
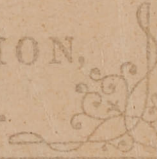


HANS AND MAY.



SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

200 MULBERRY-STREET, N. Y.





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HANS means John. Old Hans was the man that kept the church clean and dug graves in the graveyard. His hair was gray and his face was rough and coarse. His heart was hard and cold, but there was one soft warm spot in it, and that was for May, his little niece.

Hans had no wife nor child, and May had no pa nor ma. They were dead. So Hans was all that May had to care for her, and May was all that Hans had to love him.

It was a nice old stone church, with moss and ivy on it, and it stood in the grave-yard. They call it God's house, and the yard they call God's Acre. Here the dead sleep till God calls them up in the last day. Close by was the home of Hans and May.

You could just see the cot down the green lane through the trees that were on both sides.

Here they spent their nights and took their meals; but at all times of day, if it did not rain, you could find Hans in the Acre. It was his field, his park, his farm. Here he had trees, and plants, and shrubs, and he made it all look very nice. And the birds came and sung to him, and the bees would hum, and the brook purl by, and the leaves dance in the

breeze; but Hans still had that sour, hard look on his face.

And men would pass by and look at him, but they did not like him, he was so cold and cross. "It will be time to know him when we want him to make our last bed for us," they said.

"You will know me well then," Hans would say; "you will spend days and years with me here yet."

But there were times when Hans would smile, or the tear would stand

in his eyes, and they were when May was near. He had a kind heart for little May if for no one else. He kept one eye on her all the day long. And she kept close by him. While he was at work with spade, hoe, or knife, she would play on the grass near him, or feed the robin that came to take crumbs at her hand, and when she was tired of all these she would come and stand by Hans and watch him at his work. And when the sun grew hot they would go and

sit in the church porch, or up where the bell is hung, and talk of all sorts of things.

“Why is it, uncle, that folks are laid here in this Acre?” she would say.

“Why, they are asleep, my child,” said Hans.

“And how long will they sleep, uncle?” she would go on.

Then Hans would stop. He was not quite sure how long, but it would be for a long time to come.

“And will they be sure, quite sure to wake up some day?”

At this Hans would stop still longer. He did not know, he was not quite sure, “but they say so in there,” he would say, and point to the church.

“And will they sleep here in the cold ground all the while?” May would keep on in her childlike way.

“Well, *they* say,” and Hans would point at the church again, “they say

that the dead do not lie here all the time."

"Where, then, do they go to?"

"O to some fine place in the sky, where they wear white robes and are good all the time."

And then the child would come close up to Hans and put her small brown hand into his great rough palm and say: "Uncle, shall you and I be sure to go there?"

At this point Hans would change the talk. He would show her where

the robin was, or he would send her to the house to get him a drink, or he would go back to his work, and so he would not tell May if he thought they would be sure to go to that good world when they died. For the truth was, Hans did not care to talk of such things. He made graves for the rest when they died, but he did not stop to think that a grave would one day be made for him. He rang the bell for the dead, but did not care to think that the old bell-rope would

twist and turn in the hands of some one else when he should come for the last time to the Acre.

Hans did not lie, nor swear, nor steal; but he did not love God; he did not love to read in his good word the tale of the Cross nor the love of Christ. Hans cared for none of these things.

One day Hans was hard at work on a child's grave. May was at play on the path close by with a piece of string. While at play she held one

end of the string as high as her head to see how tall she was, and then she came up to the grave and laid the string down to see how long the grave was.

“O uncle!” she said, “this new place to sleep in is just the length for me when I die.”

“Die!” said Hans, and he put down his spade. “Why do you talk of that? Not you, my bird. Why, who would feed the robin, or take care of the plants, or what would

be left for me to love and care for?"

"But, uncle—"

"Not a word more, my child. The Acre makes you sad, May; let us go home."

"But, uncle dear, I want to ask that if I died I might sleep by the old yew-tree where I have slept so many, many times?"

"May, my sweet bird, you are too sad to-day. Why, you must grow up to be large, yes, and to have gray

hairs, and then it will be time to talk of death. Come, we'll go home, and I'll sing to you as we go."

And the old man tried to sing, but his heart was not in the song.

Hans had a strange dream that night. He thought that he lost little May, he could not tell where. He thought that he went all through the world and sought for her and could not find her. And one day when he was down in a dark lane he heard her voice in a song. It was

like the hymns they sing in church, but much more grand. So he went after the sound of her voice, and it led him up the rough rocks and in many a lone place till he thought he could not go on, and he must die there by the way. But the sound of May's voice gave him new strength, and he still went on and on a long time over a broad plain.

Then he saw a bright light over the plain. It was to him like a star, and the voice of May led him to that

light, and, as he came close to it, he heard more voices with hers, and he caught some of the words, and then he sung with them: "The Lord hath done great things for us, for which we are glad."

Then Hans woke up and heard the voice of little May, but it was not the voice of song. May was sick, and she called him to get up and come to her. She was quite ill. Hans knew it and the doctor said so. But they could not help her.

The next day Hans was in the Acre, but May was not with him. The birds sang, the plants were bright, and the white clouds were in the blue sky, but Hans was sad at heart. So days and weeks went on. The friends were very kind, for they loved little May and they felt sorry for poor Hans, and so time wore on, and May grew worse.

Hans had a little gold that he had saved up from time to time, and he

now told the doctor that he would give it all to him if he would save the life of the child. The doctor shook his head.

“Hans,” said he, “you of all men should know that death will not take gold to leave your child. May cannot get well.”

Hans was mad with grief. His friends tried to soothe him; but not till he had wept a long, long time did he seem to feel that it could be right at all. Then they told him that

May called him, and he went and knelt by the side of her bed. She put her little hand on his cheek as he bent over to kiss her.

“Uncle dear,” she said, “I know that I must go away. Jesus has been here to tell me that I might come to him. He will take me to the bright home in the sky where pa and ma and the good angels are. Uncle dear, I want to ask one thing of you.”

The old man, with a burst of grief,

said that he would do any thing she might ask.

“Then come to me in the new home. Christ will be glad to have you there too. O, uncle dear, do say that you will come to me there.”

Hans thought of the voice and the song that he had heard in his dream. He bent down his head and took the hand of little May, and said with a sad but true voice:

“I will come if Christ will let me.”

Now the room was full of light, as if the sun shone in there, and it seemed to be full of angels too. He could hear their voices in the same song that he heard in his dream: "The Lord hath done great things for us, for which we are glad."

He prayed there with the child's hand in his a long time, and when he was through the little hand was cold, and May slept the last long sleep of death!

Just by the old yew-tree in God's

Acre little May lies — just where she slept so often when she was there in life with Hans. Years have flown by. The bell has rung for Hans too. Hans did just what he told little May he would do. He learned how to love and serve God, and he has now gone to that bright home in the blue sky to keep his trist with May. And if we love the God that May loved we shall all go there too, and see the bright light that Hans saw in his dream, and join with him and

May in the song: "The Lord hath done great things for us, for which we are glad."

THE END.

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