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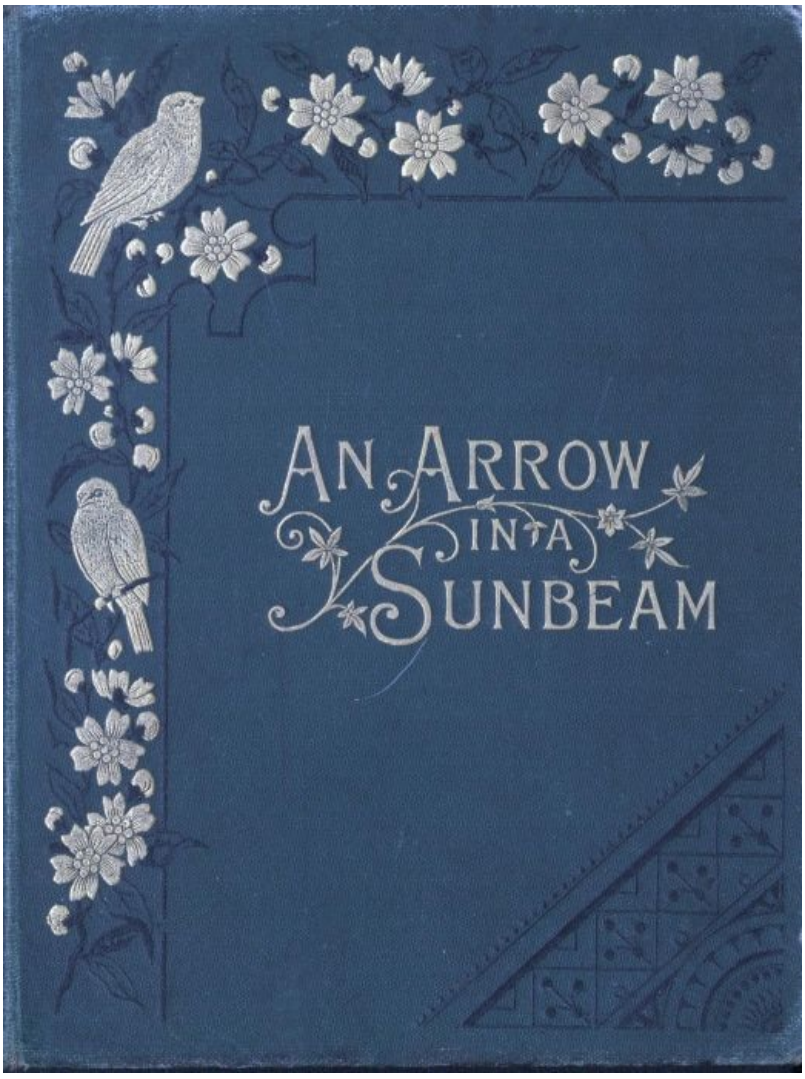

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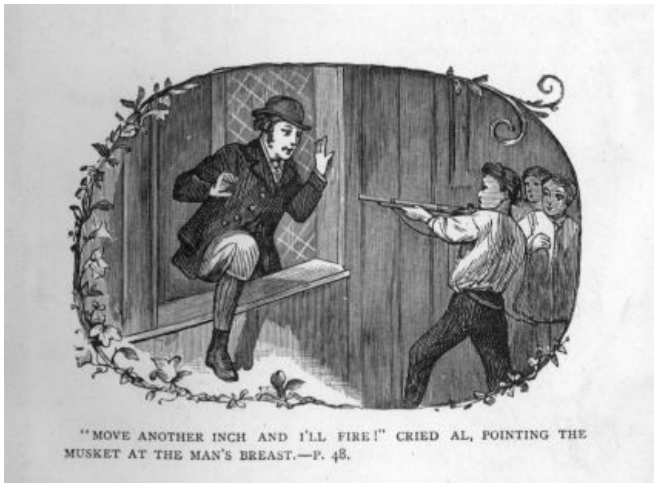
"MOVE ANOTHER INCH AND I'LL FIRE!" CRIED AL, POINTING THE MUSKET AT THE MAN'S BREAST.—P. 48.

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AND ALBION WORKS, WAKEFIELD.
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AN ARROW IN A SUNBEAM; AND OTHER TALES.

The golden sunshine, vernal air,
Sweet flowers and fruits, thy love declare;
When forests ripen Thou art there,
Who givest all.

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AN ARROW IN A SUNBEAM.

The minister of a fashionable church had noticed Sunday after Sunday a little old lady with a sad, patient face, dressed in very shabby mourning, sitting in the strangers' pew.

Like Job this good man could say, "The cause that I knew not, I sought out." He soon learned from the sexton her name and residence, and was surprised to find her in the very topmost room of a house, amid evidences of real poverty.

In the one little window bloomed a monthly rose and a vigorous heliotrope, and beside the pots lay half-a-dozen books, such as are rarely seen in the homes of the very poor. On the wall hung two fine engravings, and an old fashioned gold watch was suspended from a faded velvet case over the mantel piece.

Her story, when she was induced to tell it, was neither new nor startling. She had long been a widow. Her children had been called from her, till now she had but one, and he, being a cripple, could do little more than supply his own absolute wants by his work as a repairer of watches.

The pastor was charmed with her patient endurance of what others would call the hard discipline of life, and when he left her he felt that he had been a learner instead of a teacher in that poor room.

Being too delicate to allude to her apparent poverty, he said at parting, "As you are a stranger among us, I will send some of the visitors of the church to cheer and comfort you."

He selected two bright, rosy girls, full of life and happiness, of whose visits among the poor he had often heard.

They came to the widow like sunbeams through a storm. They talked cheerily, and did not appear to notice the bareness of the room. They asked something of her history, and told of their grandmothers, who also had seen much sorrow; and in this way drew her out till she told of her former competency, of her early advantages in England, and of all the misfortunes which had brought her to her present position. "And yet," she said, "I have little to complain of while I have the love and tender care of such a son as Walter."

Little by little, without a complaint from her, they found that the old lady lacked many things for her comfort. Their sympathies were aroused. It would be a delight to make her happy by gifts that would be of service to her.

Lucy Grey, a girl full of fun as well as of kindness, said, "I wish you would let me make you a bonnet; I make lovely ones. Grandma won't wear a milliner's bonnet, she likes mine so much better."

Grace Wheeler volunteered to make a dress and caps, adding, playfully, "As my dear grandma is gone, you must let me adopt you and do all I can for you. There are four of us girls always looking round for somebody to help. You can call on us for anything you want."

Four young girls, who laughingly styled themselves "The Quartette of Mercy," met at Grace Wheeler's house with materials for a dress, and a bonnet and caps. The old lady was coming two hours afterward to be fitted, having being measured before they left her house.

The girls were in a perfect gala of joy that bright afternoon. They chatted merrily while working, and one would have thought they were making costumes for comic tableaux rather than the garb of a sorrowful widow.

"I'll tell you, girls," said Lucy Grey, "the old dowager will shine when she gets my bonnet on!" and trying it on over her chestnut curls, she added, "I half-wish I was a downfallen lady myself,—a haberdasher's daughter from England! Oh, I hope I shall be a widow some time! Widows' caps are so becoming!"

"Well," replied Grace, laughing, "do your best for Goody Horn, and maybe she'll let you have 'dear Walter.' Then you'll be a widow soon,—he's so feeble."

"Oh, I wish I had the dressing of her! 'She'd surprise herself,' as the Dutchman said. I'd put a canary-coloured pompon and a white aigrette in that bonnet, and"—here she slipped a scarlet bird out of her own hat and stuck it into a fold of the crape Lucy was laying on to the old fashioned close frame—"I'd make her an upper skirt with a tie-back, get scarlet stockings and low shoes, and"——

"Pho! you'd make the dear old soul look like Mother Hubbard!" cried another.

"No," said Grace; "but she looks now like

"Little Dame Crump, with her brand-new broom;"

and no doubt Walter looks either like Mother Hubbard's dog, or—or I don't know what."

"Oh, by-the-way, did you notice a violin on the bureau? Whoever gets 'dear Walter' will have a chance to do all the family dancing. The dowager's too old, and Walter's too lame; but there, what stuff I'm talking; it's well mother isn't within hearing. She won't let me have any sport. But I do think old folks are so comical! I'll do anything in the world to help them, though."

They worked on some time, and in the real kindness which was hidden under this nonsense they laid plans for the dear old stranger's future comfort.

"Why, girls, it's time she was here now!"

"Nora," called Grace, as a girl passed the door, "when an old lady comes, send her right up stairs."

"There was an old person here an hour ago, and as you told me not to let any one in who asked for you for an hour, I told her to sit down in the hall. I suppose she's there now. I forgot all about her," was the reply.

Grace flew down, but there was no one there.

"That was some old beggar who got tired of waiting. I'm sure she'll be here soon," said Lucy.

But she did not come, and they grew tired of waiting to try on the dress and hat. So they resolved to go, all four together, the next day, to the "opening at Madam Horn's," and carry the things themselves.

They did so; but when the "dowager" opened the door at their knock, they hardly knew her. She looked straight, and solemn, and cold. She did not even ask them in; but they went in and seated themselves.

Grace said, "You didn't come yesterday to try on the dress, and thinking you might be ill, we brought it here."

"But I did go, ladies. I went an hour earlier than you asked me, to beg that the dress might be cut perfectly plain, without upper skirt or flounce. The girl seated me in the hall, and while I sat there, I was forced to hear myself and my son ridiculed and turned to scorn in a way I could not believe possible.

"I have done nothing to merit this. I never begged of you, nor sought your sympathy in my sorrows, and I cannot understand why I am made the butt of your scorn."

"Oh, Mrs. Horn," cried Lucy, "we were only in sport! I hope you will forgive us."

"Is it sport to cast contempt on an aged woman who has been walking for years in a fiery furnace upheld and comforted by God? Is it sport to ridicule an unfortunate boy who has a continual warfare with pain to keep up this poor home?"

"Oh, don't speak of it again!" said Grace blushing deeply and half-ready to cry, as she untied the package in her hand, while Lucy unpinned the paper that held the bonnet.

"Put them up, please, young ladies. I cannot look on them, and I never could wear them. When you first came, I told Walter that I felt as if a sunbeam had come into the

house and remained behind you. Last night I told him that my new sunbeam had an arrow concealed in it."

"But you *will* take the things, after all our trouble?" implored Grace, with tears dropping from her eyes.

"No, never; I can hear the Gospel in my old clothes. I should take no pleasure in these; they are associated with too painful thoughts. I hope God will bless you, children, and save you from an old age of poverty, and give you what He has given me,—a full trust in His love and tenderness. Good-by."

You can imagine the feelings of those young girls when they left that poor room in tears.

Respectful treatment is more to the sensitive poor than gifts of food, garments or money; and nothing is so likely to harden the hearts of the young as the habit of getting sport out of the sorrows and infirmities of others.

MISS SYDNEY'S FLOWERS.

owever sensible it may have been considered by other people, it certainly was a disagreeable piece of news to Miss Sydney, that the city authorities had decided to open a new street from St. Mary Street to Jefferson. It seemed a most unwarrantable thing to her that they had a right to buy her property against her will. It was so provoking, that, after so much annoyance from the noise of St. Mary Street during the last dozen years, she must submit to having another public thoroughfare at the side of her house also. If it had only been at the other side, she would not have minded it particularly; for she rarely sat in her drawing-room, which was at the left of the hall. On the right was the library, stately, dismal, and apt to be musty in damp weather; and it would take many bright people, and a blazing wood-fire, and a great deal of sunshine, to make it pleasant. Behind this was the dining-room, which was really bright and sunny, and which opened by wide glass doors into a conservatory. The rattle and clatter of St. Mary Street was not at all troublesome here; and by little and little Miss Sydney had gathered her favourite possessions from other parts of the house, and taken one end of it for her sitting-room. The most comfortable chairs had found their way here, and a luxurious great sofa which had once been in the library, as we'll as the bookcase which held her favourite books.

The house had been built by Miss Sydney's grandfather, and in his day it had seemed nearly out of the city: now there was only one other house left near it; for one by one the quiet, aristocratic old street had seen its residences give place to shops and warehouses, and Miss Sydney herself had scornfully refused many offers of many thousand dollars for her home. It was so changed! It made her so sad to think of the dear old times, and to see the houses torn down, or the small-paned windows and old-fashioned front-doors replaced with French plate-glass to display better the wares which were to take the places of the quaint furniture and well-known faces of her friends! But Miss Sydney was an old woman, and her friends had diminished sadly. "It seems to me that my invitations are all for funerals in these days," said she to her venerable maid Hannah, who had helped her dress for her parties fifty years before. She had given up society little by little. Her friends had died, or she had allowed herself to drift away from them, while the acquaintances from whom she might have filled their places were only acquaintances still. She was the last of her own family, and, for years before her father died, he had lived mainly in his library, avoiding society and caring for nothing but books; and this, of course, was a check upon his daughter's enjoyment of visitors. Being left to herself, she finally became content with her own society, and since his death, which followed a long illness, she had refused all invitations; and with the exception of the interchange

of occasional ceremonious calls with perhaps a dozen families, and her pretty constant attendance at church, you rarely were reminded of her existence. And I must tell the truth: it was not easy to be intimate with her. She was a good woman in a negative kind of way. One never heard of any thing wrong she had done; and if she chose to live alone, and have nothing to do with people, why, it was her own affair. You never seemed to know her any better after a long talk. She had a very fine, courteous way of receiving her guests,—a way of making you feel at your ease more than you imagined you should when with her,—and a stately kind of tact that avoided skilfully much mention of personalities on either side. But mere hospitality is not attractive, for it may be given grudgingly, or, as in her case, from mere habit; for Miss Sydney would never consciously be rude to any one in her own house—or out of it, for that matter. She very rarely came in contact with children; she was not a person likely to be chosen for a confidante by a young girl; she was so cold and reserved, the elder ladies said. She never asked a question about the winter fashions, except of her dressmaker, and she never met with reverses in housekeeping affairs, and these two facts rendered her unsympathetic to many. She was fond of reading, and enjoyed heartily the pleasant people she met in books. She appreciated their good qualities, their thoughtfulness, kindness, wit or sentiment; but the thought never suggested itself to her mind that there were living people not far away, who could give her all this, and more.

If calling were not a regulation of society, if one only went to see the persons one really cared for, I am afraid Miss Sydney would soon have been quite forgotten. Her character would puzzle many people. She put no visible hinderance in your way; for I do not think she was consciously reserved and cold. She was thoroughly well-bred, rich, and in her way charitable; that is, she gave liberally to public subscriptions which came under her notice, and to church contributions. But she got on, somehow, without having friends; and, though the loss of one had always been a real grief, she learned without much trouble the way of living the lonely, comfortable, but very selfish life, and the way of being the woman I have tried to describe. There were occasional days when she was tired of herself, and life seemed an empty, formal, heartless discipline. Her wisest acquaintances pitied her loneliness; and busy, unselfish people wondered how she could be deaf to the teachings of her good clergyman, and blind to all the chances of usefulness and happiness which the world afforded her; and others still envied her, and wondered to whom she meant to leave all her money.

I began by telling you of the new street. It was suggested that it should bear the name of Sydney; but the authorities decided finally to compliment the country's chief magistrate, and call it Grant Place. Miss Sydney, did not like the sound of it. Her family had always been indifferent to politics, and indeed the kite of the Sydney had flown for many years high above the winds that affect commonplace people. The new way from Jefferson Street to St. Mary was a great convenience, and it seemed to our friend that all the noisiest vehicles in the city had a preference for going back and forth under her windows. You see she did not suspect, what afterwards became so evident; that there was to be a way opened into her own heart also, and that she should confess one day, long after that she might have died a selfish old woman, and not have left one sorry face behind her, if it had not been for the cutting of Grant Place.

The side of her conservatory was now close upon the sidewalk, and this certainly was not agreeable. She could not think of putting on her big gardening-apron, and going in to work among her dear plants any more, with all the world staring in at her as it went by. John the coachman, who had charge of the greenhouse, was at first very indignant; but, after she found that his flowers were noticed and admired, his anger was turned into an ardent desire to merit admiration, and he kept his finest plants next the street. It was a good thing for the greenhouse, because it had never been so carefully tended; and plant after plant was forced into luxuriant foliage and blossom. He and Miss Sydney had planned at first to have close wire screens made to match those in the dining-room; but now, when she spoke of his hurrying the workmen, whom she supposed had long since been ordered to make them, John said, "Indeed, mum, it would be the ruin of the plants shutting put the light; and they would all be rusted with the showerings I gives them every day." And Miss Sydney smiled, and said no more.

The street was opened late in October, and, soon after, cold weather began in real earnest. Down in that business part of the city it was the strangest, sweetest surprise to come suddenly upon the long line of blooming plants and tall green lily-leaves under a roof festooned with roses and trailing vines. For the first two or three weeks, almost everybody stopped, if only for a moment. Few of Miss Sydney's own friends even had ever seen her greenhouse; for they were almost invariably received in the drawing-room. Gentlemen stopped the thought of business affairs, and went on down the street with a fresher, happier feeling. And the tired shop-girls lingered

longest. Many a man and woman thought of some sick person to whom a little handful of the green leaves and bright blossoms, with their coolness and freshness, would bring so much happiness. And it was found, long months afterward, that a young man had been turned back from a plan of wicked mischief by the sight of a tall green geranium, like one that bloomed in his mother's sitting-room way up in the country. He had not thought, for a long time before, of the dear old woman who supposed her son was turning his wits to good account in the city. But Miss Sydney did not know how much he wished for a bit to put in his buttonhole when she indignantly went back to the dining-room to wait until that impertinent fellow stopped staring in.

