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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GYPSY BREYNTON ***

Gypsy Breynton

By
ELIZABETH STUART
PHELPS

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PREFACE.

Having been asked to write a preface to the new edition of the Gypsy books, I am not a little perplexed. I was hardly more than a girl myself, when I recorded the history of this young person; and I find it hard, at this distance, to photograph her as she looks, or ought to look to-day. She does not sit still long enough to be "taken." I see a lively girl in pretty short dresses and very long stockings,—quite a Tom-boy, if I remember rightly. She paddles a raft, she climbs a tree, she skates and tramps and coasts, she is usually very muddy, and a little torn. There is apt to be a pin in her gathers; but there is sure to be a laugh in her eyes. Wherever there is mischief, there is Gypsy. Yet, wherever there is fun, and health, and hope, and happiness,—and I think, wherever there is truthfulness and generosity,—there is Gypsy, too.

And now, the publishers tell me that Gypsy is thirty years old, and that girls who were not so much as born when I knew the little lady, are her readers and her friends to-day.

Thirty years old? Indeed, it is more than that! For is it not thirty years since the publication of her memoirs? And was she, at that time, possibly sixteen? Forty-six years? Incredible! How in the world did Gypsy "grow up?" For that was before toboggans and telephones, before bicycles and electric cars, before bangs and puffed sleeves, before girls studied Greek, and golf-capes came in. Did she go to college? For the Annex, and Smith, and Wellesley were not. Did she have a career? Or take a husband? Did she edit a Quarterly Review, or sing a baby to sleep? Did she write poetry, or make pies? Did she practice medicine, or matrimony? Who knows? Not even the author of her being.

Only one thing I do know: Gypsy never grew up to be "timid," or silly, or mean, or lazy; but a sensible woman, true and strong; asking little help of other people, but giving much; an honor to her brave and loving sex, and a safe comrade to the girls who kept step with her into middle life; and I trust that I may bespeak from their daughters and their scholars a kindly welcome to an old story, told again.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

Newton Centre, Mass.,
April, 1895.

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GYPSY BREYNTON



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Chapter I

WHICH INTRODUCES HER

"Gypsy Breynton. Hon. Gypsy Breynton, Esq., M. A., D. D., LL. D., &c., &c. Gypsy Breynton, R. R."

Tom was very proud of his handwriting. It was black and business-like, round and rolling and readable, and drowned in a deluge of hair-line flourishes, with little black curves in the middle of them. It had been acquired in the book-keeping class of Yorkbury high school, and had taken a prize at the end of the summer term. And therefore did Tom lean back in his chair, and survey, with intense satisfaction, the great sheet of sermon-paper which was covered with his scrawlings.

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Tom was a handsome fellow, if he did look very well pleased with himself at that particular moment. His curly hair was black and bright, and brushed off from a full forehead, and what with that faint, dark line of moustache just visible above his lips, and that irresistible twinkle to his great merry eyes, it was no wonder Gypsy was proud of him, as indeed she certainly was, nor did she hesitate to tell him so twenty times a day. This was a treatment of which Tom decidedly approved. Exactly how beneficial it was to the growth within him of modesty, self-forgetfulness, and the passive virtues generally, is another question.

The room in which Tom was sitting might have been exhibited with profit by Mr. Barnum, as a legitimate relic of that chaos and Old Night, which the poets tell us was dispelled by the light of this order-loving creation.

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It had a bed in it, as well as several chairs and a carpet, but it required considerable search to discover them, for the billows of feminine drapery that were piled upon them. Three dresses,—Tom counted, to make sure,—one on the bedpost, one rolled up in a heap on the floor where it had fallen, and one spread out on the counterpane, with benzine on it. What with kerosene oil, candle drippings, and mugs of milk, Gypsy managed to keep one dress under the benzine treatment all the time; it was an established institution, and had long ago ceased to arouse remark, even from Tom. There was also a cloak upon one chair, and a crocheted cape tied by the tassels on another. There was a white tippet hanging on the stovepipe. There was a handbox up in one corner with a pretty hat lying on the outside, its long, light feather catching the dust; it was three days now since Sunday. There were also two pairs of shoes, one pair of rubbers, and one slipper under the bed; the other slipper lay directly in the middle of the room. Then the wardrobe door was wide open,—it was too full to stay shut,—upon a sight which, I think, even Gypsy would hardly want put into print. White skirts and dressing-sacks; winter hoods that ought to have been put up in camphor long ago; aprons hung up by the trimming; a calico dress that yawned mournfully out of a twelve-inch tear in the skirt; a pile of stockings that had waited long, and were likely to wait longer, for darning; some rubber-boots and a hatchet.

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The bureau drawers, Tom observed, were tightly shut,—probably for very good reasons. The table, at which he sat, was a curiosity to the speculative mind. The cloth was two-thirds off, and slipping, by a very gradual process, to the floor. On the remaining third stood an inkstand and a bottle of mucilage, as well as a huge pile of books, a glass tumbler, a Parian vase, a jack-knife, a pair of scissors, a thimble, two spools of thread, a small kite, and a riding-whip. The rest of the table had been left free to draw a map on, and was covered with pencils and rubber, compasses, paper, and torn geography leaves.

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There were several pretty pictures on the walls, but they were all hung crookedly; the curtain at the window was unlooped, and you could write your name anywhere in the dust that covered mantel, stove, and furniture.

And this was Gypsy's room.

Tom had spent a longer time in looking at it than I have taken to tell about it, and when he was

through looking he did one of those things that big brothers of sixteen long years' experience in this life, who are always teasing you and making fun of you and "preaching" at you, are afflicted with a chronic and incurable tendency to do. It is very fortunate that Gypsy deserved it, for it was really a horrible thing, girls, and if I were you I wouldn't let my brothers read about it, as you value your peace of mind, lace collars, clean clothes, good tempers, and private property generally. I'd put a pin through these leaves, or fasten them together with sealing-wax, or cut them out, before I'd run the risk.

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And what did he do? Why, he put a chair in the middle of the room, tied a broom to it (he found it in the corner with a little heap of dust behind it, as Gypsy had left it when her mother sent her up to sweep the room that morning), and dressed it up in the three dresses, the cloaks and the cape, one above another, the chair serving as crinoline. Upon the top of the broom-handle he tied the torn apron, stuffed out with the rubber-boots, and pinned on slips of the geography leaves for features; Massachusetts and Vermont giving the graceful effect of one pink eye and one yellow eye, Australia making a very blue nose, and Japan a small green mouth. The hatchet and the riding-whip served as arms, and the whole figure was surmounted by the Sunday hat that had the dust on its feather. From under the hem of the lowest dress, peeped the toes of all the pairs of shoes and rubbers, and the entire contents of the sliding table-cloth, down to every solitary pencil, needle, and crumb of cake, were ranged in a line on the carpet. To crown the whole, he pinned upon the image that paper placard upon which he had been scribbling.

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When his laudable work was completed, this ingenious and remorseless boy had to stand and laugh at it for five minutes. If Gypsy had only seen him then! And Gypsy was nearer than he thought—in the front door, and coming up the stairs with a great banging and singing and laughing, as nobody but Gypsy could come up stairs. Tom just put his hand on the window-sill, and gave one leap out on the kitchen roof, and Gypsy burst in, and stopped short.

Tom crouched down against the side of the house, and held his breath. For about half a minute it was perfectly still. Then a soft, merry laugh broke out all at once on the air, something as a little brook would splash down in a sudden cascade on the rocks.

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"O—oh! Did you ever? I never *saw* anything so funny! Oh, dear *me!*"

Then it was still again, and then the merry laugh began to spell out the placard.

"Gypsy Breynton. Hon.—Hon. Gypsy Breynton,—what? Oh, Esq., M. A., D. D., LL. D.—what a creature he is! Gypsy Breynton, R. R. R. R.? I'm sure I don't know what that means—Tom! Thom—as!"

Just then she caught sight of him out on the ridge-pole, whittling away as coolly as if he had sat there all his life.

"Good afternoon," said Gypsy, politely.

"Good afternoon," said Tom.

"Been whittling out there ever since dinner, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

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"I thought so. Come here a minute."

"Come out here," said Tom. Gypsy climbed out of the window without the slightest hesitation, and walked along the ridge-pole with the ease and fearlessness of a boy. She had on a pretty blue delaine dress, which was wet and torn, and all stuck together with burs; her boots were covered with mud to the ankle; her white stockings spattered and brown; her turban was hanging round her neck by its elastic; her net had come off, and the wind was blowing her hair all over her eyes; she had her sack thrown over one arm, and a basket filled to overflowing, with flowers and green moss, upon the other.

"Well, you're a pretty sight!" said Tom, leisurely regarding her. Indeed, he was not far from right. In spite of the mud and the burs and the tears, and the general dropping-to-pieces look about her, Gypsy managed, somehow or other, to look as pretty as a picture, with her cheeks as red as a coral, and the soft brown hair that was tossing about her eyes. Gypsy's eyes were the best part of her. They were very large and brown, and had that same irresistible twinkle that was in Tom's eyes, only a great deal more of it; and then it was always there. They twinkled when she was happy and when she was cross; they twinkled over her school-books; they twinkled, in spite of themselves, at church and Sabbath school; and, when she was at play, they shone like a whole galaxy of stars. If ever Gypsy's eyes ceased twinkling, people knew she was going to be sick. Her hair, I am sorry to say, was *not* curly.

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This was Gypsy's one unalleviated affliction in life. That a girl could possibly be pretty with straight hair, had never once entered her mind. All the little girls in story-books had curls. Who ever heard of the straight-haired maiden that made wreaths of the rosebuds, or saw the fairies, or married the Prince? And Gypsy's hair was not only straight, it was absolutely uncurlable. A week's penance "done up in paper" made no more impression than if you were to pinch it.

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However, that did not interfere with her making a bit of a picture, perched up there on the roof beside Tom, among her burs and her flowers and her moss, her face all dimples from forehead to chin.

"Where have you been?" said Tom, trying to look severe, and making a most remarkable failure.

"Oh, only over to the three-mile swamp after white violets. Sarah Rowe, she got her two hands full, and then she just fell splash into the water, full length, and lost 'em—Oh, dear me, how I laughed! She did look so funny."

"Your boots are all mud," said Tom.

"Who cares?" said Gypsy, with a merry laugh, tipping all the wet, earthy moss out on her lap, as she spoke. "See! isn't there a quantity? I like moss 'cause it fills up. Violets are pretty enough, only you *do* have to pick 'em one at a time. Innocence comes up by the handful,—only mine's most all roots."

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"I don't know what's going to become of you," said Tom, drawing down the corner of his mouth.

"Neither do I," said Gypsy, demurely; "I wish I did."

"You won't learn to apply yourself to anything," persisted Tom. "Work or play, there's no system to you. You're like a——" Tom paused for a simile—"Well, like a toad that's always on the jump."

"Ow!" said Gypsy, with a little scream, "there's a horrid old snail crawled out my moss!" and over went moss, flowers, basket, and all, down the roof and upon the stone steps below. "There! Good enough for it!"

Tom coughed and whittled. Gypsy pulled her net out of her basket, and put up her hair. There was a little silence. Nothing had yet been said about the image in Gypsy's room, and both were determined not to be the first to speak of it. Gypsy could have patience enough where a joke was in question, and as is very apt to be the case, the boy found himself outwitted. For not a word said Gypsy of the matter, and half an hour passed and the supper-bell rang.

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"There!" said Gypsy, jumping up, "I do declare if it isn't supper, and I've got these burs to get off and my dress to mend and my shoes and stockings to change, and—Oh, dear! I wish people didn't ever have to do things, anyway!"

With this very wise remark, she walked back across the ridge-pole and climbed in the window. There was nothing for Tom to do but follow; which he did slowly and reluctantly. Something would have to be said now, at any rate. But not a syllable said Gypsy. She went to the looking-glass, and began to brush her hair as unconcernedly as if everything were just as she left it and precisely as she wanted it.

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Tom passed through the room and out of the door; then he stopped. Gypsy's eyes began to twinkle as if somebody had dropped two little diamonds in them.

"I say," said Tom.

"What do you say?" replied Gypsy.

"What do you suppose mother would have to say to you about this *looking* room?"

"I don't know what she'd say to you, I'm sure," said Gypsy, gravely.

"And you, a great girl, twelve years old!"

"I should like to know why I'm a railroad, anyway," said Gypsy.

"Who said you were a railroad?"

"Whoever wrote Gypsy Breynton, R. R., with my red ink."

"That doesn't stand for railroad."

"Doesn't? Well, what?"

"Regular Romp."

"Oh!"



Chapter II

A SPASM OF ORDER

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"I can't help it," said Gypsy, after supper; "I can't possibly help it, and it's no use for me to try."

"If you cannot help it," replied Mrs. Breynton, quietly, "then it is no fault of yours, but in every way a suitable and praiseworthy condition of things that you should keep your room looking as I would be ashamed to have a servant's room look, in my house. People are never to blame for what they can't help."

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"Oh, there it is again!" said Gypsy, with the least bit of a blush, "you always stop me right off with that, on every subject, from saying my prayers down to threading a needle."

"Your mother was trained in the new-school theology, and she applies her principles to things terrestrial as well as things celestial," observed her father, with an amused smile.

"Yes, sir," said Gypsy, without the least idea what he was talking about.

"Besides," added Mrs. Breynton, finishing, as she spoke, the long darn in Gypsy's dress, "I think people who give right up at little difficulties, on the theory that they can't help it, are——"

"Oh, I know that too!"

"What?"

"Cowards."

"Exactly."

"I hate cowards," said Gypsy, in a little flash, and then stood with her back half turned, her eyes fixed on the carpet, as if she were puzzling out a proposition in Euclid, somewhere hidden in its brown oak-leaves.

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"Take a chair, and sit by the window and think of it," remarked Tom, in his most aggravating tone.

"That's precisely what I intend to do, sir," said Gypsy; and was as good as her word. She went upstairs and shut her door, and, what was remarkable, nobody saw anything more of her. What was still more remarkable, nobody heard anything of her. For a little while it was perfectly still overhead.

"I hope she isn't crying," said Mr. Breynton, who was always afraid Gypsy was doing something she ought not to do, and who was in about such a state of continual astonishment over the little nut-brown romp that had been making such commotion in his quiet home for twelve years, as a respectable middle-aged and kind-hearted oyster might be, if a lively young toad were shut up in his shell.

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"Catch her!" said the more appreciative Tom; "I don't believe she cries four times a year. That's the best part of Gyp.; with all her faults, there's none of your girl's nonsense about her."

Another person in the room, who had listened to the conversation, went off at this period into a sudden fit of curiosity concerning Gypsy, and started up-stairs to find her. This was Master Winthrop Breynton, familiarly and disrespectfully known as Winnie. A word must be said as to this young person; for, whatever he may be in the eyes of other people, he was of considerable importance in his own. He had several distinguishing characteristics, as is apt to be the case with gentlemen of his age and experience. One was that he was five lengthy and important years of age; of which impressive fact his friends, relatives, and chance acquaintances, were informed at every possible and impossible opportunity. Another was, that there were always, *at least*, half a

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dozen buttons off from his jacket, at all times and places, though his long-suffering mother lived in her work-basket. A third, lay in the fact that he never walked. He trotted, he cantered, he galloped; he progressed in jerks, in jumps, in somersets; he crawled up-stairs like a little Scotch plaid spider, on "all fours;" he came down stairs on the banisters, the balance of power lying between his steel buttons and the smooth varnish of the mahogany. On several memorable occasions, he has narrowly escaped pitching head first into the hall lamp. His favorite method of locomotion, however, consisted in a series of *thumps*, beginning with a gentle tread, and increasing in impetus by mathematical progression till it ended in a thunder-clap. A long hall to him was bliss unalloyed; the bare garret floor a dream of delight, and the plank walk in the woodshed an ecstasy. Still a fourth peculiarity was a pleasing habit when matters went contrary to his expressed wishes, of throwing himself full length upon the floor without any warning whatsoever, squirming around in his clothes, and crying at the top of his lungs. Added to this is the fact that, for some unaccountable reason, Winnie's eyes were so blue, and Winnie's laugh so funny, and Winnie's hands were so pink and little, that somehow or other Winnie didn't get half the scoldings he deserved. But who is there of us that does, for that matter?

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Well, Winnie it was who stamped across the hall, and crawled up-stairs hand over hand, and stamped across the upper entry, and pounded on Gypsy's door, and burst it open, and slammed in with one of Winnie's inimitable shouts.

"Oh *Wimie!*"

"I say, father wants to know if——"

"Just *see* what you've done!"



Winnie stopped short, in considerable astonishment. Gypsy was sitting on the floor beside one of her bureau drawers which she had pulled out of its place. That drawer was a sight well worth seeing, by the way; but of that presently. Gypsy had taken out of it a little box (without a cover, like all Gypsy's boxes) filled with beadwork,—collars, cuffs, nets, and bracelets, all tumbled in together, and as much as a handful of loose beads of every size, color, and description, thrown down on the bottom. Gypsy was sorting these beads, and this was what had kept her so still. Now Winnie, in slamming into the room after his usual style, had stepped directly into the box, crushed its pasteboard flat, and scattered the unlucky beads to all four points of the compass.

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Gypsy sat for about half a minute watching the stream of crimson and blue and black and silver and gold, that was rolling away under the bed and the chair and the table, her face a perfect little thunder-cloud. Then she took hold of Winnie's shoulder, without any remarks, and—shook him.

It was a little shake, and, if it had been given in good temper, would not have struck Winnie as anything but a pleasant joke. But he knew, from Gypsy's face, it was no joke; and, feeling his dignity insulted, down he went flat upon the floor with a scream and a jerk that sent two fresh buttons flying off from his jacket.

Mrs. Breynton ran up-stairs in a great hurry.

"What's the matter, Gypsy?"

"She sh—sh—shooked me—the old thing!" sobbed Winnie.

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"He broke my box and lost all my beads, and I've got them all to pick up just as I was trying to put my room in order, and so I was mad," said Gypsy, frankly.

"Winnie, you may go down stairs," said Mrs. Breynton, "you must learn to be more careful with Gypsy's things."

Winnie slid down on the banisters, and Mrs. Breynton shut the door.

"What are you trying to do, Gypsy?"

"Pick up my room," said Gypsy.

"But what had that to do with stringing the beads?"

"Why, I—don't know exactly. I took out my drawer to fix it up, and my beads were all in a muss, and so I thought I'd sort them, and then I forgot."

"I see several things in the room that want putting in order before a little box of beads," said Mrs. Breynton, with a smile that was half amused, half sorrowful. Gypsy cast a deprecating glance around the room, and into her mother's face.

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"Oh, I *did* mean to shut the wardrobe door, and I thought I'd taken the broom down stairs as much as could be, but that everlasting Tom had to go and— Oh dear! did you ever see anything so funny in all your life?" And Gypsy looked at the image, and broke into one of her rippling laughs.

"It is really a serious matter, Gypsy," said Mrs. Breynton, looking somewhat troubled at the laugh.

"I know it," said Gypsy, sobering down, "and I came up-stairs on purpose to put everything to rights, and then I was going to live like other people, and keep my stockings darned, and—then I had to go head first into a box of beads, and that was the end of me. It's always so."

"You know, Gypsy, it is one of the signs of a lady to keep one's room in order; I've told you so many times."

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"I know it," said Gypsy, forlornly; "don't you remember when I was a little bit of a thing, my telling you that I guessed God made a mistake when he made me, and put in some ginger-beer somehow, that was always going off? It's pretty much so; the cork's always coming out at the wrong time."

"Well," said Mrs. Breynton, with a smile, "I'm glad you're trying afresh to hammer it in. Pick up the beads, and tear down the image, and go to work with a little system. You'll be surprised to find how fast the room will come to order."

"I think," she added, as she shut the door, "that it was hardly worth while to—"

"To shake Winnie?" interrupted Gypsy, demurely. "No, not at all; I ought to have known better."

Mrs. Breynton did not offer to help Gypsy in the task which bade fair to be no easy one, of putting her room in order; but, with a few encouraging words, she went down stairs and left her. It would have been far easier for her to have gone to work and done the thing herself, than to see Gypsy's face so clouded and discouraged. But she knew it would be the ruin of Gypsy. Her only chance of overcoming her natural thoughtlessness, and acquiring the habits of a lady, lay in the persistent doing over and over again, by her own unaided patience, these very things that came so hard to her. Gypsy understood this perfectly, and had the good sense to think her mother was just right about it. It was not want of training, that gave Gypsy her careless fashion of looking after things. Mrs. Breynton was a wise, as well as a loving mother, and had done everything in the way of punishment, reproof, warning, persuasion, and argument, that mothers can do for the faults of children. Nor was it for want of a good example, Mrs. Breynton was the very pink of neatness. It was a natural *kink* in Gypsy, that was as hard to get out as a knot in an apple-tree, and which depended entirely on the child's own will for its eradication. This disorder in her room and about her toilet was only one development of it, and by no means a fixed or continued one. Gypsy could be, and half the time she was, as orderly and lady-like as anybody. She did everything by fits and starts. As Tom said, she was "always on the jump." If her dress didn't happen to be torn and her room dusty, why, she had a turn of forgetting everything. If she didn't forget, she was always getting hurt. If it wasn't that, she lost her temper every five minutes. Or else she was making terrible blunders, and hurting people's feelings; something was always the matter; and some one was always on the *qui vive*, wondering what Gypsy was going to do next.

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Yet, in spite of it all, the person who did not love Gypsy Breynton (provided he knew her) was not to be found in Yorkbury. Whether there was any reason for this, you can judge for yourself as the story goes on.

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After her mother had gone down, Gypsy went to work in earnest. She picked up the beads, and put them back into the drawer which she left upon the floor. Then she attacked Tom's image. It took her fully fifteen minutes merely to get the thing to pieces, for the true boy-fashion in which it was tied, pinned, sewed, and nailed together, would have been a puzzle to any feminine mind. She would have called Tom up to help her, but she was just a little bit too proud.

The broom she put out in the entry the first thing; then, remembering that that was not systematic, she carried it down stairs and hung it on its nail. The shoes and the dresses, the cape and the cloak, the tippet and the hat, she put in their places; the torn apron and the unmended stockings she tumbled into her basket, then went back and folded them up neatly; she also made a journey into the woodshed expressly to put the hatchet where it belonged, on the chopping-block. By this time it was quite dark, but she lighted a lamp, and went at it afresh. Winnie came up to the entry door, and, at a respectful distance, told her they were "popping" corn down stairs;

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but she shook her head, and proceeded with her dusting like a hero. Tom whistled for her up the chimney-flue; but she only gave a little thump on the floor, and said she was busy.

It was like walking into a labyrinth to dispose of the contents of that table-cloth. How to put away the pencils and the rubber, when the drawing-box was lost; how to collect all the cookey-crumbs and wandering needles, that slipped out of your finger as fast as you took hold of them; where on earth to put those torn geography leaves, that wouldn't stay in the book, and couldn't be thrown away; where *was* the cork to the inkstand? and how should she hang up the riding-whip, with the string gone? These were questions that might well puzzle a more systematic mind than Gypsy's. However, in due time, the room was restored to an order that was delightful to see,—for, if Gypsy made up her mind to a thing, she could do it thoroughly and skilfully,—and she returned to the bureau drawer. This drawer was a fair specimen of the rest of Gypsy's drawers, shelves, and cupboards, and their name was Legion. Moreover, it was an "upper drawer," and where is the girl that does not know what a delicate science is involved in the rearranging of these upper drawers? So many laces, and half-worn collars that don't belong there, are always getting in; loose coppers have such a way of accumulating in the crevices; all your wandering pins and hair-pins make it a rendezvous by a species of free-masonry utterly inexplicable; then your little boxes fit in so tightly, and never have room to open, and are always getting their covers caught when you shut the drawer, and, when you try to keep them down, you pinch your fingers so.

