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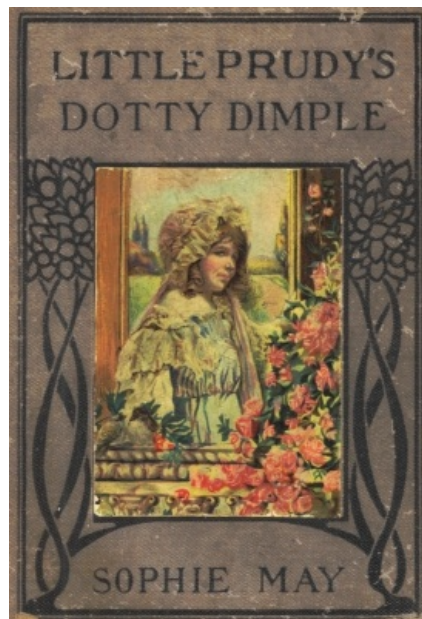
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LITTLE PRUDY'S DOTTY DIMPLE

By

SOPHIE MAY

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DEDICATION.
TO
LITTLE NELLY CLARKE.

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DOTTY DIMPLE.

CHAPTER I.

DOTTY'S BABYHOOD.

Alice was the youngest of the Parlin family. When Grandma Read called the children into the kitchen, and told them about their new little sister, Susy danced for joy; and Prudy, in her delight, opened the cellar door, and fell down the whole length of the stairs. However, she rolled as softly as a pincushion, and was not seriously hurt.

"But you can't go into mother's room," said Susy, "you're crying so hard."

"Poh!" replied three-years-old Prudy, twinkling off the tears; "yes, I can neither. I won't go *crying* in! I didn't hurt me velly bad. I'm weller now!"

So she had the first peep at the wee dot of a baby in the nurse's arms.

"O, dear, dear," said she, "what shall I do? I *are* so glad! I wish I could jump clear up to the *sky* of this room! How do you do, little sister?"

The baby made no reply.

"Why! don't you love me? This is *me*: my name's Prudy. I've got a red pocket dress;—Santa Claw brought it."

Still the little stranger paid no heed,—only winked her small, bright eyes, and at last closed them entirely.

"O, my stars! she don't hear the leastest thing," sobbed Prudy, glad of an excuse to cry again. "She can't hear the leastest mite of a thing! Where's the holes in her ears gone to? O, dear, dear!"

It seemed to Susy that this was the happiest day of her life. She stole up to her mother and kissed her. "O, mamma," said she, "wasn't God good to send this little sister?—Why, I'm crying," added Susy, greatly surprised: "what do you suppose makes me cry, when I'm happy all over—clear to the ends of my fingers?"

"Yes, your eyes are sprinklin' down tears, but you're laughing all over your face; and so 'm I," said little Prudy, delighted to see some one else as foolish as herself.

"Susan, I hope thee'll receive this new sister as a gift from God," said grandma Read, wiping her spectacles.

"It seems so funny," said Susy, gently stroking the baby's face; "so funny for me to have a new sister."

"Now you've tolled a story, Susy Parlin; she was sende to me,—isn't I the littlest?" cried bruised and battered Prudy, shaking with another tempest of tears, and kissing the baby violently.

"O, mamma! O, grandma," said Susy, clasping her hands in alarm, "don't let her kiss that soft baby so hard! She'll draw the blood right through her cheeks."

The nurse who was a smiling woman, with a wart on her nose, began to frown a little, and grandma Read, patting Prudy's head, whispered to her that if she did not stop crying she must leave the room, as the noise she made disturbed her mother.

"Then I'll—I'll be—just as good as a lady, and I won't kiss her no more," replied little Prudy between her sobs, at the same time prying open baby's mouth with her busy fingers.

"Why, where's her teef? When you goin' to put in her teef?"

"O," said Susy, in an ecstasy, "isn't she such a velvet darling? What cunning little footsie-tootsies! Shaped just like a flatiron! But I haven't seen her eyes yet."

"There, look now," said Prudy, puffing in the baby's face; "her eyes has came! I've *blowed* 'em open."

"O, fie, Miss Prudy," said the nurse, biting her lips; "now you'll certainly have to leave the room. It's not safe for you to come near this tiny bit of a baby. Nobody ever knows what you are likely to do next."

Little Prudy hung her head in great dismay.

"Then, if she goes, I'll have to go too, or there'll be a fuss," sighed Susy, stroking the baby's hair, which was as soft as a mouse's fur.

Both children cast a lingering look at the bewitching little figure, so daintily wrapped in a fleecy blanket. Prudy felt tempted to snatch her up and give her a good hugging, but stood in mortal fear of the nurse. There was something awful about Mrs. Fling: Prudy presumed it was the wart on her nose.

When the children were outside the door, and grandma had closed it gently, they seated themselves on the upper step of the staircase, and began to talk over this strange affair.

"Don't you know what made me cry in there?" said Prudy. "The baby isn't only a *girl*, and that's why I cried."

For the moment Prudy fancied she was telling the truth.

Susy laughed. "Just to think of our keeping a boy in *THIS* house, Prudy Parlin!"

"O, no! *course* not!" returned her little sister, quickly; "*we* wouldn't keep a boy."

"You see," argued Susy, "it's boys that fires all the popguns, and whistle in your ears, and frighten you. Why, if this was a brother, we couldn't but just live! What made you cry for a brother, Prudy?"

"Poh, I didn't! I wouldn't have him for nothin' in my world! I'm glad God sende a girl, and that's what made me *laugh*."

"It seems so queer to think of it Prudy, I don't know what to do with myself, I declare."

"Well, I know what *I'm* goin' to do. I'll give her my red pocket-dress. She's come clear down from God's house, and this is a drefful cold world."

Susy knew that little Prudy's heart must be overflowing with sisterly love to the baby, or she would not be willing to give her the pocket-dress.

"She can tuck her candy in it," pursued Prudy; "'tisn't a believe-make, you know; there's a hole clear through. She can tuck her candy in, and her pyunes and pfigs, and teenty apples. Oho!"

"'Twill be as mother says about giving her your dress, Prudy; but we shall be glad to see you kind to the new sister," said Susy, who was fond of giving small lectures to Prudy. "We ought to be kind to her, for God sent her down on purpose. Of course it will be *ME* that will take the most care of her; but maybe they'll let you watch her sometimes when she's asleep. Don't blow open her eyes any more, Prudy; that's very naughty. If we do just as we ought to, and are kind to her, she'll be a comfort, and grow up a lady!"

"O, will she?" asked Prudy, a little sadly. "I thought when she growed up she'd be a gemplum, like papa."

"What an idea! But that's just as much sense as you little bits o' children have! When you don't know about anything, Prudy, you may come and ask *me*; I'm most six."

The new baby was very wonderful indeed. The first thing she did was to cry; the next was to sneeze. Prudy wished "all the people down street, and all the ladies that lived in the whole o' the houses, could see the new sister." Her heart swelled with pride when admiring ladies took the unconscious little creature in their arms, saying, "Really, it is a remarkably pretty child. What starry eyes! What graceful little fingers! Isn't her mouth shaped like Prudy's?"

Mrs. Parlin did not approve of cradles, and the nurse had a fashion of rolling the baby in a blanket and laying her down in all sorts of places. One day little Prudy flung herself into the big rocking chair, not noticing the small bundle which lay there, under a silk handkerchief.

It was feared at first that the baby was crushed to death; but when she was heard to cry, Mrs. Parlin said, "We have great cause for thankfulness. So far as I can judge, it is only her *nose* that is broken!"

But the doctor pronounced the baby's bones as sound as ever.

"It is only little Miss Prudy whose nose is out of joint," added he.

Prudy ran to look in the glass, but could not see anything the matter with her nose, or anything that looked like "a joint." But after this she was as careful as a child of her heedless age can be, not to injure her tender sister. She never again saw a silk handkerchief without shaking it to make sure there was not a baby under it.

It was a long while before the friends could decide upon a name for this beautiful stranger.

"For my part I have no choice," said Mr. Parlin, "and only one remark to make; call the child by her right name, whatever it may be, for I am very much opposed to pet names, of all sorts."

After every one else had spoken, Mrs. Parlin suggested that she would like to call the baby Alice Barrow, in honor of a dear friend, now in heaven.

She grew to be a fair, fat baby; and while her teeth were pricking through, like little pointed pearls, Susy's front teeth were dropping out. Then she grew to be a toddling child; and while she was learning to walk, Prudy was beginning to sew patchwork. For time does not stand still; it passed, minute by minute, over the heads of Susy, Prudy, and Alice, as well as all the rest of the world. And soon it brought an end to Alice's babyhood.

CHAPTER II.

THE BONE MAN.

In spite of all Mr. Parlin had said against it, his little daughter was called by various pet names,—such as Midge, and Ladybird, and Forget-me-not. Very few were the people who seemed to remember that her name was Alice.

She had a pair of busy dimples, which were a constant delight to her sisters.

"They twinkle, twinkle like little stars, only they don't shine," cried Prudy.

"Why," said Susy, "it's just as if her cheeks were made of water, and we were skipping pebbles in 'em."

And because of these tiny whirl pools, the child was usually called Dotty Dimple. From the time she could stand on her own little feet, she was a queen of a baby, and carried her small head very high. If she chanced to fall over a chair she seldom shed a tear, but thought the chair had treated her shamefully, and ought to be shut up in the closet. She never liked to have any one kiss her little bruises and pity her. It gave great offence if any one said, "Poor Alice!" She seemed to grow half a head taller in a minute, and looked as if she would say, "Needn't make a baby o' *me*!"

Not that she really said so. Talking was a thing she did not often attempt, though she sang a great deal, with a voice as clear as a flute. Prudy mourned because her tongue "did not grow fast enough." But where was the need of speech? If she fancied she would like to be tossed to the "sky of the room," she had only to pat her father's arm, and point upward, and the next minute she was flying to the ceiling, in high glee, and catching her breath. If she wished to go walking, it was enough to point to the door, and then to her hat. Her little forefinger was as good as most people's tongues, and served as a tolerably good guide-post, for it pointed the way she meant to go herself, and the way she wished others to go.

One day, while Mrs. Parlin was making currant jelly, she allowed Prudy to stay in the kitchen, and see her strain the beautiful crimson juice. But as for Alice, she had been found pounding eggs in a mortar, and must be taken away. She was placed in care of Susy, who led her out upon the piazza, where she could watch the people passing by. "*Peddadder!*" cried Alice, showing her dimples. "Yes, *piazza*; so it is," said careless Susy, beginning to read a fairy story, and soon forgetting her quiet little charge.

Looking up at last, there was nothing to be seen of Alice. She could not have entered the house, for the front-door knob was above her reach.

Susy ran out upon the pavement, and looked up and down the street. Which way to go she could not tell, but started down street at full speed. "O, I'm sure I ought to be going *up street*," gasped she; "and if I was, I shouldn't think *that* was right either. Wish I knew which way I should *expect* Dotty to go, and then I'd know she'd gone just the other way."

After flitting hither and thither for some time, Susy ran home to give the alarm. Without stopping to remove the jelly from the stove, Mrs. Parlin, Norah, and Prudy ran out of doors, and taking different directions, started in search of the missing child.

On High Street Prudy met a soap-man, just reentering his wagon at some one's door.

"O, have you seen my little sister?" cried Prudy, pressing her hand against her heart.

"Your little sister? And who may that be?" said the soap-man, in a deep whisper; for he had such a severe cold on his lungs that for six months he had not spoken a loud word.

"O, her name is Alice Wheelbarrow Parlin, sir," whispered Prudy, in reply; "and she had on a pink dress, and her hair curls down her neck, and she has the brightest eyes, and two years and a half of age, sir. O, where *do* you s'pose she's gone to?"

In her concern for Dotty, Prudy had forgotten her usual fear of strangers.

"I'm sorry you've lost your sister," whispered the soap-man; "but as you seem to be pretty well tired out, suppose you jump into my cart and ride with me."

Prudy wondered why the man still kept whispering, but presumed there was some reason why the loss of Dotty ought to be kept secret. She looked at the long lumber-wagon, partly filled with barrels, and was on the point of replying, "No, thank you, sir," when a bright idea occurred to her.

"Do you s'pose, sir, I can get to my sister any quicker if I ride?"

"Well, can't say as to that, my dear," whispered the soap-man, shoving a barrel to one side, "seeing as I don't know where your sister's to be found; but there's one thing certain—you'll get over the ground a good deal quicker riding than you would on your feet. I'm going to Pearl Street before I stop."

"Then I'll ride, sir, if you'll please lift me in," whispered poor Prudy, trembling with fear of the uncouth wagon and strange man, yet resolved to risk anything for Dotty's sake.

There was no seat in the wagon, and Prudy was obliged to stand up.

"Hold on to me, sissy," said the kind-hearted soap-boiler. "I reckon you ain't used to riding in this kind of shape. Why, lawful sakes, your face is as white as a pond-lily!"

"It's my heart," whispered Prudy, faintly; "it *whisks* just like the eggs Norah beats in a bowl. But it's no matter, sir; I don't think I'm afraid,—or only a little speck," added she, in a lower whisper; for, though anxious to be polite, she did not mean to tell anything but the "white truth."

