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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CLEMATIS ***

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CLEMATIS
ANITA
PATHWAYS
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DAN'S BOY
PENNIE
ANDRÉ
ONE FOOT ON THE GROUND
ROBIN



"Are you going to sit here all day, little girl?"

CLEMATIS

BY
BERTHA B. AND ERNEST COBB
Authors of Arlo, Busy Builder's Book, Hand in Hand With Father Time,
etc.

With illustrations by
A. G. CRAM
AND
WILLIS LEVIS

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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By BERTHA B. and ERNEST COBB

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Twenty-second Impression

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Made in the United States of America

Somerset, Mass.

Dear Priscilla:

You have taken such a fancy to little Clematis that we hope other children may like her, too. We may not be able to buy you all the ponies, and goats, and dogs, and cats that you would like, but we will dedicate the book to you, and then you can play with all the animals Clematis has, any time you wish.

With much love, from
BERTHA B. AND ERNEST COBB.

To Miss Priscilla Cobb.

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CLEMATIS

CHAPTER I

LOST IN THE BIG CITY

It was early Spring. A warm sun shone down upon the city street. On the edge of the narrow brick sidewalk a little girl was sitting.

Her gingham dress was old and shabby. The short, brown coat had lost all its buttons, and a rusty pin held it together.

A faded blue cap partly covered her brown hair, which hung in short, loose curls around her face.

She had been sitting there almost an hour when a policeman came along.

"I wonder where that girl belongs," he said, as he looked down at her. "She is a new one on Chambers Street."

He walked on, but he looked back as he walked, to see if she went away.

The child slowly raised her big, brown eyes to look after him. She watched him till he reached the corner by the meat shop; then she looked down and began to kick at the stones with her thin boots.

At this moment a bell rang. A door opened in a building across the street, and many children came out.

As they passed the little girl, some of them looked at her. One little boy bent down to see her face, but she hid it under her arm.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked. "Who's going to hurt you?"

She did not answer.

Another boy opened his lunch box as he passed, and shook out the pieces of bread, left from his lunch.

Soon the children were gone, and the street was quiet again.

The little girl kicked at the stones a few minutes; then she looked up. No one was looking at her, so she reached out one little hand and picked up a crust of bread.

In a wink the bread was in her mouth. She reached out for another, brushed off a little dirt, and

ate that also.

Just then the policeman came down the street from the other corner. The child quickly bent her head and looked down.

This time he came to where she sat, and stopped.

"Are you going to sit here all day, little girl?" he asked.

She did not answer.

"Your mother will be looking for you. You'd better run home now, like a good girl. Where do you live, anyway?"

He bent down and lifted her chin, so she had to look up at him.

"Where do you live, miss? Tell us now, that's a good girl." 5

"I don't know." The child spoke slowly, half afraid.

"O come now, of course you know, a big girl like you ought to know. What's the name of the street?"

"I don't know."

"Ah, you're only afraid of me. Don't be afraid of Jim Cunneen now. I've a little girl at home just about your age."

He waited for her to answer, but she said nothing.

"Come miss, you must think. How can I take you home if you don't tell me where you live?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, dear me! That is all I get for an answer. Well then, I'll have to take you down to the station. May be you will find a tongue down there." 6

As he spoke, he took hold of her arm to help her up. Then he tried one more question.

"What is your name?"

"My name is Clematis."

As she spoke she moved her arm, and out from the coat peeped a kitten. It was white, with a black spot over one eye.

"There, that is better," answered the policeman. "Now tell me your last name."

"That is all the name I have, just Clematis."

"Well then, what is your father's name?"

"I haven't any father."

"Ah, that is too bad, dear. Then tell me your mother's name." He bent down lower to hear her reply. 7

"I haven't any mother, either."

"No father? No mother?" The policeman lifted her gently to her feet. "Well miss, we won't stay here any longer. It is getting late."

Just then the kitten stuck its head out from her coat and said, "Miew."

It seemed very glad to move on.

"What's that now, a cat? Where did you get that?"

"It is my kitty, my very own, so I kept it. I didn't steal it. Its name is Deborah, and it is my very own."

"Ah, now she is finding her tongue," said the policeman, smiling; while Clematis hugged the kitten. 8

But the little girl could tell him no more, so he led her along the street toward the police station.

Before they had gone very far, they passed a baker's shop.

In the window were rolls, and cookies, and buns, and little cakes with jam and frosting on them.

The smell of fresh bread came through the door.

"What is the matter, miss?" The man looked down, as Clematis stood still before the window.

She was looking through the glass, at the rolls, and cakes, and cookies.



"I don't want to stay here if you are going to throw my cat away"

The policeman smelled the fresh bread, and it made him hungry. 9

"Are you hungry, little girl?" he asked, looking down with a smile.

"Wouldn't you be hungry if you hadn't had anything to eat all day long?" Clematis looked up at him with tears in her big brown eyes.

"Nothing to eat all day? Why, you must be nearly starved!" As he spoke, the policeman started into the store, pulling Clematis after him.

She was so surprised that she almost dropped her kitten.

"Miew," said poor Deborah, as if she knew they were going to starve no longer. But it was really because she was squeezed so tight she couldn't help it. 10

"Now, Miss Clematis, do you see anything there you like?"

Jim Cunneen smiled down at Clematis, as she peeped through the glass case at the things inside.

She stood silent, with her nose right against the glass.

There were so many things to eat it almost took her breath away.

"Well, what do you say, little girl? Don't you see anything you like?"

"May I choose anything I want?"

"Yes, miss. Just pick out what you like best." 11

The lady behind the counter smiled, as the policeman lifted Clematis a little, so she could see better. There were cakes, and cookies, and buns, and doughnuts.

"May I have a cream cake?" asked Clematis.

"Of course you may. What else?" He lifted her a bit higher.

"Miew!" said Deborah, from under her coat.

"Oh, excuse me, cat," he said, as he set Clematis down. "I forgot you were there too."

The woman laughed, as she took out a cream cake, a cookie with nuts on it, and a doughnut.

"May I eat them now?" asked Clematis, as she took the bag. 12

"You start right in, and if that's not enough, you can have more. But don't forget the cat."

Jim Cunneen laughed with the baker woman, while Clematis began to eat the doughnut, as they started out.

Before long they came to a brick building that had big doors.

"Here we are," said the policeman. They turned, and went inside.

There another policeman was sitting at a desk behind a railing.

"Well, who comes here?" asked the policeman at the desk.

"That is more than I know," replied Jim Cunneen. "I guess she's lost out of the flower show. She says her name is Clematis." 13

Clematis said nothing. Her mouth was full of cream cake now, and a little cream was running

over her fingers.

Deborah was silent also. She was eating the last crumbs of the doughnut.

"Is that all you could find out?" The other man looked at Clematis.

"She says she has no father and no mother. Her cat is named Deborah. That is all she told me."

"Oh, well, I guess you scared her, Jim. Let me ask her. I'll find out."

The new policeman smiled at Clematis. "Come on now, sister," he said. "Tell us where you live. That's a good girl." 14

Clematis reached up one hand and took hold of her friend's big finger. She looked at the new policeman a moment.

"If you didn't know where you lived, how could you tell anyone?" she said.

Jim Cunneen laughed. He liked to feel her little hand.

"See how scared she is of me," he said. "We are old friends now."

Again they asked the little girl all the questions they could think of. But it was of no use. She could not tell them where she lived. She would not tell them very much about herself. 15

At last the Captain came in. They told him about this queer little girl.

He asked her questions also. Then he said:

"We shall have to send her to the Home. If anyone claims her he can find her there."

So Clematis and Deborah were tucked into the big station wagon, and Jim Cunneen took her to the Home, where lost children are sheltered and fed.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILDREN'S HOME

16

As they climbed the steps leading to the Home, Clematis looked up at the policeman.

"What is this place?" she asked.

"This is the Children's Home, miss. You will have a fine time here."

A young woman with a kind face opened the door.

The policeman did not go in. "Here is a child I found on Chambers Street," he said. "We can't find out where she lives." 17

"Oh, I see," said the woman.

"Could you take her in for a while, till we can find her parents?"

"Yes, I guess we have room for her. Come in, little girl."

At that moment there was a scratching sound, and Deborah stuck her head out.

"Miew," said Deborah, who was still hungry. Perhaps she thought it was another bakery.

"Dear me!" cried the young woman, "we can't have that cat in here."

Clematis drew back, and reached for Jim Cunneen's hand.

"It's a very nice cat, I'm sure," said the policeman.

He felt sorry for Clematis. He knew how she loved her kitten. 18

"But it's against the rules. The children can never have cats or dogs in here."

Clematis, with tears in her eyes, turned away.

"Come on," she said to her big friend. "Let us go."

But Jim Cunneen drew her back. He loved little girls, and was also fond of cats.

"Don't you think the cook might need it for a day or two, to catch the rats?" he asked, with his best smile.

"Oh dear me, I don't know. I don't think so. It's against the rules for children to bring in pets."

"Ah then, just wait a minute. I'll be right back." 19

The policeman ran down the steps and around the corner of the house, while the young woman asked Clematis questions.

"It's all right then, I'm sure," he called as he came back. "Katie says she would be very glad to have that cat to help her catch the rats."

The young woman laughed; Clematis dried her tears, and Jim Cunneen waved his hand and said

goodby.

In another moment the door opened, and Clematis, with Deborah still in her arms, was in her new home.

It was supper hour at the Children's Home. In the big dining room three long tables were set. 20

At each place on the clean, bare table was a plate, a small yellow bowl, and a spoon.

Beside each plate was a blue gingham bib.

Jane, one of the girls in the Home, was filling the bowls on her table with milk from a big brown pitcher.

Two little girls worked at each of the tables. While one filled the bowls, the other brought the bread.

She put two thick slices of bread and a big cookie on each plate.

The young woman who had let Clematis in, came to the table near the door.

"There is a new girl at your table tonight, Jane," she said. "She will sit next to me." 21

"All right, Miss Rose," answered Jane, carefully filling the last yellow bowl.

"Please may I ring the bell tonight, Miss Rose?" asked Sally, who had been helping Jane.

Miss Rose looked at the table. Every slice of bread and every cookie was in place.

"Yes, dear; your work is well done. You may ring."

At the sound of the supper bell, a tramping of many feet sounded in the long hall.

The doors of the dining room were opened, and Mrs. Snow came in, followed by a double line of little girls.

Each girl knew just where to find her place, and stood waiting for the signal to sit. 22

A teacher stood at the head of each table, and beside Miss Rose was the little stranger.

Mrs. Snow was the housemother. She asked the blessing, while every little girl bowed her head.

Clematis stared about at the other children all this time, and wondered what they were doing.

Now they were seated, and each girl buttoned her bib in place before she tasted her supper.

Sally sat next to Clematis.

"They gave you a bath, didn't they?" she said, as she put her bread into her bowl. 23

Clematis nodded.

"And you got a nice clean apron like ours, didn't you?"

Clematis nodded again.

"Oh, see her hair, it's lovely!" sighed a little girl across the table, who had short, straight hair.

Clematis' soft brown curls were neatly brushed, and tied with a dark red ribbon.

She did not look much like the child who came in an hour before.

"What's her name?" asked Jane, looking at Miss Rose.

"We'll ask her tomorrow. Now stop talking please, so she can eat her supper." 24

At that, the little girl looked up at Miss Rose and said: "My name is Clematis, and my kitty's name is Deborah."

Just as she said this, a very strange noise was heard. Every child stopped eating. Miss Rose turned red, and Mrs. Snow looked up in surprise.

"Miew, miew, miew," came from under the table. In another minute a little head peeped over the edge of the table where Clematis sat. It was a kitten, with a black spot over one eye.

"Miew, miew," Deborah continued, and stuck her little red tongue right into the yellow bowl. She was very hungry, and could wait no longer.



Deborah was very hungry

Mrs. Snow rapped on the table, for every child laughed right out. What fun it was! No one had ever seen a cat in there before. 25

"Miss Rose, will you kindly put that cat out. Put her out the front door." Mrs. Snow was very stern. She didn't wish any cats in the Home.

Clematis looked at Mrs. Snow. Her eyes filled with tears, and she began to sob.

Miss Rose turned as red as Deborah's tongue. She had not asked Mrs. Snow if she might let the cat in. She thought it would stay in the kitchen with Katie.

"Did you hear me, Miss Rose? I wish you would please put the cat out the door. We can't have it here." 26

Miss Rose started to get up, when Clematis slipped out of her chair, hugging Deborah tightly to her breast.

The tears were running down her cheeks, as she started for the door.

"Where are you going, little girl?" said Mrs. Snow.

Clematis did not answer, but kept right on.

"Stop her, Miss Rose. What is the matter, anyway? Dear me, what a fuss!"

Miss Rose caught Clematis by the arm.

"Wait, dear," she said. "Don't act like that. Answer Mrs. Snow."

"I don't care," sobbed Clematis, looking back. "I don't want to stay here if you are going to throw my cat away." 27

"I should have asked you, Mrs. Snow," said Miss Rose. "She had the kitten with her. She cried to bring it in, and Katie said she would care for it in the kitchen."

"Oh, so that is it. Well, don't cry, child. Take it back to Katie, and tell her to keep the door shut."

"She's hungry," said Clematis, drying her eyes on her sleeve.

"Well, ask Katie to feed her then, and come right back to the table."

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST NIGHT

Supper was soon finished, with many giggles from the little girls, who hoped that Deborah would get in again.

Clematis ate every crumb of her bread and cookie. Her yellow bowl looked as if Deborah had lapped it dry. 28

"After supper, we play games. It's great fun," said Sally, as they were folding their bibs.

The bell rang, and the long line of children formed once more.

They marched out through the long hall, up the broad stairs to the play room.

There were little tables, with low chairs to match. Some of the tables held games.

In one corner of the room was a great doll house, that a rich lady had given to the Home.

In another corner was a small wooden swing with two seats.

A rocking horse stood near the window, and a box of bean bags lay on a low shelf near by.

Soon all were playing happily, except Clematis, who stood near the window.