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Please to imagine, O orderly readers! who keep every pin in its proper place, the worst looking upper drawer that your horrified eyes ever beheld, and you will have some idea of this drawer of Gypsy's.

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There were boxes large, and boxes small, boxes round, square, and oblong; boxes with covers (only two), and boxes without; handkerchiefs, under-sleeves, collars,—both clean and soiled,—laces and ribbons, and bows and nets; purses and old gloves, a piece of soap, a pile of letters, scratched and scattering jewelry, a piece of dried cake, several fans all covered with dust, and nobody knew what not, in the lower strata, out of sight.

Gypsy sat and looked at it for about two minutes in utter despair. Then she just turned the whole thing bottom upwards in a great heap on the floor, and began to investigate matters, with her cheeks very red.

Presently, the family down stairs heard a little scream. Winnie stamped up to see what was the matter.

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"Why, I've found my grammar!" said Gypsy. "It's the one in marble covers I lost ever—ever so long ago, and had to get a new one. It was right down at the bottom of the drawer!"

Pretty soon there was another little scream, and Gypsy called down the chimney:

"Tom Breynton! What do you think? I've found that dollar bill of yours you thought I'd burnt up."

After awhile there came still another scream, a pretty loud one this time. Mrs. Breynton came up to see what had happened.

"I've cut my hand," said Gypsy, faintly; "there was a great heap of broken glass in my drawer!"

"*Broken glass!*"

"Yes, I'm sure I don't know how it came there; I guess I was going to frame a picture."

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Mrs. Breynton bound up her finger, and went down again. She was no more than fairly seated before there came from up-stairs, not a scream, but one of the merriest laughs that ever was heard.

"What is to pay, now?" called Tom, from the entry.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Gypsy; "it's too funny for anything! If here isn't the *carving-knife* we scolded Patty for losing last winter, and—Oh, Tom, just look here!—my stick of peanut candy, that I thought I'd eaten up, all stuck on to my lace under-sleeves!"

It was past Gypsy's bed-time when the upper drawer was fairly in order and put back in its place. Three others remained to go through the same process, as well as wardrobe shelves innumerable. Gypsy, with her characteristic impulsiveness, would have sat up till twelve o'clock to complete the work, but her mother said "No" very decidedly, and so it must wait till tomorrow.

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Tom came in just as everything was done, and Gypsy had drawn a long breath and stood up to look, with great satisfaction, all around her pleasant, orderly room.

"Well done! I say, Gypsy, what a jewel you are when you're a mind to be."

"Of course, I am. Have you just found it out?"

"Well, you know you're a diamond, decidedly in the rough, as a general thing. You need cutting down and polishing."

"And you to polish me? Well, I like the looks of this room, anyhow. It *is* nice to have things somewhere where you won't trip over them when you walk across the room—only if somebody else would pick 'em up for me."

"How long do you suppose it will last?" asked Tom, with an air of great superiority.

"Tom," said Gypsy, solemnly; "that's a serious question."

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"It might last forever if you have a mind to have it,—come now, Gyp., why not?"

"That's a long time," said Gypsy, shaking her head; "I wouldn't trust myself two inches. Tomorrow I shall be in a hurry to go to school; then I shall be in a hurry to go to dinner; then I shall be in a *terrible* hurry to get off with Sarah Rowe, and so it goes. However, I'll see. I feel, to-night, precisely as if I should never want to take a single pin out of those little black squares I've put them into on the cushion."

Gypsy found herself in a hurry the next day and the next, and is likely to, to the end of her life, I am afraid. But she seemed to have taken a little gasp of order, and for a long time no one had any complaint to make of Gypsy's room or Gypsy's toilet.



Chapter III

MISS MELVILLE'S VISITOR

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As will be readily supposed, Gypsy's name was not her original one; though it might have been, for there have been actual Billys and Sallys, who began and ended Billys and Sallys only.

Gypsy's real name was an uncouth one—Jemima. It was partly for this reason, partly for its singular appropriateness, that her nickname had entirely transplanted the lawful and ugly one.

This subject of nicknames is a curiosity. All rules of euphony, fitness, and common sense, that apply to other things, are utterly at fault here. A baby who cannot talk plainly, dubs himself "Tuty," or "Dess," or "Pet," or "Honey," and forthwith becomes Tuty, Dess, Pet, or Honey, the rest of his mortal life. All the particularly cross and disagreeable girls are Birdies and Sunbeams. All the brunettes with loud voices and red hands, who are growing up into the "strong-minded women," are Lilies and Effies and Angelinas, and other ethereal creatures; while the little shallow, pink-and-white young ladies who cry very often and "get nervous," are quite as likely to be royal Constance, or Elizabeth, without any nickname at all.

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But Gypsy's name had undoubtedly been foreordained, so perfectly was it suited to Gypsy. For never a wild rover led a more untamed and happy life. Summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, found Gypsy out in the open air, as many hours out of the twenty-four as were not absolutely bolted and barred down into the school-room and dreamland. A fear of the weather never entered into Gypsy's creed; drenchings and freezings were so many soap-bubbles,—great fun while they lasted, and blown right away by dry stockings and mother's warm fire; so where was the harm? A good brisk thunderstorm out in the woods, with the lightning quivering all about her and the thunder crashing over her, was simple delight. A day of snow and sleet, with drifts knee-deep, and winds like so many little knives, was a festival. If you don't know the supreme bliss of a two-mile walk on such a day, when you have to shut your eyes, and wade your way, then Gypsy would pity you. Not a patch of woods, a pond, a brook, a river, a mountain, in the region (and there, in Vermont, there were plenty of them), but Gypsy knew it by heart.

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There was not a trout-brook for miles where she had not fished. There was hardly a tree she had not climbed, or a fence or stone-wall—provided, of course, that it was away from the main road and people's eyes—that she had not walked. Gypsy could row and skate and swim, and play ball and make kites, and coast and race, and drive, and chop wood. Altogether Gypsy seemed like a very pretty, piquant mistake; as if a mischievous boy had somehow stolen the plaid dresses, red cheeks, quick wit, and little indescribable graces of a girl, and was playing off a continual joke on

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the world. Old Mrs. Surly, who lived opposite, and wore green spectacles, used to roll up her eyes, and say What *would* become of that child? A whit cared Gypsy for Mrs. Surly! As long as her mother thought the sport and exercise in the open air a fine thing for her, and did not complain of the torn dresses oftener than twice a week, she would roll her hoop and toss her ball under Mrs. Surly's very windows, and laugh merrily to see the green glasses pushed up and taken off in horror at what Mrs. Surly termed an "impropriety."

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Therefore it created no surprise in the family one morning, when school-time came and passed, and Gypsy did not make her appearance, that she was reported to be "making a raft" down in the orchard swamp.

"Run and call her, Winnie," said Mrs. Breynton. "Tell her it is very late, and I want her to come right up,—remember."

"Yes mum," said Winnie, with unusual alacrity, and started off down the lane as fast as his copper-toed feet could carry him. It was quite a long lane, and a very pleasant one in summer. There was a row of hazel-nut bushes, always green and sweet, on one side, and a stone-wall on the other, with the broad leaves and tiny blossoms of a grape-vine trailing over it. The lane opened into a wide field which had an apple-orchard at one end of it, and sloped down over quite a little hill into a piece of marshy ground, where ferns and white violets, anemones, and sweet-flag grew in abundance. In the summer, the water was apt to dry up. In the spring, it was sometimes four feet deep. It was a pleasant spot, for the mountains lay all around it, and shut it in with their great forest-arms, and the sharp peaks that were purple and crimson and gold, under passing shadows and fading sunsets. And, then, is there any better fun than to paddle in the water?

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Gypsy looked as if she thought not, when Winnie suddenly turned the corner, and ran down the slope.

She had finished her raft, and launched it off from the root of an old oak-tree that grew half in the water, and, with a long pole, had pushed herself a third of the way across the swamp. Her dress was tucked up over her bright balmoral, and the ribbons of her hat were streaming in the wind. She had no mittens or gloves on her hands, which were very pink and plump, and her feet were incased in high rubber boots.

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"Hullo!" said Winnie, walking out on the root of the oak.

"Hilloa!" said Gypsy.

"I say—that's a bully raft."

"To be sure it is."

"I haven't had a ride on a raft since—why since 'leven or six years ago when I was a little boy. I shouldn't wonder if it was twenty-three years, either."

"Oh, I can't bear people that hint. Why don't you say right out, if you want a ride?"

"I want a ride," said Winnie, without any hesitation.

"Wait till I turn her round. I'll bring her up on the larboard side," replied Gypsy, in the tone of an old salt of fifty years' experience.

So she paddled up to the oak-tree, and Winnie jumped on board.

"I guess we'll have time to row across and back before school," said Gypsy, pushing off.

Winnie maintained a discreet silence.

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"I don't suppose it's very late," said Gypsy.

"Oh, just look at that toad with a green head, down in the water!" observed Winnie.

They paddled on a little ways in silence.

"What makes your cheeks so red?" asked Gypsy.

"I guess it's scarlet fever, or maybe it's appleplexy, you know."

"Oh!"

Just then Winnie gave a little scream.

"Look here—Gyp! The boat's goin'clock down. I don't want to go very much. I saw another toad down there."

"I declare!" said Gypsy, "we're going to be swamped, as true as you live! It isn't strong enough to bear two,—sit still, Winnie. Perhaps we'll get ashore."

But no sooner had she spoken the words than the water washed up about her ankles, and Winnie's end of the raft went under. The next she knew, they were both floundering in the water.

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It chanced to be about three feet and a half deep, very cold, and somewhat slimy. Gypsy had a strong impression that a frog jumped into her neck when she plunged, head first, into the deep mud at the bottom. After a little splashing and gasping, she regained her feet, and stood up to

her elbows in the water. But what she could do, Winnie could not. He had sunk in the soft mud, and even if he had had the courage to stand up straight, the water would have been above his head. But it had never occurred to him to do otherwise than lie gasping and flat on the bottom, where he was drowning as fast as he possibly could.

Gypsy pulled him out and carried him ashore. She wrung him out a little, and set him down on the grass, and then, by way of doing something, she took her dripping handkerchief out of her dripping pocket and wiped her hands on it.

"O—o—oh!" gasped Winnie; "I never did—you'd ought to know—you've just gone'n drowned me!" [Pg 51]



"What a story!" said Gypsy; "you're no more drowned than I am. To be sure you *are* rather wet," she added, with a disconsolate attempt at a laugh.

"You oughtn't to have taken me out on that old raft," glared Winnie, through the shower of water-drops that rained down from his forehead, "you know you hadn't! I'll just tell mother. I'll get sick and be died after it, you see if I don't." [Pg 52]

"Very well," said Gypsy, giving herself a little shake, very much as a pretty brown spaniel would do, who had been in swimming.

"You may do as you like. Who teased to go on the raft, I'd like to know?"

"*Besides,*" resumed Winnie, with an impressive cough; "you're late to school, 'cause mother, she said you was to come right up when she sent me down, only I—well I guess, I b'lieve I forgot to tell you,—I rather think I did. Anyways, you're late,—*so!*"

Gypsy looked at Winnie, and Winnie looked at Gypsy. There was an awful silence.

"Winnie Breynton," said Gypsy, solemnly, "if you don't get one whipping!"

"I don't care to hear folks talk," interrupted Winnie, with dignity, "I am five years old." [Pg 53]

Gypsy's reply is not recorded.

I have heard it said that when Tom espied the two children coming up the lane, he went to his mother with the information that the fishman was somewhere around, only he had sent his fishes on ahead of him. They appeared to have been freshly caught, and would, he thought, make several dinners; but I cannot take the responsibility of the statement.

It was very late, much nearer ten o'clock than nine, when Gypsy was fairly metamorphosed into a clean, dry, very penitent-looking child.

She hurried off to school, leaving Winnie and his mother in close conference. Exactly what happened on the occasion of that interview, has never been made known to an inquiring public.

On the way to school Gypsy had as many as six sober thoughts; a larger number than she was usually capable of in forty-eight hours. One was, that it was too bad she had got so wet. Another was, that she really supposed it was her business to know when school-time came, no matter where she was or what she was doing. Another, that she had made her mother a great deal of trouble. A fourth was, that she was sorry to be so late at school—it always made Miss Melville look so; and then a bad mark was not, on the whole, a desirable thing. Still a fifth was, that she would never do such a thing again as long as she lived—*never*. The sixth lay in a valiant determination to behave herself the rest of this particular day. She would study hard. She would get to the head of the class. She wouldn't put a single pin in the girls' chairs, nor tickle anybody, nor make up funny faces, nor whisper, nor make one of the girls laugh, not one, not even that silly Delia Guest, who laughed at nothing,—why, you couldn't so much as make a doll out of your handkerchief and gloves, and hang it on your pen-handle, but what she had to go into a spasm over it. [Pg 54]

No, she wouldn't do a single funny thing all day. She would just sit still and look sober and sorry, and not trouble Miss Melville in the least. Her mind was quite made up.

Just as she had arrived at this conclusion she came to the school-house door. Gypsy and a number of other girls, both her own age and younger, who either were not prepared to enter the high school, or whose parents preferred the select school system, composed Miss Melville's charge. They were most of them pleasant girls, and Miss Melville was an unusually successful teacher, and as dearly loved as a judicious teacher can be. The school-house was a bit of a brown building tucked away under some apple-trees on a quiet by-road. It had been built for a district school, but had fallen into disuse years ago, and Miss Melville had taken possession of it.

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Gypsy slackened her pace as she passed under the apple-boughs, where the tiny, budding leaves filled all the air with faint fragrance. It was nearly recess time; she knew, because she could hear, through the windows, the third geography class reciting. It was really too bad to be so late. She went up the steps slowly, the corners of her mouth drawn down as penitently as Gypsy's mouth could well be.

Just inside the door she stopped. A quick color ran all over her face, her eyes began to twinkle like sparks from a great fire of hickory, and, in an instant, every one of those six sober thoughts was gone away somewhere—nobody could have told where; and the funniest little laugh broke the silence of the entry.

The most interested observer could not have told what Gypsy saw that was so very amusing. The entry was quite deserted. Nothing was to be seen but a long row of girls' "things," hanging up on the nails—hats and bonnets, tippets, sacks, rubbers, and baskets; apparently as demure and respectable as hats, bonnets, tippets, sacks, rubbers, and baskets could be. Yet there Gypsy stood for as much as a minute laughing away quietly to herself, as if she had come across some remarkable joke.

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About ten minutes after, some one knocked at the school-room door. Miss Melville laid down her geography.

"Cape Ann, Cape Hatteras, Cape—may I go to the door?" piped little Cely Hunt, holding up her hand. Miss Melville nodded and Cely went. She opened the door—and jumped.

"What's the matter, Cely?—Oh!" For there stood the funniest old woman that Cely or Miss Melville had ever seen. She had on a black dress, very long and very scant, that looked as if it were made out of an old waterproof cloak. Over that, she wore a curious drab-silk sack, somewhat faded and patched, with all the edges of the seams outside. Over that, was a plaid red-and-green shawl, tied about her waist. There was a little black shawl over that, and a green tippet wound twice around her throat with the ends tucked in under the shawl. She had a pair of black mitts on her hands, and she carried a basket. Her face no one could see, for it was covered with a thick green veil, tied closely about her bonnet.

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Cely gave a little scream, and ran behind the door. Miss Melville stepped down from the platform, and went to meet the visitor.

"Good arternoon," said the old woman, in a very shrill voice.

"Good afternoon," said Miss Melville, politely.

"I come to see the young uns," piped the old woman. "I ben deown teown fur some eggs, an'clock I heerd the little creaturs a sayin'clock of their lessons as I come by, an'clock thinks says I to myself, says I, bless their dear hearts, I'll go in an'clock see 'em, says I, an'clock I'll thank ye kindly for a seat, for I'm pretty nigh beat out."

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The scholars all began to laugh. Miss Melville, somewhat reluctantly, handed her visitor a chair by the door, but did not ask her upon the platform, as the visitor seemed to expect.

"There's a drefful draught here on my neck," she muttered, discontentedly; "an'clock I'm terribly afflicted with rheumatiz mostly. Can't see much of the young uns here, nuther."

"I doubt if there is much here that will interest you," observed Miss Melville, looking at her keenly. "You may rest yourself, and then I think you had better go. Visitors always disturb the children."

"Bless their dear hearts!" cried the old woman, shrilly. "They needn't be afraid of me—I wouldn't hurt 'em. Had a little angel boy once myself; he's gone to Californy now, an'clock I'm a lone, lorn widdy. I say—little gal!" and the stranger pointed her finger (it trembled a little) at Sarah Rowe, who had grown quite red in the face with her polite efforts not to laugh. "Little gal, whar's yer manners?—laughin'clock at a poor ole creetur like me! Come out here, and le's hear ye say that beautiful psalm of Dr. Watts—now!"

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"How doth the little busy bee!"

But just then something happened for which the old woman and the scholars were equally unprepared. Miss Melville looked through the green veil straight into the old woman's eyes, and said just one word. She said it very quietly, and she said it without a smile. It was

"Gypsy!"

There was a great hush. Sarah Rowe was the first to break it.

"Why, that's my sack turned wrong side out!"

"And those are my mitts!" said Agnes Gaylord.

"If you please, Miss Melville, that's my black shawl,—I know it by the border," piped a very little girl in mourning.

"I do believe that's my waterproof, and Lucy's plaid shawl," giggled Delia Guest. "Did you *ever*?" [Pg 61]

"And my green veil," put in somebody else, faintly.

Miss Melville quietly removed the veil, and Gypsy looked up with her mischief bright all over her face. Her eyes fell, however, and her cheeks flushed crimson, when she saw the look about Miss Melville's mouth.

"You may go and put away the things, Gypsy," said Miss Melville, still without a smile. Gypsy obeyed in silence. The girls stopped laughing, and began to whisper together behind the desk-covers.

"The school will come to order," said Miss Melville. "Cely, what is the largest river in New England?—Next."

Gypsy hung up the things, and came slowly back into the room. Miss Melville motioned her to her seat, but took no further notice of her. Gypsy, silent and ashamed, took out her spelling-book, and began to study. The girls looked at her out of the corners of their eyes, and every now and then Delia Guest broke out afresh into a smothered laugh, but no one spoke to her, and she spoke to nobody. [Pg 62]

The spelling-class was called out, but Miss Melville signified, by a look, that Gypsy was to keep her seat. Recess came, but Miss Melville was busy writing at her desk, and took no notice of her, further than to tell the group of girls, who had instantly clustered buzzing and laughing about her, that they were all to go out doors and play. They went, and Gypsy sat still with her head behind the desk-cover. Something in Miss Melville's manner said, louder than words, that she was displeased. It was a manner which made Gypsy feel, for once in her life, that she had not one word to say.

She busied herself with her books, and tried to look unconcerned when the scholars came back. The arithmetic class recited, but her teacher did not call for her; the history class, but no one spoke to Gypsy. The disgrace of this punishment was what Gypsy minded the most, though it was no slight thing to see so many "absent" marks going down on her report, when she was right in the room and had learned her lessons. [Pg 63]

After what seemed to her an interminable time, the morning passed and the school broke up. The children, controlled by that something in Miss Melville's manner, and by Gypsy's averted head and burning cheeks, left the room quickly, and Gypsy and her teacher were alone.

"Gypsy," said Miss Melville.

There was no answer.

"Gypsy."

There came a faint "Yes'm" from behind the desk-cover. Miss Melville laid down her pencil, closed her own desk, and came and sat down on the bench beside Gypsy.

"I wonder if you are as sorry as I am," she said, simply.

Something very bright glittered on Gypsy's lashes, and two great drops stood on her hot cheeks.

"I don't see what possessed me!" she said, vehemently. "Why don't you turn me out of school?" [Pg 64]

"I did not think you could willingly try to make me trouble," continued Miss Melville, without noticing the last remark.

The two great drops rolled slowly down Gypsy's cheeks, and into her mouth. She swallowed them with a gulp, and brushed her hand, angrily, across her eyes. Gypsy very seldom cried, but I fancy she came pretty near it on that occasion.

"Miss Melville," she said, with an earnestness that was comical, in spite of itself; "I wish you'd please to scold me. I should feel a great deal better."

"Scoldings won't do you much good," said Miss Melville, with a sad smile; "you must cure your own faults, Gypsy. Nobody else can do it for you."

Gypsy turned around in a little passion of despair.

"Miss Melville, *I can't!* It isn't in me—you you don't know! Here this very morning I got late to school, tipping Winnie over in a raft—drenched through both of us, and mother, so patient and sweet with the dry stockings she'd just mended, and wasn't I sorry? Didn't I think about it all the way to school—the whole way, Miss Melville? And didn't I make up my mind I'd be as good as a kitten all day, and sit still like Agnes Gaylord, and not tickle the girls, nor make you any trouble, nor anything? Then what should I do but come into the entry and see those things, and it all came like a flash how funny it would be'n I'd talk up high like Mrs. Surly 'n you wouldn't know me, and [Pg 65]

—that was the last I thought, till you took off the veil, and I wished I hadn't done it. It's just like me—I never can help anything anyhow."

"I think you can," said her teacher, kindly. "You certainly had the power, when you stood out there in the entry, to stop and think before you touched the things."

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"I don't know," said Gypsy, shaking her head, thoughtfully; "I don't believe I had."

"But you wouldn't do it again?"

"I guess I wouldn't!" said Gypsy, with an emphasis.

"What you can do one time, you can another," said Miss Melville.

Gypsy was silent.

"There's one other thing about it," continued her teacher, "besides the impropriety of playing such a trick in school hours—that is, that it was very unkind to me."

"Unkind!" exclaimed Gypsy.

"Yes," said Miss Melville, quietly, "unkind."

"Why, Miss Melville, I wouldn't be unkind to you for anything!—I love you dearly."

"Nevertheless, Gypsy, it was very unkind to deliberately set to work to annoy me and make me trouble, by getting the school into a frolic. Anything done to break the order of study-hours, or to withstand any rule of the school, is always an unkindness to a teacher. There is scarcely a girl in school that might help me more than you, Gypsy, if you chose."

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"I don't see how," said Gypsy, astonished.

"I do," said Miss Melville, smiling, "and I always think a little vote of thanks to you, when you are quiet and well-behaved. An orderly scholar has a great deal of influence. The girls all love you, and are apt to do as they see you do, Gypsy."

There was a little silence, in which Gypsy's eyes were wandering away under the apple-boughs, their twinkling dimmed and soft.

At last she turned quickly, and threw her arms about her teacher's neck.

"Miss Melville, if you'll give me one kiss, I'll never be an old woman again, if I live as long as Methuselah!"

Miss Melville kissed her, and whispered one or two little loving words of encouragement, such as nobody but Miss Melville knew how to say. But Gypsy never told what they were.

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"I believe there's a bolt left out of me somewhere," she said, as they left the school-house together; "what do you suppose it is?"

"It is the strong, iron bolt, '*stop and think*,' Gypsy."

"Um—yes—perhaps it is," said Gypsy, and walked slowly home.



