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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DEAR LITTLE GIRL ***



A

DEAR LITTLE

GIRL

AMY E. BLANCHARD

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Contents

<u>CHAPTER I.</u>		
AN ACCIDENT		9
<u>CHAPTER II.</u>		
GETTING SETTLED		21
<u>CHAPTER III.</u>		
WHAT HAPPENED		35
<u>CHAPTER IV.</u>		
MAGGIE'S CASE		49
<u>CHAPTER V.</u>		
A GUILTY CONSCIENCE		63
<u>CHAPTER VI.</u>		
THE FAIR		74
<u>CHAPTER VII.</u>		
WHERE THE DOLL WENT		88
<u>CHAPTER VIII.</u>		
A PECK OF TROUBLE		103
<u>CHAPTER IX.</u>		
ABOUT SEVERAL THINGS		116
<u>CHAPTER X.</u>		
MORE SURPRISES		128
<u>CHAPTER XI.</u>		
ADOPTED		141
<u>CHAPTER XII.</u>		
THE RUNAWAY		155
<u>CHAPTER XIII.</u>		
PLEASANT CHANGES		168

Chapter I

AN ACCIDENT.

"It will be a fine opportunity for Edna," said Mrs. Conway.

Edna did not like that word opportunity; it always seemed to her that it meant something unpleasant. She had noticed that when pleasant things came along they were rarely spoken of as "opportunities," but were just *happenings*. So she sat with her little sturdy legs dangling down from the sofa, and a very sober look upon her round face, while her busy, dimpled hands were folded quietly.

Her mother leaned over, and took the plump little fingers in hers, giving them a squeeze. "It will be an opportunity," she repeated, as her eyes rested fondly on the child by her side; "but she is only eight, and it seems like pushing her out of the nest before her wings are ready, poor birdie!"

"O, no it doesn't," replied Mr. Conway. "It will only be changing nests. Aunt Elizabeth will be just like a mother to her; it is not like a boarding-school, my dear."

"I know," replied Mrs. Conway, resting her cheek against Edna's little dark head. "Should you like to go to Aunt Elizabeth's, dear?"

"Cousin Louis will be there, you know," put in Edna's father, "and you'll have fine times together. Suppose I read to you what Aunt Elizabeth says. 'You write, my dear nephew, that it seems prudent, on account of your wife's health, that you should go to Florida. I have received some such news from William who is about to take a trip to California in search of health. He has asked me to take charge of his son, Louis, during his absence. Should you not like to place Edna, also, with us during the time you are gone? She could then attend school and would find a pleasing companion in her cousin Louis, who, I fear, will be somewhat lonely with only myself and your Uncle Justus. The advantages of a city are great, and I need not say we will endeavor'—h'm—h'm—never mind the rest," said Mr. Conway, laying down the letter. "You know, daughter, Aunt Elizabeth lives in a big city, where there are fine shops and beautiful parks; moreover, you would meet a lot of nice little girls in the school. It would be much nicer than for you to stay here with sister and the boys while we are gone. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Edna, her little fat hand enfolded in her mother's, feeling very moist from the excitement of the prospect.

"Of course, I know it is best," said Mrs. Conway, "and I know Aunt Elizabeth means to be as kind as possible." Here a wistful look came into the mother's eyes, but Edna only saw visions of gay shops, while she pictured romps with her cousin Louis.

She remembered very little of this great aunt, except that she had once sent her a most beautiful doll, with a cunning trunk filled with such neat, old-fashioned frocks and aprons, together with a real little slate and books. Aunt Elizabeth had written a tiny letter which the doll had brought pinned to her muff. In the letter the doll's name was said to be Ada, and many instructions were given as to her behavior and studies. So Ada and Aunt Elizabeth were inseparably connected in Edna's mind.

"I must go get Ada ready," she said, jumping down from the sofa on which she had been sitting. "When shall I go to the city, papa?"

"Next week," he answered; and the little girl, on business intent, ran to the playroom.

There was a great deal to do before she should go away. She reflected. She must clean house, and see that all Ada's clothes were clean and whole, for it would never do to let Aunt Elizabeth find that they had not been kept carefully. "They are not all here," said the child, sitting down on the floor. "Lilypaws tore up the muff, and Gyp ate up one of the books; then the wind blew away an apron and a skirt that day I washed them and put them out on the grass to dry. I'll have to tell Aunt Elizabeth about that. She'll know it was an accident. Maybe sister will make me some more. I'll go ask her now."

Leaving Ada with her wardrobe scattered over the nursery floor, Edna sought sister, who was studying her lessons, curled up on the window seat of her room. "I'm going to the city to live, next week," announced Edna, importantly, "and I'll have to get Ada's clothes in order. Sister, won't you help me?"

"Going to the city!" cried Celia, lowering her book in surprise. "What do you mean? O! you're only playing make-believe."

"No, I'm not. I am really and truly going. Papa and mamma said so. I'm going to live with Aunt Elizabeth while they are away in Florida, and, of course, Ada will have to go."

"And, of course, I'll help you," replied Celia, "you poor little midget."

"I'm not poor at all," replied Edna, "for Cousin Louis is going to be there, and I'm going to play with him in the park, and I'm going to buy things in the beautiful shops. What shall I buy for you, sister?"

"O, I don't know. Don't buy me anything—or if you should see a belt buckle exactly like Grace Neal's, I should like to have one, but only if it is *exactly*."

"All right; I'll buy that and send it to you," decided Edna, very positively, while she made up her mind to notice Grace Neal's buckle very particularly the next time she saw her.

There was much hurry and excitement for the next week. Edna did not go to school at all during that time, for the dressmaker was likely at any time to want her to stand up to be fitted,

something Edna did not like at all. "I believe I'd just as soon go to school," she fretted while Miss Marsh, with her mouth full of pins, pinched up here, and trimmed off there, bidding the little girl to "stand still."

"I am standing as still as a mouse," she protested.

"About as still as that canary bird," returned Miss Marsh. "Don't shrug your shoulders while I cut out this armhole. I might snip you with the scissors."

That was something really to be dreaded, so Edna did stand very still while the cold steel points circled her plump shoulder. "O, dear!" she sighed, when the operation was finished, "I hope I sha'n't need any more clothes for a year."

But even the discomfort of dress-fitting did not do away with the pleasure the little girl felt in her pretty new frocks, and it seemed no time before her trunk stood ready packed and she had said good-bye to Gyp and Lilypaws, to Bobby in his cage, and to the chickens, each and every one; her own special pet hen, Snowflake, being entreated not to hatch out any new chickens till Edna should return.

It was rather a solemn moment, after all, when mamma hugged her and kissed her, with the tears running down her cheeks; when the cook, Jane, hoped they'd see her again; and when the boys thrust parting gifts into her hands—Frank a small mouth organ, and Charlie a wad of something which was afterward discovered to be taffy, wrapped in brown paper; when Celia winked away the tear-drops from her lashes and called her "precious little sister." It was therefore with the very opposite of a smile upon her face that she climbed up the steps into the car. But the dimples soon came back again as the car moved off, and the boys, standing on a woodpile, cheered and waved their hats as the little head at the window nodded good-bye.

It was quite a long journey to the city to which Edna was going, a whole day and night to be on the cars, and after the first few hours the little girl began to get very restless. Even the picture papers her father bought her, and the little excitement of stopping once in a while at a station, where could be seen queer-looking people, did not serve to keep Edna from getting very tired; but it grew dark early, and when the porter came in to make up the berths she felt that she would be quite ready to clamber up into that funny little bed above her papa's.

"It's just like being put away on a shelf," she laughed. "Suppose I should tumble out, papa?"

"Then I think it would be better for you to take the lower berth," he replied.

"O, no. I like it best up here. I can peep out better. Are you going to bed, too, papa?"

"Not just yet. I am going to the smoking-car for a while. You go to sleep, daughter, and I'll be back pretty soon."

It was some time before the child could compose herself. The voices of the people in the car, the clatter of a passing train, the letting down of the berths, or the opening of a door, all tended to keep her awake, but after a little time she began to say over a rhyme she had learned at school, keeping time to the motion of the car as she repeated:

"To cuddle up the baby ferns, and smooth the lily's sheet,
And tuck a warm, white blanket down around the roses' feet;"

and before she knew it she was fast asleep.

How long she had slept she had not the slightest idea, when she was awakened, very suddenly, by a jerk of the car which nearly threw her from the berth. She sat up rubbing her eyes, wondering where she was, and for a moment it seemed as if she must be dreaming that she was packed away on a high shelf in such a queer place; but presently she was quite wide-awake, and found that there was a great commotion going on; men with lanterns hurried through the car; women began to scream, babies to cry.

"It's all right!" some one shouted. "Don't be alarmed!"

This was enough to frighten Edna, and she began to scramble on her clothes as quickly as possible, first peering down into the berth below, but seeing no papa there. "O, where is my papa? Where is my papa?" she whispered under her breath, as the little trembling fingers tried to fasten the buttons hurriedly.

Presently some one parted the curtains and looked in; it was the negro porter.

"'Scuse me, Miss," he said, "but de folks is all leavin' de cyar. You better let me 'sist you off."

"I want my papa!" cried Edna, looking around distressedly. "O, please tell me what is the matter."

"De engine an' de baggage cyar was derailed," explained the man, "an' de smokin' cyar cotched fire."

"O! O! my papa is burned up!" cried Edna, helplessly.

"No, miss, I reckon he ain't, but yuh see dey is sorter 'stracted out dere; de women a-faintin' an' de men a-hollerin', but nobody ain't hurt so tur'ble. Yuh better come get off." And picking her up in his arms the porter bore her from the car.

"Now I'll set you down on dis ole stump, an' yuh'll be safe," said he. And Edna found herself, at midnight, by the side of the railroad in what seemed to be a bit of woodland. She could hear the rushing of water and see the blazing car ahead. The rest of the train had been backed along the track, and some of the women and men, seeing the rear cars were not hurt, were climbing back into them. There was a crowd of people moving about farther up the railroad, and Edna made up her mind that she would try to find out what had become of her father. So she took her way toward the throng of people who were gathered about the baggage car, which lay over on its side by an embankment.

"You'd better go back to the rear cars, little girl," said some one, as she came up. "Where is your mother?"

"She is at home," replied Edna. "I want my papa. Is he burned up?"

"No, indeed; no one is burned up," was the reply. "You go back and we'll find your father. What is his name?"

"His name," returned Edna, "is Henry Parker Conway."

"Anybody about here by the name of Conway?" shouted the man.

But there was no one answering to that name in the crowd, and Edna picked her way back to the stump where the porter had placed her, feeling very lonely and miserable. "O dear!" she said to herself. "What shall I do? Suppose papa doesn't come for me? That man said they had sent ahead for another engine, and that we should go on pretty soon; but I can't go without my papa," and the tears began to run down Edna's cheeks. She was beginning to feel cold, and it was very forlorn to sit there alone on a stump all night. "I believe I'll go back to the car," she said, "but I don't know where I belong." By great effort she managed to climb up on the high step of the first car, then made her way inside and stood there looking wistfully around.

"Why, you poor little child," said a lady, coming forward. "Where did you come from?"

"I came from the stump," replied Edna, "and I want my papa," she continued, her lip quivering and her eyes filling.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know," returned Edna, and putting her head against the arm which was placed sympathetically around her, she sobbed outright.

"There! There! Tell me all about it," said her friend. "We'll make it all right as soon as my husband comes in. Come, sit down here by me. Your father can't be very far away, and you know no one has been very badly hurt."

Edna gave the best account of herself that she could, and the lady comforted her and promised that she should be safely cared for.

After what seemed a long time, just as the morning was breaking, the train was again on its way. But no papa had appeared, although the husband of Edna's new friend had gone through the cars to look for him.

Chapter II

GETTING SETTLED.

Poor little Edna! she was so unhappy, so anxious, as the train moved along faster and faster. Even kind Mrs. Porter by her side felt that she did not know just how to comfort the child, although she did try very hard, and at least made the little girl feel that she should be safely guarded on her way to her aunt's house; for Mrs. Porter lived in the same city, and had promised to take Edna in charge and deliver her safely at her aunt's very door.

The rising sun was lighting up the mountain tops and finding its way into the deep gorges, when suddenly Edna started to her feet with a cry, as the door opened and a man came in, very pale, with his head bandaged and his hand in a sling.

"Papa! Papa!" a little voice rang out, in tones of such gladness as caused everyone in the car to turn. It was Edna's father, truly, who made his way over to the seat where his little girl was sitting.

With his uninjured hand fondly clasped in that of his daughter he told how he had happened to be absent from her so long. "I was in the smoking car when the accident occurred," he said, "and I was thrown forward so violently that I was stunned, and was carried out of the car to a place of safety. Later I was placed in a berth in the car ahead of this, and lay in a stupor till a short time ago, when some one discovered me and asked if my name were Conway, saying that inquiries had been made for me. In the confusion and trouble I had been forgotten, but a doctor has been looking me over and tells me I am only a little shaken up, so all I needed was a bit of patching, as

you see by this cut head and sprained wrist. I shall be as good as new in a few days. Poor, little daughter! I suspect that you fancied all sorts of things about me."

"Indeed she did," said Mrs. Porter, smiling, "we were really alarmed ourselves for your safety."

"I don't know what I should have done without Mrs. Porter. You don't know how good she has been to me," said Edna, looking up gratefully.

So the rest of the journey they were all on very good terms, and when Edna parted from her kind friends at the depot it was with a promise to go and see them as soon as she could.

"We have two boys, but no little girl," Mrs. Porter told her; "but we'll have a good time, even if we have no dolls in our house."

The accident had kept them from reaching Aunt Elizabeth's at the time they expected, and it was quite dark by the time they arrived at the house. Edna, therefore, could not see much of the street, but she could see the open square near by. The door was opened by Uncle Justus himself. "Heigho, little girl!" he exclaimed. "What's all this?"

"We were beginning to think you were not coming," was Aunt Elizabeth's greeting, as she, too, came forward. "What detained you, Henry? Why, what has happened to you?"

"We had an accident," explained Mr. Conway; and he proceeded to give an account of it, while Edna sat looking about her and wondering where her Cousin Louis was.

She was not long wondering, for in a few moments the door of the sitting-room opened and a little boy about ten years of age came quietly in; he was fair-haired and pale, and did not burst into the room as Frank or Charlie would have done.

"Louis, here is Cousin Edna," said Aunt Elizabeth. "Come and shake hands with her, then go with her to find Ellen, who will show her to her room. She will want to prepare for supper."

Edna cast an appealing glance at her father as she went out; but he was absorbed in talking to Uncle Justus, and, after shaking hands absently with Louis, returned to his conversation, and Edna followed Louis, feeling a little aggrieved at being sent off in this way. "My mamma would have gone with a little girl herself," she thought, as she waited for Louis to return with a candle, for which he went to the kitchen. "Say," he said, on his return, "Ellen is setting the table. I'll take you to your room; it's 'way up stairs;" and he swung around the post of the baluster to run up ahead of her. On the first landing he paused. "This is the parlor," he said, and Edna peeped in. The appearance of the room gave her a subdued feeling, as if she must not speak above a whisper. The windows were heavily curtained, and the children's voices had a muffled sound as they slipped cautiously inside. The furniture was big and ponderous; on a little stand was placed a heavy family Bible, a hymn book, bound in purple velvet, with gilt clasp, lying on top. Edna thought this last very beautiful, and looked back at it as they stole quietly out of the room.

On the next floor were the schoolrooms; these too, were shown Edna by Louis.

"These two rooms are the girls' schoolrooms, and back there is the boys' room," he explained.

"It must be a big school. Does Uncle Justus teach all the scholars?" asked Edna, with a little hope that the shaggy eyebrows would not be within her line of vision during all the school hours.

"No," replied Louis. "Aunt Elizabeth teaches the boys and Miss Ashurst the little girls."

Edna was relieved, and followed Louis up the last flight to the top floor. "My!" she said, "it is 'way up at the top of the house, isn't it? This is a queer house. I never saw one like it, with the parlor on the second floor. Where is your room, Louis?"

"I sleep in a little room next to aunt and uncle. Here's yours. Ellen has that one next to you," and he flung open a door; but by the dim light of the candle Edna could not see all the details.

"There isn't any gas up here," explained Louis, "but you won't mind that. It is pretty high up, too, but you can see ever so far from this window—the harbor where the ships sail and where the bridge crosses this side, and you can see the cars and lots of things. I'd a heap rather be up here, but Aunt Elizabeth said 'No,' and that settled it. There now, can I do anything for you?" he asked, setting down Edna's little hand satchel.

"No-o, thank you," replied the little girl, helplessly. She was so used to having sister or mamma at hand that it seemed very queer to be left alone, and after Louis had shut the door she stood looking around, not knowing just what to do; but she concluded she must take off her coat and hat, anyhow. This she did, and then washed off some of the dust as best she could, smoothing down her hair with her little wet hands.

"I wonder if I am to blow out the candle or take it back," she said to herself, but a recollection of the dark passageway decided her to take the candle down stairs, and she proceeded to descend, feeling rather scared as she passed the dusky corners of a strange house.

Supper was ready shortly after she entered the sitting-room; it consisted of warmed-over rolls, dried apples stewed, grated cheese, weak tea, and a dry kind of cake which tasted of the wooden box in which it had been kept. Edna never forgot the taste of that cake with which she became very familiar as time went on.



UNCLE JUSTUS.

Uncle Justus was a very quiet, dignified man, with a Roman nose and gray side whiskers. He wore spectacles, which added to the effect of the shaggy eyebrows. Edna was very much afraid of him at first. Aunt Elizabeth was portly and bland, but her sharp eyes had a way of looking you through and through. Edna soon discovered that she was a person much more to be feared than Uncle Justus. She allowed no nonsense, no indecision. When she looked at you during mealtime and said, in a severe tone, "Butter or molasses?" if you wavered an instant you were told you could have neither, since you did not know what you wanted. To be allowed both was out of the question, and so it was a serious matter, with a slice of bread on your plate, to make a wise choice instantly.

