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A Missionary Twig. FRONTISPIECE.

Cover

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A
MISSIONARY TWIG.

BY

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CHAPTER I.

EDITH TRIES TO EXPLAIN.

“I do think Edith is the queerest girl I ever saw in all my life!” said Marty Ashford.

“Don't jump up and down behind my chair that way, Marty,” said her mother; “you shake me so that I can scarcely hold my needle. What does Edith do that is so queer?”

“Oh, she's always putting ten into things.”

“Putting ten into things?”

“Yes'm. I mean when she gets any money she always says ten will go into it so many times, and then she takes a tenth of it—you know we learn about tenths in fractions at school—and goes and puts it in a blue box she has.”

“I should call that taking ten out of things.”

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“Well, whatever it is, that's what she does. Every time she gets ten cents she puts one cent in her blue box.”

“What does she do if she only gets five cents?”

“Oh, she keeps it very carefully till she gets another five, and then she takes her tenth out of it. And would you believe it, when we were all at Asbury Park last summer—”

“Marty,” interrupted her mother, “can't you tell me just as well sitting still? You fidget so that you make me dreadfully nervous. Can't you sit still?”

“I don't believe I can, but I'll try real hard,” said Marty, crowding herself into Freddie's little rocking-chair and clasping her arms around her knees, as if to hold herself still.

“Well, what about Asbury Park?” Mrs. Ashford asked.

“Why, when we were at Asbury Park and Edith's father was going to New York, he gave her a whole dollar to do what she pleased with. Now you know it would be the easiest thing in the world to spend a dollar there. I could spend it just as easy as anything.”

“I dare say you could,” said Mrs. Ashford, laughing.

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“And any way you know it was vacation, and even if you save tenths other times you oughtn't to feel as if you must do it in vacation. But Edith had to go and get her dollar changed and put ten cents of it in the old blue box.”

“So she would not take a vacation from her tenths?”

“No, indeed. And the other day when her uncle from Baltimore was here, he gave her fifty cents, and it would just pay for a perfectly lovely paintbox that she wants; but she couldn't buy it because five cents of the fifty was tenths; and now she'll have to wait till she gets some more money.”

“What does she do with all the money in the blue box?” Mrs. Ashford inquired.

“Oh, she gives it to some mission-band!” replied Marty in a tone of disgust.

“Is that the mission-band Miss Agnes Walsh wanted you to join?”

“Yes, ma'am; but I didn't want to take up my Saturdays going to a thing like that, I'd rather play.”

“Let me see,” said Mrs. Ashford, “what is the name of that band?”

“*Missionary Twigs*,” replied Marty. “Funny kind of a name, isn't it?”

Then presently she said, “I don't think Edith always takes the tenths out fair; for when her grandma was away lately for six days she paid Edith three cents a day for
[Pg 8] watering her plants, and of course that was eighteen cents. So the tenth was a good deal over one cent and not quite two, and yet Edith put two cents of it away.”

“I think that was more than fair.”

“Well, I suppose it was,” Marty admitted. She actually sat quite still for two or three minutes thinking, and then asked,

“Mamma—I never thought of this before but what do you suppose is the reason she saves *tenths*? Why doesn't she save ninths or elevenths or something else?”

“Why don't you ask her?” suggested Mrs. Ashford.

“I will,” exclaimed Marty. “I'll ask her the very next time I go over there.”

Which was in about five minutes, for Edith lived in the same block and the little girls were constantly visiting each other. This being Saturday, of course there was no school. Marty ran in at the side gate and through the kitchen with a “How do, Mary?” to the cook. Edith heard her coming and called over the stairs,

“O Marty, come right up! I was just wishing you would come over and help me.”

Marty flew up stairs and into the nursery. Edith's dolls were sitting in a row on the little bureau, some dressed and some undressed, and Edith was standing in front of
[Pg 9] them looking very much perplexed.

“Oh! I'm so glad you've come,” she said. “Now you can help me with these troublesome dolls.”

“What's the matter with them?”

“Why, we've just heard that Aunt Julia and Fanny are coming to tea this evening, and of course I want the dolls to look decent. I wouldn't have Fanny see them in their everyday clothes for anything; and they don't seem to have enough good clothes to go around.”

“Let's see what they've got,” said Marty, plunging into business with her usual energy.

“Well,” said Edith, “Queenie has her new white Swiss, so she's all right, and she can have Virginia's surah sash. Louisa Alcott can wear her black silk skirt and borrow Queenie's blue cashmere waist. But Harriet has nothing fit for an evening.”

“Let her wear the sailor suit she came in, and say she's just home from the seaside,” suggested Marty, after a moment's meditation.

“Yes, that will do,” replied Edith. “But what about Virginia? Her white dress is soiled, her red gauze is badly torn, and she can't borrow from the others because she's so much larger. To be sure she has this pale blue tea-gown I made myself. Do you think it would be good enough?” and she held it up doubtfully.

[Pg 10] “No,” said Marty candidly, “I don't think it would. It isn't made very well. It's kind of baggy. Hasn't she anything else?”

“Nothing but a brown woollen walking dress and a Mother Hubbard wrapper.”

“Neither of those will do,” Marty decided.

Then she put her finger to her lip and thought.

A bright idea occurred to her presently.

“Put her to bed and make believe she's sick. She can wear the best nightdress, trimmed with lace, and we can put on the ruffled pillow-cases and fix up the bed real nice.”

“That will be splendid!” cried Edith. “I knew you'd think of something!”

They went to work on the plans proposed, and soon had the whole family in presentable condition. So busy were they with the dolls that Marty would have forgotten the errand she came on, had she not happened to catch a glimpse of the blue box when Edith opened a drawer. Then she exclaimed,

“Oh! Edie, what I came over for was to ask you why you save tenths.”

“Why I do what?” said Edith, wondering.

“Why you put tenths away in your box. Why don't you save eighths or ninths or something else?”

[Pg 11] “Because the Bible says tenths,” Edith replied.

“The Bible!” cried Marty. “Does the Bible say anything about saving tenths for a mission-band?”

“No, not just that; but it says—wait, I'll get my Bible and show you what it does say.”

She ran into her room, and bringing her Bible, sat down on a low chair and eagerly turned the leaves. Marty knelt close beside her, bending over the book also, so that her brown curls pressed against Edith's wavy golden hair.

“Here's one of the verses,” said Edith. “Leviticus twenty-seventh chapter and thirtieth verse: 'And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord.'”

“There's nothing about tenths in that,” said Marty.

“Tithes means tenths—the tenth part,” Edith explained.

“Oh! does it? Well, you see, I didn't know.”

“Yes; here it is in the thirty-second verse: 'And concerning the tithe of the herd or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.'”

“But there's nothing in all that about money,” Marty objected. “It's all fruit and
[Pg 12] flocks and herds.”

“I know,” Edith replied, “but mamma says that flocks and herds and money are all different kinds of property. The Jews hadn't much money; their property was flocks and herds and such things. Giving tenths of what they had for the Lord's service was a very important part of their religion.”

“Yes, but you are not a Jew,” said Marty. “Besides, you give your tenths to a mission-band.”

“But the mission-band sends the money to a big society that uses it to send people to tell the heathen about God.”

“Is that what mission-bands are for—to send people to teach the heathen?” asked Marty.

“Yes, and to tell us about the heathen, so that we shall want to send the gospel to them,” said Edith. “Giving to help teach people about God is giving to him, isn't it?”

“And does the Bible say that everybody must give tenths?” asked Marty.

“No,” said Edith, “there is another plan in the New Testament. Mamma says that it is good for older people, but for little children who haven't good judgment, the Jewish plan of giving tenths is better.”

“It must be pretty hard to have to give some of your money away, whether you
[Pg 13] want to or not,” said Marty.

“Oh! but I always want to,” Edith declared. “The longer I do this way the better I like it.”

“Well,” remarked Marty consolingly, “a tenth isn't much any way; you'd hardly miss it. Neither would the Jews, for I guess they were pretty rich.”

“Oh! the tenth wasn't all they gave, and it isn't all I give. For me it is just the—the —beginning, the *sure* thing. The Jews had other ways of giving—first-fruits and thank-offerings and praise-offerings and free-will-offerings. And sometimes I give thank-offerings and praise-offerings too, but they are extra; the tenths I give always.”

“It's all dreadfully mixed up,” said poor Marty.

“I suppose it is, the way I tell it,” Edith candidly admitted. “Let us go and get mamma to tell you, the way she told me.”

Marty willingly agreed, and they went into the sitting-room where Mrs. Howell was sewing.

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CHAPTER II.

WHAT MRS. HOWELL TOLD THEM.

“Mamma,” cried Edith, “I've been trying to tell Marty about tenths and offerings, and why I give my money that way, but I can't do it so that she can understand. Wont you tell her, and show her some of the verses you showed me?”

“Good-morning, Marty,” said Mrs. Howell pleasantly to the little girl who ran to kiss her. “What is it you don't understand?”

“I don't quite understand why the Jews gave tenths, nor why Edith has to do what the Jews did.”

“Well, bring your Bible, Edith, and give Marty mine, and I will show you some of the passages about giving. The first mention in the Bible of giving tithes to the Lord is when Jacob was at Bethel.”

“Wasn't that when he slept on a stone pillow, and had the beautiful dream of angels going up and down a ladder that reached to heaven?” Edith asked.

“Yes; and you remember the Lord appeared to him in the dream, and promised to
[Pg 15] be with him wherever he went. And Jacob made a vow to the Lord, in which he said, 'And of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.' You will find it all in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis.”

“Yes,” said Marty, after turning the leaves a few minutes. “Here it is: I never noticed it before.”

“Then,” Mrs. Howell went on, “you know when God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt into the promised land, he gave them a great many laws, for they were just like children, and had to be told exactly what to do on every occasion. Among other things he told them how to give. Edith, find the eighteenth chapter of Numbers and the twenty-first verse.”

Edith found the place and read, “And behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for the service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.”

“Why should the children of Levi have it?” asked Marty.

“Because the tribe of Levi was set apart for the service of God in the tabernacle, and afterward the temple, and had no 'inheritance' of land to till and pasture flocks upon like the other tribes; so the rest of the nation was instructed to provide for
[Pg 16] them. So you see these tithes were for what we should call the support of the gospel; and Levi was the ministering tribe.”

Then Mrs. Howell showed the children passages in Second Chronicles and Nehemiah where bringing tithes is spoken of, and in Malachi where the people are rebuked for not bringing them. Then she bade them turn to places in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke where our Saviour commends the giving of tithes, though he says that there are “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.”

“But tithes were not all the Israelites gave,” Mrs. Howell resumed, after the little girls had read the verses. “They gave in many other ways. Let me take that Bible a moment, Marty. Here in Deuteronomy, twelfth chapter and sixth verse, you see that many things are mentioned besides tithes—vows and free-will-offerings and the firstlings of the herds and of the flocks. Then at their feast times, three times in the year, they were told, in the sixteenth chapter of the same book, the sixteenth and seventeenth verses, that every man was to give as he was able.”

“Seems to me they must have been giving all the time,” observed Marty.

“Yes, it has been estimated that a truly devout Jew gave away about a third of his
[Pg 17] income. That is more than three-tenths, you know. Giving freely to the Lord's service and to the poor was part of a Jew's religion.”

“That's what Edith says,” Marty remarked. “'Tisn't part of ours, is it?”

“Oh, yes it is,” said Mrs. Howell, smiling a little; “though perhaps not as much as it should be. All through the Bible we are taught the duty of giving, and though, of course, those particular directions in the Old Testament were intended especially for the Jews, we may learn from them that the best way of giving is to give systematically.”

“What do you mean by systematically?” asked Marty.

“I mean not giving just when we happen to feel particularly interested in some object, or when we don't want the money for something else, but having some plan about it and giving regularly, intelligently, and, above all, prayerfully.”

“Tell Marty the New Testament plan for giving, mamma,” Edith requested.

“St. Paul tells the Corinthians in the sixteenth chapter and second verse of the first epistle: 'Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.' You see that is somewhat different from tenths. No

[Pg 18] particular portion is mentioned, but we are to regularly set aside for religious purposes as much as we can afford, and the amount is to be increased as our means increase."

"Why doesn't Edith do that way?" Marty inquired.

"When she is older and better able to judge how much she ought to give, she may adopt that plan. But it is simpler and easier just to give a tenth, and it is well for little people who are learning to have a plain and easy rule to go by."

"And why does Edith give her tenths to foreign missionary work instead of to something else?" asked Marty.

This led to a long talk about the duty of obeying Christ's last command to carry the gospel to all nations; and Mrs. Howell explained how missionary societies are trying to obey this command, and how important it is that Christians should be very prompt and regular with their contributions, so that the good work may not be hindered.

"You see," said Mrs. Howell, "in order to send the gospel to these far-away people, we must send missionaries to them. There is no other way, while there are a good many ways in which even children may help people near by. For instance, they can
[Pg 19] persuade other children to go to church and Sunday-school. And then they can be kind to the poor, and can help them in other ways beside giving money to them. Edith mends her old toys for poor children. She keeps her bright cards and picture books as nice as possible, and when done with them carries them to the Children's Hospital or to the Almshouse; and she is very careful of her clothes, so that when she has outgrown them they will do for poor little girls. There are children now down town going to Sunday-school in her clothes. So you see that even if your money goes to the missionary work, you need not neglect other ways of doing good."

"I think it's grand!" said Marty with long-drawn breath. "I've a great mind to begin trying to do somebody some good, and not keep everything myself. I have a dime every week to do what I please with, and sometimes I get other money besides."

"I am sure you would find a great deal of satisfaction in helping others," said Mrs. Howell.

"Mrs. Howell," asked Marty, after studying the verse in First Corinthians for some time, "what does it mean about laying by in store the first day of the week?"

"The first day of the week is the Sabbath, and that is a fitting time to consider how
[Pg 20] God has prospered you and to lay aside your offering."

"I think if I had a box and saved tenths I'd like to do that way," said Marty. "I suppose papa could give me my dime just as well Saturday as Monday. I do believe I'd like to belong to that band and give some money to send Bibles and teachers to the heathen."

"Oh! do, do join our mission-band," urged Edith. "You'll like it ever so much," and she went on so enthusiastically telling how delightful it was, that Marty at once decided, if her mamma approved, she would "join" at the very next meeting. Of course she could not have been so constantly with Edith without already having heard much about the band, but she had never been so interested in it as this morning, and was now very anxious to go to the meeting the coming Saturday.

"I'll run right home and ask mamma," she said.

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CHAPTER III.

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MARTY GETS STARTED.

"O Mamma!" cried Marty, bursting into her mother's room, "may I have—"

Then she stopped suddenly, for she saw her mother was sitting in the rocking-chair with Freddie in her arms, evidently trying to put him to sleep. He looked around when Marty came in so noisily, and Mrs. Ashford said, in a vexed tone,

"O Marty! why do you rush in that way? I have been trying for half an hour to put Freddie to sleep, and have just got him to lay his head down."

"Now I will lay my head up," Freddie announced, and sat up with his eyes as wide open as if he never meant to go to sleep in his life.

"I'm so sorry, mamma," said Marty, "but I didn't know he'd be going to sleep at this time."

"It is sooner than usual, but he seemed so sleepy and was so fretful, I thought I
[Pg 22] would just give him his dinner early, and put him to sleep before our lunch."

"Maybe he will lie on the bed with me, and go to sleep that way, as he did the other

day," suggested Marty, who was always very ready to make amends for any mischief she had caused. "Wont Freddie come and lie down beside sister?"

"No, no, no!" said Freddie, shaking his curly head and pushing Marty away with his foot.

"I'll tell you a pretty story," said Marty coaxingly.

"No, no," said the little boy.

"Pretty story about the three bears."

At this mention of his favorite story Freddie began to relent, and presently stretched out his arms to Marty. Mrs. Ashford put him on the bed, and he cuddled up to Marty while she told him the thrilling story of the Great Huge Bear, the Middle-sized Bear, and the Little Small Wee Bear; but long before she came to the place where little Silver Hair was found, Freddie was fast asleep.

"What were you going to ask me, Marty?" inquired her mamma, when they were seated at lunch.

"Oh, yes!" said Marty, in her excitement laying down her fork and twisting her napkin. "I was going to ask you if I might have a box to put tenths in, and if I mayn't
[Pg 23] belong to the mission-band."

"I thought you didn't want to belong to the band."

"Well, I didn't before, but I do now. I didn't know till this morning how nice it is. Mrs. Howell and Edith have been telling me all about giving money systematically, and showing me verses in the Bible; and so I thought I'd like to give some of my money, and go with Edith to the mission meeting next Saturday, if you will let me."

"Of course you may go if you wish."

"And may I have a box to put my money in?"

"Yes."

"Where shall I get it?"

"I'll give you one," said Mrs. Ashford, laughing. "Will that cardinal and gilt one of mine be suitable for the purpose?"

"*Will* you give me that beauty? Thank you ever so much," and Marty flew around the table to kiss her mother.

When they went up stairs Mrs. Ashford got out the pretty box, and, at Marty's desire, wrote on the bottom of it, "Martha Ashford," and the date. Marty, after excessively admiring and rejoicing over it, made a place for it in the corner of one of her drawers. Then she consulted her mother how to begin with the tenths.

[Pg 24] "I haven't any of this week's money left," she said—in fact she seldom had any of her weekly allowance over—" but I have twenty-seven cents of my Christmas money yet. Had I better take a tenth of that, or wait and begin with my next ten cents?"

Her mother thought it would be best, perhaps, to keep the twenty-seven cents for "emergencies," and begin the tenths with the next week's money.

"But one penny will be very little to take to the meeting," said Marty. "How would it do to put in two more as a thank-offering for something or other?"

"That is a very good idea."

In the evening her father came in for his share of the requests.

"Papa," she asked, "would you just as soon give me my ten cents this evening as Monday?"

"Certainly," he replied, taking a dime out of his pocket. "What's going on this evening?"

"Oh, nothing's going on, but I've begun to have a box for missionary money—that lovely cardinal one of mamma's with gilt spots on it—and I'm going to put tenths and offerings in it and take them to the mission-band to help send missionaries to the heathen."

[Pg 25] "Well, that's good. But what are you going to do about candy and such things?"

"Oh, I don't put all my money in the box; just some of it. I'm going to learn to give—what was it I told you mamma?"

"Systematically?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's it. You know, papa, that means giving just so much of your money and giving it at a certain time and never forgetting to give it. That's the

reason I wanted my ten cents now, so that I can put some of it in the box to-morrow morning. And, O papa! would it trouble you to give it to me all in pennies?”

“Not at all,” said her father gravely, and he counted out ten pennies, taking back the dime. “Now how much of that goes in the cardinal box?”

“One penny for tenths and two as a thank-offering, because I'm thankful that I've got started. So to-morrow morning three pennies will rattle into the box.”

“Why to-morrow?”

“Because it's the first day of the week. That's the New Testament plan, 'lay by in store on the first day of the week.'”

Then she climbed on her father's knee and told him all her day's experience. He approved of her plans and said he hoped she would be able to carry them out.

“I think,” he said, “it is a very good thing for small folks to learn to spend their
[Pg 26] money wisely, and a better thing to learn to be willing to share the good they have with those not so well off. But you will have to watch yourself very carefully, for it wont be so easy to do all this when the novelty wears off as it is now.”

“Oh! I'm always going to do this way,” said Marty very determinedly, “all my life.”

She always entered with heart and soul into whatever interested her, and all that week she could hardly think of anything but the mission-band and the money she was saving for it. By Wednesday she had dropped two more pennies into the box—a free-will-offering she told her mother—and did not spend a cent for anything, though one of her dolls was really suffering for a pink sash.

She was a great deal of the time with Edith, who gave her the most glowing accounts of what they did at the band—how they had recitations and dialogues and items, how they made aprons and kettle-holders and sold them, and how Miss Agnes read most interesting missionary stories to them while they sewed. She also told of a beautiful letter the secretary, Mary Cresswell, had written to the lady missionary in the school in Lahore, India, which the Twigs supported, and how they were anxiously looking for a reply. Miss Agnes said they must not expect a reply very soon, for
[Pg 27] missionaries were very busy people and had not much time for letter-writing. But the girls thought that Mrs. C——, the missionary, would be so pleased with Mary's letter she would certainly make time to write, at least a tiny answer.

“Does the band support a whole school?” Marty inquired in surprise. “It must take a lot of money.”

“What we do is to pay the teacher's salary, and that's only about twenty or twenty-five dollars a year,” Edith replied. “You see it's this kind of a school: the missionary ladies rent a little room for a school and hire a native teacher, somebody perhaps who attends one of the mission churches.”

“But how can any one afford to teach for so little money?”

“Oh, that's a good deal for them, for the natives of those countries can live on very little, Miss Agnes says. So the missionaries sometimes have a good many of these schools in different parts of the city, and they visit each one every two or three days to see how the children are getting on and to give them religious instruction. Miss Agnes says in that way the missionaries can do something for a great many children, and the more money we bands send to pay teachers the more of these little schools
[Pg 28] there may be.”

Marty could hardly wait for Saturday to come. She asked her mother to select a verse for her to say at the meeting.

“For Edith says they all repeat verses when their names are called.”

Her mother chose this one for her: “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.”

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CHAPTER IV.

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WHOLES INSTEAD OF TENTHS.

When Marty came home from the meeting the next Saturday evening, and entered the sitting-room in her usual whirlwind style, she found her father there having a romp with Freddie.

“Why, here is little sister! Well, missy, where have you been?” he asked.

“Why, papa!” exclaimed Marty reproachfully. “To the mission meeting, of course. I told you this morning I was going.”

“So you did; and you have told me every morning this week that this was the important day. I don't know how I came to forget it. Well, how did you like the meeting?”

“Oh, ever so much! I heard a great many sad things.”

“That's a new reason for liking a thing,” said her father.

“I mean,” replied Marty, “I liked it because it was so nice and interesting, but I did hear some sad things. Don't you think it's sad to hear of a little school in one of those
[Pg 30] big, bad Chinese cities, where the children were beginning to learn about Jesus, being broken up because the folks in this country don't send money enough to pay a teacher? And it would only take a little money, too.”

“That is certainly very sad.”

“Yes; and Miss Agnes told us of other schools that have to send the girls and boys away because there isn't possibly room for them, and there is no money to make the buildings larger. I asked her why the big society in this country—the one where the money from all the bands is sent, you know—didn't just take hold and build plenty of schools, so that all the heathen children might be taught; and she said that the Board —that's the big society—has no money to send but what the churches and Sunday-schools give them, and lately they haven't been giving enough to build all the schools that are wanted. Isn't it awful!”

