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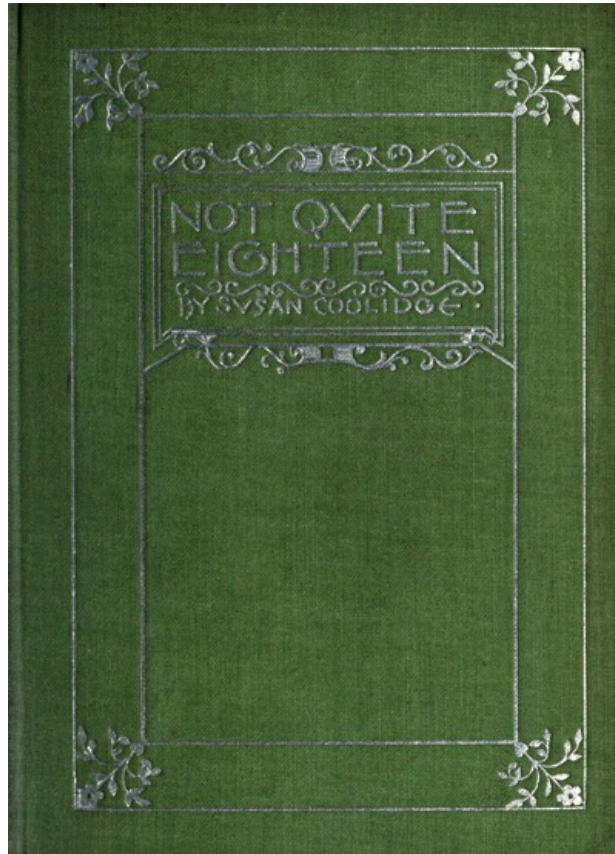
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NOT QUITE EIGHTEEN ***

NOT QUITE EIGHTEEN





The fox stared at her, and she stared back at the fox.—[PAGE 16.](#)

NOT QUITE EIGHTEEN.

By SUSAN COOLIDGE,

AUTHOR OF "WHAT KATY DID," "THE NEW YEAR'S BARGAIN,"
"THE BARBERRY BUSH," "A GUERNSEY LILY,"
"IN THE HIGH VALLEY," ETC.

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HOW BUNNY BROUGHT GOOD LUCK.



T was Midsummer's Day, that delightful point toward which the whole year climbs, and from which it slips off like an ebbing wave in the direction of the distant winter. No wonder that superstitious people in old times gave this day to the fairies, for it is the most beautiful day of all. The world seems full of bird-songs, sunshine, and flower-smells then; storm and sorrow appear impossible things; the barest and ugliest spot takes on a brief charm and, for the moment, seems lovely and desirable.

"That's a picturesque old place," said a lady on the back seat of the big wagon in which Hiram Swift was taking his summer boarders to drive.

They were passing a low, wide farmhouse, gray from want of paint, with a shabby barn and sheds attached, all overarched by tall elms. The narrow hay-field and the vegetable-patch ended in a rocky hillside, with its steep ledges, overgrown and topped with tall pines and firs, which made a dense green background to the old buildings.

"I don't know about its being like a picter," said Hiram, dryly, as he flicked away a fly from the shoulder of his horse, "but it isn't much by way of a farm. That bit of hay-field is about all the land there is that's worth anything; the rest is all rock. I guess the Widow Gale doesn't take much comfort in its bein' picturesque. She'd be glad enough to have the land made flat, if she could."

"Oh, is that the Gale farm, where the silver-mine is said to be?"

"Yes, marm; at least, it's the farm where the man lived that, 'cordin' to what folks say, said he'd found a silver-mine. I don't take a great deal of stock in the story myself."

"A silver-mine! That sounds interesting," said a pretty girl on the front seat, who had been driving the horses half the way, aided and abetted by Hiram, with whom she was a prime favorite. "Tell me about it, Mr. Swift. Is it a story, and when did it all happen?"

"Well, I don't know as it ever did happen," responded the farmer, cautiously. "All I know for certain is, that my father used to tell a story that, before I was born (nigh on to sixty years ago, that must have been), Squire Asy Allen—that used to live up to that red house on North Street, where you bought the crockery mug, you know, Miss Rose—come up one day in a great hurry to catch the stage, with a lump of rock tied in his handkerchief. Old Roger Gale had found it, he said, and they thought it was silver ore; and the Squire was a-takin' it down to New Haven to get it analyzed. My father, he saw the rock, but he didn't think much of it from the looks, till the Squire got back ten days afterward and said the New Haven professor pronounced it silver, sure enough, and a rich specimen; and any man who owned a mine of it had his fortune made, he said. Then, of course, the township got excited, and everybody talked silver, and there was a great to-do."

"And why didn't they go to work on the mine at once?" asked the pretty girl.

"Well, you see, unfortunately, no one knew where it was, and old Roger Gale had taken that particular day, of all others, to fall off his hay-riggin' and break his neck, and he hadn't happened to mention to any one before doing so where he found the rock! He was a close-mouthed old chap, Roger was. For ten years after that, folks that hadn't anything else to do went about hunting for the silver-mine, but they gradooally got tired, and now it's nothin' more than an old story. Does to amuse boarders with in the summer," concluded Mr. Swift, with a twinkle. "For my part, I don't believe there ever was a mine."

"But there was the piece of ore to prove it."

"Oh, that don't prove anything, because it got lost. No one knows what became of it. An' sixty years is long enough for a story to get exaggerated in."

"I don't see why there shouldn't be silver in Beulah township," remarked the lady on the back seat. "You have all kinds of other minerals here,—soapstone and mica and emery and tourmalines and beryls."

"Well, ma'am, I don't see nuther, unless, mebbe, it's the Lord's will there shouldn't be."

"It would be so interesting if the mine could be found!" said the pretty girl.

"It would be *so*, especially to the Gale family,—that is, if it was found on their land. The widow's a smart, capable woman, but it's as much as she can do, turn and twist how she may, to make both ends meet. And there's that boy of hers, a likely boy as ever you see, and just hungry for book-l'arnin', the minister says. The chance of an eddication would be just everything to him, and the widow can't give him one."

"It's really a romance," said the pretty girl, carelessly, the wants and cravings of others slipping off her young sympathies easily.

Then the horses reached the top of the long hill they had been climbing, Hiram put on the brake, and they began to grind down a hill equally long, with a soft panorama of plummy tree-clad summits before them, shimmering in the June sunshine. Drives in Beulah township were apt to be rather perpendicular, however you took them.

Some one, high up on the hill behind the farmhouse, heard the clank of the brakes, and lifted up her head to listen. It was Hester Gale,—a brown little girl, with quick dark eyes, and a mane of curly chestnut hair, only too apt to get into tangles. She was just eight years old, and to her the old farmstead, which the neighbors scorned as worthless, was a sort of enchanted land, full of delights and surprises,—hiding-places which no one but herself knew, rocks and thickets where she was sure real fairies dwelt, and cubby-houses sacred to the use of "Bunny," who was her sole playmate and companion, and the confidant to whom she told all her plans and secrets.

Bunny was a doll,—an old-fashioned doll, carved out of a solid piece of hickory-wood, with a stern expression of face, and a perfectly unyielding figure; but a doll whom Hester loved above all things. Her mother and her mother's mother had played with Bunny, but this only made her the dearer.

The two sat together between the gnarled roots of an old spruce which grew near the edge of a steep little cliff. It was one of the loneliest parts of the rocky hillside, and the hardest to get at. Hester liked it better than any of her other hiding-places, because no one but herself ever came there.

Bunny lay in her lap, and Hester was in the middle of a story, when she stopped to listen to the wagon grinding down-hill.

"So the little chicken said, 'Peep! Peep!' and started off to see what the big yellow fox was like," she went on. "That was a silly thing for her to do, wasn't it, Bunny? because foxes aren't a bit nice to chickens. But the little chicken didn't know any better, and she wouldn't listen to the old hens when they told her how foolish she was. That was wrong, because it's naughty to dis—dis—apute your elders, mother says; children that do are almost always sorry afterward.