The little girl's gentle ways won the soap-boiler's heart at once. "What's your fathers name, little dear?" inquired he, as they went clattering through the streets.

"His name is Mr. Edward Parlin.—But O, I don't see a single thing of Dotty!"

"Dotty! Why, who is Dotty?" asked the man, turning about, and gazing at his little passenger with a look of curiosity.

"Why, Mr.—, why, *sir*, don't you know?" replied the child, struck with a sudden fear that her strange companion was a crazy man. "O, my stars! don't you know what you took me up for? Didn't you hear? My little sister ran off the piazza." Then Prudy repeated the words aloud, slowly and on a high key, anxious this time to make her meaning very clear. "She—ran—off—the—piazza, with a pink dress on, sir, and not a speck—of—a—hat. And I was stirring jelly on the stove, and never knew it till she was lost and gone. And we're all hunting,—me, and—mother, and

—all. I thought you knew, sir; but if you didn't I guess I'd better get out!"

The good-natured soap-man shook with laughter. "Excuse me, little miss," said he, "but the fact is, I understood you to say your sister's name was Alice Wheelbarrow Parlin, and that's why I was puzzled to know who you meant by Dotty.—But here we are at Pearl Street. Here, in this house, lives one of my best customers. Now, if you like, I'll lift you out, and you can go with me and inquire for your little sister. Then you can ride again, for I'm going as far as Munjoy."

So saying, the man took Prudy out in his arms. She knew it was rather odd for a little girl like her to be going around to people's back doors with a stranger in a blue blouse; but it was all for Dotty's sake.

The man knocked with the handle of his whip, and a neat-looking servant girl appeared.

"Have you seen anything of a stray child?" was his first question.

"My little sister," cried Prudy, in breathless haste. "She had on a pink dress, and curls bareheaded."

"We have seen no such child pass this way," replied the girl, civilly. Prudy's eager face fell.

"I supposed likely as not you hadn't," said the soap-man; "so now we'll proceed to business. You see I'm here with my wagon and barrels, and I suppose you perceive that I've come for your bones!"

These whispered words fell on Prudy's ears with terrible force. A vague terror seized her. "*I've come for your bones!*" What could he mean? Was he an ogre, right out of a fairy-book? What did he want of that poor woman's bones?

Without stopping to think twice, Prudy ran off with trembling haste, and by the time the astonished soap-boiler missed her she had reached Congress Street, and was still running.

The first thing she saw, as she entered her own door, was the fluttering of Dotty's pink dress. The runaway was safe and sound. She had only toddled off after a man with a basket of images, calling out, "baa, baa," "moo, moo," "bow-wow." The end of it was, that the image man had given her a toy lamb, for which she had said, "How do," instead of thank you; and Florence Eastman had led her home.

Susy was heartily ashamed of her heedlessness.

"Now, mother," said she, "do you think, if I should be kept on bread and water for a whole day, I should learn to remember? You'll never trust Dotty with me again."

"Ah," said Mrs. Parlin, with a meaning smile; "the trouble is, Susy, you've made up your mind that your memory is good for nothing; you *expect* to forget! I *shall* trust you again, and you must fully resolve to do better."

Dotty was very proud of her "baa, baa," and insisted upon putting it in her bathing tub every morning, and scrubbing it with her own hands.

Everybody laughed at Prudy's wild story of the soap-boiler.

"We were tired, my feet and I," said she, between laughing and crying; "but I never'd have rode with that whispering man if I'd known he was a *bone man!*"

CHAPTER III.

DOTTY'S VERSES.

By the time Alice Parlin was three years old she could prattle like a bobolink, and thought herself quite as old and wise as either of her sisters. Every Sunday morning it made her very wretched to see Susy and Prudy set out, with bright faces, for Sabbath school!

"Mayn't me go, too?" said she, plaintively. "Me's got the coop; *must* go to Sabber school!"

"O," replied Prudy, snatching a kiss from her pouting lips, "if you've got the croup you certainly can't go."

Dotty shook her curls. "Coop's went off now. Dotty'll go, all o' *you*."

"O, no, little sister; you'll stay at home and look at your pictures. That's the way *I* did when I was little."

"You mustn't *contraspute*," cried Dotty, shaking her elbows. "I *is* goin' to Sabber school." Then suddenly showing her dimples, she added with a bright smile, "'Cause I's your comfort, you know, Prudy, your darlin', precious little comfort; isn't I, Prudy?"

"Dear me," thought tender Prudy, "the poor little thing always has to stay at home. I'll ask mother to let her go with me next time. It is right for me to ask, for I'm sure I don't *want* her to go; so it

isn't selfish!"

Mrs. Parlin had a great many doubts as to Dotty's good behavior, but at last consented. She felt pretty safe to trust her with Prudy, who was very patient, and had even now a memory longer than Susy's.

Before the time came to start for Sabbath school, Dotty stood a long while before the mirror, looking up at her gay hat and down at her cunning gaiters. She liked nice clothes, and it pleased her to see herself so prettily dressed.

"Is that you, O you darlin' Dotty?" said she, nodding her vain little head, and smiling till her dimples "twinkled." "Well, good by, Dotty; I's goin' to Sabber school."

"O, hurry, hurry!" cried Susy; "we'll surely be late."

They stepped out upon the pavement, Dotty walking between her sisters.

"We can't hurry, you know," said Prudy, "because Dotty's feet are so little."

"I never should have thought of bringing her," exclaimed Susy. "Any one would think she'd been eating snails. When she takes up her foot she shakes it before she puts it down."

"O, what a 'tory!" said Dotty Dimple, tossing her head. "I never shaken my foot; did I, Prudy?"

But Prudy had suddenly turned about, and gone back to the house, saying she had forgotten something. She had left home without kissing her mother good by, and nothing could console Prudy for the loss of one of her mother's caresses.

"There, girls, I'm back again," said she, catching her breath. "Now, Dotty, let's we see how fast we can walk."

"Dreffful dirty," said Dotty, scowling at her overshoes.

"Yes," replied Susy, "this snow has been round on the ground a good while. It's most time it went back to heaven to get clean."

"What do you mean by snow's going to heaven?" said Prudy, gazing at the street, which was half white and half black.

"Why, you see," answered Susy, "it says, 'God scattereth the snow like wool, and his hoar-frost like the shining pearls.' And my Sabbath school teacher tells us that after a while the sun draws it back, and makes clouds of it, as 'twas before. So, you see, the snow and the rain keep sprinkling down, and then rising up to the sky again."

"Why—ee!" said Prudy; "how does the snow go up? I never saw it going."

"Indeed you have, Prudy. It goes puffing up in fog. Why, it's just as if the snow was a teakettle, and it keeps steaming out clouds."

"O, does it, Susy? Now, when it fogs, I shall know the snow's going up."

"Please don't talk any more," returned Susy, suddenly lowering her voice; "we must be very quiet on the street, for it's Sunday. You don't mean any harm, Prudy, but you say so much that I'm afraid I shall forget my lesson. I keep saying it over to myself, you know."

Susy and Prudy belonged in different classes. Susy recited from a question book, and Prudy learned verses from the Bible. Dotty Dimple went with Prudy into Miss Carlisle's class, where eight or ten little girls were already seated.

"It's my little sister, Miss Carlisle," whispered blushing Prudy. "Mother allowed her to come to-day because she isn't coming any more. Will you please excuse her?"

Smiling, Miss Carlisle was very willing to "excuse" Dotty for her sweet sister's sake. But Prudy felt rather nervous. She made a place beside herself for Dotty, who folded her small hands and sat as still as a marble cherub; but what odd thing she might take it into her busy brain to do, no one could tell.

When Prudy's turn came she repeated her verse: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips."

"An excellent text," said Miss Carlisle. "It would make me very happy if I thought you would remember it all your life, darling. Do you think you understand it?"

"Mother says it means, 'Be careful to say only what is true and good,'" replied Prudy, in a low voice.

"That is right," said Miss Carlisle; "but do you understand what is called the 'figure of speech' in the verse? Do you know what a watch is?"

"A little thing that ticks."

"There is another kind, my dear. We have in cities *watchmen*, to guard us and see that all goes right while we sleep."

"O, I know," replied Prudy, quickly; "the verse asks God to give us a *conscience* to walk back and

forth before our lips while we talk!"

Miss Carlisle went on to say more about the watch, while Dotty fixed her bright eyes on her face, thinking, "What booful flowers those is in her bonnet! Where did she pick 'em?"

The next verse was Sadie Bicknell's:—

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Dotty listened to this, and Miss Carlisle's remarks upon it, with the most solemn earnestness, hoping to learn why it was that people should sit with a lamp shining on their feet. She thought she could now see why Prudy loved to go to "Sabber school;" it was because she heard so many funny things.

Soon all the little girls had repeated their texts; but, to her great surprise, Dotty had not been called upon to say or do a single thing. It was a marked slight. She hardly knew whether to be angry or not. "I guess the lady didn't see me," thought Dotty. So she cleared her throat with a loud noise, which echoed across the room. Then Miss Carlisle looked at her and smiled. She was off the seat, standing on her tiptoes, Prudy tried to draw her back; but so much the more Dotty persisted. She shook off her sister's hand.

"I wasn't a 'peakin' to you," said she.

"Never mind her, Prudy," said Miss Carlisle, for the poor girl was crimson with shame; "let your little sister come to me; perhaps she wishes to tell me something."

Miss Carlisle bent forward, and let Dotty place her rosy lips close to her face.

"Now, what do you wish, little one?"

"You didn't hear me say my *verse*," whispered Dotty, in a tone of pique.

"Your verse? Did you learn one, child?"

"Yes, 'm, I did. I learned it all day yes'day."

"O, very well! then say it, by all means, dear."

Prudy's face expressed perfect despair. She tried to hush Dotty; but one might as well coax the wind to stop blowing. The child's thoughts had been like caged birds, and now out they must fly.

"Shall I *whisper*?" asked Dotty.

"No, say your verse aloud."

The child planted herself in front of the class, and recited, in a high key, and with the greatest delight,—

"What you thpose um had for supper?
B'ack-eyed beans, un bread un butter."

It was not possible to help smiling. Prudy in spite of her shame and distress, shook with laughter; but it was a laughter just ready to tremble into tears.

"I'll never ask mother to let her come again, if I once *do* get her safe home," thought outraged Prudy.

Dotty was not allowed to attend Sabbath school again that year; but it was a long time before she forgot some of the things she had heard Miss Carlisle say. Many of the strange words rang in her ears for weeks after wards, though she said nothing about them.

One day she rushed into the nursery out of breath. Prudy was kneeling before her little trunk, putting in order the paper dolls, which Dotty had scattered over the floor. They were a sad sight. Some of them had lost their heads, and some had lost their fine clothes, which are worth as much as heads any day—to dolls.

But Dotty did not stop to look at the mischief she had made. Her thoughts were of other matters. She had brought from the kitchen a "Tom Thumb lamp" and a bunch of matches.

Without a word she seated herself on the floor, behind her sister, and drew off her shoes and stockings. She looked for a moment at her little pink toes, then rubbed the whole bunch of matches on the carpet, saying to herself, "A lamp to my feet."

But, somehow, the lamp would not light itself. Dotty did not know how to turn back the chimney, and, though there was certainly blaze enough in the matches, it did not catch the wick. It leaped forward and caught the skirt of Prudy's dress.

"You're burnin' afire! You're burnin' afire!" shouted Dotty, dancing around her sister. Prudy now felt the heat, and screamed too, bringing her mother and Norah to the spot at once. The flames were soon smothered in a rug, and so Prudy's life was mercifully saved.

It was sometime before any one understood what Dotty had been trying to do with a light.

"I was just only a-puttin' a lamp to my feet," sobbed she. "I learned it to Sabber school."

But the little one's rare tears were soon dried by a romp with Zip out of doors.

"It's queer how things always happen just right," said Prudy, still trembling from her fright. "You said, if I'd been wearing my calico, mother, I'd have been scorched. And you know it was only the littlest while ago I put on this blue delaine, to go to auntie's in!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE NESTLINGS.

An hour or two after this, Mrs. Parlin, Susy, Prudy, and Zip went to visit Mrs. Eastman, who now lived a little way out of town.

Dotty was driving ducks, and did not see her mother and sisters when they started.

"Where is they, Nono? And where's Prudy?"

"Gone walking. Your mamma told you they were going," replied Norah, setting a basin of water and a brush and comb on the stand.

"Well, Prudy's runned away," cried Dotty, "Naughty girl; made out o' dirt!"

"Come here, Miss Dimple, and let me brush your hair."

"Well, here's my hair, Nono, but you mustn't pull it; 't isn't *your* hair! O, I want to kiss my mamma, I do!"

"Your mamma will be back again this evening."

"Don't want to kiss her in the evening—want to kiss her now!"

"What makes you in such a hurry to kiss your mother?"

"O, I just only want to tell her to whip Prudy. Naughty Prudy runned away! Made out o' dirt!"

Dotty always looked very low-spirited while her long hair was being curled over a stick, and now was more unhappy than usual, for it was one of her "temper days."

But at last cousin Percy Eastman happened to call in, and declared he must take his pretty cousin home with him in the carriage.

"I'll get her ready," said Norah; "but you're sure to be sorry if you take her, for she's brimming over with mischief to-day."