Chapter IV

GYPSY HAS A DREAM

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"Come, Tom—do."

"Do what?"

"You know as well as I do."

"What did you observe?"

"Tom Breynton!"

"That's my name."

"Will you, or will you not, come down to the pond and have a row?"

"Let's hear you tease a little."

"Catch me! If you won't come for a civil request, I won't tease for it."

"Very good," said Tom, laying aside his Euclid; "I like your spunk. Rather think I'll go."

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Tom tossed on his cap and was ready. Gypsy hurried away to array herself in the complication of garments necessary to the feminine adventurer, if she so much as crosses the yard; a continual mystery of Providence, was this little necessity to Gypsy, and one against which she lived in a state of incessant rebellion. It was provoking enough to stand there in her room, tugging and hurrying till she was red in the face, over a pair of utterly heartless and unimpressible rubbers, that absolutely refused to slip over the heel of her boot, and to see Tom through the window, with his hands in his pocket, ready, waiting, and impatient, alternately whistling and calling for her.

"I never *did!*" said Gypsy, in no very gentle tone.

"Hur—ry up!" called Tom, coolly.

"These old rubbers!" said Gypsy.

"What's the matter?" asked her mother, stopping at the door.

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"It's enough to try the patience of a saint!" said Gypsy, emphatically, holding out her foot.



"Perhaps I can help you," said Mrs. Breynton, stooping down. "Why, Gypsy! your boots are wet through; of course the rubbers won't go on."

"I didn't suppose that would make any difference," said Gypsy, looking rather foolish. "I got them wet this morning, down at the swamp. I thought they were dry, though: I sat with my feet in the oven until Patty drove me off. She said I was in the bread."

"You will have to put on your best boots," said her mother.

"Oh, Tom!" called Gypsy, in despair, as the shrillest of all shrill whistles came up through the window. "Everything's in a jumble! I'll be there as soon as I can."

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She changed her boots, tossed on her turban, whisked on her sack, and began to fasten it with a jerk, when off came the button at the throat, and rolled maliciously quite out of sight under the bed.

"There!" said Gypsy.

"Can't wait!" shouted Tom.

"I mended that sack," said Gypsy, "only yesterday afternoon. I call it too bad, when a body's trying to keep their things in order, and do up all their mending, that things have to act so!"

"I think you have been trying to be orderly," said her mother, helping her to pin the offending

sack about the throat, for there was no time now to restore the wandering button. "I have noticed a great improvement in you; but there's one thing wanting yet, that would have kept the button in its place, and had the boots properly taken off and dried at the right time."

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"What's that?" asked Gypsy, in a great hurry to go.

"A little more *thoroughness*, Gypsy."

This bit of a lesson, like most of Mrs. Breynton's moral teachings, was enforced with a little soft kiss on Gypsy's forehead, and a smile that was as unlike a sermon as smile could be.

Gypsy gave two thoughts to it, while she jumped down stairs three steps at a time; then, it must be confessed, she forgot it entirely, in the sight of Tom coolly walking off down the lane without her. But words that Mrs. Breynton said with a kiss did not slip away from Gypsy's memory "for good an a'," as easily as that. She had her own little places and times of private meditation, when such things came up to her like faithful angels, that are always ready to speak, if you give them the chance.

Tom was still in sight, among the hazel-nut bushes and budding grape-vines of the lane, and Gypsy ran swiftly after him. She was fleet of foot as a young gazelle, and soon overtook him. She had just stopped, panting, by his side, and was proceeding to make some remarks which she thought his conduct richly deserved, when the sound of some little trotting feet behind them attracted their attention.

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"Why, Winnie Breynton!" said Gypsy.

"Where are you going?" asked Tom, turning round.

"Oh, nowheres in particular," said Winnie, with an absent air.

"Well, you may just turn round and go there, then," said Tom. "We don't want any little boys with us this afternoon."

"*Little boys!*" said Winnie, with a terrible look; "I'm five years old, sir. I can button my own jacket, and I've got a snowshovel!"

Tom walked rapidly on, and Gypsy with him. A moment's reflection seemed to convince Winnie that his company was not wanted, and he disappeared among the hazel nut bushes.

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Gypsy and Tom were fast walkers, and they reached the pond in a marvellously short time. This pond was about a half-mile from the house, just at the foot of a hill which went by the name of Kleiner Berg—a German word meaning little mountain. There were many of these elevations all along the valley in which Yorkbury was situated. They seemed to be a sort of stepping-stones to the great, snow-crowned mountains, that towered sharply beyond. The pond that nestled in among the trees at the foot of the Kleiner Berg was called the Kleiner Berg Basin. It was a beautiful sheet of water, small and still and sheltered, and a great resort of pleasure-seekers because of the clouds of white and golden lilies that floated over it in the hot summer months. Mr. Breynton owned a boat there, which was kept locked to a tiny wharf under the trees, and was very often used by the children, although Tom declared it was no better to fish in than a wash-tub; as a Vermont boy, used to the trout-brooks up among the mountains, would be likely to think.

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"What's that?" asked Gypsy, as they neared the wharf.

"Looks as much like a little green monkey as anything," said Tom, making a tube of his hands to look through. "It's in the boat, whatever it is."

"It's a green-and-white gingham monkey," said Gypsy, suddenly, "with a belt, and brown pants, and a cap on wrong side before."

"The little—, he may just walk home anyhow," observed Tom, in his autocratic style. "He ought to be taught better than to come where older people are, especially if they don't want him."

"I suppose he likes to have a boat-ride as well as we do," suggested Gypsy.

"Winthrop!" called Tom, severely.

Winnie's chin was on his little fat hand, and Winnie's eyes were fixed upon the water, and Winnie was altogether too deeply absorbed in meditation to deign a reply.

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"Winnie, where did you come from?"

"Oh!" said Winnie, looking up, carelessly; "that you?"

"How did you get down here, I'd like to know?" said Gypsy.

Winnie regarded her impressively, as if to signify that his principles of action were his own until they were made public, and when they were made public she might have them.

"You may just get out of that boat," said Tom, rather crossly for him. Winnie hinted, as if it were quite an accidental remark, that he had no intention of doing so. He furthermore observed that he would be happy to take them to row. "Father said whoever took the boat first was to have it."

Tom replied by taking him up in one hand, twisting him over his shoulder, and landing him upon

the grass. At this Winnie, as characteristic in his wrath as in his dignity, threw himself flat, and began to scream after his usual musical fashion. [Pg 78]

"It's too bad!" said Gypsy. "Let him go, Tom—do."

"He should have stayed where he was told to," argued Tom, who, like most boys of his age, had a sufficiently just estimate of the importance of his own authority, and who would sometimes do a very selfish thing under the impression that it was his duty to family and state, as an order-loving individual and citizen.

"I know it isn't so pleasant to have him," said Gypsy, "but it does make him so dreadfully happy."

That was the best of Gypsy;—she was as generous a child as poor, fallen children of Adam are apt to be; as quick to do right as she was to do wrong, and much given to this fancy of seeing people "dreadfully happy." I have said that people loved Gypsy. I am inclined to think that herein lay the secret of it. [Pg 79]

Then Gypsy never "preached." If she happened to be right, and another person wrong, she never put on superior airs, and tried to patronize them into becoming as good as she was. She made her suggestions in such a straightforward, matter-of-fact way, as if of course you thought so too, and she was only agreeing with you; and was apt to make them so merrily withal, that there was no resisting her.

Therefore Tom, while pretending to carry his point, really yielded to the influence of Gypsy's kind feeling, in saying,—

"On the whole, Winnie, I've come to the conclusion to take you, on condition that you always do as I tell you in future. And if you don't stop crying this minute, you sha'n't go."

This rather ungracious consent was sufficient to dry Winnie's tears and silence Winnie's lungs, and the three seated themselves in the little boat, and started off in high spirits. It was a light, pretty boat, painted in bright colors, and christened *The Dipper*, it being an appropriate and respectful title for a boat on the Kleiner Berg *Basin*. Moreover, the air was as sweet as a May-flower, and as warm as sunshine; there was a soft, blue sky with clouds of silver like stately ships sailing over it, and such a shimmering, bright photograph of it in the water; then Tom was so pleasant, and rowed so fast, and let Gypsy help, and she could keep time with him, and the spray dashed up like silver-dust about the oars, and the bees were humming among the buds on the trees, and the blue dragon-flies, that skipped from ripple to ripple, seemed to be having such a holiday. Altogether, Gypsy felt like saying, with famous little Prudy,— [Pg 80]

"Oh, I'm so glad there happened to be a world, and God made me!"

After a while Tom laid down his oars, and they floated idly back and forth among the lily-stems and the soft, purple shadows of the maple-boughs, from which the perfumed scarlet blossoms dropped like coral into the water. Tom took off his cap, and leaned lazily against the side of the boat; Winnie, interested in making a series of remarkable faces at himself in the water, for a wonder sat still, and Gypsy lay down across two seats, with her face turned up watching the sky. It was very pleasant, and no one seemed inclined to talk. [Pg 81]

"I wish I were a cloud," said Gypsy, suddenly, after a long silence. "A little white cloud, with a silver fringe, and not have anything to do but float round all day in the sunshine,—no lessons nor torn dresses nor hateful old sewing to do."

"S'posin' it thunder-stormed," suggested Winnie. "You might get striked."

"That would be fun," said Gypsy, laughing. "I always wanted to see where the lightning came from."

"Supposing there came a wind, and blew you away," suggested Tom, sleepily. [Pg 82]

"I never thought of that," said Gypsy. "I guess I'd rather do the sewing."

Presently a little scarlet maple-blossom floated out on the wind, and dropped right into Gypsy's mouth (which most unpoetically happened to be open).

"Just think," said Gypsy, whose thoughts seemed to have taken a metaphysical turn, "of being a little red flower, that dies and drops into the water, and there's never any fruit nor anything,—I wonder what it was made for."

"Perhaps just to make you ask that question," answered Tom; and there was a great deal more in the answer than Tom himself supposed. This was every solitary word that was said on that boat-ride. A little is so much better than much, sometimes, and goes a great deal further.

It seemed to Gypsy the pleasantest boat-ride she had ever taken; but Tom became tired of it before she did, and went up to the house, carrying Winnie with him. Gypsy stayed a little while to row by herself. [Pg 83]

"Be sure you lock the boat when you come up," called Tom, in starting.

"Oh yes," said Gypsy, "I always do."

"Did you bring up the oars?" asked Tom, at supper.

"Yes, they're in the barn. I do sometimes remember things, Mr. Tom."

"Did you—," began Tom, again.

But Winnie just then upset the entire contents of his silver mug of milk exactly into Tom's lap, and as this was the fourth time the young gentleman had done that very thing, within three days, Tom's sentence was broken off for another of a more agitated nature.

That night Tom had a dream.

He thought the house was a haunted castle—(he had, I am sorry to say, been reading novels in study hours), and that the ghost of old Baron Somebody who had defrauded the beautiful Lady Somebody-else, of Kleiner Berg Basin and the Dipper, in which it was supposed Mrs. Surly had secreted a blind kitten, which it was somehow or other imperatively necessary should be drowned, for the well-being of the beautiful and unfortunate heiress,—that the ghost of this atrocious Baron was going down stairs, with white silk stockings on his feet and a tin pan on his head.

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At this crisis Tom awoke, with a jump, and heard, or thought he heard, a slight creaking noise in the entry. Winnie's cat, of course; or the wind rattling the blinds;—nevertheless, Tom went to his door, and looked out. He was exceedingly sleepy, and the entry was exceedingly dark, and, though he had not a breath of faith in ghosts, not he,—was there ever a boy who had?—and though he considered such persons, as had, as candidates for the State Idiot Asylum, yet it must be confessed that even Tom was possessed of an imagination, and this imagination certainly, for an instant, deluded him into the belief that a dim figure was flitting down stairs.

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"Who's there?" said Tom, rather faintly.

There was no reply. A curious sound, like the lifting of a distant latch by phantom fingers, fell upon his ear,—then all was still.

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Tom. Nevertheless, Tom went to the head of the stairs, and looked down; went to the foot of the stairs, and looked around. The doors were all closed as they had been left for the night. Nothing was to be seen; nothing was to be heard.

"Curious mental delusions one will have when one is sleepy," said Tom, and went back to bed, where, the reader is confidentially informed, he lay for fifteen entire minutes with his eyes wide open, speculating on the proportion of authenticated ghost-stories;—to be sure, there had been some; it was, perhaps, foolish to deny as much as that.

After which, he slept the rest of the night as soundly as young people of sixteen, who are well and happy, are apt to sleep.

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That night, also, Gypsy had a dream.

She dreamed that Miss Melville sailed in through the window on an oar, which she paddled through the air with a parasol, and told her that her (Gypsy's) father had been hung upon a lamp-post by Senator Sumner, for advocating the coercion of the seceded States, and that Tom had set Winnie afloat on the Kleiner Berg Basin, in a milk-pitcher. Winnie had tipped over, and was in imminent danger of drowning, if indeed he were not past hope already, and Tom sat up in the maple-tree, laughing at him.

Her mother appeared to have enlisted in the Union army, and, her father being detained in that characteristic manner by Mr. Sumner, there was evidently nothing to be done but for Gypsy to go to Winnie's relief. This she hastened to do with all possible speed. She dressed herself under a remarkable sense of not being able to find any buttons, and of getting all her sleeves upon the wrong arm. She put on her rubber-boots, because it took so long to lace up her boots. Her stockings she wore upon her arms. The reason appeared to be, that she might not get her hands wet in pulling Winnie out. She stopped to put on her sack, her turban, and her blue veil. She also spent considerable time in commendable efforts to pin on a lace collar which utterly refused to be pinned, and to fasten at her throat a velvet bow that kept turning into a little green snake, and twisting round her fingers.

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When at length she was fairly ready, she left the house softly, under the impression that Tom (who appeared to have the remarkable capacity of being in the house and down in the maple-trees at one and the same time) would stop her if he heard her.

She ran down the lane and over the fields and into the woods, where the Kleiner Berg rose darkly in front of her; so, at last, to the Basin, which rippled and washed on its shore, and tossed up at her feet—*an empty milk-pitcher!*

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A horrible fear seized her. She had come too late. Winnie was drowned. It was all owing to that lace collar.

She sprang into the boat; she floated away; she peered down into the dark water. But Tom laughed in the maple-tree; and there was no sign nor sound of Winnie.

She cried out with a loud cry, and awoke. She lifted up her head, and saw—



Chapter V

WHAT SHE SAW

[Pg 89]

A great, solemn stretch of sky, alive with stars.

A sheet of silent water.

A long line of silent hills.

She had acted out her dream! When the truth came to Gypsy, she sat for a moment like one stunned. The terrible sense of awakening in a desolate place, at midnight, and alone, instead of in a safe and quiet bed, with bolted doors, and friends within the slightest call, might well alarm an older and stouter heart than Gypsy's. The consciousness of having wandered she did not know whither, she did not know how, in the helplessness of sleep, into a place where her voice could reach no human ear, was in itself enough to freeze her where she sat, with hands locked, and wide, frightened eyes, staring into the darkness.

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After a few moments she stirred, shivered a little, and looked about her.

It was the Basin, surely. There were the maples, there was the Kleiner Berg rolling up, soft and shadowy, among its pines. There were the mountains, towering and sharp—terrible shadows against the sky. Here, too, was the Dipper beneath her, swaying idly back and forth upon the water. She remembered, with a little cry of joy, that the boat was always locked; she could not have stirred from the shore; it would be but the work of a moment to jump upon the wharf, then back swiftly through the fields to the house.

She looked back. The wharf was not in sight. A dark distance lay between her and it. The beds of lily-leaves, and the dropping blossoms of the maples were about her on every side. She had drifted half across the pond.

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She understood it all in a moment—*she had not locked the boat that afternoon.*

What was to be done? The oars were half a mile away, in the barn at home. There was not so much as a branch floating within reach on the water. She tried to pull up the board seats of the boat, under the impression that she could, by degrees, paddle herself ashore with one of them. But they were nailed tightly in their places, and she could not stir them. Evidently, there was nothing to be done.

Perhaps the boat would drift ashore somewhere; she could land anywhere; even on the steep Kleiner Berg side she could easily have found footing; she was well used to climbing its narrow ledges, and knew every crack and crevice and projection where a step could be taken. But, no; the boat was not going to drift ashore. It had stopped in a tangle of lily-leaves, far out in the water, and there was not a breath of wind to stir it. If the water had not been deep she could have waded ashore; but her practised ear told her, from the sound of the little waves against her hand, that wading was not to be thought of. To be sure, Gypsy could swim; but a walk of half a mile in drenched clothes was hardly preferable to sitting still in a dry boat, to say nothing of the inconvenience of swimming in crinoline, and on a dark night.

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No, there was nothing to be done but to sit still till morning.

Having come to this conclusion, Gypsy gave another little shiver, and slipped down into the bottom of the boat, thinking she might lie with her head under the stern-seat, and thus be somewhat shielded from the chilly air. In turning up her sack-collar, to protect her throat, she touched something soft, which proved to be the lace collar. This led her to examine her dress. She now noticed for the first time that one stocking was drawn up over her hand,—the other she had probably lost on the way,—and that she had put her bare feet into rubber-boots. The lace collar was fastened by a bit of green chenille she sometimes wore at her throat, and which had

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doubtless been the snake of her dream.

Lonely, frightened, and cold as she was, Gypsy's sense of the ludicrous overcame her at that, and she broke into a little laugh. That laugh seemed to drive away the mystery and terror of her situation, in spite of the curious sound it had in echoing over the lonely water; and Gypsy set herself to work with her usual good sense to see how matters stood.

"In the first place," she reasoned, talking half aloud for the sake of the company of her own voice, "I've had a fit of what the dictionary calls somnambulism, I suppose. I eat too much pop-corn after supper, and that's the whole of it,—it always makes me dream,—only I never was goose enough to get out of bed before, and I rather think it'll be some time before I do again. I came down stairs softly, and out of the back door. Nobody heard me, and of course nobody will hear me till morning, and I'm in a pretty fix. If I hadn't forgotten to lock the boat I should be back in bed by this time. Oh dear! I wish I were. However, I'm too large to tip myself over and get drowned, and I couldn't get hurt any other way; and there's nothing to be afraid of if I do have to stay here till morning, except sore throat, so there's no great harm done. The worst of it is, that old Tom! Won't he laugh at me about the boat! I never expect to hear the end of it. Then when they go to my room and find me gone, in the morning, they'll be frightened. I'm rather sorry for that. I wish I knew what time it is."

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Just then the distant church-clock struck two. Gypsy held her breath, and listened to it. It had a singular, solemn sound. She had never heard the clock strike two in the morning but once before in her life. That was once when she was very small, when her father was dangerously sick, and the coming of the doctor had wakened her. She had always somehow associated the hour with mysterious flickering lights, and anxious whispers and softened steps, and a dread as terrible as it was undefined. Now, out here in this desolate place, where the birds were asleep in their nests, and the winds quiet among the mountain-tops, and the very frogs tired of their chanting,—herself the only waking thing,—these two far, deep-toned syllables seemed like a human voice. Like the voice, Gypsy fancied, of some one imprisoned for years in the belfry, and crying to get out.

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Two o'clock. Three—four—five—six. At about six they would begin to miss her; her mother always called her, then, to get up. Four hours.

"Hum,—well," said Gypsy, drawing her sack-collar closer, "pretty long time to sit out in a boat and shiver. It might be worse, though." Just then her foot struck something soft under the seat. She pulled it out, and found it to be an old coat of Tom's, which he sometimes used for boating. Fortunately it was not wet, for the boat was new, and did not leak. She wrapped it closely around her shoulders, curled herself up snugly in the stern, and presently pronounced herself "as warm as toast, and as comfortable as an oyster."

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Then she began to look about her. All around and underneath her lay the black, still water,—so black that the maple-branches cast no shadow on it. About and above her rose the mountains, grim and mute, and watching, as they had watched for ages, and would watch for ages still, all the long night through. Overhead, the stars glittered and throbbed, and shot in and out of ragged clouds. Far up in the great forests, that climbed the mountain-sides, the wind was muttering like an angry voice.

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Somehow it made Gypsy sit very still. She thought, if she were a poet, she would write some verses just then; indeed, if she had had a pencil, I am not sure but she would have, as it was.

Then some other thoughts came to Gypsy. She wondered why, of all places, she chanced to come to the Basin in her dream. She might have gone to the saw-mill, and been caught and whirred to death in the machinery. She might have gone to the bridge over the river, and thrown herself off, not knowing what she did. Or, what if the pond had been a river, and she were now floating away, helpless, out of reach of any who came to save her, to some far-off dam where the water roared and splashed on cruel rocks. Or she might, in her dream, have tipped over the boat where the water was deep, and been unable to swim, encumbered by her clothing. Then she might have been such a girl as Sarah Rowe, who would have suffered agonies of fright at waking to find herself in such a place. But she had been led to the quiet, familiar Basin, and no harm had come to her, and she had good strong nerves, and lost all her fear in five minutes, so that the mischance would end only in an exciting adventure, which would give her something to talk about as long as she lived.

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Well; she was sure she was very thankful to—whom? and Gypsy bowed her head a little at the question, and she sat a moment very still.

Then she had other thoughts. She looked up at the shadowed mountains, and thought how year after year, summer and winter, day and night, those terrible masses of rock had cleaved together, and stood still, and caught the rains and the snows and vapors, the golden crowns of sunsets and sunrisings, the cooling winds and mellow moonlights, and done all their work of beauty and of use, and done it aright. "*Not one faileth.*" No avalanche had thundered down their sides, destroying such happy homes as hers. No volcanic fires had torn them into seething lava. No beetling precipice, of which she ever heard, had fallen and crushed so much as the sheep feeding in the valleys. To the power of the hills as to the power of the seas, Someone had said, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.

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And the Hand that could uphold a mountain in its place, was the Hand that had guided her—one little foolish, helpless girl, out of millions and millions of creatures for whom He was caring—in the wanderings of an uneasy sleep that night.

There was a great awe and a great joy in this thought; but sharp upon it came another, as a pleasure is followed by a sudden pain,—a thought that came all unbidden, and talked with Gypsy, and would not go away. It was, that she had gone to bed that night without a prayer. She was tired and sleepy, and the lamp went out, and so,—and so,—well, she didn't know exactly how it came about.

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Gypsy's bowed head fell into her hands, and there, crouched in the lonely boat, under the lonely sky, she put this thought into a few whispered words, and I know there was One to hear it.

Other thoughts had Gypsy after this; but they were those she could not have put into words. For three of those solemn, human syllables had sounded from the distant clock, and far over the mountain-tops the sweet summer dawn was coming. Gypsy had never seen the sun rise. She had seen, to be sure, many times, the late, winter painting of crimson and gold in the East, which unfolded itself before her window, and chased away her dreams. But she had never watched that slow, mysterious change from midnight to morning, which is the only spectacle that can properly be called a sunrise.

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There was something in Gypsy that made her sit like a statue there, wrapped in Tom's old coat, her face upturned, and her very breath held in, as the heavy shadows softened and melted, and the stars began to dim in a pale, gray light, that fell and folded in the earth like a mist; as the clouds, that floated faintly over the mountains, blushed pink from the touch of an unseen sun; as the pink deepened into crimson, and the crimson burned to fire, and the outlines of the mountains were cut in gold; as the gold broadened and brightened, and stole over the ragged peaks, and shot down among the forests, and filtered through the maple-leaves, and chased the purple shadows far down among the valleys; as the birds twittered in unseen nests, and the crickets chirped in the meadows, and the dews fell and sparkled from nodding grasses, and "all the world grew green again."