"Well, she hadn't gone far before she heard a rustle in the bushes on one side. She thought it was the fox, and then she *did* feel frightened, you'd better believe, and all the things she meant to say to him went straight out of her head. But it wasn't the fox that time; it was a teeny-weeny little striped squirrel, and he just said, 'It's a sightly day, isn't it?' and, without waiting for an answer, ran up a tree. So the chicken didn't mind *him* a bit.

"Then, by and by, when she had gone a long way farther off from home, she heard another rustle. It was just like—Oh, what's that, Bunny?"

Hester stopped short, and I am sorry to say that Bunny never heard the end of the chicken story, for the rustle resolved itself into—what do you think?

It was a fox! A real fox!

There he stood on the hillside, gazing straight at Hester, with his yellow brush waving behind him, and his eyes looking as sharp as the row of gleaming teeth beneath them. Foxes were rare animals in the Beulah region. Hester had never seen one before; but she had seen the picture of a fox in one of Roger's books, so she knew what it was.

The fox stared at her, and she stared back at the fox. Then her heart melted with fear, like the heart of the little chicken, and she jumped to her feet, forgetting Bunny, who fell from her lap, and rolled unobserved over the edge of the cliff. The sudden movement startled the fox, and he disappeared into the bushes with a wave of his yellow brush; just how or where he went, Hester could not have told.

"How sorry Roger will be that he wasn't here to see him!" was her first thought. Her second was for Bunny. She turned, and stooped to pick up the doll—and lo! Bunny was not there.

High and low she searched, beneath grass tangles, under "juniper saucers," among the stems of the thickly massed blueberries and hardhacks, but nowhere was Bunny to be seen. She peered over the ledge, but nothing met her eyes below but a thick growth of blackish, stunted evergreens. This place "down below" had been a sort of terror to Hester's imagination always, as an entirely unknown and unexplored region; but in the cause of the beloved Bunny she was prepared to risk anything, and she bravely made ready to plunge into the depths.

It was not so easy to plunge, however. The cliff was ten or twelve feet in height where she stood, and ran for a considerable distance to right and left without getting lower. This way and that she quested, and at last found a crevice where it was possible to scramble down,—a steep little crevice, full of blackberry briars, which scratched her face and tore her frock. When at last she gained the lower bank, this further difficulty presented itself: she could not tell where she was. The evergreen thicket nearly met over her head, the branches got into her eyes, and buffeted and bewildered her. She could not make out the place where she had been sitting, and no signs of Bunny could be found. At last, breathless with exertion, tired, hot, and hopeless, she made her way out of the thicket, and went, crying, home to her mother.

She was still crying, and refusing to be comforted, when Roger came in from milking. He was sorry for Hester, but not so sorry as he would have been had his mind not been full of troubles of his own. He tried to console her with a vague promise of helping her to look for Bunny "some day when there wasn't so much to do." But this was cold comfort, and, in the end, Hester went to bed heartbroken, to sob herself to sleep.

"Mother," said Roger, after she had gone, "Jim Boies is going to his uncle's, in New Ipswich, in September, to do chores and help round a little, and to go all winter to the academy."

The New Ipswich Academy was quite a famous school then, and to go there was a great chance for a studious boy.

"That's a bit of good luck for Jim."

"Yes; first-rate."

"Not quite so first-rate for you."

"No" (gloomily). "I shall miss Jim. He's always been my best friend among the boys. But what makes me mad is that he doesn't care a bit about going. Mother, why doesn't good luck ever come to us Gales?"

"It was good luck for me when you came, Roger. I don't know how I should get along without you."

"I'd be worth a great deal more to you if I could get a chance at any sort of schooling. Doesn't it seem hard, Mother? There's Squire Dennis and Farmer Atwater, and half a dozen others in this township, who are all ready to send their boys to college, and the boys don't want to go! Bob

Dennis says that he'd far rather do teaming in the summer, and take the girls up to singing practice at the church, than go to all the Harvards and Yales in the world; and I, who'd give my head, almost, to go to college, can't! It doesn't seem half right, Mother."

"No, Roger, it doesn't; not a quarter. There are a good many things that don't seem right in this world, but I don't know who's to mend 'em. I can't. The only way is to dig along hard and do what's to be done as well as you can, whatever it is, and make the best of your 'musts.' There's always a 'must.' I suppose rich people have them as well as poor ones."

"Rich people's boys can go to college."

"Yes,—and mine can't. I'd sell all we've got to send you, Roger, since your heart is so set on it, but this poor little farm wouldn't be half enough, even if any one wanted to buy it, which isn't likely. It's no use talking about it, Roger; it only makes both of us feel bad.—Did you kill the 'broilers' for the hotel?" she asked with a sudden change of tone.

"No, not yet."

"Go and do it, then, right away. You'll have to carry them down early with the eggs. Four pairs, Roger. Chickens are the best crop we can raise on this farm."

"If we could find Great-uncle Roger's mine, we'd eat the chickens ourselves," said Roger, as he reluctantly turned to go.

"Yes, and if that apple-tree'd take to bearing gold apples, we wouldn't have to work at all. Hurry and do your chores before dark, Roger."

Mrs. Gale was a Spartan in her methods, but, for all that, she sighed a bitter sigh as Roger went out of the door.

"He's such a smart boy," she told herself, "there's nothing he couldn't do,—nothing, if he had a chance. I do call it hard. The folks who have plenty of money to do with have dull boys; and I, who've got a bright one, can't do anything for him! It seems as if things weren't justly arranged."

Hester spent all her spare time during the next week in searching for the lost Bunny. It rained hard one day, and all the following night; she could not sleep for fear that Bunny was getting wet, and looked so pale in the morning that her mother forbade her going to the hill.

"Your feet were sopping when you came in yesterday," she said; "and that's the second apron you've torn. You'll just have to let Bunny go, Hester; no two ways about it."

Then Hester moped and grieved and grew thin, and at last she fell ill. It was low fever, the doctor said. Several days went by, and she was no better. One noon, Roger came in from haying to find his mother with her eyes looking very much troubled. "Hester is light-headed," she said; "we must have the doctor again."

Roger went in to look at the child, who was lying in a little bedroom off the kitchen. The small, flushed face on the pillow did not light up at his approach. On the contrary, Hester's eyes, which were unnaturally big and bright, looked past and beyond him.

"Hessie, dear, don't you know Roger?"

"He said he'd find Bunny for me some day," muttered the little voice; "but he never did. Oh, I wish he would!—I wish he would! I do want her so much!" Then she rambled on about foxes, and the old spruce-tree, and the rocks,—always with the refrain, "I wish I had Bunny; I want her so much!"

"Mother, I do believe it's that wretched old doll she's fretted herself sick over," said Roger, going back into the kitchen. "Now, I'll tell you what! Mr. Hinsdale's going up to the town this noon, and he'll leave word for the doctor to come; and the minute I've swallowed my dinner, I'm going up to the hill to find Bunny. I don't believe Hessie'll get any better till she's found."

"Very well," said Mrs. Gale. "I suppose the hay'll be spoiled, but we've got to get Hessie cured at any price."

"Oh, I'll find the doll. I know about where Hessie was when she lost it. And the hay'll take no harm. I only got a quarter of the field cut, and it's good drying weather."

Roger made haste with his dinner. His conscience pricked him as he remembered his neglected promise and his indifference to Hester's griefs; he felt in haste to make amends. He went straight to the old spruce, which, he had gathered from Hester's rambling speech, was the scene of Bunny's disappearance. It was easily found, being the oldest and largest on the hillside.

Roger had brought a stout stick with him, and now, leaning over the cliff edge, he tried to poke with it in the branches below, while searching for the dolly. But the stick was not long enough, and slipped through his fingers, disappearing suddenly and completely through the evergreens.

"Hallo!" cried Roger. "There must be a hole there of some sort. Bunny's at the bottom of it, no doubt. Here goes to find her!"

His longer legs made easy work of the steep descent which had so puzzled his little sister. Presently he stood, waist-deep, in tangled hemlock boughs, below the old spruce. He parted the bushes in advance, and moved cautiously forward, step by step. He felt a cavity just before him,

but the thicket was so dense that he could see nothing.