She was looking at the trees, which were sending out red buds. The sun had set, and the sky was rosy with the last light of day.

"Don't you want to play?" asked Miss Rose, coming across the room.

Clematis shook her head.

"What would you like to do, dear?"

Clematis thought a moment.

"I should like to help Katie in the kitchen. She must need some little girl."

Miss Rose smiled. "If Clematis can get down into the kitchen, she can see her kitten," she thought. "She is a sly little puss herself."

"I don't think you could go down tonight, but if you are a good girl I am sure Katie will want you to help her before long."

Clematis smiled.

"Come now, and I will ask Jane to show you the doll house."

So the little girls took Clematis over to the doll house that stood in the corner.

Jane opened the front door, so they could look in and see four pretty rooms.

Lace curtains hung at the tiny windows. New rugs were on the floors.

There was a tiny kitchen, with a tiny stove and tiny kettles, all just like your own house. It was enough to make any girl happy.

It was so much fun that Clematis forgot to be sad, and was not ready to leave the doll house when the bell rang once more. It was bedtime.

"That is the sleepy bell," said Jane, closing the door to the doll house, and running toward the stairs.

Clematis was at the end of the row, as the girls went out of the playroom, and Miss Rose spoke as she passed through the door.

"I will show you where you are to sleep, my dear. You go with the other children, and I'll come in a few minutes."

Clematis followed the other children up the stairs to the sleeping rooms.

Miss Rose soon came, and together they went to the room at the end of the hall.

How sweet that room looked to the tired little stranger!

A white iron bed stood against the wall, near the window. A small table held a wash basin and pitcher. There was a cup and soap dish, too.

Two clean towels hung near by.

Best of all was the little white bureau, with a mirror. The mirror had a white frame.

There was a pink rug before the bureau, and beside the bureau was a white chair.

"Oh, my!" cried Clematis, "see the flowers on the wall!" The pink wall paper was covered with white roses and their green leaves.

Miss Rose took a white nightdress from the bureau, and laid it on the bed.

"Now, Clematis, I shall give you just ten minutes to undress. When I come back I want you to be all ready for me."

Miss Rose went out, and Clematis started on her shoes.

"I guess she don't know how fast I can undress," she said to herself.

When Miss Rose came back, in ten minutes, she found Clematis already in bed, and half asleep.

"Why Clematis, this will never do!" Miss Rose pulled back the sheet and made Clematis sit up.

There, beside the bed, was a pile of clothes. There were the stockings, just as she had pulled them off.

The boots were thrown down on the clean gingham dress, and the fresh apron was sadly crushed.

"I am sorry, little girl," said Miss Rose, "but you will have to get right up."

"Why?" asked Clematis.

"No little girl can go to bed without washing her face and hands. No little girl can leave her clothes like this."

"Isn't this my room?" said Clematis, slowly getting out of bed.

"It is for tonight. We always let a new child sleep alone the first night."

"Wasn't I quick in getting into bed? Why must I get up?"

"Look, dear. Look at that pile of clothes."

"Oh, I always leave them there," replied Clematis. "Then I know just where to find them in the morning."

"We don't do so here, Clematis. Now please pick up the clothes, fold them, and put them on the chair."

"Then put your boots under the chair, and take off your pretty hair ribbon."

Clematis gathered the clothes together, but she was not happy.

"I know you are tired, dear, but I am tired too, and we must do things right, even if we are tired."

"Now I must show you how to wash, and brush your teeth, and then have you say your prayers, before I can leave you."

"Oh bother!" sighed Clematis.

"No, we mustn't say words like that. Come now, we will get washed."

Miss Rose poured some water from the pitcher, and made Clematis wash her hands, and arms, and face, carefully. Then she took a toothbrush from a box and gave it to her.

"What is this for?" asked Clematis.

"Why dear," answered Miss Rose in surprise, "that is a tooth brush."

"A tooth brush! Why, there is no hair on my teeth."

Miss Rose laughed. "No dear, perhaps not, but we must brush them carefully each night with water, or they will soon be aching."

"Will that stop teeth from aching?"

"Yes indeed, it will help very much to keep them from aching."

"All right, then." Clematis began to brush her teeth. "My teeth ached last week. I nearly died," she answered.

The teeth were cleaned, and Clematis was ready for bed.

"Now dear, let us say our prayers."

"I don't know any prayers."

Miss Rose looked at Clematis in pity. "Don't you really know any prayers at all?"

"Would you know any prayers if you had never learned any?"

Miss Rose smiled sadly.

"Well, then," she said, "we will learn the Lord's Prayer, and then you will know the most beautiful prayer of all."

They knelt down together, and Clematis said over the words after Miss Rose.

"Now good night, dear, and pleasant dreams," said Miss Rose, as she tucked her in.

"Good night," said Clematis.

The door closed, and all was dark.

The maple trees swayed gently outside the window.

They nodded to Clematis, as she watched them with sleepy eyes.

One little star peeped in at her through the maple tree.

CHAPTER IV

WHO IS CLEMATIS?

The bright sun was shining on the red buds of the maple tree when Clematis woke the next morning.

It was early. The rising bell had not rung. Clematis got up and looked out of the open window.

She could see nothing but houses across the street, but the buds of the maple were beautiful in the sun.

"I wish I had some of those buds to put in my room," said Clematis to herself.

She took her clothes, and began to dress. While she was dressing, she looked again at the maple buds, and wanted them more than ever.

"If I reached out a little way, I could get some of those, I just know I could," she thought.

As soon as she got her shoes on she pushed the window wide open.

She leaned out. Some beautiful buds were very near, but she could not quite reach them.

She leaned out a little farther. Then she climbed upon the window sill.

They were still out of her reach.

For a minute she stopped. Then she put one foot out in the gutter. With one hand she held the blind, and reached out to the nearest branch.

At last she had it. She drew it nearer, and broke off a piece with many buds.

As the piece broke off, the branch flew back again to its place, and Clematis almost fell back through the window to the floor.

She patted the red buds and made a little bunch of them. She filled her cup with water and put the buds in it; then she put it on the bureau.

Clematis was looking proudly at them, when the door opened, and Miss Rose came in.

She looked at Clematis, and then at the buds.

"Why, Clematis!" she said.

Then she looked out the window. There, several feet beyond the window, was the broken end. Drops of sap were running from the white wood.

"How did you get those buds?" asked Miss Rose.

"I reached out of the window," said Clematis, "why, was that stealing?"

Miss Rose gasped.

"Clematis, do you mean to tell me that you climbed out of the window and reached for that branch?"

Clematis nodded. Tears came into her eyes. She must have done something very wrong, but she did not know just what was so wicked about taking a small branch from a maple tree.

"I didn't know it was stealing," she sobbed.

"It isn't that, Clematis. It is not wrong to take a twig, but think of the danger. Don't you know you might have fallen and killed yourself?"

Clematis wiped her eyes on her sleeve.

"Oh, that's nothing," she said, "I had hold of the blind all the time. I couldn't fall."

"Now, Clematis, no child ever did such a thing before, and you must never, never, do it again. Do you understand?"

"Yes'm."

"Do you promise?"

"Yes'm."

"Well then, let's get ready for breakfast."

Clematis washed her face and hands, brushed her hair, and cleaned her teeth carefully.

Soon she was ready to go down stairs, and took one of the maple buds to put in her dress.

As they went out, Miss Rose saw that she wanted to say something.

"Do you want something?" she said.

"Can I help Katie this morning?"

"After breakfast I will ask Mrs. Snow, but breakfast is almost ready now."

Just then the breakfast bell rang, and Clematis marched in with the other children. She was thinking about Deborah, and wondering if she had caught any rats.

For breakfast they had baked apples, oatmeal with milk, and rye gems.

It did not take them long to eat this. Soon they were through, and ready for the morning work.

As they were getting up, Mrs. Snow came to speak to Miss Rose.

Clematis held her breath when she heard what was said.

"Perhaps this little girl would like to go down and play with her kitten a while. We can find some work for her by and by."

"Oh yes," said Clematis, "I would."

"Well, you can tell Katie I said you might. Be sure not to get in her way."

Off ran Clematis to the kitchen, to find her dear Deborah.

There she was, curled up like a little ball under the stove.

She looked with sleepy eyes at Clematis, and crawled down into her lap.

Then Clematis smoothed her and patted her, till she purred her very sweetest purr.

"Ah," said Katie. "It's a fine cat. It caught a big rat in the night, and brought it in, as proud as pie."

"Do you think they will let me keep her?" asked Clematis.

"Oh, I guess so. If she catches the rats, she will be welcome here. You can be sure of that. I hate rats."

While Clematis and Deborah were having such a good time in the kitchen, Mrs. Snow took Miss Rose to her room.

"Well, Miss Rose, have you found out anything about that strange little child?"

"Not very much yet. She talks very little, and has had very little care."

"What makes you think so?"

"Why, the poor child didn't know what a tooth brush was for. She said she always left her clothes in a pile by the bed, because she could find them all in the morning."

Mrs. Snow sighed.

"Dear me, she will need much care, to teach her how to do things well. But I guess her folks will come for her before long."

"I don't know who her folks can be. She has never learned any prayers."

"Poor child, she must be a sad case." Mrs. Snow sighed again.

"But she is very fearless. This morning, before I went to her room, she had climbed out of the window and broken off a piece of the maple tree with buds on it."

"What, way up there at the roof?"

"Yes, she said that was nothing, for she had hold of the blind."

"What did she want the branch for?"

"She wanted it for the red buds. She broke them off and put them in her cup, like flowers."

"Well, Miss Rose, take her out to walk this afternoon, and ask her some questions. Perhaps you can find out where she lives."

CHAPTER V

CLEMATIS BEGINS TO LEARN

Clematis played with Deborah all the morning. She forgot about helping Katie, and when Katie asked her if she wanted to help her peel some potatoes, she said:

"I don't know how."



“Didn’t you ever peel potatoes?”

“Didn’t you ever peel potatoes?” asked Katie.

“No, I never had to do any work.”

“Well, you will have to be doing some work round here. It’s lucky for you that Mrs. Snow is good to little girls. You would have a hard row to hoe in some homes, believe me.”

53

Clematis was busy tying her hair ribbon round Deborah’s neck, and did not answer.

The morning went fast, and the dinner was ready before Clematis was ready to leave her kitten.

For dinner they had soup, in the little yellow bowls, with a big piece of Johnny cake, and some ginger bread.

As soon as dinner was over, Miss Rose brought Clematis a brown coat.

It was not new, but it was neat and warm, much better than the one she had worn the day before.

“Come, Clematis,” she said, “I am going out to walk. Don’t you want to go with me?”

54

“Where are you going?” asked Clematis, shrinking back.

“Oh, out in the park, and down by the river. I think you will like it.”

Clematis put on the coat as quickly as she could. Then she took Miss Rose by the hand.

“Come on, let’s go,” she said.

“You might wait till I get my coat and hat on.” Miss Rose was laughing at her.

Soon they were down by the river. Miss Rose sat on the gravel, while Clematis ran along the edge of the water.

She sailed bits of wood for boats, and threw little stones in, to see the rings they made. She was very, very happy.

55

“Clematis,” said Miss Rose, “don’t you remember the street you lived on?”

Clematis thought a minute.

“How would you know the street you lived on if nobody ever told you?”

Miss Rose thought a moment.

“Don’t you remember your mother’s name?”

Clematis shook her head.

“I don’t remember. It was a long time ago.”

“Do you mean she died a long time ago?”

Miss Rose asked her some other questions. At last she said:

56

“Well, tell me the name of the man you lived with.”

“His name was Smith.”

“Oh dear, there are so many Smiths, we shall never guess the right one. Dear me, Clematis. I don’t know how we shall ever find your home.”

Clematis threw a big stone into the water, which made a big splash.

"I hope you never will," she said.

"Why, Clematis! Do you mean that you wish never to go back where you came from?"

"Well, how would you like to live in a place where you had to stay in an old brick yard all day, and never saw even grass?"



Thinking of the land of flowers

Miss Rose thought a while. Then she got up and started back to the Home.

Clematis followed her slowly. She was sorry to go.

That night Mrs. Snow talked with Miss Rose again.

"She must have lived in the city," said Miss Rose. "She had to stay in a yard paved with bricks all day. She doesn't remember her parents at all. She ran away, that is sure."

"I hardly know what to do," said Mrs. Snow, at last. "She can stay here for a while, and perhaps the people she lived with will find her here."

So Mrs. Snow told the policeman what they had found out, and he said they would do the best they could to find her people.

That night Clematis did not go to the little room near the maple tree to sleep. She went into the big room.

Jane slept in the bed next to hers. Miss Rose told her to see that Clematis had what help she needed in going to bed.

The day had been a busy one for Clematis. She was very sleepy.

"I guess I won't bother with teeth and things tonight," she said to herself.

So she pulled off her clothes, and got into bed.

"Oh Clematis, you can't do that. You've got to pick up your clothes, and clean your teeth, and do lots of things."

Jane came and shook her, as she snuggled under the clothes.

"Oh, I'm too tired tonight. I'll do it tomorrow night."

Clematis did not stir.

Just then Miss Rose came into the sleeping room.

She saw Jane trying to get Clematis out of bed. She also saw the pile of clothes.

"Clematis, I can't have this. Get right out of bed, and do as I told you last night."

She wanted children to obey her, and she had tried to be very kind to Clematis.

The other children giggled, as Clematis got slowly out of bed.

But Miss Rose frowned at them.

"You see that she does every single thing she ought," said Miss Rose to Jane, "and if she doesn't, you tell me."

Then Miss Rose went away, and left the girls to get ready for bed.

Poor Clematis had a hard time of it. The other girls made fun of her, because she was so clumsy

and slow. At last she got her clothes folded up, and went to wash.

"She isn't washing her neck and ears," said Jane to herself, "but I guess I won't tell."

So at last Clematis got into bed again, and went to sleep.

CHAPTER VI

CLEMATIS HAS A HARD ROW TO HOE

It was all Jane could do the next morning to make Clematis get up when the rising bell rang.