Gypsy thought it was worth an ugly dream and a little fright, to see such a sight. She wondered if those old pictures of the great masters far away over the sea, of which she had heard so much, were anything like it. She also had a faint, flitting notion that, in a world where there were sunrises every day, it was very strange people should ever be cross, and tear their dresses, and forget to lock boats. It seemed as if they ought to know better.

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Just then Gypsy fell asleep, with her head on the bottom of the boat; and the next she knew it was broad day, and a dear, familiar voice, from somewhere, was calling,—

"Gypsy!—Why, Gypsy!"

"How do you do?" said Gypsy, sleepily, sitting up straight.

Tom was standing on the shore. He did not say another word. He jumped into an old mud-scuttle, that lay floating among the bushes, and paddled up to her before she was wide enough awake to speak.

"Why, Gypsy Breynton!"

"I've been walking in my sleep," said Gypsy, with a little laugh; "I came out here to save Winnie from upsetting in a milk-pitcher, and then I woke up, and I *did* forget to lock the boat, and I couldn't get ashore."

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"How long have you been here?" Tom was very pale.

"Since a little before two. There was a splendid sunrise, only it was rather cold, and I didn't know where I was at first, and I—well, I'm glad you're come."

"Put on my coat over that. Lean up against my arm—so. Don't try to talk," said Tom, in a quick, business-like tone. But Tom was curiously pale.

"Why, there's no harm done, Tom, dear," said Gypsy, looking up into his face.

"I can't talk about it, Gypsy—I *can't*, I thought, I—"

Tom looked the other way to see the view, and did not finish his sentence.

"You don't suppose she's going to be a somnambulist?" asked Mr. Breynton. This was the first time he had remembered to be worried over any of Gypsy's peculiarities all day. He had spent so much time in looking at her, and kissing her, and wiping his spectacles.

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"No, indeed," said her mother; "it was nothing in the world but popped-corn. The child will never have another such turn, I'll venture."

And she never did.

It is needless to say that nobody scolded Gypsy for forgetting to lock the boat. She was likely enough to remember the incident. She had, perhaps, received a severe punishment for so slight a negligence, but the reader may rest assured that the boat was always locked thereafter when Gypsy had anything to do with it.



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CHAPTER VI

UP IN THE APPLE TREE

"Gypsy! Gypsy!"

"What's wanted?"

"Where are you?"

"Here."

"I don't know where 'here' is."

"Well, you'll find out after a while."

Winnie trotted along down the garden-path, and across the brook. "Here" proved to be the great golden-russet tree. High up on a gnarled old branch, there was a little flutter of a crimson and white gingham dress, and a merry face peeping down through the dainty pink blossoms that blushed all over the tree. It looked so pretty, framed in by the bright color and glistening sunlight, and it seemed to fit in so exactly with the fragrance and the soft, dropping petals, and the chirping of the blue-birds overhead, that I doubt if even Mrs. Surly would have had the heart to say, as Mrs. Surly was much in the habit of saying,—

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"A young lady, twelve years old, climbing an apple-tree! Laws a massy! I pity your ma—what a sight of trainin'clock she must ha' wasted on you!"

"It looks nice up there," said Winnie, admiringly, looking up with his mouth open; "I'm a comin'clock up."

"Very well," said Gypsy.

Winnie assailed a low-hanging bough, and crawled half way up, where he stopped.

"Why don't you come?" said Gypsy.

"Oh, I—well, I think I like it better down here. You can see the grass, and things. There's a black grasshopper here, too."

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"What do you want, anyway?" asked Gypsy, taking a few spasmodic stitches on a long, white seam; "I'm busy. I can't talk to little boys when I'm sewing."

"Oh, I guess I don't want anythin'clock, very much," said Winnie, folding his arms composedly, as if he had seated himself for the day; "I'm five years old."

Down went Gypsy's work, and a whole handful of pink and white blossoms came fluttering into Winnie's eyes.

"How am I going to sew?" said Gypsy, despairingly; "you're so exactly in the right place to be hit. I don't believe Mrs. Surly herself could help snowballing you."

"Mrs. Surly snowball! Why, I never saw her. Wouldn't it be just funny?"

"Winnie Breynton, *will* you please to go away?"

"I say, Gypsy,—if you cut off a grasshopper's wings, and frow him in a milk-pan, what would he do?" remarked Winnie, inclining to metaphysics, as was Winnie's custom when he wasn't wanted. Gypsy took several severe stitches, and made no answer.

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"Gypsy—if somebody builded a fire inside of me and made steam, couldn't I draw a train of cars?"

"Look here—Gyp., when a cat eats up a mouse—"

Winnie forgot what he was aiming at, just there, coughed, and began again.

"Samson could have drawn a train of cars, anyway."

"Oh, Winnie Breynton!"

"Well, if he had a steam-leg, he'd be jest as good as an engine—*wouldn't* I like to seen him!" Just then a branch struck Winnie's head with decidedly more emphasis than the handful of blossoms, and Winnie slid to the ground, and remarked, with dignity, that he was sorry he couldn't stay longer. He would come again another day. About half way up the walk, he stopped, and turned leisurely round.

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"Oh—Gypsy! Mother want's to know where's the key of the china-closet she let you have. She's in a great hurry. That's what I come down for; I s'posed there was something or nuther."

"Why, Winnie Breynton! and you've been sitting there all this——"

"Where's the key?" interrupted Winnie, severely; "mother hadn't ought to be kept waitin'clock."

"It's up-stairs in—in, I guess in my slippers," said Gypsy, stopping to think.

"*Slippers!*"

"Yes. I was afraid I should forget to put it up, so I put it in my slipper, because I should feel it, and remember it. Then I took off the slippers, and that was the last I thought of it."

"It was very careless," said Winnie, with a virtuous air. It was noticeable that he took good care to be out of hearing of Gypsy's reply.

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Gypsy returned to her seam, and the apple-blossoms, and to her own little meditations about the china-closet key; which, being of a private and somewhat humiliating nature, are not given to the public.

The apple-tree stood in one corner of a very pleasant garden. Mr. Breynton had a great fancy for working over his trees and flowers, and, if he had not been a publisher and bookseller, might have made a very successful landscape-gardener. Poor health had driven him out of the professions, and the tastes of a scholar drove him away from out-door life; he had compromised the matter by that book-store down opposite the post-office. The literature of a Vermont town is not of the most world-stirring nature, and it did occur to him, occasionally, that business was rather dull, but his wife loved the old home, the children were comfortable and happy, and he himself, he thought, was getting rather old to start out on any new venture elsewhere; so Yorkbury seemed likely to be the family nest for life.

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It was the same methodical kind-heartedness that made him at once so thoughtful and tender a father, and yet so habitually worried by the children's little failings, that gave him his taste for beautiful flowers and shrubbery, and his skill in cultivating them. This garden was his pet enterprise. It was gracefully laid out with winding walks, evergreens, fruit-trees and flower-beds; not in stiff patterns, but with a delightful studied negligence, such as that with which an artist would group the figures on a landscape. Rocks and vines and wild flowers were scattered over the garden very much as they would be found in the fields; stately roses and dahlias, delicate heliotrope and aristocratic fuchsias, would grow, side by side, with daisies and buttercups. But, best of all, Gypsy liked the corner where the golden russet stood. A bit of a brook ran across it, which had been caught in a frolic one day, as it went singing away to the meadows, and dammed up and paved down into a tiny pond.

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The short-tufted grass swept over its edge like a fringe, and in their season slender hair-bells bent over, casting little blue shadows into the water; the apple-boughs, too, hung over it, and flung down their showers of pearls and rubies, when the wind was high. Moreover, there was a statue. This statue was Gypsy's pride and delight. It was Aladdin's Palace, the Tuilleries, Versailles, and the Alhambra, all in one. The only fault to be found with it was that it was not marble. It was a species of weather-proof composition, but very finely carved, and much valued by Mr. Breynton. It was a pretty thing—a water-nymph rising from an unfolded lily, with both hands parting her long hair from a wondering face, that, pleased with its own beauty, was bent to watch its reflection in the water.

Altogether, the spot was so bewitching, that it is little wonder Gypsy's work kept dropping into her lap, and her eyes wandering away somewhere into dreamland.

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One of those endless seams on a white skirt that you have torn from the placket to the hem, is not a very attractive sight, if you have it to mend, and don't happen to like to sew any better than Gypsy did.

She seemed fated to be interrupted in her convulsive attempts at "run-and-back stitching." Winnie was hardly in the house, before Sarah Rowe came out in the garden to hunt her up.

"Oh, dear," said Gypsy, as Sarah's face appeared under the apple-boughs; "I'm not a bit glad to see you."

"That's polite," said Sarah, reddening; "I'll go home again."

"Look," said Gypsy, laughing; "just see what I've got to mend, and I came out here on purpose to get it done, so I could come over to your house. You see I oughtn't to be glad to see you at all, but

I am exceedingly."

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Sarah climbed up, and sat down beside her upon a long, swaying bough.

"Now don't you speak a single word," said Gypsy, with an industrious air, "till I get this done."

"No, I won't," said Sarah. "What do you have to sew for, Saturday afternoons?"

"Why, it's my mending: mother wants me to do it Saturday morning, and of course it's a great deal easier, because then you have all the afternoon to yourself, only I never seem to get time; I'm sure I don't know why. This morning I had my history topics to write."

"Why, I wrote mine yesterday!"

"I meant to, but I forgot; Miss Melville said I musn't put it off another day. There! I wasn't going to talk."

"Mother does my mending for me," said Sarah.

"She does! Well, I just wish my mother would. She says it wouldn't be good for me."

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"How did you tear such a great place, I'd like to know?"

"Put my foot right through it," said Gypsy, disconsolately. "It was hanging on a chair, and I just stepped in it and started to run, and down I went,—and here's the skirt. I was running after the cat. I'd put her under my best hat, and she was spinning down stairs. You never saw anything so funny! I'm always doing such things,—I mean like the skirt. I do declare! you musn't talk."

"I'm not," said Sarah, laughing; "it's you that are talking. You haven't sewed a stitch for five minutes, either."

Gypsy sighed, and her needle began to fly savagely. There was a little silence.

"You see," said Gypsy, breaking it, "I'm trying to reform."

"Reform?" said Sarah, with some vague ideas of Luther and Melancthon, and Gypsy's wearing a wig and spectacles, and reading Cruden's "Concordance."

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"Yes," nodded Gypsy, "reform. I never knew anybody need it as much as I. I never do things anyway, and then I do them wrong, and then I forget all about them. Mother says I'm improving. She says my room used to look like a perfect Babel, and now I keep the wardrobe door shut, and dust it out—sometimes. Then there's my mending. I came out here so's to be quiet and *keep at it*. The poor dear woman is so afraid I won't learn to do things in a lady-like way. It would be dreadful not to grow up a lady, wouldn't it?"

"Dreadful!" said Sarah; "only I wish you'd hurry and get through, so we can go down to the swamp and sail. Couldn't you take a little bigger stitches?"

"No," said Gypsy, resolutely; "I should have to rip it all out. I'm going to do it right, if it takes me all day."

Gypsy began to sew with a will, and Sarah, finding it was for her own interest in the end, stopped talking; so the fearful seam was soon neatly finished, the work folded up, and the thimble and scissors put away carefully in the little green reticule.

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"I lose so many thimbles,—you don't know!" observed Gypsy, by way of comment. "I'm going to see if I can't keep this one three months."

"Now let's go," said Sarah.

"In a minute; I must carry my work up first. I'm going to jump off—it's real fun. You see if I don't go as far as that dandelion."

So Gypsy sprang from the tree, carrying a shower of blossoms with her.

"Oh, look out for the statue!" cried Sarah.

The warning came too late. Gypsy fell short of her mark, hit the water-nymph heavily, and it fell with a crash into the water, where the paved bottom was hard as rock.

"Just see what you've done!" said Sarah, who had not a capacity for making comforting remarks. "What do you suppose your father will say?"

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Gypsy stood aghast. The water gurgled over the fallen statue, whose pretty, upraised hands were snapped at the wrist, and the wondering face crushed in. There was a moment's silence.

"Don't you tell!" said Sarah at length; "nobody saw it fall, and they'll never think you did it. You just seem surprised, and keep still about it."

Gypsy flushed to her forehead.

"Why, Sarah Rowe! how can you say such a thing? I wouldn't tell a lie for anything in this world!"

"It wouldn't be a lie!" said Sarah, looking ashamed and provoked. "You needn't say you didn't do it."

"It would be a lie!" said Gypsy, decidedly. "He'd ask if anybody knew,—I wouldn't be so mean, even if I knew he couldn't find out. I am going to tell him this minute."

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Gypsy started off, with her cheeks still very red, up the garden paths and down the road, and Sarah followed slowly. Gypsy's sense of honor had received too great a shock for her to take pleasure just then in Sarah's company, and Sarah had an uneasy sense of having lowered herself in her friend's eyes, so the two girls separated for the afternoon.

It was about a mile to Mr. Breynton's store. The afternoon was warm for the season, and the road dusty; but Gypsy ran nearly all the way. She was too much troubled about the accident to think of anything else, and in as much haste to tell her father as some children would have been to conceal it from him.

Old Mr. Simms, the clerk, looked up over his spectacles in mild astonishment, as Gypsy entered the store flushed, and panting, and pretty. To Mr. Simms, who had no children of his own, and only a deaf wife and a lame dog at home for company, Gypsy was always pretty, always "such a wonderful development for a young person," and always just about right in whatever she did.

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"Why, good afternoon, Miss Gypsy," said Mr. Simms; "I'm surprised to see you such a warm day—very much surprised. But you always were a remarkable young lady."

"Yes," panted Gypsy; "where's father, Mr. Simms?"

"He's up in the printing-room just now, talking with the foreman. Can I carry any message for you, Miss Gypsy?"

"Oh, Mr. Simms," said Gypsy, confidentially, "I've done the most dreadful thing!"

"Dear me! I don't see how that is possible," said Mr. Simms, taking his spectacles off nervously, and putting them on again.

"I have," said Gypsy; "I've broken the water-nymph!"

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Simms, looking relieved; "why, how did it happen?"

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"I jumped on it."

"Jumped on it!"

"Yes; I'm sure I don't know what father'll say."

"Well, I *must* say you are a wonderful young person," said Mr. Simms, proudly. "I'm sure I'm glad that's all. Don't you fret, my dear. Your father won't care much about water-nymphs, when he has such a daughter."

"But he will," said Gypsy, who regarded Mr. Simm's compliments only as a tiresome interruption to conversation, and by no means as entitled to any attention; "he will be very sorry, and I am going to tell him right off. Please, Mr. Simms, will you speak to him?"

"Remarkable development of veracity!" said Mr. Simms, as he bowed himself away in his polite, old-fashioned way, and disappeared up the stairway that led to the printing-rooms. It seemed to Gypsy, waiting there so impatiently, as if her father would never come down. But come he did at last, looking very much surprised to see her, and anxious to know if the house were on fire, or if Winnie were drowned.

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"No," said Gypsy, "nothing has happened,—I mean nothing of that sort. It's only about me. I have something to tell you."

"I think I will walk home with you," said her father. "There isn't much going on Saturday

afternoons. Simms, you can lock up when you go home to supper. I hope you haven't been giving your mother any trouble, or thrown your ball into Mrs. Surly's windows again," he added, nervously, as they passed out of the door and up the street together.

"No, sir," said Gypsy, faintly; "it's worse than that."

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Mr. Breynton heaved a sigh, but said nothing.

"I know you think I'm always up to mischief, and I don't suppose I'll ever learn to be a lady and know how not to break things, and I'm so sorry, but I didn't suppose there was any harm in jumping off an apple-tree, and the water-nymph went over and perhaps if you sent me to school or something I'd learn better where they tie you down to a great board," said Gypsy, talking very fast, and quite forgetting her punctuation.

"The water-nymph!" echoed Mr. Breynton.

"Yes," said Gypsy, dolefully; "right over, head-first—into the pond—broken to smash!"

"Oh, Gypsy! that is too bad."

"I know it," interrupted Gypsy; "I know it was terribly careless—terribly. Did you ever know anything so exactly like me? The worst of it is, being sorry doesn't help the matter. I wish I could buy you another. Won't you please to take my five dollars, and I'll earn some more picking berries."

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"I don't want your money, my child," said Mr. Breynton, looking troubled and puzzled. "I'm sorry the nymph is gone; but somehow you do seem to be different from other girls. I didn't know young ladies ever jumped."

Gypsy was silent. Her father and mother seemed to think differently about these things. To her view, and she felt sure, to her mother's, the fault lay in the carelessness of not finding out whether the image was in her way. She could not see that she was doing anything wrong in going out alone into an apple-tree, and springing from a low bough, upon the soft grass. Very likely, when she was a grown-up young lady, with long dresses and hair done up behind, she shouldn't care anything about climbing trees. But that was another question. However, she had too much respect for her father to say this. So she hung her head, feeling very humble and sorry, and wondering if Mr. Simms couldn't plaster the nymph together somehow, he was always so ready to do things for her.

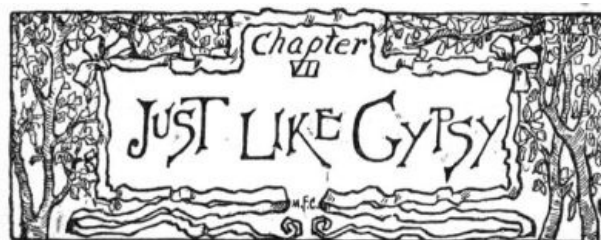
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"Well," said her father, after a moment's thought, in which he had been struggling with a sense of disappointment at the destruction of his statue, that would have made a less kind-hearted man scold.

"Well, it can't be helped; and as to the climbing trees, I suppose your mother knows best. I am glad you came and told me, anyway—very glad. You are a truthful child, Gypsy, in spite of your faults."

"I couldn't bear to tell lies," said Gypsy, brightening a little.

It is possible this was another one of the reasons why people had such a habit of loving Gypsy. What do you think?



Chapter VII

JUST LIKE GYPSY

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One afternoon Gypsy was coming home from the post-office. It was a rare June day. The great soft shadows fell and faded on the mountains, and the air was sweet with the breath of a hundred fields where crimson clovers nodded in the sleepy wind. It seemed to Gypsy that she had never seen such mellow sunlight, or skies so pure and blue; that no birds ever sung such songs in the elm-trees, and never were butterflies so golden and brown and beautiful as those which fluttered drowsily over the tiny roadside clovers. The thought came to her like a little sudden heart-throb, that thrilled her through and through, that this world was a very great world, and very beautiful,

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—it seemed so alive and happy, from the arch of the blazing sky down to the blossoms of the purple weeds that hid in the grass. She wondered that she had never thought of it before. How many millions of people were enjoying this wonderful day! What a great thing it was to live in such a world, where everything was so beautiful and useful and happy! The very fact that she was alive in it made her so glad. She felt as if she would like to go off on the rocks somewhere, and shout and jump and sing.

As she walked slowly along past the stores and the crowded tenement-houses, swinging her little letter-basket on her arm, and dreaming away with her great brown eyes, as such young eyes will always dream upon a summer's day, there suddenly struck upon that happy thought of hers a mournful sound.

It was a human groan.

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It grated on Gypsy's musing, as a file grates upon smooth marble; she started, and looked up. The sound came from an open window directly over her head. What could anybody be groaning about such a day as this? Gypsy felt a momentary impatience with the mournful sound; then a sudden curiosity to know what it meant. A door happened to be open near her, and she walked right in, without a second thought, as was the fashion in which Gypsy usually did things. A pair of steep stairs led up from the bit of an entry, and a quantity of children, whose faces and hands were decidedly the worse for wear, were playing on them.

"How do you do?" said Gypsy. The children stared.

"Who lives here?" asked Gypsy, again. The children put their fingers in their mouths.

"Who is that groaning so?" persisted Gypsy, repressing a strong desire to box their ears. The children crawled a little further up-stairs, and peered at her from between their locks of shaggy hair, as if they considered her a species of burglar. At this moment a side door opened, and a red-faced woman, who was wiping her hands on her apron, put her head out into the entry, and asked, in rather a surly tone, what was wanted.

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"Who is that groaning?" repeated Gypsy.

"Oh, that's nobody but Grandmother Littlejohn," said the woman, with a laugh, "she's always groanin'clock."

"But what does she groan for?" insisted Gypsy, her curiosity nowise diminished to see a person who could be "always groanin'clock," through not only one, but many, of such golden summer days.

"Oh, I s'pose she's got reason enough, for the matter of that," said the woman, carelessly; "she's broke a bone,—though she do make a terrible fuss over it, and very onobligin'clock it is to the neighbors as has the lookin'clock after of her."

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"Broken a bone! Poor thing, I'm going right up to see her!" said Gypsy, whose compassion was rising fast.

"Good luck to you!" said the woman, with a laugh Gypsy did not like very much. It only strengthened her resolution, however, and she ran up the narrow stairs scattering the children right and left.

Several other untidy-looking women opened doors and peered out at her as she went by; but no one else spoke to her. Guided by the sound of the groans, which came at regular intervals like long breaths, she went up a second flight of stairs, more narrow and more dark than the first, and turned into a little low room, the door of which stood open.

"Who's there!" called a fretful voice from inside.

"I," said Gypsy; "may I come in?"

"I don't know who you be," said the voice, "but you may come 'long ef you want to."



Gypsy accepted the somewhat dubious invitation. The room was in sad disorder, and very dusty. An old yellow cat sat blinking at a sunbeam, and an old, yellow, wizened woman lay upon the bed. Her forehead was all drawn and knotted with pain, and her mouth looked just like her voice—fretful and sharp. She turned her head slowly, as Gypsy entered, but otherwise she did not alter her position; as if it were one which she could not change without pain. [Pg 131]

“Good afternoon,” said Gypsy, feeling a little embarrassed, and not knowing exactly what to say, now she was up there. [Pg 132]

“Good arternoon,” said Grandmother Littlejohn, with a groan.

“I heard you groan out in the street,” said Gypsy, rushing to the point at once; “I came up to see what was the matter.”

“Matter?” said the old woman sharply, “I fell down stairs and broke my ankle, that’s the matter, an’clock I wonder the whole town hain’t heerd me holler,—I can’t sleep day nor night with the pain, an’clock it’s matter enough, I think.”

“I’m real sorry,” said Gypsy.

Mrs. Littlejohn broke into a fresh spasm of groaning at this, and seemed to be in such suffering, that it made Gypsy turn pale to hear her.

“Haven’t you had a doctor?” she asked, compassionately. [Pg 133]

“Laws yes,” said the old woman. “Had a doctor! I guess I have, a young fellar who said he was representative from somewhere from Medical Profession, seems to me it war, but I never heerd on’t, wharever it is, an’clock he with his whiskers only half growed, an’clock puttin’clock of my foot into a wooden box, an’clock murderin’clock of me—I gave him a piece of my mind, and he hain’t come nigh me since, and I won’t have him agin nowadays.”

“But they always splinter broken limbs,” said Gypsy.

“Splinters?” cried the old woman; “I tell ye I fell down stairs! I didn’t get no splinters in.”

Gypsy concluded to suppress her surgical information.

“Who takes care of you?” she asked, suddenly.

