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THE STORY OF DAGO

"IT WAS HER SWINGING AND JERKING ON THE ROPE THAT RANG THE BELL."

THE STORY OF DAGO

BY

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON

AUTHOR OF "THE LITTLE COLONEL," "BIG BROTHER,"
"OLE MAMMY'S TORMENT," "THE GATE OF THE
GIANT SCISSORS," "TWO LITTLE KNIGHTS
OF KENTUCKY," ETC.

Illustrated by

ETHELDRED B. BARRY

BOSTON
L.C. PAGE & COMPANY
1900

TO

"Gin the Monk"

WHOSE PRANKS ARE LINKED
WITH THE BOYHOOD MEMORIES OF DR. GAVIN FULTON,
ONE OF THE BEST OF PHYSICIANS AND FRIENDS,
THIS STORY OF DAGO
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

THE STORY OF DAGO.

CHAPTER I.

THIS IS THE STORY THAT DAGO TOLD TO THE MIRROR-MONKEY ON MONDAY.

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Here I am at last, Ring-tail! The boys have gone to school, thank fortune, and little Elsie has been taken to kindergarten. Everybody in the house thinks that I am safe up-stairs in the little prison of a room that they made for me in the attic. I suppose they never thought how easy it would be for me to swing out of the open window and climb down the lightning-rod. Wouldn't Miss Patricia be surprised if she knew that I am down here now in the parlour, talking to you, and sitting up here among all these costly, breakable things! [Pg 2]

I have been wanting to get back into this room ever since that first morning that I slipped in and found you sitting here in the looking-glass, but the door has been shut every time that I have tried to come in. Do you remember that morning? You were the first ring-tail monkey that I had seen since I left the Zoo, and you looked so much like my twin brother, who used to swing with me in the tangled vines of my native forests, and pelt me with cocoanut-shells, and chatter to me all day long under those hot, bright skies, that I wanted to put my arms around you and hug you; but the looking-glass was between us. Some day I shall break that glass, and crawl back behind there with you.

It is a pity that you are dumb and do not seem to be able to answer me, for if you could talk to me about the old jungle days I would not be so homesick. Still, it is some comfort to know that you are not deaf, and I intend to come in here every morning after the children go to school; that is, every morning that I find the door open. I've had a very exciting life in the past, and I think that you'll find my experiences interesting. [Pg 3]

Of course I'll not begin at the beginning, for, being a ring-tail monkey yourself, you know what life is like in the great tropical forests. Perhaps it would be better to skip the circus part, too, for it was a very unhappy time that followed, after I was stolen from home by some men who came on a big ship, and carried me away to be sold to a travelling showman.

It makes my back ache to this day to think of the ring-master's whip. I was as quick to learn as any of the other monkeys who were in training, but an animal who has done nothing all his life but climb and play can't learn the ways of a human being all in one week. I was taught to ride a pony and drive a team of greyhounds, and to sit at a table and feed myself with a silver folk. One half-hour I was made to be a gentleman, and wear a dress suit, and tip my hat to the ladies, and the next I would be expected to do something entirely different; be a policeman, maybe, and arrest a rowdy dog in boxing-gloves. Oh, I couldn't begin to tell you the things I was expected to do, from

drilling like a soldier to wheeling a doll carriage and smoking a pipe. Sometimes when I grew confused, and misunderstood the signals and did things all wrong, the ring-master would swing his whip until it cracked like a pistol, and shout out, in a terrible voice, "Oh, you stupid little beast! What's the matter with you?" That always frightened me so that it gave me the shivers, and then he would shout at me again until I was still more confused and terrified, and couldn't do anything to please him. [Pg 4]

Stupid little beast indeed! I wished sometimes that I could have had him captive, back in the jungles of the old home forest, just to have seen which would have been the stupid one there. How long would it have taken him to have learned an entirely different way of living, I wonder. How many moons before he could swing by his hands and hunt for his food in the tree-tops? He might have learned after awhile where the wild paw-paws hang thickest, and where the sweetest, plumpest bananas grow; but when would he ever have mastered all the wood-lore of the forest folk,—or gained the quickness of eye and ear and nose that belongs to all the wise, wild creatures? Oh, how I longed to see him at the mercy of our old enemies, the Snake-people! One of those pythons, for instance, "who could slip along the branches as quietly as moss grows." That would have given him a worse fit of shivers than the ones he used to give me. [Pg 5]

I'll not talk about such a painful subject any longer, but you may be sure that I was glad when something happened to the show. The owner lost all his money, and had to sell his animals and go out of the business. After that I had a very comfortable winter in a zoological garden out West, near where we stranded. Then an old white-haired man from California bought me to add to his private collection of monkeys. He had half a dozen or so in his high-walled garden.

It was a beautiful place, hot and sunny like my old home, and full of palm-trees and tangled vines and brilliant flowers. The most beautiful thing in it was a great rose-tree which he called Gold of Ophir. It shook its petals into a splashing fountain where goldfish were always swimming around and around, and it was hard to tell which was the brightest, the falling rose-leaves, or the tiny goldfish flashing by in the sun.

There was a lady who used to lie in a hammock under the roses every day and smile at my antics. She was young, I remember, and very pretty, but her face was as white as the marble mermaid in the fountain. The old gentleman and his wife always sat beside her when she lay in the hammock. Sometimes he read aloud, sometimes they talked, and sometimes a long silence would fall upon them, when the splashing of the fountain and the droning of the bees would be the only sound anywhere in the garden. [Pg 6]

When they talked, it was always of the same thing: the children she had left at home,—Stuart and Phil and little Elsie. I did not listen as closely as I might have done had I known what a difference those children were to make in my life. I little thought that a day was coming when they were to carry me away from the beautiful garden that I had grown to love almost like my old home. But I heard enough to know that they were as mischievous as the day is long, and that they kept their poor old great-aunt Patricia in a woful state of nervous excitement from morning till night. I gathered, besides, that their father was a doctor, away from home much of the time. That was why their great-aunt had them in charge. [Pg 7]

Their mother had come out to her father's home in California to grow strong and well. The sun burned a pink into the blossoms of the oleander hedges, and the wind blew life into the swaying branches of the pepper-trees, but neither seemed to make her any better. After awhile she could not even be carried out to her place in the hammock. Then they sent for Doctor Tremont and the children.

The first that I knew of their arrival, the two boys came whooping down the paths after the gardener, shouting, "Show us the monkeys, David! Show us the monkeys! Which one is Dago, and which one is Matches?"

I did not want to come down for fear that Stuart might treat me as he had done Elsie's kitten. I had heard a letter read, which told how he had tried to cure it of fits. He gave it a shock with his father's electric battery, and turned the current on so strong that he killed it. Not knowing but that he might try some trick on me, I held back until I saw him feeding peanuts to Matches. I never could bear her. She is the only monkey in the garden that I have never been on friendly terms with, so I came down at once to get my share of peanuts, and hers, too, if possible. [Pg 8]

I must say that I took a great fancy to both the boys; they were so friendly and good-natured. They each had round chubby faces, and hard little fists. There was a wide-awake look in their big, honest, gray eyes, and their light hair curled over their heads in little tight rings. Elsie was only five,—a restless, dimpled little bunch of mischief, always getting into trouble, because she would try to do everything that her brothers did.

The gardener fished her out of the fountain twice in the week she was there. She was reaching for the goldfish with her fat little hands, and toppled in, head first. Phil began the week by getting a bee-sting on his lip, and a bite on the cheek from a parrot that he was teasing. As for Stuart, I think he had climbed every tree on the place before the first day was over, and torn his best clothes nearly off his back. The gardener had a sorry time of it while they stayed. He complained that "a herd of wild buffalo turned loose to rend and destroy" would not have done as much damage to his fruit and flowers as they. "Not as they means to do it, I don't think," he said. "But they're so chock-full of *go* that they fair runs away with their selves." The gardener's excitement did not long last, however.

[Pg 9]

There came a day when there was no noise in the garden. The boys wandered around all morning without playing, now and then wiping their eyes on their jacket sleeves, and talking in low tones. Once they threw themselves down on the grass and hid their faces, and cried and sobbed, until their grandfather came out and led them away. The blinds were all drawn next morning, and the gardener came and cut down nearly all his lilies, and great armfuls of the Gold of Ophir roses to carry into the house.

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Another quiet day went by, and then there was such a rumbling of carriage wheels outside the garden, that I climbed up a tree and looked over the high walls. There was a long, slow procession winding up the white mountain road toward a far-away grove of pines. I knew then what had happened. They were taking the children's mother to the cemetery, and they would have to go home without her. "Poor children," I thought, "and poor old great-aunt Patricia."

The next evening I heard the old gentleman tell David to bring Matches and me into the house. The next thing I knew I was dropped into a big bandbox with holes in the lid, and somebody was buckling a shawl-strap around it. Then I heard the old gentleman say to Doctor Tremont, "Tom, I don't want to add to the inconveniences of your journey, but I should like to send these monkeys along to help amuse the boys. Maybe they'll be some comfort to them. Dago is for Stuart, and Matches is for Phil. It would be a good idea to keep them in their boxes to-night on the sleeping-car. They are unusually well behaved little animals, but it would be safer to keep them shut up until the boys are awake to look after them."

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You can imagine my feelings when I realised that I was to be sent away. I shrieked and chattered with rage, but no one paid any attention to me. I was obliged to settle down in my box in sulky silence. In a little while I could feel myself being carried down the porch steps. Then the carriage door slammed

and we jolted along in the dark for a long time. I knew when we reached the depot by the bright light streaming through the holes in my box-lid. I was carried up the steps into the sleeping-car, and for the next quarter of an hour it seemed to me that my box changed position every two minutes. The porter was getting us settled for the night He was about to poke the box that held me [Pg 12] under the berth where little Elsie and her nurse were to sleep, when Stuart called him from the berth above, into which he had just climbed. So I was tossed up as if I had been an ordinary piece of baggage, the porter little knowing what was strapped so carefully inside the bandbox.

Doctor Tremont and Phil had the section just across the aisle from ours, and Phil carried his box up the step-ladder himself, and stowed Matches carefully away in one corner before he began to take off his shoes. When the curtains were all drawn and the car-lights turned down low so that every one could sleep, Stuart sat up and began unbuckling the strap around my box. I knew enough to keep still when he took the lid off and gently stroked me. I had no intention of being sent back to the baggage-car, if keeping quiet would help me to escape the conductor's eyes.

Stuart stroked me for a moment, and then, cautiously drawing aside his curtains, thrust his head out and looked up and down the aisle. Everything was quiet. Then he gave the softest kind of a whistle, so faint that it seemed little more than the echo of one; but Phil heard, and instantly his head was [Pg 13] poked out between his curtains. Stuart held me up and grinned. Immediately Phil held up Matches and grinned. After a funny pantomime by which, with many laughable gestures, each boy made the other understand that he intended to allow his pet freedom all night, they drew in their heads and lay down.