Feeling for his pocket-knife, which luckily was a stout one, he stood still, cutting, slashing, and breaking off the tough boughs, and throwing them on one side. It was hard work, but after ten minutes a space was cleared which let in a ray of light, and, with a hot, red face and surprised eyes, Roger Gale stooped over the edge of a rocky cavity, on the sides of which something glittered and shone. He swung himself over the edge, and dropped into the hole, which was but a few feet deep. His foot struck on something hard as he landed. He stooped to pick it up, and his hand encountered a soft substance. He lifted both objects out together. [26]

The soft substance was a doll's woollen frock. There, indeed, was the lost Bunny, looking no whit the worse for her adventures, and the hard thing on which her wooden head had lain was a pickaxe,—an old iron pick, red with rust. Three letters were rudely cut on the handle,—R. P. G. They were Roger's own initials. Roger Perkins Gale. It had been his father's name also, and that of the great-uncle after whom they both were named. [27]

With an excited cry, Roger stooped again, and lifted out of the hole a lump of quartz mingled with ore. Suddenly he realized where he was and what he had found. This was the long lost silver-mine, whose finding and whose disappearance had for so many years been a tradition in the township. Here it was that old Roger Gale had found his "speciment," knocked off probably with that very pick, and, covering up all traces of his discovery, had gone sturdily off to his farm-work, to meet his death next week on the hay-rigging, with the secret locked within his breast. For sixty years the evergreen thicket had grown and toughened and guarded the hidden cavity beneath its roots; and it might easily have done so for sixty years longer, if Bunny,—little wooden Bunny, with her lack-lustre eyes and expressionless features,—had not led the way into its tangles. [28]

Hester got well. When Roger placed the doll in her arms, she seemed to come to herself, fondled and kissed her, and presently dropped into a satisfied sleep, from which she awoke conscious and relieved. The "mine" did not prove exactly a mine,—it was not deep or wide enough for that; but the ore in it was rich in quality, and the news of its finding made a great stir in the neighborhood. Mrs. Gale was offered a price for her hillside which made her what she considered a rich woman, and she was wise enough to close with the offer at once, and neither stand out for higher terms nor risk the chance of mining on her own account. She and her family left the quiet little farmhouse soon after that, and went to live in Worcester. Roger had all the schooling he desired, and made ready for Harvard and the law-school, where he worked hard, and laid the foundations of what has since proved a brilliant career. You may be sure that Bunny went to Worcester also, treated and regarded as one of the most valued members of the family. Hester took great care of her, and so did Hester's little girl later on; and even Mrs. Gale spoke respectfully of her always, and treated her with honor. For was it not Bunny who broke the long spell of evil fate, and brought good luck back to the Gale family? [29]

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A BIT OF WILFULNESS. [30]



HERE was a great excitement in the Keene's pleasant home at Wrentham, one morning, about three years ago. The servants were hard at work, making everything neat and orderly. The children buzzed about like active flies, for in the evening some one was coming whom none of them had as yet seen,—a new mamma, whom their father had just married.

The three older children remembered their own mamma pretty well; to the babies, she was only a name. Janet, the eldest, recollected her best of all, and the idea of somebody coming to take her place did not please her at all. This was not from a sense of jealousy for the mother who was gone, but rather from a jealousy for herself; for since Mrs. Keene's death, three years before, Janet had done pretty much as she liked, and the idea of control and interference aroused within her, in advance, the spirit of resistance. [31]

Janet's father was a busy lawyer, and had little time to give to the study of his children's characters. He liked to come home at night, after a hard day at his office, or in the courts, and find a nicely arranged table and room, and a bright fire in the grate, beside which he could read his newspaper without interruption, just stopping now and then to say a word to the children, or have a frolic with the younger ones before they went to bed. Old Maria, who had been nurse to all the five in turn, managed the housekeeping; and so long as there was no outward disturbance, Mr. Keene asked no questions.

He had no idea that Janet, in fact, ruled the family. She was only twelve, but she had the spirit of a dictator, and none of the little ones dared to dispute her will or to complain. In fact, there was not often cause for complaint. When Janet was not opposed, she was both kind and amusing. She had much sense and capacity for a child of her years, and her brothers and sisters were not [32]

old enough to detect the mistakes which she sometimes made.

And now a stepmother was coming to spoil all this, as Janet thought. Her meditations, as she dusted the china and arranged the flowers, ran something after this fashion:

"She's only twenty-one, Papa said, and that's only nine years older than I am, and nine years isn't much. I'm not going to call her 'Mamma,' anyway. I shall call her 'Jerusha,' from the very first; for Maria said that Jessie was only a nickname, and I hate nicknames. I know she'll want me to begin school next fall, but I don't mean to, for she don't know anything about the schools here, and I can judge better than she can. There, that looks nice!" putting a tall spike of lilies in a pale green vase. "Now I'll dress baby and little Jim, and we shall all be ready when they come."

[33]

It was exactly six, that loveliest hour of a lovely June day, when the carriage stopped at the gate. Mr. Keene helped his wife out, and looked eagerly toward the piazza, on which the five children were grouped.

"Well, my dears," he cried, "how do you do? Why don't you come and kiss your new mamma?"

They all came obediently, pretty little Jim and baby Alice, hand in hand, then Harry and Mabel, and, last of all, Janet. The little ones shyly allowed themselves to be kissed, saying nothing, but Janet, true to her resolution, returned her stepmother's salute in a matter-of-fact way, kissed her father, and remarked:

"Do come in, Papa; Jerusha must be tired!"

Mr. Keene gave an amazed look at his wife. The corners of her mouth twitched, and Janet thought wrathfully, "I do believe she is laughing at me!" But Mrs. Keene stifled the laugh, and, taking little Alice's hand, led the way into the house.

[34]

"Oh, how nice, how pretty!" were her first words. "Look at the flowers, James! Did you arrange them, Janet? I suspect you did."

"Yes," said Janet; "I did them all."

"Thank you, dear," said Mrs. Keene, and stooped to kiss her again. It was an affectionate kiss, and Janet had to confess to herself that this new—person was pleasant looking. She had pretty brown hair and eyes, a warm glow of color in a pair of round cheeks, and an expression at once sweet and sensible and decided. It was a face full of attraction; the younger children felt it, and began to sidle up and cuddle against the new mamma. Janet felt the attraction, too, but she resisted it.

"Don't squeeze Jerusha in that way," she said to Mabel; "you are creasing her jacket. Jim, come here, you are in the way."

[35]

"Janet," said Mr. Keene, in a voice of displeasure, "what do you mean by calling your mother 'Jerusha'?"

"She isn't my real mother," explained Janet, defiantly. "I don't want to call her 'Mamma;' she's too young."

Mrs. Keene laughed,—she couldn't help it.

"We will settle by and by what you shall call me," she said. "But, Janet, it can't be Jerusha, for that is not my name. I was baptized Jessie."

"I shall call you Mrs. Keene, then," said Janet, mortified, but persistent. Her stepmother looked pained, but she said no more.

None of the other children made any difficulty about saying "Mamma" to this sweet new friend. Jessie Keene was the very woman to "mother" a family of children. Bright and tender and firm all at once, she was playmate to them as well as authority, and in a very little while they all learned to love her dearly,—all but Janet; and even she, at times, found it hard to resist this influence, which was at the same time so strong and so kind.

[36]

Still, she did resist, and the result was constant discomfort to both parties. To the younger children the new mamma brought added happiness, because they yielded to her wise and reasonable authority. To Janet she brought only friction and resentment, because she would not yield.

So two months passed. Late in August, Mr. and Mrs. Keene started on a short journey which was to keep them away from home for two days. Just as the carriage was driving away, Mrs. Keene suddenly said,—

"Oh, Janet! I forgot to say that I would rather you didn't go see Ellen Colton while we are away, or let any of the other children. Please tell nurse about it."

[37]

"Why mustn't I?" demanded Janet.

"Because—" began her mother, but Mr. Keene broke in.

"Never mind 'because,' Jessie; we must be off. It's enough for you, Janet, that your mother orders it. And see that you do as she says."

"It's a shame!" muttered Janet, as she slowly went back to the house. "I always have gone to see Ellen whenever I liked. No one ever stopped me before. I don't think it's a bit fair; and I wish Papa wouldn't speak to me like that before—her."

Gradually she worked herself into a strong fit of ill-temper. All day long she felt a growing sense of injury, and she made up her mind not to bear it. Next morning, in a towering state of self-will, she marched straight down to the Coltons, resolved at least to find out the meaning of this vexatious prohibition. [38]

No one was on the piazza, and Janet ran up-stairs to Ellen's room, expecting to find her studying her lessons.