“Nobody! I don’t want nobody takin’clock care of me when I ain’t shut up in a box on the bed, an’clock now I am, the neighbors is shy enough of troublin’clock themselves about me, an’clock talks of the work-house. I’ll starve fust!” [Pg 134]

“Who gives you your dinners and suppers?” asked Gypsy, beginning to think Grandmother Littlejohn was a very ill-treated woman.

“It’s little enough I gets,” said the old woman, groaning afresh; “they brings me up a cup of cold tea when they feels like it, and crusts of bread, and I with no teeth to eat ’em. I hain’t had a mouthful of dinner this day, and that’s the truth, now!”

“No dinner,” cried Gypsy. “Why, how sorry I am for you! I’ll go right home and get you some, and tell my mother. She’ll take care of you—she always does take care of everybody.”

“You’re a pretty little gal,” said Mrs. Littlejohn, with a sigh; “an’clock I hope you’ll be rewarded for botherin’clock yourself about a poor old woman like me. Does your ma use white sugar? I like white sugar in my tea.” [Pg 135]

“Oh yes,” said Gypsy, rather pleased than otherwise to be called a “pretty little gal.” “Oh yes; we have a whole barrel full. You can have some just as well as not; I’ll bring you down a pound or so, and I have five dollars at home that you might have. What would you like to have me get for you?”

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Littlejohn; "what a angel of mercy to the poor and afflicted you be! I should like some fresh salmon and green peas, now, if I could get 'em."

"Very well," said Gypsy; "I'll hurry home and see about it."

Accordingly she left the old woman groaning out her thanks, and went down the narrow stairs, and into the street.

She ran all the way home, and rushed into the parlor where her mother was sitting quietly sewing. She looked up as the door burst open, and Gypsy swept in like a little hurricane, her turban hanging down her neck, her hair loose and flying about an eager face that was all on fire with its warm crimson color and twinkling eyes.

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"Why Gypsy!"

"Oh, mother, such an old woman—such a poor old woman! groaning right out in the street—I mean, I was out in the street, and heard her groan up two flights of the *crookedest* stairs, and she broke her ankle, and the neighbors won't give her anything to eat, unless she goes to the poor-house and starves, and she hasn't had any dinner, and——"

"Wait a minute, Gypsy; what does all this mean?"

"Why, she fell down those horrid stairs and broke her ankle, and wants some salmon and green peas, and I'm going to give her my five dollars, and——Oh, white sugar, some white sugar for her tea. I never heard anybody groan so, in all my life!"

Mrs. Breynton laid down her work, and laughed.

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"Why, mother!" said Gypsy, reddening, "I don't see what there is to laugh at!"

"My dear Gypsy, you would laugh if you had heard your own story. The most I can make out of it is, that a little girl who is so excited she hardly knows what she is talking about, has seen an old woman who has been begging for fresh salmon."

"And broken her ankle, and is starving," began Gypsy.

"Stop a minute," interrupted Mrs. Breynton, gently. "Sit down and take off your things, and when you get rested tell me the story quietly and slowly, and then we will see what is to be done for your old woman."

Gypsy, very reluctantly, obeyed. It seemed to her incredible that any one could be so quiet and composed as her mother was, when there was an old woman in town who had had no dinner. However, she sat still and fanned herself, and when she was rested, she managed to tell her story in as connected and rational manner, and with as few comments and exclamations of her own, as Gypsy was capable of getting along with, in any narration.

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"Very well," said her mother, when it was finished; "I begin to understand things better. Let me see: in the first place, you felt so sorry for the old woman, that you went alone into a strange house, among a sort of people you knew nothing about, and without stopping to think whether I should be willing to have you—wasn't that so?"

"Yes'm," said Gypsy, hanging her head a little; "I didn't think—she did groan so."

"Then Mrs. Littlejohn seems to like to complain, it strikes me."

"Complain!" said Gypsy, indignantly.

"Yes, a little. However, she might have worse faults. The most remarkable thing about her seems to be her modest request for salmon and white sugar. You propose giving them to her?"

"Why, yes'm," said Gypsy, promptly. "She's in such dreadful pain. When I sprained my wrist, you gave me nice things to eat."

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"But it wouldn't follow that I should give Mrs. Littlejohn the same," said Mrs. Breynton, gently. "Salmon and white sugar are expensive luxuries. I might be able to do something to help Mrs. Littlejohn, but I might not be able to afford to take her down the two or three pounds of sugar you promised her, nor to spend several dollars on fresh salmon—a delicacy which we have had on our own table but once this season. Besides, there are thirty or forty sick people in town, probably, who are as poor and as much in need of assistance as this one old woman. You see, don't you, that I could not give salmon and peas and white sugar to them all, and it would be unwise in me to spend all my money on one, when I might divide it, and help several people."

"But there's my five dollars," said Gypsy, only half convinced.

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"Very well, supposing I were to let you give it all away to Mrs. Littlejohn, even if she were the most worthy and needy person that could be found in town, what then? It is all gone. You have nothing more to give. The next week a poor little girl who has no hat, and can't go to Sunday-school, excites your sympathy, and you would be glad to give something toward buying her a hat—you have not a copper. You go to Monthly Concert, and want to drop something into the contribution box, but Mrs. Littlejohn has eaten up what you might have given. You want to do something for the poor freedmen, who are coming into our armies; you cannot do it, for you have nothing to give."

"Well," said Gypsy, with a ludicrous expression of conviction and discomfiture, "I suppose so; I didn't think."

"*Didn't think!*—the old enemy, Gypsy. And now that I have pointed out the little mistakes you made this afternoon, I want to tell you, Gypsy, how pleased I am that you were so quick to feel sorry for the old woman, and so ready to be generous with your own money and help. I would rather have you fail a dozen times on the unselfish side, than to have you careless and heartless towards the people God has made poor, and in suffering—there! I have given you a long sermon. Do you think mother is always scolding?"

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Mrs. Breynton drew her into her arms, and gave her one of those little soft kisses on the forehead, that Gypsy liked so much. "I will go down and see the old woman after supper," she said, then.

"Couldn't you go before?" suggested Gypsy. "She said she hadn't had any dinner."

"We can't do things in too much of a hurry; not even our charities," said Mrs. Breynton, smiling. "I have some work which I cannot leave now, and I have little doubt the woman had some dinner. The poor are almost always very kind neighbors to each other. I will be there early enough to take her some supper."

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So Gypsy was comforted for Mrs. Littlejohn.

It was nearly dark when Mrs. Breynton came up from the village, with her pleasant smile, and her little basket that half Yorkbury knew so well by sight, for the biscuit and the jellies, the blanc-mange, and the dried beef and the cookies, that it brought to so many sick-beds. Gypsy had been watching for her impatiently, and ran down to the gate to meet her.

"Well, did you find her?"

"Oh, yes."

"What do you think of her?" asked Gypsy, a little puzzled by her mother's expression.

"She is a good deal of a scold, and something of a sufferer," said Mrs. Breynton. Gypsy's face fell, and they walked up to the house in silence.

"Then you're not going to do anything for her?" asked Gypsy, at length, in a disappointed tone.

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"Oh, yes. She needs help. She can't be moved to the poor-house now, and, besides, is likely to get well before long, if she is properly taken care of. I gave her her supper, and have arranged with one or two of the ladies to send her meals for a few days, till we see how she is, and what had better be done. I take care of her to-morrow, and Mrs. Rowe takes her the next day."

"Good!" said Gypsy, brightening; "and I may take her down the things, mayn't I, mother?"

"If you want to."

Gypsy went to bed as happy as a queen.

The next morning she rose early, to be sure to be in time to take Mrs. Littlejohn's breakfast; and was disappointed enough, when her mother thought it best she should wait till she had eaten her own. However, on the strength of the remembrance of her mother's tried and proved wisdom, on certain other little occasions, she submitted with a good grace.

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She carried Mrs. Littlejohn a very good breakfast of griddle-cakes and fish-balls and sweet white bread, and was somewhat taken aback to find that the old woman received it rather curtly, and asked after the salmon.

It was very warm at noon. When she carried the dinner, the walk was long and wearisome, and Mrs. Littlejohn neglected to call her an angel of mercy, and it must be confessed Gypsy's enthusiasm diminished perceptibly.

That evening Mr. and Mrs. Breynton were out to tea, and Tom was off fishing. Mrs. Breynton left Mrs. Littlejohn's supper in a basket on the shelf, and told Gypsy where it was. Gypsy had been having a great frolic in the fresh hay with Sarah Rowe, and came in late. No one but Winnie was there. She ate her supper in a great hurry, and went out again. Patty saw her from the window, and concluded she had gone to Mrs. Littlejohn's.

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That night, about eleven o'clock, some one knocked at Mrs. Breynton's door, and woke her up.

"Who is it?" she called.

"Oh, mother Breynton!" said a doleful voice; "what *do* you suppose I've done now?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Breynton, with a resigned sigh.

"I hope she hasn't been walking in her sleep again," said Mr. Breynton, nervously.

"Forgotten Mrs. Littlejohn's supper," said the doleful voice through the key-hole.

"Why, Gypsy!"

"I know it," said Gypsy, humbly. "Couldn't I dress and run down?"

"Why, no indeed! it can't be helped now. Run back to bed."

"Just like Gypsy, for all the world!" said Tom, the next morning. "Always so quick and generous, and sorry for people, and ready to do, and you can depend on her just about as much as you could on a brisk west wind!"



CHAPTER VIII

PEACE MAYTHORNE

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"After you have seen Mrs. Littlejohn, and explained why she went supperless last night," said Mrs. Breynton, "I want you to do an errand for me."

"What is it?" asked Gypsy, pleasantly. She felt very humble, and much ashamed, this morning, and anxious to make herself useful.

"I want you to find out where Peace Maythorne's room is,—it is in the same house,—and carry her this, with my love."

Mrs. Breynton took up a copy of "Harper's Magazine," and handed it to Gypsy.

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"Tell her I have turned the leaf down at some articles I think will interest her, and ask her if the powder I left her put her to sleep."

"Who is Peace Maythorne?" asked Gypsy, wondering. "Is she poor?"

"Yes."

"How funny to send her a 'Harper's,'" said Gypsy. "Why don't you give her some money, or something?"

"Some things are worth more than money to some people," said Mrs. Breynton, smiling.

"Why! then you had been into that house before I found Mrs. Littlejohn?" said Gypsy, as the thought first struck her.

"Oh, yes; many times."

Gypsy started off, with the Magazine under her arm, wondering if there were a house in town, filled with these wretched poor, in which her mother was not known as a friend.

Her heart sank a little as she climbed the dark stairs to Mrs. Littlejohn's room. She had begged of her mother a tiny pailful of green peas, with which she hoped to pacify the old woman, but she was somewhat in dread of hearing her talk, and ashamed to confess her own neglect.

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Mrs. Littlejohn was eating the very nice breakfast which Mrs. Rowe had sent over, and groaning dolefully over it, as Gypsy entered.

"Good morning," said Gypsy.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Littlejohn, severely.

"I went out to play in the hay with Sarah Rowe, and forgot all about your supper last night, and I'm just as sorry as I can be," said Gypsy, coming to the point frankly, and without any attempt to excuse herself.

"Oh, of course!" said Mrs. Littlejohn, in the tone of a martyr. "It's all I expect. I'm a poor lone widdy with a bone broke, and I'm used to bein'clock forgot. Little gals that has everything they want, and five dollars besides, and promises me salmon and such, couldn't be expected to remember the sufferin'clock and afflicted,—of course not."

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It was not an easy nor a pleasant thing to apologize to a person to whom she had played the charitable lady the day before; and Mrs. Littlejohn's manner of receiving the explanation

certainly made it no easier. But Gypsy, as the saying goes, "swallowed her pride," and felt that she deserved it.

"I've brought you some peas," she said, meekly.

"Oh!" said the old woman, relenting a little, "you have, have you? Well, I'm obleeged to you, and you can set 'em in the cupboard."

Gypsy emptied her peas into a yellow bowl which she found in the cupboard, and then asked,—

"Can I do anything for you?"

"I'm terrible thirsty!" said Mrs. Littlejohn, with a long groan. "There's some water in that air pail."

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Gypsy went into the corner where the pail stood, and filled the mug with water; then, not being able to think of anything more to say, she concluded to go.

"Good mornin'clock," said Mrs. Littlejohn, in a forgiving tone; "I hope you'll come agin."

Gypsy secretly thought it was doubtful if she ever did. Her charity, like that of most young people of her age and experience, was not of the sort calculated to survive under difficulties, or to deal successfully with shrewish old women.

After inquiring in vain of the group of staring children where Peace Maythorne's room was, Gypsy resorted to her friend, the red-faced woman, who directed her to a door upon the second story.

It was closed, and Gypsy knocked.

"Come in," said a quiet voice. Gypsy went in, wondering why Peace Maythorne did not get up and open the door, and if she did not know it was more polite. She stopped short, as she entered the room, and wondered no longer.

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It was a plain, bare room, but neat enough, and not unpleasant nor unhomelike, because of the great flood of morning sunlight that fell in and touched everything to golden warmth. It touched most brightly, and lingered longest, on a low bed drawn up between the windows. A girl lay there, with a pale face turned over on the pillows, and weak, thin hands, folded on the counterpane. She might, from her size, have been about sixteen years of age; but her face was like the face of a woman long grown old. The clothing of the bed partially concealed her shoulders, which were cruelly rounded and bent.

So Peace Maythorne was a cripple.

Gypsy recovered from her astonishment with a little start, and said, blushing, for fear she had been rude,—

"Good morning. I'm Gypsy Breynton. Mother sent me down with a magazine."

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"I am glad to see you," said Peace Maythorne, smiling. "Won't you sit down?"

Gypsy took a chair by the bed, thinking how pleasant the old, pale face, was, after all, and how kindly and happy the smile.

"Your mother is very kind," said Peace; "she is always doing something for me. She has given me a great deal to read."

"Do you like to read?—I don't," said Gypsy.

"Why, yes!" said Peace, opening her eyes wide; "I thought everybody liked to read. Besides I can't do anything else, you know."

"Nothing at all?" asked Gypsy.

"Only sometimes, when the pain isn't very bad, I try to help aunt about her sewing, I can't do much."

"Oh, you live with your aunt?" said Gypsy.

"Yes. She takes in sewing. She's out, just now."

"Does your back pain you a great deal?" asked Gypsy.

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"Oh, yes; all the time. But, then, I get used to it, you know," said Peace.



"*All the time!*—oh, I am so sorry!" said Gypsy, drawing a long breath.

"Oh, it might be worse," said Peace, smiling.

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"I've only lain here three years. Some people can't move for forty. The doctor says I sha'n't live so long as that."

Gypsy looked at the low bed, the narrow room, the pallid face and shrunken body cramped there, moveless, on the pillows. Three years! Three years to lie through summer suns and winter snows, while all the world was out at play, and happy!

"Well," said Gypsy, as the most appropriate comment suggesting itself; "*you are* rather different from Mrs. Littlejohn!"

Peace smiled. There was something rare about Peace Maythorne's smile.

"Poor Mrs. Littlejohn! You see, she isn't used to being sick, and I am; that makes the difference."

"Oh, I forgot!" said Gypsy, abruptly, "mother said I was to ask if those powders she left you put you to sleep."

"Nicely. They're better than anything the doctor gave me; everything your mother does seems to be the best sort, somehow. She can't touch your hand, or smooth your pillow, without doing it differently from other people."

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"That's so!" said Gypsy, emphatically. "There isn't anybody else like her. Do you lie awake very often?"

Peace answered in the two quiet words that were on her lips so often, in the quiet voice that never complained,—

"Oh, yes."

There was a little silence. Gypsy was watching Peace. Peace had her eyes turned away from her visitor, but she was conscious of every quick, nervous breath Gypsy drew, and every impatient little flutter of her hands.

The two girls were studying each other. Gypsy's investigations, whatever they were, seemed to be very pleasant, for she started at last with a bit of a sigh, and announced the result of them in the characteristic words,—

"I like you!"

To her surprise, Peace just turned up her eyes and turned them away, and the eyes were full of tears. After a moment,—

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"Thank you. I don't see many people so young—except the children. I tell them stories sometimes."

"But you won't like me," said Gypsy.

"I rather think I shall."

"No you won't," said Gypsy, shaking her head decidedly; "not a bit. I know you won't. I'm silly,—well, I'll tell you what I am by-and-by. First, I want to hear all about you,—everything, I mean," she added, with a quick delicacy, of which, for "blundering Gypsy," she had a great deal,—"everything that you care to tell me."

"Why, I've nothing to tell," said Peace, smiling, "cooped up here all the time; it's all the same."

"That's just what I want to hear about. About the being cooped up. I don't see *how you bear it!*"

said Gypsy, impetuously.

Peace smiled again. Gypsy had a fancy that the smile had stolen one of the sunbeams that lay in such golden, flickering waves, upon the bed. [Pg 157]

Too much self-depreciation is often a sign of the extremest vanity. Peace had nothing of this. Seeing that Gypsy was in earnest in her wish to hear her story, she quietly began it without further parley. It was very simple, and quickly told.

"We used to live on a farm on the mountains—father and mother and I. There were a great many cattle, and so much ground it tired me to walk across it. I always went to school, and father read to us in the evenings. I suppose that's the way I've learned to love to read, and I've been so glad since. I was pretty small when they died,—first father, then mother. I remember it a little; at least I remember about mother,—she kissed me so, and cried. Then Aunt Jane came for me, and brought me here. We lived in a pleasant house up the street, at first. I used to work in the mill, and earned enough to pay aunt what I cost her. Then one day, when I was thirteen years old, we were coming out at noon, all of us girls, in a great hurry and frolic, and I felt sick and dizzy watching the wheels go round, and,—well, they didn't mean to,—but they pushed me, and I fell." [Pg 158]

"Down stairs?"

"All the way,—it was a long, crooked flight. I struck my spine on every step."

"Oh, Peace!" said Gypsy, half under her breath.

"I was sick for a little while; then I got better. I thought it was all over. Then one day I found a little curve between my shoulders, and so,—well, it came so slowly I hardly knew it, till at last I was in bed with the pain. We had come here because it was hard times, and aunt had to support me,—and then there were the doctor's bills."

"Doesn't he say you can *ever* get well? never sit up a little while?" [Pg 159]

"Oh, no."

Gypsy gasped a little, as if she were suffocating.

"And your aunt,—is she kind to you?"

"Oh, yes."

A certain flitting expression, that the face of Peace caught with the words, Gypsy could not help seeing.

"But I mean, real kind. Does she love you?"

The girl's cheek flushed to a pale, quick crimson, then faded slowly.

"She is very good to me. I am a great trouble. You know I am not her own. It is very hard for her that I can't support myself."

Gypsy said something just then, in her innermost thought of thoughts, about Aunt Jane, that Aunt Jane would not have cared to hear.

"If I could only earn something!" said Peace, with a quick breath, that sounded like a sigh. "That is hardest of all. But it's all right somehow." [Pg 160]

"Peace Maythorne!" said Gypsy, in a little flash, "I don't see! never to go out in the wind and jump on the hay, and climb the mountains, and run and row and snowball,—why, it would *kill* me! And you lie here so sweet and patient, and you haven't said a cross word all the while you've been telling me about it. I don't understand! How can you, *can* you bear it?"

"I couldn't, if I didn't tell Him," said Peace, softly.

"Whom?"

"God."

There was a long silence. Gypsy looked out of the window, winking very hard, and Peace lay quite still upon the bed.

"There!" said Gypsy, at last, with a jump. "I shall be late to school."

"Oh," said Peace, "you haven't told me anything about yourself; you said you would." [Pg 161]

"Well," said Gypsy, tying on her hat, "that's easy enough done. I'm silly and cross, and forgetful and blundering."

"I don't believe it," said Peace, laughing.

"I am," said Gypsy, confidentially; "it's all true; and I'm always tearing my dresses, and worrying father, and getting mad at Winnie, and bothering Miss Melville, and romping round, and breaking my neck! and then, when things don't go right, how I scold!"

Peace smiled, and looked incredulous.

"It's just so," said Gypsy, giving a little sharp nod to emphasize her words. "And here you lie, and

never think of being cross and impatient, and love everybody and everybody loves you, and—well, all I have to say is, if I were you I should have scolded everybody out of the house long before this!”

“You mustn’t talk so about me,” said Peace, a faint shadow of pain crossing her face. “You don’t know how wicked I am—nobody knows; I am cross very often. Sometimes when my back aches as if I should scream, and aunt is talking, I hide my face under the clothes, and don’t say a word to her.” [Pg 162]

“You call *that* being cross!” said Gypsy, with her eyes very wide open. She buttoned on her sack, and started to go, but stopped a minute.

“I don’t suppose you’d want me to come again—I’m so noisy, and all.”

“Oh, I should be so glad!” said Peace, with one of those rare smiles: “I didn’t dare to ask you.”

“Well; I’ll come. But I told you you wouldn’t like me.”

“I do,” said Peace. “I like you very much.”

“How funny!” said Gypsy. Then she bade her good-by, and went to school.

“Mother,” she said, at night, “did you have any particular reason in sending me to Peace Maythorne?” [Pg 163]

“Perhaps so,” said Mrs. Breynton, smiling. “Why?”

“Nothing, only I thought so. You were a very wise woman.”

A while after she spoke up, suddenly.

“Mother, don’t the Quakers say good matches are made in heaven?”

“Who’s been putting sentimental ideas into the child’s head?” said her father, in an undertone.

“Why, Gypsy Breynton!” said Winnie, looking very much shocked; “you hadn’t ought to say such things. Of course, the brimstone falls down from hell, and they pick it up and put it on the matches!”

“What made you ask the question?” said Mrs. Breynton, when the laugh had subsided.

“Oh, I was only thinking, I guessed Peace Maythorne’s name was made in heaven. It so exactly suits her.” [Pg 164]

After that, the cripple’s little quiet room became one of the places Gypsy loved best in Yorkbury.

Two or three weeks after that Mrs. Littlejohn, who had been gaining rapidly in strength and good temper under Mrs. Breynton’s wise and kindly care, took it into her head one morning, when she was alone, to walk across the room, and look out of the window. The weakened limb was not in a fit state to be used at all, and the shock given to it was very great. Inflammation set in, and fever, and the doctor shook his head, and asked if the old woman had any friends living anywhere; if so, they had better be sent for. But the poor creature seemed to be desolate enough; declared she had no relatives, and was glad of it; she only wanted to be let alone, and she should get well fast enough.

She never said that when Mrs. Breynton was in the room. Gypsy went down one evening with her mother, to help her carry a bundle of fresh bed-clothing, and she was astonished at the gentleness which had crept into the old withered face and peevish voice. Mrs. Littlejohn called her up to the bed, just as she started to go. [Pg 165]

“I say, little gal, I told ye a fib the day ye fust come. I did have a dinner, though it war a terrible measly one—Mrs. Breynton, marm!”

Mrs. Breynton stepped up to her.

“What was that ye read t’other day, ’bout liars not goin’clock into the kingdom of heaven?—I ’most forgot.”

Gypsy crept out, softly. She was wondering how her mother had managed her charity to this fretful old woman so wisely, that her words, unfitly spoken, were becoming a trouble to herself, and her hours of increasing pain turned into hours of late, faint repentance. Perhaps the charm lay in a certain old book, dog-eared and worn, and dusty from long disuse on the cupboard shelf. This little book Mrs. Breynton had found, and she had read in it many times, until that painful groaning ceased. [Pg 166]

And so one night it chanced that the old yellow cat sat blinking at the light, and the yellow, furrowed face turned over on the pillow and smiled, and lay still. The light burned out, and the morning came; the cat jumped purring upon the bed, and seeing what was there, curled up by it, with a mournful mewling cry.