Stuart wanted me to sleep on the pillow beside him, but I was still sulky, and retired to my box at his feet. In spite of the jar and rumble of the train I slept soundly for a long time. It must have been somewhere about the middle of the night when I was awakened all of a sudden by a fearful crash and the feeling that I was pitching headlong down a frightful precipice.

The next instant I struck the floor with a force that nearly stunned me. When I gathered my wits together I found myself in the middle of the aisle, bruised and sore, with the bandbox on top of me.

We had been going with the usual terrific speed of a fast express, down steep mountain grades, sweeping around dizzy curves, and now we had come to a sudden stop without reason or warning. It gave the train such a tremendous [Pg 14] jar that windows rattled, baggage lurched from the racks, the porter sprawled full-length on the floor as I had done, and more than one head was bumped unmercifully against the hard woodwork of the berths. Everybody sprang up to ask what was the matter. Babies cried and women scolded and men swore. All I could do was to whimper with pain and fright until Stuart came scrambling after me. My shoulder was bruised and my head aching, and no one can imagine my terrible fright at such a rude awakening. If I had not been in the box, I might have saved myself when the crash came, but I was powerless to catch at anything when it went bump over on to the floor.

The brakeman and conductor came running in to see what was the matter. Nobody knew why the train had stopped. It was several minutes before they discovered the cause, but I had found out while Stuart was climbing back to bed with me. Swinging by her hands from the bell-rope which ran down the centre of the car, was that miserable little monkey, Matches, making a fool of herself and everybody else. Who but that little imp of mischief would have done such a thing as to get up in the middle of the night and go through a lot [Pg 15] of gymnastic exercises on the bell-rope? It was her swinging and jerking on the rope that rang the bell and brought the engine to that sudden stop.

I don't know how the doctor settled it with the conductor. I know that there was a great deal said, and Matches and I were both sent back to the baggage-car. All the rest of the journey I had an aching head and a bruised shoulder to keep me in mind of that hateful little Matches, and I resolved long before we reached home that I would do something to get even with her, before we had lived together a week.

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CHAPTER II.

WHAT DAGO SAID TO THE MIRROR-MONKEY ON TUESDAY.

Ring-tail, what do you think of Miss Patricia? I'm afraid of her. The night we came home she met us in the hall, looking so tall and severe in her black gown, with those prim little bunches of gray curls on each side of her face, that I went under a chair. Then I thought I must have misjudged her, for there were tears in her eyes when she kissed the children, and I heard her whisper as she turned away, "poor little motherless lambs!" Still I have seen so many people in the course of my travels that I rarely make a mistake in reading character. As soon as she caught sight of me I knew that my first thought had been right. Her thin Roman nose went up in the air, and her sharp eyes glared at me so savagely that I could think of nothing else but an old war eagle, with arrows in its talons. You may have seen them on silver dollars. [Pg 17]

"Tom Tremont," she exclaimed, "you don't mean to say that you have brought home a *monkey*!" I wish you could have heard the disgust in her voice. "Of all the little pests in the world, they are certainly the worst!"

"Yes, Aunt Patricia," he answered. "They've been a great pleasure to the boys."

"*They!*" she gasped. "You don't mean to say that there are *two*!" Then she saw Matches climbing up on Phil's shoulder, and words failed her.

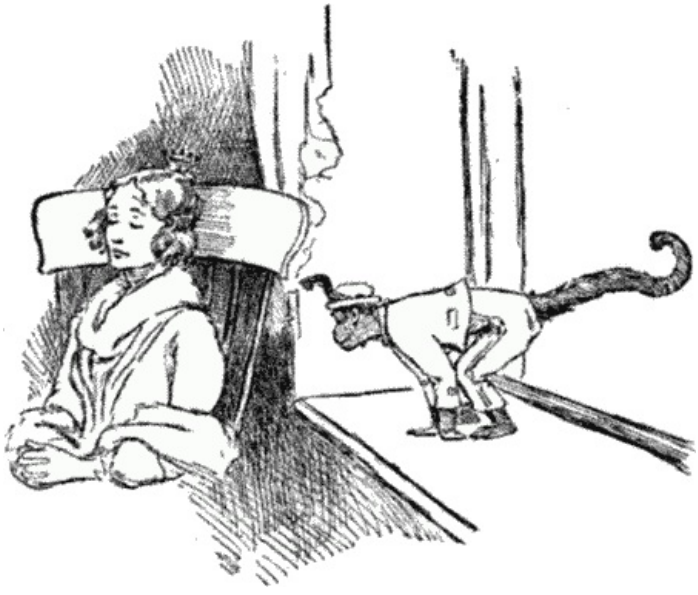
"Yes; their grandfather gave each of the boys one of his pets. He said that they would be company for them on the way home, and would help divert their thoughts from their great loss. They grieved so, poor little lads."

That softened Miss Patricia again, and she said nothing more about our being pests. But when she passed me she drew her skirts aside as if she could not bear to so much as brush against me, and from that hour it has been war to the knife between us.

Matches and I were given a little room up in the attic under the eaves, but at first we were rarely there during the day. The boys took us with them wherever they went. We had been there some time before we were left alone long enough for me to do any exploring. [Pg 18]

It was almost dark when that first chance came. I prowled around the attic awhile. Then I climbed out of the window and swung down by the vines that covered that side of the house, to the shutters of the room below. It happened to be Miss Patricia's room. As I perched on the top of the shutters, leaning over and craning my neck, I could see Miss Patricia sitting there in the dusk beside her open window. Her hands were folded in her lap, and she was rocking gently back and forth in a high-backed rocking-chair, with her eyes closed.

I thought it would be a good chance for me to take a peep into her room, so I ventured to swing over and drop down on the window-sill beside her, on all fours. I did it very quietly, so quietly, in fact, that I do not see how she could possibly have been disturbed; yet I give you my word, Ring-tail, that woman shrieked until you could have heard her half a mile. I never was so terrified in all my life. It paralysed me for an instant, and then I sprang up by the vines to the lightning-rod, and streaked up it faster than any lightning ever came down. Once in my room, I shook all the rest of the evening. [Pg 19]



Matches said that Miss Patricia was probably worse scared than I was, but that's impossible. I never made a sound, and as for her—why, even the cook came running when Miss Patricia began to shriek, and she was in the coal-cellar at the time, and is deaf in one ear. [Pg 20]

But Matches always disagreed with me in everything, and I was not sorry when we parted company. I'd better tell you about that next. It happened in this way. Stuart came into the room one day with Sim Williams, one of the boys who was always swarming up the stairs to see us. Sim was older than Stuart, and one of those restless, inquiring boys, never satisfied with letting well enough alone. He was always making experiments. This time he wanted to experiment on me with a handful of tobacco,—coax me to eat it, you know, and see what effect it would have. But Stuart objected. He was afraid it might make me sick, and proposed trying it on Phil's monkey first. So they called Matches, and the silly little beast was so pleased and flattered by their attention that she stood up and ate all they gave her. She did not like it, I could see that, but they praised her and coaxed her, and it turned her head. Usually I received the most attention.

It did not seem to hurt her any, so Sim offered me some. But I would not take it. I folded my hands, first over my ears and then over my eyes. Then I held them over my mouth. Stuart thought it wonderfully smart of me, and so did [Pg 21] Sim, when he found that it was a trick that Stuart's grandfather had taught me. The old man had an ebony paper-weight on his library table, which he called "the three wise monkeys of Japan." They were carved sitting back to back. The first one had its paws folded over its eyes in token that it must never see more than it ought to see, the second covered its ears that it might not hear more than it ought to hear, and the third solemnly held its paws over its mouth, in order that it might never say more than it ought to say.

Stuart thought that I had forgotten the trick. He told Sim that it was the only one I knew. I was glad that he had never discovered that I am a trained monkey. If he had known how many tricks I can perform life wouldn't have been worth living. It would have been like an endless circus, with me for the only performer. As it was, I was made to go through that one trick of the wise monkeys of Japan until I was heartily disgusted with it, or with anything else, in fact, that suggested the land of the Mikado.

Stuart was in a hurry to show me off to the other fellows, so he caught me up under his arm, and started off to the ball-ground, where most of them were to [Pg 22] be found. Matches tried to follow us, but Sim drove her back, and the last I saw of her she was under the table, whimpering. It was a soft little complaining cry she had, almost like the chirp of a sleepy bird, and when she made it her mouth drew up into a pitiful little pucker.

I slept in the laundry that night, for it was after dark when we got home, and the boys were not allowed to carry a light up into the attic. Next day, when Stuart took me back to my room, there lay Matches, stretched out on the floor as dead as a mummy. The tobacco had poisoned her. Phil was crying over her as if his heart would break. He didn't know what had killed her, and the boys did not see fit to tell. As for me, I remembered my lesson, never to say any more than I ought to say, and discreetly folded my hands over my mouth whenever the subject was mentioned.

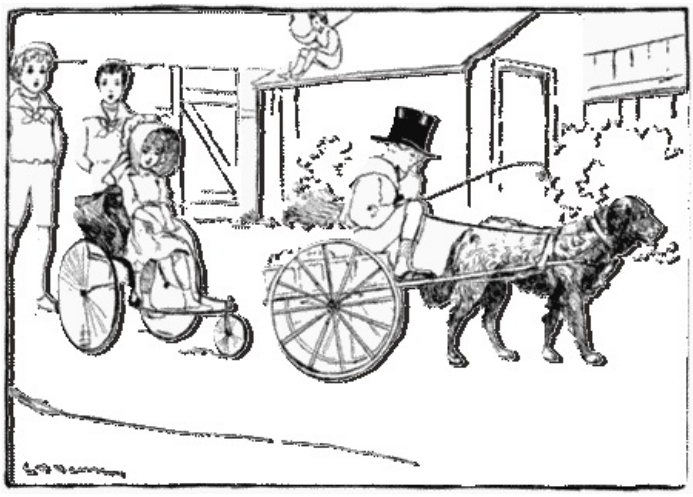
I have no doubt but that I could have eaten as much tobacco as Matches did, and escaped with only a short illness, but the sickly little mossback didn't have the constitution that we ring-tails have. She was a poor delicate creature [Pg 23] that the least thing affected. I couldn't help feeling sorry for her, and yet I was so glad to be rid of her that I capered around for sheer joy. When I realised that never again would I be kept awake by her snoring, never again would I be disturbed by her disagreeable ways, and that at last I was even with her for spilling me out of my berth on the sleeping-car, I swung on my turning-pole until I was dizzy. No one knew what a jubilee I had all alone that night in my little room under the eaves.

Little did I dream of the humiliation in store for me. The next day I found that Matches was to have a funeral after school, and that I—I, who hated her—was to take the part of chief mourner. The boys took off my spangled jacket and dressed me up in some clothes that belonged to Elsie's big Paris doll. They left my own little cap on my head, but covered it and me all over with a long crape veil that dragged on the ground behind me and tripped me up in front when I tried to walk. It was pinned tightly over my face, and I nearly smothered, for it was a hot September afternoon. I sputtered and gasped under the nasty black thing until I was almost choked. It was so thick I could scarcely breathe [Pg 24]

through it, but the more I sputtered the more it pleased the children. They said I seemed to be really crying and sobbing under my veil, and that I was acting my part of chief mourner beautifully.