Dotty danced like a piece of thistledown. "There, Nono," said she, "I's goin' to auntie's my own self; Prudy'll have to give up."

All this time Mrs. Parlin and the two older children were having a fine walk. It was a bright June day. Prudy said she had to sing to herself for all the things she saw looked as happy as if they were alive. As Prudy talked, she flew from flower to flower, like a honey-bee.

"I can't wait for Prudy to walk so zigzag," said Susy.

Mrs. Parlin suggested that Susy should keep on, and tell her aunt Eastman they were coming. Then she allowed Prudy to walk as "zigzag" as she pleased; for Mrs. Parlin had long patience with her children.

"O, mamma," said Prudy, suddenly stopping short, and standing on one foot; "if there isn't a cow!"

"I see, my dear, she is eating the sweet grass."

"Yes, 'm; but don't its horns flare out like a pitchfork? Do you s'pose he knows how easy he could toss folks right up in the air?"

"I hope my little daughter is not afraid of a gentle cow."

"No, indeed," cried Prudy, clinging fast to her mother's hand. "Poh! if I was afraid of a cow I'd be a cow—ard. I'd as lief he'd see me as not, if you'll shake your parasol at him, mamma."

Prudy breathed more freely when the cow was out of sight.

Soon she saw something which caused her to forget her terror. Peeping in among the branches of a small tree, she espied what she called a "live bird's nest." Never having seen any young birds before, she wondered at first "who had picked off their feathers." The wee things seemed to be left to themselves while their mother was away providing supper.

"Haven't they very big stretchy mouths, for such small birdies?" said Prudy. "Aren't you afraid they'll crack their mouths in two, gaping so, mamma?"

"They are only hungry, child. Suppose you feed them with a bit of a berry."

Prudy nipped a strawberry into three parts with her thumb and forefinger, and dropped the pieces into their mouths.

"O, mamma, they swallowed it whole! they swallowed it whole! Their teeth haven't come!"

Prudy's fresh delight and surprise were so pleasant to witness that her mother allowed her to linger for a while, mincing berries for the nestlings supper.

When, at last, they reached Mrs. Eastman's, Prudy eagerly described the young wonders she had found.

"It was like a story," said she, "of little widow-children,—how the mother was dead, and the children had to stay alone."

"Children are never widows," said Susy, laughing; "it isn't possible! But if their parents die, they are orphans sometimes."

"That's just what I meant," exclaimed Prudy, looking crestfallen. "I should think you might know what I mean, 'thout laughing at me, either."

Before long Dotty Dimple arrived, in great triumph. She threw her chubby arms about her mother's neck, saying, "Is I your little comfort, mamma? I came in the hoss and carriage. S'an't give Prudy no supper—will you? 'Cause Prudy runned away!"

"I should not have allowed this child to come," said Mrs. Parlin, at the tea table; "but cousin Percy always picks up the stray babies, and gives them a ride."

Dotty looked as if she could easily forgive her cousin Percy. But there was one thing that made her nice supper taste like "spoiled nectar," and that was the sight of Prudy enjoying her strawberries and cream.

If she had runned away, as Dotty insisted upon believing, why was she not shut up in the closet? Strange to say, dearly as Dotty loved this kind sister, she enjoyed seeing her punished. She was vexed because Prudy was allowed, after all, to sit at the table with the rest of the family. The little creature was very tired, for she had driven ducks all the long summer day. She was also a little sleepy; and, more than all, it was one of her "temper days," when everything went wrong.

After tea she had a serious quarrel with her little cousin Johnny, over a dead squirrel, which they both tried to feed with sugared water, from a teaspoon.

"Johnny," cried she, "don't you touch his mouf any more! If you do, I s'an't w'ip you, Johnny, but I'll sp'inkle some ashes on your head! Yes, I will."

Johnny, heedless of the threat, tried again to force open Bunny's stiff mouth, Dotty's beautiful eyes blazed.

Without a word she walked off proudly to the kitchen, and came back with a handful of cold ashes, which she freely sifted into Johnny's flaxen hair. Mrs. Parlin saw that it was high time to take her youngest daughter home.

"O, mother," said Prudy, who always felt herself disgraced by her little sister's bad conduct, "sometimes Dotty pretty nearly makes you cry! Don't you almost wish you hadn't any such little girl?"

"My dear child, I am her *mother*, and she could hardly do anything so naughty that I should cast her out of my heart. When she has these freaks of temper, I think, 'God bears with me, and I will try to bear with my little one. I will wait. One of these days, when her reason grows, she will be a real blessing to us all."

Mrs. Parlin proceeded to put on Dotty's outer wrappings, saying she must be taken home. The child struggled and screamed, and declared she "*would* be good, she *would* be a comfort;" but her mother was firm, though her sweet temper never for a moment forsook her. Susy and Prudy looked on, and learned a lesson in patience which was worth twenty lectures.

Percy Eastman was as glad to carry his spirited little cousin back as he had been to bring her to his house. Mrs. Parlin rode too; but Susy and Prudy walked.

When they came to the tree which contained the birds' nest, Prudy parted the branches, but the nestlings were not to be seen; the mother-bird had gathered them under her wings, out of sight.

"Hush!" whispered Susy; "hear them peep! Let's go; we'll frighten the old birdie out of her wits."

"I wish you could see them, Susy; then you'd know how cunning they are; and now you never'll know. But it doesn't seem a bit like orphan children since their mother's got home."

"Makes me think of *our* mamma, and *her* three little children," said Susy, taking her sister's hand.

"Yes," said Prudy, her face radiant with a glow of love, warm from her heart; "how good our mother always is, and always was, before ever our *reasons* grew! Think what we'd do this night, Susy Parlin, if there wasn't any *mother* to our house!"

CHAPTER V.

FANNY HARLOW'S PARTY.

"Kiss me, little sister," said Prudy, "and let me go, for I must get ready for the party."

"I know where you're goin'," said Dotty; "why can't I go too?"

Little did innocent Prudy dream of the queer thoughts which were chasing one another in her little sister's brain. After she and Susy had gone, and the house was quite still, Dotty stood at the window, looking down street. It was a lovely day; the clouds were "softer than sleep."

"O, my suz!" said Dotty Dimple; "there they go, way off, way off, Susy and Prudy. Bof of 'em are all gone. Nobody at home but me. Didn't ask me to her party, Fanny Harlow didn't."

Dotty heaved a deep sigh, took her black baby out of its cradle, and shook it with all her might.

"What you lookin' to me for, Phib? I wasn't a 'peakin' to you. I'm goin' to cover you all up, Phib, so you won't hear me think."

Then Dotty looked out of the window again. "What a good little girl I am," thought she, "not to be a cryin'! Prudy'd cry! There goes the blacksmif's shop." Dotty meant the blacksmith. "His mother lets him go everywhere. Everybody's mother lets 'em go everywhere."

A prettily dressed little girl passed the window.

"How do you do, little girl?" whispered Dotty, in a voice so low that even the cat did not hear. "O, what a booful hat you've got! Would your mamma make you wear a *rainy* dress, like mine? No, she wouldn't. Your mamma lets you go to parties all the days only Sundays. My mamma has sticked me into the nursery, and nothin' but a dar'needle to sew with! O, hum! And I haven't runned away since forever'n ever! They don't 'low me to run away. Wish Fanny Harlow'd asked me to her party. I know why she never! 'Cause she forgot I was born."

Presently there was a sound of little feet. Dotty was pattering up stairs.

"Didn't know I was sewing with a dar'needle—did you, mamma? Mayn't I go to Fanny Harlow's party?"

Mrs. Parlin was busy with visitors, and did not pay much heed to her little daughter. So Dotty crept close to her mother's side, and buried her roguish face behind her head-dress.

"Wish you'd please to punish me, mamma," said she; "punish me now; I'm *a-goin'* to be naughty?"

Mrs. Parlin smiled, and reminded Dotty that it was not polite to whisper in company. Then she went on talking with her friends, and Miss Dimple slipped quietly out of the room.

"I know I don't ought to," mused the child; "I'm a-goin' to do wicked, and get punished; but I *want* to do wicked, and get punished. I've been goody till I'm all tired up!"

Having made this decision, she went to Prudy's closet, and looked at the dresses hanging wrong side outward on the pegs.

"This is a booful one," said she, pulling down a scarlet merino. She put on the dress, forgetting, in her guilty haste, to take off her own blue one.

"O, my suz! I never did see!" said Dotty, puffing and tugging in her efforts to fasten the frock. "My mother must make Prudy's clo'es bigger'n this; yes, she must. It chokes."

However, by dint of much hard work she succeeded in squeezing her round little figure into the red merino, and fastening two of the buttons. "O, hum!" sighed she; "this dress is so tight I shan't grow to-day!"

Dotty had a great admiration for her mother's purple breakfast shawl, which she now threw over her little shoulders with tremulous delight. Nono's Sunday bonnet she next laid her naughty hands upon. Very charming was this bonnet in Dotty's eyes, as it was made of claret-colored silk, and was all on fire inside with scorching red and yellow flames. It was so huge and so deep that Dotty's small face under it looked as if it had got lost in Mammoth Cave.

"Now I've got every single clo'es on me. Guess there won't anybody think I'm a boy this time," mused she, giving a last glance at the mirror; "there won't anybody laugh, and say, 'How d'ye do, my fine little fellow?'"

Very well pleased with herself, Dotty dressed "brother Zip" in Prudy's water-proof cloak, and they both stole out by the side door, without being seen. But which way to go Dotty could not tell.

"Where *is* the-girl-that-has-the-party's house?" thought she, under her bonnet. "Well, it's by the stone lions, 'most up to the North Pole. Now, Zippy, if we keep a-goin' we shall get there, and we'll see some girls out by the door."

Zip wagged his faithful tail, which was quite hidden under the cloak, and they both trudged on, Dotty's heart quivering with wicked delight.

She happened to go in the right direction, and at last did really reach the "house by the stone

lions." Several young girls were indeed playing in the yard.

"What little image is that, traveling this way?" cried Florence Eastman, holding up both hands.

"A beggar child, perhaps," replied Fanny Harlow. "'Sh! 'sh! don't laugh!"

"I don't see anything but a walking bonnet," tittered one of the girls; "don't it look like a chaise top? O, look, look! as true as you live, that thing that's hopping along beside her is a dog!"

The little figure now approached very slowly, its head bent down, its fingers in its mouth; though the girls saw nothing but a big, drooping bonnet, a purple shawl, and a pair of tiny feet peeping out from a red dress.

"I guess she came from Farther India," suggested Susy, that being the most foreign land she could think of.

Dotty now gave a loud knock at the gate, and peeped in between the bars. In doing so she had to push back the chaise-top, and the little girls had a full view of her face.

"O, Dotty Dimple Parlin!" screamed her sisters, in dismay.

Fanny Harlow hastened to open the gate.

"Where did you come from, you naughty thing?" whispered Susy, with a crimson face.

Dotty's sole answer was a violent sneeze, which burst off two buttons, the only ones which fastened the scarlet merino.

"I've broke my dress," said Dotty, calmly.

The little girls were greatly amused, but Dotty eyed them with such a gaze of lofty disdain that they kept their faces as straight as possible.

"Poor thing," said cousin Florence; "how tired you must be! Don't you want to sit right down in this iron chair?"

Dotty's bright eyes flashed. "Don't you pity *me*, Flossy! Now 'top it!"

"How shall we ever get her home?" thought the two older sisters, in alarm; for they saw by the motion of Dotty's elbows, that she had made up her mind to queen it over the whole company.

"Look here, Dotty," said Prudy, going up to her, and kissing her; "did mother say you might come, darling?"

Dotty rubbed off the kiss, and made no answer.

"Don't you think 'twould be a nice plan," whispered Prudy, "for me and Susy to draw you home in a little carriage? And I'll ask mother to forgive you."

"O, yes," said Susy, in an agony of mortification; "now do!"

Dotty looked as unmoved as one of the stone lions, and took no notice of the request.

"What made they put two trees 'side that one tree?" asked she, by way of changing the subject.

"Now, Dotty, you will go, that's a little love," said Susy, wringing her hands. "Only think, if you don't you'll lose five kisses to-night, and I dare say mamma will punish you, too."

"There's a man goin' by—old all over, and a white whisker. Who is it?" inquired Dotty, changing the subject again. "The whisker looks like snow, 's if his chin's cold!"

"Never mind the man," returned Prudy. "If you'll go I'll spend my five cents, and buy you some pep'mints."

"I'd rather have pickled limes," said Dotty thoughtfully.

"So you shall," cried eager Susy; "and you'll be the sweetest little pet, and ride home like a lady."

"So I will," said Dotty, serenely, "when I've had my supper."

Susy's face fell. If the little piece of obstinacy would stay, she *would*; and Mrs. Harlow politely declared they should all be delighted. But how would she behave at the table? Her manners were as yet unformed; she needed line upon line and precept upon precept. It was dreadful to think of her taking supper at one of the nicest houses in the city, in that dress, and without her watchful mother too! It was a severe trial to Susy. Prudy was also distressed, but her "sky-like spirit" brightened again speedily.

The little girls all crowded about Dotty, begging her to join in their games; but she said it would "hurt her big bonnet," which she could not be persuaded to take off, because she fancied it added something to her importance.