“Peace Maythorne says,” said Gypsy, “that if Mrs. Littlejohn went to heaven, she will be so happy *to find she doesn’t scold!* Isn’t it funny, in Peace, to think of such things?”



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Chapter IX

CAMPING OUT

Do you remember Mr. Gough's famous story of the orator who, with a great flourish of rhetoric as prelude, announced to his audience the startling fact that there was a "gre—at difference in people?" On the strength of this original statement, it has been supposed that there were a variety of tastes to be suited in selecting for the readers of "Gypsy Breynton" the most entertaining passages of this one summer in her life. The last two chapters were for the quiet young people. This one is for the lively young people—the people who like to live out of doors, and have adventures, and get into difficulties, and get over them. The quiet people aforesaid need not read it, if they don't want to.

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Did you ever "camp out"?

If you ever did, or ever very much wanted to, you will know how Gypsy felt one morning after her summer vacation had begun, and she was wondering what she should do with herself all day, when Tom came into her room and said,—

"Gypsy, don't you wish you were a boy? I'm going to spend a week at Ripton, with Hallam."

"Mr. Hallam!" exclaimed Gypsy. Mr. Guy Hallam was a lawyer about thirty years old; but Tom had the natural boy's feeling about "mistering" any one, that he had gone on fishing excursions with, ever since he could remember; while Gypsy was more respectful.

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"Ripton!" said Gypsy, again; "Oh, dear me!"



"And going to camp out and have a fire, and cook our trout, and shoot our rabbits," said Tom, with an aggravating appearance of indifference, as if these were only a specimen of innumerable delights unmentioned.

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"Oh, dear *me!*" said Gypsy, with a long sigh.

"There are several disadvantages in being a girl, my dear, as you will find out, occasionally," said Tom, with a lordly air.

"Girls are just as good as boys!" answered Gypsy, flashing up.

"Only they can't camp out."

"I'm not so sure of that, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Girls do camp out; I've heard about it; parties of ladies and gentlemen go out up on the Adirondacks. You might take Sarah Rowe and me."

Tom smiled a very superior smile.

"Come, Tom, do—there's a good fellow!"

"Take along a couple of girls that can't fish, and scream when you shoot a squirrel, and are always having headaches, and spraining their ankles, and afraid to be left alone? No, thank you!" [Pg 171]

"I can fish, and I'm no more afraid to be left alone than you are!" said Gypsy, indignantly. "I'll go and ask mother."

She ran down stairs, slamming all the doors, and rushed noisily into the parlor.

"Oh, mother! Tom's going to camp out with Mr. Guy Hallam, and can't Sarah and I go, too?"

"Oh, what now?" said Mrs. Breynton, laughing, and laying down her work.

"Only for a week, mother, up Ripton—just think! With a tent and a fire, and Mr. Hallam to take care of us."

This last remark was a stroke of policy on Gypsy's part, for Tom had come in, and it touched a bit of boy's pride, of which Gypsy was perfectly aware he had a good deal.

"As if I couldn't take as good care of you as Guy Hallam, or the next man!" he said, in an insulted tone. [Pg 172]

"Then Tom is willing you should go," observed Mrs. Breynton.

"Why—I don't know," said Tom, who had not intended to commit himself; "I didn't say so."

"But you will say so—now, there's a dear, good Tom!" said Gypsy, giving him a soft kiss on one cheek. Gypsy did not very often kiss Tom unless he asked her, and it was the best argument she could have used; for, though Tom always pretended to be quite above any interest in such tender proceedings, yet this rogue of a sister looked so pink and pretty and merry, with her arms about his neck and her twinkling eyes looking into his, that there was no resisting her. Gypsy was quite conscious of this little despotism, and was enough of a diplomatist to reserve it for rare and important occasions.

"We—ell," said Tom, slowly; "I don't know as I care, if Hallam doesn't—just for once, you understand; you're not to ask me again as long as you live." [Pg 173]

"There, there!" cried Gypsy, clapping her hands, and jumping up and down. "Tom, you are a cherub—a wingless cherub. Now, mother!"

"But supposing it rains?" suggested Mrs. Breynton.

"Oh, we'll take our water-proofs."

"The tent will be dry enough," put in Tom, bringing in his forces like a good soldier, now he was fairly enlisted.

"But if you catch cold and get sick, my dear; Tom won't want to cut short his excursion to bring you home."

"There's Mr. Fisher, right on top of the mountain; he'd bring me in his wagon. Besides, I wouldn't be silly enough to get sick."

"But Sarah might."

"Sarah does as I tell her," said Gypsy, significantly. "I should take care of her."

"But Mrs. Rowe may not be willing Sarah should go, and Mr. Guy Hallam must be asked, Gypsy." [Pg 174]

"Well, but—," persisted Gypsy; "if Mrs. Rowe and Mr. Hallam and everybody are willing, may I go?"

"Well," said Mrs. Breynton, after a few minutes' thinking, "I guess so; if Tom will take good care of you; and if you will promise to go to Mr. Fisher's the rainy nights—I mean if it rains hard."

"Oh, mother, mother Breynton! There never was such a dear little woman in this world!"

"Why, my *dear!*" said Mr. Breynton, when he heard of it; "how can you let the child do such a thing? She will fall off the precipice, or walk right into a bear's den, the first thing."

"Oh, I'll trust her," answered her mother, smiling; "and then, Mrs. Fisher will be so near, and so ready to take care of her if it is cold or wet; it isn't as if she were going off into a wild place; of course, then, I shouldn't let her go without some grown woman with them." [Pg 175]

"Well, my dear, I suppose you know best. I believe I agreed to let you do as you pleased with your girl, seeing she's the only one."

Mrs. Rowe was willing if Mrs. Breynton were willing; Mr. Guy Hallam had no objections. Sarah was delighted, Gypsy radiant, Tom patronizing, and Winnie envious, and so, amid a pleasant little bustle, the preparations began, and one sunny morning the party stowed themselves and their

baggage comfortably away in Mr. Surly's double-seated wagon (much to the horror of his excellent wife, who looked out of the window, and wondered if Miss Rowe did expect that wild young un of hers to come home alive), and trotted briskly out of Yorkbury, along the steep, uneven road that led to the mountain.

Ripton was a long ride from Yorkbury, and the wagon was somewhat crowded, owing to the presence of Mr. Surly, who was by no means a thin man, and who acted as driver. He was to return with his "team," as the Vermont farmers invariably call their vehicles, and when the party were ready to come home Mr. Fisher was to be hired to bring them down. It would have been unsafe for any but an experienced driver to hold the reins on those mountain roads, as Gypsy was convinced, afresh, before the ride was over.

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For the first few miles the way led along the beautiful valley of the Otter Creek, and then grew suddenly steep as they began to ascend the mountain. Such beautiful pictures unfolded before them, as they wound slowly up, that even Gypsy did not feel like talking, and it was a very silent party.

They passed through pine forests, dense and still, where the wind was hoarse, and startled squirrels flew over the fallen trunks and boughs of ruined trees. They rode close to the edge of sheer precipices four hundred feet down, with trout-brooks, like silver threads, winding through the gorges. Great walls of rock rose above and around them, and seemed to shut them in with a frown. Sharp turns in the road brought them suddenly to the edge of abysses from which, in dark nights, they might have easily ridden off. Gay flowers perfumed the fresh, high winds, and rank mosses grew and twined, and hung thickly upon old stones and logs and roadside banks, where the mountain sloped steeply. Far above were the tops of those tall, sentinel trees, called, by Vermonters, the Procession of Pines, the tower above their lesser comrades two by two, regular, solemn, and dark against the sky for miles of forest-track. Between these were patches and glimpses of a sky without a cloud. Gypsy had seen it all many times before; but it was always new and grand to her; it always made the blood leap in her veins and the stars twinkle in her eyes, and set her happy heart to dreaming a world of pleasant dreams.

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She was leaning back against the wagon-seat, with her face upturned, to watch the leaves flutter in the distant forest-top, when Mr. Surly reined up suddenly, and the wagon stopped with a jerk.

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"I declare!" said Mr. Guy Hallam.

"Waal, this is sum'at of a fix neow," said Mr. Surly, climbing out over the wheel.

"What's the matter?" asked Gypsy and Sarah, in one breath, jumping up to see.

"Matter enough," said Tom.

For, turning a sharp corner just ahead of them, was a huge wood-cart, drawn by two struggling horses. The road was just wide enough for one vehicle; where their wagon stood, it would have been simply impossible to place two abreast. At their right, the wooded slope rose like a wall. At their left, a gorge two hundred feet deep yawned horribly, and the trout-brook gurgled over its stones.

"You hold on there," shouted the driver of the wood-cart; "I'll turn in here anigh the mountain. You ken git by t'other side, can't you?"

"Reckon so," said Mr. Surly, measuring the distance with his eye. He climbed in again, and took the reins, and the driver of the wood-cart wheeled up into a semi-circular widening of the road where a sand-heap had been dug away. The space left was just wide enough for a carriage to pass closely without grazing the wheels of the wood-cart, or the low log which formed the only fence on the edge of the ravine.

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"Oh, we shall certainly tip over and be killed! Oh dear, let me get out!" cried Sarah, as the wagon passed slowly forward.

"Hush up!" said Gypsy, quickly. "Tom won't let us go, if you act so. Don't you suppose four grown men know better than we do whether it's safe? I'm not afraid a bit."

Nevertheless, Gypsy and Tom, and even Mr. Hallam, looked narrowly at the old frail log, and down into the gorge where the water was gurgling. Once the wheels grazed the log, and it tilted slightly. Sarah screamed aloud. Mr. Surly knew what he was about, however, and knew how to do it. He passed on safely into the wider road, and the wood-cart rattled composedly on.

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"There a'r'd a ben a purty close shave in the night," he remarked, coolly, pointing with his whip down the precipice. "There was a team went down here five years ago,—jist off that maple-tree there,—horse, wagin, and all, an'clock two men, brothers they was, too; one man hung onto a branch or suthin'clock, and was ketched and saved; t'other one got crushed to jelly. It was a terrible dark night."

Even Gypsy gave a little shiver during this entertaining conversation, and was glad they had come up in the daytime.

Mr. Surly drove to a certain by-road in the woods, where he left them, and returned home; and the party proceeded on foot, with their baggage, to the place Mr. Hallam had chosen as a camp-ground.

It was a pleasant spot, far enough in the woods to be still and wild, near enough to the little settlement on top of the mountain to be free from bears, as Sarah had required to be informed ten separate times, on the way. There was a little, natural clearing among the trees, which Mr. Hallam and Tom made larger by cutting down the shrubbery and saplings. They had brought hatchets with them, as well as guns, knives, and fish-hooks. It seemed very warlike and real, Gypsy thought—quite as if they intended to spend the rest of their lives there. She almost wished a party of Indians would come and attack them, or a bear or a wolf.

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Having selected a smooth, level spot for the tents, Mr. Hallam thought they had better put them up immediately. It chanced that he and Tom each owned one, which was a much better arrangement than the dividing of one into two apartments. The two were placed side by side, and the girls' tent was distinguished and honored by a bit of a flag on top, and an extra fold of rubber-cloth in front, to keep out the rain. There was also a ditch dug around it, to drain off the water in case of a severe storm.

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"Besides, if it rains very hard, they can be sent to Mr. Fisher's," said Tom.

"Catch me!" said Gypsy. "Why, it would be all the fun to sleep out in the rain."

While Mr. Hallam and Tom were setting up the tents—and it took a long time—the two girls busied themselves unpacking the baggage.

They were really astonished to find how much they had brought, when it was all taken out of the baskets and boxes and bags, and each article provided with a place within or without the tents. To begin with, the little girls had each a bag of such things as were likely to be necessary for their mountain toilet, consisting principally of dry stockings; for, as Gypsy said, they expected to wet their feet three or four times a day, and she should enjoy it for once. Then they had brought their long waterproof cloaks, in which they considered themselves safe from a deluge. There were plenty of fish-lines, and tin pans and kettles, and knives and steel forks, and matches, and scissors and twine and needles, and the endless variety of accoutrements necessary to a state of highly-civilized camp-life. There were plates and mugs and pewter teaspoons,—Mrs. Breynton would not consent to letting her silver ones go,—and Gypsy thought the others were better, because it seemed more like "being wild." Indeed, she would have dispensed with spoons altogether, but Sarah gave a little scream at the idea, and thought she couldn't possibly eat a meal without. Then the provision basket was full of bread and butter and cake and pies, and summer apples and salt and pepper, and Indian meal and coffee, and eggs and raw meat, and fresh vegetables. They expected, however, to live chiefly on the trout which Mr. Hallam and Tom were to catch, and Mrs. Fisher would supply them with fresh milk from her dairy.

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The girls made their toilet arrangements in one corner of their tent. A rough box served as a dressing-table, and Sarah had brought a bit of a looking-glass, which she put on top of it. They collected piles of sweet, dry leaves for a bed, and a certain thoughtful mother had tucked into their bags a pair of sheets and a blanket; so they were nicely fitted out. Gypsy had a secret apprehension that they were preparing for a very luxurious sort of camp-life. After a little consultation, they decided to make two rooms out of their tent, as they were sadly in need of a kitchen. Accordingly they took their heavy blanket shawls, tied them together by the fringe, and hung them up as a curtain across the middle of the tent. The front apartment served nicely as a kitchen, and the provisions and crockery were moved in there, in spite of Tom's ungallant remark that he and Mr. Hallam should never see any of the pies he knew.

By way of recompense, he took the guns, and all dangerous implements, under his own care.

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The afternoon was nearly spent, when their preparations were at last completed, and they were ready to begin house-keeping.

"Let's have supper," said Gypsy. Gypsy was always ready to have supper, whenever dinner-time was passed.

"We haven't a single trout," said Tom.

"It is rather late to fish," said Mr. Hallam. "The little girls are tired and hungry,—indeed we all are, for that matter,—and I guess we will have supper."

Gypsy installed herself as housekeeper-in-general, and she and Sarah lost no time in unpacking the cake and bread and butter. Tom collected some light, dry brushwood for a fire, and he and Mr. Hallam made the coffee. It seemed as if no supper had ever tasted as that supper did. The free mountain air was so fresh and strong, and the breath of the pines so sweet. It was so pleasant to sit on the moss around a fire, and eat with your fingers if you chose, without shocking anybody. Then the woods looked so wide and lonely and still, and it was so strange to watch the great red sunset dying like a fire through the thick green net-work, where the pine-boughs and the maple interlaced.

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For about five minutes after supper was cleared away, when the great shadows began to darken among the trees, Sarah discoursed in a vague, scientific way, about the habits of bears, and Gypsy had a dim notion that she shouldn't so very much object to see her mother come walking up the mountain, seized with an uncontrollable desire to spend a night in a tent. But Tom was so pleasant and merry, and Mr. Hallam told such funny stories, that they were laughing before they knew it, and the evening passed happily away.

Gypsy could not sleep for some time that night, for delight at spending a night out doors in a real

tent on a real mountain, that was known to have an occasional real bear on it. She did not feel afraid in the least, although Sarah had a very uncomfortable way of asking her, every ten minutes, if she were perfectly *sure* it was safe. [Pg 187]

"Oh, don't!" said Gypsy, at last. "I am having such a good time thinking that I'm really here. You go to sleep."

Sarah was so much accustomed to doing as Gypsy told her, that she turned over and went to sleep without another word. It was not a good thing for Gypsy to be so much with just such a girl as Sarah. She was physically the weaker of the two, as well as the more timid, and she had fallen into a habit of obeying, and Gypsy of commanding, by a sort of mutual tacit agreement. It was partly for this reason, as was natural enough, that Gypsy chose her so often for a companion, but principally because Sarah never refused any romp or adventure; other timid girls liked to have their own way and choose their own quiet plays. Sarah's timidity yielded to Gypsy's stronger will. If Gypsy took a fancy to climb a ruined windmill, Sarah would scream all the way, but follow. If Gypsy wanted to run at full speed down a dangerous steep hill, where there were walls to be leaped, and loose, rolling stones to be dodged, Sarah scolded a little, but went. [Pg 188]

A girl more selfish than Gypsy would have been ruined by this sort of companionship. Her frank, impulsive generosity saved her from becoming tyrannical or dictatorial. The worst of it was, that she was forced to form such a habit of always taking the lead.

She lay awake some time that night after Sarah had fallen asleep, listening to the strange whispers of the wind in the trees, and making plans for to-morrow, until at last her happy thoughts faded into happy dreams.

She did not know how long she had been asleep, when something suddenly woke her. She was a little startled at first by the unfamiliar sight of the tent-roof, and narrow, walled space which shut her in. The wind was sighing drearily through the forest, the distant scream of an owl had an ugly sound; and—why no—but yes!—another sound, more ugly than the cry of a night-bird, was distinct at the door of the tent—the sound of a quick, panting breath! [Pg 189]

Gypsy sat upright in bed, and listened.

It grew louder, and came nearer; quick, and hoarse, and horrible—like the breathing of a hungry animal.

Sarah slept like a baby; there was not a movement from Tom and Mr. Hallam in the other tent; everything was still but that terrible sound. Gypsy had good nerves and was not easily frightened, but it must be confessed she thought of those traditionary bears which had been seen at Ripton. She had but a moment in which to decide what to do, for the creature was now sniffing at the tent-door, and once she was sure she saw a dark paw lift the sail-cloth. She might wake Sarah, but what was the use? She would only scream, and that would do no good, and might do much harm. If it were a bear, and they kept still, he might go away and leave them. Yet, if it were a bear, Tom must know it in some way. [Pg 190]

All these thoughts passed through Gypsy's mind in that one instant, while she sat listening to the panting of the brute without.

Then she rose quickly and went on tiptoe to the tent-door. Her hand trembled a little as she touched the canvas gently—so gently that it scarcely stirred. She held her breath, she put her eye to the partition, she looked out and saw—

Mr. Fisher's little black dog!

Tom was awakened by a long, merry laugh that rang out like a bell on the still night air, and echoed through the forest. He thought Gypsy must be having another fit of somnambulism, and Sarah jumped up, with a scream, and asked if it wasn't an Indian.

The night passed without further adventure, and the morning sun woke the girls by peering in at a hole in the tent-roof, and making a little round golden fleck, that danced across their eyelids until they opened. [Pg 191]

They were scarcely dressed, when Tom's voice, with a spice of mischief in it, called Gypsy from outside. The girls hurried out, and there he sat with Mr. Hallam, before a crackling fire over which some large fresh trout were frying in Indian meal.

"Oh, why didn't you let us go, too?" said Gypsy.

"We took the time while you were asleep, on purpose," said Tom, in his provoking fashion. "Nobody can do any fishing while girls are round."

"Tom doesn't deserve any for that speech," said Mr. Hallam, smiling; "and I shall have to tell of him. It happens that I caught the fish while a certain young gentleman was dreaming."

"O—oh, Tom! Well; but, Mr. Hallam, can't we go fishing to-day?" [Pg 192]

"To be sure, you can."

"How long do you suppose you'll stand it?—girls always give out in half an hour."

"I'll stand it as long as you will, sir!"

Tom whistled.

The trout were done to that indescribable luscious point of brown crispness, and the breakfast was, if possible, better than the supper.

After breakfast, they started on a fishing excursion down the gorge. It was a perfect day. It seemed to the girls that no winds from the valley were ever so sweet and pure as those winds, and no lowland sunshine so golden. The brook foamed and bubbled down its steep, rocky bed, splashed up jets of rainbow spray into the air, and plunged in miniature cascades over tiny gullies; the wet stones flashed in the light upon the banks, and tall daisies, peering over, painted shifting white outlines of themselves in the swelling current and the shallow pools; here and there, too, where the water was deep, the fish darted to the surface, and darted out of sight.

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"Isn't it *beau—tiful!*" cried Sarah.

"Pretty enough," said Gypsy, affecting carelessness, and trying to unwind her line in as *au fait* and boyish a manner as possible.

"You girls keep this pool. Mr. Hallam and I are going a little ways up stream," said Tom. "Now don't speak a word, and be sure you don't scream if you catch a fish by any chance between you, and frighten them all away."

"As if I didn't know that! Here, Sarah, hold your rod lower," said Gypsy, assuming a professional air. Mr. Hallam and Tom walked away, and the girls fished for just half an hour in silence. That is to say, they sat on the bank, and held a rod. Sarah had had one faint nibble, but that was all that had happened, and the sun began to be very warm.

"I'm going out on those stones," said Gypsy. "I believe I see a fish out there."

So she stepped out carefully on the loose stones, which tilted ominously under her weight.

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"Oh, you'll fall!" said Sarah.

"Hush—sh! I see one."

Up went the rod in the air with a jerk, over went the stone, and down went Gypsy. She disappeared from sight a moment in the shallow water; then splashed up with a gasp, and stood, dripping.

"Oh, dear me!" said Sarah.

Tom came up, undecided whether to laugh or scold.

"Well, Gypsy Breynton, you've done it now! Now I suppose you must go directly home, and you'll catch cold before you can get there. This is a pretty fix!"

"N—no," gasped Gypsy, rubbing the water out of her eyes; "I have dry clothes up in the tent. Mother said I should want them. I guess I'll go right up. I'm—rather—wet, I believe."

Tom looked at his watch, as Gypsy toiled dripping up the bank. The temptation was too great to be resisted, and he called out,—

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"Precisely half an hour! Gypsy, my dear, I'd stay all long, as the boys do, by all means!" It was a very good thing about Gypsy, that she was quite able to relish a joke at her own expense. She laughed as merrily as Tom did, and the morning's adventure made quite as much fun as they would have gained from a string of perfectly respectable fishes, properly and scientifically caught, with dry feet and a warm seat on the bank under a glaring sun. Mr. Hallam and Tom brought up plenty for dinner; so no one went hungry.

That afternoon, it chanced that the girls were left alone for about one hour. Mr. Hallam had taken Tom some distance up the stream for a comfortable little fish by themselves, and left the girls to prepare supper, with strict injunctions not to go out of sight of the tents.

They were very well content with the arrangement for a while, but at last Gypsy became tired of having nothing but the trees to look at, and suggested a visit to the brook. She had seen some checker-berry leaves growing in the gorge, and was seized with a fancy to have them for supper. Sarah, as usual, made no objections, and they went.

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"It's only just out of sight of the tent," said Gypsy, as they ran down over the loose stones; "and we won't be gone but a minute."

But they were gone many minutes. They had little idea how long the time had been, and were surprised to find it growing rapidly dark in the forest when they came panting back to the tent, out of breath with the haste they had made.

"They must be back by this time," said Gypsy; "Tom!"

There was no answer.

"Tom! Thom-as! Mr. Hallam!"

A bird chirped in a maple-bough overhead, and a spark cracked out of the smouldering hickory fire; there was no other sound.

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"I guess they're busy in their tent," said Gypsy, going up to it. But the tent was empty.

"They haven't come!" exclaimed Sarah.

"It's real mean in them to leave us here," said Gypsy, looking round among the trees.

"You know," suggested Sarah, timidly, "you know Mr. Hallam said we were to stay at the tents. Perhaps they came while we were gone, and couldn't find us, and have gone to hunt us up."

