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Title: Gypsy's Cousin Joy

Author: Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

Release date: June 21, 2006 [EBook #18646]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Roger Frank and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

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## Gypsy's Cousin Joy

By  
ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

New York  
Dodd, Mead and Company



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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'S COUSIN JOY

### CHAPTER I



The second arithmetic class had just come out to recite, when somebody knocked at the door. Miss Cardrew sent Delia Guest to open it.

"It's a—ha, ha! letter—he, he! for you," said Delia, coming up to the desk. Exactly wherein lay the joke, in the fact that Miss Cardrew should have a letter, nobody but Delia was capable of seeing; but Delia was given to seeing jokes on all occasions, under all circumstances. Go wherever you might, from a prayer-meeting to the playground, you were sure to hear her little giggle.

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"A letter for you," repeated Delia Guest. "He, he!"

Miss Cardrew laid down her arithmetic, opened the letter, and read it. "Gypsy Breynton."

The arithmetic class stopped whispering, and there was a great lull in the schoolroom.

"Why I never!" giggled Delia. Gypsy, all in a flutter at having her name read right out in school, and divided between her horror lest the kitten she had tied to a spool of thread at recess, had been discovered, and an awful suspicion that Mr. Jonathan Jones saw her run across his plowed field after chestnuts, went slowly up to the desk.

"Your mother has sent for you to come directly home," said Miss Cardrew, in a low tone. Gypsy looked a little frightened.

"Go home! Is anybody sick, Miss Cardrew?"

"She doesn't say—she gives no reasons. You'd better not stop to talk, Gypsy."

Gypsy went to her desk, and began to gather up her books as fast as she could.

"I shouldn't wonder a bit if the house'd caught afire," whispered Agnes Gaylord. "I had an uncle once, and his house caught afire—in the chimney too, and everybody'd gone to a prayer-meeting; they had now, true's you live."

"Maybe your father's dead," condoled Sarah Rowe.

"Or Winnie."

"Or Tom."

"Just think of it!"

"What *do* you s'pose it is?"

"If I were you, I guess I'd be frightened!"

"Order!" said Miss Cardrew, in a loud voice.

The girls stopped whispering, and Gypsy, in nowise reassured by their sympathy, hurried out to put on her things. With her hat thrown on one side of her head, the strings hanging down into her eyes, her sack rolled up in a bundle under her arm, and her rubbers in her pocket, she started for home on the full run. Yorkbury was pretty well used to Gypsy, but everybody stopped and stared at her that morning; what with her burning cheeks, and those rubbers sticking out of her pocket, and the hat-strings flying, and the brambles catching her dress, and the mud splashing up under her swift feet, it was no wonder.

"Miss Gypsy!" called old Mr. Simms, the clerk, as she flew by the door of her father's book-store. "Miss Gypsy, my *dear*!"

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But on ran Gypsy without so much as giving him a look, across the road in front of a carriage, around a load of hay, and away like a bird down the street. Out ran Gypsy's pet aversion, Mrs. Surly, from a shop-door somewhere—

"Gypsy Breynton, what a sight you be! I believe you've gone clear crazy—Gypsy!"

"Can't stop!" shouted Gypsy, "it's a fire or something somewhere."

Eight small boys at the word "fire" appeared on the instant from nobody knew where, and ran after her with hoarse yells of "fire! fire! Where's the engine? Vi—ir-r-!" By this time, too, three dogs and a nanny-goat were chasing her; the dogs were barking, and the nanny-goat was baaing or braying, or whatever it is that nanny-goats do, so she swept up to the house in a unique, triumphal procession.



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Winnie came out to meet her as she came in at the gate panting and scarlet-faced.

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Fifty years instead of five might Winnie have been at that moment, and all the cares of Church and State on the shoulders of his pinafore, to judge from the pucker in his chin. There was always a pucker in Winnie's chin, when he felt—as the boys call it—"big."

"What do s'pose, Gypsy?—don't you wish you knew?"

"What?"

"Oh, no matter. *I* know."

"Winnie Breynton!"

"Well," said Winnie, with the air of a Grand Mogul feeding a chicken, "I don't care if I tell you. We've had a temmygral."

"A telegram!"

"I just guess we have; you'd oughter seen the man. He'd lost his nose, and——"

"A telegram! Is there any bad news? Where did it come from?"

"It came from Bosting," said Winnie, with a superior smile. "I s'posed you knew *that!* It's sumfin about Aunt Miranda, I shouldn't wonder." [Pg 13]

"Aunt Miranda! Is anybody sick? Is anybody dead, or anything?"

"I don't know," said Winnie, cheerfully. "But I guess you wish you'd seen the envelope. It had the funniest little letters punched through on top—it did now, really."

Gypsy ran into the house at that, and left Winnie to his meditations.

Her mother called her from over the banisters, and she ran upstairs. A small trunk stood open by the bed, and the room was filled with the confusion of packing.

"Your Aunt Miranda is sick," said Mrs. Breynton.

"What are you packing up for? You're not going off!" exclaimed Gypsy, incapable of taking in a greater calamity than that, and quite forgetting Aunt Miranda.

"Yes. Your uncle has written for us to come right on. She is very sick, Gypsy." [Pg 14]

"Oh!" said Gypsy, penitently; "dangerous?"

"Yes."

Gypsy looked sober because her mother did, and she thought she ought to.

"Your father and I are going in this noon train," proceeded Mrs. Breynton, rolling up a pair of slippers, and folding a wrapper away in the trunk. "I think I am needed. The fever is very severe; possibly—contagious," said Mrs. Breynton, quietly. Mrs. Breynton made it a rule to have very few concealments from her children. All family plans which could be, were openly and frankly discussed. She believed that it did the children good to feel that they had a share in them; that it did them good to be trusted. She never kept bad tidings from them simply because they were bad. The mysteries and prevarications necessary to keep an unimportant secret, were, she reasoned, worse for them than a little anxiety. Gypsy must know some time about her aunt's sickness. She preferred she should hear it from her mother's lips, see for herself the reasons for this sudden departure and risk, if risk there were, and be woman enough to understand them. [Pg 15]

Gypsy looked sober now in earnest.

"Why, mother! How can you? What if you catch it?"

"There is very little chance of that, one possibility in a hundred, perhaps. Help me fold up this dress, Gypsy—no, on the bed—so."

"But if you should get sick! I don't see why you need go. She isn't your own sister anyway, and she never did anything for us, nor cared anything for us."

"Your uncle wants me, and that is enough. I want to be to her a sister if I can—poor thing, she has no sister of her own, and no mother, nobody but the hired nurses with her; and she may die, Gypsy. If I can be of any help, I am glad to be." [Pg 16]

Her mother spoke in a quiet, decided tone, with which Gypsy knew there was no arguing. She helped her fold her dresses and lock her trunk, very silently, for Gypsy, and then ran away to busy herself with Patty in getting the travelers' luncheon. When Gypsy felt badly, she always hunted up something to do; in this she showed the very best of her good sense. And let me tell you, girls, as a little secret—in the worst fits of the "blues" you ever have, if you are guilty of having any, do you go straight into the nursery and build a block house for the baby, or upstairs and help your mother baste for the machine, or into the dining-room to help Bridget set the table, or into the corner where some diminutive brother is crying over his sums which a very few words from you would straighten, or into the parlor where your father sits shading his eyes from the lamplight, with no one to read him the paper; and before you know it, you will be as happy as a queen. You don't believe it? Try and see. [Pg 17]

Gypsy drowned her sorrow at her mother's departure, in broiling her mutton-chops and cutting her pie, and by the time the coach drove to the door, and the travelers stood in the entry with bag and baggage, all ready to start, the smiles had come back to her lips, and the twinkle to her eyes.

"Good-bye, father! O-oh, mother Breynton, give me another kiss. There!—one more. Now, if you don't write just as soon as you get there!"

"Be a good girl, and take nice care of Winnie," called her mother from the coach-window. And then they were driven rapidly away, and the house seemed to grow still and dark all at once, and a great many clouds to be in the warm, autumn sky. The three children stood a moment in the entry looking forlornly at each other. I beg Tom's pardon—I suppose I should have said the two children and the "young man." Probably never again in his life will Tom feel quite as old as he felt in that sixteenth year. Gypsy was the first to break the dismal silence.

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"How horrid it's going to be! You go upstairs and she won't be there, and there'll be nobody coming home from the store at night, and, then—you go round, and it's so still, and nobody but me to keep house, and Patty has just what she likes for breakfast, for all me, and *I* think Aunt Miranda needn't have gone and been sick, anyway."

"A most sensible and sympathizing niece," observed Tom, in his patronizing way.

"Well, you see, I suppose I don't care very much about Aunt Miranda," said Gypsy, confidentially. "I'm sorry she's sick, but I didn't have a bit nice time in Boston last vacation, and she scolded me dreadfully when I blew out the gas. What is it, Patty? Oh, yes—come to dinner, boys."

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"I say," remarked Winnie, at the rather doleful dinner-table, "look here, Gypsy."

"What?"



"S'posin' when they'd got Aunt Miranda all nailed into her coffin—tight in—she should be *un-*deaded, and open her eyes, and begin—begin to squeal, you know. S'pose they'd let her out?"

Just four days from the morning Mrs. Breynton left, Tom came up from the office with a very sober face and a letter.

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Gypsy ran out to meet him, and put out her hand, in a great hurry to read it.

"I'll read it to you," said Tom; "it's to me. Come into the parlor."

They went in, and Tom read:

"MY DEAR SON:

"I write in great haste, just to let you know that your Aunt Miranda is gone. She died last night at nine o'clock, in great distress. I was with her at the last. I am glad I came—very; it seems to have been a comfort to her; she was so lonely and deserted. The funeral is day after to-morrow, and we shall stay of course. We hope to be home on Monday. There has been no time yet to make any plans; I can't tell what the family will do. Poor Joy cannot bear to be left alone a minute. She follows me round like a frightened child. The tears come into my eyes every time I look at her, for the thoughts of three dear, distant faces that might be left just so, but for God's mercy to them and to me. She is just about Gypsy's age and height, you know. The disease proved *not* to be contagious, so you need feel no anxiety. A kiss to both the children. Your father sends much love. We shall be glad to get home and see you again.

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"Very lovingly,

"MOTHER."

Inside the note was a slip for Gypsy, with this written on it:

"I must stop to tell you, Gypsy, of a little thing your aunt said the day before she died. She had been speaking of Joy in her weak, troubled way—of some points wherein she

hoped she would be a different woman from her mother, and had then lain still a while, her eyes closed, something—as you used to say when you were a little girl—very *sorry* about her mouth, when suddenly she turned and said, 'I wish I'd made Gypsy's visit here a little pleasanter. Tell her she must think as well as she can of her auntie, for Joy's sake, now.'

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Gypsy folded up the paper, and sat silent a moment, thinking her own thoughts, as Tom saw, and not wishing to be spoken to.

Those of you who have read "Gypsy Breynton" will understand what these thoughts might be. Those who have not, need only know that Gypsy's aunt had been rather a gay, careless lady, well dressed and jeweled, and fond enough of dresses and jewels; and that in a certain visit Gypsy made her not long ago, she had been far from thoughtful of her country niece's comfort.

And this was how it had ended. Poor Aunt Miranda!

"Well," said Gypsy, at last, with something dim in her eyes, "I dare say I was green and awkward, and it was half my fault. I never could understand how people could just turn round when anybody dies, and say they were good and perfect, when it wasn't any such a thing, and I can't say I think she was, for it would be a lie. But I won't say anything more against her. Poor Joy, poor Joy! Not to have any mother, Tom, just think! Oh, just *think!*"

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## CHAPTER II

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### SHE SHALL COME?



Supper was ready. It had been ready now for ten minutes. The cool, white cloth, bright glass, glittering silver, and delicate china painted with a primrose and an ivy-leaf—the best china, and very extravagant in Gypsy, of course, but she thought the occasion deserved it—were all laid in their places upon the table. The tea was steeped to precisely the right point; the rich, mellow flavor had just escaped the clover taste on one side, and the bitterness of too much boiling on the other; the delicately sugared apples were floating in their amber juices in the round glass preserve-dish, the smoked halibut was done to the most delightful brown crispness, the puffy, golden drop-cakes were smoking from the oven, and Patty was growling as nobody but Patty could growl, for fear they would "slump down intirely an' be gittin' as heavy as lead," before they could be eaten.

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There was a bright fire in the dining-room grate; the golden light was dancing a jig all over the walls, hiding behind the curtains, coquetting with the silver, and touching the primroses on the plates to a perfect sunbeam; for father and mother were coming. Tom and Gypsy and Winnie were all three running to the windows and the door every two minutes and dressed in their very "Sunday-go-to-meeting best;" for father and mother were coming. Tom had laughed well at this plan of dressing up—Gypsy's notion, of course, and ridiculous enough, said Tom; fit for babies like Winnie, and *girls*. (I wish I could give you in print the peculiar emphasis with which Tom was wont to dwell on this word.) But for all that, when Gypsy came down in her new Scotch plaid dress, with her cheeks so red, and her hair so smooth and black; and Winnie strutted across the room counting the buttons on his best jacket, Tom slipped away to his room, and came down with his purple necktie on.

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It made a pretty, homelike picture—the bright table and the firelight, and the eager faces at the window, and the gay dresses. Any father and mother might have been glad to call it all their own, and come into it out of the cold and the dark, after a weary day's journey.

These cozy, comfortable touches about it—the little conceit of the painted china, and the best clothes—were just like Gypsy. Since she was glad to see her father and mother, it was imperatively necessary that she should show it; there was no danger but what her joy would have been sufficiently evident—where everything else was—in her eyes; but according to Gypsy's view of matters, it must express itself in some sort of celebration. Whether her mother wouldn't have been quite as well pleased if her delicate, expensive porcelain had been kept safely in the closet; whether, indeed, it was exactly right for her to take it out without leave, Gypsy never stopped to consider. When she wanted to do a thing, she could never see any reasons why it shouldn't be done, like a few other girls I have heard of in New England. However, just such a mother as Gypsy had was quite likely to pardon such a little carelessness as this, for the love in it, and the welcoming thoughts.

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"They're comin', comin', comin'," shouted Winnie, from the door-steps, where, in the exuberance of his spirits, he was trying very hard to stand on his head, and making a most remarkable failure—"they're comin' lickitycut, and I'm five years old, 'n' I've got on my best jacket, 'n' they're comin' slam bang!"

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"Coming, coming, coming!" echoed Gypsy, about as wild as Winnie himself, and flying past him down to the gate, leaving Tom to follow in Tom's own dignified way.

Such a kissing, and laughing, and talking, and delightful confusion as there was then! Such a shouldering of bags and valises and shawls, such hurrying of mother in out of the cold; such a pulling of father's whiskers, such peeping into mysterious bundles, and pulling off of wrappers, and hurrying Patty with the tea-things; and questions and answers, and everybody talking at once—one might have supposed the travelers had been gone a month instead of a week.

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"My kitty had a fit," observed Winnie, the first pause he could find.

"And there are some letters for father," from Tom.

"Patty has a new beau," interrupted Gypsy.

"It was an awfully fit," put in Winnie, undiscouraged; "she rolled under the stove, 'n' tell *you* she squealed, and——"

"How is uncle?" asked Tom, and it was the first time any one had thought to ask.

"Then she jumped—splash! into the hogshhead," continued Winnie, determined to finish.

"He is not very well," said Mr. Breynton, gravely, and then they sat down to supper, talking the while about him. Winnie subsided in great disgust, and devoted himself, body, mind, and heart, to the drop-cakes.

"Ah, the best china, I see," said Mrs. Breynton, presently, with one of her pleasantest smiles, and as Mrs. Breynton's smiles were always pleasant, this was saying a great deal. "And the Sunday things on, too—in honor of our coming? How pleasant it all seems! and how glad I am to be at home again."

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Gypsy looked radiant—very much, in fact, like a little sun dropped down from the sky, or a jewel all ablaze.

Some mothers would have reproved her for the use of the china; some who had not quite the heart to reprove would have said they were sorry she had taken it out. Mrs. Breynton would rather have had her handsome plates broken to atoms than to chill, by so much as a look, the glow of the child's face just then.

There was decidedly more talking than eating done at supper, and they lingered long at the table, in the pleasant firelight and lamplight.

"It seems exactly like the resurrection day for all the world," said Gypsy.

"The resurrection day?"

"Why, yes. When you went off I kept thinking everybody was dead and buried, all that morning, and it was real horrid—Oh, you don't know!"

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"Gypsy," said Mrs. Breynton, a while after supper, when Winnie had gone to bed, and Tom and his father were casting accounts by the fire, "I want to see you a few minutes." Gypsy, wondering, followed her into the parlor. Mrs. Breynton shut the door, and they sat down together on the sofa.

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"I want to have a talk with you, Gypsy, about something that we'd better talk over alone."

"Yes'm," said Gypsy, quite bewildered by her mother's grave manner, and thinking up all the

wrong things she had done for a week. Whether it was the time she got so provoked at Patty for having dinner late, or scolded Winnie for trying to paint with the starch (and if ever any child deserved it, he did), or got kept after school for whispering, or brought down the nice company quince marmalade to eat with the blanc mange, or whether—

"You haven't asked about your cousin, Joy," said her mother, interrupting her thinking.

"Oh!—how is she?" said Gypsy, looking somewhat ashamed.

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"I am sorry for the child," said Mrs. Breynton, musingly.

"What's going to become of her? Who's going to take care of her?"

"That is just what I came in here to talk about."

"Why, I don't see what I have to do with it!" said Gypsy, astonished.

"Her father thinks of going abroad, and so there would be no one to leave her with. He finds himself quite worn out by your aunt's sickness, the care and anxiety and trouble. His business also requires some member of the firm to go to France this fall, and he has almost decided to go. The only thing that makes him hesitate is Joy."

"I see what you mean now, mother—I see it in your eyes. You want Joy to come here." Gypsy spoke in a slow, uncomfortable way, as if she were trying very hard not to believe her own words.

"Yes," said Mrs. Breynton, "that is it."

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Gypsy's bright face fell. "Well?" she said, at last.

"I told your uncle," said her mother, "that I could not decide on the spot, but would let him know next week. The question of Joy's coming here will affect you more than any member of the family, and I thought it only fair to you that we should talk it over frankly before it is settled."

Gypsy had a vague notion that all mothers would not have been so thoughtful, but she said nothing.

"I do not wish," proceeded Mrs. Breynton, "to make any arrangement in which you cannot be happy; but I have great faith in your kind heart, Gypsy."

"I don't like Joy," said Gypsy, bluntly.

"I know that, and I am sorry it is so," said her mother. "I understand just what Joy is. But it is not all her fault. She has not been trained just as you have, Gypsy. She was never taught and helped to be a generous gentle child, as you have been taught and helped. Your uncle and aunt felt differently about these things; but it is no matter about that now—you will understand it better when you are older. It is enough for you to know that Joy has great excuse for her faults. Even if they were twice as great as they are, one wouldn't think much about them now; the poor child is in great trouble, lonely and frightened and motherless. Think, if God took away *your* mother, Gypsy."

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"But Joy didn't care much about her mother," said honest Gypsy. "She used to scold her, Joy told me so herself. Besides, I heard her, ever so many times."

"Peace be with the dead, Gypsy; let all that go. She was all the mother Joy had, and if you had seen what I saw a night or two before I came away, you wouldn't say she didn't love her."

"What was it?" asked Gypsy.

"Your auntie was lying all alone, upstairs. I went in softly, to do one or two little things about the room, thinking no one was there."

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"One faint gaslight was burning, and in the dimness I saw that the sheet was turned down from the face, and a poor little quivering figure was crouched beside it on the bed. It was Joy. She was sobbing as if her heart would break, and such sobs—it would have made you cry to hear them, Gypsy. She didn't hear me come in, and she began to talk to the dead face as if it could hear her. Do you want to know what she said?"

Gypsy was looking very hard the other way. She nodded, but did not speak, gulping down something in her throat.

"This was what she said—softly, in Joy's frightened way, you know: 'You're all I had anyway,' said she. 'All the other girls have got mothers, and now I won't ever have any, any more. I did used to bother you and be cross about my practising, and not do as you told me, and I wish I hadn't, and—'

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"Oh—hum, look here—mother," interrupted Gypsy, jumping up and winking very fast, "isn't there a train up from Boston early Monday morning? She might come in that, you know."

Mrs. Breynton smiled.

"Then she may come, may she?"

"I rather think she may," said Gypsy, with an emphasis. "I'll write her a letter and tell her so."

"That will be a good plan, Gypsy. But you are quite sure? I don't want you to decide this matter in



too much of a hurry."

"She'll sleep in the front room, of course?" suggested Gypsy.

"No; if she comes, she must sleep with you. With our family and only one servant, I could hardly keep up the extra work that would cause for six months or a year."

"Six months or a year! In my room!"

Gypsy walked back and forth across the room two or three times, her merry forehead all wrinkled into a knot.

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"Well," at last, "I've said it, and I'll stick to it, and I'll try to make her have a good time, anyway."

"Come here, Gypsy."

Gypsy came, and one of those rare, soft kisses—very different from the ordinary, everyday kisses—that her mother gave her when she hadn't just the words to say how pleased she was, fell on her forehead, and smoothed out the knot before you could say "Jack Robinson."

That very afternoon Gypsy wrote her note to Joy:

"DEAR JOY:

"I'm real sorry your mother died. You'd better come right up here next week, and we'll go chestnutting over by Mr. Jonathan Jones's. I tell you it's splendid climbing up. If you're very careful, you needn't tear your dress *very* badly. Then there's the raft, and you might play baseball, too. I'll teach you.

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"You see if you don't have a nice time. I can't think of anything more to say.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"GYPSY."

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## CHAPTER III

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### ONE EVENING



So it was settled, and Joy came. There was no especial day appointed for the journey. Her father was to come up with her as soon as he had arranged his affairs so that he could do so, and then to go directly back to Boston and sail at once.

Gypsy found plenty to do, in getting ready for her cousin. This having a roommate for the first time in her life was by no means an unimportant event to her. Her room had always been her own especial private property. Here in a quiet nook on the broad window-sill she had curled herself up for hours with her new story-books; here she had locked herself in to learn her lessons, and keep her doll's dressmaking out of Winnie's way; here she had gone away alone to have all her "good cries;" here she sometimes spent a part of her Sabbath evenings with her most earnest

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and sober thoughts.

Here was the mantel-shelf, covered with her little knick-knacks that no one was ever allowed to touch but herself—pictures framed in pine cones, boxes of shell-work, baskets of wafer-work, cologne-bottles, watchcases, ivy-shoots and minerals, on which the dust accumulated at its own sweet will, and the characteristic variety and arrangement whereof none ever disputed with her. What if Joy should bring a trunkful of ornaments?

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There in the wardrobe were her treasures covering six shelves—her kites and balls of twine, fishlines and doll's bonnets, scraps of gay silk and jackknives, old compositions and portfolios, colored paper and dried moss, pieces of chalk and horse-chestnuts, broken jewelry and marbles. It was a curious collection. One would suppose it to be a sort of co-partnership between the property of a boy and girl, in which the boy decidedly predominated.

Into this wardrobe Gypsy looked regretfully. Three of those shelves—those precious shelves—must be Joy's now. And what *should* be done with the things?

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Then there were the bureau drawers. What sorcerer's charms, to say nothing of the somewhat unwilling fingers of a not very enthusiastic little girl, could cram the

contents of four (and those so full that they were overflowing through the cracks) into two?

Moreover, as any one acquainted with certain chapters in Gypsy's past history will remember, her premises were not always celebrated for the utmost tidiness. And here was Joy, used to her elegant carpets and marble-covered bureaus, and gas-fixtures and Cochtuate, with servants to pick up her things for her ever since she was a baby! How shocked she would be at the dust, and the ubiquitous slippers, and the slips and shreds on the carpet; and how should she have the least idea what it was to have to do things yourself?



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However, Gypsy put a brave face on it, and emptied the bureau drawers, and squeezed away the treasures into three shelves, and did her best to make the room look pleasant and inviting to the little stranger. In fact, before she was through with the work she became really very much interested in it. She had put a clean white quilt upon the bed, and looped up the curtain with a handsome crimson ribbon, taken from the stock in the wardrobe. She had swept and dusted every corner and crevice; she had displayed all her ornaments to the best advantage, and put fresh cologne in the bottles. She had even brought from some sanctum, where it was folded away in the dark, a very choice silk flag about four inches long, that she had made when the war began, and was keeping very tenderly to wear when Richmond was taken, and pinned it up over her looking-glass.