After supper Edna and Louis played quietly with a queer old-fashioned game, called "The War of the Revolution;" it was played by using a teetotum and counters. Tiring of this the children next looked at a huge picture book containing Bible stories, with very highly colored illustrations. Edna was charmed with it, but was told that hereafter it was to be viewed only on Sundays, although as a special privilege it could be examined this first evening. The little girl was far too tired to care to sit up late, after the exciting scenes she had gone through, and of which she told Louis in reply to his eager questionings.

"My!" he had said, "I'd like to have been there. Won't they all stare at you in school to-morrow when I tell them?" To her little high-up room Edna was taken by the maid, Ellen, who was an uncouth, kindly creature, and from the first befriended the little girl.

"I'll sit up here, dear," she said, "an' kape open me dhure so yez will know I'm there;" and Edna fell asleep quite comforted by the near presence of the girl.

She was aroused the next morning by a voice, saying, "Come, come, child, it's high time to be up. I've let you sleep overtime after your journey, but you must be ready for school;" and opening her eyes the child saw Aunt Elizabeth standing over her.

"Am I to go to school to-day?" she asked, sitting up straight.

"Why not?"

Edna had no reply ready; she didn't know why not, except that her father was going home that afternoon, and she had hoped to have the morning with him.

Aunt Elizabeth, however, would not listen to protests, but bade her niece hurry down.

"Who will fasten my buttons?" asked Edna.

Aunt Elizabeth looked at her severely. "A big girl, eight years old, that has to be dressed like a baby!" she exclaimed. "Hereafter you must fasten your own buttons;" and she left Edna sitting on the floor feeling rather disconsolate at this prospect.

However, by fastening the buttons in front and then twisting the garments around, slipping her arms into the shoulder straps last, she managed all the buttons but those of her frock, and for this she concluded she must ask Ellen's help. So she stole softly down stairs and out into the kitchen, where the willing maid helped her through the difficulty.

And so the new life began. School was rather pleasant, after all. Miss Ashurst made the lessons interesting, and while Uncle Justus had an eye to the schoolroom where the little girls were he seldom came in, although to him were offenders sent. Edna thought she could not possibly endure the disgrace of being ordered into the next room, so terrible did it seem to her. Consequently she took care to give no cause. She soon became acquainted with the little girls,

and chose her special companions from them. They were, however, never allowed to visit her, as she soon found out to her confusion, for in the innocence of her heart she asked her deskmate to come and bring her dolls one Friday afternoon, but the little visitor was not allowed to enter the house, and was given the message that Edna was not permitted to receive company unless invited by her aunt. Poor little Edna was overcome with shame, and for the first time realized what real homesickness meant.

"My mamma let me have little girls to come and play with me," she sobbed; "and I used to go to play with them."

Aunt Elizabeth was a trifle less stern than usual; perhaps she did have some tender feeling for the child. "Stop crying, my dear," she said. "You and Louis may go and take a walk in the square. To-morrow I will take you to see some children who will, I hope, make you understand how highly favored you are. Run along, now, and get your hat. You may stay out an hour."

In the hall Uncle Justus met her, and seeing her wet eyes asked, "What is the matter, little girl?"

A grieving sigh was his only answer, so he patted her head and gave her a nickel. "There is a nice little shop around the corner," he said. "Louis can take you there to buy some candy." This showed such real sympathy that Edna looked up gratefully and ran to find her cousin.

"Good!" cried Louis whom she found in the schoolroom studying his lessons for Monday. "I'm tired of staying here, and they won't let me play with the boys in the street. There is one boy, though, that I do know. I see him in the square sometimes; he is a jolly fellow. They don't know I see him."

"O, is that right?" asked Edna.

"Ho! why not?"

"Why, I don't know, it's—it's kind of deceiving."

"I'd tell 'em if they'd ask me," replied Louis, conclusively. "Come, I'll race you around the square;" and they started out.

The square was a pretty place even in winter weather. In the center was a circular coping from which a flight of steps led down to a spring, the water of which ran constantly from two lions' mouths. Edna had never seen anything like this before, and was filled with admiration. It ever after remained a delight to her, and to the square she would rather go than anywhere else. The candy shop around the corner was another place to be favored. It was a queer little old-fashioned affair, quite unlike the big shops on the other streets, but there was something the children liked about the way the wares were shown, and the good-natured German woman who kept the shop was always ready to attend to the little ones, helping them out when it came to be a serious question whether peanut taffy or sour balls should be chosen.

On this Friday afternoon the gift from Uncle Justus was spent in little scalloped cakes of maple sugar, at which the children nibbled as they ran back to the square.

"There's Phil Blaney now," said Louis. "Come along, Edna;" and the little girl followed her cousin to a bench where a boy, somewhat older than Louis, was sitting. He looked Edna over rather contemptuously, and she, on her part, took a dislike to him which she never overcame, although the boy tried to be friendly, especially after Louis told him of Edna's exciting journey. But the hour was soon up, and Ellen at the door beckoned them in. Edna wanted to tell about Phil Blaney, but didn't know just what to do about it, especially when Louis called her a telltale for thinking of such a thing. Before she decided the question something happened which put it quite out of her mind.

Chapter III

WHAT HAPPENED.

The happening came about in this way: Aunt Elizabeth had promised to take Edna to see some poor little children who, she said, might make Edna feel how highly favored she was. Aunt Elizabeth Horner was a good woman, although she was rather hard on little people, having been brought up in a very strict way herself; but she was interested in many charities and missions, was always making warm clothing for the poor, and many a time sat up late at night, after a busy day, in order to fashion pretty cornucopias, boxes, and other fancy articles for some fair in which she was interested. She was one of the managers of an institution called "The Home of the Friendless," and favored it more than any of her other charities. The name appealed strongly to Edna, and she was very anxious to see the little children.

"We want to build a nice big new home for these poor wanderers who have no other home and no friends, so we are going to hold a fair," said Aunt Elizabeth, as they stopped at the door of a quiet-looking house on a little side street. "This is too small a place for the many little children

who should be provided for."



AUNT ELIZABETH.

Edna was very much interested in seeing the little waifs, in hearing them sing, and in seeing where they ate and slept. She was very thoughtful as she sat perched up on the seat of the car by her aunt's side during their homeward journey.

"I wish I could do something for them," she said, after a while.

"So you can, my dear," replied Aunt Elizabeth. "You can help me to make something for the fair."

"Do you think I really could?" cried Edna, delightedly.

"I am quite sure of it; if you are willing to give up some of your playtime, you can help me a great deal by cutting out the paper for my cornucopias, and perhaps you could do some of the pasting yourself."

This was surely a pleasant prospect, and the little girl was much pleased at it. She was a warm-hearted child, and a generous one, too. So she not only helped to make the pretty things, but brought all her pennies to her aunt to spend in materials.

"I will tell you what we can do with the pennies," said Aunt Elizabeth. "We will buy a lot of little dolls, and you can help dress them. I will have a great big shoe at my table, in which we can have the old woman who had 'so many children she didn't know what to do.'"

"Where will you get the old woman?" asked Edna, her face beaming.

Louis was standing by. "O, Aunt Elizabeth!" he said, becoming interested in the plan, "let me give the money for the old woman." So it was settled, and Edna gave up every spare moment to helping. All her thoughts were upon the fair, and she thought nothing more beautiful than the pretty things which Aunt Elizabeth's deft fingers turned out. There were little mugs and boats and pitchers, all made of pasteboard and fancy papers; these were to be filled with candy, and made a fine show as they stood on a table ready to be sent away.

One afternoon Aunt Elizabeth wanted some ribbon in a hurry. "I am going to send you downtown, Edna," she said. "You are big enough to find your way alone. Hurry back, for I want the ribbon as soon as I can get it."

"Can't Louis go with me?"

"No; he has to study one of his lessons, which he missed this morning. It is high time you were learning to be more self-reliant. I will tell you just how and where to go."

Edna's heart fluttered at this undertaking. She had never been downtown alone, and she was much afraid that she could not find the way, but she decided to do the best she could, especially as she knew her aunt would consider any objection in the light of disobedience.

It was all very easy to get in the car, pay her fare, and ask the conductor to let her out at such a street; so she managed very easily to reach the shop and get the ribbon; but to take the car home she was obliged to cross the street, and here came trouble, for there were horses dashing up and down, trolley cars coming this way and that, and, altogether, it was a very confusing point. Therefore Edna stood a long time on the curb before she dared to venture across, but finally she summoned up courage when the way seemed tolerably clear, and she managed to reach the opposite side; but looking back at a trolley car which seemed close at hand she hurried faster than her stout little legs could be relied upon to take her, and down she went in the mud of the gutter. She picked herself up in an agony of shame, lest she should be laughed at, and ran on as

fast as she could up the street, but, unfortunately, in the wrong direction; for when she stood still and looked about her there were no blue cars to be seen, and it all looked strange.

She felt in her pocket for her parcel; it was safe, but her car fare was gone, and she stood a pitiful, mud-besmeared little object. Then the big tears began to come as she walked along very fast. "O dear, I'm lost!" she said to herself, "and I'll have to walk home, and Aunt Elizabeth is in a hurry, and she'll scold me! O dear! O dear! I want my own home, I do, I do." She began then to run along very fast again, to hide her tears from passers-by, and presently she came bump up against another little girl who had also been running.

The two children coming to such an abrupt standstill stared at each other. Edna saw a poor, ragged, dirty, pale-faced child with wild locks; and the little girl saw Edna with the tears still coursing down her cheeks, her pretty coat and frock stained with mud, and her hat knocked very much to one side.

It was the ragged girl who smiled first.

"I 'most knocked ye down, didn't I?" she said. "Where was ye going so fast?"

"I am going home," replied Edna, "only I don't know how to get there."

"Yer lucky."

Edna stared. "I think I'm very unlucky. What makes you say that?"

"Yer lucky ter have any home ter go ter. I ain't. Yer live somewhere, if ye don't know where it is, an' I don't live nowhere, if I know where that is."

Edna smiled at this. "Why," she said, "where are your father and mother?"

"I ain't got none. Mis' Ryan she bound me out to Mis' Hawkins, an' I ain't goin' to stay there, I ain't. She starves me an' beats me;" and the child's voice shrilled out again, "I ain't goin' ter stay, I ain't."

"And haven't you any grandparents, or aunts or uncles?"

The child shook her head.

"Nor great-aunts? I think maybe you have a great-aunt like my Aunt Elizabeth," continued Edna.

But another shake of the head was the reply.

"And you haven't any friends. O, do say you haven't any friends," urged Edna, a pleased look coming into her face. "If you just say you haven't any friends I'll know just what to do."

"There's Moggins," said the child.

"Who is Moggins?" Edna asked, her face falling.

"My cat. Mis' Hawkins won't let me let him indoors; but he knows me an' comes when I call him."

"O, well," replied Edna, "of course a cat is a friend, but I don't believe he'll count. Anyhow, we'll take him, too."

"Where?" asked the girl, in astonishment.

"Why, to the Home of the Friendless, of course; aren't you friendless, and you haven't any home. It's just the place made for you;" and Edna smiled, well pleased. "Can you get Moggins? Is he far away?"

"Down there," and the child jerked her head in the direction of a narrow court near by.

"I'll wait here for you," said Edna, decidedly. "Tell me your name and I'll tell you mine. I'm Edna Conway."

"I'm Maggie Horn. You wait for me;" and Maggie darted away, leaving Edna on the corner.

All thoughts of the ribbon, car fare, and all else faded away before this great new interest. The saving from homelessness and friendlessness this little street child whom Edna had met in such an unexpected way seemed to her more important than anything else in the world, and she eagerly waited Maggie's return.

She did not have to wait long, for very soon Maggie came running back with a forlorn, miserable, half-starved kitten cuddled up in her arms.

"Here he is!" she cried, exultantly. "I ketched him; he was a-settin' in the sun. Let's hurry, so Mis' Hawkins won't git me." Edna patted Mogg's head, the little cat looking at her with scared eyes until he was reassured by Maggie's coaxing voice.

"Ye see," said Maggie, "he's kinder skeert o' most folks, 'cause they've tret him so bad. The way I come to git him was when Annie Flynn an' Han Murphy had him a-swingin' him round by one paw and then flingin' him off ter see if he'd light on his feet; one of his legs has been queer ever since. I give 'em my supper fur lettin' me have him, but I have a time ter keep the boys from gittin' him. Come, let's go to the place. Where is it?"

Edna came to a halt, looking doubtfully up and down the street. "I don't just know," she said, "but I'll know it when I see it, for there's a sign over the door with 'Home for Friendless Children' on it."

"Ho!" exclaimed Maggie, "we might walk all day in this big place, and then not get there."

"If I hadn't lost the ten cents I had for car fare we might ride and tell the conductor to let us off when we got there," said Edna, naïvely.

Maggie laughed. She was sharper than Edna. "How'd ye know which car to take?"

"That's so," was the reply; "we'll have to ask a policeman."

"No! no!" cried Maggie. "I'm skeered o' the perlice."

"Then we'll go to that drug store and ask," concluded Edna, wisely; and with childlike confidence she turned to the shop in question.

"The 'Home of the Friendless,'" said the clerk, with a smile, as he looked at the queer little pair. "Let me see, I can soon tell you;" and he turned over the pages of a big book on the counter. "It is on Pearl Street, No. 342."

"Is it a long way?" asked Edna.

"It's pretty long to walk. You'd better ride."

"O no, we can't; we'll walk. I can, can't you, Maggie?"

"Sure," replied Maggie, forcibly, if not elegantly.

Thanking the clerk who gave them some further instructions the little girls started out on their journey.

"We must go up this street to Market, and out Market to Pearl," said Edna; and they trotted along chatting as if the proceeding were not an unusual one.

It was a long, tiresome walk, but the place was reached at last; and Edna, standing on tiptoe, rang the bell, which was answered by one of the little inmates of the house.

Edna smiled as she recognized one of the children she had seen when she visited the place with her aunt. "O, how do you do?" she said; "I have brought Maggie to live here with you." And she stepped into the hall, followed by Maggie, who still held the scraggy little kitten hugged close.

The child who opened the door stared. "I'll go call Miss Barnes," she said. The sweet-faced teacher looked a little curiously at the visitors, but Edna was confident of a welcome. "I've brought Maggie," she informed the lady, with a bright smile. "She hasn't any home, nor any friend but Moggins, and Moggins hasn't any friends but her. So, you know, that's why they both had to come."

"But, my dear," interrupted Miss Barnes, "we cannot take in little people without knowing something more about them. The case will have to go before the Board of Managers, and then if it is all right we'll be very glad to have this little girl. The Board meets the first Friday in each month."

Edna looked distressedly at Maggie. "O dear," she sighed, "and we've come such a long way, and we're so hungry, at least I am. I expected to be back by dinner time."

Miss Barnes was looking at her more closely.

"Why," she exclaimed, "aren't you the little girl who came with one of our managers not long ago? Aren't you Mrs. Horner's niece?"

"Why, yes," replied Edna. "Didn't you know me? I knew you right away. I'm awfully muddy, 'cause I tumbled down. I lost my car fare, and we've walked and walked."

"You poor little child," said Miss Barnes, "let me go and call the matron, and we'll talk this over."

"Maggie can't go back," decided Edna. "She would be beat to death, and so would Moggins."

After a long consultation with the matron, and innumerable questions, it was arranged that Maggie should remain till Miss Barnes had seen Mrs. Horner. "And Moggins, too," stipulated Edna.

But the matron shook her head. "Then I'll have to take him home with me," said Edna, though in her heart she had many misgivings as to what Aunt Elizabeth would say.

Poor little Maggie stood with quivering lips as she saw her only friends depart; but the good matron set before her a generous bowl of mush and milk and the half-starved child, after receiving the assurance that all possible should be done for her, accepted matters quietly.

It was a very weary little girl whom Miss Barnes held by the hand as the two stopped at the door of the four-story house opposite the square.

"Shure! it's yersel'," cried Ellen, as she answered the bell. "Mrs. Horner's called out a-suddint, me dear, an' phwat'll she say to yer shtayin' so long? Phwat's that ye have?"

"O, it's Moggins; won't you take him and give him some milk? And, O Ellen, I'm so hungry!"

"The pore dear," returned Ellen, taking the kitten tenderly.

"I'll find Uncle Justus," said Edna, as she ushered Miss Barnes into the sitting-room, and, having brought her uncle, she ran to get something to eat from Ellen, for the kind-hearted maid had saved the child's dinner for her.

Having satisfied her appetite, and having heard the front door open and shut, Edna began to be seized with fear; and she stood tremblingly by the door as she heard Uncle Justus approach. But he only asked, "Have you had some dinner, little girl?" Then he laid his hand gently on her head and walked on. Next the front door again opened, and Edna heard Aunt Elizabeth's voice. Should she stay or go? Fear overcame her, and she took to her heels, never resting till she was up in her little room, where with beating heart she sat at the window overlooking the harbor.

Chapter IV

MAGGIE'S CASE.

For a long time Edna sat at the window expecting every moment to hear her aunt's heavy tread upon the stair. Finally, from sheer exhaustion, the little dusky head drooped on the sill, and when the last fading sunbeam stole into the room it found the little girl fast asleep.

She was aroused from her slumbers by Ellen. "Shure, dear, are ye moindin' it's near supper time?" she said.

Edna started up. "O, Ellen," she exclaimed, "I've been asleep."

"Yes, dear, an' so ye have; it's no wonder, with the tramp ye took. Come, let me put on another frock. I'll take this wan an' clane it for ye, so the misthress will niver know a bit of harrum come to it."

"O Ellen! you're so good," said Edna gratefully, her arms going around Ellen's neck.

"Sorry a bit," protested Ellen, laughing as she fastened Edna's frock. "Now ye are as nate as a new pin."

"Was Aunt Elizabeth very cross when she saw Moggins?" asked the little girl wistfully. "Will she turn him out?"