Fanny Harlow brought out a picture book for the little runaway.

"I'm afraid she'll tear it," said careful Prudy.

Dotty looked at her sister with a withering glance, and, in her eagerness to prove that she knew

how to handle books, suddenly tore one of the leaves. She was surprised and mortified; but her self-esteem was not easily crushed.

"There, Prudy," said she, pertly; "what made you let me do it for? You *said* I'd tear it!"

Mrs. Harlow hastened supper, fearing that Mrs. Parlin might be anxious about her little daughter. Dotty was placed between her two sisters. Susy pinned a napkin about the child's neck, and in a whisper begged to be allowed to spread her bread and butter for her. Dotty had worn the air of a princess royal all the afternoon; but now, seated in a high chair, and surrounded by a group of admiring little girls, she felt like a crowned queen. Taking her bread in both hands, she crumbed it into her goblet of milk, and began to dip it out with the handle of her fork. The girls looked on and smiled, and Dotty gave a little purr of satisfaction.

"Everybody'll think mother doesn't teach her good manners," thought poor Susy, hardly knowing whether she ate bread or ashes.

"Dear, dear," said Prudy to herself; "Dotty may die some time, and then I should be sorry, and cry. I'll keep thinking of that, so I can bear her awful actions better."

The little princess, from her throne in the high chair, did very rude things; such as coughing and blowing crumbs into her plate, drumming with her feet, and beating time with her fork and spoon. When bread was offered, she said,—

"I don't like *baker's* bread. I like *daily* bread."

But this was all the remark she made during the whole meal. At last she ceased eating, coughing, and drumming: there was a "flash of silence."

Everybody looked up. Dotty's eyes were closed, and her head was swaying from side to side, like a heavy apple stuck on a knitting needle—she was fast asleep.

She was wheeled home in a small carriage, followed by a guard of all the girls. Next day she was duly punished by being tied to the bedpost with the clothes-line.

"I wish her *reasons* would begin to grow," sighed Prudy. "I never can feel happy when Dotty gets into a fuss."

"I've been thinking it all over," replied Susy, "and I've made up my mind that God allows her to mortify you and me. You know we must have some kind of a trial, or we shouldn't grow gentle and sweet tempered."

"As mother is," added Prudy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LITTLE TEACHER.

At last Dotty's "reasons" did begin to grow. Her mother was too wise and kind to allow her to have her own naughty way; and by the time she was four years old she had very few "temper days," and seemed to be growing quite lovely.

But her sisters were troubled because she had not yet learned to read. Prudy remembered how ashamed she herself had felt when she first set out in earnest to go to school. For some time after her lameness she was so delicate that no pains had been taken to teach her to read.

"My little sister must never be so stupid as I was," thought Prudy, uneasily.

Sometimes visitors inquired if Miss Dotty knew her letters, and poor Prudy blushed with shame when Mrs. Parlin calmly replied that she did not.

"I'm sure mother feels mortified," thought Prudy; "but she holds up her head, and tries to make the best of it. I'll not say a word to anybody, but I mean to teach my little sister my own self!"

So one Wednesday afternoon, when Susy was away, Prudy called Dotty into the nursery, and shut the door.

"What you want me of?" asked the child.

"I want to tell you something nice. Don't you wish you knew your A, B, C's, darling? There, that's what it is."

Dotty shook her head three or four times, and looked down at the carpet.

"Why, Dotty Dimple, you oughtn't to do so. You must answer when a question is asked. Wouldn't you like to learn your letters, like a goody girl, so you can read the nice books? Now be polite, and speak."

"I don't want to be polite, and speak, nor I don't want to learn my letters, like a goody gell; so there!" replied Dotty, seizing the kitty, and wrapping her in a shawl.

"O, Dotty Dimple!" said Prudy, in a tone of deep distress; "how old you're getting to be! just think!"

"I'm four years old, and I weigh four pounds," answered Dotty, drawing out her little cab, and throwing the muffled kitty into it, as if she had been a roll of cloth.

"O, my stars, Dotty, I can't bear to have you talk so."

Dotty tucked in the kitty's tail, and drew the carriage about the room, to give "Pusheen" an airing. "Pusheen" was her kitty's name in Irish.

"You can't think how dreadful it is, Dotty, to grow up and not know anything!"

Dotty turned a short corner. Pusheen had a fall; down came the little cab, kitty and all.

"To grow up and not know anything," continued Prudy. "O, it's enough to break anybody's heart!"

"Be you goin' to cry?" said Dotty, in a soft voice, kneeling, and peeping up into Prudy's eyes, with some curiosity.

Prudy was obliged to smile but hid her face in the sofa-pillow, and hoped Dotty did not see her. She found she must hit upon some other plan. Dotty could not be made to feel the terrors of growing up a dunce.

"Now, little sister," said she, "if you'll let me be your teacher, and keep school here in the nursery —"

"O, hum! A *little gell* keep school! Would you send me to the bottom of the foot?"

"O, no! I'll do something for you—let's me see!"

"Well, what?" cried Dotty, her eyes sparkling like blue gems; "what'll you do for me, Prudy?"

Prudy thought a minute. Meanwhile the muffled kitty slowly freed herself from the shawl, and slyly leaped to the top of the bureau, out of reach of her little mistress.

"O, Prudy," said Dotty, dancing about; "do something quick."

"Listen, dear! Will you promise to learn to read if I'll tell you a story about every single letter there is on your blocks?"

"How long a story? As long as this room? Yes, I'll promige," cried Dotty, with a gleeful laugh. "Go get the stories, and tell 'em this minute!"

"Now we'll begin," said Prudy, no less delighted, pouring the blocks out of the box upon the floor. "I'll ring the little tea-bell, and call the school to order. The school means *you*, and you must walk in and take your seat."

"Yes, if you'll let me sit in the rocking-chair!"

"O, but that is mine, because I'm the teacher."

"Then I'm goin' off into the kitchen," said Dotty, loftily, "and I don't know as I'll come back. I won't promige."

"O, take the rocking-chair!" replied Prudy quickly. "I'll sit on the ottoman; it's just as good. Glad you spoke of it, Dotty; 'twouldn't be proper for the teacher to rock. Hark! now I tingle the bell. School's begun!"

Dotty walked along, and very demurely seated herself in the big chair.

"Here," said Prudy, showing her a block, "is your first letter; guess what the picture means, and I'll tell you the name of the letter."

"That?" said Dotty, glancing at it; "that's a monkey; what you s'pose?"

"O, no! it's pretty near a monkey, not quite: it's what we call an *ape*."

"A nape!" echoed Dotty, pointing at it, and laughing. "O, my! you don't know nothin' at all but just—do you, Prudy Parlin? Funny gell to keep school! Didn't you never see a monkey? I've seen 'em dancing tummy-tum-tum, and a man making music with a little mite of a churn."

"Well, perhaps this is a monkey, and ape is its baby name," said Prudy, doubtfully.

"Got a face like a dried apple—hasn't he?" said the young pupil, admiringly. "Rally round the flag, boys!"

"Hush! You mustn't sing in school. The name of this letter is A. Look at it ever so long, and say it over."

"A, A, A," repeated Dotty, to the tune of "John Brown."

Prudy took courage. "All right, only you mustn't sing. I couldn't speak the letter better myself than you do, *so* soon. A stands for ape."

"No, for monkey."

The little teacher yielded the point. She had begun her school with plenty of love and patience.

"Now tell a story," said Dotty, settling herself in the chair.

"Can't you say 'please'?" suggested Prudy, mildly. "'Please' is but a little word, and 'thank you' is not long."

"Well, please, and thank you,—'bout a ape."

"I know a real nice one. Once there was a monkey—"

"No, a ape."

"Well, a ape, then. But I didn't start right. Once Mr. 'Gustus Allen sailed round the world."

"Did? Who sailed him?"

"O, he went in one of those ships that go puffing out of the bay. And he had a little ape, named Jacky."

"How did you know? You wasn't there."

"O, he told me about it. He was the brightest little creature, Jacky was. When he was cold, Mr. Allen used to tuck him right in his bosom. Sometimes he got into mischief, he knew so much."

"Did he know as much as Zip? Did he ever talk in meetin'?"

"No, he couldn't bark the way Zip did at the lecture, but he chattered, as we do when our teeth are cold. When he'd been doing mischief he'd run round the floor of the ship, wagging his head the way I do now, as if he was as innocent as a whole lot of kittens. Why, he acted as you did, Dotty, when you was a little girl, and picked the inside out of that custard pie."

"Ahem!" said Dotty. "I guess you think you're talkin' to somebody else, Prudy Parlin! I don't like your story; wish you'd stop."

"But I was going to tell you how Jacky got sick, and there were ever so many more monkeys on board—"

"On what board?"

"On the ship. And they took care of Jacky, and brought him his supper as if they were folks."

"What did he have for supper?"

"O, nuts and things, on a wooden plate."

"I wish I was a monkey!"

"O, Dotty Dimple, that's a horrid speech!"

"Then I don't want to be a monkey; I want to be a ape. I wish I could go puffing round the world in a ship."

"Well, Dotty, this isn't keeping school. What letter have you learned?"

"I didn't learn a letter; I learned a story. You're a funny gell to keep a *story*-school!"

Prudy held up the block.

"O, that picked thing? You called it a ape!"

"Why, Dotty Parlin! that's A."

"A *what?*"

"I said A," repeated Prudy, with emphasis, "only just A."

"Why, 'tisin't A *nothing*—is it?"

"Dear me," thought Prudy, "I don't see how folks do keep school. I'm getting just as hungry—and cross!"

When Dotty had learned A so well that she knew it at a glance, her teacher proceeded to the next letter, which stood on the block for a bat. Dotty said the picture looked "like Zip with an umbrella over him."

After the second story, she was tired of the business.

"Look out the window, Prudy. See that whale! O, you April fool!"

The young sister sighed over her sister's light-minded behavior. When they came to C, which stood for cat, Dotty seized her kitty and tried to feed her with lozenges. But Pusheen turned away her head with a gesture which signified,—

"Candy isn't fit to touch. I'd eat a mouse with you, with pleasure."

"Talk," said Dotty; "say 'thank you,' Pusheen! No, indeed, you needn't do it; I's just in fun. God didn't give you any teef to talk with, Pussy; so you can't talk."

"Now, Dotty, this next letter is D."

"O, Prudy, I wish you'd hush! I've got the earache."

"Ah, well!" thought the gentle teacher, with a sigh; "I'll try again, some other day. I'll not give it up. Grandma says, 'Time and patience make the mulberry leaf into satin.' I don't know what that means, only it's something about *perseverance*."

CHAPTER VII.

BOTH SIDES OF A STORY.

The little school was not resumed for some time. Not that Prudy had forgotten it, by any means; but the next Saturday she had visitors, and the following Wednesday an exciting event occurred. It concerned Susy's pony. Percy Eastman said he was called Wings "because he hadn't any feet." Susy was vexed at this remark, and Prudy, taking her part, said, "Percy is such a *pert* boy;" adding next moment, "What *is* pert?"

But Percy only meant that the pony sadly needed some new shoes; and this was very true.

Now it happened that Mr. Parlin, being too busy to go himself, sent Eddy Johnson and Charley Piper with Wings to the blacksmith's shop. It seemed to Susy that the boys were gone a long while, for it was Wednesday afternoon, and she was impatient for a ride. She sat down to practise a little, but her mind was out of doors, and the unwilling piano seemed crying out to be let alone.

"I can't play," said Susy, decidedly; "and that's the truth."

At that moment a sweet little voice was heard, singing, "John's Brown buddy;" and Dotty Dimple's head and shoulders were thrust into the room.

"I've broked it," said she; "I've broked it all to smash."

"Broke what, for pity's sakes?"

"Your teapot," replied Dotty, in a very cheerful voice.

"O, I never did, in all my life, see such a child," wailed Susy. "What made you go and meddle with my dear little gold-edged tea-set?"

Dotty looked like an injured lamb, brushed the wayward hair out of her eyes, and gazed wistfully into her sister's face.

"Is I your little comfort, Susy? Is I your little comfort?"

"No," cried Susy, wavering between a smile and a tear; "no, indeed! To think of *your* being a comfort! O, my stars!"

"Well, then," continued the little one, in a soothing, cooing tone, "then I never broked it; it broked itself!"

So saying, she produced from the depths of her pocket the fragments of the gilt-edged toy. They were past the healing power even of Spalding's glue, that was certain. At the painful sight, poor Susy's patience flew into as many pieces as the teapot.

"O, you naughty, naughty thing, to say it broke itself!"

"Then it didn't," replied the little culprit, not a whit dismayed. "Then 'twas Prudy. We was playing 'thimble-coop.' *She* broked it all to smash!"

"O, mother," said Susy, running out to the kitchen; "Dotty's making up fibs as fast as she can speak! You'll have to shut her up in the closet."

"Not so fast, my dear. Let us wait till we hear both sides of the story."