On the table, too, stood her Parian vase filled with golden and blood-red maple-leaves, and the flaming berries of the burning-bush. Very prettily the room looked, when everything was finished, and Gypsy was quite proud of it.

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Joy came Thursday night. They were all in the parlor when the coach stopped, and Gypsy ran out to meet her.

A pale, sickly, tired-looking child, draped from head to foot in black, came up the steps clinging to her father's hand, and fretting over something or other about the baggage.

Gypsy was springing forward to meet her, but stopped short. The last time she had seen Joy, she was in gay Stuart-plaid silk and corals. She had forgotten all about the mourning. How thin and tall it made Joy look!

Gypsy remembered herself in a minute and threw her arms warmly around Joy's neck. But Joy did not return the embrace, and gave her only one cold kiss. She had inferred from Gypsy's momentary hesitation that she was not glad to see her.

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Gypsy, on her part, thought Joy was proud and disagreeable. Thus the two girls misunderstood each other at the very beginning.

"I'm real glad to see you," said Gypsy.

"I thought we never should get here!" said Joy, petulantly. "The cars were so dusty, and your coach jolts terribly. I shouldn't think the town would use such an old thing."

Gypsy's face fell, and her welcome grew faint.

Joy had but little to say at supper. She sat by her father and ate her muffins like a very hungry, tired child—like a very cross child, Gypsy thought. Joy's face was always pale and fretful; in the bright lamplight now, after the exhaustion of the long journey, it had a pinched, unpleasant look.

"Hem," coughed Tom, over his teacup. Gypsy looked up and their eyes met. That look said unutterable things.

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If it had not been for Mrs. Breynton, that supper would have been a dismal affair. But she had such a cozy, comfortable way about her, that nobody could help being cozy and comfortable if they tried hard for it. After a while, when Mr. Breynton and his brother had gone away into the library for a talk by themselves, and Joy began to feel somewhat rested, she brightened up wonderfully, and became really quite entertaining in her account of her journey. She thought Vermont looked cold and stupid, however, and didn't remember having noticed much about the mountains, for which Gypsy thought she should never forgive her.

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But there was at least one thing Gypsy found out that evening to like about Joy. She loved her father dearly. One could not help noticing how restless she was while he was out of the room, and how she watched the door for him to come back; how, when he did come, she stole away from her aunt and sat down by him, slipping her hand softly into his. As he had been all her life the most indulgent and patient of fathers, and was going, early to-morrow morning, thousands of miles away from her into thousands of unknown dangers, it was no wonder.

While it was still quite early, Joy proposed going to bed. She was tired, and besides, she wanted to unpack a few of her things. So Gypsy lighted the lamp and went up with her.

"So I am to sleep with you," said Joy, as they opened the door, in by no means the happiest of tones, though they were polite enough. [Pg 49]

"Yes. Mother thought it was better. See, isn't my room pretty?" said Gypsy, eagerly, thinking how pleased Joy would be with the little welcome of its fresh adornments.

"Oh, is *this* it?"

Gypsy stopped short, the hot color rushing all over her face.

"Of course, it isn't like yours. We can't afford marble bureaus and Brussels carpets, but I thought you'd like the maple-leaves, and I brought out the flag on purpose because you were coming."

"Flag! Where? Oh, yes. I have one ten times as big as that at home," said Joy, and then she too stopped short, for she saw the expression of Gypsy's face. Astonished and puzzled, wondering what she had done, Joy turned away to unpack, when her eye fell on the vase with its gorgeous leaves and berries, and she cried out in real delight: "O—oh, how *pretty*! Why, we don't have anything like this in Boston." [Pg 50]

But Gypsy was only half comforted.

Joy unlocked her trunk then, and for a few minutes they chatted merrily over the unpacking. Where is the girl that doesn't like to look at pretty clothes? and where is the girl that doesn't like to show them if they happen to be her own? Joy's linen was all of the prettiest pattern, with wonderful trimmings and embroideries such as Gypsy had seldom seen: her collars and undersleeves were of the latest fashion, and fluted with choice laces; her tiny slippers were tufted with velvet bows, and of her nets and hair-ribbons there was no end. Gypsy looked on without a single pang of envy, contrasting them with her own plain, neat things, of course, but glad, in Gypsy's own generous fashion, that Joy had them.

"I had pretty enough things when you were in Boston," said Joy, unfolding her heavy black dresses with their plain folds of bombazine and crape. "Now I can't wear anything but this ugly black. Then there are all my corals and malachites just good for nothing. Madame St. Denis—she's the dressmaker—said I couldn't wear a single thing but jet, and jet makes me look dreadfully brown." [Pg 51]

Gypsy hung up the dress that was in her hand and walked over to the window. She felt very much as if somebody had been drawing a file across her front teeth.

She could not have explained what was the matter. Somehow she seemed to see a quick picture of her own mother dying and dead, and herself in the sad, dark dresses. And how Joy could speak so—how she *could*!

"Oh—only two bureau drawers! Why didn't you give me the two upper ones?" said Joy, presently, when she was ready to put away her collars and boxes. [Pg 52]

"Because my things were in there," said Gypsy.

"But your things were in the lower ones just as much."

"I like the upper drawers best," said Gypsy, shortly.

"So do I," retorted Joy.

The hot color rushed over Gypsy's face for the second time, but now it was a somewhat angry color.

"It wasn't very pleasant to have to give up any, and there are all those wardrobe shelves I had to take my things off from too, and I don't think you've any right to make a fuss."

"That's polite!" said Joy, with a laugh. Gypsy knew it wasn't, but for that very reason she wouldn't say so.

One more subject of dispute came up almost before this was forgotten. When they were all ready to go to bed, Joy wanted the front side. [Pg 53]

"But that's where I always sleep," said Gypsy.

"There isn't any air over the back side and I can't breathe," said Joy.

"Neither can I," said Gypsy.

"I never can get to sleep if I don't have the place I'm used to," said Joy.

"You can just as well as I can," said Gypsy. "Besides, it's my bed."

This last argument appeared to be unanswerable, and Gypsy had it her way.

She thought it over before she went to sleep, which was not very soon; for Joy was restless, and tossed on her pillow, and talked in her dreams. Of course the front side and the upper drawers belonged to her—yes, of course. She had only taken her rights. She would be obliged to anybody to show her where she was to blame.

Joy went to sleep without any thoughts, and therein lay just the difference.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHESTNUTS



Something woke Gypsy very early the next morning. She started up, and saw Joy standing by the bed, in the faint, gray light, all dressed and shivering with the cold.

"Well, I never!" said Gypsy.

"What's the matter?"

"What on earth have you got your dress on in the middle of the night for?"

"It isn't night; it's morning."

"Morning! it isn't any such a thing."

"'Tis, too. I heard the clock strike five ever so long ago."

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Gypsy had fallen back on the pillow, almost asleep again. She roused herself with a little jump.

"See *here!*"

"Ow! how you frightened me," said Joy, with another jump.



"Did I? Oh, well"—silence. "I don't see"—another silence—"what you wear my rubber—rubber boots for."

"Your rubber boots! Gypsy Breynton, you're sound asleep."

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"Asleep!" said Gypsy, sitting up with a jerk, and rubbing both fists into her eyes. "I'm just as wide awake as you are. Oh, why, you're dressed!"

"Just found that out?" Joy broke into a laugh, and Gypsy, now quite awake, joined in it merrily. For the first time a vague notion came to her that she was rather glad Joy came. It might be some fun, after all, to have somebody round all the time to—in that untranslatable girls' phrase—"carry on with."

"But I don't see what's up," said Gypsy, winking and blinking like an owl to keep her eyes open.

"Why, I was afraid father'd get off before I was awake, so I was determined he shouldn't. I guess I kept waking up pretty much all night to see if it wasn't time."

"I wish he didn't have to go," said Gypsy. She felt sorry for Joy just then, seeing this best side of her that she liked. For about a minute she wished she had let her have the upper drawer.

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Joy's father started by a very early train, and it was still hardly light when he sat down to his hurried breakfast, with Joy close by him, that pale, pinched look on her face, and so utterly silent that Gypsy was astonished. She would have thought she cared nothing about her father's going, if she had not seen her standing in the gray light upstairs.

"Joyce, my child, you haven't eaten a mouthful," said her father.

"I can't."

"Come, dear, do, just a little, to please father."

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Joy put a spoonful of tea to her lips, and put it down. Presently there was a great rumbling of wheels outside, and the coachman rang the door-bell.



"Well, Joy."

Joy stood up, but did not speak. Her father, holding her close in his arms, drew her out with him into the entry. Mrs. Breynton turned away; so did Gypsy and the rest. In a minute they heard Joy go into the parlor and shut the door, and then her father called out to them with his cheerful good-byes, and then he was in the coach, and the door was shut.

Gypsy stole into the parlor. Joy was standing there alone by the window.

"Why don't you cry?" said Gypsy; "I would."

"I don't want to," said Joy, moving away. Her sorrow at parting with her father made her fretful that morning. This was Joy's way. She had inherited her mother's fashion of taking trouble. Gypsy did not understand it, and her sympathy cooled a little. Still she really wanted to do something to make her happy, and so she set about it in the only ways she knew.

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"See here, Joy," she called, merrily, after breakfast, "let's come out and have a good time. I have lots and lots to show you out in the barn and round. Then there is all Yorkbury besides, and the mountains. Which'll you do first, see the chickens or walk out on the ridge-pole?"

"On the *what*?"

"On the ridge-pole; that's the top of the roof, you know, over the kitchen. Tom and I go out there ever so much."

"Oh, I'd rather see the chickens. I should think you'd kill yourself walking on roofs. Wait till I get my gloves."

"Oh, you don't want gloves in *Yorkbury*," said Gypsy, with a very superior air. "That's nothing but a Boston fashion. Slip on your hat and sack in a jiff, and come along."

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"I shall tan my hands," said Joy, reluctantly, as they went out. "Besides, I don't know what a jiff is."

"A jiff is—why, it's short for jiffy, I suppose."

"But what's a jiffy?" persisted Joy.

"Couldn't tell you," said Gypsy, with a bubbling laugh; "I guess it's something that's in a terrible hurry. Tom says it ever so much."

"I shouldn't think your mother would let you use boys' talk," said Joy. Gypsy sometimes stood in need of some such hint as this, but she did not relish it from Joy. By way of reply she climbed up the post of the clothesline.

Joy thought the chickens were pretty, but they had such long legs, and such a silly way of squealing when you took them up, as if you were going to murder them. Besides she was afraid she should step on them. So they went into the barn, and Gypsy exhibited Billy and Bess and Clover with the talent of a Barnum and the pride of a queen. Billy was the old horse who had pulled the family to church through the sand every Sunday since the children were babies, and Bess and Clover were white-starred, gentle-eyed cows, who let Gypsy pull their horns and tickle them with hay, and make pencil-marks on their white foreheads to her heart's content, and looked at Joy's strange face with great musing beautiful brown eyes. But Joy was afraid they would hook her, and she didn't like to be in a barn.

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"What! not tumble on the hay!" cried Gypsy, half way up the ladder into the loft. "Just see what a quantity there is of it. Did you ever know such a quantity? Father lets me jump on it 'cause I don't hurt the hay—very much."

No. Joy couldn't possibly climb up the ladder. Well, Gypsy would help her then. By a little maneuvering she persuaded Joy to step up three rounds, and she herself stood behind her and began to walk up. Joy screamed and stood still.

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"Go ahead—you can't stop now. I'll keep hold of you," said Gypsy, choking with laughter, and walking on. There was nothing for Joy to do but climb, unless she chose to be walked over, so up they went, she screaming and Gypsy pushing all the way.

"Now all you have to do is just to get up on the beams and jump off," said Gypsy, up there, and peering down from among the cobwebs, and flying through the air, almost before the words were off from her lips. But Joy wouldn't hear of getting into such a dusty place. She took two or three dainty little rolls on the hay, but the dried clover got into her hair and mouth and eyes, and she was perfectly sure there was a spider down her neck; so Gypsy was glad at last to get her safely down the ladder and out doors.

After that they tried the raft. Gypsy's raft was on a swamp below the orchard, and it was one of her favorite amusements to push herself about over the shallow water. But Joy was afraid of wetting her feet, or getting drowned, or something—she didn't exactly know what, so they gave

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that up.

Then Gypsy proposed a game of marbles on the garden path. She played a great deal with Tom, and played well. But Joy was shocked at the idea. That was a *boy's* play!

"What will you do, then?" said Gypsy, a little crossly. Joy replied in the tone of a martyr, that she was sure she did not know. Gypsy coughed, and walked up and down on the garden fence in significant silence.

Joy was not to go to school till Monday. Meantime she amused herself at home with her aunt, and Gypsy went as usual without her.

Saturday afternoon was the perfect pattern of an autumn afternoon. A creamy haze softened the sharp outline of the mountains, and lay cloudlike on the fields. The sunlight fell through it like sifted gold, the sky hung motionless and blue—that glowless, deepening blue that always made Gypsy feel, she said, "as if she must drink it right up"—and away over miles of field and mountain slope the maples crimsoned and flamed. [Pg 64]

Gypsy came home at noon with her hat hanging down her neck, her cheeks on fire, and panting like the old lady who died for want of breath; rushing up the steps, tearing open the door, and slamming into the parlor.

"Look here!—everybody—where are you? What do you think? Joy! Mother! There's going to be a great chestnutting."

"A what?" asked Joy, dropping her embroidery.

"A chestnutting, up at Mr. Jonathan Jones's trees, this afternoon at two o'clock. Did you ever hear anything so perfectly mag?"—mag being "Gypsy" for magnificent. [Pg 65]

"Who are to make the party?" asked her mother.

"Oh, I and Sarah Rowe and Delia Guest and—and Sarah Rowe and I," said Gypsy, talking very fast.

"And Joy," said Mrs. Breynton, gently.

"Joy, of course. That's what I came in to say."

"Oh, I don't care to go if you don't want me," said Joy, with a slighted look.

"But I do want you. Who said I didn't?"

"Well," said Joy, somewhat mollified, "I'll go if there aren't any spiders."

The two girls equipped themselves with tin pails, thick boots and a lunch-basket, and started off in high spirits at precisely half-past one. Joy had a remarkably vague idea of what she was going to do, but she felt unusually good-natured, as who could help feeling, with such a sunlight as that and such distant glories of the maple-trees, and such shadows melting on the mountains! [Pg 66]

"I want to go chestnotting, too-o-o!" called Winnie, disconsolate, in the doorway.

"No, Winnie, you couldn't, possibly," said Gypsy, pleasantly, sorry to disappoint him; but she was quite too well acquainted with Winnie to undertake a nutting party in his company.

"Oh, yes, do let's take him; he's so cunning," said Joy. Joy was totally unused to children, having never had brothers and sisters of her own, and since she had been there, Winnie had not happened to develop in any of his characteristic methods. Moreover, he had speedily discovered that Joy laughed at everything he said; even his most ordinary efforts in the line of wit; and that she gave him lumps of sugar when she thought of it; and therefore he had been on his best behavior whenever she was about. [Pg 67]

"He's so terribly cunning," repeated Joy; "I guess he won't do any hurt."

"I won't do any hurt," put in Winnie; "I'm real cunnin', Gypsy."

"You may do as you like, of course," said Gypsy. "I know he will make trouble and spoil all the party, and the girls would scold me 'cause I brought him. I've tried it times enough. If you're a mind to take care of him, I suppose you can; but you see if you don't repent your bargain."

Gypsy was perfectly right; she was not apt to be selfish in her treatment of Winnie. Such a tramp as this was not at all suited to his capacities of feet or temper, and if his mother had been there she would have managed to make him happy in staying home. But Winnie had received quite too much encouragement; he had no thought of giving up his bargain now. [Pg 68]

"Gypsy Breynton, you just needn't talk. I'm goin' chestnotting. I'm five years old. I'm goin' with cousin Joy, and I'll eat just as many chestnuts as you or anybody else, now!"

Gypsy had not the slightest doubt of that, and the three started off together.

They met Sarah Rowe and Delia on the way, and Gypsy introduced them.

"This is my cousin Joy, and this is Sarah. That one in the shaker bonnet is Delia Guest. Oh, I forgot. Joy's last name is Breynton, and Sarah is Sarah Rowe."

Joy bowed in her prim, cityish way, and Sarah and Delia were so much astonished thereat that they forgot to bow at all, and Delia stared rudely at her black dress. There was an awkward silence.

"Why don't you talk, somebody?" broke out Gypsy, getting desperate. "Anybody'd think we were three mummies in a museum."

"I don't think you're very perlite," put in Winnie, with a virtuous frown; "if you don't let me be a dummy, too, I'll tell mother, and that would make four." [Pg 69]

This broke the ice, and Sarah and Delia began to talk very fast about Monday's grammar lesson, and Miss Cardrew, and how Agnes Gaylord put a green snake in Phœbe Hunt's lunch-basket, and had to stay after school for it, and how it was confidently reported in mysterious whispers, at recess, that George Castles told Mr. Guernsey he was a regular old foggy, and Mr. Guernsey had sent home a letter to his father—not Mr. Guernsey's father, but George's; he had now, true's you live.

Now, to Joy, of course, none of this was very interesting, for she had not been into the schoolroom yet, and didn't know George Castles and Agnes Gaylord from Adam; and somehow or other it never occurred to Gypsy to introduce some subject in which they could all take part; and so somehow it came about that Joy fell behind with Winnie, and the three girls went on together all the way to Mr. Jones's grove. [Pg 70]

"Isn't it splendid?" called Gypsy, turning around. "I'm having a real nice time."

"Ye—es," said Joy, dolefully; "I guess I shall like it better when we get to the chestnuts."

Nothing particular happened on the way, except that when they were crossing Mr. Jonathan's plowed field, Winnie stuck in the mud tight, and when he was pulled out he left his shoes behind him; that he repeated this pleasing little incident six consecutive times within five minutes, varying it by lifting up his voice to weep, in Winnie's own accomplished style; and that Joy ended by carrying him in her arms the whole way.

Be it here recorded that Joy's ideal of "cherubic childhood," Winnie standing as representative cherub, underwent then and there several modifications. [Pg 71]

"Here we are!" cried Gypsy at last, clearing a low fence with a bound. "Just see the leaves and the sky. Isn't it just—oh!"

It was, indeed "just," and there it stopped; there didn't seem to be any more words to say about it. The chestnut-trees were clustered on a small, rocky knoll, their golden-brown leaves fluttering in the sunlight, their great, rich, bursting green burs bending down the boughs and dropping to the ground. Around them and among them a belt of maples stood up like blazing torches sharp against the sky—yellow, scarlet, russet, maroon, and crimson veined with blood, all netted and laced together, and floating down upon the wind like shattered jewels. Beyond, the purple mountains, and the creamy haze, and the silent sky.

It was a sight to make younger and older than these four girls stand still with deepening eyes. For about a half minute nobody spoke, and I venture to say the four different kinds of thoughts they had just then would make a pretty bit of a poem. [Pg 72]

Whatever they were, a fearfully unromantic and utterly indescribable howl from Winnie put an unceremonious end to them.

"O-oh! ugh! ah! Gypsy! Joy! I've got caught onto my buttons. My head's tippin' over the wrong way. Boo-hoo-hoo! Gypsy!"

The girls turned, and stood transfixed, and screamed till they lost their breath, and laughed till they cried.

Winnie, not being of a sentimental turn of mind, had regarded unmoved the flaming glories of the maple-leaves, and being influenced by the more earthly attractions of the chestnuts, had conceived the idea of seizing advantage of the girls' unpractical rapture to be the first on the field, and take entire and lawful possession thereof. Therefore had he made all manner of haste to crawl through the fence, and there had he stuck fast between two bars, balanced like a seesaw, his head going up and his feet going down, his feet going up and his head going down. [Pg 73]

Gypsy pulled him out as well as she could between her spasms of laughter.

"I don't see anythin' to laugh at," said Winnie, severely. "If you don't stop laughin' I'll go way off into the woods and be a Injun and never come home any more, and build me a house with a chimney to it, 'n' have baked beans for supper 'n' lots of chestnuts, and a gun and a pistol, and I won't give *you* any! Goin' to stop laughin'?"

It did not take long to pick up the nuts that the wind and the frost had already strewn upon the ground, and everybody enjoyed it but Joy. She pricked her unaccustomed fingers on the sharp burs, and didn't like the nuts when she had tasted of them.

"They're not the kind of chestnuts we have in Boston," she said; "ours are soft like potatoes." [Pg 74]

"Oh dear, oh dear, she thought they *grew boiled!*" and there was a great laugh. Joy colored, and did not relish it very much. Gypsy was too busy pulling off her burs to notice this. Presently the

ground was quite cleared.

"Now we must climb," said Gypsy. Gypsy was always the leader in their plays; always made all their plans. Sarah Rowe was her particular friend, and thought everything Gypsy did about right, and seldom opposed her. Delia never opposed anybody.

"Oh, I don't know how to climb," said Joy, shrinking and shocked.

"But I'll show you. *This* isn't anything; these branches are just as low as they can be. Here, I'll go first and help you, and Sarah can come next."

So up went Gypsy, nimble as a squirrel, over the low-hanging boughs that swayed with her weight.

"Come, Joy! I can't wait."

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Joy trembled and screamed, and came. She crawled a little ways up the lowest of the branches, and stopped, frightened by the motion.

"Catch hold of the upper bough and stand up; then you can walk it," called Gypsy, half out of sight now among the thick leaves.

Joy did as she was told—her feet slipped, the lower branch swung away from under her, and there she hung by both hands in mid-air. She was not more than four feet from the ground, and could have jumped down without the slightest difficulty, but that she was altogether too frightened to do. So she swung back and forth like a lantern, screaming as loud as she could scream.

Gypsy was peculiarly sensitive to anything funny, and she quite forgot that Joy was really frightened; indeed, used as she was to the science of tree-climbing all her life, that a girl could hang within four feet of the ground, and not know enough to jump, seemed to her perfectly incomprehensible.

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"Jump, Joy, jump!" she called, between her shouts of laughter.

"No, no, don't, you might break your arm," cried Delia Guest, who hadn't the slightest scruple about telling a falsehood if she were going to have something to laugh at by the means. Poor Joy was between Scylla and Charybdis. (If you don't know what that means, go and ask your big brothers; make them leave their chess and their newspapers on the spot, and read you what Mr. Virgil has to say about it.) If she hung on she would wrench her arms; if she jumped, she should break them. She hung, screaming, as long as she could, and dropped when she could hang no longer, looking about in an astonishment that was irresistibly funny, at finding herself alive and unhurt on the soft moss.

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The girls were still laughing too hard to talk. Joy stood up with a very red face and began to walk slowly away without a word.

"Where are you goin?" called Gypsy from the branches.

"Home," said Joy.

"Oh, don't; come, we won't laugh any mote. Come back, and you needn't climb. You can stay underneath and pick up while we throw down."

"No; I've had enough of it. I don't like chestnutting, and I don't like to be laughed at, either. I shan't stay any longer."

"I'm real sorry," said Gypsy. "I couldn't help laughing at you, you did look so terribly funny. Oh, dear, you ought to have seen yourself! I wish you wouldn't go. If you do, you can find the way alone, I suppose."

"I suppose so," said Joy, doubtfully.

"Well, you'd better take Winnie; you know you brought him, and I can't keep him here. It would spoil everything. Why, where is the child?"

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He was nowhere to be seen.

"Winnie! Win—nie!"

There was a great splash somewhere, and a curious bubbling sound, but where it came from nobody could tell. All at once Delia broke into something between a laugh and a scream.

"O—oh, I see! Look there—down in that ditch beyond the elder-bushes—quick!"

Rising up into the air out of the muddy ground, without any visible support whatever, were a pair of feet—Winnie's feet, unmistakably, because of their copper toes and tagless shoestrings—and kicking frantically back and forth. "Only that and nothing more."

"Why, where's the—rest of him?" said Joy, blankly. At this instant Gypsy darted past her with a sudden movement, flew down the knoll, and began to pull at the mysterious feet as if for dear life.

