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Author: Susan Coolidge

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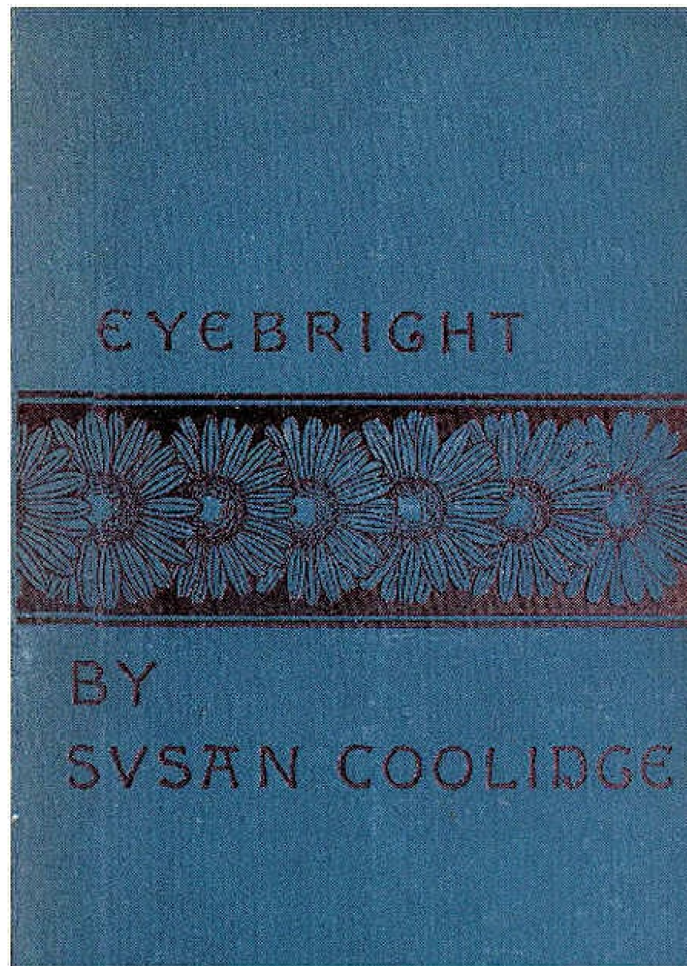

EYEBRIGHT.

A STORY.

By SUSAN COOLIDGE,

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW YEAR'S BARGAIN," "WHAT KATY DID," "WHAT KATY DID AT SCHOOL," "MISCHIEF'S THANKSGIVING," "NINE LITTLE GOSLINGS."

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EYEBRIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

LADY JANE AND LORD GUILDFORD.

"THE FALCON"

It wanted but five minutes to twelve in Miss Fitch's schoolroom, and a general restlessness showed that her scholars were aware of the fact. Some of the girls had closed their books, and were putting their desks to rights, with a good deal of unnecessary fuss, keeping an eye on the clock meanwhile. The boys wore the air of dogs who see their master coming to untie them; they jumped and quivered, making the benches squeak and rattle, and shifted their feet about on the uncarpeted floor, producing sounds of the kind most trying to a nervous teacher. A general expectation prevailed. Luckily, Miss Fitch was not nervous. She had that best of all gifts for teaching,—calmness; and she understood her pupils and their ways, and had sympathy with them. She knew how hard it is for feet with the dance of youth in them to keep still for three long hours on a June morning; and there was a pleasant, roguish look in her face as she laid her hand on the bell, and, meeting the twenty-two pairs of expectant eyes which were fixed on hers, rang it—dear Miss Fitch—actually a minute and a half before the time.

At the first tinkle, like arrows dismissed from the bow-string, two girls belonging to the older class jumped from their seats and flew, ahead of all the rest, into the entry, where hung the hats and caps of the school, and their dinner-baskets. One seized a pink sun-bonnet from its nail, the other a Shaker-scoop with a deep green cape; each possessed herself of a small tin pail, and just as the little crowd swarmed into the passage, they hurried out on the green, in the middle of which the schoolhouse stood. It was a very small green, shaped like a triangle, with half a dozen trees growing upon it; but

"Little things are great to little men,"

you know, and to Miss Fitch's little men and women "the Green" had all the importance and excitement of a park. Each one of the trees which stood upon it possessed a name of its own. Every crotch and branch in them was known to the boys and the most daring among the girls; each had been the scene of games and adventures without number. "The Castle," a low spreading oak with wide, horizontal branches, had been the favorite tree for fights. Half the boys would

garrison the boughs, the other half, scrambling from below and clutching and tugging, would take the part of besiegers, and it had been great fun all round. But alas, for that "had been!" Ever since one unlucky day, when Luther Bradley, as King Charles, had been captured five boughs up by Cromwell and his soldiers, and his ankle badly sprained in the process, Miss Fitch had ruled that "The Castle" should be used for fighting purposes no longer. The boys might climb it, but they must not call themselves a garrison, nor pull nor struggle with each other. So the poor oak was shorn of its military glories, and forced to comfort itself by bearing a larger crop of acorns than had been possible during the stirring and warlike times, now for ever ended.

Then there was "The Dove-cote," an easily climbed beech, on which rows of girls might be seen at noon-times roosting like fowls in the sun. And there was "The Falcon's Nest," which produced every year a few small, sour apples, and which Isabella Bright had adopted for her tree. She knew every inch of the way to the top; to climb it was like going up a well-known staircase, and the sensation of sitting there aloft, high in air, on a bough which curved and swung, with another bough exactly fitting her back to lean against, was full of delight and fascination. It was like moving and being at rest all at once; like flying, like escape. The wind seemed to smell differently and more sweetly up there than in lower places. Two or three times lost in fancies as deep as sleep, Isabella had forgotten all about recess and bell, and remained on her perch, swinging and dreaming, till some one was sent to tell her that the arithmetic class had begun. And once, direful day! marked with everlasting black in the calendar of her conscience, being possessed suddenly, as it were, by some idle and tricksy demon, she stayed on after she was called, and, called again, she still stayed; and when, at last, Miss Fitch herself came out and stood beneath the tree, and in her pleasant, mild voice told her to come down, still the naughty girl, secure in her fastness, stayed. And when, at last, Miss Fitch, growing angry, spoke severely and ordered her to descend, Isabella shook the boughs, and sent a shower of hard little apples down on her kind teacher's head. That was dreadful, indeed, and dreadfully did she repent it afterward, for she loved Miss Fitch dearly, and, except for being under the influence of the demon, could never have treated her so. Miss Fitch did not kiss her for a whole month afterward,—that was Isabella's punishment, —and it was many months before she could speak of the affair without feeling her eyes fill swiftly with tears, for Isabella's conscience was tender, and her feelings very quick in those days.

This, however, was eighteen months ago, when she was only ten and a half. She was nearly twelve now, and a good deal taller and wiser. I have introduced her as Isabella, because that was her real name, but the children and everybody always called her Eyebright. "I. Bright" it had been written in the report of her first week at Miss Fitch's school, when she was a little thing not more than six years old. The droll name struck some one's fancy and from that day she was always called Eyebright because of that, and because her eyes were bright. They were gray eyes, large and clear, set in a wide, low forehead, from which a thick mop of hazel-brown hair, with a wavy kink all through it, was combed back, and tied behind with a brown ribbon. Her nose turned up a little; her mouth was rather wide, but it was a smiling, good-tempered mouth; the cheeks were pink and wholesome, and altogether, though not particularly pretty, Eyebright was a pleasant-looking little girl in the eyes of the people who loved her, and they were a good many.

To her there was a great charm in all that goes to the making of pictures.—Page 7.

The companion with whom she was walking was Bessie Mather, her most intimate friend just then. Bessie was the daughter of a portrait-painter, who didn't have many portraits to paint, so he was apt to be discouraged, and his family to feel rather poor. Eyebright was not old enough to perceive the inconveniences of being poor. To her there was a great charm in all that goes to the making of pictures. She loved the shining paint-tubes, the palette set with its ring of many-colored dots, and the white canvases; even the smell of oil was pleasant to her, and she often wished that her father, too, had been a painter. When, as once in a great while happened, Bessie asked her to tea, she went with a sort of awe over her mind, and returned in a rapture, to tell her mother that they had had biscuits and apple-sauce for supper, and hadn't done any thing in particular; but she had enjoyed it so much, and it had been so interesting! Mrs. Bright never could understand why biscuits and apple-sauce, which never created any enthusiasm in Eyebright at home, should be so delightful at Bessie Mather's, neither could Eyebright explain it, but so it was. This portrait-painting father was one of Bessie's chief attractions in Eyebright's eyes, but apart from that, she was sweet-tempered, pliable, and affectionate, and—a strong bond in friendship sometimes—she liked to follow and Eyebright to lead; she preferred to listen and Eyebright to talk; so they suited each other exactly. Bessie's hair was dark; she was not quite so tall as Eyebright; but their heights matched very well, as, with arms round each other's waist, they paced up and down "the green," stopping now and then to take a cookie, or a bit of bread and butter, from the dinner-pails which they had set under one of the trees.

Not the least attention did they pay to the rest of the scholars, but Eyebright began at once, as if reading from some book which had been laid aside only a moment before:

"At that moment Lady Jane heard a tap at the door.

"'See who it is, Margaret,' she said.

"Margaret opened the door, and there stood before her astonished eyes a knight clad in shining armor.

"'Who are you, Sir Knight, and wherefore do you come?' she cried, in amaze.

"'I am come to see the Lady Jane Grey,' he replied; 'I have a message for her from Lord Guildford Dudley.'

"'From my noble Guildford,' shrieked Lady Jane, rushing forward.

"'Even so, madam,' replied the knight, bowing profoundly."

Here Eyebright paused for a large bite of bread and butter.

"Go on—please go on," pleaded Bessie, whose mouth happened to be empty just then.

Mumble, mumble,—"the Lady Jane sank back on her couch"—resumed Eyebright, speaking rather thickly by reason of the bread and butter. "She was very pale, and one tear ran slowly down her pearly cheek.

"'What says my lord?' she faintly uttered.

"'He bids me to tell you to hope on, hope ever,' cried the knight; 'the jailer's daughter has promised to steal her father's keys to-night, unbar his door, and let him escape.'

"'Can this be true?' cried Margaret—that's you, you know, Bessie—be ready to catch me. 'Help! my lady is about to faint with joy.'"

Here Eyebright sank on the grass, while Bessie made a dash, and raised her head.

"'Is it? Can it be—true?' murmured the Lady Jane,"—her languid hand meanwhile stealing into the dinner-pail, and producing therefrom a big red apple.

"'It is true—the blessed news is indeed true,' cried the true-hearted Margaret.

"'I feel new life in my veins;' and the Lady Jane sprang to her feet." Here Eyebright scrambled to hers.

"'Come, Margaret,' she cried, 'we most decide in what garb we shall greet my dearest lord when he comes from prison. Don't you think the cram—cram—cramberry velvet, with a net-work of pearls, and,'—what else did they wear, Bessie?"

"Girdles?" ventured Bessie.

"'And a girdle of gems,'" went on Eyebright, easily, and quite regardless of expense. "'Don't you think that will be best, girl?'"

"Oh, Eyebright, would she say 'girl?'" broke in Bessie; "it doesn't sound polite enough for the Lady Jane."

"They all do,—I assure you they do. I can show you the place in Shakespeare. It don't sound so nice, because when people say 'girl,' now, it always means servant-girl, you know; but it was different then; and Lady Jane did say 'my girl.' And you mustn't interrupt so, Bessie, or we shan't get to the execution this recess, and after school I want to play the little Princes in the Tower."

"I won't interrupt any more," said Bessie; "go on."

"'Yes, the cramberry velvet is my choice,'" resumed Eyebright. "'Sir Knight, accept my grateful thanks.'

"He bent low and kissed her fair hand.

"'May naught but good tidings await you ever-more!' he murmured. 'Sorrow should never light on so fair a being.'

"'Ah,' she said, 'sorrow seems my portion. What is rank or riches or ducality to a happy heart!'"

"What did you say? What was that word, Eyebright?"

"Ducality. Lady Jane's father was a duke, you know."

"The knight sighed deeply, and withdrew.

"'Ah, Guildford,' murmured the Lady Jane, laying her head on the shoulder of her beloved Margaret, 'shall I indeed see you once more? It seems too good to be true.'"

Eyebright paused, and bit into her apple with an absorbed expression. She was meditating the next scene in her romance.

"So the next day and the next went by, and still the Lady Jane prayed and waited. Night came at last, and now Lord Guildford might appear at any moment. Margaret dressed her lovely mistress in the velvet robe, twined the pearls in her golden hair, and clasped the jewelled girdle round her slender waist. One snow-white rose was pinned in her bosom. Never had she looked so wildly beautiful. But still Lord Guildford came not. At last a tap at the door was heard.

"'It is he!' cried the Lady Jane, and flew to meet him.

"But alas! it was not he. A stern and gigantic form filled the door-way, and, entering, looked at her with fiery eyes. No, his helmet was shut tight. Wouldn't that be better, Bessie?"

"Oh yes, much better. Do have it shut," said the obliging Bessie.

"His lineaments were hidden by his helmet," resumed Eyebright, correcting herself; "but there was something in his aspect which made her heart thrill with terror.

"'You are looking to see if I am one who will never cross your path again,' he said, in a harsh tone. 'Lady Jane Grey—no! Guildford Dudley has this day expiated his crimes on Tower Hill. His headless trunk is already buried beneath the pavement where traitors lie.'

"'Oh no, no; in mercy unsay the word!' shrieked the Lady Jane, and with one quick sob she sank lifeless to the earth, while Margaret sank beside her. We won't really sink, I think, Bessie, because the grass stains our clothes so, and they get so mussed up. Wealthy says she can't imagine what I do to my things; there was so much grass-green in them that it greened all the water in the tub last wash, she told mother; that was when we played the Coramantic Captive, you know, and I had to keep fainting all the time. We'll just make believe we sank, I guess.

"'Rouse yourself, Lady,' went on the stern warrior 'I have more to communicate. You are my prisoner. Here is the warrant to arrest you, and the soldiers wait outside.'

"One dizzy moment, and Lady Jane rallied the spirit of her race. Her face was deadly pale, but she never looked more lovely.

"'I am ready,' she said, with calm dignity; 'only give me time to breathe one prayer,' and, sinking at the foot of her crucifix, she breathed an Ave Maria in such melodious tones that all present refrained from tears.

"'Lead on,' she murmured.

"We now pass to the scene of execution," proceeded Eyebright, whose greatest gift as a storyteller was her power of getting over difficult parts of the narrative in a sort of inspired, rapid way. "I guess we won't have any trial, Bessie, because trials are so hard, and I don't know exactly how to do them. It was a chill morning in early spring. The sun had hid his face from the awful spectacle. The bell was tolling, the crowd assembled, and the executioner stood leaning on the handle of his dreadful axe. The block was ready!—"

"Oh, Eyebright, it is awful!" interposed Bessie, on the point of tears.

"At last the door of the Tower opened," went on the relentless Eyebright, "and the slender form of the Lady Jane appeared, led by the captain of the guard, and followed by a long procession of monks and soldiers. Her faithful Margaret was by her side, drowned in tears. She was so young, so fair and so sweet that all hearts pitied her, and when she turned to the priest and said, 'Father, do not we-ep'—"

Eyebright here broke down and began to cry. As for Bessie, she had been sobbing hard, with her handkerchief over her eyes for nearly two minutes.

"'I am go-ing to hea-ven,'" faltered Eyebright, overcome with emotion. "'Thank my cousin, Bloody Mary, for sending me th-ere.'"

"Can you tell me the way to Mr. Bright's house?" said a voice just behind them.

The girls jumped and looked round. In the excitement of the execution, they had wandered, without knowing it, to the far edge of the green, which bordered on the public road. A gentleman on horseback had stopped close beside them, and was looking at them with an amused expression, which changed to one of pity, as the two tear-stained faces met his eye.

"Is any thing the matter? Are you in any trouble?" he asked, anxiously.

"Oh no, sir; not a bit. We are only playing; we are having a splendid time," explained Eyebright.

And then, anxious to change the subject, and also to get back to Lady Jane and her woes, she made haste with the direction for which the stranger had asked.

"Just down there, sir; turn the first street, and it's the fourth house from the corner. No, the fifth,—which is it, Bessie?"

"Let me see," replied Bessie, counting on her fingers. "Mrs. Clapp's, Mr. Potter's, Mr. Wheelwright's,—it's the fourth, Eyebright."

The gentleman thanked them and rode away. As he did so, the bell tinkled at the schoolhouse door.

"Oh, there's that old bell. I don't believe it's time one bit. Miss Fitch must have set the clock forward," declared Eyebright.

Alas, no; Miss Fitch had done nothing of the sort, for at that moment clang went the town-clock, which, as every one knew, kept the best of time, and by which all the clocks and watches in the neighborhood were set.

"Pshaw, it really is!" cried Eyebright. "How short recess seems! Not longer than a minute."

"Not more than half a minute," chimed in Bessie. "Oh, Eyebright, it was too lovely! I hate to go in."

The cheeks and eyelids of the almost executed Lady Jane and her bower maiden were in a sad state of redness when they entered the schoolroom, but nobody took any particular notice of them. Miss Fitch was used to such appearances, and so were the other boys and girls, when Eyebright and Bessie Mather had spent their recess, as they almost always did, in playing the game which they called "acting stories."

CHAPTER II.

AFTER SCHOOL.

Four o'clock seemed slow in coming; but it struck at last, as hours always will if we wait long enough; and Miss Fitch dismissed school, after a little bit of Bible-reading and a short prayer. People nowadays are trying to do away with Bibles and prayers in schools, but I think the few words which Miss Fitch said in the Lord's ear every night—and they were very few and simple—sent the little ones away with a sense of the Father's love and nearness which it was good for them to feel. All the girls and some of the boys waited to kiss Miss Fitch for good-night. It had been a pleasant day. Nobody, for a wonder, had received a fault-mark of any kind; nothing had gone wrong, and the children departed with a general bright sense that such days do not often come, and that what remained of this ought to be made the most of.

There were still three hours and a half of precious daylight. What should be done with them?

Eyebright and a knot of girls, whose homes lay in the same direction with hers, walked slowly down the street together. It was a beautiful afternoon, with sunshine of that delicious sort which only June knows how to brew,—warm, but not burning; bright, but not dazzling. It lay over the walk in broad golden patches, broken by soft, purple-blue shadows from the elms, which had just put out their light leaves and looked like fountains of green spray tossed high in air. There was a sweet smell of hyacinths and growing grass and cherry-blossoms; altogether it was not an afternoon to spend in the house, and the children felt the fact.

"I don't want to go home yet," said Molly Prime. "Let's do something pleasant all together instead."

"I wish my swing were ready, and we'd all have a swing in it," said Laura Wheelwright. "Tom said he would put it up to-day, but mother begged him not, because she said I had a cold and would be sure to run in the damp grass and wet my feet. What shall we do? We might go for a walk to Round Pond; will you?"

"No; I'll tell you," burst in Eyebright. "Don't let's do that, because if we do, the big boys will see us and want to come too, and then we sha'n't have any fun. Let's all go into our barn; there's lots of hay up in the loft, and we'll open the big window and make thrones of hay to sit on and tell stories. It'll be just as good as out-doors, and no one will know where we are or come to interrupt us. Don't you think it would be nice? Do come, Laura."

"Delicious! Come along, girls," answered Laura, crumpling her soft sun-bonnet into a heap, and throwing it up into the air, as if it had been a ball.

"Oh, may we come too?" pleaded little Tom and Rosy Bury.

"No, you can't," answered their sister, Kitty, sharply. "You'd be tumbling down and getting frightened, and all sorts of things. You'd better run right home by yourselves."

The little ones were silent, but they looked anxiously at Eyebright.

"I think they might come, Kitty," she said. "They're almost always good, and there's nothing in the loft to hurt them. Yes; they can come."

"Oh, very well, if you want the bother of them. I'm sure I don't mind," replied Kitty.

Then they all ran into the barn. The eight pairs of double-soled boots clattered on the stairs like a sudden hail-storm on a roof. Brindle, old Charley, and a strange horse who seemed to be visiting them, who were munching their evening hay, raised their heads, astonished; while a furtive rustle from some dim corner in the loft showed that Mrs. Top-knot or Mrs. Cochin-China, hidden away there, heard too, and did not like the sound at all.

"Oh, isn't this lovely!" cried Kitty Bury, kicking the fine hay before her till it rose in clouds. "Barns are so nice, I think."

"Yes, but don't kick that way," said Romaine Smith, choking and sneezing. "Oh dear, I shall smother. Eyebright, please open the window. Quick, I am strangling."

Eyebright, who was sneezing too, made haste to undo the rusty hook, and swing the big wooden shutter back against the outside wall of the barn. It made an enormous square opening, which seemed to let in all out-doors at once. Dark places grew light, the soft pure air, glad of the chance, flew in to mix with the sweet, heavy smell of the dried grasses; it was as good as being out-doors, as Eyebright had said.

The girls pulled little heaps of hay together for seats, and ranged themselves in a half-circle round the window, with Mr. Bright's orchard, pink and white with fruit blossoms, underneath them; and beyond that, between Mr. Bury's house and barn, a glimpse of valley and blue river, and the long range of wooded hills on the opposite bank. It was a charming out-look, and though the children could not have put into words what pleased them, they all liked it, and were the happier for its being there.

"Now we're ready. Who will tell the first story?" asked Molly Prime, briskly.

"I'll tell the first," said Eyebright, always ready to take the lead. "It's a splendid story. I read it in a book. Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a little tailor, who was very good, and his name was Hans. He lived all alone in his little house, and had to work very hard because he was poor. One day as he sat sewing away, some one knocked at the door.

"'Come in,' said Hans, and an old, old man came in. He was wrapped up in a cloak, and looked very cold and tired.

"'Please may I warm myself by your fire?' he said.

"'Why of course you may,'—said good little Hans. 'A warm at the fire costs nothing, and you are welcome.'

"So the old man sat down and warmed himself.

"'Have you come a long way to-day?' Hans said.

"'Yes,' said the old man,—'a long, long way. And I'm ever so cold and hungry.'

"'Poor old fellow,' thought Hans. 'I wish I had something for him to eat; but I haven't, because there is nothing for my own dinner except a piece of bread and a cup of milk.' But then he thought, 'I can do with a little less for once. I'll give the old man half of that.' So he broke the bread in two, and poured half the milk into another cup, and gave them to the old man, who thanked him, and ate it up. But he still looked so hungry, that Hans thought, 'Poor fellow, he is a great deal older than I. I can go without a dinner for once, and I'll give him the rest.' Wasn't that good of Hans?"

"Yes, very good," replied the children, beginning to get interested.

"When the old man had eaten up all the bread and milk, he looked much better. And he got up to go, and said, 'You have been very good, and given me all your own dinner. I wish I had something to give you in return, but I have only got this,' and he took from under his cloak a shabby, old coffee-mill—the shabbiest old thing you ever saw, all cut up with jack-knives, you know, and scratched with pins, with ink-spots on it,"—Eyebright, drawing on her imagination for shabby particulars, was thinking, you see, of her desk at school, which certainly *was* shabby.

"Hans could hardly keep from laughing; but the old man said severely, 'Don't smile. This mill is better than it looks. It is a *magic mill*. Whenever you want any thing, you have only to give the handle one turn, and say, "Little mill, grind so and so, open sesame," and, no matter what it is, the mill will begin of itself and grind it for you. Then when you have enough, you must say, "Little mill, stop grinding, Abracadabra," and it will stop. Good-by,' and before Hans could say a word,

the old man hurried out of the door and was gone, leaving the queer old mill behind him.

"Of course Hans thought he must be crazy."

"I should have thought so," said Bessie Mather, who was cuddled in the hay close to Eyebright.

"Well, he wasn't! Hans at first thought he would throw the mill away, it looked so dirty and horrid, but then he thought, 'I might as well try it. Let me see, what do I want most at this moment? why, my dinner to be sure. I gave mine to the old man. I'll ask for a goose—roast goose, with hot buttered rolls and coffee. That's a dinner for a prince, let alone a tailor like me.'

"So he gave the handle a turn, and said to the mill, 'Little mill, grind a fat roast goose, open sesame,'—not believing a bit that it would, you know. And, just think! all of a sudden, the handle began to fly round as fast as the wind, and, in one second, out of the top came a beautiful roast goose, all covered with stuffing and gravy. It came so fast that Hans had to catch hold of its drumsticks and take it in his hand, there wasn't time to fetch a dish. He was so surprised that he stood stock-still, staring at the mill with his mouth open, and the handle went on turning, and another goose began to come out of the top. Then Hans was frightened, for he thought, 'What shall I do with two roast geese at once?' and he shouted loudly, 'Little mill, stop grinding, Abracadabra,' and the mill stopped, and the other goose, which had only began to come out, you see, doubled itself up, and went back again into the inside of the mill as fast as it came.

"Then Hans fetched a pitcher, and he said, 'Little mill, grind hot coffee with cream and sugar,' and immediately a stream of coffee came pouring out, till the pitcher was full. Then he ground some *delicious* rolls and butter, and then he set the mill on his shelf, and danced about the shop for joy.

"'Hans,' he said, 'your fortune is made.'

"And so it was. Because, you know, if people came and asked, 'How soon could you make me a coat?' Hans just had to answer, 'Why, to-morrow of course;' and then, when they were gone, he would go to the mill, and say, 'Little mill, grind a coat to fit Mr. Jones,' and there it would be. The coats all fitted splendidly and wore twice as long as other coats, and all the town said that Hans was the best tailor that ever was, and they all came to him for things, and he got very rich and took a big shop. But he was just as kind to poor people as ever, and the mill did every thing he wanted. Wasn't it nice?"

"I wish there really was a mill like that; I know what I would grind," said Romaine.

"Well, what would you, Romy?"

"A guitar with a blue ribbon, like my cousin Clara Cunningham's. She puts the ribbon round her neck and sings, and it's just lovely."

"But you don't know how to play, do you?" inquired Molly.

"No, but afterwards I'd grind a big music-box, and just as I began to play—no, to pretend to play—I'd set it off, and it would sound as if I was playing."

"Pshaw, I'd grind something a great deal better than that," cried Kitty. "I'd grind a real piano, and I'd learn to play on it my own self. I wouldn't have any old make-believe music-boxes to play for me."

"You never saw a guitar, I guess," rejoined Romaine, pouting, "or you wouldn't think so."

"I'd grind a kitten," put in Rosy, "a white one, just like my Snowdrop. Snowdrop has runned away. I don't know where she is."

"How funny she'd look, coming out of the coffee-mill, mewing and purring," said Eyebright. "Now stop telling what you'd grind, and let me go on. Hans had a neighbor, a very bad man, whose name was Carl. When he saw how rich Hans was getting to be, he became very enverous."

"Very what?"

"Enverous. He didn't like it, you know."

"Don't you mean envious?" said Molly Prime.

"Yes, didn't I say so? Mother says I mispronounce awfully, and it's because I read so much to myself. I meant enver—envious, of course. Well,—Carl noticed that every day when people had gone home to their dinners, Hans shut his door, and stayed alone for an hour, and didn't let anybody come in. This made him suspect something. So one day he bored a little round hole in the back door of Hans' house, and he sat down and put his eye to it, and thought, 'Here I stay, if it is a month, till I find out what that little rascal does when he is alone.'

"So he watched and watched, and for a long time he didn't see any thing but Hans sewing away and waiting on his customers. But at last the clock struck twelve, and then Hans shut his door and locked it tight, and Carl said to himself, 'Ha, ha, now I have him!'

"Hans brought out the coffee-mill, and set it on the table, and Carl heard him say, 'Little mill, grind roast veal, open sesame,' and a nice piece of veal came out of the mill, and fell into a platter which Hans held to catch it, and then Carl snapped his fingers and jumped for joy, and ran off to the wharf, where there was a pirate ship whose captain was a friend of his, and he said to the

pirate captain, 'Our fortunes are made.'

"'What do you mean?" asked the pirate.

"'I mean,' said Carl, 'that that little villain, Hans the tailor, has got a fairy mill which grinds every thing he asks for, and I know where he keeps it, and what he says to make it grind, and if you will go shares, I'll steal it this very night, and we'll sail off to a desert island, and there we'll grind gold and grind gold till we are as rich as all the people in the world put together. What do you say to that?'