"I don't want to get up yet," grumbled Clematis. "I will get up pretty soon."

"No you won't either. You'll get up right off now. We have to be ready for breakfast in fifteen minutes."

Jane pulled down the clothes, while the other girls laughed. Poor Clematis had to get up.

At first she was cross, but when she looked out of the window, she smiled.

From this window she could see way off to a beautiful hill, golden brown in the morning sun.

Part way to the hill was a river. Its little waves shimmered and danced. Its shores were quite green already.

Now Clematis was wide awake and happy. She started to dress.

"Wash first," said Jane.

Clematis started to grumble again, but when she looked into the mirror above the wash stand, there was the river, smiling at her in the mirror.

She knew this river. She had been there. Perhaps she would go again some day.

For breakfast they had a bowl of oatmeal and milk, with two slices of bread.

Clematis looked around while they were eating.

"Don't you ever get a cup of coffee for breakfast?" she asked of Sally, who sat next to her.

"Oh, no, never, but sometimes we have cocoa, on real cold mornings."

Clematis turned up her nose a little. She did not care much for oatmeal.

"I like doughnuts and coffee a great deal better," she said.

"Huh, you won't have any doughnuts and coffee round here," said Jane. "You'd better eat what you have."

Clematis took her advice, and had just finished her bread, when the bell sounded.

"Now, Clematis," said Miss Rose, "you are going to stay here for a while anyway, so you must take your part in the daily work."

"Yes'm."

"I think you said yesterday you would like to help Katie in the kitchen."

"Oh, yes'm," said Clematis. She had been thinking of Deborah and longing to see her.

"Well, let's go down and see what Katie can find for you to do."

There was Deborah, sleeping under the edge of the stove. Clematis took her while Miss Rose was asking Katie.

"This little girl thinks she would like to have some work down here in the kitchen, Katie. Is there anything you would like her to do?"

"Ah, no thank you, Miss Rose, she wouldn't be any use at all."

Clematis looked up. She did not feel very happy.

"Why, don't you think she could help you?" Miss Rose looked surprised.

"No miss, she is no use at all. Yesterday I asked her to peel some potatoes, but she never lifted a finger. She said she didn't know how."

"Why, Clematis, I am surprised."

"Well," said Clematis, "if you never learned to peel potatoes, would you know how to do it?"

"Yes, I think I should. Katie would have shown you, if you had been willing to try."

Clematis hung her head, and buried her face in Deborah's soft fur.

"You see, miss, she's of no use to me. She don't want to work at all. Her cat, now, is a worker. She caught a big rat in the night."

"Well then, Clematis, we shall have to ask Mrs. Snow to find you something else to do."

Clematis dropped her kitten, and the tears ran down her cheeks, as she followed Miss Rose upstairs. 67

Katie looked after her with a sad smile.

"She'll have a hard row to hoe round here, believe me," she said to herself.

Mrs. Snow frowned when Miss Rose told her.

"I am very sorry," she said. "She may work with Jane, then, in the dormitory. Jane is a good worker and can teach her."

Poor Clematis was rather frightened when she heard that she was to work in the dormitory. She was afraid a dormitory was some dark place like a prison. She did not know that the dormitory was the big room where she had slept. 68

Soon Clematis was back in the big room again. There she took the place of another little girl, who was making up the beds with Jane.

"Hurry up now," said Jane. "We have got to get these beds all made up before nine o'clock. School begins then."

She showed Clematis how to tuck the sheet in, down at the foot, and pull it up smooth at the head of the bed.

Clematis was looking out of the window, way over the river, to the sunny brown hill.

"There now. Why don't you look out?" said Jane. For Clematis had given such a pull that she pulled all the clothes out at the foot of the bed. 69

"I was looking out, so there," said Clematis.

"Yes, looking out of the window, that's all." Jane was vexed.

"Now hurry up and get them tucked in again."

But Clematis was very clumsy, and not very willing. She had never had to make beds before. She didn't see any need of it.

"Why can't you leave the blankets till you go to bed, and then just pull them up?" she said, pouting.

"Because you can't, that's why. And you'd better try, or you'll never get a chance to go to the country." 70

"What do you mean? Who goes to the country?"

Clematis came round the bed and took Jane by the arm.

"Why, most of the children who do well, or try hard to do well, go to the country for two weeks in the summer."

"To the country where the flowers grow, and where there is grass all around?"

"Sure, and where they give you milk and apple pie. Oh, apple pie even for breakfast, and doughnuts between meals. I had doughnuts every day."

"Crickety!" said Clematis.

"You'd better not let Miss Rose hear you say that, and you needn't worry. You won't go to any country, when you can't even make beds." 71

Clematis gave Jane a frightened look, and started to work the best she knew how.

But the best Clematis knew how was very poor work, and by the time the bell rang for school, one bed still had to be done.

"Let it alone," said Jane. "I can make it up faster myself."

Her hands and feet moved fast enough to surprise little Clematis, who followed her friend down to the school room, wondering how long it would take her to learn to make beds.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT CLEMATIS FOUND

School began with music, and Miss Rose went to the piano. The minute she began to play, Clematis stood up, and stared at her.

"Sit down. Don't stand up now." Jane pulled her sleeve.

But Clematis paid no attention. She kept her eyes on the piano, and seemed to hear nothing else. 72

The song was of Spring; of birds, and brooks, and flowers. Clematis listened to every word, and when it was finished she sat down with a sigh.

73

After the singing, they had a class in reading.

Clematis stared at the words on the blackboard, but could not tell any of them.

"Have you learned any of your letters?" asked Miss Rose.

"No'm," said Clematis.

The other children giggled, for Clematis was as large as Jane. Jane was eight, and could read very well.

"Tomorrow you must go into the special class, and you must work hard, and catch up as fast as you can."

"Yes'm."

Clematis was angry. She didn't like to be laughed at.

At recess, all the children ran out into the yard to play. It was a large yard, with a high wooden fence around it.

74

Glad to be free, Jane ran off to find some chums, and left Clematis to play by herself.

So Clematis wandered round by the fence till she came to a sunny spot, near the big maple tree with the red buds.

Here she picked up a dead twig and sat down, turning over the dried leaves with the twig, and throwing them in the air.

As she picked up the leaves, she saw some blades of grass beneath them.

Then she picked up more leaves, and found many blades of grass growing beneath their warm shelter.

75

Clematis got up and walked near the fence, where the leaves were thicker. There she poked them away, and found longer blades of grass, and new leaves, green and shiny.

"Oh," she said to herself, "I hope I can come out here every day."

Then she stopped. She pushed away some more leaves. She looked around at the other children.

None of them were looking at her.

She stooped, and took something from under the pile of leaves.

Again she looked about, but nobody was paying attention to her. All the children were playing games.

76

Then a sound made her look up. It was the bell. Recess was over, and all the children were going in.

Clematis put her hand into her apron pocket quickly, and followed the other children back to school.

"How has the new girl done today?" asked Mrs. Snow, just before they sat down to dinner.

"She seems to feel more at home," replied Miss Rose. "She doesn't know her letters yet. I guess she has grown up all by herself."

"That is too bad. I will give her a test this afternoon, about three. If she would like to play with her kitten in the playroom for an hour, after dinner, she may do so."

77

"Oh, I am sure she would be glad to see her kitten. She is a queer child. At recess she stole away all by herself, to play by the fence."

The children were coming in now, and Mrs. Snow nodded to Miss Rose, as she went to her chair.

Little Sally had been just behind Miss Rose as she said the last words to Mrs. Snow. She heard part of the words she said, and began to whisper to her neighbor.

"She said somebody stole something. It must be that new girl. See how queer she looks."

78

Then of course the neighbor had to whisper to the girl next to her.

"Do you know what it was the new girl stole? See how funny she looks. She'd better not steal anything of mine."

In a minute Clematis knew they were talking about her. She didn't know what it was, but she knew it was unkind.

They were looking at her, and talking to each other. Her face turned red. She could not eat. One hand went deep into her apron pocket.

Miss Rose quickly saw that something was wrong. She knew that little girls often made fun of the strangers, and it vexed her.

"Any little girl who is not polite," she said, "may leave the table at once."

79

The girls stopped talking, but they poked each other with their feet under the table. They were sure Clematis had stolen something, for she looked just as if she had.

"Come, Clematis, eat your dinner now."

"Yes'm," said Clematis. But it was hard to swallow the bread.

She drank the soup, and left most of the bread by her bowl.

As soon as the bell rang, Miss Rose beckoned to her.

"Would you like to take Deborah to the playroom for a while, and play with her there?"

Clematis looked very much surprised. She had expected some new trouble.

"Oh, yes'm," she gasped, and started down to the kitchen, glad to get away from the other girls, who had been watching.

Then Miss Rose beckoned to Jane.

"Jane, what were the girls saying about Clematis at the table?"

Jane hung her head. She did not like to repeat such awful things about Clematis, for she really liked her, though it was hard to teach her to work.

"Tell me, Jane. Miss Rose wants to know."

"The girls were saying she stole something."

"Stole something? Why, what did she steal, Jane?"

"I don't know. I just heard them saying she had stolen something. She looked just as if she had."

"Very well. Thank you, Jane."

Jane went down to the school room, where all the girls were eager to know what Clematis had stolen. But Jane could tell them nothing.

"She just asked me what you said," Jane declared.

"That's just like Jane," cried Sally. "She knows all the time, only she won't tell."

While they were talking, Clematis was finding a cosy corner in the playroom, and smoothing out every hair on Deborah's smooth back.

Deborah seemed very happy, and purred all the time.

"I don't care if they do say mean things, and make noses at me. You won't ever, will you, Debby?"

"Purr, purr, purr," said Deborah. No indeed, she never would.

Time went fast, and it was three o'clock before Clematis had got Deborah settled down for sleep in a little bed she made for her beneath the window.

"Take her downstairs now, Clematis," said Miss Rose, coming in. "Then come up to Mrs. Snow's room. We want to ask you some questions."

Again Clematis turned red. She went slowly downstairs, with Deborah under one arm. The other hand deep in her apron pocket.

"She surely looks as if something were wrong," thought Miss Rose, as Clematis disappeared.

Clematis looked very unhappy when she went to Mrs. Snow's room.

"Come in, little girl," said Mrs. Snow, kindly. "There are some things I want to ask you about."

"Yes'm," replied Clematis, her lips quivering.

"First, I want to know what all this talk is about. Some of the girls were saying that you took something which did not belong to you. Can that be true?"

Clematis hung her head. The tears came into her eyes.

"Don't cry, Clematis," said Miss Rose. "Just tell Mrs. Snow what it is, and perhaps we can make it all right again."

"What was it, little girl?" asked Mrs. Snow, as she drew her nearer.

"It was mine, I found it first," sobbed Clematis.

"Yes, but you must remember that if we find a thing, that does not make it ours. We must find the true owner, and give it back. That is the only honest thing to do."

"What was it you found?" asked Miss Rose.

"I don't kn-ow."

"Where did you find it?"

"Do-wn by the fe-ence."

"Where is it now, Clematis?" Mrs. Snow spoke kindly, as she wiped the child's face with her handkerchief.

"It's in my pocket," answered Clematis.

She drew out her closed hand, held it before the two ladies, and slowly opened it.

Within lay a limp, withered dandelion blossom.

CHAPTER VIII

A VISITOR

Mrs. Snow still tells the story of how Clematis stole the first dandelion of the springtime, out under the leaves.

People laugh when they hear the story. You see, it all came about because the children told tales on each other, and it was a good joke on them.

But as Clematis stood there, before Mrs. Snow and Miss Rose, she didn't see the joke at all. She cried, and hid her face in her arms.

"Come here, dear," said Mrs. Snow. "It is all right, and you shall have every dandelion you find in the yard."

"Wasn't it stealing?" sobbed Clematis.

"No, it was all right, if you found it first."

"And can I have all I find first?"

"Yes, indeed you can."

Clematis lifted her head, and wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Oh," she said, and seemed happy once more. She smoothed the limp little flower in her hot hand.

"And now," said Mrs. Snow, "I wonder if you can tell us some more about yourself."

"Yes'm, I'll tell you all you ask, and I won't tell any lies."

"I'm sure you won't. Perhaps you can remember, now, where you lived before you came here."

Clematis shook her head. "I told Miss Rose every single thing," she said, "except—"

"Except what?"

"Except that I ran away."

Clematis hung her head again.

"Why did you run away?"

"Well, wouldn't you run away, if you had to stay in a yard all day that was nothing but bricks?"

Mrs. Snow smiled. "Perhaps I would," she replied.

"Didn't you ever go out at all?" asked Miss Rose, who had been listening.

"Just sometimes, to go over to the store. Just across the street and back, and that was all bricks, too."



Clematis held out her hand

"Do you think you could find your way home again, if Miss Rose went with you?"

Clematis shook her head. "Oh, no. It was a long, long way. I was most dead from walking."

Mrs. Snow thought a moment. Then she said, "Miss Rose tells me that you have not learned to read. Is that true?"

"Yes'm, I never learned to do anything except count the change I got. But I can learn to read, and do numbers, too."

Clematis spoke without sobbing now. She was thinking of the country, where girls went who did well.

"Do you think you could take her in a class by herself for a short time?" Mrs. Snow asked, turning to Miss Rose.

Miss Rose was about to answer, when one of the older girls came to the door.

"What is it, Ruth?"

"Please, Mrs. Snow, a man wants to see you."

"What is his name?"

"His name is Smith. He wants to see you about a little girl."

As she said this, Miss Rose looked up quickly.

Clematis also looked up. Her face turned red, and she put a finger in her mouth.

"Tell him to come in here."

In another minute a small, thin man walked in.

He was poorly dressed, and looked as if he had been ill.

"Did you wish to see me about one of the children?" asked Mrs. Snow.

"Yes, marm, about this little girl right here."

The man turned and smiled at Clematis, who was standing close by Miss Rose.

"Hello, Clematis, I thought I should find you somewhere."

Clematis smiled too, but she did not speak.

"Oh," said Mrs. Snow, "are you the one who took care of this little girl?"