No; Ellen was in the bed, fast asleep. Janet took a story-book, and sat down beside her. "She'll be surprised when she wakes up," she thought.

The book proved interesting, and Janet read on for nearly half an hour before Mrs. Colton came in with a cup and spoon in her hand. She gave a scream when she saw Janet.

"Mercy!" she cried, "what are you doing here? Didn't your ma tell you? Ellen's got scarlet-fever."

"No, she didn't tell me *that*. She only said I mustn't come here."

"And why did you come?"

Somehow Janet found it hard to explain, even to herself, why she had been so determined not to obey.

Very sorrowfully she walked homeward. She had sense enough to know how dreadful might be the result of her disobedience, and she felt humble and wretched. "Oh, if only I hadn't!" was the language of her heart. [39]

The little ones had gone out to play. Janet hurried to her own room, and locked the door.

"I won't see any of them till Papa comes," she thought. "Then perhaps they won't catch it from me."

She watched from the window till Maria came out to hang something on the clothesline, and called to her.

"I'm not coming down to dinner," she said. "Will you please bring me some, and leave it by my door? No, I'm not ill, but there are reasons. I'd rather not tell anybody about them but Mamma."

"Sakes alive!" said old Maria to herself, "she called missus 'Mamma.' The skies must be going to fall."

Mrs. Keene's surprise may be imagined at finding Janet thus, in a state of voluntary quarantine. [40]

"I am so sorry," she said, when she had listened to her confession. "Most sorry of all for you, my child, because you may have to bear the worst penalty. But it was brave and thoughtful in you to shut yourself up to spare the little ones, dear Janet."

"Oh, Mamma!" cried Janet, bursting into tears. "How kind you are not to scold me! I have been so horrid to you always." All the pride and hardness were melted out of her now, and for the first time she clung to her stepmother with a sense of protection and comfort.

Janet said afterwards, that the fortnight which she spent in her room, waiting to know if she had caught the fever, was one of the nicest times she ever had. The children and the servants, and even Papa, kept away from her, but Mrs. Keene came as often and stayed as long as she could; and, thrown thus upon her sole companionship, Janet found out the worth of this dear, kind stepmother. She did *not* have scarlet-fever, and at the end of three weeks was allowed to go back to her old ways, but with a different spirit. [41]

"I can't think why I didn't love you sooner," she told Mamma once.

"I think I know," replied Mrs. Keene, smiling. "That stiff little will was in the way. You willed not to like me, and it was easy to obey your will; but now you will to love me, and loving is as easy as unloving was."

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THE WOLVES OF ST. GERVAS.

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HERE never seemed a place more in need of something to make it merry than was the little Swiss hamlet of St. Gervas toward the end of March, some years since.



The winter had been the hardest ever known in the Bernese Oberland. Ever since November the snow had fallen steadily, with few intermissions, and the fierce winds from the Breithorn and the St. Theodule Pass had blown day and night, and the drifts deepened in the valleys, and the icicles on the eaves of the chalets grown thicker and longer. The old wives had quoted comforting saws about a "white Michaelmas making a brown Easter;" but Easter was at hand now, and there were no signs of relenting yet. [43]

Week after week the strong men had sallied forth with shovels and pickaxes to dig out the half-buried dwellings, and to open the paths between them, which had grown so deep that they seemed more like trenches than footways.

Month after month the intercourse between neighbors had become more difficult and meetings less frequent. People looked over the white wastes at each other, the children ran to the doors and shouted messages across the snow, but no one was brave enough to face the cold and the drifts.

Even the village inn was deserted. Occasionally some hardy wayfarer came by and stopped for a mug of beer and to tell Dame Ursel, the landlady, how deep the snows were, how black clouds lay to the north, betokening another fall, and that the shoulders and flanks of the Matterhorn were whiter than man had ever seen them before. Then he would struggle on his way, and perhaps two or three days would pass before another guest crossed the threshold. [44]

It was a sad change for the Kröne, whose big sanded kitchen was usually crowded with jolly peasants, and full of laughter and jest, the clinking of glasses, and the smoke from long pipes. Dame Ursel felt it keenly.

But such jolly meetings were clearly impossible now. The weather was too hard. Women could not easily make their way through the snow, and they dared not let the children play even close to the doors; for as the wind blew strongly down from the sheltering forest on the hill above, which was the protection of St. Gervas from landslides and avalanches, shrill yelping cries would ever and anon be heard, which sounded very near. The mothers listened with a shudder, for it was known that the wolves, driven by hunger, had ventured nearer to the hamlet than they had ever before done, and were there just above on the hillside, waiting to make a prey of anything not strong enough to protect itself against them. [45]

"Three pigs have they carried off since Christmas," said Mère Kronk, "and one of those the pig of a widow! Two sheep and a calf have they also taken; and only night before last they all but got at the Alleene's cow. Matters have come to a pass indeed in St. Gervas, if cows are to be devoured in our very midst! Toinette and Pertal, come in at once! Thou must not venture even so far as the doorstep unless thy father be along, and he with his rifle over his shoulder, if he wants me to sleep of nights."

"Oh, dear!" sighed little Toinette for the hundredth time. "How I wish the dear summer would come! Then the wolves would go away, and we could run about as we used, and Gretchen Slaut and I go to the Alp for berries. It seems as if it had been winter forever and ever. I haven't seen Gretchen or little Marie for two whole weeks. *Their* mother, too, is fearful of the wolves." [46]

All the mothers in St. Gervas were fearful of the wolves.

The little hamlet was, as it were, in a state of siege. Winter, the fierce foe, was the besieger. Month by month he had drawn his lines nearer, and made them stronger; the only hope was in the rescue which spring might bring. Like a beleaguered garrison, whose hopes and provisions are running low, the villagers looked out with eager eyes for the signs of coming help, and still the snows fell, and the help did not come.

How fared it meanwhile in the forest slopes above?

It is not a sin for a wolf to be hungry, any more than it is for a man; and the wolves of St. Gervas were ravenous indeed. All their customary supplies were cut off. The leverets and marmots, and other small animals on which they were accustomed to prey, had been driven by the cold into the recesses of their hidden holes, from which they did not venture out. There was no herbage to tempt the rabbits forth, no tender birch growths for the strong gray hares. [47]

No doubt the wolves talked the situation over in their wolfish language, realized that it was a desperate one, and planned the daring forays which resulted in the disappearance of the pigs and sheep and the attack on the Alleene's cow. The animals killed all belonged to outlying houses a little further from the village than the rest; but the wolves had grown bold with impunity, and, as Mère Kronk said, there was no knowing at what moment they might make a dash at the centre of the hamlet.

I fear they would have enjoyed a fat little boy or girl if they could have come across one astray on the hillside, near their haunts, very much. But no such luck befell them. The mothers of St. Gervas were too wary for that, and no child went out after dark, or ventured more than a few yards from the open house-door, even at high noon. [48]

"Something must be done," declared Johann Vecht, the bailiff. "We are growing sickly and timorous. My wife hasn't smiled for a month. She talks of nothing but snow and wolves, and it is making the children fearful. My Annerle cried out in her sleep last night that she was being devoured, and little Kasper woke up and cried too. Something must be done!"

"Something must indeed be done!" repeated Solomon, the forester. "We are letting the winter get the better of us, and losing heart and courage. We must make an effort to get together in the old neighborly way; that's what we want."

This conversation took place at the Kröne, and here the landlady, who was tired of empty kitchen and scant custom, put in her word:—

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"You are right, neighbors. What we need is to get together, and feast and make merry, forgetting the hard times. Make your plans, and trust me to carry them out to the letter. Is it a feast that you decide upon? I will cook it. Is it a *musiker fest*? My Carl, there, can play the zither with any other, no matter whom it be, and can sing. *Himme!* how he can sing! Command me! I will work my fingers to the bone rather than you shall not be satisfied."

"Aha, the sun!" cried Solomon; for as the landlady spoke, a pale yellow ray shot through the pane and streamed over the floor. "That is a good omen. Dame Ursel, thou art right. A jolly merrymaking is what we all want. We will have one, and thou shalt cook the supper according to thy promise."