"So the pirate captain was delighted, of course, because you know that's all that pirates want, just to get gold, and he said 'Yes,' and that very night, when Hans was asleep, Carl crept in, stole the mill, ran to the wharf, and he and the pirate captain sailed away, and Hans never saw his mill again."

"Oh, what a shame! Poor little Hans," cried the children.

"Well, it didn't make so much matter," explained Eyebright, comforting them, "because Hans by this time had got to be so well known, and people liked him so much, that he kept on getting richer and richer, and was always kind to the poor, and happy, so he didn't miss his mill much. The pirate ship sailed and sailed, and by and by, when they were 'way out at sea, the captain said to Carl, 'Suppose we try the mill, and see if it is really as good as you think.'

"'Very well,' said Carl, 'what shall we grind?'

"'We won't grind any gold yet,' said the captain, 'because gold is heavy, and we can do it better on the desert island. We'll just grind some little thing now for fun.' Then he called out to the cook, and said, 'Hollo, cook, is there any thing wanting there in your kitchen?'

"'Yes, sir, please,' said the cook, 'we're out of salt; we sailed so quick that I couldn't get any.'

"So Carl fetched the mill, and set it on the cabin table, and said, 'Little mill, grind salt, open sesame.'

"And immediately a stream of beautiful white salt came pouring out, till two bags which the cook had brought were quite full, and then the captain said, 'That's enough, now stop it.'

"*Just at that moment Carl recollected that he didn't know how to stop the Mill.*"

Here Eyebright made a dramatic pause.

"Oh, what next? What did he do?" cried the others.

"He said all the words he could think of," continued Eyebright; "'Shut, sesame!' and 'Stop!' and 'Please stop!' and 'Don't!' and ever so many others; but he couldn't say the right one, because he didn't know it, you see! So the salt kept pouring on, and it filled all the bags, and boxes, and barrels, and—and—all the—salt-cellars, in the ship, and it ran on to the table, and it ran on to the floor; and the pirate captain caught hold of the handle and tried to keep it from turning; and it gave him such a pinch that he put his fingers into his mouth, and danced with pain. Then he was so mad that he got an axe and chopped the mill in two, to punish it for knocking him. But immediately another handle sprouted out on the half which hadn't any, and that made two mills, and the salt came faster than ever. At last, when it was up to their knees, Carl and the pirate captain ran to the deck to consult what they should do; and, while they were consulting, the mills went on grinding. And the ship got so full, and the salt was so heavy, that, all of a sudden, down they all sank, ship and Carl and the pirates and the mills and all, to the bottom of the sea."

Eyebright came to a full stop. The children drew long breaths.

"Didn't anybody ever get the mill again?" asked Bessie.

"No, never. There they both are at the bottom, grinding away as hard as they can; and that's the reason why the sea is so salt!"

"Is it salt?" asked little Rosy, who never had seen the sea.

"Why, Rosy, of course. Didn't you ever eat codfish? They come out of the sea, and they're just as salt as salt can be," said Tom, who was about a year older than Rosy.

"Now, Molly, you tell one," said Eyebright. "Tell us that one which your grandma told you,—the story about the Indian. Don't you recollect?"

"Oh, yes; the one I told you that day in the pasture. It's a true story, too, every bit of it. My grandma knew the lady it happened to. It was ever and ever so long ago, when the country was all over woods and Indians, you know, and this lady went to the West to live with her husband. He was a pio-nary,—no, pioneer,—no, missionary,—that was what he was. Missionaries teach poor people and preach, and this one was awfully poor himself, for all the money he had was just a little bit which a church in the East gave him.

"Well, after they had lived at the West for a year, the missionary had to come back, because some of the people said he wasn't orthodox. I don't know what that means. I asked father once, and he said it meant so many things that he didn't think he could explain them all; but ma, she said, it means 'agreeing with the neighbors.' Anyhow, the missionary had to come back to tell the folks that he was orthodox, and his wife and children had to stay behind, in the woods, with wolves and

bears and Indians close by.

"The very day after he started, his wife was sitting by the fire with her baby in her lap, when the door opened, and a great, enormous Indian walked in and straight up to her.

"I guess she was frightened; don't you?

"'He gone?' asked the Indian in broken English.

"'Yes,' she said.

"Then the Indian held out his hands and said,—'Pappoose. Give.'"

"Oh, my!" cried Romaine. "I'd have screamed right out."

"Well, the lady didn't," continued Molly. "What was the use? There wasn't any one to scream to, you know. Beside, she thought perhaps the Indian was trying her to see if she trusted him. So she let him take the child, and he marched away with it, not saying another word.

"All that night, and all next day, she watched and waited, but he did not come back. She began to think all sorts of dreadful things,—that perhaps he had killed the child. But just at sunset he came with the baby in his arms, and the little fellow was dressed like a chief, in a suit of doe-skins which the squaws had made, with cunning little moccasins on his feet and a feather stuck in his hair. The Indian put him in his mother's lap, and said,—

"'Now red man know white squaw friend, for she not afraid give child.'

"And after that, all the time her husband was gone, the Indians brought venison and game, and were real kind to the lady. Wasn't it nice?"

The children drew long breaths of relief.

"I don't think I could have been so brave," declared Kitty.

"Now I'll tell you a story which I made up myself," said Romaine, who was of a sentimental turn. "It's called the Lady and the Barberry Bush.

"Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a lady who loved a barberry bush, because its berries were so pretty, and tasted so nice and sour. She used to water it, and come at evening to lay her snow-white hand upon its leaves."

"Didn't they prick?" inquired Molly, who was as practical as Romaine was sentimental.

"No, of course they didn't prick, because the barberry bush was enchanted, you know. Nobody else cared for barberry bushes except the lady. All the rest liked roses and honeysuckles best, and the poor barberry was very glad when it saw the lady coming. At last, one night, when she was watering it, it spoke, and it said,—'The hour of deliverance has arrived. Lady, behold in me a Prince and your lover!' and it changed into a beautiful knight with barberries in his helmet, and knelt at her feet, and they were very happy for ever after."

"Oh, how short!" complained the rest. "Eyebright's was a great deal longer."

"Yes, but she read hers in a book, you know. I made mine up, all myself."

"I'll tell you a 'tory now," broke in little Rosy. "It's a nice 'tory,—a real nice one. Once there was a little girl, and she wanted some pie. She wanted some weal wich pie. And her mother whipped her because she wanted the weal wich pie. Then she kied. And her mother whipped her. Then she kied again. And her mother whipped her again. And the wich pie made her sick. And she died. She couldn't det well, 'cause the dottor he didn't come. He couldn't come. There wasn't any dottor. He was eated up by tigers. Isn't that a nice 'tory?"

The girls laughed so hard over Rosy's story that, much abashed, she hid her face in Kitty's lap, and wouldn't raise it for a long time. Eyebright tried to comfort her.

"It's a real nice story," she said. "The nicest of all. I'm so glad you came, Rosy, else you wouldn't have told it to us."

"Did you hear me tell how the dottor was eated up by tigers?" asked Rosy, peeping with one eye from out of the protection of Kitty's apron.

"Yes, indeed. That was splendid."

"I made that up!" said Rosy, triumphantly revealing her whole face, joyful again, and bright as a full moon.

"Who'll be next?" asked Eyebright.

"I will," said Laura. "Listen now, for it's going to be perfectly awful, I can tell you. It's about robbers."

As she spoke these words, Laura lowered her voice, into a sort of half-groan, half-whisper.

"There was once a girl who lived all alone by herself, with just one Newfoundland dog for company. He wasn't a big Newfoundland,—he was pretty small. One night, when it was all dark and she was just going to sleep, she heard a rustle underneath her bed."

The children had drawn closer together since Laura began, and at this point Romaine gave a loud shriek.

"What was that?" she asked.

All held their breaths. The loft was getting a little dusky now, and sure enough, an unmistakable rustle was heard among the hay in a distant corner!

"This loft would be a very bad place for a robber," said Eyebright, in a voice which trembled considerably, though she tried to keep it steady. "A robber wouldn't have much chance with all our men down below. James, you know, girls, and Samuel and John."

"Yes,—and Benjamin and Charles," chimed in the quick-witted Molly; "and your father, Eyebright, and Henry,—all down there in the barn."

While they recited this formidable list, the little geese were staring with wide-open, affrighted eyes into the corner where the rustle had been heard.

"And,—" continued Eyebright, her voice trembling more than ever, "they have all got pitchforks, you know, and guns, and—oh, mercy! what was that? The hay moved, girls, it did move, I saw it!"

All scrambled to their feet prepared to fly, but before any one could start, the hay in the corner parted, and, cackling and screaming, out flew Mrs. Top-knot, tired of her hidden nest, or of the story-telling, and resolved on escape. Eyebright ran after, and shoo-ed her downstairs. Then she came back laughing, and said,—

"How silly we were! Go on, Laura."

But the nerves of the party were too shaky still to enjoy robber-stories, and Eyebright, perceiving this, made a diversion.

"I know what we all want," she said; "some apples. Stay here all of you, and I'll run in and get them. I won't be but a minute."

"Mayn't I come too?" asked the inseparable Bessie.

"Yes, do, and you can help me carry 'em. Don't tell any stories while we're gone, girls. Come along, Bess."

Wealthy happened to be in the buttery, skimming cream, so no one spied them as they ran through the kitchen and down the cellar stairs. The cellar was a very large one. In fact, there were half a dozen cellars opening one into the other, like the rooms of a house. Wood and coal were kept in some of them, in others vegetables, and there was a swinging shelf where stood Wealthy's cold meat, and odds and ends of food. All the cellars were dark at this hour of the afternoon, very dark, and Bessie held Eyebright's hand tight, as, with the ease of one who knew the way perfectly, she sped toward the apple-room.

In the blackest corner of all, Eyebright paused, fumbled a little on an almost invisible shelf with a jar which had a lid and clattered, and then handed to her friend a dark something whose smell and taste showed it to be a pickled butternut.

"Wealthy keeps her pickles here," she said, "and she lets me take one now and then, because I helped to prick the butternuts when she made 'em. I got my fingers awfully stained too. It didn't come off for almost a month. Aren't they good?"

"Perfectly splendid!" replied Bessie, as her teeth met in the spicy acid oval. "I do think butternut pickles are just too lovely!"

The apple-room had a small window in it, so it was not so dark as the other cellars. Eyebright went straight to a particular barrel.

"These are the best ones that are left," she said. "They are those spotty russets which you said you liked, Bessie. Now, you take four and I'll take four. That'll make just one apiece for each of us."

"How horrid it would be," said Bessie, as the two went upstairs again with the apples in their aprons,—"how horrid it would be if a hand should suddenly come through the steps and catch hold of our ankles."

"Good gracious, Bessie Mather!" cried Eyebright, whose vivid imagination represented to her at once precisely how the hand on her ankle would feel, "I wish you wouldn't say such things,—at least till we're safely up," she added.

Another moment, and they were safely up and in the kitchen. Alas, Wealthy caught sight of them.

"Eyebright," she called after them, "tea will be ready in ten minutes. Come in and have your hair brushed and your face washed."

"Why, Wealthy Judson, what an idea! It's only twenty minutes past five."

"There's a gentleman to tea to-night, and your pa wants it early, so's he can get off by six," replied Wealthy. "I'm just wetting the tea now. Don't argue, Eyebright, but come at once."

"I've got to go out to the barn for one minute, anyhow," cried Eyebright, impatiently, and she and

Bessie flashed out of the door and across the yard before Wealthy could say another word.

"It's too bad," she said, rushing upstairs into the loft and beginning to distribute the apples. "That old tea of ours is early to-night, and Wealthy says I must come in. I'm so sorry now that I went for the apples at all, because if I hadn't I shouldn't have known that tea was early, and then I needn't have gone! We were having such a nice time! Can't you all stay till I've done tea? I'll hurry!"

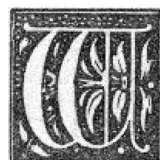
But the loft, with its rustles and dark corners, was not to be thought of for a moment without Eyebright's presence and protection.

"Oh, no, we couldn't possibly; we must go home," the children said, and down the stairs they all rushed.

Brindle and old Charley and the strange horse raised their heads and stared as the little cavalcade trooped by their stalls. Perhaps they were wondering that there was so much less laughing and talking than when it went up. They did not know, you see, about the "perfectly awful" robber story, or the mysterious rustle, or how dreadfully Mrs. Top-knot in the dark corner had frightened the merry little crowd.

CHAPTER III.

MR. JOYCE.



ealthy was waiting at the kitchen-door, and pounced on Eyebright the moment she appeared. I want you to know Wealthy, so I must tell you about her. She was very tall and very bony. Her hair, which was black streaked with gray, was combed straight, and twisted round a hair-pin, so as to make a tight, solid knot, about the size of a half-dollar, on the back of her head. Her face was kind, but such a very queer face that persons who were not used to it were a good while in finding out the kindness. It was square and wrinkled, with small eyes, a wide mouth, and a nose that was almost flat, as if some one had given it a knock when Wealthy was a baby, and driven it in. She always wore dark cotton gowns and aprons, as clean as clean could be, but made after the pattern of Mrs. Japhet's in the Noah's arks,—straight up and straight down, with almost no folds, so as to use as little material as possible. She had lived in the house ever since Eyebright was a baby, and looked upon her almost as her own child,—to be scolded, petted, ordered about, and generally taken care of.

Eyebright could not remember any time in her life when her mother was not ill. She found it hard to believe that mamma ever had been young and active, and able to go about and walk and do the things which other people did. Eyebright's very first recollections of her were of a pale, ailing person always in bed or on the sofa, complaining of headache and backache, and general misery, —coming downstairs once or twice in a year perhaps, and even then being the worse for it. The room in which she spent her life had a close, dull smell of medicines about it, and Eyebright went past its door and down the entry on tiptoe, hushing her footsteps without being aware that she did so, so fixed was the habit. She was so well and strong herself that it was not easy for her to understand what sickness is, or what it needs; but her sympathies were quick, and though it was not hard to forget her mother and be happy when she was rioting out-of-doors with the other children, she never saw her without feeling pity and affection, and a wish that she could do something to please or to make her feel better.

Tea was so nearly ready that Wealthy would not let Eyebright go upstairs, but carried her instead into a small bedroom, opening from the kitchen, where she herself slept. It was a little place, bare enough, but very neat and clean, as all things belonging to Wealthy were sure to be. Then, she washed Eyebright's face and hands, and brushed her hair, retying the brown bow, crimping with her fingers the ruffle round Eyebright's neck, and putting on a fresh white apron to conceal the ravages of play in the school frock. Eyebright was quite able to wash her own face, but Wealthy was not willing yet to think so; she liked to do it herself, and Eyebright cared too little about the matter, and was too fond of Wealthy beside, to make any resistance.

When the little girl was quite neat and tidy,—"Go into the sitting-room," said Wealthy, with a final pat. "Tea will be ready in a few minutes. Your pa is in a hurry for it."

So Eyebright went slowly through the kitchen, which looked very bright and attractive with its crackling fire and the sunlight streaming through its open door, and which smelt delightfully of ham and eggs and new biscuit,—and down the narrow, dark passage, on one side of which was the sitting-room, and on the other a parlor, which was hardly ever used by anybody. Wealthy dusted it now and then, and kept her cake in a closet which opened out of it, and there were a mahogany sofa and some chairs in it, upon which nobody ever sat, and some books which nobody ever read, and a small Franklin stove, with brass knobs on top, in which a fire was never lighted, and an odor of mice and varnish, and that was all. The sitting-room on the other side of the entry was much pleasanter. It was a large, square room, wainscoted high with green-painted wood, and had a south window and two westerly ones, so that the sun lay on it all day long. Here and there in the walls, and upon either side of the chimney-piece, were odd, unexpected little cupboards, with small green wooden handles in their doors. The doors fitted so closely that it was hard to tell

which was cupboard and which wall; anybody who did not know the room was always a long time in finding out just how many cupboards there were. The one on the left-hand side of the chimney-piece was Eyebright's special cupboard. It had been called hers ever since she was three years old, and had to climb on a chair to open the door. There she kept her treasures of all kinds,—paper dolls and garden seeds, and books, and scraps of silk for patchwork; and the top shelf of all was a sort of hospital for broken toys, too far gone to be played with any longer, but too dear, for old friendship's sake, to be quite thrown away. The furniture of the sitting-room was cherry-wood, dark with age; and between the west windows stood a cherry-wood desk, with shelves above and drawers below, where Mr. Bright kept his papers and did his writing.

He was sitting there now as Eyebright came in, busy over something, and in the rocking-chair beside the fire-place was a gentleman whom she did not recognize at first, but who seemed to know her, for in a minute he smiled and said:—

"Oho! here is my friend of this morning. Is this your little girl, Mr. Bright?"

"Yes," replied papa, from his desk; "she is mine—my only one. That is Mr. Joyce, Eyebright. Go and shake hands with him, my dear."

Eyebright shook hands, blushing and laughing, for now she saw that Mr. Joyce was the gentleman who had interrupted their play at recess. He kept hold of her hand when the shake was over, and began to talk in a very pleasant, kind voice, Eyebright thought.

"I didn't know that you were Mr. Bright's little daughter when I asked the way to his house," he said "Why didn't you tell me? And what was the game you were playing, which you said was so splendid, but which made you cry so hard? I couldn't imagine, and it made me very curious."

"It was only about Lady Jane Grey," answered Eyebright. "I was Lady Jane, and Bessie, she was Margaret; and I was just going to be beheaded when you spoke to us. I always cry when we get to the executions; they are so dreadful."

"Why do you have them, then? I think that's a very sad sort of play for two happy little girls like you. Why not have a nice merry game about men and women who never were executed? Wouldn't it be pleasanter?"

"Oh, no! It isn't half as much fun playing about people who don't have things happen to them," said Eyebright, eagerly. "Once we did, Bessie and I. We played at George and Martha Washington, and it wasn't amusing a bit,—just commanding armies, and standing on platforms to receive company, and cutting down one cherry-tree! We didn't like it at all. Lady Jane Grey is much nicer than that. And I'll tell you another splendid one, 'The Children of the Abbey.' We played it all through from the very beginning chapter, and it took us all our recesses for four weeks. I like long plays so much better than short ones which are done right off."

Mr. Joyce's eyes twinkled a little, and his lips twitched; but he would not smile, because Eyebright was looking straight into his face.

"I don't believe you are too big to sit on my knee," he said; and Eyebright, nothing loth, perched herself on his lap at once. She was such a fearless little thing, so ready to talk and to make friends, that he was mightily taken with her, and she seemed equally attracted by him, and chattered freely as to an old friend.

She told him all about her school, and the girls, and what they did in summer, and what they did in winter, and about Top-knot, and the other chickens, and her dolls,—for Eyebright still played with dolls by fits and starts, and her grand plan for making "a cave" in the garden, in which to keep label-sticks and bits of string and her cherished trowel.

"Won't it be lovely?" she demanded. "Whenever I want any thing, you know, I shall just have to dig a little bit, and take up the shingle which goes over the top of the cave, and put my hand in. Nobody will know that it's there but me. Unless I tell Bessie—," she added, remembering that almost always she did tell Bessie.

Mr. Joyce privately feared that the trowel would become very rusty, and Eyebright's cave be apt to fill with water when the weather was wet; but he would not spoil her pleasure by making these objections. Instead, he talked to her about his home, which was in Vermont, among the Green Mountains, and his wife, whom he called "mother," and his son, Charley, who was a year or two older than Eyebright, and a great pet with his father, evidently.

"I wish you could know Charley," he said; "you are just the sort of girl he would like, and he and you would have great fun together. Perhaps some day your father'll bring you up to make us a visit."

"That would be very nice," said Eyebright. "But"—shaking her head—"I don't believe it'll ever happen, because papa never does take me away. We can't leave poor mamma, you know. She'd miss us so much."

Here Wealthy brought in supper,—a hearty one, in honor of Mr. Joyce, with ham and eggs, cold beef, warm biscuit, stewed rhubarb, marmalade, and, by way of a second course, flannel cakes, for making which Wealthy had a special gift. Mr. Joyce enjoyed every thing, and made an excellent meal. He was amused to hear Eyebright say, "Do take some more rhubarb, papa. I stewed it my own self, and it's better than it was last time," and to see her arranging her

mother's tea neatly on a tray.

"What a droll little pussy that is of yours!" he said to her father, when Eyebright had gone upstairs with the tray. "She seems all imagination, and yet she has a practical turn, too. It's an odd mixture. We don't often get the two things combined in one child."

"No, you don't," replied Mr. Bright. "Sometimes I think she has too much imagination. Her head is stuffed with all sorts of notions picked up out of books, and you'd think, to hear her talk, that she hadn't an idea beyond a fairy-tale. But she has plenty of common sense, too, and is more helpful and considerate than most children of her age. Wealthy says she is really useful to her, and has quite an idea of cooking and housekeeping. I'm puzzled at her myself sometimes. She seems two different children rolled into one."

"Well, if that is the case, I see no need to regret her vivid imagination," replied his friend. "A quick fancy helps people along wonderfully. Imagination is like a big sail. When there's nothing underneath it's risky; but with plenty of ballast to hold the vessel steady, it's an immense advantage and not a danger."

Eyebright came in just then, and as a matter of course went back to her perch upon her new friend's knee.

"Do you know a great many stories?" she asked suggestively.

"I know a good many. I make them up for Charley sometimes."

"I wish you'd tell me one."

"It will have to be a short one then," said Mr. Joyce, glancing at his watch. "Bright, will you see about having my horse brought round? I must be off in ten minutes or so." Then, turning to Eyebright,—"I'll tell you about Peter and the Wolves, if you like. That's the shortest story I know."

"Oh, do! I like stories about wolves so much," said Eyebright, settling herself comfortably to listen.

"Little Peter lived with his grandmother in a wood," began Mr. Joyce in a prompt way, as of one who has a good deal of business to get through in brief time.

"They lived all alone. He hadn't any other boys to play with, but once in a great while his grandmother let him go to the other side of the wood, where some boys lived, and play with them. Peter was glad when his grandmother said he might go.

"One day in the autumn, he said: 'Grandmother, may I go and see William and Jack?' Those were the names of the other boys.

"'Yes,' she said, 'you can go, if you will promise to come home at four o'clock. It gets dark early, and I am afraid to have you in the wood later than that.'

"So Peter promised. He had a nice time with William and Jack, and at four o'clock he started to go home; for he was a boy of his word.

"As he went along, suddenly, on the path before him, he saw a most beautiful gray squirrel, with a long bushy tail.

"'Oh, you beauty!' cried Peter. 'I must catch you and carry you home to grandmother.'

"Now, this was humbug in Peter, because grandmother did not care a bit about gray squirrels. But Peter did.

"So Peter ran to catch the squirrel, and the squirrel ran, too. He did not go very fast, but kept just out of reach. More than once, Peter thought he had laid hold of him, but the cunning squirrel always slipped through his fingers.

"At last the squirrel darted up into a thick tree, where Peter could not see him any more. Then Peter began to think of going home. To his surprise it was almost dark. He had been running so hard that he had not noticed this before, nor which way he had come, and when he looked about him, he saw that he had lost his way.

"This was bad enough, but worse happened; for, pretty soon, as he plodded on, trying to guess which way he ought to go, he heard a long, low howl far away in the wood,—the howl of a wolf. Peter had heard wolves howl before, and he knew perfectly well what the sound was. He began to run, and he ran and ran, but the howl grew louder, and was joined by more howls, and they sounded nearer every minute, and Peter knew that a whole pack of wolves was after him. Wolves can run much faster than little boys, you know. They had almost caught Peter, when he saw—"

Mr. Joyce paused to enjoy Eyebright's eyes, which had grown as round as saucers in her excitement.

"Oh, go on!" she cried, breathlessly.

"—when he saw a big hollow tree with a hole in one side. There was not a moment to spare; the hole was just big enough for him to get into; and in one second he had scrambled through and was inside the tree. There were some large pieces of bark lying inside, and he picked one up and nailed it over the hole with a hammer which he happened to have in his pocket. So there he was,

in a safe little house of his own, and the wolves could not get at him at all."

"That was splendid," sighed Eyebright, relieved.

"All night the wolves stayed by the tree, and scratched and howled and tried to get in," continued Mr. Joyce. "By and by the moon rose, and Peter could see them putting their noses through the knotholes in the bark, and smelling at him. But the knotholes were too small, and, smell as they might, they could not get at him. At last, watching his chance he whipped out his jack-knife and cut off the tip of the biggest wolf's nose. Then the wolves howled awfully and ran away, and Peter put the nose-tip in his pocket, and lay down and went to sleep."

"Oh, how funny!" cried Eyebright, delighted. "What came next?"

"Morning came next, and he got out of the tree and ran home. His poor grandmother had been frightened almost to death, and had not slept a wink all night long; she hugged and kissed Peter for half an hour and then hurried to cook him a hot breakfast. That's all the story,—only, when Peter grew to be a man, he had the tip of the wolf's nose set as a breast pin, and he always wore it."

Here Mr. Joyce set Eyebright down, and rose from his chair, for he heard his horse's hoofs under the window.

"Oh, do tell me about the breast-pin before you go!" cried Eyebright. "Did he really wear it? How funny! Was it set in gold, or how?"

"I shall have to keep the description of the breast-pin till we meet again," replied Mr. Joyce. "My dear," and he stooped and kissed her, "I wish I had a little girl at home just like you. Charley would like it too. I shall tell him about you. And if you ever meet, you will be friends, I am sure."

Eyebright sat on the door-steps and watched him ride down the street. The sun was just setting, and all the western sky was flushed with pink, the very color of a rosy sea-shell.

"Mr. Joyce is the nicest man that ever came here, I think," she said to Wealthy, who passed through the hall with her hands full of tea-things. "He told me a lovely story about wolves. I'll tell it to you when you put me to bed, if you like. He's the nicest man I ever saw."

"Nicer than Mr. Porter?" asked Wealthy, grimly, walking down the hall.

Eyebright blushed and made no answer. Mr. Porter was a sore subject, though she was only six years old when she knew him, and had never seen him since.

He was a young man who for one summer had rented a vacant room in Miss Fitch's school building. He took a great fancy to Eyebright, who was a little girl then, and he used to play with her, and carry her about the green in his arms. Several times he promised her a doll, which he said he would fetch when he went home. At last, he went home and came back, but no doll appeared and whenever Eyebright asked after it, he replied that it was "in his trunk."

One day, he carelessly left open the door of his room and Eyebright, peeping in, spied it, and saw that his trunk was unlocked. Now was her chance, she thought, and, without consulting anybody, she went in, resolved to find the doll for herself.

Into the trunk she dived. It was full of things, all of which she pulled out and threw upon the floor, which had no carpet, and was pretty dusty. Boots, and shirts, and books, and blacking-bottles, and papers,—all were dumped one on top of the other; but though she went to the very bottom, no doll was to be found, and she trotted away, almost crying with disappointment, and leaving the things just as they lay, on the floor.

Mr. Porter did not like it at all, when he found his property in this condition, and Miss Fitch punished Eyebright, and Wealthy scolded hard; but Eyebright never could be made to see that she had done any thing naughty.

"He's a wicked man, and he didn't tell the trufe," was all she would say. Wealthy was deeply shocked at the affair, and never let Eyebright forget it, so that even now, after six years had passed, the mention of Mr. Porter's name made her feel uncomfortable. She left the door-step presently, and went upstairs to her mother's room, where she usually spent the last half-hour before going to bed.

It was one of Mrs. Bright's better days, and she was lying on the sofa. She was a pretty little woman still, though thin and faded, and had a gentle, helpless manner, which made people want to pet her, as they might a child. The room seemed very warm and close after the fresh door-step, and Eyebright thought, as she had thought many times before, "How I wish that mother liked to have her window open!" But she did not say so. "Was your tea nice, mamma?" she asked, a little doubtfully, for Mrs. Bright was hard to please with food, probably because her appetite was so fickle.

"Pretty good," her mother answered; "my egg was too hard, and I don't like quite so much sugar in rhubarb, but it did very well. What have you been about all day, Eyebright?"

"Nothing particular, mamma. School, you know; and after school, some of the girls came into our hayloft and told stories, and we had such a nice time. Then Mr. Joyce was here to tea. He's a real nice man, mamma. I wish you had seen him."

"How was he nice? It seems to me you didn't see enough of him to judge," said her mother.

"Why, mamma, I can always tell right away if people are nice or not. Can't you? Couldn't you, when you were well, I mean?"

