

get it fresh from the fountain-head, while the Dane cooks up a mawkish, wishy-washy sort of a lingo."

The rags talked, and rags are rags all the world over; they are thought nothing of except in the dust-heap.

"I am Norse," said the Norwegian; "and when I have said I am Norse, I guess I have said enough. I am firm of fibre, like the granite rocks of old Norway. The land there has a constitution, just like free America. It sets my fibres tickling to think of what I am, and to ring out my thoughts in words of the real old grit."

"But we have a complete literature," said the Danish rag; "do you understand what that is?"

"Understand!" repeated the Norwegian: "oh this flat-land creature! shall I give him a hoist up-hill, and a Northern Light or two, clout as he is? When the Norway sun has thawed the ice, then come lubberly Danish hulks, bringing us butter and cheese, a right noble cargo; and they bring, too, by way of ballast, the Danish literature. We don't want it. One can do without stale beer in a land of sparkling springs, and up yonder is a natural well that was never bored; no, nor yet puffed into European notice by news-mongers, confederate jobbers, and book-making tourists in foreign parts. I speak free from the bottom of my lungs, and the Dane must get used to the free sound; and so he will some day, in his Scandinavian clamber up our proud mountain land—that primary knob of the universe!"

"A Danish rag could never talk like that; no!" said the Dane. "It is not our nature: I know myself; and all our rags are like me. We are so good-natured, so unassuming. We only think too little of ourselves. Not that we gain much by our modesty; but I do like it; I consider it quite charming. Still I am perfectly aware of my own good qualities, I assure you, but I don't talk about them: nobody shall ever bring such a charge against me. I am gentle and complaisant; bear everything patiently, spite nobody, and speak good of all men—though there is not much good to be said of other people; but that is their business. I can afford to smile at it, I feel myself so superior."

"Have done with this flat-land drivel; it turns me sick," said the Norwegian, caught a puff of wind, and fluttered away from his own heap on to another.

Paper they both became, and, as chance would have it, the Norwegian rag became a sheet on which a Norseman wrote a true-love letter to a Danish girl; and the Danish rag became the manuscript for a Danish ode in honour of Norway's strength and beauty.

Something good there may come even of rags, when they are once out of the dust-heap, and the change has been made in favour of truth and beauty: they keep up a good understanding between us, and in that there is a blessing.

The story is done. It is rather pretty, and offensive to nobody except to Rags.

II.—WHAT THE WHOLE FAMILY SAID.

WHAT did the whole family say? Well, listen now first to what the little Marie said.

It was the little Marie's birthday,—the most beautiful of all days, she thought. All her small girl-friends and boy-friends came to play with her, and she wore her finest frock: this had been given to her by Grandmother, who was now with the good God; but Grandmother had cut it, and made it herself before she went up into the bright beautiful heavens. The table in Marie's room was shining with presents: there was the prettiest little kitchen, with all the belongings of a kitchen; and a doll that could twist its eyes, and cry "ugh!" when you pinched its stomach; ah! and there was a picture-book too, full of the prettiest stories, to be read when somebody could read. But it was more beautiful than all the stories in the world to live to see many birthdays.

"Oh it *is* so beautiful to live!" said the little Marie. "Godfather said that was the most beautiful fairy tale."

In the room next her were both her brothers; they were big boys, one of them nine years old, and the other eleven. They thought it beautiful to live too, to live in their way; not to be babies like Marie, but thorough-going schoolboys; to get their high mark in class, to fight their schoolfellows, and like them all the better for it; to skate in the winter, and ride velocipedes in summer; to read of baronial castles, with drawbridges and dungeons, and to read of discoveries in Central Africa. On this subject, though, one of the boys had a misgiving—that all might be discovered before he was grown a man; then *he* was to go out on adventures. Life is the most beautiful fairy tale, said Godfather, and one takes a part in it oneself.

It was on the parlour-floor these children