

# The Green Sheaf

“Now, Philip, where is your clay chicken?”

Philip, full of a deep mystery, skuttled away and presently returned with a bundle tied up in a yellow handkerchief spotted with red roses. His baby fingers fumbled with the knots until suddenly the clay chicken was discovered shattered in pieces.

The stranger's eye grew stern. “Why have you done this? Were you so greedy to get the money?”

“Oh, no! darling Man-with-the-hat. I wanted to give you this—I bought it of the pedlar yesterday.” The words almost fell over each other with gasps and spasms of mingled excitement and smiles. He thereupon produced from the innermost recesses of his garment, a clay cow that stood serenely smiling on a terra-cotta base that matched her adorning spots.

The stranger turned hurriedly to Peter.

“And yours?”

Peter, the faintest suspicion of self-righteousness gleaming in his eye, displayed his chicken intact and in perfect condition. The stranger's face fell. He has kept it thus—he feared—because he is selfish and would hoard it.

“Oh, Mr. Man-with-the-hat, I wanted to buy you a cow like Philip—(surely a slip)—but I could not break the chicken because it was so beautiful, and because you giv'd it me!”

What need is there of more? So glad was the stranger with these answers, that he took the two fatherless ones to be his sons, and lest the cheese maker might be lonely, he took him also to be his servant, and they all lived happily ever after.

*E. Harcourt Williams.*