“A very sad state of affairs,” said Mr. Ashford, but he could hardly help smiling a little at Marty's profound indignation.

“I should think the people in this country couldn't sit still and see things going on in such a way,” she said. “Why, do you know, Miss Agnes says there are places where the poor people are asking for missionaries, and there are none to send, because
[Pg 31] there's not money enough to support them. I should think that people would just go and take all their money out of the banks and send it to the Board. Then there would be so much money pouring in that the Board would have to sit up nights to count it.”

“No, no; that wouldn't do,” said her father. “Little girls don't understand these matters.”

“Well, but, papa,” she said, coming close to him, dragging her coat after her by one sleeve, “don't you think if everybody were to give as the Lord has prospered them, there would be nearly enough money to do the right thing by the heathen?”

“Yes, there's something in that,” answered Mr. Ashford, looking with a queer kind of a smile at his wife, over Marty's head. “But you can't compel every one to do what is right. All you can do is to attend to your own contributions.”

“Well,” said Marty, half crying in her earnestness, “I started out to give tenths; but as long as there are so many heathen, and so few missionaries, I'm going to give halves or wholes. I can't stand tenths.”

And she marched off and put every cent she had in the red box. When she got her weekly allowance, that also went in. Her mother suggested that she would better not
[Pg 32] give all her money away at once.

“I think,” she said, “it would be much better to do as you started to do, and not give in that impulsive way.”

But Marty was sure she should not regret it, and declared she was going to give every bit of money she ever should have to send missionaries to the heathen. She was very full of ardor for about two days, though on Monday something occurred that made her feel very bad. She was playing with Freddie in the morning, and when schooltime came he began to whimper, and holding her dress, pleaded,

“Don't go, Marty; play wis me.”

She was very fond of her little brother, and proud that he seemed to think more of her than he did of any one else, so she was usually quite gentle with him. She now petted him and coaxed him to let her go, saying when she came home she would bring him a pretty little sponge cake. She often brought these tasty little cakes to Freddie, and he considered them a great treat. The prospect of one quite satisfied him, and after many last kisses he let her go peaceably.

On the way home from school she stopped at the bakery, and it was not until the cake was selected and wrapped up that she remembered she had no money. It was
[Pg 33] all in her missionary box.

“Oh! I can't take it after all,” she said regretfully. “I forgot I have no money.”

“That makes no difference at all,” said the kindly German woman, who knew Marty, as Mrs. Ashford generally dealt at the shop: “you take it all the same, and bring the penny to-morrow—any day.”

“No, thank you, mamma wouldn't like me to do that,” answered Marty, hastening out to hide her tears. She was so sorry for Freddie's disappointment; and disappointed he was, for he had a good memory and immediately asked for his cake. Then there was a great crying scene, for Marty cried as heartily as he did, and their mamma had to comfort them both.

“I think, mamma,” said Marty, when Freddie had condescended to eat a piece of another kind of cake and quiet was restored, “I think, after all, I'll not put *every* cent of my money in the box, but will keep a little to buy things for dear little Freddie—and you,” giving her mother a squeeze.

“That will be best,” said Mrs. Ashford. “I know you enjoy bringing us things sometimes.”

This was quite true. Marty was very generous, and nothing pleased her more than to bring home some modest dainty, such as her small purse would buy, and share it
[Pg 34] with everybody in the house, not forgetting Katie in the kitchen.

But her penniless condition brought her a harder time yet. The next day in school a sudden recollection flashed upon her that nearly took her breath away. She could hardly wait until school was dismissed to race home to her mother, to whom she managed to gasp,

“Oh, mamma! next Friday is Cousin Alice's birthday!”

“Is it?” said Mrs. Ashford calmly. “What then?”

“Why, you know that letter-rack of silver cardboard that I have been making for her birthday, and counted so on giving her, isn't finished.”

“It is all ready but the ribbon, isn't it? It wont take long to finish. I will make the bows for you.”

“But the ribbon isn't bought yet, and I haven't got a cent!” exclaimed Marty despairingly.

There were two very strict rules in connection with the money Marty received each week. One was she was never to ask for it in advance, and the other that she was not to borrow from any one, expecting to pay when she got her dime. If she spent all her
[Pg 35] money the first of the week, she had to do without things, no matter how badly she wanted them, till the next allowance came in. This was to teach her foresight and carefulness, her father said. Now she had no money and no expectation of any until Saturday, when the birthday would be over. Of course there was all the money in the red box, but she did not dream of touching that. It was just as much missionary money as if it was already in the hands of the Board that Miss Agnes talked about.

“If I had any ribbon that would suit,” said Mrs. Ashford, “I would give it to you; but I haven't. Besides, for a present it would be better to have new ribbon. How much would it cost?”

“Rosa Stevenson paid eight cents a yard for hers, and it takes a yard and a half—narrow ribbon, you know.”

“Then you will want twelve cents. I am sorry I cannot lend you the money, but it is against the rule, you know.”

“Yes, ma'am, I know,” Marty replied sorrowfully.

She was sadly disappointed, as she had been looking forward for several weeks to the time when she should have the pleasure of presenting the nicely-made letter-rack to her cousin. She did not grudge the money she had devoted to missions; she would
[Pg 36] like to have given much more if she could; but she began to see that Edith's way of giving according to system was the best. She was still very much interested in the heathen, but they seemed a little farther off than on Saturday, while Cousin Alice and the letter-rack now absorbed most of her thoughts. She stood dolefully gazing out the window, not paying any attention to Freddie's invitation to come and play cable cars.

“Well, cheer up!” said her mother. “We will find some way out of the difficulty. You try to think of some plan to get twelve cents, and so will I. Between us we ought to devise something.”

Marty brightened up instantly and looked eagerly at her mother, sure that relief was coming immediately. “What is your plan, mamma?” she asked.

“Oh! I didn't say I had one yet,” said Mrs. Ashford, laughing. “You must give me time to think; and you must think yourself.”

That was all she would say then, and Marty spent a very restless afternoon and evening trying to think of some way to earn or save that money, but could think of nothing that would bring it in time for Friday. At bedtime her mother inquired, “Have you got a plan yet?”

[Pg 37] “No, indeed. I can't think of a thing,” answered Marty, nearly as doleful as ever.

“How do you like this plan?” said Mrs. Ashford. “I have some rags up in the storeroom that I want picked over, the white separated from the colored, and if you will do it to-morrow afternoon, I will give you fifteen cents.”

“Oh, I'll do it! I'll do it!” cried Marty in delight, kissing her mother. “You're the best mamma that ever was!”

“It is not pleasant work, and will probably take all your playtime,” cautioned her mother.

“Oh! I don't mind that,” said Marty.

So, although the next afternoon was remarkably pleasant, and it would have been delightful to be playing with her sled in the snow-heaped little park near by, where the other girls were, she very cheerfully spent it in the dull storeroom with an old calico wrapper over her dress, sorting rags. There were a good many to do—though she candidly said she didn't think there was more than fifteen cents' worth—and she got pretty tired. Katie offered to help, but Marty heroically refused, and earned her money fairly.

The letter-rack was completed in good time, and presented. Cousin Alice said it was the very prettiest of all her gifts, besides being extremely useful.

“Mamma,” said Marty that evening, “I believe after all I'll go back to Edith's plan of
[Pg 38] giving 'tenths' and 'offerings' to missions.”

“I think that would be the better way,” said her mother.

“Not that I'm tired of the heathen or the mission-band, or of giving, you know, but just because—”

“Yes, I understand,” said her mother, as she hesitated; “you are just as much interested in the matter as ever, but you now see that there are more ways than one of doing good with money, and that it is better to give systematically, as Mrs. Howell says. Then you know what you are doing, and I dare say, taking it all in all, you will give more that way than by giving a good deal one time and nothing at all another.”

“Oh! I'll *never* come to the time when I wont give anything,” Marty declared emphatically.

And she then truly believed she never should.

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CHAPTER V.

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THE EBONY CHAIR.

For a few weeks everything went smoothly. Marty attended the meetings of the band, in which she took great interest, and put two or three pennies in her box every Sunday morning. But there came a time when she began to find it hard to give even that much. There seemed to be so many little things she wanted, and it was just the season of the year when she had very few presents of money. She generally got some on her birthday, in August, and again at Christmas; but as she could not keep money very well, that was soon spent, and during the latter part of the winter she was very poor. Once or twice nothing went in the box but the strict tenth, and once she had a hard struggle with herself before even that went in; in fact, she had a very bad time altogether. It was all owing to a tiny chair.

“O girls!” exclaimed Hattie Green, one day at recess, “have you seen those lovely chairs in Harrison's window?”

“What chairs?” inquired the girls.

[Pg 40] “Oh, such lovely little dolls' chairs! Carved, you know, and with *beautiful* red cushions. I came by there this morning, and that's the reason I was late at school, I stopped so long to look at those cunning chairs.”

“Let's all go home that way,” suggested Marty, “and then we can see them.”

“All right,” said Hattie.

So after school quite a crowd went around by Harrison's toy-store to see the wonderful chairs.

There they were, rather small, to be sure, but ebony—at least they looked like ebony—and crimson satin. The girls were in raptures with them.

“They are beauties!” cried Edith.

“How I should love to have one!” said Marty.

“I wonder how much they are,” said Rosa Stevenson.

“You go in and ask, Rosa,” said Edith.

“Yes, do, do,” urged the others.

Rosa went, and came back with the information that they were twelve cents apiece.

“Well, that isn't so much,” said Edith. “I think I can afford to get one. I'll see when I go home.”

“I know I have enough money to buy one,” said Rosa, “but I never buy anything
[Pg 41] without asking mamma about it first.”

“She'll let you get it,” said Edith.

“Oh, you girls always have some money saved up, and I never have,” sighed Marty. “And I do want one of those chairs so badly.”

“So do I,” said Hattie, “and I haven't any money either, but I'm going to tease mamma night and day till she gives me twelve cents.”

“It's no use to tease my mamma,” said Marty. “If she wont let me do a thing, she wont, and that's the end of it. But of course I'll tell her about the chairs, and see what she says. Maybe she'll let me have one.”

As soon as she reached home Marty gave her mother a glowing description of the chairs, winding up with,

“And, O mamma! I do want one awfully.”

“But you have so many playthings already, Marty,” objected her mother. “Just look at those closet shelves! Besides, you got a complete set of dolls' furniture Christmas.”

“Oh, I know I don't *need* another chair at all, but those red ones are so cunning, and one would look so well mixed in among my blue ones. I should *love* to have one.”

“I am sorry your mind is so set on it,” said Mrs. Ashford, “for I dislike to have you disappointed, but when you have so many playthings, I really don't feel like giving
[Pg 42] you money, even if it is only a trifle.”

“May I buy a chair if I have money enough of my own?” Marty asked.

“Oh, yes—if you wish to spend your money that way; but I would rather save it for something else if I were you.”

Marty had no very clear idea where “money of her own” was to come from just at that time, but thought it possible the necessary amount might appear before the chairs were all sold.

The next morning Rosa and Edith came to school with money to buy chairs, and at recess all their special friends went with them to Harrison's to make the purchase. When Marty had a nearer view of the chairs and handled them, she was more anxious than ever to possess one. This anxiety increased as the days passed and the chairs gradually disappeared.

Nobody gave her any money and her mother did not offer her any more “paid” work. She was very, very sorry that she had spent all of her allowance on Monday morning—at least all but two cents and the one in the red box. That, of course, she took with her to the meeting Saturday afternoon.

Saturday evening she received her next week's supply, and that, with the two cents she had over, was exactly enough to get the longed-for toy. But one cent was tenths.

[Pg 43] “That just spoils the whole thing,” she said to herself. “I might as well have none at all as only eleven cents.”

Then she wondered if it would not do to borrow that tenth. She had not thought of taking out any of the money when she was in such straits about Cousin Alice's ribbon, but this seemed different. It was only one penny, and she was sure of being able to replace it.

But borrowing was against the rule, and it must be especially wrong to borrow missionary money. She felt ashamed and her cheeks burned when the thought came to her.

“I s'pose I'll have to give up the chair,” she sighed; “at least unless I get a little more money somehow. I wish papa wasn't so strict about borrowing. A penny wouldn't be much to borrow.”

Sunday morning she took out her money and counted it over again very carefully. Yes, there was exactly twelve cents. Then she slowly took up one cent to drop in the box. As she did so the temptation to borrow it came again.

“No, I wont do that,” she said resolutely, but after looking at the penny for a while, concluded not to put it in the box until after she came from Sunday-school.

After Sunday-school she tried it again, but still hesitated.

[Pg 44] “I'll wait till bedtime,” she thought.

By bedtime she had decided not to put it in at all.

“I b'lieve I'll borrow it. It wont do any harm to let the box go empty for one week. I'll get the chair to-morrow, and make the tenth all right next Sunday.”

So she got into bed and covered herself up, but she could not go to sleep. She tossed and tumbled for what seemed to her a long time. “It's all because that penny isn't in the box,” she thought. Finally she could stand it no longer. She got up, and feeling around in the drawer, found the penny and put it in the box. Then she went to bed, and was soon asleep.

Having decided she could not have what she so ardently desired, Marty should have kept out of the way of temptation, but every day she went to look at the chairs, and seeing them, she continued to want one. By Thursday they were all gone but two, and Hattie triumphantly announced that at last her mamma had given her money to buy one. Then Marty felt that she *must* have the other.

When she had her wraps on that afternoon ready to go out to play, she went to the missionary box, and, with hands trembling in her excitement, took out the solitary penny. Then without stopping to think she ran down stairs. Just as she was opening
[Pg 45] the street-door she repented, and after meditating a while in the vestibule, standing first on one foot and then on the other, she slowly retraced her steps and put the penny back.

“Now it's safe,” she said. “I'll just dash out without it, and of course when I haven't got it, I can't spend it.”

She dashed about half way, when all at once the vision of the lovely chair rose up before her, and the desire to possess it was greater than ever. She stopped again to think, and the result was, she returned and got the penny—it was not quite so hard to take it out the second time as it was the first—and started for the street once more.

Perhaps she might have repented and gone back again, had not her mother, who was entertaining some ladies in the parlor, called to her, “Marty, don't race up and down stairs so,” and then Marty went out with the penny in her hand.

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CHAPTER VI.

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THE EMPTY BOX.

So the chair was bought and Marty tried to think she was perfectly satisfied, but it was strange how little she cared for it after all. She showed her purchase to her mother, who said it was quite pretty, but not very substantial; that she feared it would not last long.

Marty put it in her dolls' house and played with it, trying hard to enjoy it, but her conscience was so ill at ease that she soon began to hate the sight of the chair, and by Friday evening she had pushed it away back on the shelf behind everything. The sight of the red box, too, was more than she could stand, it seemed to look so reproachfully at her; even after she had laid one of her white aprons over it she disliked to open the drawer.

There was a special meeting of the band that Saturday, as they were getting ready for their anniversary. No contributions were expected, so that it did not matter about Marty having no money; but she was feeling so low-spirited and ashamed that she
[Pg 47] simply could not go among the others nor take part in missionary exercises.

“Are you going for Edith this afternoon or is she coming for you?” inquired Mrs. Ashford.

“I'm not going to the meeting,” replied Marty in a low voice. “I told Edith I wasn't going.”

“Not going!” exclaimed Mrs. Ashford in surprise. “Why, you are not tired of it already, are you?”

“No, ma'am,” Marty answered, “but I don't want to go to-day.”

Mrs. Ashford thought perhaps Marty and Edith had had a little falling out, though it must be said they very seldom quarreled; or that Marty was beginning to tire a little of her new enterprise, for she was rather in the habit of taking things up with great energy and soon becoming weary of them. Mrs. Ashford had not expected her

missionary enthusiasm to last very long; and as she herself was not at that time much interested in such matters, she was not prepared to keep up Marty's zeal, but was inclined to allow her to go on with the work or give it up, just as she chose, as she did in matters of less importance.

However, Mrs. Ashford knew that, whatever the trouble was, it would all come out sooner or later, for Marty always told her everything. So she merely said,

[Pg 48] "Well, as it is so bleak to-day and you have a cold, perhaps it would be just as well for you not to go out."

Marty, disinclined to play, took one of her "Bessie Books" and sat down by the window. Though so cheerless out-doors, with the wind whistling among the leafless trees and blowing the dust about, that sitting room was certainly very cosey and pleasant.

Marty's "pretty mamma," as she often called her, in her becoming afternoon gown of soft, dark red stuff, sat in a low rocker in front of the bright fire busy with her embroidery and softly singing as she worked. Freddie, on the rug at her feet, played quietly with a string of buttons. The only sounds in the room were Mrs. Ashford's murmured song and an occasional chirp from the canary. But all at once this cheerful quietness was broken by loud sobbing.

Poor Marty had been so unhappy the last two days, and now added to what she felt to be the meanness of appropriating that missionary penny, was the disappointment of not being at the meeting, for she was longing to be there, though not feeling fit to go. Besides, it was a great load on her mind that she had not told her mamma how she got the chair, nor what was the reason she did not want to go to the meeting.
[Pg 49] And now she could endure her wretchedness no longer.

"What's the matter, Marty?" exclaimed Mrs. Ashford, much startled. "Are you ill? Is your throat sore? Come here and tell me what ails you?"

"Oh, mamma, I'm very, very wicked," sobbed Marty, and running to her mother's arms she tried to tell her troubles, but cried so that she could not be understood.

"Never mind, never mind," said her mother soothingly. "Wait until you can stop crying and then tell me all about it."

Freddie was dreadfully distressed to see his sister in such a state and did all he could to comfort her, bringing her his horse-reins and a whole lapful of building-blocks, and was rather surprised that they did not have the desired effect.

When Marty became quieter she told the whole story of the dolls' chair and the missionary penny. "That's the reason I didn't want to go to the meeting," she said. "I don't feel fit to 'sociate with good missionary children. I'm so sorry and so ashamed. I wish I had let the penny stay in the box and the chair stay in the store."

"We cannot undo what is done," said her mother gravely. "We can only make all possible amends and try to do better in future. You can replace the penny this
[Pg 50] evening, and this lesson you have had may teach you to be more self-denying. You know you cannot spend all your money for trifles and yet have some to give away. If you want to give you must learn to do without some things. But, Marty, if it is going to be so difficult to devote some of your money to missions, you had better just give up the attempt and go back to your old way of doing."

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Marty earnestly. "Please let me try again. I know I'll do better now, and I do want to help in missionary work."

"Well," said Mrs. Ashford, "just as you wish. I don't like to see you beginning things and giving them up so soon, but at the same time I don't think you need feel obliged to give to these things whether you want to or not."

"Oh, but I do want to ever so much," Marty protested.

She felt better after telling her mother all about the matter, and now was quite ready to brighten up and start afresh. The next morning besides dropping in two pennies for tenths she put in another, which she said was a "sorry" offering, but did not know the Bible name for it. She would have liked to make amends by putting in the whole ten cents, but her mother would not allow it.

"Things would soon be as bad as ever," were her warning words, "if that's the way
[Pg 51] you are going to do. The next thing you will want to take some of it out, as you did the penny for the chair."

"No, no, mamma! I don't b'lieve I ever *could* be so mean again," Marty declared.

"I don't believe either that you would do it again. But you will certainly save yourself a great deal of worry, and will be likely to do more good in the work you have begun, by following Mrs. Howell's advice of having a plan of giving and keeping to it."

“Well, I'm going to try that way in real earnest now,” said Marty; “but I wish it was as easy for me to be steady about things as it is for Edith. She never seems to get into trouble over her tenths.”

A few days after this, when she was spending the afternoon with Edith, Marty told Mrs. Howell what a time she had had, and added,

“Doesn't it seem strange that I can't give my money regularly?”

“Perhaps,” suggested Mrs. Howell, “you have not asked God to help you in your new enterprise.”

“Why, no, I haven't,” replied Marty. “I never thought of it.”

[Pg 52] “My dear child, we are nothing in our own strength. We should always ask God to help us, in what we attempt, and ask for his blessing. Unless he blesses our work, it cannot prosper.”

“But I don't know how to ask him,” said Marty, speaking softly. “The prayers I say every night are 'Our Father,' and 'Now I lay me,' and there's nothing in them about mission work. I should have to say another prayer, shouldn't I?”

“If you more fully understood the Lord's Prayer, you would know that exactly what you want is included in it. But why cannot you ask for what you desire in your own words? Just go to God as trustingly as you would to your mother, when you want something you know she will let you have, if it is good for you to have it. And that would be really praying, for, Marty, don't you know there's a great difference between saying prayers and praying? You may say a dozen prayers and not pray at all.”

“Don't I pray when I kneel beside the bed and say those two prayers?”

“You do if you make the petitions your own, and really desire what you ask for, and if you ask in the right spirit. But if you just say the words over without thinking what you are saying, or whom you are speaking to, it is not praying at all. It is mocking God.”

[Pg 53] “I'm sure I wouldn't do that,” said Marty, looking frightened.

“I know you would not willfully, my dear, but I just want to show you that saying over certain words is not praying. We don't realize what a blessed privilege it is to pray. God's ear is open night and day to any of us, even the smallest child. He is as ready to hear anything you may have to say as he is to hear Dr. Edgar when he gets up in his pulpit and prays.”

“Then it wouldn't be wrong to ask God to help me give missionary money regularly, would it?”

“It would be very right.”

That night when Marty knelt beside her bed she really prayed. She felt that God was listening to her, and when she came to the words, “Now I lay me down to sleep,” she realized that she was committing herself to his care, and was sure that in that care she was safe. After her usual prayers she paused a moment and then added, “And, O Lord, please help me to be steady in giving missionary money.”

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CHAPTER VII.

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HOW MISSIONS HELPED THE HOME FOLKS.

The mission work that Marty had entered upon was teaching her to pray.

She really wished to be a mission worker in her small way and she tried hard to be faithful, but owing to her forgetfulness or impatience or selfishness, things sometimes went wrong. Once or twice she forgot to learn a verse to say at the meeting, and was much mortified. Once she got very impatient with a piece of sewing and spoiled it, and then was angry because some of the girls laughed at her. And she still found it hard to give her money regularly; some weeks she wanted it so much for something else.

But all these little trials she carried to God and was helped. This led to the habit of bringing all her little troubles to him.

One day Miss Agnes remarked that we don't put enough thanks in our prayers. We ask that such and such things may be done, but we don't thank God half enough for what he has done and is constantly doing for us. We come to him with all the [Pg 55] miseries of our lives, but don't tell him about the happy and joyous things. Afterward Marty put more thanks in her prayers, and she told Miss Agnes that it was astonishing how many thankful things there were to say.

Marty also used her Bible a great deal more after she joined the band than before.