Several neighbors had entered the inn kitchen since the talk began, so that quite a company had collected,—more than had got together since the mass on Christmas Day. All were feeling cheered by the sight of the sunshine; it seemed a happy moment to propose the merrymaking.

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So it was decided then and there that a supper should be held that day week at the Kröne, men and women both to be invited,—all, in fact, who could pay and wished to come. It seemed likely that most of the inhabitants of St. Gervas would be present, such enthusiasm did the plan awake in young and old. The week's delay would allow time to send to the villagers lower down in the valley for a reinforcement of tobacco, for the supply of that essential article was running low, and what was a feast without tobacco?

"We shall have a quarter of mutton," declared the landlady. "Neils Austerman is to kill next Monday, and I will send at once to bespeak the hind-quarter. That will insure a magnificent roast. Three fat geese have I also, fit for the spit, and four hens. Oh, I assure you, my masters, that there shall be no lack on my part! My Fritz shall get a large mess of eels from the Lake. He fishes through the ice, as thou knowest, and is lucky; the creatures always take his hook. Fried eels are excellent eating! You will want a plenty of them. Three months *maigre* is good preparation for a feast. Wine and beer we have in plenty in the cellar, and the cheese I shall cut is as a cartwheel for bigness. Bring you the appetites, my masters, and I will engage that the supply is sufficient."

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The landlady rubbed her hands as she spoke, with an air of joyful anticipation.

"My mouth waters already with thy list," declared Kronk. "I must hasten home and tell my dame of the plan. It will raise her spirits, poor soul, and she is sadly in need of cheering."

The next week seemed shorter than any week had seemed since Michaelmas. True, the weather was no better. The brief sunshine had been followed by a wild snowstorm, and the wind was still blowing furiously.

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But now there was something to talk and think about besides weather. Everybody was full of the forthcoming feast. Morning after morning Fritz of the Kröne could be seen sitting beside his fishing-holes on the frozen lake, patiently letting down his lines, and later, climbing the hill, his basket laden with brown and wriggling eels. Everybody crowded to the windows to watch him,—the catch was a matter of public interest.

Three hardy men on snow-shoes, with guns over their shoulders, had ventured down to St. Nicklaus, and returned, bringing the wished-for tobacco and word that the lower valleys were no better off than the upper, that everything was buried in snow, and no one had got in from the Rhone valley for three weeks or more.

Anxiously was the weather watched as the day of the feast drew near; and when the morning dawned, every one gave a sigh of relief that it did not snow. It was gray and threatening, but the wind had veered, and blew from the southwest. It was not nearly so cold, and a change seemed at hand.

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The wolves of St. Gervas were quite as well aware as the inhabitants that something unusual was going forward.

From their covert in the sheltering wood they watched the stir and excitement, the running to and fro, the columns of smoke which streamed upward from the chimneys of the inn. As the afternoon drew on, strange savory smells were wafted upward by the strong-blowing wind,—smells of frying and roasting, and hissing fat.

"Oh, how it smells! How good it does smell!" said one wolf. He snuffed the wind greedily, then threw back his head and gave vent to a long "O-w!"

The other wolves joined in the howl.

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"What can it be? Oh, how hungry it makes me!" cried one of the younger ones. "O-w-w-w!"

"What a dreadful noise those creatures are making up there," remarked Frau Kronk as, under the protection of her stalwart husband, she hurried her children along the snow path toward the Kröne. "They sound so hungry! I shall not feel really safe till we are all at home again, with the

door fast barred."

But she forgot her fears when the door of the inn was thrown hospitably open as they drew near, and the merry scene inside revealed itself.

The big sanded kitchen had been dressed with fir boughs, and was brightly lighted with many candles. At the great table in the midst sat rows of men and women, clad in their Sunday best. The men were smoking long pipes, tall mugs of beer stood before everybody, and a buzz of talk and laughter filled the place. [55]

Beyond, in the wide chimney, blazed a glorious fire, and about and over it the supper could be seen cooking. The quarter of mutton, done to a turn, hung on its spit, and on either side of it sputtered the geese and the fat hens, brown and savory, and smelling delicious. Over the fire on iron hooks hung a great kettle of potatoes and another of cabbage.

On one side of the hearth knelt Gretel, the landlord's daughter, grinding coffee, while on the other her brother Fritz brandished an immense frying-pan heaped with sizzling eels, which sent out the loudest smells of all.

The air of the room was thick with the steam of the fry mingled with the smoke of the pipes. A fastidious person might have objected to it as hard to breathe, but the natives of St. Gervas were not fastidious, and found no fault whatever with the smells and the smoke which, to them, represented conviviality and good cheer. Even the dogs under the table were rejoicing in it, and sending looks of expectation toward the fireplace. [56]

"Welcome, welcome!" cried the jolly company as the Kronks appeared. "Last to come is as well off as first, if a seat remains, and the supper is still uneaten. Sit thee down, Dame, while the young ones join the other children in the little kitchen. Supper is all but ready, and a good one too, as all noses testify. Those eels smell rarely. It is but to fetch the wine now, and then fall to, eh, Landlady?"

"Nor shall the wine be long lacking!" cried Dame Ursel, snatching up a big brown pitcher. "Sit thee down, Frau Kronk. That place beside thy gossip Barbe was saved for thee. 'Tis but to go to the cellar and return, and all will be ready. Stir the eels once more, Fritz; and thou, Gretchen, set the coffee-pot on the coals. I shall be back in the twinkling of an eye." [57]

There was a little hungry pause. From the smaller kitchen, behind, the children's laughter could be heard.

"It is good to be in company again," said Frau Kronk, sinking into her seat with a sigh of pleasure.

"Yes, so we thought,—we who got up the feast," responded Solomon, the forester. "'Neighbors,' says I, 'we are all getting out of spirits with so much cold and snow, and we must rouse ourselves and do something.' 'Yes,' says they, 'but what?' 'Nothing can be plainer,' says I, 'we must'—*Himme!* what is that?"

What was it, indeed?

For even as Solomon spoke, the heavy door of the kitchen burst open, letting in a whirl of cold wind and sleet, and letting in something else as well.

For out of the darkness, as if blown by the wind, a troop of dark swift shapes darted in. [58]

They were the wolves of St. Gervas, who, made bold by hunger, and attracted and led on by the strong fragrance of the feast, had forgotten their usual cowardice, and, stealing from the mountain-side and through the deserted streets of the hamlet, had made a dash at the inn.

There were not less than twenty of them; there seemed to be a hundred.

As if acting by a preconcerted plan, they made a rush at the fireplace. The guests sat petrified round the table, with their dogs cowering at their feet, and no one stirred or moved, while the biggest wolf, who seemed the leader of the band, tore the mutton from the spit, while the next in size made a grab at the fat geese and the fowls, and the rest seized upon the eels, hissing hot as they were, in the pan. Gretchen and Fritz sat in their respective corners of the hearth, paralyzed with fright at the near, snapping jaws and the fierce red eyes which glared at them. [59]

Then, overturning the cabbage-pot as they went, the whole pack whirled, and sped out again into the night, which seemed to swallow them up all in a moment.

And still the guests sat as if turned to stone, their eyes fixed upon the door, through which the flakes of the snow-squall were rapidly drifting; and no one had recovered voice to utter a word, when Dame Ursel, rosy and beaming, came up from the cellar with her brimming pitcher.

"Why is the door open?" she demanded. Then her eyes went over to the fireplace, where but a moment before the supper had been. Had been; for not an eatable article remained except the potatoes and the cabbages and cabbage water on the hearth. From far without rang back a long howl which had in it a note of triumph.

This was the end of the merrymaking. The guests were too startled and terrified to remain for another supper, even had there been time to cook one. Potatoes, black bread, and beer remained, and with these the braver of the guests consoled themselves, while the more timorous hurried [60]

home, well protected with guns, to barricade their doors, and rejoice that it was their intended feast and not themselves which was being discussed at that moment by the hungry denizens of the forest above.

There was a great furbishing up of bolts and locks next day, and a fitting of stout bars to doors which had hitherto done very well without such safeguards; but it was a long time before any inhabitant of St. Gervas felt it safe to go from home alone, or without a rifle over his shoulder.