"Yes, marm. I've had her ever since she was a little baby."

Mrs. Snow thought a minute.

"I suppose you want to take her home with you."

"I don't know about that. I have no home to keep a child in, and do right by her. You see, my wife is sick most of the time."

"Don't you know any of her folks who could care for her?"

"No, marm. Her mother came to our house when Clematis was a tiny baby. She said the father was dead. Then she died too, and we could never find out who she was."

"Do you know her last name?" asked Miss Rose.

"No, miss. We never knew her last name. She said it was Jones, but we never believed that was the truth. This little girl we just called Clematis."

"Didn't she have anything to help you find out who she was?" asked Mrs. Snow in surprise.

"Not a single thing, except this picture."

The man took out a small photograph.

It showed three girls standing together in front of a brick building.

"That is her mother on the left, marm, but I don't see how the picture helps very much."

"That is true. Still, the picture is better than nothing."

"That is just what we thought, marm," Mr. Smith replied. "We kept her along, hoping we should find some one to claim her, but no one came. She is too big for us to care for now."

"Then you are ready to give her up?"

"Yes, marm, if you will care for her. She is very restless, and always wanting to run off."

Mrs. Snow turned to Clematis.

"Do you think you would rather stay here, than go back with Mr. Smith?"

"Yes'm," said Clematis, quickly. She had been thinking of the visits to the country. If she went back to the yard, all made of bricks, how would she ever see the grass and flowers?

"Very well, Mr. Smith. I think you have done a good deal to keep her as long as you have. She was well fed, even if she didn't learn much."

"Thank you, marm."

Then Miss Rose took Clematis out of the office, while Mrs. Snow talked with Mr. Smith.

All the afternoon Clematis wondered what they were going to do with her.

After supper Miss Rose called to her, as the children were going to the playroom.

"Clematis," she said, "do you think that if you stayed here you could work real hard, and learn to do as the other children do?"

"Yes'm."

"Very well. Mrs. Snow finds that we can keep you here. I will try to teach you myself, so you can catch up with the other children."

"Yes'm," said Clematis.

That is all she said, but she was so glad, that she could not sleep for a long time after she went to bed.

She lay awake thinking, and thinking, of the things she would learn to do, so she might go at last to the country, the land of flowers, and grass, and birds; the land where white clouds floated always in a blue, blue sky.

CHAPTER IX

THE SECRET

The next morning Clematis did better in helping Jane with the beds, and before many mornings had passed she learned so well that Miss Rose praised her for her work.

When she wanted to stop trying, and wanted to get up without washing her face and hands, and cleaning her teeth, she would look out the window at the hill beyond the river.

It seemed to smile at her and say:

"Don't forget the beautiful country, little girl. Remember the birds and the flowers. Do the best you can."

But there were so many things to do that it seemed to poor Clematis as if she would never learn half of them.

When she tried to help in setting the table, she dropped some plates.

She said things that made the other girls cross, for she had never learned to play with other girls, and she forgot that she could no longer do just as she pleased.

Worst of all, she did not always pay attention to study, and when Miss Rose left her to do some numbers, would be looking out of the window, instead of working on her paper.

So the days went on, and spring was almost over.

The dandelions had all blossomed and grown up tall, with white caps on their heads, and there were no other flowers in the yard.

One day Clematis found something which made her almost as happy as if she had found some flowers.

At first she thought she would keep it a secret, and tell no one about it. Then she thought how good Jane had been to her, so she went up to her when she was standing alone.

"Say, Jane, if I tell you a secret will you promise not to tell anybody else?"

"Sure, I'll promise," said Jane. "What is it?"

Clematis looked around. The other children were playing games.

"Come over here," she said.

She led Jane to the big board fence which stood at the back of the yard.

Then she got down on her knees and took hold of one of the boards. It was loose, and she could pull it out.

"See, look through there," said Clematis, in a low voice.

Her face shone with pleasure as she peeped through.

Jane knelt down, and peeped through too. Beyond the fence she could see into another yard.

In this yard there was grass growing, and flower-beds, where the flowers were beginning to grow up in green shoots.

But this was not all. Not far from the fence, by a corner of the garden, stood a low bush. She could smell its sweet fragrance from where she knelt.

"Do you see it?" whispered Clematis.

"Of course I see it. I can smell it too. It's great."

Jane took in a long breath of the fragrance, and smiled at Clematis.

"Oh, I wish I had some of those blossoms." Clematis looked eagerly at the blossoms. "Do you

know what they are, Jane?"

"Oh, yes; those are lilacs."

The two girls had just time to take one more deep breath, full of the fragrance from the lilac blossoms, before the bell rang.

Jane kept her promise, and while the lilacs lasted, they used to go often to their secret place and smell the fragrance of the blossoms.

The first of July, some of the girls began to start for their vacations in the country.

Now it was harder than ever for Clematis to stick to her work. She kept thinking of the beautiful fields, when she should have been thinking of numbers.

103

"I don't know what we are going to do with you, Clematis," said Miss Rose one day.

"You do try hard sometimes. You have learned to make beds well. You are a good girl about your clothes, morning and night. But you are dreaming of other things, I fear. What is it you dream about so much?"

Clematis thought a moment.

"Do you think I will have a chance to go to the country?"

She looked up at Miss Rose. Her face was white and anxious.

"Why Clematis. I don't know. You wouldn't be very much help I am afraid. You quarrel with the other children, and you are very slow to learn."

104

"Yes'm," said Clematis, and hung her head.

"Still," said Miss Rose, "you might have a chance later. If you try hard I will not forget you."

Clematis tried to feel happier then, but there were so many things to learn, and so few days to learn them in, that she hardly dared to hope very much.

She found it very hard to learn to play happily with the other children, and liked it much better just to get Deborah all by herself and play with her.

July went by, and the children began to come back again. They told stories of the wonderful things they had seen, and now Clematis was only too glad to sit near them and listen.



Clematis is better

"Oh," said Sally, who had been to Maine, "Mr. Lane had a field almost as big as a whole city, full of long grass and daisies."

105

"Would he let you pick the daisies?" asked Clematis.

"Of course he would; all you wanted."

"Where is Maine?" asked Clematis, eagerly.

"Hear her talk," said another girl, named Betty, with a sniff. "She needn't worry, she'll never get a chance to pick any."

Betty was not very kind, and did not like Clematis. She often made fun of the younger children.

Clematis turned red. Her eyes flashed, and she was about to answer, when the supper bell rang.

106

They had just sat down at the table, when Betty said to a girl near by:

"You ought to hear Clematis. She thinks she is going to the country. Just as if anybody would have her around."

Betty sat next to Clematis, who heard every word.

She had tried to be a good girl and learn, just as Miss Rose asked her to.

Her face burned, and her eyes flashed more than ever.

Before she stopped to think, she turned and waved her spoon before Betty's face, saying:

"You can't stop me. You'd better keep quiet, you old pig!"

Betty was so startled that she moved back. Her arm struck her bowl of milk, and the milk spilled out, all over the table.

Part of it spilled down into her lap.

Then Clematis began to cry. When Miss Rose sent her away from the table, and up to her bed, she went willingly.

She was glad to get away from the other children.

Miss Rose saw how sad she was, and knew how naughty Betty had been, so she did not punish her.

"I am very sorry you have not learned to behave more politely, Clematis. Perhaps this will be a lesson to you."

That was all she said before Clematis went to bed, but Clematis cried quietly a long, long time.

She felt that she had made every one look at her, right in front of Mrs. Snow. What would Mrs. Snow think of her now?

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CHAPTER X

TWO DOCTORS

It was very late before Clematis fell asleep that night, and in the morning she had a headache.

When she got up she had to sit on the bed, she felt so dizzy.

Miss Rose found her sitting there.

"Why, Clematis," she said. "Are you sick?"

"Yes'm, I guess so," whispered the poor little girl.

"Lie right down again, dear, and perhaps you will feel better."

They brought her a cup of cocoa, and some toast, for breakfast, but she could not eat.

All day she lay there, pale and sick.

In the afternoon old Doctor Field came in to see her. He sat down by the bed and asked her some questions.

He looked at her tongue, and felt her pulse. Then he took out some little pills and gave them to Miss Rose.

"I guess you had better put her in a single room," he said. "Give her some of these in water, every two hours during the day."

He smiled at Clematis before he went out. "I guess she will feel better in the morning, when I come again."

But in the morning Clematis was not better. She was worse.

"How did she pass the night?" asked Doctor Field, as he felt her pulse.

"Not very well," said Miss Rose. "She did not sleep much, and had a good deal of pain."

Doctor Field looked at her chest and arms.

"It might be chicken pox, or measles," he said, "but I don't see any of the usual signs."

Little Clematis lay and looked at him steadily.

"Did you want something, dear?" he asked.

"I want a drink," she said. "I want a drink of cold, cold water."

"Yes, dear, you shall have a drink, of course you shall."

The old doctor went into the hall with Miss Rose.

"She may have a drink, but only a little at a time. And I wouldn't let it be too cold. She really gets enough water with her medicine."

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Soon they brought Clematis a little water in a cup. She raised her head and drank it, but then made a face and turned her head away.

"It isn't any good," she said.

That evening old Doctor Field came again. He looked carefully at Clematis, and shook his head.

"I guess it's only a slow fever. It's nothing catching," he said. "She'll be better in a few days." 113

The few days passed, but Clematis was not better.

At night she was restless, and slept little. Even when she did sleep, her slumber was disturbed by bad dreams.

She talked to herself during these dreams, though people couldn't understand what she said.

Doctor Field came to see her every day or two, but he could not tell what her sickness was. He always said:

"Just give her the medicine as directed, and she will be better soon."

Miss Rose had asked Mrs. Snow if she might take care of her, for she had come to love little Clematis, and Clematis loved her in return. 114

The school work did not take her time very much now, so Mrs. Snow was glad to let Miss Rose care for Clematis.

If she stayed away very long, Clematis would call for her. She wanted her in the room.

"Mrs. Snow," said Miss Rose, one day, after Clematis had been ill more than two weeks, "I am very anxious about Clematis."

"Is she no better?"

"No, I feel she is worse. She keeps asking for a cold drink of water, and says she is burning up. I wish I dared give her some, and keep her cooler." 115

"Well, I think I should follow the doctor's directions. It wouldn't be wise to do anything that is not directed by him."

"Don't you suppose we could have another doctor to look at her, Mrs. Snow?"

"No, I fear not; not just now, anyway."

Miss Rose went back to the little room upstairs with a sad heart. She knew Clematis was very ill.

That night she prayed that something might be done for the little sick girl, and the next morning she felt as if her prayers had been answered, when Doctor Field came.

"I shall have to be away for a short time, Miss Rose," he said, after he looked at Clematis, and felt her pulse. 116

"A young man, Doctor Wyatt, will take my place, and I am sure he will do all that can be done."

"Can he come today?" asked Miss Rose. "I wish he could see her soon."

"I will ask him. I think he will be much interested in Clematis. I should like to see her well again myself, but I must be out of town a few weeks."

"Oh, I hope he will come today, and I hope he will take an interest in my little girl," said Miss Rose to herself.

"I know she can be cured, if we only know what is the matter." 117

That afternoon Doctor Wyatt came. Miss Rose was glad when she saw him, for he was so kind, and so wise, that she knew he would do the best he could.

The afternoon was hot, and Clematis was covered with hot blankets, as directed by Doctor Field.

Dr. Wyatt took the blankets, and threw them off.

"The poor child will roast under those," he said.

Then he sat beside her, and watched her.

"Is there anything you would like?" he said at last, in a pleasant voice.

"Yes, I want a cold drink of water." Her voice sounded faint and feeble now. 118

"What does she have to drink?" asked Doctor Wyatt.

"We give her water now and then, as directed by Dr. Field. But we do not give her very much, and not very cold."

"Have you any oranges in the house?"

"I could get some."

"Then take the white of an egg, and put with it the juice of a whole orange. Add half a glass of water, with pieces of ice.

"Have good big pieces of ice," Doctor Wyatt called after her, as he saw that Clematis had fixed her eye on him.

Clematis smiled when he said that, and turned toward him with a sigh. 119

Soon Miss Rose came back with the glass. Dr. Wyatt held it to the lips of the little sick girl. She

drank slowly.

"Oh thanks," she whispered, when he took the glass away.

"Give her some of that whenever she asks for it," he said.

"Now tell me about the nights," the doctor went on.

"She is restless, and sleeps very little. She has bad dreams when she does sleep, and talks to herself."

"What does she talk about?"

"I don't know. We can't make out."

"Do you keep the room lighted at night?"

"Oh, no, it is kept dark."

"Well, tonight keep it lighted. People who have bad dreams are often frightened by the dark."

"Shall I give her the medicine as directed?"

"No, don't give her any more medicine at present. Give her all she wants of the orange and egg. I'll be back in the morning."

And Dr. Wyatt was gone.

"He's a good doctor," said Clematis, licking her dry lips. "I want a drink."

Miss Rose smiled, and put the glass to her lips.

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Off for Tilton

CHAPTER XI

A LONG, ANXIOUS NIGHT

121

"Well," said Doctor Wyatt, the next morning, "how is Clematis today?"

"She seems a little more comfortable," said Miss Rose.

The doctor sat by her for half an hour. He felt her pulse, and looked her all over. Then he shook his head.

That day he spent a long time studying his books.

In the evening he came again, and sat by Clematis. He shook his head, sadly.

"I must tell you, Miss Rose, that Clematis is a very sick little girl," he said, as they stood in the hall.

122

"Can't you do anything for her?" The tears sprang to her eyes.

"Perhaps I can. If she is no better tomorrow, I shall feel very anxious."

Again that night the doctor spent a long time over his big books. Then he went and talked with doctors in the hospital.

"I shall be here most of the time tonight," he said the next morning. "Keep her cool, and as comfortable as you can."

Miss Rose went back to the bed with aching heart.

"Oh, if we only knew what was the matter with you, Clematis," she thought, as she looked at the little white face. 123

In the evening Doctor Wyatt came back once more.