II.

It was just about this time that Mrs. Marley made a change in her place of business. She had sold candy round the corner in Jefferson Street for a great many years; but she had suffered terribly from rheumatism all the winter before. She was nicely sheltered from too much sun in the summer; but the north winds of winter blew straight toward her; and after much deliberation, and many fears and questioning as to the propriety of such an act she had decided to find another stand. You or I would think at first that it could make no possible difference where she sat in the street with her goods; but in fact one has regular customers in that business, as well as in the largest wholesale enterprise. There was some uncertainty whether these friends would follow her if she went away. Mrs. Marley's specialty was molasses-candy; and I am sure, if you ever chanced to eat any of it, you would look out for the old lady next time you went along the street. Times seemed very hard this winter. Not that trade had seriously diminished; but still the outlook was very dark. Mrs. Marley was old, and had been so for some years, so she was used to that; but somehow this fall she seemed to be getting very much older all of a sudden. She found herself very tired at night, and she was apt to lose her breath if she moved quickly; besides this, the rheumatism tortured her. She had saved only a few dollars, though she and her sister had had a comfortable living,—what they had considered comfortable, at least, though they sometimes had been hungry, and very often cold. They would surely go to the almshouse sooner or later,—she and her lame old sister Polly.

It was Polly who made the candy which Mrs. Marley sold. Their two little rooms were up three flights of stairs; and Polly, being too lame to go down herself, had not been out of doors in seven years. There was nothing but roofs and sky to be seen from the windows; and, as there was a manufactory near, the sky was apt to be darkened by its smoke. Some of the neighbours dried their clothes on the roofs, and Polly used to be very familiar with the apparel of the old residents, and exceedingly interested when a strange family came, and she saw something new. There was a little bright pink dress that the trig young French woman opposite used to hang out to dry; and somehow poor old Polly used always to be brightened and cheered by the sight of it. Once in a while she caught a glimpse of the child who wore it. She hardly ever thought now of the outside world when left to herself, and on the whole she was not discontented. Sister Becky used to have a great deal to tell her sometimes of an evening. When Mrs. Marley told her in the spring twilight that the grass in the square was growing green, and that she had heard a robin, it used to make Polly feel homesick; for she was apt to think much of her childhood, and she had been born in the country. She was very deaf, poor soul, and her world was a very forlorn one. It was nearly always quite silent, it was very small and smoky out of doors, and very dark and dismal within. Sometimes it was a hopeless world, because the candy burnt; and if there had not been her Bible and hymn-book, and a lame pigeon that lit on the window-sill to be fed every morning, Miss Polly would have found her time go heavily.

One night Mrs. Marley came into the room with a cheerful face, and said very loud, "Polly, I've got some news!" Polly knew by her speaking so loud that she was in good-humour. When any thing discouraging had happened, Becky spoke low, and then was likely to be irritated when asked to repeat her remark.

"Dear heart!" said Mrs. Marley, "now I am glad you had something hot for supper. I was turning over in my mind what we could cook up, for I feel real hollow. It's a kind of chilly day." And she sat down by the stove, while Polly hobbled to the table, with one hand to her ear to catch the first sound of the good news, and the other holding some baked potatoes in her apron. That hand was twisted with rheumatism, for the disease ran in the family. She was afraid every day that she should have to give up making the candy on the next; for it hurt her so to use it. She was continually being harrowed by the idea of its becoming quite useless, and that the candy might not be so good; and then what would become of them? Becky Marley was often troubled by the same thought. Yet they were almost always good-natured, poor old women; and, though Polly Sharpe's pleasures and privileges were by far the fewest of

anybody's I ever knew, I think she was as glad in those days to know the dandelions were in bloom as if she could see them; and she got more good from the fragments of the Sunday-morning sermon that sister Becky brought home than many a listener did from the whole service.

The potatoes were done to a turn, Mrs. Marley shouted; and then Polly sat down close by her to hear the news.

"You know I have been worrying about the cold weather a-coming, and my rheumatics; and I was afeared to change my stand, on account of losing custom. Well, to-day it all come over me to once that I might move down a piece on Grant Place,—that new street that's cut through to St. Mary. I've noticed for some time past that almost all my reg'lar customers turns down that way, so this morning I thought I'd step down that way too, and see if there was a chance. And after I gets into the street I sees people stopping and looking at something as they went along; and so I goes down to see; and it is one of them hothouses, full of plants a-growing like it was mid-summer. It belongs to the big Sydney house on the corner. There's a good place to sit right at the corner of it, and I'm going to move over there to-morrow. I thought as how I wouldn't leave Jefferson Street to-day, for it was too sudden. You see folks stops and looks at the plants, and there wasn't any wind there to-day. There! I wish you could see them flowers."

Sister Polly was very pleased, and, after the potatoes and bread were eaten, she brought on an apple pie that had been sent up by Mrs. Welch, the washerwoman who lived on the floor next but one below. She was going away for three or four days, having been offered good pay to do some cleaning in a new house, and her board besides, near her work. So you see that evening was quite a jubilee.

The next day Mrs. Marley's wildest expectations were realized; for she was warm as toast the whole morning, and sold all her candy, and went home by two o'clock. That had never happened but once or twice before. "Why, I shouldn't wonder if we could lay up considerable this winter," said she to Polly.

Miss Sydney did not like the idea of the old candy-woman's being there. Children came to buy of her, and the street seemed noisier than ever at times. Perhaps she might have to leave the house, after all. But one may get used to almost any thing; and as the days went by she was surprised to find that she was not half so much annoyed as at first; and one afternoon she found herself standing at one of the dining-room windows, and watching the people go by. I do not think she had shown so much interest as this in the world at large for many years. I think it must have been from noticing the pleasure her flowers gave the people who stopped to look at them that she began to think herself selfish, and to be aware how completely indifferent she had grown to any claims the world might have upon her. And one morning, when she heard somebody say, "Why, it's like a glimpse into the tropics! Oh! I wish I could have such a conservatory!" She thought, "Here I have kept this all to myself for all these years, when so many others might have enjoyed it too!" But then the old feeling of independence came over her. The greenhouse was out of people's way; she surely couldn't have let people in whom she didn't know; however, she was glad, now that the street was cut, that some one had more pleasure, if she had not. After all it was a satisfaction to our friend; and from this time the seeds of kindness and charity and helpfulness began to show themselves above the ground in the almost empty garden of her heart. I will tell you how they grew and blossomed; and as strangers came to see her real flowers, and to look in at the conservatory windows from the cold city street, instead of winter to see a bit of imprisoned summer, so friend after friend came to find there was another garden in her own heart, and Miss Sydney learned the blessedness there is in loving and giving and helping.

For it is sure we never shall know what it is to lack friends, if we keep our hearts ready to receive them. If we are growing good and kind and helpful, those who wish for help and kindness will surely find us out. A tree covered with good fruit is never unnoticed in the fields. If we bear thorns and briers, we can't expect people to take very great pains to come and gather them. It is thought by many persons to be not only a bad plan, but an ill-bred thing, to give out to more than a few carefully selected friends. But it came to her more and more that there was great selfishness and shortsightedness in this. One naturally has a horror of dragging the secrets and treasures of one's heart and thought out to the light of day. One may be willing to go without the good that may come to one's own self through many friendships; but, after all, God does not teach us, and train our lives, only that we may come to something ourselves. He helps men most through other men's lives; and we must take from him, and give out again, all we can, wherever we can, remembering that the great God is always trying to be the friend of the least of us. The danger is, that we oftenest give our friendship selfishly; we do not think of our friends, but of ourselves. One never can find one's self beggared; love is a treasure that does not lessen, but grows, as we spend it.

The passers-by seemed so delighted with some new plants which she and John had arranged one day, that as she was going out in the afternoon to drive, she stopped just as she was going to step into the carriage and said she thought she would go round and look at the conservatory from the outside. So John turned the horses, and followed. It was a very cold day, and there were few people in the street. Every thing was so cheerless out of doors, and the flowers looked so summer-like! No wonder the people liked to stop, poor souls! For the richer, more comfortable ones lived farther up town. It was not in the shopping region; and, except the business-men who went by morning and evening, almost every one was poor.

Miss Sydney had never known what the candy-woman sold before, for she could not see any thing but the top of her rusty black bonnet from the window. But now she saw that the candy was exactly like that she and her sister used to buy years upon years ago; and she stopped to speak to the old woman, and to buy some, to the utter amazement of her coachman. Mrs. Marley was excited by so grand a customer, and was a great while counting out the drumsticks, and wrapping them up. While Miss Sydney stood there a thin, pitiful little girl came along, carrying a clumsy baby. They stopped, and the baby tried to reach down for a piece. The girl was quite as wistful; but she pulled him back, and walked on to the flowers. "Oh! pitty, pitty!" said the baby, while the dirty little hands patted the glass delightedly.

"Move along there," said John gruffly; for it was his business to keep that glass clean and bright.

The girl looked round, frightened, and, seeing that the coachman was big and cross-looking, the forlorn little soul went away. "Baby want to walk? You're so heavy!" said she in a fretful, tired way. But the baby was half crying, and held her tight. He had meant to stay some time longer, and look at those pretty, bright things, since he could not have the candy.

Mrs. Marley felt as if her customer might think her stingy, and proceeded to explain that she couldn't think of giving her candy away. "Bless you, ma'am, I wouldn't have a stick left by nine o'clock."

Miss Sydney "never gave money to street-beggars." But these children had not begged, and somehow she pitied them very much, they looked so hungry. And she called them back. There was a queer tone to her voice; and she nearly cried after she had given the package of candy to them, and thrown a dollar upon the board in front of Mrs. Marley, and found herself in the carriage, driving away. Had she been very silly? and what could John have thought? But the children were so glad; and the old candy-woman had said, "God bless you, mum!"

After this, Miss Sydney could not keep up her old interest in her own affairs. She felt restless and dissatisfied, and wondered how she could have done the same things over and over so contentedly for so many years. You may be sure, that, if Grant Place had been unthought of, she would have lived on in the same fashion to the end of her days. But after this she used to look out of the window; and she sat a great deal in the conservatory, when it was not too warm there, behind some tall callas. The servants found her usually standing in the dining-room; for she listened for footsteps, and was half-ashamed to have them notice that she had changed in the least. We are all given to foolish behaviour of this kind once in a while. We are often restrained: because, we feel bound to conform to people's idea of us. We must be such persons as we imagine our friends think us to be. They believe that we have made up our minds about them, and are apt to show us only that behaviour which they think we expect. They are afraid of us sometimes. They think we cannot sympathize with them. Our friend felt almost as if she were yielding to some sin in this strange interest in the passers-by. She had lived so monotonous a life, that any change could not have failed to be somewhat alarming. She told Bessie Thorne afterward, that one day she came upon that verse of Keble's Hymn for St. Matthew's Day. Do you remember it?—

> "There are, in this loud, stunning tide
> Of human care and crime,
> With whom the melodies abide
> Of the everlasting chime;
> Who carry music in their heart
> Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
> Plying their daily task with busier feet
> Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

It seemed as if it were a message to herself, and she could not help going to the window a few minutes afterward. The faces were mostly tired-looking and dissatisfied. Some people looked very eager and hurried, but none very contented. It was the literal daily bread they thought of; and, when two fashionably-dressed ladies chanced to go by the window, their faces were strangely like their poorer neighbours

in expression. Miss Sydney wondered what the love for one's neighbour could be; if she could ever feel it herself. She did not even like these people whom she watched, and yet every day, for years and years, she had acknowledged them her brothers and sisters when she said, "Our Father who art in heaven."

It seemed as if Miss Sydney, of all people, might have been independent and unfettered. It is so much harder for us who belong to a family, for we are hindered by the thought of people's noticing our attempts at reform. It is like surrendering some opinion ignominiously which we have fought for. It is kind of "giving in." But when she had acknowledged to herself that she had been in the wrong, that she was a selfish, thoughtless old woman, that she was alone, without friends, and it had been her own fault, she was puzzled to know how to do better. She could not begin to be very charitable all at once. The more she realized what her own character had become, the more hopeless and necessary seemed reform.

Such times as this come to many of us, both in knowing ourselves and our friends. An awakening, one might call it,—an opening of the blind eyes of our spiritual selves. And our ears are open to some of the voices which call us; while others might as well be silent, for all the heed we give them. We go on, from day to day, doing, with more or less faithfulness, that part of our work we have wit enough to comprehend; but one day suddenly we are shown a broader field, stretching out into the distance, and know that from this also we may bring in a harvest by and by, and with God's help.

Miss Sydney meant to be better,—not alone for the sake of having friends, not alone to quiet her conscience, but because she knew she had been so far from living a Christian life, and she was bitterly ashamed. This was all she needed,—all any of us need,—to know that we must be better men and women for God's sake; that we cannot be better without his help, and that his help, may be had for the asking. But where should she begin? She had always treated her servants kindly, and they were the people she knew best. She would surely try to be more interested in the friends she met; but it was nearly Christmas time, and people rarely came to call. Every one was busy. Becky Marley's cheery face haunted her; and one day after having looked down from the window on the top of her bonnet, she remembered that she did not get any candy, after all, and she would go round to see the old lady again, she looked poor, and she would give her some money. Miss Sydney dressed herself for the street, and closed the door behind her very carefully, as if she were a mischievous child running away. It was very cold, and there were hardly a dozen persons to be seen in the streets, and Mrs. Marley had evidently been crying.

"I should like some of your candy," said our friend.

"You know I didn't take any, after all the other day." And then she felt very conscious and awkward, fearing that the candy woman thought she wished to remind her of her generosity.

"Two of the large packages, if you please. But, dear me! aren't you very cold, sitting here in the wind?" and Miss Sydney shivered, in spite of her warm wrappings.

It was the look of sympathy that was answered first, for it was more comforting than even the prospect of money, sorely as Mrs. Marley needed that.

"Yes, mum, I've had the rheumatics this winter awful. But the wind here!—why, it ain't nothing to what it blows round in Jefferson Street, where I used to sit. I shouldn't be out to-day, but I was called upon sudden to pay my molasses bill, when I'd just paid my rent; and I don't know how ever I can. There's sister Polly—she's dead lame and deaf. I s'pose we'll both be in the almshouse afore spring. I'm an old woman to be earning a living out 'o doors in winter weather."

There is no mistaking the fact that Miss Sydney was in earnest when she said, "I'm so sorry! Can't I help you?"

Somehow she did not feel so awkward, and she enjoyed very much hearing this bit of confidence.

"But my trade has improved wonderful since I came here. People mostly stops to see them beautiful flowers; and then they sees me, and stops and buys something. Well, there's some days when I gets down-hearted, and I just looks up there, and sees them flowers blooming so cheerful, and I says, 'There! this world ain't all cold and poor and old, like I be; and the Lord he ain't never tired of us, with our worrying about what He's a-doing with us; and heaven's a-coming before long anyhow!'" And the Widow Marley stopped to dry her eyes with the corner of her shawl.

Miss Sydney asking her to go round to the kitchen, and warm herself; and, on finding out more of her new acquaintance's difficulties, she sent her home happy, with money enough to pay the dreaded bill, and a basket of good things which furnished such a supper for herself and sister Polly as they had not seen for a long

time. And their fortunes were bettered from that day. "If it hadn't been for the flowers, I should ha' been freezing my old bones on Jefferson Street this minute, I s'pose," said the Widow Marley.

Miss Sydney went back to the dining-room after her *protégée* had gone, and felt a comfortable sense of satisfaction in what she had done. It had all come about in such an easy way too! A little later she went into the conservatory, and worked among her plants. She really felt so much younger and happier and once, as she stood still, looking at some lilies-of-the-valley that John had been forcing into bloom, she did not notice that a young lady was looking through the window at her very earnestly.

III.

That same evening Mrs. Thorne and Bessie were sitting up late in their library. It was snowing very fast, and had been since three o'clock; and no one had called. They had begun the evening by reading and writing, and now were ending with a talk.

"Mamma," said Bessie, after there had been a pause, "whom do you suppose I have taken a fancy to? And do you know, I pity her so much!—Miss Sydney."

"But I don't know that she is so much to be pitied," said Mrs. Thorne, smiling at the enthusiastic tone. "She must have everything she wants. She lives all alone, and hasn't any intimate friends, but, if a person chooses such a life, why, what can we do? What made you think of her?"

"I have been trying to think of one real friend she has. Everybody is polite enough to her, and I never heard that any one disliked her; but she must be forlorn sometimes. I came through that new street by her house to-day: that's how I happened to think of her. Her greenhouse is perfectly beautiful, and I stopped to look in. I always supposed she was cold as ice (I'm sure she looks so); but she was standing out in one corner, looking down at some flowers with just the sweetest face. Perhaps she is shy. She used to be very good-natured to me when I was a child, and used to go there with you. I don't think she knows me since I came home; at any rate, I mean to go to see her some day."

"I certainly would," said Mrs. Thorne. "She will be perfectly polite to you, at all events. And perhaps she may be lonely, though I rather doubt it; not that I wish to discourage you, my dear. I haven't seen her in a long time, for we have missed each other's calls. She never went into society much; but she used to be a very elegant woman, and is now, for that matter."

"I pity her," said Bessie persistently. "I think I should be very fond of her if she would let me. She looked so kind as she stood among the flowers to-day! I wonder what she was thinking about. Oh! do you think she would mind if I asked her to give me some flowers for the hospital?"