So the wolves had the best of the merrymaking, and the villagers decidedly the worst. Still, the wolves were not altogether to be congratulated; for, stung by their disappointment and by the unmerciful laughter and ridicule of the other villages, the men of St. Gervas organized a great wolf-hunt later in the spring, and killed such a number that to hear a wolf howl has become a rare thing in that part of the Oberland. [61]

"Ha! ha! my fine fellow, you are the one that made off with our mutton so fast," said the stout forester, as he stripped the skin from the largest of the slain. "Your days for mutton are over, my friend. It will be one while before you and your thievish pack come down again to interrupt Christian folk at their supper!"

But, in spite of Solomon's bold words, the tale of the frustrated feast has passed into a proverb; and to-day in the neighboring chalets and hamlets you may hear people say, "Don't count on your mutton till it's in your mouth, or it may fare with you as with the merry-makers at St. Gervas."

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THREE LITTLE CANDLES. [62]



THE winter dusk was settling down upon the old farmhouse where three generations of Marshes had already lived and died. It stood on a gentle rise of ground above the Kittery sands,—a low, wide, rambling structure, outgrowth of the gradual years since great-grandfather Marsh, in the early days of the colony, had built the first log-house, and so laid the foundation of the settlement.

This log-house still existed. It served as a lean-to for the larger building, and held the buttery, the "out-kitchen" for rougher work, and the woodshed. Moss and lichens clustered thickly between the old logs, to which time had communicated a rich brown tint; a mat of luxuriant hop-vine clothed the porch, and sent fantastic garlands up to the ridgepole. The small heavily-puttied panes in the windows had taken on that strange iridescence which comes to glass with the lapse of time, and glowed, when the light touched them at a certain angle, with odd gleams of red, opal, and green-blue. [63]

On one of the central panes was an odd blur or cloud. Cynthia Marsh liked to "play" that it was a face,—the face of a girl who used to crawl out of that window in the early days of the house, but had long since grown up and passed away. It was rather a ghostly playmate, but Cynthia enjoyed her.

This same imaginative little Cynthia was sitting with her brother and sister in the "new kitchen," which yet was a pretty old one, and had rafters overhead, and bunches of herbs and strings of dried apples tied to them. It was still the days of pot-hooks and trammels, and a kettle of bubbling mush hung on the crane over the fire, which smelt very good. Every now and then Hepzibah, the old servant, would come and give it a stir, plunging her long spoon to the very bottom of the pot. It was the "Children's Hour," though no Longfellow had as yet given the pretty name to that delightful time between daylight and dark, when the toils of the day are over, and even grown people can fold their busy hands and rest and talk and love each other, with no sense of wasted time to spoil their pleasure. [64]

"I say," began Reuben, who, if he had lived to-day, would have put on his cards "Reuben Marsh, 4th," "what do you think? We're going to have our little candles to-night. Aunt Doris said that mother said so. Isn't that famous!"

"Are we really?" cried Cynthia, clasping her hands. "How glad I am! It's more than a year since we had any little candles, and though I've tried to be good, I was so afraid when you broke the oil-lamp, the other day, that it would put them off. I do love them so!" [65]

"How many candles may we have?" asked little Eunice.

"Oh, there are only three,—one for each of us. Mother gave the rest away, you know. Have you made up any story yet, Eunice?"

"I did make one, but I've forgotten part of it. It was a great while ago, when I thought we were surely going to get the candles, and then Reuben had that quarrel with Friend Amos's son, and mother would not let us have them. She said a boy who gave place to wrath did not deserve a

little candle."

"I know," said Reuben, penitently. "But that was a great while ago, and I've not given place to wrath since. You must begin and think of your story very hard, Eunice, or the candle will burn out while you are remembering it." [66]

These "little candles," for the amusement of children, were an ancient custom in New England, long practised in the Marsh family. When the great annual candle-dipping took place, and the carefully saved tallow, with its due admixture of water and bayberry wax for hardness, was made hot in the kettle, and the wicks, previously steeped in alum, were tied in bunches so that no two should touch each other, and dipped and dried, and dipped again, at the end of each bundle was hung two or three tiny candles, much smaller than the rest. These were rewards for the children when they should earn them by being unusually good. They were lit at bedtime, and, by immemorial law, so long as the candles burned, the children might tell each other ghost or fairy stories, which at other times were discouraged, as having a bad effect on the mind. This privilege was greatly valued, and the advent of the little candles made a sort of holiday, when holidays were few and far between. [67]

"I suppose Reuben will have his candle first, as he is the oldest," said Eunice.

"Mother said last year that we should have them all three on the same night," replied Cynthia. "She said she would rather that we lay awake till half-past nine for once, than till half-past eight for three times. It's much nicer, I think. It's like having plenty to eat at one dinner, instead of half-enough several days running. Eunice, you'd better burn your candle first, I think, because you get sleepy a great deal sooner than Reuby or I do. You needn't light it till after you're in bed, you know, and that will make it last longer. When it's done, I'll hurry and go to bed too, and then we'll light mine; and Reuben can do the same, and if he leaves his door open, we shall hear his story perfectly well. Oh, what fun it will be! I wish there were ever and ever so many little candles,—a hundred, at the very least!" [68]

"Hepsy, ain't supper nearly ready? We're in such a hurry to-night!" said Eunice.

"Why, what are you in a hurry about?" demanded Hepsy, giving a last stir to the mush, which had grown deliciously thick.

"We want to go to bed early."

"That's a queer reason! You're not so sharp set after bed, as a general thing. Well, the mush is done. Reuby, ring the bell at the shed door, and as soon as the men come in, we'll be ready."

It was a good supper. The generous heat of the great fireplace in the Marsh kitchen seemed to communicate a special savor of its own to everything that was cooked before it, as if the noble hickory logs lent a forest flavor to the food. The brown bread and beans and the squash pies from the deep brick oven were excellent; and the "pumpkin sweets," from the same charmed receptacle, had come out a deep rich red color, jellied with juice to their cores. Nothing could have improved them, unless it were the thick yellow cream which Mrs. Marsh poured over each as she passed it. The children ate as only hearty children can eat, but the recollection of the little candles was all the time in their minds, and the moment that Reuben had finished his third apple he began to fidget. [69]

"Mayn't we go to bed now?" he asked.

"Not till father has returned thanks," said his mother, rebukingly. "You are glad enough to take the gifts of the Lord, Reuben. You should be equally ready to pay back the poor tribute of a decent gratitude."

Reuben sat abashed while Mr. Marsh uttered the customary words, which was rather a short prayer than a long grace. The boy did not dare to again allude to the candles, but stood looking sorry and shamefaced, till his mother, laying her hand indulgently on his shoulder, slipped the little candle in his fingers.

"Thee didn't mean it, dear, I know," she whispered. "It's natural enough that thee shouldst be impatient. Now take thy candle, and be off. Cynthia, Eunice, here are the other two, and remember, all of you, that not a word must be told of the stories when once the candles burn out. This is the test of obedience. Be good children, and I'll come up later to see that all is safe." [70]

Mrs. Marsh was of Quaker stock, but she only reverted to the once familiar *thee* and *thou* at times when she felt particularly kind and tender. The children liked to have her do so. It meant that mother loved them more than usual.

The bedrooms over the kitchen, in which the children slept, were very plain, with painted floors and scant furniture; but they were used to them, and missed nothing. The moon was shining, so that little Eunice found no difficulty in undressing without a light. As soon as she was in bed, she called to the others, who were waiting in Reuben's room, "I'm all ready!" [71]

A queer clicking noise followed. It was made by Reuben's striking the flint of the tinder-box. In another moment the first of the little candles was lighted. They fetched it in; and the others sat on the foot of the bed while Eunice, raised on her pillow, with red, excited cheeks, began:—

"I've remembered all about my story, and this is it: Once there was a Fairy. He was not a bad fairy, but a very good one. One day he broke his wing, and the Fairy King said he mustn't come to

court any more till he got it mended. This was very hard, because glue and things like that don't stick to Fairies' wings, you know."

"Couldn't he have tied it up and boiled it in milk?" asked Cynthia, who had once seen a saucer so treated, with good effect.

"Why, Cynthia Marsh! Do you suppose Fairies like to have their wings boiled? I never! Of course they don't! Well, the poor Fairy did not know what to do. He hopped away, for he could not fly, and pretty soon he met an old woman.

