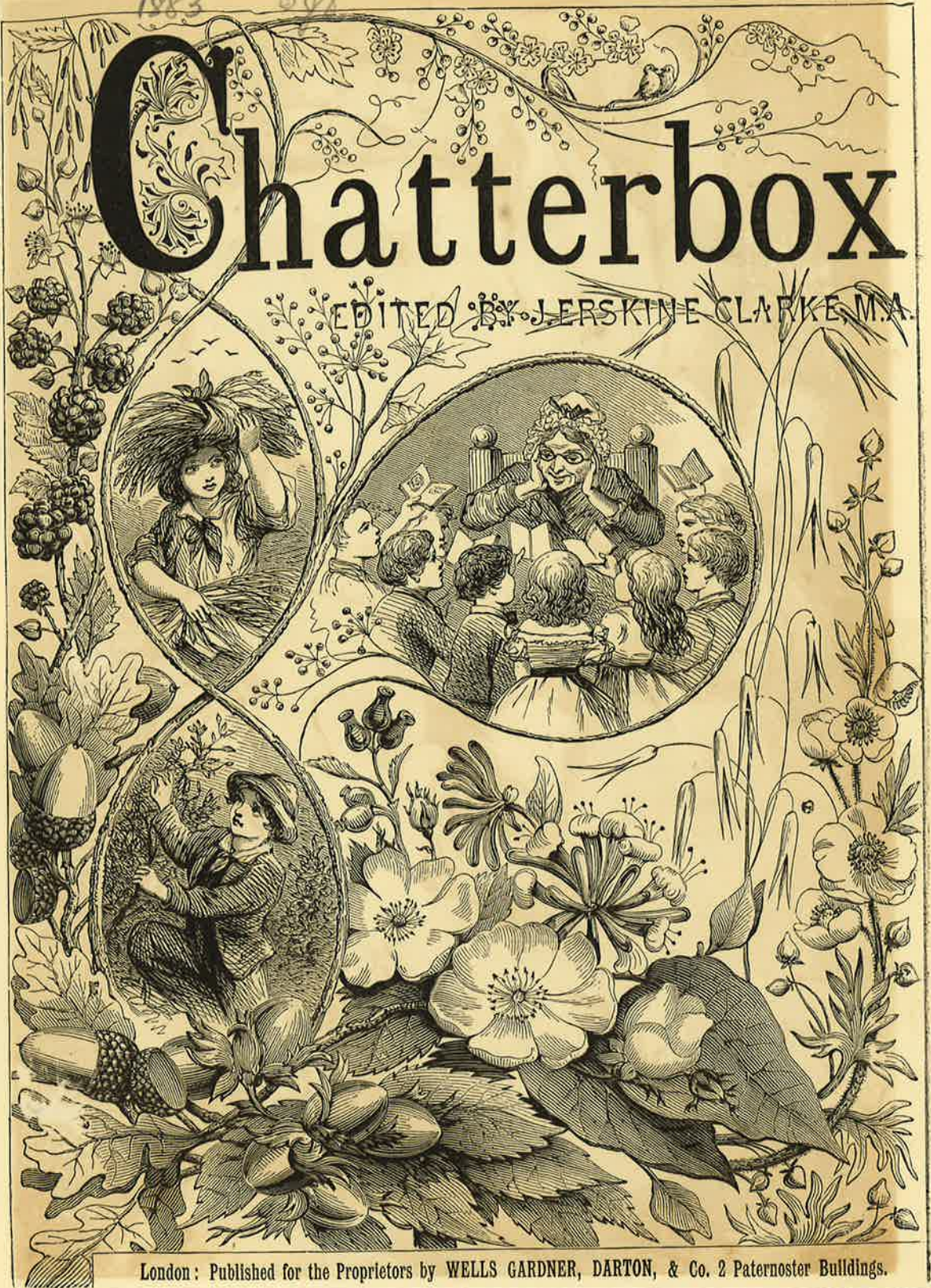


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Chatterbox

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GOOD ADVICE.

A LADY once applied to the Rev. John Newton for advice and consolation. Her distress arose from ill-natured remarks which had been made upon herself, and her dread of future annoyance. After listening to her tale Mr. Newton said, 'I will tell you a story. One day this winter, as I was going to visit some sick persons at a distance, I found a good deal of snow in the streets, and a number of idle boys throwing snowballs at people as they passed along. I made up my mind to pass them as well as I could; I did not, however, escape them, for they attacked me from behind, but I took no notice and hastened on, and was soon out of their reach, and was not hurt by the balls which struck me.

'On my return I came to the same troop, who were still bent on mischief. I prepared to be assailed, but as I drew near to them I heard one say, "Here he comes again, let us have at him!" but another said, "No, do not let us snowball him, for he took no

notice of us before." So I passed on and saw no more of them. Now, Madam, if you take no notice of these ill-natured things, the persons who have said them will cease to give you cause of complaint.'

THE STORY OF THE THREE HUNDRED SPARTANS.

