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Unknown, "Philip and Agnes, or, The Benevolent Children" (1806). *Historical Quaker Books*. Book 35.
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PHILIP AND AGNES;

OR,

THE BENEVOLENT CHILDREN.

Embellished with a Magic Lantern Exhibition.

PUBLISHED BY BENJAMIN JOHNSON, No. 249,
Market Street, Philadelphia.—1806.

PHILIP AND AGNES;

OR,

THE BENEVOLENT CHILDREN.

MR. AND MRS. MANLY, FREDERIC, EDWARD, AND CAROLINE.

MR. MANLY.

I SHALL begin this evening's amusement by telling part of my little story before I show my figures; and I will relate a few anecdotes of a brother and sister, who were unequalled in the county they lived in for amiableness of manners, benevolence, and generosity.

Obedient to the slightest wishes of their parents, and kind and indulgent to their servants, they were adored in their own family; and the interest they took in the concerns of their poor neighbours, made them beloved by the whole village.

Their father and mother were not rich, and consequently could not indulge their children in every act of good nature and kindness they wished to do; but as far as their pocket money would go, they contrived to assist many a sick and distressed person, and when they had no more money still visited and comforted them as well as they were able, carrying them a little wine or broth, or whatever their mamma could spare without inconvenience.

One of their great favourites was old Martha, who was sometimes employed to weed the garden, or to assist the servants when they were particularly busy. Martha was very poor, but always neat in her person, and never complained; on the contrary, she always appeared contented and thankful to God Almighty that she was, at her time of life still strong and hearty, and could, whenever she found any one kind enough to employ her, support herself by her labour.

She lived in a cottage by the road side, and having saved a few shillings, purchased what she styled a little shop, which she placed on a table, covered with a clean white cloth, at her door, and often sold a small toy, some gingerbread, or sugar candy, to people who passed in their way to the village.

Martha had a small garden behind her cottage, stored with useful vegetables, and a little sort of yard, where she kept a cock and hen, which had been given to her when they were but chickens by

her young master and mistress, and she valued them very highly on that account; moreover, she had now and then a fresh egg for her supper, and hoped in the spring to have a fine brood of chickens to sell, and often did she amuse herself, as many people do, by reckoning them before they were hatched, calculating how much money they would bring, and hoping by that means she might add to the little stock in her shop.

The spring arrived, and Martha took the first opportunity of setting her hen upon thirteen eggs, because she had been told she would have no luck without an odd number, and people in her station are often superstitious. Philip and Agnes were extremely diverted when she told them of it, and asked her if she did not think there might also be a charm in some particular number, as well as an odd one, which she assured them, with a wise nod, she thought very likely. This made them laugh very heartily, because they had both too much good sense not to see how very ridiculous it was to think so; but they were also too good-natured to let old Martha perceive that they were amused at her expence, and only said they wished sincerely that thirteen eggs might produce thirteen fine chickens, and that she might be able to sell them for a good price.

The poor old woman was however destined to undergo a severe shock; for on going the next morning, as soon as she was up, to visit her garden and poultry, she found to her great surprise,

the door open, and—sad to relate!—the cock and hen, with the whole thirteen eggs, besides her best apron, which was bleaching on the hedge, and her little tea-kettle, left by accident at the side of the well, were all taken away.

Trifling as such things may appear to those who live in affluence, it should be remembered that to a poor creature, who never earned more than six pence a day, they were very severe losses. She must pinch many weeks to replace her apron and tea-kettle; but the loss of her cock and hen, and all the hope of profit she had so long attached to them, that she had almost persuaded herself she saw the money in her hand, grieved her so much that she burst into tears as she stood looking at the empty nest, and had not power to quit the place.

"Who knows," said she "but the wind may have blown the door open, and they may be rambled out into the lane in search of food!—But what a foolish old woman I am! the eggs could not walk away, neither could my tea-kettle nor my apron!—No, no, too sure they are stolen, and I shall never be able to replace them."

Whilst she thus stood bewailing her loss, Agnes's maid happened to pass by the door, and hearing Martha's melancholy tale, endeavoured, as well as she could, to console her; but finding she could not succeed, went home full of the bad news to her young mistress.

