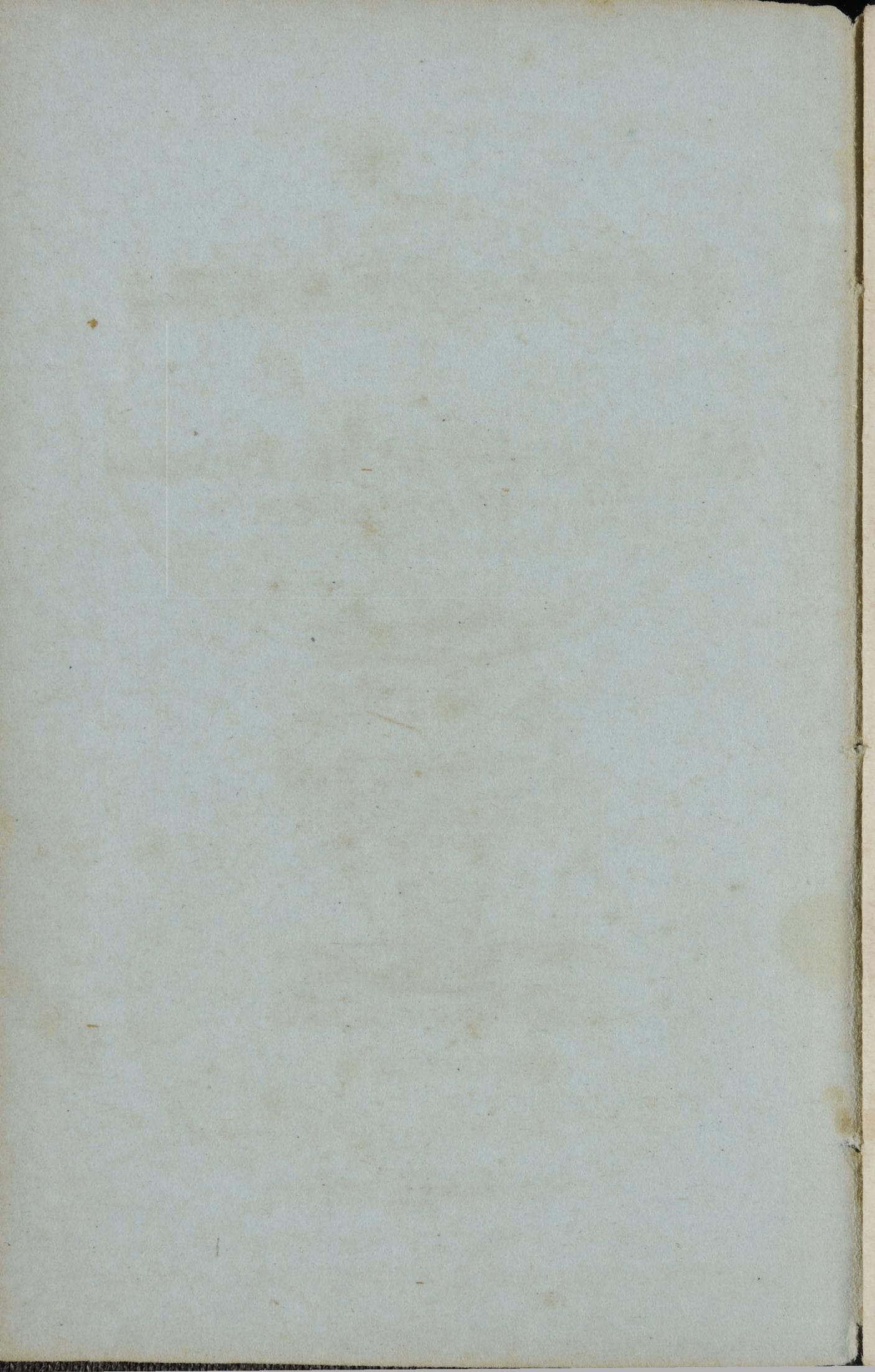
**The History of Benjamin
the Gardener.**



Providence;

H. H. BROWN, PRINTER.

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1831.



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The Dog is remarkable for his fidelity.



The Fox is noted for his cunning.

THE VINE-STALK.



In the beginning of the spring, Mr. Sefton took a walk one day about his country house, with his son Jerry. The violets and primroses were in full blow; and many of the trees were already budding forth their green leaves, while others were bright and gay with white or crimson blossoms, that promised the finest fruits. They strolled on till they came to an alley of lattice-work, at the foot of which was planted a vine, whose rough and crooked stem spread without

beauty or order, its brown and naked stalk all over the lattice. Papa, cried Jerry, do you see this ugly tree, that looks as if it was staring and making faces at us? Why should not we tear it up, and give it to the gardener, to heat his oven?

Jerry then began pulling at it as hard as he could, in order to force it up by the roots; but the roots were too deep in the earth for his strength. "Pray let it alone," cried Mr. Sefton; "I will not have it removed. I shall tell you in due time, my reasons."

Jerry. "But only look, papa, at those beautiful blossoms of the almond and peach trees! Why should not the vine be as pretty too, if it had a mind not to be pulled up? It spoils and destroys the

whole look of every thing. Shall I go and tell the gardener to come and drag it away?"

Mr. Sefton. "No, my dear; I would have it stay where it is, a little while longer."

Jerry still persisted in abusing it: his father endeavored to turn his attention upon other objects; and, at last, the unfortunate vine-stalk was forgotten.

Mr. Sefton's affairs, soon after, carried him to a town at some distance, where he was detained till the autumn.

His first care then, was to visit his country seat; and he again took his little son with him. The weather was extremely hot, and they sought shelter from the rays of the sun, by walking in the alley of lattice-work.