And, as it turned out, Dotty really did not deserve to be punished for wrong stories. She and Prudy had each assisted in breaking the teapot; one had knocked it off the bureau, and the other had stepped on it. But Dotty, who gloried in "a fuss," had begged to be the one to tell Susy the startling news. She wished to see her eyes flash, and hear her expressions of surprise. She knew that, however angry Susy might be, there was one magical sentence which would always her to terms: "Dotty'll go out doors, 'out her hat, get cold, have the *coop*, and *DIE!*"

At the bare mention of such a fearful thing, Susy's anger was sure to cool at once. This time Dotty varied her method a little.

"See," said she, looking out of the window; "the boys has came."

Of course that was the last of Susy's thoughts about the teapot. She rushed out of doors bareheaded, followed by Dotty. Eddy Johnson was just hitching Wings to a post near the gate.

"Have they *shoed* him?" said Susy.

"*Shoed* him? I should think they had; all of that," replied Eddy, indignantly.

"Booted him, more like," muttered Charley Piper, in the same tone.

"Why, what do you mean, boys?" said Susy, patting the pony, and gazing tenderly into his eyes.

"O, we don't mean anything, as I know of. You must run into the house and ask your mother to come out here," said Eddy, mysteriously.

"Why, it's my own pony, that my own father gave me, and if there's anything the matter with it I should think you might tell," cried Susy, her voice shaking with a vague dread of some terrible mishap.

"Well, may be there isn't anything ails him," returned Eddy, coolly. "I never said there was; but your mother'll know!"

"O, Dotty Dimple, run into the house this very minute, please to," exclaimed Susy, "and ask mother—if she's combing her hair, or *anything*—to come right out here as quick as she can run, and not wait! O, dear, dear, dear! Why, Dotty Dimple Parlin! you haven't started yet! Quick! quick! quick!"

Dotty, who had only waited to be spoken to the second time, now ran in such haste that she stumbled on the piazza steps; but, nothing daunted, jumped up and went on, delighted to know that this time something had probably happened. She startled her mother, and called her away from her toilet, with the sudden cry that the boys and pony were 'most killed.

At the same time she had the pleasure of throwing Prudy into a panic,—dear little Prudy, who had been for the last five minutes searching her treasures in the hope of finding some toy which would replace Susy's teapot.

Prudy and Dotty appeared at the gate in a very brief space; Prudy with her mouth in the shape of the letter O, and Mrs. Parlin not far off, in the act of fastening her breastpin.

"Well, boys, what is it?" said the good lady, smiling. "I hardly think anything very serious has happened, either to you or the pony."

"*You* tell," said Eddy to Charley; "I *dassn't*. The blacksmith's man may be mad if I do. But he's abused this hoss, though," continued Eddy, not waiting to let Charley speak for him; "he's abused him awfully! It's right up and down mean; and three of us boys seen him!"

Susy clasped her hands, and performed a "stamp-act" on the pavement.

"See there," said Eddy, pointing triumphantly to Wings' left hind leg; "see that—will you?"

True enough, there were two or three small wounds, out of which was oozing thick dark blood. Susy looked as if her heart was breaking, but not a word did she speak.

"Pete Grimes did that with his hobnail, cowhide boots!" said Eddy, sternly.

"With his hammer, you *mean*," interposed Charley.

"With his *boot*, sir," persisted Eddy, with increasing eloquence. "Didn't I see him, me and Dan Murphy? Didn't we stand there by the coal-bin, sir? He booted him well, Mis' Parlin. I'll tell you where he did it; here on the left side, ma'am. Look where the hair sticks up! Pooty well mauled—ain't he, ma'am? Pete swore at him, too. Never heard such talk—did you, Charley?"

"No, ma'am, I never did," replied Master Charley, addressing Mrs. Parlin, who fancied she could detect on Wings' glossy hide the marks of a boot, though there were no traces of the wicked oaths.

"It is a most abusive thing—if it is so," said she, with much feeling; for if anything could move her gentle heart to anger, it was cruelty to animals. "What made Mr. Grimes behave so strangely, boys? Was the pony restless?"

"Restless? No, indeed, ma'am," replied Eddy, the orator; "as gentle as a lamb, ma'am. It was Pete Grimes's wicked temper, and his wicked disposition; that's what it was."

It was well for Susy that her over-strained feelings now found vent in words and tears. "There is no grief like the grief which does not speak." Her dumb agony gave way, and she wept and raved like a little wild thing.

Mrs. Parlin ordered the boys to lead the pony around to the back door, and there she washed out his wounds, trying all the while to soothe Susy, whose heart was beating a quick-step, and who trembled in every limb.

"Old Grimes is dead, that good old man!" repeated Prudy, with angry emphasis; "but it wasn't *his* father. No, indeed; with the old blue buttons down the back! Why, Peter is an awful man! I saw him once, and his face looked as if he'd been rubbing it on a pen-wiper! There, Susy, don't you cry," she added, applying a moral lesson to her sister's wounded feelings, like a healing plaster; "he's dreadful wicked, and one of these days he'll get hurt his own self; a horse'll strike *him!*"

"Yes, a horse'll strike *him!*" echoed Dotty Dimple.

"But what good will that do Wings?" moaned Susy. "Evil for evil only makes things worse."

Her indignation did not lessen, but rather increased, the longer she reflected upon the subject. What right had a man to abuse anybody's horse—more especially hers?

"Mr. Grimes ought to be 'dited, and sent to the Reform School or State's Prison this very night," said she, in her wrath. Prudy thought precisely the same; also Miss Dimple, who looked upon the whole affair as a joke, intended for her amusement.

When Mr. Parlin came home to tea, and heard the story, he did not blame Susy in the least for her indignation, but started off for the blacksmith's with the limping pony, saying he meant to "inquire into the business."

"May I go with you?" cried Susy.

"Me, too?" said Prudy, echoed by Dotty.

"Only Susy," replied their father; "she may go if she likes."

Susy very much wondered what her father was going to do. As they approached the shop, she saw, standing at the door, the man whose face looked as if it had been "rubbed on a pen-wiper."

"Mr. Grimes," said Mr. Parlin, in a pleasanter manner than Susy thought was at all necessary, "Mr. Grimes, I believe I owe you for shoeing this pony."

While Mr. Grimes was making the change, Mr. Parlin added,—

"How happens it, my friend, that this little animal bears such marks of ill treatment? See how he limps. Look at this gash."

"O," said Mr. Grimes, "he lamed himself by kicking out against the coal-box; he's a nervous thing."

Mr. Parlin then told the boys' story.

"It is not so, upon my word and honor, sir," replied sooty-faced Mr. Grimes, with great amazement. "I'll leave it to Mr. Fox."

Mr. Fox, and two or three other men, declared very positively that they had seen little Wings beating himself against the coal-box; and one of them pointed out to Mr. Parlin the blood-stain on the edge of the wood.

"You can't trust much to what boys say, especially such harum-scarum fellows as Ed Johnson," added Mr. Fox. "I shouldn't wonder, now, Grimes, if he and that Piper boy got their tempers up, and tried to spite you, for ordering them out of the shop. They were troublesome, and he had to speak sharp," added Mr. Fox, addressing Mr. Parlin again.

"That's so!" exclaimed Mr. Grimes. "You take three little chaps, and have 'em meddling with your nails, and sticking scraps of iron into the coals, and it makes a man cross—or it frets *me*, and I told 'em to quit."

"Saucy little rogues," chimed in Mr. Fox, anxious for the honor of his workman.

"As for my striking the pony," continued Mr. Grimes, "I might have patted him once or twice with the *handle* of the hammer. I often do that; but my blows wouldn't kill a fly."

After a little more conversation Mr. Parlin was satisfied that no real cruelty had been used towards Wings. Susy's heart rose like a feather.

"*Always wait till you hear both sides of a story!*" said Mr. Parlin, as he and his daughter walked home.

"Just the words *mother* said this very day," cried Susy, skipping lightly over the paving-stones. "It's so queer you and mother should *both* talk so much alike."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WATER-KELPIE.

It was nearly time for vacation. As the children were to start on the next Monday for Willow-brook, their mother allowed them to spend their last Wednesday afternoon with their cousin Florence. It fell to Prudy's lot to dress her little sister.

"I'm ever so glad," said Dotty, "that the barber snipped off my *kyurls*. Don't you think I do look like a boy, now, Prudy? You may call me Tommy, if you want to; I'm willin'."

"There, now," she exclaimed, when her toilet was made, "say me my lesson; please to, Prudy."

"O, I forgot all about that" replied the little teacher, uneasily. "Susy 'll be done practising in half an hour, and I thought I'd just have time to make my doll's boots,—finish them, I mean. Can't you wait till Saturday, Dotty?"

"O, my suz, Prudy Parlin! When I get to be a great sister to you, I won't treat you so. I want to get my letters all smooth done to-day,—don't want to wait till Sat'day."

At any other time Prudy would have been gratified to see Dotty show so much eagerness.

"Be kind to thy sister," hummed the gentle little teacher. "Yes, I will. I'm always glad after I've been kind. Nothing makes me love Dotty so well as to try to please her!"

"Now," said she, calling her school to order, "you've learned as far as S, which I think is doing finely, all alone, with nobody to help us. This next letter stands, you see, for a *top*. What is it we drink out of cups?"

"I don't get anything but milk, and that's in a mug," replied Dotty in an injured tone.

"But what does mother drink? Now think."

Dotty eyed the letter sharply. "Why, mamma drinks coffee sometimes, and it has grounds; but they don't look like that thing, the grounds don't! Why, that thing looks like a spade, with the teeth out, wrong side up."

"You mean a *rake*" laughed Prudy. "Well, dear, this is T."

When Dotty came to X, she declared it stood "for your thumb. Susy said so, and it was in the music-book."

Now came an hour of triumph for the little pupil. Her mother was both surprised and delighted to hear that her youngest daughter knew all her letters.

"She can say them skipping about," said Prudy, "and can spell a few little words, too."

"C, a, t, cat, d, o, g, Zip," laughed Dotty, showing her deepest dimples, and frisking about the room.

"My dear little ones," said Mrs. Parlin, kissing both the children, "I am really very much gratified. Both teacher and pupil have shown a great deal of patience and perseverance."

These words from her beloved mother were most precious to Prudy. Dotty, though she did not know what was meant by patience and perseverance, presumed it was something fine, and laughed and danced in great glee.

Nothing remarkable happened during the visit to Florence Eastman, except that Miss Dimple and Johnny were found running off the track of the upper railroad just one second after the engine started. Everybody was very much frightened when it was all safely over. But Dotty said,—

"O, my suz! Me an' Johnny has done that a hundred and a million times—hasn't we, Johnny? We wait till the injin w'istles, then we run on to the platform—don't we, Johnny?"

It came out after a while, that these reckless children had also been in the habit of crossing pins on the track, to make "scissors," the weight of the cars pressing the two pins into a solid x.

"I still tremble," said Mrs. Eastman, with white lips. "This Alice Parlin is the most daring little creature I ever saw, more harum-scarum than ever Susy was."

Prudy was Mrs. Eastman's pet. "Prudy," she said, "was a natural lady: the other two were romps."

The next Monday Mrs. Parlin and the three children started for Willow-brook. Dotty wished to take her sweet Pusheen and her darling Zip; but it was decided that Pusheen must stay at home, and help keep house.

"Be a good kitty," said her little mistress, embracing her, "and eat all the mice in the mouse-chamber, 'fore they grow up *rats!*"

But Zip was allowed to go to Willow-brook; and Dotty watched him all the way, scarcely allowing him to stir from the seat beside her.

"No," said she, holding him firmly by both ears; "Dotty'd be glad to let you get down, but she doesn't think it's best. You is only a doggie, and you'd get runned over and die. So now, Zippy, you'll have to give up, and it's no use to bark."

But Zip, having the spirit of a dog, *would* bark.

The whole party reached Willow-brook in safety, and had a joyful welcome.

"Prudy, my aunt Louise is the handsomest lady there is in this world," said Dotty, privately.

"O, Dotty, how can you think so," exclaimed Prudy, "when there's only one woman can be *THAT!*"

"Who's *she?*"

"Mother, *of course!*"

When Dotty was called to supper, she was found beside Pincher's green grave, telling her "brother Zip" the story of that dog's death, and trying to impress upon his mind the importance of keeping his paws out of fox-traps.

It was delightful to be at grandma Parlin's once more. The summer-house, the seat in the tree,

and the swing, were all in their old places, and had been waiting a whole year for the children. A few things had been added: a hennery,—called by Dotty "a henpeckery"—and a graceful white boat, named the Water-Kelpie. This boat was kept chained to a stake on the bank, and no one could have a sail in it without first obtaining the key, which hung over the bird-cage, in the back parlor.

Susy was charmed with the boat. It was lighter and nicer than the old canoe, which had so long been used by the family. She and Lonnie Adams, her aunt Martha's nephew, took daily lessons in rowing; but Susy, who had for years been accustomed to the water, knew how to manage a boat far better than did Master Lonnie. The boy strained every nerve, to very little purpose, while Susy would lightly dip in the paddle, and turn it with perfect ease.

"I don't care," said Lonnie; "guess you can't drive a nail any better than I can, Susy Parlin, and I can row her some, anyhow. Now, Abner, can't I row her?"

"Yes, my boy, I think I've heard you *roar*," replied Abner, with a provoking smile.

"Well, can't I row her this way?"

"Middlin' well," returned Abner, cautiously; "but little Sue, here, is the water-man for me."