Besides the verse they were expected to repeat at roll-call, Miss Agnes sometimes asked them to bring all the texts they could find bearing upon a certain subject. The golden text for Sunday-school might be learned from the lesson-paper, but it was necessary to search the Bible for these other verses. At first Marty did not know how to begin to find them and appealed to her mother for help. Mrs. Ashford gave all the assistance in her power, though saying with a half-sigh,

“I'm afraid I don't know much about these things, Marty.”

One day Mrs. Ashford had been out shopping and in the evening several parcels were sent home. These she opened in the sitting-room. As she unwrapped quite a large one Mr. Ashford inquired,

“What is that huge book?”

When his wife handed it to him he whistled and exclaimed,

[Pg 56] “A concordance! What in the world do you want with this? Are you going to study theology?”

“No,” replied Mrs. Ashford, laughing, “but Marty comes to me with so many questions that I found I could not get on any longer without that.”

“What's a concordance, mamma?” asked Marty, “and has it anything to do with me?”

“It is a book to help us find all those verses in the Bible you have been asking me about. You see I'm not as good and wise as your friend Mrs. Howell, and don't know as much about the Bible as she does.”

“You're every bit as good,” declared Marty, who by this time had got both arms around her mother's waist as she stood on the rug, and was looking up in her face lovingly, “and you will be as wise when you are as old, for she is a great deal older than you.”

Her father and mother both laughed at Marty's earnestness, and Mr. Ashford said,

“That's right, Marty. Stand up for your mother.”

They found the concordance very useful, and from time to time spent many happy hours searching the Scriptures with its aid, comparing passages and talking them over. Not only did they find texts for the band, but other subjects were traced
[Pg 57] through the sacred pages. Occasionally Marty saw her mother busy with the concordance and Bible when she had not asked her assistance about verses.

It was while Marty was giving wholes instead of tenths and the red box was so well filled, that it met with an accident that disfigured it for life. Though the occurrence was a sad and humiliating one for Marty, it led to good results.

She had the box out one day and was counting the money, although she knew precisely how much there was. As a good deal of it was in pennies it made quite a noise, so that Freddie, attracted by the bright outside and noisy inside, thought he would like to have the box to play with. He asked Marty to give it to him, but she, busy with her counting, answered rather sharply,

“No, indeed; you can't have it. Go away, now. Don't touch!”

But Freddie was very quick in his movements, and before she could get it out of his reach he had seized it and shaken the contents all over the floor. Marty, very angry at having her beautiful box treated so roughly, and seeing the money rolling about in all directions, cried in loud tones,

[Pg 58] “Let go, you naughty boy! You'll break it!”

Freddie, now angry also, and determined to have what he wanted, held on manfully, screaming, “Dive it to me! dive it to me!” and in the struggle a small piece was broken off the lid.

Mrs. Ashford, hearing the loud tones, hurried into the room, and arrived in time to see Marty strike Freddie with one hand while she held the box high above her head with the other. Freddie was pounding her with all his little strength and crying uproariously.

“Marty, Marty!” called Mrs. Ashford, “don't strike your little brother. What is the matter? Come here, Freddie.”

But Freddie stamped his foot and screamed, “Will have it! Will have pretty box!” and Marty wailed, “Oh! he's broken my lovely box and spilled all my money.”

It was some time before peace was fully restored, though Marty was soon very repentant for what she had done and Freddie's ill-temper never lasted very long.

After standing a while with his face to the wall, as was his custom on such occasions, crying loudly, the little tempest was all over. He turned around, and putting up his hands to wipe his eyes said pitifully,

“My teeks are so wet, and I have no hamititch to dry them.”

“Come here and I'll dry them,” said his mother, taking him on her knee.

Mrs. Ashford, hearing the loud tones, hurried into the room. Page 58

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“My chin is all wet,” he said.

“So it is, but we'll dry all your face.”

“And my hands are all wet.”

“What a poor little wet boy!” said his mother tenderly, but cheerfully too.

After making him comfortable she said,

“Now are you sorry you were such a naughty boy?”

He nodded his head, and turning to Marty, who was crawling around gathering up her money, he said, “Sorry, Marty.”

Marty crept up to him, and kissing over and over the little arm she had struck, said with eyes full of tears,

“You dear little darling, you don't know how awfully sorry Marty is for being so bad to you!”

Then they rubbed their curly heads together until Freddie began to laugh, and in a few moments he was playing with his tin horse as merrily as if nothing had happened, while Marty gathered up and put away her treasures.

“Now, Marty,” said her mother, “you must keep that out of Freddie's sight. He is nothing but a baby, and doesn't know that it is any different from any other box. Let me see where it is broken. Perhaps I can mend it.”

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“No, mamma,” said Marty, “I don't want it mended. I am going to let it be this way to remind me of how naughty I was to my dear little brother, and maybe it will keep me from getting so angry with him again. It does seem dreadful, too, to think that just when I'm trying to be good to children away over the sea, I should be partic'lerly bad to my own little brother, doesn't it?”

“I sha'n't say a word,” replied her mother, “for I see you can rebuke yourself.”

So the broken missionary box was a constant reminder to Marty that her work for those far away should make her all the more loving to the dear ones at home.

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CHAPTER VIII.

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“NOT IN THE GOOD TIMES.”

One Saturday afternoon as Edith and Marty entered the room where the meetings of the band were held, half a dozen girls rushed to them, exclaiming,

“Oh, what do you think! Mary Cresswell has a letter from Mrs. C——!”

How eager they all were to hear that letter! As soon as the opening exercises were over, Miss Walsh told Mary she might read it. The young secretary looked quite proud and important as she unfolded the letter, very tenderly, indeed, for it was written on thin paper, as foreign letters are, and she was afraid of tearing it.

After speaking very nicely of the letter she had received from them, Mrs. C—— went on to tell them something about Lahore and about the school they were interested in. She said:

“You must not imagine a well-arranged schoolroom with desks, maps, black-boards, and so on. We cannot afford anything like that, and in any case it would be useless to
[Pg 62] the kind of pupils we have. We pay a woman a little for the use of part of the room in which she lives, and while the school is in session she goes on with her work in one corner. This room is quite dark, as, having no windows, all the light it receives is from the door. It has no furniture to speak of. The teacher and pupils sit on the earth floor.”

She then described the dress of the little girls, which certainly did not appear to be very comfortable for the cool weather they sometimes have in North India, and said, “No matter how poor and scanty the clothing, they must have some kind of jewelry, even if it is only glass or brass bangles. They are anything but cleanly, as they are not taught in their own homes to be so; besides, some of their customs are considerably against cleanliness. For instance, they must not wash themselves at all for a certain length of time after the death of relatives. So it sometimes happens the children come to school in a very dirty condition.”

These children, Mrs. C—— said, were bright and learned quite readily. She mentioned some of the hymns and Scripture verses they knew, and some of the answers they had given to questions she put to them.

“But the great difficulty is,” she wrote, “they are taken away from school so young
[Pg 63] to be married and thus lost to us. Still it is good to think that they receive some religious instruction, and matters in regard to girls and women in India are gradually improving. Not quite so much stress is laid on child-marriage; indeed, some native societies are being formed for the purpose of opposing this custom, and many more girls are allowed to attend school than used to be the case.

“But there is room yet for great improvement. You, my young friends, in your happy childhood and girlhood, cannot conceive the miseries of these poor little creatures. Thank God your lot is cast in a Christian land, and oh! do all you can to send the gospel light into these dark places of the earth.”

The girls had a great deal to say about this letter, and as it was sewing afternoon, Miss Walsh allowed them to talk over their work instead of having any reading.

“Somebody told me,” said little Daisy Roberts, “that in India they don't care as much about girls as boys, and sometimes they kill the girl babies. Is that so?”

“Yes,” replied Miss Walsh. “It used to be a very common custom, and is still so to some extent, though the British Government has done much to stop it.”

“They must be very cruel to want to kill their own dear little babies. Why, if
[Pg 64] anybody should hurt our little Nellie, we'd all fly at him and nearly tear him to pieces,” and Daisy's face got very red and she doubled up her little fist at the very thought of such a thing.

“It isn't always, nor perhaps often, done in a spirit of cruelty. Sometimes it is because the parents are poor and cannot afford to marry their daughters, for weddings cost a great deal, and according to the notions of the country everybody must be married. Often it ruins a man to get his daughters married, and he lives in poverty all the rest of his life. Then very ignorant and superstitious parents sometimes sacrifice their children to please their gods, and as girls are not as much thought of as boys, it is frequently the girls who are killed. But, as I told you, the Government does not allow such doings, and when people are found breaking the law they are punished. Besides, as Christianity spreads these wicked things cease.”

“I think that way they have of making little girls get married is awful,” said Edith. “Just think of being dragged off to be married when you're only a little mite of a thing, and having to leave your own mamma and live with a cross old mother-in-law who abuses you!”

“Don't their fathers and mothers love them at all, Miss Agnes, that they send them
[Pg 65] off that way and allow them to be miserable?” asked Marty, who was ready to cry

over the miseries of the poor little India girl.

“Of course there are many cruel parents—heathenism, you know, does not teach people to be kind and loving—but many love their children as much as your parents love you. In fact they are over-indulgent to them, and let them do just what they please when they are small. And you may imagine that the mother especially has a very sore heart when her little daughter is taken from her and when she hears of her being ill-treated in her new home. But it is considered a disgrace if girls are not married when mere children; and a loving mother wishes to keep her daughters from disgrace.”

“And how if the little girl's husband dies?” Rosa Stevenson inquired.

“Oh, then the poor little widow leads a miserable life.”

“Why, how?” Marty asked. “Can't she go back home then?”

“No,” Miss Walsh answered. “She has to live on in the father-in-law's house, where she is treated shamefully, made to do hard work, is half starved, and not allowed clothes enough to keep her comfortable. She is not taken care of when sick, and is
[Pg 66] treated worse in every way than you have any idea of or ever can have.”

“It's perfectly dreadful!” declared one of the girls.

“Didn't they use to burn the widows on their husbands' funeral pile?” asked another.

“Yes, but the British Government put a stop to that.”

“I believe I'd rather be burnt up and done with it than have to lead such a miserable life,” said Mary Cresswell.

“Oh, no, it would be dreadful to be burnt,” said Rosa.

“Seems to me it's dreadful all around,” said Marty, sighing.

“You may be thankful you don't have to make the choice,” said Miss Walsh.

“Then the poor children are not even made comfortable when they go to school,” Rosa went on, “so dirty and forlorn!”

“How queerly they're dressed,” said Hannah Morton.

“They seem to be dressed principally in earrings and bracelets,” remarked Marty.

“Miss Agnes,” inquired Mary, “aren't there other kinds of schools besides these little day-schools?”

“Oh, yes. One of the first things that the missionaries try to do is to establish boarding-schools, so as to get the boys and girls altogether away from the influence
[Pg 67] of their heathen homes. This is the way many converts are made. There are now many such schools and much good has been done by them. You remember we sent the extra ten dollars we had last year to help build an addition to a boarding-school in China.”

“Are Chinese little girls treated as badly as the ones in India?” Marty asked.

“Why, yes,” said Hannah, before Miss Walsh could reply. “Don't you remember the 'Chinese Slave Girl,' that Miss Agnes read to us?—at least read some of it. And don't you know how they are tortured by binding their feet?”

“That isn't done on *purpose* to torture them,” said Mary. “That's a custom of the country.”

“Most of their customs appear to be tortures,” said Marty.

“Yes,” said Miss Walsh, “the customs of barbarous and half-civilized nations are very hard on the women and girls.”

“Well, it all makes me feel very sorrowful,” Marty declared. “I never thought before, when I've had such good times all my life, that there are so many little girls who are not—a—”

“Not in the good times?” said Miss Walsh, helping her out.

“Yes, ma'am; and I do wish I could do something for some of them.”

“So do I,” said several of the others.

[Pg 68] “I suppose,” suggested Edith, “the faster we send the gospel to those countries the better it will be for the girls and everybody.”

“Couldn't we raise more money this year, enough to support another school, or to pay for a girl or boy in a boarding-school somewhere?” Rosa proposed.

“In that case we should have to double, or more than double, our usual amount,” said Miss Walsh. “The question is, can we do that?”

“Oh, do let us try!” exclaimed several of the girls.

Then they began forthwith to make plans for raising more money.

“Of course the more members we have, the more money we'll raise,” said Mary Cresswell, “so I think we'd better try again to get others to join our band. I have asked the Patterson girls two or three times, but I'm going to ask them again.”

“Better not ask them *plump* to join,” suggested Bertie Lee. “Just get them somehow to come to one meeting, and then they'll be sure to want to belong.”

“There's some wisdom in that,” said Miss Walsh, laughing.

“Yes'm,” said Bertie, “and I believe I'll try that way with Annie Kelley.”

[Pg 69] “I'm going to ask that new girl in our Sunday-school class,” said Hannah.

“I'm going to try to get *somebody* to come,” said Marty.

“So am I,” “And I,” cried the others.

“That's right,” said Miss Walsh. “We want to get as many people as possible interested in missionary work, and, as Mary says, the more that are interested and belong to societies, the more money will be raised, and, of course, the more good will be done. So, don't you see, you are aiding the cause very much when you try to make our meetings attractive, and so induce others to join the band.”

“I've thought of a way to make some missionary money, if it would be right to do it,” said Edith.

“What is it?” asked Miss Walsh.

“Well—you know those prizes Dr. Edgar and Mr. Stevenson give at the Sunday-school anniversary for learning the Psalms and chapters—would it do to ask them to give us money instead of books or anything else, so that we might have it for missions?”

“We certainly might ask our pastor and superintendent what they think of the plan. I have no doubt they would be willing to adopt it when they know what the money is to be used for. I think myself, your idea is a very good one.”

[Pg 70] “Yes,” said Rosa, “we should not only be studying the Bible for our own sakes, but be helping missions at the same time.”

“We'd be working for our missionary money then, shouldn't we?” remarked one of the girls.

“Yes, *indeed*!” replied another, with a laugh and shrug. She was not fond of committing to memory.

“It's a good way, though,” said Marty, standing up for Edith's suggestion, “and I'm going to start right in and learn something. Miss Agnes, I wonder how much they'd give for the 119th Psalm?”

Marty asked this in real earnest, and although Miss Walsh felt like smiling, she answered gravely,

“I don't think it is quite the right spirit in which to study the Bible, Marty—doing it only for the sake of the money, even if the money is for missions.”

“Oh! I shouldn't do it *just* for the money, but I thought if I could get more for a long Psalm than for a short one, I'd rather learn the long one, and have more missionary money. But I shouldn't want to do it if it was wrong, you know,” Marty added, looking distressed.

“I know you would not,” said Miss Walsh kindly. “I have no doubt your motives are
[Pg 71] all right, though you can hardly explain them. I can understand that you would be willing to do considerable hard work for missions, and I am glad of your willingness and enthusiasm. They help me.”

Then Marty looked radiant.

There were other plans proposed, and every one had so much to say that Miss Walsh had some trouble in getting the meeting to break up.

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CHAPTER IX.

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JENNIE.

“I do b'lieve,” said Marty one day, after she had been a member of the mission-band for several months, “I do b'lieve that hearing so much about the poor little children in India and China and those places, and trying to do something to help them, makes me feel far more like helping poor children here at home. Now, there's Jennie—I know I shouldn't have thought much about her if I hadn't been thinking of those far-away children.”

This was after she had made some sacrifices for the benefit of poor little Jennie, and this is the way she first came to know of her.

When the spring house-cleaning was going on, Mrs. Ashford's regular helper one day could not come and sent another woman. In the evening when Mrs. Ashford went into the kitchen to pay this Mrs. Scott for her day's work, Marty, who had a great habit of following her mother around the house, went also. Mrs. Scott had just finished her supper, and after receiving her money and replying to Mrs. Ashford's
[Pg 73] pleasant remarks, she said hesitatingly, pointing to a saucer of very fine canned peaches which was part of her supper, but which she had apparently only tasted, “Please, mem, may I take them splendid peaches home to my sick little girl? She can't eat nothin' at all hardly, and she would relish them, I know. If you'd jist give me the loan of an old bowl or somethin—”

“Oh! have you a sick child?” said Mrs. Ashford sympathizingly. “She shall certainly have some peaches, but you must eat those yourself. Katie, get—”

“Oh! no, mem,” protested Mrs. Scott, “that's too much like beggin'. I jist wanted to take mine to her.”

“No, it isn't begging at all,” said Mrs. Ashford. “I'm very glad you told me about your little girl. Katie, fill one of those small jars with peaches.”

Then Mrs. Ashford went into the pantry, and returning with two large oranges and some Albert biscuit, asked,

“Can you carry these also?”

Mrs. Scott was full of thanks, and said she knew such nice things would do Jennie a world of good.

“I can make enough to keep her warm in winter and get her plain vittles, but it isn't
[Pg 74] at all what she ought to have now, I know,” she said sorrowfully.

Mrs. Ashford asked what was the matter with Jennie and how long she had been ill. Mrs. Scott replied that she had hurt her back more than a year ago; and though she had been “doctored” then and appeared to get a little better, since they moved to their present abode—for they came from a distant town—she had become worse and was now not able to walk at all, but was obliged to lie in bed, sometimes suffering much pain.

“How was she hurt?” Mrs. Ashford inquired.

“She fell down the stair,” was all the reply given, but Katie said afterward that she had heard that Jennie was thrown or pushed down stairs by her drunken father. She said poor Mrs. Scott had had a very hard life with this shiftless, drunken husband, who abused her and the children. All the children were dead now except Jennie, who was about a year older than Marty, and early in the winter “old Scott,” as Katie called him, died himself from the effects of a hurt received in a fight while “on a spree.” As Mrs. Scott had been ill part of the winter and unable to work much, she had got behind with her rent, and altogether had been having a very hard time.

Marty was very much interested in what Mrs. Scott said, and asked a question or
[Pg 75] two on her own account.

“Who stays with your little girl when you are away?”

“Bless your sweet eyes! nobody stays with her. She just lies there her lone self, unless some of the other children in the house run in and out, but mostly she doesn't want their noise.”

“How long has she been in bed?”

“Most of the time for eight months, miss,” replied the poor mother with a sigh.

“Doesn't she ever sit up in the rocking-chair?”

“We have no rocking-chair, but sometimes when I go home from work, or the days I have no work, I hold her in my arms a bit to rest her.”

“Has she got anything to amuse her?”

“Yes, she has a picture-book I got her last Christmas.”

“Mamma!” exclaimed Marty, as soon as the door closed behind Mrs. Scott, “just think of lying in bed since Christmas, and now it's the first of May, with nothing but

one picture-book!”

“Ah! Marty,” said her mother, “there are many people in the world who have very hard times.”

“Well, I don't know them all, and I couldn't help them all if I did; but I feel that I
[Pg 76] know Jennie real well, and mayn't I give her some of my books and playthings? a whole lot, so that she wont be so lonesome when her mother's away.”

“I was thinking of going to see her soon, and if you wish you may go too and carry her a picture-book or something of the sort.”

Marty in her usual wholesale way would have carried half her possessions to Jennie, but Mrs. Ashford prevailed upon her to limit her gift to a small book and a few bright cards.

“You would better see Jennie first,” she said. “She may not care for books and may be too miserable to care much for playthings.”

It happened the day they fixed upon to go Mrs. Ashford brought home from market a small measure of strawberries, though they were yet somewhat expensive. Marty, seeing them on the lunch-table, nearly went wild over them, being very fond of the fruit, but her mother noticed that after she was served she barely tasted them, and then sat with the spoon in her hand gravely thinking.

“Don't you like them after all, Marty?”

“O mamma, they're perfectly delicious! I was just thinking how good they would taste to Jennie. Can't we take her some of them?”

“I am afraid there are none to spare. You know Katie must have some, and I want
[Pg 77] to save a few for your papa.”

“I might take her mine,” said Marty slowly. “I've only eaten one.” But she looked at the berries longingly.

“That would be too much of a sacrifice, I fear,” said Mrs. Ashford, “but I'll tell you what we will do if you are willing. You set yours aside for Jennie and I will give you half of mine, and then we will all have some.”

Marty was afraid it would not be fair to have her mother make a sacrifice also, but Mrs. Ashford declared she should like it of all things, and was very glad Marty had thought of taking some berries to Jennie.

So the strawberries were put in a basket with two glasses of jelly, some nice rusks that Katie was famous for making, and a closely-covered dish of chicken broth. Marty had her parcel ready, and they set out on their expedition.

When they reached the house and knocked at the door of the room Mrs. Scott had directed them to, a weak but shrill voice cried out, “Come!”

They entered a neat but poorly furnished room, of which the only occupant was a pale, thin girl, lying in what appeared to be a very uncomfortable position in bed.

“I suppose you are Jennie,” said Mrs. Ashford, with her pleasant smile.

[Pg 78] “Yes, ma'am,” answered the girl, staring.

“I am Mrs. Ashford. My little girl and I have come to see you.”

Jennie probably had few visitors, and she certainly did not know how to treat them. She did not ask her present ones to be seated, and merely continued to stare at them as well as she could stare in the doubled-up way she was lying.

“Your mother is out to-day, is she?” said Mrs. Ashford.

“Yes, but she's only gone for half a day. She ought to be home now,” and then the poor child broke into a whining cry, saying,

“I wish she'd come and fix me, for I'm all slid down, and give me some dinner.”

It is very hard to be polite and pleasant when you are faint, sick, and generally miserable.

“Wont you let me fix you?” asked Mrs. Ashford. She put the basket on the table, and taking off her gloves, approached the bed.

“Now, Marty,” she said, “as I raise Jennie, you beat up the pillows.”

Marty beat them with a will, and the sick girl was soon comfortably placed. She appeared greatly relieved and sighed from satisfaction. Mrs. Ashford, seeing a tin plate on the shelf, covered it with one of the napkins from her basket, and placing on
[Pg 79] it the small glass saucer of strawberries and a rusk, gave it to Marty to carry to Jennie. The wan face of the invalid flushed with pleasure when she saw the dainty

food.

“For me!” she exclaimed.

“Of course it's for you,” replied Marty, settling the plate on the bed.

Just then Mrs. Scott entered, almost breathless from her hurried walk, having been detained, and knowing Jennie would need her. She was exceedingly grateful when she found Mrs. Ashford and Marty ministering to her sick child.

“O mother!” cried the latter. “The lady lifted me up in bed; and see the strawberries! Some are for you.”

“No, no,” protested her mother, but Jennie persisted in forcing at least one upon her. When Marty saw how the berries were enjoyed she felt very well repaid for having been satisfied with a smaller portion herself.

Mrs. Ashford inquired what had been done for Jennie, and found she had had no doctor since coming to the city.