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"Why, what *is* she doing?" cried all the girls in a breath. As they spoke, up came Winnie entire



into the air, head down, dripping, drenched, black with mud, gasping, nearly drowned.

Gypsy shook him and pounded him on the back till his breath came, and when she found there was no harm done, she set him down on a stone, wiped the mud off from his face, and threw herself down on the grass as if she couldn't stand up another minute.

"Crying? Why, no; she's laughing. Did you ever?"

And down ran the girls to see what was the matter. At the foot of the knoll was a ditch of black mud. In the middle of this ditch was a round hole two feet deep, which had been dug at some time to collect water for the cattle pasturing in the field to drink. Into this hole, Winnie, in the course of some scientific investigations as to the depth of the water, had fallen, unfortunately, the wrong end foremost, and there he certainly would have drowned if Gypsy had not seen him just when she did.

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But he was not drowned; on the contrary, except for the mud, "as good as new;" and what might have been a tragedy, and a very sad one, had become, as Gypsy said, "too funny for anything." Winnie, however, "didn't see it," and began to cry lustily to go home.

"It's fortunate you were just going," said Gypsy. "I'll just fill my pail, and then I'll come along and very likely overtake you."

Probably Joy didn't fancy this arrangement any too well, but she remembered that it was her own plan to take the child; therefore she said nothing, and she and Winnie started off forlornly enough.

About five o'clock Gypsy walked slowly up the yard with her pail full of nuts, her hat in her hand, and a gay wreath of maple-leaves on her head. With her bright cheeks and twinkling eyes, and the broad leaves casting their gorgeous shadows of crimson and gold upon her forehead, she made a pretty picture—almost too pretty to scold.

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Tom met her at the door. Tom was very proud of Gypsy, and you could see in his eyes just then what he thought of her.

"What a little——" he began, all ready for a frolic, and stopped, and grew suddenly grave.

"Where are Joy and Winnie?"

"Haven't they come?"

"No."

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## CHAPTER V

### GYPSY MAKES A DISCOVERY



Gypsy turned very pale.

"Where are they?" persisted Tom. And just then her mother came out from the parlor.

"Why, Gypsy, where are the children?"

"I'm afraid Joy didn't know the way," said Gypsy, slowly.

"Did you let her come home alone?"

"Yes'm. She was tired of the chestnuts, and Winnie fell into the ditch. Oh, mother!"

Mrs. Breynton did not say one word. She began to put on her things very fast, and Tom hurried up to the store for his father. They hunted everywhere, through the fields and

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in the village; they inquired of every shop-keeper and every passer, but no one had seen a girl in black, with a little boy. There were plenty of girls, and an abundance of little boys to be found at a great variety of places, but most of the girls wore green-checked dresses, and the boys were in ragged jackets. Gypsy retraced every step of the way carefully from the roadside to the chestnut-trees. Mr. Jonathan Jones, delighted that he had actually caught somebody on his plowed land, came running down with a terrible scolding on his lips. But when he saw Gypsy's utterly wretched face and heard her story, he helped her instead to search the chestnut grove and the surrounding fields all over. But there was not a flutter of Joy's black dress, not an echo of Winnie's cry. The sunset was fading fast in the west, long shadows were slanting down the valley, and the blaze of the maples was growing faint. On the mountains it was quite blotted out by the gathering darkness.

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"What *shall* I do?" cried Gypsy, thinking, with a great sinking at her heart, how cold the nights

were now, and how early it grew quite dark.

"Hev you been 'long that ere cross-road 't opens aout through the woods onto the three-mile square?" asked Mr. Jonathan. "I've been a thinkin' on't as heow the young uns might ha took that ere ef they was flustered beout knowin' the way neow mos' likely."

"Oh, what a splendid, good man you are!" said Gypsy, jumping up and down, and clapping her hands with delight. "Nobody thought of that, and I'll never run over your plowed-up land again as long as ever I live, and I'm going right to tell father, and you see if I do!"

Her father wondered that they had not thought of it, and old Billy was harnessed in a hurry, and they started for the three-mile cross-roads. Gypsy went with them. Nobody spoke to her except to ask questions now and then as to the precise direction the children took, and the time they started for home. Gypsy leaned back in the carriage, peering out into the gloom on either side, calling Joy's name now and then, or Winnie's, and busy with her own wretched thoughts. Whatever they were, she did not very soon forget them. [Pg 85]

It was very dark now, and very cold; the crisp frost glistened on the grass, and an ugly-looking red moon peered over the mountain. It seemed to Gypsy like a great, glaring eye, that was singling her out and following her, and asking, "Where are Joy and Winnie?" over and over. "Gypsy Breynton, Gypsy Breynton, where are Joy and Winnie?" She turned around with her back to it, so as not to see it. [Pg 86]

Once they passed an old woman on the road hobbling along with a stick. Mr. Breynton reined up and asked if she had seen anything of two children.

"Haow?" said the old woman.

"Have you seen anything of two children along here?"

"Chilblains? No, I don't have none this time o' year, an' I don't know what business it is o' yourn, nuther."

"Children!" shouted Mr. Breynton; "two *children*, a boy and a girl."

"Speak a little louder, can't you? I'm deaf," said the old woman.

"Have you—seen anything—of—two—children—a little boy, and a girl in black?"

"Chickens? black chickens?" said the old woman, with an angry shake of the head; "no, I hain't got no chickens for yer. My pullet's white, and I set a heap on't an' wouldn't sell it to nobody as come askin' oncivil questions of a lone, lorn widdy. Besides, the cat eat it up las' week, feathers 'n' all." [Pg 87]

Mr. Breynton concluded there was not much information to be had in that quarter, and drove on.

A little way farther they came across a small boy turning somersets in the ditch. Mr. Breynton stopped again and repeated his questions.

"How many of 'em?" asked the boy, with a thoughtful look.

"Two, a boy and a girl."

"Two?"

"Yes."

"A boy and a girl?"

"Yes."

"You said one was a boy and t'other was a girl?" repeated the small boy, looking very bright.

"Yes. The boy was quite small, and the girl wore a black dress. They're lost, and we're trying to find them." [Pg 88]

"Be you, now, really!" said the small boy, apparently struck with sudden and overwhelming admiration. "That is terribly good in you. Seems to me now I reckon I see two young uns 'long here somewhars, didn't I? Le' me see."

"Oh, where, where?" cried Gypsy. "Oh, I'm so glad! Did the little boy have on a plaid jacket and brown coat?"

"Waal, now, seems as ef 'twas somethin' like that."

"And the girl wore a hat and a long veil?" pursued Gypsy, eagerly.

"Was she about the height of this girl here, and whereabouts did you see her?" asked Tom.

"Waal, couldn't tell exactly; somewhars between here an' the village, I reckon. Seems to me she did have a veil or suthin'."

"And she was real pale?" cried Gypsy, "and the boy was dreadfully muddy?"

"Couldn't say as to that"—the small boy began to hesitate and look very wise—"don't seem to remember the mud, and on the whole, I ain't partiklar sure 'bout the veil. Oh, come to think on't, [Pg 89]

it wasn't a gal; it was a deaf old woman, an' there warn't no boy nowadays."

Well was it for the small boy that, as the carriage rattled on, he took good care to be out of the reach of Tom's whip-lash.

It grew darker and colder, and the red moon rode on silently in the sky. They had come now to the opening of the cross-road, but there were no signs of the children—only the still road and the shadows under the trees.

"Hark! what's that?" said Mr. Breynton, suddenly. He stopped the carriage, and they all listened. A faint, sobbing sound broke the silence. Gypsy leaned over the side of the carriage, peering in among the trees where the shadow was blackest.

"Father, may I get out a minute?"

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She sprang over the wheel, ran into the cross-road, into a clump of bushes, pushed them aside, screamed for joy.

"Here they are, here they are—quick, quick! Oh, Winnie Breynton, do just wake up and let me look at you! Oh, Joy, I *am* so glad!"

And there on the ground, true enough, sat Joy, exhausted and frightened and sobbing, with Winnie sound asleep in her lap.

"I didn't know the way, and Winnie kept telling me wrong, and, oh, I was *so* tired, and I sat down to rest, and it is so dark, and—and oh, I thought nobody'd ever come!"

And poor Joy sprang into her uncle's arms, and cried as hard as she could cry.

Joy was thoroughly tired and chilled; it seemed that she had had to carry Winnie in her arms a large part of the way, and the child was by no means a light weight. Evidently, Master Winnie had taken matters pretty comfortably throughout, having had, Joy said, the utmost confidence in his own piloting, declaring "it was just the next house, right around the corner, Joy; how stupid in her not to know! he knew all the whole of it just as well as anything," and was none the worse for the adventure. Gypsy tried to wake him up, but he doubled up both fists in his dream, and greeted her with the characteristic reply, "Naughty!" and that was all that was to be had from him. So he was rolled up warmly on the carriage floor; they drove home as fast as Billy would go, and the two children, after a hot supper and a great many kisses, were put snugly to bed.

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After Joy was asleep, Mrs. Breynton said she would like to see Gypsy a few moments downstairs.

"Yes'm," said Gypsy, and came slowly down. They sat down in the dining-room alone. Mrs. Breynton drew up her rocking-chair by the fire, and Gypsy took the cricket.

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There was a silence. Gypsy had an uncomfortable feeling that her mother was waiting for her to speak first. She kicked off her slipper, and put it on; she rattled the tongs, and pounded the hearth with the poker; she smoothed her hair out of her eyes, and folded up her handkerchief six times; she looked up sideways at her mother; then she began to cough. At last she broke out—

"I suppose you want me to say I'm sorry. Well, I am. But I don't see why I'm to blame, I'm sure."

"I haven't said you were to blame," said her mother, quietly. "You know I have had no time yet to hear what happened this afternoon, and I thought you would like to tell me."

"Well," said Gypsy, "I'd just as lief;" and Gypsy looked a little, a very little, as if she hadn't just as lief at all. "You see, 'in the first place and commencing,' as Winnie says, Joy wanted to take him. Now, she doesn't know anything about that child, not a thing, and if she'd taken him to places as much as I have, and had to lug him home screaming all the way, I guess she would have stopped wanting to, pretty quick, and I always take Winnie when I can, you know now, mother; and then Joy wouldn't talk going over, either."

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"Whom did she walk with?" interrupted Mrs. Breynton.

"Why, with Winnie, I believe. Of course she might have come on with Sarah and Delia and me if she'd wanted to, but—I don't know—"

"Very well," said Mrs. Breynton, "go on."

"Then, you see, Joy didn't like chestnuts, and couldn't climb, and—oh, Winnie kept losing his shoes, and got stuck in the fence, and you never *saw* anything so funny! And then Joy couldn't climb, and she just hung there swinging; and now, mother, I couldn't help laughing to save me, it was so exactly like a great pendulum with hoops on. Well, Joy was mad 'cause we laughed and all, and so she said she'd go home. Then—let me see—oh, it was after that, Winnie tumbled into the ditch, splash in! with his feet up in the air, and I thought I should *go off* to see him."

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"But what about Joy?"

"Oh, well, Joy took Winnie—he was so funny and muddy, you don't know—'cause she brought him, you know, and so they came home, and I thought she knew the way as much as could be, and I guess that's all."

"Well," said her mother, after a pause, "what do you think about it?"

"About what?"

"Do you think you have done just right, Gypsy?"

"I don't see why not," said Gypsy, uneasily. "It was perfectly fair Joy should take Winnie, and of course I wasn't bound to give up my nutting party and come home, just for her." [Pg 95]

"I'm not speaking of what is *fair*, Gypsy. Strictly speaking, Joy had her *rights*, and you had yours, and the arrangement might have been called fair enough. But what do you think honestly, Gypsy—were you a little selfish?"

Gypsy opened her eyes wide. Honestly she might have said she didn't know. She was by nature a generous child, and the charge of selfishness was seldom brought against her. Plenty of faults she had, but they were faults of quick temper and carelessness. Of deliberate selfishness it had scarcely ever occurred to her that anybody could think her capable. So she echoed—

"Selfish!" in simple surprise.

"Just look at it," said her mother, gently; "Joy was your visitor, a stranger, feeling awkward and unhappy, most probably, with the girls whom you knew so well, and not knowing anything about the matters which you talked over. You might, might you not, have by a little effort made her soon feel at home and happy? Instead of that, you went off with the girls, and let her fall behind, with nobody but Winnie to talk to." [Pg 96]

Gypsy's face turned to a sudden crimson.

"Then, a nutting party was a new thing to Joy, and with the care of Winnie and all, it is no wonder she did not find it very pleasant, and she had never climbed a tree in her life. This was her first Saturday afternoon in Yorkbury, and she was, no doubt, feeling lonely and homesick, and it made her none the happier to be laughed at for not doing something she had not the slightest idea how to do. Was it quite generous to let her start off alone, over a strange road, with the care of a crying——"

"And muddy," put in Gypsy, with twinkling eyes, "from head to foot, black as a shoe." [Pg 97]

"And muddy child?" finished Mrs. Breynton, smiling in spite of herself.

"But Joy wanted to take him, and I told her so. It was her own bargain."



"I know that. But we are not speaking of bargains, Gypsy; we are speaking of what is kind and generous. Now, how does it strike you?"

"It strikes me," said Gypsy, in her honest way, after a moment's pause—"it strikes me that I'm a horrid selfish old thing, and I've lived twelve years and just found it out; there now!"

Just as Gypsy was going to bed she turned around with the lamp in her hand, her great eyes dreaming away in the brownest of brown studies.

"Mother, is it selfish to have upper drawers, and front sides, and things?" [Pg 98]

"What are you talking about, Gypsy?"

"Why, don't my upper drawers, and the front side of the bed, and all that, belong to me, and must I give them up to Joy?"

"It is not necessary," said her mother, laughing. But Gypsy fancied there was a slight emphasis on the last word.

Joy was sound asleep, and dreaming that Winnie was a rattlesnake and Gypsy a prairie-dog, when somebody gave her a little pinch and woke her up.

"Oh—why—what's the matter?" said Joy.

"Look here, you might just as well have the upper bureau drawers, you know, and I don't care anything about the front side of the bed. Besides, I wish I hadn't let you come home alone this afternoon."

"Well, you *are* the funniest!" said Joy.

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## CHAPTER VI

### WHO PUT IT IN?



On Monday Joy went to school. Gypsy had been somewhat astonished, a little hurt, and a little angry, at hearing her say, one day, that she "didn't think it was a fit place for her to go—a high school where all the poor people went."

But, fit or not, it was the the only school to be had, and Joy must go. Perhaps, on some accounts, Mrs. Breynton would have preferred sending the children to a private school; but the only one in town, and the one which Gypsy had attended until this term, was broken up by the marriage of the teacher, so she had no choice in the matter. The boys at the high school were, some of them, rude, but the girls for the most part were quiet, well-behaved, and lady-like, and the instruction was undoubtedly vastly superior to that of a smaller school. As Gypsy said, "you had to put into it and study like everything, or else she gave you a horrid old black mark, and then you felt nice when it was read aloud

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at examination, didn't you?"

"I wouldn't care," said Joy.

"Why, Joyce Miranda Breynton!" said Gypsy. But Joy declared she wouldn't, and it was very soon evident that she didn't. She had not the slightest fancy for her studies; neither had Gypsy, for that matter; but Gypsy had been brought up to believe it was a disgrace to get bad marks. Joy had not. She hurried through her lessons in the quickest possible fashion, anyhow, so as to get through, and out to play; and limped through her recitations as well as she could. Once Gypsy saw—and she was thoroughly shocked to see—Joy peep into the leaves of her grammar when Miss Cardrew's eyes were turned the other way.

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Altogether, matters did not go on very comfortably. Joy's faults were for the most part those from which Gypsy was entirely free, and to which she had a special and inborn aversion. On the other hand, many of Gypsy's failings were not natural to Joy. Gypsy was always forgetting things she ought to remember. Joy seldom did. Gypsy was thoughtless, impulsive, always into mischief, out of it, sorry for it, and in again. Joy did wrong deliberately, as she did everything else, and did not become penitent in a hurry. Gypsy's temper was like a flash of lightning, hot and fierce and melting right away in the softest of summer rains. When Joy was angry she *sulked*. Joy was precise and neat about everything. Gypsy was not. Then Joy kept still, and Gypsy talked; Joy told *parts* of stories, Gypsy told the whole; Joy had some foolish notions about money and dresses and jewelry, on which Gypsy looked with the most supreme contempt—not on the dresses, but the notions. Therefore there was plenty of material for rubs and jars, and of all sad things to creep into a happy house, these rubs and jars are the saddest.

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One day both the girls woke full of mischief. It was a bracing November day, cool as an ice-cream and clear as a whistle. The air sparkled like a fountain of golden sands, and was as full of oxygen as it could hold; and oxygen, you must know, is at the bottom of a great deal of the happiness and misery, goodness and badness, of this world.

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"I tell *you* if I don't feel like cutting up!" said Gypsy, on the way to school. Gypsy didn't look unlike "cutting up" either, walking along there with her satchel swung over her left shoulder, her turban set all askew on her bright, black hair, her cheeks flushed from the jumping of fences and running of races that had been going on since she left the house, and that saucy twinkle in her eyes. Joy was always somewhat more demure, but she looked, too, that morning, as if she were quite as ready to have a good time as any other girl.

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"Do you know," said Gypsy, confidentially, as they went up the schoolhouse steps, "I feel precisely as if I should make Miss Cardrew a great deal of trouble to-day; don't you?"

"What does she do to you if you do?"

"Oh, sometimes she keeps you after school, and then again she tells Mr. Guernsey, and then there are the bad marks. Miss Melville—she's my old teacher that married Mr. Hallam, she was just silly enough!—well, she used to just look at you, and never open her lips, and I guess you

wished you hadn't pretty quick."

It was very early yet, but quite a crowd was gathered in the schoolhouse, as was the fashion on cool mornings. The boys were stamping noisily over the desks, and grouped about the stove in No. 1. No. 1. was the large room where the whole school gathered for prayer. A few of the girls were there—girls who laughed rudely and talked loudly, none of them Gypsy's friends. Tom never liked to have Gypsy linger about in No. 1, before or after school hours; he said it was not the place for her, and Tom was there that morning, knotting his handsome brows up into a very decided frown, when he saw her in the doorway, with Joy peeping over her shoulder. So Gypsy—somewhat reluctantly, it must be confessed, for the boys seemed to be having a good time, and with boys' good times she had a most unconquerable sympathy—went up with Joy into Miss Cardrew's recitation room. Nobody was there. A great, empty schoolroom, with its rows of silent seats and closed desks, with power to roam whithersoever you will, and do whatsoever you choose, is a great temptation. The girls ran over the desks, and looked into the desks, jumped over the settees, and knocked down the settees, put out the fire and built it up again, from the pure luxury of doing what they wanted to, in a place where they usually had to do what they didn't want to. They sat in Miss Cardrew's chair, and peeped into her desk; they ate apples and snapped peanut shells on the very platform where sat the spectacled and ogre-eyed committee on examination days; they drew all manner of pictures of funny old women without any head, and old men without any feet, on the awful blackboard, and played "tag" round the globes. Then they stopped for want of breath.

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"I wish there were something to do," sighed Gypsy; "something real splendid and funny."

"I knew a girl once, and she drew a picture of the teacher on the board in green chalk," suggested Joy; "only she lost her recess for a whole week after it."

"That wouldn't do. Besides, pictures are too common; everybody does those. Boys put pins in the seats, and cut off the legs of the teacher's chair, and all that. I don't know as I care to tumble Miss Cardrew over—wouldn't she look funny, though!—'cause mother wouldn't like it. Couldn't we make the stove smoke, or put pepper in the desks, or—let me see."

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"Dress up something somehow," said Joy; "there's the poker."

Gypsy shook her head.

"Delia Guest did that last term, 'n' the old thing—I mean the poker, not Delia—went flat down in the corner behind the stove—flat, just as Miss Melville was coming in, and lay there in the wood-pile, and nobody knew there was a single sign of a thing going on. I guess you better believe Delia felt cheap!—hark! what's that?"

It was a faint miaow down in the yard. The girls ran to the window and looked out.

"A kitten!"

"The very thing!"

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"I'm going right down to get her."

Down they ran, both of them, in a great hurry, and brought the creature up. The poor thing was chilled, and hungry, and frightened. They took her up to the stove, and Gypsy warmed her in her apron, and Joy fed her with cookies from her lunch-basket, till she curled her head under her paws with a merry purr, all ready for a nap, and evidently without the slightest suspicion that Gypsy's lap was not foreordained, and created for her especial habitation as long as she might choose to remain there.

"Joy," said Gypsy, suddenly, "I've thought of something."

"So have I."

"To dress her——"

"Up in a handkerchief."

"And things."

"I know it."

"And put her——"

"Yes! into Miss Cardrew's desk!"

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"Won't it be just——"

"Splendid! Hurry up!"

They "hurried up" in good earnest, choking down their laughter so that nobody downstairs might hear it. Joy took her pretty, purple-bordered handkerchief and tied it over the poor kitten's head like a nightcap, so tight that, pull and scratch as she might, pussy could not get it off. Gypsy's black silk apron was tied about her, like a long baby-dress, a pair of mittens were fastened on her arms, and a pink silk scarf around her throat. When all was done, Gypsy held her up, and trotted her on her knee. Anybody who has ever dressed up a cat like a baby, knows how indescribably funny a sight it is. It seemed as if the girls could never stop laughing—it does not take much to

make girls laugh. At last there was a commotion in the entry below.

"It's the girls!—quick, quick!"

Gypsy, trying to get up, tripped on her dress and fell, and away flew the kitten, all tangled in the apron, making for the door as fast as an energetic kitten could go. [Pg 110]

"She'll be downstairs, and maybe Miss Cardrew's there! *Oh!*"

Joy sprang after the creature, caught her by the very tip end of her tail just as she was preparing to pounce down the stairs, and ran with her to Miss Cardrew's desk.

"Put her in—quick, quick!"

"O-oh, she won't lie still!"

"Where's the lunch-basket? Give me some biscuit—there! I hear them on the stairs!"

The kitten began to mew piteously, struggling to get out with all her might. Down went the desk-cover on her paws.

"There now, lie still! Oh, *hear* her mew! What shall we do?"

Quick footsteps were on the stairs—halfway up; merry laughter, and a dozen voices.

"Here's the biscuit. Here, kitty, kitty, *poor* kit-ty, do *please* to lie still and eat it! Oh, Joy Breynton, did you ever?" [Pg 111]

"There, she's eating!"

"Shut the desk—hurry!"

When the girls came in, Joy and Gypsy were in their seats, looking over the arithmetic lesson. Joy's book was upside down, and Gypsy was intensely interested in the preface.

Miss Cardrew came in shortly after, and stood warming her fingers at the stove, nodding and smiling at the girls. All was still so far in the desk. Miss Cardrew went up and laid down her gloves and pushed back her chair. Joy coughed under her breath, and Gypsy looked up out of the corners of her eyes.

"Mr. Guernsey is not well to-day," began Miss Cardrew, standing by the desk, "and we shall not be able to meet as usual in No. 1 for prayers. It has been thought best that each department should attend devotions in its own room. You can get out your Bibles." [Pg 112]

Gypsy looked at Joy, and Joy looked at Gypsy.

Miss Cardrew sat down. It was very still. A muffled scratching sound broke into the pause. Miss Cardrew looked up carelessly, as if to see where it came from; it stopped.

"She'll open her desk now," whispered Joy, stooping to pick up a book.

"See here, Joy, I almost wish we hadn't——"

"We will read the fourteenth chapter of John," spoke up Miss Cardrew, with her Bible in her hand. No, she hadn't opened her desk. The Bible lay upon the outside of it.

"Oh, if that biscuit'll only last till she gets through praying!"

"Hush-sh! She's looking this way."

Miss Cardrew began to read. She had read just four verses, when—

"Miaow!" [Pg 113]

Gypsy and Joy were trying very hard to find the place. Miss Cardrew looked up and around the room. It was quite still. She read two verses more.

"Mi-aow! mi-aow-aow!"

Miss Cardrew looked up again, round the room, over the platform, under the desk, everywhere but *in* it.

"Girls, did any of you make that sound?"

Nobody had. Miss Cardrew began to read again. All at once Joy pulled Gypsy's sleeve.

"Just look there!"