Bessie Thorne is a very dear girl. Miss Sydney must have been hard-hearted if she had received her coldly one afternoon a few days afterward, she seemed so refreshingly young and girlish a guest as she rose to meet the mistress of that solemn, old-fashioned drawing-room. Miss Sydney had had a re-action from the pleasure her charity had given her, and was feeling bewildered, unhappy, and old that day. "What can she wish to see me for, I wonder?" thought she, as she closed her book, and looked at Miss Thorne's card herself, to be sure the servant had read it right. But, when she saw the girl herself, her pleasure showed itself unmistakably in her face.

"Are you really glad to see me?" said Bessie in her frankest way, with a very gratified smile. "I was afraid you might think it was very odd in me to come. I used to like so much to call upon you with mamma when I was a little girl! And the other day I saw you in your conservatory, and I have wished to come and see you ever since."

"I am very glad to see you, my dear," said Miss Sydney, for the second time. "I have been quite forgotten by the young people of late years. I was sorry to miss Mrs. Thorne's call. Is she quite well? I meant to return it one day this week, and I thought only last night I would ask about you. You have been abroad, I think?"

Was not this an auspicious beginning? I cannot tell you all that happened that afternoon, for I have told so long a story already. But you will imagine it was the beginning of an intimacy that gave great pleasure, and did great good, to both the elder woman and the younger. It is hard to tell the pleasure which the love and friendship of a fresh, bright girl like Bessie Thorne, may give an older person. There is such a satisfaction in being convinced that one is still interesting and still lovable, though the years that are gone have each kept some gift or grace, and the possibilities of life seem to have been realized and decided. There are days of our old

age when there seems so little left in life, that living is a mere formality. This busy world seems done with the old, however dear their memories of it, however strong their claims upon it. They are old: their life now is only waiting and resting. It may be quite right that we sometimes speak of second childhood, because we must be children before we are grown, and the life to come must find us, ready for service. Our old people have lived in the world so long; they think they know it so well: but the young man is master of the trade of living, and the man only his blundering apprentice.

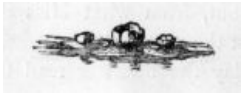
Miss Sydney's solemnest and most unprepared servant was startled to find Bessie Thorne and his mistress sitting cosily together before the dining-room fire. Bessie had a paper full of cut flowers to leave at the Children's Hospital on her way home. Miss Sydney had given liberally to the contribution for that object; but she never had suspected how interesting it was until Bessie told her, and she said she should like to go some day, and see the building and its occupants for himself. And the girl told her of other interest that were near her kind young heart,—not all charitable interests,—and they parted intimate friends.

"I never felt such a charming certainty of being agreeable," wrote Bessie that night to a friend of hers. "She seemed so interesting in every thing, and, as I told you, so pleased with my coming to see her. I have promised to go there very often. She told me in the saddest way that she had been feeling so old and useless and friendless, and she was very confidential. Imagine her being confidential with me! She seemed to me just like myself as I was last year,—you remember—just beginning to realize what life ought to be, and trying, in a frightened, blind kind of way to be good and useful. She said she was just beginning to understand her selfishness. She told me I had done her ever so much good; and I couldn't help the tears coming into my eyes. I wished so much you were there, or some one who could help her more; but I suppose God knew when he sent me. Doesn't it seem strange that an old woman should talk to me in this way, and come to me for help? I am afraid people would laugh at the very idea. And only to think of her living on and on, year after year, and then being changed so! She kissed me when I came away, and I carried the flowers to the hospital. I shall always be fond of that conservatory, because if I hadn't stopped to look in that day, I might never have thought of her.

"There was one strange thing happened, which I must tell you about, though it is so late. She has grown very much interested in an old candy-woman, and told me about her; and do you know that this evening uncle Jack came in, and asked if we knew of anybody who would do for janitress—at the Natural History Rooms, I think he said. There is good pay and she would just sell catalogues, and look after things a little. Of course the candy-woman may not be competent; but, from what Miss Sydney told me, I think she is just the person."

The next Sunday the minister read this extract from "Queen's Gardens" in his sermon. Two of his listeners never had half understood its meaning before as they did then. Bessie was in church, and Miss Sydney suddenly turned her head, and smiled at her young friend, to the great amazement of the people who sat in the pews near by. What could have come over Miss Sydney?

"The path of a good woman is strewn with flowers; but they rise *behind* her steps, not before them. 'Her feet have touched the meadow, and left the daisies rosy.' Flowers flourish in the garden of one who loves them. A pleasant magic it would be if you could flush flowers into brighter bloom by a kind look upon them; nay, more, if a look had the power not only to cheer, but to guard them. This you would think a great thing? And do you think it not a greater thing that all this, and more than this, you can do for fairer flowers than these,—flowers that could bless you for having blessed them, and will love you for having loved them,—flowers that have eyes like yours, and thoughts like yours, and lives like yours?"



A BRAVE BOY.

peaking of courage," said my friend Tom Barton, as we met one day after a long separation, "reminds me of an incident that happened at the doctors' school the first winter after you left.

"It was during the Christmas holidays, and all of the boys had gone home except two brothers, named Fred and Albert Kobb, and myself. They were obliged to stay during the vacation because their parents were spending the season in Florida, and I,—well, as you know, my home was at a distance, and we were poor, so I remained at school.

"The brothers were very unlike, both in appearance and character. Fred, the elder of the two, was a large, muscular, ruddy-faced boy, not much in love with books. He was of an over-bearing disposition, and had a great deal of conceit.

"Albert, on the contrary, was pale and slender. He was very quiet and studious, and had such a love of honesty and truth, and such detestation of meanness and wrong, that we boys had dubbed him the 'Parson.'

"It was the Saturday night between Christmas and New Year's. We three boys were hugging the stove in the little room adjoining the doctor's study. Doctor was in the study writing a sermon for the following day, as he had to preach at Milltown.

"We could hear his pen scratching over the paper during the lulls in our conversation. Occasionally that 'ahem!' of his would come through the partially opened door; but somehow his 'ahems' seemed to lose their ominous character during holidays.

"The subject of our conversation was a robbery that had been perpetrated at Squire Little's store the previous night.

"Robberies, as you know, were unusual occurrences in the little village of Acme. Of course this one furnished a topic for abundance of talk.

"Wherever we had been that day we had found some groups of men and boys talking about robberies in general, and this one in particular.

"It was but natural that in the evening we boys should discuss the same subject, and each of us offered various speculations as to who the robber was, where he had gone, and whether he would be captured or not.

"Then we told stories of all the daring burglaries of which we had ever heard or read, and finally described such as had happened in our own houses.

"In the descriptions of our personal experiences Fred gave a glowing account of an incident that had occurred in his father's family. One night he said the coachman thought he saw a man prowling in the chicken-yard. He fired a pistol at him, and had summoned the other servants to go in pursuit of the robber. He told us how the brave men, armed with lanterns, pokers, and blunderbusses, had reached the chicken-yard, and there found traces of blood, which they followed up for a few yards, and found, lying in the last throes of death, the victim of the coachman's prowess,—a fine black Spanish rooster!

"At length said I, 'What would you do if you should hear a burglar some night trying to enter your house?'

"Fred straightened himself and squared his shoulders. 'I wouldn't hesitate a moment to shoot him,' said he, valiantly. 'I tell you, it would be a good burglar that could get away from me.'

"Al rested his chin in his hands, and gazed thoughtfully into the glowing coals.

"'Well,' said he slowly, 'it is hard to tell what a fellow might do under such circumstances. I rather believe, though, I would take good care to keep out of his way. What would you do, Tom?'

"'Me?" I exclaimed. 'Very likely I'd cover my head with the bedclothes and leave

him to carry off house and all if he could.'

"Fred was about to make another remark, but was prevented by the doctor, who appeared in the doorway. 'Well, boys,' said he, 'don't you think we've had enough talk about robberies for one evening? It is getting late now, and your continual talking has bothered me so that I have only written one page during the last half hour, and on that page I have written four times the word "burglar" instead of "bravery."'

"Bidding him good-night we went up stairs, and were soon fast asleep.

"About midnight I awoke with the consciousness of having been aroused by some unusual noise. Slightly raising my head I listened, and heard a scraping sound at the back hall window.

"We three boys occupied the front room on the third floor, the same that you and Atkinson had at one time. It was a bright moonlight night. Glancing towards the Kobbs' bed, I saw them both sitting up. The noise had aroused them also.

"'There's some one trying to get in that hall window,' said Al, in a whisper. 'I'm going to see.'

"'Wait and listen awhile,' urged Fred.

"'And give the fellow a chance to get in?' exclaimed Al. 'No; we better stop him where he is.'

"'Let's call the doctor,' said Fred.

"'There isn't time for that. Don't you hear him unfastening the window-bolt? Come, hurry! I'm going to take the old-musket; you take the bat.'

"'The gun isn't loaded,' said Fred; and his voice actually trembled. Whether he was shivering from cold or fright, I don't know.

"'It will scare him just the same,' said Al; and taking down the rusty firearm, he hurried out into the hall, followed at a little distance by his brother, armed with the base-ball bat.

"I was never very brave, and therefore I took good care to keep as far behind Fred as he was behind his brother; in fact to be more honest, I merely ventured as far as the door, and there peeped into the hall.

"A man's form was crawling through the window, but he seemed to be so occupied by keeping the sash up that he had not as yet noticed the two boys. As he threw one leg over the sill, he thrust his hand into his breast pocket and drew out a small, dark object.

"'Murder! he's drawing a pistol!' roared Fred in terror; and turning hastily to fly, he ran against me in the doorway, and we both fell sprawling upon the floor.

"'Robbers! fire!' shrieked Fred. 'Here's another one!' and darting into an opposite room, he crawled under the bed there.

"'Move another inch and I'll fire!' cried Al, pointing the musket at the man's breast.

"Och!—murther! Masther Al, don't be afther a-shootin' me!' came a familiar voice in broad Hibernian accents.

"It was Pat, the doctor's man.

"'What! is that you, Pat?' exclaimed Al, lowering the weapon.

"'Sorra the day for me an' it wur,' said the Irishman, as he carefully deposited on the floor the pistol Fred had seen him draw, which was simply a small, flat bottle. He then leisurely lifted his other ponderous foot over the window-sill, shook himself, as if to ascertain whether he had a whole skin, and shut the window. Then he picked up the bottle, and carefully replaced it in his coat pocket.

"Meanwhile, Al had been quietly laughing, and I was still on the floor laughing and rubbing the bruises on my legs, which had been caused by Fred's collision.

"'What's the meaning of this?' whispered Al. 'How is it, Pat, that you come into the house in this way instead of by the door?"

"'Well, you see,' said Pat, 'I just wint the night to say me cousin, who is a-workin' at the Smit's, an' not moindin' to disturb the docther an' his wife, sure didn't I put the long laddher forninst the windew, intindin' to tak out that new pane of glass that was

raycintly tacked in, an' inter in as nate an' quiet as ye plaze: but the lad was scared a bit. Where is he?'

"'Who? Fred?' asked Al.

"'Ay, it's Fred I mane,' said Pat.

"Having by this time rubbed my bruises sufficiently and picked myself up, I led them to Fred's place of concealment. His feet and legs were in plain sight, for, ostrich-like, he seemed to have imagined that if his head alone were covered, he was perfectly safe. Pat grasped him by the ankle, and despite of his kicking hauled him out.

"'Oh,' cried Fred, in abject terror, supposing it was the burglar who had caught him, 'don't kill me! don't kill me! My money is all in the trunk in the opposite room!'

"'Do keep still, and don't make such a fool of yourself! It's only Pat,' said Al, with suppressed laughter, while Pat and I indulged in laughter that was far from suppressed.

"In the midst of this racket we heard a door open below, and the doctor's voice called,—

"'What is the matter up there?'

"'Nothin', sur,' replied Pat, with Irish readiness, 'only the lads got freighted as I was comin' to bed.'

"'Tell them to be quiet, or I shall come up,' said doctor.

"'D'ye hear that, b'ys?' said Pat. 'Get to bed now; ye'll tak' your death runnin' round in the cowld widout your clothes on.'

"In our excitement we had forgotten that the mercury outside was nearly down to zero, and had not noticed the cold; but Pat's words quickened our sensitiveness, so we hastened shivering to bed, and the house was again quiet.

"Monday morning the doctor summoned us all to his study, and there instituted one of his usual courts of inquiry. He was judge, jury and counsel. Pat was the principal witness, and we boys were there in order to corroborate or refute Pat's testimony, and also to sustain somewhat the respectability of the court I suppose.

"'Patrick,' said the doctor, in opening the case, 'what was the cause of that noise up stairs Saturday night?'

"'Well, Your Riverence,' began Pat, and his small gray eyes twinkled as he cast a sly glance at me, 'Sathurday noight I fought I'd call on me cousin, who has just coom from the ould counthry, an' is workin' in the village'—

"'At Smith's,' put in Al, by way of explanation."

The doctor was not very strict when he held court during holidays, otherwise he might have told Al to remain silent until he was questioned.

"'At Smit's,' repeated Pat, 'an' moindin' not to disturb yez by comin' in late, sure I just climbed up to the hall winder, an' as I wur half t'rough, an' wur' takin' somethin' from me pocket'—

"'A flat bottle,' interposed Al.

"'A bottle, eh? And what was in it?' asked the doctor, suspiciously, in an unprecedented manner beginning the cross-examination before the direct was concluded.

"'Only a wee dhrap of medicine, sur,' said Pat. 'Me cousin was afeared I had the influenzys, an' gave it to me for it.'

"'Go on,' said doctor, with a smile.

"'As I wur a-sayin', sur, I dhrew forth the bottle, whin there came wan yell from Masther Fred in the back part of the hall, an' says he, "Och! murther! he's dhrawin' his pistol!" an' thin' he run like—like'—

"'Ay, ay!' exclaimed doctor, warningly.

"'Like a deer,' said Pat; 'an' as I wur a-sayin', sur, I looked up and saw Masther Al fornist me, with a gun dhrawed up to his shoulder an' pintin' at me, an' says I, "Don't murther me!"

"'An' sure, sir, he did not, an' thin we wint an' pullt Fred out from under the bed, where he'd crawled wid his two legs stickin' out in the moonlight, an' Tam an' messel' wur smilin' quiet like, an' Your Riverence towld us to shut up, an' we wint to bed, sur.'

"'And how did Tom act?' said the doctor. 'Eh, Tom, you young rogue, what are you snickering and giggling at behind Pat's back? Are you laughing at him or me?'

"'Neither,' I replied; 'but the truth is, doctor, that Pat told me he might be out late Saturday night, and that I needn't be frightened if I heard any unusual noise. But I forgot to tell the boys, and was so startled and confused in waking from a sound sleep, that I at first thought it was a burglar, and after I did recollect that it was only Pat, I concluded not to say anything, but test their courage, as I supposed there was no danger in it.'

"'Well, Pat,' said doctor, 'when you visit your cousin again, don't climb through the window on your return. And, boys, the next time you hear any suspicious sound at midnight, come and call me the first thing you do.'

"So having brought in a verdict of 'not guilty of any evil intentions,' the doctor adjourned the court.

"Poor Fred was never heard to boast of his bravery, or even to mention the word 'burglar,' after that. So true it is that boasters usually prove cowards when put to the test."

C. S. SLEIGHT.

LADY FERRY.

e have an instinctive fear of death; yet we have a horror of a life prolonged far beyond the average limit: it is sorrowful; it is pitiful; it has no attractions.

This world is only a schoolroom for the larger life of the next. Some leave it early, and some late: some linger long after they seem to have learned all its lessons. This world is no heaven: its pleasures do not last even through our little lifetimes.

There are many fables of endless life, which in all ages have caught the attention of men; we are familiar with the stories of the old patriarchs who lived their hundreds of years; but one thinks of them wearily, and without envy.

When I was a child, it was necessary that my father and mother should take a long sea-voyage. I never had been separated from them before; but at this time they thought it best to leave me behind, as I was not strong, and the life on board ship did not suit me. When I was told of this decision, I was very sorry, and at once thought I

should be miserable without my mother; besides, I pitied myself exceedingly for losing the sights I had hoped to see in the country which they were to visit. I had an uncontrollable dislike to being sent to school, having in some way been frightened by a maid of my mother's, who had put many ideas and aversions into my head which I was very many years in outgrowing. Having dreaded this possibility, it was a great relief to know that I was not to be sent to school at all, but to be put under the charge of two elderly cousins of my father,—a gentleman and his wife whom I had once seen, and liked dearly. I knew that their home was at a fine old-fashioned country-place, far from town, and close beside a river, and I was pleased with this prospect, and at once began to make charming plans for the new life.

I had lived always with grown people, and seldom had had any thing to do with children. I was very small for my age, and a strange mixture of childishness and maturity; and, having the appearance of being absorbed in my own affairs, no one ever noticed me much, or seemed to think it better that I should not listen to the conversation. In spite of considerable curiosity, I followed an instinct which directed me never to ask questions at these times; so I often heard stray sentences which puzzled me, and which really would have been made simple and commonplace at once, if I had only asked their meaning. I was, for the most of the time, in a world of my own. I had a great deal of imagination, and was always telling myself stories; and my mind was adrift in these so much, that my real absent-mindedness was mistaken for childish unconcern. Yet I was a thoroughly simple unaffected child. My dreams and thoughtfulness gave me a certain tact and perception unusual in a child; but my pleasures were as deep in simple things as heart could wish.