“ Ah, papa!” cried Jerry, “ how beautiful is this green, and this shade! How glad I am you made them take away that nasty dry old wood, that I was so vexed to see in the spring, and surprise me by putting in its place the most charming tree that ever I saw in my life! What delightful fruit it has! Only look at these fine grapes —some green, some purple, and some almost black! There is not one single tree in the whole garden that makes so good a figure as this. Almost all the rest have lost their fruit; but this, only look, papa, how it is covered! see what thick clusters there are under all these large green leaves. I should like to know whether they are as sweet-tasted as they are pretty.”

Mr. Seston gave him one to

make trial of. It was the muscadine sort. His transports were now increased; and still more, when his father informed him, that it was from pressing these grapes that the delightful juice was produced which he sometimes had tasted at table, after dinner.

“I see, my dear, how you are surprised, (said Mr. Seston;) but your amazement will be yet greater, when I tell you that this is the very same tree, so dry, brown, twisted and sprawling, which you so much scoffed at in the spring. Shall I now, then, call the gardener, and tell him to root it up, and heat his oven with it?”

“O not for the world, papa! I would rather have him root up every tree in the garden. That muscadine is so good!”

Mr. Sefton. “ You see, then, Jerry, how well I did not to follow your advice. What has happened to you frequently happens in life. At sight of an ill-dressed or ugly child, the richer and happier are but too apt to despise him; to grow proud by being compared with him, and even to have the cruelty to insult and deride him. Be careful, my Jerry, of ever forming such hasty judgments. Perhaps in that very outside, to which nature has been so unkind, there may reside a soul, that may one day astonish the world by the greatness of its virtues, or instruct and benefit mankind by its extraordinary talents. The stalk may be rough, where the fruit is the finest and best flavored.”

THE
HISTORY
OF
Benjamin the Gardener.



NEAR the city of Boston, lived an honest and industrious gardener, whose name was Benjamin, and who was in general considered the most skilful in his profession of any in that vicinity. His fruits were much larger than any of his neighbors', and were generally supposed to have a more exquisite flavor.

It was the pride of all the neighboring gentlemen to have Benjamin's fruits to form their desserts, so that he was under no necessity of sending the produce of his gar-

den to market, as he was always sure of meeting with a sale for them at home. His prudence and assiduity increased as his good fortune enlarged, and, instead of riches making him idle, he attended more closely to cultivation.

Such a character and situation



Benjamin's industry and attention to his trees, is rewarded by much fruit.

could not fail of procuring him a suitable matrimonial mate, and he accordingly married a young woman in the neighborhood, whose name was Jane, and who was both prudent and handsome. The first year of their marriage was as comfortable as they could wish for; for Jane assisted her husband in his business, and every thing prospered with them.

This happiness, however, was not to last long; for near his house lived another gardener, whose name was Thomson, and who spent his time from morning till night, in an ale-house. The merriness and thoughtless humor of Thomson by degrees began to be pleasing to Benjamin, who fell into the same ruinous error. At first he only went now and then

to drink with him, and talk with him about gardening; but he very soon began to drop the subject of plants, and delight only in the praises of drinking.

Jane saw this change in her husband with the utmost grief and consternation. As yet, not having sufficient experience to attend the wall fruit herself, she was frequently obliged to fetch him home to his work, when she generally found him in a state of intoxication. It would often have been better had he kept out of the garden than gone into it; for his head was generally so muddled with liquor when he went to work on his trees, that his pruning-knife committed the greatest depredations, cutting away those branches which ought to have been left, and

leaving those that were useless.

Hence it was not to be wondered at that the garden fell off in the quality and quantity of its fruit; and the more Benjamin perceived the decay, the more he gave himself up to drinking. As his garden gradually failed in procuring him the means of getting strong liquor, he first parted with his furniture, and then with his linen and clothes.

Jane, in the mean time, did what little she could to keep things together; but all to no purpose. One day, when she was gone to market with some roots she had reared herself, he went and sold his working utensils, and immediately went and spent all with Thomson. Judge what must be the situation of poor Jane on her

return! It was indeed a heart-breaking consideration to be thus reduced to poverty by the folly of her husband; but yet she loved him, and equally felt for him as she did for herself, but still more for an infant, as yet but six months old, and which received its nourishment from her breast.

In the evening, Benjamin came home drunk, and swearing at his wife, asked her for something to eat. Jane handed him a knife, and put before him a large basket covered with her apron. Benjamin in a pet pulled away the apron; but his astonishment was inexpressible, when he beheld nothing in the basket but his own child fast asleep. "Eat that, (said Jane) for I have nothing else to give you. It is your own

child, and if you do not devour it, famine and misery will in a short time.”

Benjamin seemed almost petrified into a stone at these words, and for some time remained speechless, with his eyes fixed on his little sleeping son. At last recovering himself, quite sobered, his heart eased itself in tears and lamentations. He rose and embraced his wife, asked her pardon, promised to amend; and what was still better, he was faithful to his promise.

Though his wife's father had for some time refused to see him, yet on being made acquainted with his promises of reformation he advanced money sufficient to enable him to restore his garden to its former state. Benjamin did not deceive him, for his gar-

den put on another appearance, and cut a more splendid figure than ever. After this, neither his prudence or activity forsook him, but he became at once, and continued so even to old age, the honest man, the indulgent husband, and the tender father. He would sometimes tell this tale of follies to his son, as a lesson to him, how dangerous it is to get connected with bad company, and how easily human nature is led astray by the poison of example. The son, who thus acquired knowledge at the father's former expense, became a wise and prudent man, and continued all his life as sober as he was laborious.

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