"Where?"

"Trickling down the outside of the desk!"

"You don't suppose she's upset the——"

"Ink-bottle—yes."

Miss Cardrew was in the tenth verse, and the room was very still. Right into the stillness there broke again a distinct, prolonged, dolorous—

And this time Miss Cardrew laid down her Bible and lifted the desk-cover.

It is reported in school to this day that Miss Cardrew jumped.

Out flew the kitten, like popped corn from a shovel, glared over the desk in the nightcap and black apron, leaped down, and flew, all dripping with ink, down the aisle, out of the door, and bouncing downstairs like an India-rubber ball.

Delia Guest and one or two of the other girls screamed. Miss Cardrew flung out some books and papers from the desk. It was too late; they were dripping, and drenched, and black. The teacher quietly wiped some spots of ink from her pretty blue merino, and there was an awful silence.

"Girls," said Miss Cardrew then, in her grave, stern way, "who did this?"

Nobody answered.

"Who put that cat in my desk?" repeated Miss Cardrew.

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It was perfectly still. Gypsy's cheeks were scarlet. Joy was looking carelessly about the room, scanning the faces of the girls, as if she were trying to find out who was the guilty one.

"It is highly probable that the cat tied herself into an apron, opened the desk and shut the cover down on herself," said Miss Cardrew; "we will look into this matter. Delia Guest, did you put her in?"

"No'm—he, he! I guess I—ha, ha!—didn't," said Delia.

"Next!"—and down the first row went Miss Cardrew, asking the same question of every girl, and the second row, and the third. Gypsy sat on the end of the fourth settee.

"Gypsy Breynton, did you put the kitten in my desk?"

"No'm, I didn't," said Gypsy; which was true enough. It was Joy who did that part of it.

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"Did you have anything to do with the matter, Gypsy?" Perhaps Miss Cardrew remembered that Gypsy had had something to do with a few other similar matters since she had been in school.

"Yes'm," said honest Gypsy, with crimson face and hanging head, "I did."

"What did you do?"

"I put on the apron and the tippet, and—I gave her the biscuit. I—thought she'd keep still till prayers were over," said Gypsy, faintly.

"But you did not put her in the desk?"

"No'm."

"And you know who did?"

"Yes'm."

Miss Cardrew never asked her scholars to tell of each other's wrong-doings. If she had, it would have made no difference to Gypsy. She had shut up her lips tight and not another word would she have said for anybody. She had told the truth about herself, but she was under no obligations to bring Joy into trouble. Joy might do as she liked.

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"Gypsy Breynton will lose her recesses for a week and stay an hour after school tonight," said Miss Cardrew. "Joy, did you put the kitten in my desk?"

"No, ma'am," said Joy, boldly.

"Nor have anything to do with it?"

"No, ma'am," said Joy, without the slightest change of color.

"Next!—Sarah Rowe."

Of course Sarah had not, nor anybody else. Miss Cardrew let the matter drop there and went on with her reading.

Gypsy sat silent and sorry, her eyes on her Testament. Joy tried to whisper something to her once, but Gypsy turned away with a gesture of impatience and disgust. This thing Joy had done had shocked her so that she felt as if she could not bear the sight of her face or touch of her hand. Never since she was a very little child had Gypsy been known to say what was not true. All her words were like her eyes—clear as sunbeams.

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At dinner Joy did all the talking. Mrs. Breynton asked Gypsy what was the matter, but Gypsy said "Nothing." If Joy did not choose to tell of the matter, she would not.

"What makes you so cross?" said Joy in the afternoon; "nobody can get a word out of you, and you don't look at me any more than if I weren't here."

"I don't see how you can *ask* such a question!" exploded Gypsy, with flashing eyes. "You know



what you've done as well as I do."

"No, I don't," grumbled Joy; "just 'cause I didn't tell Miss Cardrew about that horrid old cat—I wish we'd let the ugly thing alone!—I don't see why you need treat me as if I'd been murdering somebody and were going to be hung for it. Besides, I said 'Over the left' to myself just after I'd told her, and I didn't want to lose my recess if you did." [Pg 119]

Gypsy shut up her pink lips tight, and made no answer.

Joy went out to play at recess, and Gypsy stayed in alone and studied. Joy went home with the girls in a great frolic after school, and Gypsy stayed shut up in the lonely schoolroom for an hour, disgraced and miserable. But I have the very best of reasons for thinking that she wasn't nearly as miserable as Joy.

Just before supper the two girls were sitting drearily together in the dining-room, when the door-bell rang.

"It's Miss Cardrew!" said Joy, looking out of the window; "what do you suppose she wants?"

Gypsy looked up carelessly; she didn't very much care. She had told Miss Cardrew all she had to tell and received her punishment. [Pg 120]

As for her mother, she would have gone to her with the whole story that noon, if it hadn't been for Joy's part in it.

"What is that she has in her hand, I wonder?" said Joy uneasily, peeping through a crack in the door as Miss Cardrew passed through the entry; "why, I declare! if it isn't a handkerchief, as true as you live—all—inky!"

When Miss Cardrew had gone, Mrs. Breynton came out of the parlor with a very grave face, a purple-bordered handkerchief in her hand; it was all spotted with ink, and the initials J. M. B. were embroidered on it.

"Joy."

Joy came out of the corner slowly.

"Come here a minute."

Joy went and the door was shut. Just what happened that next half hour Gypsy never knew. Joy came upstairs at the end of it, red-eyed and crying, and gentle. [Pg 121]

Gypsy was standing by the window.

"Gypsy."

"Well."

"I love auntie dearly, now I guess I do."

"Of course," said Gypsy; "everybody does."

"I hadn't the least idea it was so wicked—not the least *idea*. Mother used to——"

But Joy broke off suddenly, with quivering, crimson lips.

What that mother used to do Gypsy never asked; Joy never told her—either then, or at any other time.

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## CHAPTER VII

### PEACE MAYTHORNE'S ROOM



"Tis, too."

"It isn't, either."

"I know just as well as you."

"No you don't any such a thing. You've lived up here in this old country place all your life, and you don't know any more about the fashions than Mrs. Surly."

"But I know it's perfectly ridiculous to rig up in white chenille and silver pins, when anybody's in such deep mourning as you. I wouldn't do it for anything."

"I'll take care of myself, if you please, miss."

"And I know another thing, too."

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"You do? A whole thing?"

"Yes, I do. I know you're just as proud as you can be, and I've heard more'n one person say so. All the girls think you're dreadfully stuck up about your dresses and things—so there!"

"I don't care what the girls think, or you either. I guess I'll be glad when father comes home and I get out of this house!"

Joy fastened the gaudy silver pins with a jerk into the heavy white chenille that she was tying about her throat and hair, turned herself about before the glass with a last complacent look, and walked, in her deliberate, cool, provoking way, from the room. Gypsy got up, and—slammed the door on her.

Very dignified proceedings, certainly, for girls twelve and thirteen years old. An unspeakably important matter to quarrel about—a piece of white chenille! Angry people, be it remembered, are not given to over-much dignity, and how many quarrels are of the slightest importance?

[Pg 124]

Yet the things these two girls found to dispute, and get angry, and get miserable, and make the whole family miserable over, were so ridiculously petty that I hardly expect to be believed in telling of them. The front side of the bed, the upper drawer in the bureau, a hair-ribbon, who should be helped first at the table, who was the best scholar, which was the more stylish color, drab or green, and whether Vermont wasn't a better State than Massachusetts—such matters might very appropriately be the subjects of the dissensions of young ladies in pinafores and pantalettes.

Yet I think you will bear me witness, girls, some of you—ah, I know you by the sudden pink in your cheeks—who have gone to live with a cousin, or had a cousin live with you, or whose mother has adopted an orphan, or taken charge of a missionary's daughter, or in some way or other have been brought for the first time in your life into daily and hourly collision with another young will just as strong and unbending as yours—can't you bear me witness that, in these little contests between Joy and Gypsy, I am telling no "made-up stories," but sad, simple fact?

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If you can't, I am very glad of it.

No, as I said before, matters were not going on at all comfortably; and every week seemed to make them worse. Wherein lay the trouble, and how to prevent it, neither of the girls had as yet exerted themselves to think.

A week or two after the adventures that befell that unfortunate kitten, something happened which threatened to make the breach between Gypsy and Joy of a very serious nature. It began, as a great many other serious things begin, in a very small and rather funny affair.

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Mrs. Surly, who has been spoken of as Gypsy's particular aversion, was a queer old lady with green glasses, who lived opposite Mr. Breynton's, who felt herself particularly responsible for Gypsy's training, and gave her good advice, double measure, pressed down and running over. One morning it chanced that Gypsy was playing "stick-knife" with Tom out in the front yard, and that Mrs. Surly beheld her from her parlor window, and that Mrs. Surly was shocked. She threw up her window and called in an awful voice—

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"Jemima Breynton!"

Now you might about as well challenge Gypsy to a duel as call her Jemima; so—

"What do you want?" she said, none too respectfully.

"I have something to say to you, Jemima Breynton."

"Say ahead," said Gypsy, under her breath, and did not stir an inch. Distance certainly lent enchantment to the view when Mrs. Surly was in the case.

"Does your ma allow you to be so bold as to play boys' games *with* boys, right out in sight of folks?" vociferated Mrs. Surly.

"Certainly," nodded Gypsy. "It's your turn, Tom."

"Well, it's my opinion, Gypsy Breynton, you're a romp. You're nothing but a romp, and if *I* was your ma—"

Tom dropped his knife just then, stood up and looked at Mrs. Surly. For reasons best known to herself, Mrs. Surly shut the window and contented herself with glaring through the glass. [Pg 128]

Now, Joy had stood in the doorway and been witness to the scene, and moreover, having been reproved by her aunt for something or other that morning, she felt ill-humored, and very ready to find fault in her turn.

"I think it's just so, anyway," she said. "*I* wouldn't be seen playing stick-knife for a good deal."

"And I wouldn't be seen telling lies!" retorted Gypsy, sorry for it the minute she had said it. Then there followed a highly interesting dialogue of about five minutes' length, and of such a character that Tom speedily took his departure.

Now it came about that Gypsy, as usual, was the first ready to "make up," and she turned over plan after plan in her mind, to find something pleasant she could do for Joy. At last, as the greatest treat she could think of to offer her, she said: [Pg 129]

"I'll tell you what! Let's go down to Peace Maythorne's. I do believe I haven't taken you there since you've been in Yorkbury."

"Who's Peace Maythorne?" asked Joy, sulkily.

"Well, she's the person I love just about best of anybody."

"Best of anybody!"

"Oh, mother, of course, and Tom, and Winnie, and father, and all those. Relations don't count. But I do love her as well as anybody but mother—and Tom, and—well, anyway, I love her dreadfully."

"What is she, a woman, or a girl, or what?"

"She's an angel," said Gypsy.

"What a goose you are!"

"Very likely; but whether I'm a goose or not, she's an angel. I look for the wings every time I see her. She has the sweetest little way of keeping 'em folded up, and you're always on the jump, thinking you see 'em." [Pg 130]

"How you talk! I've a good mind to go and see her."

"All right."

So away they went, as pleasant as a summer's day, merrily chatting.

"But I don't think angels are very nice, generally," said Joy, doubtingly. "They preach. Does Peace Maythorne preach? I shan't like her if she does."

"Peace preach! Not like her! You'd better know what you're talking about, if you're going to talk," said Gypsy, with heightened color.

"Dear me, you take a body's head off. Well, if she *should* preach, I shall come right home."

They had come now to the village, where were the stores and the post-office, the bank, and some handsome dwelling-houses. Also the one paved sidewalk of Yorkbury, whereon the young people did their promenading after school in the afternoon. Joy always fancied coming here, gay in her white chenille and white ribbons, and dainty parasol lined with white silk. There is nothing so showy as showy mourning, and Joy made the most of it. [Pg 131]

"Why, where are you going?" she exclaimed at last. Gypsy had turned away from the fashionable street, and the handsome houses, and the paved sidewalk.

"To Peace Maythorne's."

"*This* way?"

"This way."

The street into which Gypsy had turned was narrow and not over clean; the houses unpainted and low. As they walked on it grew narrower and dirtier, and the houses became tenement houses only.

"Do, for pity's sake, hurry and get out of here," said Joy, daintily holding up her dress. Gypsy walked on and said nothing. Red-faced women in ragged dresses began to cluster on the steps; muddy-faced children screamed and quarreled in the road. At the door of a large tenement building, somewhat neater than the rest, but miserable enough, Gypsy stopped. [Pg 132]

"What are you stopping for?" said Joy.

"This is where she lives."

"*Here?*"

"I just guess she does," put in a voice from behind; it was Winnie, who had followed them on tiptoe, unknown to them, all the way. "She's got a funny quirk in her back, 'n' she lies down pretty much. That's her room up there to the top of the house. It's a real nice place, I tell *you*. They have onions mos' every day. Besides, I saw a little boy here one time when I was comin' 'long with mother, 'n' he was smokin' some tobaccer. He said he'd give it to me for two napples, and mother just wouldn't let me."

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"*Here*—a cripple!" exclaimed Joy.

"Here, and a cripple," said Gypsy, in a queer tone, looking very straight at Joy.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" broke out Joy, "playing such a trick on me. Do you suppose *I'm* going into such a place as this, to see an old beggar—a hunch-backed beggar?"

Gypsy turned perfectly white. When she was very angry, too angry to speak, she always turned white. It was some seconds before she could find her voice.

"*A hunch-backed beggar!* Peace? How *dare* you say such things of Peace Maythorne? Joy Breynton, I'll never forgive you for this as long as I live—never!"

The two girls looked at each other. Just at that moment I am afraid there was something in their hearts answering to that forbidden word, that terrible word—hate. Ah, we feel so safe from it in our gentle, happy, untempted lives, just as safe as they felt once. Remember this, girls: *when Love goes out, Hate comes in*. In your heart there stands an angel, watching, silent, on whose lips are kindly words, in whose hands are patient, kindly deeds, whose eyes see "good in everything," something to love where love is hardest, some generous, gentle way to show that love when ways seem closed. In your heart, too, away down in its darkest corner, all forgotten, perhaps, by you, crouches something with face too black to look upon, something that likewise watches and waits with horrible patience, if perhaps the angel, with folded wing and drooping head, may be driven out. It is never empty, this curious, fickle heart. One or the other must stand there, king of it. One or the other—and in the twinkling of an eye the change is made, from angel to fiend, from fiend to angel; just which you choose.

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Joy broke away from her cousin in a passion. Gypsy flew into the door of the miserable house, up the stairs two steps at a time, to the door of a low room in the second story, and rushed in without knocking.

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"Oh, Peace Maythorne!"

The cripple lying on the bed turned her pale face to the door, her large, quiet eyes blue with wonder.

"Why, Gypsy! What is the matter?"

Gypsy's face was white still, very white. She shut the door loudly, and sat down on the bed with a jar that shook it all over. A faint expression of pain crossed the face of Peace.

"Oh, I didn't mean to—it was cruel in me! How *could* I? Have I hurt you *very* badly, Peace?" Gypsy slipped down upon the floor, the color coming into her face now, from shame and sorrow. Peace gently motioned her back to her place upon the bed, smiling.

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"Oh, no. It was nothing. Sit up here; I like to have you. Now, what is it, Gypsy?"

The tone of this "What is it, Gypsy?" told a great deal. It told that it was no new thing for Gypsy to come there just so, with her troubles and her joys, her sins and her well-doings, her plans and hopes and fears, all the little stories of the fresh, young life from which the cripple was forever shut out. It told, too, what Gypsy found in this quiet room, and took away from it—all the help and the comfort, and the sweet, sad lessons. It told, besides, much of what Peace and Gypsy were to each other, that only they two should ever exactly understand. It was a tone that always softened Gypsy, in her gayest frolics, in her wildest moods. For the first time since she had known Peace, it failed to soften her now.

She began in her impetuous way, her face angry and flushed, her voice trembling yet:—

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"I can't tell you what it is, and that's the thing of it! It's about that horrid old Joy."

"Gypsy!"

"I can't help it—I hate her!"

"Gypsy."

Gypsy's eyes fell at the gentle word.

"Well, I felt just as if I did, down there on the steps, anyway. You don't know what Joy said. It's something about you, and that's what makes me so mad. If she ever says it again!"

"About me?" interrupted Peace.

"Yes," said Gypsy, with great, flashing eyes. "I wouldn't tell it to you for all the world; it's so bad as that, Peace. How she *dared* to call you a beg—"

Gypsy stopped short. But she had let the cat out of the bag. Peace smiled again.

"A beggar! Well, it doesn't hurt me any, does it? Joy has never seen me, doesn't know me, you must remember, Gypsy. Besides, nobody else thinks as much of me as you do."

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"I didn't mean to say that; I'm always saying the wrong thing! Anyway, that isn't all of it, and I did think I should strike her when she said it. I can't bear Joy. You don't know what she is, Peace. She grows worse and worse. She does things I wouldn't do for anything, and I wish she'd never come here!"

"Is Joy *always* wrong?" asked Peace, gently. Peace rarely gave to any one as much of a reproof as that. Gypsy felt it.

"No," said she, honestly, "she isn't. I'm real horrid and wicked, and do ugly things. But I can't help it; Joy makes me—she acts so."

"I know what's the matter with you and Joy, I guess," said Peace.

"The matter? Well, I don't; I wish I did. We're always fight—fighting, day in and day out, and I'm tired to death of it. I'm just crazy for the time for Joy to go home, and I'm dreadfully unhappy having her round, now I am, Peace."

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Gypsy drew down her merry, red lips, and looked very serious. To tell the truth, however, do the best she would, she could not look altogether as if her heart were breaking from the amount of "unhappiness" that fell to her lot. A little smile quivered around the lips of Peace.

"Well," said Gypsy, laughing in spite of herself, "I am. I never *can* make anybody believe it, though. What is the matter with Joy and me? You didn't say."

"You've forgotten something, I think."

"Forgotten something?"

"Yes—something you read me once out of an old Book."

"Book? Oh!" said Gypsy, beginning to understand.

"In honor preferring one another," said Peace, softly. Gypsy did not say anything. Peace took up her Bible that lay on the bed beside her—it always lay on the bed—and turned the leaves, and laid her finger on the verse. Gypsy read it through before she spoke. Then she said slowly:

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"Why, Peace Maythorne. I—never could—in this world—never."

Just then there came a knock at the door. Gypsy went to open it, and stood struck dumb for amazement. It was Joy.

"Auntie said it was supper-time, and you were to come home," began Joy, somewhat embarrassed. "She was going to send Winnie, but I thought I'd come."

"Why, I never!" said Gypsy, still standing with the door-knob in her hand.

"Is this your cousin?" spoke up Peace.

"Oh, yes, I forgot. This is Peace Maythorne, Joy."

"I am glad to see you," said Peace in her pleasant way; "won't you come in?"

"Well, perhaps I will, a minute," said Joy, awkwardly, taking a chair by the window, and wondering if Gypsy had told Peace what she said. But Peace was so cordial, her voice so quiet, and her eyes so kind, that she concluded she knew nothing about it, and soon felt quite at her ease. Everybody was at ease with Peace Maythorne.

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"How pleasant it is here!" said Joy, looking about the room in unfeigned astonishment. And indeed it was. The furniture was poor enough, but everything was as neat as fresh wax, and the sunlight, that somehow or other always sought that room the earliest, and left it the latest—the warm, shimmering sunlight that Peace so loved—was yellow on the old, faded carpet, on the paperless, pictureless wall, on the bed where the hands of Peace lay, patient and folded.

"It *is* pleasant," said Peace, heartily. "You don't know how thankful it makes me. Aunt came very near taking a room on the north side. Sometimes I really don't know what I should have done. But then I guess I should have found something else to like."

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*I should have found something else.* A sudden thought came to the two girls then, in a dim, childish way—a thought they could by no means have explained; they wondered if in those few words did not lie the key to Peace Maythorne's beautiful, sorrowful life. They would not have expressed it so, but that was what they meant.

"See here," broke out Gypsy all at once, "Peace Maythorne wants you and me to make up, Joy."

"Your cousin will think I'm interfering with what's none of my business," said Peace, laughing. "I didn't say exactly that, you know; I was only talking to you."

"Oh, I'd just as lief make up now, but I wouldn't this morning," wondering for the second time if Peace *could* know what she said, and be so gentle and good to her; "I will if Gypsy will."

"And I will if Joy will," said Gypsy, "so it's a bargain."

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"Do you have a great deal of pain?" asked Joy, as they rose to go, with real sympathy in her puzzled eyes.

"Oh, yes; but then I get along."

"Peace Maythorne!" put in Gypsy just then, "is *that* all the dinner you ate?" Gypsy was standing by the table on which was a plate containing a cold potato, a broken piece of bread, and a bit of beefsteak. Evidently from the looks of the food, only a few mouthfuls had been eaten.

"I didn't feel hungry," said Peace, evasively.

"But you like meat, for you told me so."

"I didn't care about this," said Peace, looking somewhat restless.

Gypsy looked at her sharply, then stooped and whispered a few words in her ear.

"No," said Peace, her white cheek flushing crimson. "Oh, no, she never told me not to. She means to be very kind. I cost her a great deal."

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"But you know she'd be glad if you didn't eat much, and that was the reason you didn't," exclaimed Gypsy, angrily. "I think it's abominable!"

"Hush! *please* Gypsy."

Gypsy hushed. Just then the door opened and Miss Jane Maythorne, Peace's aunt, came in. She was a tall, thin, sallow-faced woman, with angular shoulders and a sharp chin. She looked like a New England woman who had worked hard all her life and had much trouble, so much that she thought of little else now but work and trouble; who had a heart somewhere, but was apt to forget all about it except on great occasions.

"I've been talking to Peace about not eating more," said Gypsy, when she had introduced Joy, and said good-afternoon. "She'll die if she doesn't eat more than that," pointing to the plate.

"She can eat all she wants, as far as I know," said Aunt Jane, rather shortly. "Nobody ever told her not to. It's nothing very fine in the way of victuals I can get her, working as I work for two, and most beat out every night. La! Peace, you haven't eaten your meat, have you? Well, I'll warm it over to-morrow, and it'll be as good as new."

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"The old dragon!" exclaimed Gypsy, under her breath, as the girls went out. "She is a dragon, nothing more nor less—a dragon that doesn't scold particularly, but a dragon that *looks*. I'd rather be scolded to death than looked at and looked at every mouthful I eat. I don't wonder Peace doesn't eat. She'll starve to death some day."

"But why don't you send her down things?" asked Joy. Gypsy shook her head.

"You don't understand Peace. She wouldn't like it. Mother does send her a quantity of books and flowers and things, and dinner just as often as she can without making Peace feel badly. But Peace wouldn't like 'em every day."

"She's real different from what I thought," said Joy—"real. What pretty eyes she has. I didn't seem to remember she was poor, a bit."

"What made you come down?"

"'Cause," said Joy.

This excellent reason was all that was ever to be had out of her. But that first time was by no means the last she went to Peace Maythorne's room.

The girls were in good spirits that night, well pleased with each other, themselves, and everybody else, as is usually the case when one is just over a fit of ill-temper. When they were alone in bed, Gypsy told Joy about the verse of which Peace spoke. Joy listened in silence.

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Awhile after, Gypsy woke from a dream, and saw a light burning on the table. Joy was sitting up in her white night-dress, turning the leaves of a book as if she were hunting for something.



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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE STORY OF A NIGHT

November, with its bright, bleak skies, sere leaves tossing, sad winds sobbing, and rains that wept for days and nights together, on dead flowers and dying grasses, moaned itself away at last, and December swept into its place with a good rousing snow-storm, merry sleigh-bells, and



bright promises of coming Christmas. The girls coasted and skated, and made snow-men and snowballs and snow-forts. Joy learned to slide down a moderate hill at a mild rate without screaming, and to get along somehow on her skates alone—for the very good reason that Tom wouldn't help her. Gypsy initiated her into the mysteries of "cannon-firing" from the great icy forts, and taught her how to roll the huge balls of snow. Altogether they had a very good time. Not as good as they might have had, by any means; the old rubs and jars were there still, though of late they had been somewhat softened. Partly on account of their talk with Peace; partly because of a certain uncomfortable acquaintance called conscience; partly because of their own good sense, the girls had tacitly made up their minds

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at least to make an effort to live together more happily. In some degree they succeeded, but they were like people walking over a volcano; the trouble was not *quenched*; it lay always smoldering out of sight, ready at a moment's notice to flare up into angry flame. The fault lay perhaps no more with one than another. Gypsy had never had a sister, and her brothers were neither of them near enough to her own age to interfere very much with her wishes and privileges. Moreover, a brother, though he may be the greatest tease in existence, is apt to be easier to get along with than a sister about one's own age. His pleasures and ambitions run in different directions from the girls; there is less clashing of interests. Besides this, Gypsy's playmates in Yorkbury, as has been said, had not chanced to be girls of very strong wills. Quite to her surprise, since Joy had been her roommate and constant companion, had she found out that she—Gypsy—had been pretty well used to having her own way, and that other people sometimes liked to have theirs.