“I have no money to pay a doctor,” said poor Mrs. Scott, wiping her eyes, “and I can't go to a stranger and ask him to attend her for nothing. I give her the medicine the doctor told me to get when she was first hurt, but it don't seem to do any good
[Pg 80] now.”

Mrs. Ashford said she would speak to a doctor not far from there, with whom she was well acquainted, and she was sure he would be willing to come and see what could be done for the child.

“It is very hard that you have to be away from her so much, when she is sick, and almost helpless.”

“It is hard, mem, but what can I do? I must work to pay the rent and get us bread, and glad enough I am to have the work. And she's not always so forlorn as you found her, for mostly she can move herself. She's a bit weak to-day. Then when I go for all day, I leave things handy on a chair by the bed, and the people in the house are real kind, coming in to see if she wants anything and to mend the fire.”

In the meantime the children were not saying much, for Jennie, besides being somewhat shy, appeared tired and weak. She was greatly pleased with the book and cards, holding them tenderly in her hands. Marty sat in silence a while, and then asked,

“Have you a doll?”

“No,” replied Jennie. “I never had one.”

“Never in your whole life!” exclaimed Marty, extremely astonished.

“No,” said Jennie quietly. “But wunst we lived next door to a girl who had one, and
[Pg 81] sometimes she let me hold it. It was the very beautifulest kind of a doll, *I* think,” she added with great animation: “had light curly hair and big blue eyes.”

Marty was so overcome that she could do nothing but stand and gaze at the little girl who never had a doll, and nothing more was said until her mother was ready to go home.

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CHAPTER X.

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LAURA AMELIA.

On their way home Mrs. Ashford stopped at Dr. Fisher's, and finding him in his office, made her plea, and readily obtained his promise to see Jennie.

All the way Marty was unusually silent and appeared to be thinking intently. When they were nearly home she said impressively,

“Mamma, do you know, Jennie never had a doll—never in her whole life!”

“Indeed!”

“No, ma'am; and I've been thinking I'd like to give her one of mine.”

“Do you think you could part with any of yours?”

“I love them all dearly, but I think I *could* do it to make Jennie happy. I know she'd like to have a doll, and it would be a long time before I could save money enough to buy her one.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Ashford, “I'm sure she would be very happy with one of yours, but you had better take time to think it over well, and not do anything you would

afterward regret.”

[Pg 83] Marty thought it over until the next evening, and then said she still wished to give Jennie the doll.

“Very well, then,” said her mother, “I am willing you should do it. Which doll do you think of giving her?”

“Laura Amelia.”

“Why, she is your third largest and one of your prettiest! Why do you choose her?”

“Because Jennie would like a fair doll, and she's the only fair one I have except the one Grandma Brewster gave me, and I shouldn't like to give that away.” And then she repeated what Jennie had said about the next-door girl's doll.

So it was settled that Laura Amelia was to leave home the next Saturday. Her clothes were put in good order, and Mrs. Ashford made her a travelling dress.

On Friday night when Marty, in her little wrapper and worsted slippers, made her appearance at the sitting-room door to say “Good-night,” she had Laura Amelia clasped in her arms.

“Halloa! Miss Moppet,” said her papa. “Are you off? What's the matter with that dolly? Do you have to walk her to sleep?”

“Oh, no. She's very good, but she's going to sleep with me, because it's the last
[Pg 84] night she'll be here.”

Marty tried to reply steadily, but her voice trembled.

“Ah!” said her papa sympathizingly. “Where is she going?”

“I'm going to give her to Jennie.”

Of course Mr. Ashford had heard all about Jennie. He approved of her being helped, but did not like to see Marty in distress, and he noticed her eyes were full of tears.

“It is a shame for the child to give away playthings she is fond of,” he said to his wife.

“I didn't tell her to give it,” replied Mrs. Ashford. “It was her own notion.”

“Here, Marty,” said her father, putting his hand in his pocket, “you keep that doll yourself and I'll give you some money to get Jennie another one.”

“Oh! no, papa,” said Marty earnestly. “Thank you ever so much, but I want to give Jennie a doll all myself, and I've quite made up my mind to give her this one. I thought it over a whole day—didn't I, mamma? You mustn't s'pose I don't *want* to give Laura Amelia to Jennie, because I do, but you know such things make one feel a little sad for a while.”

“I presume they do,” said Mr. Ashford, smiling as he lifted both Marty and the doll
[Pg 85] to his knee. “How many dolls have you?”

“Seven, counting the two little china ones.”

“Well, that's a pretty numerous family for one small girl to care for. I guess you can spare Lucy Aurelia.”

“Lucy Aurelia!” Marty laughed heartily. “O papa, what is the reason you never can remember my dolls' names?”

“I don't see how you can remember them yourself.” Then as he kissed her goodnight he said,

“I am glad my little girl is learning to be kind to the poor and friendless.”

The next day there was some prospect that Marty would not get to Jennie's after all, as Mrs. Ashford could not very well go with her and would not let her go alone. Marty was preparing to be dreadfully disappointed, but her mother said, “Wait until after lunch and we will see what can be done.”

Just then there was a tap at the door, and a tall, dark-eyed, smiling young lady entered.

“Why, here's Cousin Alice!” exclaimed Marty, and the warm welcome the visitor received from them all showed what a favorite she was.

“I've come to stay to lunch if you will have me,” she announced, throwing her wrap and gloves on the couch. Marty immediately invited her to stay for ever, and Freddie
[Pg 86] began building a wall with his blocks all around her chair so that she could not possibly get away.

“Alice,” said Mrs. Ashford, after there had been a good deal of talk and play, “I am going to ask you to do something for me.”

“I shall be only too happy to do it, Cousin Helen,” said Miss Alice in her bright way. “You have only to speak.”

“Marty wants to do an errand down near the old postoffice this afternoon. I don't like to have her go into that part of the town by herself, and I can't go with her. Would you be willing to go with her?”

“Most certainly,” was the cordial reply.

“Oh! that will be splendid,” cried Marty.

Then both she and her mother proceeded to tell their cousin all about Jennie, after which Marty dressed the doll and packed its clothes in a box.

“What a good idea it is of Marty's to give that doll and all its belongings to Jennie!” said Miss Alice. “It will be such amusement and occupation for her when she is alone so much. It must be perfectly dreadful to lie there all day, and day after day, with nothing to do and nothing to interest her. I suppose she cannot read.”

“Not very well, I fancy, for her mother said they had moved about so much before
[Pg 87] she was hurt that she had very little chance to go to school. I suppose there is really not much of anything she could do now, as she is so weak and miserable, but it has just occurred to me that if she gets stronger under Dr. Fisher's treatment, you might help her to a light, pleasant occupation which would enliven her dull life.”

“I? How? I'm sure I should be very glad to do anything possible for the poor girl.”

“You might teach her to crochet or knit. You do such work to perfection and know so much about it. I know you have plenty of odds and ends of worsted and other materials, and I can furnish you with a good deal more. If she is able to learn, I think it would be a charming work for her, and might be very useful in coming years.”

“That is an excellent suggestion. I shall be very glad to teach her, or at least try to teach her, for I don't know how I should succeed in the attempt.”

“Oh! you would succeed beautifully, and it need not take up much of your time, as Landis Court is nearer you than it is to us, and you could run over for a little while any time. But you can see when you go whether it is worth while to speak of the matter.”

[Pg 88] “It would be just lovely!” was Marty's opinion.

“Now, Marty,” cautioned her mother, “don't you say anything about it to Jennie. Just let Cousin Alice do it in her own nice way.”

“A thousand thanks,” said Cousin Alice with her gay laugh. “I'll be sure to do my prettiest after that.”

When they made the visit, however, it was found useless to mention crocheting or any other subject to Jennie. Her attention was altogether absorbed by the doll. Mrs. Scott happened to be at home, and while she was bustling around getting chairs for her visitors and Marty was introducing her cousin, Jennie never took her eyes from Laura Amelia. Presently she said in a trembling voice,

“May I hold your doll a minute?”

“I brought her for you,” said Marty, handing the doll.

“For me to hold a minute?”

“No; to keep. She's your dolly now.”

Jennie looked perfectly bewildered at first, and then when she began to understand the matter she clasped the doll in her arms and burst into tears.

Marty was very much frightened. “Oh! don't let her cry,” she said to Mrs. Scott. “It will make her sick.”

[Pg 89] “Never mind, missy; she'll soon be all right. Come now Jennie, don't cry. Sit up and thank the little lady for the beautiful present. But it's too much to give her. Who'd ha' thought of you bringing such a handsome doll! And just what she's always wanted but never looked to having. I'm sure I don't know how to thank you,” and the poor woman threatened to follow Jennie's example, and cry over their good fortune.

Then Cousin Alice came to the rescue by suggesting that Marty should tell Jennie the doll's name and show her wardrobe. The little girls were soon chattering over the contents of the box, and Miss Alice learned from Mrs. Scott that the doctor had been to see Jennie. He said he saw no reason why with proper treatment she should not become well again, though it was likely she would always be somewhat lame and perhaps never very strong. He had sent her strengthening medicine and said she

must drink milk every day.

Then began better times for Jennie than she had ever had in her life before. First, as she would have said herself, there was the doll to love and cherish, to dress and undress, to talk to and to put to sleep. Then there were the books and pictures, for between Marty and Edith, who also came, her stock of them increased rapidly. Then there was the decrease of pain and the increase of strength, for what with the
[Pg 90] bathings and rubbings that the doctor ordered, and the nourishing food that Mrs. Ashford and Miss Alice sent, she began to get greatly better.

When she arrived at the point of sitting propped up in bed for several hours at a time, Miss Alice spoke of the crocheting and found her exceedingly willing to learn. She took it up quite rapidly too, and very much enjoyed working with the bright worsteds.

Miss Alice was greatly interested in her pupil and sometimes made quite long visits, teaching her or reading to her, and her visits made the little invalid so happy that she got better all the faster.

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CHAPTER XI.

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THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Marty and Edith often accompanied Miss Alice when she visited Jennie. Sometimes they each took a doll to visit Laura Amelia, also carrying some of their dishes and having a dolls' tea-party. This always pleased Jennie very much, though at first she scarcely knew how to play in this quiet, lady-like fashion, as she had only been accustomed to playing in the street with rough children before she was hurt. Of course she had had no chance at all to play during the last year.

Sometimes the girls read little stories to her. This she viewed as a surprising accomplishment, as she could only spell her way along, not being able to read well enough to enjoy it. So in one way or another they entertained her, making her forget her weakness.

Sometimes they talked about other things, telling her of the mission-band, though, as it was something so outside of her experience, she could, with all their explanation, hardly form any idea of it. She took more interest in descriptions of the
[Pg 92] country, the green fields, shady woods, and pretty gardens. She was very fond of flowers, and during the early summer her friends kept the poor room quite bright with them. An old lady living near Mrs. Ashford, and having an unusually large yard for the city, had a great many flowers, and hearing of Marty's sick friend in Landis Court, told her whenever she was going over there to come and get some flowers for Jennie. This delighted both little girls extremely.

One day when they were all with Jennie, she picked up one of her cards that had on it a picture of a shepherd leading his flock and carrying a lamb in his arms. She wanted to know what it meant, and what a shepherd was, and what sheep were. After it had been explained, she said,

"'Shepherd' makes me think of a hymn they used to sing in the Sunday-school down in the Harbor."

"Did you ever go to Sunday-school?" asked Marty.

"I went a little while when we lived down in the Harbor. My teacher had a lovely velvet cloak trimmed with fur."

"Didn't she tell you about the Good Shepherd?" Edith inquired.

"No. She didn't seem to know about any kind of shepherd. Leastways she never let
[Pg 93] on that she did. But they used to sing beautiful hymns, and one was about a shepherd."

"Was it 'Saviour, like a shepherd lead us'?" asked Marty.

"That was the very one!" exclaimed Jennie in delight. "How did you know that was it?"

"I thought it might be."

"Would you like to have us sing it now?" Miss Alice inquired.

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

So they sang it, Jennie joining in whenever they came to the words, "Blessed Jesus," which, besides the first line, was all she knew.

"Is blessed Jesus a shepherd?" she asked.

“He is the Good Shepherd,” replied Edith.

“Where's his sheep?”

“All who believe on Him are his sheep, for the Bible says, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.'”

Miss Alice saw that Jennie did not altogether understand Edith, so in a few simple words she explained that Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd, and calls us to follow him. Then taking up the picture again she repeated what she had said about shepherds and their flocks, and also went over some of the hymn they had been singing, until Jennie began to get into her little muddled brain
[Pg 94] quite a clear idea of Jesus, our Shepherd.

“Where is your Bible? I will show you the chapter about the Good Shepherd.”

“I ha'n't got one. Mother has one, but I guess it's locked up in that little black trunk. It's a purple one with clasps that somebody gave her long ago, and she always had to keep it hid for fear papa'd sell it for whiskey.”

Jennie said all this very coolly, she was so much accustomed to the kind of life in which there was more whiskey than Bible; but Edith and Marty looked much shocked.

“Never mind,” said Miss Alice, “I will bring my Bible the next time I come and read the chapter to you.”

Just then a beautiful plan flashed into Marty's head, and as Edith was included in it, she could not resist reaching over and giving her arm a tiny squeeze. Edith must have partly understood, for she answered with a smile.

In the meantime Miss Alice was saying to Jennie,

“Did you ever hear the Psalm beginning, 'The Lord is my Shepherd'?”

“I don't b'lieve I ever did,” said Jennie.

“Marty, can't you and Edith repeat it for her?”

Marty was not sure she remembered it all, but Edith knew it, and the beautiful
[Pg 95] Psalm was reverently recited.

That evening as Mrs. Scott, wearied with the labors of the day, was seated in one of the stiff, hard chairs doing some mending by the uncertain light of a smoky lamp, Jennie told her all that had been said and done in the afternoon, and then asked,

“Mother, can't you find that about the shepherd in your purple Bible and read it over to me?”

“I'll try, but I'm a poor reader, Jennie, and anyways I don't know as I can find the place you want.”

She unlocked the trunk and bringing forth, wrapped in soft paper, an old-fashioned, small-print Bible that had once been handsome, but was now sadly tarnished, she screwed up the smoky lamp and began to turn the leaves.

“I don't know where the place is, child. I'm none so handy with books, and there's a great many different chapters here.”

“It was about green pastures and quiet waters. Miss Alice said a pasture is a field, and it minded me of that grassy field where Tim took me the summer before he died. You know there was a pond in it, and we paddled along the edge. It was the prettiest place I ever saw, and on awful hot days I wish I was there again. I think it must be
[Pg 96] just such a place the Bible shepherd takes his folks to.”

Mrs. Scott turned the leaves back and forth, anxious to please Jennie, but unable to find what she wished.

“Now I mind,” exclaimed Jennie presently: “Miss Alice didn't call the green pasture piece a chapter; she called it a Psalm.”

“Oh! now I'll find it,” said her mother. “I know about Psalms, for my good old grandfather used to be always reading them, and I used to think it was queer the way they was spelt—with a 'p' at the beginning. I saw them over here a minute ago.”

Then after a little more searching she inquired,

“Is this it? 'The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want.'”

“The very thing!” Jennie exclaimed joyfully.

Mrs. Scott, though with some difficulty, managed to read it, while Jennie listened with closed eyes and clasped hands, thinking of the delightful places into which the Shepherd leads his flock.

“They're sweet verses,” said Mrs. Scott, as she closed the book, after laying a piece of yarn in to mark the place, “and it rests a body to read them. I call to mind now that many's the time I've heard my granddad read 'em. And I've heard 'em in church, too,
[Pg 97] when I used to go.”

“Why don't you go to church sometimes now, mother?” Jennie asked. “There's nobody to rail at you for going. You might borrow Mrs. O'Brien's bonnet after she's been to mass, and go round to the church on the front street, where we hear the singing from every Sunday.”

Mrs. Scott began to think she should like to go. She cleaned off her old black alpaca as well as possible, and the next Sunday, borrowing her kindly Catholic neighbor's bonnet, she went to church for the first time in many years.

She came home delighted, and had much to tell Jennie about the pleasant gentleman who gave her a seat and invited her to come again, about the good sermon that she could understand every bit of, and the rousing hymns, which indeed Jennie could hear with the window open.

Not long after this, one of the ladies Mrs. Scott worked for gave her a partly-worn sateen dress and a black straw bonnet, so that she was fitted out to go to church all summer; and go she did with great enjoyment. It was a pleasure to Jennie also, for with listening to the singing as she lay in bed, and hearing about all that was said
[Pg 98] and done from her mother, she almost felt as though she had been at church herself.

The purple Bible was not locked up any more, but kept handy for Miss Alice to read, and to mark passages for Mrs. Scott to read in the evening, for Jennie liked to hear the same things over and over.

The plan that popped into Marty's head that day she told to Edith on the way home, after they had left Cousin Alice.

“O Edie!” she said, “wouldn't it be nice to give Jennie a Bible for her very own?”

“You mean for you and me together to give it?” said Edith.

“Yes. You know my birthday comes in August and yours in September, and we always get some money—”

“And we could each give half, and get Jennie a Bible,” broke in Edith.

“Yes; or if we *couldn't* do it then, we might have enough by Christmas.”

“And it would be a *beautiful* Christmas gift!”

“Oh! do let us do it,” said Marty, seizing Edith and whirling her around and around.

“Yes, do,” said Edith, panting for breath.

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CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 99]

“NOW DON'T FORGET!”

It was well on in June, and Mrs. Ashford was very busy making preparations to go to the country with the children.

Two successive summers they had spent at a very pleasant mountain farmhouse, but the last year they had gone to the seashore. This summer Mrs. Ashford decided for the farmhouse again, to Marty's great delight, for it was a perfect paradise to her.

She herself had many preparations to make—deciding which dolls to take and which to leave at home, and getting them all ready for whatever was to be their fate. It also took a good deal of time to choose from her little library the few books her mamma allowed her to take for rainy days. It was a weighty matter, too, to select a suitable present for Evaline, the little girl at the farmhouse, as her father suggested she should do, and gave her money to buy it.

Then Jennie was very much on her mind.

“What will she do for soup and jelly and things when we are away, mamma?” she
[Pg 100] asked anxiously.

“I shall tell Katie to carry her something now and then,” Mrs. Ashford replied. “Besides, Cousin Alice will be in town until August, and she will look out for Jennie. Then Mrs. Scott told me the other day that she had got all her back rent paid up now, and she expects to have three days' work every week all summer; so they will get on very well.”

Another day Marty came home from Jennie's in distress.

“Mamma,” she said, “the doctor says Jennie may soon begin to sit up in an easy-

chair; and they haven't got any. Their two chairs are the most *uneasy* things I ever saw in my life. Now, how is she going to sit up?”

Mrs. Ashford laughed as she said, “Well, I was going to give you a surprise, but I may as well tell you now that I have sent that old rocking-chair that was up in the storeroom to be mended, and am going to give it to Mrs. Scott.”

Marty was overjoyed to hear this.

“And, oh! mamma, wont you give them the small table that stands in the third-story hall? You always say it is only in the way there, and it would be so nice beside Jennie's bed to put her things on, instead of a chair.”

“Yes, I suppose they might as well have it.”

[Pg 101] “And the red cover that belongs to it, mamma?”

“O Marty, Marty!” exclaimed her mother, laughing. “How many more things will you want for Jennie? But the red cover may go too.”

These things were sent, together with some of Marty's underclothing, a pair of half-worn slippers, and a couple of Mrs. Ashford's cast-off gingham dresses, to be made into wrappers for Jennie. Edith and Cousin Alice also brought some articles for Jennie's comfort.

“She will need a footstool with that chair,” said Cousin Alice. “I have an extra hassock in my room; I'll bring that.”

Mrs. Howell sent an old but soft and pretty comfort to spread over the chair, and which would also be handy for an additional covering in case of a cold night.

“A curtain on the window would soften the light on hot afternoons,” Miss Alice thought. So she made one of some white barred muslin she had and put it up. She also thought that as Jennie still had not much appetite, some prettier dishes than those Mrs. Scott had—they were very few, and very coarse and battered—might make the food taste better.

“I know, when I am ill,” she said to Mrs. Ashford, “the way my food is served makes a great difference.”

[Pg 102] So she brought a cheap but pretty plate, cup, and saucer, with which Jennie was extremely delighted.

“After we all go away there wont be anybody to take flowers to Jennie,” said Edith, “and I'm afraid she'll miss them. She does enjoy them so much. I've a great mind to buy her a geranium. May I, mamma? They're only ten cents.”

“Of course you may. I think it would be very nice for Jennie and her mother to have something of the kind growing in their room,” said Mrs. Howell.

She went with Edith to the florist's, and after helping her to select a scarlet geranium, she bought a pot of mignonette and another of sweet alyssum for Edith to give to Jennie.

Marty helped Edith to carry their plants to their destination, and what rejoicing there was over that window-garden!

“It's too much! too much!” exclaimed Mrs. Scott, wiping her eyes as she looked around the now really comfortable room.

Then when Miss Alice came in, as she did presently, with four bright-colored Japanese fans which she proceeded to fasten on the bare walls, that seemed to cap the climax.

“There never were kinder ladies—never!” exclaimed Mrs. Scott, while Jennie was
[Pg 103] too much overcome to say anything.

“It wont be so hard for Jennie to be shut up here, and she wont miss Marty and Edith so much, if she has these little bits of bright things to look at,” said Miss Alice.

Marty took the greatest interest in helping to arrange all these things for Jennie's comfort and happiness, and in thinking, too, how much pleasure they would bring into poor Mrs. Scott's hard-working life. When she went home after her final visit to Landis Court, she said with a sigh of relief,

“Now they're fixed comfor'ble, and we can go as soon as we like.”

All this time that she had been so engaged with Jennie she had not neglected the mission band, but attended the meetings regularly and became more and more interested in what she heard there.

She still pursued the plan of giving to missions at least a tenth of all the money she got. During the spring and early summer she had had two or three “windfalls” —one

or two small presents of money, and once her father had given her a quarter for hunting out from an enormous pile certain numbers of a magazine he wished to consult. Besides she had made a little money solely for the missionary-box by hemming dusters for her mother.

[Pg 104] The meeting on the third Saturday in June was very important, as it was the last regular meeting that would be held until September, and there were many arrangements to be made.

Most of the girls and Miss Walsh herself expected to be away two months, but several members were to be at home all summer and a few were only going away for a short time. Miss Walsh said she did not think it fair that those remaining in town should be deprived of their missionary meetings. It had therefore been decided that the meetings should be continued, though not just in the same way as during the rest of the year. No business was to be transacted and the girls were not to sew unless they wished.