"'Goody,' said he, 'can you tell me what will mend a Fairy's broken wing?'

"'Is it your wing that is broken?'" asked the old woman.

"'Yes,' said the Fairy, speaking very sadly.

"'There is only one thing,' said the old woman. 'If you can find a girl who has never said a cross word in her life, and she will put the pieces together, and hold them tight, and say, "*Ram shackla alla balla ba*," three times, it will mend in a minute.'

"So the Fairy thanked her, and went his way, dragging the poor wing behind him. By and by he came to a wood, and there in front of a little house was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. Her eyes were as blue as, as blue as—as the edges of mother's company saucers! And her hair, which was the color of gold, curled down to her feet.

"'A girl with hair and eyes like that couldn't say a cross word to save her life,' thought the Fairy. He was just going to speak to her. She couldn't see him, you know, because he was indivisible—"

"'Invisible,' you mean," interrupted Reuben.

"Oh, Reuben, don't stop her! See how the tallow is running down the side of the candle! She'll never have time to finish," put in Cynthia, anxiously.

"I meant 'invisible,' of course," went on Eunice, speaking fast. "Well, just then a woman came out of the house. It was the pretty girl's mother.

"'Estella,' she said, 'I want you to go for the cows, because your father is sick.'

"'Oh, bother!' said the pretty girl. 'I don't want to! I hate going for cows. I wish father wouldn't go and get sick!' Just think of a girl's speaking like that to her mother! And the Fairy sighed, for he thought, 'My wing won't get mended here,' and he hopped away.

"By and by he came to a house in another wood, and there was another girl. She wasn't pretty at all. She had short stubby brown hair like Cynthia's, and a turn-up nose like me, and her freckles were as big as Reuben's, but she looked nice and kind.

"The Fairy didn't have much hope that a girl who was as homely as that could mend wings. But while he was waiting, another woman came out. It was the turned-up-nose girl's mother, and she said, 'I want you to go for the cows to-night, because your father has broken his leg.'

"And the girl smiled just as sweet, and she said, 'Yes, mother, I'll be glad to go.'

"Then the Fairy rejoiced, and he came forward and said—Oh, dear!"

This was not what the Fairy said, but what Eunice said; for at that moment the little candle went out.

"Well, I am glad you got as far as you did," whispered Cynthia, "for I guess the turned-up-nose girl could mend the wing. Now, Reuby, if you'll go into your room I'll not be two minutes. And then you can light my candle."

In less than two minutes all was ready. This time there were two little girls in bed, and Reuben sat alone at the foot, ready to listen.

"My story," began Cynthia, "is about that girl in the window-pane in the ell. Her name was Mercy Marsh, and she lived in this house."

"Is it true?" asked Eunice.

"No, it's made up, but I'm going to make believe that it's true. She slept in the corn chamber,—it was a bedroom then,—and she had that yellow painted bedstead of Hepzibah's.

"There was a hiding-place under the floor of the room. It was made to put things in when Indians came, or the English,—money and spoons, and things like that.

"One day when Mercy was spinning under the big elm, a man came running down the road. He was a young man, and very handsome, and he had on a sort of uniform.

"'Hide me!' he cried. 'They will kill me if they catch me. Hide me, quick!'

"'Who will kill you?' asked Mercy.

"Then the young man told her that he had accidentally shot a man who was out hunting with him, and that the man's brothers, who were very bad people, had sworn to have his blood.

"Then Mercy took his hand, and led him quickly up to her room, and lifted the cover of the hiding-place, and told him to get in. And he got in, but first he said, 'Fair maiden, if I come out alive, I shall have somewhat to say to thee.' And Mercy blushed."

"What did he mean?" asked Eunice, innocently.

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"Oh, just love-making and nonsense!" put in Reuben. "Hurry up, Cynthia! Come to the fighting. The candle's all but burned out."

"There isn't going to be any fighting," returned Cynthia. "Well, Mercy pulled the bedside carpet over the cover, and she set that red candle-stand on one corner of it and a chair on the other corner, and went back to her spinning. She had hardly begun before there was a rustling in the bushes, and two men with guns in their hands came out."

"Which way did he go?' they shouted.

"Who?' she said, and she looked up so quietly that they never suspected her.

"Has no one gone by?' they asked her.

"No one,' she said; and you know this wasn't a lie, for the young man did not go by. He stopped!

"There is the back door open,' she went on, 'and you are welcome to search, if you desire it. My father is away, but he will be here soon.' She said this because she feared the men.

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"So the men searched, but they found nothing, and Mercy's room looked so neat and peaceful that they did not like to disturb it, and just looked in at the door. And when they were gone, Mercy went up and raised the cover, and the youth said that he loved her, and that if the Lord willed, he—"

Pop! The second candle went suddenly out.

"It's a shame!" cried Reuben, dancing with vexation. "It seems as if the blamed things knew when we most wanted them to last!"

"Oh, Reuben! don't say 'blamed.'"

"I forgot. Well, blame-worthy, then. There's no harm in that."

"We shall never know if the young man married Mercy," said little Eunice, lamentably.

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"Oh, of course he did! That's the way stories always end."

"Now, Reuben, hurry to bed, and when you are all ready, light your candle, and if you speak loud we shall hear every word."

This was Reuben's story: "Once there was a Ghost. He had committed a murder, and that was the reason he had to go alone and fly about on cold nights in a white shirt."

"He used to look in at windows and see people sitting by fires, and envy them. And he would moan and chatter his teeth, and then they would say that he was the wind."

"Oh, Reuben! is it going to be very awful?" demanded Cynthia, apprehensively.

"Not very. Only just enough to half-scare you to death! He would put his hand out when girls stood by the door, and they would feel as if a whole pitcher of cold water had been poured down their backs."

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"Once a boy came to the door. He was the son of the murdered man. The Ghost was afraid of him. 'Thomas!' said the Ghost."

"Who speaks?' said the boy. He couldn't have heard if he hadn't been the son of the murdered man."

"I'm the Ghost of your father's slayer,' said the Ghost. 'Tell me what I can do to be forgiven.'"

"I don't think you can be forgiven,' said the boy. Then the Ghost gave such a dreadful groan that the boy felt sorry for him."

"I'll tell you, then,' he said. 'Go to my father's grave, and lay upon it a perfectly white blackberry, and a perfectly black snowdrop, and a valuable secret, and a hair from the head of a really happy person, and you shall be forgiven!'"

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"So the Ghost set out to find these four things. He had to bleach the blackberry and dye the snowdrop, and he got the hair from the head of a little baby who happened to be born with hair and hadn't had time to be unhappy, and the secret was about a goldmine that only the Ghost knew about. But just as he was laying them on the grave, a cold hand clutched—" The sentence ended in a three-fold shriek, for just at this exciting juncture the last candle went out."

"Children," said Mrs. Marsh, opening the door, "I'm afraid you've been frightening yourselves with your stories. That was foolish. I am glad there are no more little candles. Now, not another word to-night."

She straightened the tossed coverlids, heard their prayers, and went away. In a few minutes all

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that remained of the long-anticipated treat were three little drops of tallow where three little candles had quite burned out, three stories not quite told, and three children fast asleep.

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UNCLE AND AUNT.



UNCLE and Aunt were a very dear and rather queer old couple, who lived in one of the small villages which dot the long indented coast of Long Island Sound. It was four miles to the railway, so the village had not waked up from its colonial sleep on the building of the line, as had other villages nearer to its course, but remained the same shady, quiet place, with never a steam-whistle nor a manufactory bell to break its repose.

Sparlings-Neck was the name of the place. No hotel had ever been built there, so no summer visitors came to give it a fictitious air of life for a few weeks of the year. The century-old elms waved above the gambrel roofs of the white, green-blinded houses, and saw the same names on doorplates and knockers that had been there when the century began: "Benjamin," "Wilson," "Kirkland," "Benson," "Reinike,"—there they all were, with here and there the prefix of a distinguishing initial, as "J. L. Benson," "Eleazar Wilson," or "Paul Reinike." Paul Reinike, fourth of the name who had dwelt in that house, was the "Uncle" of this story.