It happened that our cousin Matthew was to come to the city on business the week that the ship was to sail, and that I could stay with my father and mother to the very last day, and then go home with him. This was much pleasanter than leaving sooner under the care of an utter stranger, as was at first planned. My cousin Agnes wrote a kind letter about my coming, which seemed to give her much pleasure. She remembered me very well, and sent me a message which made me feel of consequence; and I was delighted with the plan of making her so long a visit.

One evening I was reading a story-book, and I heard my father say in an undertone, "How long has madam been at the ferry this last time? Eight or ten years, has she not? I suppose she is there yet?"—"Oh, yes!" said my mother, "or Agnes would have told us. She spoke of her in the last letter you had, while we were in Sweden."

"I should think she would be glad to have a home at last, after her years of wandering about. Not that I should be surprised now to hear that she had disappeared again. When I was staying there while I was young, we thought she had drowned herself, and even had the men search for her along the shore of the river; but after a time cousin Matthew heard of her alive and well in Salem; and I believe she appeared again this last time as suddenly as she went away."

"I suppose she will never die," said my mother gravely. "She must be terribly old," said my father. "When I saw her last, she had scarcely changed at all from the way she looked when I was a boy. She is even more quiet and gentle than she used to be. There is no danger that the child will have any fear of her; do you think so?"—"Oh, no! but I think I will tell her that madam is a very old woman, and that I hope she will be very kind, and try not to annoy her; and that she must not be frightened at her strange notions. I doubt if she knows what craziness is."—"She would be wise if she could define it," said my father with a smile. "Perhaps we had better say nothing about the old lady. It is probable that she stays altogether in her own room, and that the child will rarely see her. I never have realized until lately the horror of such a long life as hers, living on and on, with one's friends gone long ago: such an endless life in this world!"

Then there was a mysterious old person living at the ferry, and there was a question whether I would not be "afraid" of her. She "had not changed" since my father was a boy: "it was horrible to have one's life endless in this world!"

The days went quickly by. My mother, who was somewhat of an invalid, grew sad as the time drew near for saying good-by to me, and was more tender and kind than ever before, and more indulgent of every wish and fancy of mine. We had been together all my life, and now it was to be long months before she could possibly see my face again, and perhaps she was leaving me forever. Her time was all spent, I believe, in thoughts for me, and in making arrangements for my comfort. I did see my mother again; but the tears fill my eyes when I think how dear we became to each other before that first parting, and with what a lingering, loving touch, she herself packed my boxes, and made sure, over and over again, that I had whatever I should need; and I remember how close she used to hold me when I sat in her lap in the evening, saying that she was afraid I should have grown too large to be held when she came back again. We had more to say to each other than ever before, and I think, until then, that my mother never had suspected how much I observed of life and of

older people in a certain way; that I was something more than a little child who went from one interest to another carelessly. I have known since that my mother's childhood was much like mine. She, however, was timid, while I had inherited from my father his fearlessness, and lack of suspicion; and these qualities, like a fresh wind, swept away any cobwebs of nervous anticipation and sensitiveness. Every one was kind to me, partly, I think, because I interfered with no one. I was glad of the kindness, and, with my unsuspected dreaming and my happy childishness, I had gone through life with almost perfect contentment, until this pain of my first real loneliness came into my heart.

It was a day's journey to cousin Matthew's house, mostly by rail; though, toward the end, we had to travel a considerable distance by stage, and at last were left on the river-bank opposite my new home, and I saw a boat waiting to take us across. It was just at sunset, and I remember wondering if my father and mother were out of sight of land, and if they were watching the sky; if my father would remember that only the evening before we had gone out for a walk together, and there had been a sunset so much like this. It somehow seemed long ago. Cousin Matthew was busy talking with the ferry-man; and indeed he had found acquaintances at almost every part of the journey, and had not been much with me, though he was kind and attentive in his courteous, old-fashioned way, treating me with the same ceremonious politeness which he had shown my mother. He pointed out the house to me: it was but a little way from the edge of the river. It was very large and irregular, with great white chimneys; and, while the river was all in shallow [Transcriber's note: shade?], the upper windows of two high gables were catching the last red glow of the sun. On the opposite side of a green from the house were the farm-house and buildings; and the green sloped down to the water, where there was a wharf and an ancient-looking storehouse. There were some old boats and long sticks of timber lying on the shore; and I saw a flock of white geese march solemnly up toward the barns. From the open green I could see that a road went up the hill beyond. The trees in the garden and orchard were the richest green; their round tops were clustered thickly together: and there were some royal great elms near the house. The fiery red faded from the high windows as we came near the shore, and cousin Agnes was ready to meet me; and when she put her arms round me as kindly as my mother would have done, and kissed me twice in my father's fashion, I was sure that I loved her, and would be contented. Her hair was very gray; but she did not look, after all, so very old. Her face was a grave one, as if she had had many cares; yet they had all made her stronger, and there had been some sweetness, and something to be glad about, and to thank God for, in every sorrow. I had a feeling always that she was my sure defence and guard. I was safe and comfortable with her: it was the same feeling which one learns to have toward God more and more, as one grows older.

We went in through a wide hall, and up stairs, through a long passage, to my room, which was in a corner of one of the gables. Two windows looked on the garden and the river; another looked across to the other gable, and into the square, grassy court between. It was a rambling, great house, and seemed like some English houses I had seen. It would be great fun to go into all the rooms some day soon.

"How much you are like your father!" said cousin Agnes, stooping to kiss me again, with her hand on my shoulder. I had a sudden consciousness of my bravery in having behaved so well all day; then I remembered that my father and mother were at every instant being carried farther and farther away. I could almost hear the waves dash about the ship; and I could not help crying a little. "Poor little girl!" said cousin Agnes: "I am very sorry." And she sat down, and took me in her lap for a few minutes. She was tall, and held me so comfortably, and I soon was almost happy again; for she hoped I would not be lonely with her, and that I would not think she was a stranger, for she had known and loved my father so well: and it would make cousin Matthew so disappointed and uneasy if I were discontented; and would I like some bread and milk with my supper, in the same blue china bowl, with the dragon on it, which my father used to have when he was a boy? These arguments were by no means lost upon me, and I was ready to smile presently; and then we went down to the dining room, which had some solemn-looking portraits on the walls, and heavy, stiff furniture; and there was an old-fashioned woman standing ready to wait, whom cousin Agnes called Deborah, and who smiled at me graciously.

Cousin Matthew talked with his wife for a time about what had happened to him and to her during his absence; and then he said, "And how is madam to-day? you have not spoken of her."—"She is not so well as usual," said cousin Agnes. "She has had one of her sorrowful times since you went away. I have sat with her for several hours to-day; but she has hardly spoken to me." And then cousin Matthew looked at me, and cousin Agnes hesitated for a minute. Deborah had left the room.

"We speak of a member of our family whom you have not seen, although you may have heard your father speak of her. She is called Lady Ferry by most people who know of her; but you may say madam when you speak to her. She is very old, and her mind wanders, so that she has many strange fancies; but you must not be afraid, for

she is very gentle and harmless. She is not used to children; but I know you will not annoy her, and I dare say you can give her much pleasure." This was all that was said; but I wished to know more. It seemed to me that there was a reserve about this person, and the old house itself was the very place for a mystery. As I went through some of the other rooms with cousin Agnes in the summer twilight, I half expected to meet Lady Ferry in every shadowy corner; but I did not dare to ask a question. My father's words came to me,—"Such an endless life," and "living on and on." And why had he and mother never spoken to me afterward of my seeing her? They had talked about it again, perhaps, and did not mean to tell me, after all.

I saw something of the house that night, the great kitchen, with its huge fireplace, and other rooms up stairs and down; and Cousin Agnes told me, that by daylight I should go everywhere, except to Madam's rooms: I must wait for an invitation there.

The house had been built a hundred and fifty years before, by Colonel Haverford, an Englishman, whom no one knew much about, except that he lived like a prince, and would never tell his history. He and his sons died; and after the Revolution the house was used for a tavern for many years,—the Ferry Tavern,—and the place was busy enough. Then there was a bridge built down the river, and the old ferry fell into disuse; and the owner of the house died, and his family also died, or went away; and then the old place, for a long time, was either vacant, or in the hands of different owners. It was going to ruin at length, when cousin Matthew bought it, and came there from the city to live years before. He was a strange man; indeed, I know now that all the possessors of the Ferry farm must have been strange men. One often hears of the influence of climate upon character; there is a strong influence of place; and the inanimate things which surround us indoors and out make us follow out in our lives their own silent characteristics. We unconsciously catch the tone of every house in which we live, and of every view of the outward, material world which grows familiar to us, and we are influenced by surroundings nearer and closer still than the climate or the country which we inhabit. At the old Haverford house it was a mystery which one felt when one entered the door; and when one came away, after cordiality, and days of sunshine and pleasant hospitality, it was still with a sense of this mystery, and of something unseen and unexplained. Not that there was any thing covered and hidden necessarily; but it was the quiet undertone in the house which had grown to be so old, and had known the magnificent living of Colonel Haverford's time, and afterward the struggles of poor gentlemen and women, who had hardly warmed its walls with their pitiful fires, and shivering, hungry lives; then the long procession of travellers who had been sheltered there in its old tavern days; finally, my cousin Matthew and his wife, who had made it their home, when, with all their fortune, they felt empty-handed, and as if their lives were ended, because their only son had died. Here they had learned to be happy again in a quiet sort of way, and had become older and serener, loving this lovable place by the river, and keepers of its secret—whatever that might be.

I was wide awake that first evening: I was afraid of being sent to bed, and, to show cousin Agnes that I was not sleepy, I chattered far more than usual. It was warm, and the windows of the parlour where we sat looked upon the garden. The moon had risen, and it was light out of doors. I caught every now and then the faint smell of honeysuckle, and presently I asked if I might go into the garden a while; and cousin Agnes gave me leave, adding that I must soon go to bed, else I would be very tired next day. She noticed that I looked grave, and said that I must not dread being alone in a strange room, for it was so near her own. This was a great consolation; and after I had been told that the tide was in, and I must be careful not to go too near the river wall, I went out through the tall glass door, and slowly down the wide garden-walk, from which now and then narrower walks branched off at right angles. It was the pride of the place, this garden; and the box-borders especially were kept with great care. They had partly been trimmed that day; and the evening dampness brought out the faint, solemn odour of the leaves, which I never have noticed since without thinking of that night. The roses were in bloom, and the snow-ball bushes were startlingly white, and there was a long border filled with lilies-of-the-valley. The other flowers of the season, were all there and in blossom; yet I could see none well but the white ones, which looked like bits of snow and ice in the summer shadows,—ghostly flowers which one could see at night.

It was still in the garden, except once I heard a bird twitter sleepily, and once or twice a breeze came across the river, rustling the leaves a little. The small-paned windows glistened in the moonlight, and seemed like the eyes of the house watching me, the unknown new-comer.

For a while I wandered about, exploring the different paths, some of which were arched over by the tall lilacs, or by arbors where the grape-leaves did not seem fully grown. I wondered if my mother would miss me. It seemed impossible that I should have seen her only that morning; and suddenly I had a consciousness that she was thinking of me, and she seemed so close to me, that it would not be strange if she

could hear what I said. And I called her twice softly; but the sound of my unanswered voice frightened me. I saw some round white flowers at my feet, looking up mockingly. The smell of the earth and the new grass seemed to smother me. I was afraid to be there all alone in the wide open air; and all the tall bushes that were so still around me took strange shapes, and seemed to be alive. I was so terribly far away from the mother whom I had called; the pleasure of my journey, and my coming to cousin Agnes, faded from my mind, and that indescribable feeling of hopelessness and dread, and of having made an irreparable mistake, came in its place. The thorns of a straying slender branch of a rose bush caught my sleeve maliciously as I turned to hurry away, and then I caught sight of a person in the path just before me. It was such a relief to see some one, that I was not frightened when I saw that it must be Lady Ferry.

She was bent, but very tall and slender, and was walking slowly with a cane. Her head was covered with a great hood or wrapping of some kind, which she pushed back when she saw me. Some faint whitish figures on her dress looked like frost in the moonlight: and the dress itself was made of some strange stiff silk, which rustled softly like dry rushes and grasses in the autumn,—a rustling noise that carries a chill with it. She came close to me, a sorrowful little figure very dreary at heart, standing still as the flowers themselves; and for several minutes she did not speak, but watched me, until I began to be afraid of her. Then she held out her hand, which trembled as if it were trying to shake off its rings. "My dear," said she "I bid you welcome: I have known your father. I was told of your coming. Perhaps you will walk with me? I did not think to find you here alone." There was a fascinating sweetness in Madame's voice, and I at once turned to walk beside her, holding her hand fast, and keeping pace with her feeble steps. "Then you are not afraid of me?" asked the old lady, with a strange quiver in her voice. "It is a long time since I have seen a child."—"No," said I, "I am not afraid of you. I was frightened before I saw you, because I was all alone, and I wished I could see my father and mother;" and I hung my head so that my new friend could not see the tears in my eyes, for she watched me curiously. "All alone: that is like me," said she to herself. "All alone? a child is not all alone, but there is no one like me. I am something alone: there is nothing else of my fashion, a creature who lives forever!" and Lady Ferry sighed pitifully. Did she mean that she never was going to die like other people? But she was silent, and I did not dare to ask for any explanation as we walked back and forward. Her fingers kept moving round my wrist, smoothing it as if she liked to feel it, and to keep my hand in hers. It seemed to give her pleasure to have me with her, and I felt quite at my ease presently, and began to talk a little, assuring her that I did not mind having taken the journey of that day. I had taken some long journeys: I had been to China once, and it took a great while to get there; but London was the nicest place I had ever seen; had Lady Ferry even been in London? And I was surprised to hear her say drearily that she had been in London; she had been everywhere.

"Did you go to Westminster Abbey?" I asked, going on with the conversation childishly. "And did you see where Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots are buried? Mamma had told me all about them."

"Buried, did you say? Are they dead too?" asked Madam eagerly. "Yes, indeed!" said I: "they have been dead a long time."—"Ah! I had forgotten," answered my strange companion. "Do you know of any one else who has died beside them? I have not heard of any one's dying and going home for so long! Once every one died but me —except some young people; and I do not know them."—"Why, every one must die," said I wonderingly. "There is a funeral somewhere every day, I suppose."—"Every one but me," Madam repeated sadly,—"every one but me, and I am alone."

Just now cousin Agnes came to the door, and called me. "Go in now, child," said Lady Ferry. "You may come and sit with me to-morrow if you choose." And I said good-night, while she turned, and went down the walk with feeble, lingering steps. She paced to and fro, as I often saw her afterwards, on the flagstones: and some bats flew that way like ragged bits of darkness, holding somehow a spark of life. I watched her for a minute: she was like a ghost, I thought but not a fearful ghost,—poor Lady Ferry!

"Have you had a pleasant walk?" asked cousin Matthew politely. "To-morrow I will give you a border for your own, and some plants for it, if you like gardening." I joyfully answered that I should like it very much, and so I began to feel already the pleasure of being in a real home, after the wandering life to which I had become used. I went close to cousin Agnes's chair to tell her confidentially that I had been walking with Madam in the garden, and she was very good to me, and asked me to come to sit with her the next day: but she said very odd things.

"You must not mind what she says," said cousin Agnes; "and I would never dispute with her, or even seem surprised, if I were you. It hurts and annoys her, and she soon forgets her strange fancies. I think you seem a very sensible little girl, and I have told you about this poor friend of ours as if you were older. But you understand do you not?" And then she kissed me good-night, and I went up stairs, contented with

her assurance that she would come to me before I went to sleep.

I found a pleasant-faced young girl busy putting away some of my clothing. I had seen her just after supper, and had fancied her very much, partly because she was not so old as the rest of the servants. We were friendly at once, and I found her very talkative; so finally I asked the question which was uppermost in my mind,—Did she know anything about Madam?

"Lady Ferry, folks call her," said Martha, much interested. "I never have seen her close to, only from the other side of the garden, where she walks at night. She never goes out by day. Deborah waits upon her. I haven't been here long; but I have always heard about Madame, bless you! Folks tell all kinds of strange stories. She's fearful old, and there's many believes she never will die; and where she came from nobody knows. I've heard that her folks used to live here; but nobody can remember them, and she used to wander about; and once before she was here,—a good while ago; but this last time she came was nine years ago; one stormy night she came across the ferry, and scared them to death, looking in at the window like a ghost. She said she used to live here in Colonel Haverford's time. They saw she wasn't right in her head —the ferry-men did. But she came up to the house, and they let her in, and she went straight to the rooms in the north gable, and she never has gone away: it was in an awful storm she came, I've heard, and she looked just the same as she does now. There! I can't tell half the stories I've heard, and Deborah she most took my head off," said Martha, "because, when I first came, I was asking about her; and she said it was a sin to gossip about a harmless old creature whose mind was broke, but I guess most everybody thinks there's something mysterious. There's my grandmother—her mind is failing her; but she never had such ways! And then those clothes that my lady in the gable wears: they're unearthly looking; and I heard a woman say once, that they come out of a chest in the big garret, and they belonged to a Mistress Haverford who was hung for a witch, but there's no knowing that there is any truth in it." And Martha would have gone on with her stories, if just then we had not heard cousin Agnes's step on the stairway, and I hurried into bed.