"Now, Miss Rose," he said, "you are very tired. You must go away for a walk, or a visit, or a rest. I will take care of her tonight."

"Don't you think I had better stay, too?"

"No, you must rest. Please have a cup of coffee sent to me about ten. I shall stay right here. You will be needed tomorrow."

Doctor Wyatt sat down to watch by Clematis.

It was a warm evening, so he gave her a drink, and fanned her, to cool her hot face. 124

As it grew late, she fell into a light sleep. As she slept, she began to talk in low tones.

The doctor bent his head down very near her lips, and listened carefully to everything she said.

Hour after hour he watched and listened, until he, too, fell asleep, just as the sun was coming up.

Miss Rose found him there in the morning, sleeping in his chair, close by the bed.

"Miss Rose," he asked, as he started up, "did this little girl want anything very much indeed?"

"Yes, she did. She wanted to go to the country, as the other children did, but it did not seem quite possible." 125

"That's it! That's just it!" exclaimed Doctor Wyatt. "She spoke of flowers, of lilacs and daisies. I couldn't tell much what she said, but I could hear those words."

At that moment, Clematis opened her eyes and stared about her.

Doctor Wyatt took one thin, frail hand in his big brown ones.

"Clematis," he said in a loud, firm tone, "I know a lovely place in the country. If you will get well, you can go there for two whole weeks."

Clematis stared at him, but did not seem to hear him. 126

"I want a drink," she said feebly.

He put the glass to her lips.

"You can pick daisies, and goldenrod, and all sorts of flowers in the country, if you'll just get well, can't she, Miss Rose?"

"Yes, Clematis, you can." Miss Rose tried to speak cheerfully, but it was hard. She wanted to cry.

Clematis stared at her also for a minute, and then turned away.

"I'll go get some sleep now. Keep her cool and comfortable, till I come back again this evening."

The day passed slowly. Mrs. Snow came in two or three times to look at Clematis, and feel her pulse. 127

Some of the other teachers came to peep in also. They went away softly, wiping their eyes.

"She is a queer little girl," said one, "but I do love her."

That is what they all felt.

At evening Doctor Wyatt returned. He looked anxious, as he took his seat beside the bed.

"I shall stay till about ten, Miss Rose, so you must rest now."

"I don't want to go," said Miss Rose.

"You must, you will be needed later. She will need great care tonight, I think."

At ten, Miss Rose returned. She had not rested much, and was glad to get back to the bedside. 128

"Here is my telephone number, Miss Rose. You can get me very soon by calling me up. Watch her carefully, and if you see any change at all, send for me at once."

"Do you think there may be a change tonight?" Miss Rose looked straight into his face to see just what he meant.

"Yes, Miss Rose, there may be, and I hope it will be for the better."

"You hope?" Miss Rose held her breath a minute.

"Yes, let us hope. Hope does more than all the medicine in the world." 129

The minutes crept along into hours, and midnight passed, while Miss Rose watched.

Clematis seemed restless, but she did not talk to herself any more.

Miss Rose held the glass to her lips now and then, but she did not drink.

When Miss Rose wiped her face with a cold, wet cloth, she smiled a faint little smile, as if she liked it. Then the look of pain would come again, as she turned restlessly.

The clock outside struck one. How slowly the minutes went.

At last it struck two, and a breeze stirred the leaves outside.

They were the leaves of the maple Clematis had broken in the early Spring. Now they seemed to whisper softly to each other.

All else was silent.

Miss Rose had watched a long time. Many days she had been by the bed. Her eyes began to droop.

"I'll rest my head just a minute," she thought, and leaned back upon the chair.

Slowly the clock struck three. As the last stroke came, Miss Rose stirred, and opened her eyes.

Then she started up.

"I must have been asleep," she said aloud. "Oh, shame on me for sleeping, when I promised to watch."

She looked down at the bed.

Clematis lay there, peaceful and quiet. Her little hand was white and still as marble. Her face seemed very happy. All pain was gone, and a smile lay upon the pale lips.

"Oh, little Clematis. To think I should have been asleep!"

Miss Rose took out her handkerchief, and bent her head down on the bed, weeping.

A slight sound seemed to come from the pillow. Miss Rose looked up.

The child's eyes were open wide. She was looking at her in wonder.

"He said I could go, didn't he?" said Clematis in a faint voice.

Miss Rose choked down her sobs.

"Yes, yes, Clematis, he did, he did."

"Well, then, what are you crying about?"

Clematis closed her eyes again and lay, still as before, with a little smile on her lips.

Miss Rose was so astonished that she sat staring at her for some minutes, until she heard a step in the hall.

It was Doctor Wyatt.

He came in softly and looked at the little figure on the bed.

He felt her pulse, and listened to her heart. Then he smiled, and led Miss Rose from the room.

"She is all right now," he whispered. "Let her sleep as long as she can."

CHAPTER XII

GETTING WELL

Clematis slept all night, and all the next day. It was evening when she woke.

Miss Rose was beside the bed, and heard her as she moved.

"Do you feel better now, dear little girl?" asked Miss Rose.

Clematis looked at her a moment with eyes wide open.

"He said I could go, didn't he?" she asked.

"Yes, surely he did, and you can go; you shall go just as soon as you are well."

Clematis smiled a happy smile.

"I want a drink of that orange juice."

Miss Rose brought a glass with ice in it, and held it, while Clematis sipped it slowly. Then she washed her face and hands in cold water.

"Thanks," the little girl whispered, as she turned on the pillow, and went off to sleep again.

There was great joy all through the Home, for every one knew that Clematis was getting well.

Doctor Wyatt came every day to look at his little sick girl, and laugh, and pat her cheeks.

"You just wait till you see the apple pies my aunt can make," he would say.

Then Clematis would smile.

"Tell me about the garden. Are there any lilacs?"

"No lilac blossoms now, little sister, but asters, and hollyhocks, and goldenrod. You just wait till you see them."

Then the doctor would go out, with another laugh.

Soon Clematis got so well that she could sit up in bed.

Miss Rose would sit by the window, sewing, and sometimes she would read a story.

One afternoon she saw that Clematis was anxious about something. She had a little wrinkle in her forehead.

"What is it you are thinking about? Is there something you want?"



In the country at last

Miss Rose went and stood by the bed, smoothing her forehead with her soft hand.

"I was thinking," said Clematis. "I was thinking that—that perhaps I could have Deborah come to see me, just for a minute."

"Well, you wait a minute, and I'll see."

Miss Rose went out, and Clematis waited to hear her steps again. She had not seen Deborah for a long time.

Soon she heard Miss Rose coming back. She shut her eyes till the footsteps came up to the bed, and before she opened them, there was a little pounce beside her.

Her dear Deborah was rubbing a cold nose against her cheek, and purring how glad she was to see her.

Clematis smoothed and patted her a long time, as she lay purring close by her side.

After that, Deborah came up often, and lay there on the bed, while Miss Rose sewed by the window.

"What are you sewing?" asked Clematis one day, when she was well enough to sit up.

"What do you suppose?"

"It looks like a dress."

"That's just what it is. It's a new dress for a little girl to wear to the country."

"Oh, who is going to have it? Let me see it. Please hold it up."

Miss Rose held the dress before her. It was nearly done.

The skirt was of serge, navy blue, with two pockets. With it went a middy blouse, with white lacings at the neck, and white stars on the sleeves.

"Oh, please tell me. Who is going to have it?" The child's eyes danced as she saw the pretty dress.

"I'll give you just one guess," said Miss Rose, smiling.

Clematis gasped. Could it be for her? She had never dreamed of owning a dress like that.

The little girl sat there a moment, without speaking. Then she pointed one finger at herself.

"Right, the very first time," said Miss Rose. "This blouse is to travel in. There is another."

She reached down and lifted another blouse. This was white, with blue collar and cuffs, and a blue star on the sleeve.

All this was too much for Clematis. The tears stood in her eyes, and she breathed fast. But she did not say very much to speak her gratitude.

"Oh, thanks," was all she said. Miss Rose saw in her face how much it all meant to her.

"I am proud of this little patient," said Doctor Wyatt, the next day. "If she keeps on at this rate, we can send her up to Tilton next week."



"What are you sewing?"

How her eyes shone! How her heart jumped! The very next week she would be starting for the land of her dreams.

She could see great fields of grass, with daisies and clover. Already she could see them stretching out before her.

How she got through the days before she was to start, she never knew. She was well enough now to sleep in the dormitory once more; to eat with the other children, and do some of the work.

"Now dear," said Miss Rose, the day before she was to start, "I must leave you. I am going away, too, for a vacation, so I must say goodbye today."

Clematis looked up in surprise. She never thought that grown people wanted to go away. She did not notice how pale and tired Miss Rose was. It had been hard work for her.

"You will try to help all you can, won't you, dear? Think every minute of what you can do to help. Then people will love you, even if you make mistakes."

"Yes'm, I will promise."

"You can wear the blue blouse, and you can put the white one in the box I gave you, if you are afraid of crushing it in the little bag."

"Oh, yes'm, I don't want to put it in the bag."

"Well, then, goodbye, and have a good time. Jerry will see that you get on the right train."

Jerry was the old cab man, who had a stand near the school, and carried people to the station.

This was a new delight for Clematis. What fun to ride to the station with Jerry, in a cab!

All day the joyful thoughts of her trip filled her mind. She could think of nothing else. The other children laughed at her, but she never minded them at all.

She was going to the country, to the birds, and flowers, and fields, and that was all she cared.

But as she was going to bed, one thought seemed to disturb her. She lay there thinking, with the little anxious line across her forehead.

A long time she thought. Then she spoke half aloud.

"That's just what I'll do," she said. "I've got to, anyway. I don't care if the blouse is crushed a little."

Then she went to sleep.

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CHAPTER XIII

OFF FOR TILTON

The day that she had longed for came at last. The sun was bright, the breeze was cool, and Clematis was as happy as the sparrows that hopped about in the maple tree.

All the morning she ran here and there, getting her things ready.

She had a small, black bag, and the box Miss Rose left for her extra blouse. Her things were put into these.

Mrs. Snow had an early lunch for Clematis, because she was going on the one o'clock train.

146

"I would rather eat it down in the kitchen with Katie," she said, when they started to put a bowl on the big table.

Katie was willing, so Clematis had some bread and soup on the corner of the kitchen table.



With Katie in the kitchen

"It will be nearer the street, so I will bring my things down here," she said.

She seemed very nervous, but Katie thought it was because of her trip.

"Don't worry, Miss Clematis," she said. "Jerry will soon be here."

"I know it." Clematis looked around. Then she slipped out of her chair and went up to Katie.

147

She whispered a minute in her friendly ear.

"Oh, now dearie, I wouldn't be doing that."

Katie put her hand on the little girl's cheek, and shook her head. "I don't think they would like it."

But Clematis was very serious. The tears came into her eyes as she whispered again.

"Oh, please, please! I don't know what might happen."

"Well, then," answered Katie, "what I don't see, I don't know about. I'm going upstairs a minute. Be quick now."

She went upstairs, and Clematis hurried into the small room near the kitchen, with her box.

148

In a minute she came out again, looking all about.

When Katie came down, she was drinking her soup. She could not swallow the bread.

"Dear child," said Katie, as the bell rang. "I hope the worry doesn't make her sick again."

Jerry was ready with the cab.

"All aboard, mum, I'll take your things."

He started to take the box, which she hugged up under one arm.

"Oh, no thank you," she cried, and held on to it tighter than ever.

Katie gave him the black bag she had in her hand, and the next minute Clematis was safe inside, and throwing a kiss to the friendly cook. 149

Before he got to the station, old Jerry stopped, and went into a store. He came out with a big paper bag.

"Katie told me to get this for you, miss," he said, as he passed the bag to her through the open window.

She peeped inside. There was a smaller bag, and several big peaches.

In the smaller bag were sandwiches, and cream cakes.

What a treat! Clematis often longed for peaches, but had not tasted them very often.

In the station Jerry got down, and led her to the train. 150

"Here is a passenger for Tilton, New Hampshire," he said to the conductor.

"All right, Jerry, I'll look after her."

The big conductor smiled at the little passenger.

"Come on, sister," he said, as he stooped to take her box.

"Oh, no, thank you," said Clematis, hugging it closer than ever.

"She must have her money in that," laughed Jerry.

So the conductor took the two bags, while Clematis carried the box. He found her a seat where she could be right by the window.

Soon the train started. They went across bridges, and through the yards, till at last they came to the open country. 151

There Clematis could see the fields, and the flowers, which grew close by the tracks.

As the train flew on, they came to quiet woods, with little brooks, and cows resting comfortably in the shade.

There was so much to see, that Clematis could not take her face from the window a minute.

Farmers were at work in the fields of wheat, and corn, and oats. They were mowing and raking. Some were throwing hay into the big carts.

At last they came to a big river that ran along by the track. Clematis could see people fishing along the banks, and rowing on the smooth water. 152

"I hope there is a river in Tilton," she thought.

It was a long time before she thought of the peaches, and sandwiches. When she did, she knew she was very hungry, so she opened the bag, and ate, while she watched the river, and fields, and forests.

One sandwich she broke in halves. She raised the cover of the box a little, and put one half inside. Then she shut the cover and tied the string.

"Tilton is the next station," said the conductor, at last.

They went along beside a small river, across a bridge, and the train stopped at Tilton. 153

"I guess that little girl is for me," said a tall man with a pleasant face, as Clematis came down the steps.

"Her tag says Mrs. Alder on it, is that the one?" asked the conductor.

"That's right. I told Mrs. Alder I would bring her along when I came from the train."

"Well, here's her bag. She won't let any one touch her box. She keeps her money in it. Goodby, little girl."

"Too—too—too-too."

The whistle blew, the wheels began to turn, and the long train drew slowly away. 154

"Right over here, little girl. Climb right up on the seat. I'll hold your box."

"Oh, no thank you," said Clematis. "I'll keep it."

Then she looked up at the seat. How was she to climb up there and hold her box?

Suddenly she was lifted off the ground, and found herself safe on the high seat.

"That's the way we'll fix it," said the man, with a smile. "Up you go, money, box, and all."