All the children of the neighbourhood came to the funeral. There was a band to lead the procession; a band of three boys, playing on a French harp, a jew's-harp, and a drum. Johnny Grey's Newfoundland dog was hitched to the little wagon that held Matches's coffin. Phil drove, sitting up solemnly in his father's best high silk hat with its band of crape. It was much too large for his head, and slipped down over his curls until the brim rested on the tips of his ears. It was serious business for Phil. His eyes were red and his dirty face streaked with tears. He had grown to be very fond of Matches.

Elsie and I followed on a tricycle. She had borrowed an old-fashioned scoop bonnet and a black silk apron from one of the neighbours. I sat beside her, feeling very hot and uncomfortable in the crape veil in which I was pinned. The others walked behind us, two by two, in a long procession. We went five times aroundthe circle, while Sim Williams, on the wood-shed roof, tolled a big auction bell, which he had borrowed for the occasion. [Pg 27]



MATCHES'S FUNERAL.

When it was all over and the little mound over Matches's grave had been covered with sod, the children were loath to stop playing funeral. They had enjoyed it so much. Somebody said that we ought to march down the street so that people could see how funny I looked in my crape veil; but I could stand it no longer. When I saw that the band was really moving toward the gate, and that Stuart was about to lift me into the wagon that had carried Matches's coffin, I shrieked with rage and bit and tore at my veil until I was soon free.

In about a minute it was nothing but a heap of rags and tatters, and Phil and Stuart were looking at it and then at each other with troubled faces. "It's Aunt Patricia's!" one of them gasped. "And it is all torn to bits! Oh, Dago, you little mischief, how *could* you? Now we'll catch it!" As if it were my fault. I don't know what happened when the veil was taken back. Luckily I had no share in that part of it, although Miss Patricia seemed to add that to the long list of grievances she had against me, and her manner toward me grew even more severe than before. [Pg 28]

The excitement of the funeral seemed to make Phil forget the loss of Matches that day, but he cried next morning when Stuart came down with me on his shoulder, and there was no frisky little pet for him to fondle and feed. How he could grieve for her is more than I could understand. I didn't miss her,—I was glad she was gone. Every day Phil put fresh flowers on her grave. Sometimes it was only a stiff red coxcomb or a little stemless geranium that had escaped the early frost. Sometimes it was only a handful of bright grasses gone to seed. The doctor's neglected garden flaunted few blooms this autumn, but the little fellow, grieving long and sorely, did all he could to show respect to Matches's memory.

One day, nearly a month later, he went crying into his father's office, saying that Matches was gone. Stuart and Sim Williams had dug her up and sold her skeleton to a naturalist in the next block for fifty cents. He had just heard of it. I never saw a child so excited. He was sobbing so hard that he could not breathe except in great choking gasps, and it was some time before his father could quiet him enough to understand what he was talking about. [Pg 29]

Oh, but Doctor Tremont was angry! And yet it did not sound so bad when

Stuart had explained it. He hadn't thought that he was doing anything dishonest or unkind to Phil. He only thought what an easy way it would be to make fifty cents. He didn't see how it could make any difference to Phil, so long as he never found it out, and Sim had sworn not to tell. The mound would still be there, and he could go on putting flowers on it just the same. Sim was the one who had first spoken of it, and Sim had half the money.

I was not in the room all of the time, so I cannot tell what passed between Stuart and his father. I could hear the doctor's voice for a long time, talking in low, deep tones, very earnestly. I know he said something about Phil's being such a little fellow, and how the mother who had gone away would have been grieved to know that he was so unhappy. What he said must have hurt Stuart more than a whipping, for when he came out his eyes were red, and he looked as solemn as an owl. [Pg 30]

He had promised his father several things. One was that he would have nothing more to do with Sim Williams, who was always leading him into trouble, and another was that he would beg Phil's pardon, and do something to make up for the injury he had done him. Stuart thought and thought a long time what that should be. I know the doctor's talk must have gone deep, for by and by he took *me*,—*Dago*,—his best-beloved possession, and gave me to Phil.

At first the little fellow couldn't believe it. "Oh, brother!" he cried. "Do you really mean it? Is it for keeps?"

"Yes, it's for keeps," said Stuart, grimly. Then he put his hands in his pockets and walked away, whistling, although there were tears in his eyes. But Phil ran after him with me in his arms.

"Oh, I couldn't take *all* of him, Stuart," he said. "You are too good. That would be too much, when you are so fond of him. But I'd love to own half of him. Let's go partnerships. You claim half, and I'll claim half."

Well, they decided to settle it that way, after a great deal of talking. You can't imagine, Ring-tail, how queer it makes me feel to be divided up in such a fashion. Sometimes I puzzle over it until I am dizzy. Which of me belongs to Stuart, and which of me belongs to Phil? [Pg 31]

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CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE MIRROR-MONKEY HEARD ON WEDNESDAY.

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Do you see any gray hairs in my fur, Ring-tail, or any new wrinkles in my face? Life in this family is such a wear and tear on the nerves that I feel that I am growing old fast. So much happens every day. Something is always happening here. Really, I have had more exciting experiences in one short forenoon, here in this house, than I used to have in a whole month in the Zoo. It is bad for me to be in such a state of constant fright.

The day after I was divided between Phil and Stuart, the boys of the neighbourhood had a Cuban war in our back yard. At least they started to have one,—built a camp-fire and put up a tent and got their ammunition ready. Each side made a great pile of soft mud-balls, and it was agreed that as soon as a soldier was hit and spotted by the moist clinging stuff he was to be counted dead. You see the sport was not dangerous, only dirty. [Pg 33]

Stuart had his coat off, rolling mud-balls with all his might and main. He was plastered with mud to his elbows, and his face was a sight.

Phil was busy sweeping up dead leaves for the camp-fire. Suddenly he dropped his old broom and went trotting off toward the house. "I am going to get something that will make it sound like a real war," he said to me as he left. The boys did not hear him, and he came back presently, with his little blue blouse all pouched out in front with the things he had stuffed inside of it.

I followed him into the tent and watched him unload. First there was the old powder-horn that always hangs over the hall mantelpiece. Then there was a big, wide-necked bottle, a large, clean handkerchief, and a spool of thread. "You see this, Dago?" he said to me. "Now you watch and see what happens."

He tore the hem off the handkerchief, poured a lot of powder into the middle of the square that was left, and then drew the corners together in one hand.

With the other hand he squeezed the powder into a ball in the middle of the handkerchief, and wrapped the thread around and around above it to keep the wad in place. [Pg 34]

"Now I'll put the wad of powder into the bottle," he said, "and leave the ends of the cloth sticking out for a fuse. See?"

I didn't know anything about gunpowder then, so I put my head close to his as he squatted there in the tent, talking as he worked. "Come on, Dago," he said, when it was ready, "I'll light this at the camp-fire and hold the bottle straight out in the air, so it won't hurt anything. It'll go off like a pistol—bim!—and make the boys jump out of their boots." I thought it would be better for me to get out of the way if a racket like that was coming, so I scuttled up to the top of the tent-pole.

Phil stooped down by the bonfire, held the rag to the coals until it began to smoulder, and swung around to point it at the fence. There was no sound. Evidently the bottle did not make as good a pistol as he thought it would. "The light's gone out," he muttered, bringing the bottle cautiously around to look at it. Then he blew it, either to see if he could rekindle it, or to make sure that the last spark was out,—I could not tell. The next instant there was a puff, a flash, and then, jungles of my ancestors! such a noise and such screams and such a smell of burning powder! After that I could see nothing but a tangled mass of boys, all legs and elbows, crowding around poor little Phil to see what had happened. If war is like that, then my voice and vote are henceforth for peace, and peace alone. It's awful! [Pg 35]

They carried him up-stairs, and his father was sent for, and the neighbours came running in as soon as the boys had scampered home with the news. For awhile it seemed to me that the whole world was topsy-turvy. Miss Patricia was so frightened she couldn't do a thing. I really pitied her, for her hands trembled and her voice shook, and even the little bunches of gray curls bobbed up and down against her pale cheeks. I have had the shivers so often that I can sympathise with any one whose nerves are unstrung from fright.

The doctor turned us all out of the room, and I waited with the boys out by the alley-gate until he came down-stairs and told us how badly Phil was burned. His front hair and eyebrows and beautiful long curly lashes were singed off, and his face was so full of powder that it was as speckled as a turkey egg. The grains would have to be picked out one by one,—a slow and painful proceeding. The doctor could not tell how badly his eyes were hurt until next day, but thought he would have to lie in a dark room for a week at least, with his eyelids covered with cotton that had been dipped in some soothing kind of medicine. [Pg 36]

But that week went by, and many a long tiresome day besides, before Phil could use his eyes again. They would not let me go into the room that first day, but after Phil had gone to sleep I hid under a chair in the upper hall, where Miss Patricia and the doctor were talking. "Tom," said Miss Patricia, "what do you suppose made that child do such a reckless thing? Sometimes I think that boys are like monkeys, and are possessed by the same spirit of mischief. Neither seem satisfied unless they are playing tricks or making some kind of a disturbance. They are always getting into trouble."

"Yes, it does seem so," answered the doctor, "but if we could look down to the bottom of a boy's heart, we would find that very little of the mischief that he gets into is planned for the purpose of making trouble. He does things from a pure love of fun, or from some sudden impulse, and because he never stops to think of what it may lead to. Phil never stopped to think any more than Dago would have done, what would be the result of setting fire to the powder. You must remember that he is a very little fellow, Aunt Patricia. He is only eight. We shouldn't expect him to have the reasoning powers of a man, and the caution and judgment that come with age." [Pg 37]

Now I thought that that was a very sensible speech. It seemed to excuse some of my own past mistakes. But Miss Patricia put on her old war-eagle look.

"Really, Tom," she said, "that sounds very well, but it is not what was taught in my day. A wholesome use of the rod after the first act of disobedience helps boys to stop and think before committing the second. It is a great developer of judgment, in my opinion. If you had punished Phil the first time he took down his grandfather's powder-horn after you had forbidden him to touch it, he would never have taken it down the second time, and so would have been spared all this suffering to-day." [Pg 38]

"I know you are right, Aunt Patricia," said the doctor, "but I seem to

remember my own boyhood so clearly, the way I thought and felt and looked at things, that I have a very warm sympathy for my little lads when they go wrong."

Miss Patricia rose to go down and prepare the lemon jelly that Phil had asked for, saying, as she moved toward the stairs:

"Well, I love Phil and Stuart dearly. I'm devoted to them, and willing to do anything in my power for their comfort, but I'm free to confess that I don't understand them. I never did understand boys." Then she tripped over me as I nearly upset us both in my frantic efforts to get out of her way. "Or monkeys either," she added, shaking her skirts at me with a displeased "*Shoo*," as if I had been a silly old hen.