"I don't think much of that sort of judging," said Mrs. Bright, languidly. "It takes a long time to find out what people really are,—years."

"Why, mamma!" cried Eyebright, with wide-open eyes. "I couldn't know but just two or three people in my whole life if I had to take such lots of time to find out! I'd a great deal rather be quick, even if I changed my mind afterward."

"You'll be wiser when you're older," said her mother. "It's time for my medicine now. Will you bring it, Eyebright? It's the third bottle from the corner of the mantel, and there's a tea-cup and spoon on the table."

**Eyebright fetched the medicine and the cup,
and her mother measured out the dose.—Page 61.**

Poor Mrs. Bright! Her medicine had grown to be the chief interest of her life! The doctor who visited her was one of the old-fashioned kind who believed in big doses and three pills at a time, and something new every week or two; but, in addition to his prescriptions, Mrs. Bright tried all sorts of queer patent physics which people told her of, or which she read about in the newspapers. She also took a great deal of herb tea of different sorts. There was always a little porringer of something steaming away on her stove,—camomile, or boneset, or wormwood, or snakeroot, or tansy, and always a long row of fat bottles with labels on the chimney-piece above it.

Eyebright fetched the medicine and the cup, and her mother measured out the dose.

"I can't help hoping that this is going to do me good," she said. "It's something new which I read about in the 'Evening Chronicle,'—Dr. Bright's Cosmopolitan Febrifuge. It seems to work the most wonderful cures. Mrs. Mulravy, a lady in Pike's Gulch, Idaho, got entirely well of consumptive cancer by taking only two bottles; and a gentleman from Alaska writes that his wife and three children, who were almost dead of cholera collapse and heart-disease, recovered entirely after taking the Febrifuge one month. It's very wonderful."

"I've noticed that those folks who get well in the advertisements always live in Idaho and Alaska and such like places, where people ain't very likely to go a-hunting after them," said Wealthy, who came in just then with a candle.

"Now, Wealthy, how can you say so! Both these cures are certified to by regular doctors. Let me see,—yes,—Dr. Ingham and Dr. H. B. Peters. Here are their names on the bottle!"

"It's easy enough to make up a name or two if you want 'em," muttered Wealthy. Then, seeing that Mrs. Bright looked troubled, she was sorry she had spoken, and made haste to add, "However, the medicine may be first-rate medicine, and if it does you good, Mrs. Bright, we'll crack it up everywhere,—that we will."

Eyebright's bedtime was come. She kissed her mother for good-night with the feeling which she always had, that she must kiss very gently, or some dreadful thing might happen,—her mother

break in two, perhaps, or something. Wealthy, who was in rather a severe mood for some reason, undressed her in a sharp, summary way, declined to listen to the wolf story, and went away, taking the candle with her. But there was little need of a candle in Eyebright's room that night, for the shutters stood open, and a bright full moon shone in, making every thing as distinct, almost, as it was in the daytime. She was not a bit sleepy, but she didn't mind being sent to bed, at all, for bedtime often meant to her only a second playtime which she had all to herself. Getting up very softly, so as to make no noise, she crept to the closet, and brought out a big pasteboard box which was full of old ribbons and odds and ends of lace and silk. With these she proceeded to make herself fine; a pink ribbon went round her head, a blue one round her neck, a yellow and a purple round either ankle, and round her waist, over her night-gown a broad red one, very dirty, to serve as a sash. Each wrist was adorned with a bit of cotton edging, and, with a broken fan in her hand, Eyebright climbed into bed again, and putting one pillow on top of the other to make a seat, began to play, telling herself the story in a low, whispering tone.

"I am a Princess," she said; "the most beautiful Princess that ever was. But I didn't know that I was a Princess at all, because a wicked fairy stole me when I was little, and put me in a lonely cottage, and I thought I wasn't any thing but a shepherdess. But one day, as I was feeding my sheep, a ne-cro-answer he came by and he said:—

"'Princess, why don't you have any crown?'

"Then I stared, and said, 'I'm not a Princess.'

"'Oh, but you are,' he said; 'a real Princess.'

"Then I was so surprised you can't think, Bessie.—Oh, I forgot that Bessie wasn't here. And I said, 'I cannot believe such nonsense as that, sir.'

"Then the necroanswer laughed, and he said:—

"'Mount this winged steed, and I will show you your kingdom which you were stolen away from.'

"So I mounted."

Here Eyebright put a pillow over the foot-board of the bed, and climbed upon it, in the attitude of a lady on a side-saddle.

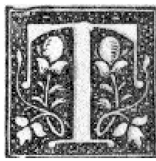
"Oh, how beautiful it is!" she murmured. "How fast we go! I do love horseback."

Dear silly little Eyebright! Riding there in the moonlight, with her scraps of ribbon and her bare feet and her night-gown, she was a fantastic figure, and looked absurd enough to make any one laugh. I laugh, too, and yet I love the little thing, and find it delightful that she should be so easily amused and made happy with small fancies. Imagination is like a sail, as Mr. Joyce had said that evening; but sails are good and useful things sometimes, and carry their owners over deep waters and dark waves, which else might dampen, and drench, and drown.

EYEBRIGHT MAKING HERSELF FINE.

CHAPTER IV.

A DAY WITH THE SHAKERS.

hree weeks after Mr. Joyce's visit, the long summer vacation began. The children liked school, but none the less did they rejoice over the coming of vacation. It brought a sense of liberty, of long-days-all-their-own-to-do-as-they-liked-with, which it was worth going to school the rest of the year to feel. Each new morning was like a separate beautiful gift, brought and laid in their hands by an invisible somebody, who must be kind and a friend, since he continually did this delightful thing for them.

One hot August afternoon, Eyebright and two or three of her special cronies had gone for coolness to the ice-house, a place which they had used as a playroom before on especially sultry days. It was a large, square underground cave, with a shingled roof set over it, whose eaves rested on the ground. The ice when first put in, filled all the space under the roof, and it was necessary to climb up to reach the top layer; later, ice and ground were on a level, but by August so much ice had been used or had melted away, that a ladder was wanted to help people down to the surface. The girls had left the door a little open, but still the place was dark, and they could only dimly see the tin chest in the corner where Wealthy kept her marketing, and the shapes of two or three yellow crocks which lay half buried, their round lids looking like the caps of droll little drowning Chinamen.

It was so hot outside, that the dullness of the ice was as refreshing as very cold water is to people who have been walking in the sun. The girls drew long breaths of relief as they entered. Such a sharp change from heat to cold is not quite safe, and I imagine Wealthy would probably have had a word to say on the subject, had she spied them going into the ice-house; but Wealthy happened to be looking another way that afternoon, so she did not interfere; and as, strange to say, it harmed nobody that time, we need not discuss the wisdom of the proceeding, only don't any of you who read this go and sit in an ice-house without getting leave from someone wiser than yourselves.

"Oh, this is delightful," said Romaine. "It's just like the North Pole and the Arctic regions which Pa read about in the book. Don't you come here sometimes and play shipwreck and polar bears, Eyebright? I should think you would."

"We did once, but Harry Prime broke a butter-jar, and Wealthy was as mad as hops, and said we must never play here again, and I must never let another boy come into the ice-house. She didn't say we girls mustn't come, though, and I'm glad she didn't; for it's lovely in hot weather, I think."

"I wish *we* had an ice-house," sighed Kitty Bury, "you do have such lots of nice things, Eyebright, ice-houses and hay-lofts and a great big garret, and a room to yourself; I wish I was an only child."

"I'd rather have some brothers and sisters than all the ice-houses in creation," said Eyebright, who never had agreed with Kitty as to the advantages of being 'only.' "It's a great deal nicer."

"That's because you don't know any thing about it. Brothers and sisters are nice enough sometimes, but other times they're nothing but a plague," snapped Kitty, who seemed out of sorts for some reason or other; "you can't imagine what a bother Sarah Jane is to me. She's always taking my things, and turning my drawers over, and tagging round after me when I don't want her; and if I bolt the door, and try to get a little peace and quiet, she comes and bangs, and says it's her room too, and I've no business to lock her out; and then mother takes her part, and it isn't nice a bit. I would a great deal rather be an only child than have Sarah Jane."

"But don't you have splendid times at night and in the morning? I always thought it must be so nice to wake up and find another girl there ready to play and talk." Eyebright's tone was a little wistful.

"Well, it's nice *sometimes*," admitted Kitty.

Just then the door at the top of the ladder opened, and a fresh face peeped in.

"Oh, it's Molly Prime," they all cried. "Here we are, Molly, come along."

Molly scrambled down the ladder.

"I guessed where you were," she said. "Wealthy didn't know, so I took care not to say a word to her, but just crept round and looked in. Oh, girls! what do you think is going to happen?—something nice."

"What?"

"Miss Fitch is going to have a picnic and take us to the Shakers."

The Shaker settlement was about ten miles from Tunxet. I am not sure that I have remembered to tell you that Tunxet was the name of the place where Eyebright and the other children lived, but it was, Tunxet Village. They were used to see the stout, sober-looking brethren in their broad-brimmed hats, driving about the place in wagons and selling vegetables, cheese, and apple-butter. But, as it happened, none of the children had ever visited the home of the community, and Molly's news produced a great excitement.

"Goody! goody!" they all cried, "when are we going, Molly, and how did you know?"

"Miss Fitch told father. She came to borrow our big wagon, and Ben to drive, and Pa said she

could have it and welcome, because he thinks ever so much of Miss Fitch, and so does mother. We are going on Friday, and we are not to carry any thing to eat, because we're sure to get a splendid dinner over there. Mother says nobody makes such good things as the Shakers do. Won't it be lovely? All the school is going, little ones and all, except Washington Wheeler, and he can't, because he's got the measles."

"Oh, poor little Washington, that's too bad," said Eyebright, "but I'm too glad for any thing that we're going. I always did want to see the Shakers. Wealthy went once, and she told me about it. She says they're the cleanest people in the world, and that you might eat off their kitchen floor."

"Well, if Wealthy says that, you may be sure it is true," put in Laura Wheelwright. "Ma declares *she's* the cleanest person she ever saw."

"Oh, Wealthy says the Shakers wouldn't call her clean a bit," replied Eyebright. "They'd never eat off *her* floor, she says."

"Shall we really have to eat off a floor?" inquired Bessie, anxiously.

"Oh, no. That's only a way of saying very clean indeed!" explained Eyebright.

All was expectation from that time onward till Friday came. The children were afraid it might rain, and watched the clouds anxiously. Thursday evening brought a thunder-storm, and many were the groans and sighs; but next morning dawned fresh and fair, with clear sunshine, and dust thoroughly laid on the roads, so that every thing seemed to smile on the excursion. There was but one discord in the general joy, which was that poor little Washington Wheeler must be left behind, with his measles and his disappointment. Eyebright felt so sorry for him that she told Wealthy she was afraid she shouldn't enjoy herself; but bless her! no sooner were they fairly off, than she forgot Washington and every thing else, except the nice time they were having; and neither she nor any one beside noticed the very red and very tear-stained little face, pressed against the pane of the upper window of Mr. Wheeler's house, to watch the big wagon roll through the village.

Such a big wagon, and packed so very full! There were twenty-three of them, including Miss Fitch, and Ben, the driver, and how they all got in is a mystery to this day. The big girls held the little ones in their laps, the boys were squeezed into the bottom, which was made soft with straw, and somehow every body did have a place, though how, I can't explain. The road was new to them after the first two or three miles, and a new road is always exciting, especially when, as this did, it winds and turns, now in the woods, and now out, now sunshiny, and now shady, and does not give you many chances to look ahead and see what you are coming to. They passed several farmhouses, where boys whom they had never seen before ran out and raised a shout at the sight of the wagon and its merry load. A horse in a field, who looked like a very tame, good-natured horse indeed, took a fancy to them, and trotted alongside till stopped by a fence. Then he flung up his head and whinnied, as if calling them to come back, which made the children laugh. Soon after that they reached a bit of woodland, where trees arched over the road and made it cool and shady, and there they saw a squirrel, running just ahead of the wagon over the pine needles. He did not seem to notice them at first, but the boys whooped and hurrahed, and *then* he was off in a minute, flashing up a tree-trunk like a streak of striped lightning. This was delightful; and no less so a flight of crows which passed overhead, cawing, and flying so low that the children could see every feather in their bodies, which shone in the sun like burnished green-black jet, and the glancing of their thievish eyes.

"Going to steal from some farmer's wheat-crop," said Miss Fitch, and she repeated these verses about a crow, which amused the children greatly.

"Where are you bound to, you sooty-black crow?
What is that noise which you make as you go?
You are a sad wicked thief, as I know,
Held by no honesty, keeping no law—
What do you say, sir?" The crow he said—
"Caw."

"Corn is still green, oh, you naughty, bad crow,
Wheat is not ripe in the meadow below.
What is your errand? I think it is low
Thus to be stuffing and cramming your maw,
Robbing the farmers!—" The crow he said—
"Caw."

"Bring me my gun. Now you sinful old crow,
Right at your back I take aim as you go.
You are a thief and the honest man's foe!
Therefore I shoot you." Click! Bang!—but, oh pshaw!
Off flew the crow, and he laughed and said—
"Caw."

By the time that the children had done giggling over the crow-rhymes, the Shaker village was in sight, looking, against its back-ground of green trees, like a group of nice yellow cheeses,—only

the cheeses were not round. All the buildings were cream-colored, and seemed freshly painted, they were so very clean. The windows had no shutters, but inside some of them hung blue paper shades to keep out the sun. Every thing looked thrifty and in excellent order. The orchard trees were heavy with half-grown apples and pears; the grass fields had been newly cut, and nothing could be imagined neater than the vegetable gardens which lay on one side of the houses. All the green things stood in precise straight rows,—every beet, and carrot, and cucumber with his hands in his own pocket, so to speak; none of that reaching about and intruding on neighboring premises which most vegetables indulge in; but every one at home, with a sedate air, and minding his own business. Not a single squash-vine could be detected tickling another squash-vine; each watermelon lay in the middle of his hill with a solemn expression on his large face; the tomatoes looked ashamed of being red; and only a suit of drab apiece seemed wanting, to make the pumpkins as respectably grave as the other members of the community. Two small boys, in wide-brimmed hats and legs of discreet tint, were weeding these decorous vegetables. They raised their heads and took one good stare as the big wagon rattled past, then they lowered them again, and went on with their work, laying the pig-weeds, which they pulled out of the ground, in neat little piles along the garden walk.

At the door of the principal building, a stout, butternut-colored Elder stood waiting, as if to learn their business.

"We have driven over to see your village," said Miss Fitch, in her pleasant voice, "and we should like dinner, if you can give it to us."

"Yea," said the Elder. He pronounced the word as if it were spelled "ye." That was all he said; but he helped the children to get down from the wagon, and led the way through a very clean, bare passage to a room equally clean and bare, where four women in drab gowns with wide collars and stiff white caps were sitting, each on a little platform by herself, darning stockings, with a basket of mending beside her.

One of these introduced herself to Miss Fitch as Sister Samantha. She had a round, comfortable face, and the boys and girls, who had felt an awe of the grave Elder, recovered courage as they looked at her. She said they could "go round" if they wanted to, and called a younger sister named Dorcas to show them the way.

Sister Dorcas had a pale, rather dissatisfied face. She did not seem so happy as Sister Samantha. She showed the children all that there was to see, but she said very little and took no pains to explain any thing, or to make the visit pleasant. They saw the bedrooms where the sisters slept, and the bedrooms where the brothers slept, all exactly alike, comfortable, plain, and unadorned, except for wonderful patchwork quilts on the beds, and the gay "pulled" rugs on the floors. They were shown the kitchen where the food for all the community was cooked, a kitchen as clean and shining as the waxen cell of a bee, and the storerooms, full of dried fruits and preserved fruits, honey, cheeses, beeswax, wooden ware, brooms, herbs, and soap. There was an "office" also, where these things were for sale to any one who should choose to buy, and great consultations took place among the children, who had almost all brought a little shopping money. Some chose maple-sugar, some, silk-winders, some, little cakes of white wax for use in work-baskets. Molly Prime had a sudden bright thought, which she whispered about, and after much giggling and mysterious explanations in corners, they clubbed together and got a work-basket for Miss Fitch. It cost a dollar and a quarter, and was a great beauty, the children thought. Miss Fitch was very much pleased with it, and that added to their pleasure, so that the purchase of the work-basket was one of the pleasantest events of the day. Eyebright spent what was left of her money in buying a new mop-handle as a present for Wealthy, who wanted one, she knew. She was a good deal laughed at by the other boys and girls, but she didn't mind that a bit, and shouldering her mop-handle as if it had been a flag-staff, followed with the rest wherever Sister Dorcas chose to lead them.

Sister Dorcas took them to see the big barns, sweet with freshly made hay, and to the dairy and cheese-house, with white shelves laden with pans of rich milk and curds, the very sight of which made the children hungry. Next they peeped into the meeting-house for Sundays, and then they were taken to the room where fruit was packed and sorted. Here they found half-a-dozen young Shakeresses, busy in filling baskets with blackberries for next day's market.

These Shaker girls pleased the children very much; they looked so fresh and prim and pretty in their sober costume, and so cheerful and smiling. Eyebright fell in love at once with the youngest and prettiest, a girl only two or three years older than herself. She managed to get close to her, and, under pretence of helping with the blackberries, drew her a little to one side, where they could talk without being overheard.

"Do you like to live here?" she asked confidentially, as their fingers met in the blackberry basket.

"Yea," said the little Shakeress, glancing round shyly. Then as she saw that nobody was noticing them, she became more communicative.

"I like it—pretty well," she said. "But I guess I shan't stay here always."

"Won't you? What will you do then? Where will you go?"

"I don't know yet; but Ruth Berguin—she is my sister in the flesh—was once of this family, and she left, and went back to the world's people and got married. She lives up in Canada now, and has got two babies. She came for a visit once, and fetched one of them. Sister Samantha felt real

badly when Ruth went, but she liked the baby ever so much. I mean to go back to the world's people too, some day."

"Oh my! perhaps *you* will get married," suggested Eyebright, greatly excited at the idea.

"Perhaps I shall," answered the small Shakeress with unmoved gravity.

Then she told Eyebright that her name was Jane, and she was an orphan, and that she and sister Orphah, whom she pointed out, slept together in one of the bedrooms which the children had seen upstairs, and had very "good times" after the lights were out, whispering to each other and planning what they would do when they were old enough to do any thing. Sister Orphah, too, had a scheme for returning to the world's people—perhaps they might go together. The idea of these "good times" rather tickled Eyebright's imagination. For a few minutes she reflected that perhaps it might be a pleasant thing to come and join the Shakers. She and sister Jane grew intimate so fast, and chattered so merrily, that Bessie became jealous and drew near to hear what they were saying, and presently one of the elder Shakeresses joined them, and gently sent Jane away on an errand. Eyebright's chance for confidences was over: but she had made the most of it while it lasted, and that is always a comfort.

By the time that they had finished the round of the premises dinner was ready,—welcome news; for the children were all very hungry. It was spread in an enormous dining-room on two long tables. The men Shakers sat at one table, and the women Shakers at the other. Miss Fitch and her scholars were placed with the latter, and some of the young sisters waited on them very neatly and quietly. Sister Jane was one of these and she took especial care of Eyebright whom she seemed to regard as a friend of her own. No one spoke at either table except to ask for something or to say "thank you"; but to make up for this silence, a prodigious amount of eating was done. No wonder, for the dinner was excellent, the very best dinner, the children thought, that they had ever tasted. There was no fresh meat, but capital pork and beans, vegetables of all kinds, delicious Indian pudding, flooded with thick, yellow cream, brown bread and white, rusk, graham gems, oat-meal and grits, with the best of butter, apple-sauce, maple-molasses, and plenty of the richest milk. Every thing was of the nicest material, and as daintily clean as if intended for a queen. Miss Fitch praised the food, and Sister Samantha, who looked pleased, said they tried to do things thoroughly, "as to the Lord." Miss Fitch said afterward that she thought this was an admirable idea, and she wished more people would try it, because then there would be less bad cooking in the world, and less saleratus and dyspepsia. She said that to be faithful and thorough in every thing, even in getting dinner ready, was a real way of serving God, and pleased Him too, because He looks beyond things, and sees the spirit in which we do them.

At three o'clock the wagon came to the door, and they said good-by to the kind Shakers. Miss Fitch paid for the dinner; but the elder was not willing to take much. They entertained the poor for nothing, he said. A small compensation from those who were able and willing to pay, did not come amiss, but a dinner for boys and girls like those, he guessed, didn't amount to much. Miss Fitch privately doubted this. It seemed to her that a regiment of grown men could hardly have devoured more in the same space of time than her hungry twenty-one; but she was grateful to the elder for his kindness, and told him so. Eyebright parted from Sister Jane with a kiss, and gave her, by way of keepsake, the only thing she had,—a china doll about two inches long, which chanced to be at the bottom of her pocket. It was a droll gift to make to a solemn little Shakeress in drab; but Jane was pleased, and said she should always keep it. Then they were packed into the wagon again, and with many good-bys they drove away, kissing their hands to the sisters at the door, and carrying with them a sense of cleanliness, hospitality, and quiet peace, which would make them for ever friendly to the name of Shaker.

The drive home was as pleasant as that of the morning had been. The children were not at all tired, and in the most riotous spirits. They hurrahed every five minutes. They made jokes and guessed riddles, and sang choruses,—"*Tranquidillo*" was one; "We'll bear the storm, it won't be long," another; and "Ubidee," which Herman Bury had picked up from a cousin in college, and which they all thought grand. Past the farmhouses they went, past the tree where the squirrel had curled himself to sleep, and the fields from which the thievish crows had flown. They stopped a minute at Mr. Wheeler's to leave some maple-sugar for Washington,—not the best diet for measles, perhaps, but pleasant as a proof of kind feeling, and then, one by one, they were dropped at the doors of their own homes.

"Well!" said Wealthy, eying her mop-handle with great satisfaction. "That's what I call sensible. I expected you'd spend your money on some pesky gimcrack or other. I never thought 't would be a handy thing like this, and I am obliged to you for it, Eyebright. Now run up and see your ma. She was asking after you a while ago."

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE BLACK DOG HAD HIS DAY.

ou've got the black dog on your shoulder, this morning; that's what's the matter with you," said Wealthy.

This metaphorical black dog meant a bad humor. Eyebright had waked up cross and irritable. What made her wake up cross I am not wise enough to explain. The old-fashioned doctors would probably have ascribed it to indigestion, the new-fashioned ones to nerves or malaria or a "febrile tendency"; Deacon Bury, I think, would have called it "Original Sin," and Wealthy, who did not mince matters, dubbed it an attack of the Old Scratch, which nothing but a sound shaking could cure. Very likely all these guesses were partly right and all partly wrong. When our bodies get out of order, our souls are apt to become disordered too, and at such times there always seem to be little imps of evil lurking near, ready to seize the chance, rush in, fan the small embers of discontent to a flame, make cross days crosser, and turn bad beginnings into worse endings.

The morning's mischances had begun with Eyebright's being late to breakfast;—a thing which always annoyed her father very much. Knowing this, she made as much haste as possible, and ran downstairs with her boots half buttoned, fastening her apron as she went. She was in too great a hurry to look where she was going, and the result was that presently she tripped and fell, bumping her head and tearing the skirt of her frock half across. This was bad luck indeed, for Wealthy, she knew, would make her darn it as a punishment, and that meant at least an hour's hard work indoors on one of the loveliest days that ever shone. She picked herself up and went into the sitting-room, pouting, and by no means disposed to enjoy the lecture on punctuality, which papa made haste to give, and which was rather longer and sharper than it would otherwise have been, because Eyebright looked so very sulky and obstinate while listening to it.

You will all be shocked at this account, but I am not sorry to show Eyebright to you on one of her naughty days. All of us have such days sometimes, and to represent her as possessing no faults would be to put her at a distance from all of you; in fact, I should not like her so well myself. She has been pretty good, so far, in this story; but she was by no means perfect, for which let us be thankful; because a perfect child would be an unnatural thing, whom none of us could quite believe in or understand! Eyebright was a dear little girl, and for all her occasional naughtiness, had plenty of lovable qualities about her; and I am glad to say she was not often so naughty as on this day.

When a morning begins in this way, every thing seems to go wrong with us, as if on purpose. It was so with Eyebright. Her mother, who was very poorly, found fault with her breakfast. She wanted some hotter tea, and a slice of toast a little browner and cut very thin. These were simple requests, and on any other day Eyebright would have danced off gleefully to fulfil them. To-day she was annoyed at having to go, and moved slowly and reluctantly. She did not say that she felt waiting on her mother to be a trouble, but her face, and the expression of her shoulders, and her dull, dawdling movements said it for her; and poor Mrs. Bright, who was not used to such unwillingness on the part of her little daughter, felt it so much that she shed a few tears over the second cup of tea after it was brought. This dismayed Eyebright, but it also exasperated her. She would not take any notice, but stood by in silence till her mother had finished, and then, without a word, carried the tray downstairs. A sort of double mood was upon her. Down below the anger was a feeling of keen remorse for what she had done, and a voice inside seemed to say: "Oh dear, how sorry I am going to be for this by and by!" But she would not let herself be sorry then, and stifled the voice by saying, half aloud, as she went along: "I don't care. It's too bad of mother. I wish she wouldn't."

Wealthy met her at the stair-foot.

"How long you've been!" she said, taking the tray from her.

"I can't be any quicker when I have to keep going for more things," said Eyebright.

"Nobody said you could," retorted Wealthy, speaking crossly herself, because Eyebright's tone was cross. "Mercy on me! How did you tear your frock like that? You'll have to darn it yourself, you know; that's the rule. Fetch your work-box as soon as you've done the cups and saucers."

Eyebright almost replied "I won't," but she did not quite dare, and walked, without speaking, into the sitting-room, where the table was made ready for dish-washing, with a tub of hot water, towels, a bit of soap, and a little mop. Since vacation began, Wealthy had allowed her to wash the breakfast things on Mondays and Tuesdays, days on which she herself was particularly busy.

Ordinarily, Eyebright was very proud to be trusted with this little job. She worked carefully and nicely, and had proved herself capable, but to-day her fingers seemed all thumbs. She set the cups away without drying the bottoms, so that they made wet rings on the shelves; she only half rinsed the teapot, left a bit of soap in its spout, and ended by breaking a saucer. Wealthy scolded her, she retorted, and then Wealthy made the speech, which I have quoted, about the black dog.

Very slowly and unwillingly Eyebright sat down to darn her frock. It was a long, jagged rent, requiring patience and careful slowness, and neither good-will nor patience had Eyebright to bring to the task. Her fingers twitched, she "pshawed," and "oh deared," ran the needle in and out and in irregularly, jerked the thread, and finally gave a fretful pull when she came to the end of the first needleful, which tore a fresh hole in the stuff and puckered all she had darned, so that it was not fit to be seen. Wealthy looked in just then, and was scandalized at the condition of the work.

"You can just pick it out from the beginning," she said. "It's a burning shame that a great girl like you shouldn't know how to do better. But it's temper—that's what it is. Nothing in the world but temper, Eyebright. You've been as cross as two sticks all day, Massy knows for what, and you

ought to be ashamed of yourself," whereon she gave Eyebright a little shake.

The shake was like a match applied to gunpowder. Eyebright flamed into open revolt.

"Wealthy Ann Judson!" she cried, angrily. "Let me alone. It's all your fault if I am cross, you treat me so. I won't pick it out. I won't darn it at all. And I shall just tell my father that you shook me; see if I don't."

Wealthy's reply was a sound box on the ear. Eyebright's naughtiness certainly deserved punishment, but it was hardly wise or right of Wealthy to administer it, or to do it thus. She was far too angry to think of that, however.

"That's what you want," said Wealthy, "and you'd be a better girl if you got it oftener." Then she marched out of the room, leaving Eyebright in a fury.

"I won't bear it! I won't bear it!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears. "Everybody is cruel, cruel! I'll run away! I'll not stay in this house another minute—not another minute," and, catching up her sun-bonnet, she darted through the hall and was out of the gate and down the street in a flash. Wealthy was in the kitchen, her father was out, no one saw her go. Rosy and Tom Bury, who were swinging on their gate, called to her as she passed, but their gay voices jarred on her ear, and she paid no attention to the call.