Susy's cheeks glowed, and there was a proud flash in her eyes as they met Lonnie's. At that moment she felt equal to the task of steering a ship across the Atlantic Ocean.

Not long after this praise from Abner, aunt Martha said that she and Master Lonnie were going over the river, after some wild-flower roots, and would be glad to have the boat sent for them at five o'clock.

"Mayn't I be the one to go?" asked Susy.

"If you like," replied the grandmother; "that is, if Abner is willing."

Susy knew perfectly well that her grandmother had no idea of allowing her to go alone; but it so happened, when she reached the river-bank with the boat-key, that Abner was nowhere to be seen.

"Seems to me," thought Susy, "Abner is generally somewhere else."

"Where you goin', all alone, 'thout me?" cried Dotty Dimple, from the top of the bank.

"You here? What did you come for?" said Susy.

For answer, Dotty took a pair of rubber overshoes out of Zip's mouth.

"Grandma says to put 'em right on, or you'll catch the hookin' cough; the boat's wet."

"There, now," said Susy, putting on the rubbers, "I've forgot the basket for those Jack-in-the-pulpit roots. Didn't grandma send it up?"

"No, she sended up *me*," replied Dotty; adding, quickly, "and I'm goin' where you go, you know; and if you don't go anywhere, I'm goin' there, too."

"That's just the way it is with you, Dotty Dimple; always coming when I don't expect you."

"Prudy coaxed me to," said Dotty, with one of her sweetest smiles and deepest dimples.

"Coaxed you?"

"Well," faltered Dotty, "she wanted to come her own self. She said she wished I'd stay to home,—so, *of course* I camed!"

"I'll tell you how it is," said Susy, thoughtfully. "That queer old Abner's nowhere to be seen. I suppose he's in the cornfield, or the meadow, or the barn. It's after five; and what will aunt Martha think? I could row across the river well enough by myself, if you'd only run home; you're *such* a bother!"

"O, my darlin' sister Susy! I won't do nothin' but just sit still. Who's your precious comfort?"

"Well, I don't know but I'll take you, then. Come, little Miss Trouble, jump into the boat."

So Dotty Dimple, being what Mr. Allen had called a "child-queen," had her own way, as usual.

"Why, where's the paddles?" said Susy. "The men must have hid them. Dear me, I can't stop to hunt; and here it is five o'clock long ago! O, I'll take this good smooth shingle, I declare! I guess it washed ashore on purpose; it's almost equal to a paddle.—Now we'll go, all so nice," continued Susy, fearlessly dipping the chance-found shingle into the water.

"O, my suz," said Dotty, clapping her hands, which had any amount of dimples on the backs; "we're goin'!"

"Of course we're going!" said Susy, proudly. "What did you expect? I can do five times as well with a shingle as Lonnie can with a paddle. What do you suppose aunt Martha'll say? 'Bravo! those are smart children, to be rowing all alone, by themselves!'"

"O, Susy, what a hubble-bubble we make in the water! Look at the bubbles winkin' their eyes!"

See those pretty wrinkles, all puckered up in the water!"

"I see them," said Susy, steadily plying her shingle; "but why don't you sit still? You'll tip us both over, as sure as this world; and if we get drowned I guess grandma'll scold! I shall be the one to have all the blame."

"O, dear," said Dotty, reeling about from side to side, "the boat's dizzy! My head's goin' to tip into the water. But don't you cry, Susy; you catch hold of me, and I shan't go!"

Susy was suddenly seized with mortal terror.

"Dotty Parlin, I'll never take you anywhere again, as long as I live! You sit as still as ever you can, and fold your hands; fold them both!"

Dotty obeyed at once, and sat up quite straight, looking very sweet, and at the same time slightly acid, like a stick of lemon-candy. The Water Kelpie, now that Dotty was quiet, floated on, safely and surely, towards the opposite shore.

It was a pretty picture—the white boat, the graceful children, and the still, blue water. Susy's fair arms were bared to the elbows, and her face was deeply flushed. Dotty's beautiful eyes danced, but she herself was motionless and demure.

When they landed, Susy called aloud for her aunt Martha to come and secure the boat. Her voice echoed from afar, waking "the sleep of the hills," but no aunt Martha appeared. The children clambered out at last, and Susy chained the boat to a stick, which she drove into the sand. But the sand was light, and the boat was heavy, and the current strong; so before the children had walked a dozen rods, the Water-Kelpie was floating down stream of its own free will.

Thus it happened that although aunt Martha was certainly surprised, she did not seem very much pleased. She did not say, "Bravo! my two nieces are smart children, to be rowing all alone by themselves." Nothing of the sort. She reproved Susy for her rash conduct, and sent her and Lonnie around two miles, by the bridge, to ask Abner to come for them with the canoe.

Lonnie was very much comforted when he saw that Susy received no praise.

"I can row her myself," said he; "but I wouldn't put Dotty in, and most drown her, and dab along with that shingle."

The runaway Water-Kelpie was caught a little way below the bridge, and Abner slyly laid by the dripping shingle, and afterwards showed it to everybody, as a proof that "our Sue was an amazin' smart little water man."

This famous boat-ride only had the effect to make Dotty Dimple more fearless than ever; but her next adventure on the water proved somewhat serious.

CHAPTER IX.

BROTHER ZIP.

There was to be a remarkable supper at grandma Parlin's, in honor of Colonel Augustus Allen, who was expected in the cars. There had been a grand excursion to welcome the soldiers, and the stage would probably be very late. Susy and Prudy had the promise of sitting up till it got in, if Dotty Dimple was only willing. But Dotty said,—

"O, no; you better go to bed when I go, Prudy, or you'll hear somebody scream."

"Let's see," said Prudy. "I've thought of something nice. Wouldn't you like to go to aunt Martha's, and stay all the afternoon and all night?"

Dotty gave a little purr, like a happy kitten.

"O, yes, if they'll let me drink choclid out o' that silver mug."

"But who'll go with you?" said Prudy. "There, I know—Abby Grant! I'll go ask mother."

Prudy thought that she herself could not possibly be spared just now to walk as far as aunt Martha's.

Abby Grant, who was supposed to be a good child, was very glad to take charge of Dotty, and called for her at two o'clock.

Aunt Louise was in the kitchen, whipping cream. "O, my suz," said Dotty, with shining eyes; "mayn't I taste o' those bubbles 'fore I go?"

Aunt Louise poured the foaming cream over some jellies, which stood in glasses.

"You shall have some to-morrow," said she, pausing to kiss Dotty, her favorite niece. Then she led the two little girls into the dining-room, where the long table was already spread for Company. Dotty could hardly keep her hands off the nice things.

"There," said aunt Louise, giving each of the children an orange, "now you may go. Abby, be sure to take good care of Dotty. Don't trust her out of your sight one minute.—Hark! there's the door-bell. You may go out of the house by the back-door."

Then Miss Louise hastened from the dining-room, without looking back to see whether the children obeyed her or not. Dotty was, in general, prompt to do as she was bidden by older people; but just now both the children found it hard to leave that tempting table. They dared not taste the dainties, but Abby thought it could surely do no harm just to touch them. But when they had gone as far as that, Abby, who was a sly, half-taught child, grew bolder, and a sudden impulse seized her to pocket a few sweetmeats, if she could only do so without being seen by Dotty's keen eyes.

"Come, Dotty Parling," said she, "you just go ask somebody to brush your hair; it's all over your head."

Dotty sighed as she cast a last glance at the table, and then, without a word, went up stairs, unwilling to be seen by aunt Martha with her "hair all over her head."

Then Abby's heart beat fast. She heard voices in the parlor, and knew that at any moment some one might enter the dining-room, and discover her. So making a hasty choice of two large pieces of jelly-cake, and half a dozen tarts, she swept out of the room just in time to escape meeting grandma Parlin.

Her pocket was stuffed quite full, and one end of a slice of cake peeped out, though she tried her best to press it down. But Abby had a hope that no one would notice it through her white apron.

As Dotty's hair was now in fine order, the two children set out on their walk. They had gone but a few steps when Zip came trotting along, with all speed, looking up in their faces as if to say, "What have I done, that I can't go too?"

"Queer what made *him* want to come," said Abby, tartly.

"He loves his little sister," said Dotty, stroking his nose. "He shall go, he shall; he's a darling."

The dog kept beside the children, and every now and then Abby secretly punched him with a stick, while Dotty was patting his head, and chatting with him.

It was a long way to aunt Martha's, and Abby, besides feeling guilty, and ashamed of herself, was also very anxious to eat the goodies which made such a bunch in her pocket. Zip seemed to know there was cake somewhere, and sniffed about in a way which made her rather nervous.

"Here, let's creep under this fence," said she; "what's the use to go 'round by the road? It's a great deal nearer to your aunt's house through the field."

"There, child," cried she, when they were on the other side of the fence, "now I want to go behind this clump of trees, to—to find a book I left here yesterday: but you mustn't come, Dotty."

"What for can't I? Yes, I shall, Abby Grant; you shame yourself! I'm goin' every single where you go; so, now, you'll have to give up!"

"Dot Parling, you go right along with your doggie! I'll come in a minute."

Dotty thought a girl of Abby's age had no right to command her. She stamped her little foot, but it made no sound in the soft grass.

"I isn't a-goin' to go long with my doggie, Abby Grant; 'cause—so there!"

"But you must. You know, Dot Parling," said Abby, more gently, "your grandma expects you to do just what I tell you. I'm afraid, dear, you won't get any of that bubbled cream if you don't mind, nor any tarts."

The child queen began to think it was wisest to obey; but she did so with a very ill grace.

"Well, Abby Grant, I will go long with my doggie; but it's cause I'm tired, and don't want to help you find your old book—so, there!"

"That's right. Dotty. Start quick—can't you?"

Dotty took "high ground" at once. She looked Abby full in the face.

"Do you like *yourself*, Abby Grant?"

"I don' know. Yes: why?"

"'Cause I shouldn't think you would! I 'spise you!"

Having freed her mind, Dotty walked on with Zip, only turning back once, to exclaim,—

"There, Abby, now you'll have to give up!"

Abby, naughty girl, ate her cake in secret, staining her white apron with the jelly, while little Miss Dimple trudged on, thinking it very strange Abby should be so long finding that book.

Perhaps for the reason that she was rather out of sorts, and thinking about Abby rather than about the road, she missed her way, and soon found herself in a narrow lane she had never seen

before.

Zip looked rather uneasy, but followed close by her side. Dotty walked on and on, till the track had faded quite away. This was not the road to aunt Martha's. Why didn't Abby come?

Dotty, too proud to cry, too angry to look back, wandered till she came to the edge of the Parlin woods. Here was a little creek, tumbling over some small gray rocks; the same "creek" where Horace had sometimes gone fishing.

"True as you live," said Dotty to herself, "here's a teenty-tonty river."

There was no way of crossing the creek, and the child felt as if she had come to the very end of the world. Her courage began to fail.

"Dotty Dimple," said she, stamping her foot, "don't you cry! If you do cry, Dotty Dimple, I'll shut you up in the closet."

But, in spite of these brave words, the unhappy child felt two or three tears raining down her cheeks. She now seated herself on the grass, and screamed for Abby.

"When she comes," thought Dotty, "I'll tell her she's 'shamed herself!'"

At first it seemed as if Abby were answering her; but the sound proved to be only the echo of Dotty's own voice. O, she might scream all the afternoon, and Abby wouldn't try to hear! O, dear; before anybody would come, a bear, or a wolf, or a whale might rush right out of the woods and eat her up! Then how Abby would cry! Abby's mother would whip her with a big stick, and say, "there, now; what made you go behind the trees, and let that little Parlin girl lose herself, and get ate up! I don't think you're very polite, you naughty girl!"—O, how everybody would cry!

But what was that little funny thing on the water? Forgetting her sudden fear of bears and whales, a fear which Abby herself had put into her little head, Dotty gazed at the "funny thing." Could it be a little truly sailboat? Yes, it certainly was. How it got into the creek Dotty never stopped to think; the question was, how could she get it out?

She blew it with her breath, but it only floated farther away. She waited, hoping it would turn about, and come towards her. She threw sticks at it, but in vain. The boys, who had set it sailing had gone into the woods for raspberries, would have laughed to see her efforts. Presently she took off her hat, held it by one string, and flung it in, as if it had been a fishing-net. It was all of no use; the boat acted as if it were alive, and did not choose to be caught.

Dotty had forgotten all about Abby and the visit to aunt Martha's.

"I know what I'll do," thought she, winking very fast. "I'll catch that boat; I will!"

When Dotty had made up her mind, she never stopped for trifles. She drew off her stockings and gaiters, and stepped into the creek. Boys waded in the water, why couldn't she? There was nothing to bite her! She wasn't afraid!

She had supposed the water would only cover her feet, but she found herself sadly mistaken. The creek was remarkably deep, and, more than that, the bottom was so soft that she sank down, down, at every step.

Poor child! It was hard enough to get lost; it was harder still to be drowned!

"O, papa!" she screamed; "O, mamma! O, Prudy! can't you come? I don't want to drown, and not have *you* drown, Prudy. Can't you come, somebody come!"

But there were no human ears near enough to hear her piteous cries. She must have drowned—there is no doubt of it—if Zip had not been close at hand. The moment he saw her sinking, he gave a low bark and swam after her.