It was very quiet about the house for a few days, and then some jolly times began in Phil's room. As soon as the boys were allowed to visit him I showed them some of my tricks, and kept them in roars of laughter. I wheeled little [Pg 39] Elsie's doll carriage around the room, and I sat up with the doctor's pipe in my mouth, I drilled and danced, and performed as if I had been on a stage. It was wonderful to them, for they had never guessed how much I knew. One day I sat down in a little rocking-chair with a kitten in my arms, and rocked and hugged it as if it had been a baby. It wasn't breathing when I stopped. The boys said I hugged it too hard, but they kept on bringing me something to rock every day, until five kittens and a rabbit had been put to sleep so soundly that they wouldn't wake up.

One day Phil was moved into Miss Patricia's room while his own was being cleaned. Of course no boys were allowed to go in there with him except Stuart. They had a good time, for Miss Patricia told them stories and showed them the curious things in her cabinet and gave them sugar-plums out of the big, blue china dragon that always stands on top of it. But I could see that she was not enjoying their visit. She was afraid that Stuart's rockers would bump against her handsome old mahogany furniture, or that they would scratch it in [Pg 40] some way, or break some of her fine vases and jardinières.

After awhile she was called down to the parlour to receive a guest, and there was nothing to amuse the boys. Time dragged so heavily that Phil begged Stuart to bring his little rubber-gun—gumbo-shooter he called it. It was a wide rubber band fastened at each end to the tips of a forked stick shaped like a big Y. They used buckshot to shoot with, nipping up a shot in the middle of the band with thumb and finger, and drawing it back as far as possible before letting it fly.

There was a fire in the grate, so they were comfortably warm even when they opened the window to take turns in shooting at the red berries on the vine just outside. It was as much as Phil could do, lying on the sofa, to send a buckshot through the open window without hitting the panes above, but Stuart cut a berry neatly from the vine at each trial.

Soon he began to boast of his skill, and aimed his sling at an ancient portrait over the mantel. It was of a dignified old gentleman in a black stock and powdered wig. He had keen, eagle eyes like Miss Patricia, which seemed to [Pg 41] follow one all around the room.

"I bet I could hit that picture square in the apple of its eye," he bragged, "right in its eye-ball,—bim!"

"Oh, don't try!" begged Phil. "It's our great-great-grandfather, and Aunt Patricia thinks a lot of that picture."

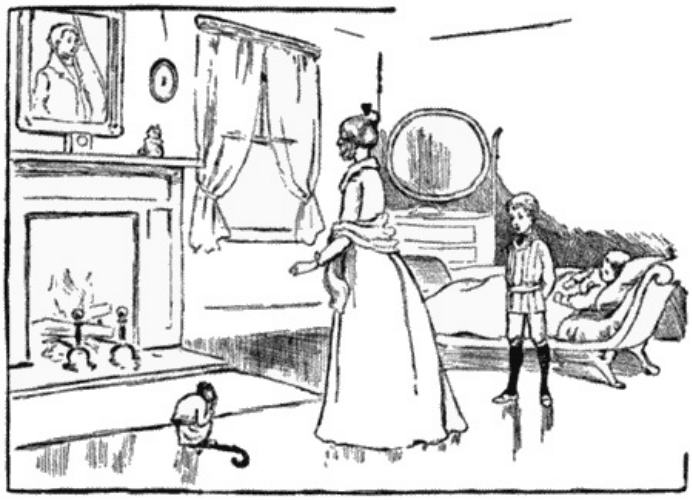
"'Course I wouldn't do it," answered Stuart, taking another aim, "but I could, just as easy as nothing." Still dallying with temptation, he pointed again at the frowning eye and drew the rubber slowly back. All of a sudden, zip! The buckshot seemed to leap from the rubber of its own accord, and Stuart fell back, frightened by what he had done. A round black hole the size of the buckshot gaped in the middle of the old-ancestor's eye-ball, as clean cut as if it had been made with a punch. It gave it the queerest, wickedest stare you can imagine. It was the first thing one would notice on looking about the room. Stuart was white about the mouth.

"Oh, dear," sighed Phil, half crying, "if Aunt Patricia was only like the wise monkeys of Japan, then she wouldn't notice." [Pg 42]

"But she will," said Stuart; "she always sees everything."

Phil had given me an idea. As soon as I heard Miss Patricia's silk skirts coming slowly through the hall with their soft swish, swish, I ran and sat in

the doorway with my hands over my eyes, in token that there was something that she ought not to look at. It should have amused her, for she knew the story of the ebony paper-weight, but instead it seemed to arouse her suspicion that something was wrong. She looked at the boys' miserable faces and then all around the room, very slowly. It was so still that you could have heard a pin drop. At last she looked up at the picture. Then she fairly stiffened with horror. She couldn't find a word for a moment, and Stuart cried out, "Oh, Aunt Patricia, I'm *so* sorry. It was an accident. I didn't *mean* to do it, truly I didn't!"



"SHE FAIRLY STIFFENED WITH HORROR."

There's no use harrowing up your feelings, Ring-tail, repeating all that was said. Miss Patricia simply couldn't believe that the shot could have struck dead centre unless the eye had been deliberately aimed at, and she thought something was wrong with a boy who would even take aim at his great-great-grandfather's eyeball. [Pg 45]

Stuart was sent from the room in disgrace to report to his father, and the last I saw of Miss Patricia that day, she was looking up at the portrait, and saying, with a mournful shake of her gray curls: "How can they do such things? I must confess that I don't understand boys!"

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CHAPTER IV.

THE TALE THE MIRROR-MONKEY HEARD ON THURSDAY.

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The day that Phil was able to go back to school was an unlucky one for me. It was so dolefully quiet everywhere. After he had gone, I slipped down-stairs on the banister, but the blinds were drawn in the parlour and dining-room, and it was so still that the only sound to be heard was the slow ticking of the great clock in the hall. When it gave a loud br-r-r and began to strike, I was so startled by the sudden noise that I nearly lost my balance and turned a somersault over the railing.

Then I saw Miss Patricia pass through the hall with her bonnet on, going out for a morning walk, and I thought it would be a fine time for me to explore her room. It is full of interesting things that I had never been permitted to touch, for when the boys were allowed to take me into Miss Patricia's room, it was always on condition that I should be made to play little Jack Horner and sit in some corner under a chair or table. [Pg 47]

So as soon as the door closed behind her I hurried up-stairs to her room. I had the best time that morning. There were all sorts of little bottles on her wash-stand with good-smelling stuff in them. I pulled out the corks and emptied some of the bottles into the bowl to make that smell good, too. Then I washed my teeth with her little silver-handled toothbrush, just as Phil does every morning, and put the sponges to soak in the water-pitcher.

After awhile I found the cut-glass vinaigrette that Miss Patricia carries around with her. I have seen her use it a hundred times at least, tipping back the silver lid, taking out the little glass stopper, and holding it to her nose with the remark that she never smelled more refreshing salts. I have wanted very much to try it myself. So now that I had the chance I did just as she does,—tipped back the lid, pulled out the stopper, and took a long, deep smell.

Whew! It almost upset me. I thought it must be fire and brimstone that she had bottled up in there. It brought the tears to my eyes, and took my breath for a minute so I had to sit and gasp. Then I dropped the vinaigrette in the slop-jar and jumped down from the wash-stand. [Pg 48]

Her high, old-fashioned bureau tempted me next. There were rows and rows of pins in a big blue pincushion, put in as evenly as if it had been done by a machine. I pulled them out, one by one, and dropped them down behind the bureau. It took some time to do that, but at last the blue cushion was empty, and I sat down on it to examine the jewel-case at my leisure. I found the prettiest things in it; an open-faced locket, set around with pearls, with the picture of a beautiful young girl in it; a string of bright coral beads, and a little carnelian ring, and a gold dollar hung on a faded ribbon. [Pg 49]

I forgot to tell you that Miss Patricia's bay window is full of flowers, and that she has a mocking-bird hanging in a cage above the wire stand that holds her ferns and foliage plants. The mocking-bird's name is Dick. Now Dick hadn't paid any attention to me until I opened the jewel-case. As I did so I knocked a hairbrush off the bureau to the floor, which must have frightened him, for he began to cry out as if something had caught hold of him. Then he whistled, as if he were calling a dog. You have no idea what a racket he made. I was afraid that some of the servants might hear him and come to see what was the matter. Then, of course, I would be turned out of the room before I had finished examining all the pretty things. I turned around and shook my fist at him and chattered at him as savagely as I knew how, but he kept on, first making that hoarse cry and then whistling as if calling to a dog. [Pg 50]

I determined to stop him in some way or another, so, not waiting to put down the gold dollar or the little carnelian ring, which were tightly clenched in one hand, I sprang down from the bureau. Running up the wire flower-stand below the cage, I shook my fist directly under his beak. It only made him noisier than ever, and he flew about the cage like something crazy.

"Be still, won't you? you silly thing!" I shrieked, and in my desperation I made a grab through the bars at his tail-feathers. A whole handful came out, and that seemed to make him wilder than before. He beat himself against the top of the cage and screamed so loud that I thought it would be better to leave before any one heard him and came in.

So I jumped across to the cabinet near the window, where the big blue dragon sat. Then I remembered the sugar-plums inside and stopped for just one taste. I lifted off the dragon's ugly head and was reaching my hand down inside for one of those delicious sweetmeats, when in walked Miss Patricia. My! I was scared! I hadn't expected her back so soon. [Pg 51]

I dropped the dragon's old blue head on the floor and was out of the window like a shot. There was a cedar-tree reaching up past the window, and I ran out on one of the limbs and hid myself among its thick branches. I could see her but she couldn't see me. She walked all around the room, and looked at the wash-stand and the bureau and at Dick's tail-feathers scattered among the window-plants and then at the blue dragon's head, smashed all to bits on the floor. Then she picked up the locket, lying face downwards on the rug, and

began searching for the other things that had been in the jewel-case. I suppose it was the carnelian ring and the gold dollar with the hole in it that she missed. I opened my hand, remembering that I had had them when I went to hush up that noisy mocking-bird. I must have dropped them when I jumped from the window into the cedar-tree. While I was hanging over the limb, peering down to see if I could catch a glimpse of them on the ground below, the housemaid, Nora, came into the room in answer to Miss Patricia's ring. A few minutes after, Doctor Tremont followed. [Pg 52]

Nora and the doctor walked around and around the room, looking at everything, as Miss Patricia had done, and hunting for the things that were missing, but Miss Patricia sat down in a high-backed chair against the wall, and cried.

"I cannot stand it any longer," she sobbed. Her old face was quivering, there was a bright red spot on each cheek, and her side-curls were trembling with excitement. "I have put up with that little beast until I can endure it no longer. Patience has ceased to be a virtue. Either it must go, or I shall. Look at Dick! His heart is beating itself almost out of his poor little body, he is so frightened. And there's that china dragon, that has been a family heirloom for generations,—all broken! And my precious little keepsakes, that I have cherished since childhood, all scattered or lost! Oh, Tom, you do not know how cruelly it hurts me!"