But my bright eyes and excited look betrayed me. Cousin Agnes said she had hoped I would be asleep. And Martha said perhaps it was her fault; but I seemed wakeful, and she had talked with me a bit, to keep my spirits up, coming to a new, strange place. The apology was accepted, but Martha evidently had orders before I next saw her; for I never could get her to discuss Lady Ferry again; and she carefully told me that she should not have told those foolish stories, which were not true: but I knew that she still had her thoughts and suspicions as well as I. Once, when I asked her if Lady Ferry were Madam's real name, she answered with a guilty flush, "That's what the folks hereabout called her, because they didn't know any other at first." And this to me was another mystery. It was strongly impressed upon my mind that I must ask no questions, and that Madam was not to be discussed. No one distinctly forbade this; but I felt that it would not do. In every other way I was sure that I was allowed perfect liberty, so I soon ceased to puzzle myself or other people, and accepted Madam's presence as being perfectly explainable and natural,—just as the rest of the household did,—except once in a while something would set me at work romancing and wondering; and I read some stories in one of the books in the library,—of Peter Rugg the missing man, whom one may always meet riding from Salem to Boston in every storm, and of the Flying Dutchman and the Wandering Jew, and some terrible German stories of doomed people, and curses that were fulfilled. These made a great impression upon me; still I was not afraid, for all such things were far outside the boundaries of my safe little world; and I played by myself along the shore of the river and in the garden; and I had my lessons with cousin Agnes, and drives with cousin Matthew who was nearly always silent, but very kind to me. The house itself was an unfailing entertainment, with its many rooms, most of which were never occupied, and its quaint, sober furnishings, some of which were as old as the house itself. It was like a story-book; and no one minded my going where I pleased.

I missed my father and mother; but the only time I was really unhappy was the first morning after my arrival. Cousin Agnes was ill with a severe headache; cousin Matthew had ridden away to attend to some business; and, being left to myself, I had a most decided re-action from my unnaturally bright feelings of the day before. I began to write a letter to my mother; but unluckily I knew how many weeks must pass before she saw it, and it was useless to try to go on, I was lonely and homesick. The rain fell heavily, and the garden looked forlorn, and so unlike the enchanting moonlighted place where I had been in the evening! The walks were like little canals; and the rose-bushes looked wet and chilly, like some gay young lady who had been caught in the rain in party-dress. It was low tide in the middle of the day, and the river-flats looked dismal. I fed cousin Agnes' flock of tame sparrows which came around the windows, and afterward some robins. I found some books and some candy which had come in my trunk, but my heart was very sad; and just after noon I was overjoyed when one of the servants told me that cousin Agnes would like to have me

come to her room.

She was even kinder to me than she had been the night before; but she looked very ill, and at first I felt awkward, and did not know what to say. "I am afraid you have been very dull, dearie," said she, reaching out her hand to me. "I am sorry, and my headache hardly lets me think at all yet. But we will have better times to-morrow —both of us. You must ask for what you want; and you may come and spend this evening with me, for I shall be getting well then. It does me good to see your kind little face. Suppose you make Madam a call this afternoon. She told me last night that she wished for you, and I was so glad. Deborah will show you the way."

Deborah talked to me softly, out of deference to her mistress's headache, as we went along the crooked passages. "Don't you mind what Madam says, least ways don't you dispute her. She's got a funeral going on to-day;" and the grave woman smiled grimly at me. "It's curious she's taken to you so; for she never will see any strange folks. Nobody speaks to her about new folks lately," she added warningly, as she tapped at the door, and Madam asked, "Is it the child?" And Deborah lifted the latch. When I was fairly inside, my interest in life came back redoubled, and I was no longer sad, but looked round eagerly. Madam spoke to me, with her sweet old voice, in her courtly, quiet way, and stood looking out of the window.

There were two tall chests of drawers in the room, with shining brass handles and ornaments; and at one side, near the door, was a heavy mahogany table, on which I saw a large leather-covered Bible, a decanter of wine and some glasses, beside some cakes in a queer old tray. And there was no other furniture but a great number of chairs which seemed to have been collected from different parts of the house.

With these the room was almost filled, except an open space in the centre, toward which they all faced. One window was darkened; but Madam had pushed back the shutter of the other, and stood looking down at the garden. I waited for her to speak again after the first salutation, and presently she said I might be seated; and I took the nearest chair, and again waited her pleasure. It was gloomy enough, with the silence and the twilight in the room; and the rain and wind out of doors sounded louder than they had in cousin Agnes's room; but soon Lady Ferry came toward me.

"So you did not forget the old woman," said she, with a strange emphasis on the word old, as if that were her title and her chief characteristic. "And were not you afraid? I am glad it seemed worth while; for to-morrow would have been too late. You may like to remember by and by that you came. And my funeral is to be to-morrow at last. You see the room is in readiness. You will care to be here, I hope. I would have ordered you some gloves if I had known; but these are all too large for your little hands. You shall have a ring; I will leave a command for that;" and Madam seated herself near me in a curious, high-backed chair. She was dressed that day in a maroon brocade, figured with bunches of dim pink flowers; and some of these flowers looked to me like wicked little faces. It was a mocking, silly, creature that I saw at the side of every prim bouquet, and I looked at the faded little imps, until they seemed as much alive as Lady Ferry herself.

Her head nodded continually, as if it were keeping time to an inaudible tune, as she sat there stiffly erect. Her skin was pale and withered; and her cheeks were wrinkled in fine lines, like the crossings of a cobweb. Her eyes might once have been blue; but they had become nearly colourless, and, looking at her, one might easily imagine that she was blind. She had a singularly sweet smile, and a musical voice, which though sad, had no trace of whining. If it had not been for her smile and her voice, I think madam would have been a terror to me. I noticed to-day, for the first time, a curious fragrance, which seemed to come from her old brocades and silks. It was very sweet, but unlike any thing I had ever known before; and it was by reason of this that afterward I often knew, with a little flutter at my heart, she had been in some other rooms of the great house beside her own. This perfume seemed to linger for a little while wherever she had been, and yet it was so faint! I used to go into the darkened chambers often, or even stay for a while by myself in the unoccupied lower rooms, and I would find this fragrance, and wonder if she were one of the old time fairies, who could vanish at their own will and pleasure, and wonder, too why she had come to the room. But I never met her at all.

That first visit to her and the strange fancy she had about the funeral I have always remembered distinctly.

"I am glad you came," Madam repeated: "I was finding the day long. I am all ready, you see. I shall place a little chair which is in the next room, beside your cousin's seat for you. Mrs. Agnes is ill, I hear; but I think she will come to-morrow. Have you heard any one say if many guests are expected?"—"No, Madam," I

answered, "no one has told me;" and just then the thought flitted through my head that she had said the evening before that all her friends were gone. Perhaps she expected their ghosts: that would not be stranger than all the rest.

The open space where Lady Ferry had left room for her coffin began to be a horror to me, and I wished Deborah would come back, or that my hostess would open the shutters; and it was a great relief when she rose and went into the adjoining room, bidding me follow her, and there opened a drawer containing some old jewelry; there were also some queer Chinese carvings, yellow with age,—just the things a child would enjoy. I looked at them delightedly. This was coming back to more familiar life; and I soon felt more at ease, and chattered to Lady Ferry of my own possessions, and some coveted treasures of my mother's, which were to be mine when I grew older.

Madam stood beside me patiently, and listened with a half smile to my whispered admiration. In the clearer light I could see her better, and she seemed older,—so old, so old! and my father's words came to me again. She had not changed since he was a boy; living on and on, and 'the horror of an endless life in this world!' And I remembered what Martha had said to me, and the consciousness of this mystery was a great weight upon me of a sudden. Why was she living so long? and what had happened to her? and how long could it be since she was a child?

There was something in her manner which made me behave, even in my pleasure, as if her imagined funeral were there in reality, and as if, in spite of my being amused and tearless, the solemn company of funeral guests already sat in the next room to us with bowed heads, and all the shadows in the world had assembled there materialized into the tangible form of crape. I opened and closed the boxes gently, and, when I had seen everything, I looked up with a sigh to think that such a pleasure was ended, and asked if I might see them again some day. But the look in her face made me recollect myself, and my own grew crimson, for it seemed at that moment as real to me as to Lady Ferry herself that this was her last day of mortal life. She walked away, but presently came back, while I was wondering if I might not go, and opened the drawer again. It creaked, and the brass handles clacked in a startling way, and she took out a little case, and said I might keep it to remember her by. It held a little vinaigrette,—a tiny silver box with a gold one inside, in which I found a bit of fine sponge, dark brown with age, and still giving a faint, musty perfume and spiciness. The outside was rudely chased, and was worn as if it had been carried for years in somebody's pocket. It had a spring, the secret of which Lady Ferry showed me. I was delighted, and instinctively lifted my face to kiss her. She bent over me, and waited an instant for me to kiss her again. "Oh!" said she softly, "it is so long since a child has kissed me! I pray God not to leave you lingering like me, apart from all your kindred, and your life so long that you forget you ever were a child."—"I will kiss you every day," said I, and then again remembered that there were to be no more days according to her plan; but she did not seem to notice my mistake.

And after this I used to go to see Madam often. For a time there was always the same gloom and hushed way of speaking, and the funeral services were to be on the morrow; but at last one day I found Deborah sedately putting the room in order, and Lady Ferry apologized for its being in such confusion; the idea of the funeral had utterly vanished, and I hurried to tell cousin Agnes with great satisfaction. I think that both she and cousin Matthew had a dislike for my being too much with Madam. I was kept out of doors as much as possible because it was much better for my health; and through the long summer days I strayed about wherever I choose. The country life was new and delightful to me. At home Lady Ferry's vagaries were carelessly spoken of, and often smiled at; but I gained the idea that they disguised the truth, and were afraid of my being frightened. She often talked about persons who had been dead a long time,—familiar characters in history, and though cousin Agnes had said that she used to be fond of reading, it seemed to me that Madam might have known these men and women after all.

Once a middle-aged gentleman, an acquaintance of cousin Matthew's, came to pass a day and night at the Ferry, and something happened then which seemed wonderful to me. It was early in the evening after tea, and we were in the parlour; from my seat by cousin Agnes I could look out into the garden, and presently, with the gathering darkness, came Lady Ferry, silent as a shadow herself, to walk to and fro on the flagstones. The windows were all open, and the guest had a clear, loud voice, and pleasant, hearty laugh; and, as he talked earnestly with cousin Matthew, I noticed that Lady Ferry stood still, as if she were listening. Then I was attracted by some story which was being told, and forgot her, but afterward turned with a start, feeling that there was some one watching; and, to my astonishment, Madam had come to the long window by which one went out to the garden. She stood there a

moment, looking puzzled and wild; then she smiled, and, entering, walked in most stately fashion down the long room, toward the gentlemen, before whom she courtesied with great elegance, while the stranger stopped speaking, and looked at her with amazement, as he rose, and returned the greeting.

"My dear Captain Jack McAllister!" said she; "what a surprise! and are you not home soon from your voyage? This is indeed a pleasure." And Lady Ferry seated herself, motioning to him to take a chair beside her. She looked younger than I had ever seen her; a bright colour came into her cheeks; and she talked so gayly, in such a different manner from her usual mournful gentleness. She must have been a beautiful woman; indeed she was that still.

"And did the good ship Starlight make a prosperous voyage? And had you many perils?—Do you bring much news to us from the Spanish Main? We have missed you sadly at the assemblies; but there must be a dance in your honour. And your wife; is she not overjoyed at the sight of you? I think you have grown old and sedate since you went away. You do not look the gay sailor, or seem so light-hearted."

"I do not understand you, madam," said the stranger. "I am certainly John McAllister; but I am no captain, neither have I been at sea. Good God! is it my grandfather whom you confuse me with?" cried he. "He was Jack McAllister, and was lost at sea more than seventy years ago, while my own father was a baby. I am told that I am wonderfully like his portrait; but he was a younger man than I when he died. This is some masquerade."

Lady Ferry looked at him intently, but the light in her face was fast fading out. "Lost at sea,—lost at sea, were you, Jack McAllister, seventy years ago? I know nothing of years; one of my days is like another, and they are gray days, they creep away and hide, and sometimes one comes back to mock me. I have lived a thousand years; do you know it? Lost at sea—captain of the ship Starlight? Whom did you say? —Jack McAllister, yes, I knew him well—pardon me; good-evening;" and my lady rose, and with her head nodding and drooping, with a sorrowful, hunted look in her eyes, went out again into the shadows. She had had a flash of youth, the candle had blazed up brilliantly; but it went out again as suddenly, with flickering and smoke.

"I was startled when I saw her beside me," said Mr. McAllister. "Pray, who is she? she is like no one I have ever seen. I have been told that I am like my grandfather in looks and in voice; but it is years since I have seen any one who knew him well. And did you hear her speak of dancing? It is like seeing one who has risen from the dead. How old can she be?"—"I do not know," said cousin Matthew, "one can only guess at her age."—"Would not she come back? I should like to question her," asked the other. But cousin Matthew answered that she always refused to see strangers, and it would be no use to urge her, she would not answer him.

"Who is she? Is she any kin of yours?" asked Mr. McAllister.

"Oh, no!" said my cousin Agnes: "she has had no relatives since I have known her, and I think she has no friends now but ourselves. She has been with us a long time, and once before this house was her home for a time,—many years since. I suppose no one will ever know the whole history of her life; I wish often that she had power to tell it. We are glad to give shelter, and the little care she will accept, to the poor soul. God only knows where she has strayed and what she has seen. It is an enormous burden,—so long a life, and such a weight of memories; but I think it is seldom now that she feels its heaviness.—Go out to her, Marcia my dear, and see if she seems troubled. She always has a welcome for the child," cousin Agnes added, as I unwillingly went away.

I found Lady Ferry in the garden; I stole my hand into hers, and, after a few minutes of silence, I was not surprised to hear her say that they had killed the Queen of France, poor Marie Antoinette! she had known her well in her childhood, before she was a queen at all—"a sad fate, a sad fate," said Lady Ferry. We went far down the gardens and by the river-wall, and when we were again near the house, and could hear Mr. McAllister's voice as cheery as ever, madam took no notice of it. I had hoped she would go into the parlour again, and I wished over and over that I could have waited to hear the secrets which I was sure must have been told after cousin Agnes had sent me away.

One day I thought I had made a wonderful discovery. I was fond of reading, and found many books which interested me in cousin Matthew's fine library; but I took great pleasure also in hunting through a collection of old volumes which had been cast aside, either by him, or by some former owner of the house, and which were piled in a corner of the great garret. They were mostly yellow with age, and had dark brown leather or shabby paper bindings; the pictures in some were very amusing to me. I used often to find one which I appropriated and carried down stairs; and on this day I came upon a dusty, odd shaped little book, for which I at once felt an affection. I looked at it a little. It seemed to be a journal, there were some stories of the Indians

and next I saw some reminiscences of the town of Boston, where, among other things, the author was told the marvellous story of one Mistress Honor Warburton, who was cursed, and doomed to live in this world forever. This was startling. I at once thought of Madam, and was reading on further to know the rest of the story, when some one called me, and I foolishly did not dare to carry my book with me. I was afraid I should not find it if I left it in sight; I saw an opening near me at the edge of the floor by the eaves, and I carefully laid my treasure inside. But, alas! I was not to be sure of its safe hiding-place in a way that I fancied, for the book fell down between the boarding of the thick walls, and I heard it knock as it fell, and knew by the sound that it must be out of reach, I grieved over this loss for a long time; and I felt that it had been most unkindly taken out of my hand. I wished heartily that I could know the rest of the story; and I tried to summon courage to ask Madam, when we were by our selves, if she had heard of Honor Warburton, but something held me back.

There were two other events just at this time which made this strange old friend of mine seem stranger than ever to me. I had a dream one night, which I took for a vision and a reality at the time. I thought I looked out of my window in the night, and there was bright moonlight, and I could see the other gable plainly; and I looked in at the windows of an unoccupied parlour which I never had seen open before, under Lady Ferry's own rooms, The shutters were pushed back, and there were candles burning; and I heard voices, and presently some tinkling music, like that of a harpsichord I had once heard in a very old house where I had been in England with my mother. I saw several couples go through with a slow, stately dance; and, when they stopped and seated themselves, I could hear their voices; but they spoke low, these midnight guests. I watched until the door was opened which led into the garden, and the company came out and stood for a few minutes on the little lawn, making their adieus, bowing low, and behaving with astonishing courtesy and elegance: finally the last good-nights were said, and they went away. Lady Ferry stood under the pointed porch, looking after them, and I could see her plainly in her brocade gown, with the impish flowers, a tall quaint cap, and a high lace frill at her throat, whiter than any lace I had ever seen, and with a glitter on it, and there was a glitter on her face too. One of the other ladies was dressed in velvet, and I thought she looked beautiful: their eyes were all like sparks of fire. The gentlemen wore cloaks and ruffs, and high-peaked hats with wide brims, such as I had seen in some very old pictures which hung on the walls of the long west room. These were not pilgrims or Puritans, but gay gentlemen; and soon I heard the noise of their boats on the pebbles as they pushed off shore, and the splash of the oars in the water. Lady Ferry waved her hand, and went in at the door; and I found myself standing by the window in the chilly, cloudy night: the opposite gable, the garden, and the river, were indistinguishable in the darkness. I stole back to bed in an agony of fear; for it had been very real, that dream. I surely was at the window, for my hand had been on the sill when I waked; and I heard a church-bell ring two o'clock in a town far up the river. I never had heard this solemn bell before, and it seemed frightful; but I knew afterward that in the silence of a misty night the sound of it came down along the water.

In the morning I found that there had been a gale in the night; and cousin Matthew said at breakfast time that the tide had risen so that it had carried off two old boats that had been left on the shore to go to pieces. I sprang to the window, and sure enough they had disappeared. I had played in one of them the day before. Should I tell cousin Matthew what I had seen or dreamed? But I was too sure that he would only laugh at me: and yet I was none the less sure that those boats had carried passengers.