Tunxet village was built upon a sloping hill whose top was crowned with woods. To reach these woods, Eyebright had only to climb two stone walls and cross a field and a pasture, and as they seemed just then the most desirable refuge possible, she made haste to do so. She had always had a peculiar feeling for woods, a feeling made up of terror and attraction. They were associated in her mind with fairies and with robbers, with lost children, redbreasts, Robin Hood and his merry men; and she was by turns eager and shy at the idea of exploring their depths, according to which of these images happened to be uppermost in her ideas. To-day she thought neither of Robin Hood nor the fairies. The wood was only a place where she could hide away and cry and be unseen, and she plunged in without a thought of fear.

In and in she went, over stones and beds of moss, and regiments of tall brakes, which bowed and rose as she forced her way past their stems, and saluted her with wafts of woodsy fragrance, half bitter, half sweet, but altogether pleasant. There was something soothing in the shade and cool quiet of the place. It fell like dew on her hot mood, and presently her anger changed to grief, she knew not why. Her eyes filled with tears. She sat down on a stone all brown with soft mosses, and began to cry, softly at first, then loudly and more loud, not taking any pains to cry quietly, but with hard sobs and great gulps which echoed back in an odd way from the wood. It seemed a relief at first to make as much noise as she liked with her crying, and to know that there was no one to hear or be annoyed. It was pleasant, too, to be able to talk out loud as well as to cry.

"They are *so* unkind to me," she wailed, "so very unkind. Wealthy never slapped me before. She has no right to slap me. I'll never kiss Wealthy again,—never. O-h, she was so unkind"—

"O-h!" echoed back the wood in a hollow tone. Eyebright jumped.

"It's like a voice," she thought. "I'll go somewhere else. It isn't nice just here. I don't like it."

So she went back a little way to the edge of the forest, where the trees were less thick, and between their stems she could see the village below. Here she felt safer than she had been when in the thick wood. She threw herself down in a comfortable hollow at the foot of an oak, and, half sitting, half lying, began to think over her wrongs.

"I guess if I was dead they'd be sorry," she reflected. "They'd hunt and hunt for me, and not know where I was. And at last they'd come up here, and find me dead, with a tear on my cheek, and then they'd know how badly they had made me feel, and their hearts would nearly break. I don't believe father would ever smile again. He'd be like the king in the 'Second Reader':—

> 'But waves went o'er his son's bright hair,
> He never smiled again.'

Only, I'm a daughter, and it would be leaves and not waves! Mother, she'd cry and cry, and as for that old Wealthy"—but Eyebright felt it difficult to imagine what Wealthy would do under these circumstances. Her thoughts drifted another way.

"I might go into a convent instead. That would be better, I guess. I'd be a novice first, with a white veil and a cross and a rosary, and I'd look so sweet and holy that all the other children,—no, there wouldn't be any other children,—never mind!—I'd be lovely, anyhow. But I'd be a Protestant always! I wouldn't want to be a Catholic and have to kiss the Pope's old toe all the time! Then by and by I should take that awful black veil. Then I could never come out any more—not ever! And I should kneel in the chapel all the time as motionless as a marble figure. That would be beautiful." Eyebright had never been able to sit still for half an hour together in her life, but that made no difference in her enjoyment of this idea. "The abbess will be beautiful, too, but stern and unrelenting, and she'll say 'Daughters' when she speaks to us nuns, and we shall say 'Holy Mother' when we speak to her. It'll be real nice. We shan't have to do any darning, but just embroidery in our cells and wax flowers. Wealthy'll want to come in and see me, I know, but I shall just tell the porter that I don't want her, not ever. 'She's a heretic,' I shall say to the porter,

and he'll lock the door the minute he sees her coming. Then she'll be mad! The Abbess and *Mère Généfride*"—Eyebright had just read for the fourth time Mrs. Sherwood's exciting novel called "The Nun," so her imaginary convent was modelled exactly after the one there described—"the abbess and *Mère Généfride* will always be spying about and listening in the passage to hear what we say, when we sit in our cells embroidering and telling secrets, but me and my Pauline—no, I won't call her Pauline—Rosalba—sister Rosalba—that shall be her name—we'll speak so low that she can't hear a word. Then we shall suspect that something strange is taking place down in the cellar,—I mean the dungeons,—and we'll steal down and listen when the abbess and the bishop and all of them are trying the sister, who has a bible tied on her leg!" Here Eyebright gave an enormous yawn. "And—if—the—mob—does come—Wealthy—will be sure to—sure to—"

But of what we shall never know, for at this precise moment Eyebright fell asleep.

ASLEEP IN THE WOODS.

She must have slept a long time, for when she waked the sun had changed his place in the sky, and was shining on the western side of the village houses. Had some good angel passed by, lifted the "black dog" from her shoulder, and swept from her mind all its foolish and angry thoughts, while she dreamed there under the trees? For behold! matters and things now looked differently to her, and, instead of blaming other people and thinking hard things of them, she began to blame herself.

"How naughty I was," she thought, "to be so cross with poor mamma, just because she wanted another cup of tea! Oh dear, and I made her cry! I know it was me—just because I looked so cross. How horrid I always am! And I was cross to papa, too, and put my lip out at him. How could I do so? What made me? Wealthy hadn't any business to slap me, though—

"But then I was pretty ugly to Wealthy," she went on, her conscience telling her the truth at last, as consciences will, if allowed. "I just tried to provoke her—and I called her Wealthy Ann Judson! That always makes her mad. She never slapped me before not since I was a little mite of a girl. Oh, dear! And only yesterday she washed all Genevieve's dolly things—her blue muslin, and her overskirt, and all—and she said she didn't mind trouble when it was for my doll. She's very good to me sometimes. Almost always she's good. Oh, I oughtn't to have spoken so to Wealthy—I oughtn't—I oughtn't!" And Eyebright began to cry afresh; not angry tears this time, but bright, healthful drops of repentance, which cleansed and refreshed her soul.

"I'll go right home now and tell her I am sorry," she said, impetuously; and, jumping from her seat, she ran straight down the hill and across the field, eager to make her confession and to be forgiven. Eyebright's fits of temper, big and little, usually ended in this way. She had none of that dislike of asking pardon with which some persons are afflicted. To her it was a relief—a thing to be met and gone through with for the sake of the cheer, the blue-sky-in-the-heart, which lay on the other side of it, and the peace which was sure to follow, when once the "forgive me" was spoken.

In at the kitchen door she dashed. Wealthy, who was ironing, with a worried frown on her brow, started and exclaimed at the sight of Eyebright, and sat suddenly down on a chair. Before she could speak, Eyebright's arms were round her neck.

"I was real horrid and wicked this morning," she cried. "Please forgive me, Wealthy. I won't be so naughty again—not ever. Oh, don't, don't!" for, to her dismay, Wealthy, the grim, broke down and began to cry. This was really dreadful. Eyebright stared a moment; then her own eyes filled, and

she cried, too.

"What a fool I be!" said Wealthy, dashing the drops from her eyes. "There, Eyebright, there! Hush, dear; we won't say any more about it." And she kissed Eyebright, for perhaps the tenth time in her life. Kisses were rare things, indeed, with Wealthy.

"Where have you been?" she asked presently. "It's four o'clock and after. Did you know that? Have you had any dinner?"

"No, but I don't want any, Wealthy. I've been in the woods on top of the hill. I ran away and sat there, and I guess I fell asleep," said Eyebright, hanging her head.

"Well, your pa didn't come home to dinner, for a wonder; I reckon he was kept to the mill; so we hadn't much cooked. I took your ma's up to her; but I never let on that I didn't know where you was, for fear of worrying her. She has worried a good lot any way. Here, let me brush your hair a little, and then you'd better run upstairs and make her mind easy. I'll have something for you to eat when you come down."

Eyebright's heart smote her afresh when she saw her mother's pale, anxious face.

"You've been out so long," she said. "I asked Wealthy, and she said she guessed you were playing somewhere, and didn't know how the time went. I was afraid you felt sick, and she was keeping it from me. It is so bad to have things kept from me; nothing annoys me so much. And you didn't look well at breakfast. Are you sick, Eyebright?"

"No, mamma, not a bit. But I have been naughty—very naughty indeed, mamma; and I ran away."

Then she climbed up on the bed beside her mother, and told the story of the morning, keeping nothing back—all her hard feelings and anger at everybody, and her thoughts about dying, and about becoming a nun. Her mother held her hand very tight indeed when she reached this last part of the confession. The idea of the wood, also, was terrible to the poor lady. She declared that she shouldn't sleep a wink all night for thinking about it.

"It wasn't a dangerous wood at all," explained Eyebright. "There wasn't any thing there that could hurt me. Really there wasn't, mamma. Nothing but trees, and stones, and ferns, and old tumbled-down trunks covered with tiny-weeny mosses,—all green and brown and red, and some perfectly white,—so pretty. I wish I had brought you some, mamma."

"Woods are never safe," declared Mrs. Bright, "what with snakes, and tramps, and wildcats, and getting lost, and other dreadful things, I hardly take up a paper without seeing something or other bad in it which has happened in a wood. You must never go there alone again, Eyebright. Promise me that you won't."

Eyebright promised. She petted and comforted her mother, kissing her over and over again, as if to make up for the anxiety she had caused her, and for the cross words and looks of the morning. The sad thing is, that no one ever does make up. All the sweet words and kind acts of a lifetime cannot undo the fact that once—one bad day far away behind us—we were unkind and gave pain to some one whom we love. Even their forgiveness cannot undo it. How I wish we could remember this always before we say the words which we afterward are so sorry for, and thus save our memories from the burden of a sad load of regret and repentance!

When Eyebright went downstairs, she found a white napkin, her favorite mug filled with milk, a plateful of bread and butter and cold lamb, and a large pickled peach, awaiting her on the kitchen table. Wealthy hovered about as she took her seat, and seemed to have a disposition to pat Eyebright's shoulder a good deal, and to stroke her hair. Wealthy, too, had undergone the repentance which follows wrath. Her morning, I imagine, had been even more unpleasant than Eyebright's, for she had spent it over a hot ironing table, and had not had the refreshment of running away into the woods.

"It's so queer," said Eyebright, with her mouth full of bread and butter. "I didn't know I was hungry a bit, but I am as hungry as can be. Every thing tastes so good, Wealthy."

"That's right," replied Wealthy, who was a little upset, and tearful still. "A good appetite's a good thing,—next best to a good conscience, I think."

Eyebright's spirits were mounting as rapidly as quicksilver. Bessie Mather appeared at the gate as she finished her last mouthful, and, giving Wealthy a great hug, Eyebright ran out to meet her, with a lightness and gayety of heart which surprised even herself. The blue sky seemed bluer than ever before, the grass greener, the sunshine was like yellow gold. Every little thing that happened made her laugh. It was as though a black cloud had been rolled away from between her and the light.

"I wonder what makes me so particularly happy to-night," she thought, as she sat on the steps waiting for papa, after Bessie was gone. "It's queer that I should, when I've been so naughty—and all."

But it was not queer, though Eyebright felt it so. The world never looks so fair and bright as to eyes newly washed by tears of sorrow for faults forgiven; and hearts which are emptied of unkind feelings grow light at once, as if happiness were the rule of the world and not the exception.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGES.

t happens now and then in life that small circumstances link themselves on to great ones, and in this way become important, when otherwise they might pass out of mind and be forgotten. Such was the case with that day's naughtiness. Eyebright remembered it always, and never without a sharp prick of pain, because of certain things that followed soon afterward, and of which I must tell you in this chapter.

Miss Fitch's winter term opened on the 15th of September. The boys and girls were not sorry to begin school, I think. They had "played themselves out" during the long vacation, and it was rather a pleasant change now to return to lessons and regular hours. Every thing seemed new and interesting after three months' absence, the schoolhouse, the Green, all the cubby-holes and hiding-places, just as shabby playthings laid aside for a while come out looking quite fresh, and do not seem like old ones at all. There was the beautiful autumn weather, beside, making each moment of liberty doubly delightful. Day after day, week after week, this perfect weather lasted, till it seemed as though the skies had forgotten the trick of raining, or how to be of any color except clear, dazzling blue. The wind blew softly and made lovely little noises in the boughs, but there was a cool edge to its softness now which added to the satisfaction of breathing it. The garden beds were gay as ever, but trees began to show tips of crimson and orange, and now and then a brown leaf floated gently down, as though to hint that summer was over and the autumn really begun. Small drifts of these brown leaves formed in the hollows of the road and about fence corners. The boys and girls kicked them aside to get at the chestnut burs which had fallen and mixed with them,—spiky burs, half open, and showing the glossy-brown nut within. It was a great apple-year, too, and the orchards were laden with ripe fruit. Nearly all the Saturday afternoons were spent by the children in apple-gathering or in nutting, and autumn seemed to them as summer had seemed before autumn, spring before summer, and winter in its turn before spring,—the very pleasantest of the four pleasant seasons of the year.

With so many things to do, and such a stock of health and spirits to make doing delightful, it is not strange that for a long time Eyebright remained unconscious of certain changes which were taking place at home, and which older people saw plainly. It did cross her mind once or twice that her mother seemed feebler than usual, and Wealthy and papa worried and anxious, but the thought did not stay, being crowded out by thoughts of a more agreeable kind. She had never in her life been brought very close to any real trouble. Wealthy had spoken before her of Mrs. So-and-so as being "in affliction," and she had seen people looking sad and wearing black clothes, but it was like something in a book to her,—a story she only half comprehended; though she vaguely shrank from it, and did not wish to read further. With all her quick imagination, she was not in the least morbid. Sorrow must come to her, she would never take a step to meet it. So she went on, busy, healthy, happy, full of bright plans and fun and merriment, till suddenly one day sorrow came. For, running in from school, she found Wealthy crying in the kitchen, and was told that her mother was worse,—much worse,—and the doctor thought she could only live a day or two longer.

"Oh, no, no, Wealthy," was all she could say at first. Then, "Why doesn't Dr. Pillsbury give mamma something?" she demanded; for Eyebright had learned to feel a great respect for medicine, and to believe that it must be able to cure everybody.

Wealthy shook her head.

"It ain't no use specylating about more medicines," she said, "your ma's taken shiploads of 'em, and they ain't never done her any good that I can see. No, Eyebright dear; it's got to come, and we must make the best of it. It's God's will I s'pose, and there ain't nothing to be said when that's the case."

"Oh, dear! how can God will any thing so dreadful?" sobbed Eyebright, feeling as if she were brought face to face with a great puzzle. Wealthy could not answer. It was a puzzle to her, also. But she took Eyebright into her lap, held her close, and stroked her hair gently; and that helped, as love and tenderness always do.

Some very sad days followed. The doctor came and went. There was a hush over the house. It seemed wrong to speak aloud even, and Eyebright found herself moving on tiptoe, and shutting the doors with anxious care; yet no one had said, "Do not make a noise." Everybody seemed to be waiting for something, but nobody liked to think what that something might be. Eyebright did not think, but she felt miserable. A great cloud seemed to hang over all her bright little world, so happy till then. She moped about, with no heart to do any thing, or she sat in the hall outside her mother's door, listening for sounds. Now and then they let her creep in for a minute to look at mamma, who lay motionless as if asleep; but Eyebright could not keep from crying, and after a little while, papa would sign to her to go, and she would creep out again, hushing her sobs till she was safely downstairs with the door shut. It was such a melancholy time that I do not see how she could have got through with it, had it not been for Genevieve, who, dumb as she was, proved best comforter of all. With her face buried in the lap of Genevieve's best frock, Eyebright might shed as many tears as she liked, whispering in the waxen ear how much she wished that mamma could get well, how good, how very good she always meant to be if she did, and how sorry she was that she had ever been naughty or cross to her; especially on that day, that dreadful day, when she

ran off into the woods, the recollection of which rankled in her conscience like a thorn, Genevieve listened sympathizingly, but not even her affection could pull out the thorn, or make its prick any easier to bear.

I do not like to tell about sad things half so well as about happy ones, so we will hurry over this part of the story. Mrs. Bright lived only a week after that evening when Eyebright first realized that she was so much worse. She waked up before she died, kissed Eyebright for good-by, and said, "My helpful little comfort." These sweet words were the one thing which made it seem possible to live just then. All her life long they came back to Eyebright like the sound of music, and when the thought of her childish faults gave her pain, these words, which carried full forgiveness of the faults, soothed and consoled her. After a while, as she grew older, she learned to feel that mamma in heaven knew much better than mamma on earth could, how much her little daughter really had loved her, and how it grieved her now to remember that ever she should have been impatient or unkind.

But this was not for a long time afterward, and meanwhile her chief pleasure was in remembering, that, for all her naughtiness, mamma had kissed her and called her "a comfort" before she died.

After the funeral, Wealthy opened the blinds, which had been kept tight shut till then, and life returned to its usual course. Breakfast, dinner, and supper appeared regularly on the table, papa went again to to the mill, and Eyebright to school. She felt shy and strange at first, and the children were shy of her, because of her black alpaca frock, which impressed their imaginations a good deal. This wore off as the frock wore out, and by the time that Eyebright had ripped out half the gathers of the waist and torn a hole in the sleeve, which was pretty soon, the alpaca lost its awfulness in their eyes, and had become as any common dress. In the course of a week or two, Eyebright found herself studying, playing, and walking at recess with Bessie, quite in the old way. But all the while she was conscious of a change, and a feeling which she fought with, but could not get rid of, that things were not, nor ever could be, as they had been before this interruption came.

Home was changed and her father was changed. Eyebright was no longer careless or unobservant, as before her mother's death, and she noticed how fast papa's hair was turning gray, and how deep and careworn the lines about his mouth and eyes had become. He did not seem to gain in cheerfulness as time went on, but, if any thing, to look more sad and troubled; and he spent much of his time at the cherry-wood desk calculating and doing sums and poring over account-books. Eyebright noticed all these little things, she had learned to use her eyes now, and though nobody said any thing about it, she felt sure that papa was worried about something, and in need of comfort.

She used to come early from play, and peep into the sitting-room to see what he was doing. If he seemed busy, she did not interrupt him, but drew her low chair to his side and sat there quietly, with Genevieve in her lap, and perhaps a book; not speaking, but now and then stroking his knee or laying her cheek gently against it. All the time she felt so sorry that she could not help papa. But I think she did help, for papa liked to have her there, and the presence of a love which asks no questions and is content with loving, is most soothing of all, sometimes, to people who are in perplexity, and trying to see their way out.

But none of Eyebright's strokes or pats or fond little ways could drive the care away from her father's brow. His trouble was too heavy for that. It was a kind of trouble which he could not very well explain to a child; trouble about business and money,—things which little people do not understand; and matters were getting worse instead of better. He was like a man in a thorny wood, who cannot see his way out, and his mind was more confused and anxious than any one except himself could comprehend.

At last things came to such a pass that there was no choice left, and he was forced to explain to Eyebright. It was April by that time. He was at his desk as usual, and Eyebright, sitting near, had Genevieve cuddled in her lap, and the "Swiss Family Robinson" open before her.

"Now you're done, arn't you, papa!" she cried, as he laid down his pen. "You won't write any more to-night, will you, but sit in the rocking-chair and rest." She was jumping up to get the chair, when he stopped her.

"I'm not through yet, my dear. But I want to talk with you for a little while."

"O papa, how nice! May I sit on your knee while you talk?"

Papa said yes, and she seated herself. He put his arm round her, and for a while stroked her hair in silence. Eyebright looked up, wonderingly.

"Yes, dear, I'll tell you presently. I'm trying to think how to begin. It's something disagreeable, Eyebright,—something which will make you feel very bad, I'm afraid."

"Oh dear! what is it?" cried Eyebright, fearfully. "Do tell me, papa."

"What should you say if I told you that we can't live here any longer, but must go away?"

"Away from this house, do you mean, papa?"

"Yes, away from this house, and away from Tunxet, too."

"Not away for always?" said Eyebright, in an awe-struck tone. "You don't mean that, papa, do you? We couldn't live anywhere else for always!" giving a little gasp at the very idea.

"I'm afraid that's what it's coming to," said Mr. Bright, sadly. "I don't see any other way to fix it I've lost all my money, Eyebright. It is no use trying to explain it to a child like you, but that is the case. All I had is gone, nearly. There's scarcely any thing left,—not enough to live on here, even if I owned this house, which I don't."

Not own their own house! This was incomprehensible. What could papa mean?

"But, papa, it's *our* house!" she ventured timidly.

Papa made no answer, only stroked her hair again softly.

"And the mill? Isn't the mill yours, papa?" she went on.

"No, dear, I never did own the mill. You were too little to understand about the matter when I took up the business. It belongs to a company; do you know what a 'company' means?—and the company has failed, so that the mill is theirs no longer. It's going to be sold at auction soon. I was only a manager, and of course I lose my place. But that isn't so much matter. The real trouble is that I've lost my own property, too. We're poor people now, Eyebright. I've been calculating, and I think by selling off every thing here I can just clear myself and come out honest but that's all. There'll be almost nothing left."

"Couldn't you get another mill to manage?" asked Eyebright, in a bewildered way.

"No, there is no other mill; and if there were, I shouldn't want to take it. I'm too old to begin life over again in the place where I started when I was a boy to work my way up. I *have* worked, too, —worked hard,—and now I come out in the end not worth a cent. No, Eyebright, I couldn't do it!"

He set her down as he spoke, and began to walk the room with heavy, unequal steps. The old floor creaked under his tread. There was something very sad in the sound.

A child feels powerless in the presence of sudden misfortune. Eyebright sat as if stunned, while her father walked to and fro. Genevieve slipped from her lap and fell with a bump on the carpet, but she paid no attention. Genevieve wasn't real to her just then; only a doll. It was no matter whether she bumped her head or not.

Mr. Bright came back to his chair again.

"I'll tell you what I've been thinking of," he said. "I own a little farm up in Maine. It's about the only thing I do own which hasn't got a mortgage on it, or doesn't belong to some one else in one way or another. It's a very small farm, but there's a house on it,—some kind of a house,—and I think of moving up there to live. I don't know much about the place, and I don't like the plan. It'll be lonely for you, for the farm is on an island, it seems, and there's no one else living there, no children for you to play with, and no school. These are disadvantages; but, on the other hand, the climate is said to be good, and I suppose I can raise enough up there for our living, and not run into debt, which is the thing I care most for just now. So I've about decided to try it. I'm sorry to break up your schooling, and to take you away from here, where you like it so much; but it seems the only way open. And if you could go cheerfully, my dear, and make the best of things, it would be a great comfort to me. That's all I've got to say."

Eyebright's mind had been at work through this long sentence. Her reply astonished her father not a little, it was so bright and eager.

"What is the island in, papa? A lake?"

"No, not a lake. It's in the sea, but very near the coast. I think there's some way of walking across at low tide, but I'm not sure."

"I think—I'm rather glad," said Eyebright slowly. "I always did want to live on an island and I never saw the sea. Don't feel badly, papa, I guess we shall like it."

Mr. Bright was relieved; but he couldn't help shaking his head a little, nevertheless.

"You must make up your mind to find it pretty lonesome," he said, compassionately.

"The Swiss Family Robinson didn't," replied Eyebright. "But then," she added, "there were six of them. And there'll only be four of us—counting Genevieve."

If Eyebright had taken the news too calmly, Wealthy made up for it by her wild and incredulous wrath when in turn it was broken to her.

"Pity's sakes!" she cried. "Whatever is the man a-thinking about? Carry you off to Maine, indeed, away from folks and church and every thing civilized! He's crazy,—that's what he is,—as crazy as a loon!"

"Papa's not crazy. You mustn't say such things, Wealthy," replied Eyebright, indignantly. "He feels real badly about going. But we've got to go. We've lost all our money, and we can't stay here."

"A desert island, too!" went on Wealthy, pursuing her own train of reflection. "Crocodiles and cannibals, I suppose! I've heard what a God-forsaken place it is up there. Who's going to look

after you, I'd like to know?—you, who never in your life remembered your rubber shoes when it rained, or knew winter flannels from summer ones, or best frocks from common?" Words failed her.

"Why, Wealthy, shan't you come with us?" cried Eyebright, in a startled tone.

"I? No, indeed, and I shan't then!" returned Wealthy. "I'm not such a fool as all that. Maine, indeed!" Then, her heart melting at the distress in Eyebright's face, she swooped upon her, squeezed her hard, and said: "What a cross-grained piece I be! Yes, Eyebright dear, I'll go along. I'll go, no matter where it is. You shan't be trusted to that Pa of yours if I can help it; and that's my last word in the matter."

Eyebright flew to papa with the joyful news that Wealthy was willing to go with them. Mr. Bright looked dismayed.

"It's out of the question," he replied. "I can't afford it, for one thing. The journey costs a good deal, and when she got there, Wealthy would probably not like it, and would want to come back again, which would be money thrown away. Beside, it is doubtful if we shall be able to keep any regular help. No, Eyebright; we'd better not think of it, even. You and I will start alone, and we'll get some woman there to come and work when it's necessary. That'll be as much as I can manage."

Of course, when Wealthy found that there were objections, her wish to go increased tenfold. She begged, and Eyebright pleaded, but papa held to his decision. There was no helping it, but this difference in opinion made the household very uncomfortable for a while. Wealthy felt injured, and went about her work grimly, sighing conspicuously now and then, or making dashes at Eyebright, kissing her furiously, shedding a few tears, and then beginning work again, all in stony silence. Papa shut himself up more closely than ever with his account-books, and looked sadder every day; and Eyebright, though she strove to act as peacemaker and keep a cheerful face, felt her heart heavy enough at times, when she thought of what was at hand.

They were to start early in May, and she left school at once; for there was much to be done in which she could help Wealthy, and the time was but short for the doing of it all. The girls were sorry when they heard that Eyebright was going away to live in Maine, and Bessie cried one whole recess, and said she never expected to be happy again. Still, the news did not make quite as much sensation as Eyebright had expected, and she had a little sore feeling at her heart, as if the others cared less about losing her than she should have cared had she been in their place. This idea cost her some private tears; she comforted herself by a poem which she called "Fickleness," and which began:

"It is wicked to be fickle,
  And very, very unkind,
And I'd be ashamed"—

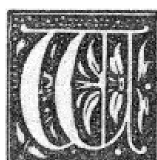
but no rhyme to fickle could she find except "pickle," and it was so hard to work that in, that she gave up writing the verses, and only kept away from the girls for a few days. But for all Eyebright's doubts, the girls did care, only Examination was coming on, and they were too busy in learning the pieces they were to speak, and practising for a writing prize which Miss Fitch had promised them, to realize just then how sorry they were. It came afterward, when the Examination was over, and Eyebright really gone; and it was a long time—a year or two at least—before any sort of festival or picnic could take place in Tunxet without some child's saying, wistfully: "I wish Eyebright was here to go; don't you?" Could Eyebright have known this, it would have comforted her very much during those last weeks; but the pity is, we can't know things beforehand in this world.

So, after all, her chief consolation was Genevieve, to whom she could tell any thing without fear of making mischief or being contradicted.

"There's just one thing I'm glad about," she said to this chosen confidante, "and that is that it's an island. I never saw any islands, neither did you, Genevieve; but I know they must be lovely. And I'm glad it's in the sea, too. But, oh dear, my poor child, how will you get along without any other dolls to play with? You'll be very lonely sometimes—very lonely, indeed—I'm afraid."

CHAPTER VII.

BETWEEN THE OLD HOME AND THE NEW.



ealthy," said Eyebright, "I want to tell you something."

Wealthy was kneading bread, her arms rising and falling with a strong, regular motion, like the piston of a steam-engine. She did not even turn her head, but dusting a little flour on to the dough, went straight on saying briefly,—

"Well, what?"

"I've been thinking," continued Eyebright, "that when papa and I get to the Island, perhaps some days there won't be anybody to do the cooking but me, and it would be so nice if you would teach me a few things,—not hard ones, you know,—little easy things. I know how to toast now, and how to boil eggs, and make shortcake, and stew rhubarb, but papa would get tired of those if he didn't have any thing else, I am afraid."

"You and your Pa'll go pretty hungry, I guess, if there's no one but you to do the cooking," muttered Wealthy. "Well, what would you like to learn?"

"Is bread easy to make? I'd like to learn that."