"Whist, dear, an' I'll tell ye; but ye mustn't let on a worrud, but take it as a matter of coorse. I was brushing up the harruth when yer aunt come into the settin'-room. 'Where's Edna?' says she. 'Up stairs,' says yer uncle. 'Did she get the ribbon all right?' says she. 'She did,' says he, 'an' she done more nor that,' an' he up an' told her all about yer doin's; an' yer aunt set thoughtfullike, a-rollin' up her bonnet strings the whoile. Yer Uncle Justus, he stud up on the two fate of him, an' says he, 'Yer not to punish her, Elizabeth. She has moinded the worrud, "Inasmuch as ye did it to me,"' an' with that I picked up me dustpan an' wint out into the kitchen. Afther a bit yer aunt come out, an' she spies the skileton of a cat onto the harruth, an' says she, 'I'll not abide the cat in the house.' 'The cat is to stay,' says the uncle from the dhure where he stud. Yer aunt looked up kinder dazed-like at the firrum way of him, an', says she, 'Thin, Ellen, ye must kape the crathur in the kitchen. I don't begrutch it the bit of scrapin's it'll take to feed it.' An' so, dear, ye just go down cheerfullike, an' say nothin'." And Edna, clasping Ellen's big, kind, coarse hand, went down stairs.



Uncle Justus was sitting by the fire, which cast a ruddy glow through the isinglass of the stove. The old gentleman was slowly polishing his glasses with his silk handkerchief, blinking his eyes and looking the very picture of sternness. Edna stole softly up, her little heart beating with a mixture of timidity and gratitude. She gently plucked her uncle's sleeve, then she said, "Thank you so much, Uncle Justus," and leaning forward she gave a little light kiss, which fell only upon the outer edge of one carefully curled gray side whisker; then, overcome by the boldness of her act, Edna fled to the window and hid herself in the heavy curtains. But Uncle Justus understood, for when his wife came into the room, he said, "Edna has come down, Elizabeth," and calling her to him, he actually put his arm around the shrinking child, as she faltered out her account of her day's doings, while she felt sure he meant to stand her friend, and bravely told about even the muddy frock. "I am sorry, auntie," she said. "I did mean to come right home."

"I forgive you, my child, because you have told the exact truth. I can trust you because you are truthful. Perhaps I expected too much of you, sending you so far alone," was the reply.

Edna could hardly believe her ears, to hear that from Aunt Elizabeth!

And so Moggins's place in the family was secure. He grew sleek and fat under Ellen's care, and was a great source of amusement to Edna; many a wild play they had together in the big yard.

Maggie's case, however, was not so easily settled. After leaving Uncle Justus, Miss Barnes hurried back to the Home.

"I don't know what we are going to do about this little child," she said to the matron. "We cannot keep her here against the rules of the institution. I did not find Mrs. Horner at home, and so there is nothing to do but to take the child back to the people with whom she has been living, until we can make plans for her."

But Maggie, upon being told this, burst into a perfect frenzy of weeping. "O, don't take me back! Don't! Don't!" she cried. "She will beat me for running away. O, you don't know her."

"But she must not," said Miss Barnes. "She can be arrested for ill-treating you."

"You don't know her," repeated Maggie. "She will beat me like she did oncet before, when I went to the mission school, an' some ladies give me clothes. She took 'em away an' said I was settin' myself up to be a lady an' she'd learn me, she would, an' she beat me tur'ble," and Maggie hid her face at the recollection. "An' when the ladies came to see about me," she continued, "she told me ef I dast tell 'em, she'd do worse by me, an' she told the ladies I was a lym' thievin' critter, an' purtended I was ill tret, when she was a mother to me an' never laid the flat of her hand agen me, 'ceptin' fur my good."

Maggie had been standing before Miss Barnes and the matron, her head buried in her arm, but when telling this tale she looked with tearful eyes straight at her hearers. She was a pitiful looking little object, indeed, even now, with her neglected locks smoothed, her face and hands washed, and an apron covering her ragged frock, for she was thin and hollow-eyed, with pallid cheeks and bony little hands, which worked convulsively as she told her story.

"What shall we do?" said Miss Barnes, her heart swelling with sympathy.

The matron looked thoughtful. "I can't take any responsibility in the matter, Miss Barnes," she replied, "much as I hate to turn the child out."

"She shall not go back," returned Miss Barnes, with emphasis. "Please get some sort of a hat for her, Mrs. Shaw, and I will go and see Mrs. Ramsey. It is a case that needs instant attention."

Mrs. Ramsey was the wealthiest and most influential of the ladies directly interested in the Home, and was one of the warmest-hearted women in the world. She was, moreover, very firm and decided; once undertaking a matter she did not let it drop till she had accomplished what she set out to do, and therefore Miss Barnes was wise in selecting her as an adviser.

In all her short life Maggie had never seen such magnificence as that which met her astonished eyes as the footman in livery ushered Miss Barnes and her charge into the library where Mrs. Ramsey was sitting. The child gazed at pictures and ornaments, soft draperies and luxurious couches, feeling as if this were the court of a queen. She had knocked about too much in the streets to be very shy, but she was bewildered by all that she saw, so she sat on the edge of a chair not speaking, nor even listening to what was said of her.

"I suppose the child's morals are far from good," Miss Barnes said; "but little Edna Conway, who is a dear child, seems to have taken a fancy to this poor little waif." And Miss Barnes told of Edna's trust in bringing Maggie to the Home, of Maggie's love for the little kitten, and all that she knew of the child from her own story.

"She must have some good in her," said Mrs. Ramsey, thoughtfully. "Anyhow, Miss Barnes, she is a poor, neglected, friendless child, and such are the ones for whom the Home is intended." She sat musingly regarding Maggie. "Come here, little girl," she said, presently.

Maggie started, but obediently left her chair and stood before Mrs. Ramsey, who looked at her searchingly. "How old are you?" she asked.

"I don't know, ma'am."

"How long have you lived with this woman whom you have just left?"

"I don't know ezactly. I lived with Mis' Ryan first. She told me she missed my mother. She was right good to me, she was, but she had to go to a place, an' she bound me out to Mis' Hawkins, to look after the young uns and do chores. Mis' Hawkins is a hummer."

"A what?"

"She's a reg'lar out an' outer; jus' tur'ble; drinks an' fights. She's been tuck up lots of times, so you can't skeer her that a-way."

"Do you know anything about your mother? Where does Mrs. Ryan live?"

"She lives to a place in the country. She tol' me my mother was better'n mos'; that she was a lady in the millinery line, an' made grand bonnets and hats."

"And your mother is not living?"

"No, ma'am. She got consumed and died, Mis' Ryan said."

Mrs. Ramsey again sat thinking. "Miss Barnes," she said, after a pause, "you were perfectly right; it would not do for you to take the responsibility of this. We must establish our legal claim to this child. I do not imagine it will be difficult. You may leave Maggie with me. It is too late to do anything this evening, but to-morrow I will settle the question." And Maggie found herself the guest of—it seemed to her—the most elegant lady in the land.

"We shall see you again at the Home, Maggie," said Miss Barnes, kindly, as she took her leave. "Be a good girl, and do not give Mrs. Ramsey any trouble. She is more than kind, and you see she trusts you."

"O, Miss Barnes. I wouldn't do nothin' to trouble that beautiful lady for nothin'; no, not for nothin'," promised Maggie.

After Miss Barnes had gone Mrs. Ramsey summoned a maid. "Take this little girl, and give her a good bath," she said. "You can put a cot in your room for her. She is to sleep here to-night, and to-morrow she is to go out with me. We will have to manage some sort of an outfit for her. I think you will have to go out early, Rosa, and do some shopping for her. Are you hungry, Maggie?" she asked, turning to the child.

"No, ma'am. I was, but I had a big bowl of mush and milk, what Mis' Shaw give me."

"You had better give her something more, Rosa. Mush and milk is not a very lasting diet," returned Mrs. Ramsey, smiling. "Now go with Rosa, Maggie," and Mrs. Ramsey turned back to the magazine which she had been reading when Miss Barnes, with Maggie, came in.

Half fearful, half ecstatic, Maggie took her place by the side of Mrs. Ramsey in her fine carriage the next morning. Rosa had clothed her in an entirely new suit of clothes, and had really taken pride in seeing how nice she could make her little charge look. So it was quite a well-appearing little girl who was Mrs. Ramsey's companion. The idea of riding in that beautiful carriage nearly

took Maggie's breath away; it seemed as if she must be dreaming; but as she neared the place where Mrs. Hawkins lived, her heart fluttered, and she looked up so appealingly at Mrs. Ramsey, that the eyes of the sweet woman filled. "No one shall hurt you, Maggie dear," she said. And she held the child's hand firmly, as they left the carriage.

"There she is!" cried Maggie, clinging closely to her friend, as a hard-featured woman turned toward them from the sidewalk.

Mrs. Hawkins was no respecter of persons, and Mrs. Ramsey's appearance with Maggie was the signal for a fierce outbreak.

"There ye are, are ye. Callin' yerself a lady, maybe, abductin' children. I'll have the law on ye, sure as me name's Hawkins," she cried.

"The child left you of her own accord," said Mrs. Ramsey, with dignity.

"Then ye've brought her back, have ye?" and Mrs. Hawkins cast a threatening look at Maggie.

"No, I have not," replied Mrs. Ramsey, quietly. "I simply brought her along to identify you."

"Ye think yer honest, don't ye?" shrieked Mrs. Hawkins. "I'll have the child back. I've the law on me side."

"We shall find out if the law permits anyone to retain a child and ill-treat her," returned Mrs. Ramsey.

"Ill-treat, is it? Who says it? If it's that little lyin', whinin'—"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Ramsey, in a tone of command.

The woman was silenced for a moment, then she made a grab at Maggie, who clung to her protector.

At this moment up strode a policeman. "What's all this?" he cried. "What's the trouble? Pardon me, madam," he said, addressing Mrs. Ramsey.

That lady explained.

The policeman looked perplexed. "I am not sure but the woman has some right, madam. I happen to know that the child belongs here, but you can probably settle it if she has been ill-treated. You had better leave the girl here, and consult the proper authorities."

Mrs. Hawkins stood with her arms akimbo, looking on triumphantly.

"If she must stay, so must I," said Mrs. Ramsey, firmly.

"Very well, madam. I will see that you are protected from the woman," said the policeman.

Mrs. Ramsey thanked him, and calling her coachman, she bade him drive directly to her husband's office. Then she took up her place in a little shop, still holding Maggie by the hand.

Chapter V

A GUILTY CONSCIENCE.

It was an all-day matter. Mrs. Ramsey bravely held her place in the shop, gazed at by curious eyes, but she calmly waited the return of her carriage with her husband.

That gentleman's appearance with two officers rather took down Mrs. Hawkins, and although she still persisted in claiming Maggie, after a long parley and a visit to the office of a lawyer, the matter was finally settled, and Maggie was borne triumphantly away, and handed over to Miss Barnes.

"If there ever was a good woman whom riches cannot spoil it is Mrs. Ramsey," said the teacher, when she heard Maggie's account of her day. "You ought to thank God for such a friend, Maggie."

Thus Maggie was established in her new home. She felt the restraint, it must be admitted, and was not by any means a model child, for the life she had been living had not been one that helped her to much goodness; but she had very strong affections and a grateful heart; therefore, to remind her that Mrs. Ramsey or Edna would be disappointed in her, if she were naughty, was the surest means of bringing penitence for a fault, a means which does not always work as well with children brought up in a purer atmosphere.

Edna had occasion to learn more of Maggie, as she was allowed a weekly visit to the Home to see her little friend. One day Maggie confessed to her that she was far from perfect, and told, with tears in her eyes, of obstinate faults. "But I will be good. I'll try harder'n ever," promised the child, "for Miss Barnes told me I didn't love you nor Mrs. Ramsey when I behave bad, for if I did I'd want to show you. Do you care when I'm bad?" she asked, wistfully.

"Of course I do," replied Edna. "What had you been doing to make Miss Barnes say that?"

Maggie was silent for a moment. "There's a little girl here with long curls—she's awful pretty, an' every one says she'll get 'dopted some day 'cause she's so pretty—an' one day she kicked me under the bench when some ladies was here, an'—an' I pinched her, an' the ladies saw me, an' made a fuss about it, so Miss Barnes sent me out of the room."

"Did you tell on her?" asked Edna.

"No, I didn't."

"I like you for that," she replied, sympathizing with the not telling, for her loyal little heart forbade her to tell on Louis many a time when he had done some little mean trick.

Therefore on this evening of her visit to Maggie, her mind was full of such things. "I wouldn't let a poor little Friendless be better than I am," she said to herself, "and I'll be twice as nice to Louis now." In consequence she was quite disturbed when she missed her cousin from the supper table that evening.

"Why, where is Louis?" she asked.

"He is in his room," replied Aunt Elizabeth, in a tone which forbade further questioning. Edna glanced at her uncle; he, too, looked stern and unyielding, and no chance was given the little girl that evening to find out the cause of Louis' banishment. She had become very fond of her cousin, although she did not always quite approve of him. He was a gentle, affectionate boy, easily influenced, and being an only child, had been allowed his own way, so that he was very much spoiled. He was, nevertheless, a very agreeable companion for a little girl, for he did not disdain to play with dolls at times, and would dress up and play "lady" when nothing more exciting was suggested. He was very fond of keeping shop, a drug store he usually preferred to have it; this probably on account of the very small pair of scales among his toys. He served Edna and the dolls a certain delectable drink made by filling with sugar and water, bottles in which remained a few drops of vanilla extract; these bottles Ellen bestowed upon the children, and they considered the mixture they prepared something very delicious. The rest of the stock consisted chiefly of sand, slate-pencil dust, dried beans, and bits of broken twigs. Many a happy hour did the two children spend playing together; therefore, when Edna felt that some stern decree had been passed upon Louis, her little tender heart felt it deeply.

At breakfast time no Louis appeared, nor did he take his place in school that day. To his school-fellows' question, "What is the matter with Louis?" Edna was obliged to answer, "I don't know."

After dinner, which seemed a more solemn affair than usual, the little girl could stand it no longer. To her questions Ellen could give no satisfactory answers, so, watching an opportunity, when Uncle Justus was taking his afternoon nap and when Aunt Elizabeth had gone to some meeting, Edna stole up to the storeroom, whose window was diagonally opposite to that of Louis' room. After a moment's hesitation she tapped on the window; there was no response from Louis' room. Then Edna decided to write a note and slip it under his door. This she managed to do. "I am going to the storeroom, open your window," was what she wrote, and the note served its purpose, for when the storeroom window was raised there stood Louis before his window.

"O, Louis," cried Edna. "Can't you get out?"

"No," was the reply.

"O, dear, I wish you could. I have such a lot to tell you. What are you shut up for? What did you do?"

Louis looked sullen. "I didn't do anything."

"O!" said Edna. "Are you sure? Then why did they shut you up?"

"Just for hatefulness," replied Louis. "I wasn't doing a thing."

This seemed a dreadful state of affairs, and Edna hardly knew what to think. "I wish I could let you out," she said, sympathetically, "but I can't."

Louis stood with downcast eyes, hammering with his knife upon the sill.

"Are you sure you haven't done anything?" persisted Edna.

"Of course I haven't. They just want to show their power over me, and I am half starved, I haven't had anything but bread and water."

Edna's eyes filled. "I wish I had something nice to give you to eat," she said, in distress.

"I wish you had," replied Louis.

"O, I hear some one," cried Edna, suddenly, and she shut down the window, hastily.

But the footsteps proved to be only those of Ellen going through the hall. Edna, nevertheless, did not dare to venture into the storeroom again at once, for Uncle Justus was apt any minute to awaken, and thinking to divert Louis by playing with Moggins in the yard, the little girl went out and tried to display the cat to the boy at the window above, but he stood watching her with such an unsmiling face that Edna was overcome with pity.

"I suppose he is almost starved," she said, to herself. "It isn't likely Ellen would dare to give me anything for him. I wish I had some pennies, but I have given them all to auntie for the fair." She stood pondering over the subject when her eye caught sight of a covered dish standing on a bench by the kitchen door. Edna lifted the cover and saw that the dish was full of baked apples which had been placed there to cool for supper. Without stopping to think, she picked up two of the apples by their stems and thrust them into her little clean handkerchief which, still unfolded, had been lying in her pocket.

Holding the four corners of the handkerchief together, she ran upstairs to the storeroom. She had heard Uncle Justus go out for a walk, and she knew that Aunt Elizabeth would not return till dark.

In response to the raising of the window Louis' window also opened. "I have something for you," said Edna, hastily; "but I don't know how to get it to you. It's in my handkerchief. Wait a minute." She had an idea, for presently out of the window came a rod, on the end of which was tied the handkerchief of baked apples. Exercising much care, Edna managed to direct the pole—which was the handle of the window brush—to Louis' window and the apples were taken in. Then Edna drew back the stick, set it up in its place, and ran up to her room to think about it.

She did not feel comfortable over the matter. Only a short time ago her aunt and uncle had been kinder to her than she had reason to expect they could be, and now to find them so harsh to Louis seemed a contradiction. Perhaps he had been naughty and deserved the punishment. She remembered with regret that Louis did not always speak the truth; once or twice he had screened himself by blaming her for something of which she was innocent. At all events she had no right to take the apples. Why, they didn't belong to her! Of course, they didn't. She wouldn't eat any for supper, and in that way she could replace them. Edna was very fond of baked apples, and the sacrifice decided upon, she felt more comfortable.

So, at supper she did refuse the apples, an unusual proceeding which caused her aunt to look at her so sharply that Edna felt those penetrating eyes were seeing straight into her very heart, and she colored up, taking a very long, slow drink of water to hide her embarrassment.

She was very quiet all during the evening, meekly holding some worsted for her aunt, then taking a very dull book, and trying to read it. But she was very glad when bedtime came.

Usually it was a very few minutes after her head touched the pillow that she was asleep; but this night slumber did not easily come, and the pillow was very damp under the rosy cheek which lay upon it. "O, dear!" sighed the conscience-stricken child. "It didn't do a bit of good to go without the apples; I can't go to sleep, and it's been nearly all night since I came up stairs. O, dear, what shall I do?"

The moments became harder and harder to bear, and, finally, with but one thought in her mind, she slipped out of bed and down stairs. It was not very late, although it seemed so to the child. Uncle Justus and Aunt Elizabeth were still in the sitting-room. They were surprised by the appearance of a little form standing in the doorway.