Before he could reach the unfortunate child the water was up to her waist, and she was wringing her little helpless hands, and saying, "Now I lay me down to sleep!"

Faithful old Zip lost not a moment, but seized her skirts and dragged her to the bank, laying her on the ground as tenderly as her own mother could have done.

Now you see why it is that God had put it into Zip's loving heart to "want to come with his little sister."

Abner, who arrived a few minutes later, in order to cut some young birches for his fence, said,—

"Wasn't it lucky, that that dog *happened* to be right on the spot? And lucky, too, that I *happened* along in the nick of time, to carry the poor little girl home in my arms?"

But the truth is, in this world which our Heavenly Father watches over, nothing ever comes by chance, and events do not *happen*.

Abby shed many bitter tears, but they were not so much tears of sorrow for her sin, as of shame for being found out. Such weeping does no good. Indeed I am afraid it only hardened Abby's heart.

But the day ended gloriously for Dotty. She was handed about to be kissed by everybody, and was, after all, allowed to sit up till nine o'clock, and actually ate a "bubbled cream," sitting as

close as she could beside Colonel Allen's elbow.

CHAPTER X.

DR. PRUDY.

The next day Dotty had a severe cold, and her mother, fearing the croup, did not allow her to go out of doors. This was hard for the child. She felt very restless, because she had to give up "housekeeping" with Prudy, a very fascinating game, which could only be played on the river-bank. She looked out of the kitchen window, and saw some carpenters shingling the barn.

"O, hum!" she murmured, "I wish grandpa wouldn't mend his barn!"

A white mist was creeping slowly over the river and the distant hills.

"There, now," she sighed, "I wish the earth wouldn't *breave* so hard!"

Then she went into the parlor, like a little gray cloud.

"O, dear; I don't like this house, 'cause it's got a top to it! Wish I was somewhere else!"

"Poor child," said Colonel Allen, who was seated on the sofa, looking out of the bay-window upon the garden; "do you love home better than this beautiful spot?"

"No," replied the little one, shaking her head. "I don't love my home, 'cause I live there; I don't love nothin'. O, hum, suz!"

Then Dotty wandered into the nursery, and stood all alone, leaning against the lounge.

"I shouldn't think my mother'd let me be so cross," mused she.

She did not cry, for she had learned very young that crying is of no use; and it may be, too, that she had only a small fountain of tears back of her eyes. Prudy, entering the nursery in eager haste, for her "bean-bags," was touched at sight of her sister's sad face.

"There, now, I'll put back my bean-bags, and try to make her happy," said Prudy to herself. "That will be following the Golden Rule; for it's doing unto Dotty as I want Susy to do unto me, when *I'm* sick."

She went quietly up to Dotty, who still stood leaning gloomily against the lounge. The child turned around with a sudden smile. It cheered her to see Prudy's sweet face, which was always sunny with a halo of happy thoughts.

"Are you real sick, though, Dotty Dimple?"

"Yes, I are," replied Dotty, well pleased to be asked such a question. "I got 'most drowned, you know. O, I wish you'd stayed out in the rain the other day, and got cold; then you'd have been sick, too."

Prudy smiled, for she knew that her little sister really had no such unkind wish at heart. She was only trying, with her limited stock of words, to say that she longed to have a little sympathy. It was not often that Dotty was willing to be pitied.

"See here, Prudy darling, don't you want a piece of my cough-candy? It's good! You may bite clear down to there, where I've scratched with a pin."

"No, thank you, dear, I don't care a bit for it."

Dotty's face beamed with joyous dimples. It was so pleasant to be generous, and at the same time keep the candy! In her short life Dotty Dimple had not quite learned that "the half is better than the whole."

"Now," said Prudy, after thinking a while, "suppose we play that you're sick,—as you are, you know,—and I'm the doctor."

Dotty gave a little scream of delight.

"You may see my tongue," said she, running to the looking-glass; "it's real rusty. Can't you scrape it with a knife, Brady?"

"You must say *doctor*, when you speak to me. Now, my dear patient, it's best for you to lie on the lounge, and take medicine in the chest. Poor young lady, we shall be so glad when you get your health all well!—Do you want me to extricate a tooth? Have you any headache, miss?"

Prudy's voice was low and sympathetic. "Yes, Dr. Prudy," replied the patient, with a stifled groan; "I've truly got the ache in my head; it pricks through my hair." "I'll tell you the cause of that, my dear patient; I suspect your pillow's made of pin-feathers. Let me feel your pulse on the back of your hand—your wrist, I mean. Terrible," moaned the young doctor, gazing mournfully at the ceiling; "it's stopped beating. Can't expect your life now. O, no!"

"Now you must put your hands behind you, and walk across the room," suggested Dotty; "that's the way."

"If my memory preserves me right," continued the young doctor, pacing the floor, "you've got the—ahem!—*pluribus unum*." Here Dr. Prudy ran her fingers through her hair. "But it goes light this year—with care, ma'am, you know. So I'll go and stir you up some pills in my marble mortar."

"O, dear me, doctor; don't you now! Bring me some lemonade and nuts, for I'm drefful sick; but don't bring me no pills nor molters!"

"Poh, only brown bread, Dotty! what do you suppose?"

Upon the whole, Miss Dimple, being petted to her heart's content, had quite a comfortable day of it.

In the evening she asked,—

"Mightn't I eat supper, all alone, in the parlor? Once, when I had the sores all wrinkled out on my face, on my chin and round my eyes, all round, *then* I ate in the parlor."

Prudy, with her grandmother's consent, carried in a pretty salver, on which were a little Wedgewood teapot with hot water, a tiny sugar-bowl and creamer, a plate, and cup and saucer, some slices of toast, and a glass of jelly.

"Thank you a whole heart-full," said Dotty, springing off the sofa; "that little waiter and so forth is real big enough for me."

Dotty thought "and so forth" meant "cups and saucers." She had heard Norah tell Prudy, when she wished to set the table, that she might put on "the knives and forks, and so forth," and Dotty had noticed that it was always cups and saucers after the knives and forks.

"But, Dr. Prudy, there's one thing you've forgot," said the young patient; "a little tea-bell, so I can tingle it, and call you in."

The bell was brought, and while the rest of the family ate in the dining-room, Dotty took her "white tea" in the parlor, in queenly state.

Prudy had eaten half a thin slice of toast, when the long and sharp ringing of the tea-bell summoned her into the parlor.

"And what would you like, Miss Dimple?" said the remarkably obliging doctor, with a low bow.

"More jelly," replied the patient, holding up the empty glass, "and some squince marmalade."

After obeying this request, Prudy went back to her supper, and had just finished her slice of bread, when the bell struck again.

This time there was "that old spin-wheel in the chimney again,"—so the patient said,—and a book in the what-not wrong side up, looking "as if it would choke."

The book was set right; but the noise in the chimney was too much for the doctor's skill, since neither she nor any one else knew its cause.

Next sounded a furious peal of the bell, and a series of loud screams from the little sick girl. She had been dreadfully stung by a bee, which had buzzed its way out from the fireboard. Strange to tell, there was a swarm of bees in the chimney, instead of "a spin-wheel."

Abner at once mounted to the roof of the house, and peeped into the chimney. A nice, cosy beehive it made, filled to the throat with waxen cells.

Dotty bore her sufferings sweetly, being sustained by the promise of a large box of honey, by and by.

"Bees have a 'sweet, sweet home,' I think," said Susy.

"So do ants when they get in the sugar-box," rejoined Prudy.

As night approached, Dotty showed symptoms of croup.

"I think," said her grandmother, "it will be the safest way to give her some castor-oil and molasses; that is what her father used to take when he was a little boy."

Dotty pouted. "Dirty, slippy castor-oil," she cried, shaking her elbows—a thing she seldom did now. "I shan't let it go in my throat. I'll bite my teeth togedder tight."

"Alice," said her grandmother, "is that the proper way to speak to me?"

The child's face cleared in a moment.

"I wasn't a-speakin' to you, grandma," said she, sweetly; "I was a talkin' to the dust-pan."

"O, Dotty Parlin!" cried Prudy, much distressed. "Nobody ever talked to the dust-pan, in all the days of their lives! I always thought you were a good girl, Dotty, but now I am afraid you tell false fibs!"

Dotty clung about Prudy like a sweet pea, and peeped into her eyes with a pleading look.

"Say, do you love me, Prudy? For I'm goin' to let the oil slip right down my throat, just as my papa did when *he* was a little boy."

After swallowing the oil and molasses, Dotty grew very affectionate, and kissed everybody twice, all around. Then she said her prayers, and went to bed.

"Mamma," said she, "now smooove me up under my chin, please." She loved to have the sheet laid straight. "Do you s'pose God will take care o' me to-night, mamma?"

"Certainly, my darling; you may be very sure He will. Your heavenly Father never sleeps. He watches over you always."

"Now, truly, does he?" said the child, pressing her flushed cheek against the pillow. "Does he see me in my chubby bed, when the moon's all dark?"

"O, my suz!" cried she, suddenly, raising her head; "God can take care o' me most always, you know, but I'm drefful afraid something will catch me while he's 'tending to *another* man!"

Mrs. Parlin explained to her little daughter, as well as she could, the omnipresence and infinite goodness of God; and while she was still talking, in low, soothing tones, the little one fell asleep.

But about midnight there was a sudden alarm. Lights glanced here and there over the house, and Susy and Prudy were wakened from a deep sleep by the sound of voices. Dotty had a violent attack of croup.

"Put me out doors," gasped the poor little sufferer, when she could speak at all. "I can't breave if the window's *ever* so up. Get me nearer to the moon. Then I can breave!"

"It's so dreadful!" sobbed Susy. "I feel real sure she's going to die this time."

"O, no, I don't think she will," said Prudy, shaking the tears off her eyelashes. "God took care of me when I had the lameness, and He'll take care of her. He loves her as much as he loves me."

"Now just listen to me," returned Susy, pacing the floor of the green chamber, in her night-dress, while Prudy sat on the edge of the bed. "God loves us all; but that's no sign we can't die! Little children, no older than Dotty, have their breath snatched right away, and are covered up in the ground, with gravestones at their heads and feet. O, you haven't the least idea, Prudy. You never think anything can happen!"

"Well, things don't happen very often, you know, Susy."

"There, Prudy Parlin, don't talk so! I feel just as if Dotty was going to die this very night."

"O, I don't think she will, Susy. But she's God's little girl, and if He wants her up in heaven He has a right to take her. He never'll take her, though, unless it's best, now certainly."

"Sit still, Prudy, just as you are. The moon is shining into the window, on your tears, and it seems as if I could almost see a rainbow in your eyes!—There, it's gone now. What makes you talk so queer about God, Prudy? as if you knew a great deal more than I do?"

"I don't know half as much as you do," replied Prudy; "but I used to lie and think about the Saviour when I had the lameness.—Hark! Is that Dotty laughing? Let's go in and see if she isn't 'most well."

The child was indeed better; but for the next three nights she suffered from severe attacks of the croup. Her sisters had not known how they loved her till she showed her frail side, and they saw how slender was the thread which bound her to earth. When she was strong, and roguish, and wilful, they forgot that she was only a tender flower after all, and might be nipped from the stem any time.

When she was well again, Prudy said to her mother, in confidence, "It didn't kill her, the croup didn't, but it might have killed her; and I'm going to love her all the time as if she was really dead, and gone to heaven."

CHAPTER XI.

BUYING A BROTHER.

"One, two, buckle my slipper! no, my gaiters," repeated Miss Dimple, as Prudy laced her boots. "I wish I was a horse, then my shoes would be nailed on, and be done with it."

"I'm so glad," said Prudy, putting on her hat, "that we can go to housekeeping again."

They had built a shingle palace on the bank of the river. It was as white as chalk could make it, and glared like a snowdrift out of a clump of evergreens which were no taller than dandelions.

"Our house is shaded so much," said Prudy, "that it makes me think of a lady with hair over her eyes."

The entrance to the little palace was through a swinging door, of white cloth, and from the roof fluttered a small flag. There were four rooms in the house, all of them on the ground floor. The parlor was elegantly furnished with a braided carpet, of striped grass, a piano, whose black and white keys were put on with coal and chalk, not to mention other articles of luxury. The table was spread with acorn-cups and poppy teapots, the little housekeepers being advised not to make use of their china dishes for this establishment.

There was a very black stove in the kitchen, but the most of the cooking was done out of doors, farther down the bank, in ovens shaped like swallows' nests. Here were baked delicious mud cakes, tempting currant tarts, and dainty custards.

Nothing pleased Miss Dimple so well as to govern a household. She ruled with a rod of iron.

In the midst of a caution to her servant-maid, Prudy, "not to burn her biscuits as black as so'-leather," she was surprised to see her twinkling off a tear.

"O, Prudy, I didn't mean to scold," said she, in the tenderest tones.

"Poh, as if I minded your make-believe, Dotty! I was only thinking about aunt Madge—that's all."

"What has she done?" asked Dotty as she went on stamping her mud cake with the head of a pin.

"It isn't done yet, Dotty; but it will be. She's going to be married."

Dotty dropped her mud-cake. "Why! who to? Abner?"