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As for Joy, she had always been an only child, and that tells a history. Of the two perhaps she had the more to learn. The simple fact that she was brought wisely and kindly, but *thoroughly*, under Mrs. Breynton's control, was decidedly a revelation to her. At her own home, it had always been said, from the time she was a baby, that her mother could not manage her, and her father would not. She rebelled a little at first against her aunt's authority, but she was fast learning to love her, and when we love, obedience ceases to be obedience, and becomes an offering freely given.

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A little thing happened one day, showing that sadder and better side of Joy's heart that always seemed to touch Gypsy.

They had been having some little trouble about the lessons at school; it just verged on a quarrel, and slid off, and they had treated each other pleasantly after it. At night Joy was sitting upstairs writing a letter to her father, when a gust of wind took the sheet and blew it to Gypsy's feet. Gypsy picked it up to carry it to her, and in doing so, her eyes fell accidentally on some large, legible words at the bottom of the page. She had not the slightest intention of reading them, but their meaning came to her against her will, in that curious way we see things in a flash sometimes. This was what she saw:

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"I like auntie ever so much, and Tom. Gypsy was cross this morning. She——" and then followed Joy's own version of the morning's dispute. Gypsy was vexed. She liked her uncle, and she did not like to have him hear such one-sided stories of her, and judge her as he would.

She walked over to Joy with very red cheeks.

"Here's your letter. I tried not to read it, but I couldn't help seeing that about me. I don't think you've any business to tell him about me unless you can tell the truth."

Of course Joy resented such a remark as this, and high words followed. They went down to supper sulkily, and said nothing to one another for an hour. After tea, Joy crept up moodily into the corner, and Gypsy sat down on the cricket for one of her merry talks with her mother. After she had told her how many times she missed at school that day, what a funny tumble Sarah Rowe had on the ice, and laughed over "Winnie's latest" till she was laughed out and talked out too, she sprang into her lap, in one of Gypsy's sudden outbursts of affection, throwing her arms around her neck, and kissing her on cheeks, forehead, lips and chin.

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"O-oh, what a blessed little mother you are! What *should* I do without you?"

"Mother's darling daughter! What should she do without you?" said Mrs. Breynton, softly.

But not softly enough. Gypsy looked up suddenly and saw a pale face peering out at them from behind the curtain, its great eyes swimming in tears, its lips quivering. The next minute Joy left the room.

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There was something dim in Gypsy's eyes as she hurried after her. She found her crouched upstairs in the dark and cold, sobbing as if her heart would break. Gypsy put her arm around her.



"Kiss me, Joy."

Joy kissed her, and that was all that was said. But it ended in Gypsy's bringing her triumphantly downstairs, where were the lights and the fire, and the pleasant room, and another cricket waiting at Mrs. Breynton's feet. [Pg 155]

They were very busy after this with the coming Christmas. Joy confidently expected a five-dollar bill from her father, and Gypsy cherished faint aspirations after a portfolio with purple roses on it. But most of their thoughts, and all their energies, were occupied with the little gifts they intended to make themselves; and herein lay a difficulty. Joy's father always supplied her bountifully with spending money; Gypsy's stock was small. When Joy wanted to make a present, she had only to ask for a few extra dollars, and she had them. Gypsy always felt as if a present given in that way were no present; unless a thing cost her some self-denial, or some labor, she reasoned, it had nothing to do with her. If given directly out of her father's pocket, it was his gift, not hers. [Pg 156]

But then, how much handsomer Joy's things would be.

Thus Gypsy was thinking in her secret heart, over and over. How could she help it? And Joy, perhaps—possibly—Joy was thinking the same thing, with a spice of pleasure in the thought.

It was about her mother that Gypsy was chiefly troubled. Tom had condescendingly informed her, about six months ago, that he'd just as lief she would make him a watch-case if she wanted to very much. Girls always would jump at the chance to get up any such nonsense. Be sure she did it up in style, with gold and silver tape, and some of your blue alpaca. (Tom's conceptions of the feminine race, their apparel, occupations and implements, were bounded by tape and alpaca.) So Tom was provided for; the watch-case was nearly made, and bade fair to be quite as pretty as anything Joy could buy. Winnie was easily suited, and her father would be as contented with a shaving-case as with a velvet dressing-gown; indeed he'd hardly know the difference. Joy should have a pretty white velvet hair-ribbon. But what for mother? She lay awake a whole half hour one night, perplexing herself over the question, and at last decided rather falteringly on a photograph frame of shell-work. Gypsy's shell-work was always pretty, and her mother had a peculiar fancy for it. [Pg 157]

"I shall give her Whittier's poems," said Joy, in—perhaps unconsciously, perhaps not—a rather triumphant tone. "I heard her say the other day she wanted them ever so much. I'm going to get the best copy I can find, with gold edges. If uncle hasn't a nice one in his store, I'll send to Boston. Mr. Ticknor'll pick me out the best one he has, I know, 'cause he knows father real well, and we buy lots of things there." [Pg 158]

Gypsy said nothing. She was rather abashed to hear Joy talk in such familiar terms of Mr. Ticknor. She was more uneasy that Joy should give so handsome a present. She sat looking at her silently, and while she looked, a curious, dull, sickening pain crept into her heart. It frightened her, and she ran away downstairs to get rid of it.

A few days after, she was sitting alone working on the photograph case. It was rather pretty work, though not over-clean. She had cut a well-shaped frame out of pasteboard, with a long, narrow piece bent back to serve as support. The frame was covered with putty, and into the putty she fastened her shells. They were of different sizes, shapes, and colors, and she was laying them on in a pretty pattern of stars and crescents. She had just stopped to look at her work, her red lips shut together with the air of a connoisseur, and her head on one side, like a canary, when Joy came in. [Pg 159]

"Just look here!" and she held up before her astonished eyes a handsome volume of blue and gold—Whittier's poems, and written on the fly-leaf, in Joy's very best copy-book hand, "For Auntie, with a Merry Christmas, from Joy."

"Uncle sent to Boston for me, and got it, and he promised on his word 'n' honor, certain true, black and blue, he wouldn't let Auntie know a single sign of a thing about



it. Isn't it splendid?"

"Ye-es," said Gypsy, slowly.

"Well! I don't think you seem to care much."

Gypsy looked at her shell-work, and said nothing. For the second time that dull, curious pain had crept into her heart. What did it mean? Was it possible that she was *envious* of Joy? Was it *possible*?

The hot crimson rushed to Gypsy's cheeks for shame at the thought. But the thought was there.

She chanced to be in Peace Maythorne's room one day when the bustle of preparation for the holidays was busiest. Peace hid something under the counterpane as she came in, flushing a little. Gypsy sat down in her favorite place on the bed, just where she could see the cripple's great quiet eyes—she always liked to watch Peace Maythorne's eyes—and in doing so disturbed the bedclothes. A piece of work fell out: plain, fine sewing, in which the needle lay with a stitch partially taken.



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"Peace Maythorne!" said Gypsy, "you've been doing it again!"

"A little, just to help aunt, you know. A little doesn't hurt me, Gypsy."

"Doesn't hurt you? Peace, you know better. You know you never sew a stitch but you lie awake half the night after it with the pain."

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Peace did not contradict her. She could not.

"Help your aunt!" Gypsy went on vehemently; "she oughtn't to let you touch it. She hasn't any more feeling than a stone wall, nor half as much, I say!"

"Hush, Gypsy! Don't say that. Indeed I'd rather have the pain, and help her a little, once in a while, when my best days come and I can; I had, really, Gypsy. You don't know how it hurts me—a great deal more than this other hurt in my back—to lie here and let her support me, and I not do a thing. O Gypsy, you don't know!"

Something in Peace Maythorne's tone just then made Gypsy feel worse than she felt to see her sew. She was silent a minute, turning away her face.

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"Well, I suppose I don't. But I say I'd as lief have a stone wall for an aunt; no, I will say it, Peace, and you needn't look at me." Peace looked, notwithstanding, and Gypsy stopped saying it.

"Sometimes I've thought," said Peace, after a pause, "I might earn a little crocheting. Once, long ago, I made a mat out of ends of worsted I found, and it didn't hurt me hardly any; on my good days it wouldn't honestly hurt me at all. It's pretty work, crocheting, isn't it?"

"Why don't you crochet, then," said Gypsy, "if you must do anything? It's ten thousand times easier than this sewing you're killing yourself over."

"I've no worsteds, you know," said Peace, coloring; and changed the subject at once.

Gypsy looked thoughtful. Very soon after she bade Peace good-bye, and went home.

That night she called her mother away alone, and told her what Peace had said.

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"Now, mother, I've thought out an idea."

"Well?"

"You mustn't say no, if I tell you."

"I'll try not to; if it is a sensible idea."

"Do I *ever* have an idea that isn't sensible?" said Gypsy, demurely. "I prefer not to be slandered, if you please, Mrs. Breynton."

"Well, but what's the idea?"

"It's just this. Miss Jane Maythorne is a heathen."

"Is that all?"

"No. But Miss Jane Maythorne *is* a heathen, and ought to cut off her head before she lets Peace sew. But you see she doesn't know she's a heathen, and Peace will sew."

"Well, what then?"

"If she will do something, and won't be happy without, then I can't help it, you see. But I can give her some worsteds for a Christmas present, and she can make little mats and things, and you can buy them. Now, mother, isn't that nice?"

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"Yes," said Mrs. Breynton, after a moment's thought. "It is a very good plan. I think Joy would like to join you. Together, you can make quite a handsome present out of it."

"I don't want Joy to know a thing about it," said Gypsy, with a decision in her voice that amounted almost to anger.

"Why, Gypsy!"

"No, not a thing. She just takes her father's money, and gives lots of splendid presents, and makes me ashamed of all mine, and she's glad of it, too. If I'm going to give anything to Peace, I don't want her to."

"I think Joy has taken a great fancy to Peace. She would enjoy giving her something very much," said Mrs. Breynton, gravely.

"I can't help it. Peace Maythorne belongs to me. It would spoil it all to have Joy have anything to do with it."

"Worsted are very expensive now," said her mother; "you alone cannot give Peace enough to amount to much." [Pg 165]

"I don't care," said Gypsy, resolutely, "I want to do one thing Joy doesn't."

Mrs. Breynton said nothing, and Gypsy went slowly from the room.

"I wish we could give Peace Maythorne something," said Joy, an hour after, when they were all sitting together. Mrs. Breynton raised her eyes from her work, but Gypsy was looking out of the window.

When the girls went up to bed, Gypsy was very silent. Joy tried to laugh and plague and scold her into talking, but it was of no use. Just before they went to sleep, she spoke up suddenly:

"Joy, do you want to give something to Peace Maythorne?"

"Splendid!" cried Joy, jumping up in bed to clap her hands, "what?"

Gypsy told her then all the plan, a little slowly; it was rather hard. [Pg 166]

Perhaps Joy detected the hesitation in her tone. Joy was not given to detecting things with remarkable quickness, but it was so plain that she could not very well help it.

"I don't believe you want me to give any of it."

"Oh, yes," said Gypsy, trying to speak cordially, "yes, it will be better."

It certainly was better she felt. She went to sleep, glad it was settled so.

When the girls came to make their purchases, they found that Gypsy's contribution of money would just about buy the crochet-needles and patterns. The worsteds cost about treble what she could give. So it was settled that they should be Joy's gift.

Gypsy was very pleasant about it, but Joy could not help seeing that she was disappointed. So then there came a little generous impulse to Joy too, and she came one day and said:

"Gypsy, don't let's divide the things off so, for Peace. It makes my part the largest. Besides, the worsteds look the prettiest. Let's just give them together and have it all one." [Pg 167]

There is a rare pleasure in making a gift one's self, without being hampered by this "all-together" notion, isn't there?—especially if the gift be a handsome one, and is going where it is very much needed. So as Joy sat fingering the pile of elegant worsteds, twining the brilliant, soft folds of orange, and crimson, and royal purple, and soft, wood-browns about her hands, it cost her a bit of a struggle to say this. It seems rather a small thing to write about? Ah, they are these *bits of struggles* in which we learn to fight the great ones; perhaps these bits of struggles, more than the great ones, make up life.

"You're real good," said Gypsy, surprised; "I think I'd rather not. It isn't really half of it mine, and I don't want to say so. But it's just as good in you." [Pg 168]

At that moment, though neither of them knew it was so, one thought was in the heart of both. It was a sudden thought that came and went, and left a great happiness in its place (for great happiness springs out of very little battles and victories),—a memory of Peace Maythorne's verse. The good Christmas time would have been a golden time to them, if it taught them in ever so small, imperfect ways, to prefer one another "in honor."

One day before it came a sudden notion seemed to strike Gypsy, and she rushed out of the house in her characteristic style, as if she were running for her life, and down to Peace Maythorne's, and flew into the quiet room like a tempest.

"Peace Maythorne, what's your favorite verse?"

"Why, what a hurry you're in! Sit down and rest a minute."

"No, I can't stop. I just want to know what your favorite verse is, as quick as ever you can be." [Pg 169]

"Did you come down just for that? How queer! Well, let me see."

Peace stopped a minute, her quiet eyes looking off through the window, but seeming to see nothing—away somewhere, Gypsy, even in her hurry stopped to wonder where.

"I think—it isn't one you'd care much about, perhaps—I think I like this. Yes, I think I *can't help* liking it best of all."

Peace touched her finger to a page of her Bible that lay open. Gypsy, bending over, read:

"And the inhabitants shall not say I am sick."

When she had read, she stooped and kissed Peace with a sudden kiss.

From that time until Christmas Gypsy was very busy in her own room with her paint box, all the spare time she could find. On Christmas Eve she went down just after dusk to Peace Maythorne's room, and called Miss Jane out into the entry. [Pg 170]

"This is for Peace, and I made it. I don't want her to see a thing about it till she wakes up in the morning. Could you please to fasten it up on the wall just opposite the bed where the sun shines in? sometime after she's gone to sleep, you know."

Miss Jane, somewhat bewildered, took the thing that Gypsy held out to her, and held it up in the light that fell from a neighbor's half-open door.

It was a large illuminated text, painted on Bristol board of a soft gray shade, and very well done for a non-professional artist. The letters were of that exquisite shade known by the artists as *smalt* blue, edged heavily with gold, and round them a border of yellow, delicate sprays of wheat. Miss Jane spelled out in German text:

"And the Inhabitants shall not say I am Sick."

"Well, thank you. I'll put it up. Peace never gets asleep till terrible late, and I'm rather worn out with work to lie awake waitin' till she is. But then, if you want to surprise her—I s'pose she *will* be dreadful tickled—I guess I'll manage it someways." [Pg 171]

Perhaps Miss Jane was softened into being obliging by her coming holiday; or perhaps the mournful, longing words touched something in her that nothing touched very often.

Gypsy and Joy were not so old but that Christmas Eve with its little plans for the morrow held yet a certain shade of that delightful suspense and mystery which perhaps never hangs about the greater and graver joys of life. I fancy we drink it to the full, in the hanging up of stockings, the peering out into the dark to see Santa Claus come down the chimney (perfectly conscious that that gentleman is the most transparent of hoaxes, but with a sort of faith in him all the while; we *may* see him if we can lie awake long enough—who knows?) the falling asleep before we know it, and much against our will, the waking in the cold, gray, mysterious dawn, and pattering about barefoot to "catch" the dreaming and defenseless family. [Pg 172]

"I'm going to lie awake all night," Gypsy announced, as she stood brushing out her bright, black hair; "then I'll catch you, you see if I don't."

"But I'm going to lie awake, too," said Joy. "I was going to last Christmas, only—I didn't."

"Sit up and see the sun dance, like Patty."

"Well, let's. I never was awake all night in my whole life."

"Nor I," said Gypsy. "I came pretty near it once, but I somehow went to sleep along at the end."

"When was that?"

"Why, one time I had a dream, and went clear over to the Kleiner Berg Basin, in my sleep, and got into the boat." [Pg 173]

"You did!"

"I guess I did. The boat was unlocked and the oars were up at the barn, and so I floated off, and there I had to stay till Tom came in the morning."

"Why, I should have been scared out of my seventeen senses," said Joy, creeping into bed. "Didn't you scream?"

"No. That wouldn't have done any good. See here, Joy, if you find me going to sleep, pinch me, will you?"

"Oh, yes," said Joy, with alacrity. "I shall be awake, I know."

There was a silence. Gypsy broke it by turning her head over on the pillow with a whisk, and opening her eyes savagely, quite indignant to find them shut.

"Joy."

No answer.

"Joy, you're going——"

Joy's head turned over with another whisk. [Pg 174]

"No, I'm not. I'm just as wide awake as ever I was."

Another silence.

"Gypsy!"

Gypsy jumped.

"*You're* going to sleep."

"It isn't any such thing," said Gypsy, sitting up and rubbing her eyes.

"I wonder if it isn't most morning," said Joy, in a tone of cheerful indifference.

"Most morning! Mother'd say we'd been in bed just ten minutes, I suppose."

Joy stifled a groan, and by dint of great exertions turned it into a laugh.

"All the longer to lie awake. It's nice, isn't it?"

"Ye-es. Let's talk. People that sit up all night talk, I guess."

"Well, I guess it would be a good plan. You begin."

"I don't know anything to say."

[Pg 175]

"Well, I'm sure I don't."

Silence again.

"Joy Breynton."

"We-ell?"

"I guess I'll keep awake just as well if I—shut up—my eyes. Don't you—"

That was the end of Gypsy's sentence, and Joy never asked for the rest of it. Just about an hour and a half after, Gypsy heard a noise, and was somewhat surprised to see Joy standing up with her head in the washbowl.

"What *are* you doing?"

"Oh, just dipping my head into the water. They say it helps keep people awake."

"Oh—well. See here; we haven't talked much lately, have we?"

"No. I thought I wouldn't disturb you."

Gypsy made a ghastly attempt to answer, but couldn't quite do it.

At the end of another indefinite period Joy opened her eyes under the remarkable impression that Oliver Cromwell was carrying her to the guillotine in a cocoa-nut shell; it was really a very remarkable impression, considering that she had been broad awake ever since she came to bed. As soon as her eyes were opened she opened her mouth likewise—to gasp out a little scream. For something very tall and white was sitting on the bedpost with folded arms.

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"Why, Gypsy Breynton!"

"What?"

"What are you up there for?"

"Got up so's to keep awake. It's real fun."

"Why, how your teeth chatter. Isn't it cold up there?"

"Ra-ther. I don't know but I *might* as well come down."

"I wonder," muttered Gypsy, drowsily, just as Joy had begun in very thrilling words to request Oliver Cromwell to have mercy on her, and was about preparing to jump out of the cocoa-nut shell into Niagara Falls, "I wonder what makes people think it's a joke to lie awake."

[Pg 177]

"I don't believe they do," said Joy, with a tinge in her voice of something that, to say the least, was not hilarious.

"Yes they do," persisted Gypsy; "all the girls in novels lie awake all night and cry when their lovers go to Europe, and they have a real nice time. Only it's most always moonlight, and they talk out loud. I always thought when I got large enough to have a lover, I'd try it."

Joy dropped into another dream, and, though not of interest to the public, it was a very charming dream, and she felt decidedly cross, when, at the end of another unknown period Gypsy woke her up with a pinch.

"Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!"

"What are you merry Christmassing for? That's no fair. It isn't morning yet. Let me alone."

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"Yes, it is morning too. I heard the clock strike six ever so long ago. Get up and build the fire."

"I don't believe it's morning. You can build it yourself."

"No, it's your week. Besides, you made me do it twice for you your last turn, and I shan't touch it."

Besides, it *is* morning."

Joy rose with a groan, and began to fumble for the matches. All at once Gypsy heard a very fervent exclamation.

"What's the matter?"

"The old thing's tipped over—every single, solitary match!"

Gypsy began to laugh.

"It's nothing to laugh at," chattered Joy; "I'm frozen almost to death, and this horrid old fire won't do a thing but smoke."

Gypsy, curled up in the warm bed, smothered her laugh as best she could, to see Joy crouched shivering before the stove-door, blowing away frantically at the fire, her cheeks puffed out, her hands blue as indigo. [Pg 179]

"There!" said Joy, at last; "I shan't work any more over it. It may go out if it wants to, and if it don't it needn't."

She came back to bed, and the fire muttered and sputtered a while, and died out, and shot up again, and at last made up its mind to burn, and burned like a small volcano.

"What a noise that fire makes! I hope it won't wake up mother. Joy, don't it strike you as rather funny it doesn't grow light faster?"

"I don't know."

"Get up and look at the entry clock; you're on the front side."

Poor Joy jumped out shivering into the cold again, opened the door softly, and ran out. She came back in somewhat of a hurry, and shut the door with a bang.

"Gypsy Breynton!"

"What?"

"If I *ever* forgive you!"

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"What is the matter?"

"It's *just twenty-five minutes past eleven!*"

Gypsy broke into a ringing laugh. Joy could never bear to be laughed at.

"I don't see anything so terrible funny, and I guess you wouldn't if you'd made that old—"

"Fire; I know it. Just to think!—and you shivering and blowing away at it. I never heard anything so funny!"

"I think it was real mean in you to wake me up, any way."

"Why, I thought I heard it strike six as much as could be. Oh, dear, oh, dear!"

Joy couldn't see the joke. But the story of that memorable night was not yet finished.

The faint, gray morning really came at last, and the girls awoke in good earnest, ready and glad to get up.

"I feel as if I'd been pulled through a knothole," said Joy.

"I slept with one eye open all the time I did sleep," said Gypsy, drearily. "I know one thing. I'll never try to lie awake as long as I live."

"Not when you have a lover go to Europe?"

"Not if I have a dozen lovers go to Europe. How is that fire going to be built, I'd like to know?—every stick of wood burned out last night."

There was no way but to go down into the wood-shed and get some. It was yet early, and quite dark.

"Go the back stairs," said Gypsy, "so's not to wake people up."

Joy opened the door, and jumped, with a scream that echoed through the silent entry. [Pg 182]

"Hush-sh! What is the matter?"

"A—a—it's a *ghost!*"

"A ghost! Nonsense!"



Gypsy pushed by trembling Joy and ran out. She, too, came back with a jump, and, though she did not scream, she did not say nonsense.

"What *can* it be?"

It certainly did look amazingly like a ghost. Something tall and white and ghastly, with awful arm extended. The entry was very dark.

Joy sprang into bed and covered up her face in the clothes. Gypsy stood still and winked fast for about a minute. Then Joy heard a fall and a bubbling laugh.

"That old Tom! It's nothing but a broom-handle and a sheet. Oh, Joy, just come and see!"

After that, Joy declared she wouldn't go to the wood-shed alone, if she dressed without a fire the rest of her life. So Gypsy started with her, and they crept downstairs on tiptoe, holding their very breath in their efforts to be still, the stairs creaking at every step. Did you ever *particularly* want stairs to keep still, that they didn't creak like thunder-claps? [Pg 183]

The girls managed to get into the wood-shed, fill their basket, and steal back into the kitchen without mishap. Then came the somewhat dubious undertaking of crawling upstairs in darkness that might be felt, with a heavy and decidedly uncertain load of wood.

"I'll go first and carry the basket," said Gypsy. "One can do it easier than two."

So she began to feel her way slowly up.

"It's black as Egypt! Joy, why don't you come?"

"I'm caught on something—oh!" Down fell something with an awful crash that echoed and reëchoed, and resounded through the sleeping house. It was succeeded by an utter silence. [Pg 184]

"What is it?" breathed Gypsy, faintly.