I felt sorry, then. I wanted to cry out, as Stuart had done when he shot his great-great-grandfather's portrait, "Oh, Aunt Patricia, I'm *so* sorry! It was an accident. I didn't mean to do it, truly I didn't mean to!" But she couldn't understand monkey language, and man's speech has been denied us, so I only hugged the limb closer and watched in silence. [Pg 53]

I stayed in that tree all day. The boys came home from school, and called and called me, but I kept as still as a mouse. It was not until long after dark that I crawled up the lightning-rod and slipped through the window into my room in the attic. Phil found me there the next morning when he began his search again. He squeezed me until I ached, he was so glad to see me. Then he and Elsie brought me my breakfast and sat on the floor, half crying as they watched me eat, for the order had gone forth that I must be sent away. The doctor could forgive his boys when they did wrong, but he couldn't make any allowance for me.

"I think it's too bad that we have to give up the very nicest pet we ever had, just because Aunt Patricia don't like him," exclaimed Phil, mournfully. "Dago didn't do much mischief that can't be mended. Carnelian rings are as cheap as anything. Nora said so. It would be easy enough to get her another one as good as the one Dago lost, and I'd be only too glad to give her my big silver dollar in place of the gold one. That would be better than the one she had before, for mine hasn't any hole in it. Dick's tail-feathers will grow out again, and everything could be fixed as good as new except the old blue dragon, and he was too ugly to make a fuss about, anyhow!" [Pg 54]

"He always had good sugar-plums in him, though," said little Elsie, who had had her full share of them, and who had so many sweet memories of the dragon that she looked upon it as a friend.

"I don't care! I love Dago a thousand times more than she could possibly love an old piece of china or a gold dollar with a hole in it. I wouldn't take a hundred dollars for Dago, and Aunt Patricia is a mean old thing to make papa say that we have to give him up. I wished I dared tell her so. I should like to stand outside her door and holler at the top of my voice:

"Old Aunt Pat
You're mean as a rat!"

"Why, Philip Tremont!" cried Elsie, in a shocked voice. "Something awful will happen to you if you talk that way. She isn't just your aunt, she's your great-aunt, too, in the bargain, and she's an old, old lady." [Pg 55]

"Well, I would!" insisted Phil. "I don't care what you say." Just then a faint sound of music, far-away down the street, but steadily coming nearer, floated up the attic stairs. The children ran to the window to listen, hanging recklessly out over the sill.

"It's a grind-organ man!" cried Elsie, "and he's got a monkey."

"I wonder how Dago would act if he were to see one of his own family," said Phil. "Come on, let's take him down and see."

He grabbed me up excitedly, regardless of the fact that I had not finished my breakfast, and was still clinging to a half-eaten banana. Tucking me under his arm, he went clattering down the steep attic stairs, calling Elsie to follow. Running across the upper hall, he slid down the banister of the next flight of stairs, that being the quickest way to reach the front door and the street. Elsie was close behind. She slid down the banister after him, her chubby legs held stiffly out at each side, and the buttons on her jacket making a long zigzag scratch under her, as she shot down the dark, polished rail. [Pg 56]

A crowd of children had stopped on the curbstone in front of the house, shivering a little in the pale autumn sunshine, but laughing and pushing each other as they gathered closer around the man with the hand-organ. As the wheezy notes were ground out, the man unwound the rope that was coiled around his wrist, and bade the monkey at the other end of it step out and dance.

"Come on, Dago! Come shake hands with the other monkey!" the children cried. But I shrank back as far as possible, clinging to Phil's neck. Not for a fortune would I have touched the miserable little animal crouching on the organ. She might have been Matches's own sister, from her resemblance to her. She belonged to the same species, I am sure, and whenever they held me near her I shrieked and scolded so fiercely that Phil finally said that I shouldn't be teased.

The man who held the string was a hard master. One could plainly see that. He had a dark, cruel face, and he jerked the rope and swore at her in Italian whenever she stopped dancing, which she did every few seconds. He had started on his rounds early, in order to attract as many children as possible before school-time, and I doubt if the poor little thing had had any breakfast. She was sick besides. She would dance a few steps and then cower down and tremble, and look at him so appealingly, that only a brute could have had the heart to strike her as he did. When he found that all his jerking was in vain, he gave her several hard blows with the other end of the rope. At that she staggered up and began to dance again, but it was not long until she was huddled down on the curbstone as before, shaking as if with a chill. [Pg 57]

Oh, how I wished that I could be a human being for a few minutes! A big strong man with a rope in my hands, and that fellow tied to one end of it. Wouldn't I make him dance? Wouldn't I jerk him and scold him and beat him, and give him a taste of how it feels to be a helpless animal, sick and suffering, in the power of a great ugly brute like himself?

Maybe he would not have been so rough if he had known that any one besides the children was looking on. He did not see the gentleman standing at the open front door across the street, watching him with a frown on his face. He did not see him, as I did, walk back into the hall and turn the crank of an alarm-signal. But in less than two minutes, it seemed to me, that same gentleman was coming across the street with the policeman he had summoned. A few words passed between them, and almost before the children knew what was happening, the policeman had the organ-grinder by the arm, and was marching him off down the street. The gentleman who had caused the arrest followed with the poor trembling monkey. [Pg 58]

"That's the president of the society for preventin' you bein' cruel to animals," explained one of the larger boys to the crowd of children. "You dasn't hurt a fly when he is around. Lucky for the monk that the man happened to stop in front of his house this mornin'. Come on, lets see what they do with it."

The children trooped off after him, and Phil and Elsie watched them down the street until they were out of sight, pushing and tripping at each other's heels in their eagerness to follow.

Then Phil climbed up on one of the gate-posts with me in his arms, and Elsie promptly scrambled up to the other. [Pg 59]

"That's what might happen to Dago any day, sister," Phil said, in a solemn voice, as he hugged me tight. If we give him up, some old organ-grinder may get him, and beat him and beat him, and be cruel to him, and I'm just not going to let anybody have him. I'll hide him somewhere so nobody can find him."

"Trouble is he won't stay hid," answered Elsie, with a mournful look in her big blue eyes. "We'll have to think of some other plan."

It was a cold morning, but there they perched on the gate-posts, and thought and thought until the school-bell began to ring.

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CHAPTER V.

WHAT DAGO TOLD ON FRIDAY.

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Before the bell stopped ringing, some one called Elsie to the house to get ready for kindergarten, and Phil ran down to the stable with me. He tied me to an iron ring in one of the stalls by a halter. Of course any knot that a boy of that size could tie would not keep me a prisoner very long. By the time he was halfway to school I was free and on my way back to the house.

I stayed in the laundry nearly all day, for the sun went under a cloud soon after breakfast, and a cold drizzling rain began to fall. It gave me the rheumatism, and I was glad to curl up in a big market-basket on the shelf behind the stove, and enjoy the heat of the roaring fire. Nora was ironing, and singing as she worked. Not since I left the warm California garden had I been as peaceful and as comfortable. The heat made me so drowsy that not even [Pg 61] the thump, bump of Nora's iron on the ironing-board, or the sound of her shrill singing could keep me awake. I dreamed and dozed, and dozed and dreamed all day, in a blissful state of contentment.

It was nearly dark when I roused up enough to stretch myself and step out of the basket. Nora had gone up-stairs and was setting the supper-table. I could hear the cook beating eggs in the pantry. There would be muffins for supper. The sound made me so hungry that I slipped into the dining-room, and hid under the sideboard until Nora had finished her work and gone back to the kitchen. The cook was still mixing muffin batter in the pantry. I could hear her spoon click against the crock as she stirred it, so that I knew she would not be in to disturb me for some time.

I never saw a table more inviting. After I had leaped up on it, I sat and looked all around a moment, trying to decide what to take first. Everything was so good. There wasn't much room to walk about, and when I stepped over the jelly to reach the cheese, which seemed to tempt my appetite more than anything, my long tail switched the roses out of the bowl in the middle of the [Pg 62] table. That confused me slightly, and in trying not to upset anything else I stepped flat into the butter, and dragged my little plaid flannel skirt through the applesauce. Why they persist in dressing me in this ridiculous fashion is more than I can understand.

You may be sure that I would have starved a week rather than have climbed on that table, if I had had the slightest foreboding of what was to follow. But how could I know that Miss Patricia was to choose that very moment for walking into the dining-room? She had just come in from the street, for she had on her bonnet, and carried an umbrella in her hand. Phil and little Elsie followed her.

"Oh, you little torment!" she cried, when she saw me, and, before I could make up my mind which way to jump, she flew at me with her umbrella, trying to strike me without breaking any of the dishes. I dodged this way and that. Seeing no way of escape from the room, I ran up the curtains, over and under the chairs, around and around,—anywhere to keep out of her way. She was after me at every step. WhenI ran up to the top of the high, carved back of the [Pg 65] old-fashioned sideboard, I found myself out of her reach for one breathless minute. She was climbing on a chair after me, when the cook, hearing the unusual sounds, opened the pantry door and looked in.

"'OH, YOU LITTLE TORMENT!' SHE CRIED."

It was my only chance of escape, and, regardless of where I might land, I leaped wildly out. I escaped Miss Patricia's umbrella, it is true, but, just my luck, I went bump into the cook's face, and then into the crock of muffin batter which she held in her arms. She dropped us both with a scream which brought everybody in the house hurrying to the dining-room, and I scuttled up to the highest shelf of the pantry, where I crouched trembling, behind some spice-boxes. I was dripping with cold muffin batter, and more miserable and frightened than I had ever been before in my whole life.

I could hear excited voices in the dining-room. When Miss Patricia first struck me with the umbrella, Phil had cried out: "Stop that! You stop hitting my monkey!" Then as she chased me around the room, making vain attempts to reach me as I scampered over chairs and up curtains, he seemed to grow wild with rage. He was fairly beside himself and bristled up like an angry little [Pg 66] fighting-cock. "You're a mean old thing," he shrieked, breaking over all bounds of respect, and screaming out his words so loud that his father, passing through the hall, heard the impudent rhyme he had made up the day before:

"Old Aunt Pat,
You're mean as a rat!"

It was just as he yelled this that the cook opened the pantry door, and I made my fatal plunge into the dark and the crock of muffin batter.

As I hid behind the spice-boxes I heard Doctor Tremont tell Phil, in a very stern voice, to march up-stairs, and stay there until he came for him. It must have been nearly an hour that I hid on that shelf, waiting for a chance to make my escape. The batter began to harden and cake on me until I could not move without every hair on my body pulling painfully.

Things were set to rights in the dining-room after awhile and the family had supper. Some bread and milk were sent up to Phil. Soon after I reached the laundry, Stuart found me there. He turned the hose on me and gave me a [Pg 67] rough scrubbing. Then he wrapped me in a piece of a blanket and took me up-stairs to dry before the fire in his room. Phil had gone to bed, and was lying there sobbing, with his head under the pillows when we came in. He wouldn't talk at first, but after awhile he told Stuart that his father had given him a hard whipping for speaking so disrespectfully to an old lady like Miss Patricia, and that he could not go to the table again until he had asked her pardon. That Phil vowed he would not do so long as he lived. He had made up his mind to run away in the morning. Nobody treated him right, and he didn't intend to stand it any longer.