"You ain't hardly strong enough," said Wealthy, with a sigh, but she set her bowl on a chair as she spoke, and proceeded to give Eyebright a kneading lesson on the spot. It was much more fatiguing than Eyebright had supposed it would be. Her back and arms ached for a long time afterward, but Wealthy said she "got the hang of it wonderfully for a beginner," and this praise encouraged her to try again. Every Wednesday and Saturday, after that, she made the bread, from the sifting of the flour to the final wrap of the hot loaf in a brown towel, Wealthy only helping a very little, and each time the task seemed to grow easier, so that, before they went away, Eyebright felt that she had that lesson at her fingers' ends. Wealthy taught her other things also,—to broil a beefsteak, and poach an egg, to make gingerbread and minute biscuit, fry Indian pudding, and prepare and flavor the "dip" for soft toast. All these lessons were good for her, and in more senses than one. Many a heart-ache flew up the chimney and forgot to come down again, as she leaned over her saucepans, stirring, tasting, and seasoning. Many a hard thought about the girls and their not caring as they ought about her going, slipped away, and came back brightened into good-humor, in the excitement of watching the biscuits rise, or moulding them into exact form and size. And how pleasant it was if Wealthy praised her, or papa asked for a second helping of something and said it was good.

Meanwhile, the business of breaking up was going on. Wealthy, whose ideas were of the systematic old-fashioned kind, began at the very top of the house and came slowly down, clearing the rooms out in regular order, scrubbing, sweeping, and leaving bare, chill cleanness behind her. Part of the furniture was packed to go to the Island, but by far the greater part was brought down to the lower floor, and stacked in the best parlor, ready for an auction, which was to take place on the last day but one. It was truly wonderful how many things the house seemed to contain, and what queer articles made their appearance out of obscure holes and corners, in the course of Wealthy's rummagings. There were old fire-irons, old crockery, bundles of herbs, dried so long ago that all taste and smell had departed, and no one now could guess which was sage and which catnip; scrap-bundles, which made Eyebright sigh and exclaim, "Oh dear, what lots of dresses I would have made for Genevieve, if only I had known we had these!" There were boxes full of useless things, screws without heads, and nails without points, stopples which stopped nothing, bottles of medicine which had lost their labels, and labels which had lost their bottles. Some former inhabitant of the house had evidently been afflicted with mice, for six mouse-traps were discovered, all of different patterns, all rusty, and all calculated to discourage any mouse who ever nibbled cheese. There were also three old bird-cages, in which, since the memory of man, no bird had ever lived; a couple of fire-buckets of ancient black leather, which Eyebright had seen hanging from a rafter all her life without suspecting their use, and a gun of Revolutionary pattern which had lost its lock. All these were to be sold, and so was the hay in the barn, as also were the chickens and chicken-coops; even Brindle and old Charley.

The day before the auction, a man came and pasted labels with numbers on them upon all the things. Eyebright found "24" stuck on the side of her own special little stool, which papa had said she might take to the Island, but which had been forgotten. She tore off the label, and hid the stool in a closet, but it made her feel as if every thing in the house was going to be sold whether or no, and she half turned and looked over her shoulder at her own back, as if she feared to find a number there also. Wealthy, who was piling the chairs together by twos, laughed.

"I guess they won't put you up to 'vandoo,'" she said; "or, if they do, I'll be the first to bid. There, that's the last! I never did see such a heap of rubbish as come out of that garret; your Ma, and your Grandma, too, I reckon, never throwed away any thing in all their days. Often and often I used to propose to clean out and kind of sort over the things, but your Ma, she wouldn't ever let me. They was sure to come in useful some day, she said; but that day never come,—and there they be, moth-and-rust-corrupted, sure enough! Well, 'tain't no use layin' up treasures upon earth. We all find that out when we come to clear up after fifty years' savin'."

Next morning proved fine and sunny, and great numbers of people came to the auction. Some of them brought their dinners in pails, and stayed all day, for auctions do not occur very often in the country, and are great events when they do. Eyebright, who did not know exactly how to dispose of herself, sat on the stairs, high up, where no one could see her, and listened to the auctioneer's loud voice calling off the numbers and bids. "No. 17, one clock,—who bids two dollars for the clock? No. 18, lounge covered with calliker. I am offered seven-fifty for the lounge covered with calliker. I am offered seven-fifty for the lounge covered with calliker. Who bids eight? Thank you, Mr. Brown—going at eight—gone." And No. 17 was the kitchen clock, which had told her the hour so many, many times; the lounge covered with "calliker" was mother's lounge, on which she had so often lain. It seemed very sad, somehow, that they should be "going—gone."

Later in the day she saw, from the window, people driving away in their wagons with their bargains piled in behind them, or set between their knees,—papa's shaving-glass, Wealthy's wash-tubs, the bedstead from the best room. She could hardly keep from crying. It seemed as if

the pleasant past life in the old house were all broken up into little bits, and going off in different directions in those wagons.

She was still at the window when Wealthy came up to search for her. Eyebright's face was very sober, and there were traces of tears on her cheeks.

"Eyebright, where are you? Don't stay mopin' up here, 'tain't no use. Come down and help me get tea. I've made a good fire in the sittin'-room, and we'll all be the better for supper, I reckon. Auctions is wearin' things, and always will be to the end of time. Your Pa looks clean tuckered out."

"Are all the people gone?" asked Eyebright.

"Yes, they have, and good riddance to them. It made me madder than hops to hear 'em a-boastin' of the bargains they'd got. Mrs. Doolittle, up to the corner, bid in that bureau from the keepin'-room chamber for seven dollars. It was worth fifteen; the auction-man said so himself. But to kind of match that, her daughter-in-law, she giv' thirty cents a yard for that rag-carpet in your room, and it didn't cost but fifty when it was new, and that was twelve years ago next November! So I guess we come out pretty even with the Doolittle family, after all!" added Wealthy, with a dry chuckle.

Eyebright followed downstairs. The rooms looked bare and unhomelike with only the few pieces of furniture left which Wealthy had bid in for her private use; for Wealthy did not mean to live out any more, but have a small house of her own, and support herself by "tailorin'." She had bought a couple of beds, a table, a few chairs, and some cooking things, so it was possible, though not very comfortable, to spend one night more in the house. Eyebright peeped into the empty parlor and shut the door.

"Don't let's open it again," she said. "We'll make believe that every thing is there still, just as it used to be, and then it won't seem so dismal."

But in spite of "make-believes," it would have been dismal enough had they not been too busy to think how altered and forlorn the house looked. One more day of hard work, and all was cleared out and made clean. Wealthy followed with her broom and actually "swept herself out," as Eyebright said, brushing the last shreds and straws through the door on to the steps, where the others stood waiting. Mr. Bright locked the door. The key turned in the rusty lock with a sound like a groan. Mr. Bright stood a moment without speaking; then he handed the key to Wealthy, shook hands with her, and walked quickly away in the direction of Mr. Bury's house, where he and Eyebright were to spend the night.

Wealthy was feeling badly over the loss of her old home; and emotion, with her, always took the form of gruffness.

"No need to set about kissing to-night," she said, as Eyebright held up her face, "I'm a-comin' round to see you off to-morrow."

Then she, too, stalked away. Eyebright looked after her for a little while, then very slowly she opened the garden-gate, and went the round of the place once more, saying good-by with her eyes to each well-known object. The periwinkle bed was blue with flowers, the daffodils were just opening their bright cups. "Old maids," Wealthy had been used to call them, because their ruffled edges were so neatly trimmed and pinked. There was the apple-tree crotch, where, every summer since she could remember, her swing had hung. There was her own little garden, bare now and brown with the dead stalks of last year. How easy it would be to make it pretty again if only they were going to stay! The "cave" had fallen in, to be sure, and was only a hole in the ground, but a cave is soon made. She could have another in no time if only—here Eyebright checked herself, recollecting that "if only" did not help the matter a bit, and, like a sensible child, she walked bravely away from the garden and through the gateway. She paused one moment to look at the sun, which was setting in a sky of clear yellow, over which little crimson clouds drifted like a fleet of fairy boats. The orchards and hedges were budding fast. Here and there a cherry-tree had already tied on its white hood. The air was full of sweet prophetic smells. Altogether, Tunxet was at its very prettiest and pleasantest, and, for all her good resolutions, Eyebright gave way, and wept one little weep at the thought that to-morrow she and papa must leave it all.

She dried her eyes soon, for she did not want papa to know she had been crying, and followed to Mrs. Bury's, where Kitty and the children were impatiently looking out for her, and every one gave her a hearty welcome.

But in spite of their kindness, and the fun of sleeping with Kitty for the first time, it seemed grave and lonesome to be anywhere except in the old place where she had always been, and Eyebright began to be glad that she and papa were to go away so soon. The home feeling had vanished from Tunxet, and the quicker they were off, the better, she thought.

The next morning, they left, starting before six o'clock, for the railroad was five miles away. Early as it was, several people were there to say good-by,—Bessie Mather, Laura Wheelwright,—who hadn't taken time even to wash her face,—Wealthy, very gray and grim and silent, and dear Miss Fitch, to whom Eyebright clung till the very end. The last bag was put in, Mr. Bury kissed Eyebright and lifted her into the wagon, where papa and Ben were already seated. Good-bys were exchanged. Bessie, drowned in tears, climbed on the wheel for a last hug, and was pulled down by some one. Ben gave a chirrup, the horses began to move, and that was the end of dear

old Tunxet. The last thing Eyebright saw, as she turned for a final look, was Wealthy's grim, sad face,—poor Wealthy, who had lost most and felt sorriest of all, though she said so little about it.

It was a mile or two before Eyebright could see any thing distinctly. She sat with her head turned away, that papa might not notice her wet eyes. But perhaps his own were a little misty, for he, too, turned his head, and it was a long time before he spoke. The beautiful morning and the rapid motion were helps to cheerfulness, however, and before they reached the railroad station Mr. Bright had begun to talk to Ben, and Eyebright to smile.

She had never travelled on a railroad before, and you can easily imagine how surprising it all seemed to her. At first it frightened her to go so fast, but that soon wore off, and all the rest was enjoyment. Little things, which people used to railroads hardly notice, struck her as strange and pleasant. When the magazine-boy chucked "Ballou's Dollar Monthly" into her lap, she jumped, and said, "Oh, thank you!" and she was quite overcome by the successive gifts, as she supposed, of a paper of pop-corn, a paper of lozenges, and a "prize package," containing six envelopes, six sheets of note-paper, six pens, a wooden pen-handle and a "piece of jewelry,"—all for twenty-five cents!

"Did he really give them to me?" she asked papa, quite gasping at the idea of such generosity.

Then the ice-water boy came along, with his frame of tumblers; she had a delicious cold drink, and told papa "she did think the railroad was so kind," which made him laugh; and, as seeing him laugh brightened her spirits, they journeyed on very cheerfully.

About noon, they changed cars, and presently after that Eyebright became aware of a change in the air, a cool freshness and odor of salt and weeds, which she had never smelt before, and liked amazingly. She was just going to ask papa about it when the train made a sudden curve and swept alongside a yellow beach, beyond which lay a great shining expanse,—gray and silvery and blue,—over which dappled foamy waves played and leaped, and large white birds were skimming and diving. She drew a long breath of delight, and said, half to herself and half to papa, "That is the sea!"

"How did you know?" asked he, smiling.

"Oh, papa, it couldn't be any thing else. I knew it in a minute."

After that, they were close to the sea almost all the way. Eyebright felt as if she could never be tired of watching the waves rise and fall, or of breathing the air, which seemed to fill and satisfy her like food though it made her hungry, too, and she was glad of the nice luncheon which Mr. Bury had packed up for them. But even pleasant things have a tiring side to them, and as night drew on, Eyebright began to think she should be as glad of bed as she had been of dinner.

Her heavy head had been nodding for some time, and had finally dropped upon papa's shoulder, when he roused her with a shake and said,—

"Wake up, Eyebright, wake up! Here we are."

"At the Island?" she asked, drowsily.

"No, not at the Island yet. This is the steamboat."

To see a steamboat had always been one of Eyebright's chief wishes, but she was too sleepy at that moment to realize that it was granted. Her feet stumbled as papa guided her down the stair; she could not keep her eyes open at all. The stewardess—a colored woman—laughed when she saw the half-awake little passenger; but she was very good-natured, whipped off Eyebright's boots, hat, and jacket, in a twinkling, and tucked her into a little berth, where in three minutes she was napping like a dormouse. There was a great deal of whistling and screeching and ringing of bells when the boat left her dock, heavy feet trampled over the deck just above the berth, the water lapped and hissed; but not one of these things did Eyebright hear, nor was she conscious of the rock-ing motion of the waves. Straight through them all she slept; and when at last she waked, the boat was no longer at sea, and there was hardly any motion to be felt.

It was not yet six o'clock. The shut-up cabin was dark and close, except for one ray of yellow sun, which straggled through a crack, and lay across the carpet like a long finger. It flickered, and seemed to beckon, as if it wanted to say, "Get up, Eyebright, it is morning at last; get up, and come out with me." She felt so rested and fresh that the invitation was irresistible; and slipping from the berth, she put on dress and boots, which were laid on a chair near by, tied the hat over her unbrushed hair, and with her warm jacket in hand, stole out of the cabin and ran lightly upstairs to the deck.

Then she gave a great start, and said, "Oh!" with mingled wonder and surprise; for, instead of the ocean which she had expected to see, the boat was steaming gently up a broad river. On either side was a bold, wooded shore. The trees were leafless still, for this was much farther north than Tunxet, but the rising sap had tinted their boughs with lovely shades of yellow, soft red, and pink-brown, and there were quantities of evergreens beside, so that the woods did not look cold or bare. Every half mile or so the river made a bend and curved away in a new direction. It was never possible to see far ahead, and, as the steamer swept through the clear green and silver water, it continually seemed that, a little farther on, the river came to end, and there was no way out except to turn back. But always when the boat reached the place where the end seemed to be, behold, a new reach of water, with new banks and tree-crowned headlands, appeared, so that

their progress was a succession of surprises. Here and there were dots of islands too, just big enough to afford standing-room to a dozen pines and hemlocks, so closely crowded together that the trees next the edge almost seemed to be holding fast by their companions while they leaned over to look at their own faces in the water.

These tiny islets enchanted Eyebright. With each one they passed she thought, "Oh, I hope ours is just like that!" never reflecting that these were rather play islands than real ones, and that Genevieve was the only member of the family likely to be comfortable in such limited space as they afforded. She had the deck and the river to herself for nearly an hour before any of the passengers appeared; when they did, she remembered, with a blush, that her hair was still unbrushed, and ran back to the cabin, when the stewardess made it tidy, and gave her a basin of fresh water for her face and hands. She came back just in time to meet papa, who was astonished at the color in her cheek and the appetite she displayed at breakfast, which was served in a stuffy cabin smelling of kerosene oil and bed-clothes, and calculated to discourage any appetite not sharpened by early morning air.

Little did Eyebright care for the stuffy cabin. She found the boat and all its appointments delightful; and when, after breakfast, the old captain took her down to the engine-room and showed her the machinery, she fairly skipped with pleasure. It was a sort of noisy fairy-land to her imagination; all those wonderful cogs and wheels, and shining rods and shafts, moving and working together so smoothly and so powerfully. She was sorry enough when, at eleven o'clock, they left the boat, and landed at a small hamlet, which seemed to have no name as yet, perhaps because it was so very young. Eyebright asked a boy what they called the town, but all he said in reply was, "'Tain't a teown"—and something about a "Teownship," which she didn't at all understand.

Here they had some dinner, and Mr. Bright hired a wagon to take them "'cross country" to Scrapplehead, which was the village nearest to "Causey Island," as Eyebright now learned that their future home was called. "Cosy," papa pronounced it. The name pleased her greatly, and she said to herself, for perhaps the five-hundredth time, "I *know* it is going to be nice."

It was twenty-two miles from the nameless village to Scrapplehead, but it took all the afternoon to make the journey, for the roads were rough and hilly, and fast going was impossible. Eyebright did not care how slowly they went. Every step of the way was interesting to her, full of fresh sights and sounds and smells. She had never seen such woods as those which they passed through. They looked as if they might have been planted about the time of the Deluge, so dense and massive were their growths. Many of the trees were old and of immense size. Some very large ones had fallen, and their trunks were thickly crusted with fungi and long hair-like tresses of gray moss. Here and there were cushions of green moss, so rich and luxuriant as to be the softest sitting-places imaginable. Eyebright longed to get out and roll on them; the moss seemed at least a yard deep. Once they passed an oddly shaped broad track by the road-side, which the driver told them was the foot-mark of a bear. This was exciting. And a little farther on, at the fording of a shallow brook, he showed them where a deer had stopped to drink the night before, and left the impression of his slender hoofs in the wet clay.

It was as interesting as a story to be there, so near the haunts of these wild creatures. Then, leaving the woods, they would come to wide vistas of country, with pine-clad hills and slopes and beautiful gleaming lakes. And twice from the top of an ascent they caught the outlines of a bold mountain-range. A delicious air blew down from these mountains, cool, crystal clear, and spiced with the balsamic smell of hemlocks and firs and a hundred lovely wood-odors beside.

"Oh, isn't Maine beautiful!" cried Eyebright, in a rapture. She felt a sort of resentment against Wealthy for having called it a "God-forsaken" place. "But Wealthy didn't know: she never was here," was her final conclusion. "If she ever had been here, she couldn't have been so silly."

It was too dark to see much of Scrapplehead when at last they got there. It was a small place, nestled in an angle of the hills. The misty gray ocean lay beyond. Its voice came to their ears as they descended the last steep pitch, a hushed low voice with a droning tone, as though it were sleepy-time with the great sea. There was no tavern in the village, and they applied at several houses before finding any one willing to accommodate them. By this time, Eyebright was very tired, and could hardly keep from crying as they drove away from the third place.

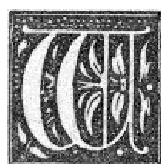
"What shall we do if nobody will take us in?" she asked papa dolefully. "Shall we have to sit in the wagon all night?"

"Guess 't won't come to that," said the cheery driver. "Downs'll take you. I'll bet a cookie he will." When he came to "Downs's," he jumped out and ran in. "They're real clever folks," he told Mrs. Downs; "and the little gal is so tired, it's a pity to see."

So Mrs. Downs consented to lodge them; and their troubles were over for that day. Half blind with sleep and fatigue, Eyebright ate her bread and milk, fried eggs, and doughnuts, fell asleep while she undressed, gave her head a knock against the bedpost, laughed, hurried into bed, and in three minutes was lost in dreamless slumber. The wind blew softly up the bay, the waves sang their droning lullaby, a half-grown moon came out, twinkled, and flashed in the flashing water, and sent one long beam in to peep at the little sleeper in bed. The new life was begun, and begun pleasantly.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUSEY ISLAND.



hen Eyebright awoke next morning, she ran straight to the window, with the hope that she might see Causey Island. But the window did not look toward the sea. Only a barn, a bit of winding road, and a green hill with a rocky top, were to be seen; and she dropped the paper shade with a sense of disappointment.

Dressing herself as fast as she could, she ran downstairs. Mrs. Downs, who was frying fish in the kitchen, pointed with a spoon in answer to her question, and said,—

"It's up that way the island is, but 'taint much to look at. It's too fur for you to see the house."

Eyebright didn't particularly care about seeing the house. She was satisfied with seeing the island. There it lay, long and green, raised high out of the blue sea like a wall, with the water washing its stony shore. There seemed to be a good many trees and bushes on top, and altogether she thought it a beautiful place, and one where a little girl might be happy to live.

"You ain't the folks that's coming to live up to the island, be you?" said Mrs. Downs. "Do tell if you are? We heard there was some one. There hain't been nobody there for quite a spell back, not since the Lotts went away last year. Job Lott, he farmed it for a while; but Miss Lott's father, he was took sick over to Machias, and they moved up to look after him, and nobody's been there since, unless the boys for blueberries. I guess your Pa'll find plenty to do to get things straightened out, and so will the rest of you."

"There isn't any 'rest' but me."

"Do tell now. Hain't you any Ma?"

"No," said Eyebright, sadly. "Mother died last November."

"You poor little thing!" cried kind Mrs. Downs; "and hain't you got no brothers and sisters either?"

"No; not any at all."

"Why, you'll be lonesome, I'm afraid, up to the island. You never lived in such a sort of a place before, did you?"

"Oh, no; we always lived in Tunxet. But I don't believe I shall be lonesome. It looks real pretty from here. Why is it called Cosy Island, Mrs. Downs?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know. Folks always called it that. I never thought to ask nobody. Perhaps he'll know when he comes in."

"He" was Mr. Downs; but he knew no more than his wife about the name of the island. Mr. Bright, however, was better informed. He told them that the name, in the first place, was "Causeway," from the natural path, uncovered at each low tide, which connected it with the shore, and that this had gradually been changed to "Causey," because it was easier to pronounce. Eyebright was rather disappointed at this explanation.

"I thought it was 'Cosy,'" she said, "because the island was cosey."

Mr. Downs gave a great laugh at this, but papa patted her head kindly, and said,—

"We'll see if we can't make it so, Eyebright."

The tide would not serve for crossing the causeway till the afternoon, but Mr. Downs offered to put them over in his boat without waiting for that. It was arranged that they should come back for the night, and Mrs. Downs packed some bread and cheese and doughnuts in a basket to serve them as dinner. Eyebright took the basket on her arm, and ran down to the shore in high spirits. It was a lovely day. The sea was as blue as the sky, and, as the boat pushed off, little ripples from the incoming tide struck the pebbly beach, with swift flashes of white, like gleaming teeth, and a gay little splash, so like a laugh that Eyebright laughed too, and showed her teeth.

"What are you smiling at?" asked her father.

"I don't know," she answered, in a tone of dreamy enjoyment. "I like it here, papa."

Near as the island looked, it took quite a long time to reach it, though Mr. Downs pulled strongly and steadily. It was very interesting, as each stroke took them nearer and nearer, and showed more and more distinctly what their future home was like. The trees, which at first had seemed a solid green mass, became distinct shapes of pines, hemlocks, and sumachs. A little farther, and openings appeared between them, through which open spaces on top could be seen, bushes, a field, and yes, actually! a little brown patch, which was a house. There it was, and Eyebright held Genevieve up that she might see it, too.

"That's our house, my child," she whispered. "Aren't you glad? But my! don't it look small?"

It was small, smaller even than it looked, as they found, when, after saying good-by to Mr. Downs, and getting directions for crossing the "Causey," they climbed the steep path which led to

the top, and came out close to the house. Mr. Bright gave a low whistle as he looked at it, and Eyebright opened her eyes wide.

"It's a comfort that we're not a large family, isn't it?" she said, quaintly. "I'm almost glad now that Wealthy didn't come, papa. Wouldn't she say it was little? Littler than Miss Fitch's schoolhouse, I do believe."

The front door was fastened only by a large cobweb, left by some industrious spider of last year, so it was easy to make their way in. There was no entrance-hall. The door opened directly into a square kitchen, from which opened two smaller rooms. One had shelves round it, and seemed to be a sort of pantry or milk-room. As they went into the other, a trickling sound met their ears, and they saw a slender stream of clear spring water running into a stone sink. The sink never seemed to get any fuller, but the water ran on and on, and there was no way to stop it, as Eyebright found after a little examination.

"Isn't that splendid?" she cried. "It just runs all the time, and we shan't have to pump or any thing. I do like that so much!" Then, as if the sound made her thirsty, she held her head under the spout, and took a good long drink.

"Do taste it. It's the best water that ever was," she declared.

This spring-water, always at hand, was the only luxury which the little house afforded. All the rest was bare and plain as could be. Upstairs were two small chambers, but they were more like chicken-coops than bedrooms; for the walls, made of laths not yet plastered, were full of cracks and peep-holes, and the staircase which led to them resembled a ladder more than was desirable. There was plenty of sunshine everywhere, for there were no blinds, and the sweet yellow light made a cheerfulness in the place, forlorn as it was. Eyebright did not think it forlorn. She enjoyed it very much as though it had been a new doll's-house, and danced about gleefully, planning where this should go, and that; how papa's desk should have a corner by one window, and her little chair by the other, and the big mahogany table, which Wealthy had persuaded them to bring, by the wall. She showed a good deal of cleverness and sense in their arrangement, and papa was well content that things should be as she liked.

"We must have the upstairs rooms plastered, I suppose," he said. "That'll require some time, I'm afraid. Plaster takes so long to dry. We must arrange to wait at Mr. Downs's for a week or two, Eyebright."

He sighed as he spoke, and sat down on the door-step, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands, looking tired and discouraged.

"Oh, must we?" cried Eyebright, her face falling. "That won't be nice a bit. Papa! I've got an idea. Don't plaster the walls. Let me fix them. I'll make them real nice, just as nice as can be, if you will, and then we shan't have to wait at all."

"Why, what can you do with them? How do you mean?" demanded her father.

"Oh, papa, it's a secret, I'd rather not tell you. I'd rather have it a surprise,—mayn't I?"

Papa demurred, but Eyebright coaxed and urged, and at last he said,—

"Well, I don't care about it one way or the other. Try your idea if you like, Eyebright. It will amuse you perhaps, and any thing will do for the summer. We can plaster in the fall."

"I don't believe you'll want to," remarked Eyebright, shaking her head mysteriously. "My way is much prettier than plaster. Just you wait and see, papa. I'm sure you'll like it."

But papa seemed down-hearted, and it was not easy to make him smile. To tell the truth, the look of the farm was rather discouraging. He kicked the earth over with his foot, and said the soil was poor and every thing seemed run down. But Eyebright would not give in to this view at all. It was a lovely place, she insisted, and she ran about discovering new beauties and advantages every moment. Now it was a thicket of wild roses just budding into leaf. Next a patch of winter-green, with white starry blossoms and red berries. Then, peeping over the bank, she called papa's attention to a strip of pebbly beach on the side of the island next the sea.

"Here's where we can take baths," she said. "Why, I declare, here's a path down to it. I guess the people who used to live here made it; don't you? Oh, do come and see the beach, papa!"

It was a rough little path which led to the beach, and overgrown with weeds; but they made their way down without much trouble, and Eyebright trampled the pebbles under foot with great satisfaction.

"Isn't it splendid!" she cried. "See that great stone close to the bank, papa. We can go behind there to dress and undress. It's a real nice place. I'm going to call it the 'The Dressing-room.' How wide the sea is on this side! And what is that long point of land, papa?"

For the island lay within a broad curving bay. One end of the curve projected only a little way, but toward the north a long, cape-like tongue of land, with a bold, hilly outline, ran out to sea, and made a striking feature in the landscape.

"Those are the Guinness Hills," said Mr. Bright. "Canada begins just the other side of them. Do you see those specks of white on the point? That is Malachi, and in the summer there is a steamboat once a week from there to Portland. We can see it pass in clear weather, Mr. Downs

says."

"That will be nice," said Eyebright, comfortably. "I'm glad we've got a beach of our own, papa; aren't you? Now I want to look about some more."

To the left of the house the ground rose in a low knoll, whose top was covered with sassafras bushes. This was the source of the spring whose water ran into the back kitchen. They came upon it presently, and could trace the line of spouts, each made of a small tree-trunk, halved and hollowed out, which led it from the hill to the house. Following these along, Eyebright made the discovery of a cubby,—a veritable cubby,—left by some child in a choice and hidden corner formed by three overlapping moosewood bushes. The furniture, except for a table made of three shingles, consisted entirely of corn-cobs; but it was a desirable cubby for all that, and would be a pleasant out-door parlor for Genevieve on hot days, Eyebright thought. It made the island seem much more home-like to know that other children had lived there and played under the trees; and, cheered by this idea, she became so merry, that gradually papa brightened, too, and began to make plans for his farming operations with more heart than he had hitherto shown, deciding where to plant corn and where potatoes, and where their little vegetable garden would better be.

"I suppose it's no use to try for fruit," he said; "the climate is too cold."

"Not too cold for blueberries," Eyebright replied. "There are lots of them, Mrs. Downs says, and lots of cranberries, and Mr. Downs's brother has got an apple-tree."

"An apple-tree! Dear! dear! Think of getting to a place where people have only one apple-tree," muttered Mr. Bright.

By the time that they had made the circuit of the island it was twelve o'clock. This was dinner-time, Eyebright declared, and she produced the lunch-basket. Mrs. Downs's bread had yellow specks of saleratus in it, and was very different from Wealthy's delicious loaves; but they were too hungry to criticise, though Eyebright shook her head over it, and thought with satisfaction of the big parcel of yeast-powder which she and Wealthy had packed up. She knew exactly where it was, in the corner of a certain red box, and that reminded her to ask papa when the boxes would be likely to come.

"They are due at this moment," he replied, "I suppose we may look for them at any time now. Mr. Downs says there have been head winds for this week past, and I presume that has kept the sloop back. Perhaps she may come to-day."