At this “good-by” meeting, as they called it, Miss Walsh had a few words to say both to the stay-at-homes and to those who were going away. To the first she said,

“Dear girls, we leave the band in your hands knowing you will do all you can for its best interests. Mrs. Cresswell has kindly invited you to hold your meetings at her house. I have appointed four of the older girls to lead these meetings—Mary Cresswell and Hannah Morton in July, Ella Thomas and Mamie Dascomb in August. I have given each of these leaders some missionary reading in case you run short, but
[Pg 105] I dare say you will find plenty of things yourselves. I also intend to write you a little letter for each meeting, and should be glad to have any or all of you write to me.”

To the others she said,

“Now when you are away having a good time, don't forget missions. Keep up your interest and come home ready to work more earnestly and faithfully than ever. There are many ways of keeping the subject fresh in your minds and of helping along with the work even in vacation times. But you know this as well as I do, and I should like the suggestions as to how to do it to come from you.”

After a pause Edith said, “We all know the subjects for the next four meetings, and we might study and read just as we should do at home.”

“That is a good suggestion,” said Miss Walsh, “and one I hope you will all adopt; for if you don't, I'm afraid the go-aways will be far behind the stay-at-homes.”

“We might remember what we hear about missions and tell it when we come back,” said one of the others.

“That would be very instructive and pleasant,” said their leader; “and you may have plenty of opportunity to hear, as in these days very interesting missionary
[Pg 106] meetings are often held at summer resorts. Besides you may meet individuals who can give you much information.”

“We might do as you are going to do and write letters to the band at home,” said another.

“I know the band at home would like that very much, but you must remember that they must be letters suited to a missionary meeting.”

“We might join with others in holding meetings,” suggested Rosa Stevenson. “In the cottage where I was last summer there were four other girls and two boys who belonged to mission-bands, and we had a meeting every Sunday.”

“Good!” cried Miss Walsh.

“If we meet any children who don't know about missions, we might tell them about our band and what we do,” said Daisy Roberts timidly.

“The very thing, Daisy!” exclaimed Miss Walsh, patting the tiny girl on the shoulder. “And you think that might start them up to become mission workers, do you?”

“Yes, ma'am,” replied Daisy.

“I think,” said Marty, after various other suggestions had been made, and she wondered that no one had thought of this, “I think we all should take our missionary boxes and banks and barrels and jugs along with us, and put money in regularly as
[Pg 107] we do at home.”

“That is *very* important,” said Miss Walsh, “because if we neglect to lay by our contributions at the right time, trusting to make up the amount when we return home, we may find ourselves in a tight place and our treasury will suffer. And now, dear missionary workers, wherever you may be, at home or abroad, don't forget to pray every day for the success of this work. Remember what we are working for is the advancement of the kingdom of our blessed Lord and Saviour.”

And then before the closing prayer they all stood up and sang,

"The whole wide world for Jesus."

This meeting filled Marty with the greatest enthusiasm and she felt as though she could do anything for missions. *She* would not forget the subject for a single day, she was sure.

"Oh Miss Agnes," she said, "I sha'n't forget missions. I'll study the subjects every week and learn lots of missionary verses. I'll save all the money I can; and I'll tell *somebody*, if it's only Evaline, all I know about missionary work. I'll tell her the first thing when I get there. To be sure she can't have a band all by herself, but it may do good somehow."

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CHAPTER XIII.

OFF TO THE MOUNTAINS.

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"Here's your train!" said Mr. Ashford, hurrying into the waiting-room where he had left his wife and children while he purchased their tickets. "I'll carry Freddie. Come, Marty."

While they were waiting their turn to pass through the gate Marty and her mother were jostled by the crowd against two small, ragged, dirty boys, who had crept by the officers and were looking through the railings at the arriving and departing trains.

"Lots of these folks are goin' to the country, where 'ta'n't so hot and stuffy as 'tis here," said the larger boy. "Was you ever in the country, Jimmy?"

"Naw," replied the other, a thin, pale little chap about seven, leaning wearily against an iron post. "Never seed no country, but I *wants* to."

Marty and her mother, who heard what was said and saw the wistful look on the small boy's face, pressed each other's hands and exchanged a sorrowful glance. Then
[Pg 109] they were obliged to move on; but after going through the gate Marty pulled her hand out of her mother's and, running back, took a couple of cakes from a paper bag she carried and passed them through the fence to the boys. How their faces brightened at this little act of kindness!

"Marty, Marty!" called her father, who had not seen what she did and was afraid she would get lost in the crowd, "where are you? Hurry up, child!"

Then, when he had made them comfortable in the car and was about bidding them good-by, he said,

"Now, Marty, when you change cars stick closely to your mother and don't be running after strangers, as you did a moment ago."

"Why, papa," Marty protested earnestly, "they weren't strangers; at least I know that littlest boy with the awfully torn hat. He is Jimmy—"

"Well, well, I can't stop now to hear who he is, but I didn't know he was an acquaintance of yours. However, don't run after anybody, or you will get lost some of these days. Good-by, good-by. Be good children, both of you."

"Who was that boy, Marty?" asked Mrs. Ashford presently.

"He's Jimmy Torrence, and he lives in Jennie's house. Don't you remember I told
[Pg 110] you that one day, when we were all in Mrs. Scott's room singing to Jennie, a little boy came and leaned against the door-post and listened? Mrs. Scott told him to come in and took him on her lap. She gave him a cup of milk, and after he went away she said he had been sick with a fever and his folks were very poor. There's a good many of them, and they live in the third-story back-room."

"Oh, yes, I remember. So that is the boy. Poor little fellow! He looks as if he needed some country air."

"*Doesn't* he!" said Marty. "O mamma, don't you think that society Mrs. Watson belongs to would send him to the country for a week? That would be better than nothing."

"I fear they cannot, for Mrs. Watson told me the other day that there are a great many more children who ought to be sent than they have money to pay for."

"I *wish* he could go," said Marty.

The boy's pale, wistful face haunted her for a while, but in the excitement of the journey it faded from her mind.

After the rush and roar of the train how perfectly still it seemed in the green valley where stood Trout Run Station! How peaceful the mountains! how pure and sweet the air!

“Mamma,” said Marty almost in a whisper, “everything is exactly the same as
[Pg 111] ever.”

“Mountains don't change much,” replied Mrs. Ashford as she seated herself on one of the trunks and took Freddie on her lap.

“But I mean this funny little station and the tiny river and the old red tannery over there, and the quietness and everything! And oh, there's Hiram! He looks just as he did summer before last, and I believe he's got on the very same straw hat!”

Hiram, Farmer Stokes' hired man, who had come to meet the travellers, now appeared from the rear of the station, where he had been obliged to stay by his horses until the train had vanished in the distance. His sunburnt face wore a broad smile, and though he did not say much, Mrs. Ashford and Marty knew that in his slow, quiet way he was very glad to see them. He seemed to be particularly struck by the fact that the children had grown so much, and when Freddie got off his mother's lap and ran across the platform, Hiram gazed at him in admiration, also seeming highly amused.

“I can't believe this tall girl's Marty, and as for the little boy—why, he was carried in arms the last time *I* saw him!”

“Two years makes a great difference in children,” said Mrs. Ashford.

[Pg 112] “That's so,” Hiram assented. “Well, I reckon we'd better be moving.”

“How I dread the steep hills,” said Mrs. Ashford as they were being helped into the wagon after the baggage had been stowed away. “I do hope your horses are safe, Hiram. Now, Marty, be sure to hold on with both hands when we come to the worst places.”

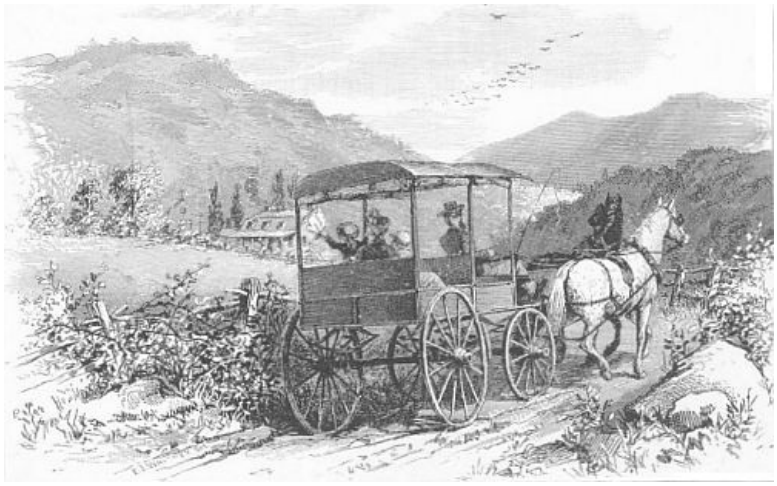
“Don't you be 'fraid, Mrs. Ashford; there isn't a mite of danger,” said Hiram, gathering up the reins. “Get up!”

“Get up!” cried Freddie, who had watched the process of getting started with the greatest interest, and who was now holding a pair of imaginary reins in one tiny fist and flourishing an imaginary whip with the other.

Hiram laughed aloud. That Freddie could walk was funny enough, but that he could talk and make believe drive was too much for Hiram. It was some time before he got over it.

“How's Evaline?” asked Marty. “Why didn't she come to meet us?”

“She's spry. She wanted to come along down, but her ma was afraid 'twould crowd you.”



They approached an open, level place from which there was a magnificent view. Page 113

After a drive of about three miles among the mountains, the winding road gradually ascending, with here and there a somewhat steep incline, they approached an open, level place from which there was a magnificent view of what Marty called
[Pg 113] the “real mountains.” For these wooded or cultivated hills they were driving among were only the beginnings of the range. Here was a cluster of houses and a white frame “hotel” with green blinds.

“They've been doing right smart of building in Riseborough since you were up,” said Hiram to Mrs. Ashford. “You see the hotel's done, and Sims has built him a new store, and Mrs. Clarkson's been building on to her cottage.”

“Is the hotel a success?” asked Mrs. Ashford.

“First-rate. Full all last summer, and Dutton expects a lot of folks this season. A big party came up t'other day.”

They had a chance to see the guests at the hotel, ladies on the piazzas and children playing in the green yard, while Hiram stopped to do an errand at the store, which was also the postoffice.

Nearly another mile of up-hill brought them to their destination—a brown farmhouse with its red barns and granaries standing in the midst of smiling fields and patches of cool, dark woods, while in the distance rose grand, solemn mountains.

There was Evaline, seated on the low gatepost, and Mrs. Stokes and her grownup daughter, Almira, in the doorway, all on the lookout and ready to wave their
[Pg 114] handkerchiefs the moment the wagon appeared.

“It's more like going to see some cousins or something than being summer-boarders, isn't it, mamma?” said Marty.

“Here we all are, Mrs. Stokes!” cried Mrs. Ashford from the wagon. “Quite an addition to your family.”

“The more the merrier! I'm right down glad to see you,” said good-natured Mrs. Stokes, coming to lift the children down and kissing them heartily.

The travellers were very tired after their long day's journey. Mrs. Ashford and Marty were ready to do justice to the good supper provided, but Freddie was only able to keep his eyes open long enough to eat a little bread and milk. The next morning, however, he was as bright as a button, and took to country life so naturally that he was out in the yard feeding the chickens before his mother knew what he was about.

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CHAPTER XIV.

[Pg 115]

A PLAN AND A TALK.

Marty so enjoyed being back at the farm, and there was so much to see and to do, that for four or five days she could think of nothing else. She and Evaline raced all over the place, climbing trees and fences, playing in the barn or down in the wood, paddling in the little brook, riding on the hay-wagon, and going with the boy to bring home the cows.

In short, the delights of farm life for the time being drove everything else out of Marty's head, and it was not until Sunday morning that she gave a thought to missions. Perhaps she would not have remembered even then had not her mother said,

“Marty, here are your ten pennies. I forgot to give them to you yesterday.”

“There!” thought Marty. “In spite of what Miss Agnes said the very last thing, I've forgotten all about missions. I've never told Evaline a breath about them, and I haven't prayed or done anything.”

She got out her box and put in it her tenth, and four pennies for a thank-offering
[Pg 116] for the happy time she had been having. She also got the list of subjects Miss Walsh had furnished her with, and some of her books; but there was no time to read then, for her mother had said she might go to church with Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, and she must get ready. Evaline was not at home, her uncle having called the previous evening and taken her to spend a couple of days at his house.

There was preaching that Sunday in the schoolhouse at Black's Mills, a village between four and five miles distant in the opposite direction from Riseborough. It was quite a novelty to Marty to go so far to church, but it was a lovely drive and she enjoyed it extremely. It certainly seemed strange to attend service in the battered little frame schoolhouse, without any organ or choir, and to eat crackers and cheese in the wagon on the way home, as Mrs Stokes was afraid she would be hungry before their unusually late dinner. But Marty was so charmed with country life and all belonging to it that she considered the whole thing an improvement upon city churchgoing.

In the afternoon she took her Bible and some missionary leaflets, and going into a retired place in the garden read and studied for more than an hour. The missionary
[Pg 117] spirit within her was fully awake that day. She longed to talk with Evaline and could hardly wait until it was time for her to come home. But by Tuesday, when she did come, Marty's head was full of other matters, such as a discovery she had made in the wood of a hollow in an old tree which would be a lovely playhouse, and an expedition to Sunset Hill that was being talked of. So in one way or another nearly

two weeks of vacation had passed before this Missionary Twig, who had been so ardent to begin with, had redeemed her promise of trying to interest somebody in the work.

But in the meantime she had thought of Jimmy Torrence. The way he was brought to her mind was this. She was with her mother on the side porch, Monday morning, when Mrs. Stokes, coming out of the kitchen with floury hands, inquired,

“Mrs. Ashford, did you see the little boy in the carriage that just passed 'long?”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Ashford.

“Well, you just ought to have seen him when they brought him up here three weeks ago—his folks are boarding over at Capt. Smith's; such a pale, peaked child *I* never saw! Had been awful sick, they said, and now you see he looks right down well.”

“Why, yes, he does,” said Mrs. Ashford. “I should never imagine he had been ill
[Pg 118] very recently. The country has certainly done him good.”

“That's just it!” said Mrs. Stokes. “There's nothing like taking children to the country a spell after they've been sick. Makes 'em fat and rosy in less than no time.”

“Oh! mamma,” exclaimed Marty. “That makes me think of poor little Jimmy. I wish we could do something to get him sent to the country.”

“I wish we could, but I don't see any way to do it. I have given all I can afford this summer to the different Fresh-Air Funds.”

“Can't you think of anything, clothes or such things, that you were going to get me, and that I *could* do without, and send the money to Mrs. Watson?” pleaded Marty.

“I can't think of anything just this minute,” answered her mother with a gentle smile, “but if you will bring Freddie in out of the hot sun, and get something to amuse him near here, I'll try to think.”

“Oh! do, please. And mind, mamma, it must be something for me to do without—not you.”

Marty ran down the yard to where Freddie, with red face and without his hat, was
[Pg 119] rushing up and down playing he was a “little engine.”

“Freddie,” she called, “don't you want to come and make mud pies?”

This was a favorite amusement of the small boy, and instantly the little engine subsided into a baker. Marty led him up near the porch, where there was a nice bed of mould—“ clean dirt,” Mrs. Stokes called it—and they were soon hard at work on the pies.

Marty enjoyed this play as much as Freddie, and it was some time before she thought of asking,

“Mamma, have you thought of anything yet?”

Mrs. Ashford smiled and nodded.

“What is it?” exclaimed Marty, bounding up on the porch.

“I don't know whether you will like the plan or not, but it is the only thing that occurs to me. Your school coat will be too short for you next winter, and I was going to get you a new one. But the old one could be altered so that you might wear it. I have some of the material, and could piece the skirt and sleeves and trim it with braid. As it always was a little too large for you about the shoulders, it would fit next winter well enough that way. Doing that would save about five dollars as near as I can calculate.”

[Pg 120] “Then we should have five dollars for Jimmy?”

“Yes.”

“But would it be much trouble to you to alter the coat?”

“It would be some trouble, but I am willing to take that for my share.”

“Oh! then let's do it,” cried Marty.

“Wait, wait,” said her mother. “You must think it over first. You know when you do things in a hurry, sometimes you regret them afterwards.”

“I know I sha'n't regret this,” Marty protested; “but I'll go and think a while.”

She went and sat down on her last batch of pies, resting her head on her knees, with her eyes shut. In a very short space of time she was back at her mother's side.

“Oh! you have not thought long enough,” said Mrs. Ashford. “I meant for a day or two.”

“There's no use thinking any longer, for I know I'll think just the same. I've thought all about how the coat will look when it's pieced, and how all the girls will know it's pieced, and how I'd a great deal rather have one that isn't pieced. Then I thought how pale and sick Jimmy looks, and how much he wants to go to the country, and how much good it would do him to go, and how he has no nice times as I have, and, I declare, I'd rather wear pieced coats all the rest of my life than not have him go.” [Pg 121] She winked her eyes very hard to keep back the tears.

“Very well,” said Mrs. Ashford, stroking the little girl's flushed cheek, “we will consider it settled. I will write to Mrs. Watson this afternoon, inclosing the money, and telling her about Jimmy.”

By Saturday a reply came from Mrs. Watson saying that arrangements had been made to send Jimmy to a kind woman in the country, who would take good care of him, and it was probable the money Marty had sent would pay his board there for nearly three weeks. She also said that Jimmy had been very poorly again. Dr. Fisher, finding him in Mrs. Scott's room one day when he called, had seen how miserable the boy was, and had given him medicine, and had said, when he heard he was going to be sent to the country, that it would be just the thing, better than any amount of medicine. The letter also stated that Mrs. Fisher had fitted Jimmy out in some of her little boy's clothes. So he would be very comfortable.

“Could anything be nicer!” exclaimed Marty. “I'm so glad of it all!”

The same mail that brought Mrs. Watson's letter brought Marty's little missionary [Pg 122] magazine, which she always wanted to sit right down and read.

“Now,” said her mother, after they had got through talking over the letter, “I wish you would mind Freddie while I write some letters.”

Marty took her magazine into the back yard where Freddie was playing with his wheelbarrow under the lilac-bushes. She sat down by the big pear-tree to read, though not forgetting to keep an eye on her little brother's proceedings. Missions seemed as interesting as ever as she read. Presently she saw Evaline coming out of the kitchen with a pail of water and brush to scrub the back steps.

“Evaline,” she called, “when you get through your work come down here where I'm minding Freddie, wont you? I want to tell you something.”

“Yes,” replied Evaline, “I'll come pretty soon. This is the last thing I've got to do.”

She soon came and threw herself on the grass beside Marty, who forthwith began showing her the magazine and telling her in a rather incoherent way about mission work in general and their band in particular. She told how many belonged to the band, what they did at the meetings, how much money they had, and what they were going to do with it; how this band was only one of hundreds of bands that were all [Pg 123] connected with a big society; and how the object of the whole thing was to teach the heathen in foreign lands about God and try to make Christians of them.

“That must be the same thing that Ruth Campbell was talking so much about a while ago,” said Evaline when Marty stopped, more to take breath than because she had nothing further to say.

“Who's Ruth Campbell? and what was she saying?”

“Why, the Campbells live in that house that you can just see the top of from our barn. Ruth's as old as our Almiry, but she knows a heap more, for she went to school in Johnsburgh. She taught our school last winter, and is going to again next. She told us about something they have in Johnsburgh, and it sounds very much like yours, so it must be a mission-band. She said she wished we could have one here, but none of us paid much attention to it.”

“Oh, I think you would like it ever so much,” said Marty; “only maybe there wouldn't be enough children round here to make a band,” she added doubtfully.

“How many does it take?” asked Evaline.

“Oh, bands are of different sizes. I s'pose you *could* make one of four or five.”

“There's a sight more children than that on the mountain,” said Evaline with some [Pg 124] contempt. “But then some of 'em mightn't want to send their money away to the heathen; and anyhow, I don't know where they'd get any money to send. Folks up here, 'specially children, don't have much.”

“Why, I thought the country was just the place to make money for missions,” cried Marty. “There's 'first-fruits' and such things that are a great deal easier got at in the country than in town. And I have heard of children raising missionary corn and potatoes, and having missionary hens that laid the very best kind of eggs regularly every day, that brought a high price.”

“Yes, but who's going to buy the things up here? Folks all have their own corn and

potatoes and hens. And how'd we children get a few little things miles and miles to market?”

Marty was rather taken aback by this view of the subject. “The children I read about got *somebody* to buy their things,” she said.

She was rather discouraged because Evaline was not more enthusiastic about missions, and thought there was no use trying to further the cause in this region; but fortunately she happened to tell Almira what they had been talking of, and she took up the subject as warmly as Marty could wish, saying she thought it would be very nice to have a missionary circle of some sort.

[Pg 125] “Ruth has talked to me about it,” she said, “and I promised to help, but we can't seem to get the children interested.”

“Aren't there *any* interested, not even enough to begin with?” inquired Marty.

“Well, there are Ruth's two brothers and sister, and I think Joe and Maria Pratt, who live just beyond Campbell's, might be talked into it. Then there's Eva, but she doesn't seem to care much about it.”

“I care a great deal more since I heard Marty tell about her band,” Evaline declared, “and I wouldn't mind belonging to something of the kind, only I don't see where I'd get any money to give.”

“We'd try to manage that,” said Almira.

After that for a few days there was a good deal of talk among them all on the subject, and some reading aloud afternoons from Marty's missionary books. Finally Mrs. Stokes said she thought it would be a very good thing for the young people in the neighborhood to have a society, and proposed that Almira and the little girls should go over and spend the next afternoon with Ruth, when they could talk the matter over.

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CHAPTER XV.

[Pg 126]

THE MOUNTAIN MISSION-BAND.

“I am very glad Marty came up here this summer, for I do believe, with her to help us, we shall get the mission-band started at last,” said pretty, blue-eyed Ruth Campbell, after they had all been talking for an hour or so as hard as their tongues could go.

When she had learned what her visitors' errand was, she had called her sister and brothers and had sent Hugh over for Maria and Joe Pratt. Then they had quite a conference on the shady porch, Ruth sewing busily all the while.

“I'm afraid I can't help much,” said Marty.

“Why, you have helped and are helping ever so much. You've got Evaline all worked up, and Maria too, and by telling us what you do in your band you have given us many hints for ours.”

“Now, Ruth,” said Evaline, “let's begin the band right away, so that we can have some meetings while Marty's here. You must be president, of course.”

[Pg 127] “Evaline has it all settled,” said Ruth, laughing. Then turning to Almira she asked, “Which do you think would be best—just start a kind of temporary band and wait until school opens to organize, or organize now, trusting to persuade others to join?”