"Why, Edna, what are you doing here in your night clothes?" exclaimed Aunt Elizabeth. "Are you ill?"

"No," replied Edna, below her breath, while the lump in her throat seemed to grow bigger and bigger.

After the first glance Uncle Justus's eyes did not turn from the newspaper he was reading.

"What is the matter, then?" asked Aunt Elizabeth, with a piercing look. "You are not ill."

"No, I'm not ill, Aunt Elizabeth," replied the child. "I'm wicked. I've stoled."

"What do you mean? What was it you took?" asked Aunt Elizabeth.

"Two baked apples."

"And that is why you refused them at supper. When did you eat them?"

"I didn't eat them," replied Edna, hesitatingly. "O, please, auntie, I won't eat any the next time either. Please shut me up, and feed me on bread and water, like Louis."

"Did you take the apples for Louis?" suddenly asked Uncle Justus.

Edna gave an assenting nod, while she looked up with appealing eyes.

"How did you get them to him?"

"Through the window, on the end of a stick."

A little queer look came into Uncle Justus's face.

"You will take cold standing there," said Aunt Elizabeth, returning to her work. "Go back to bed."

"Won't you please shut me up and let Louis out?" said Edna. "I'll stay two days, one for him and one for me."

"Go to bed," commanded Aunt Elizabeth, "We'll settle it to-morrow."

Chapter VI

THE FAIR.

The next morning saw Louis free, and he appeared at the breakfast table wearing a very dogged expression of discontent. Edna trembled in her shoes at what might be awaiting her, and when her aunt called her solemnly to her room the child felt as if she were going before a dreadful court of justice.

She never forgot that talk with Aunt Elizabeth, who, to do her credit, tried to mete out what she considered as light a punishment as would meet the case. It was not the punishment which Edna minded; it was the long talk behind locked doors, which she bore standing in front of her aunt, whose sharp eyes were fixed on the little culprit. "The value of the apples is a very small matter," said Aunt Elizabeth, "and you shall replace them by going without, as your own conscience told you it would be right to do; but the principle of the thing is what I mind, even though you took the fruit for some one else. You were not only breaking the commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal,' but you were not honoring those who stand in the place of your father and mother. And it was not helping Louis; it was harming him, for your uncle and I knew better than you what was best to be done. Now," concluded Aunt Elizabeth, "because you were brave enough to come and confess your fault, and because you are really contrite, I shall not punish you beyond forbidding you all sweets for a week."

Edna accepted her punishment very meekly. She was very fond of sweets, and it was hard to go without anything of that kind for seven whole days. Ellen with all good intentions offered her a slice of bread and butter spread with sugar in the kitchen one day; but the child was too honest to accept it, and it is quite likely that this stanch upholding of her aunt's decree had its effect not only upon Ellen but also upon Louis.

"Say, Edna," said the boy, when he heard the result of the affair, "I'm awfully sorry you got into a fuss on my account."

"O, I don't mind it much," replied his cousin; "I mind having Uncle Justus think me bad."

Louis opened his eyes. "You don't care what that old tyrant thinks, do you?"

"Why, yes," was the reply; "don't you? I don't like anybody to think I am wicked."

"I don't care what some people think," replied Louis, angrily. "I wish my father and mother were here, he'd soon see whether I'd be shut up again just because I chose to play with a boy they didn't know. I'll run away next time, see if I don't."

"Was that it?" returned Edna; "but you know they said we mustn't make friends with strange children."

"Didn't you make friends with Maggie Horn? Answer me that, miss," exclaimed Louis, triumphantly.

Edna was silent. She didn't exactly see the way clear to defend herself, although she knew there was a difference somewhere.

"Maggie Horn is nothing but a dirty little street child," continued Louis; "and I haven't the least doubt but that she tells stories and steals and all that, while Phil Blaney lives in a nice house, and—and—"

"As if that made him good," answered Edna, scornfully. "I just know that he is a great deal worse than Maggie, for she never had anyone to teach her, and Phil has had, so he is much worse."

"He is not," replied Louis, fiercely.

"He is, he is," contradicted Edna, "and you are a horrid, disagreeable boy to talk so about Maggie; I am not going to play with you, so there," and picking up her doll, she stalked away.

"Yah! yah! 'I don't want to play in your yard,'" sang Louis after her.

Edna was very angry, the more so that she did not know how to defend Maggie. It was quite likely, she thought, that Maggie might do all sorts of wrong things, and it was also quite true that she had, herself, made friends with a strange girl. She could not puzzle it out, and she went down stairs to the sitting-room where Uncle Justus was. She sat down on a hassock by the fire, looking very thoughtful. Once or twice she glanced up at her uncle.

After a while he noticed the questioning look on her face. "What is it, little girl?" he asked.

"Uncle Justus," she said, "was I very bad when I talked to Maggie Horn, and got 'quainted with her? Louis says it was just as bad as for him to talk to Phil Blaney."

"Why did you talk to Maggie and make her acquaintance?"

"Cause I was so sorry for her," replied Edna, simply.

"And why did Louis become intimate with Phil; was it to do him good?"

"No," replied Edna, "I don't believe he thought of that. I think it was because he thought Phil was fun."

"And did you think about disobeying when you met Maggie?"

"O, no, of course not; Uncle Justus, you don't think I meant to, do you? We bumped into each other, and when I saw how poor and thin she was I felt so sorry. You don't think I talked to her because I wanted not to mind Aunt Elizabeth, do you?"

"No, I do not think so; I believe all your thought was to help Maggie. It was not willful disobedience, so you see there is a difference between the two cases."

Edna was thoughtful. "Yes, I see," she answered. But somehow that "feeling sorry for people" made her get over her anger against Louis, and she went up stairs singing a little song to herself. And a half hour later the two might have been heard laughing merrily over their play, and planning what they were going to do at the fair which was to be held the next week.

Before then Edna found out more of Louis' misbehavior. It seems that he had, more than once, gone out the back gate when he was supposed to be studying his lessons in the afternoon, climbing the fence and creeping in the house again just at dusk, being encouraged in this by Phil Blaney. Uncle Justus coming home later than usual one evening caught sight of Louis with a crowd of bad boys and grimly marched his nephew home.

Phil Blaney was a wild, uncontrolled boy, who spent most of his time in the street, played truant three days out of five, was a great boaster, and sneered at anything like goodness. He was vastly amusing, however, and generally was surrounded by a crowd of admiring lads who thought him quite a hero. He had completely fascinated Louis, who was blind to his faults and attached great weight to every word he uttered. Phil encouraged the younger boy to be as defiant as possible, telling him he was a coward to stand being badgered by old "goggle-eyes," as he called Professor Horner. So Louis was under a very bad influence, the real danger of which neither he nor Edna could realize.

The next week, however, the fair was the great matter of interest. Aunt Elizabeth had a table and allowed the children to go as helpers, if not every day, at least quite often. Louis being the elder was sometimes allowed to return in the evening, and Edna's great desire was to be allowed also to go at that time.

"It is much more fun at night," Louis had told her. "There are so many people there, and it is all lighted up, and there is always music, singing, or something." But Aunt Elizabeth had not hinted at there being a possibility of Edna's being allowed to sit up after eight o'clock, and Edna was so very eager to go "just one evening."

Finally she summoned up courage to take her longing to Uncle Justus. There appeared to be a very good understanding between the grave, dignified man and the honest little girl, and the confidences between the two grew more and more frequent.

Uncle Justus was in the large schoolroom looking over some papers when Edna peeped in. Seeing him so busy she crept away and went to her desk in the adjoining room to wait till he should be free.

After a while she heard him get up and clear his throat in a little way that he had. So she left her desk and reached him as he stood looking thoughtfully out of the window. "Uncle Justus," she said, "if you were a little girl my size, and there were a fair going on, don't you think you'd want very much to go in the evening?"

The queer little look which came into Uncle Justus's face when such questions were put to him appeared as he said, "I do not believe I could imagine the feelings of a little girl, for it is a long time since I was even a little boy."

For a moment Edna's imagination tried to picture Uncle Justus as a little boy, but it was such a very difficult thing that she gave it up almost immediately.

"You see," Edna went on, "I don't believe I should mind about most fairs, but this is such a particular fair. You know it is to get a new house for Maggie and the rest of the little Friendlesses, and then I helped to make some of the pretty things, and I do want to hear the singing, and see how it looks lighted up."

Uncle Justus smiled; it was not a very fascinating place to him, but it was fairyland to the little girl. "What does your aunt say?" he asked.

"She doesn't say anything about it," replied Edna; "only she never lets me sit up after eight-o'clock, you know."

"We'll have to see about it," was all Uncle Justus said, but it was quite enough for Edna to know he meant to put in a word for her. And indeed that very evening Aunt Elizabeth remarked, "Edna, if you study your lessons faithfully for the rest of the week you may go to the fair with me on Friday evening, as there will be no school the next day."

Edna clasped her hands and shot a pleased look at Uncle Justus, who looked at her over the top of his spectacles. "O!" she exclaimed, "I am so rejoiciful."

Even Aunt Elizabeth smiled at that, and it is needless to say that the lessons were given unusual attention for the next few days.

But, alas! when Friday afternoon came Aunt Elizabeth was laid up with an attack of neuralgia, and there was no hope of her getting to the fair that evening.

Such a disappointed little girl never was—the great tear-drops splashed down her cheeks as she heard the decision and fled to her room. "O, dear! O, dear!" she said, "I don't see why it had to be Friday. Why didn't Aunt Elizabeth wait just one more day?" Something poor Aunt Elizabeth would have been ready enough to do if possible. It did seem to Edna as if she could not stand it, and she went down to supper with very red eyes. Louis tried to comfort her and promised to play buttons with her that evening, a specially favorite amusement of the little girl when Aunt Elizabeth allowed her button bag to be used, and all sorts of plays were invented by using the buttons. But even this prospect had lost its charm. "I wish I were a man," exclaimed Louis, suddenly, "I'd take you."

Uncle Justus looked up quizzically. "No, you wouldn't, my young sir," he replied; "for I expect to give myself the pleasure of taking Edna to the fair this evening."

Down went Edna's knife and fork, and, in defiance of all the set rules of the house, she jumped up from her seat and actually hugged Uncle Justus. She probably would not have done so if Aunt Elizabeth had been present, but that restraining presence removed, the children both felt a little less timid.

It did not take Edna long to get ready, and such a rosy, beaming face as appeared at the door of the sitting-room must have given Uncle Justus a feeling of satisfaction that he had sacrificed his comfort for that one evening, for the old gentleman did not at all enjoy going to fairs, and would have preferred to spend the evening over his papers and magazines at his own fireside.

The fair rooms truly did present a dazzling scene to the little girl, and she was enjoying it all hugely when her uncle declared himself tired and told her to run about a little while and come back to him when she had seen everything.

She had not gone farther than the second booth when her attention was caught by a beautiful large doll which bore a card saying that to the little girl who should receive the largest number of votes would the doll be given.

"What do you think of it?" asked some one, as the child stood absorbed in gazing at the lovely creature before her. Edna looked up; at her side stood the minister of the church to which she went every Sunday with her aunt and uncle.

"I think it is perfectly lovely; but what does that mean?" exclaimed she.

"What, the card? It means that a wealthy gentleman bought the doll, and, having no little girl of his own to give it to, thought this would be a nice way to dispose of it. The friends of some little girls will vote for them, and the one who has the greatest number of votes will get the doll. Now, I suspect you wish very much that you could be the fortunate little girl."

"Yes, I do," replied Edna, candidly; "only I haven't very many friends, 'cause I don't live here. I am spending the winter with Uncle and Aunt Horner."

"O, yes, you are Professor Horner's little niece; now, let me see, perhaps you have more friends here than you imagine. Suppose I were to try to get some votes for you; shall I?"

Edna was about to speak, when a sudden thought came into her mind. For a moment a hard struggle went on. She did love dolls, but she had several, and she stood looking soberly at the one before her while the minister watched her.

"What is it, little one?" he asked, gently. Edna looked up wistfully, the color coming and going in her face.

"I was thinking"—she said, "O! won't you please get the votes for Maggie Horn instead of me? I don't believe Maggie ever had a doll in her life, and I have so many."

"And don't you want this one?"

Edna was silent, but her candor always prevailed. "O yes, but Maggie would be so perfectly wild over it, and you see she's one of the little Friendlesses, and this is her fair, so she ought to have it," she said in a moment.

"Then," returned the minister, "I will try to get a great many votes for her. And your name is—"

"Edna Conway. I must go back to Uncle Justus now."

The minister took her by the hand and piloted her through the crowd. "Can you spare me your little girl a while longer, Professor?" he asked.

Uncle Justus gave a willing consent, and when Edna had eaten a plate of ice cream, had heard the music, had seen the lemonade well, lighted up with electric lights, and had looked at pretty things till she was tired, her friend took her back to Uncle Justus.

But that gentleman sent her to pick out a cornucopia from Aunt Elizabeth's table, and she was made happy by the possession of the one which she had always especially admired; it was shiny white with little bunches of flowers over it, and the picture of a dear little girl on it.

Her uncle and the minister were in earnest conversation when she returned to them, and the minister's parting words were:

"Good-night, my child; we must have you here to-morrow evening to hear who gets the doll."

Edna was so tired that she nearly fell asleep on the way home, but she felt quite wide-awake when they reached there, and was very much surprised when Uncle Justus bent down and kissed her good-night. He had never done this before, and although pleased at the act, Edna wondered why he did it, and she went up stairs also wondering who would get that lovely doll.

Chapter VII

WHERE THE DOLL WENT.

Edna awoke, still wondering. Of course she realized that there was no hope of her going to the fair again that evening, for she had been up until ten o'clock the night before, and besides Aunt Elizabeth would not be well enough to go out into the night air, and Uncle Justus could not be expected to give up his warm corner and his easy chair a second time. So Edna contented herself with dwelling upon the delights of the evening before, and wrote a long account of it to sister. Writing to her sister or her parents was one of her regular Saturday employments. The letters were always strictly scrutinized by Aunt Elizabeth, and sometimes had to be written all over again.

Edna had just finished her letter when Ellen called her.

"Come, dear; there's a lady to see you in the parlor."

"Who can it be? O, maybe it is Miss Atkins, my Sunday-school teacher!"

"Shure, thin, it's not," replied Ellen; "but you're to hurry."

"This is Miss Martin," said Aunt Elizabeth, as Edna entered the room. "Come and speak to her."

"You know who I am, don't you?" said Miss Martin, drawing the little girl to her side.

Edna did know.

"You are our minister's daughter," she replied.

"Yes; and my father wants you to come and take tea with us and go to the fair afterward to find out about that wonderful doll. You know this is the last evening, and the votes are to be counted."

Edna looked quickly at Aunt Elizabeth. Would she let her go? But it was evident that Miss Martin's invitation was not to be set aside like that of an ordinary person, and Edna was made happy by hearing her aunt say:

"Mr. Martin is very kind. My niece should feel very much favored. You may go and get ready, Edna. Miss Martin is good enough to say that she will wait for you."

Edna scampered up stairs as fast as she could go, then she flew down to the kitchen to ask Ellen's help.

The good-humored maid was as pleased as possible over the pleasure promised her favorite, and she made ready the little girl with all the speed necessary.

"My father and I will bring Edna home ourselves," said Miss Martin. "I am so sorry, Mrs. Horner, that your neuralgia must keep you at home; but we hope this evening to bring you full reports of our success."

Mr. Martin came out of his study to greet Edna, and made her feel at home at once by telling her a funny story about the big dog which stalked through the hall and sniffed at the little visitor in a way which, at first, rather scared her, but she soon found he meant to make friends with her, so she was quite content to sit with his big head in her lap and his soft brown eyes looking up at her while Mr. Martin asked about her own pets which she had left at home.

It seemed very queer to sit there and see where those wise sermons were made which the minister preached from the pulpit every Sunday, to find out that Mr. Martin was as full of fun as anyone, and that his daughter did not stand in awe of him, but that she teased him at supper for his fondness for hot buttered cakes.

I shall like to go to church very much next Sunday, thought Edna, because I know Mr. Martin, and have seen just how it looks here when he is writing his sermons.

When supper was over no time was lost in starting for the fair.

"We must make hay while the sun shines," said Mr. Martin, "and try if we can add to the votes we already have."

"O!" exclaimed Edna, "have you a great many Mr. Martin? Is there any chance of Maggie's getting the doll?"

Mr. Martin smiled.

"That is telling," he replied. "But you will know pretty soon."

It was very exciting to be present this last evening of the fair, for everyone was anxious to make the most of it, and Edna thought it great fun to watch the auctioneer who was selling off some of the larger articles. She was intensely interested when Mr. Martin began bidding on a set of books, and was quite as triumphant as he was when they were knocked down to him.

But all other interests fell flat when some one came up and said:

"Mr. Martin, they are going to count the votes for the doll."

Edna's eyes grew big, and she could scarcely sit still from anxiety. She kept craning her neck to see if anyone were coming from the direction of that special booth. Finally she was rewarded by seeing the doll delivered into the hands of a gentleman who made his way toward the platform.

There was another little girl who was quite as eager as herself. Edna had often seen her in church, and knew she was the daughter of wealthy parents. She wore very pretty, dainty clothes, and Edna found her eyes very often wandering in the direction of this little girl during service; but the object of her admiration once turned and made a face at Edna, which proceeding shocked her very much. "I wouldn't do that in church," she said to herself. "I don't care if she is rich and comes in that shining carriage; she is not a nice little girl. I like Maggie Horn much better."

Therefore it was a very thrilling moment when the gentleman holding the doll mounted the stand, and said, "I have here a very popular young lady. She comes from Mrs. Tuttle's booth, and has received so many votes that she must be quite anxious herself as to her future." Then reading from a paper, he said, "I will only announce the two candidates who have received the greatest number of votes: Clara Adams, one hundred and twenty-seven; Edna Conway—" the little girl's heart stood still, and she clasped Miss Martin's hand convulsively, while she looked at her with something like reproach—"in behalf of Maggie Horn," continued the gentleman, "three hundred and one votes." There was silence a moment. "I want to say," the gentleman went on, "that the little girl—whose representative I hope is here—is one of the inmates of the Home of the Friendless, rescued from a pitifully unhappy life by Edna Conway, who has also been the means of procuring for the little girl, no longer friendless, this beautiful doll. Will Miss Edna Conway please come forward?"