"Oh!" said Gypsy, quickly, "I forgot." She turned away her face a moment, so that Sarah could not see it; then she turned back, and said, slowly,—

"Sarah, I'm very sorry I took you off. This is rather a bad fix. We must make the best of it now."

"Let's call again," said Sarah, faintly.

They called again, and many times; but there was no reply. Everything was still but the bird, and the sparks that crackled now and then from the fire. The heavy gray shadows grew purple and grew black. The little foot-paths in the woods were blotted out of sight, and the far sky above the tree-tops grew dusky and dim.

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"We might go to Mr. Fisher's,—do, Gypsy! I can't bear to stay here," said Sarah, looking around.

"No," said Gypsy, decidedly. "We can't go to Mr. Fisher's, because that would mislead them all the more. We must stay here now till they come."

"I'm afraid!" said Sarah, clinging to her arm; "it is so dark. Perhaps we'll have to stay here alone all night,—oh, Gypsy!"

"Nonsense!" said Gypsy, looking as bold as possible; "it wouldn't be so dreadful if we did. Besides, of course, we sha'n't; they'll be back here before long. You go in the tent, if you feel any safer there, and I'll make up a bright fire. If they see it, they'll know we've come."

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Sarah went into the tent, and covered her head up in the bed-clothes; but in about ten minutes she came back, feeling a little ashamed of her timidity, and sat down by Gypsy before the fire. It was a strange picture—the ghostly white tents and tangled brushwood gilded with the light; the great forest stretching away darkly beyond; the fitful shadows and glares from the flickering fire that chased each other in strange, uncouth shapes, among the leaves, and the two children sitting there alone with frightened, watching eyes.

"I'm not a bit afraid," said Gypsy, after a silence, in a tone as if she were rather arguing with herself than with Sarah. "I think it's rather nice. Tom left his gun all loaded, and we can defend ourselves against anything. I'm going to get it, and we'll play we're Union refugees hiding in the South."

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So she went into Tom's tent, and brought out his gun.

"Look out!" said Sarah, shrinking, "it may go off."

"Go off? Of course it can't, unless I pull the trigger. I know how to manage a gun,—hark! what's that?"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Sarah, beginning to cry. "I know it's a bear."

"Hush! Let's listen."

They listened. A curious, irregular tramping round broke the stillness.

Gypsy stood up quickly, and put the gun into position upon her shoulder.

"It isn't Tom and Mr. Hallam,—then there would be two. This is only one, and it doesn't sound like a man, I declare."

"Oh, it's a bear, it's a bear! We shall be eaten up alive,—oh, Gypsy, Gypsy!"

"Keep still! I can shoot him if it is; but I know it isn't; just wait and see."

The curious sound came nearer; tramped through the underbrush; crushed the dead twigs. Gypsy's finger was on the trigger; her face a little pale. She thought the idea of the bear all nonsense; she did not know what she feared; the very mystery of the thing had thoroughly frightened her.

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"Keep still, Sarah; you hit me. I don't want to fire till I see."

"Oh, it's coming, it's coming!" cried Sarah, starting back with a scream. She clung, in her terror, to Gypsy's arm; jerked it; the trigger snapped, and a loud explosion echoed and re-echoed and reverberated among the trees.

It was followed by a sound the most horrible Gypsy had heard in all her life.

It was a human cry. *It was Tom's voice.*



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Chapter X

THE END OF THE WEEK

Gypsy threw down the gun, and threw up her hands with a curious quick motion, like one in suffocation, who was trying to find a voice; but she did not utter a sound.

There was an instant's awful stillness. In that instant, it seemed to Gypsy as if she had lived a great many years; in that instant, even Sarah's frightened cries were frozen.

Then the bushes parted, and some one sprang through. Gypsy knew the face all blackened and marred with powder—the face dearer to her than any on earth but her mother's. So she had not killed him—thank God, thank God!

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"Gypsy, child!" called the dear, familiar voice; "what ails you? You haven't hurt me, but why in the name of all danger on this earth did you touch—"

But Tom stopped short; for Gypsy tottered up to him with such a white, weak look on her face, that he thought the rebound of the gun must have injured her, and caught her in his arms.

"You're not going to faint! Where are you hurt?"

But Gypsy was not hurt, and Gypsy never fainted. She just put her arms about his neck and hid her face close upon his shoulder, and cried as if her heart would break.

It was a long time before she spoke,—only kissing him and clinging to him through her sobs,—then, at last,—

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"Oh, Tom, I thought I had killed you—I thought—and I loved you so—oh, Tom!"

Tom choked a little, and sat down on the ground, holding her in his lap.

"Why, my little Gypsy!"

Just then footsteps came crashing through the underbrush, and Mr. Hallam ran hurriedly up.

"Oh, you've found them! Where were they? What has happened to Gypsy?"

"Let me go," sobbed Gypsy; "I can't talk just now. I want to go away and cry."

She broke away from Tom's arms, and into the tent, where she could be alone.

"What has happened?" repeated Mr. Hallam. "We came home in less than an hour, and couldn't find you. We have been to Mr. Fisher's, and hunted everywhere. I was calling for you in the gorge when Tom found you."

Sarah was left to tell their story; which she did with remarkable justness, considering how frightened she was. She shared with Gypsy the blame of having left the tents, and insisted that it was her fault that the gun went off. Before the account was quite finished, Gypsy called Tom from the tent-door, and he went to her.

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She was quiet, and very pale,

“Oh, Tom, I am so sorry! I didn’t think I should be gone so long.”

“It was very dangerous, Gypsy. You might have been lost, or you might have had to spend the night here alone, while we were hunting for you.” [Pg 206]

“I know it, I know it; and Sarah was so frightened, and I was too, a little, and Sarah thought you were a bear.”

“I have told you a great many times that it is *never* safe for you to touch my gun,” said Tom, gravely. He felt that Gypsy’s carelessness might have brought about too terrible consequences, both to herself and to him, to be passed by lightly; and he had an idea that, as long as her mother was not there to tell her so, he must.

But Gypsy dropped her head, and looked so humble and wretched, that he had not the heart to say any more.

Gypsy was sure all the pleasure of her camping-out was utterly spoiled; but there was a bright sun the next morning, and Tom was so kind and pleasant, and the birds were singing, and the world didn’t look at all as if she had nearly killed her brother twelve hours before, so she found she was laughing in spite of herself, and two very happy days passed after that. Mr. Hallam made a rule that he or Tom should keep the girls constantly in sight, and that, during the time spent in excursions which they could not join, they should remain in Mr. Fisher’s house. He said it was too wild a place for them to be alone in for any length of time, and he was sorry he left them before. [Pg 207]

Gypsy did not resent this strict tutelage. She was very humble and obedient and careful as long as they stayed upon the mountain. Those few moments, when she clung sobbing to Tom’s neck, were a lesson to her. She will not forget them as long as she lives.

At the end of the fourth day, just at supper time, a dark cloud sailed over the sky, and a faint wind blew from the east.

“I wonder if it’s going to rain,” said Mr. Hallam. They all looked up. Gypsy said nothing; in her secret heart, she hoped it would. [Pg 208]

“What about sending the girls to Mrs. Fisher’s?” asked Tom, when they were washing the dishes.

“Oh, no, no, it won’t rain, I know—let us stay, Mr. Hallam, please. Why, I should feel like a deserter if I went off!” pleaded Gypsy.

The dark cloud seemed to have passed away, and the wind was still. After thinking a while, Mr. Hallam decided to let them stay.

In the middle of the night, Gypsy was awakened by a great noise. The wind was blowing a miniature hurricane through the trees, and the rain was falling in torrents. She could hear it spatter on the canvas roof, and drop from the poles, and gurgle in a stream through the ditch. She could hear, too, the loud, angry murmur of the trout brook and the splashing of hundreds of rivulets that dashed down the slope and over the gorge into it.

She gave Sarah a little pinch, and woke her up. [Pg 209]

“Oh, Sarah, it’s come! It’s raining like everything, and here we are, and we can’t get to Mr. Fisher’s—isn’t it splendid?”

“Ye-es,” said Sarah; “it’s very splendid, only isn’t it a little—wet? It’s dropping right on my cheek.”

“Oh, that’s nothing—why, here I can put my hand right down into a puddle of water. It’s just like being at sea.”

“I know it. Are people at sea always so—cold?”

"Why, I'm not cold. Only we might as well wear our water-proofs. The leaves *are* a little damp."

So they put on their tweed cloaks, and Gypsy listened to the wind, and thought it was very poetic and romantic, and that she was perfectly happy. And just as she had lain down again there came a great gust of rain, and one of the rivulets that were sweeping down the mountain splashed in under the canvas, and ran right through the middle of the tent like a brook. Sarah jumped up with energy.

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"O—oh, it's gone right over my feet!"

"My shoes are sailing away, as true as you live!" cried Gypsy, and sprang just in time to save them.

The dinner-basket and a tin pail were fast following, when Tom appeared upon the scene, and called through the wall of shawls,—

"Girls, you'll have to go to Mrs. Fisher's. Be quick as you can!"

"I don't want to a bit," said Gypsy, who was sitting in a pool of water.

"Well, I'm going," announced Sarah, with unheard-of decision. "Camping out is very nice, but drowning is another thing."

"Well—I—suppose it *would* be a—little—dryer," said Gypsy, slowly.

The girls were soon dressed, and Tom lighted a lantern and went with them. A few peals of thunder growled sullenly down the valley, and one bright flash of lightning glared far through the forest. Sarah was afraid she should be struck. Gypsy was thinking how grand it was, and wished she could be out in a midnight storm every week.

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It was after midnight, and every one at Mr. Fisher's was asleep; but Tom knocked them up, and Mr. Fisher was very much amused, and Mrs. Fisher was very kind and hospitable, and built up a fire, and said they should be perfectly dry and warm before they went to bed.

So the girls bade Tom good-night, and he went back to Mr. Hallam, and they, feeling very cold and sleepy and drenched, were glad enough to be taken care of, and put to bed like babies, after Mrs. Fisher's good, motherly fashion.

"Sarah," said Gypsy, sleepily, just as Sarah was beginning to dream. "A feather-bed, and—and *pillows!* (with a little jump to keep awake long enough to finish her sentence) are a little better—on the whole—than a mud—pud—"

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Just there she went to sleep. The next day it poured from morning till night. That was just what Mr. Hallam and Tom liked, so they fished all day, and the girls amused themselves as best they might in Mr. Fisher's barn. The day after it rained in snatches, and the sun shone in little spasms between. A council of exigencies met in Mr. Hallam's tent, and it was unanimously decided to go home. Even Gypsy began to long for civilized life, though she declared that she had never in all her life had such a good time as she had had that week.

So Mr. Fisher harnessed and drove them briskly down the mountain, and "from afar off" Gypsy saw her mother's face, watching for her at the door—a little anxious; very glad to see her back.



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Chapter XI

GYPSY'S OPINION OF BOSTON

Just at the end of the vacation, it was suddenly announced that Miss Melville was not going to teach any more.

"How funny!" said Gypsy. "Last term she expected to, just as much as anything. I don't see what's the reason. Now I shall have to go to the high school."

It chanced that they were remodelling some of the rooms at the high school, and the winter term, which would otherwise have commenced in September, was delayed till the first of October.

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Gypsy had jumped on all the hay-cocks, and picked all the huckleberries, and eaten all the early Davises, and gone on all the picnics that she could, and was just ready to settle down contentedly to school and study; so the news from Miss Melville was not, on the whole, very agreeable. What to do with herself, for another long month of vacation, was more than she knew.

She wandered about the house and sat out among the clovers and swung on the gate, in a vague, indefinite sort of way, for two weeks; then one morning Mrs. Breynton read her a letter which set her eyes on fire with delight. It was an invitation from her aunt to spend a fortnight in Boston. It so happened that Gypsy had never been to Boston. It was a long day's journey from Yorkbury, and Mr. Breynton was not much in favor of expensive travelling for the children while they were very young; arguing that the enjoyment and usefulness would be doubled to them when they were older. Besides, Gypsy's uncle, though he was her father's brother, had seldom visited Yorkbury. His business kept him closely at home, and his wife and daughter always went to the seaside in summer; so the two families had seen very little of each other for years.

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Mrs. Breynton, however, thought it best Gypsy should make this visit; and Gypsy, who had lived twelve years in a State which contained but one city, considered going to Boston very much as she would have considered going to Paradise.

It took a few days of delightful hurry and bustle to get ready. There was much washing and mending and altering, sewing on of trimmings and letting down of tucks, to be done for her; for Mrs. Breynton desired to spare her the discomfort of feeling "countrified," and Yorkbury style was not distinctively *a la Paris*. She told Gypsy, frankly, that she must expect to find her cousin Joy better dressed than herself; but that her wardrobe should be neat and tasteful, and in as much accordance with the prevailing mode as was practicable; so she hoped she would have too much self-respect to be troubled by the difference.

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"I hope I have," said Gypsy, with an emphasis.

The days passed so quickly that it seemed like a dream when she had at last bidden them all good-by, kissed her mother just ten times, and was fairly seated alone in the cars, holding on very tightly to her ticket, and wondering if the men put her trunk in. Although she was so little used to travelling, having never been farther than to Burlington or Vergennes in her life, yet she was not in the least afraid to take the journey alone. Her mother felt sure she could take care of herself, and her father had given her so many directions, and written such careful memoranda for her, of changes of cars, refreshment stations, what to do with her check, and how to look after her baggage, that she felt sure she could not make a mistake. Being a bright, observing child, fearless as a boy, and not in the least inclined to worry, she had no trouble at all. The conductor was very kind; an old gentleman, who was pleased with her twinkling eyes and red cheeks, gave her an orange, and helped look after her baggage; two old ladies gave her fennel and peppermints; and before she reached Boston she was on terms of intimacy with six babies, a lapdog, and a canary-bird. Altogether, it had been a most charming journey, and she was almost sorry when they reached the city, and the train rolled slowly into the dark depot.

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The passengers were crowding rapidly out, the lamps were lighted in the car, and she felt a little lonely sitting still there, and waiting for her uncle. She had not waited but a moment, however, when a pleasant, whiskered face appeared at the car-door, and one of those genial, "off-hand" voices, that sound at once so kindly and so careless, called out,—

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"O—ho! So here's the girl! Glad to see you, child. This way; the hack's all ready."

She was hurried into a carriage, her trunk was tossed on behind, and then the door was shut, and they were driven rapidly away through a maze of crooked streets, glare of gaslights, and brilliant shop-windows, that bewildered Gypsy. She had a notion that was the way fairy-land must look. Her uncle laughed, good-naturedly, at her wide-open eyes.

"Boston is a somewhat bigger village than Yorkbury, I suppose! How's your father? Why didn't he come with you? Is your mother well? And that boy—Linnie—Silly—what do call him?"

"Winnie, sir; and then there's Tom."

"Winnie—oh, yes! Tom well, too?"

Before the ride was over, Gypsy had come to the conclusion that she liked her uncle very much, only he had such a funny way of asking questions, and then forgetting all about them.

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The driver reined up at a house on Beacon Street, and Gypsy was led up a long flight of steps through a bright hall, and into a room that dazzled her. A bright coal-fire was glowing in the grate, for it was a chilly evening, and bright jets of gas were burning in chandeliers. Bright carpets, and curtains, furniture, pictures, and ornaments covered the length of two parlors separated only by folding-doors, and mirrors, that reached from the floor to the ceiling, reflected her figure full length, as she stood in the midst of the magnificence, in her Yorkbury hat and homemade casaque.

"Sit down, sit down," said her uncle; "I'll call your aunt. I don't see where they are; I told them to be on hand,—Kate, where's Mrs. Breynton?"

"She's up-stairs, sir, dressing," said the servant, who had opened the door.

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"Tell her Miss Gypsy has come; sit down, child, and make yourself at home."

Gypsy sat down, and Mr. Breynton, not satisfied with sending a message to his wife, went to the foot of the stairs, and called,—

“Miranda!—Joy!”

A voice from somewhere above answered, a little sharply, that she was coming as fast as she could, and she told Joyce to go down long ago, but she hadn’t stirred.

Gypsy heard every word, and she began to wonder if her aunt were very glad to see her, and what sort of a girl her cousin must be, if she didn’t obey her mother unless she chose to. Just then Joy came down stairs, walking very slowly and properly, and came into the parlor with the manners of a young lady of eighteen. She might have been a pretty child, if she had been dressed more plainly and becomingly; but her face was pale and thin, and there was a fretful look about her mouth, that almost spoiled it.

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Gypsy went up warmly, and kissed her. Joy had extended the tips of her fingers to shake hands, and she looked a little surprised, but kissed her politely, and asked if she were tired with the journey. Just then Mrs. Breynton came in, with many apologies for her delay, met Gypsy kindly enough, and sent her up-stairs to take off her things.

“Who trimmed your hat?” asked Joy, suddenly.

“Miss Jones. She’s our milliner.”

“Oh,” said Joy, “mine is a pheasant. Nobody thinks of wearing velvet now—most everybody has a pheasant.”

“I shouldn’t like to wear just what everybody else did,” Gypsy could not help saying. She hung the turban up in the closet, with a little uncomfortable feeling. It was a fine drab straw, trimmed and bound with velvet a shade darker. It was pretty, and she knew it; it just matched her casaque, and her mother had thought it all the more lady-like for its simplicity. Nevertheless, it was not going to be very pleasant to have her cousin Joy ashamed of her.

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“Oh, oh, how short they wear dresses in Yorkbury!” remarked Joy, as Gypsy walked across the room. “Mine are nearly to the tops of my boots, now I’m thirteen years old.”

“Are they?—where did I put my bag?” said Gypsy, carelessly. Joy looked a little piqued that she did not seem more impressed.

“There’s dinner,” she said, after a silence, in which she had been secretly inspecting and commenting upon every article of Gypsy’s attire. “Come, let’s go down. Mother scolds if we’re late.”

“Scolds!” said Gypsy. “How funny! my mother never scolds.”

“Doesn’t she?” asked Joy, a little wonder in her eyes.

“It seems so queer to have dinner at six o’clock,” said Gypsy, confidentially, as they went down stairs. “At home they are just sitting down to supper.”

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Joy laughed patronizingly.

“Oh, yes; I suppose you’re used to country hours.”

For the second time, Gypsy felt uncomfortable. She would very much have liked to ask her cousin what there was to be ashamed of in being used to country hours, when you lived in the country. But they had reached the dining-room door, and her aunt was calling out somewhat fretfully to Joy to hurry, so she said nothing.

After supper, her uncle said she looked very much like her father, hoped she would make herself at home, thought her a little taller than Joyce, and then was lost to view, for the evening, behind his newspaper. Her aunt inquired if she could play on the piano, was surprised to find she knew nothing more classical than chants and Scotch airs; told Joy to let her hear that last air of Von Weber’s; and then she took up a novel which was lying partially read upon the table. When Joy was through playing, she proposed a game of solitaire. Gypsy would much rather have examined the beautiful and costly ornaments with which the rooms were filled, but she was a little too polite and a little too proud to do so, unasked.

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“What do you play most?” she asked, as they began to move the figures on the solitaire board.

“Oh,” said Joy, “I practise three hours, and that takes all the time when I’m in school. In vacations, I don’t know,—I like to walk in Commonwealth Avenue pretty well; then mother has a good deal of company, and I always come down.”

“Only go to walk, and sit still in the parlor!” exclaimed Gypsy; “dear me!”

“Why, what do you do?”

“Me? Oh, I jump on the hay and run down hills and poke about in the swamp.”

“What?”

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“Push myself round on a raft in the orchard-swamp; it’s real fun.”

"Why, I never heard of such a thing!" said Joy, looking shocked.

"Well, it's splendid; you ought to come up to Yorkbury, and go out with me. Tom would make you a raft."

"What *do* the people say?" said Joy, looking at her mother.

"Oh, there aren't any people there to see. If there were, they wouldn't say anything. I have just the nicest times. Winnie and I tipped over last spring,—clear over, splash!"

"You will ruin your complexion," remarked her aunt, laying down her novel. "I suppose you never wear a veil."

"A veil? Dear me, no! I can't bear the feeling of a veil. I wore one in the cars through, to keep the cinders off. Then, besides that, I row and coast, and,—oh, I forgot, walking on the fences; it's real fun if you don't tumble off."

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"Walking on the fences!"

"Oh, yes. I always go in the fields where there's nobody round. Then I like to climb the old walls, where you have to jump when the stones roll off from under you."

Mrs. Breynton elevated her eyebrows with a peculiar expression, and returned to her novel.

Gypsy was one of those happy people who are gifted with the faculty of always having a pleasant time, and the solitaire game was good enough, if it hadn't been so quiet; but when she went up to bed, she looked somewhat sober. She bade Joy good-night, shut herself into the handsomely-furnished room which had been given her, sat down on the floor, and winked hard several times. She would not have objected at that moment to seeing her mother, or Tom, or pulling her father's whiskers, or squeezing Winnie a little, or looking into the dear, familiar sitting-room where they were all gathered just then to have prayers. She began to have a vague idea that there was no place like home. She also came to the conclusion, very faintly, and feeling like a traitor all the time, that her Aunt Miranda was very fashionable and very fretful, and did not treat Joy at all as her mother treated her; that Joy thought her countrified, and had never walked on a fence in all her life; that her uncle was very good, but very busy, and that a fortnight was a rather long time to stay there.

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However, her uncle's house was not the whole of Boston. All the delights of the great, wonderful city remained unexplored, and who could tell what undreamed-of joys to-morrow would bring forth?

So Gypsy's smiles came back after their usual punctual fashion, and she fell asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow, to dream that she was sitting in Tom's lap, reading an Arabic novel aloud to Winnie.

It might have been about half an hour after, that she woke suddenly with a terrible feeling in her lungs and throat, and sat up in bed gasping, to see the door burst open, and her aunt come rushing in.

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"Is the house on fire?" asked Gypsy, sleepily.

"House on fire! It might have been. It's a wonder you're alive!"

"Alive," repeated Gypsy, bewildered.

"Why, child, you blew out the gas!" said her aunt, sharply, throwing open the windows. "Didn't you know any better than that?"

"I'm so used to blowing out our lamps," said Gypsy, feeling very much frightened and ashamed.

"Country ways!" exclaimed her aunt. "Well, thank fortune, there's no harm done,—go to sleep, like a good girl."

Gypsy did not relish being told to go to sleep like a good girl, when she had done nothing wrong; nor did her aunt's one chilly kiss, at leaving her, serve to make her forget those few sharp words.

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The next morning, after breakfast, Joy proposed to go out to walk, and Gypsy ran up to put on her things in great glee. One little circumstance dashed damply on it, like water on glowing coals.

"How large your casaque is about the neck," said Joy, carelessly. "I like mine small and high, with a binding."

Gypsy remembered what her mother said: and, because her casaque happened to be cut after Miss Jones's patterns instead of Madame Demorest's, she did not feel that her character was seriously affected; but it was not pleasant to have such things said. Her cousin did not mean to be unkind. On the contrary, she had taken rather a fancy to Gypsy. She was simply a little thoughtless and a little vain. Joy is not the only girl in Boston, I am afraid, who has hurt the feelings of her country visitors in that careless way.

"You've never seen the Common, I suppose, nor the Public Gardens?" said Joy, as they started off. "We'll walk across to Boylston Street,—dear me! you haven't any gloves on!"

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"Oh, must I put them on?" said Gypsy, with a sigh; "I'm afraid I sha'n't like Boston if I have to

wear gloves week-days. I can't bear the feeling of them."