"But, Phil," said Stuart, "you know yourself, that it wasn't very nice of Dago to go walking around the table through the butter and applesauce, and all the things to eat. I don't wonder that Aunt Patricia was provoked, 'specially when he has done so many other things to tease her. She didn't hurt him much for all her whacking around. I saw nearly as much of the fight as you did. She

didn't hit him more than one lime out of ten. I was perfectly willing that my half of Dago should get what it deserved." [Pg 68]

At that, Phil cried still harder. "Well, if you say that," he sobbed, giving his pillow an angry thump, "then you don't love Dago as much as I do. You're against him, too. Nobody cares anything for either of us, and I'll take him and go off with him in the morning. I'm going as soon as it is light."

But when the daylight came, Phil was not in such a hurry to go. He still refused to ask his Aunt Patricia's pardon, so his breakfast was sent up-stairs to him, and he ate in sulky silence. He waited until he saw his father drive away down the street, and then he went in search of Elsie. She is always wanting to do everything that he does, so he had no trouble in persuading her to help him carry out his plans.

"Put on the oldest, raggedest clothes you can find," he said to her, "and tie an old handkerchief over your head so't you'll look as beggary as possible. I'll tear some more holes in the old overalls that I played in last summer, and pull part of the brim off my straw hat. We'll take the music-box out of the hall, and put it in my little red wheelbarrow, and you and me and Dago will start off [Pg 69] through the streets like the grind-organ man did yesterday, I planned it all last night while everybody in the house was sound asleep. We'll sing when the music-box plays songs, and you and Dago can dance when it plays waltzes. I'll give you part of the money that we get to buy you the prettiest doll in town. I'll take the rest and go off to the place that I'm thinking about."

He wouldn't tell her where the place was, although she begged him with tears in her eyes. "Some place where they're not cruel to little boys and monkeys," was all he would tell her. "Where they don't ever whip them, and where they don't mind 'em getting into mischief once in awhile."

An hour later everything was ready for the start. Except for the daintily embroidered ruffles of her white linen underskirt, that would show below her old gingham dress, little Elsie might have been taken for the sorriest beggar in town. The dress was faded and outgrown. The little shawl she had pinned over her shoulders had one corner burned out of it, and the edges of the hole were scorched and jagged. A faded silk muffler that she had used in her doll- [Pg 70] cradle was drawn tightly over her tousled curls, and tied under her chin.

Phil's outfit might have come from the ragbag, too, it was so tattered and patched. But he had forgotten to take off his silver cuff-buttons, and the shoes he wore looked sadly out of place below the grimy jeans overalls. He was obliged to wear a pair of bright tan-coloured shoes, so new that they squeaked. They were the only ones he had, for his old ones had been thrown away the day before. At first he was tempted to go barefoot, but the November wind was chilly, although the sun shone, and he dared not risk it.

It was ten o'clock by the court-house dial, and the bell was on the last stroke, when little Elsie held open the alley-gate and Phil trundled the red wheelbarrow through. I was perched on the music-box. Rather an uncertain seat, I found it, as it slid back and forth at every step. I had to hold on so tight that my arms were sore for two days afterward.

"Which way shall we go?" asked little Elsie, as she fastened the gate behind us. Phil looked up and down the alley in an uncertain way, and then said, [Pg 71] "When the princes in the fairy tales start out into the wide world to make their fortunes, they blow a leather up into the air and follow that."

"Here's one," cried Elsie, running forward to pick up a bit of fluffy white down that had blown over from a pigeon-house on the roof of a neighbouring stable. "I'll blow, and you say the charm." She puckered up her rosy little mouth and gave a quick puff.

"Feather, feather, when we blow,
Point the way that we should go,"

sang Phil. "West!" he exclaimed, as it sailed lazily across the alley and over a high board fence. "That means that we are to go down toward the cotton-mills. I don't know much about that part of town. Mostly poor people live there, who look as if they hadn't much money to give away. But we'll try it, anyhow."

Picking up the barrow-handles, he trundled down the alley toward Pine Street, with little Elsie holding fast to the tail of his tattered jacket. We were off at last, to seek our fortunes in the wide, wide world, and our hearts were light as we followed the feather.

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CHAPTER VI.

WHAT DAGO SAID TO THE MIRROR-MONKEY ON SATURDAY.

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Such a day as that was! We enjoyed it at first, for the sun shone and a crowd of dancing children followed us everywhere we went. We were in a strange part of town, so no one recognised us, but more than one woman looked sharply at little Elsie's embroidered ruffles, peeping out below the old gingham dress, and at Phil's squeaky new shoes.

"Have you run away, honey, or did your mammy dress you up that way and send you out to beg?" asked a pleasant-voiced woman, with a baby in her arms, as she leaned over a gate to drop a penny in Elsie's cup. Elsie gave a startled glance at Phil, not knowing what to say, and Phil, turning very red, moved away without answering.

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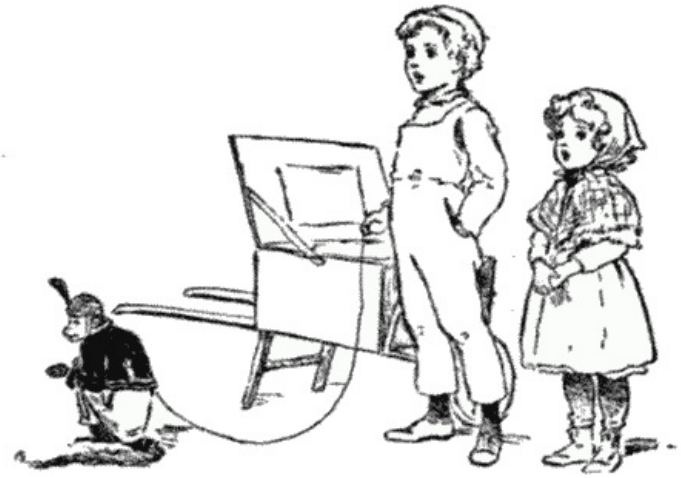
The music-box was an old-fashioned affair that wound up noisily with a big key. It played several jerky little waltzes and four plaintive old songs: "Ben Bolt," "The Last Rose of Summer," "Then You'll Remember Me," and "Home, Sweet Home." The children had sung them so often that they knew all the words, and their voices rang out lustily at first; but, about the twentieth time the same old round of tunes began, little Elsie drew a deep, tired breath.



[Pg 74]

"Oh, Phil," she said, "I *can't* sing those songs all over again. I'm sick of them." She sat down on the curbstone, refusing to join in the melody, clasping her hands around her knees, and rocking back and forth as the shrill voice of the music-box piped on alone.

"I just *hate* 'Sweet Alice Ben Bolt,'" she complained. "Isn't it most time to go home?" It was noon now. At the sound of the factory whistles all our followers had deserted us, and gone home to dinner. Phil sat down on the curbstone beside Elsie, and emptying the pennies out of the little cup she had been carrying, gravely counted them. "There's only eleven," he announced. "Of course we can't go home yet."

The music-box droned out the last notes of "You'll Remember Me," gave a click, paused an instant as if to take breath, and then started mournfully on its last number, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." At the first sound of the familiar notes, Elsie laid her head down on her knees and began to weep dismally. "I wish I was back in my home, sweet home," she cried. "I'm *so* tired and cold and hungry. I'm nearly starved. Oh, brother, I wisht I hadn't runned away! I don't *like* to be a beggar," she wailed.

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Phil began patting her on the back. "Don't cry, sister," he begged. "We'll go back to that bake-shop we passed a little while ago, and get something to eat. Don't you remember how good it smelled? Come on! You'll feel better when you've had a lunch. I'll spend every penny we've got, if you'll only stop crying. We can make some more this afternoon."

Elsie wiped her eyes on her shawl, let him help her to her feet, and obediently trotted after him as we went down the narrow back street, through which we had passed a few moments before. It was not far to the bakery. The opening

of the door made a bell ring somewhere in the rear of the shop, and a fat, motherly old German woman came waddling to the front. Phil bought a bag of buns and another of little cakes, and was turning to go out again when Elsie climbed up on a chair near the stove, refusing to move. A cold wind had begun to blow outdoors, and her hands and wrists showed red below her short sleeves.

"I'm tired," she said, with an appealing glance of her big blue eyes at the old woman. "Mayn't we stay here and rest while we eat the cakes?"

"Ach, yes, mein liebchen!" cried the motherly old soul, taking Elsie's cold little hands in hers. "Come back mit me, where is one leedle chair like yourself." [Pg 76]

She led the way into a tiny sitting-room at the rear of the shop, where a canary in a cage and geraniums blooming in the window made it seem like summer. Hot, spicy smells of good things baking, floated in from ovens somewhere out of sight.

As Elsie sank down into the little chair, with a deep sigh, Phil trundled the wheelbarrow into the room, and for the first time the old woman caught sight of me and the music-box. You should have heard her exclamations and questions. She laughed at Phil's answers until her fat sides shook. Little by little she found out the whole truth about our running away, and seemed to think it very amusing. After we had rested awhile, Phil offered to give her a private performance. As he started to wind the music-box, she opened a door into a stairway and called, "Oh, Meena! Make haste, once already, and bring der baby!"

In answer to her call, a young woman came hurrying down the steps, carrying a big fat baby, who stared at us solemnly with its round blue eyes, and stuck its thumb in its mouth. But as the music started, and I began my dancing, he kicked and crowed with delight. The more he gurgled and cooed and waved his little fat hands, the broader the smiles spread on the women's faces. I mention this because the more he noticed us, the more his grandmother's heart seemed to warm toward us. When the music stopped, she went out of the room and brought us each a glass of milk and a little mince pie, hot from the oven. [Pg 77]

After we had eaten, Elsie got down on the rug and played with the baby, although Phil kept insisting that it was time to go. One thing after another delayed us until it was nearly the middle of the afternoon before we started out again on the streets. The old woman pinned Elsie's shawl around her more comfortably, kissed her on each cheek, and told Phil to hurry home with her, that it was getting too cold to be wandering around, standing on street corners.

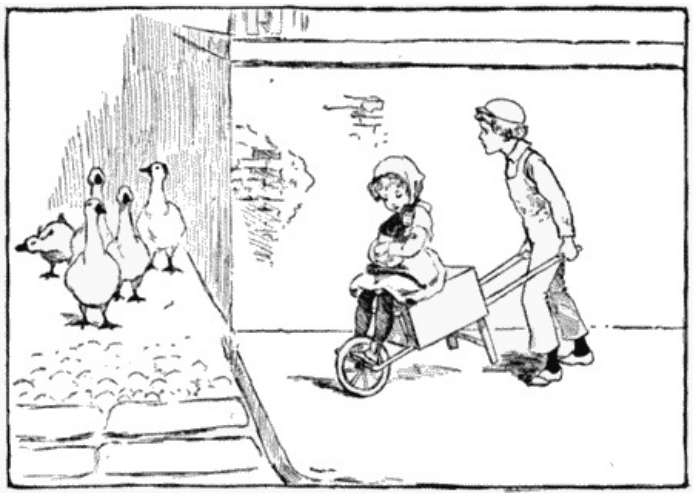
She watched us out of sight. As soon as we had turned a corner, Phil looked ruefully into Elsie's empty cup. "If I had known she was going to give us the milk and pie, I wouldn't have bought the buns," he said. "We haven't made much headway, and it gets dark so soon, these days. I'm afraid the feather fooled us about the way to go." [Pg 78]

We wandered on and on all the rest of that long afternoon, sometimes playing before every door, and sometimes walking blocks before stopping for a performance. Phil's new shoes tired his feet until he could scarcely drag them, and little Elsie's lips were blue with cold. At last when the music-box struck up "Home, Sweet Home" for what seemed the ten hundreth time, her voice quavered through the first line and stopped short with a sob.