"I do hope she will. I want dreadfully to begin and fix the house. Doesn't it seem a great while since we left Tunxet, papa? I can't believe that it is only three days, so much has happened."

The tide had been going out since eleven o'clock, and by four, when they were ready to cross, the causeway was uncovered. It was a wide pathway of sand, not flat and even all the way, but high in some places and low in others, with shells and pebbles shining here and there on its surface. It was like a beach, except for being narrower, and having water on both sides of it, instead of on only one. The sand was still wet enough to make good hard footing, and Eyebright skipped gayly over it, declaring that she felt just like the children of Israel in the middle of the Red Sea.

"It is so strange to think that, just a little while ago, this was all water," she said; "and just a little while longer, and it will be all water again. It is the most interesting thing we've got on our island, I think, papa; but it makes me feel a little afraid, too."

"There's nothing to be afraid of if you're only careful not to come here except when the tide is going out," said her father. "Now remember this, Eyebright,—you must never try to cross when the tide is rising, even if the sand looks perfectly dry and the water seems a good way off. The sea comes in very fast up here on these northern shores, and if you made a misstep and sprained your ankle, or had an accident of any kind, you might be drowned before any one could come to your help. Remember, my child."

"Yes, papa, I will," said Eyebright, looking rather nervously at the water. It was slipping farther away every moment, and seemed the most harmless thing in the world; but papa's words made her feel as if it were a dangerous and deceitful creature which could not be trusted.

It was over a mile from the causeway to the village, though at first sight the distance looked much less Plodding along the sandy shore was slow work, so that they did not reach the village till nearly six. A smell of frying met them as they entered the door. Mrs. Downs, wishing to do them honor, was making blueberry flapjacks for tea. Did any of you ever eat blueberry flapjacks? I imagine not, unless you have summered on the coast of Maine. They are a kind of greasy pancake, in which blueberries are stirred till the cakes are about the color of a bruise. They are served swimming in melted butter and sugar, and in any other place or air would be certain indigestion, if not sudden death, to any person partaking of them. But, somehow, in that place and that air they are not only harmless but seem quite delicious as well. Eyebright thought so. She ate a great many flapjacks, thought them extremely nice, and slept like a top afterward, with never a bad dream to mar her rest.

A big gray sail at the wharf was the glad sight that met their eyes when they came down next morning. The sloop had come in during the night, with all Mr. Bright's goods on board. He had hoped that it might be possible to land them on the island, but the captain said it was out of the question; he couldn't get near enough, for one thing, and if he could, he wouldn't; for how were heavy things like them to be dumped on a shelvin' bank like that, he'd like to know? So the goods

were landed on the dock at Scrapplehead, and Mr. Downs undertook to find an ox-team to draw them across the causeway at low tide.

Getting oxen was not an easy matter at that season of the year, but Mr. Downs, who had taken a fancy to his lodgers, bestirred himself, and at last found some one willing to let his yoke go in consideration of a dollar and a quarter. So, at exact low tide, the great cart, piled with boxes and barrels, creaked slowly across the sandy bar, Mr. Downs driving, and papa walking behind with Eyebright, who was more than ever reminded of the crossing of the Red Sea. It took much lugging and straining and "gee"-ing and "haw"-ing to get the load up the steep bank on the other side; but all arrived safely at last in front of the house. There the cart was unloaded as fast as possible, a few things set indoors, the rest left outside, and, getting into the cart, they all drove back across the causeway. It was harder work than when they came, for the tide was rising, and the sand had grown soft and yielding. One great swirling wave ran up and curled around the oxen's hoofs just as they reached firm ground, but, though Eyebright gave a little scream, and Mr. Downs frowned and said, "by gosh!" no harm was done, and the momentary fright only made pleasanter their drive to Scrapplehead, which they reached just as the sun sank for the night into a great soft-looking bed of purple and crimson clouds.

This was their last night with the Downs family. Early next morning they started for the island in Mr. Downs's boat, taking with them their last bundles and bags, and Mrs. Downs, who had kindly offered to give them a day's help. Very helpful it proved, for there was every thing to do.

Mr. Bright, like all men, wanted to do every thing at once, and Eyebright was too inexperienced to know what should come first and what second; so Mrs. Downs's good sense and advice were of great value. Under her directions the bedrooms were swept and cleaned, and the bedsteads put together, first of all, for, as she said, "You've got to sleep, anyhow, and if you don't do it comfortable you'll be sick, and that would never do." Next, while Eyebright swept the kitchen, she and Mr. Bright got the stove into place, fixed the pipe, and lighted a fire, after which Mrs. Downs scoured the pantry shelves, and unpacked china and tins.

"There," she said, surveying the result with great satisfaction. "That begins to look folksy. What's sewed up in that old comforter? A rocking-cheer. Let's have it out!"

So the rocking-chair was unsewed, and papa's desk and the big table were unpacked; and as each familiar article came to view, Eyebright felt as though an old friend were restored to her. She patted the arm of her own little chair, and put the plaided cover from the old sitting-room over the table, with a sense of cheer and comfort. She and papa and Mrs. Downs dined on bread and cheese in the intervals of work, and by five o'clock they were very fairly in order, and Mrs. Downs made ready to go back to her own family. Eyebright walked with her as far as the causeway, and parted with a hearty kiss. Mrs. Downs seemed like a second Wealthy, almost, she had been so kind and thoughtful all that busy day.

Papa was sitting in the rocking-chair, by the stove, when she went back. She stopped to kiss him as she passed, and proceeded to set the table and get supper. Mrs. Downs had started them with a supply of bread, butter, and milk; but the tea and sugar came out of one of the Tunxet boxes, and so did the tumbler of currant-jam, opened in honor of the occasion. Wealthy had made it, and it seemed to taste of the pleasant old times. Eyebright did not care to think much about Wealthy just then. The tide was drawing over the causeway, cutting them off from everybody else in the world. She felt lonely and the least bit afraid, in spite of papa's being there; and only keeping very busy till bedtime saved her from homesickness, which she felt would be a bad beginning, indeed, for that first evening in her new home.

Next morning was fair. All the days had been good so far, which was fortunate, for a half-settled house is a dismal place enough in rainy weather. Eyebright opened her eyes, and after one bewildered stare began to laugh, for through the slats of her "coop," she could distinctly see papa, half-dressed, and brushing his hair in his, on the other side of the entry. This was not to be endured, so after breakfast, while he went to the village for some provisions, she set to work with great energy on her plan for reforming the bedroom walls. This was to cover them with "picture papers." There was an abundance of material for the purpose at hand, for her mother had taken Harper's Bazar and Frank Leslie's Illustrated for several years; and as she saved all the back numbers, a large pile had collected, which Wealthy had carefully packed. These Eyebright sorted over, setting aside all the pictures of cows, and statesmen, and steamboats, and railroad trains for papa's room, and keeping the kittens, and dogs, and boys, and girls, and babies for her own. She fastened the papers to the laths with tacks, and the ceilings were so low that she was able to do all but the very top row herself. That she was forced to leave for papa. So hard did she work that the whole of his room was done before he appeared, climbing the path, with a big bundle under one arm, a basket in his hand, and looking very warm and tired.

"It's a hard pull up the shore," he said, wiping his forehead. "I shall have to get a boat whether I can afford it or not, I'm afraid. It'll be worse when hot weather comes, and there'll always be the need of going over to the village for something or other."

"A boat," cried Eyebright, clapping her hands "Oh, papa, that would be splendid. I can learn to row it my own self, can't I? It'll be as nice as a carriage of our own,—nicer, for we shan't have to catch the horse, or feed him either. Now, papa, let me carry the basket, and oh, do come quick. I want to show you how beautifully I have done your bedroom."

Papa liked the bedroom very much. He was glad to be saved the expense and delay of plastering,

only he said he was afraid he should always be late to breakfast, because he should want to lie in bed and study his picture-gallery, which joke delighted Eyebright highly.

It was several days before she had time to attend to her own papering, for there was a great deal else to do,—boxes to unpack, places to settle, and outside work to begin. Mr. Bright hired a man for one week to plow and plant and split wood. After that, he thought he could keep things in running order by himself. He had been brought up on a farm, but years of disuse had made him stiff and awkward at such labor, and he found the work harder than he had expected. Eyebright was glad to see the big woodpile grow. It had a cosey look to her, and gradually the house was beginning to look cosey too. The kitchen, with its strip of carpet and easy-chairs and desk, made quite a comfortable sitting-room. Eyebright kept a glass of wild roses or buttercups or white daisies always on the table. She set up a garden of her own, too, after a while, and raised some balsams and "Johnny-jump-ups" from seeds which Mr. Downs gave her, and some golden-brown coreopsis. As for the housekeeping, it fared better than could have been expected with only a little girl of thirteen to look after things. Once a week, a woman came from the village for the day (and half a dollar), did the washing and part of the ironing, roasted a joint of meat if there was one to roast, made a batch of pies, perhaps, or a pan of gingerbread, and scoured the pots and pans and the kitchen floor. This lightened the work for the next seven days, and left Eyebright only vegetables and little things to cook, and the ordinary cleaning, bed-making, and dusting to do, which she managed very well on the whole, though sometimes she got extremely tired, and wished for Wealthy's strong hands to help her. Milk and butter came from Mr. Downs's every other day, and papa was very good and considerate about his food, and quite contented with a dinner of potatoes or mush if nothing better was to be had, so the little housekeeper did not have any heavy burden on her mind so far as he was concerned.

The boat proved a great comfort when it came, which was not till more than a month after their settlement on Causey Island. Eyebright took regular rowing lessons and practised diligently, so that after a few weeks she became really expert, and papa could trust her to go alone as far as the village, when the weather was fair and the sea smooth. These rows to and fro were the greatest treats and refreshments after house-work. Sometimes it happened that her errands kept her till sunset, and she floated home on the incoming tide, just dipping the oars gently in now and then, and carried along by the current and a "singing" wind, which followed close behind and pushed the boat on its way. These were Eyebright's real "play" times. She kept a story going about a princess and a boat, and some water-fairies and a water-prince, and whenever the chance came for a solitary row, she "acted" it by herself in the old pleasant way, always wishing that Bessie or some other girl could be along to play it with her. Another girl,—some one to share work and fun, waking and sleeping, with her,—that was all which was wanted, she thought, to make Causey Island as pleasant as Tunxet.

CHAPTER IX.

SHUT UP IN THE OVEN.

ou will probably think that it was a dish of pork-and-beans, or an Indian pudding of the good, old-fashioned kind, which was shut up in the Oven. Not at all. You are quite mistaken. The thing shut up in the Oven was Eyebright herself! And the Oven was quite different from any thing you are thinking of,—cold, not hot; wet, not dry; with a door made of green sea-water instead of black iron. This sounds like a conundrum; and, as that is hardly fair, I will proceed to unriddle it at once and tell you all about it.

The Oven was a sort of cave or grotto in the cliffs, four miles from Scrapplehead, but rather less than three from the causeway. Its real name was "The Devil's Oven." Country people, and Maine country people above all others, are very fond of calling all sorts of strange and striking places after the devil. If Eyebright had ever heard the whole name, perhaps she might not have ventured to go there alone as she did, in which case I should have no adventure to write about. But people usually spoke of it for shortness' sake as the "Oven," and she had no idea that Satan had any thing to do with the place, nor, for that matter, have I.

It was from Mrs. Downs that she first heard about the Oven. Mrs. Downs had been there once, years before. It was a "natteral curosity," she said, with all sorts of strange sea-creatures growing in pools, and the rocks were red and quite beautiful. It wasn't a dangerous place, either, and here Mr. Downs confirmed her. You couldn't get in after half-tide, but anybody could stay in for a week in ordinary weather, and not be drowned. There were plenty of places a-top of the cave, where you could sit and keep dry even at high water, though it would be "sort of poky," too. Eyebright's imagination was fired by this description, and she besought papa to take her there at once. He promised that he would "some day," but the day seemed long in coming, as holidays always do to busy people; and June passed, and July, and still the Oven was unvisited, though Eyebright did not forget her wish to go.

August came at last,—the delicious north-of-Maine August, with hot, brilliant noons, and cool, balmy nights, so different from the murky, steamy August of everywhere else,—and was half over, when one afternoon papa came in with a piece of news.

"What should you say, Eyebright, if I were to go off for the whole day to-morrow?" he asked.

"Why, papa Bright, what do you mean? You can't! There isn't anywhere to go to."

"There's Malachi."

"Oh, papa, not in our little boat!"

"No, in a schooner belonging to Mr. Downs's brother. It has just put in with a load of lumber, and the captain has offered me a passage if I like to go. He expects to get back to-morrow evening about nine o'clock. Should you be lonesome, do you think, Eyebright, if I went?"

"Not a bit," cried Eyebright, delighted at the idea of papa's having a sail. "I'll do something or other that is pleasant. Perhaps I'll go and stay all day with Mrs. Downs. Anyhow, I'll not be lonely. I'm glad the captain asked you to go, papa. It'll be nice, I think."

But next morning, when she had given papa his early breakfast, watched him across the causeway, and seen the sails of the schooner diminish into two white specks in the distance, she was not sure that it was nice. She sang at her dish-washing and clattered her cups and spoons, to make as much noise as possible; but for all she could do, the house felt silent and empty, and she missed papa very much. Her plan had been to go to the village as soon as her work was done, and make Mrs. Downs a visit, but later another idea popped into her mind. She would go to the Oven instead.

"I know about where it is," she thought. "If I keep close to the shore I can't miss it, anyway. Mr. Downs said it wasn't more than two miles and three-quarters from the causeway. Two miles and three-quarters isn't a very long walk. It won't be half-tide till after ten. I can get there by a little after nine if I start at once. That'll give me an hour to see the cave, and when I come back I'll go down to the village and stay to dinner with Mrs. Downs. I'll take some bread and butter, though, because one does get so hungry up here if you take the least little walk. What a good idea it is to do this! I am glad papa went to Malachi, after all."

Her preparations were soon made, and in ten minutes she was speeding across the causeway, which was safe walking still, though the tide had turned,—her pocket full of bread and butter, and Genevieve in her arms. She had hesitated whether or not to take Genevieve, but it seemed too sad to leave her all alone on the island, so it ended in her going too, in her best bonnet and a little blanket shawl. The morning was most beautiful, dewy and fresh, and the path along the shore was scented with freshly cut hay from inland fields, and with spicy bayberry and sweet fern. A belated wild rose shone here and there in the hedges, pale and pink. Tangles of curly, green-brown fringe lay over the clustering Virgin's Bower. The blue lapping waves, as they rose and fell, were full of sea-weeds of a lovely red-brown tint, and a frolicsome wind played over the

surface of the sea, and seemed to be whispering something funny to it, for the water trembled in the sun and dimpled as if with sudden laughter.

The way, as a general thing, lay close by the shore, winding over the tops of low cliffs covered with dry yellow grasses. Now and then it dipped down to strips of shingle beach, or skirted little coves with boundaries of bushes and brambles edging the sand. Miles are not easy to reckon when people are following the ins and outs of an irregular coast. Half a dozen times Eyebright clambered to the water's edge and peeped round the shoulder of a great rock, thinking that she must have got to the cave at last. Yet nothing met her eyes but more rocks, and surf, and fissures brown with rust and barnacles. At last, she came on a group of children, playing in the sand, and stopped to ask the way of them.

There were two thin, brown little girls in pink-and-gray gingham frocks, and pink-and-gray striped stockings appearing over the tops of high, laced boots. They were exactly the same size, and made Eyebright think of grasshoppers, they were so wiry and active, and sprang about so nimbly. Then there were three rosy, hearty-looking country children, and a pair of little boys, with sharp, delicately cut faces, who seemed to be brothers, for they looked like each other and quite unlike the rest. All seven were digging holes in the sand with sticks and shovels, and were as much absorbed in their work as a party of diligent beavers. When Eyebright appeared, with Genevieve in her arms, they stopped digging and looked at her curiously.

"Do you know how far the Oven is from here?" asked Eyebright.

"No," and "What's the Oven?" answered the children, and one of the gray-and-pink little girls added: "My, what a big doll!" Eyebright scarcely heeded these answers, she was so delighted to see some children after her long fast from childhood.

"What are you making?" she asked.

"A fort," replied one of the boys.

"Now, Fweddy, you said you'd call it a castle," put in one of the girls.

"Well, castles are just the same things as forts. My mother said so."

"Is that your mother sitting there?" asked Eyebright catching a glimpse of a woman and a baby under a tree not far off.

"Oh, dear, no! That's Mrs. Waurigan. She's Jenny's mother, you know, and 'Mandy's and Peter Paul Rubens's. She's not our mother at all. My mother's name is Mrs. Brown, and my papa is Dr. Azariah P. Brown. We live in New York city. Did you ever see New York city?"

When Eyebright appeared with Genevieve in her arms, they stopped digging and looked at her curiously.—Page 172.

"No, never. I wish I had," said Eyebright.

"It's a real nice place," went on the pink-and-gray midge. "You'd better make haste and come and see it quick, 'cause it's de-te-rotting every day; my papa said so. Don't you think Dr. Azariah P. Brown is a beau-tiful name? I do. When I'm mallied and have a little boy, I'm going to name him Dr. Azariah P. Brown, because it's the beautifulest name in the world."

"She's 'gaged already," said the other little sister. "She's 'gaged to Willy Prentiss. And she's got a 'gagement wing; only, she turns the stone round inside, so's to make people b'lieve it's a plain gold wing and she's mallied already. Isn't that cheating? It's just as bad as telling a weal story."

"No, it isn't either!" cried the other, twirling a small gilt ring round on a brown finger, and revealing a gem made, apparently, of second-rate sealing-wax, and about the color of a lobster's claw. "No, it isn't cheating, not one bit; 'cause sometimes the wing gets turned round all by itself, and then people can see that it isn't plain gold. And Nelly's 'gaged, too, just as much as I am, only she hasn't got any wing, because Harry Sin—"

"Now, Lotty!" screamed Nelly, flinging herself upon her, "you mustn't tell the name."

"So your name is Lotty, is it?" said Eyebright, who had abandoned Genevieve to the embraces of Jenny, and was digging in the sand with the rest.

"No, it isn't. My really name is Charlotte P., only Mamma calls me Lotty. I don't like it much. It's such a short name, just Lotty. Look here, you didn't ever see me till to-day, so it can't make much difference to you, so won't you please call me Charlotte P.? I'd like it so much if you would."

Eyebright hastened to assure Charlotte P. of her willingness to grant this slight favor.

"Are these little boys your brothers, Lot—Charlotte P., I mean?" she asked.

"Oh, no!" cried Nelly. "Our bwother is lots and lots bigger than they are. That's Sinclair and Fweddy. They ain't no 'lation at all, 'cept that they live next door."

"Their mamma's a widow," interposed Charlotte P. "She plays on the piano, and a real handsome gentleman comes to see her 'most every day. That's what being a widow means."

"Look here what I've found!" shouted Sinclair, who had gone farther down the beach. "I guess it's a shrimp. And if I had a match I'd make a fire and cook it, for I read in a book once that shrimps are delicious."

"Let me see him! Let me see him!" clamored the little ones. Then, in a tone of disgust: "Oh, my! ain't he horrid-looking and little. He isn't any bigger than the head of a pin."

"That's not true," asserted Sinclair: "he's bigger than the head of my mamma's shawl-pin, and that's ever so big."

"I don't believe he's good a bit," declared Lotty.

"Then you shan't have any of him when he's cooked," said Sinclair. "I've got a jelly-fish, too. He's in a hole with a little water in it, but he can't get out. I mean to eat him, too. Are jelly-fish good?" to Eyebright.

"I don't believe they are," she replied. "I never heard of anybody's eating them."

"I like fishes," went on Sinclair. "My mamma says she guesses I've got a taste for nat-nat-ural history. When I grow up I mean to read all the books about animals."

"And what do you like?" asked Eyebright of the other little boy, who had not spoken yet, and whose fair baby face had an odd, almost satirical expression.

"Fried hominy," was the unexpected reply, uttered in a sharp, distinct voice. The children shouted and Eyebright laughed, but Freddy only smiled faintly in a condescending way. And now Eyebright remembered that she was on her road to the cave,—a fact quite forgotten for the moment,—and she jumped up and said she must go.

"Perhaps Mrs. Waurigan will know where the Oven is," she added.

"I guess so," replied Lotty; "because she does know about a great many, many things. Good-by!—do come again to-morrow, and bring Dolly, won't you?" and she gave Genevieve one kiss and Eyebright another. "You're pretty big to play with dolls, I think. But then"—meditatively—"she's a pretty big doll too."

Mrs. Waurigan was knitting a blue-yarn stocking. She could tell Eyebright nothing about the Oven.

"I know it's not a great way off," she said. "But I've never been there. It can't be over a mile, if it's so much as that; that I'm sure of. Have you walked up all the way from Scrapplehead? I want to know? It's a long way for you to come."

"Not so far as New York city," said Eyebright, laughing. "Those little girls tell me they come from there."

"Yes; the twins and Sinclair and Freddy all come from New York. Their mother, Mis' Brown, who is a real nice lady, was up here last year. She took a desprit fancy to the place, and when the children had scarlet fever in the spring, and Lotty was so sick that the doctor didn't think she'd ever get over it, she just packed their trunk and sent them right off here just as soon as they was fit to travel. She said all she asked was that I'd feed 'em and do for 'em just as I do for my own; and you wouldn't believe how much they've improved since they came. They look peaked enough still, but for all that nobody'd think that they were the same children."

"And did the little boys come with them?"

"Yes. They're neighbors, Miss' Brown wrote, and their mother wanted to go to the Springs, or somewhere, so she asked mightn't they come, too. At first, I thought I couldn't hardly manage with so many, but they haven't been a bit of trouble. Just set them anywheres down on the shore, and they'll dig all day and be as happy as clams. The only bad things is boots. Miss' Brown, she sent seven pairs apiece in the trunk, and, you would hardly believe it, they're on the sixth pair already. Rocks is dreadful hard on leather, and so is sand. But I guess their Ma wont care so's they go back strong and healthy."

"I'm sure she won't," said Eyebright. "Now I must be going, or I shan't be able to get into the cave when I find it."

"You'd better come in and get a bite of something to eat as you come back," said Mrs. Waurigan. "That's the house just across that pasture. 'T ain't but a step out of your way."

"Oh, thank you. How kind you are!" replied Eyebright. Then she said good-by and hurried on, thinking to herself,—"Maine is full of good people, I do believe. I wish Wealthy could come up here and see how nice they are."

It seemed more than a mile to the Oven, but she made the distance longer than it was by continually going down to the water's edge to make sure that she was not passing the cave without knowing it. It was almost by accident that in the end she lighted upon it. Strolling a little out of her way to pick a particularly blue harebell which had caught her eye, she suddenly found herself on the edge of a hollow chasm, and, peeping over, perceived that it must be the place she was in search of. Scrambling down from her perch, which was about half-way up one side, she found herself in a deep recess, overhung by a large rock, which formed a low archway across its front. The floor ran back for a long distance, rising gradually, in irregular terraces, till it met the roof; and here and there along these terraces were basin-like holes full of gleaming water, which must be the pools Mrs. Downs had talked about.

Eyebright had never seen a cave before, though she had read and played about caves all her life, so you can imagine her ecstasy and astonishment at finding herself in a real one at last. It was as good as the "Arabian Nights," she thought, and a great deal better than the cave in the "Swiss Family Robinson." Indeed, it was a beautiful place. Cool green light filled it, like sunshine filtered through sea-water. The rocky shelves were red, or rather a deep rosy pink, and the water in the pools was of the color of emerald and beautifully clear. She climbed up to the nearest pool, and gave a loud scream of delight, for there, under her eye, was a miniature flower-garden, made by the fairies, it would seem, and filled with dahlia-shaped and hollyhock-shaped things, purple, crimson, and deep orange; which were flowers to all appearance, and yet must be animals; for they opened and shut their many-tinted petals, and moved and swayed when she dipped her fingers in and splashed the water about. There were green spiky things, too, exactly like freshly fallen chestnut burrs, lettuce-like leaves,—pale red ones, as fine as tissue-paper,—and delicate filmy foliage in soft brown and in white. Yellow snails clung to the sides of the pool, vivid in color as the blossom of a trumpet-creeper; and, as she lay with her face close to the surface of the water, a small, bright fish swam from under the leaves, and darted across the pool like a quick sun ray. Never, even in her dreams, had Eyebright imagined any thing like it, and in her delight she gave Genevieve a great hug, and cried:—

"Aren't you glad I brought you, dear, and oh, isn't it beautiful?"

There were several pools, one above another, and each higher one seemed more beautiful than the next below. The very biggest "dahlia" of all—Anemone was its real name, but Eyebright did not know that—was in the highest of these pools, and Eyebright lay so long looking at it and giving it an occasional tickle with her forefinger to make it open and shut, that she never noticed how fast the tide was beginning to pour in. At last, one great wave rolled up and broke almost at her feet, and she suddenly bethought herself that it might be time to go. Alas! the thought came too late, as in another minute she saw. The rocks at the side, down which she had climbed, were cut off by deep water. She hurried across to the other side to see if it were not possible to get out there; but it was even worse, and the tide ran after as she scrambled back, and wetted her ankles before she could gain the place where she had been sitting before she made this disagreeable discovery. That wasn't safe either, for pretty soon a splash reached her there, and she took Genevieve in her arms and climbed up higher still, feeling like a hunted thing, and as if the sea were chasing her and would catch her if it possibly could.

It was a great comfort just then to recollect what Mr. Downs had said about the cave being safe enough for people who were caught there by the tide, "in ordinary weather." Eyebright worried a little over that word "ordinary," but the sun was shining outside, and she could see its gleam through the lower waves; the water came in quietly, which proved that there wasn't much wind; and altogether she concluded that there couldn't be any thing extraordinary about this particular day. I think she proved herself a brave little thing, and sensible, too, to be able to reason this out as she did, and avoid useless fright; but, for all her bravery, she couldn't help crying a little as she sat there like a limpet among the rocks, and realized that the Oven door was fast shut, and she couldn't get out for ever so many hours. All of a sudden it came to her quite distinctly how foolish and rash it was to have come there all alone, without permission from papa, or letting anybody know of her intention. It was one comfort that papa at that moment was in Malachi, and couldn't be anxious about her; but, "Oh dear!" Eyebright thought, "how dreadfully he would feel if I never did get out, and he came back and found me gone, and nobody could tell him where I

was. I'll never do such a bad, naughty thing again, never,—if I ever do get out, that is—" she reflected, as the water climbed higher and higher, and again she moved her seat to avoid it, still with the sense of being a hunted thing which the sea was trying to catch.

Her seat was now too far from the pools for her to note how the anemones and snails were enjoying their twice-a-day visit from the tide, how the petals quivered and widened, the weeds grew brighter, and the fish darted about with renewed life and vigor. I don't believe it would have been much comfort to her if she had seen them. Fishes are unfriendly creatures; they never seem to care any thing about human beings, or whether they are feeling glad or sorry. Genevieve, for all her being made of wax, was much more satisfactory. What was particularly nice, she lent Eyebright her blanket-shawl to wear, for the cave had begun to feel very chilly. The shawl was not large, but it was better than nothing; and with this round her shoulders, and Dolly cuddled in her arms, she sat on the very highest ledge of all and watched the water rise. She couldn't go any higher, so she hoped *it* couldn't, either; and as she sat, she sang all the songs and hymns she knew, to keep her spirits up,—"Out on an Ocean," "Shining Shore" (how she wished herself on one!), "Rosalie, the Prairie Flower," "Old Dog Tray," and ever so many others. It was a very miscellaneous concert, but did as well for Eyebright and the fishes as the most classical music could have done; better, perhaps, for Mozart and Beethoven might have sounded a little mournful, and "songs without words" would never have answered. Songs *with* words were what were wanted in that emergency.

The tide halted at last, after filling the cave about two-thirds full. Once sure that it had turned and was going down, Eyebright felt easier, and could even enjoy herself again. She ate the bread and butter with a good appetite, only wishing there was more of it, and then made up a delightful story about robbers and a cave and a princess, in which she herself played the part of the princess, who was shut in the cave of an enchanter till a prince should come and release her through a hole in the top. By the time that this happened and the princess was safely out, the uppermost pool was uncovered, and Eyebright clambered down the wet rocks and took another long look at it, "making believe" that it was a garden which a good fairy had planted to amuse the princess; and, indeed, no fairy could have invented a prettier one. So, little by little, and following the receding sea, she was able at last, with a jump and a long step, to reach the rocky pathway by which she had come down, and two minutes later she was on top of the cliff again, and in the sunshine, which felt particularly warm and pleasant. The sun was half-way down the sky; she had been in the cave almost six hours, and she knew it must be late in the afternoon.