XERXES, the king of Persia, resolved to conquer Greece, and he collected a great army from every part of his dominions. There were to be seen gathered together men of all nations: Medes and Persians, woolly-haired negroes and swarthy Indians, all armed with their various weapons—nearly two millions of fighting men. For the Persian empire was the largest in the world; and the king thought in his pride that he could easily overcome such a little country as Greece, that could only muster a few thousand warriors. But then these were all free men, fighting for liberty and their families, whilst the



Eurytus fighting the Persians in the Pass.

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Persian army was chiefly composed of men forced to leave their homes to fight for an Eastern tyrant. The king had spent four years in making preparations for the war, and he had a fleet of ships that he might attack Greece by sea as well as by land. He caused a bridge of boats to be made over the Hellespont, the narrow strait that separates Asia from Europe, but the waves dashed it in pieces; so he made a stronger one of ships, and then his army began their march. So great were their numbers, that it was seven days and nights before they had all crossed over the bridge into Europe.

Now there was only one way of entering Greece from the north-east coast, and that was by a narrow pass through the mountains. This pass was called Thermopylæ, from the hot springs there; it was about five miles long, but very narrow at each end. A little within the pass there was a wall that had been built at some former period, and here the Greeks, no way affrighted at the multitude of their enemies, resolved to make a stand, and bar the way of their invaders. So they sent a force of about four thousand men, under the command of Leonidas, to take up their position in the pass. Leonidas was the king of Sparta, and he had with him three hundred chosen warriors, all of them men ready to die in defence of their country. Two of the Spartans, however, Eurytus and Aristodemus, were attacked by a disease in their eyes that nearly deprived them of sight, and they were compelled to leave their posts and retire to Alpenus, a town at the southern end of the pass. The rest of the small army was composed of troops from the different states of Greece.

When Xerxes arrived at Thermopylæ with his vast host, he thought that the Greeks would fly in terror at the mere sight of him. He sent forward a horseman to examine their position. Now the Spartans wore long hair, which they were very particular to keep smooth and carefully parted; and the horseman saw them behind the wall within the pass, some of them sitting quietly combing their hair, whilst others were exercising themselves in feats of strength. There was with Xerxes one Demaratus, a deposed Spartan king, who had taken refuge at his court; and when the horseman returned and told the Persian monarch what he had seen, Xerxes, in astonishment, asked Demaratus if it were possible that this handful of men would dare to oppose him. 'They certainly mean to fight,' replied the Spartan; 'for it is the custom of my countrymen to arrange their hair before going into battle.' But the king would not believe him, and waited four days in the expectation that the Spartans would come out of the pass and submit to him.

At length he sent a body of troops to capture them, and bring them in chains to his feet. But the Spartans, firmly standing at the narrow entrance of the pass, drove them back with their long spears with dreadful slaughter. Xerxes was seated on a lofty throne, whence he could see the battle; and he now ordered his own body-guard to advance to the attack. They were called the Immortals, were ten thousand in number, were supposed to be invincible, and felt sure of victory. But they also had to give way before the steady valour of the Spartans, and the king rose from his throne in fear and rage when he saw the

destruction of his finest troops! The battle had lasted the whole day.

Now there was an intricate path over the mountains, known to but a few of the Greeks themselves; and when Leonidas heard of it he posted some troops on the hills to guard it. A treacherous Greek, named Ephialtes, betrayed the secret to Xerxes, who immediately sent Hydarnes, the commander of the Immortals, to follow the guidance of the traitor, and enter the pass at the southern end, so that the Greeks would be hemmed in. The Persians set out at nightfall, marching as silently as they could; but the night was very still, and the sound of their feet crunching over the dead leaves that strewed the path alarmed the Greeks posted there, who started to their arms. Hydarnes paused; for he feared that they might be Spartans; but when Ephialtes assured him they were not, he forced his way through them, and pursued his way down to the southern side of the mountain.

At daybreak the sentinels on the heights brought news to Leonidas that the secret path was discovered by the enemy. There was still time for him to retreat, but no true Spartan would think of that, and both he and his three hundred companions determined to do their duty, and remain at their posts to resist the invaders of their country. So he sent home all the other Greeks except the Thebans, whom he suspected of favouring the enemy, and the Thespians, who wished to stay and share his fate and his glory.

Ephialtes had calculated the time it would take him to traverse the mountain, and had arranged with Xerxes to attack the Spartans in front at the same time that the Immortals fell upon their rear; and so in the morning he once more ordered his troops to advance. But Leonidas, now knowing his death was certain, rushed on his foes at the head of his little band, overthrowing them on all sides. The Persians, crowded together, were trampled under foot; yet still more were driven up to the combat by the lash of their officers over the bodies of their comrades. The brave Leonidas was killed, and a desperate fight took place over his body, and there were but few of the three hundred left alive. Their spears were broken, and their swords blunted. Suddenly the Greeks heard that Hydarnes and his Immortals were entering the pass behind them. The Thebans threw down their arms, and begged their lives, which were granted them; but the Spartans, retiring within the pass behind the wall, drew up on a little hillock, where they were soon surrounded by their enemies, and overwhelmed with showers of javelins, arrows, and stones, till the last of them lay dead.