"Now I want to go up the street about a mile or so, before I take you to Mrs. Alder. I don't suppose you mind, do you?"

Clematis shook her head. She was happy at the thought of another ride. 155

So they drove up a long hill. As they reached the top, the man stopped his horse, and looked

about.

"It's pretty, isn't it?" he said.

Clematis nodded, and looked all about her.

The hill sloped down again into a little valley, where the brook ran between green meadows.

Beyond that, the pastures ran up to meet the forest on another hill.

Looking past this hill, she could see the blue waters of a lake, sparkling in the evening sun.

From the lake the ground rose once more. Up and up it went, with pastures and forests, until it came to the rocky crowns of three mountains. 156

The mountains were a deep, misty blue. Above them rose the white August clouds, rolling on and on, into the highest heaven.

Clematis drew a long breath.

"It is lovely," she whispered.

Not far from where they stopped was a white house, with the blinds closed. Vines ran about the front, and all seemed lonely.

"Who lives there?" she asked, finding her tongue at last.

"No one lives there now. A nice old man used to live there, but he had a good deal of sadness. He shut up the house, and went to live in a little place over near Bean Hill." 157

He pointed over to another hill which rose in the east.

Clematis would have liked to know more about the man who could leave such a lovely place, but the horse started on again.

Soon they turned into another road, and before long were turning back toward the village.

All the way along, Clematis could see the blue mountains in the distance. She could not take her eyes from them.

"Well, there is your house," said the man, at last, pointing to a neat, white house.

Clematis looked all about. Yes, there were gardens, and flowers, and fields, and trees. 158

There was a cow down by a little brook.

Everything she had hoped to find was there. There was a tall maple beside the house.

"Well, this is Clematis, I guess," said a lady, coming down the path.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Ladd. I see she came right side up."

She took the bag Mr. Ladd handed down, and reached for the box that Clematis still hugged in her lap.

Clematis started to explain, but Mrs. Alder did not wait. She was nervous and quick. 159

She pulled the box out of her hands.

"Why Clematis, what is in this box?" Mrs. Alder looked at it in surprise.

Clematis did not answer. She gasped, and turned red as a rooster's comb.

"It's her money, Mrs. Alder," said Mr. Ladd, laughing. "She has it tied up for safe keeping. The conductor told me so."

Mrs. Alder lifted one corner of the box to peep in.

There was a scratching sound, and then out popped a little white, furry head, with sharp ears, and one black eye.

It was Deborah.

CHAPTER XIV

THE COUNTRY

When Mr. Ladd saw the little white head peep out, he put his head back and laughed.

"I pity the rats in your barn now, Mrs. Alder," he shouted.

Mrs. Alder frowned at first, but when she looked at Clematis, and saw her anxious face, she smiled.

"What on earth made you bring that cat way up here?" she asked.

"She's my own cat. I was afraid to leave her at the Home all alone. Would you like to leave your cat alone, where people might throw it away while you were gone?" 161

Just then a tall man with a gray beard walked up.

"Never mind, Mary," he said. "We have plenty of milk in the dairy, and plenty of rats in the barn."

By this time Clematis had Deborah safe in her arms, and Mr. Alder led the way to the house, while Mr. Ladd drove off, laughing as he went.

"Well, you can take the cat down to the barn. I won't have it in the house," said Mrs. Alder.

"All right, we'll find a place for her," said Mr. Alder. He took Clematis by the hand, and they went down to the barn.

162

A gray horse poked his head from a box stall to look at the little visitor, and a little red hen called her chickens, and hastened away, clucking, as if she were very angry.

Clematis turned to look at her.

"Did you ever have any chickens?" asked Mr. Alder.

"Oh, no, I never saw any." Clematis could not take her eyes from the little chicks, as they ran after their anxious mother.

"We have lots of things to show you here. Let's put your cat up in the loft now."

They went up a set of stairs, and there was a loft, full of sweet hay.



Clematis stuck one hand out

"There now, Mrs. Tabby, you will find a good bed, and good hunting here."

163

"Her name isn't Tabby, it's Deborah," said Clematis, as she put her down.

"Oh, that's quite a name. It suits her very well." Mr. Alder led the way down again.

At the other end of the barn, a red and white calf came up to meet them.

It put out its wet nose to smell the little visitor, and made her start back.

"He wants to say 'how do'. He loves little girls," said Mr. Alder.

Clematis stuck one hand out timidly, and pulled it back again, when the calf tried to lick it with his rough tongue.

164

"He wants just a little taste," laughed Mr. Alder. "Come on now. Here is something else."

At the end of the barn, Clematis could hear strange noises. There, in the yard, were some smooth, white animals running about.

When Clematis came near the fence, they ran and put their fore feet up, and stuck their noses out.

"Uff, uff," they said. Then they squealed.

"Oh, I know! Those are pigs!" cried Clematis, clapping her hands.

Eight clean, white pigs were grunting and squealing for their supper.

"Squeal away, piggies," said Mr. Alder. "Supper will be along soon."

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In a moment, he brought from the dairy a bright milk pail. Then they went down to the gate, and he called:

"Come boss, come boss. Come Betty."

A sleek, plump cow came over the hill, and hurried down to the gate. It was just the color of a mouse.

"Dear old Betty. Steady now." Betty pushed through, and walked fast to the barn, where she began to whisper to her calf, and lap it with her great rough tongue.

As Clematis came up, Betty put her head down, and shook her horns.

"Behave, Betty. You ought to be ashamed," said Mr. Alder. "You see, she won't let any strangers near her calf."

Then he took some grain and put it in Betty's box, while he tied her head, and sat down on the stool beside her.

Clematis had never seen a cow milked before, and stood watching the white streams which filled the foaming pail, as if Mr. Alder were a fairy. It seemed like magic.

When the pail was full, Mr. Alder poured some into a shiny can, and took the rest to the dairy.

There he poured it into a red machine, with a big bowl. He turned the handle, and soon two streams came out.

"What is that for?" Clematis thought this might be some new magic. Indeed it was magic, almost.

"This is the separator," answered Mr. Alder. "I pour the milk in at the top, and turn the handle. Then the cream comes out of one spout, and the skimmed milk from the other."

"Oh, I see," said Clematis, though it really was all like magic to her.

"Now I guess we are through. Let's go up and see what they have for supper."

Mr. Alder took the empty pail, and led her back to the house, where supper was ready and waiting.

The smell of hot biscuit made Clematis feel very hungry, and she was glad that supper was all ready.

With the biscuit, was golden butter, and apple sauce.

"Do you like warm milk right from the cow?" asked Mrs. Alder.

"Yes'm," replied Clematis, with a nod.

So Mrs. Alder put a little pitcher, with a glass, not much bigger than a thimble, beside her plate.

She could pour it out herself, as often as she emptied her glass.

"Better leave room for some fresh blueberry pie, and a piece of cheese," said Mr. Alder.



The little red hen

Blueberry pie and cheese, hot biscuit and fresh milk, and golden butter, all she wanted; surely, Sally never had any supper better than this.

The shadows were falling, and the August crickets were beginning their evening concert, when Clematis had eaten the last bit of pie on her plate.

"The Sand Man is coming, I do believe," said Mr. Alder, as he reached over to pinch her cheek.

"Well, I don't wonder, the trip was a long one for a little girl. You shall go right to bed, Clematis."

Mrs. Alder took a lamp as she spoke, and led the little visitor to the stairs.

"Good night, sleep tight, don't let the skeeters bite."

Mr. Alder called after her as she went up.

Clematis laughed. Her eyes were drooping, and her feet were heavy, as she climbed the stairs.

"There now, we'll have you tucked in before a cat can say Jack Sprat," said Mrs. Alder, as she unbuttoned her boots.

"Haven't I got to fold my clothes?" asked Clematis, as Mrs. Alder began picking them up.

"Never mind about them tonight. Here's a wet cloth. We'll just have a quick wash, and into bed you go."

The bed was soft; the pillows were softer; and the song of the evening breeze in the maple, without her open window, was softer still.

"I am in the country," sighed Clematis. "I can hear the trees, and I can smell the flowers now. Tomorrow I will—"

I wish I could tell you what she was going to do. I can't, for just then, she fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XV

CLEMATIS TRIES TO HELP

The birds in the maple tree woke Clematis early the next morning.

For a minute she did not know where she was. Then she hopped out of bed and ran to the window.

The sun was up. The birds were singing all about. The smell of clover and sweet grass came to her open window.

There, across the valley, lay the mountains she saw in the evening.

Now they were not blue. She could see the rocks and the bushes, in the morning light. But they were just as lovely as before.

"Oh," she thought, "some day I'll go and climb up those mountains."

Then she washed carefully at the stand by the window, for she remembered what Miss Rose had said.

When she was dressed, she started down stairs. Then she thought again.

"I must help all I can. I guess I'll make the bed."

So she drew the clothes neatly over the bed, and smoothed the pillow. Then she went down.

"Good morning, Clematis," said Mrs. Alder. "I see you get up before breakfast. Did you have a good sleep?"

"Yes'm," replied Clematis. "Would you like me to help you?"

"No, you had better run out and see what Mr. Alder is doing. You can help me after breakfast."

So Clematis ran out.

How loud the birds sounded in the clear air. How they chirped and twittered. How sweet the smell of the flowers, and how bright the sun.

"Oh, there's the little red hen!" she cried. "But she has lost her chickens. Every one is gone."

There was the little hen, sitting on the ground, near the barn door.

Just then Mr. Alder came out with a pail of milk.

"Oh, Mr. Alder, where have all the chickens gone?" cried Clematis.

He laughed. "Dear me," he said. "I don't see them anywhere, do you?"

"No, but they were all here last night."

"I wonder if the rats caught them." Mr. Alder looked very sad.

"Oh, dear, if they did, I'll tell Deborah."

Clematis looked as if she were ready to cry.

"Don't cry. I'll get a fairy to bring them back. You turn around and shut your eyes."

He turned her around. "Now, are your eyes shut?"

"Yes."

"Now you must say, 'Fairy, Fairy, bring back my chicks.'"

"Fairy, Fairy, bring back my chicks," said Clematis, laughing.

She heard the little red hen clucking behind her. Then she heard the chickens peeping.

"Turn round," said Mr. Alder.

She opened her eyes; she turned around; and there were the chicks, running about their mother.

She was just going to cry out in surprise, when the hen lifted her wings, and two more ran out from beneath them.

"Oh, I know. She had them under her feathers all the time."

Clematis laughed and danced about, while the red hen clucked to her chicks and walked off very angry indeed.

Mr. Alder laughed also, and picked up the pail.

"Do you see that patch of raspberries down there, just beyond the hen house?" he asked.

Clematis nodded.

"I think there are some big, late raspberries down there. Would you like to pick a few? You'll find them good."

"For me to eat?"

"Yes, eat all you can find. They are good for little city girls."

"Oh, thank you." Clematis started toward the patch of raspberries.

Then she stopped.

"I must see Deborah first," she said. "I wonder if she caught any rats."

"To be sure, I forgot Deborah. Give her my love."

Mr. Alder went to separate his milk, while Clematis found Deborah sound asleep on the hay, and ready to visit the raspberry patch.

Soon the bell for breakfast rang, and Clematis ran to the house. Her lips and fingers were red with raspberries, for she had found big ones.

By her plate was her tiny glass, and a pitcher of rich milk. There were corn flakes, and shredded wheat first, and then toast, and bacon, and big baked apples with cream.

Clematis had never really expected to have such things to eat. The stories other little girls had told her, all had seemed like fairy tales.

"Now you can help me a while, if you wish," said Mrs. Alder, after breakfast. "Can you wash dishes?"

"Oh, yes'm, I can do that all right."

Clematis looked after Mr. Alder with longing eyes. He was going to feed the pigs. She longed to go too, but she knew she must help all she could.

So she started in on the plates and cups.

The water was hot, and she found it hard work to hold the china. Just as she was lifting a cup, it slipped from her hand.

"Snick."

"Gracious, what was that?" asked Mrs. Alder. She thought a good deal of her china.

The cup was taken out. A piece was broken from the edge.

"Oh, dear me. I have had those cups for twenty years. I guess I'll finish the dishes."

Clematis said nothing, but turned very red. She almost cried, she was so ashamed.

"Well, don't worry too much about it," said Mrs. Alder. "You can help me with the beds. I'm sure you can make your bed without doing any harm."

"Oh, yes'm, I've made it already."

"Made it already? When?"

"Why, when I got up, before breakfast."

"Mercy! Go right up and pull the clothes back. It must always air for an hour."

Poor Clematis went up and pulled the clothes back to air.

"How can I help, if every single thing I do is wrong?" Clematis spoke crossly out the window at the robin on the edge of the roof.

Then she felt a crumb in her pocket, and pushed up the screen to throw it out.

Mr. Robin flew away, and Mrs. Alder came in at that moment.

"Dear child, what on earth have you put up that screen for? Do you want to fill the house with flies?"

"No'm, I didn't know—"

"Oh, well, never mind. You don't know much, I guess. I promised to take you, and I'll keep my word, but it's no use trying to fit city children into real homes."

Mrs. Alder shut the screen with a bang.

"There now, you run along out doors. I guess you and Mr. Alder will get along all right, but don't touch anything."

"Hello, it looks like rain. What's the trouble, sister?"

Mr. Alder smiled and pinched her cheek, as he met Clematis at the back door.

"I tried to help," said Clematis, drying her eyes.

"Oh, I see. You didn't do things quite right, did you? Well, I wouldn't fret about that. I don't do things quite right, myself."

Clematis smiled through her tears.

"Come on now, and help me pick some late peas for dinner. You will like that, I am sure."

He took her hand, and soon she was happy again.

"There, you picked two quarts, and did it well, too. Now take these up to Mrs. Alder, and tell her you can shell them out, every one, without hurting a thing."

"Oh," said Mrs. Alder, in the kitchen. "You think you can shell peas, do you? Well, take them out under the maple tree. Then I won't have the pods all around the kitchen."

And Clematis proved that she could shell peas, after all.