Growing red and white by turns; glad, fearful, ashamed, all at once, Edna went to the platform amid tremendous applause. Every eye was turned upon her, and she felt in this conspicuous position as if she should sink through the floor. Into her hands the lovely doll was given, and then the gentleman detained her by saying, "One moment, my dear. The ladies of the fair want you to accept this little basket of flowers, with their love;" and a basket of exquisite roses was handed down.

Edna hardly knew how she got back to Miss Martin's side, but when she did reach there the doll was laid upon the bench, the flowers were handed to Mr. Martin, and the little child hid her face on her friend's shoulder, overcome by the situation.

"We'd better go now," said Miss Martin, in a low voice, as she saw a body of girls ready to pounce upon Edna with hugs and kisses. "I am sure Mrs. Horner would not like this fuss over her niece," she continued to her father. And Edna was quite ready to leave, not liking herself to be fussed over.

Miss Martin and her father only stopped to see their little charge safe in the hands of her aunt and uncle, and with many thanks, Edna bade them a fervent good-night. In her delight she entered the sitting-room, forgetting to be a little girl that should "be seen and not heard."

"O, Uncle Justus!" she cried. "See! see! the doll for Maggie; and look at my flowers! Look, auntie!"

"Not so loud, child," reproved Aunt Elizabeth.

"Let me see. Yes, the doll is very pretty; and where did you get your flowers?"



"Why," returned Edna, innocently, "the man said that the ladies of the fair gave them to me with their love, and I don't know why, for I didn't get a single vote but yours and Uncle Justus's."

Aunt Elizabeth smiled, but she did not explain. "Well, child," she said, "it was very kind of the ladies to pay the compliment to Mr. Martin's little guest."

"O, yes," replied Edna, "of course it was, and he liked it, too. I wish I had given him and Miss Martin more of the roses."

"You had better put them in water, or they will all fade," said Aunt Elizabeth; "I have no doubt the ladies will remember Mr. Martin. Now go to bed, and try to get up when you are called so as to be ready for Sunday-school."

"O, Aunt Elizabeth, just please tell me when I can take Maggie her doll."

"I am afraid I shall not be able to go with you on Monday, for I have a meeting in the afternoon," answered Aunt Elizabeth.

"Couldn't you find your way alone?" asked Uncle Justus.

"I think perhaps I could," replied Edna, a little doubtfully, "but I am not very good at finding my way about. Papa says my bump of locality was left out. I don't know what that means, but he said so."

"Perhaps if I put you on the cars and tell the conductor to let you out at Pearl Street you could find your way," said Uncle Justus.

"And what about the getting back?" put in Aunt Elizabeth. "I think Edna will have to wait."

But here again Miss Martin came to her aid, for the next morning after Sunday-school she made her way over to where Edna was standing waiting for Louis, and asked her about the matter.

"I can't go till Tuesday," Edna told her, "for Aunt Elizabeth hasn't time to take me, and I do so want Maggie to have her doll. Won't she be s'prised. Miss Martin? I am just crazy to take it to her."

"Let me see," returned Miss Martin, thoughtfully. "If your aunt will allow you to go, perhaps I can take you. How would that do? I will see Mrs. Horner after church, and we'll try and arrange it."

And so it was settled that Edna should go with Miss Martin to the Home the next afternoon. In the meantime it was a great temptation to have the pretty doll so near and not resist the temptation of being a little envious of it. Many a peep was taken at the fine lady laid away in state in one of Edna's bureau drawers; but the child was honorable enough not to run the risk of spoiling the freshness of her attire by taking her out of her place.

"I think you were a goose not to try for the doll yourself," said Louis.

"O, Louis!" replied Edna. "I never could have had all those votes, and besides I have Moggins, so

you see I ought to make up to Maggie for that."

"Well, that's so," replied Louis. "Anyhow I am glad that that stuck-up Clara Adams did not get her."

Edna was thoughtful. "So am I," she confessed. "But," she added, "I heard Miss Martin say, 'Poor Clara Adams, I'm very sorry for that child.'"

"Poor!" exclaimed Louis. "I don't know where you get your rich people from if she's poor. I reckon Miss Martin doesn't know what she's talking about."

"I'm going to ask her," declared Edna. And true to her word she did ask, that very afternoon, "What made you say, 'Poor Clara Adams,' Miss Martin?"

"Did I say that? Well, dear, she is a very poor little girl; with all her rich clothes and her ornaments there is one ornament which I am afraid she will never be able to wear."

Edna opened her eyes. "What is it, Miss Martin?" she asked, wondering if Clara were in any way deformed so she could not wear rings.

Miss Martin smiled. "Did you never hear about the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit?" she said.

"O," returned Edna, only half understanding.

"Clara is a restless, discontented, envious little girl," continued Miss Martin; "and although her mother and father come to church every Sunday, and give liberally to charities, their little girl is not taught to find happiness by thinking of others rather than of herself, and so that poor little self of hers often feels as much neglected as Maggie Horn ever did."

"But Clara isn't neglected," interposed Edna.

"She thinks she is, unless some one is paying attention to her all the time. She wants to be noticed and considered and amused from morning till night, and feels slighted at being set aside for a single instant. So you see she is a little girl to be pitied. 'Contentment is better than wealth,' says the old proverb."

That was a new way to look at Clara Adams, Edna reflected; but she had not time then to think much of the matter, for by this time they had reached the Home where Maggie was.

This was not visitors' day, but a note from Mrs. Horner to Miss Barnes gave Edna special permission to see Maggie. She came into the room looking very clean and neat in her blue dress and gingham apron. Her face brightened as she caught sight of Edna.

"Why," she exclaimed, "how did you happen to come to-day? How is Moggins? I hope he doesn't bother your aunt."

"Moggins is as fat as butter," answered Edna, "and I came—O, Maggie—I came to bring you this," and she thrust the doll into the little girl's arms.

Maggie looked from the doll to Edna and back again, perfectly bewildered. "Why, why," she said, "not for me! You don't mean for me!"

Edna nodded, "Yes," most decidedly. "It's for you, and came from the fair. O, so many people voted for her—three hundred. Isn't she sweet?"

"O! O!" cried Maggie, "I never had nothin' like this. I never expected nothin' like it. I feel like it was Christmas, an' I was a-dreamin, an' it was a story book all to once. Da'st I kiss you?"

"Why, of course," replied Edna, heartily, and she threw her arms around the little girl and gave her a fervent embrace. Then followed a close examination of the dolly's pretty clothes by both little girls, till Miss Martin came in accompanied by Miss Barnes, who said she was sorry to take Maggie away, but that it was study hour; and the children separated, one about as happy as the other.

Then Edna and her friend turned toward home, where a new surprise was awaiting.

Chapter VIII

A PECK OF TROUBLE.

"Where is uncle?" was Edna's first question when she reached home.

"Listen to the dear," replied Ellen. "She doesn't know that the two of them has gone away suddint."

"Why, where?" asked Edna, in astonishment.

"To Mr. Horner's sither's, darlin'; wurred came by the bhy from the telegraph office thot the

poor leddy's tur'ble low, and would they come right away? So the madam t'rows a bit o' their clothes intil a bag, an' says she, 'Ellen, we'll be back the mornin; ye must look out for the childer.'"

"O," cried Edna, "then we can eat supper in the kitchen; and you'll let me pour out, won't you?"

"Will I thin? av coorse I will, an' I'll make ye a bit o' short cake."

"O, that will be fine," replied Edna, "I'm going up stairs to take off my wraps, and then I'm coming down into the kitchen."

"Moind ye change yer dhress," called Ellen; "an' put on an apron, so ye'll not get yer clothes hurted."

Edna was down again in a twinkling, the cause of the sudden departure of her uncle and aunt lost sight of in this "happening" of a cosy time.



MOGGINS.

There was something particularly cheery and comfortable about the clean kitchen. Louis was already there playing with Moggins; the little kitty was whisking around after a string, his prancings and sidewise jumps making the children laugh merrily. Edna left this play to make a little short cake from some dough which Ellen gave her. She baked it on top of the stove, and, although it was neither very clean nor well baked, and was rather ragged looking, it was heartily enjoyed by the children and Moggins, who was a little cat ready to taste anything offered to him.

Edna poured out the cambric tea and mixed it with great gravity, giving Louis plenty of sugar in his, while the amount of short cake and syrup indulged in would have been considered shocking by Aunt Elizabeth. But the children had never so enjoyed a meal in that house.

Edna's doll, Ada, occupied a place at the table, being mounted upon a firkin placed upon a chair, and as Edna had to eat both her own and her doll's share of the short cake it was no wonder that the supply was more than she could manage.

Louis took Moggins under his care, but Moggins, it must be confessed, did not behave so well as Ada, for he slyly whipped off with his paw pieces of food from Louis' fork, and began lapping the cambric tea from his neighbor's cup, so finally he was sent from the table, a disgrace which did not affect him in the least, as it gave him a chance to scamper around after his tail, and race about without restraint.

"O, Louis," said Edna, when bedtime came, "aren't you afraid to sleep down here alone?"

Louis flushed up. "What did you say that for?" he replied. "I wasn't going to think about it, and now you've made me. I'm not exactly afraid, but it is a long way up to you and Ellen if anything should happen."

Ellen stood thoughtfully considering the question, one hand on her hip, and the other stroking her puckered-up lips. "Thru for ye," she said. "I promised the mistress to hev an eye on ye, an' how can an eye pinitrate through the two flures? I'll bring a cot down for mesilf to your aunt's room, an' Edna shall sleep in the big bed, whilst I take the cot, so we'll all be commojus and neighborlylike."

There was much fun and laughter getting the cot down stairs, and Edna thought it a great experience to sleep in her aunt's big bed, while Louis was very glad not to be so far removed

from the others, although he professed great indifference upon the subject after his first confession.

The next morning the school children began to gather. Nine o'clock came and no teacher, for, strange to say, even Miss Ashurst did not make her appearance. A note from her did arrive, but as it was addressed to Professor Horner no one opened it, and the cause of her absence was not explained.

"O, fun!" cried one of the girls. "No school to-day. We'll have a holiday."

"We'd better wait a little while," said Agnes Evans, who was the eldest as well as the brightest pupil in the school. "Professor and Mrs. Horner may come in any minute; we'll wait till ten o'clock. Come here, little sobersides," she said to Edna. "What are you so solemn about? What word did your aunt and uncle leave?"

"They left word that they would be back this morning," replied Edna. "Of course they supposed Miss Ashurst would be here, and that she would be able to get along till they came. Don't you think—" and Edna looked up hesitatingly.

"What, monkey dear?" said Agnes, passing her arm around the child. "Out with it."

"Don't you think we might have school just the same if you big girls were to take the teachers' places? Don't you think we ought to try to do the best we can?"

"You dear child," responded Agnes. "The idea of your having more conscience than us big girls! Of course that is what we should do. Miss Ashurst has been absent once or twice before, and one of us has always taken charge of the little girls. Helen Darby, come here," she called to one of her classmates. "Will you take charge of the little girls? We're going to be good and have school the best way we can. Find Florence Gittings and see if she'll undertake the boys. She'll be just the one to manage them," and springing forward to Professor Horner's desk, Agnes rapped sharply.

The girls who had been chattering like magpies suddenly became silent. "Girls!" said Agnes, "how many of you will stand by me, and do their best to-day? This little midget has made me ashamed of myself by telling me my duty, and I'll do my best to teach those in this room. Anyone who can't trust to my judgment can go home immediately, and any girl who can't promise to behave just as well as if the professor were here can also go home."

Not a girl left the room.

"Good!" cried Agnes. "Now let us go to work," and school was opened without further delay.

Agnes conscientiously kept strictly to the order of the day as mapped out by Professor Horner, and the girls, with good will, entered into the spirit of the occasion. "You are on your honor, girls," Agnes told them, "and I don't believe there is one here mean enough to slight her work." So even the most careless tried to keep up to the standard set for her, while the bright young teacher made everything as interesting as possible.

Florence Gittings managed the little boys fairly well, and Helen Darby did her best with the little girls. The latter, however, belonged to the most troublesome class, and Edna felt very much ashamed of some of them.

"O, dear!" she said to Miss Evans, "our class didn't behave well at all, and it will have to be reported to Uncle Justus."

"You dear thing!" replied Agnes, "you shall be reported for good behavior, I can tell you. I shall just tell your uncle what a dear little soul you were, and how you really were the one who started the plan of our day's doings."

Edna blushed at the praise. She was not often commended by Aunt Elizabeth, who did not believe in praising children, and so the little girl was very grateful for this.

"If anything happens to detain our teachers to-morrow, girls," said Agnes, at parting, "we shall do just as well, I hope. So please all put in an appearance."

Dinner was not served in the kitchen, and the two children ate their meal feeling a little forlorn at being so long left to themselves. It was very well for a time, but, as the day wore on, Edna missed Uncle Justus from his place in his easy chair, missed Aunt Elizabeth's heavy tread, and told Louis she did.

"Ho! that's just like a girl," he said. "I don't miss them that way, I can tell you. I'm glad enough to get a chance to have a fling. I know what I'm going to do this afternoon."

"What?" asked Edna.

"I'm going to have a lot of the boys in and have some fun."

"O!" exclaimed his cousin, with round eyes of disapproval.

"Why shouldn't I?" asked Louis, sharply. "I guess I have a right to do as I choose when there's nobody here to tell me I sha'n't."

Edna could not always answer Louis' arguments, but she knew it would be against the wishes of her aunt and uncle. "I wouldn't do it," she said.

"O, no, *you* wouldn't, good little baby girl; you're too much of a saint. I suppose you'll tattle, too."

The tears came into Edna's eyes. "Now, Louis, you know I never tell on you."

"Well, no, you don't; but if you're so down on a fellow's having any fun, what's he to expect?"

"I'm not down on your having fun, but I think we ought to do just as well as we can while uncle and aunt are away; better even, for it seems sort of—sort of dishonest to do things behind people's backs that you wouldn't do before their faces."

"Do you mean to say I am dishonest?" began Louis, blustering.

"O, no," cried Edna; "but—but—"

"Humph! I don't believe you know what you do mean. Now, see here; my father and mother ain't wicked people, are they?"

"Of course not."

"Well, then, if they let me have boys to come in and play with me at home, why isn't it just as right here? Answer me that!"

Edna could not answer, so she got up and walked away, Louis calling after her, "You needn't have anything to do with it, Miss Goody-goody. I don't suppose the boys will insist upon your playing with them." And a moment after Edna heard him go out of the house.

About a half hour later she heard him return, a troop of boys following him. They clattered into the house and up into the schoolroom. Ellen, hearing the noise, went up, but, as might have been expected, the boys only jeered at her, and paid no attention to what she said.

"Masther Louis must study his lessons," she told them.

"I don't have to," replied Louis. "I don't call that any school we had to-day, and I'm not going to study the same lessons twice. You don't know anything about it, Ellen. You just go along and tend to your business. We're not going to do any harm." And Ellen, after standing helplessly looking at them for a moment, went back to her work.

"Will she tell on you, Louis?" asked the boys.

"I don't care if she does," returned he. "If they make a fuss, I know what I can do. I can run away."

"Good for you!" cried Phil Blaney. "Of course you can. You can go out West. You can make your way to California, where your father and mother are. You'll have a fine time, Lou, for you'll meet cowboys, and maybe you'll have a whack at the Indians. That's what I'd like to do. You're no baby, to be ordered around by a little girl and a servant."

"You bet I'm not," returned Louis, feeling very big. "They'd better try bossing me. I'll let 'em know they can't do it."

The boys' play became more and more boisterous as time went on. The schoolroom presented a fine field for sport, and Edna, in her room above, trembled as now and then came a crash which made her jump.

"O, my!" she exclaimed; "I hope they won't go to Uncle Justus's chemical closet. I'm so afraid they will!" And, indeed, the boys were bent on investigating everything, with the intention of putting all in order before they left.

But in the midst of the din came a sudden quiet. Edna could stand it no longer, and she ran down stairs and peeped in the room. In flinging a book across the room one of the boys had upset a bottle of ink, the contents of which spattered floor and wall. The boys were busy mopping it up.

"You can say the cat got up here and did it," Phil Blaney was saying.

"No, he sha'n't," cried Edna, from the door, ready to defend Moggins.

The boys all stopped and looked fearfully around.

"O, it's only Louis' cousin! She won't tell; will you, Edna?"

"I sha'n't let Moggins be blamed when he can't speak for himself," she replied, firmly, although she was scared.

"If you dare to tell," began Phil, coming up to her threateningly, "I'll—I'll make it worse for you."

Edna grew very pale. She was afraid of this big, boastful boy, but she did not flinch.

"Say, will you tell?" demanded Phil, seizing her by the wrist.

Louis sprang forward. "Look out!" he cried. "Let my cousin alone, will you! Don't you dare to touch her."

Phil turned on him, the other boys standing off.

"You want to fight, do you?" cried Phil, with a swagger.

Louis' eyes flashed, and he made a step forward to wrench Phil's hold from Edna's wrist.

"O, don't, Louis; don't!" cried the little girl, making an effort and freeing herself to fling her arms around her cousin.

"Come on, boys!" called Phil "Don't let these youngsters down me."

The boys stood a little uncertain, till Charlie Stabler, who had been out of the room to get some water, returned. "Ah, let them alone!" he said. "Louis is littler than you, Phil."

"I don't care!" replied he. "I'll thrash him if Edna does not promise not to tell."

Poor little Edna! She trembled from head to foot. Louis had befriended her, and now, to choose between him and Moggins, what was she to do? But her courage came to her rescue. "You're a coward!" she cried.

Again Phil made a dive at her, but Charlie Stabler, leading the other boys, arose to the occasion, and made a rush forward, so that the little girl found herself in the midst of the group.

