

GYPSY'S SOWING AND REAPING

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Gypsy's sowing and reaping by E. Stuart Phelps

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E. STUART PHELPS

**GYPSY'S SOWING
AND REAPING**

GYPSY'S
SOWING AND REAPING.

Ward, Lock, Fowden & Co.

BY

E. STUART PHELPS,

AUTHOR OF "GYPSY BREYNTON," "GYPSY'S COUSIN JOY," "MERCY
GLIDDON'S WORK," ETC.

"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather,
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen while one stands."

WARD, LOCK, FOWDEN & CO.,
LONDON, NEW YORK, MELBOURNE, AND SYDNEY.

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GYPSY'S SOWING AND REAPING.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEST IN THE HAY.

"Gypsy, Gypsy!"

Nobody answered.

"*Gypsy!*"

A social young rooster, thinking himself personally addressed, replied to the name by a cheerful crow, and the cat, roused from her nap in the sunny corner by the hogshead, came up purring to rub herself against Tom's boot. Otherwise, the yard was quite still; so was the lane, and he had searched the chaise-house thoroughly. Of twenty or more places, any one of which Gypsy was as likely to be in as in any other, it was by no means easy to know which to choose. Tom decided on the barn, and pushing open the stable door, he walked in—as Tom walked in everywhere—with his hands in his pockets, whistling.

There was a stir of the warm, clover-scented air, and a faint rustling somewhere overhead.

"Gypsy, is that you?"

"Ye—s. What do you want?"

"Why didn't you answer a fellow before? I've been calling you *post hominum memoriam*."

"He might show off his Latin,—so he might!" interrupted the voice from overhead.

"Didn't you hear me?" demanded Tom, sublimely ignoring the thrust. Gypsy did not answer, and he climbed up into the loft to see about it.

"Well done! If you don't look as much like the brown pullet as any other simile that presents itself to the vivid imagination!"

Down in the sweet, warm hay, among the dried clover and buttercups and feathered grass, a great hollow was scooped like a nest, and out of it rose a round, nut-brown face, with brown eyes and ripe, red lips, and hair as black as a coal. As one climbed up the ladder, that was all that could be seen.

"Oh, thank you," said Gypsy, looking up carelessly, "you're always complimentary, but I'm afraid you're outdoing yourself. The brown pullet's a handsome hen, anyway."

"I really should like to know whether you heard me or not," said Tom, sitting down on the hay beside her.

Gypsy arched her pretty eyebrows.

"Can't you give a fellow a civil answer?"

"Certainly; but I'm afraid you won't think it's

very civil after I've given it. Will you have it, or won't you?"

"I'll have it."

"Well, then, I—suppose I did hear you. I didn't mean you should know it, but 'I can't tell a lie, pa, I can't tell a lie.'"

"Why didn't you have the politeness to answer then?" said Tom, with a genuine, elder-brotherly frown.

"It was impolite, I know, but you see I wanted to get through."

"Through?"

"Yes. I knew if you came I shouldn't do a stitch, and I came up here to mend,—don't you tell?"

"No."

"Well, I tore my dress, my bran new Fall delaine, and the very first morning I've had it on,—down the placket, clear away to the hem, running after Mrs. Surly's puppy, and the horrid little thing stood and barked at me just as if he were glad of it. Then you see she does so much mending for me."

"The puppy?"

"Of course."

"Ob, Mrs. Surly?"

"Exactly. Mother sends the clothes over to her every Wednesday night, and brings them back in a wheelbarrow Saturdays. I'm astonished you didn't know that without asking. Any more remarks?"

"Well, not just at present. If I think of any more, I'll let you know."

"Very well, I'll go on then. You see, mother is for ever sewing for me, and so I thought it was too bad in me, and I'd come up here and get it all mended without anybody's knowing. Besides, I'm in a terrible hurry to go to Sarah Rowe's. Ow! there goes my needle! Move away a little, please, and let me hunt."

"Well, that's the first time I ever saw anybody seriously set to work to 'hunt for a needle in a hay-mow.' If it isn't just like you! I hope you expect to find it."

"Here it is," said Gypsy, in triumph, picking it out from her boot-lacing where it had stuck. Tom subsided.

"There!" said Gypsy, after a moment's silence, in which her needle had been flying fast,—so fast that I would not undertake to say anything about the size of the stitches, "I think that will go. To be sure it's all puckers, and I don't know what mother'd say to sewing it with green thread, but it doesn't deserve any better,—the old thing! it needn't have torn any way. Now I am going to Sarah's."

"My company's not wanted then," said Tom, beginning to descend the ladder. "I'll make myself scarce."

"Why, I didn't mean to send you off. Did you want anything particular?"

"Oh, nothing, only I felt kind of social. You'll be rid of me soon enough, when I'm gone to college."

"I don't want to be rid of you, Tom. I'd love to