"O, dear, no! To Mr.—I mean Colonel—Augustus Allen. Didn't you ever hear of that?"

"Was that why he sent his objections to mamma?" asked Dotty, in a low voice.

"He sent his *respects* to mother, if that's what you mean; and in the same letter he said, 'Give oceans of love to Prudy.' As if it wasn't bad enough to break my heart, without trying to drown me," murmured Prudy, with dripping eyes.

"I don't see what you're crying for," broke in her little sister. "I shall marry my papa one of these days. I should think you'd feel badder about that. Who's *you* goin' to marry, Prudy?"

"Nobody, Dotty, as long as I live! I shall stay at home with my mother, and she'll be sitting in the rocking-chair, knitting, and father'll be sitting by the window, reading the paper.—But there," added she, "aunt Madge might be married three or four times, and I wouldn't care. It's her going to New York that makes my heart ache so."

"Well, shell come back bimeby," said Dotty, soothingly.

"O," replied Prudy, with a wise smile; "seems to me when I was four years old I knew a great deal more than you do, child! People that are married stay away always."

"I wish they wouldn't," cried Dotty, beginning to feel alarmed. "I'll ask Colonel 'Gustus to marry Abby Grant after she gets growed, and let my auntie stay at home."

"The worst of it is," continued Prudy, glad of her sister's sympathy, such as it was, "Colonel Allen is a lawyer."

"Well, isn't lawyers as good as white folks?"

"The only trouble with lawyers, Dotty, is, that they can't write so you can read it. My father told me so. He said their writing was like turkey's tracks. He said it looked as if a fly had got into the inkstand, and crawled over the paper."

Dotty's face was the picture of distress.

"It's a drefful thing to grow up a nidiot," said she, drawing her mouth down as she had seen Prudy do when beseeching her to learn the alphabet. "Don't he know all the letters, skippin' about?"

Here aunt Louise's voice was heard, from the piazza. She asked if the children would like to go with her and see Mrs. Gray's baby. After a little washing and brushing they were ready.

"Auntie," said Dotty, as they walked along, "you've got my porkmonnaie."

"Very true; so I have."

"How much money is in my porkmonnaie?"

"Two dollars and a half. Why?"

"'Cause I want to give it to Mr. Colonel Allen, to make him marry Abby Grant when she gets growed. I 'spise her, and I want her to go to New York. There's where the husbands and wives go."

Miss Louise laughed.

"Very well," said she; "you may give the money to 'Mr. Colonel,' and I've no doubt you can persuade him to marry any one you please."

Dotty smiled with entire satisfaction, but Prudy looked inquiringly into her auntie's face, not

believing it possible that Colonel Allen would really change his mind for two dollars and a half.

The children went wild over the sleeping baby, Philip Gray.

"He's a brother, isn't he?" said Dotty. "I wish he was mine. I haven't any but Zip. I'd take my kitty out of the carriage, and put in this brother, and give him all my sugar things."

"Well," said Dr. Gray, with a flicker of fun in his eyes, "the baby is not of the least use to me, and if you like him, my dear—"

Dotty danced about the cradle.

"He's nicer than a squir'l caught in a cage. O, he is!"

"That's just as people may fancy," said Dr. Gray. "Now I think, for my part, a squirrel would be less trouble, for he could get his own living."

Dotty peeped into the doctor's face with her bright eyes, to make sure he really liked squirrels better than babies.

"But," continued he, very gravely, "it may be his mother might object to my giving him away. I don't know why it is, but she seems to value him very highly. She would expect some money for him, I think. How much are you willing to pay?"

Dotty reflected. She possessed several dollies, a new tea-set, a box of picture-books, and a red morocco ball. But what would Dr. Gray care for these, or her various other toys? All her money was contained in her portemonnaie, the money which she had meant should put a stop to her aunt Madge's dreadful marriage. Should she save her auntie, and give up the baby? Or should she buy the baby, and leave her auntie to her fate?

The struggle in her mind was a severe one, but it did not last long.

"O," thought she, looking at the little sleeper in the cradle, "I'd rather have him than aunt Madge; for he'll stay to our house, and sleep in my crib."

"How now?" said Dr. Gray, pinching Dotty's cheek; "made up your mind?"

"Yes, sir," replied the child, with her finger in her mouth; "I'm goin' to buy him. I mean, I'm goin' to if I can get him for two dollars and a half."

"A generous sum," laughed the doctor. "Well said. Now, the next thing is, to obtain his mother's consent."

This was very easily done, for Mrs. Gray, who was not strong, and had only a young girl in the kitchen, declared that, dearly as she loved the baby, she found him a deal of trouble.

Dotty's face was radiant; but Prudy, who understood that the whole conversation was merely a playful one, looked down upon her younger sister with a sage smile.

"Don't you think," whispered Dotty, clutching her auntie by the dress, "don't you think we'd better be going?"

"Why, dear, are you tired of your brother so soon?"

"O, I want to get the carriage, you know, and the money to pay him for."

Miss Louise, who knew that her little niece was terribly in earnest, now tried to divert her with pictures; but Dotty was not to be wheedled by any such arts.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Dr. Gray; "we'll keep little Phil for you till he's as tall as a pair of tongs."

Unfortunately there was a fireplace in the room, and Dotty's keen eyes at once espied the tongs, leaning against a brass rest. As quick as a thought she seized them, and laid them in the cradle beside the baby. They were half an inch shorter than Phil—even the doctor was obliged to confess it.

"Bravo! Miss Bright Eyes," said he, catching up Dotty, and whirling her over his shoulder; "you have a shrewd little brain of your own. I see you can be trusted to make your own bargains."

The baby had been for some moments nestling uneasily, and of course was broad awake by this time, screaming lustily, as if to protest against the inhuman proceeding of being bought and sold.

Dotty had just time to see that her "brother" had "nut-blue" eyes, when she was hurried away by her aunt Louise.

For three days the expectant child was kept in suspense by mirthful Dr. Gray, who pretended that he should bring the baby to her some time when she did not expect it. She often rushed into the parlor, saying, "O, I thought I heard somethin' cryin'"; and almost cried herself because there was no baby there. "I wish I could stop expecting my brother," said Dotty, sorrowfully, "for then he might come."

But, at last, after her young heart had throbbled again and again with false hopes, she began to see that she had been cruelly deceived. Dr. Gray did not mean, and never had meant, to sell his baby.

"He tells too many fibs," said Dotty, stamping her foot, and looking very much flushed; "he cheated me, he did."

"Now, Susy, do you think it was right to cheat her so?" said Prudy, sorry for Dotty's disappointment.

"I don't know," replied the older sister, hesitating. "Dr. Gray is a real good man. I don't believe he meant to cheat. Father wears paper collars sometimes, and makes believe they are linen; but then, you know, *father* wouldn't cheat! Dr. Gray was only joking. The trouble is, Dotty is too little to understand jokes. Dr. Gray didn't mean to break his word."

"Well, if he didn't break it, he *bent* it," replied Prudy, positively.

CHAPTER XII.

A WEDDING.

"I shan't buy any more brothers as long as I live—now you see if I do," said Dotty Dimple, with quivering lips.

"Come here, little one, and sit on my knee," said Colonel Augustus Allen. "Can't you think of something next as good as a baby brother? How would you fancy a grown-up uncle!"

Dotty looked wonderingly into Colonel Allen's face.

"Who's got any to sell?" said she.

"Possibly the minister may have," said Colonel Allen, laughing. "You wait till this evening, and very likely he may be here. Then you can go up to him and say, 'Please, Mr. Hayden, will you sell me an uncle?'"

"But he'll cheat me—he will," said Dotty, shaking her finger.

"O, no, never fear. Just try him, and see. Here's a sealed envelope which Susy may keep for you till night."

"And shan't I have to spend the money in my porkmonnaie?"

"Not a cent of it, chickie."

Something was going on which was called *a wedding*; though what a wedding might be, Miss Dimple had no idea, having never attended one in all her life. But it was something remarkable, no doubt, for the parlors were glowing with flowers, and everybody was in a flutter. The three children, dressed in their very best, were allowed to sit up for the whole evening, or, at any rate, as long as they pleased.

It was as lovely out of doors as "a Lapland night." The full moon and the gay lamplight tried to outshine one another.

"Do look at that great moon dripping down the juniper tree," cried Prudy, growing poetical as she gazed. "Let me tell you, Susy, when the moon is young and little, it makes me think of a smile, and when it's a grown-up, full moon, it makes me think of a laugh."

Just as Dotty was beginning to wonder whether she felt sleepy or not, the door-bell rang; and after that it kept ringing every few minutes for an hour. By that time the fragrant parlors were almost filled with guests. Everybody had a few kind words for the children, and Prudy listened and answered with timid blushes: but Dotty Dimple was, as usual, very fearless, and perfectly at ease.

Presently Colonel Allen, and Miss Margaret, and Miss Louise entered the room. Dotty had been wondering where they were.

"Now," whispered aunt Louise, "now's the time to ask Mr. Hayden for that new uncle."

Dotty stepped briskly up to the minister.

"Here's a letter for you," said she, "and it says, 'Will you please sell me an uncle, sir?'"

Mr. Hayden smiled, and asked the little maiden what sort of an uncle she would like.

"A new one," she replied, bending her head one side, and peeping up in his face like a tame canary, "and a soldier, too, if you've got any to sell."

Mr. Hayden said he certainly had, and laughed when he spoke, though Dotty could not imagine why. Dr. Gray took her up in his arms, and declared he would like to carry her home in his pocket. Such an idea! And Dr. Gray was the man who had cheated her! When he set her down again she stood on her dignity, and carried her head like a queen.

She had hardly crossed the room, and taken her station beside Prudy, when a hush fell upon the

company. Dotty was inclined to think people had paused in conversation to watch *her*. Colonel Allen and aunt Madge were standing together, and Mr. Hayden in front of them. The guests were looking at *them*, not at Miss Dotty Dimple!

Mr. Hayden began to talk very solemnly—almost like preaching. No one else spoke; no one smiled. Before Dotty could ask what they were doing, Mr. Hayden was praying; and after the prayer, which was so hearty and simple that Dotty could almost understand it, the whole room was in motion again. Everybody seemed suddenly bent on kissing aunt Madge, though what that young lady had been doing which was better than usual Dotty could not exactly make out. But this, she concluded, was in some way connected with the entertainment called *a wedding*.

"Come, now, little lady," said Mr. Hayden, taking Dotty's hand, and leading her up to Colonel Allen, "here is the uncle you have bought. He is new, and a soldier too. So you see I have done my best for you."

"That?" said Dotty, pointing her index-finger at the bridegroom in surprise. "I know *him*; he isn't *new*. He is Mr. Colonel. He isn't my uncle a bit, sir."

"True, he was not, five minutes ago, Miss Dimple; but the few little words you heard me say to him have made a wonderful change. He is now your uncle Augustus, and your aunt Margaret is Mrs. Allen."

Dotty looked up bewildered. Her newly-married aunt was engaged in talking to the guests; but Colonel Allen was gazing down upon his new niece with an arch smile.

"The minister did not cheat you, you see?" said he. "He has really given you what he promised."

"I didn't want you to marry my good auntie," was all Dotty's answer.

"Ah, my dear, that is very sad! I was not aware that you had any dislike for me."

"O, I love you," exclaimed Dotty, "'cause you carry me pickaback; *but* I wish you knew your letters skippin' about!"

The minister and the bridegroom smiled at this absurd little speech, and it was repeated to everybody in the room. Prudy felt very guilty, and blushed like a damask rose, for she knew where Dotty had caught the idea of Colonel Allen's extreme ignorance.

"I am very sorry, little Miss Dimple, that you object to me," said the new uncle; "but by and by you and I will take the big dictionary, and you may point out the letters to me. I think you will find I know them 'skippin' about.' Is there anything else you have against me?"

"Yes, sir," replied the child, earnestly; "you're a lawyer—my father says so. You wrote to him once."

"Did I? What did I write?"

"A letter."

"And where was the harm in that?"

"O, it looked like turkeys' tracks—he said it did. You wrote the letter with a fly. You dipped him in the inkstand, and stuck him on a pin, and wrote with him. My father says so."

"You surprise me, Dotty. I really don't remember it. Have you any other reason for not wishing me to be your uncle?"

"I wanted you to marry somebody else."

"Indeed! You ought to have mentioned it before! What young lady had you chosen for me, Miss Dimple?"

"Abby Grant, the little girl that went behind the tree and let me lose myself. I'd as lief she'd go to New York as not. If you'd only waited for her she'd have growed up."

By this time Mrs. Parlin, though somewhat amused by her little daughter's sharp speeches, thought it best to put an end to them by taking her away into a corner. She was too much inclined to pertness.

The evening was very delightful; but like everything else in this world it could not last always. After the guests had departed, and before the doors were closed or the lights put out, the three tired children slowly wound their way up stairs.

"I'm glad it's over and done," said Prudy, resignedly. "I've cried just all I'm going to."

"I only wish Grace Clifford had been here," murmured Susy, clutching hold of the baluster.

"Well, I don't wish nothing so there," said Dotty Dimple, dreamily.

And this is the last word we are to hear from her. She is nearly asleep. Let us bid her and her two older sisters a Good Night and Pleasant Dreams.

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