"Let her alone!" cried Louis.

"I shan't!" cried Phil, and the confusion arose higher and higher.

But suddenly a hush fell upon everyone, and, looking up, Edna saw Uncle Justus standing in the doorway.

Chapter IX

ABOUT SEVERAL THINGS.

It seemed to Edna, as she looked up, that she had never seen Uncle Justus's eyebrows appear so shaggy, nor his eyes snap so. "Boys!" he thundered out, "leave the house."

Every one slunk out of the room and down the stairs without a word.

"Edna," he said, when the last one had left, "go to your room. I thought I could trust you," he added. "Come with me, Louis."

Edna crept up stairs, her bosom heaving, and such a hurt, dreadful feeling in her heart. It was so terrible to be judged in that way, as if she had taken part in all that disorder. She felt as if she could not stand it, but there was no room left for explanation, and she cried as if her heart would break over this dreadful condition of things.

It was not long, however, before she heard some one coming up stairs. "Edna, my child, where are you?" a voice said, quite gently. "Your uncle didn't understand," she heard Aunt Elizabeth say. "He is very sorry he blamed you unjustly. One of the boys, Charlie Stabler, has been here to acknowledge his part in the affair, and to offer to pay for any damage done. He is a very manly boy, although he did not do quite right to join the others. He has also said that you had nothing to do with the trouble, and has told of Louis' defense of you, which in some degree lessens the fault."

Edna jumped up and threw her arms around her aunt. "O, auntie," she cried, "I am so glad you have come back." Aunt Elizabeth smiled and bade Edna bathe her face and go down and see her uncle, who was waiting for her.

Uncle Justus stood at the foot of the stairs; he opened his arms as his little niece came down, and as he held her closely she knew he meant to make amends for the harsh judgment.

"How is your sick sister?" asked the little girl.

"She is better—a little better, but still very ill," replied Uncle Justus.

"I am so glad she is better," returned Edna, "And you won't have to go away again, will you?"

"I hope not. You had a hard time getting along, did you?"

"We didn't at first," acknowledged Edna, truthfully. "We had fun, but to-day it has been just horrid. Why didn't you come back this morning, uncle?"

"We missed the train; there are only two trains a day from that junction, and something happened to the carriage on the way, so we were too late for the morning train. You didn't have school, of course. I found Miss Ashurst's note when I reached here. She has an attack of grippe."

"O, yes, we did have school. I am sorry, uncle, but the little girls weren't as good as the others."

"And you are one of the little girls," returned Uncle Justus, smiling, and looking down at her. But Edna felt that whatever he might hear of the rest, he would not include her with the number of those who had misbehaved.

That he was highly pleased with Agnes Evans's account of the day was evident from his manner to his pupils, and he did not even reprimand the little girls, who continued under Agnes Evans's teaching while Miss Ashurst remained away. To Edna's surprise Louis was not shut up, but there was a sullen look on his face which told of his feelings. Edna's gratitude for his defense of her increased her affection for her cousin, and she tried in every way to show him little attentions, which he took graciously enough, but which did not seem to add very much to his happiness, and at times Edna felt very indignant at the sternness with which he was treated, and the cold tones in which he was addressed. It was very nice to have Uncle Justus give her credit for trying to be a good girl, and to have Aunt Elizabeth smile upon her, but it made her feel the coldness of their manner to Louis all the more.

To be sure Aunt Elizabeth did not seem to think Edna ever could be cured of certain faults. "You are a very careless child," she would say. "I am afraid you will never be the neat housekeeper your grandmother was;" or, "Edna, that exhibition of temper over little things must be controlled; it is a very serious fault." Again it would be, "You are very babyish, and lack self-control; there is no need of crying over such a small matter as a little blister on your finger." And Edna wondered if she were expected to be like the Spartan boy who held the fox under his coat while it gnawed at his heart. Aunt Elizabeth never pitied her, and even the little caresses from Uncle Justus were few and far between.

"I should like a real lap," said the little girl, wistfully, to her doll. "I should like to have mamma to hug and hug as hard as I wanted, and I should like to have sister to be silly with. I like to be silly sometimes, and sister does, too. It is a long time, Ada, since we saw them all, the boys, and the kittens, and Snowflake, and all the rest. I am afraid it is going to be a long time more, for mamma wrote that it would have to be quite warm weather before they could come back."

To be sure Ellen had a lap ready whenever there was time for her to sit down, but she was kept very busy, the one servant in a large house, and even on the days when the wash-woman came she worked just as hard. Then Aunt Elizabeth did not approve of much time spent in the kitchen by her niece, and so, with Louis grumpy, Ellen busy, Uncle Justus reading, and Aunt Elizabeth absorbed in her many interests, there were days which seemed very long to the little girl, and once or twice she went to her room at night so homesick that she threw herself, crying, on the bed, with her doll hugged up to her, and fell fast asleep without undressing, to awaken in the middle of the night chilly and uncomfortable, finding herself on the outside of the covers. She would then shiver out of her clothes and creep into bed, after groping around to get Ada and place her safely under the bedclothes. But this was only sometimes; generally speaking, the days were not unhappy ones, for lessons and practicing, so many squares of patchwork, so many pages of reading filled up the hours, and the playtime was not so long as to become tiresome.

Once a week there was a visit to Maggie, who was always overjoyed to see her little friend.

"I don't know what I shall do when you go home," Maggie said, sadly, one day. "And when you take Moggins so far off, I'll never hear of him."

Edna was thoughtful. "What becomes of little girls who live here till they grow up?" she asked.

"Some of 'em don't stay that long, they get 'dopted," replied Maggie, "an' some of 'em get places." And Edna bore this information in mind.

"What do you have to do to get 'dopted?" she asked her aunt.

"You don't do anything but try to behave yourself," replied she. "What are you thinking about, Edna? Surely you do not need to have anyone to adopt you?"

"No," was the reply, "I was thinking of Maggie."

"Well, if some lonely, childless person were to come along and take a fancy to Maggie, she might be adopted, but usually the younger children are preferred; little girls of her age are not often chosen."

Edna was disappointed. She had thought that maybe her aunt's influence might be all that was necessary, provided Maggie should care to be chosen as some one's possible daughter.

But she did not give up the hope. "Maybe some one will 'dopt you, Maggie," she said, "and then, of course, you can have Moggins back again. Your new mamma would want you to have him." And so the two children talked over this possibility, as if it were a delightful fairy tale.

All this time Louis' discontent seemed to increase and he chafed more and more under restraint. It is quite true that the same kind of treatment did not suit the two children. Edna, on the one hand, an honest, conscientious, self-sacrificing little girl, and on the other hand Louis, a spoiled, proud, rather selfish little boy. Gentle firmness would have been best for Louis, but firmness without gentleness did not suit him at all, and he resented the methods of his uncle and aunt.

"I'm not going to stand being ordered about as I am, and treated as if I were the worst person in the world" he said to Edna. "They're all right when you are concerned, but they act as if I were a criminal, and I don't want to be good for them."

Edna looked distressed. "O, Louis," she said, "I don't believe they feel that way."

"They act that way," replied he, "and I know what I am going to do."

"What?" asked Edna. "Tell me, Louis; I won't tell."

"Sure you won't?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"Give your word of honor that you won't tell anyone I know."

"Yes, I promise."

"Well," and Louis lifted his hand emphatically, "I'm going to run away."

"O, Louis."

"Yes, I'm going to find my mother and father."

"Why don't you write to them to come take you away?"

"I have asked them, but they wrote back that this was the best place for me, and that I must stay, and I won't—I won't."

"Please stay," pleaded Edna. "Just stand it a little while longer. I'm so afraid you'll get into a herd of cattle out on the prairies where they have whole stampedes, and you might get caught by the Indians, and I'd never see you again," and Edna's eyes filled at the possibility.

"Ho! no fear of that. I'd skulk as well as the best of them, and I'd keep out of the way of the cattle. I might stop over night with some of the cowboys, but I wouldn't stay," replied Louis, with a very dim idea of what he might have to encounter.

"Well, anyhow, it wouldn't be right," replied Edna.

"I'd like to know why; it isn't as if I were running away *from* my father and mother. I'm going to run *to* them; that makes all the difference."

But Louis had talked so before, and Edna did not take it very much to heart, especially as just about that time came an invitation from Agnes Evans which Uncle Justus accepted for Edna without consulting anyone.

Miss Evans asked if Edna might be allowed to spend Saturday and Sunday in the country. The girl had taken quite a fancy to the child, and had won her confidence so that nowadays Miss Agnes was consulted upon all points, and although Aunt Elizabeth frowned upon the decision, Uncle Justus would not allow it to be changed, and so Edna set out very gayly, and thought nothing could be more delightful than to spend this time with her beloved friend.

"You know," said Agnes, "I have a little sister, so I am sure we can make you have a good time. Do you like the country?"

"O, I like it much better than the city," was the reply. "I live in a half-and-half country place. We have chickens and a cow. O, it has been so long since I saw a real chicken."

Miss Agnes laughed. "Where did you see any make-believe ones?"

Edna laughed, too. "O, I mean live running-about chickens. I am a little afraid of cows. Ours hasn't any horns; it is the horny kind I am afraid of."

They were then on their way to the pretty country home in which Miss Evans lived. She spent her time during the week at a married sister's, in order to attend Professor Horner's school, but she always went home on Friday afternoons, returning Monday.

It was a mild day in March when the spring seemed quite near, although snow and frost might still be expected. At the station a carriage met them, and they were driven about half a mile to where a low, old-fashioned house stood. Two great cedar trees stood, one on each side the walk which led up to the house, and which was bordered by a box hedge so high that Edna could not see over it. A little girl, a trifle younger than Edna, came dancing down to meet them. She had yellow curly hair and big blue eyes. Edna thought her very pretty and was ready at once to make friends with her.



DOROTHY.

"Take Edna up to your room, Dorothy," said Miss Agnes. "You are to be roommates, you know. Show her your dolls, and make her at home," and Edna followed her new acquaintance up the broad staircase, feeling that this was much more like being at home.

"She is a dear little child," Agnes said to her mother, "and I am sure is often homesick, and longs for her own little playmates."

"You must bring her out often," replied motherly Mrs. Evans. "I can imagine how glad I should be to have some one take a little notice of Dorothy if she were away from home."

"How long are you going to stay?" asked Dorothy, not meaning to be rude, but like most children, wanting to crowd all she could into the time.

"Till Monday evening," answered Edna. But it was not on the next Monday nor the one following that which found Edna back again in the city.

Chapter X

MORE SURPRISES.

"To-morrow," said Dorothy, "we will have a good time. We can play the whole day long."

"That will be so nice," returned Edna, with a little sigh of content; "I just love to play with dolls—don't you? I believe if I had a hundred dolls I should love every one."

"I don't know about a hundred dolls," replied Dorothy; "but I know I could love twenty-five. I am going to hunt up all I have—broken ones and all. We'll get Agnes to help us mend them; then to-morrow we can divide them, and you can have half while you are here," said the little girl, generously.

So a delightful morning it was—choosing dolls, dressing them, playing party, and all done in such a merry humor that Mrs. Evans and Agnes, sitting in the room opposite the nursery, often smiled to hear peals of laughter.

"Those children are having a good time," remarked Mrs. Evans; "there has been nothing but peace between them."

"I thought they would suit one another," returned Agnes.

"I think I shall send them over to Mrs. MacDonald's this afternoon," Mrs. Evans went on. "Edna will like the walk, and I promised to let Mrs. MacDonald know about some flower bulbs."

Therefore, after an early dinner, the two little girls set out to take a walk over the country road to this neighbor's.

Mrs. MacDonald was a widow, who lived all alone in a big house, substantially built of gray stone. She had once been a dressmaker, had married when no longer young a man of wealth, who died a few years after their marriage, leaving her very well off. She had no children, was a little peculiar, but a thoroughly good woman, and a neighbor whom Mrs. Evans much esteemed. She was very fond of Dorothy, and met the little girls very cordially.

"Bless my little Goldilocks," she said, in greeting; "and who is this?"

"This is Edna Conway," Dorothy informed her. "She is making me a visit. O, Mrs. MacDonald, may

I show her the greenhouse?"

"To be sure you may; but you must be hungry after your long walk. Go ask Lizzie to get you some doughnuts. You know where to find her."

Edna did not know whether or not to follow her friend, but thought it would be more polite to sit with her hostess. Mrs. MacDonald had nothing to say for a while, and Edna was puzzling her brain as to what suitable remark she could make, when Mrs. MacDonald surprised her by saying:

"How should you like to come here and be my little girl?"

This was a difficult question to answer, but Edna got through bravely by saying, "If I didn't have any mamma and papa of my own I should like it very much, 'cause it is very pretty here, and I'd like to be near Dorothy, and—" she added, timidly, "you look like a very good lady." She would like to have said, "You are a very pretty lady," but Mrs. MacDonald was not handsome.

A hearty laugh was the little girl's reply.

"Well, dear," was then made answer, "I'll not rob your father and mother of such a bonny little lass, if it is too big a place for one lonely old woman to have to herself."

"Are you lonely?" asked Edna, with much sympathy in her tones. She jumped down from her chair and came closer. A bright idea had occurred to her. "I know a little girl that wants very much to be 'dopted," she said, earnestly.

"You do? Tell me about her."

So Edna began a story which Dorothy's reappearance did not interrupt, so interested were both herself and her listener.

"You see," said Edna, in conclusion, folding her little, warm hands very closely, as was her fashion when much interested. "You see, Maggie doesn't have a chance to be 'dopted like the littler girls, 'cause people like the baby ones best, though if I were a grown-up lady like you I'd 'dopt Maggie," she concluded.

At this moment Lizzie made her appearance with the plate of doughnuts. She was a middle-aged woman, with rather a sad face, though a kindly one.

"What is Maggie's last name?" asked Mrs. MacDonald.

"Her name is Maggie Horn."

Lizzie, putting down the plate, turned with a look of surprise to Edna. "What Maggie Horn?" she asked. "What about her?"

"Why, do you know my Maggie?" asked Edna.

"I know a Maggie Horn," and she turned to Mrs. MacDonald. "Excuse me, ma'am, but my breath was quite taken away by hearing the young lady speak of a Maggie Horn."

"That is all right, Lizzie. Perhaps you can tell us something of the little girl who has been treated unkindly," said Mrs. MacDonald. "I am interested in Edna's story of her."

"Well, ma'am, the little child that I used to know was left quite alone by a poor lady who died in the house where I lodged. She had been quite well to-do in her day—a milliner, ma'am, and a good one, I take it—but she married a bad man, who went through with her bit of a fortune and then went on, leaving her with this one child. The trouble, and all, ma'am, wore on her, and with weak lungs, she grew worse and worse, poorer and poorer, though always proud, ma'am, and most a respectable lady, with a good education. She died when the little one was three years old, and left the child with me. But, as you know, ma'am, I had my own troubles; and when a family by the name of Hawkins moved into the street, as wanted a bit of a girl to give an eye to the baby, I thought it was a chance for Maggie to begin to make her living. Indeed, ma'am, I didn't mean to turn her off to be ill-treated, but I thought it was none too soon for her to begin to look out for herself. She was eight years old."

"Why, you must be Mrs. Ryan," exclaimed Edna, putting this and that together, "and you were good to Maggie. She was, Maggie told me so," she continued, turning to Mrs. MacDonald.

"It was a sorry day I parted from her," said Lizzie: "but, ma'am, I had my own flesh and blood to look after, and my husband's funeral and doctor's bills to stand, and so—I did my best."

"You meant to do right, I have no doubt," said Mrs. MacDonald. "It was an error of judgment. Now, when the children have finished their doughnuts, I want you to tell John to show them the greenhouses."

Lizzie led the way, asking many questions about Maggie, and expressing her thankfulness that she was freed from an unhappy life.

The greenhouses were a delight to Edna. She was specially pleased to see ripe strawberries this early in the year, and gave the gardener a beaming smile when he told her to pick one for herself.

"I am going to carry it home to Miss Agnes," she declared.

"And I'll take mine to mamma," determined Dorothy, who had been allowed the same privilege.

Mrs. MacDonald had ordered the gardener to give them each a little bunch of violets, so they said their good-byes, much pleased with the visit.

"Wasn't it queer that I should have seen Mrs. Ryan?" said Edna. "I shall have so much to tell Maggie."

"I think it is funny for you to be friends with a little orphan asylum girl," returned Dorothy.

"Well, you see, she isn't zactly a orphan, 'cause they don't know whether she has a father or not, and then, you know, I feel so sorry for her."

"So do I," replied Dorothy. "I don't mean I wouldn't help her if I could, but I never knew anyone before who had a friend like that."

"O!" said Edna, suddenly, "my strawberry is getting so soft I shall have to eat it. I wish I had held it by the stem, instead of in my hand. Yours isn't a bit soft."

"Perhaps yours was the ripest. I'll eat mine, too, if you eat yours, and we can give mamma and sister the violets."

This was agreed upon, and the children disposed of the strawberries lingeringly.

Miss Agnes was lying on the lounge when they found her in the sitting-room.

"I have a bad headache," she told Edna. "Did you enjoy your walk?"



MISS AGNES.

"Yes," replied she; "but I'm awfully tired."

"Come cuddle up here by me," said Miss Agnes. "You have had such an exciting time I don't wonder you are tired. You must go to bed early."

Edna was quite ready to share with Dorothy the pretty little brass bedstead, but she did not lie awake long, and in the morning was very loath to move when Dorothy called her.

"How red your face is," said Dorothy, as Edna sat up. "You look sort of queer."

"I feel sort of queer," replied she, putting her head down on the pillow again.

Dorothy slipped out of bed, and ran into the next room, where her sister slept. At her gentle little shake Agnes turned over with a sigh.

"What is it?" she asked, sleepily.

"Why—" began Dorothy. "O, sister, your face is red, too."

"Is it? I feel headachy."

"You and Edna look just the same way," declared Dorothy. And sure enough, both showed well-developed cases of measles.

Edna was not very ill, but it was not considered safe for her to go back to the city for some time, much to Dorothy's delight.