Mrs. Alder gave her a cookie for her pay, and said she had done very well.

"I guess you'll get along all right, if you stay out doors," she said.

"Thanks," said Clematis, eating the cookie as she went out. She was glad enough to stay out doors.



Clematis watched the little fishes by the shore

"I'll help Mr. Alder all the time," she said to herself. "I'll feed the pigs, and the hens, and I guess he'll be glad I'm here."

CHAPTER XVI

ONLY A FEW DAYS MORE

Clematis did help Mr. Alder, and tried hard, in her way, to make herself useful.

She helped Mrs. Alder too, for she went on errands to the village every time she was asked. Every day she went to the Post Office. She took home the letters and carried home bundles from the stores.

Clematis loved this walk, because the road ran down by Knapp's saw mill, and by the river.

Near the stocking mill, the river came right up to the road, and she could even see the little fish, in the clear water.

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Sometimes she stopped longer than she thought, and was late getting back, but Mrs. Alder did not scold her.

"The less we expect of her, the less we shall be disappointed," she would say.

On Sunday, they all went down to church to hear Mr. Sampson preach.

He smiled at her in his kindly way, when she went out.

"Let me see, I don't know your name, do I?" he asked, taking her hand.

"It's Clematis."

"Well, Clematis, I'm glad to see you. I hope you will come again."

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"That little girl looks just like another little girl I used to know," he said to Mr. Alder.

"She is here for a week or two. Doctor Wyatt sent her up." Mr. Alder whispered to him a minute, before they went away.

"How would you like to take a long walk this afternoon, Clematis?" said Mr. Alder, while she was eating her ice cream and cake.

"Oh, yes, let's." Clematis was glad enough. She never liked Sundays very well.

"Good, we can walk up Bean Hill, if you think you can go that far."



She could see the little fish

"Oh, I can walk farther than that."

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So they started out, while Mrs. Alder lay down for a nap.

They didn't go by the road, but crossed the river in a boat that Mr. Alder kept tied to the bank.

Then they walked through the trees and meadows by the path.

Clematis was full of joy. New birds sang here. New trees, and new flowers met her at each turn.

After they had walked about a mile, they came to a little cabin, set among maple trees.

"Who lives here?" asked Clematis. It looked like the cabins she had seen in her picture books.

"No one lives here now. This is where they boil down their sap in the spring. They make maple syrup, and maple sugar."

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There were the big pans, turned upside down, and the pails that caught the sap.

Her mouth watered as she thought of all the maple sugar they had made in that little cabin. She wanted to stay longer, but Mr. Alder started on.

"We must get along, I want to see Mr. Brooks before we go home."

"Who is Mr. Brooks?"

"Mr. Brooks is a good man who lives over here on the side of Bean Hill. He lives all alone by himself."

"Oh," replied Clematis, "is he the man who owns the white house with the vines, and has had so much sadness?"

"Yes. How did you know about him?"

"Mr. Ladd stopped near his house. He told me."

The walk was a long one, and Clematis was glad when she saw the little cottage on the hillside.

"Here we are. There is Mr. Brooks now, working over his flowers." Mr. Alder went over to the little garden, where a man with white hair was pulling out weeds.

"Good day, Mr. Alder. Glad enough to see you. Come up and sit on the piazza."

Mr. Brooks smiled, as he wiped his hands.

"And here is a lady, too," he added. "I believe I have never met her."

He held out his hand to Clematis with a kindly smile, and led them to the piazza.

Mr. Alder told him who she was, while Clematis was looking at the neat little cottage.

A vine was growing about the door, with little white flowers, peeping out from its green leaves.

Mr. Brooks saw her looking at it.

"Do you like the flowers?" he asked.

"Yes,—it is just the same."

"What do you mean? What is just the same?"

"Why, just the same vine as the one on the white house."

"She saw the old home place when she drove over with Mr. Ladd," said Mr. Alder. "She remembered the vine."

"I am glad you like it. You ought to like it, Clematis, because it has your own name," added Mr. Alder.

"Well, well, is her name Clematis?" Mr. Brooks took her on his knee and looked into her face.

"I wish I had a little girl like you," he said.

She sat there on his knee, while he talked with Mr. Alder.

"I hope you will come again, Clematis. You will, if you get a chance, won't you?" Mr. Brooks said, as they started to go.

He brought out a big, sweet pear, and put it into her hand.

"You can eat that on the way home," he said.

All the way home Clematis kept thinking of Mr. Brooks, and the vine, and how he had looked into her face while she sat on his knee.

She had never known any father or mother, and people didn't have time to hold her that way at the Home.

"Could we go again?" she asked, as they crossed the river.

"Well, perhaps. We'll see."

When they got home, Mrs. Alder was sitting on the back steps.

Beside her, in the grass, lay three dead chickens.

"How on earth did those chickens get killed?" asked Mr. Alder, as he took one in his hand.

"Why on earth did that child ever bring her old cat up here? That's what I'd like to know." Mrs. Alder was cross.

"Did Deborah do that? Dear me! We'll have to shut her up in the loft."

"That's where she is, and that's where she'll stay," said Mrs. Alder. "Remember now, Clematis. Don't you let her get out again."

"Yes'm," said Clematis.

She didn't know what else to say, so she went sadly to the loft. There she found Deborah, sleeping sweetly, as if she had never done a thing wrong in the world.

She sat down by the open window, and looked across the river valley, and across the lake, to the mountains.

"Oh dear!" she sighed.

She heard Mrs. Alder speaking.

"I don't care, I think the Doctor was asking a good deal of us, to keep a strange child like that."

"Well, Mary, never mind. It is only for a few days longer. I guess we can stand it. Think of the pleasure it gives Clematis."

Mr. Alder spoke kindly, but as Clematis heard the words, she turned pale.

"Only a few days more. Only a few days more." The words went through her mind again and again.

She had never thought about going back. Two weeks seems a long, long time to little girls. Only a few days more before she must leave Tilton.

Clematis put her elbows on the window sill, and rested her chin in her hands.

The sun was setting behind the maple tree. The golden rays gleamed in the white mist that had risen from the river, for it was a cold evening.

In the distance the Belmont mountains were a deep, misty blue, and the clouds above them all white and gold.

Now all the valley was filling with a golden mist. The birds were singing in the trees along the banks of the river. They filled the evening air with joyous songs.

"Only a few days more. Only a few days more."

Soon she must go back to the brick walls, and the yard with the high fence around it.

When Mr. Alder came to call Clematis for supper, her eyes were red, and her cheeks pale.

"Never mind, dear little girl," he said. "We'll keep Deborah shut up. I guess we can spare the chickens. We have plenty more."

She said nothing, but went silently in for the evening meal. She had forgotten all about the chickens. All through supper the words ran in her head, and the last thing in her mind as she fell asleep was this thought:

"Only a few days more."

CHAPTER XVII

WHERE IS CLEMATIS?

On Monday Clematis found a big, blue envelope, with the other mail.

"I guess you have a letter for your own self this time," said Mr. Morse, as he handed her the mail.

Clematis did not stop to look at the little fishes by the shore. She hurried straight home.

It was a letter for her own self. Miss Rose sent it to her.

"Oh, I wish I had learned to read. Please read mine first, Mrs. Alder?"

"Do you think that is polite?" asked Mrs. Alder.

"No'm, but you get lots of letters."

"That is true. Well, let us see."

She opened the envelope, while Clematis got close to her side.

"Dear little Clematis:

I hope you are well, and having a good time. I am sure you must be having a splendid time, for Tilton is a lovely place. I wish I were with you.

What a naughty girl you were to take Deborah, when she was not invited. I hope Mrs. Alder has forgiven you.

I am going to ask Mrs. Alder to send you home on the afternoon train Saturday, so you will be all ready when school begins.

I shall be at the train to meet you. Don't forget Deborah.

Your true friend,
Rose Thornton."

"That is a good letter for a little girl to get, I am sure. Now run out and play, while I read my letters."

Clematis went out, rather slowly. The letter made her think again of the end of her stay, and she was sad.

But the sun was bright, the breeze was cool, and the birds sang merrily.

She saw Mr. Alder down in the garden, and ran to him.

"Can I help you, Mr. Alder?"

"I think not. I am weeding late carrots, and I think you would not know them from weeds."

"I should know them, honestly. Just let me try a little bit."

"Well, then, take this little trowel. Make the earth loose around them, and then pull the weeds out with your fingers."

Clematis kneeled in the soft earth, and began to work with the trowel.

She weeded the row across from Mr. Alder, where he could see what she was doing.

"Well, I declare! You are a real gardener." Mr. Alder patted her shoulder, and praised her well when she had done several feet of her row. 204

The little green tops of the carrots all stood straight and clean. Every weed was gone, but no carrots were hurt.

"I told you I could do it. You did not believe me, did you?"

Clematis smiled happily.

"Well, I do now. I never saw any one do better."

So the man and the little girl worked side by side beneath the August sun.

The smell of the warm earth, and the fresh growing things all around her, made Clematis breathe deeply.

She could hear the birds singing, and see the mountains, across the lakes. 205

While she was hard at work, she almost forgot to be sad because she was going back on the Saturday train.

"Just look at that child," said Mrs. Alder, when they went in to wash for dinner. "Has she been weeding in her good clothes?"

"She has weeded two whole rows of carrots, I know that much. I'll get her some new clothes when those wear out. She is as much help at weeding as a man."

Clematis was as proud of that, as Deborah was with her first rat. In the afternoon Mrs. Alder found her a pair of small overalls. These covered her dress and kept her clean. 206

It was a happy child that came in at evening. She had worked steadily, in the hot sun and the breeze, and had finished all the carrots.

"You don't know how much help that has been, Clematis," said Mr. Alder. "It tires my back to weed carrots, and now they are all done."

"I will weed tomorrow, too," she said, happy with her praise.

There was plenty to do, as there always is on a farm, and Clematis was busy all day.

"I don't see how she learns so quickly," exclaimed Mr. Alder, when he was telling Mr. Ladd about her.

"I suppose it is because she naturally loves it," he answered. "It seems too bad that she couldn't live here in the country, she seems to love it so." 207

"Yes. I wish Mrs. Alder was better, and took to children more. Clematis is clumsy in the house, but out in the garden she is right at home."

So the days went on, with sunshine and clouds, and Saturday came nearer and nearer.

"Clematis, what have you been doing to the calendar in your room?" asked Mrs. Alder, at dinner on Friday.

"I was just looking to see how many days till Saturday."

"Well, you needn't muss it up that way." 208

Every morning Clematis had taken it down and counted the days with her fingers.

Friday evening she did not eat much supper, and was very silent.

"Longing to get back home, I guess," said Mrs. Alder. "Well, dear, you will be back with the other children tomorrow. I know what it is. I was homesick myself when I was a child."

Clematis did not answer. She didn't know how to tell what it was that troubled her, so she said nothing.

The stars were bright, and the tiny moon was low in the sky, before the weary eyes closed in sleep.

Clematis had been thinking, and thinking. Tomorrow was Saturday. 209

Early in the morning she was awake again, by the window.

She leaned her head on her hands, and began to think again.

"That is what he said," she repeated, half aloud.

"That is just what he said. If he didn't mean it, why did he say it?"

At the breakfast table, Mrs. Alder noticed how pale her cheeks were.

"Try to eat some toast, dear," said Mrs. Alder. "You will soon be home again. Only a few hours more now."

Clematis raised her eyes, and gave Mrs. Alder a strange look. 210

"That child does beat all," said Mrs. Alder, after breakfast. "She seems to be thinking a lot, but

she keeps as quiet as a stone jug."

"She is thinking; you may be sure of that," Mr. Alder replied.

All the morning Clematis went about silently, except when she was in the loft with Deborah. Then she talked.

"I shan't be afraid. I am a big girl, Debby, and I shan't be a mite afraid."

Deborah could not speak, but she snuggled up close, and purred, so Clematis knew just what she meant.

"Be sure to have all your things ready, Clematis," called Mrs. Alder. 211

"We shall have an early dinner, for Mr. Ladd will be here about one o'clock to take you to the station."

"Yes'm," said Clematis, and she went slowly to her room.

Before long, all was ready, and dinner was on the table.

"Now, let's eat a big dinner. I roasted a chicken especially for you."

How good the roast chicken smelled! There were baked potatoes, and peas, and beans, too.

Clematis was hungry now. She ate, and ate, and ate.

"Good girl." Mr. Alder patted her on the head. "Travelers must be well fed."

"Be sure to wash all the blueberry off your mouth," added Mrs. Alder, as Clematis got down. 212

Clematis went to the sink and washed her face and hands. Then she went to the back door.

"Don't forget Deborah's satin dress, and velvet hat?" called Mr. Alder.

She turned and smiled back at him, as she went out.

Soon Mr. Ladd drove up.

"I came a bit early," he said. "I've got some milk for the Seminary. Is Clematis ready?"

"Yes, all ready, I guess. She just went out to get her cat."

Mrs. Alder went to the back door and called.

She waited a minute, but Clematis did not come. 213

She called again. No Clematis. "Please go and get her, Henry," she said to Mr. Alder. "Tell her to come right in."

After a few minutes Mr. Alder came back. He looked puzzled.

"Well, where is Clematis?" asked Mrs. Alder.

"I don't know."

"Don't know? Isn't she in the loft?"

"No."

"Well, perhaps she went to say goodbye to the pigs."

"She isn't there."

"She must be around here somewhere. She has no wings; she can't fly."

"I'm not so sure of that." Mr. Alder smiled in a puzzled way at Mr. Ladd. 214

"That's just like you men."

Mrs. Alder went to the door and called as loudly as she could. Then she went to the barn and called again.

She looked all about. Mr. Alder looked all about. Mr. Ladd looked all about.

They all called once more.

It was of no use. Clematis was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII

HUNTING FOR CLEMATIS

Mr. Alder looked at Mr. Ladd. Mr. Ladd looked at Mrs. Alder. They all looked at each other.

What should they do?

"Well," said Mrs. Alder at last, "you drive down street with Mr. Ladd and find out if any one has seen her. I will look all about the farm." 215

The men had not gone far down the street when they met a boy.