Philip was soon informed by his sister of Martha's misfortune, who they found sitting in a melancholy posture by her little shop at the door; and who told them, with tears in her eyes, that she had no heart to go out that day, but should stay at home and try to sell something, hoping by the next morning she should be more reconciled to her loss, and better able to do her work.

Agnes said she also hoped it, advised her to be more cheerful, and not to fail being in their garden the next morning as she was very much wanted; this she promised to do, and they, wishing her a good morning, returned home.

Poor old Martha sold very little, and began to fear that all kinds of misfortunes were coming upon her at once. She went to bed in very low spirits, but reproached herself for it, and determined to hope for better days; called herself an ungrateful woman, undeserving the favours she had received from God, who had hitherto given her health and strength to gain her living, and would still, no doubt, if she trusted in him, continue to provide for her in some way or other. This comfortable reflection composed her to sleep, and she did not awake till the sun shone in at her little casement, and told her it was time to rise.

I am rather late, thought she, as she dressed herself, and the gardener will be angry; but my drop of milk will soon be warmed for my breakfast—I have no tea now!—to be sure that is a sad change!—but I must be contented.

Thus, endeavouring to suit her mind to her present circumstances, she went down stairs, and hearing a kind of bustle in her little yard, opened the door; when, to her great astonishment, the first objects which met her eyes were a fine cock and hen, exactly like her own, and thirteen young chickens just hatched. "This is witchcraft," cried Martha, shutting the door in haste.

CAROLINE.

Oh! there she is, poor soul! how frightened she looks!—But, papa, did she really believe it was witchcraft?

MR. MANLY.

No, no, she was not quite so weak as that, though a little superstitious: it was only her manner of expressing herself when any thing happened unexpectedly.

Turning towards the window, she met with another surprise, and her eyes were dazzled with the sight of a new shining copper tea-kettle, and a nice white apron; both so much better than those she had lost, that she stood motionless with wonder and amazement, when Philip and Agnes jumped in from the garden, and asked her if ever she had known the lucky number so quickly hatched, or an old tea-kettle become so suddenly bright.

Martha now guessed who had done her this piece of kindness, but could not find words to thank them as she wished: she could only shed

tears. At length being a little recovered, she asked her young benefactors how they had contrive l to get the kettle and apron into her house, and the poultry into her yard, without her hearing them.

" Easily enough," answered Philip : " if those who came with a wicked intention could manage to get in, why could we not do it, who wished to serve you, and at the same time procure a pleasure for ourselves by witnessing your surprise. Your garden hedge is not very difficult to pass, Martha, and my penknife soon pushed the fastening of your little casement, which enable me to place the tea-kettle and apron where you found them. We spent all yesterday in searching for a cock and hen as like your's as possible, and at length met with what we wanted at farmer Wilson's, and the hen had just hatched seven chickens : we determined to procure six more, thinking that thirteen chickens would soon console you for the loss of your thirteen eggs. Having the whole family in a basket, and being at once in the garden, we had only to open the door and set them at liberty in the yard ; and we had but just finished our work, when we heard you moving and opening your window. We then hid ourselves behind the great gooseberry bush, down there by the apple tree, and had the pleasure of enjoying all your surprise ; but my sister laughed so much that I wonder you did not hear her,

and particularly when you exclaimed that it was witchcraft and ran into the house.

"It was very foolish of me, master Philip," said Martha, "for certainly I do neither believe in witches nor fairies, or any such nonsense, no more than I do in ghosts or goblins; and I was as sure that all the things came there by human hands, as I was that human hands had stolen the others, though the hearts of those they belong to must be so very different. Surprised and astonished I certainly was, for how could I suppose that such a terrible loss would be so soon not only replaced, but that I should be richer than I was before! Never more will I complain or fret and vex myself, because every thing will not happen to my mind; it is very wicked to do so, but I hope God will forgive me."

Martha once more regaled herself with tea for breakfast, and then went cheerfully to weed in Mr. Fortescue's garden; and Philip and Agnes amused their papa and mamma with an account of their morning's employment, which pleased them so much that they doubled their allowance of pocket money from that day, as an encouragement to them, and that they might have it more in their power to do good than they had hitherto had.