“I think it would be best to organize now. It will be easier to get them to join a band already started than it will be to get them stirred up to begin,” was Almira's opinion.

Then she wished to know what they would do about her. She wanted to belong, but then she was not a child.

“Do you know of any band, Marty, that has both children and young ladies?” she asked.

“No,” replied Marty. “In our church the young ladies have a band themselves.”

“But this isn't a church band; it's a neighborhood band,” Ruth interposed; “and as we haven't many folks up here, I think it will be well not to divide our forces, but to include all in one organization. Of course Almira must belong. I think, though, before organizing we had better see and invite some of the other neighbors. Effie, couldn't you and Maria go over to McKay's and see what they think of it?”

Effie, a gentle girl of thirteen, just as pretty and blue-eyed as her sister, thought she could.

Joe Pratt said he knew a boy he thought might come.

[Pg 128] “How about the Smiths, Evaline? Do you think any of them would be interested?” Ruth inquired.

“Sophy might,” Evaline replied rather doubtfully.

“Well, you see her, wont you? They are not far from you.”

It was finally resolved that as everybody was so busy through the week during this harvesting season, a meeting should be held the next Sunday afternoon. The place chosen was a grove which was just half way between Mr. Stokes' and Mr. Campbell's. If, however, the day was not suitable for an out-door meeting, they were to assemble in Mr. Stokes' barn, a fine, new affair, much handsomer than his house, and occupying a commanding situation from which there was a beautiful view.

When everything was settled the children ran off to play, and Almira helped Ruth and her mother to get supper.

The next Sunday was a lovely day, not too warm, and the meeting in the grove was a decided success. Altogether there were fourteen present, though two were visitors, Marty and one of Capt. Smith's summer boarders, who came with Sophy. Ruth had a nice little programme made out, and after the exercises they organized. Ruth was
[Pg 129] elected president, Almira, for the present, secretary, and Hugh Campbell, treasurer. They decided as long as the weather remained pleasant to meet every Sunday afternoon. In winter, of course, they could not get together so frequently.

They had already had, and continued to have, many discussions about ways of earning their missionary money. One thing the boys thought of was to gather berries and sell them to the people in the valleys, mountain blackberries being esteemed very delicious. There would be plenty of work about that—first climbing the heights and then carrying their burdens for miles.

Ruth was so much taken with Marty's plan of making tenths the basis of what she gave to missions that she concluded to adopt the same plan.

“That's easy enough for you,” said Almira. “You have your salary and half the butter-money, but I have no income. You know we don't sell much butter. I'll have to think of some other way to earn a little money.”

“Well, do hurry and think what we can do, Almira,” said Evaline fretfully. She depended on her sister always to do the thinking. “I'm afraid we wont have anything to give.”

“I am thinking,” said Almira.

The result was she asked her father if he would let her and Evaline have a strip of
[Pg 130] the field adjoining the garden next summer, where they might raise vegetables. When he consented she asked Mrs. Dutton at the hotel if she would buy these vegetables. To this Mrs. Dutton, who knew the good quality of everything from the Stokes farm, and what a “capable” girl Almira was, readily agreed.

“There now, Eva,” said Almira, “by weeding and gathering vegetables you can earn your missionary money.”

“But, Almira,” said Marty, “how will you ever get the things down to the hotel?”

“Well, the evenings Hiram has to go to Trout Run to meet the market train, he can take my baskets for the next day along. Other days, if I can't do any better, I can harness Nelly and take them down in the morning myself before she is needed in the fields.”

“You'd have to get up awfully early.”

“Oh, yes!” said Almira, laughing. “I'll have to get up about three o'clock, I suppose, to have the things ready in time.”

“Three o'clock!” exclaimed Marty in dismay.

“There's going to be plenty of hard work about your missionary money, Almira,” said Mrs. Ashford.

“Oh, I'm willing to do the work,” replied Almira. “From all Ruth says, it is a cause
[Pg 131] worth working for.”

“Yes; but all that wont be till next summer—a year off,” objected Evaline. “How are we going to get any money sooner?”

But Almira had another plan.

“Father,” she said, one evening, “instead of hiring an extra hand this fall to sort and barrel apples, wont you let Evaline and me do it, and pay us the wages?”

“Do you think you could do as much work as a man?” inquired the farmer good-humoredly.

“I'll back Almiry for fast and good work against any man *I* ever saw,” said Hiram emphatically.

Mr. Stokes laughed quietly. “Well,” he said, “'t will be hard work, with all else you have to do, but I'm willing you should try.”

“I can do it,” Almira answered determinedly.

After another spell of thinking she said to Evaline, “We might raise some turkeys next summer. They bring a good price.”

“Oh, turkeys are such a bother!” cried Evaline. “They take so much running after—always going where they might get hurt.”

She had had some experience in minding young turkeys.

“But just think of the money we'd have,” Almira reminded her. “And you know we'll
[Pg 132] have to work for our missionary money somehow.”

“That's so,” said Evaline, who was not fond of work. “It might as well be turkeys as anything else.”

“Mamma,” said Marty one morning, “Hiram says he'd like to join the band. But a great big man can't belong to a mission-band, can he?”

“He might be an honorary member,” suggested Mrs. Ashford.

“What sort of a member is that?”

“He could attend the meetings, take part in the exercises, and contribute money, but he could not vote.”

“Well, maybe Hiram would like to join that way. S'pose we ask him;” and off she and Evaline flew in search of Hiram.

They found him up by the barn.

“O Hiram!” said Marty. “I just now told mamma about your wanting to join the mission-band, and she says you might join as an *honorary* member.”

Hiram stuck his pitchfork in the ground, rested his hands on the top of it, and his chin on his hands.

“What's that kind of a member got to do?” he asked slowly.

“You may give money, but you can't vote,” Marty instructed him.

Hiram thought over it a good while, and then said very gravely, though his eyes
[Pg 133] twinkled, “Well, I guess giving money's the main thing after all, isn't it? I reckon I'll join if you'll let me.”

“We'll be ever so glad to have you,” said Marty warmly. She felt as if it was partly her band, and was interested in seeing it growing and flourishing.

They were nearly back to the house when Evaline suddenly stopped, exclaiming,

“You never told him he might come to the meetings!”

“Neither I did! How came I to forget that! We must go right back and tell him.”

When they reached the barn again, they saw Hiram at the foot of the hill, just entering the next field; but hearing the girls shouting, “Hiram! Hiram!” and seeing them running to overtake him, he strode back across the fence, and seated himself on the top rail to wait for them.

“I forgot a most important thing,” said Marty, panting for breath. “Mamma says honorary members may attend the meetings.”

“Maybe I hadn't better attend them,” said Hiram with a quizzical look. “I might want to vote.”

“Oh, do you think you should?” asked Marty anxiously.

Hiram bit off a piece of straw and chewed it, slowly moving his head from side to
[Pg 134] side, appearing to meditate profoundly, while the little girls waited in suspense.

“Well,” he said, after he had apparently thought the matter over, “I suppose I can hold up from voting; and I reckon you can count on me to come.”

And come he did, the very next Sunday, appearing to take great interest in the proceedings.

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CHAPTER XVI.

[Pg 135]

A FLOWER SALE.

“Oh, look! Look over there!” exclaimed Marty. “What are those lovely white flowers?”

“Wild clematis,” replied Evaline.

“O Hiram, wont you please stop and let us get some?” pleaded Marty. “I'd like so much to take some to mamma.”

Hiram was obliged to go to Black's Mills on an errand that morning, and Marty and Evaline had been allowed to go with him for the ride. Returning he had driven around by another road, as he said one of the horses had lost a shoe, and this road, though longer, was less stony, and therefore easier for the horse than the other. Besides it would take them by McKay's blacksmith-shop, where he could get the horse shod.

It was when going through a valley, which the country folks called “the bottom,” that they saw the clematis. It was growing in the greatest profusion in the meadows and the woods on both sides of the road, rambling over bushes, rocks, fences,
[Pg 136] everything, with its great starry clusters of white blossoms.

“I don't think you had better go after any,” said Hiram in reply to Marty's request. “Them low places are muddy after the rain yesterday, and your ma might be angry if you was to go home with your shoes all muddied. Besides, there *may* be snakes under them bushes.”

“Snakes! Oh, dear!” said Marty with a shudder. “But I should like some of those flowers for mamma.”

“Well,” said Hiram, reining in the horses, “if you promise to sit still in the wagon and not be up to any of your tricks of climbing in and out, I'll get you some.”

“Oh, thank you ever so much! I'll sit as still as a mouse. But then I shouldn't like the snakes to bite you.”

“I reckon they wont bite me,” said Hiram, as he leaped over the fence, and taking out his knife proceeded to cut great clusters of flowers.

“Oh, just see the loads he is getting!” cried Marty.

Then as Hiram returned with a huge armful which he carefully laid in the back of the wagon, she said, “Thank you many times, Hiram. You are very kind. How pleased mamma will be! But half these are yours, Evaline.”

After this they had what was to Marty the pleasure of fording a small stream,
[Pg 137] where the horses were allowed to stop and drink. Presently they had a distant view of a cascade, called Buttermilk Falls. As the road did not approach very near, only a glimpse could be caught of the creamy foam; but Hiram said that some day, if Mr. Stokes could spare him, he would drive them all down to that point, and they could walk from there to the falls.

“I reckon Mrs. Ashford would like to see 'em,” he said.

“Indeed she would,” said Marty.

Altogether the drive was what Marty considered “just perfectly lovely.” And she was delighted also to be able to go home with such quantities of pretty flowers. She was already planning with Evaline what vases and pitchers they should put them in. “How surprised the folks will be when they see us coming in with our arms full!” she said.

When they reached a little wood back of Mr. Stokes' barn, Hiram stopped the horses, saying,

“Now, I've got to go 'round to McKay's, and may have to wait there a considerable spell, so you'd better just hop out here and go home through the woods.”

He helped them out, gave them the flowers, and drove on. The girls sat down under a tree and divided the spoils. Marty contrived to make a basket of her broad-
[Pg 138] brimmed brown straw hat, in which she carefully placed her flowers. Evaline's basket was her gingham apron held up by the corners.

When they came within sight of the grove where their missionary meetings had been held, Evaline whispered,

“Look, Marty! there are some ladies sitting on our log.”

Sure enough, there were three young ladies, evidently resting after a mountain climb, for their alpenstocks were lying beside them, and one, a bright, black-eyed girl

wearing a stylish red jacket, was fanning herself with her broad hat. As Marty and Evaline drew near this young lady called out gaily,

“Well, little flower girls, where did you come from?”

“We've been to Black's Mills in the wagon with Hiram, and when we were coming through the bottom he got this clematis for us,” explained Marty, who always had to be spokesman.

“And it is beautiful!” exclaimed the young lady. “What wouldn't I give for some like it! Did Hiram leave any or did he gather all for you?”

“Oh, there's plenty left!”

“Then I must have some,” said the young lady, jumping up. “Come, girls, follow
[Pg 139] your leader to this bottom, wherever it is, and let us gather clematis while we may.”

“Fanny, Fanny, you crazy thing! Sit down and behave yourself,” cried one of her friends, laughing. “You have no idea where the place is, and we have been walking for three or four hours already.”

“Oh, you can't go,” said Marty earnestly to Miss Fanny. “It's miles and miles away; down steep hills and across the ford. Besides, Hiram says there may be snakes among the bushes.”

“Well, that settles it,” said Miss Fanny, reseating herself on the log, while the others laughed heartily.

Then Marty said with pretty hesitation, “Wont you have some of my flowers? I'd like to give you some.”

“Some of mine, too,” said Evaline, her generosity overcoming her shyness.

“Oh, no, indeed!” protested Miss Fanny. “Thank you very much, but I would not for the world deprive you of them. Very likely you have got it all arranged exactly how you are going to dispose of them at home.”

So they had, but neither of them was a bit selfish. Marty had already placed her hat on the end of the log and was busily engaged in separating a large bunch of flowers
[Pg 140] from the rest, and Evaline, approaching the young ladies, held out her apronful towards them.

“Perhaps,” suggested the tall, fair girl, whom her companions called “Dora,” “perhaps you would be willing to play you are real flower girls and would sell us some.”

“Yes, yes,” exclaimed Miss Fanny, “let us make a play of it. Little girls, how much are your flowers?” and she drew forth a long blue purse.

“'T would be mean to sell what didn't cost us anything, and what we didn't have to move a finger to get,” said Marty. “I'd a great deal rather you would let me give you as many as you want.”

“No, it would not be mean at all when you are giving up what you have so much pleasure in. It would only be fair to take something in exchange,” said Miss Fanny. “Just think!” she added persuasively, “isn't there something you'd each like to have a quarter for?”

Marty still held out against taking money for the flowers, but all at once Evaline exclaimed brightly, “Oh, the mission-band!”

“Mission-band!” cried Miss Fanny. “Familiar sound! Are you mission girls?”

“Yes,” they said.

[Pg 141] “Why, so are we all. We must shake hands all around.”

They did so, laughing, and feeling like old friends. Then in ten minutes' chatter the young ladies told what cities they were from and what bands they belonged to, found out about Marty's home band, and the newly-formed mountain band she took such an interest in, and which Evaline persisted in saying Marty started. They were particularly delighted in hearing about this last; they thought it highly romantic that the meetings were held in that lovely grove, and were amused by the idea of meeting in the barn in case of rain, and also of Hiram's consenting to join as an honorary member.

“Now,” said Miss Fanny, “you will agree to sell some of your flowers, wont you? See how nicely it all fits in—we want some flowers very much, and you want some money for your mission work. So it's a fair exchange. Girls,” she said, turning to her friends, “you know this is Mrs. Thurston's birthday. Wouldn't it be lovely if we could have about half this clematis to decorate her room with?”

Marty declared if she was going to give them a quarter apiece, she must take all,

or most of the flowers, instead of half. After much talk it was finally arranged that the little girls were each to keep what Miss Fanny called “a good double-handful,” [Pg 142] and the rest was handed over to the young ladies.

“This is my first missionary money,” said Evaline, caressing her bright silver quarter in delight.

Marty, also, appeared very well pleased with the unexpected increase to her store.

Before separating Miss Fanny proposed another plan. She had already stated that she and her friends were staying at the hotel in Riseborough, and had caused Evaline to point out where she lived.

“Day after to-morrow,” said Miss Fanny, “a party of five or six of us are going to take a drive to see some falls, and coming back we pass right by your house. We shall probably be along towards the close of the afternoon. Now couldn't you be on the lookout for us, and have some more missionary clematis for sale?”

“It doesn't grow very near here,” said Evaline, “and I don't believe Hiram would have time to take us to the bottom again after any. He's busy harvesting.”

“Of course I don't wish you to go to so much trouble about it; but cannot you get us flowers of some kind near here—in some of these woods?”

Evaline, who was anxious for more missionary money, said she thought there were still some cardinal flowers down in the glen, and Miss Fanny said they would be the [Pg 143] very thing.

“And then it would be more like earning the missionary money if we had to work ourselves to get the flowers,” said Marty.

“You have been brought up in the orthodox school, I see,” said Miss Fanny, and all the young ladies laughed.

After many last words and kindly adieus, they parted, and the children ran home to relate their adventures.

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CHAPTER XVII.

[Pg 144]

WEEDING.

When the plan for Thursday was announced, both Mrs. Ashford and Mrs. Stokes objected to the little girls going so far into the woods by themselves; and nobody could go with them.

“Then we'll have no flowers for the ladies,” sighed Marty.

“And no more missionary money,” added Evaline.

“Why not give them flowers out of the garden?” said Mrs. Stokes. “Sakes alive! there's plenty there. And they're just the kind I've seen city folks going crazy over. Some of the hotel folks were up here last summer, and deary me! but they did make a to-do over my larkspur, sweet-william, china pinks, candytuft, cockscomb, and such. You just give the ladies some of 'em, and they'll be pleased enough; for there's hardly any flowers in Riseborough—too shady, I guess.”

“That's all well enough for Evaline,” said Mrs. Ashford, “but Marty has no right to sell your flowers.”

[Pg 145] “She has if I give 'em to her, hasn't she? I'm sure she's welcome to every bloom in the garden to do what she pleases with. Not that I want my flowers sold; I'd rather give 'em to the ladies, but as long as it is for mission work—” and the good woman finished with a little nod.

But Mrs. Ashford still objected to Marty's taking the flowers, and Evaline would not have anything to do with the scheme unless Marty could “go halves.”

“Dear Mrs. Stokes,” said Marty, “can't you think of some way I could work for the flowers, and then mamma wouldn't object to my taking them?”

“Well, I'll tell you. The gravel walk 'round the centre bed is pretty tolerable weedy, and if you and Evaline'll weed it out nice and clean, you may have all the flowers you want all summer.”

That satisfied all parties, and the weeding began that afternoon. When Marty was going to do anything she always wanted to get at it right away. Besides Almira advised them to do some that afternoon.

“Then maybe you can finish it up to-morrow morning before the sun gets 'round there,” she said. “This is a very good time to do it too—just after the rain.”

[Pg 146] The girls were armed with old knives—not very sharp ones—to dig out the weeds with, if they would not come with pulling.

"You must be sure to get them up by the roots," said Almira, "or they'll grow again before you know where you are."

"Oh, we are going to do it *good*," Marty declared.

They divided the walk into sections, and set to work vigorously. In a few moments Marty remarked complacently,

"The bottom of my basket is quite covered with weeds. But then," she added in a different tone, "I don't see where they came from. I hardly miss them out of the walk."

A few moments more of quiet work, and she called out,

"Evaline, are many of your weeds in *tight*?"

"Awful tight," answered Evaline disconsolately. "They've got the longest roots of any weeds *I* ever saw. 'T would take a week of rain to make this walk fit to weed."

"Well," said Marty, "of course it isn't just as easy as taking a quarter for some clematis that was given to us in the first place, but as it is for missions I think we ought to be willing to do it, even if it is a little hard."

"That's so," Evaline replied, brightening up.

"And I'm very glad your mother thought of this," Marty went on, "for it would be
[Pg 147] dreadful disappointing not to have any flowers for the ladies when they come, and not to get any more missionary money."

Again Evaline agreed with her, and the work went on.

In about half an hour there was quite a large clean patch, and much encouraged by seeing the progress they were making, they worked more diligently than ever. Then Marty had a sentimental idea that it might help them along to sing a missionary hymn, but found upon trial that it was more of a hindrance than a help.

"I can't sing when I'm all doubled up this way," she said, "and anyway when I find a very tough weed I have to stop singing and pull. Then I forget what comes next."

"I guess it's better to work while you work and sing afterward," was Evaline's opinion.

Here they heard somebody laughing, and looking up saw Mrs. Ashford, who had come out to see how they were getting on.

"I think Evaline is about right," she said; "singing and weeding don't go together very well. But how nicely you have been doing! Why, you are nearly half through!"

"Yes, ma'am," said Evaline, "and the other side of the circle a'n't half so bad as this was. We'll easy get it done to-morrow morning."

[Pg 148] "Yes; and, mamma," cried Marty, "we've got them out good. I don't believe there'll ever be another weed here!"

"They'll be as bad as ever after a while," said Evaline, who knew them of old.

Marty was pretty tired that evening and did not feel like running about as much as usual.

"There now!" exclaimed Mrs. Stokes, looking at Marty as she sat on the porch steps after supper leaning back against her mother, "there now! you're all beat out. 'T was too hard work for you. I oughtn't to have let you do it."

"Oh! indeed, Mrs. Stokes, I'm not so very tired," cried Marty, "and I was glad to do it."

Another hour's work the next morning finished the weeding, and the girls reflected with satisfaction that they had earned their flowers. Mrs. Stokes said the work was done "beautiful," and Hiram, who was brought to inspect it, said they had done so well that he had a great mind to have them come down to the field and hoe corn.

Thursday morning early they gathered and put in water enough flowers for seven fair-sized bouquets, thinking they had better have one more than Miss Fanny mentioned in case an extra lady came. By four o'clock these flowers—and how lovely and fragrant they were!—with Mrs. Ashford's valuable assistance were made into
[Pg 149] tasteful bouquets, placed on an old tray with their stems lightly covered with wet moss, and set in the coolest corner of the porch. The children, including Freddie, all nicely dressed, took up position on the steps, partly to keep guard over the flowers and prevent Ponto from lying down on them, and partly to watch for their callers.

Marty's bright eyes were the first to see the carriages.

“There they come around the bend!” she exclaimed, and shortly a carryall driven by Jim Dutton, and containing three ladies and two children, followed by a buck-board wherein sat Miss Fanny and Miss Dora, drew up at the gate.

Evaline's shyness came on in full force and she hung back, but Marty, with Freddie holding her hand, proceeded down the walk. They were met by Miss Fanny, who had thrown the reins to her friend and jumped out the moment the horse stopped. She kissed Marty, snatched up Freddie, exclaiming, “What a darling little boy!” and called out, “Come down here, Evaline! I want to see you.”

Mrs. Stokes, who was too hospitable to see people so near her house without inviting them in, now came forward to give the invitation, and as they were obliged
[Pg 150] to decline on the score of lateness, she called Almira to bring some cool spring water for them. Seeing Freddie approaching dangerously near one of the horses, Marty cried, “Freddie, Freddie, come away from the horse!” and he gravely inquired, “What's the matter with the poor old horse?”

This made every one laugh and brought Mrs. Ashford from the porch to take his hand and keep him out of danger. So they were all assembled at the roadside, and quite a pleasant, lively time they had.

The flowers were asked for and Evaline brought them, while Marty explained why they were garden instead of wild flowers, and Mrs. Stokes told how the girls earned them. The bouquets were extremely admired. When proposing the plan in the woods, Miss Fanny had suggested “ten-cent” bouquets, but everybody said ten cents was entirely too cheap for such large, beautifully arranged ones, that fifteen cents was little enough. There was one composed entirely of sweet peas, as Mrs. Ashford said those delicate flowers looked prettier by themselves. This Miss Fanny seized upon, insisted on paying twenty cents for, and presented to a pale, sweet-faced lady in mourning.

She drew Marty to the side of the carriage where this lady was, and said in a low voice,

[Pg 151] “Mrs. Thurston, this is the little girl I told you of—the Missionary Twig who doesn't leave her missionary zeal at home when she goes away in vacation.”

The lady smiled affectionately as she pressed Marty's hand, and said,

“I am glad to meet such an earnest little comrade.”

“Oh! but you don't know,” protested Marty. “I came very near forgetting the whole thing. Indeed, it went out of my head altogether from Tuesday till Sunday.”

The ladies laughed, and Miss Fanny said,

“Mrs. Thurston was a missionary in India for many years, Marty, and would be there yet if she was able.”