When I went out to the garden, I hurried to the porch, and saw, to my disappointment, that there were great spiders' webs in the corners of the door, and around the latch, and that it had not been opened since I was there before. But I saw something shining in the grass, and found it was a silver knee-buckle. It must have belonged to one of the ghostly guests, and my faith in them came back for a while, in spite of the cobwebs. By and by I bravely carried it up to Madam, and asked if it were hers. Sometimes she would not answer for a long time, when one rudely broke in upon her reveries, and she hesitated now, looking at me with singular earnestness. Deborah was in the room; and, when she saw the buckle, she quietly said that it had been on the window-ledge the day before, and must have slipped out. "I found it down by the doorstep in the grass," said I humbly; and then I offered Lady Ferry some strawberries which I had picked for her on a broad green leaf, and came away again.

A day or two after this, while my dream was still fresh in my mind, I went with Martha to her own home, which was a mile or two distant,—a comfortable farmhouse for those days, where I was always made welcome. The servants were all very kind to me: as I recall it now, they seemed to have pity for me, because I was the only child perhaps. I was very happy, that is certain, and I enjoyed my childish amusements as heartily as if there were no unfathomable mysteries or perplexities or sorrows

anywhere in the world.

I was sitting by the fireplace at Martha's, and her grandmother, who was very old, and who was fast losing her wits, had been talking to me about Madam. I do not remember what she said, at least, it made little impression; but her grandson, a worthless fellow, sauntered in, and began to tell a story of his own, hearing of whom we spoke. "I was coming home late last night," said he, "and, as I was in that dark place along by the Noroway pines, old Lady Ferry she went by me, and I was near scared to death. She looked fearful tall—towered way up above me. Her face was all lit up with blue light, and her feet didn't touch the ground. She wasn't taking steps, she wasn't walking, but movin' along like a sail-boat before the wind. I dodged behind some little birches, and I was scared she'd see me; but she went right out o' sight up the road. She ain't mortal."

"Don't scare the child with such foolishness," said his aunt disdainfully. "You'll be seein' worse things a-dancin' before your eyes than that poor, harmless old creatur' if you don't quit the ways you've been following lately. If that was last night, you were too drunk to see anything;" and the fellow muttered, and went out banging the door. But the story had been told, and I was stiffened and chilled with fright; and all the way home I was in terror, looking fearfully behind me again and again.

When I saw cousin Agnes, I felt safer, and since cousin Matthew was not at home, and we were alone, I could not resist telling her what I had heard. She listened to me kindly, and seemed so confident that my story was idle nonsense, that my fears were quieted. She talked to me until I no longer was a believer in there being any unhappy mystery or harmfulness; but I could not get over the fright, and I dreaded my lonely room, and I was glad enough when cousin Agnes, with her unfailing thoughtfulness, asked if I would like to have her come to sleep with me, and even went up stairs with me at my own early bedtime, saying that she should find it dull to sit all alone in the parlour. So I went to sleep, thinking of what I had heard, it is true, but no longer unhappy, because her dear arm was over me, and I was perfectly safe. I waked up for a little while in the night, and it was light in the room, so that I could see her face, fearless and sweet and sad, and I wondered, in my blessed sense of security, if she were ever afraid of Lady Ferry.

I will not tell other stories: they are much alike, all my memories of those weeks and months at the ferry, and I have no wish to be wearisome. The last time I saw Madam she was standing in the garden door at dusk. I was going away before daylight in the morning. It was in the autumn: some dry leaves flittered about on the stone at her feet, and she was watching them. I said good-by again, and she did not answer me: but I think she knew I was going away, and I am sure she was sorry, for we had been a great deal together; and, child as I was, I thought to how many friends she must have had to say farewell.

Although I wished to see my father and mother, I cried as if my heart would break because I had to leave the ferry. The time spent there had been the happiest time of all my life, I think. I was old enough to enjoy, but not to suffer much, and there was singularly little to trouble one. I did not know that my life was ever to be different. I have learned, since those childish days, that one must battle against storms if one would reach the calm which is to follow them. I have learned also that anxiety, sorrow, and regret fall to the lot of every one, and that there is always underlying our lives, this mysterious and frightful element of existence; an uncertainty at times, though we do trust every thing to God. Under the best-loved and most beautiful face we know, there is hidden a skull as ghastly as that from which we turn aside with a shudder in the anatomist's cabinet. We smile, and are gay enough; God pity us! We try to forget our heart-aches and remorse. We even call our lives commonplace, and, bearing our own heaviest burdens silently, we try to keep the commandment, and to bear one another's also. There is One who knows: we look forward, as He means we shall, and there is always a hand ready to help us, though we reach out for it doubtfully in the dark.

For many years after this summer was over, I lived in a distant, foreign country; at last my father and I were to go back to America. Cousin Agnes and cousin Matthew, and my mother, were all long since dead, and I rarely thought of my childhood, for in an eventful and hurried life the present claims one almost wholly. We were travelling in Europe, and it happened that one day I was in a bookshop in Amsterdam, waiting for an acquaintance whom I was to meet, and who was behind time.

The shop was a quaint place, and I amused myself by looking over an armful of old English books which a boy had thrown down near me, raising a cloud of dust which was plain evidence of their antiquity. I came to one, almost the last, which had a strange familiar look, and I found that it was a copy of the same book which I had lost in the wall at the ferry. I bought it for a few coppers with the greatest

satisfaction, and began at once to read it. It had been published in England early in the eighteenth century, and was written by one Mr. Thomas Highward of Chester,—a journal of his travels among some of the English colonists of North America, containing much curious and desirable knowledge, with some useful advice to those persons having intentions of emigrating. I looked at the prosy pages here and there, and finally found again those reminiscences of the town of Boston and the story of Mistress Honor Warburton, who was cursed, and doomed to live in this world to the end of time. She had lately been in Boston, but had disappeared again; she endeavoured to disguise herself, and would not stay long in one place if she feared that her story was known, and that she was recognized. One Mr. Fleming, a man of good standing and repute, and an officer of Her Majesty Queen Anne, had sworn to Mr. Thomas Highward that his father, a person of great age, had once seen Mistress Warburton in his youth; that she then bore another name, but had the same appearance. "Not wishing to seem unduly credulous," said Mr. Highward, "I disputed this tale; but there was some considerable evidence in its favour, and at least this woman was of vast age, and was spoken of with extreme wonder by the town's folk."

I could not help thinking of my old childish suspicions of Lady Ferry, though I smiled at the folly of them and of this story more than once. I tried to remember if I had heard of her death; but I was still a child when my cousin Agnes had died. Had poor Lady Ferry survived her, and what could have become of her? I asked my father, but he could remember nothing, if indeed he ever had heard of her death at all. He spoke of our cousins' kindness to this forlorn soul, and that, learning her desolation and her piteous history (and being the more pitiful because of her shattered mind), when she had last wandered to their door, they had cared for the old gentlewoman to the end of her days—"for I do not think she can be living yet," said my father, with a merry twinkle in his eyes: "she must have been nearly a hundred years old when you saw her. She belonged to a fine old family which had gone to wreck and ruin. She strayed about for years, and it was a godsend to her to have found such a home in her last days."

That same summer we reached America, and for the first time since I had left it I went to the ferry. The house was still imposing, the prestige of the Haverford grandeur still lingered; but it looked forlorn and uncared for. It seemed very familiar; but the months I had spent there were so long ago, that they seemed almost to belong to another life. I sat alone on the doorstep for a long time, where I used often to watch for Lady Ferry; and forgotten thoughts and dreams of my childhood came back to me. The river was the only thing that seemed as young as ever. I looked in at some of the windows where the shutters were put back, and I walked about the garden, where I could hardly trace the walks, all overgrown with thick, short grass though there were a few ragged lines of box, and some old rose-bushes; and I saw the very last of the flowers,—a bright red poppy, which had bloomed under a lilac-tree among the weeds.

Out beyond the garden, on a slope by the river, I saw the family burying-ground, and it was with a comfortable warmth at my heart that I stood inside the familiar old enclosure. There was my Lady Ferry's grave; there could be no mistake about it, and she was dead. I smiled at my satisfaction and at my foolish childish thoughts, and thanked God that there could be no truth in them, and that death comes surely,—say rather that the better life comes surely—though it comes late.

The sad-looking, yellow-topped cypress, which only seems to feel quite at home in country burying-grounds, had kindly spread itself like a coverlet over the grave, which already looked like a very old grave; and the headstone was leaning a little, not to be out of the fashion of the rest. I traced again the words of old Colonel Haverford's pompous epitaph, and idly read some others. I remembered the old days so vividly there; I thought of my cousin Agnes, and wished that I could see her; and at last, as the daylight faded, I came away. When I crossed the river, the ferry-man looked at me wonderingly, for my eyes were filled with tears. Although we were in shadow on the water, the last red glow of the sun blazed on the high gable-windows, just as it did the first time I crossed over,—only a child then, with my life before me.

I asked the ferry-man some questions, but he could tell me nothing: he was a new-comer to that part of the country. He was sorry that the boat was not in better order; but there were very seldom any passengers. The great house was out of repair: people would not live there, for they said it was haunted. Oh, yes! he had heard of Lady Ferry. She had lived to be very ancient; but she was dead.

"Yes," said I, "she is dead."

A BIT OF SHORE LIFE.

often think of a boy with whom I made friends last summer, during some idle, pleasant days that I spent by the sea. I was almost always out of doors, and I used to watch the boats go out and come in; and I had a hearty liking for the good-natured fishermen, who were lazy and busy by turns, who waited for the wind to change, and waited for the tide to turn, and waited for the fish to bite, and were always ready to gossip about the weather, and the fish, and the wonderful events that had befallen them and their friends.

Georgie was the only boy of whom I ever saw much at the shore. The few young people living there all went to school through the hot summer days at a little weather-beaten schoolhouse a mile or two inland. There were few houses to be seen, at any rate, and Georgie's house was the only one so close to the water. He looked already nothing but a fisherman; his clothes were covered with an oil-skin suit, which had evidently been awkwardly cut down for him from one of his father's, of whom he was a curious little likeness. I could hardly believe that he was twelve years old, he was so stunted and small; yet he was a strong little fellow; his hands were horny and hard from handling the clumsy oars, and his face was so brown and dry from the hot sun and chilly spray, that he looked even older when one came close to him. The first time I saw him was one evening just at night fall. I was sitting on the pebbles, and he came down from the fish-house with some lobster-nets, and a bucket with some pieces of fish in it for bait, and put them into the stern of one of the boats which lay just at the edge of the rising tide. He looked at the clouds over the sea, and at the open sky overhead, in an old wise way, and then, as if satisfied with the weather, began to push off his boat. It dragged on the pebbles; it was a heavy thing, and he could not get it far enough out to be floated by the low waves, so I went down to help him. He looked amazed that a girl should have thought of it, and as if he wished to ask me what good I supposed I could do, though I was twice his size. But the boat grated and slid down toward the sand, and I gave her a last push as the boy perched with one knee on her gunwale and let the other foot drag in the water for a minute. He was afloat after all; and he took the oars, and pulled manfully out toward the moorings, where the whale-boats and a sail-boat or two were swaying about in the wind, which was rising a little since the sun had set. He did not say a word to me, or I to him. I watched him go out into the twilight,—such a little fellow, between those two great oars! But the boat could not drift or loiter with his steady stroke, and out he went, until I could only see the boat at last, lifting and sinking on the waves beyond the reef outside the moorings. I asked one of the fishermen whom I knew very well, "Who is that little fellow? Ought he to be out by himself, it is growing dark so fast?"

"Why, that's *Georgie*!" said my friend, with his grim smile. "Bless ye! he's like a duck; ye can't drown him. He won't be in until ten o'clock, like's not. He'll go way out to the far ledges when the tide covers them too deep where he is now. Lobsters he's after."

"Whose boy is he?" said I.

"Why, Andrer's, up here to the fish-house. *She's dead*, and him and the boy get along together somehow or 'nother. They've both got something saved up, and Andrer's a clever fellow; took it very hard, losing his wife. I was telling of him the other day: 'Andrer,' says I, 'ye ought to look up somebody or 'nother, and not live this way. There's plenty o' smart, stirring women that would mend ye up, and cook for ye,

and do well by ye.'—'No,' says he; 'I've hed my wife, and I've lost her.'—'Well, now,' says I, 'ye've shown respect, and there's the boy a-growin' up, and if either of you was took sick, why, here ye be.'—'Yes,' says he, 'here I be, sure enough;' and he drawed a long breath, 's if he felt bad; so that's all I said. But it's no way for a man to get along, and he ought to think of the boy. He owned a good house about half a mile up the road; but he moved right down here after she died, and his cousin took it, and it burnt up in the winter. Four year ago that was. I was down to the Georges Banks."

Some other men came down toward the water, and took a boat that was waiting, already fitted out with a trawl coiled in two tubs, and some hand-lines and bait for rock-cod and haddock, and my friend joined them; they were going out for a night's fishing. I watched them hoist the little sprit-sail, and drift a little until they caught the wind, and then I looked again for Georgie, whose boat was like a black spot on the water.

I knew him better soon after that. I used to go out with him for lobsters, or to catch cunners, and it was strange that he never had any cronies, and would hardly speak to the other children. He was very shy; but he had put all his heart into his work,—a man's hard work, which he had taken from choice. His father was kind to him; but he had a sorry home, and no mother,—the brave, fearless, steady little soul!

He looked forward to going one day (I hope that day has already dawned) to see the shipyards at a large seaport some twenty miles away. His face lit up when he told me of it, as some other child's would who had been promised a day in fairy-land. And he confided to me that he thought he should go to the Banks that coming winter. "But it's so cold!" said I; "should you really like it?"—"Cold!" said Georgie. "Ho! rest of the men never froze." That was it,—the "rest of the men;" and he would work until he dropped, or tend a line until his fingers froze, for the sake of that likeness,—the grave, slow little man, who has so much business with the sea, and who trusts himself with touching confidence to its treacherous keeping and favour.

Andrew West, Georgie's father, was almost as silent as his son at first, but it was not long before we were very good friends, and I went out with him at four o'clock one morning, to see him set his trawl. I remember there was a thin mist over the sea, and the air was almost chilly: but, as the sun came up, it changed the colour of everything to the most exquisite pink,—the smooth slow waves, and the mist that blew over them as if it were a cloud that had fallen down out of the sky. The world just then was like the hollow of a great pink sea-shell; and we could only hear the noise of it, the dull sound of the waves among the outer ledges.

We had to drift about for an hour or two when the trawl was set; and after a while the fog shut down again gray and close, so we could not see either the sun or the shore. We were a little more than four miles out, and we had put out more than half a mile of lines. It is very interesting to see the different fish that come up on the hooks,—worthless sculpin and dog-fish, and good rock-cod and haddock, and curious stray creatures which often even the fishermen do not know. We had capital good luck that morning, and Georgie and Andrew and I were all pleased. I had a hand-line, and was fishing part of the time, and Georgie thought very well of me when he found I was not afraid of a big fish, and, besides that, I had taken the oars while he tended the sail, though there was hardly wind enough to make it worth his while. It was about eight o'clock when we came in, and there was a horse and wagon standing near the landing; and we saw a woman come out of Andrew's little house. "There's your aunt Hannah a'ready," said he to Georgie; and presently she came down the pebbles to meet the boat, looking at me with much wonder as I jumped ashore.

"I sh'd think you might a' cleaned up your boat, Andrer, if you was going to take ladies out," said she graciously. And the fisherman rejoined, that perhaps she would have thought it looked better when it went out than it did then; he never had got a better fare o' fish unless the trawls had been set over night.

There certainly had been a good haul; and, when Andrew carefully put those I had caught with the hand-line by themselves, I asked his sister to take them, if she liked. "Bless you!" said she, much pleased, "we couldn't eat one o' them big rock-cod in a week—I'll take a little ha'dick if Andrer 'll pick me one out."

She was a tall, large woman, who had a direct, business-like manner,—what the country people would call a master smart woman, or a regular driver,—and I liked her. She said something to her brother about some clothes she had been making for him or for Georgie, and I went off to the house where I was boarding for my breakfast. I was hungry enough, since I had had only a hurried lunch a good while before sunrise. I came back late in the morning, and found that Georgie's aunt was just going away. I think my friends must have spoken well of me, for she came out to meet me as I nodded in going by, and said, "I suppose ye drive about some? We should be pleased to have ye come up to see us. We live right 'mongst the woods; it ain't much of a place to ask anybody to." And she added that she might have done a good deal better for herself to have staid off. But there! they had the place, and she

supposed she and Cynthy had done as well there as anywhere. Cynthy—well, she wasn't one of your pushing kind; but I should have some flowers, and perhaps it would be a change for me. I thanked her, and said I should be delighted to go. Georgie and I would make her a call together some afternoon when he wasn't busy; and Georgie actually smiled when I looked at him, and said, "All right," and then hurried off down the shore. "Ain't he an odd boy?" said Miss Hannah West, with a shadow of disapproval in her face. "But he's just like his father and grandfather before him; you wouldn't think they had no gratitude nor feelin', but I s'pose they have. They used to say my father never'd forgit a friend, or forgive an enemy. Well, I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure, for taking an interest in the boy." I said I liked him: I only wished I could do something for him. And then she said good-day, and drove off. I felt as if we were already good friends. "I'm much obliged for the fish," she turned round to say to me again, as she went away.