"Oh, Phil, I'm getting tireder and tireder! Can't you make that box skip that song?" she begged. "If I hear it another time I just can't stand it! I'll *have* to turn around and go back home."

Phil glanced anxiously at the clouded sky. The sun was so low it was hidden by the tall buildings, and the darkness was coming on rapidly.

"Well, come along!" he said, impatiently. "I s'pose I'll have to take you home, cry-baby, but I'm not going in myself. We haven't any money at all, hardly; not enough to take me even a tweety, weenty part of the way to that place I'm going to, let alone enough to buy you that doll. But that's the way with girls. They always spoil everything." [Pg 81]



"ALL WENT WELL UNTIL WE REACHED AN ALLEY CROSSING."

Little Elsie rubbed her sleeve across her eyes and swallowed hard. "I wouldn't ask to go back, brother, really and truly I wouldn't, but I'm so cold and mizzible I feel most like I'm going to be sick."

Phil looked at her little bare red hands and tear-stained face, and said, gruffly, "Well, then, get on the wheelbarrow. You can sit on the music-box and hold Dago in your lap, and I'll wheel you a piece until you get rested."

Elsie very willingly climbed up and took me in her lap. It was hard work for Phil. He grew red in the face, and his arms ached, but he kept bravely on, although he was out of breath from the hard pushing. All went well until we reached an alley crossing. Phil, whose attention was all on the wheel of his barrow, which he was trying to steer safely between the cobblestones, did not see a long string of geese waddling down the alley on their way home from the commons, where they had been feeding all day. They came silently along [Pg 82] in an awkward, wavering line, as quietly as a procession of web-footed ghosts, until they were almost upon us. Then the leader shot out his wings with a hoarse cry, every goose in the procession followed his example, and with a rush they flapped past us, half running, half flying. It was done with such startling suddenness that it caused a general upsetting of our party. Phil veered to one side, and over we went in a heap, music-box, Elsie, barrow, and all, with myself on top. There was a frightened scream from Elsie, followed by a steady downpour of tears as Phil picked her up. She had struck her forehead on a cobblestone, and a big blue bump was rapidly swelling above one eye. Her nose was bleeding a little, too. Phil was so occupied in trying to comfort her, and in wiping away the blood, that it was several minutes before he thought of the music-box. When he picked it up he found it was so badly broken that it would no longer play.

"Oh, what will papa say!" cried Elsie. The little fellow made no answer, but could scarcely keep from crying himself, as he lifted it on the barrow, to start back home. [Pg 83]

"When will we be there, brother?" asked Elsie, when they had trudged along for some time. She was holding on to the tail of his jacket, sniffling dismally. Phil stopped, for they had reached a street corner, and looked around. It was growing dusk. Then he turned to her with a dazed, scared fate.

"Oh, Sis," he cried, "I don't know what to do. This isn't the street that I thought it was. I'm afraid we're lost!"

They had reached the edge of the town by this time. Only one more block of pretty suburban homes stood between them and the outskirting fields.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Phil, after a moment's pause, bravely choking back his own fears at sight of his little sister's frightened face. "See that house over there with the firelight shining through the windows, so bright and warm? It looks as if kind people lived there. We'll go and ask them to show us the way home."

"I wish I was home now," mourned Elsie. "I wish I was all clean and warm, sitting at the supper-table with my good clothes on, beside my papa. Maybe we'll never find our way back, any more! Maybe he'll never kiss me and say, [Pg 84] 'Papa's dear little daughter,' again! He'll think I'm dead. Maybe we'll have to go and live with beggars, and be somebody's poor children all our life to punish us for running away; and, oh, maybe we'll never have any 'home, sweet

home' any more!"

At the picture she made for herself, of the cheerful room with the dear home faces gathered around the table, which she might never see again, she began to sob wildly. The tears were falling so fast now that she could hardly see, but stumbled blindly along, stumping her tired toes at every step, and clinging fast to Phil's old jacket.

They had almost reached the house with the friendly windows, when a great iron gate just ahead of them swung open, and an elegantly dressed old lady walked out to step into a carriage, drawn up at the curbstone. Behind her came another old lady, tall and stately, and with something so familiar in appearance that both the children stood still in astonishment. She was looking about her with sharp, eagle-like eyes. Her skirts swished softly as she walked, and the little bunches of gray curls on each side of her face bobbed gently under her imposing black bonnet. [Pg 85]

"Aunt Patricia!" screamed little Elsie, darting forward and clasping her arms around the astonished old lady's knees. "Oh, Aunt Patricia! We're lost! *Please* take us home!"

If a dirty little grizzly bear had suddenly sprung up in the path and begun hugging her, Miss Patricia could not have been more amazed than she was at the sight of the ragged child who clung to her. She pushed back the old silk muffler from the tousled curls, and looked wonderingly on the child's blood-stained face with the blue bump still swelling on the forehead.

"Caroline Driggs," she called to the lady who stood waiting for her at the carriage door, "am I dreaming? I never saw my nephew's children in such a plight before. I can scarcely believe they are his."

"Oh, we are! We are!" screamed little Elsie. "I'll just *die* if you say we are not!"

Phil stood by, too shamefaced to plead for himself, yet fearful that she might take Elsie and leave him to his fate, because he had refused to apologise for his rude speech. [Pg 86]

Miss Patricia had been spending the day with Mrs. Driggs, who was an old friend of hers, and who was now about to take her home in her carriage. Mrs. Driggs seemed to understand the situation at a glance. "Come on," she said. "We'll put the children in here with us; the monkey and the rest of the gypsy outfit can go up with the coachman. Here, Sam, take this little beast on the seat with you, and lift up the barrow, too."

If those children were half as glad to sink down on the comfortable cushions as I was to snuggle under the coachman's warm lap-robe, then I am sure that Mrs. Driggs's elegant carriage never held three more grateful hearts. As we climbed to our places I heard Mrs. Driggs say, kindly: "So the little ones were masquerading, were they? It is a cold day for such sport."

Miss Patricia answered, in a voice that trembled with displeasure: "Really, Caroline, I am more deeply mortified than I can say, to think that any one bearing my name—the proud, unsullied name of Tremont—could go parading the streets, in the garb of a beggar, asking for alms. I cannot trust myself to speak of it calmly." [Pg 87]

All the way home I felt sorry for Phil. I didn't envy him having to sit there, facing Miss Patricia, with his conscience hurting him as it must have done. That is the advantage of being a monkey. We have no consciences to trouble us. I didn't envy his home-coming, either, although I knew he would be glad enough to creep into his warm, soft bed. His feet were badly blistered from his long tramp in his new shoes.

Stuart looked after my comfort, and I was soon curled up snugly on a cushion before the fire. Phil and Elsie had a hot bath, and hot bread and milk, and were put to bed at once. Elsie was coughing at nearly every breath, and the doctor seemed troubled when he came up to rub some soothing lotion on the poor little swelled forehead. He brought something for Phil's blistered feet, too, but he never spoke a word all the time he was putting it on.

After it was done he stood looking at him very gravely. Then he said: "Your little sister tells me that you took her out to dance and sing in the streets to-day to earn money, in order that you may run away from home. Is that so?" [Pg 88]

"Yes, sir," answered Phil, in a very faint voice.

"So you are tired of your home," continued the doctor, "and think you could find kinder treatment among strangers who care nothing for you. I am sorry that my little son has come to such a conclusion. But if you are determined to leave us, there is no necessity for you to slip off like a thief in the night. Winter is coming on, and you will need all your warm clothes. Better take time to pack them properly, and collect whatever of your belongings you want to keep. I am very much afraid that this day's work is going to make your little sister ill. No doubt you will feel worse for it yourself, and will need a good rest before starting out. Maybe you'd better wait until Monday, before you turn your back for ever on your home and family."

The doctor waited a moment, but Phil made no answer. After waiting another moment, still without a word from Phil, the doctor said, "Good night, my son," and walked down-stairs into the library.

Now, I know well enough that, when we started out in the morning, Phil was fully determined to run away from home, as soon as he could earn enough money to take him. I couldn't understand what had changed his mind so completely. You can imagine my surprise when he began to sob, "Oh, papa! papa! You didn't kiss me good night and you don't care a bit if I run away! Oh, I don't want to go now! I don't *want* to!" [Pg 89]

It sounded so pitiful that I got up off my cushion and walked over to the bed. All that I could do was to take his head in my arms and rub it and pat it and rub it again. I think it comforted him a little, although he sobbed out at first: "Oh, Dago, you're the only friend I've got! It's awful when a little boy's mother is dead, and there isn't anybody in the whole world to love him but a monkey!"

The door was open into Elsie's room. She heard what he said, and in a minute, she came pattering across the carpet in her little bare feet and climbed up on the bed beside me.

"Don't say that, brother," she begged, leaning over and kissing him. "Dago isn't the only one that loves you, 'cause there's me. Don't cry."

"But, oh," wailed Phil, "papa didn't say one word about my staying! He doesn't care if I run away. He never once asked me not to, and I believe he'll be glad when I'm gone, 'cause he can't bear to see Aunt Patricia worried, and everything I do seems to worry her. She says she doesn't understand boys, and I s'pose it's best for me to go. But I don't want to. *Aow, I don't want to!*" [Pg 90]

By this time he had worked himself up into such a spasm of crying that he could not stop, for all little Elsie's begging. She wiped his eyes on the sheet with her little dimpled hands, and kissed him a dozen times. Then I think she must have grown frightened at his sobs, for she slipped off the bed to the floor, "I'll tell papa that you don't want to go," she said, trailing out of the room in her long white nightgown. She had to hold it up in front to keep from tripping, and her little bare feet went patter, patter, down the long stairs to the library. Wondering what would happen next, I followed her into the hall, and swung by my tail over the banister.

Doctor Tremont was sitting in a big armchair before the fire, with his head in his hands. He looked very much troubled over something. She opened the door, and ran up to him. [Pg 91]

"Why, Elsie, child, what is the matter?" he cried, catching her in his arms. "What do you mean by running around the house in your nightgown? Doesn't my little daughter know that it will make her cough worse, and maybe make her very, very ill?"