"The clothes-horse, and *every one of Patty's clean clothes!*"

Scarcely were the words off from Joy's lips, when Gypsy, sitting down on the stairs to laugh, tipped over her basket, and every solitary stick of that wood clattered down the uncarpeted stairs, thumped through the banisters, bounced on the floor, rolled into the corners, thundered against the cellar door. I don't believe you ever heard such a noise in all your life.

Mr. and Mrs. Breynton ran from one direction, Tom from another, Winnie from a third, and Patty, screaming, in fearful *dishabille*, from the attic, and the congress that assembled in that entry where sat Gypsy speechless on one stair, and Joy on another, the power fails me to describe.

But this was the end of that Christmas night.

It should be recorded that the five-dollar bill and the portfolio with purple roses on it were both forthcoming that day, and that Gypsy entirely forgot any difference between her own little gifts and Joy's. This was partly because she had somehow learned to be glad in the difference, if it pleased Joy; partly because of a certain look in her mother's eyes when she saw the picture-frame. Such a look made Gypsy happy for days together. [Pg 185]

That Christmas was as merry as Christmas can be, but the best part of it all was the sight of Peace Maythorne's face as she lay twining the gorgeous worsteds over her thin fingers, the happy sunlight touching their colors of crimson, and royal purple, and orange, and woodland brown, just as kindly as it was touching the new Christmas jewels over which many another young girl in many another home sat laughing that morning.

But Gypsy long remembered—she remembers now with dim eyes and quivering smile—how Peace drew her face down softly on the pillow, pointing to the blue and golden words upon the wall, and said in a whisper that nobody else heard: [Pg 186]

"That is best of all. Oh, Gypsy, when I woke up in the morning and found it!"

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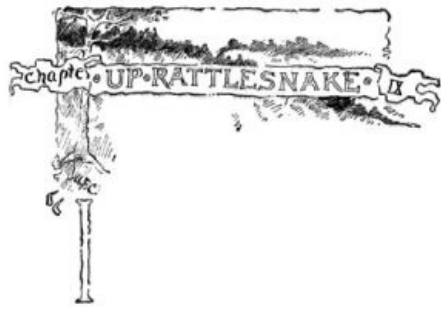
## CHAPTER IX

### UP RATTLESNAKE

"I should think we might, I'm sure," said Joy pausing, with a crisp bit of halibut on her fork, just midway between her plate and her lips.

"You needn't shake your head so, Mother Breynton," said Gypsy, her great brown eyes pleading over her teacup with their very most irresistible twinkle. "Now it isn't the slightest trouble to say yes, and you can just as well say it now as any other time, you know."

"But it really seems to me a little dangerous, Gypsy,—up over those mountain roads on livery-stable horses." [Pg 188]



"But Tom says it isn't a bit dangerous, and Tom's been up it forty times. Rattlesnake has the best roads of any of the mountains round here, and there are fences by all the precipices, Tom said, didn't you, Tom?"

"No," said Tom, coolly. "There isn't a fence. There are logs in some places, and in some there aren't."

"Oh, what a bother you are! Well, any way it's all the same, and I'm not a bit afraid of stable horses. I can manage any of them, from Mr. Burt's iron-gray colt down," which was true enough. Gypsy was used to riding, and perfectly fearless.

"But Joy hasn't ridden much, and I should never forgive myself if any accident happened to her while her father is gone."

"Joy can ride Billy. There isn't a cow in Yorkbury safer."

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Mrs. Breynton sipped her tea and thought about it.

"I want to go horsebacking, too," put in Winnie, glaring savagely at Gypsy over his bread and milk. "I'm five years old."

"And jerked six whole buttons off your jacket this very day," said Gypsy, eyeing certain gaps of which there were always more or less to be seen in Winnie's attire in spite of his mother's care. "A boy who jerks buttons like that couldn't go 'horsebacking.' You wouldn't have one left by the time you came home,—look out, you'll have your milk over. You tipped it over times enough this morning for one day."

"You *will* have your milk over; don't stand the mug up on the napkin-ring,—no, nor on that crust of bread, either," repeated his mother, and everybody looked up anxiously, and edged away a little from Winnie's immediate vicinity. This young gentleman had a pleasing little custom of deluging the united family at meal-time, at least once regularly every day, with milk and bread-crumbs; maternal and paternal injunctions, threats, and punishments notwithstanding, he contrived every day some perfectly novel, ingenious, and totally unexpected method of accomplishing the same; uniting, in his efforts, the strategy of a Napoleon, with the unruffled composure of a Grant.

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"I don't know but what I'll see what father thinks about it," Mrs. Breynton went on, thoughtfully. "If he should be willing—"

"Good, good!" cried Gypsy, clapping her hands. "Father's in the library. Winnie, you run up and ask him if we can't go up Rattlesnake."

"Well," said Winnie, "when I just get through eatin'. I'm goin' to make him let me horseback as much as you or anybody else."

Winnie finished his toast with imperturbable deliberation, pushed back his chair, and jumped up.

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Splash! went a shower of milk all over him, his mother, the table, and the carpet. Everybody jumped. Winnie gasped and stood dripping.

"Oh-oh! how did he do it? Why, Winnie *Breynton!*"

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For there hung the mug from his waist, empty, upside down, *tied to his bib.*

"In a hard knot, if you'll believe it! I never saw such a child in all my life! Why, *Winnie!*"

The utter blankness of astonishment that crept over Winnie's face when he looked down and saw the mug hanging, Mr. Darley might have made a small fortune out of; but the pen of a Cicero could not attempt it. It appeared to be one of those cases when "the heart feels most though the lips move not."

"What *did* you do such a thing for? What could possess you?"

"Oh," said Winnie, very red in the face, "it's there, is it? I was a steamboat, and the mug was my stove-pipe, 'n' then I forgot. I want a clean apron. I don't want any milk to-morrer."

This was in the early summer. The holidays had come and gone, and the winter and the spring. Coasting, skating, and snowballing had given place to driving hoop, picking flowers, boating, and dignified promenades on the fashionable pavement down town; furs and bright woolen hoods, tippets, mittens, and rubber-boots were exchanged for calico dresses, comfortable, brown, bare hands, and jaunty straw hats with feathers on them. On the whole, it had been a pleasant winter: times there had been when Gypsy heartily wished Joy had never come, when Joy heartily wished she were at home; certain little jealousies there had been, selfish thoughts, unkind acts, angry words; but many penitent hours as well, some confessions, the one to the other, that nobody else heard, and a certain faint, growing interest in each other. Strictly speaking, they did not very much *love* each other yet, but they were not far from it. "I am getting used to Joy," said Gypsy. "I like Gypsy ever so much better than I did once," Joy wrote to her father. One thing they had learned that winter. Every generous deed, every thoughtful word, narrowed the distance between them; each one wiped out the ugly memory of some past impatience, some past unkindness. And now something was about to happen that should bring them nearer to each other than anything had done yet.

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That June night on which they sat at the tea-table discussing the excursion up Rattlesnake was the beginning of it. When Winnie was sufficiently mopped up to admit of his locomotion about the house with any safety to the carpets, he was dispatched to the library on the errand to his father. What with various wire-pullings of Gypsy's, and arguments from Tom, the result was that Mr. Breynton gave his consent to the plan, on condition that the young people would submit to his accompanying them.

"That's perfectly splend," cried Gypsy; "all the better for having you. Only, my best beloved of fathers, you mustn't keep saying, 'Gypsy, Gypsy, be careful,' you know, every time my horse jumps, because if you should, I'm very much afraid."

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"Afraid of what?"

"That Gypsy wouldn't be careful," said the young lady, folding her hands demurely. Her father attempted to call her a sauce-box but Gypsy jumped upon his knee, and pulled his whiskers till he cried out for mercy, and gave her a kiss instead.

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There was an undercurrent of reality in the fun, however. Mr. Breynton's over-anxiety—fussiness, some people would have called it—his children were perfectly conscious of; children are apt to be the first to discover their parents' faults and weaknesses. Gypsy loved her father dearly, but she somehow always felt as if he must be *managed*.

So it came about that on a certain royal June day, a merry party started for a horseback ride up Rattlesnake mountain.

"I've a good mind to take my waterproof," said Joy, as they were starting; "we may not be back till late, and you know how cold it grows by the river after dark."

"Nonsense!" laughed Gypsy; "why, the thermometer's 80° already."

Nevertheless, Joy went back and got the waterproof. She afterwards had occasion to be very glad of it.

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The party consisted of Mr. Breynton, Tom, Joy, Gypsy, Mr. and Mrs. Hallam (this was the Mrs. Hallam who had once been Gypsy's teacher), Sarah Rowe, and her brother Francis, who was home from college on account of ill health, he said. Tom always coughed and arched his eyebrows in a very peculiar way when this was mentioned, but Gypsy could never find out what he did it for.

The day, as I said, was royal. The sky, the river, the delicate golden green of the young leaves and grass, the lights and shadows on the distant mountains, all were mellowed in together like one of Church's pictures, and there was one of those spicy winds that Gypsy always described by saying that "the angels had been showering great bottles of fresh cologne-water into them."



The young people felt these things in a sort of dreamy, unconscious way, but they were too busy and too merry to notice them in detail. [Pg 198]

Joy was mounted safely on demure Billy, and Gypsy rode—not Mr. Burt's iron-gray, for Tom claimed that—but a free, though manageable pony, with just the arch of the neck, toss of the mane, and coquettish lifting of the feet that she particularly fancied. The rest were variously mounted: Francis Rowe rode a fiery colt that his father had just bought, and the like of which was not to be seen in Yorkbury.

Up—up, winding on and away, through odors of fragrant pines and unseen flowers, under the soft, green shadows, through the yellow lights. How beautiful—how beautiful it was!

"Who'll race with me?" inquired Mr. Francis Rowe suddenly. "I call it an uncommon bore, this doing nothing but looking at the trees. I say, Breynton, the slope's easy here for a quarter of a mile; come ahead." [Pg 199]

"No, thank you; I don't approve of racing up mountains."

Tom might have said he didn't approve of being beaten; the iron-gray was no match for the colt, and he knew it.

"Who'll race?" persisted Mr. Francis, impatiently; "isn't there anybody?"

"I will," said Gypsy, seriously enough.

"You!" said Tom; "why, the colt would leave that bay mare out of sight before you could say Jack Robinson."

"Oh, I don't expect to beat. Of course that's out of the question. But I should like the run; where's the goal, Francis?"

"That turn in the road where the tall fir-tree is, with those dead limbs; you see?"

"Yes. We'll trot, of course. All ready."

"Be very careful, Gypsy," called her father, nervously; "I'm really almost afraid to have you go. You might come to the precipice sooner, than you expect, and then the horse may shy." [Pg 200]

"I'll be careful father; come, Nelly, gently—whe-ee!"

Suddenly reflecting that it was not supposed to be lady-like to whistle, Gypsy drew her lips into a demure pucker, touched Nelly with the tassel of her whip, and flew away up the hill on a brisk trot. Mr. Francis condescendingly checked the full speed of the colt, and they rode on pretty nearly side by side.

"I'm afraid, in justice to my horse, I must really come in first," began Mr. Francis, loosening his rein as they neared the fir-tree.

"Oh, of course," said Gypsy, with a twinkle in her eyes; "I didn't undertake to beat."

Now Nelly had a trick with which Gypsy was perfectly familiar, of breaking into a run at an instant's notice, if she were pinched in a certain spot on her neck. Suddenly, while the colt was springing on in his fleet trot, and Mr. Francis supposed Gypsy was a full eight feet behind, he was utterly confounded to see her flying past him on a bounding gallop, her hair tossing in the wind, her cheeks scarlet, her eyes triumphant. [Pg 201]

But right in the middle of the road, between them and the fir-tree, was something neither of them had seen;—a huge tree just fallen, with its high, prickly branches on.

"Jerusalem!" said Mr. Francis, under his breath as the colt pricked up his ears ominously.

"Oh, good! here's a jump," cried Gypsy, and over it she went at a bound. The colt reared and shied, and planting his dainty forefeet firmly on the ground, refused to stir an inch. Gypsy whirled around and stood triumphant under the fir-tree, her eyes snapping merrily.

"Why, how did this ever happen?" cried the rest, as they came laughing up.

"I say, there's some witchcraft about this business," remarked Mr. Francis, quite bewildered; "wait till I've cleared off these branches, and we'll try that over again." [Pg 202]

"Very well," said Gypsy, in a perfect whirl of excitement and delight, as she always was, with anything in the shape of reins in her hand. But just then she looked back and saw Joy toiling on slowly behind the others; Billy with his head hanging and his spirits quite gone. Gypsy stopped a moment as if in thought, and then rode slowly down the hill.

"I'm having a horrid time," said Joy disconsolately, as she came up; "Billy is as stupid as a mule, and won't go."

"I'm real sorry," said Gypsy, slowly; "you might have Nelly. We'll change awhile."

"No," said Joy, "I'm afraid of Nelly. Besides, you wouldn't like Billy any better than I do. It's dreadfully stupid back here alone, though. I wish I hadn't come."

"Francis," called Gypsy, "I guess I won't race, I'm going to ride with Joy awhile." [Pg 203]

"Why, you needn't do that!" said Joy, rather ashamed of her complaining. But Gypsy did do it; and though her face had clouded for the moment, a sunbeam broke over it then that lasted the rest of the day.

The day passed very much like other picnics. They stopped in a broad, level place on the summit of the mountain, tied the horses where they could graze on the long, tufted wood-grass, unpacked the dinner baskets, and devoted themselves to biscuit and cold tongue, tarts, lemonade and current wine, through the lazy, golden nooning.

It was voted that they should not attempt the long, hot ride down the mountain-side until the blaze of the afternoon sun should be somewhat cooled. So, after dinner they went their several ways, finding amusement for the sultry hours. Mr. Breynton and Tom went off on a hunt after a good place to water the horses; Francis Rowe betook himself to a cigar; Sarah curled herself up on the soft moss with her sack for a pillow, and went to sleep; Mr. and Mrs. Hallam sat under the trees and read Tennyson to each other. [Pg 204]

"How terribly stupid that must be," said Gypsy, looking on in supreme disgust; "let's you and I go off. I know a place where there used to be some splendid foxberry blossoms, lot's of 'em, real pretty; they looked just as if they were snipped out of pearls with a pair of sharp scissors."

"I wouldn't go out of sight of us all," called Mr. Breynton, as the two girls roamed away together among the trees.

"But you are most out of sight now," said Joy, presently.

"Oh, he didn't say we *mustn't*," answered Gypsy. "He didn't mean we *mustn't*, either. Father always worries so."

It would have been well for Gypsy if her father's *wish* had been to her what her mother's was—as binding as a command. "Just think," observed Gypsy, as they strolled on through the fallen leaves and redcup mosses, "just think of their sitting still and reading poetry on a picnic! I can't get over it. Miss Melville didn't used to do such stupid things. It's just 'cause she's married." [Pg 205]

"How do you know but you'll do just the same some day?"

"Catch me! I'm not going to be married at all."

"Not going to be married! Why, I am, and I'm going to have a white velvet dress too."

"Well, you may. But I wouldn't for a whole trunkful of white velvet dresses—no, I wouldn't for two dozen trunkfuls. I'm not going to stay home and keep house, and look sober, with my hair done up behind. I'd rather be an old maid, and have a pony and run round in the woods."

"Why, I never saw such a girl!" exclaimed Joy, opening her small eyes wide; "I wouldn't be an old maid for anything. I'm going to be married in St. Paul's, and I'm going to have my dress all caught up with orange buds, and spangles on my veil. Therése and I, we planned it all out one night—Therése used to be my French nurse, you know." [Pg 206]

For answer, Gypsy threw herself down suddenly on the velvet moss, her eyes turned up to the far, hazy sky, showing in patches through a lace work of thousands of leaves.

"Joy," she said, breaking a silence, and speaking in a curious, earnest tone Gypsy seldom used, "I do really, though, sometimes go off alone where there are some trees, and wonder."

"Wonder what?"

"What in this world I was ever made for. I suppose there's got to be a reason."

"A reason!" said Joy, blankly.

"There's got to be something *done*, for all I see. God doesn't make people live on and on and die, for nothing. One can't be a little girl all one's life, climbing trees and making snowballs," said Gypsy, half dreamily, half impatiently, jumping up and walking on. [Pg 207]



So they wandered away and away, deeper into the heart of the forest, through moss and tufted

grasses, and tangles of mountain flowers, chatting as girls will, in their silly, merry way, with now and then a flash of graver thought like this of Gypsy's. [Pg 208]

"You're sure you know the way back," said Joy, presently.

"Oh, yes; I've been over it forty times. We've turned about a good many times, but I don't think we've gone very far from the top of the mountain."

So, deeper, and further, and on, where the breath of the pines was sweet; where hidden blossoms were folding their cups for the night, and the shadows in the thickets were growing gray.

"Gypsy!" said Joy, suddenly, "we're certainly going *down hill!*"

"So we are," said Gypsy, thoughtfully; "it's getting dark, too. They'll be ready to start for home. I guess we'll go back now."

They turned then, and began rapidly to retrace their steps, over brambles and stones and fallen trees; through thickets, and up projecting rocks—very rapidly. [Pg 209]

"It is growing dark," said Gypsy, half under her breath; "why didn't we find it out before?"

"Gypsy," said Joy, after a silence, "do you remember that knot of white birches? I don't."

Gypsy stopped and looked around.

"N-no, I don't know as I do. But I dare say we saw them and forgot. Let's walk a little faster."

They walked a little faster. They walked quite as fast as they could go.

"See that great pile of rock," said Joy, presently, her voice trembling a little; "I know we didn't come by that before. It looks as if there were a precipice off there."

Gypsy made no answer. She was looking keenly around, her eyes falling on every rock, stump, tree, and flower, in search of the tiny, trodden path by which they had left the summit of the mountain. But there was no path. Only the bramble, and the grass, and the tangled thickets. [Pg 210]

It was now very dark.

"I guess this is the way," spoke up Gypsy, cheerfully—"here. Take hold of my hand, Joy, and we'll run. I think I know where the path is. We had turned off from it a little bit."

Joy took her hand, and they ran on together. It grew darker, and grew darker. They could scarcely see the sky now, and the brambles grew high and thick and strange.

Suddenly Gypsy stopped, knee-deep in a jungle of blackberry bushes.

"Joy, I'm—afraid I don't—know the—way."

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## CHAPTER X

### WE ARE LOST



The two girls, still clasping hands, looked into each other's eyes. Gypsy was very pale.

"Then we are lost!"

"Yes."

Joy broke into a sort of sobbing cry. Gypsy squeezed her hand very tightly, with quivering lips.

"It's all my fault. I thought I knew. Oh, Joy, I'm so sorry!"

She expected Joy to burst forth in a torrent of reproaches; once it would have been so; but for some reason, Joy did not say an angry word. She only sobbed away quietly, [Pg 212]

clutching at Gypsy's hand as if she were very much frightened. She was frightened thoroughly. The scene was enough to terrify a far less timid child than Joy.

It was now quite dark. Over in the west a faint, ghostly gleam of light still lingered, seen dimly through the trees; but it only made the utter blackness of the great forest-shadows more horrible. The huge trunks of the pines and maples towered up, up—they could scarcely see how far, grim, and gloomy and silent; here and there a dead branch thrust itself out against the sky, in that hideous likeness to a fleshless hand which night and darkness always lend to them. Even Gypsy, though she had been in the woods many times at night before, shuddered as she stood looking up. A queer thought came to her, of an old fable she had sometime read in Tom's mythology; a fable of some huge Titans, angry and fierce, who tried to climb into heaven; there was just that [Pg 213]

look about the trees. It was very still. The birds were in their nests, their singing done. From far away in some distant swamp came the monotonous, mournful chant of the frogs—a dreary sound enough, heard in a safe and warm and lighted home; unspeakably ugly if one is lost in a desolate forest.

Now and then a startled squirrel dropped from bough to bough; or there was the stealthy, sickening rustle of an unseen snake among the fallen leaves. From somewhere, too, where precipices that they could not find dashed downwards into damp gullies, cold, clinging mists were rising.

"To stay here all night!" sobbed Joy, "Oh Gypsy, Gypsy!"

Gypsy was a brave, sensible girl, and after that first moment of horror when she stood looking up at the trees, her courage and her wits came back to her.

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"I don't believe we shall have to stay here all night," speaking in a decided, womanly way, a little of the way her mother had in a difficulty.

"They are all over the mountain hunting for us now. They'll find us before long, I know. Besides, if they didn't, we could sit down in a dry place somewhere, and wait till morning; there wouldn't anything hurt us. Oh, you brought your waterproof—good! Put it on and button it up tight."

Joy had the cloak folded over her arm. She did passively as Gypsy told her. When it was all buttoned, she suddenly remembered that Gypsy wore only her thin, nankeen sack, and she offered to share it with her.

"No," said Gypsy, "I don't want it. Wrap it around your throat as warm as you can. I got you into this scrape, and now I'm going to take care of you. Now let's halloa."

And halloa they did, to the best of their ability; Joy in her feeble, frightened way, Gypsy in loud shouts, and strong, like a boy's. But there was no answer. They called again and again; they stopped after each cry, with breath held in, and head bent to listen. Nothing was to be heard but the frogs and the squirrels and the gliding snakes.

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Joy broke out into fresh sobs.

"Well, it's no use to stand here any longer," said Gypsy; "let's run on."

"Run where? You don't know which way. What shall we do, what *shall* we do?"

"We'll go this way—we haven't tried it at all. I shouldn't wonder a bit if the path were right over there where it looks so black. Besides, we shall hear them calling for us."

Ah, if there had been anybody to tell them! In precisely the other direction, the picnic party, roused and frightened, were searching every thicket, and shouting their names at every ravine. Each step the girls took now sent them so much further away from help.

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While they were running on, still hand in hand, Joy heard the most remarkable sound. It was a laugh from Gypsy—actually a soft, merry laugh, breaking out like music on the night air, in the dreary place.

"Why, Gypsy Breynton! What can you find to laugh at, I should like to know?" said Joy, provoked enough to stop crying at very short notice.

"Oh, dear, I really can't help it," apologized Gypsy, choking down the offending mirth; "but I was thinking—I couldn't help it, Joy, now, possibly—how mad Francis Rowe will be to think he's got to stop and help hunt us up!"

"I wonder what that black thing is ahead of us," said Joy, presently. They were still running on together, but their hands were not joined just at that moment. Joy was a little in advance.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Gypsy, eyeing it intently. The words were scarcely off from her lips before she cried out with a loud cry, and sprang forward, clutching at Joy's dress.

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She was too late.

Joy tripped over a mass of briars, fell, rolled heavily—not over upon the ground, but *off*. Off into horrible, utter darkness. Down, with outstretched hands and one long shriek.

Gypsy stood as if someone had charmed her into a marble statue, her hands thrown above her head, her eyes peering into the blank darkness below.

She stood so for one instant only; then she did what only wild, impulsive Gypsy would have done. She went directly down after Joy, clinging with her hands and feet to the side of the cliff; slipping, rolling, getting to her feet again, tearing her clothes, her hands, her arms—down like a ball, bounding, bouncing, blinded, bewildered.

If it had been four hundred feet, there is no doubt she would have gone just the same. It proved to be only ten, and she landed somewhere on a patch of soft grass, except for her scratches and a bruise or two, quite unhurt.

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Something lay here beside her, flat upon the ground. It was Joy. She lay perfectly still.

A horrible fear came over Gypsy. She crept up on her hands and knees, trying to see her lace

through the dark, and just then Joy moaned faintly. Gypsy's heart gave a great thump. In that moment, in the moment of that horrible fear and that great relief, Gypsy knew for the first time that she loved Joy, and how much.

"It's my ankle," moaned Joy; "it must be broken—I know it's broken."

It was not broken, but very badly sprained.

"Can you stand on it?" asked Gypsy, her face almost as pale as Joy's.

Joy tried to get to her feet, but fell heavily, with a cry of pain.

Gypsy looked around her with dismay. Above, the ten feet of rock shot steeply; across the gully towered a high, dark wall; at each end, shelving stones were piled upon each other. They had fallen into a sort of unroofed cave,—a hollow, shut in completely and impassably. Impassably to Joy; there could be no doubt about that. To leave her there alone was out of the question. There was but one thing to be done; there was no alternative. [Pg 219]

"We must stay here all night," said Gypsy, slowly. She had scarcely finished her sentence when she sprang up, her lips parted and white.