"I suppose that's what makes your hands so red and brown," replied Joy, astonished, casting a glance at her own sickly, white fingers, which she was pinching into a pair of very tight kid gloves.

"Here are the Gardens," she said, proudly, as they entered the inclosure. "Aren't they beautiful? I don't suppose you have anything like this in Yorkbury. We'll go up to the Common in a minute."

Gypsy looked carelessly around, and did not seem to be very much impressed or interested.

"I'd rather go over into that street where the people and the carriages are," she said.

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"Why!" exclaimed Joy; "don't you like it? See the fountains, and the deer and the grass, and all."

"I like the deer," said Gypsy; "only I feel so sorry for them."

"Sorry for them!"

"Why, they look so as if they wanted to be off in the woods with nobody round. I like the rabbits better, jumping round at home under the pine-trees. Then I think the trout-brook, at Ripton, is a great deal prettier than these fountains. But then I guess I should like the stores," she said, apologetically, a little afraid she had hurt or provoked Joy.

"I never saw anybody like you," said Joy, looking puzzled. When they came to Tremont, and then to Washington Street, Gypsy was in an ecstasy. She kept calling to Joy to see that poor little beggar girl, or that funny old woman, or that negro boy who was trying to stand on his head, or the handsome feather on that lady's bonnet, and stopped every other minute to see some beautiful toy or picture in a shop-window, till Joy lost all patience.

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"Gypsy Breynton! don't keep staring in the windows so; people will think we are a couple of servant girls just from down East, who never saw Washington Street before!"

"I never did," said Gypsy, coolly.

But she looked a little sober. What was the use of Boston, and all its beautiful sights and busy sounds, if you must walk right along as if you were going to church, and not seem to see nor hear any of the wonders, for fear of being called countrified? Gypsy began to hate the word.

"You must take your cousin to the Aquarial Gardens," said Mr. Breynton to Joy, at dinner.

"Oh, I'm tired to death of the Aquarial Gardens," answered Joy; "none of the girls I go with ever go now, and I've seen it all so many times."

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"But Gypsy hasn't. Try the Museum, then."

"I can't bear the Museum. The white snakes in bottles make me so nervous," said Joy.

"A white snake in a bottle! Why, I never saw one," said Gypsy, with sparkling eyes.

"Well, I'll go with you, child, if Joy hasn't the politeness to do it," said her uncle, patting her eager face.

"Mr. Breynton," said his wife, petulantly, "you are *always* blaming that child for something."

Yet, in the very next breath, she scolded Joy, for delaying her practising ten minutes, more severely than her father would have done if she had told a falsehood.

Mr. Breynton was very busy the next day, and forgot all about Gypsy; but the day after he left his store at an early hour, and took her to the Museum, and out to Bunker Hill. That was the happiest day Gypsy spent in Boston.

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The day after her aunt had a large dinner company. No one would have imagined that Gypsy dreaded it in the least; but, in her secret heart, she did. Joy seemed to be perfectly happy when she was dressed in her brilliant Stuart plaid silk, with its long sash and valenciennes lace ruffles, and spent a full half hour exhibiting her jewelry-box to Gypsy's wondering eyes, and trying to decide whether she would wear her coral brooch and ear-rings, which matched the scarlet of the plaid, or a handsome malachite set, which were the newer.

Gypsy looked on admiringly, for she liked pretty things as well as other girls; but dressed herself in the simple blue-and-white checked foulard, with blue ribbons around her net and at her throat to match,—the best suit, over which her mother had taken so much pains, and which had seemed so grand in Yorkbury,—hoped her aunt's guests would not laugh at her, and decided to think no more about the matter.

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The first half hour of dinner passed off pleasantly enough. Gypsy was hungry; for she had just come home from a long walk to Williams & Everett's picture gallery, and the dinner was very nice; the only trouble with it being that, there were so many courses, she could not decide what to eat and what to refuse. But after a while a deaf old gentleman, who sat next her, felt conscientiously impelled to ask her where she lived and how old she was, and she had to scream so loud to answer him, that it attracted the attention of all the guests. Then the dessert came and the wine, and an hour and a half had passed, and still no one showed any signs of leaving the table, and the old gentleman made spasmodic attempts at conversation, at intervals of ten

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minutes. The hour and a half became two hours, and Gypsy was so thoroughly tired out sitting still, it seemed as if she should scream, or upset her finger-bowl, or knock over her chair, or do some terrible thing.

"You said you were twelve years old, I believe?" said the old gentleman, suddenly. This was the fifth time he had asked that very same question. Joy trod on Gypsy's toes under the table, and Gypsy laughed, coughed, seized her goblet, and began to drink violently to conceal her rudeness.

"Twelve years? and you live in Vermont?" remarked the old gentleman placidly. This was a drop too much. Gypsy swallowed her water the wrong way, strangled and choked, and ran out of the room with crimson face, mortified and gasping.

She knew, by a little flash of her aunt's eyes, that she was ashamed of her, and much displeased. She locked herself into her own room, feeling very miserable, and would not have gone down stairs again if she had not been sent for, after the company had returned to the parlors. [Pg 237]

She did not dare to disobey, so she went, and sat down in a corner by the piano, where she hoped she should be out of sight.

A pleasant-faced lady, sitting near, turned, and said,—

"Don't you play, my dear?"

"A little," said Gypsy, wishing she could have truthfully said no.

"I wish you would play for me," said the lady.

"Oh, I shouldn't like to," said Gypsy, shrinking; "I don't know anything but Scotch airs."

"That is just what I like," said the lady. "Mrs. Breynton, can't you persuade your niece to play a little for me?"

"Certainly, Gypsy," said her aunt, with a look which plainly said, "Don't think of it."

Gypsy's mother had taught her that it was both disobliging and affected to refuse to play when she was asked, no matter how simple her music might be. So, not knowing how to refuse, and wishing the floor would open and swallow her up, she went to the piano, and played two sweet Scotch airs. She played them well for a girl of her age, and the lady thanked her, and seemed to enjoy them. But that night, just as she was going to bed, she accidentally overheard her aunt saying to Joy,— [Pg 238]

"It was very stupid and forward in her. I tried to make her understand, but I couldn't—those little songs, too! Why, with all your practice, and such teachers as you have had, I wouldn't think of letting you play before anybody at your age."

Gypsy cried herself to sleep that night.

Just a week from the day that she came to Boston, Gypsy and Joy were out shopping in Summer Street. They had just come out of Hovey's, when they met a ragged child, not more than three years old, crying as if its heart were broken. [Pg 239]

"Oh, dear!" cried Gypsy; "see that poor little girl! I'm going to see what's the matter."

"Don't!" said Joy, horrified; "come along! Nobody stops to speak to beggars in Boston; what *are* you doing?"

For Gypsy had stopped and taken the child's two dirty little fists down from her eyes, and looked down into the tear-stained and mud-stained face to see what was the matter.

"I—I don't know where nobody is," sobbed the child.

"Have you lost your way? Where do you live?" asked Gypsy, with great, pitying eyes. Gypsy could never bear to see anybody cry; and then the little creature was so ragged and thin.

"I live there," said the child, pointing vaguely down the street. "Mother's to home there somewhars."

"I'll go with you and find your mother," said Gypsy; and taking the child's hand, she started off in her usual impulsive fashion, without a thought beyond her pity. [Pg 240]

"Gypsy! Gypsy Breynton!" called Joy. "The police will take her home—you mustn't!"

But Gypsy did not hear, and Joy, shocked and indignant, went home and left her.

In about an hour Gypsy came back, flushed and panting with her haste. Joy, in speechless amazement, had looked from the window and seen her *running* across the Common.

Her aunt met her on the stairs with a face like a thunder-cloud.

"Why, Gypsy Breynton, I am ashamed of you! How *could* you do such a thing as to go off with a beggar, and *take hold of her hand* right there in Summer Street, and go nobody knows where, alone, into those terrible Irish streets! It was a *dreadful* thing to do, and I should think you would have known better, and I really think I must write to your mother about it immediately!"

Gypsy stood for a moment, motionless with astonishment. Then, without saying a word, she [Pg 241]

passed her aunt quickly on the stairs, and ran up to her room. Her face was very white. If she had been at home she would have broken forth in a torrent of angry words.

Kate, the house-maid, was sweeping the entry.

"Did you know there was going to be another great dinner to-day, miss?" she said, as Gypsy passed her.

Gypsy went into her room, and locked her door. Another of those terrible dinner-companies, and her aunt so angry at her! It was too much—she could not bear it! She looked about the room twice, passed her hand over her forehead, and her face flushed quickly.

One of Gypsy's sudden and often perilous resolutions was made.



Chapter XII

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

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No one came to the room. After a while the front door opened and shut, and she saw, from the window, that her aunt and Joy were going out. She then remembered that she had heard them say they had some calls to make at that hour. Her uncle was at the store, and no one was now in the house besides herself, but the servants.

"All right," she said, half aloud; "I couldn't have fixed it better."

For half an hour she stayed in her room with the door locked, and any one listening outside could have heard her moving briskly about, opening drawers and shutting closet doors. Then she came down stairs and went out. She was gone just about long enough to have been to the nearest hack-stand and back again. A few minutes after she returned, the door-bell rang.

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"I'll go," she called to Kate; "it's a man I sent here on an errand, and I shall have to see him."

"Very well, miss," said Kate, and went singing down the back-stairs with her broom.

"This way," said Gypsy, opening the door. She led the way to her room, and the man who followed her shouldered her trunk with one hand, and carried it out to a carriage which stood at the door. Gypsy went into her aunt's room and left a little note on the table where it would be easily seen, threw her veil over her face, felt of her purse to be sure it was safe in her pocket, and ran hastily down stairs after him, and into the carriage. The man strapped on her trunk, slammed the door upon her, and, mounting his box, drove rapidly away. Kate, who happened to be looking out of one of the basement windows, saw the carriage, but did not notice the trunk. She supposed Gypsy was riding somewhere to meet her aunt or uncle, and went on with her dusting.

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The carriage stopped at the Fitchburg depot, and Gypsy paid her fare and went into the ladies' room. The coachman, who seemed to be an accommodating man, though a little curious, brought her a check, and hoped she'd get along comfortable; it was a pretty long journey for such a young creetur to take alone.

Gypsy thanked him, and going up to the ticket-master, asked him something in a low tone.

"In just an hour!" said the ticket-master, in a loud, business-like voice.

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"An hour! So long as that?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Gypsy drew her veil very closely about her face, and sat down in the darkest corner she could

find. She seemed to be very much afraid of being recognized; for she shrank from every new-comer, and started every time the door opened.

"Train for Fitchburg, Rutland, Burlington!" shouted a voice, at last, and the words were drowned in the noise of hurrying feet.

Gypsy took a seat in the rear car, by the door, which was open, so that she was partially concealed from the view of the passengers. Just before the train started, a tall, whiskered gentleman walked slowly through the car, scanning the faces on each side of him.

"You haven't seen a little girl here, dressed in drab, with black eyes and red cheeks, have you?" he asked, stopping just in front of Gypsy.

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Several of the passengers shook their heads, and one old lady piped out on a very high key,—

"No, sir, I hain't!"

The gentleman passed out, and shut the door. Gypsy held her breath. It was her uncle.

He looked troubled and anxious. Gypsy's cheeks flushed,—a sudden impulse came over her to call him back,—she started and threw open the window, but the engine-bell rang, the train puffed slowly off, and her uncle disappeared in the crowd.



As she was whirled rapidly along through wharves and shipping and lumber, away from the roar of the city, and out where woods and green fields lined the way, she began, for the first time, to think what she was doing, and to wonder if she were doing right. Her anger at her aunt, and the utter disappointment and homesickness of her Boston visit, had swept away, for a few moments, all her power of reasoning. To get home, to see her mother,—to hide her head on her shoulder and cry,—this was the one thought that had turned itself over and over in her mind, on that quick ride from Beacon Street, and in that hour spent in the dark corner of the depot. Here she was, running like a thief from her uncle's house, without a word of good-by or thanks for his hospitality, with no message to tell him where she had gone but that note, hastily written in the first flush of her hurt and angry feelings. And the hurrying train was whirling her over hill and valley faster and farther. To go back was impossible, go on she must. What had she done?

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She began now, too, to wonder where she should spend the night. The train went only as far as Rutland, and it would be late and dark when she reached the town—far too late for a little girl to be travelling alone, and to spend a night in a strange hotel, in a strange place. What should she do?

As the afternoon passed, and the twilight fell, and the lamps were lighted, and people hurried out at way-stations to safe and waiting homes, her loneliness and anxiety increased. Just before entering Rutland, a young man, dressed in a dandyish manner, and partially intoxicated, entered the car, and took the empty seat by Gypsy. She did not like his looks, and moved away slightly, turning to look out of the window.

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"No offense, I hope?" said the man, with a foolish smile; "the car was full."

Gypsy made no reply.

"Travelling far?" he said, a moment after.

"To Rutland, sir," said Gypsy, feeling very uneasy, as she perceived the odor of rum, and wishing he would not talk to her.

"Friends there?" said the man again.

"N—no, sir," said Gypsy, reluctantly. "I am going to the hotel."

"Stranger in town? What hotel do you go to?"

"I don't know," said Gypsy, hurriedly. The car was just stopping, and she rose and tried to pass him.

"I will show you the way," he said, standing up, and reeling slightly as he tried to walk. Gypsy, in despair, looked for the conductor. He was nowhere to be seen. The crowd passed out, quite careless of the frightened child, or regarding her only with a curious stare. [Pg 250]

"It's only a little way," said the man, with an oath.

"Why, sakes a massy, if this ain't Gypsy Breynton!"

Gypsy turned, with a cry of joy, at hearing her name, and fairly sprang into Mrs. Surly's arms.

"Why, where on airth did you come from, Gypsy Breynton?"

"I came from Boston, and that man is drunk, and,—oh, dear! I'm so glad to see you, and I've got to go to a hotel, and I didn't know what mother would say, and where did you come from?" said Gypsy, talking very fast.

"I come from my sister Lucindy's, down to Bellows Falls, and I'm going to Cousin Mary Ann Jacobs to spend the night." [Pg 251]

"Oh!" said Gypsy, wistfully.

"I don't see how a little gal like you ever come to be on a night train alone," said Mrs. Surly, with a keen, curious look at Gypsy's face; "but I know your ma'd never let you go to a hotel this time o' night, and Mary Ann she'd be delighted to see you; so you'd better come along."

Gypsy was so happy and so thankful, she could fairly have kissed her,—even her, Mrs. Surly. Cousin Mary Ann received her hospitably, and the evening and the night passed quickly away. Mrs. Surly was very curious, and somewhat suspicious on the subject of Gypsy's return to Yorkbury, under such peculiar circumstances. Gypsy said that she left Boston quite suddenly, that they were not expecting her at home, and that she took so late a train for several reasons, but had not thought that it went no further than Rutland, till she was fairly started; which was true. More than this, Mrs. Surly could not cross-question out of her, and she soon gave up trying. [Pg 252]

Cousin Mary Ann wanted Mrs. Surly's company another day; so Gypsy took an early train for Yorkbury alone.

Gypsy never took any trouble very deeply to heart, and the morning sunlight, and the sight of the dear, familiar mountains, drove away, to a great extent, the repentant and anxious thoughts of the night.

As the train shrieked into Yorkbury, she forgot everything but that she was at home,—miles away from Boston, her mother near, and Tom, and the dear old days of paddling about on rafts, and having no dinner-parties to disgrace herself at, and no aunt to be afraid of.

It seemed as if every one she knew were at the station. Mr. Surly was there, under strict orders from his wife, to watch for her every train till she came; and Mr. Fisher was there, just down on an errand from the mountains; and Mrs. Rowe and Sarah were walking up the street; and Agnes Gaylord was over at the grocer's, nodding and smiling as Gypsy stepped upon the platform; and there, too, was Mr. Simms, who had been somewhere in the cars, and who stepped into the coach just after she did. [Pg 253]

"Why, Miss Gypsy!—why, really! You home again, my dear? Why, your father didn't expect you!"

"I know it," said Gypsy. "Are they all well?"

"Oh, yes, yes, all well,—but to give them such a surprise! It is so exactly like you, my dear."

"I don't like Boston," said Gypsy, coloring. "I had a horrid time, and I came home very suddenly."

"Don't like Boston? Well, you *are* a remarkable young lady!" exclaimed Mr. Simms, and relapsed into silence, watching Gypsy's flushed and eager face, as people watch a light coming back into a dark room. [Pg 254]

"We have missed you up at the store, my dear," he said, after a while.

"Have you? I'm glad. Oh! who's that with Miss Melville out walking under the elm-trees?"

"I guess it's Mr. Hallam."

"Oh, to be sure," interrupted Gypsy, looking very bright. "I see,—Mr. Guy Hallam. Now I guess I know why she wouldn't teach school!"

"They are to be married in the spring," said Mr. Simms.

"Just think!" said Gypsy. "How funny! Now she'll have to stay at home and keep house all day,—I think she's real silly, don't you?"

Of all the many remarkable things that Miss Gypsy had ever said, Mr. Simms thought this capped the climax. [Pg 255]

Now the coach had rattled up the hill, and lumbered round the corner, and there was the old house, looking quiet and pleasant and dear, in the morning sunlight. Gypsy was so excited that

she could not sit still, and kept Mr. Simms in a fever of anxiety, for fear she would tumble out of the coach windows. It seemed to her as if she had been gone a year, instead of just one week.

She sprang down the carriage-steps at a bound, and ran into the house. Her mother was out in the kitchen helping Patty about the dinner. She heard such a singing and shouting as no one had made in the house since Gypsy went away, and hurried out into the front entry to see what had happened. Tom ran in from the garden, and Winnie slid down on the banisters, and Mr. Breynton was just coming up the yard, and Patty put her head in at the entry door, wiping her hands on her apron, and everybody must be kissed all round, and for a few minutes there was such a bustle, that Gypsy could hardly hear herself speak.

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"What has brought you home so soon?" asked her mother, then. "We didn't look for you for a week yet."

"Oh, I hate Boston!" cried Gypsy, pulling off her things. "I didn't like anything but the Museum and Bunker Hill; and Joy wore silk dresses, and wouldn't let me look in the shop-windows, 'n I took a poor, little beggar-girl home, and you can't run round any, and Aunt Miranda told me she'd tell you, and I hate it, and she's just as cross as a bear!"

"Your aunt cross!" said her mother, who could make neither beginning nor end of Gypsy's excited story.

"I guess she is," said Gypsy, with an emphasis. "Oh, I *am* so glad to get home. Where's the kitty, and how's Peace Maythorne and everybody, and Winnie has a new jacket, hasn't he?"

Mr. and Mrs. Breynton exchanged glances. They saw that something was wrong; but wisely considered that that time was not the one for making any inquiries into the matter. Mrs. Breynton thought, also, that if Gypsy had been guilty of ill-temper or rudeness, she would confess it herself. She was right; for as soon as dinner was over, Gypsy called her away alone, and told her all the story. They were shut up together a long time, and when Gypsy came out her eyes were red with crying.

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All that Mrs. Breynton said does not matter here; but Gypsy is not likely soon to forget it. A few words spoken, just as the conversation ended, became golden mottoes that helped her over many rough places in her life.

"It is all the old trouble, Gypsy,—you 'didn't think.' A little self-control, a moment's quiet thought, would have saved all this."

"Oh, I know it!" sobbed Gypsy. "That's what always ails me. I'm always doing things, and always sorry for them. I mean to do right, and I cannot remember. What shall I do with myself, mother?"

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"Gypsy," said her mother, very soberly, "this will never do. You *can* think. And Gypsy, my child, in every one of these little thoughtless words and acts God sees a *sin*."

"A sin when you didn't think?" exclaimed Gypsy.

"You must learn to think, Gypsy; and He will teach you."

Her mother kissed her many times, and Gypsy clung to her neck, and was very still. Whatever thoughts she had just then, she never told them to any one.

The afternoon passed away like a merry dream. Gypsy was so happy that she had had the talk with her mother; so glad to be kissed and forgiven and loved and helped; to find every one so pleased to see her back, and home so dear, and the mountains so blue and beautiful, and the sunlight so bright, that she scarcely knew whether she were asleep or awake. She must hunt up the kitten, and feed the chickens, and take a peep at the cow, and stroke old Billy in his stall; she must see how many sweet peas were left on the vines, and climb out on the shed-roof that had been freshly shingled since she was gone, and run down to the Kleiner Berg, and over to see Sarah Rowe. She must know just what Tom had been doing this interminable week, just how many buttons Winnie had lost off from his jacket, and what kind of pies Patty had baked for dinner. She must kiss her mother twenty times an hour, and pull her father's whiskers, and ride Winnie on her shoulder. Best of all, perhaps, it was to run down to Peace Maythorne's, and find the sunlight golden in the quiet room, and the pale face smiling on the pillow; to hear the gentle voice, when the door opened, say, "Oh, Gypsy!" in such a way,—as no other voice ever said it; and then to sit down and lay her head upon the pillow by Peace, and tell her all that had happened.

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"Well," said Peace, smiling, "I think you have learned a good deal for one week, and I guess you will never *unlearn* it."

"I guess you'll be very sorry you went to Bosting," remarked Winnie, in an oracular manner, that night, when they were all together in their old places in the sitting-room. "The Meddlesome Quinine Club had a concert here last Wednesday, and we had preserved seats. What do you think of that?"

This is a copy of the letter that found its way to Beacon Street a few days after:—

"MY DEAR UNCLE AND AUNT MIRANDA:

"I am so sorry I don't know what to do. I was so tired sitting still, and going to dinner-parties, and then auntie was displeased about the beggar-girl (I took her home, and her mother was just as glad as she could be, and so poor!) and so I felt angry and homesick, and I know I oughtn't to

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have gone to such a place without asking; but I didn't think; and then I came home in the afternoon train, but I didn't think when I did that either. Mother says that was no excuse, and I know it was very wicked in me to do such a thing. Mrs. Surly met me in the cars at Rutland, and took me to spend the night with her cousin, Mrs. Mary Ann Jacobs; so I got along safely, and nothing happened to me, but one drunken man that kept talking.

"Mother says I have done a *very* rude and unkind thing, to leave you all so, when you had invited me there, and been so good to me. I know it. I had a real nice time when I went to see Bunker Hill and the Museum with uncle; and, of course, it was my own fault that I didn't like to wear gloves, and choked so at dinner.

"Mother says you will never want to see me there again; and I shouldn't think you would. Seems to me I never did such a thing in all my life, and you haven't any idea how badly I feel about it. But I know that doesn't help it any. [Pg 262]

"I've made up my mind never to do anything again till I've thought it all over as many as twelve times. Mother says two or three would do, but I think twelve would be safer.

"I wish you'd let Joy come up here. I'd take her boating and riding, and up to Ripton, and down to the swamp, and everything, and try to make up.

"I don't suppose you will ever care anything more about me; but I wish you'd please to excuse me and forgive me.

"Your affectionate niece,
"GYPSY.

"P. S.—Winnie's cat has the *cummingest* little set of kittens you ever saw. They're all blind, and they have such funny paws."



Transcriber's Notes

1. Punctuation has been normalized to contemporary standards.
2. Frontispiece relocated to after title page.
3. Typographic errors corrected in original:
 - p. 48 an to on ("Winnie jumped on board")
 - p. 58 mits to mitts ("pair of black mitts")
 - p. 119 friend' to friend's ("in her friend's eyes")

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GYPSY BREYNTON ***

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