He started quickly up the stairs with her, to carry her back to bed. She clasped her arms around his neck, and laid her soft pink cheek against his. "Oh, daddy dear," I heard her say, "Phil is crying and crying up there in the dark, and the monkey's patting his head, trying to make him stop. He's crying because you don't love him any more. He said you didn't kiss him good night, and you don't care if he runs away, and he hasn't a friend in the world but me and the monkey. He feels awful bad about having to leave home. Oh, daddy dear, *please* tell him he can stay!"

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CHAPTER VII.

WHAT DAGO TOLD THE MIRROR-MONKEY ON SUNDAY.

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As soon as Elsie was put back to bed, Doctor Tremont came into the room where I was still trying to comfort Phil, for I had skipped back to him when they started up the stairs. Stirring the fire in the grate until it blazed brightly, he turned to look at Phil. There was a long silence; then he said, "Phil, come here, my boy. Come and sit on my knee by the fire. I want to talk to you awhile."

His voice was so kind and gentle that it seemed to me nobody could have been afraid of him then, but Phil climbed out of bed very slowly, as if he did not want to obey. Wrapping him in a warm, fleecy blanket, the doctor drew him over to a big rocking-chair in front of the fire, and sat down with him on his knee. I crawled back to my cushion on the hearth. [Pg 93]

For a little while there was nothing said. The old chair crooned a comforting lullaby of *creakity-creak*, *creakity-creak*, as the doctor rocked back and forth, with the boy's curly head on his shoulder. At last he said: "You think that I am unkind, Phil, because I want to send your pet away, and cruel because I punished you for speaking rudely to your Aunt Patricia. Now, I am going to tell you her story, and maybe you will understand her better. The truth is, you do not understand your Aunt Patricia, or why many of the little things you do should annoy her. I want you to put yourself in her place as near as you can, and see how differently you will look at things from her standpoint.

"She was the only child in a houseful of grown people, and growing up among prim elderly persons made her orderly and exact in everything she did. When she was a very little girl she was sent to a strict, old-fashioned school every morning, where she learned to work samplers as well as to read and spell. They used to tell that, at the age of seven, she came home one day with two prizes which she had taken. One was for scholarship, and one was for neatness in her needlework. When she brought them home, her grandmother [Pg 94] (that is your great-great-grandmother, you know) praised her for the first; but her grandfather (the one whose portrait Stuart shot) said: 'Nay, it is for the neatness that the little lass should be most commended, for it is ever a pleasing virtue in a woman.' Then he gave her a gold dollar, to encourage her in always being neat and exact. She was so proud of it that nothing could have persuaded her to spend it. She had a hole bored in it so that she could hang it on a ribbon around her neck. For a long, long time she wore it that way. She has often said to me that the sight of it was a daily reminder of what her grandfather wanted her to be, and that it helped her to form those habits of orderliness and neatness in which her family took such pride. Long after she stopped wearing the little coin, the sight of it used to recall the old proverbs that she heard so often, such as '"A stitch in time saves nine," Patricia,' or, 'Remember, my dear, "have a place for everything, and everything in its place."' It used to remind her of the praise they gave her, too. Her grandfather's 'Well done, my good little lass,' was a reward that made her [Pg 95] happy for hours.

"Her room was always in perfect order. Even her toys were never left scattered about the house. She has her old doll packed away now, in lavender, in nearly as good condition as when it was given to her, sixty years ago. You can see how anything would annoy her that would break in on these lifelong habits of hers. She was a child that took great pleasure in her little keepsakes, and the longer she owned them the dearer they became. She kept that little gold coin, that her grandfather gave her, for over half a century; and that is the dollar that Dago lost. Do you wonder that she grieved over the loss of it?

"The old blue china dragon is one of her earliest recollections. It used to sit on a cabinet in her grandmother's room, and there were always sugar-plums in it, as there have been ever since it was given to her. I can remember it myself when I was a boy. One of the pleasures of my visit to the old house was listening in the firelight to grandfather's 'dragon tales,' as we called them. They were about all sorts of wonderful things, and we called them that [Pg 96] because, while he told them, the old dragon was always passed around and we sat and munched sugar-plums. That jar has been in the family so long that your great-great-grandfather remembered it when he was a boy,—and that is the jar that Dago broke.

"There were very few children in the neighbourhood where your Aunt Patricia lived. For a long time she had no playmates except the little boy who lived on the adjoining place, Donald McClain. But he came over nearly every day for four years, and they grew to love each other like brother and sister. It was a lonesome time for the little Patricia when the McClains moved away. Donald brought her a tiny carnelian ring the day he came over for the last time. 'To remember me by,' he said, and she put it on her finger and remembered him always, as the kindest, manliest little playmate any child ever had.

"She grew up after awhile to be a beautiful young girl. I will show you her miniature sometime, with the pearls around it. The little carnelian ring was too small then, and she had to lay it away; but she never forgot her old playmate. When she was nineteen her mother died, and, soon after, her father [Pg 97] lost his eyesight, and she gave up all her time to caring for him. She sang to him, read to him, led him around the garden, and amused him constantly. She never went anywhere without him, never thought of her own pleasure, but stayed alone with him in the quiet old house, year after year, until he died.

"Donald came back once after he was a man, and had been through college, and stayed all summer in his old home. He was going to Scotland in the fall. Before he left, he asked Aunt Patricia to be his wife and go with him. She said, 'I would, Donald, if I were not needed so much here at home; but how could I go away and leave my poor old blind father?'

"He would not take no for an answer, but went away, saying that he would be back again in a year, and then they would take care of the dear old father together. But when the year was over, the ship that was bringing him home went down at sea in a storm, and all that Aunt Patricia had left of his was his letters, and the little carnelian ring he had given her, when they were children, to 'remember him by.' And that is the ring that Dago lost." [Pg 98]

Phil raised his head quickly from his father's shoulder. "Oh, papa!" he cried. "I'm so sorry! I never could have said anything mean to her if I had known all that."

His father went on. "That is why I am telling you this now, my son. Maybe children could understand old people better, if they knew how much they had suffered in their long lives, how much they had lost, and how much they had given up for other people's sakes. Aunt Patricia has been like a mother to me ever since I was left without any, when I was Stuart's age. She sent me to college, she gave me a home with her until I was successfully started in my profession, and has shown me a thousand other kindnesses that I have not been able to repay. I have been able to make up to her what she has spent in money, but a lifetime would not be long enough to cancel my debt to her for all the loving care she has given me. But even if she hadn't been so kind; even if she were crabbed and cross and unreasonable, I couldn't let a son of mine be rude to an old lady under my roof. One never knows what troubles have whitened the hair and made the wrinkles come in the temper as well as the [Pg 99] face. Old age must be respected, no matter how unlovely.

"As for Aunt Patricia,—if you would only remember how good she was to you after your accident, how she nursed you, and waited on you, and read to you hour after hour,—she has been tender and loving to all of you, especially little Elsie, and is trying to help me bring up my children as best we can, alone. And, Phil, my boy, sometimes it is as hard for us as it is for you, to always know what is best to do without the little mother's help."

Phil's arm stole around his father's neck. "I'll ask Aunt Patricia's pardon in the morning, the very first thing," he said, in a low voice. "I'll tell her that I didn't understand her, just like she didn't understand me, and after this I'll be like the three wise monkeys of Japan."

"How is that?" asked his father, smiling.

"Why, never say or hear or see more than I ought to. Keep my hands over my eyes or ears or mouth, whenever I'm tempted to be rude. Instead of thinking that she's fussy and particular, I'll only see the wrinkles in her face that the trouble made, and I'll remember how good she's been to you and all of us." [Pg 100]

His father hugged him closer. "If you can always remember to do that," he said, "your part of the world will certainly be a happy place to live in. If you can be blind and deaf to other people's faults and speak only pleasant things."

"Papa," said Phil, in the pause that followed, hiding his face on his father's shoulder and speaking with a tremble in his voice, "I'm mighty sorry I did so many bad things to-day: broke the music-box, and ran away with Elsie, and mortified the family name, begging on the streets. That's what Aunt Patricia told Mrs. Driggs. I never want to run away again as long as I live. Oh, if you'll only forgive me and let me stay, I'd rather be your little boy than anybody else's in the whole world!"

The doctor gathered him closer in his arms and kissed him. "Do you think that anything in the whole world could make me give you up, my little Philip?" he said. "You have been a great worry to me sometimes, but you are one of my very greatest blessings, and I love you—oh, my child, you will never know how

much!"

A great, happy "bear-hug" almost choked him, as Phil's arms were clasped about his neck. Then he said, "I think we understand each other all the way around, now. Shut your eyes, little man, and I'll rock you to sleep." [Pg 101]

Phil snuggled down against him like a little bird in a warm nest, and there they sat in the firelight together. The old rocking-chair threw a giant shadow on the wall as it swung slowly back and forth, back and forth. "*Creakity-creak*," droned the rockers. "*Creakity-creak*, *squeakity-squeak*," and to the music of their drowsy song Phil fell fast asleep in his father's arms.

[Pg 102]

CHAPTER VIII.

DAGO BIDS FAREWELL TO THE MIRROR-MONKEY.

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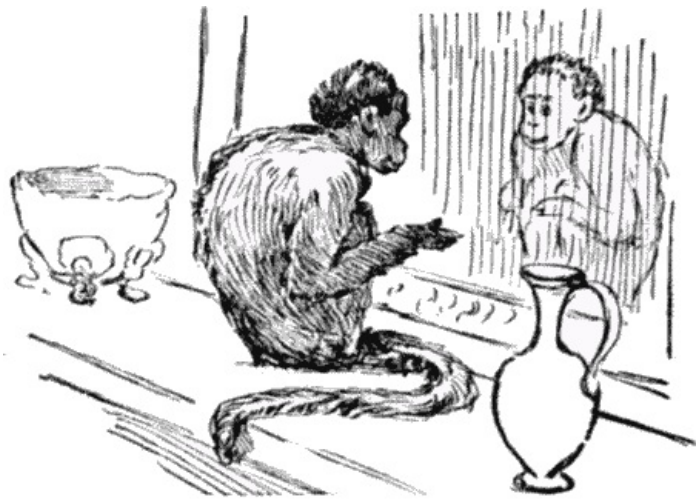
Hey there, Ring-tail, I've just slipped in a moment to say good-bye. I'm off for California in the morning. It seems that I'm at the bottom of all the trouble in this family, so I'm to be shipped by the fast express. But you needed waste any sympathy on *me*. I am going back to the old California garden among the vines and the pepper-trees, where I shall miss all the winter's snow and ice that I have been dreading.

The boys do not feel that they are giving me up entirely, for they will see me once a year when they visit their grandfather. I am sorry to leave them, but the kindest master in the world couldn't make me as happy as the freedom of the warm, wide outdoors. Next time you hear of me I shall be back in that land of summer, watching the water splash over the marble mermaid in the fountain, and the goldfish swim by in the sun. [Pg 103]

Think of me, sometimes, Ring-tail; not as you have known me here, caged in a man-made house, and creeping about in everybody's way, but think of me as the happiest, freest creature that ever swung from a bough. Free as the birds and the bees in the old high-walled garden, and as happy, too, as they, when the sunshine turns to other sunshine all the Gold of Ophir roses. Good-bye! old fellow!



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