"Joy, see, see! what is that?"

"What? Where?" asked Joy between her sobs.

"There! *isn't that smoke?*"

A distinct, crackling sound answered her, as of something fiercely licking up the dead leaves and twigs,—a fearful sound to hear in a great forest. At the same instant a white cloud of smoke puffed down almost into their faces. Before they had time to stir or cry out, a great jet of yellow flame shot up on the edge of the cliff, glared far into the shadow of the forest, lighted up the ravine with an awful brightness. [Pg 220]

*The mountain was on fire.*

Gypsy sat for the instant without speaking or moving. She seemed to herself to have no words to say, no power of motion. She knew far better than Joy what those five words meant. A dim remembrance came to her—and it was horrible that it should come to her just then—of something she had seen when she was a very little girl, and never forgotten, and never would forget. A mountain burning for weeks, and a woman lost on it; all the town turned out in an agony of search; the fires out one day, and a slow procession winding down the blank, charred slope, bearing something closely covered, that no one looked upon.

She sprang up in an agony of terror. [Pg 221]

"Oh, Joy, *can't* you walk? We shall die here! We shall be burned to death!"

At that moment a flaming branch fell hissing into a little pool at the bottom of the gully. It passed so near them that it singed a lock of Gypsy's hair.

Joy crawled to her feet, fell, crawled up again, fell again.

Gypsy seized her in both arms, and dragged her across the gully. Joy was taller than herself, and nearly as heavy. How she did it she never knew. Terror gave her a flash of that sort of strength which we sometimes find among the insane.

She laid Joy down in a corner of the ravine the furthest removed from the fire; she could not have carried her another inch. Above and all around towered and frowned the rocks; there was not so much as a crevice opening between them; there was not a spot that Joy could climb. Across, the great tongues of flame tossed themselves into the air, and glared awfully against the sky, which was dark with hurrying clouds. The underbrush was all on fire; two huge pine trees were ablaze, their branches shooting off hotly now and then like rockets. [Pg 222]

*When those trees fell they would fall into the ravine.*

Gypsy sat down and covered her face.

Little did Mr. Francis Rowe think what he had done, when, strolling along by the ravine at twilight, he threw down his half-burnt cigar: threw it down and walked away whistling, and has probably never thought of it from that day to this.

Gypsy sat there with her hands before her face, and she sat very still. She understood in that moment what was coming to her and to Joy. Yes, to her as well as to Joy; for she would not leave Joy to die alone. It would be an easy thing for her to climb the cliffs; she was agile, fearless, as used to the mountains as a young chamois, and the ascent, as I said, though steep, was not high. Once out of that gully where death was certain, she would have at least a chance of life. The fire if not checked would spread rapidly, would chase her down the mountain. But that she could escape it she thought was probable, if not sure. And life was so sweet, so dear. And her mother—poor mother, waiting at home, and looking and longing for her! [Pg 223]

Gypsy gave a great gulp; there was such a pain in her throat it seemed as if it would strangle her. But should she leave Joy, crippled and helpless, to die alone in this horrible place? Should she do it? No, it was through her careless fault that they had been brought into it. She would stay with

Joy.

"I don't see as we can do anything," she said, raising her head.

"Shall we be burned to death?" shrieked Joy. "Gypsy, Gypsy, shall we be burned to death?"

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A huge, hot branch flew into the gully while she spoke, hissing as the other had done, into the pool. The glare shot deeper and redder into the forest, and the great trees writhed in the flames like human things.

The two girls caught each other's hands. To die—to die so horribly! One moment to be sitting there, well and strong, so full of warm, young life; the next to lie buried in a hideous tangle of fallen, flaming trunks, their bodies consuming to a little heap of ashes that the wind would blow away to-morrow morning; their souls—where?

"I wish I'd said my prayers every day," sobbed Joy, weakly. "I wish I'd been a good girl!"

"Let's say them now, Joy. Let's ask Him to stop the fire. If He can't, maybe He'll let us go to heaven anyway."

So Gypsy knelt down on the rocks that were becoming hot now to the touch, and began the first words that came to her:—"Our Father which art in Heaven," and faltered in them, sobbing, and began again, and went through somehow to the end.

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After that, they were still a moment.

"Joy," said Gypsy then, faintly, "I've been real ugly to you since you've been at our house."

"I've scolded you, too, a lot, and made fun of your things. I wish I hadn't."

"If we could only get out of here, I'd never be cross to you as long as ever I live, and I wish you'd please to forgive me."

"I will if—if you'll forgive me, you know. Oh, Gypsy, it's growing so hot over here!"

"Kiss me, Joy."

They kissed each other through their sobs.

"Mother's in the parlor now, watching for us, and Tom and—"

Gypsy's sentence was never finished. There was a great blazing and crackling, and one of the trees fell, swooping down with a crash. It fell *across* the ravine, lying there, a bridge of flame, and lighting the underbrush upon the opposite side. One tree stood yet. That would fall, when it fell, directly into the corner of the gully where the girls were crouched up against the rocks. And then Joy remembered what in her terror she had not thought of before.

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"Gypsy, *you* can climb! don't stay here with me. What are you staying for?"

"You needn't talk about that," said Gypsy, with faltering voice; "if it hadn't been for me you wouldn't be here. I'm not going to sneak off and leave you,—not any such thing!"

Whether Gypsy would have kept this resolve—and very like Gypsy it was, to make it—when the flames were actually upon her; whether, indeed, she ought to have kept it, are questions open to discussion. Something happened just then that saved the trouble of deciding. It was nothing but a clap of thunder, to be sure, but I wonder if you have any idea how it sounded to those two girls.

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It was a tremendous peal, and it was followed by a fierce lightning-flash and a second peal, and then by something that the girls stretched out their arms to with a great cry, as if it had been an angel from heaven. A shower almost like the bursting of a cloud,—great, pelting drops, hissing down upon the flaming tree; it seemed like a solid sheet of water; as if the very flood-gates of heaven were open.

The cruel fire hissed and sputtered, and shot up in angry jets, and died in puffs of sullen smoke; the glaring bridge blackened slowly; the pine-tree, swayed by the sudden winds, fell *into* the forest, and the ravine was safe. The flames, though not quenched,—it might take hours to do that,—were thoroughly checked.

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And who was that with white, set face, and outstretched hands, springing over the smoking logs, leaping down into the ravine?

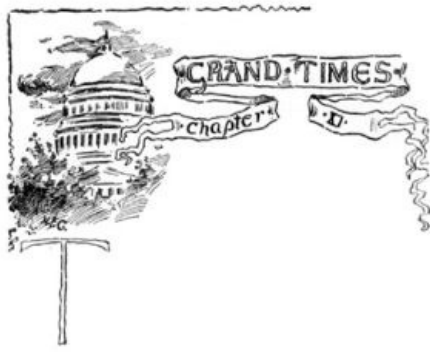
"Oh, Tom, Tom! Oh, father, here we are!"

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## CHAPTER XI

### GRAND TIMES

[Pg 229]



"To go to Washington?"

"Go to Washington!"

"Did you ever?"

"Never!"

"See the President."

"And the White House and the soldiers."

"And the donkeys and all."

"I know it."

"Father Breynton, if you're not just magnificent!"

This classical conversation took place on a certain Wednesday morning in that golden June which the picnic ushered in. And such a hurrying and scampering, and mending and making of dresses, such a trimming of summer hats and packing of trunks and valises, as there was the rest of that week!

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"You'd better believe we're busy," Gypsy observed, with a very superior air, to Mrs. Surly, who had "just dropped in to find out what that flyaway Gypsy had been screechin' round the house so for, these two days past."

"You'd better believe we have enough to do. Joy's got two white skirts to have tucked in little bits of tucks, and she's sent to Boston for a new veil. Mother's made me a whole new dress to wear in the cars, and I've got a *beautiful* brown feather for my turban. Besides, we're going to see the President, and what do you think? Father says there are ever so many mules in Washington. Won't I sit at the windows and see 'em go by!"

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Thursday, Friday, Saturday passed; Sunday began and ended in a rain-storm; Monday came like a dream, with warm, sweet winds, and dewdrops quivering in a blaze of unclouded light. Like a dream it seemed to the girls to be hurrying away at five o'clock, from an unfinished breakfast, from Mrs. Breynton's gentle good-bye, Tom's valuable patronage and advice, and Winnie's reminder that he was five years old, and that to the candid mind it was perfectly clear that he ought "to go too-o-oo."

Very much like a dream was it, to be walking on the platform at the station, in the tucked skirts and new brown feather; to watch the checking of the trunks and buying of the tickets, quite certain that they were different from all other checks and tickets; to find how interesting the framed railway and steamboat guide for the Continent, on the walls of the little dingy ladies' room, suddenly became,—at least until the pleasing discovery that it was printed in 1849, and gave minute directions for reaching the *Territory* of California.

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More like a dream was it, to watch the people that lounged or worked about the *dépôt*; the ticket-master, who had stood shut up there just so behind the little window for twenty years; the baggage-master, who tossed about their trunks without ever *thinking* of the jewelry-boxes inside, and that cologne-bottle with the shaky cork; the cross-eyed woman with her knitting-work, who sold sponge-cake and candy behind a very small counter; the small boys in singularly airy jackets, who were putting pins and marbles on the track for the train to run over; the old woman across the street, who was hanging out her clothes to dry in the back yard, just as if it had been nothing but a common Monday, and nobody had been going to Washington;—how strange it seemed that they could all be living on and on just as they did every day!

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"Oh, just think!" said Gypsy, with wide open eyes. "Did you ever? Isn't it funny? Oh, I wish they could go off and have a good time too."

Still like a dream did it seem, when the train shrieked up and shrieked them away, over and down the mountains, through sunlight and shadow, by forest and river, past village and town and city, away like an arrow, with Yorkbury out of sight, and out of mind, and only the wonderful, untried days that were coming, to think about,—ah, who would think of anything else, that could have such days?

Gypsy made her entrance into Boston in a very *distingué* style. It chanced that just after they left Fitchburg, she espied the stone pier of an unfinished bridge, surmounted by a remarkable boy standing on his head. Up went the car-window, and out went her own head and one shoulder, the better to obtain a view of the phenomenon.

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"Look out, Gypsy," said her father uneasily. "If another train should come along, that is very dangerous."

"Yes, sir," said Gypsy, with a twinkle in her eye, "I am looking out."

Now, as Mr. Breynton had been on the continual worry about her ever since they left Yorkbury, afraid she would catch cold in the draft, lose her glove out of the window, go out on the platform, or fall in stepping from car to car, Gypsy did not pay the immediate heed to his warning that she ought to have done. Before he had time to speak again, puff! came a sharp gust of wind and away went her pretty turban with its new brown feather,—over the bridge and down into the river.

"There!" said Joy.

"Gypsy, my *dear!*" said her father.

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"Well, anyway," said Gypsy, drawing in her head in the utmost astonishment, "I can wear a handkerchief."

So into Boston she came with nothing but a handkerchief tied over her bright, tossing hair. You ought to have seen the hackmen laugh!

The girls made an agreement with Mrs. Breynton to keep a journal while they were gone; send her what they could, and read the rest of it to her when they came home. She thought in this way they would remember what they saw more easily, and with much less confusion and mistake. These journals will give you a better account of their journey than I can do.

They wrote first from New York. This is what Joy had to say:—

NEW YORK, June 17,—Tuesday Night.

"Oh, I'm so tired! We've been 'on the go' all day. You see, we got into Boston last night, and took the boat, you know, just as we expected to. I've been on so forty times with father; he used to take me ever so often when he went on business; so I was just as used to it, and went right to sleep; but Gypsy, you know, she's never been to New York any way, and never was on a steamer, and you ought to have seen her keep hopping up in her berth to look at things and listen to things! I expected as much as could be she'd fall down on me—I had the under berth—and I don't believe she slept very much. I don't care so much about New York as she does, either, because I've seen it all. Uncle thought we'd stay here a day so as to look about. He wanted Gypsy to see some pictures and things. To-morrow morning real early we go to Philadelphia. You don't know what a lovely bonnet I saw up Fifth Avenue to-day. It was white crape, with the dearest little loves of forget-me-nots outside and in, and then a white veil. I'm going to make father buy me one just like it as soon as I get out of mourning.



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"I expect this isn't very much like a journal, but I'm terribly sleepy, and I guess I must go to bed."

GYPSY'S JOURNAL.

"BREVOORT HOUSE, Tuesday Night.

"Mother, Mother Breynton! I never had such a good time in all my life! Oh, I forgot to say I haven't any more idea how to write a journal than the man in the moon. I meant to put that at the beginning so you'd know.

"Well, we came on by boat, and you've no idea how that machinery squeaked. I laughed and laughed, and I kept waking up and laughing.

"Then—oh, did Joy tell you about my hat? I suppose you'll be sorry, but I don't believe you can help laughing possibly. I just lost it out of the car window, looking at a boy out in the river standing on its head. I mean the boy was on his head, not the river, and I had to come into Boston tied up in a handkerchief. Father hurried off to get me a new hat, 'cause there wasn't any time for me to go with him, and what *do* you suppose he bought? I don't think you'd ever get over it, if you were to see it. It was a white turban with a black edge rolled up, and a great fringe of *blue beads* and a *green feather!* He said he bought it at the first milliner's he came to, and I should think he did. I guess you'd better believe I felt nice going all the way to New York in it. This morning I ripped off the blue fringe the very first thing, and went into Broadway (isn't it a big street? and I never saw such tall policemen with so many whiskers and such a lot of ladies to be helped across) and bought some black velvet ribbon with a white edge to match the straw; the green feather wasn't nice enough to wear. I knew I oughtn't to have lost the other, and father paid five dollars for this horrid old thing, so I thought I wouldn't take it to a milliner. I just trimmed it up myself in a rosette, and it doesn't look so badly after all. But oh, my pretty brown feather! Isn't it a shame?

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"Father took us to the Aspinwall picture-gallery to-day. Joy didn't care about it, but I liked it ever so much, only there were ever so many Virgin Marys up in the clouds, that looked as if they'd been washed out and hung up to dry. Besides, I didn't understand what all the little angels were kicking at. Father said they were from the old masters, and there was a lady with a pink parasol, that screamed right out, and said they were sweet pretty. I suppose when I'm grown up I shall have to think so too. I saw a picture of a little boy out in the woods, asleep, that I liked ever so much better.

"We've seen ever so many other things, but I haven't half time to tell you about them all.

"We're at the Brevoort House, and I tell you I was frightened when I first came in, it's so handsome. We take our rooms, and then just go down into the most splendid dining-hall, and sit down at little tables and order what we want, and don't pay for anything but that. Father says it's the European plan. Our rooms are beautiful. Don't you tell anybody, but I'm almost afraid of the waiters and chambermaids; they look as if they felt so grand. But Joy, she just rings the bell and

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makes them bring her up some water, and orders them around like anything. Joy wanted to go to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, but father said it was too noisy. He says this is noisy enough, but he wanted us to see what a handsome hotel is like, and—and—why! I'm almost asleep.

#### JOY'S JOURNAL.

"PHILADELPHIA, Wednesday, June 18.

"We came to Philadelphia this morning, and we almost choked with the dust, riding through New Jersey. We're at a boarding-house,—a new one just opened. They call it the Markœ House. (I haven't the least idea whether I've spelled it right.) Uncle didn't sleep very well last night, so he wanted a quiet place, and thought the hotels were noisy. He thought once of going to La Pierre, but gave it up. Father used to go to the Continental, I know, because I've heard him say so. I'm too tired to write any more."

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#### GYPSY'S JOURNAL.

"THURSDAY, June something or other.

"We stayed over a day here,—oh, 'here' is Philadelphia,—because father wanted us to see the city. It's real funny. People have white wooden shutters outside their windows, and when anybody dies they keep a black ribbon hanging out on them. Then the streets are so broad. I saw four Quakers this morning. We've been out to see Girard College, where they take care of orphans, and the man that built it, Mr. Stephen Girard, he wouldn't ever let any minister step inside it. Wasn't it funny in him?"

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"Then we went over to Fairmount, besides. Fairmount is where they bring up the water from the Schuylkill river, to supply the city. There is machinery to force it up—great wheels and things. Then it makes a sort of pond on top of a hill, and there are statues and trees, and it's real beautiful.

"Father wanted to take us out to Laurel Hill:—that's the cemetery, he says, very much like Mount Auburn, near Boston, where Aunt Miranda is buried. But we shan't have time."

#### GYPSY'S JOURNAL.

"FRIDAY NIGHT.

"In Washington! in Washington! and I'm too sleepy to write a thing about it."

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## CHAPTER XII

### A TELEGRAM



#### JOY'S JOURNAL.

"SATURDAY, June 21st.

"Well, we are here at last, and it is really very nice. I didn't suppose I should like it so much; but there is a great deal to be seen. We stopped over one train at Baltimore. It rained like everything, but uncle wanted us to see the city. So we took a hack and drove about, and saw Washington's monument. I suppose I ought to describe it, but it was so rainy I didn't notice it very much. I think monuments look like big ghosts, and then I'm always afraid they'll tumble over on me."

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"Gypsy said she wondered whether George Washington ever looked down out of heaven to see the monuments, and cities, and towns, and all the things that are named after him, and what he thought about it. Wasn't it queer in her?"

"We stopped at a great cathedral there is in Baltimore, too. It was very handsome, only so dark. I saw some Irish women saying their prayers round in the pews, and there was a dish of holy water by the door, and they all dipped their fingers in it and crossed themselves as they went in and out.

"We saw ever so many negroes in Baltimore, too. From the time you get to Philadelphia, on to Washington, there are ever so many; it's so different from New England. I never saw so many there in all my life as we have seen these few days. Gypsy doubled up her fist and looked real angry when she saw them sometimes, and said, 'Just to think! perhaps that man is a slave, or that little girl!' But I never thought about it somehow. To-morrow I will write about Washington. Baltimore has taken up all my room."

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#### GYPSY'S JOURNAL.

"You ought to have seen the yellow omnibus we came up from the dépôt in! Such a *looking* thing! It was ever so long, something like a square stove-pipe, pulled out; and it was real crowded, and the way it jolted! There were several of them there waiting for the passengers. I should think they might have some decent, comfortable horse-cars, the way they do in other cities. I think it's very nice at Philadelphia. They come to the dépôts at every train, and go down at every train. Father says the horse-car arrangements are better in Philadelphia than they are in Boston or New York.

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"It seems very funny here, to be in a city that is under military rule. There are a great many soldiers, and barracks where they sleep; and a great many tents, too. There are forts, father says, all around the city, and Monday we can see some of them. While we were riding up from the dépôt I saw six soldiers marching along with a Rebel prisoner. Father says they found him hanging around the Capitol, and that he was a Rebel spy. He had on a ragged coat, and a great many black whiskers, and he was swearing terribly. I didn't feel sorry for him a bit, and I hope they'll hang him, or something; but father says he doesn't know.

"We are at Willard's Hotel. Father came here for the same reason he went to the Brevoort—so we might see what it was like. It is very large, and so many stairs! and such long dining-tables, and so many men eating at them. We didn't have as nice a supper as we did in New York.

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"It is late now, and the lamps are lighted in the streets. I can see from the window the people hurrying by, and some soldiers, and one funny little tired mule drawing a great wagon of something.

"There! he's stopped and won't move an inch, and the man is whipping him awfully. The wicked old thing....

"I was just going to open the window and tell him to stop, but father says I mustn't.

"As we rode up from the dépôt, I saw a great round dim thing away in the dark. Father says it is the dome of the Capitol."

#### GYPSY'S JOURNAL.

"After Sundown, SUNDAY NIGHT.

"Father says it isn't any harm to write a little about what we saw to-day, because we haven't been anywhere except to church.

"The horrid old gong woke me up real early this morning. I should have thought it very late at home, but they don't have breakfast in hotels till eight o'clock hardly ever, and you can get up all along till eleven, just as you like. This morning we were so tired that we didn't want to get up a bit.

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"There was a waiter at the table that tipped over a great plateful of beefsteak and gravy right on to a lady's blue silk morning-dress. She was a Senator's wife, and she jumped like anything. Joy said, 'What a shame!' but I think it's real silly in people to wear blue silk morning-dresses, because then you can't wear anything any nicer, and you won't feel dressed up in the afternoon a bit.—Oh, I forgot! this isn't Sunday!

"Well, we all went to church this morning to Dr. Gurley's church. Dr. Gurley is a Presbyterian, father says. I don't care anything about that, but I thought you might. That is the church President Lincoln goes to, and we went there so as to see him.

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"He sat clear up in front, and I couldn't see anything all through the sermon but the back of his head. We sat 'most down by the door. Besides, there was a little boy in the pew next ours that kept his father's umbrella right over the top of the pew, and made me laugh. He was just about as big as Winnie. Oh, they say *slip* here instead of pew, just as they do in Boston. I don't see what's the use. Joy doesn't like it because I keep saying pew. She says it's countrified. I think one is just as good as another.

"Well, you see, we just waited, and father looked at the minister, and Joy and I kept watching the President's kid gloves. They were black because he's in mourning for his little boy, and he kept putting his hand to his face a great deal. He moved round too, ever so much. I kept thinking how tired he was, working away all the week, taking care of those great armies, and being scolded when we got beaten, just as if it were all his fault. I think it is real good in him to come to church anyway. If I were President and had so much to do, and got so tired, I'd stay at home Sundays and go to sleep,—if you'd let me. I think President Lincoln must be a very good man. I'm sure he is, and I'll tell you why.

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"After church we waited so as to see him. There were ever so many strangers sitting there together,—about fifty I should say, but father laughed and said twenty. Well, we all stood up, and he began to walk down the aisle with his wife, and I saw his face, and he isn't homely, but he looks real kind, and oh, mother! so sober and sad! and I *know* he's a good man, and that's why.

"Mrs. Lincoln was dressed all in black, with a long crape veil. She kind of peeked out under it, but I couldn't see her very well, and I didn't think much about her because I was looking at him.

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"Well, then, you see there were some people in front of me, and I couldn't see very well, so I just

stepped up on a cricket so's to be tall, and what do you think? When the President was opposite, just opposite, and looked round at us, that old cricket had to tip over, and down I went, flat, in the bottom of the pew!

"I guess my cheeks were as red as two beets when I got up; and the President saw me, and he looked right at me,—right into my eyes and laughed. He did now, really, and he looked as if he couldn't help it, possibly.

"When he laughs it looks like a little sunbeam or something, running all over his face.

"Father says we shan't probably see him again. They don't have any receptions now at the White House, because they are in mourning.

"We went to a Quaker meeting this afternoon, but there isn't any time to tell about it."

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#### JOY'S JOURNAL.

"MONDAY, June 23.

"Oh dear me! We've seen so much to-day I can't remember half of it. I shall write what I can, and Gypsy may write the rest.

"In the first place, we went to the Capitol. It's built of white marble, and it's very large. There are quantities of long steps on different sides of it, and so many doors, and passages, and rooms, and pillars. I never could find my way out, in the world, alone. I wonder the Senators don't get lost sometimes.

"About the first place you come into is a round room, called the rotunda. Uncle says rotunda means round. There are some pictures there. One of them is Washington crossing the Delaware, with great cakes of ice beating up against the boat. One of the men has a flag in his hand. Gypsy and I liked it ever so much.

"Oh!—the dome of the Capitol isn't quite finished. There is scaffolding up there, and it doesn't look very pretty.

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"Well, then we went upstairs, and I never saw such handsome stairs! They are marble, and so wide! and the banisters are the most elegant variegated marble,—a sort of dark brown, and they are *so* broad! Why, I should think they were a foot and a half broad, but then I don't know exactly how much a foot is.

"We went into two rooms that Gypsy and I both liked best of anything. One is called the Marble Room, and the other the Fresco Room. The Marble Room is all made of marble,—walls, floor, window-sills, everything but the furniture. The marble is of different colors and patterns, and *just* as beautiful! The furniture is covered with drab damask.

"The Fresco Room is all made of pictures. Frescoes are pictures painted on the ceilings, Uncle says. He says Michael Angelo, the great sculptor and artist, used to paint a great many, and that they are very beautiful. He says he had to lie flat on scaffoldings while he was painting the domes of great churches, and that, by looking up so, in that position, he hurt his eyes very much. This room I started to tell about is real pretty. I've almost forgotten what the furniture is covered with. Seems to me it is yellow damask, or else it's the Marble Room that's yellow, and this is drab,—or else—I declare! We've seen so much to-day, I've got everything mixed up!