One morning, not long afterward, I asked Georgie if he could possibly leave his business that afternoon, and he gravely answered me that he could get away just as well as not, for the tide would not be right for lobsters until after supper.

"I should like to go up and see your aunt," said I. "You know she asked me to come the other day when she was here.

"I'd like to go," said Georgie sedately. "Father was going up this week; but the mackerel struck in, and we couldn't leave. But it's better'n six miles up there."

"That's not far," said I. "I'm going to have Captain Donnell's horse and wagon;" and Georgie looked much interested.

I wondered if he would wear his oil-skin suit; but I was much amazed, and my heart was touched, at seeing how hard he had tried to put himself in trim for the visit. He had on his best jacket and trousers (which might have been most boys' worst), and a clean calico shirt; and he had scrubbed his' freckled, honest little face and his hard little hands, until they were as clean as possible; and either he or his father had cut his hair. I should think it had been done with a knife, and it looked as if a rat had gnawed it. He had such a holiday air! He really looked very well; but still, if I were to have a picture of George, it should be in the oil-skin fishing-suit. He had gone out to his box, which was anchored a little way out in the cove, and had chosen two fine lobsters which he had tied together with a bit of fish-line. They were lazily moving their claws and feelers; and his father, who had come in with his boat not long before, added from his fare of fish three plump mackerel.

"They're always glad to get new fish," said he. "The girls can't abide a fish that's corned, and I haven't had a chance to send 'em up any mackerel before. Ye see, they live on a cross-road, and the fish-carts don't go by." And I told him I was very glad to carry them, or any thing else he would like to send. "Mind your manners, now, Georgie," said he, "and don't be forrard. You might split up some kindlin's for y'r aunts, and do whatever they want of ye. Boys ain't made just to look at, so ye be handy, will ye?" And Georgie nodded solemnly. They seemed very fond of each other, and I looked back some time afterward to see the fisherman still standing there to watch his boy. He was used to his being out at sea alone for hours; but this might be a great risk to let him go off inland to stay all the afternoon.

The road crossed the salt-marshes for the first mile, and, when we had struck the higher land, we soon entered the pine-woods, which cover a great part of that country. It had been raining in the morning for a little while; and the trunks of the trees were still damp, and the underbrush was shining wet, and sent out a sweet, fresh smell. I spoke of it, and Georgie told me that sometimes this fragrance blew far out to sea, and then you knew the wind was north-west.

"There's the big pine you sight Minister's Ledge by," said he, "when that comes in range over the white schoolhouse, about two miles out."

The lobsters were clashing their pegged claws together in the back of the wagon, and Georgie sometimes looked over at them to be sure they were all right. Of course I had given him the reins when we first started, and he was delighted because we saw some squirrels, and even a rabbit, which scurried across the road as if I had been a fiery dragon, and Georgie something worse.

We presently came in sight of a house close by the road,—an old-looking place, with a ledgy, forlorn field stretching out behind it toward some low woods. There were high white-birch poles holding up thick tangles of hop-vines, and at the side there were sunflowers straggling about as if they had come up from seed scattered by the wind. Some of them were close together, as if they were whispering to each other; and their big, yellow faces were all turned toward the front of the house, where people were already collected as if there was a funeral.

"It's the auction," said Georgie with great satisfaction. "I heard 'em talking about

it down at the shore this morning. There's Lisha Downs now. He started off just before we did. That's his fish-cart over by the well."

"What is going to be sold?" said I.

"All the stuff," said Georgie, as if he were much pleased. "She's going off up to Boston with her son."

"I think we had better stop," said I, for I saw Mrs. 'Lisha Downs, who was one of my acquaintances at the shore, and I wished to see what was going on, besides giving Georgie a chance at the festivities. So we tied the horse, and went toward the house, and I found several people whom I knew a little. Mrs. Downs shook hands with me as formally as if we had not talked for some time as I went by her house to the shore, just after my breakfast. She presented me to several of her friends with whom she had been talking as I came up. "Let me make you acquainted," she said: and every time I bowed she bowed too, unconsciously, and seemed a little ill at ease and embarrassed, but luckily the ceremony was soon over. "I thought I would stop for a few minutes," said I by way of apology. "I didn't know why the people were here until Georgie told me."

"She's going to move up to Boston 'long of her son," said one of the women, who looked very pleasant and very tired. "I think myself it is a bad plan to pull old folks up by the roots. There's a niece of hers that would have been glad to stop with her, and do for the old lady. But John, he's very high-handed, and wants it his way, and he says his mother sha'n't live in any such place as this. He makes a sight o' money. He's got out a patent, and they say he's just bought a new house that cost him eleven thousand dollars. But old Mis' Wallis, she's wonted here; and she was telling of me yesterday she was only going to please John. He says he wants her up there, where she'll be more comfortable, and see something."

"He means well," said another woman whom I did not know; "but folks about here never thought no great of his judgment. He's put up some splendid stones in the burying-lot to his father and his sister Miranda that died. I used to go to school 'long of Miranda. She'd have been pleased to go to Boston; she was that kind. But there! mother was saying last night, what if his business took a turn, and he lost every thing! Mother's took it dreadfully to heart; she and Mis' Wallis were always mates as long ago as they can recollect."

It was evident that the old widow was both pitied and envied by her friends on account of her bettered fortunes, and they came up to speak to her with more or less seriousness, as befitted the occasion. She looked at me with great curiosity, but Mrs. Down told her who I was, and I had a sudden instinct to say how sorry I was for her, but I was afraid it might appear intrusive on so short an acquaintance. She was a thin old soul who looked as if she had had a good deal of trouble in her day, and as if she had been very poor and very anxious. "Yes," said she to some one who had come from a distance, "it does come hard to go off. Home is home, and I seem to hate to sell off my things; but I suppose they would look queer up to Boston. John says I won't have no idea of the house until I see it:" and she looked proud and important for a minute, but, as some one brought an old chair out at the door, her face fell again. "Oh, dear!" said she, "I should like to keep that! it belonged to my mother. It's most wore out anyway. I guess I'll let somebody keep it for me;" and she hurried off despairingly to find her son, while we went into the house.

There is so little to interest the people who live on those quiet, secluded farms, that an event of this kind gives great pleasure. I know they have not done talking yet about the sale, of the bargains that were made, or the goods that brought more than they were worth. And then the women had the chance of going all about the house, and committing every detail of its furnishings to their tenacious memories. It is a curiosity one grows more and more willing to pardon, for there is so little to amuse them in everyday life. I wonder if any one has not often been struck, as I have, by the sadness and hopelessness which seems to overshadow many of the people who live on the lonely farms in the outskirts of small New-England villages. It is most noticeable among the elderly women. Their talk is very cheerless, and they have a morbid interest in sicknesses and deaths; they tell each other long stories about such things; they are very forlorn; they dwell persistently upon any troubles which they have; and their petty disputes with each other have a tragic hold upon their thoughts, sometimes being handed down from one generation to the next. Is it because their world is so small, and life affords so little amusement and pleasure, and is at best such a dreary round of the dullest housekeeping? There is a lack of real merriment, and the fun is an odd, rough way of joking: it is a stupid, heavy sort of fun, though there is much of a certain quaint humour, and once in a while a flash of wit.

I came upon a short, stout old sister in one room, making all the effort she possibly could to see what was on the upper shelves of a closet. We were the only persons there, and she looked longingly at a convenient chair, and I know she wished

I would go away. But my heart suddenly went out toward an old dark-green Delft bowl which I saw, and I asked her if she would be kind enough to let me take it, as if I thought she were there for a purpose. "I'll bring you a chair," said I; and she said, "Certain, dear." And I helped her up, and I'm sure she had the good look she had coveted while I took the bowl to the window. It was badly cracked, and had been mended with putty; but the rich, dull colour of it was exquisite. One often comes across a beautiful old stray bit of china in such a place as this, and I imagined it filled with apple-blossoms or wild roses. Mrs. Wallis wished to give it to me, she said it wasn't good for any thing; and, finding she did not care for it, I bought it; and now it is perched high in my room, with the cracks discreetly turned to the wall. "Seems to me she never had thrown away nothing," said my friend, whom I found still standing on the chair when I came back. "Here's some pieces of a pitcher: I wonder when she broke it! I've heard her say it was one her grandmother gave her, though. The old lady bought it at a vandoo down at old Mis' Walton Peters's after she died, so Mis' Wallis said. I guess I'll speak to her, and see if she wants every thing sold that's here."

There was a very great pathos to me about this old home. It must have been a hard place to get a living in, both for men and women, with its wretched farming-land, and the house itself so cold and thin and worn out. I could understand that the son was in a hurry to get his mother away from it. I was sure that the boyhood he had spent there must have been uncomfortable, and that he did not look back to it with much pleasure. There is an immense contrast between even a moderately comfortable city house and such a place as this. No wonder that he remembered the bitter cold mornings, the frost and chill, and the dark, and the hard work, and wished his mother to leave them all behind, as he had done! He did not care for the few plain bits of furniture: why should he? and he had been away so long, that he had lost his interest in the neighbours. Perhaps this might come back to him again as he grew older; but now he moved about among them, in his handsome but somewhat flashy clothes, with a look that told me he felt conscious of his superior station in life. I did not altogether like his looks, though somebody said admiringly, as he went by, "They say he's worth as much as thirty thousand dollars a'ready. He's smart as a whip."

But, while I did not wonder at the son's wishing his mother to go away, I also did not wonder at her being unwilling to leave the dull little house where she had spent so much of her life. I was afraid no other house in the world would ever seem like home to her: she was a part of the old place: she had worn the doors smooth by the touch of her hands, and she had scrubbed the floors, and walked over them, until the knots stood up high in the pine boards. The old clock had been unscrewed from the wall, and stood on a table; and when I heard its loud and anxious tick, my first thought was one of pity for the poor thing, for fear it might be homesick, like its mistress. When I went out again, I was very sorry for old Mrs. Wallis; she looked so worried and excited, and as if this new turn of affairs in her life was too strange and unnatural; it bewildered her, and she could not understand it; she only knew every thing was going to be different.

Georgie was by himself, as usual, looking grave and intent. He had gone aloft on the wheel of a clumsy great ox-cart in which some of the men had come to the auction, and he was looking over people's heads, and seeing every thing that was sold. I saw he was not ready to come away, so I was not in a hurry. I heard Mrs. Wallis say to one of her friends, "You just go in and take that rug with the flowers on't, and go and put it in your wagon. It's right beside my chest that's packed ready to go. John told me to give away any thing I had a mind to. He don't care nothing about the money. I hooked that rug four year ago; it's most new; the red of the roses was made out of a dress of Miranda's. I kept it a good while after she died; but it's no us to let it lay. I've given a good deal to my sister Stiles: she was over here helping me yesterday. There! it's all come upon me so sudden; I s'pose I shall wish, after I get away, that I had done things different; but, after I knew the farm was goin' to be sold, I didn't seem to realize I was goin' to break up, until John came, day before yesterday."

She was very friendly with me, when I said I should think she would be sorry to go away: but she seemed glad to find I had been in Boston a great deal, and that I was not at all unhappy there. "But I suppose you have folks there," said she, "though I never supposed they was so sociable as they be here, and I ain't one that's easy to make acquaintance. It's different with young folks; and then in a case o' sickness I should hate to have strange folks round me. It seems as if I never set so much by the old place as I do now I'm goin' away. I used to wish 'he' would sell, and move over to the Port, it was such hard work getting along when the child'n was small. And there's one of my boys that run away to sea, and never was heard from. I've always thought he might come back, though everybody gave him up years ago. I can't help thinking what if he should come back, and find I wa'n't here! There; I'm glad to please John: he sets everything by me, and I s'pose he thinks he's going to make a spry young woman of me. Well, it's natural. Every thing looks fair to him, and he thinks he can have the world just as he wants it; but *I* know it's a world o' change,—a world o'

change and loss. And you see, I shall have to go to a strange meetin' up there. Why, Mis' Sands! I am pleased to see you. How did you get word?" And then Mrs. Wallis made another careful apology for moving away. She seemed to be so afraid some one would think she had not been satisfied with the neighbourhood.

The auctioneer was a disagreeable-looking man, with a most unpleasant voice, which gave me a sense of discomfort, the little old house and its surroundings seemed so grave and silent and lonely. It was like having all the noise and confusion on a Sunday. The house was so shut in by the trees, that the only outlook to the world beyond was a narrow gap in the pines, through which one could see the sea, bright, blue and warm with sunshine, that summer day.

There was something wistful about the place, as there must have been about the people who had lived there; yet, hungry and unsatisfied as her life might have been in many ways, the poor old woman dreaded the change.

The thought flashed through my mind that we all have more or less of this same feeling about leaving this world for a better one. We have the certainty that we shall be a great deal happier in heaven; but we cling despairingly to the familiar things of this life. God pity the people who find it so hard to believe what he says, and who are afraid to die, and are afraid of the things they do not understand! I kept thinking over and over of what Mrs. Wallis had said: 'A world of change and loss!' What should we do if we did not have God's love to make up for it, and if we did not know something of heaven already?

It seemed very doleful that everybody should look on the dark side of the Widow Wallis's flitting, and I tried to suggest to her some of the pleasures and advantages of it, once when I had a chance. And indeed she was proud enough to be going away with her rich son; it was not like selling her goods because she was too poor to keep the old home any longer. I hoped the son would always be prosperous, and that the son's wife would always be kind, and not ashamed of her, or think she was in the way. But I am afraid it may be a somewhat uneasy idleness, and that there will not be much beside her knitting-work to remind her of the old routine. She will even miss going back and forward from the old well in storm and sunshine; she will miss looking after the chickens, and her slow walks about the little place, or out to a neighbour's for a bit of gossip, with the old brown checked handkerchief over her head; and, when the few homely, faithful old flowers come up next year by the door-step, there will be nobody to care any thing about them.

I said good-by, and got into the wagon, and Georgie clambered in after me with a look of great importance, and we drove away. He was very talkative: the unusual excitement of the day was not without its effect. He had a good deal to tell me about the people I had seen, though I had to ask a good many questions.

"Who was the thin old fellow, with the black coat, faded yellow-green on the shoulders, who was talking to Skipper Down about the dog-fish?"

"That's old Cap'n Abiah Lane," said Georgie; "lives over toward Little Beach,—him that was cast away in a fog in a dory down to the Banks once; like to have starved to death before he got picked up. I've heard him tell all about it. Don't look as if he'd ever had enough to eat since!" said the boy grimly. "He used to come over a good deal last winter, and go out after cod 'long o' father and me. His boats all went adrift in a big storm in November, and he never heard nothing about 'em; guess they got stove against the rocks."

We had still more than three miles to drive over a lonely part of the road, where there was scarcely a house, and where the woods had been cut off more or less, so there was nothing to be seen but the uneven ground, which was not fit for even a pasture yet. But it was not without a beauty of its own; for the little hills and hollows were covered thick with brakes and ferns and bushes, and in the swamps the cat-tails and all the rushes were growing in stiff and stately ranks, so green and tall; while the birds flew up, or skimmed across them as we went by. It was like a town of birds, there were so many. It is strange how one is always coming upon families and neighbourhoods of wild creatures in the unsettled country places; it is so much like one's going on longer journeys about the world, and finding town after town with its own interests, each so sufficient for itself.

We struck the edge of the farming-land again, after a while, and I saw three great pines that had been born to good luck in this world, since they had sprouted in good soil, and had been left to grow as fast as they pleased. They lifted their heads proudly against the blue sky, these rich trees, and I admired them as much as they could have expected. They must have been a landmark for many miles to the westward, for they grew on high land, and they could pity, from a distance, any number of their poor relations who were just able to keep body and soul together, and had grown up thin and hungry in crowded woods. But, though their lower branches might snap and crackle at a touch, their tops were brave and green, and they kept up appearances,

at any rate; these poorer pines.

Georgie pointed out his aunt's house to me, after a while. It was not half so forlorn-looking as the others, for there were so many flowers in bloom about it of the gayest kind, and a little yellow-and-white dog came down the road to bark at us; but his manner was such that it seemed like an unusually cordial welcome rather than an indignant repulse. I noticed four jolly old apple-trees near by, which looked as if they might be the last of a once flourishing orchard. They were standing in a row, in exactly the same position, with their heads thrown gayly back, as if they were dancing in an old-fashioned reel; and, after the forward and back, one might expect them to turn partners gallantly. I laughed aloud when I caught sight of them: there was something very funny in their looks, so jovial and whole-hearted, with a sober, cheerful pleasure, as if they gave their whole minds to it. It was like some old gentlemen and ladies who catch the spirit of the thing, and dance with the rest at a Christmas party.

Miss Hannah West first looked out of the window, and then came to meet us, looking as if she were glad to see us. Georgie had nothing whatever to say; but, after I had followed his aunt into the house, he began to work like a beaver at once, as if it were any thing but a friendly visit that could be given up to such trifles as conversation, or as if he were any thing but a boy. He brought the fish and lobsters into the outer kitchen, though I was afraid our loitering at the auction must have cost them their first freshness; and then he carried the axe to the wood-pile, and began to chop up the small white-pine sticks and brush which form the summer fire-wood at the farm-houses,—crow-sticks and underbrush, a good deal of it,—but it makes a hot little blaze while it lasts.