Meantime, Eurytus and Aristodemus, lying ill at Alpenus, had heard that the Persians were about to enter the pass, and that Leonidas and his devoted band would be surrounded by their foes. Calling for his arms, and grasping his spear and shield, though he could scarce see, Eurytus told his servant to lead him into the battle. The helot obeyed, and guiding his master into the fatal pass, there left him, and the half-blind hero, rushing on the Persians, fell beneath their javelins.

Aristodemus, probably thinking it useless to go into the pass where he was sure to be killed, returned to Sparta with tidings of the battle. But his country-

men said that he had forsaken his duty, and deserted his general. No one would speak to him, and he dragged on a miserable existence till the following year, when there was another battle with the Persians at Platea. The unhappy man, thinking he could now retrieve his honour, ventured his life in the most reckless manner, and was killed after performing prodigies of valour. After the battle, he was adjudged to have far exceeded his companions in bravery; but the Spartans, believing that his wonderful deeds proceeded from desperation, rather than from true courage, would not award him the palm, though they no longer called him 'The coward.' And so poor Aristodemus was deprived of honour even in death.

After the battle of Thermopylæ, Xerxes began to think the conquest of Greece not so easy as he had imagined it would be, and asked Demaratus if he should meet with many more such obstacles in his way. Demaratus told him that there were at least eight thousand of his countrymen all ready to act as Leonidas had done. And shortly afterwards, the Persian fleet having been overcome and nearly destroyed at Salamis, Xerxes fled back to his own dominions, leaving his general, Mardonius, to carry on the war. But Mardonius was killed, and his army routed at Platea, and the Persians were finally driven from Greece.

The memory of Leonidas and his three hundred companions was held in the greatest veneration by the Spartans. Festivals were established in their honour, and hymns sung in their praise, and a splendid monument was erected over their grave in the pass. The battle of Thermopylæ was fought four hundred and eighty years before the Christian era. A few remains of their monument may still be seen, but the fame of the brave men who died for their country will live for ever.

A. R.

'THEY DIDN'T THINK.'

ONCE a trap was baited
With a piece of cheese;
It tickled so a little mouse,
It almost made him sneeze.
An old mouse said, 'There's danger;
Be careful where you go!'
'Nonsense!' said the other;
'I don't think you know.'
So he walked in boldly—
Nobody in sight:
First he took a nibble,
Then he took a bite;
Close the trap together
Snapped as quick as wink,
Catching 'mousey' fast there,
'Cause he *didn't think*.

Once there was a robin
Lived outside the door,
Who wanted to go inside
And hop upon the floor.
'Oh, no!' said the mother,
'You must stay with me;
Little birds are safest
Sitting in a tree.'

'I don't care,' said Robin,
And gave his tail a fling;
'I don't think the old folk
Know quite everything.'
Down he flew, and Kitty seized him
Before he'd time to blink;
'Oh!' he cried, 'I'm sorry,
But I *didn't think*.'

Now, my little children,
You who read this song,
Don't you see what trouble
Comes of doing wrong?
And can't you take a warning
From their dreadful fate,
Who began their thinking
When it was too late?
Don't think there's always safety
Where no danger shows;
Don't suppose you know more
Than anybody knows;
But when you're warned of ruin,
Pause upon the brink,
And don't go over headlong,
'Cause you *didn't think*.

PHCEBE CARY.

CARRIER PIGEONS AND THE FISHERIES.

THE experiment which was tried last year of employing carrier pigeons for the purpose of bringing early intelligence each morning from the fishing-ground of the results of the night's labour, is again being resorted to this season, and with the most satisfactory results. One of the birds is taken out in each boat in the afternoon, and after the nets have been hauled on the following morning, and the extent of the catch ascertained, the pigeon is despatched with a small piece of parchment tied round its neck, containing information as to the number of crans on board, the position of the boat, the direction of the wind, and the prospects of the return journey. If the wind is blowing in an unfavourable direction, a request is made for a tug, and from the particulars given as to the bearings of the craft she can be picked up easily by the steamer. The other advantages of the system are that, when the curers know the quantity of herrings they may expect, they can prepare for delivering and curing of the fish. Most of the pigeons belong to Messrs. Moir and Son, Aberdeen. When let off from the boats the birds always circle three times round overhead, and then sweep away towards the land with great rapidity, generally flying at the rate of about a mile per minute. Two superior birds in Messrs. Moir's possession have come a distance of twenty or twenty-five miles in as many minutes. The pigeons require very little training, and soon know where to land with their message. A cot has been fitted up on the roof of Messrs. Moir's premises at the quay for the birds, and they always alight there on their return from sea.—*Fishing Gazette*.

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