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"Uncle has just been correcting our journals, and he says it isn't proper to say 'I've got,' but I ought to say 'I have.'

"Oh, I forgot to say that the Senators' wives and daughters who are boarding here are very stylish people. When I grow up I mean to marry a Senator, and come to Washington, and give great parties.

"I don't see why I don't hear from father. You know it's nearly three weeks now since I had a letter. I thought I should have one last week, just as much as could be."

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#### GYPSY'S JOURNAL.

"Eight o'clock, MONDAY NIGHT.

"Joy has told ever so much about the Capitol, and I don't want to tell it all over again. If I forget it, I can look at her journal, you know.

"But she didn't tell about Congress. Well, you see if we'd come a little later we shouldn't have seen them at all; and if it didn't happen to be a long session we shouldn't see them so late in the season. But then we did. I'm very glad, only I thought it was rather stupid.

"I liked the halls, anyway. They're splendid, only there's a great deal of yellow about them; and then there are some places for pictures, and the pictures aren't put up yet.

"There's a gallery runs round, where visitors sit. The Senators and Representatives are down on the floor. We went into the Senate first. They sat in seats that curved round, and the President of the Senate—that's Vice-President Hamlin—he sits in a sort of little pulpit, and looks after things. If anybody wants to speak, they have to ask him, and he says, 'The Senator from so-and-so has the floor.' Then when they get into a fight, he has to settle it. Isn't it funny in such great grown-up men to quarrel? But they do, like everything. There was one man got real mad at Mr. Sumner to-

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day.

"I didn't care about what they were talking about, but it was fun to look down and see all the desks and papers, and some of them were just as sleepy as could be. Then they kept whispering to each other while a man was speaking, and sometimes they talked right out loud. If I should do that at school, I guess Miss Cardrew would give it to me. But what I thought was queerest of all, they all talked right *at* the Vice-President, and kept saying, 'Mr. President,' and 'Sir,' just as if there weren't anybody else in the room.

"Some of the Senators are handsome, and a good many more aren't. Joy stood up for Mr. Sumner because he came from Massachusetts. He *is* a nice-looking man, and I had to say so. He has a high forehead, and he looks exactly like a gentleman. Besides, father says he has done a noble work for the country and the slaves, and the rest of New England ought to be just as proud of him as Massachusetts.

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"We went into the House of Representatives, too, and it was a great deal noisier there than it was in the Senate, there were so many more of them. I saw one man eating peanuts. Most all of them looked hungry. The man that sits up behind the desk and takes care of the House, is called the Speaker. I think it's real funny, because he never makes a speech. As we came out of the Capitol, father turned round and looked back and said: 'Just think! All the laws that govern this great country come out from there.' He said some more about it, too, but there was the funniest little negro boy peeking through the fence, and I didn't hear.

"We went to the White House next. Father says it's something like a palace, only some palaces are handsomer. It's white marble like the Capitol. We went up the steps, and a man let us right in. We saw two rooms. One is called the Red Room and one the Green Room.

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The Red Room is furnished in red damask and the Green is all green. They were very handsome, only all the furniture was ranged along the walls, and that made it seem so big and empty. Father says that's because these rooms are used for receptions, and there is such a crowd.

"There is a Blue Room, too, that visitors are sometimes let into. Father asked the doorkeeper; but he said, 'The family were at breakfast in it.' That was *eleven o'clock*! I guess I'd like to be a President's daughter, and not have to get up. We didn't see anything more of President Lincoln.

"We've been going all day, and we've been to the Patent Office and the Smithsonian Institute, but I'm too tired to say anything about them."

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#### GYPSY'S JOURNAL.

"TUESDAY.

"We've been over to Alexandria—that's across the Potomac River—in the funniest little steamboat you ever saw. When you went in or came out of the cabin, you have to crawl under a stove-pipe. It wasn't high enough to walk straight. I don't like Alexandria. It's all mud and secessionists. People looked cross, and Joy was afraid they'd shoot us. We saw the house where Col. Ellsworth was shot at the beginning of the war. The man was very polite, and showed us round. The plastering around the place where he fell, and *all the stairs*, had been cut away by people as relics. We saw the church where Gen. Washington used to go, too."

#### JOY'S JOURNAL

"WEDNESDAY NIGHT.

"We are just home from Mount Vernon and we've had a splendid time. We went in a steamboat; it's some way from Washington. You can go by land, if you want to. It was real pleasant. Gen. Washington's house was there,—a queer, low old place, and we went all over it. There was a nice garden, and beautiful grounds, with woods clear down to the water. He is buried on the place under a marble tomb, with a sort of brick shed all around it. There is nothing on the tomb but the word WASHINGTON. His wife is buried by him, and it says on hers, MARTHA, CONSORT OF WASHINGTON. All the gentlemen took off their hats while we stood there. To-morrow we are going to Manassas, if there is a boat. Uncle is going to see. I am having a splendid time. Won't it be nice telling father all about it when he comes home?"

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Joy laid down her pen suddenly. She heard a strange noise in her uncle's room where he and Gypsy were sitting. It was a sort of cry,—a low, smothered cry, as of some one in grief or pain. She shut up her portfolio and hurried in. Mr. Breynton held a paper in his hand. Gypsy was looking over his shoulder, and her face was very pale.

"What is it? What's the matter?"

Nobody answered.

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Mr. Breynton turned away his face. Gypsy broke out crying.

"Why, what *is* the matter?" said Joy, looking alarmed.

"Joy, my poor child—" began her uncle. But Gypsy sprang forward suddenly, and threw her arms around Joy's neck.

"Oh, Joy, Joy,—your father!"

"Let me see that paper!" Joy caught it before they could stop her, opened it, read it,—dropped it slowly. It was a telegram from Yorkbury:—

*"Boston papers say Joy's father died in France two weeks ago."*

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## CHAPTER XIII

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### A SUNDAY NIGHT



They were all together in the parlor at Yorkbury—Joy very still, with her head in her auntie's lap. It was two weeks now since that night when she sat writing in her journal at Washington, and planning so happily for the trip to Manassas that had never been taken.

They had been able to learn little about her father's death as yet. A Paris paper reported, and Boston papers copied, the statement that an American of his name, stopping at an obscure French town, was missing for two days, and found on the third, murdered, robbed, horribly disfigured. Mr. George Breynton had been traveling alone in the interior of the country, and had written home that he should be in this town—St. Pierre—at precisely the time given as the date of

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the American's death. So his long silence was awfully explained to Joy. The fact that the branch of his firm with which he had frequent business correspondence, had not received the least intelligence of him for several weeks, left no doubt of the mournful truth. Something had gone wrong in the shipping of certain goods, which had required his immediate presence; they had therefore written and telegraphed to him repeatedly, but there had been no reply. Day by day the ominous silence had shaded into alarm, had deepened into suspense, had grown into certainty.

Mr. Breynton had fought against conviction as long as he could, had clung to all possibilities and impossibilities of doubt, but even he had given up all hope.

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Dead—dead, without a sign; without one last word to the child waiting for him across the seas;

without one last kiss or blessing; dead by ruffian hands, lying now in an unknown, lonely grave. It seemed to Joy as if her heart must break. She tried to fly from the horrible, haunting thought, to forget it in her dreams, to drown it in her books and play. But she could not leave it; it would not leave her. It must be taken down into her heart and kept there; she and it must be always alone together; no one could come between them; no one could help her.

And so there was nothing to do but take that dreary journey home from Washington, come quietly back to Yorkbury, come back without father or mother, into the home that must be hers now, the only one left her in all the wide world; nothing to do but to live on, and never to see him any more, never to kiss him, never to creep up into his arms, or hear his brave, merry voice calling, "Joyce, Joyce," as it used to call about the old home. No one called her Joyce but her father. No one should ever call her so again.

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Tom called her so one day, never thinking.

"I don't want to hear that—not that name," said Joy, flushing suddenly; then paling and turning away.

She was very still now. Since the first few days she seldom cried; or if she did, it was when she was away alone in the dark, with no one to see her. She had grown strangely silent, strangely gentle and thoughtful for Joy. Sorrow was doing for her what it does for so many older and better; and in her frightened, childish way, Joy was suffering all that she could suffer.

Perhaps only Gypsy knew just how much it was. The two girls had been drawn very near to each other these past few weeks. It seemed to Gypsy as if the grief were almost her own, she felt so sorry for Joy; she had grown very gentle to her, very patient with her, very thoughtful for her comfort. They were little ways in which she could show this, but these little ways are better than any words. When she left her own merry play with the girls to hunt up Joy sitting somewhere alone and miserable, and coax her out into the sunlight, or sit beside her and tell funny stories till the smiles came wandering back against their will to Joy's pale face; when she slid her strawberry tarts into Joy's desk at recess, or stole upstairs after her with a handful of peppermints bought with her own little weekly allowance, or threw her arms around her so each night with a single, silent kiss, or came up sometimes in the dark and cried with her, without saying a word, Joy was not unmindful nor ungrateful. She noticed it all, everything; out of her grief she thanked her with all her heart, and treasured up in her memory to love for all her life the Gypsy of these sad days.

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They were in the parlor together on this Sunday night, as I said,—all except Mr. Breynton, who had been for several days in Boston, settling his brother's affairs, and making arrangements to sell the house for Joy; it was her house now, that handsome place in Beacon Street, and that seemed so strange,—strange to Joy most of all.

They were grouped around the room in the fading western light, Gypsy and Tom together by the window, Winnie perched demurely on the piano-stool, and Joy on the cricket at Mrs. Breynton's feet. The faint light was touching her face, and her mournful dress with its heavy crape trimmings,—there were no white chenille and silver brooches now; Joy had laid these things aside of her own wish. It is a very small matter, to be sure, this mourning; but in Joy's case it mirrored her real grief very completely. The something which she had *not* felt when her mother died, she felt now, to the full. She had a sort of notion,—an ignorant, childish notion, but very real to her,—that it was wicked to wear bows and hair-ribbons now.

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She had been sitting so for some time, with her head in her aunt's lap, quite silent, her eyes looking off through the window.

"Why not have a little singing?" said Mrs. Breynton, in her pleasant, hushed voice;—it was always a little different somehow, Sunday nights; a little more quiet.

Gypsy went to the piano, and usurped Winnie's throne on the stool, much to that young gentleman's disgust.

"What shall it be, mother?"

"Joy's hymn, dear."

Gypsy began, without further explanation, to play a low, sweet prelude, and then they sang through the hymn that Joy had learned and loved in these few desolate weeks:

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"There is an eye that never sleeps  
Beneath the wing of night;  
There is an ear that never shuts  
When sink the beams of light.

"There is an arm that never tires  
When human strength gives way—  
There is a love that never fails  
When earthly loves decay."

Joy tried to sing, but just there she broke down. Gypsy's voice faltered a little, and Mrs. Breynton sang very softly to the end.

After that they were all still; Joy had hidden her face. Tom began to hum over the tune uneasily, in his deep bass. A sudden sob broke into it.

"This is what makes it all so different."

"What, dear?"

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"The singing, and the prayers, and the Sunday nights; it's been making me think about being a good girl, ever since I've been here. We never had any at home. Father—"

But she did not finish. She rose and went over to the western window, away from the rest, where no one could see her face.

The light was dimming fast; it was nearly dark now, and the crickets were chirping in the distant meadows.

Tom coughed, and came very near trying to whistle. Gypsy screwed the piano-stool round with a sudden motion, and went over to where Joy stood.

Tom and his mother began to talk in a low voice, and the two girls were as if alone.

The first thing Gypsy did, was to put her arms round Joy's neck and kiss her. Joy hid her face on her shoulder and cried softly. Then Gypsy choked a little, and for a while they cried together.



"You see I *am* so sorry," said Gypsy.

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"I know it,—I know it. Oh, Gypsy, if I could see him *just one minute!*"

Gypsy only gave her a little hug in answer. Then presently, as the best thing she could think of to say:

"We'll go strawberrying to-morrow, and I'll save you the very best place. Besides, I've got a tart upstairs I've been saving for you, and you can eat it when we go up to bed. I think things taste real nice in bed. Don't you?"

"Look here, Gypsy, do you know I love you ever so much?"

"You do! Well, isn't that funny? I was just thinking how much I loved you. Besides, I'm real glad you're going to live here always."

"Why, I thought you'd be sorry."

"I should have once," said Gypsy honestly. "But that's because I was ugly. I don't think I could get along without you possibly—no, not anyway in the world. Just think how long we've slept together, and what 'gales' we do get into when our lamp goes out and we can't find the matches! You see I never had anybody to get into gales with before."

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Somebody rang the door-bell just then, and the conversation was broken up.

"Joy, have you a mind to go?" asked Mrs. Breynton. "Patty is out, this evening."

"Why! whoever it is, they've come right in," said Joy, opening the door.

A man was there in the entry;—a man with heavy whiskers and a valise.

The rest of them sitting back there in the dark waited, wondering a little who it could be coming in Sunday night. And this is what they heard:

"Joyce, little Joyce!—why, don't be frightened, child; it's nobody but father."

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## CHAPTER XIV

[Pg 274]

### GOOD BYE

They were alone together in the quiet room—Peace Maythorne and Joy. The thick yellow sunlight fell in, touching the old places,—the wall where Gypsy's blue and golden text was hanging,—a little patch of the faded carpet, the bed, and the folded hands upon it, and the peaceful face.

Joy had crept up somewhat timidly into Gypsy's place close by the pillow. She was talking, half sadly, half gladly, as if she hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

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"You see, we're going right off in this noon train, and I thought I *must* come over and say good-bye."



"I'm real sorry to have you go—real."

"Are you?" said Joy, looking pleased. "Well, I didn't suppose you'd care. I do believe you care for everybody, Peace."

"I try to," said Peace, smiling. "You go in rather a hurry, don't you Joy?"

"Yes. It's just a week since father came. He wants to stay a while longer, dreadfully, but he says his business at home can't be put off, and of course I'm going with him. Do you know, Peace, I can't bear to have him out of the room five minutes, I'm so silly. It seems all the time as if I were dreaming a real beautiful dream, and when I woke up, the awful days would come back, and he'd be dead again. I keep wanting to kiss him and feel of him all the time."

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"You poor child!" said Peace, her eyes dimming a little, "how strange it all has been. How good He's been to you—God."

"I know it. I know He has, Peace. Wasn't it queer how it all came about? Gypsy says nobody but God could have managed it so, and Auntie says He must have had some very good reason.

"You see, father was sick all that time in a little out-of-the-way French town with not a single soul he knew, and nobody to talk English, and so sick he couldn't write a word—out of his head, he says, all the time. That's why I didn't hear, nor the firm. Then wasn't it so strange about that man who was murdered at St. Pierre?—the very same name—George Breynton, only it was George W. instead of George M.; but that they didn't find out till afterwards. Poor man! I wonder if *he* has anybody crying for him over here. Then you know, just as soon as ever father got well enough to travel, he started straight home. He said he'd had enough of Europe, and if he ever lived to get home, he wouldn't go another time without somebody with him. It wasn't so very pleasant, he said, to come so near dying with nobody round that you knew, and not to hear a word of your own language. Then, you know, he got into Boston Saturday, and he hurried straight up here; but the train only went as far as Rutland, and stopped at midnight. Then, you see, he was so crazy to see me and let me know he wasn't dead, he couldn't possibly wait; so he hired a carriage and drove all the way over Sunday. And oh, Peace, when I saw him out there in the entry!"

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"I guess you said your prayers that night," said Peace, smiling.

"I rather guess I did! And Peace, that makes me think"—Joy grew suddenly very grave; there was an earnest, thoughtful look in her eyes that Joy's eyes did not have when she first came to Yorkbury; a look that they had been slowly learning all this year; that they had been very quickly learning these past few weeks—"When I get home it's going to be hard—a good many things are going to be hard."

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"Yes, I see," said Peace, musingly. Peace always seemed to see just what other people were living and hoping and fearing, without any words from them to explain it.

"It's all so different from what it is here. I don't want to forget what you've told me and Auntie's told me. Almost everybody I know at home doesn't care for what you do up here in Yorkbury. I used to think about dancing-school, and birthday parties, and rigging up, and summer fashions, and how many diamonds I'd have when I was married, and all that, the whole of the time, Peace—the *whole* of it; then I got mad when my dresses didn't fit, and I used to strike Therése and Kate, if you'll believe it—when I was real angry that was. Now, up here, somehow I'm ashamed when I miss at school; then sometimes I help Auntie a little, and sometimes I *do* try not to be cross. Now, you see, I'm going back, and father he thinks the world of me, and let's me do everything I want to, and I'm afraid"—Joy stopped, puzzled to express herself—"I'm afraid I *shall* do everything I want to."

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Peace smiled, and seemed to be thinking.

"Then, you see. I shall grow up a cross, old selfish woman," said Joy dolefully; "Auntie says people grow selfish that have everything their own way. You see, up here there's been Gypsy, and she wanted things just as much as I, so there's been two ways, and that's the thing of it."

"I don't think you need to grow up selfish," said Peace, slowly; "no, I am sure you needn't."

"Well, I wish you'd tell me how."

"Ask Him not to let you," said Peace softly.

Joy colored.

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"I know it; I've thought of that. But there's another trouble. You see, father—well, he doesn't care about those things. He never has prayers nor anything, and he used to bring me novels to read Sundays. I read them then. I've got all out of the way of it up here. I don't think I should want to, now."

"Joy," said Peace after a silence, "I think—I guess, you must help your father a little. If he sees you doing right, perhaps,—he loves you so very much,—perhaps by-and-by he will feel differently."



Joy made no answer. Her eyes looked off dreamily through the window; her thoughts wandered away from Peace and the quiet room—away into her future, which the young girl seemed to see just then, with grave, prophetic glance; a future of difficulty, struggle, temptation; of old habits and old teachings to be battled with; of new ones to be formed; of much to learn and unlearn, and try, and try again; but perhaps—she still seemed to see with the young girl's earnest eyes that for the moment had quite outgrown the child—a future faithfully lived and well; not frittered away in beautiful playing only, but *filled up with something*; more than that, a future which should be a long thank-offering to God for this great mercy He had shown her, this great blessing He had given her back from the grave; a future in which, perhaps, they two who were so dear to each other, should seek Him together—a future that he could bless to them both.

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Peace quite understood the look with which she turned at last, half sobbing, to kiss her good-bye.

"I *must* go,—it is very late. Thank you, Peace. Thank you as long as I live."

She looked back in closing the door, to see the quiet face that lay so patiently on the pillow, to see the stillness of the folded hands, to see the last, rare smile.

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She wondered, half guessing the truth, if she should ever see it again. She never did.

They were all wondering what had become of her, when she came into the house.

"We start in half an hour, Joyce, my dear," said her father, catching her up in his arms for a kiss;—he almost always kissed her now when she had been fifteen minutes out of his sight,—*"We start in half an hour, and you won't have any more than time to eat your lunch."*

Mrs. Breynton had spread one of her very very best lunches on the dining-room table, and Joy's chair was ready and waiting for her, and everybody stood around, in that way people will stand, when a guest is going away, not knowing exactly what to do or what to say, but looking very sober. And very sober they felt; they had all learned to love Joy in this year she had spent among them, and it was dreary enough to see her trunks packed and strapped in the entry, and her closet shelves upstairs empty, and all little traces of her about the house vanishing fast.

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"Come along," said Gypsy in a savage undertone, "Come and eat, and let the rest stay out here. I've hardly set eyes on you all the morning. I must have you all myself now."

"Oh hum!" said Joy, attempting a currant tart, and throwing it down with one little semi-circular bite in it. "So I'm really off, and this is the very last time I shall sit at this table."

"Hush up, if you please!" observed Gypsy, winking hard, "just eat your tart."

Joy cut off a delicate mouthful of the cold tongue, and then began to look around the room.

"The last time I shall see Winnie's blocks, and that little patch of sunshine on the machine, and the big Bible on the book-case!—Oh, how I shall think about them all nights, when I'm sitting down by the grate at home."

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"Stop talking about your last times! It's bad enough to have you go anyway. I don't know what I *shall* do without you."

"I don't know what I shall do without you, I'm sure," said Joy, shaking her head mournfully, "but then, you know, we're going to write to each other twice every single week."

"I know it,—every week as long as we live, remember."

"Oh, I shan't forget. I'm going to make father buy me some pink paper and envelopes with Love stamped up in the corners, on purpose."

"Anyway, it's a great deal worse for me," said Gypsy, forlornly. "You're going to Boston, and to open the house again and all, and have ever so much to think about. I'm just going on and on, and you won't be upstairs when I go to bed, and your things won't ever be hanging out on the nails in the entry, and I'll have to go to school alone, and—O dear me!"

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"Yes, I suppose you do have the worst of it," said Joy, feeling a great spasm of magnanimity in bringing herself to say this; "but it's pretty bad for me, and I don't believe you can feel worse than I do. Isn't it funny in us to love each other so much?"

"Real," said Gypsy, trying to laugh, with two bright tears rolling down her cheeks. Both the girls were thinking just then of Joy's coming to Yorkbury. How strange that it should have been so hard for Gypsy; that it had cost her a *sacrifice* to welcome her cousin; how strange that they could ever have quarreled so; how strange all those ugly, dark memories of the first few months they spent together—the jealousy, the selfishness, the dislike of each other, the constant fretting and jarring, the longing for the time that should separate them. And now it had come, and here they sat looking at each other and crying—quite sure their hearts were broken!

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The two tears rolled down into Gypsy's smile, and she swallowed them before she spoke:

"I do believe it's all owing to that verse!"

"What verse?"

"Why, Peace Maythorne's. I suppose she and mother would say we'd tried somehow or other to prefer one another in honor, you know, and that's the thing of it. Because you see I know if I'd

always had everything my own way, I shouldn't have liked you a bit, and I'd have been real glad when you went off."

"Joyce, Joyce!" called her father from the entry, "Here's the coach. It's time to be getting ready to cry and kiss all around."

"Oh—hum!" said Gypsy.

"I know it," said Joy, not very clear as to what she was talking about. "Where's my bag? Oh, yes. And my parasol? Oh there's Winnie riding horseback on it. Well, Gypsy, go—od—"

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"Bye," finished Gypsy, with a great sob. And oh, such a hugging and kissing as there was then!

Then Joy was caught in her Auntie's arms, and Tom's and Winnie's all at once, it seemed to her, for the coachman was in a very great hurry, and by the time she was in the coach seated by her father, she found she had quite spoiled her new kid gloves, rubbing her eyes.

"Good-bye," called Gypsy, waving one of Winnie's old jackets, under the impression that it was a handkerchief.

"Twice every week!"

"Yes—sure: on pink paper, remember."

"Yes, and envelopes. Good-bye. Good-bye!"

So the last nodding and smiling was over, and the coach rattled away, and the house with the figures on the steps grew dim and faded from sight, and the train whirled Joy on over the mountains—away into that future of which she sat thinking in Peace Maythorne's room, of which she sat thinking now, with earnest eyes, looking off through the car-window, with many brave young hopes, and little fear.



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"You'd just better come into the dining-room," said Winnie to Gypsy, who was standing out in the yard, remarkably interested in the lilac-bush, and under the very curious impression that people thought she wasn't crying. "I think it's real nice Joy's gone, 'cause she didn't eat up her luncheon. There's a piece of pounded cake with sugar on top. There were tarts with squince-jelly in 'em too, but they—well, they ain't there now, someways or nuther."

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THE END.



#### Transcriber's Notes

1. Punctuation has been normalized to contemporary standards.
2. Frontispiece illustration relocated to after title page.
3. Typographic errors corrected in original:
  - p. 46 "the the" to "the" ("the very beginning")
  - p. 52 "Gpysy" to "Gypsy" ("rushed over Gypsy's face")
  - p. 85 "Gpysy" to "Gypsy" ("Gypsy leaned back")
  - p. 99 "the the" to "the" ("the only school")
  - p. 127 "Jemina" to "Jemima" ("call her Jemima")
  - p. 203 "buscuit" to "biscuit" ("biscuit and cold tongue")

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GYPSY'S COUSIN JOY \*\*\*

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