“India!” exclaimed Marty, with wide-open eyes. “In Lahore!”

She had heard more about Lahore than any other place, and to her it seemed like the principal city in India.

“Oh, no!” replied Mrs. Thurston. “Far from there, hundreds of miles. Lahore, you know, is in Northern India, in the part known as the Punjab, while my home was in the extreme south near a city called Madura. Are you especially interested in Lahore?”

“Yes, ma'am. It's where our band sends its money. We have a school there. That is, we pay the teacher. It is one of those little schools in a room rented from a poor
[Pg 152] woman, who does her work in one corner while the school is going on, and the teacher is a native.”

“Ah, yes; I understand.”

“Mrs. C—— is the missionary who superintends it, along with a lot of other schools. Do you know her?”

“No, but I have seen her name in the missionary papers.”

“Did you have some of those little schools when you were a missionary, Mrs. Thurston?” Marty inquired.

“Yes, I did some school work, but more zenana work.”

“What is zenana work?”

Just then Mrs. Thurston noticed that preparations were being made to drive on, so she merely replied,

“Come down to the village and see me, and we will have a good missionary talk.”

“Thank you ever so much,” said Marty. “I do hope mamma will let me go.”

Evaline was quite overcome when she learned that Mrs. Thurston was a “real live missionary,” and said,

“She's the first one I ever saw. I wonder if they're all as nice as that.”

After consultation with her mother, Marty decided to give half her “flower money”
[Pg 153] —which altogether amounted to eighty cents—to the mountain band, and keep the other half for the home band. “Because, you see, this is all out-and-out missionary money; there's no tithing to be done,” she said.

Evaline never felt so large in her life as she did when going to the band meeting the next Sunday, with her eighty cents ready to hand to Hugh Campbell.

The Saturday following that memorable Thursday, Miss Fanny and Miss Mary again presented themselves at the farmhouse, where they were welcomed like old friends. After some pleasant chat, and a lunch of gingerbread and fresh buttermilk, Miss Fanny said,

“We came this morning chiefly to bring you an invitation from Mrs. Thurston. She wants you all, or as many as possible, to come to an all-day missionary meeting at the hotel next Tuesday.”

“All day!” exclaimed Almira.

“Yes. That sounds formidable, doesn't it?” laughed Miss Fanny. “But I'll tell you about it. We are going to sew for a home missionary family. You must know that Mrs. Thurston, after spending the best part of her life and the greater part of her strength in the foreign field, still does all, in fact, more than her poor health will allow her to
[Pg 154] do for missions both at home and abroad. She heard the other day that a missionary family, acquaintances of hers, in Nebraska, had been burnt out, and lost everything but the clothes they had on. She told us about them with tears in her eyes, and some of us discovered she was laying aside some of her own clothes for the missionary's wife and planning how she could squeeze out a little money—for she is not rich by any means—to buy some clothes for the children. Well, the result was we took up a collection of clothes and money at the hotel, and Mrs. Thurston got Mr. Dutton to go to Trout Run and telegraph to the Mission Board that this missionary is connected with that we would send a box of things in a few days that will keep the family going until some church can send them a good large box.”

“But how will you know what kind of garments to send?” asked Mrs. Ashford. “I mean, what sizes?”

“Mrs. Thurston knows all about how many children there are, and their ages, so we can guess at their sizes.”

Mrs. Ashford, discovering there was a little girl near Freddie's age, and as he was, of course, yet in “girl's clothes,” said she could spare a couple of his suits, having brought an ample supply. Some of Marty's clothes also were found available.

[Pg 155] “We have had some things given us for the lady,” said Miss Fanny, “a wrapper, a jersey, a cashmere skirt, a shawl; also two or three children's dresses. We have bought nearly all the muslin in Mr. Sims' store, with some flannel and calico. He is going to Johnsburgh Monday, and will get us shirts for the missionary, stockings, and such things. Monday is to be a grand cutting-out day. Tuesday we are to have three sewing-machines. Several of the village ladies are coming to help, and we shall be very glad if some of you will come. Mrs. Thurston particularly desires that the little girls shall come.”

“Oh, do let us go,” Marty said, while Evaline looked it.

Mrs. Ashford could not leave Freddie, and it was not possible for both Mrs. Stokes and Almira to go, so it was settled that the latter, the little girls, and Ruth Campbell, whom Miss Fanny wished Almira to invite, should walk down pretty early in the morning, and Hiram should bring the light wagon for them in the evening.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

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THE HOTEL MISSIONARY MEETING.

“It was an elegant sewing-meeting,” Marty confided to her mother when she got home Tuesday evening, “and it wasn't a bit like that one Aunt Henrietta had the last time we were in Rochester. I liked this one best. There, you know, the ladies came all dressed up, carrying little velvet or satin work-bags, and we just had thin bread and butter and such things for tea—nothing very good. Here some of the ladies—of course I mean the ones from the village—came in calico dresses and sun-bonnets. And they were so free and easy—sewed fast and talked fast while they were there;

and then if they had to go home a little bit, they'd just pop on their bonnets and off they'd go. Mrs. Clarkson thought it was going to rain, and she ran home to take in her wash, and another lady went home two or three times to see how her dinner was getting on.

"Some of them stayed at the hotel to dinner, and all that did stay brought something with them, pies mostly, though some brought pickles, preserves, and
[Pg 157] frosted cake. And every time Mrs. Dutton saw something being smuggled through the hall she'd call out,

"'Now I told you not to bring anything. The dinner is *my* part of this missionary meeting.'

"Then they'd all laugh. They were all real kind and pleasant. And such a dinner! I do believe we had some of *everything*. And supper was just the same way."

The hotel, though the boast of the surrounding country, was a very plain establishment, being nothing more than a tolerably large, simply furnished frame house accommodating about forty persons. But it was bright and home-like and beautifully situated.

"Mrs. Thurston's meeting," as they called it, was held in the large, uncarpeted dining-room, and the dinner tables were set in the shady back yard.

The sewing-room was a busy scene, with Miss Dora and two other ladies making the machines whir and groups of workers getting material ready for the machines or "finishing off." Mrs. Thurston, appealed to from all sides, quietly directed the work,—while Miss Fanny was here, there, and everywhere, helping everybody. Almira heard, in the course of the day, that Miss Fanny was quite wealthy, that she had contributed
[Pg 158] a great deal towards getting up the box, and was going to pay the freight.

There were several children besides Marty and Evaline. They were employed to run errands, pass articles from one person to another, and fold the smaller pieces of clothing as they were completed. As the day wore on and the novelty of the thing wore off, most of the children got tired and went out to play; but Marty, though she ran out a few minutes occasionally, spent most of the time in the work-room, keeping as close as possible to Mrs. Thurston, to whom she had taken a great fancy.

Soon after dinner Miss Fanny came to Mrs. Thurston and said,

"Now, Mrs. Thurston, if you don't get out of this commotion a while you will have one of your bad headaches. Do go out in the air. We can get on without you for an hour."

So Mrs. Thurston took Marty and went into the grove back of the house, and it was while sitting there on a rustic seat, with the magnificent view spread out before them, that they had their missionary talk.

While sitting there on a rustic seat ... they had their missionary talk. Page 158.

Mrs. Thurston described her home in Southern India, and spoke of the kind of work she and her husband did there—how he preached and taught in the city and surrounding villages; how she instructed children in the schools, and visited the ignorant women, both rich and poor, in their homes. Often, when not able to leave [Pg 159] home on account of her children, she had classes of poor women in her *compound*, as the yards around the houses in India are called. She also spent a good deal of time giving her servants religious instruction.

"You know," she said, "it is very, very hot there, and we Americans can only endure the heat by being very careful. At best we sometimes get sick, and we must do all we can to save ourselves up to teach and preach. That's what we go there for. If we should cook or do any work of that kind, we should die; so we employ the natives, who are accustomed to the heat, to do these things for us. Then, these servants will each do only one kind of work. That is, the sweeper wont do any cooking or washing; the man who buys the food and waits on the table wont do anything else."

"That's very queer," said Marty.

"Yes, but it is their way. So we are obliged to have several servants. But then the wages are very low. Altogether it does not cost any more, perhaps not as much, as one good girl would in this country. They are a great deal of trouble, too. They are not, as a rule, very honest or faithful, and they have, of course, all the heathen vices, and sometimes we have much worry with them. But what I was going to say is, that [Pg 160] we do our best to teach these servants about God. We used to have them come in to prayers every day, and on Sunday I would collect them on the veranda and try to teach them verses of Scripture, which I would explain over and over again. On these occasions a good many poor, lame, blind people from the neighborhood would also come. These people were so densely ignorant that it was hard to make them understand anything, but in some cases I think the light did get into their minds."

Then Mrs. Thurston told of the death of her three dear little children, and Marty felt very, very sorry for her when she spoke of the three little graves in that distant land.

"Haven't you any living children?" she asked.

"Yes, two. One of my sons is a missionary in Ceylon, and the other, with whom I live, is a minister in New York State."

Then, it appeared, after many years of labor in that hot climate, the health of both Mr. and Mrs. Thurston broke down, and they were obliged to leave the work they loved and come back to America. In a short time Mr. Thurston died.

Marty found out, somewhat to her surprise, that the "big society" her band was connected with was not the only one. Mrs. Thurston belonged to an entirely different [Pg 161] one, and the young ladies, Fanny, Dora, and Mary, to still another.

"You see we belong to different religious denominations," said Mrs. Thurston, "and each denomination has its own Society or Board."

"This Nebraska missionary, now," suggested Marty, "I suppose he belongs to your de—whatever it is."

"Denomination," said Mrs. Thurston, smiling. "No, he belongs to yours."

"Yet you are all working for him!" exclaimed Marty.

"Of course. It would not do for these different families of Christians to keep in their own little pens all the time and never help each other. But as yet it has been found best for each denomination to have its own missionary society, though there are some Union Societies, and perhaps in coming years it may be all union."

"Now there's this mountain band," said Marty reflectively. "The people in it are not all the same kind. I mean some are Methodists, and some are Presbyterians, and the Smiths are Baptists. I heard Ruth say she didn't know what would be best to do with their money."

She afterwards heard Ruth consulting Mrs. Thurston about the matter, and the [Pg 162] latter spoke of one of these union societies. Ruth said she would speak to the others and see if they would wish to send their funds there.

By half-past four a great deal of work had been done, and the new garments were piled up on a table in the corner of the room. Though needles were still flying, taking last stitches, the hard-driven machines were silent, having run out of work, as Miss Fanny said. In the comparative quiet Ruth was heard singing softly over her work.

"Sing louder, Ruth," said Almira, and Ruth more audibly, but still softly, sang,

"From Greenland's icy mountains."

One voice after another took up the refrain, and by the time the second line was

reached the old hymn was sent forth on the air as a grand chorus. The children came up on the porch, the girls came out of the kitchen to listen. The customers in Sims' store and the loungers around the blacksmith's shop stopped talking as the sound reached them.

When the last strains died away, and before talking could be resumed, Ruth said,

“Marty, wont you say those verses you said at our last band meeting?”

[Pg 163] “I'll say them if the ladies would like to hear them,” said Marty, who was not at all timid, and knew the verses very thoroughly, having recited them at the anniversary of her own band.

The ladies desired very much to hear them, and, taking her stand at one end of the room, she repeated very nicely those well-known lines beginning,

> “An aged woman, poor and weak,
> She heard the mission teacher speak;
> The slowly-rolling tears came down
> Upon her withered features brown:
> 'What blessed news from yon far shore!
> Would I had heard it long before!'”

“How touching that is!” said one of the hotel ladies, and Mrs. Sims was seen to wipe her eyes with the pillow-slip she was seaming.

“Mrs. Thurston,” said Miss Fanny, who saw that a good start on a foreign missionary meeting had been made, and was not willing to let the opportunity be lost, “when you were in India did you meet many persons who were anxious to hear the gospel, or were they mainly indifferent?”

In replying to this question Mrs. Thurston told many interesting things that had come under her observation, and this led to further questions from others, so they had quite a long talk on missionary work both in India and other countries. Finally one of the boarders asked,

[Pg 164] “Well, do you think the world ever will be converted to Christianity?”

“I know it will,” replied Mrs. Thurston; and she quoted, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.”

Fanny. “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

Dora. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

Ruth. “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.”

“Dora, Dora,” said Miss Fanny, with an imperative little gesture, “'Jesus shall reign'” —

Miss Dora obediently began to sing,

> “Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
> Does his successive journeys run,”

and was at once joined by the others.

“Now, dear friends,” said Mrs. Thurston, when the hymn was finished, “upon this, the only occasion we are all likely to be together, shall we not unite in asking God to hasten the coming of this glorious time, and ask for his blessing on our humble attempts to work in this cause?”

[Pg 165] Work was dropped and every head bowed, as Mrs. Thurston uttered fervent words of prayer that the Lord would fill all their hearts with love for missions, and that he would permit them to do something towards helping in the work. She prayed especially for the children who were engaged in missionary work, and asked that they might have grace given them to devote their whole lives to the service of God.

“Well,” said Mrs. Clarkson, as she was leaving, “this has been a right down pleasant meeting, and I think the last part was just about the best.”

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CHAPTER XIX.

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THE GARDEN MISSIONARY MEETING.

Two or three days afterwards Miss Fanny, with one of her young friends, came up

to tell the farmhouse people that the box had gone. She said that Mr. Sims had given them a box, and had also kindly attended to sending it off.

The day after the meeting, when Hiram went down to the postoffice, Marty and Evaline had each sent by him a book for the missionary children, and Miss Fanny said that this prompted some of the children at the hotel to send books.

During the remainder of the summer there was frequent intercourse between the hotel and the farmhouse, and the "mission workers," particularly, learned to love each other very much. Marty felt very proud to be numbered among these workers, though she was only a "twig." She said,

"I'll have a great deal to tell Miss Agnes and the girls when I go home—sha'n't I, mamma?"

[Pg 167] Some new members joined the mountain band, and by the last of August it numbered twenty-one. Ruth said she wished very much that before Mrs. Thurston left they might have her meet with the band. She thought they would all take greater interest in mission work if they could hear something of it from one who had spent so many years in the midst of it. Mrs. Thurston said she would be very happy to attend a meeting and talk with the members. So arrangements were made to have her do so.

It would be impossible for her to reach the grove, as she could not walk so far, and the drive from the hotel to Mr. Campbell's was very rough and quite long.

"Mother," said Almira, when they were trying to settle the matter, "couldn't we have a meeting here? It would be easier for Mrs. Thurston to get here, and convenient enough for everybody else."

"Why, of course they may meet here," her mother replied. "Our parlor's a plenty big enough to hold 'em."

"Oh! dear Mrs. Stokes," protested Marty, "don't let us meet in the house when there's so much lovely out-of-doors. That grassy place in the garden near the currant-bushes would be just an elegant place for a meeting."

"I vote with Marty for out-of-doors," said Ruth. "We'll have enough times for in-door meetings after a while."

[Pg 168] "Suit yourselves," said kind Mrs. Stokes. "You're welcome to any place I've anything to do with."

"And may some of the rest of us from the hotel come?" asked Miss Fanny, who happened to be present when this talk was going on.

"Yes, indeed. The more the—." Mrs. Stokes was just going to say, as she so often did, "the more the merrier," when she recollected that it would be Sunday and the meeting a religious one. But she let them all know she would like them to come. Mrs. Ashford and Ruth had great difficulty in persuading her not to bake a quantity of cake on Saturday and serve refreshments to the band.

"You must remember, dear Mrs. Stokes," said Ruth, "it isn't a party, and nobody will expect anything to eat. Now you must not think of going to any trouble."

"The idee of having a lot of people come to your house and not give 'em a bite of anything!" exclaimed Mrs. Stokes.

Sunday afternoon chairs were carried out to the grassy spot Marty had selected, among them a comfortable arm-chair for Mrs. Thurston. Marty insisted on farmer Stokes' special arm-chair being carried out for him, and with the help of Wattie Campbell contrived to get it there. Hiram, before he drove down to the hotel for the [Pg 169] ladies, made a couple of benches of boards placed on kegs. These were for the girls. The boys, he said, could sit on the ground, and that is where he sat himself.

Mrs. Thurston brought with her a cloth map of India which the young ladies fastened to two trees. She also had some photographs of people and places in India which were passed around among the company. Mr. Stokes was particularly struck with the beautiful scenery these pictures showed.

"Well," he said, "I never knew much about India, but I had no idea it was such a handsome place."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Thurston, "the scenery in some parts of these tropical countries is very fine, the foliage is so luxuriant, the flowers so gorgeous, the skies so brilliant. Indeed, a photograph only gives the merest hint of the beauties."

She described certain mountain and forest views, also some parks and gardens she had visited.

"Don't you remember those lines in the missionary hymn, Mr. Stokes," Miss Dora asked,

"'Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile'?"

Mrs. Thurston told them that the people in India do not live on farms as many do in
[Pg 170] this country, but crowd together in towns and villages, going out from there to work in the fields. She briefly described the large city of Madras, with its mingled riches and poverty, its streets crowded with all sorts of people, some of them with hardly any clothing on, its temples and bazaars, or shops. Then she spoke of Madura, where her home had been so long.

It was hard to get her listeners, as they sat in this cool, shady garden, fanned by mountain breezes, to understand how hot it is in India, especially Southern India. They thought the *punkahs*, or huge fans, that are in all the churches and larger houses, and which a man works constantly to cool the air, must be very queer contrivances. The idea of having to stay indoors during the middle of the day, keeping very still, lying down, perhaps, did not strike Mrs. Stokes very favorably.

"That wouldn't suit me," she said—" to lie down in the daytime and be fanned. I'd want to be up and doing."

"I fear even your energy would flag in that climate," replied Mrs. Thurston, laughing. "Foreigners are obliged to be very careful or they could not live there at all. Of course we missionaries were not idle at the time I speak of. We were studying,
[Pg 171] writing, or making arrangements about our work."

She then told a good deal about the way the missionaries work among the people, taking her hearers with her in imagination to some of the mission-schools, and to the Sunday services in the little church where her husband had preached. In doing this she repeated a passage of Scripture and sang a hymn in the Tamil language—the language used in that part of India.

"Now I will tell you something of zenana visiting," she said.

"Mrs. Thurston," said Ruth, "wont you please first tell us exactly what a zenana is?" Ruth knew herself, but she was afraid some of the others did not.

"The word zenana," replied Mrs. Thurston, "strictly means women's apartment, but as it is generally used by us it means the houses of the high caste gentlemen, where their wives live in great seclusion. These high caste women very seldom go out, except occasionally to worship at some temple. They live, as we would say, at the back of the house, their windows never facing the street. Sometimes they have beautiful gardens and pleasant rooms, but often it is just the other way. They have few visitors and no male visitors at all, never seeing even their own brothers. The low
[Pg 172] caste women, though they lack many privileges the others have, yet have more freedom and are not secluded in this way."

"I'd rather be low caste," said Marty.

"You wouldn't rather be either if you knew all about it," said Miss Fanny.

"In visiting the poorer people," Mrs. Thurston went on to say, "when I was seen to enter a house the neighbors all around would flock in, so that I could talk with several families at once. But in visiting a zenana I only saw the inhabitants of that one house. To be sure there was generally quite a crowd of them, for the rich gentlemen often have several wives. Then there would be the daughters-in-law, for the sons all bring their wives to their father's house. Then all these ladies have female servants to wait on them and who are constantly present, so altogether there would be quite a company."

"I suppose they would be glad to see you," suggested Mrs. Ashford.

"Oh, yes. They welcome any change, their lives are so dull."

"What do they do with themselves all day long?" inquired Miss Fanny. "I suppose they don't work, as they have plenty of servants to do everything for them. They don't shop or market or visit. They have no lectures or concerts to attend. They are not
[Pg 173] educated, at least not many of them; and even if they could read, they have no books. Oh, what a life!"

"What do they do, Mrs. Thurston?" Marty asked.

"Well, they look over their clothes and jewels, spend a great deal of time every day in being bathed in their luxurious way, and being dressed. Then they lounge about, gossip, and quarrel a good deal, I suspect. They are very fond of hearing what is going on, and the servant who brings them the most news is the greatest favorite."

"And that's the way so many women have lived for centuries!" sighed Ruth.

"Things are improving somewhat now," said Mrs. Thurston. "Education for women is very much more thought of than in former years. A great many girls are now allowed to attend the Government and other schools, and many men in these days

are anxious to have their wives educated. Some employ teachers to come to their houses and teach the inmates. If only all these women could receive a Christian education, India would soon be a delightfully different place."

"How do the missionaries get into these zenanas?" Ruth inquired. "Do they go as teachers or visitors or—what?"

[Pg 174] "In some cases missionary ladies have gained admission by going to teach these shut-in ladies fancy-work or something of the kind. Other times they contrive to get introduced in some way, going as visitors. But in every case they aim to make their visit the means of carrying the gospel to these women."

"Are they willing to have you talk on religious subjects?" asked Mrs. Ashford.

"Some of them are not. You know there is, of course, as much diversity among them as among any other women. But after they have got used to our coming, and have examined our clothes and asked us all sorts of questions, some of them very childish ones, they generally listen to what we wish to say and become interested in the Bible and the story of the cross."

Mrs. Thurston then spoke particularly of some of the houses she used to visit, told about the pretty little children and their pretty young mothers, what they all did and said, in a way that interested her hearers very much. She also told how some of these friends of hers had received the gospel message and were converted to Christ. "And if you only understood the position of these people under this dreadful caste system, you would see what difficulties they have to contend with before they can come out on the Lord's side," she said. "But it is our duty and privilege to show them the right
[Pg 175] way, the way of life, and shall we not do all in our power to send them the gospel? Those of them who know about free and happy America are looking to us for help. Did you ever hear some verses called 'Work in the Zenana'? I can repeat a couple of them."

"'Do you see those dusky faces
Gazing dumbly to the West—
Those dark eyes, so long despairing,
Now aglow with hope's unrest?

"'They are looking, waiting, longing
For deliverance and light;
Shall we not make haste to help them,
Our poor sisters of the night?'"

There was a great deal more talk about India, Mrs. Thurston being besieged with questions, until Ruth feared she would be worn out, and said the meeting had better close.

"Oh! I like to talk about my dear India," said Mrs. Thurston with a tearful smile; "and if it is any help to you all in your work, I am only too willing to give you the help."

"You have helped us ever so much," replied Ruth, "and we are very grateful. I'm sure we shall always feel the greatest interest in that wonderful old India, with its sore need of the gospel."

"Yes," said Almira, "I feel now that every cent of money we can scrape together
[Pg 176] should be used for India."

"Unfortunately it is not the only needy place in the world," said Miss Mary.