"Hi, Ned! have you seen our little girl?" called Mr. Alder.

"Who, Clematis? Have you lost her?"

"No, she has lost herself. Have you seen her?"

"My gracious, no." His blue eyes opened almost as wide as butter plates.

"Well, tell any one you see that she's lost; that's a good boy."

"My gracious, I guess I will."

Off ran little Ned Atkinson, as fast as his legs would carry him.

He told every one he met, but no one had seen Clematis.

Not far down the street Mr. Knapp came rolling out of his yard.

"Have you seen that little girl of ours, Mr. Knapp?"

"Yes, yes. I saw her. She's a likely gal. Quite spry."

"Where was she?" Both men spoke at once.



"I sha'n't be afraid"

"Oh, right along here, yesterday morning."

"I mean today. Have you seen her today?"

"No, no, I haven't set eyes on her today. What's the matter? Is she lost?"

"It looks as if she were lost. We can't find her."

"Well, she'll be back.

'Let 'em alone,
And they'll come home,
Wagging their tails behind them.'"

They heard his great voice echo down the river, as they drove on.

Nobody had seen Clematis. Nobody knew anything about her.

Mrs. Alder looked everywhere at home.

Her bag and box were neatly packed and ready, but there was no sign of the little girl who owned them.

Many people were looking for Clematis that afternoon.

Ned Atkinson ran everywhere, telling people about the lost girl.

They looked in the woods and in the fields. They looked all along the river banks.

When night came, they were still hunting, but had found no trace of Clematis.

"I can't sleep a wink tonight," said Mrs. Alder. "I think the child must be crazy, to run off like that."

"I don't feel much like sleep myself," Mr. Alder replied.

"I wonder where she can be hiding."

The next morning many people came to ask if Clematis had been found.

"No, no, no. There isn't a sign of her anywhere. I don't know what we shall do."

Mrs. Alder made the same answer to every one.

During the day people still looked about in new places.

Afternoon came again, but no Clematis came with it.

Towards evening, Mr. Brooks was sitting in his chair by his little cottage, reading a book.

The sun was sinking behind the mountains in the west.

The birds were singing their evening songs, in the trees by the brook.

All was quiet and peaceful.

As he sat there, Mr. Brooks heard steps on the path.

He looked down and saw a little girl. In her arms was a cat, with a black spot over one eye.

The child stumbled as she walked. She seemed ready to drop, she was so tired.

"Why, little girl, where did you come from?" cried Mr. Brooks.

He got up and went down to meet her.

Then she raised her pale face, and he saw that it was Clematis. Her face and hands were soiled; her hair was tangled; her dress was dusty and torn.

"Oh, little maid," he said. "Did you walk way over here to see me?"

"Yes," said Clematis, faintly. "I said I would, and I did."

"Dear child, you are worn out. Come in and rest."

He took her into the little house, and got a basin and water.

"There, dear, wash your face and hands. You will feel better.

"Now sit down, Clematis," said Mr. Brooks, when she had finished washing her face and hands, "and we will have a bite to eat."

He cut a slice of bread. On this he spread some butter, and sprinkled a little sugar.

Clematis watched him with hungry eyes.

"Dear child, you must be starved," he said, as she took a great bite.

"Wouldn't you be hungry if you hadn't had any breakfast or dinner?"

Clematis took another big bite.

"No breakfast? No dinner? Where have you been all day?"

"I stayed in the little house where they boil the sap."

The bread was nearly gone now.

"Did you run away this morning?"

Mr. Brooks was cutting another slice.

"No, I stayed there last night."

"You stayed there all last night? Child! I should think you would have frozen. There was frost last night."

"I did freeze," said Clematis, beginning on the second slice.

Mr. Brooks looked at her a moment in silence, while she ate.

"I never heard anything to beat that," he said at last, as he reached once more for the bread.

"Mrs. Alder will be very anxious."

Clematis shook her head.

"No she won't. She'll be glad I'm gone."

Mr. Brooks smiled.

"Well, Mr. Alder will, anyway. As soon as you have eaten a few loaves of bread, I'll get Mr. Giles's horse. They will be glad enough to see you again."

Clematis put down her bread. Her lips quivered, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Don't you want me?" she said.

"My dear child, what do you mean?"

"You said you wished you had a little girl."

"Did I say that?"

"Yes, you said you wished you had a little girl, and you can have me. Nobody wants me, except you.

"I can make my bed, and wash dishes, and I don't say slang words any more, and I can weed everything in your garden."



In Grandfather's house

Poor Clematis, she had never said so much at one time in her life.

Then she burst into tears. She was tired, and worn, and faint.

Mr. Brooks took her into his lap. He hardly knew what to say to comfort her.

"Have you no father or mother?" he asked.

"No," she sobbed, "I haven't anybody at all."

"You see I am all alone here. I haven't any good place to keep a little girl."

"I don't care, I can sleep on the floor."

Her eyes were drooping, and she was growing quiet. Her head rested on his shoulder.

Mr. Brooks was thinking what to say, when he looked down at her face.

Her brown eyes were closed, and she was fast asleep.

He held her there a while. Then he took her into the next room, and laid her on the bed.

Covered with a warm blanket, she sighed softly, and sank into a deep slumber.

"I can't take her home tonight. She ought to have a long, quiet sleep," said Mr. Brooks to himself.

He watched her a while. Then he went out, up the mountain to Mr. Giles's house.

There he telephoned to Atkinson's store.

In another minute a little boy was racing up the street. He called to every one on his way:

"Clematis is found! Clematis is found! She's up on Bean Hill."

Ned shouted at the top of his voice.

Clematis would have been surprised, if she had seen how glad Mrs. Alder was to know that she was safe.

They sent a message to Miss Rose, and told her that Clematis was found.

Every one was glad. Every one asked how she ever got way up there on Bean Hill, but no one knew.

All this time Clematis was sleeping quietly.

When Mr. Brooks returned, she had not stirred.

He stood and looked at her a long, long time.

When he turned away there were tears in his eyes.

"Poor little elf," he whispered. "She thought I meant just what I said."

He spread some blankets on the floor, and lay down, but he did not go to sleep.

His thoughts went back to a book he had been reading.

It was about Silas Marner, a man who was sad and lonely.

Silas Marner took a little girl into his tiny house to care for, and she made his life happy again.

"Silas Marner did not have so large a home as this," he thought. "But he took good care of the little girl. How happy they were together."

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The little face, all wet with tears, came before him again and again.

"I might keep her for a little while, at least," he said to himself. "I will see what Mr. Alder thinks in the morning."

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CHAPTER XIX

NEW PLANS

When Mr. Brooks woke in the morning, Clematis was already up. She had washed her face and hands at the spring, near the door, and was sitting on the step.

"Oho, so the little bird woke first, did she?" said Mr. Brooks.

Clematis nodded, and looked up shyly.

"I was thinking about you last night before I went to sleep. Suppose I should keep you with me for a little while. Do you think you would like that?"

"Oh, I would help like anything," she cried. "You just try me, and see."

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"Well, I will talk to Mr. Alder, and perhaps you can stay for a while, at least."

So Mr. Brooks talked with Mr. Alder. Then he wrote to Mrs. Snow.

Yes, Clematis might stay a week.

How hard she tried!

"I'll wash and wipe all the dishes," she said.

The very first day she broke a cup. Then she cried.

"Dear me, don't feel bad about that. You are doing the best you can, I know."

Mr. Brooks laughed, and Clematis smiled again.

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"Men don't care so much about dishes," she said to herself.

To be sure, Clematis had not learned to do much, but she had learned to do her best.

Mr. Brooks found that she could help in many ways, and she was so anxious to do her best, that he gladly forgave her mistakes.

He made her a little bed in the room upstairs.

At evening, she could hear the wind whispering in the trees, and the little brook that ran down from the spring.

In the morning, she could see the lakes and mountains across the valley, as she sat by her open window, while the birds hopped about on the twigs, and sang their sweetest songs.



A little girl was coming up the path

Deborah slept each night in a little box close by her bed, and followed her about all day long. The week passed very quickly. On Friday, Mr. Brooks saw that she was silent and thoughtful. "I don't think I can spare you yet," he said at breakfast. "I must ask Mrs. Snow to let you stay another week, at least."

Clematis was never so happy. She smiled and hummed a little song all the morning. Now and then she would stop to pat Deborah, who slept by the stove.

"He is going to let me stay another week, Debby!" she would whisper. "Another week, another whole week."

This week was passing also, when Clematis had a great surprise.

It was a letter from Miss Rose.

"Oh, read it to me, read it to me!" she exclaimed, as she climbed up into Mr. Brooks's lap.

So he opened the envelope and read:

"Dear Clematis:

Mr. Brooks has asked us if he might keep you for a year. Do you think you would like to stay?

I shall go to see you in Tilton next week, so you must be thinking it over, and decide if you really want to stay?

Your true friend,
Rose Thornton."

After he had finished, Clematis was silent for a moment. Then she looked up at him with a happy smile.

"Please read it again," she said.

So he read it again, while she sat still in his lap.

"Do you think you would really like to stay?" he asked, when he had finished.

Clematis patted his hand, and snuggled her face against his shoulder.

"Can Debby stay, too?" she asked.

"Of course she can. We couldn't get along without Debby."

That night Clematis looked out at the golden light, just fading from the mountains.

A star was twinkling in the sky. The brook was bubbling down among the trees, and the wind hummed a little tune in their soft branches.

She was very happy.

"I am going to be happy always now," she said.

CHAPTER XX

THE TRUE FAIRY STORY

The next week they got Mr. Giles's horse, and drove down to meet Miss Rose at the station.

How glad Clematis was to see her!

She sat in her lap all the way back to Bean Hill, and told her about the mountains, the lakes, the trees, and the birds.

"So you think you would like to stay a whole year, do you?" asked Miss Rose.

Clematis smiled and nodded.

"Deborah can stay too," she said.

When they got to the little cottage, Miss Rose went in with Mr. Brooks, and had a long talk.

She told him all she knew about Clematis.

He listened while she told him how Clematis ran away, how the policeman found her, and how she came to the Home.

"Have you any trace of her father and mother?"

"No, they said the father's name was Jones, but I am not sure that was her father's true name. Both her father and mother died when she was a baby, they say."

Mr. Brooks looked puzzled.

"Did the mother leave nothing when she died, that people might know her by?"

Miss Rose reached into her little black bag and brought out the picture. Mr. Brooks did not take it at first.

"They said the father's name was Jones; did they tell you his first name?" he asked.

"No, just Jones. I could learn no other name."

Miss Rose held out the picture, and Mr. Brooks's hand trembled as he took it.

After one look, he carried it to the window.

There he held it to the light, and gazed at it a long time.

"Do you see some one there you know?" asked Miss Rose.

"Wouldn't you know your own daughter, if you saw her?"

Miss Rose smiled. Then she saw tears in his eyes.

"Please forgive me for smiling," she said. "You reminded me so much of Clematis. She asks questions just like that."

"Well, wouldn't you expect her to be like her own grandfather?"

Then Mr. Brooks smiled too.

"Is she really your grandchild?" exclaimed Miss Rose.

"Yes, she is, she must be. This is her mother here."

He pointed to one of the girls in the picture.

"This was taken in front of the Seminary, a year before she ran away to be married."

"Oh, it seems just like a fairy story. I can hardly believe it."

Miss Rose looked again at the picture.

"Yes, it is like a fairy story," Mr. Brooks replied. "Dear, wayward girl. She needn't have run away. I would have gladly forgiven her."

"Then you will take Clematis to live with you, I suppose."

"Yes indeed. I have wondered about that name, Clematis. Her mother loved flowers. She loved the clematis vine about the door most of all."

"I suppose she named Clematis in memory of her dear old home," said Miss Rose.

Then Mr. Brooks told Miss Rose about the white house on the hill.

"I suppose we ought to move back there, now," he said. "Then Clematis can go to the Union School, and grow up like other children."

"It is wonderful. It is a fairy story, I am sure," she replied, "for the fairies must have led Clematis to your door. She will be the happiest child alive, when we tell her."

And Clematis was the happiest girl alive, when they called her in and told her the whole story.

She climbed into her grandfather's lap, and held his hand, while Miss Rose told it just like a fairy tale.

"Are we going to live in the house where all the vines are?" she asked, when Miss Rose was done.

"Yes, dear, you are."

"And I can stay there always?"

"Yes, Clematis."

"And will you be my grandpa always?"

She looked up at Mr. Brooks. He smiled and kissed her hot cheek.

"Yes, little maiden. You shall be my housekeeper, and we shall be as happy as robins in an apple tree."

So Miss Rose went back to Boston, and told them all the story.

The children made her tell it over and over again. They said it was better than any fairy tale they had ever read.

"And did she really sleep out in the woods alone?" asked Sally.

"And does her grandfather really and truly have a big white house on a hill?" asked Jane.

"Yes, yes, yes. It is all true, every word of it," answered Miss Rose.

Even Clematis could hardly believe it all, at first.

She followed her grandfather all about, wherever he went, for fear he might fly away, and never come back.

In the golden October, they moved up to the white house on the hill, grandfather, Clematis, and Deborah.

There Clematis had the room over the porch, where the vines climbed around her window. She could look out each morning, and see the river, and the lakes, with the mountains beyond.

She felt a little strange among all the new people she saw each day, and she had very much to learn. But Clematis learned the best thing of all, to do the best she could, and she soon grew into a sweet, useful girl.

Her little friends loved her, and her teachers helped her, for she tried to please them, and never complained because things were not easy to do.

When she heard that Sally and the other girls could hardly believe her story, she went and whispered to her grandfather.

“May I?” she asked.

“Of course you may,” he said, “as many as you want.”

Then she wrote a letter all her own self. She invited all the girls her own age, at the Home, to visit her the next summer, and see for themselves.

So if you ever go to Tilton, you must look about for a strong, happy girl, with big brown eyes, who studies her lessons, and works in the garden, and has the happiest time any girl ever had, with her grandfather, in the big white house on the hill.

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