Hearing of the two sick girls, Mrs. MacDonald came over and took Edna under her especial care. She was an excellent nurse, and made the little child as comfortable as a tender mother could. Then when Edna was able to be up, and Mrs. MacDonald was no longer needed, every day came fruit or flowers from the kind woman.

One day Edna was much surprised by a visit from Uncle Justus. Two whole weeks since she had seen him; and he brought her—who would have thought it!—he brought Edna's doll, Ada, with him.

"Why, Uncle Justus," said Edna, looking at her doll with pleased eyes. "How did you happen to know that I wanted to see Ada so much?"

"I did not know; I only thought that a little girl who was so fond of her doll would be very likely to be glad to see it. When are we going to have you back again?"

"Next week," replied Mrs. Evans. "We cannot let her go till then. I am afraid that Dorothy will be very disconsolate at the loss of her little friend. They have had such good times together."

"I am afraid Edna will be very far behind her classes," said Uncle Justus, "and will have to study hard to make up for lost time."

Having seen Uncle Justus, and heard all the news, Edna felt that she should like to stay on indefinitely. It was very nice to be just sick enough to be considered, and to have good things to eat; to have such cosy little meals with Miss Agnes, before either of them were well enough to go down stairs; to receive from Mrs. MacDonald every day some dainty, and to have Mrs. Evans appear every evening with a delightful story book from which she would read aloud. Then it was pleasant to be thrown with such a bright companion as Dorothy, who was always ready to devise some new play or to shake out a bag of pretty pieces for doll clothes. Altogether, Edna thought herself very fortunate to have fallen into such good hands.

"It is almost like being at home," she said. "I wish you knew my mamma, Mrs. Evans."

"It will not be very long before you see her, will it?" asked Mrs. Evans, stooping to tuck in a shawl around the child.

"Not till May," replied Edna; "I s'pose mamma will stay till then."

"Well, perhaps you will come back next year, and then we shall see more of you."

Edna looked thoughtful. She knew there had been some talk of her returning another year. She loved all these friends, but she was still quite sure that home was best. Mrs. Evans' speech made her a little homesick. She wanted her mamma. To be sick without any mother at hand seemed a very unnatural thing. She was a little tired, perhaps. She would try to go to sleep.

She dozed off just as Dorothy came tiptoeing into the room. There was a look of pleased excitement upon her face, and she fidgeted about till Edna awoke from her little nap.

"Did I wake you?" she asked, contritely. "O, Edna, I know such a splendid something."

"What?" asked Edna, raising herself on her elbow.

"I can't tell you just now. You'll know pretty soon. O, you'll be so glad."

"I think you might tell me," returned Edna, a little peevishly.

"Don't be cross," said Dorothy, winningly. "I had to promise not to tell; but I did want you to expect something awfully nice."

"When shall I know?"

"To-morrow."

"O, I know what it is. I'm going to take a drive. Your mamma told me."

"That's not all," replied Dorothy, gleefully.

"I can hardly keep from telling, so please don't ask me. Here comes your supper—Mrs. MacDonald has sent you some lovely jelly."

Several times before bedtime Dorothy almost let out the secret, but Edna never suspected, so when the next day the carriage stood waiting to take her to drive she did not in the least know where they were going, nor why.

Chapter XI

ADOPTED.

As the carriage turned into the driveway which led up to Mrs. MacDonald's house, Edna exclaimed, "O, I know the s'prise! We are going to see Mrs. MacDonald."

Dorothy clapped her two hands over her mouth as if to keep in the secret that trembled upon her lips. Then she looked up at her mother, repressing a little chuckle.

"Yes, we are going to Mrs. MacDonald's," said Mrs. Evans, smiling.

They were ushered into the cosy library, where an open wood fire was blazing. Some one was curled up in a big chair before the fire—a little girl with curly auburn locks falling about her face; she wore a soft cashmere frock, and was a very dainty-looking little maid. She glanced up quickly as the visitors entered the room. Then a bright smile broke over her face, and she ran forward to meet them.

"Why," exclaimed Edna, "it's Maggie! Maggie Horn!"

"No," and the auburn locks shook a decided negative; "no, it isn't Maggie Horn; it's Margaret MacDonald! O, Edna, I'm 'dopted!"

Edna danced up and down in sheer delight, and Dorothy followed suit. Then Edna gave Maggie a great hugging. "Tell me all about it," she said. "How did it happen? O, Dorothy, this is the most delicious secret that ever was. How did you keep it?"

Mrs. Evans left the children in order to find Mrs. MacDonald, who was in the conservatory, and Maggie began:

"Well," she said, smoothing down her frock, and taking a long breath, "I was in the schoolroom, you know, when Miss Barnes was called out to see a lady, and after a while she came back and said some one wanted to see me. I thought it was my beautiful Mrs. Ramsey, so I was very glad; but it wasn't Mrs. Ramsey at all, it was a lady I had never seen before. She looked at me very hard, and asked me a lot of questions, all about my mother and lots of things; and Miss Barnes told me to bring my Bible that belonged to my mother and show it to the lady, and when she saw my mother's name, 'Agnes Wallace, from her loving mother, Margaret Wallace, Glasgow, Scotland,' she said, 'Why, she has my name, Margaret, and she has Scotch blood in her, the same as I and my husband. She shall be my own little lassie!' That was what my mother called me, Mrs. Ryan used to say, and it sounded so natural. So she told me her name was Mrs. MacDonald, and asked me if I would like to be her own little girl, and—O, Edna! I was so glad. And that was three days ago. And O, it was like a dream, for when I got here who should run and meet me but dear old Mrs. Ryan. She told me my father died just after my mother did, and that nobody had a claim on me, so I could be Margaret MacDonald forever and ever."

"Well, chatterboxes," here a voice interrupted, "have you had your talk out? We must be going," and Mrs. Evans, with Mrs. MacDonald, entered the room.

Edna ran toward the latter. "O, Mrs. MacDonald," she cried, "I do want to kiss you. You won't be lonely any more, will you?"

"No, I think not," replied Mrs. MacDonald, "and I don't want my little daughter to be. So Mrs. Evans has promised that you and Dorothy shall spend day after to-morrow with us."

This was a delightful prospect, and Edna declared that the drive and the pleasure of seeing Maggie had made her feel entirely well.

"I can't get over it," she said. "To think of Maggie's living in that dear old house, and having that great big garden to play in and being just like any nice little girl. O, it is just too lovely for anything."

That was a happy day which the three little girls spent together. Margaret—as the two others delighted to call her—brought out the doll which had been awarded her at the fair, to be displayed to Dorothy's interested eyes.

"I must tell Miss Martin. She will be so glad," said Edna. "And O, Margaret, you must have Moggins. I shall have to send him out to you;" but there was a tinge of regret in her tone.

"Will Mrs. MacDonald let you keep him?" asked Dorothy, turning to Margaret.

"I'll go and ask her," decided Edna, and straightway took herself to Mrs. MacDonald, and was not long in winning her consent. But Margaret was not willing to rob her friend at once of such an amusing companion as Moggins. "Wait till you go home," she said, "and then you will not miss him." And Edna, although she protested, was secretly glad when this was decided upon.



A pretty little room had been prepared for Margaret to use as her very own. Mrs. MacDonald believed in substantials, and did not indulge in much ornament. She was extremely fond of flowers, and her greenhouse was her greatest luxury. The house in which she lived was large, old-fashioned, and exceedingly comfortable, but was not as tasteful in its appointments as that of Mrs. Evans, "I am a plain woman," said Mrs. MacDonald to Mrs. Evans, "and I'm not given to fallals, I like my flowers and my book; and now my little daughter suits me much better than if she were a beauty."

"She has a nice, sensible, interesting face," returned Mrs. Evans.

"And, please God, she shall be a nice, sensible, interesting woman," replied Mrs. MacDonald, "and I hope a contented one. It's just wonderful what one little child can do. I'm thinking, Mrs. Evans, of that little child Edna. She has brought gladness to more hearts than one by the loving little spirit in her."

"She's a dear little body," replied Mrs. Evans, "She always makes the best of things; her little cheery ways are good to see, and are a lesson to us older growlers."

"I think my Margaret is going to be much the same," said Mrs. MacDonald. "It's no wonder they took to each other. When poor little Margaret has forgotten how ill a world she lived in, I think she'll brighten many a life by her own content."

Meanwhile the children thus discussed were making the most of their opportunities, for the day was at hand when Edna must return to the city. It must be confessed that all these good times had rather spoiled the little girl for the taking up of her life at school. But she was very brave about it, and, indeed, rather reproached herself for having any regrets at all in leaving these pleasant friends. Then she began to wonder about Louis, feeling quite selfish at having been too much taken up in the affairs which had lately interested her to think of how he might be faring, and she set out with a serious mind for her journey home.

"We will stop at the post-office and see if there are any letters," said Mr. Evans, who had taken the little girl under his protection. "The train will not be due for some minutes."

And Edna stood on the platform until he should return.

"I did find a letter for you," he said, as he joined her, and she was handed an envelope addressed in Louis' schoolboy hand.

The train was now in sight, and, after establishing the little girl in a seat by the window, Mr. Evans left her for a few minutes and Edna opened her letter.

It was dated a day or two earlier. "Dear Edna," it read, "I am going to run away. Don't tell anyone. I know you won't go back on me. I am going to my father and mother in Pasadena.

Affectionately, Louis"

A distressed little child it was who turned the letter over and over, helplessly. She had been

having such a good time; all unhappy things had been smoothed away from her, and it seemed as if this going back became suddenly more dreadful than she could possibly have expected. She was very quiet during the short trip, once in a while casting furtive glances at Mr. Evans, who, absorbed in his newspaper, did no more than address a word or two to her. He set her down at her uncle's door, bidding her good-by pleasantly, and telling her that they should hope to see her in the country often.

The latch of the door being up, Edna went in, feeling very heavy-hearted.

It was early on Saturday afternoon, the house was very quiet; there was no one in the sitting-room and Edna went through the dining-room and on to where she heard voices.

Ellen in a freshly scoured kitchen was chatting with a friend while she set things to rights. She turned with an exclamation at the sight of Edna.

"Bless the choild!" she cried. "Comin' in like a bit of a ghost! It's good to see ye, darlint. An' are ye well again? Let me see. Thim cheeks bid to be a bit more rosy."

"Where is uncle?" asked Edna.

"Sure the two of thim is after foll'in' Masther Louis."

"And Louis?" Edna's lip quivered. She hoped against hope.

"Hear now; he's gone, av coorse."

"When did he go?" asked Edna, her voice shaking.

"Poor dear; don't mourn; to be sure ye'll be missin' him. He went to-day. Let Ellen take off your wrap, and thin ye can go up and see how nate an' nice yer room looks," and Ellen turned to continue an exciting bit of gossip for her friend's benefit.

Edna slowly went up stairs. She felt, O, so lonely, and such a weight as Louis' secret gave her. Ellen couldn't understand, and didn't seem to care. What should she do? If Louis' father and mother only knew, perhaps they could do something; grown people had so many ways of preventing mishaps; time and space were often no obstacles to them. Suppose Uncle Justus and Aunt Elizabeth should find him and bring him back. Edna's sympathies were divided. She knew her cousin would be punished, and yet she knew the others would be troubled sorely if he did not return.

She sat on the top step of the stairs, thinking, thinking harder than ever before in her life. Louis had run away because he was unhappy. He had not let his parents know for fear they would tell his aunt and uncle to take measures to prevent it. But if they knew he had actually started, they would realize, maybe, how miserable he had been and would take his part. If she could only let them know. Why, she could, of course she could. She could send a telegram. She knew she could. There was a telegraph office down at the depot from which she had just come. Perhaps she could get there and back before her aunt and uncle returned, and no one would miss her.

Fired by this idea, she started out intent upon the business in hand. She had little difficulty in finding the place, and went timidly up to the desk.

She stood still, not knowing just what to do until the clerk, looking up, said, "Well, little girl, what is it?"

"I want to send a telegram;" she answered.

"Where?" asked the man, pulling a blank toward him.

Edna carefully unfolded the letter from Louis. "Pasadena, California," she said.

"Name?" continued the man.

"Mr. William Morrison."

"Well, what is the message?"

Edna looked doubtfully at him.

"Have you forgotten it?" he asked.

"No, but I—but I—"

"Well, then, out with it." The man was a trifle impatient.

"I think I had just better say Louis has runned away."

The man looked at her a moment, and a smile came over his face. "O, you are sending it yourself, are you?" he said.

Edna nodded.

"Do you want to pay for it, or shall it paid at the other end?"

Here was another dilemma; but Edna concluded that since the contents of her little purse might not cover the expense, it would best be paid for at Pasadena. Then having asked her name, the

man told her it was all right, and she left with a sense of relief.

She was making her way home again as fast as possible, when suddenly she stood still with terror, for coming up the street, directly toward her, was a herd of Texas cattle on their way to the stock yards.

If there was anything that Edna feared, it was these creatures; their wide-spreading horns seemed to menace her even a block away, and as the foremost one was quite near, she turned in a perfect agony of fear and went tumbling pell mell up the first high flight of steps which she happened to see. It seemed to her that she would never be able to get out of the way of those dreadful horns, and the rushing sound of hoofs and the bellowings which were issuing from the creatures appeared to surround her completely.

How she reached the top step she hardly knew, but, scrambling, falling, in her haste she gained her place of safety, sprawling flat on her face as she did so.

Chapter XII

THE RUNAWAY.

Meanwhile Uncle Justus had returned and was told by Ellen that Edna had arrived.

A pleased look came into Professor Horner's face. "Send her to me, Ellen," he said, and Ellen hastened up stairs to do his bidding. Failing to find the child in her room, she hunted high and low, but no Edna, and she returned to Professor Horner in perplexity.

"Shure, sor, I've looked the house over, an' the choild is nowhere at all, at all," she informed him.

Uncle Justus looked annoyed. "Some one should have been here when she came," he said to himself. "Perhaps she went to the candy shop to spend some pennies; no doubt that is it. She will be here in a few moments;" and he settled himself comfortably.

But the time passed and Edna did not appear. Professor Horner walked the floor thoughtfully, then putting on his hat and coat he went out, first to the candy shop, where nothing was learned of Edna, then to the different houses in the neighborhood in which the little girl's schoolmates might be found, but no one had seen the child, and Uncle Justus returned home to find that his wife had arrived.

She, too, looked anxious as her husband appeared with no little niece. "Edna is an obedient child," she said, "and she is not prone to get into serious mischief, but—"

"That is why I am the more anxious," replied Uncle Justus.

"I was about to say that this influence, under which she has been, may have spoiled her," continued Aunt Elizabeth, remembering that it was at her husband's suggestion that the visit to the country was made.

Uncle Justus frowned. "That is not likely; and if it were, what has it to do with the case?"

"She may have taken a fancy to go back there."

Uncle Justus caught at the suggestion. He rose to his feet.

"Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Horner. "I am going to see if she has gone back;" and he was soon on his way to Mr. Evans' office. That gentleman insisted on making the journey with the perturbed professor, and the two set out together. But on arriving they found only the family, and the situation grew more and more perplexing. "I am sure Edna is too conscientious to start back here without leave," said Mrs. Evans. "She talked very cheerfully of her return."

"I am so afraid she is run over by a trolley car," said Agnes, in distress.

"Or maybe she is lost and will be out in the dark night all alone," wept Dorothy. "O, papa, do try and find her." And the two men returned to the city together.

No news at police stations of a lost or injured child, and to the railway depots as a last resource they betook themselves. As Uncle Justus was making his inquiries some one stood by listening. It was one of the colored porters.

"'Scuse me, sah," he said, "but I b'leaves I seen de little lady you all's inquirn' fo'. I 'members her on account of de 'casion of a accident when she was on boa'd our train along o' her pa. I reckleck she went to de telegraph office dis afternoon. I were gwine to call myse'f to her remembers, but she slip out whilst I were busy, sah."

Yes, the man at the telegraph office did remember her. "A little girl," he said, "yes, sir, wore a plain frock and a big hat. Yes, she came here and got us to send a message."

"What was it?" asked Uncle Justus, eagerly. The man smiled. "As near as I can recollect, it was, 'Louis has runned away.' It was sent to Mr. William Morrison, Pasadena, California."

Uncle Justus looked puzzled. "I cannot understand why the message was sent," he said, and after some further questions he concluded to return home.

Meanwhile how fared it with Edna? At the instant that she fell upon the stone step, in her flight from the cattle, the door opened and she was lifted to her feet by a pleasant-looking boy, who, followed by another, came out of the house.

"Why, little girl," said the boy who gave her his help, "you've cut your lip; it is all bleeding. Did you fall down? That is too bad." And he began tenderly to wipe off the stains of blood. "Come in and let mother wash it off," he continued. "You call mother, Steve," he said to the other boy, and Edna was drawn into the house whether or no.

Some one came swiftly down the hall. "What is the matter, Roger?" a voice asked. "Why, I know this little girl. I have wondered for a long time if I should see her again. It is little Edna Conway;" and, looking up, Edna recognized her kind travelling companion, Mrs. Porter.

"And you never came to see me," continued the lady, reproachfully. "I had quite given you up, but 'better late than never,' and now that I have you I mean to have a good long visit to make up for your not coming before."

"I couldn't come before," replied Edna; "my aunt doesn't allow me to visit." She looked up wistfully, not liking to explain that this appearance of herself was purely accidental. "But I'm very, very glad to see you," she added.

Mrs. Porter was busy washing off the stain. "It isn't very much of a cut," she said. "I do not think it will trouble you much."

"I was so afraid of the cows," replied Edna, "and I ran up the steps as hard as I could scramble out of the way."

"They are rather terrifying, I admit. How came your aunt to allow you away down here alone, when she is so particular?" asked Mrs. Porter.

Edna was silent, and stood with downcast eyes. Then she looked up, saying, candidly, "My aunt didn't have anything to say about it. I had to come. I had to, indeed I did, but I'd rather not tell why."

Mrs. Porter looked down into the clear eyes, but they answered her look too innocently for her to suspect any wrong motive. So she smiled and kissed her little visitor. "Never mind, then," she replied. "Now you are here you must stay and take tea with us. I want you to know my boys. You look rather pale. Have you been sick?"