They were delighted with this addition to their little income, and proved to their papa and mamma, by the use they made of it, that they had not mistaken their dispositions. They had

for some time paid the schooling of a fine little boy in the village, whose mother, being a widow, had not the means of doing it, though the child shewed the strongest inclination to learn, and they now found themselves so rich that they could afford to send his sister to school with him. She was a nice little girl, and learned to read and work so well that she was, some years afterwards, taken into Mr. Fortescue's family to wait on Agnes; and, being a faithful and honest servant, and of a most affectionate and grateful disposition, never quitted it.

These amiable young people continued all their lives as they had began it: obliging to every body, and assisting, as far as they were able, those who stood in need of it, they never went into the village without being received by its inhabitants with every mark of gratitude and joy.

FREDERIC.

A very pretty story indeed! papa! I wish we had such a Philip and Agnes in our neighbourhood; they were good creatures, that is certain; —yet there are many who would be as good as they were, if they had the means of being so. It is easy enough to be kind and charitable when people have plenty of money, but without that how is it possible?

MRS. MANLY.

There are many people in the world who have money sufficient for themselves, and to make numbers, who have scarcely bread to eat, comfortable and happy, yet their hearts and their purses are so shut up, that they will not part with a single guinea, unless for their own gratification and pleasure; but there are others who, not having the quarter part of a guinea to spare, find the means of relieving the afflicted. Of the last I once met with an instance, and will relate it to you, as it will prove the truth of what I have advanced.

A poor girl* who lived in one of the public streets in London, maintained herself and her mother, who was a cripple, and otherwise incapable of helping herself, by making old silk and cotton stockings into gloves and mittins, which, though it produced but a scanty pittance, kept them from wanting bread.

Chance brought her acquainted with another poor woman, whose situation was still more deplorable than her mother, for she was bed-ridden, and had neither child or friend to help her. The trifling allowance she received from the parish did little more than pay her lodging, and she

* This is a real fact: the author heard it from a person who lived in the street in which it happened, and who knew the young woman.

wanted every comfort, and even the necessaries, her situation required.

Sally, the poor glove-maker, was truly concerned for her, and grieved that her own and her mother's poverty was so great as to exclude all possibility of sparing the smallest trifle to assist her. She thought, and thought again, whilst she sat at her work, on every means to relieve her, but without success. At length, after discarding several ideas as impracticable, she stopped at one which she flattered herself might answer; and telling her mother she had business out of doors, which might perhaps detain her an hour or two, she determined to sacrifice that portion of time (which was very precious to one in her situation) to endeavour to do something for her poor neighbour; and, beginning from the door of the house in which she lodged, she went into the first shop in her way, and asked the master of it if he would be so charitable as to give a penny a week to save a poor creature from dying of want, if she took the trouble of calling for it every Saturday evening.

She was fortunate in her first setting out, for the person she spoke to was a man of humanity; and, hearing the story, and filled with admiration at the scheme Sally had fallen upon, promised t give her even more than she asked, and sent her to the next shop with a message from himself to the person who kept it, which secured her success; and in this manner she went quite to the

end of the street on the side on which she lived, and returned home on the other: and though there were, no doubt, many who would not have taken the trouble to send a penny to the poor woman, very few indeed refused to give it once a week when called for, because none doubted the truth of her story, her humane neighbour at the first shop having written a short account of her motive for soliciting the charity at the top of a sheet of paper, and put his own name at the beginning of a list of subscribers, which was filled before half the two hours she had allowed herself were nearly expired.

Her next care was to make a little bag, strong enough to hold so many pence; and every Saturday evening she went out on her pious errand, and always returned with a sum sufficient to support the poor woman in plenty the following week.

Thus did this good creature, by a little exertion, and by giving up an hour or two of her time once in seven days, save a fellow-creature from lingering out the remainder of her life in want and misery; and she was so delighted with the success and encouragement she met with, and brought home her bag of halfpence with so much joy, and so light a heart, that, though there can be no doubt but that she will meet with a more glorious recompence hereafter, she feels herself already amply rewarded.