Neither Mrs. Waurigan nor the party of children was visible as she passed the house. They had probably gone in for tea, and she did not stop to look them up, for a great longing for home had seized upon her. The tide delayed her a little while at the causeway, so that it was past six when she finally reached the island, and her boots were wet from the soaked sand; but she didn't mind that a bit, she was so very glad to be safely there again. She pulled them off, put on dry stockings and shoes, made the fire, filled the tea-kettle, set the table, and, after a light repast of bread and milk, curled herself up in the rocking-chair for a long nap, and did not wake till nearly nine, when papa came in, having been set ashore by the schooner's boat as it passed by. He had a large codfish in his hand, swung from a loop of string.

"Well, it has been a nice day," he said, cheerfully, rubbing his hands. "The wind was fair both ways. We did some fishing, and I caught this big fellow. I don't know when I have enjoyed any thing so much. What sort of a day have you had, little daughter?"

Eyebright began to tell him, but at the same time began to cry, which made her story rather difficult to understand. Mr. Bright looked very grave when at last he comprehended the danger she had been in.

"I shan't dare to go anywhere again," he said. "I thought I could trust you, Eyebright. I supposed you were too sensible and steady to do such a wild thing as this. I am very much surprised and very much disappointed."

These words were the heaviest punishment which Eyebright could have had, for she was proud of being trusted and trustworthy. Papa had sat down and was leaning his head on his hand in a dispirited way. All his bright look was overclouded,—the pleasant day seemed forgotten and almost spoiled. She felt that it was her fault, and reproached herself more than ever.

"Oh, please don't say that, papa," she pleaded, tearfully. "I *can* be trusted, really and truly I can. I won't ever go to any dangerous place alone again, really I won't. Just forgive me this time, and you'll see how good I'll be all the rest of my life."

So papa forgave her, and she kept her promise, and never did go off on any thoughtless expeditions again, as long as she lived on Causey Island.

CHAPTER X.

A LONG YEAR IN A SHORT CHAPTER.

t was Christmas Eve, and Eyebright, alone in the kitchen, was hanging up the stockings before going to bed. Papa, who had a headache, had retired early, so there was no one to interrupt her.

She only wished there had been. Half the fun of Christmas seems missing when there is nobody from whom to keep a secret, no mystery, no hiding of things in corners and bringing them out at just the right moment. Very carefully she tied papa's stocking to the corner of the chimney and proceeded to "fill" it; that is, to put in a pair of old fur gloves which she had discovered in one of the boxes, and had mended by way of a surprise, and a small silk bag full of hickory-nut meats, carefully picked from the shells. These were all the Christmas gifts she had been able to get for papa, and the long gray stocking-leg looked very empty to her eyes. She had wished much to knit him a comforter, but it was three weeks and more since either of them had been able to get to the village; besides which, she knew that papa felt very poor indeed, and she did not like to ask for money, even so little as would have carried out her wish. "This must do," she said, with a quick sigh. Then she hung up her own stocking, and went upstairs. Eyebright always had hung up her stocking on Christmas Eve ever since she could remember, and she did it now more from the force of habit than any thing else, forgetting that there was no Wealthy at hand to put things in, and that they were living on an island which, since winter began, seemed to have changed its place, and swung a great deal farther away from things and people and the rest of the world than it had been.

For winter comes early to the Maine coasts. Long before Thanksgiving, the ground was white with snow, and it stayed white from that time on till spring. After the first heavy storm, the farmers turned out with snow-ploughs to break paths through the village. As more snow fell, it was shovelled out and thrown on either side of the path, till the long double mounds half hid the people who walked between. But there was no one to break a path along the shore toward the causeway. The tide, rising and falling, kept a little strip of sand clear for part of the distance, and on this Eyebright now and then made her way to the village. But it was a hard and uncertain walk, and as rowing the boat was very cold work, it happened sometimes that for weeks together neither she nor papa left the island, or saw anybody except each other.

This would have seemed very lonely, indeed, had not the house-work filled up so much of her time. Papa had no such resource. After the wood was chopped, and the cow fed, and a little snow shovelled, perhaps,—that was all. He could not find pleasure, as Eyebright did, in reading over and over again a book which he already knew by heart; the climate did not brace and stimulate him as it did her; the cold affected him very much; he moped in the solitude, and time hung heavily upon his hands.

Eyebright often wondered how they could ever have got along—or, in fact, if it could have been possible to get along at all—without their cow. Papa had bought her in the autumn, when he began to realize how completely they were to be shut off from village supplies in bad weather. She was a good-natured, yellow beast, without any pedigree, or any name till Eyebright dubbed her "Golden Rod," partly because of her color, and partly because the field in which she grazed before she came to them was full of goldenrod, which the cow was supposed to eat, though I dare say she didn't. She gave a good deal of milk, not of the richest quality, for her diet was rather spare, but it was a great help and comfort to have it. With milk, potatoes, cabbages, and beets from their own garden; flour, Indian meal, and a barrel of salt beef in store, there was no danger of starvation on Causey Island, though Eyebright at times grew very tired of ringing the changes on these few articles of diet, and trying to invent new dishes with which to tempt papa's appetite, which had grown very poor since the winter set in.

Altogether, life on the island was a good deal harder and less pleasant now than it had been in summer-time, and the sea was a great deal less pleasant. Eyebright loved it still; but her love was mingled with fear, and she began to realize what a terrible thing the ocean can be. The great gray waves which leaped and roared and flung themselves madly on the rocks, were so different from the blue, rippling waves of the summer, that she could hardly believe it the same sea. And even when pleasant days came, and the waves grew calm, and the beautiful color returned to the water, still the other and frightful look of the ocean remained in her memory, and her bad dreams were always about storms and shipwrecks. Many more boats passed between Malachi and Scrapplehead in winter than in summer. Now that the inland roads were blocked with snow, and the Boston steamer had ceased to run, the mails came that way, being brought over every week in a sail-boat. Even row-boats passed to and fro in calm weather, and what with lumber vessels and fishing smacks, and an occasional traveller from out-of-the-way Canada, sails at sea, or the sound of clinking oars off the bathing-beach, became of frequent occurrence. These little boats out in the great fierce ocean weighed heavily on Eyebright's mind sometimes. Especially was this the case when heavy fogs wrapped the coast, as occasionally they did for days together, making all landmarks dangerously dim and indistinct. At such times it seemed as if Causey Island were a big rocky lump which had got in the way, and against which ships were almost certain to run. She wished very much for a light-house, and she coaxed papa to let her keep a kerosene lamp burning in the window of her bedroom on all foggy and very dark nights. "The little gal's lamp," the Malachi sailors called it, and they learned to look for it as a guide, though its reflective power was not enough to make it serviceable in a fog, which was the chief danger of all.

There was no fog, however, when she opened her eyes on Christmas morning, but a bright sun, just rising, which was a sort of Christmas present in itself. She made haste to dress, for she heard papa moving in his room, and she wished to get down first, but he was as quick as she, and they finally met at the stair-top, and went down together.

When he saw the stockings, he looked surprised and vexed.

"Dear me! did you hang up your stocking, Eyebright?" he asked, in a depressed tone. "I quite forgot it was Christmas. You'll have no presents, my child, I'm afraid."

"Never mind, papa, I don't care; I don't want any thing," said Eyebright.

She spoke bravely, but there was a lump in her throat, and she could hardly keep from tears. It seemed so strange and dreadful not to have any thing at all in her stocking,—not one single thing! She had not thought much about the matter, but with childish faith had taken it for granted that she must have something—some sort of a present, and for a moment the disappointment was hard to bear.

Papa looked very much troubled, especially when he spied his own stocking and perceived that his little daughter had remembered him while he had forgotten her. He spent the morning rummaging his desk and the trunks upstairs, as if in search of something, and after dinner announced that he was going to the village to get the mail. The mails came into Scrapplehead twice a week, but he seldom had any letters, and Eyebright never, so, as a general thing, they were not very particular about calling regularly at the post-office.

Eyebright wanted to go, too, but the day was so cold that papa thought she would better not. She wrapped him in every warm thing she could find, and drew the fur-gloves over his fingers with great satisfaction.

"They will keep you quite warm, won't they?" she said. "Your fingers would almost freeze without them, wouldn't they? You like them, don't you, papa?"

"Very much," said Mr. Bright, giving her a good-by kiss.

Then he stepped into the boat and took the oars, while she wrapped her arms in her shawl and watched him row away. Her breath froze on the air like a cloud of white steam. She felt her ears tingle, and presently ran back to the house, feeling as if Jack Frost were nipping her as she ran, but with glowing cheeks and spirits brightened by the splendid air.

Just before sunset papa came rowing back. He was almost stiff with cold, but when once he had thawed out in the warm kitchen, he seemed none the worse for that. It was quite exciting to hear from the village after such a long silence. Papa had seen Mrs. Downs and Mr. Downs and the children. Benny had had the mumps, but he was almost well again. Mrs. Downs sent her love to Eyebright, and a mince pie pinned up in a towel. This was very nice, but when Eyebright unpinned the towel and saw the pie, she gave a scream of dismay.

"Why, papa, it's all hard," she said, "and it's just like ice. Touch it, papa; did you ever feel any thing so cold?"

In fact, the pie was frozen hard, and had to be thawed for a long time in the oven before it was fit to eat. While this process was going on, papa produced a little parcel from his pocket. It was a Christmas present,—a pretty blue neck-tie. Eyebright was delighted, and showed her gratitude by kissing papa at least a dozen times, and dancing about the kitchen.

"Oh, and here's a letter for you, too," he said.

"A letter for me. How queer! I never had a letter before, that I remember. Why, it's from Wealthy! Papa, I wish you'd read it to me. It looks very hard to make out, Wealthy writes such a funny hand. Don't you recollect how she used to work over her copy-book, with her nose almost touching the paper, and how inky she used to get?"

It was the first time they had heard from Wealthy since they left Tunxet, more than eight months before. Wealthy wrote very few letters, and those few cost an amount of time, trouble, and ink-spots, which would have discouraged most people from writing at all.

This was the letter:—

> DEAR EYEBRIGHT : I take my pen in hand to tell you that I am well, and hope you are the same. All the friends here is well, except Miss Bury. She's down with intermitting fever, and old Miss Beadles is dead and buried. Whether that's being well or not I can't say. Some folks think so, and some folks don't. I haint written before. I aint much of a scribe, as you know, so I judge you haven't been surprised at not hearing of me. I might have writ sooner, but along in the fall my arm was kind of lamed with rheumatism, and when I got over that, there was Mandy Harmon's weddin' things to do,—Pelatiah Harmon's daughter, down to the corners, you know. What girls want so many clothes for when they get married, I cant for the life of me tell. The shops don't shut up for good just afterward, so far as anybody knows, but you'd think they did from the fuss some of them make. Mandy had five new dresses. They was cut down to Worcester, but I made them, besides two calikus and ten of every thing, and a double gown and an Ulster and the Lord knows what not. I've had to stick to it to put 'em through, but they're all done at last, and she got married last week and went off, and she'll spend the next few years a-alterin' of them things over, or I miss my guess. That Mather girl keeps asking me about you, but I tell her you haint wrote but twice, and I don't know no more than she does. Mr. Bury got your Pa's letter. We was glad to hear you liked it up there, but most places is pleasant enough in summer. Winter is the tug. I

suppose it's cold enough where you are, sometimes, judging from Probbabillities. Mr. Asher has took the house. Tell your Pa. It dont look much like old times. He has put wooden points on top of the barn and mended the back gate, and he's got a nasty Newfoundland which barks most all the time. Now I must conclude.—Yours truly,

Wealthy A. Judson.

P. S.—My respects to your Pa and to all inquiring friends. I was thinking that that water-proof of your Ma's had better be cut over for you in the spring. What kind of help do you get up in Maine?

"Oh, how like dear, funny old Wealthy that is!" cried Eyebright, as between smiles and tears she listened to the reading of this letter. "Whom do you suppose she means by 'all inquiring friends'? And isn't it just like her to call Bessie 'that Mather girl'? Wealthy never could endure Bessie,—I can't imagine why. Well, this has been a real nice Christmas, after all. I'm glad you didn't go to the post-office last week, papa, for then we should have got the letter sooner, and shouldn't have had it for to-day. It was much nicer to have it now."

"Winter's the tug." Eyebright thought often of this sentence of Wealthy's as the long weeks went by, and still the cold continued and the spring delayed, till it seemed as though it were never coming at all, and papa grew thinner and more listless and discouraged all the time. The loneliness and want of occupation hurt him more than it did Eyebright, and when spring came, as at last it did, his spirits did not revive as she had hoped they would. Farming was trying and depressing work on Causey Island. The land was poor and rocky,—"out of heart," as the saying is, —and Mr. Bright had neither the spirit nor the money to bring it into condition. He missed his old occupation and his old neighbors more than he had expected; he missed newspapers; and a growing anxiety about the future, and about Eyebright,—who was getting no schooling of any kind,—combined to depress him and give him the feeling that he had dropped out of life, and there was no use in trying to make things better.

It was certainly a disadvantage to Eyebright, at her age, to be taken out of school; still life on the island was a schooling for all that, and schooling of a very useful kind. History and geography are excellent things, but no geography or history can take the place of the lessons which Eyebright was now learning,—lessons in patience, unselfishness, good-humor, and helpfulness. When she fought with her own little discontents and vexations, and kept her face bright and sunny for papa's sake, she was gaining more good than she could have done from the longest chapter in the best school-book ever printed. Not that the school-books are not desirable, too, or that Eyebright did not miss them. After the first novelty of their new life was over, she missed school very much, —not the fun of school only, but the actual study itself. Her mind felt as they say teething dogs do, as if it must have something to bite on. She tried the experiment of setting herself lessons, but it did not succeed very well. There was no one to explain the little difficulties that arose, and she grew puzzled and confused, and lost the desire to go on.

Another thing which she missed very much was going to church. There had never been either a church or a Sunday-school in Scrapplehead, and the people who made any difference for Sunday made it by idling about, which was almost worse than working. At first, Eyebright tried to observe the day after a fashion, by learning a hymn and studying a short Bible lesson, but such good habits drop off after a while, when there is nothing and nobody to remind or help us, and little by little she got out of the way of keeping it up, and sometimes quite forgot that it was Sunday till afterward. Days were much alike on the island, especially in winter, and it was not easy to remember, which must be her excuse; but it was a sad want in her week, and a want which was continually growing worse as she grew older.

Altogether, it was not a good or wholesome life for a child to lead, and only her high spirits and sweet, healthful temper kept her from being seriously hurt by it. It was just now that Mr. Joyce's words were proved true, and the quick power of imagination with which nature had gifted her became her best friend. It enabled her to take sights and sounds into the place of play-fellows and friends, mixing them with her life as it were, and half in fun, half in earnest, getting companionship out of them. Skies and sunsets, flowers, waves, birds,—all became a part of the fairy-world which lay always at hand, and to which her mind went for change and rest from work too hard and thoughts over-anxious for a child to bear. She was growing fast, but the only signs she gave of growing older were her womanly and thoughtful ways about papa and his comforts, and a slight, very slight, difference in her feeling toward Genevieve, whom she played with no longer, though she took her out now and then when she was quite alone, and set her in a chair opposite, as better than no company at all. Eyebright had no idea of being disloyal to this dear old friend, but her eyes had opened to the fact that Genevieve was only wax, and do what she could, it was impossible to make her seem alive any more.

Her rapid growth was another trouble, for she could not wear the clothes which she had brought with her to the island, and it was very hard to get others. Papa had no money to spare, she knew, and she could not bear to worry him with her difficulties, so she went to Mrs. Downs instead. Mrs. Downs had her hands full of sewing for "him" and her three boys; still she found time to advise and help, and between her fitting and Eyebright's sewing, a skirt and jacket were concocted out of the water-proof designated by Wealthy, which though rather queer in pattern, did nicely for cool days, and relieved Eyebright from the long-legged sensation which was growing over her. This, with a calico, some of Mrs. Bright's underclothing altered a little, and a sun-bonnet with a deep cape, made a tolerable summer outfit. Gloves, ruffles, ribbons, and such

little niceties, she learned to do without; and when the sweet summer came again with long days and warm winds, when she could row, sit out-doors as much as she liked, and swing in the wild-grape hammocks which festooned the shore, she did not miss them. Girls on desert islands can dispense with finery.

But summers in Maine are very short, and, as lengthening days and chilly nights began to hint at coming winter, Eyebright caught herself shivering, and knew that she dreaded it very much indeed.

"How long it will seem!" she thought. "And how will poor papa bear it? And what am I to do when all mamma's old clothes are worn out? I don't suppose I ever shall have any new ones, and how I am to manage, I cannot imagine!"

CHAPTER XI.

A STORM ON THE COAST.

ummers *are* short in Maine; still the autumn that year seemed in no haste to begin its work. September came and went, bringing only trifling frosts, and the equinoctial week passed without a storm. In its place appeared an odd yellow mist, which wrapped the world in its folds and made the most familiar objects look strange and unnatural. Not a fog,—it was not dense enough for that. It seemed more like air made visible, thickened just a little, and tinted with color, but common air still, warm, thin, and quiet. The wind blew softly for many days; there was a general hush over land and sea, and the sun blinked through the golden haze like a bigger and hotter moon.

This strange atmosphere lasted so long that people grew accustomed and ceased to wonder at it. Some of the old sailors shook their heads and said it would end with a gale; but old sailors are fond of prophesying gales, and nobody was frightened by the prediction, or saw any reason for being so, as long as the weather remained thus warm and perfectly calm.

The little steamer from Malachi to Portland made her last trip for the season on the 30th of September; and the day before, Mr. Bright, who had some potatoes to ship to market, went over with them to Malachi, in a small sail-boat belonging to Captain Jim, Mr. Downs's brother's son. They were not to return till next day, so it was arranged that Eyebright should spend the night with Mrs. Downs, as papa did not like to leave her alone on the island. She went with him as far as the village, and kissed him for good-by on the dock, when the little cargo was all on board and Captain Jim just ready to push off.

"I shall go home early to-morrow, and make some egg-toast and some frizzled beef for your supper, papa, so mind you don't stop to tea with Mrs. Downs," were her last words.

"All right—I won't," said her father; and Captain Jim laughed and said:—

"You'd better not put the frying-pan on till you see us a-coming, for with this light wind there's no knowing when we'll get over, and the frizzle might be sp'iled."

Then the sail flapped and filled, and off they went over the yellow sea. Eyebright watched till the boat passed behind the island, and out of sight; then she walked up the road to the Downs's, saying to herself,—

"What funny weather! I never saw any thing like it. It isn't a bit like last September."

Next morning showed the same sultry mist, a little thicker if any thing. Eyebright stayed with Mrs. Downs till after dinner, helped in the weekly baking, hemmed two crash towels, told Benny a story, and set out for home a little after four, carrying a blueberry pie in a basket for papa's supper. As she toiled over the sand of the causeway and up the steep path, she was conscious of a singular heaviness in the air, and it struck her that the sea was making a sound such as she had never heard before,—a sort of odd shuddering moan, as if some great creature was in pain a long way out from shore. The water looked glassy calm, and there did not seem to be much wind, which made the sound even stranger and more startling. But she forgot about the sound when she reached the house, for there was a great deal to do and not much time to do it in, for Captain Jim expected to get back by six o'clock or soon after. What with sweeping and dusting and fire-making, an hour passed rapidly, when suddenly a dusky darkness settled over the house, and at the same moment a blast of wind blew the door open with a bang.

"Oh dear, there is going to be a thunder-storm," thought Eyebright. She was afraid of thunder and lightning and did not like the idea at all.

Going to the door to shut it, she stopped short, for she saw a strange sight. One side of the heavens was still thick with the yellow haze, but toward the sea a bank of black clouds was whirling rapidly up from the horizon. It had nearly reached the zenith, and had already hidden the sun and turned the afternoon into temporary twilight. The sea was glassy smooth near the shore—as smooth as oil; but farther out, the waves had begun to toss and tumble, and the moaning sound was become a deep hollow boom, which might easily be imagined the very voice of the approaching storm.

Filled with anxiety, Eyebright ran down to the cliff above the bathing-beach and looked toward the long cape at the end of which lay Malachi. The dots of houses showed plainer and whiter than usual against the cape, which had turned of a deep slate-gray, almost black. Two or three ships were in sight, but they were large ships far out at sea, and the strange darkness and the confusion and tumble of the waves, which every instant increased, made it difficult to detect any object so small as a boat. She was just turning away, when a sudden gleam of light showed what seemed to be a tiny sail far out in the bay, but it disappeared and, at the same moment, a sudden, violent wind swept in from the sea, and almost threw her down. She caught hold of a sapling-stem to steady herself, and held tightly till the gust passed. Next instant came a great roar of blinding rain, and she was forced to run as fast as she could to the house. It took but two minutes to reach it; but already she was drenched to the skin, and the water was running in streams from her dress and the braids of her hair.

She had to change all her clothes. As she sat before the fire, drying her hair with a rough towel, she could hear the rain pouring on the roof with a noise like thunder, and every few minutes great waves of wind surged against the house, making it shake and tremble till the rafters creaked. There were other sounds, too,—odd rattlings, deep hollow notes like groans, and a throbbing as of some mighty pulse,—but there was no thunder; indeed Eyebright doubted if she could have heard it had there been any, so loud was the tumult of noises.

She sat by the fire and dried her hair—what else was there to do?—but feeling all the time as if she ought to be out in the rain helping papa somehow. The tears ran down her cheeks; now and then she wrung her hands tightly, and said, "O papa! O papa!" Never had she felt so little and helpless and lost in all her life before. She tried to say a prayer, but it seemed to her just then that God could not hear a weak, small voice like hers through such a rage of storm. She could not realize what it would have been such a comfort to feel,—that God is never so near his children or so ready to listen, as when storms are wildest and they need him most. And so she sat, till by and by the clock struck six, and made her jump at the idea that papa might come in soon and find no supper ready for him.

"I mustn't let *that* happen," she thought, as, with shaking hands, she mended the fire, laid the table, and set the kettle on to boil. She would not allow herself to question the fact that papa would come—*must* come, though he might be a little late; and she shaved the dried beef, broke the eggs, and sliced bread for toasting, so as to be able to get supper as soon as possible after he should appear. This helped her through with another hour. Still no sign of papa, and still the storm raged, as it seemed, more furiously than ever.

Eight o'clock, nine o'clock, ten, half-past ten. I don't know how that evening passed. It seemed as long as two or three ordinary days. Many times, thinking she heard a sound, Eyebright flew to the door, but only to come back disappointed. At last the rain slackened, and, unable to sit still any longer, she put on her water-proof and India rubbers, tied a hood over her head, and, taking a lantern, went down to the cliff again. It would have been of no use to carry an umbrella in that wind, and the night was so dark that, even with the help of the lantern, and well as she knew the path, she continually wandered from it, and struck and bruised herself against stumps and branches which there was not light to avoid.

At last she gained the top of the bank over the beach. The sea was perfectly black; she could see nothing and hear nothing, except the roar of waves and the rattle of the shingle below. Suddenly came a flash of lightning. It lit the water for a minute, and revealed a dark spot which might be a boat borne on the waves a little way out from shore. Eyebright did not hesitate an instant, but tumbled and scrambled down the bank at once, waving the lantern, and crying, "Here I am, papa! this way, papa!" as loud as she could. She had scarcely reached the beach, when another flash showed the object much nearer. Next moment came a great tumbling wave, and out of the midst of it and of the darkness, something plunged on to the beach; and then came the lightning again. It was a boat—and a man in it.

Eyebright seized and held with all her might.

"Oh, hurry and get out, papa," she cried; for though she could not see, she felt another wave coming. "I can't keep hold but a minute."

And then—she hardly knew how it happened—the man did get out—tumble out rather—upon the sand; and, as she let go the boat and caught hold of him, in sped the wave she had dreaded, with a loud roar, splashed her from head to foot, and rolled back, carrying the boat with it. The man lay on the beach as if unable to move, but by the sense of touch, as well as the dim light of the lantern, Eyebright already knew that it was not papa, but a stranger, whose arm she clutched.

"Get up, oh, do get up!" she screamed. "You'll be drowned if you don't. Don't you see that you will? Oh, what shall I do?"

The man seemed to hear, for he slowly struggled up to his feet, but he did not speak. It was terrible work getting him up the cliff. The wind in furious moments seemed to seize and pin them down, and at such times there was nothing to be done but to stand still, flatten themselves against the bank, and wait till its force abated. Eyebright was most thankful when at last they reached the top. She hurried the stranger with what speed she could across the field to the house, keeping the path better than when she came down, because the light in the kitchen window now served her as a guide. The man stumbled continually, and more than once almost fell down. As they entered the kitchen he quite fell, and lay so long on the floor as to frighten

Eyebright extremely. She had never seen any one faint, and she feared the man was dead. Not knowing in the least what she ought to do, she ran for a pillow to lay under his head, covered him with a blanket, and put some water on his forehead. This last was rather unnecessary, considering his wet condition, but Bessie had always "brought to" the Lady Jane in that way, so Eyebright thought it might be the right thing. After a long time, she had the comfort of seeing him open his eyes.

"Oh, you are better; I am so glad," she said, "Do try to get into the rocking-chair. The floor is so hard. Here, I will help you."

And she took hold of his arm for the purpose. He winced and shrank.

"Not that arm—don't touch that arm, please," he said. "I have hurt it in some way. It feels as if it were broken."

Then very slowly and painfully he got up from the floor and into the rocking-chair which Eyebright had covered with a thick comfortable to make it softer. She made haste to wet the tea, and presently brought him a cup.

"Thank you," he said, faintly. "You are very kind."

She could see his face now. He was not a young man, at all. His hair and beard were gray, and he seemed as old as papa; but he was so wet and pale and wild-looking just then, that it was not easy to judge what he was like. His voice was pleasant, and she did not feel at all afraid of him. The tea seemed to revive him a little, for, after lying quiet a while with his eyes closed, he sat up, and, fumbling with his left hand in an inner pocket, produced a flat parcel tied in stout paper, with a direction written upon it; and, beckoning Eyebright to him, said:—

"My dear, it is a bad night to ask such a favor in, and I don't know how far you may be from the village; but could you manage to send this over to the stage-office at once? It is of great consequence to me, or I would not ask it. Have you a hired man who could go? I will pay him handsomely for taking it. He must give it to the driver of the stage to put into the express-office at Gillsworth, and take a receipt for it. Please ask him to be particular about that, as the parcel has money in it."

"We haven't any hired man," said Eyebright. "I'm so sorry, sir. But even if we had, he couldn't get across for ever so long."

"Get across?"

"Yes; this is an island. Didn't you know that? We can walk over to the other shore at low tide; but the tide won't be low till after five, even if we had a man. But there isn't anybody but just me."

"After five,—and the mail goes out at six," muttered the stranger. "Then I must manage to go myself."

He tried to get up, but his arm fell helplessly by his side, he groaned, and sank back again. Presently, to Eyebright's terror, he began to talk rapidly to himself, not to her at all, as it seemed.

"It *must* go," he said, in a quick, excited way. "I don't mind what I pay or what risk I run. Do you think I'm going to lose every thing?—lose every thing?—other people's money?—" A long pause; then, "What's a wetting?"—he went on, in a loud tone—"that's nothing. A wetting!—my good name is worth more than money to me."

He was silent after that for a long time. Eyebright hoped he had gone to sleep, when suddenly he opened his eyes, and said, imploringly: "Oh, if you knew how important it was, you *would* make haste. I am sure you would."

He did not say much more, but seemed asleep, or unconscious; only now and then, roused for a moment, he muttered some word which showed him to be still thinking about the parcel, and the necessity for sending it to the office immediately.

Eyebright put another blanket round him, and fetched a chair for his feet to rest upon. That seemed all she could do, except to sit and watch him, getting up occasionally to put wood on the fire, or going to the door to listen, in hopes of hearing papa's step in the path. The parcel lay on the table where the stranger had put it. She looked at it, and looked at it, and then at the clock. It was a quarter to five. Again the broken, dreamy voice muttered: "It must go,—it must go." A sudden, generous impulse seized her.