"Well," said Ruth, "we must just work hard and do all we can for heathen lands."

Then they sang several hymns, Hiram and Hugh Campbell having carried Almira's melodeon out to the garden, and closed by repeating the Lord's prayer in concert.

During the singing Mrs. Stokes had slipped away, and Mrs. Ashford and Ruth exchanged smiling glances when they saw her standing by the garden-gate as the friends passed out, insisting that they should take some cookies and drop cakes from a basket she held. She would not hear of the hotel ladies getting into the carriage until they had partaken of the sliced cake and hot tea she had ready for them on the side porch.

"Ah, this is the way you get around it, Mrs. Stokes!" said Ruth.

"Now, Ruth," exclaimed the good woman, "don't you say a word. I a'n't going to have these folks go back home all fagged out when a cup of tea will do 'em good."

"This is another perfectly elegant missionary meeting," said Marty. "I wonder if Edith and the other girls are having as good a time as I am."

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CHAPTER XX.

Mr. Ashford came up to the farmhouse about the first of September, and spent a week before taking his family home. So Marty did not arrive in time to be present at the first meeting of the band, but on the third Saturday of the month she was on hand with her budget of news. She had much to hear as well as to tell, and it would take a long time to relate all the missionary experiences of those travelled Twigs. Indeed for several weeks something new was constantly coming up. It would be, “O Miss Agnes, I forgot to tell about such a thing.” Or, “I just now remember what I heard at such a place. May I tell it?”

Edith had attended a grand missionary meeting at the seaside, and Rosa had gone with her mother and elder sister to a missionary convention, where she saw and heard several missionaries who were at home for rest, and also several new ones who were going out soon. Others of the girls had attended band meetings where they
[Pg 178] were visiting, or had joined with other young workers in holding meetings in hotels and cottages. But no one had, like Marty, been present at the forming of a band and helped it start. Nor had they, like her, become well acquainted with a real missionary.

“Oh, I just had the nicest long talks with her!” said Marty, meaning of course Mrs. Thurston. “I could ask her anything I wanted, you know. I even sat in her lap sometimes and hugged her real hard; and she would pat me and smooth my hair with the very same hands that used to do things for the little girls in India.”

“How elegant it must have been to have a missionary meeting in that pretty old garden, and such a nice missionary there to tell you things!” said one of the girls.

“It *was*,” replied Marty briefly but fervently.

“Oh, I wish I could help start a band as Marty did!” exclaimed Daisy.

“Perhaps you have helped, though you may not be there to see it start,” said Miss Walsh. “Perhaps what you told those little girls from Georgia about our band and missions in general will bear good fruit, and there may be after a while a brand-new band in that far-away Southern town, that little Daisy helped to start.”

“Oh, I do hope so,” said Daisy, smiling and pressing her hands together.

[Pg 179] “I think it would be nice to ask Marty's mountain band to write to our band and tell us what they're doing, and we'll tell them what we're doing,” suggested Edith.

“Oh, yes, yes!” cried some of the girls.

After a little talk the suggestion was adopted. They all wanted Marty to be the one to write; but she said, though of course she was going to write to Evaline, she could not write a good enough letter to be read at the band, and would rather Mary Cresswell wrote. Miss Walsh decided that would be the better way, as Mary was so much older and more accustomed to writing. It was too much to expect Marty to do.

So Mary wrote a very nice letter—the Twigs were very proud of their bright secretary—inclosing a note of introduction from Marty. In course of time a reply was received from Almira thanking them all for their kind interest in the mountain band, and accepting the invitation to enter into a correspondence. This correspondence proved to be very pleasant and profitable to both parties.

What pleased the Twigs particularly was that Almira told them the mountain band was very much indebted to one of their members, and it was likely the band would not have been formed that summer if it had not been for that member's help. Of course she meant Marty.

[Pg 180] It must not be supposed Marty had boasted that she had done much towards getting the band organized. She only told in her childish way how it had come about, and the girls could not help seeing she had given all the aid possible.

Some of the other girls heard from members of bands they had met during the summer, and in this way several suggestions of ways of doing things were gathered up and acted upon. Miss Walsh said the whole summer experience had been very helpful.

One of Marty's earliest visits after her return was paid to Jennie in company with Cousin Alice. They found the invalid sitting up in the comfortable rocking-chair, looking very much better. She was overjoyed to see them and had a great deal to say. She was so pleased that she happened to be up, and insisted on showing how she could take the three or four steps necessary to get from the bed to the chair. She told them the doctor said that after a while, if she was very careful, she would be able to walk. “Not, of course, that skippy way you do,” she said to Marty, “but to kind o' get along.”

She also showed the crocheting she had done, and it was really very well done. As

she seemed so much better, Miss Alice asked the doctor if it would hurt her to study
[Pg 181] a little. He said it would not, and Miss Alice undertook to teach her to read better, so that she could enjoy reading to herself. Jennie was glad of the chance to learn and made good progress, so that by Christmas, when Marty and Edith gave her the Bible they had talked of in the summer, she could read it quite well.

"I think, after a while, when Jennie gets still stronger," said Miss Alice one day at Mrs. Ashford's, "I will teach her something of arithmetic and writing, because she will never be able to go to school, and some knowledge of the kind will be useful to her. I will teach her to sew nicely, too, and when she is older she may be able to earn her living, even if she is lame and delicate."

"What a good work you will be doing, Alice," cried Mrs. Ashford, "if you help a poor, sickly, ignorant child to develop into an intelligent, self-helpful, and I hope Christian woman. Jennie will bless the day she first saw you."

"Ah, but she never would have seen me but for you and Marty. In fact I don't think I should have taken much interest in her if my attention had not been attracted to her by Marty's self-denying gift of that doll."

"And I don't believe *I'd* have taken much interest in her if it hadn't been for hearing
[Pg 182] about the poor foreign children at the mission-band," said Marty.

"Everything comes around to the mission-band first or last, doesn't it?" said Cousin Alice, laughing.

"Pretty near everything," replied Marty seriously. "And then there's Jimmy Torrence," she added presently. "I don't believe I'd have been willing to have my ulster pieced for his sake if I hadn't been hearing about those other forlorn children."

She was glad to see Jimmy looking so much brighter and better. Though he did not know he owed his country visit to her, he remembered the cake she had given him and the kind words she had more than once spoken to him, so he often lingered on the stairs to see her as she passed in and out of Mrs. Scott's room, always greeting her with a bright smile.

One Sunday Mrs. Scott made him and his next older sister as clean and respectable as possible, and took them to church with her. The result was, some of the ladies of the church came around to see the Torrences, fitted the older ones out with decent clothes, and gathered them into the Sunday-school.

Soon after this, one afternoon Miss Alice came into Mrs. Ashford's sitting-room, half laughing, and exclaimed as she sank into a chair, "Oh, Marty, how you and your
[Pg 183] mission work are getting me into business!"

"Why, how?" demanded Marty.

"Oh, those Torrences!" said Miss Alice, still laughing.

"What about them? Do tell us," Marty insisted.

"Well, one day as I was going to see Jennie, I saw the two little girls younger than Jimmy on the stairs, and they did look so cold this kind of weather in their ragged calico frocks, and not much else on. So I just went home, got my old blue flannel dress, bought a few yards of cotton flannel, and took them to Mrs. Torrence to make some comfortable clothes for those poor children. And, Cousin Helen, will you believe it? I found the woman didn't know the first thing about cutting and making clothes!"

"That is very strange," said Mrs. Ashford. "How has she been getting along all this time with such a family?"

"She depends on people giving her things, and on buying cheap ready-made clothing."

"That is very thriftless."

"Yes. But I've heard it is the way so many poor people do. A great many of those women work in factories or shops before they are married, and afterwards, too, sometimes, and they have no time to learn to sew. When I found out about Mrs.
[Pg 184] Torrence I thought I would offer to show her how to cut and make those things. I thought doing that would be far greater charity than making them for her would be."

"So it would."

"To be sure she goes out washing now and then, but she has time enough to sew other days, as she only has those two little rooms to take care of, and she hasn't been taking much care of them evidently."

"I thought they only had one room," said Marty.

"They have taken another now, as Mr. Torrence has steady work. Father got him a place in a livery stable, and he's not a drinking man, so they ought to get along."

“Well, how did Mrs. Torrence take your offer of help?” asked Mrs. Ashford.

“She did not seem to like it at first. I suspect she thought I ought to make the garments myself. But after a while she came around and—”

“Your pleasant ways would make anybody come around,” exclaimed Marty warmly.

“Thanks for the compliment,” replied Miss Alice, smiling. “Well, the amount of it is I have been giving her lessons, and she is really beginning to do right well. The little tots look a great deal more comfortable, and now I am going to show her how to alter
[Pg 185] some of the clothes the Methodist Sunday-school ladies gave her, so that she will have something decent to wear herself.”

“I think you are getting into business!” exclaimed Mrs. Ashford. “It is certainly very good of you to take all that trouble. And I should imagine it is not the most comfortable place in the world in which to give sewing or any other kind of lessons. Now Mrs. Scott is different. Her room is always as neat as a pin.”

“Oh, yes!” cried Miss Alice, “that reminds me there's more to my story. These sewing lessons are actually making Mrs. Torrence cleaner and more tidy. The first day I went the table was all cluttered up, and when she cleaned it off for me to cut out on she looked rather ashamed of its dinginess, and muttered some excuse as she wiped it over with an old cloth. The next day that table looked as if she had been scrubbing it all night—it was so startlingly clean. She had scrubbed a chair, too, for me to sit on. Then I suppose she thought the clean table and chair put the rest of the room out of countenance, for on my next visit I found the floor had been scrubbed and the windows washed. When I told mother about it she said the woman should be encouraged, and sent her that striped rug that used to be in our dining-room, you
[Pg 186] remember. It was to spread down before the stove. The result of that was the old stove has been polished up within an inch of its life. Yesterday I took to the children those gay pictures that came last Christmas with the Graphic, and tacked them on to the wall. Now the next time I go I expect to see the walls scoured or whitewashed or something,” and Miss Alice finished with a laugh.

“If you keep on you will work quite a change in their way of living,” said Mrs. Ashford.

“There's plenty of room yet for improvement,” replied her cousin; “for although it must be pretty hard for such a large family to live in such a small space and be cleanly, still they might try to be.”

“I should think the narrow space would be bad enough without the dirt.”

“Well, things have been and are yet pretty forlorn. But I am glad I have been able to effect a little change for the better.”

“But you said I got you into it,” said Marty, “and I don't see what I have to do with it, nor what mission work has either.”

“I should have told you that one reason I thought of offering this help to Mrs. Torrence is that it may perhaps give me an opportunity to say something to her on religious subjects. She takes no interest in such matters, never goes to church, and
[Pg 187] only allows her children to go to Sunday-school for what people give them. The Bible-reader of that district tells me that Mrs. Torrence wont listen to her, wont let her go into the room. She is a sullen, ill-natured kind of woman—I mean Mrs. Torrence—and hard to get at. So I thought I might possibly get at her in this way, and your account of missionary ladies going to zenanas to teach fancy-work in order to get a chance to tell the women of God and the Bible, put it into my head that I might try something of the same kind.”

“Oh, it is just the same,” cried Marty, “except that it's altering and mending instead of fancy-work. How curious it is that zenana work away off in India should make you think of helping a poor woman close by in Landis Court!”

“Have you got Mrs. Torrence to listen to you yet?” asked Mrs. Ashford.

“I haven't ventured to say anything directly to her yet, but I have been talking to the children about the Sunday-school lesson, explaining it to them and teaching them the Golden Text, and their mother is obliged to hear, whether she wants to or not.”

“That's just the way Mrs. Thurston says it is in those zenanas,” said Marty. “Many of the women at first don't care to listen to good reading and teaching, and want to
[Pg 188] talk about all sorts of other things, so the missionaries have to work it in the best way they can, and after a while the women get interested and want to hear. It seems as if they couldn't get enough Bible-reading and talk. Maybe that'll be the way with Mrs. Torrence.”

“We will hope so,” replied Cousin Alice.

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CHAPTER XXI.

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ROSA STEVENSON'S SISTER.

As Christmas drew near Marty found herself very busy, for besides some little presents she was making for her “own folks,” she and her mother set to work to mend some of her old toys, to dress some new cheap dolls, and to make a few picture-books of bright pretty cards pasted on silesia and yellow muslin, for the little Torrences and other poor children they knew of.

Edith, also, was engaged in the same way, and the little girls often worked together.

Though they had received some money on their birthdays, they concluded to wait until Christmas to give Jennie her Bible, as everybody appeared to think it would be a very suitable Christmas gift for her. They got Mrs. Ashford to go with them to buy it, and with her aid succeeded in getting a very nice one, good size, clear print, and pretty cover, for the money they had set aside for the purpose.

Their mothers gave them permission to run down the afternoon before Christmas to carry the Bible to Jennie, as there would not possibly be time to go Christmas day
[Pg 190] when there was so much going on. They were to call and ask Cousin Alice to go with them; but when they stopped at her house they found she had already gone over to Landis Court, but had left word for them if they came to follow her.

When they arrived at Mrs. Scott's room they found Miss Alice very busy indeed, hanging up some wreaths of green and otherwise decorating the room. She was hurrying to get it all in order before Mrs. Scott returned from her work, as it was to be a surprise to her. Jennie, sitting in the rocking-chair with the doll in her arms, was watching the operation with the greatest interest, every now and then exclaiming, “Oh, that's splendid! What'll mother say to that!”

When Marty and Edith appeared something else seemed to occur to her, and turning from the decorations she cried eagerly to them, “Oh, did you get—!” and then glancing at Miss Alice, covered her mouth with her hand, laughed very much, but would not finish what she had begun to say.

She nearly went wild over the beautiful Bible and could hardly thank the givers enough.

“And I can read it my own self too, 'cepting of course the long words,” she said. “How queer it'll be to be sitting up reading a chapter to mother 'stead of her reading to me!”

[Pg 191] “You might read to her those Christmas verses in Luke to-morrow that I read to you not long ago,” Miss Alice suggested.

“Oh! I will. Where are they, I wonder?” said Jennie.

Edith found the place, while Marty snipped off a little bit of her blue hair-ribbon for a mark.

Some cakes and fruit Mrs. Howell and Mrs. Ashford sent Jennie were also highly appreciated. They had also sent some small but useful and pretty presents for her mother, which Jennie was to have the pleasure of giving to her. Thus they all tried to bring some Christmas joy into the poor little girl's life.

When Marty and Edith went home they each found a small parcel that Jimmy Torrence had left for them. They contained nicely crocheted bureau-covers for their dolls' houses, and were marked in Miss Alice's handwriting, “For Marty, from Jennie,” and “For Edith, from Jennie.”

“Ah! this was the secret she had with Cousin Alice,” exclaimed Marty. “Just look mamma! isn't it a pretty cover?”

Edith was equally pleased with hers, and Jennie seemed much pleased with their hearty thanks.

“I really believe she enjoyed making and giving those little things more than any
[Pg 192] other part of Christmas,” said Miss Alice. “I suppose it made her feel as if she was in the Christmas times.”

Marty never enjoyed any Christmas season so much as this one, when she worked so hard to give happiness to the poor. She had her temptations to overcome, too; for when the stores were filled with beautiful things that she would like to buy for herself or her friends, it was very hard to keep from entrenching on the money she had saved up for a special Christmas missionary offering. But her year's training in missionary giving had not gone for nothing, and she was able to make a missionary offering a part of her Christmas celebration.

The members of the band had not forgotten the talk they had had over Mrs. C——'s letter, when they resolved to try very hard to double their usual amount. The most of them were trying, and the sum was “rolling up,” the treasurer said. Whether or not they would succeed in what they were aiming at, remained to be seen, but Miss Walsh encouraged them by saying that they would certainly come much nearer success by making continual efforts than by making no effort at all.

One morning when the holidays were over, and the little girls were on their way to school, Edith had a great piece of news to tell.

[Pg 193] “What do you think!” she said. “Rosa Stevenson's grownup sister is going away next month to be a missionary!”

“*Is* she really?” exclaimed Marty.

“Yes; going to Japan, and Miss Agnes has asked her to come to the meeting next Saturday and tell us about it.”

The news spread, and the next Saturday every one of the Twigs was there, gazing with wide-open eyes at the fair young girl who was going so far from home to carry the gospel to her ignorant sisters. Sitting there with tearful Rosa's hand clasped in hers, she told the girls that when she was studying in college, God had put it into her heart to carry the tidings of his salvation to the people who knew him not. She said that though it was very hard to leave home and friends, she felt it was her duty and privilege to go, and she was thankful that the way was open for her.

Then she showed them on the map what city she was going to, and told them something of the school in which she was to teach. She promised to write to the band some time, and in closing she earnestly appealed to them to do all they could for missions.

“Even be ready to go yourself if God calls you,” she said. “When I was a little girl in a mission-band, saving up pennies and learning about these foreign lands, I never
[Pg 194] thought that one day I should be going to teach the girls of one of these countries and try to win them to Christ. So there may be some among you whom God will call to this work, and I hope none of you will slight his call, but be ready to do his will in this matter as in all others.”

Marty was very deeply impressed by what Miss Stevenson said. She thought it would be a grand thing to go away off as a missionary. She wondered if God would call her to go. She hoped he would. Only she would not wish to go to such a civilized country as Japan; the very worst part of Africa or the wildest part of Asia would be what she would choose.

Her mind was so full of the subject that she did not want to talk about anything else, or to talk at all, and was glad that Edith was going to her aunt Julia's from the meeting, so she could walk home alone. She concluded that as soon as she reached home, she would go into her room and pray that she might be a missionary. Then she could not wait until she got home, and being on a quiet street, she slipped behind a tree-box and offered this little prayer: “Dear Lord, if missionaries are still needed by the time I grow up, I pray thee let me be one. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.”

[Pg 195] She walked in home very soberly for her, and going directly to her mother, asked, “Mamma, should you like me to go away over the seas and be a missionary?”

“No, indeed!” said her mother emphatically. “I should not like it at all. You mustn't think of such a thing.”

“But if God calls me to go?” said Marty, with quivering lip.

It would be hard, after all, to leave this dear home. She scarcely knew whether she wanted her prayer answered or not.

“What do you mean?” inquired Mrs. Ashford, drawing her on her lap.

Then Marty told all about the meeting, and what she had been thinking, and how she had prayed to be a missionary.

“I want to be one if God wants me to, but I don't see how I *can* go away and leave you all,” she said, half crying.

“Well,” said her mother soothingly, seeing she was trembling with excitement, “we need not talk about it yet. It will be a long time until you are old enough or know enough to go. You will have to go to school many years yet, and then, perhaps, to college, for you know the better missionaries are educated the more good they can do. Then you must learn to make your own clothes and take care of them, and it is well to know a good deal about housekeeping also, for missionaries have to know
[Pg 196] how to be independent, and be ready for any kind of life. You would hardly be prepared to go before you are twenty, anyway, and that is ten years yet.”

“Nine and a half,” put in Marty.

“In the meantime you can be doing as much as possible for missions at home.”

“Yes,” said Marty, wiping her eyes and looking comforted, “that's so. We needn't think of my going away yet, and I s'pose the right way is to do as Miss Agnes says. She says the best way in mission work, as in everything else, is just to do the nearest thing and do it as well as we possibly can, and then be willing to let God lead us along from one step to another.”

“She is certainly right,” said Mrs. Ashford.

“I have taken some steps since Edith got me started, haven't I? I've learned a good deal about missions, and I find it a great deal easier to give money regularly now than when I began. Don't you remember how at first I either wanted to give every cent I had or else not to give anything? But I found out that wasn't the best way to do.”

“And another thing,” said Mrs. Ashford, “you have been the means of some of the rest of us taking steps. Seeing how well your systematic giving is working, I have started in to do the same way.”

[Pg 197] “Oh! *have* you, mamma?” exclaimed Marty. “Are you going to have a box for tenths? How delightful!”

“No, not a box—my square Russia-leather pocketbook. And not tenths exactly, but what you call the New Testament way.”

“That's just lovely!” said Marty, caressing her. “I'm so glad. So we'll both be mission workers the rest of our lives, wont we?”

“With God's help, we will,” replied her mother.

“And p'r'aps dear little Freddie will begin, too, when he gets old enough. You know there are boy bands. But where is Freddie? He was here when I came in.”

Just then a high-pitched little voice from the next room called, “Whoop! Marty!”

“There he is. I wonder what sort of a funny place he's hiding in this time,” said Marty, laughing and running to see.

Freddie had taken one of his papa's large handkerchiefs out of the lower drawer of the bureau, and spreading it out over his head was standing in the middle of the room, hiding. How he laughed when Marty found him!

Soon after Mrs. Ashford and Marty began studying the Bible with the help of the concordance, they agreed that it would be pleasant to read a chapter together every
[Pg 198] night before Marty went to bed. Sometimes she was too sleepy to read more than a few verses, but generally she tried to get ready in good time so that she would be wide enough awake to read a whole chapter, unless it was a very long one.

They were reading in Luke's Gospel now, but the evening of this day Marty said,

“Mamma, mayn't we read that chapter that has in it, 'Here am I; send me'? Miss Stevenson read that verse to us to-day when she was talking about us going, any of us. Do you know where it is?”

“I think I can find it pretty easily,” Mrs. Ashford replied. “I know it is in Isaiah. Here it is—the sixth chapter.”

They read it, and the eighth verse coming to Marty, she read slowly and reverently,

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

After they had finished reading, she said,

“I think that is a very hard chapter. The only verses in it that I understand are this one where it says, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,' and the eighth verse about 'Whom shall I send?'”

“Well,” said her mother, “if you understand those two, they will give you plenty to
[Pg 199] think of, and when you are older you will be able to understand more.”

After a moment's silence Marty said,

“You were saying a while ago that I'd have to go to school and learn a great deal before I could be a missionary. I s'pose I'll have to study the Bible a great deal too.”

“Oh, of course. I didn't mention that particularly, because I took it for granted you would know that any one who undertakes to show others the way of life must know the way herself, and the Bible is the book that points out that way. You remember Jesus says, 'Search the Scriptures; they are they which testify of me.'”

“But how am I ever to learn? Some people seem to know just where everything is, all the verses that explain other verses, and so on. They can so easily find something

in the Old Testament that exactly fits into something in the New Testament. I often wonder how they do it."

"They love the Word of God, study it, and pray over it."

"I want to love it too," said Marty, pressing her face against the open Bible on her mother's knee. "Whether I'm a missionary or not, I want to be a Christian and do some work for the Lord."

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Transcriber's note

The original spelling of "wont" for "won't" was retained.

Punctuation was corrected where appropriate.

Captions for the illustrations were created by the transcriber.

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