I had not seen Miss Cynthia West, the younger sister, before, and I found the two women very unlike. Miss Hannah was evidently the capable business-member of the household, and she had a loud voice, and went about as if she were in a hurry. Poor Cynthia! I saw at first that she was one of the faded-looking country-women who have a hard time, and who, if they had grown up in the midst of a more luxurious way of living, would have been frail and delicate and refined, and entirely lady-like. But, as it was, she was somewhat in the shadow of her sister, and felt as if she were not of very much use or consequence in the world, I have no doubt. She showed me some pretty picture-frames she had made out of pine-cones and hemlock-cones and alder-burs; but her chief glory and pride was a silly little model of a house, in perforated card-board, which she had cut and worked after a pattern that came in a magazine. It must have cost her a great deal of work; but it partly satisfied her great longing for pretty things, and for the daintiness and art that she had an instinct toward, and never had known. It stood on the best-room table, with a few books, which I suppose she had read over and over again; and in the room, beside, were green paper curtains with a landscape on the outside, and some chairs ranged stiffly against the walls, some shells, and an ostrich's egg, with a ship drawn on it, on the mantel-shelf, and ever so many rugs on the floor, of most ambitious designs, which they had made in winter. I know the making of them had been a great pleasure to Miss Cynthia, and I was sure it was she who had taken care of the garden, and was always at much pains to get seeds and slips in the spring.

She told me how much they had wished that Georgie had come to live with them after his mother died. It would have been very handy for them to have him in winter too; but it was no use trying to get him away from his father; and neither of them were contented if they were out of sight of the sea. "He's a dreadful odd boy, and so old for his years. Hannah, she says he's older now than I be," and she blushed a little as she looked up at me; while for a moment the tears came into my eyes, as I thought of this poor, plain woman, who had such a capacity for enjoyment, and whose life had been so dull, and far apart from the pleasures and satisfactions which had made so much of my own life. It seemed to me as if I had had a great deal more than I deserved, while this poor soul was almost beggared. I seemed to know all about her life in a flash, and pitied her from the bottom of my heart. Yet I suppose she would not have changed places with me for any thing, or with anybody else, for that matter.

Miss Cynthia had a good deal to say about her mother, who had been a schoolmate of Mrs. Wallis's—I had just been telling them what I could about the auction. She told me that she had died the spring before, and said how much they missed her; and Hannah broke in upon her regrets in her brusque, downright way: "I should have liked to kep' her if she'd lived to be a hundred, but I don't wish her back. She'd had considerable many strokes, and she couldn't help herself much if any. She'd got to be rising eighty, and her mind was a good deal broke," she added conclusively, after a short silence; while Cynthia looked sorrowfully out of the window, and we heard the sound of Georgie's axe at the other side of the house, and the wild sweet whistle of a bird that flew overhead. I suppose one of the sisters was just as sorry as the other in reality.

"Now I want you and Georgie to stop and have some tea. I'll get it good and early," said Hannah, starting suddenly from her chair, and beginning to bustle about

again, after she had asked me about some people at home whom she knew; "Cynthy! Perhaps she'd like to walk round out doors a spell. It's breezing up, and it'll be cooler than it is in the house.—No: you needn't think I shall be put out by your stopping; but you'll have to take us just as we be. Georgie always calculates to stop when he comes up. I guess he's made off for the woods. I see him go across the lot a few minutes ago."

So Cynthia put on a discouraged-looking gingham sun-bonnet, which drooped over her face, and gave her a more appealing look than ever, and we went over to the pine-woods, which were beautiful that day. She showed me a little waterfall made by a brook that came over a high ledge of rock covered with moss, and here and there tufts of fresh green ferns. It grew late in the afternoon, and it was pleasant there in the shade, with the noise of the brook and the wind in the pines, that sounded like the sea. The wood-thrushes began to sing,—and who could have better music?

Miss Cynthia told me that it always made her think of once when she was a little girl to hear the thrushes. She had run away, and fallen into the marsh; and her mother had sent her to bed quick as she got home, though it was only four o'clock. And she was so ashamed, because there was company there,—some of her father's folks from over to Eliot; and then she heard the thrushes begin to call after a while, and she thought they were talking about her, and they knew she had been whipped and sent to bed. "I'd been gone all day since morning. I had a great way of straying off in the woods," said she. "I suppose mother was put to it when she see me coming in, all bog-mud, right before the company."

We came by my friends, the apple-trees, on our return, and I saw a row of old-fashioned square bee-hives near them, which I had not noticed before. Miss Cynthia told me that the bee money was always hers; but she lost a good many swarms on account of the woods being so near, and they had a trick of swarming Sundays, after she'd gone to meeting; and, besides, the miller-bugs spoilt 'em; and some years they didn't make enough honey to live on, so she didn't get any at all. I saw some bits of black cloth fluttering over the little doors where the bees went in and out, and the sight touched me strangely. I did not know that the old custom still lingered of putting the hives in mourning, and telling the bees when there had been a death in the family, so they would not fly away. I said, half to myself, a line or two from Whittier's poem, which I always thought one of the loveliest in the world, and this seemed almost the realization of it. Miss Cynthia asked me wistfully, "Is that in a book?" I told her yes, and that she should have it next time I came up, or had a chance of sending it. "I've seen a good many pieces of poetry that Mr. Whittier wrote," said she. "I've got some that I cut out of the paper a good while ago. I think everything of 'em."

"I put the black on the hives myself," said she. "It was for mother, you know. She did it when father died. But when my brother was lost, we didn't, because we never knew just when it was; the schooner was missing, and it was a good while before they give her up."

"I wish we had some neighbours in sight," said she once. "I'd like to see a light when I look out after dark. Now, at my aunt's, over to Eliot, the house stands high, and when it's coming dark you can see all the folks lighting up. It seems real sociable."

We lingered a little while under the apple-trees, and watched the wise little bees go and come; and Miss Cynthia told me how much Georgie was like his grandfather, who was so steady and quiet, and always right after his business. "He never was ugly to us, as I know of," said she; "but I was always sort of 'fraid of father. Hannah, she used to talk to him free's she would to me; and he thought, 's long's Hannah did any thing, it was all right. I always held by my mother the most; and when father was took sick,—that was in the winter,—I sent right off for Hannah to come home. I used to be scared to death, when he'd want any thing done, for fear I shouldn't do it right. Mother, she'd had a fall, and couldn't get about very well. Hannah had good advantages. She went off keeping school when she wasn't but seventeen, and she saved up some money, and boarded over to the Port after a while, and learned the tailoress trade. She was always called very smart,—you see she's got ways different from me; and she was over to the Port several winters. She never said a word about it, but there was a young man over there that wanted to keep company with her. He was going out first mate of a new ship that was building. But, when she got word from me about father, she come right home, and that was the end of it. It seemed to be a pity. I used to think perhaps he'd come and see her some time, between voyages, and that he'd get to be cap'n, and they'd go off and take me with 'em. I always wanted to see something of the world. I never have been but dreadful little ways from home. I used to wish I could keep school; and once my uncle was agent for his district, and he said I could have a chance; but the folks laughed to think o' me keeping school, and I never said any thing more about it. But you see it might 'a' led to something. I always wished I could go to Boston. I suppose you've been there? There! I couldn't live out o' sight o' the woods, I don't believe."

"I can understand that," said I, and half with a wish to show her I had some troubles, though I had so many pleasures that she had not, I told her that the woods I loved best had all been cut down the winter before. I had played under the great pines when I was a child, and I had spent many a long afternoon under them since. There never will be such trees for me any more in the world. I knew where the flowers grew under them, and where the ferns were greenest, and it was as much home to me as my own house. They grew on the side of a hill, and the sun always shone through the tops of the trees as it went down, while below it was all in shadow —and I had been there with so many dear friends who have died, or who are very far away. I told Miss Cynthia, what I never had told anybody else, that I loved those trees so much that I went over the hill on the frozen snow to see them one sunny winter afternoon, to say good-by, as if I were sure they could hear me, and looked back again and again, as I came away, to be sure I should remember how they looked. And it seemed as if they knew as well as I that it was the last time, and they were going to be cut down. It was a Sunday afternoon, and I was all alone, and the farewell was a reality and a sad thing to me. It was saying good-by to a great deal besides the pines themselves.

We stopped a while in the little garden, where Miss Cynthia gave me some magnificent big marigolds to put away for seed, and was much pleased because I was so delighted with her flowers. It was a gorgeous little garden to look at, with its red poppies, and blue larkspur, and yellow marigolds, and old-fashioned sweet, stray things,—all growing together in a tangle of which my friend seemed ashamed. She told me that it looked as orderly as could be, until the things begun to grow so fast she couldn't do any thing with 'em. She was very proud of one little pink-and-white verbena which somebody had given her. It was not growing very well; but it had not disappointed her about blooming.

Georgie had come back from his ramble some time before. He had cracked the lobster which Miss Hannah had promptly put on to boil, and I saw the old gray cat having a capital lunch off the shells; while the horse looked meeker than ever, with his headstall thrown back on his shoulders, eating his supper of hay by the fence; for Miss Hannah was a hospitable soul. She was tramping about in the house, getting supper, and we went in to find the table already pulled out into the floor. So Miss Cynthia hastened to set it. I could see she was very much ashamed of having been gone so long. Neither of us knew it was so late. But Miss Hannah said it didn't make a mite o' difference, there was next to nothing to do, and looked at me with a little smile, which said, "You see how it is. I'm the one who has faculty, and I favour her."

I was very hungry; and, though it was not yet six, it seemed a whole day since dinner-time. Miss Hannah made many apologies; and said, if I had only set a day, she would have had things as they ought to be. But it was a very good supper and she knew it! She didn't know but I was tired o' lobsters. And when I had eaten two of the biscuits, and had begun an attack on the hot gingerbread, she said humbly that she didn't know when she had had such bad luck, though Georgie and I were both satisfied. He did not speak more than once or twice during the meal. I do not think he was afraid of me, for we had had many a lunch together when he had taken me out fishing; but this was an occasion, and there was at first the least possible restraint over all the company, though I'm glad to say it soon vanished. We had two kinds of preserves, and some honey besides, and there was a pie with a pale, smooth crust, and three cuts in the top. It looked like a very good pie of its kind; but one can't eat every thing, though one does one's best. And we had big cups of tea; and, though Miss Hannah supposed I had never eaten with any thing but silver forks before, it happened luckily that I had, and we were very merry indeed. Miss Hannah told us several stories of the time she kept school, and gave us some reminiscences of her life at the Port; and Miss Cynthia looked at me as if she had heard them before, and wished to say, "I know she's having a good time." I think Miss Cynthia felt, after we were out in the woods, as if I were her company, and she was responsible for me.

I thanked them heartily when I came away, for I had had such a pleasant time. Miss Cynthia picked me a huge nosegay of her flowers, and whispered that she hoped I wouldn't forget about lending her the book. Poor woman! she was so young, —only a girl yet, in spite of her having lived more than fifty years in that plain, dull home of hers, in spite of her faded face and her grayish hair. We came away in the rattling wagon. Georgie sat up in his place with a steady hand on the reins, and keeping a careful lookout ahead, as if he were steering a boat through a rough sea.

We passed the house were the auction had been, and it was all shut up. The cat sat on the doorstep waiting patiently, and I felt very sorry for her; but Georgie said there were neighbours not far off, and she was a master hand for squirrels. I was glad to get sight of the sea again, and to smell the first stray whiff of salt air that blew in to meet us as we crossed the marshes. I think the life in me must be next of

kin to the life of the sea, for it is drawn toward it strangely, as a little drop of quicksilver grows uneasy just out of reach of a greater one.

"Good-night, Georgie!" said I; and he nodded his head a little as he drove away to take the horse home. "Much obliged to you for my ride," said he, and I knew in a minute that his father or one of the aunts had cautioned him not to forget to make his acknowledgments. He had told me on the way down that he had baited his nets all ready to set that evening. I knew he was in a hurry to go out, and it was not long before I saw his boat pushing off. It was after eight o'clock, and the moon was coming up pale and white out of the sea, while the west was still bright after the clear sunset.

I have a little model of a fishing dory that Georgie made for me, with its sprit-sail and killick and painter and oars and gaff all cleverly cut with the clumsiest of jackknives. I care a great deal for the little boat; and I gave him a better knife before I came away, to remember me by; but I am afraid its shininess and trig shape may have seemed a trifle unmanly to him. His father's had been sharpened on the beach-stones to clean many a fish, and it was notched and dingy; but this would cut; there was no doubt about that. I hope Georgie was sorry when we said good-by. I'm sure I was.

A solemn, careful, contented young life, with none of the playfulness or childishness that belong to it,—this is my little fisherman, whose memory already fades of whatever tenderness his dead mother may have given him. But he is lucky in this, that he has found his work and likes it; and so I say, "May the sea prove kind to him! and may he find the Friend those other fishermen found, who were mending their nets on the shores of Galilee! and may he make the harbour of heaven by and by after a stormy voyage or a quiet one, whichever pleases God!"

HOW LILY GOT THE CAT.

hen the twins were about as big as last year's chickens, they had the measles.

It was in the month of May, and there was a great deal to be done just then.

There was Celestia's flower-bed to dig into; there were Mary's chickens to kiss to death, and Aunt Ann's bowls of starch and gravy to upset. And in the shop there was the cinnamon-jar to be filled up with Scotch snuff, and the cream of tartar to mix with the soda, and the molasses to be set running.

Besides these, there were a great many dry wells to be dug in the yard, and brick-paint to be pounded, and the gate to be pulled off its hinges, and as many more pieces of mischief as there were minutes in a day.

It was Davie who had all these things to do, though. Lily, sweet little blossom, only followed around after him and said "Yes."

But as for Davie, he would willingly have done everybody's work all over the city, from the President of the University, wearing his four-cornered hat on Commencement Day, down to the charcoal man who went by a great many times a day making the prettiest noise you ever heard, and looking as though he were having the best time in the world, with nobody to worry him about washing his face or keeping his clothes clean.

But the mischief had to wait now; for the twins were lying in the cradle all day long, with their faces as red as poppies, and their poor little eyes shut up and swollen.

"It is as good as a poor play to see how beautifully the measles have come out. Davie and Lily will get along all right now, as sure as A is apple-dumpling, only we

must see to it that they don't take any cold," said Aunt Ann, giving them a good drink of thoroughwort, and then hurrying off to attend to the duties of the shop, with her glasses in her hand and a pair of scissors dangling at her side by a long green braid.

It didn't seem much like a poor play, or any kind of a play, though to the twins to lie there in a bed of nettles with their eyes full of hot cotton and their throats full of pepper, and the air full of people making up dreadful faces at them, all with sore eyes and horrid red noses.

So there they lay in the cradle while a blue-bottle-fly buzzed shrilly from a dark corner where a fat gray spider had tied him up by his feet and was sharpening her bill ready to make chops of him.

The milkman whopped at the back gate; the cracked school-bell around the corner rang out long and loud; somewhere a carpenter was pounding stroke upon stroke; and, as a background, beneath all came up the heavy grinding roll of wheels and the clashing beat of hoofs upon the rough pavement.

The tall brass clock ticked and ticked and held up its hands in solemn surprise at finding it was only ten o'clock after all. Why! it seemed already as long as a whole day since the bell on the First Baptist church had struck nine.

Then Lily began to cry with a gentle little noise, about as though a humming-bird was fluttering his wings against the cup of a trumpet-flower.

"What is the matter, Lily?" asked Davie, feebly. "What you crying for?"

What was the *matter*? What *wasn't* the matter, one would think!

But Lily only whimpered, "I want the cat."

"I'll get her for you, Lily," said Davie, trying to fumble his blind way out of the cradle and start in search of her.

Fortunately for the ending of the story, somebody was in the room and was ready to pick Davie up when his weak little legs suddenly doubled up like a pocket-knife and dropped him on the nursery floor. So, though Lily did not get the cat, neither did Davie get, what Aunt Ann called "his death o' cold."

In due time, the measles turned and went their way wandering off around after other children, one generation and then another. Lily's cat lived out her nine lives and then turned into sage and catnip in the back garden.

And now, after a long, long while, Davie and Lily have a birthday. Not the next one, nor the second, nor the third, nor, if the truth must be told, the fiftieth. But a birthday that came running to meet them with glasses on and a flourishing of the almond-tree.

This time the twins' birthday is not kept in the gray old mansion, with the shop below and the garden behind, where Aunt Ann rattled her keys and lived out her bustling life. Nor does Aunt Ann come to help keep it. Her hands have long been folded in quiet rest; and it is years, too, since Mary and Celestia went where the shining is brighter than the sunlight and softer than the moon.

But the twins are not alone. Bless you! I should think not! First, here is Amy Starbird, with a pair of pictures she has painted from the very paint-box Davie gave her on her own last birthday. And here is Amy's daughter Rose, with twin marble babies tucked up in a marble crib on top of a marble match box; and Rose, all this time, is Davie's daughter as well as Amy's.

And here is a bright bevy of boys and girls, some of them with Lily's blue eyes and Lily's fair hair, each bringing some double gift for their mother and Uncle Davie.

There are pairs of wristings and pairs of neckties, books in two volumes, and double-frosted cakes; there is a pair of china slippers with a pair of babies on the toes; there is a crystal vase held up by two crystal swans, and a vase of silver in the form of a chariot drawn by two doves; for everything must be in pairs for the birthday of the twins.

Then, last of all, Davie gave to Lily a covered box, and when she opened it she saw within an exquisitely embroidered velvet pen-wiper, with a beautiful tortoise-shell cat lying upon it, and, playfully jumping over her back, were two of the most charming tortoise-shell kittens ever seen.

The mother-cat had around her neck a blue ribbon, and on the ribbon was written these words,—

"Here is your cat, Lily,—after fifty years."

FRANCES LEE.

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