"I'll take it myself!" she cried. "Then it will be sure to be in time. And I can come back when papa does."

Poor child, so sure still that papa must come!

It lacked less than three-quarters of an hour to low water. At that state of the tide the causeway was usually pretty bare; but, as she descended the hill, Eyebright, even in the darkness, could see that it was not nearly bare now. She could hear the swish of the water on the pebbles, and, by the light of her lantern, caught sight of more than one long wave sweeping almost up to the crest of the ridge. She would not wait, however, but set bravely forward. The water must be shallow, she knew, and fast growing more so, and she dared not delay; for the walk down the shore, in the wind, was sure to be a long one, "I mustn't miss the stage," she kept saying, to encourage herself, and struck in, feeling the way with the point of her umbrella, and holding the

lantern low, so as to see where she stepped. The water was only two or three inches deep,—less than that in some places; but every few minutes a wave would rush across and bury her feet above the ankles. At such times, the sand would seem to give way and let her down, and a sense of sinking and being carried off would seize upon her and take away all her strength. She dared not move at these moments, but stood still, dug her umbrella into the sand, and waited till the water ran back.

As she got farther from the island, a new danger assailed her. It was the wind, of which she now felt the full force. It bent and swayed her about till she felt like a plaything in its grasp. Once it caught her skirts and blew her over toward the deeper water. This was the most dangerous moment of all; but she struggled back, and the gust relaxed its grasp. More than once the fury of the blast was so great that she dared not stand upright, but crouched on the wet sand, and made herself as flat as possible, till it passed by. Oh, how she wished herself back at home again. But going back was as dangerous as going forward, and she kept on, firm in her purpose still, though drenched, terrified, and half crying, till, little by little, wet sand instead of water was under her feet, the waves sounded behind instead of immediately beside her, and at last, stumbling over a clump of blueberry bushes, she fell forward on her knees upon the other shore,—a soggy, soaked, disagreeable shore enough, but a most welcome sight just then.

So tired and spent was she, that for some minutes she lay under the blueberry clump before she could gather strength to pull herself up and go on. It was a very hard and painful walk, and the wind and the darkness did all they could to keep her back; but the gallant little heart did not fail, and, at last, just as the first dim dawn was breaking, she gained the village and Mr. Downs's door.

Mrs. Downs had been up nearly all night, so great was her anxiety for Captain Jim and Mr. Bright. She had just fallen asleep in her clothes, when she was roused by a knock.

"That's them at last," she cried, jumping up, and hurrying to the door.

Great was her surprise at the little soaked figure which met her eyes, and greater still when she recognized Eyebright.

"Why, what in the name of—why!" was all she could say at first. Then, regaining her wits, "Eyebright, my dear child, what has fetched you out at this hour of day; and massy's sake, how did you come?"

"I came on the causeway. Oh, Mrs. Downs, is papa here?"

"Over the causeway!" cried Mrs. Downs. "Good land alive! What possessed you to do such a fool hardy thing? I only wonder you were not drowned outright."

"So do I. I was almost. But, Mrs. Downs, is papa here? Oh, do tell me."

"No, they haven't got in yet," said Mrs. Downs, affecting an ease and security which she did not feel. "The storm has delayed them, or, what's more likely, they never started at all, and will be over to-day. I guess that'll turn out to be the way of it. Jim's got too good sense to put out in the teeth of a heavy squall like this has been. An' he must ha' seen it was a-comin'. But, my dear, how wet you are! And what did make you do such a crazy thing as to set out over the causeway in such weather?"

"I couldn't help it," with a sob. "There's a poor man up at our house, Mrs. Downs. He came in a boat, and was 'most drowned, and he's hurt his arm dreadfully, and I'm afraid he's very sick beside; and he wanted this parcel to go by the stage-driver. He said it must go, it was something very important. So I brought it. The stage hasn't gone yet, has it? I wanted so much to be in time."

"Well, I declare!" cried Mrs. Downs, furiously. "He must be a pretty man to send you across the bar in the night and such a storm, to fetch his mail. I'd like to throw it right straight in the water, that I would, and serve him right. The idea!"

"Oh, he didn't mean that I should go,—he didn't know any thing about it," protested Eyebright. "He asked me to send our hired man, and when I told him we hadn't any hired man, he said then he would come himself; but he was too sick. He said such queer things that I was frightened. And then he went to sleep, and I came. Please tell me what time it is; I must go to the office right away."

"Indeed you won't," said Mrs. Downs. "You'll come straight upstairs and go to bed. I'll wake him up. He'll take it. There's plenty of time. 'T isn't six yet, and the stage'll be late this morning, I'll bet."

"Oh, I can't go to bed; I must go back to the island," Eyebright pleaded. "The man who came is all alone there, and you can't think how sick he is."

"Poor man or not, you'll go to bed," said Mrs. Downs, inexorably, helping the tired child upstairs. "Me and Mr. Downs'll see to the poor man. You ain't needed to carry the hull world on your back as long as there's any grown folks left, you poor little mite. Go to bed and sleep, and we'll look after your man."

Eyebright was too tired to resist.

"Oh, please ask Mr. Downs to take a receipt, the man was so particular about that," was her only protest.

She fell asleep the moment her head touched the pillow, and knew nothing more till after noon, when she opened her eyes, feeling for a moment entirely bewildered as to where she was. Then, as it all came back to her mind, she jumped up in a hurry. Her clothes, nicely dried, lay on a chair beside the bed. She hurried them on, and ran downstairs.

Nobody was visible except little Benny, who told her that his mother had "gone along up to the island."

"She said you was to eat some breakfast," he added. "It's in the oven a-keepin' warm. Shall I show you where it is?"

"Oh, never mind," cried Eyebright. "Never mind about breakfast, Benny. I don't feel hungry."

"Ma said you *must*," declared Benny, opening the oven door and disclosing a plate full of something very dry and black. "Oh, dear, it's all got burned up."

"I'll drink some milk instead," said Eyebright. "Who's that coming up the road, Benny?"

"It's Pa. I guess he's come back to get you," said Benny, running out to meet him.

Mr. Downs had come to fetch Eyebright. He looked very grave, she thought.

When she asked eagerly, had papa come yet, Mr. Downs shook his head. Perhaps they had stayed over in Malachi, to avoid the storm, he said, and would get in later. He helped Eyebright into the boat, and rowed to the island without saying another word. The wind had abated, but the sea was still very rough, and long lines of white surf were breaking on the rocks and beaches.

The kitchen looked very queer and crowded, for Mr. Downs had brought down a mattress from upstairs, and made a bed on the floor, upon which Eyebright's "man" was now sleeping. His wet clothes had been changed for some dry ones belonging to Mr. Bright, and, altogether, he looked far less wild and forlorn than he had appeared to be the night before, though he evidently was seriously ill. Mrs. Downs didn't think his arm was broken; but she couldn't be sure, and "he" was sent up the shore to fetch Dr. Treat, the "natural bone-setter." There was no regular doctor at Scrapplehead.

The natural bone-setter pronounced the arm not broken, but badly cut and bruised, and the shoulder dislocated. He tied it up with a liniment of his own invention, but both fever and rheumatism followed, and for some days the stranger tossed in pain and delirium. Mrs. Downs stayed on the island to nurse him, and both she and Eyebright had their hands full, which was well, for it helped them to endure the suspense of the next week as nothing else could have done.

It was not for some time, even after that dreadful week, that they gave up the hope that Captain Jim had waited over in Malachi and would appear with the next fair wind. Then a sloop put in, bringing the certain news that he and Mr. Bright had sailed about two hours before the storm began. After that, the only chance—and that a vague one—was, that the boat might have landed on the coast farther below, or, blown out to sea, been picked up by some passing ship. Days passed in this hope. Whenever Eyebright could be spared for a moment, she always ran to the cliff on the sea-side, in the hope of seeing a ship sailing in with papa on board, or news of him. She never spoke as if there was any doubt that he would come in the end, and Mrs. Downs, dreading to cloud her hopefulness, replied always as confidently as she could, and tried to be hopeful, too.

So a fortnight passed over the busy, anxious household, and poor Eyebright—though her words were still courageous—was losing heart, and had begun to feel that a cold, dreadful wave of sorrow was poising itself a little way off, and might presently break all over her, when, one day, as she stood by the bedside of their patient,—much better now and quite in his senses,—he looked at her with a sudden start of recognition, and said:—

"Why, I know you. You are Mr. Bright's little girl,—are you not? You are Eyebright! Why did I not recognize you before? Don't you recollect me at all? Don't you know who I am?"

And, somehow, the words and the pleasant tone of voice, and the look which accompanied them made him look different, all at once, to the child, and natural, and Eyebright did know him.

It was Mr. Joyce!

CHAPTER XII.

TRANSPLANTED.

t is strange that I did not recognize you before," said Mr. Joyce next day; "and yet not so strange either, for you have grown and altered very much since we met, two years and a half ago."

He might well say so. Eyebright had altered very much. She was as tall as Mrs. Downs now, and the fatigue and anxiety of the last fortnight had robbed her of her childish look and made her

seem older than she really was. Any one might have taken her for a girl of seventeen, instead of fourteen-and-a-half. She and Mr. Joyce had had several long talks, during which he learned all about their leaving Tunxet, about her anxiety for her father, and, for the first time, the full story of the eventful night which had brought him to Causey Island. He was greatly startled and shocked when he comprehended what danger Eyebright had run in doing his errand to the village. "My dear, dear child," he said; "you did me a service I shall never forget. I could never have forgiven myself had you lost your life in doing it. If I had had my senses about me I would not have let you go; pray believe that. That unlucky parcel came near to costing more than it's worth, for it was on its account that I set out to row over from Malachi that afternoon."

"To take the stage?" suggested Eyebright.

"Yes—to catch the stage. The parcel had money in it, and it was of great consequence that it should reach Atterbury—where I live—as soon as possible. You look curious, as if you wanted to hear more. You like stories still, I see. I remember how you begged me to tell you one that night in Tunxet."

"Yes, I like them dearly. But I hardly ever hear any now. There is no one up here to tell them."

"Well, this isn't much of a story, or rather it would be a long one enough if I gave the whole of it; but the part which I can tell isn't much. Once upon a time there was a thief, and he stole a quantity of money out of a bank. It was the Atterbury Bank, of which I am the president. The theft came at the worst possible time, and there was great danger, if the money could not be recovered, that the bank would have to stop payment. Fortunately, we got a clue to the thief's whereabouts, and I started in search of him, and caught him in a little village in Canada where he had hidden himself away, and was feeling quite safe—What makes you look so excited?"

"It is *so* interesting," said Eyebright. "Weren't you a bit afraid when you saw him? Did he have a pistol?"

"Pistol? No. Ah, you are thinking of the thieves in story-books, I see,—terrible villains with masks and blunderbusses. The kind we have nowadays are quite different,—pretty young men, with nice mustaches and curly hair, who are very particular about the fit of their gloves and what kind of cigars they smoke. That's the sort who make off with bank money. This thief of ours was a young fellow, only a few years older than my Charley, whom I had known all my life, and his father before him. I would a great deal rather have had it one of the old-fashioned kind with a blunderbuss. Well, I found him, and I got back the money—the bulk of it. A part he had spent. Having secured it, my first thought was how to get home quickest, for every day's delay made a great difference to the bank. I had just time to drive over and catch the Portland steamer, but my wagon broke down six miles from Malachi, and when I got in she had been gone an hour and a half. I made inquiries, and found that the Scrapplehead stage started next morning, so I hired a boat and undertook to row across. It was not storming then. The man who let the boat did say that the weather looked 'kind of unsartin,' but I could see no change; it was thick and murky, but it had been that for days back, and I was in such haste to get in, that I should probably have tried it had it looked worse than it did. The distance is not great, and I am used to rowing. Only God's mercy saved me from capsizing when the first squall struck the boat. After that, I have only confused memories. All I could do was to keep the boat head on to the waves, and it was so intensely dark that I could see nothing. I must have been rowing for hours in the blackness, without the least idea where I was or which way I was going, when I saw a light moving toward me. That, from what you say, must have been your lantern. I had just strength left to pull toward it, and the waves carried me on to the beach. My arm was all right then. I must have hurt it when I fell over the side of the boat. It was a miraculous escape, and I believe that I owe my life to the fact of your coming down as you did. I shall never forget that, Eyebright."

People often say such things in the warm-heartedness of a great deliverance from danger, or recovery from sickness, and when they get well again, or the danger fades from their minds, they cool off a little. But Mr. Joyce did not cool; he meant all he said. And very soon after came the opportunity of proving his sincerity, for the great wave of trouble, which Eyebright had dimly felt and dreaded, broke just then and fell upon her. The boat in which Captain Jim Downs and her father had sailed was picked up far down the coast, floating bottom upward, and no doubt remained that both had lost their lives in the storm of that dreadful night.

How the poor child could have borne this terrible news without Mr. Joyce at hand to help her, I cannot imagine. She was almost broken-hearted, and grew so thin and pale that it was pitiful to see. Her sorrow was all for papa; she did not realize as yet the loss which had fallen on herself; but it would have been hard to find in the world a little girl left in a more desolate position. In losing papa she lost every thing that she had—home, protection, support. Nobody wanted her; she belonged to nobody. She could not stay on the island; she could not go back to Tunxet; there was no one in the world—unless it was Wealthy—to whom she had the right to go for help or advice; and Wealthy herself was a poor woman, with little in her power to give except advice. Eyebright instinctively dreaded the idea of meeting Wealthy, for she knew that Wealthy would *think* if she did not say it, that it was all papa's fault; that he ought never to have taken her to Maine, and the thought of having papa blamed hurt her terribly. These anxieties as yet were all swallowed up in grief for papa, but whenever she happened to think about herself, her mind grew perfectly bewildered and she could not in the least see what she was to do.

And now what a comfort Mr. Joyce was to her! He was nearly well now, and in a great hurry to

get back to his business; but nothing would have induced him to leave the poor child in such trouble, and he stayed on and on, devoting himself to her all day long, soothing her, telling her sweet things about heaven and God's goodness and love, letting her talk as much as she liked of papa, and not trying even to check the crying which such talks always brought on. Eyebright responded to this kindness with all her warm little heart. She learned to love Mr. Joyce dearly, and turned to him and clung to him as if he had been a friend always instead of for a few days only. But all this time her future remained unsettled, and she was at the same time too inexperienced and too much oppressed with sorrow to be able to think about it or make any plans.

Other people were thinking about it, however. Mrs. Downs talked the matter over with her husband, and told Mr. Joyce that "He" was willing she should take Eyebright, provided her folks, if she had any, would consent to have her "bound" to them till she was of age. They never had kept "help," and she didn't need any now; it wasn't for that she wanted the child, and as for the binding out, 'twasn't nothing but a formality, only Mr. Downs was made that way, and liked to have things done regular and legal. He set store by Eyebright, just as she did herself, and they'd see that she had a comfortable home and was well treated in every way. Mrs. Downs meant kindly, but Mr. Joyce had other schemes for Eyebright. As soon as the fact of her father's death became certain, he had written to his wife, and he only waited an answer to propose his plan. It came at last, and as soon as he had read it, he went in search of Eyebright, who was sitting, as she often did now, on the bank over the bathing-beach, looking sorrowfully off toward the sea.

"I have a letter from home," he said, sitting down beside her, "and I find that I must go back at once,—day after to-morrow at latest."

"Oh, must you?" said Eyebright, in a voice which sounded like a sob. She hid her face on his arm as she spoke, and he knew that she was crying.

"Yes; but don't cry, my dear child. I don't mean to leave you here alone. That is not my plan at all. I want you to come with me. Long ago, I wrote to my wife to propose this plan, and I only waited to hear from her before telling you about it. Will you come and live with us, Eyebright? I can't take your father's place to you,—nobody could do that, and it wouldn't be right they should; but we'll all do our best to make you happy and at home, and you shall be just like our own girl if you'll come. What do you say, my dear? Will you?"

"How kind—how kind you are!" replied Eyebright, in a dazed, wondering way. "I can't think what makes you so good to me, dear Mr. Joyce. But do you think I ought to come? I'm afraid I should be troublesome. Wealthy used to say 'that other folks's children always were troublesome,' and that it was mean to 'settle down' on people."

"Never mind Wealthy or her maxims," said Mr. Joyce, with a smile. "We'll risk your being troublesome, Eyebright. Will you come?"

"Do you think papa would have wished to have me?" asked Eyebright, wistfully. "There's nobody for me to ask now except you, you know. Papa always hated 'being under obligations' to people. If I stay with Mrs. Downs," she added, timidly, "I can work and help her, and then I shan't be a burden. I'm afraid there isn't any thing I can do to help if I go with you."

"Oh, Mrs. Downs has told you of her plan, has she," said Mr. Joyce, half vexed. "Now, listen, my child. I do really and seriously think that your father, were he here, would prefer that you should go with me. If you stay with Mrs. Downs, you must give up your education entirely. She is a kind woman and really fond of you, I think; but with her you can have no advantages of any sort, and no chance to fit yourself for any higher sort of work than house-work. With me you will have the opportunity of going to an excellent school, and, if you do your best, by the time you are twenty-one you will be able to teach, and support yourself in that way, if it becomes necessary. And, my dear, you are mistaken in thinking that there is nothing you can do to help us. We have never had a daughter, but we always have wished for one. My wife and I are getting on in life, and there are lots of ways in which a young girl will cheer and brighten us up, and help to make the house pleasant for Charley. It is dull for a boy with no sisters, and only an old father and mother. So, you see, we really are in need of a girl, and you are just the girl we need. So, will you come?"

"Oh, I'll come gladly!" cried Eyebright, yielding to the pleasantness of the thought. "I'd rather live with you than anybody else in the world, Mr. Joyce, if only you are sure it is right."

It was settled from that moment, though Eyebright still felt a little qualm of shyness and fear at the thought of the unknown Mrs. Joyce. "How horrible it would be if she didn't like me when I get there!" she said to herself.

Only one more day at Causey Island, and that a very busy and confused one. The little house, which it had taken so many days to get in order, was all pulled to pieces and dismantled in a few hours. Some things, such as papa's desk, and Eyebright's own special chair, Mr. Joyce ordered packed, and sent after them to Atterbury; the rest were left to be sold, or perhaps let with the cottage, if any one should hire it. Several articles, at his suggestion, Eyebright gave to Mrs. Downs, and she gratified Mr. Downs extremely by making him a present of the boat.

"You couldn't have done nothing to please me better," he said. "It'll come real handy to have another boat, and we shall think a heap of its being yours. And, I'll tell you what, we'll just change its name, and call it 'The Eyebright,' after you. The first spare day I get, I'll paint the name on the stern, so's we'll always be reminded of you whenever we see it."

This was quite a flight of fancy for Mr. Downs.

By sunset the house was cleared of all that was to be taken away, and Eyebright's trunk packed and locked. A very little trunk it was, and all it held very old and shabby. Even Mrs. Downs shook her head and said the things were hardly worth taking; but Eyebright didn't much mind. Her head was full of other thoughts, and, beside, she had learned to rely on Mr. Joyce as a helper out of all difficulties, and she was content to leave herself and her future wants to him.

So, at early dawning of the third day, they left the island, rowing down to the village in the newly christened "Eyebright," now the property of Mr. Downs. The good-byes had been taken the evening before, and Eyebright did not turn her head, as they glided away, to look at the green tufted shore or the blue sea, bluer than ever in the calm hush of a cloudless sunrise. Very steadily and carefully she rowed, dipping her oars, and "feathering," as papa had taught her, as if only intent on doing her task as well as possible for this the last time. But later, after they reached the village, when the farewells had all been spoken, the Downs family kissed, and herself and Mr. Joyce were in the stage-wagon ready to start, she turned again for one moment, and her eyes sought out the blue-green outline which they knew so well. There it lay, with the calm waters all about it, the home which had been at the same time so hard and so pleasant, and was now so sad. Tears rushed to her eyes as she gazed, and she whispered to herself so softly that no one else could hear, "Good-by. Good-by, papa."

How strange and yet how familiar, the road seemed!—the very road over which she and papa had passed less than two years before. It was the one journey of her life, and she recollected every thing perfectly. There was the nameless village, looking exactly the same, but no longer nameless; for a wooden board was suspended over the steamboat landing, with "Pocobasset" painted upon it in large letters. Pretty soon the steamboat came along, the same identical steamboat, and down the river they went, past all the tiny islands and wooded capes which she remembered so well; only the light was of sunset now instead of sun-rising, and the trees, which then were tinged with coming spring, now bore the red and yellow leaves of autumn. There was the good-natured stewardess and the captain,—nobody was changed,—nothing had happened, as it seemed, except to herself.

They left the boat, very early in the morning, at a point some fifty miles short of that from which she and papa had embarked, and, travelling all day, reached Atterbury late on the second afternoon. Eyebright had plenty of time to recall her dread of Mrs. Joyce as they drove up from the station. The town was large and thriving, and looked like a pleasant one. There were many white-painted, green-blinded houses, with neat court-yards, of the kind always to be found in New England villages; but among these appeared, here and there, a quaint, old-fashioned mansion; and the elm-shaded streets gave glimpses of pretty country beyond, woodlands, cultivated valley-lands, and an encircling line of hills with softly rounded outlines. Eyebright thought it a delightful-looking place. They drew up before a wide, ample house, whose garden blazed with late flowers, and Mr. Joyce, lifting her out, hurried up the gravel walk, she following timidly, threw open the front door, and called loudly: "Mother! Mother! where are you, Mother?"

At the call, a stout little lady, in a pink-ribboned cap, hurried out of a room at one side of the hall.

"Oh, Benjamin, is it really you? My dear husband. Well, I *am* glad;" and she gave him *such* a kiss. Then, turning to Eyebright, she said in the kindest voice,—

"And this is your little girl, is it? Why, Benjamin, she is taller than I am! My dear, I am very glad to see you; very glad, indeed. Father says you are *his* girl; but you must be mine, too, and learn to love the old lady just as fast as you can."

Was not this a delightful reception for a weary, journey-stained little traveller? Eyebright returned the kiss with one equally warm, and all her fears of Mrs. Joyce fled for ever.

"You shall go right upstairs," said this new friend; "tea will be ready soon, and I know you are longing for some cold water to wash off the dust. It's the most refreshing thing always after a journey."

She led the way, and left Eyebright to herself in a little bedroom. Such a pretty bedroom it was! Eyebright felt sure at once that it had been got ready expressly for herself. It was just such a room as a young girl fancies, with a dainty white bed, white curtains at the window, a white-frilled toilet-table, and on the toilet-table a smart blue pincushion, with "Welcome" stuck upon it in shining pins. Even the books on the table seemed to have been chosen to suit her taste, for there lay "The Dove in the Eagle's Nest;" "The Wide Wide World;" "The Daisy Chain," in two fat blue volumes; and Mrs. Whitney's charming tale of "We Girls." She peeped at one title after another with a little jump of satisfaction. How long, how very long it was since she had had a new story-book to read. A whole feast of enjoyment seemed shut up inside those fascinating covers. But she would not nibble the feast now; and closing "The Daisy Chain," begun to unpack her handbag.

She opened the top bureau-drawer, and said, "Oh!" quite aloud, for there appeared a row of neat little linen collars and cuffs, some pretty black neck-ties, a nubè of fleecy white wool, and a couple of cunning paper boxes with the jeweller's mark on their lids. Could they be meant for her? She ventured to peep. One box held a pair of jet sleeve-buttons; the other, a small locket of shining jet, with a ribbon drawn through its ring, all ready for wear. She was still wondering over these discoveries, when a little tap sounded on the door, followed immediately by the appearance of Mrs. Joyce.

"I just came to see if you had all you wanted," she said. "Oh, you have found those little duds. I knew, from what Father wrote, that you couldn't get any thing in the place where you were, so I chose those few little things, and to-morrow we'll see what more you want." Then, cutting short Eyebright's thanks, she opened the closet door and called out: "Let me have your jacket to hang up, my dear. There's some shelves at this end for your hats. And now I'll help you unpack. You'll never begin to feel at home till you're all unpacked and put away. Nobody does."

It was a real satisfaction to Mrs. Joyce to notice how few clothes Eyebright possessed, and how shabby they were. All the time that she folded, and arranged, she was saying to herself, gleefully "She wants this, she needs that: she must have all sorts of things at once. To-morrow I'll buy her a nice Henrietta cloth, and a cashmere for every day, and a pretty wrap of some kind and a hat."

She betrayed the direction of her thoughts by turning suddenly with the question,—

"What sized gloves do you wear, my dear?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "I haven't had any gloves for two years, except a pair of worsted mittens last winter."

"Gracious!" said Mrs. Joyce, but I think she was rather pleased than otherwise. The truth was, all her life long she had been "spoiling" for a daughter to pet and make much of, and now, at last, her chance had come. "Boys are all very well," she told Mr. Joyce that night. "But once they get into roundabouts, there is absolutely nothing more which their mothers can do for them in the way of clothes. Girls are different. I always knew that I should like a girl to look after, and this seems a dear child, Benjamin. I'm sure I shall be fond of her."

The tea-bell rang in the midst of the unpacking; but, as Mrs. Joyce observed, they had the rest of the week before them, and it didn't matter a bit; so she hurried Eyebright downstairs, and into a cheerful dining-room. Cheerfulness seemed the main characteristic of the Joyce establishment. It was not at all an elegant house,—not even, I am sorry to say, a tasteful one. Nothing could possibly be uglier or more common-place than the furniture, the curtains, or the flaps of green reps above the curtains, known to village circles as "lamberkins," and the pride of Mrs. Joyce's heart. The carpets and wall paper had no affinity with each other, and both would have horrified an artist in home decoration. But everywhere, all through the house, were neatness, solid comfort, and that spirit of family affection which makes any house pleasant, no matter how pretty or how ugly it may be; and this atmosphere of loving-kindness was as reviving to Eyebright's drooping spirits as real sunshine is to a real plant, drenched and beaten down by heavy storms. She felt its warmth through and through, and from the first it did her good.

Mr. Joyce had just asked a blessing, and was proceeding to cut the smoking beefsteak before him, when the door opened, and a tall boy, with curly hair and a bright manly face, hurried in.

"Why, father, I didn't know you were here, or I should have been in long ago. How are you, sir?" ending the sentence, to Eyebright's amazement and amusement both, with a hug and a hearty kiss, which his father as heartily returned.

"Yes; I'm at home again, and very glad and thankful to be here," said Mr. Joyce. "Here's the new sister, Charley; you didn't see her, did you? Eyebright, this is my son Charley."

"My son Charley," like most boys of sixteen, was shy with girls whom he was not acquainted with. He shook hands cordially, but he said little; only he watched Eyebright when she was not observing, and his eyes were very friendly. He liked her face, and thought her pretty, which was certainly very good of him, for she was looking her worst—tired and pale, with none of her usual sparkle, and dressed in the water-proof suit which was not at all becoming.

So here, in this secure and kindly haven, I think we may leave our little storm-tossed girl, with the safe assurance that she will be tenderly and wisely cared for. I know that a few among you will want to hear more. No story was ever written so long or so conclusive, that some child-reader did not pop up at the end with, "Oh, but just tell us this one thing." I cannot satisfy such; still, for their benefit, I will just hint at a remark made by Mrs. Joyce some months later. She and Mr. Joyce were sitting on the porch, and Eyebright, who had grown as dear as a daughter to the old lady's heart, was playing croquet with Charley.

Eyebright, who had grown as dear as a daughter to the old lady, was playing croquet with Charley.—Page 246.

"It really does seem the luckiest thing that ever was, your being shipwrecked on that island," she said. "I was almost frightened to death when I heard about it, but if you hadn't we never should have got hold of that child as we did, and what a pity that *would* be? She certainly is the nicest girl I ever saw—so sweet-tempered and loving and helpful, I don't believe any of us could get along without her now. How fond she and Charley seem of each other! I can't help thinking they'll make a match of it when they grow up. It would be an excellent idea, don't you agree with me, Benjamin? Charley could never find anybody whom he would like better, and then we should keep Eyebright with us always."

Mr. Joyce roared with laughter.

"She's only fifteen and Charley won't be seventeen till next Saturday," he said. "Don't you think you'd better put off your castles in the air till they are both a little older, Mother?"

Such castles are absurd; still it is by no means impossible that this may come to pass, and if it should happen to do so, I fancy Mr. Joyce will be as much pleased as "Mother," every whit.

THE END.

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