"I've had the measles. But I must go home, Mrs. Porter. They will be worried about me."

"No, they won't. I will send Steve with a note right away. I will tell your aunt that you tumbled up my steps, and that I am going to keep you a while. I will make it all right."

And this was done forthwith. There was no resisting Mrs. Porter, but yet Edna had a little uneasy feeling at heart that it was not just right for her to remain, although she felt tired and her head ached.

Stephen was dispatched with the note, and soon returned, saying he had delivered it safely into Ellen's hands. And the two boys proceeded to amuse their little visitor with as much gallantry as possible. Roger brought out his Punch and Judy figures. Stephen displayed his electric motor and his gold-fish; therefore the afternoon passed very quickly, and Edna forgot her fright and her troubles in all the new and interesting games the boys had to show.

"I wish we had a little sister," said Roger.

"And I wish my two brothers were here," returned Edna.

"We'll be your two brothers while you are here," said Stephen.

Edna laughed. "Then I'll have to call you Frank and Charlie," and she proceeded to decide which should be which, and to tell the boys of her brothers' pranks and funny sayings.

This was after tea, when the three were having a fine time over a game of "Parchesi," sitting around a big table.

Presently the bell rang; there were voices in the hall—questions and answers—and Mrs. Porter was summoned; then, in another minute, in walked Uncle Justus.

A look at his face told Edna something of his anxiety; but he held out his hand, and she went straight to him, where he kept her close, as if he could not let her go.

"We thought you were lost," he said, in trembling tones; "I have been looking for you since early in the day."

"O," cried Edna, "Uncle Justus, I am so sorry."

"Didn't Mrs. Horner get my note?" asked Mrs. Porter.

"That she didn't receive it made the trouble," replied Uncle Justus. "The maid took the note and put it on the hall table, where it was not discovered until an hour ago, Ellen having forgotten it

and not connecting it with Edna. In the meantime I have been searching everywhere."

"It is my fault," cried Mrs. Porter; "I should not have kept Edna this time, but I was so glad to see her, and she had hurt herself; besides, she looked so pale and tired."

"Where were you going when you started down town?" asked Uncle Justus.

"O," Edna said, "Uncle Justus, I felt so dreadfully about Louis. I couldn't stand it."

"Well, my child, I don't understand why you should; but we had better go straight home now, and relieve the minds of your friends."

Edna did not talk much on the way home, but she held Uncle Justus' hand very tightly. "Was I very bad?" once she asked, softly.

Uncle Justus, for answer, gave her hand a little squeeze, and she was satisfied. She did not ask about Louis, for she thought her uncle had been troubled enough. She felt that somewhere and somehow she had made a mistake.

"I don't believe little girls know just what is right to do without asking grown people," she said, as they left the car and neared home. "It's awfully hard to do right every time by yourself, isn't it, Uncle Justus?"

"Yes; it is best to ask advice," he replied, as he opened the front door with his latch-key.

Edna rushed in. The sitting-room seemed full of people. Who were they all? Why, there was Louis—not run away at all, but safe and sound, with an arm fondly around his mother's neck. And there—no, it could not be! There were her own father and mother. Edna gave one scream of joy—ignoring Aunt Elizabeth, whom she had not seen for three weeks, scarcely seeing Louis or anyone, but throwing herself into the dear arms for which she had so often longed during these last months.

"So, my little runaway, we have you safe and sound," said her father.

Edna looked around bewildered. She a little runaway! Did he mean her? Why, it was Louis who ran away. "I didn't run away," she said, indignantly; "it was Louis," and then everybody laughed—why, she didn't know.

"Now, give an account of yourself," said Mr. Conway. "Who told you Louis had gone away?"

"Why, Ellen did," replied Edna.

"So I had gone!" piped up Louis; "I went with papa and mamma to the hotel. They came this morning, and uncle and aunt came to take dinner with us there."

"O," exclaimed Edna, "and I sent word by the telegraph that you had runned away."

"What made you think that?" asked Mrs. Conway.

Edna looked at Louis; he looked rather sheepish, but he was brave enough to help Edna out of the difficulty now that he had his father and mother at hand. "Why—I—I—wrote to Edna," he faltered; "I said I was going to run away, and—and—what did Ellen say?"

"She said—let me see—she—why I asked where you were, and she said you were gone, and, of course, I thought you had run away, and when she said aunt and uncle had followed you I thought it must be so, and I was in such trouble I didn't know what to do 'cept to telegraph your father so he would get you, somehow; and, O, dear! I saw some dreadful cows, and I was so scared that I tumbled up the steps and Mrs. Porter's boys let me in. Then Mrs. Porter made me stay; and O, just think of it! I never knew my own papa and mamma were so near. Did you get my telegram?" she asked Mr. Morrison, innocently.

"No," he said, laughing, "it may be at the hotel now, if it was re-sent by my friends in Pasadena. You were a dear child to think of doing something for Louis, although it turned out to be such a time of trial."

"I think," said Mrs. Conway, "that Uncle Justus is the one who has had the hardest time. We knew Edna was safe as soon as we reached here, for then the note from Mrs. Porter had been found. Poor Ellen was so distressed at your loss that she never once thought of giving Aunt Elizabeth the note. You meant well, daughter, but you were too young to take matters into your own hands."

Then Mr. and Mrs. Morrison took their leave, and Louis went with them.

"I'm going home soon," he said to his cousin. "Say, Edna, I'm awfully sorry about all this fuss. It was all my fault, but I did mean to run away, only father and mother came."

"I'm very glad you didn't go," answered Edna.

It is very doubtful if Louis would have gone any great distance, even if he had started, although he stuck to it that the arrival of his parents alone prevented his making the venture.

"O, mamma! O, mamma! it is really you," said Edna, when her cousin had gone. "When am I going home with you?"

"In a few days," replied her mother.

Uncle Justus, looking at her, sighed.

"Don't you want to stay with us?" asked Aunt Elizabeth, as if she, too, felt that it would be hard to part.

With the dear mother-arms so near it was not easy to think of anyone else, but the feeling sorry for people was always ready to rise in Edna's heart, and she looked from one to the other. Poor Uncle Justus! she did not like to leave him, and even Aunt Elizabeth seemed more lovable when she considered the distance that would soon be between them.

"O," she cried, "I want you all!"

"Well," replied her father, cheerfully, "I don't know but what that can be managed. I have been thinking of a plan which we will talk over to-morrow. Just now it is high time for runaways to be in bed;" and with a kiss all around Edna said "Good-night."

Chapter XIII

PLEASANT CHANGES.

Edna stood at her high-up window fastening her frock and looking out at the scene before her. She saw the white sails in the far distance; the smoke of the train which wound its way along the outskirts of the city past the green meadows beyond; she counted over again the chimneys of the houses opposite.

To-morrow, and to-morrow—and still another to-morrow she would have her mother. It seemed to her that she was never so glad in her life. All the unhappy things seemed to have melted away like snow. Louis was safe; Maggie had a happy home; mamma and papa were with her, and soon she should see sister and the boys; and Edna gave a long sigh of content as she fastened her last button and turned to go down to breakfast.

"Now, mamma, what are we going to do?" she asked, when the meal was over.

"I have concluded not to let you return to school," mamma replied, smiling. "All this excitement has been too much for one little girl to stand, without lessons; besides, the measles do not leave one's eyes in the best condition, and we shall be going home in a day or two, so it is not worth while to begin for so short a time; so we will go shopping this morning."

Edna's face beamed. "O, mamma, then we can get sister's buckle, and take it to her. I never had a chance to go to many shops, because Aunt Elizabeth only deals at one or two places, and so I could not find the buckle I promised sister."

"Very well. Then I want to call upon Mrs. Porter and thank her for her kindness to my little girl, who has had so many rough places to go over."

Edna was thoughtful. "It has been very mixy up, hasn't it, mamma? So many things have happened. What made you come back a month sooner than you expected?"

"Because I was feeling so much better, and papa had business in the city. Should you like to live in the city, daughter?"

Edna laid her head on her mother's shoulder. "I should like to live anywhere that you are mamma; but I think it is nice out where Dorothy Evans and Maggie live. O, mamma, I have a whole bushel of things to tell you. I believe my tongue will wear out before I get through."



CELIA.

And truly, mamma told her before the day was over that her tongue must be "hung in the middle to wag at both ends." But what a delightful day it was! So many pretty things to see. Something to be chosen for the boys, and for Celia a buckle, just like Grace Neal's, which was found after some hunting.

"Mamma," said Edna, "I should like to get something for Ellen, she has been so good to me."

"Of course," replied mamma, "that must not be forgotten;" and material for a pretty frock was chosen.

"And, mamma," continued Edna, as with much satisfaction she saw the breadths measured off, "could I get some tiny little something for Uncle Justus?"

"And Aunt Elizabeth?" added mamma.

"Ye-es," said Edna, rather doubtfully; "but—but—"

"But what, dear?"

"I should like what we get for Uncle Justus to be the nicest."

Mrs. Conway smiled. "You love Uncle Justus, don't you, dear? He has always seemed so stern and distant I hardly fancied you would find the way to his heart."

"But, mamma," said Edna, sagely, "it is such a big heart when you do find your way there." A remark which mamma considered a very wise one for such a little girl to make.

"What should you like to get for Uncle Justus?" asked Mrs. Conway. "What very nice thing do you think he would fancy?"

Edna looked perplexed.

"How would a nice umbrella do?" her mother asked.

"He might lose it, and it would wear out. I want something that will not wear out."

"That is not easy to find, although a book comes near it. How would that do?"

Edna shook her head. That didn't seem to please her, and her eyes wandered around the shop in which they were. Suddenly she jumped down from the high stool upon which she had been sitting.

"I know," she exclaimed. "A clock—I'd like a clock, 'cause he'd have to wind it up, and it would remind him of me, and I'll tell him when it is ticking it says 'Ed-na, Ed-na,' just as if it were talking."

Mamma laughed, but thought it a very good choice. A pretty little memorandum tablet was then bought for Aunt Elizabeth, and the shopping for that day was finished.

"I am afraid we shall be too late for a noonday meal if we go back," said Mrs. Conway. "I told Aunt Elizabeth not to expect us, so we will take a luncheon downtown."

This was a very delightful experience, and one that had never come to Edna before; therefore she enjoyed her meal hugely.

"Now we must go to see Mrs. Porter," said mamma, and Edna was made quite happy by having her mother say that she quite agreed with her little daughter in thinking Mrs. Porter a very

charming woman.

"And, mamma, don't you think we ought to go to see Mr. and Mrs. Martin before we go home?" asked the little girl.

"To be sure, I want to meet all your friends, Mrs. Evans, Mrs. MacDonald, and all, but next we shall have to go to the hotel, where your Aunt Clara and Uncle William are."

"And Louis," added Edna.

"This is a jolly place," said Louis, when the two children were left alone. "I tell you I enjoyed my supper last night. No one said to me, 'Butter or molasses,'" and Louis' imitation of Aunt Elizabeth made Edna laugh.

"Now tell me," she said, settling herself in a big chair, "were you really going to run away? How was it?"

"Why," replied Louis, a little awkwardly, "I might have gone; but, you see, when I wrote to father and mother about not getting along well and all that, and when Uncle Justus wrote about that time, you know when the boys were there, and said I ought to be in a regular boys' school, where I'd have companions, they concluded they'd send me to a military school next year. I'd like that; I'll learn to drill and have a fine time, with boys to play with all the time, although," he added, seeing a little hurt look on Edna's face, "to tell you the truth, Edna, if it hadn't been for you I don't know how I should have managed; we did have some good times, and you made me ashamed of myself lots of times; so I didn't get into trouble near as often as I might have done if you hadn't been there; but while you were away I couldn't stand it, and I really did think I'd run away—I should have stopped on the way to say good-by to you, though—but when father and mother came I forgot all about everything, you see. I tell you, you are a brick, and stood up for me like a Trojan. I told father and mother all about it."

Praise like this was very sweet to Edna.

"You stood up for me when that boy, that Phil Blaney, was so dreadful," she made answer.

"Ho! that was nothing, I found out what a mean sort of a chap he was that day, and I've not liked him since. I like Charlie Stabler much better. Say, how will you like living here?"

"What do you mean? Am I really to come back? Did you hear mamma say so? And you will not be here. O, dear!"

"I heard some talk of you all coming here to live."

"That was what papa meant then. O, I wish I knew."

"He's in the other room now talking to my father. Let's go ask him," and the children ran tumultuously in to Mr. Conway.

"Well, I'm thinking of it," was his reply to their questioning. "It looks now as if my business would bring me here."

"And we'll really all come here to live?" cried Edna.

"Yes, I think so."

"O, then! O, papa! Couldn't we live in the country where Dorothy Evans lives? Mr. Evans comes to the city every day. It isn't far."

Mr. Conway looked at his wife. "That would not be a bad idea," he said.

"It would be an excellent one provided we can find the right place. I think it would be much better for the children," she replied.

So then and there it was arranged that a trip in that direction should be made the next day.

"Edna will be so happy to be near her friends," said Mrs. Conway to Mrs. Morrison; "although I do believe the child would try to be contented anywhere," she added.

"She has a very helpful spirit," returned Mrs. Morrison. "I don't know what Louis would have done without her. She has been much braver than he." An admission which, while perfectly true, Mrs. Conway thought was a very generous one for a mother to make.

"I can take Moggins to Margaret," said Edna, delightedly, on their way back to Aunt Elizabeth's; "and you can see all the people I like so much, mamma, my dear Miss Agnes, and all."

The gifts were duly presented, and Uncle Justus promised that the clock should say, "Ed-na, Ed-na" to him, and, many a time after, as he sat beside the fire in his easy chair, did the cheerful ticking remind him of the little loving child.

The expedition to the country was a great success. Moggins behaved beautifully, for he was curled up asleep in his basket most of the way. Margaret's delight on again having him was good to see. She was overjoyed at the possibility of having Edna for a neighbor, and Dorothy fairly screamed at the news.

"I know just the place to suit you," said Miss Agnes to Mrs. Conway. "It is about halfway between

here and the depot. You know that white house, Edna, with the vines over the porch and the big oak tree on the lawn; it is so pretty there in summer, and is very convenient to the station." And true enough it proved to suit exactly.

After this came the preparations for returning home. At first the question was raised as to whether or not Edna should be left with her aunt and uncle until after the removal, but the sight of the little, wistful, disappointed face went to the mother's heart, although Edna made no protest.

"We expect too much of the child," she said to her husband. "She has been more courageous than most children under many sore trials to a sensitive little heart; and she loves her pets, and has been separated from us all so long." Therefore, Edna was told she could pack up Ada's belongings and make ready for the return.

"We shall not be ready to remove for a couple of months," said mamma, "and you will have a good time running about for that length of time."

It was not hard to say good-by when there was such a near prospect of coming back, and even the parting with Louis was made easy because he was to spend part of the summer with his cousins.

"When we get to our new home we shall have such a good time," said Edna. "The Porter boys can play with our boys, and I can play with Dorothy and Margaret, and sister can have Miss Agnes, and O, it will be just splendid!"

It was very delightful to be at home again; to find everything looking just the same; to discover that Snowflake was nearly ready to hatch out a brood of chickens; that Mooly had a dear little calf; that the boys were as funny as ever; that sister was so, so glad to see the little traveler. And, of course, they were all ready to chatter and question and wonder over the events which had taken place and which were to take place. So the weeks went so quickly that it seemed no time before they were busy making preparations for going to their new home. By the end of the summer they were cozily settled in the white house, and had found corners for gardens and places for their pets. Uncle Justus made frequent trips to see them, and was consulted on such grave subjects as whether a gray kitten or a black one were the prettier, and what flowers would look best in a certain little garden bordered around with pebbles. He was taken to see Mrs. MacDonald, and actually seemed pleased to meet Moggins again—a fact which no one appeared to believe when Edna told it. But, then, no one understood Uncle Justus quite as well as this little niece of his.

Aunt Elizabeth is much more of a favorite than her husband with people generally; she is so bland and affable. She too enjoys an occasional trip to the country, and is always interested in telling Margaret how matters progress at the Home of the Friendless.

Later in the year three little girls, with the sister of one of them, started together to school, going to the city in the morning and returning when school was out; but during the winter months, when the days were shorter, they all remained under Uncle Justus's roof, from Monday until Friday, as Agnes had done—Agnes, who was then going to college. The Porter boys—nice little fellows—are great friends of Edna's brothers, and often come out to spend Saturday with Frank and Charlie. Louis sometimes comes for a holiday, and shows himself much more manly; he is gradually outgrowing his peevishness and selfishness, so that he bids fair to be a fine man.

The three little girls get along famously. It was whispered among the school children that Margaret was an "orphan asylum girl," and there were some who disdained her in consequence, but Edna's love and loyalty, with Dorothy's help, came to the rescue, and now Margaret MacDonald is one of the most popular girls in the school. She is so bright and amiable; moreover, the little romance about her being lost and found gives a zest to the friendships she has formed.

Celia has her own friends, and is a great stronghold for the three little girls when matters go wrong with them, as they must sometimes do. She has never found the way to the heart of Uncle Justus as Edna has, but it is unlikely that any one can do that, for, although the little clock ticking away on the mantel often says "Ed-na, Ed-na" to Uncle Justus, it often speaks another name which he has given to his favorite, but which she has never heard—"Heart Content."

THE END.

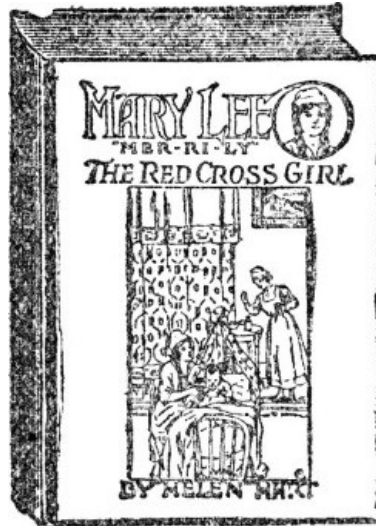
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