Uncle was tall and gaunt and gray, of the traditional New England type. He had a shrewd, dry face, with wise little wrinkles about the corners of the eyes, and just a twinkle of fun and a quiet kindness in the lines of the mouth. People said the squire was a master-hand at a bargain. And so he was; but if he got the uttermost penny out of all legitimate business transactions, he was always ready to give that penny, and many more, whenever deserving want knocked at his door, or a good work to be done showed itself distinctly as needing help.

Aunt, too, was a New Englander, but of a slightly different type. She was the squire's cousin before she became his wife; and she had the family traits, but with a difference. She was spare, but she was also very small, and had a distinct air of authority which made her like a fairy godmother. She was very quiet and comfortable in her ways, but she was full of "faculty,"—that invaluable endowment which covers such a multitude of capacities. Nobody's bread or pies were equal to Aunt's. Her preserves never fermented; her cranberry always jellied; her sponge-cake rose to heights unattained by her neighbors', and stayed there, instead of ignominiously "flopping" when removed from the oven, like the sponge-cake of inferior housekeepers. Everything in the old home moved like clock-work. Meals were ready to a minute; the mahogany furniture glittered like dark-red glass; the tall clock in the entry was never a tick out of the way; and yet Aunt never appeared to be particularly busy. To one not conversant with her methods, she gave the impression of being generally at leisure, sitting in her rocking-chair in the "keeping-room," hemming cap-strings, and reading Emerson, for Aunt liked to keep up with the thought of the day.

Hesse declared that either she sat up and did things after the rest of the family had gone to bed, or else that she kept a Brownie to work for her; but Hesse was a saucy child, and Aunt only smiled indulgently at these sarcasms.

Hesse was the only young thing in the shabby old home; for, though it held many handsome things, it was shabby. Even the cat was a sober matron. The old white mare had seen almost half as many years as her master. The very rats and mice looked gray and bearded when you caught a glimpse of them. But Hesse was youth incarnate, and as refreshing in the midst of the elderly stillness which surrounded her as a frolicsome puff of wind, or a dancing ray of sunshine. She had come to live with Uncle and Aunt when she was ten years old; she was now nearly eighteen, and she loved the quaint house and its quaint occupants with her whole heart.

Hesse's odd name, which had been her mother's, her grandmother's, and her great-grandmother's before her, was originally borrowed from that of the old German town whence the first Reinike had emigrated to America. She had not spent quite all of the time at Sparlings-Neck since her mother died. There had been two years at boarding-school, broken by long vacations, and once she had made a visit in New York to her mother's cousin, Mrs. De Lancey, who considered herself a sort of joint guardian over Hesse, and was apt to send a frock or a hat, now and then, as the fashions changed; that "the child might not look exactly like Noah, and Mrs. Noah, and the rest of the people in the ark," she told her daughter. This visit to New York had taken place when Hesse was about fifteen; now she was to make another. And, just as this story opens, she and Aunt were talking over her wardrobe for the occasion.

"I shall give you this China-crape shawl," said Aunt, decisively.

Hesse looked admiringly, but a little doubtfully, at the soft, clinging fabric, rich with masses of yellow-white embroidery.

"I am afraid girls don't wear shawls now," she ventured to say.

"My dear," said Aunt, "a handsome thing is always handsome; never mind if it is not the last novelty, put it on, all the same. The Reinikes can wear what they like, I hope! They certainly know better what is proper than these oil-and-shoddy people in New York that we read about in the newspapers. Now, here is my India shawl,"—unpinning a towel, and shaking out a quantity of dried rose-leaves. "I *lend* you this; not give it, you understand."



"I shall give you this China-crape shawl," said aunt, decisively.—[PAGE 88.](#)

"Thank you, Aunt, dear." Hesse was secretly wondering what Cousin Julia and the girls would say to the India shawl. [89]

"You must have a pelisse, of some sort," continued her aunt; "but perhaps your Cousin De Lancey can see to that. Though I *might* have Miss Lewis for a day, and cut over that handsome camlet of mine. It's been lying there in camphor for fifteen years, of no use to anybody."

"Oh, but that would be a pity!" cried Hesse, with innocent wiliness. "The girls are all wearing little short jackets now, trimmed with fur, or something like that; it would be a pity to cut up that great cloak to make a little bit of a wrap for me."

"Fur?" said her aunt, catching at the word; "the very thing! How will this do?" dragging out of the camphor-chest an enormous cape, which seemed made of tortoise-shell cats, so yellow and brown and mottled was it. "Won't this do for a trimming, or would you rather have it as it is?" [90]

"I shall have to ask Cousin Julia," replied Hesse. "Oh, Aunt, dear, don't give me any more! You really mustn't! You are robbing yourself of everything!" For Aunt was pulling out yards of yellow lace, lengths of sash ribbon of faded colors and wonderful thickness, strange, old-fashioned trinkets.

"And here's your grandmother's wedding-gown—and mine!" she said; "you had better take them both. I have little occasion for dress here, and I like you to have them, Hesse. Say no more about it, my dear."

There was never any gainsaying Aunt, so Hesse departed for New York with her trunk full of antiquated finery, sage-green and "pale-colored" silks that would almost stand alone; Mechlin lace, the color of a spring buttercup; hair rings set with pearls, and brooches such as no one sees, nowadays, outside of a curiosity shop. Great was the amusement which the unpacking caused in Madison Avenue. [91]

"Yet the things are really handsome," said Mrs. De Lancey, surveying the fur cape critically.

"This fur is queer and old-timey, but it will make quite an effective trimming. As for this crape shawl, I have an idea: you shall have an overdress made of it, Hesse. It will be lovely with a silk slip. You may laugh, Pauline, but you will wish you had one like it when you see Hesse in hers. It only needs a little taste in adapting, and fortunately these quaint old things are just coming into fashion."

Pauline, a pretty girl,—modern to her fingertips—held up a square brooch, on which, under pink glass, shone a complication of initials in gold, the whole set in a narrow twisted rim of pearls and garnets, and asked:

"How do you propose to 'adapt' this, Mamma?"

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"Oh," cried Hesse, "I wouldn't have that 'adapted' for the world! It must stay just as it is. It belonged to my grandmother, and it has a love-story connected with it."

"A love-story! Oh, tell it to us!" said Grace, the second of the De Lancey girls.

"Why," explained Hesse; "you see, my grandmother was once engaged to a man named John Sherwood. He was a 'beautiful young man,' Aunt says; but very soon after they were engaged, he fell ill with consumption, and had to go to Madeira. He gave Grandmamma that pin before he sailed. See, there are his initials, 'J. S.,' and hers, 'H. L. R.,' for Hesse Lee Reinike, you know. He gave her a copy of 'Thomas à Kempis' besides, with 'The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me,' written on the title-page. I have the book, too; Uncle gave it to me for my own."

"And did *he* ever come back?" asked Pauline.

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"No," answered Hesse. "He died in Madeira, and was buried there; and quite a long time afterward, Grandmamma married my grandfather. I'm so fond of that queer old brooch, I like to wear it sometimes."

"How *does* it look?" demanded Pauline.

"You shall see for yourself, for I'll wear it to-night," said Hesse.

And when Hesse came down to dinner with the quaint ornament shining against her white neck on a bit of black velvet ribbon, even Pauline owned that the effect was not bad,—queer, of course, and unlike other people's things, but certainly not bad.

Mrs. De Lancey had a quick eye for character, and she noted with satisfaction that her young cousin was neither vexed at, nor affected by, her cousins' criticisms on her outfit. Hesse saw for herself that her things were unusual, and not in the prevailing style, but she knew them to be handsome of their kind, and she loved them as a part of her old home. There was, too, in her blood a little of the family pride which had made Aunt say, "The Reinikes know what is proper, I hope." So she wore her odd fur and made-over silks and the old laces with no sense of being ill-dressed, and that very fact "carried it off," and made her seem well dressed. Cousin Julia saw that her wardrobe was sufficiently modernized not to look absurd, or attract too much attention, and there was something in Hesse's face and figure which suited the character of her clothes. People took notice of this or that, now and again,—said it was pretty, and where could they get such a thing?—and, flattery of flatteries, some of the girls copied her effects!

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"Estelle Morgan says, if you don't mind, she means to have a ball-dress exactly like that blue one of yours," Pauline told her one day.

"Oh, how funny! Aunt's wedding-gown made up with surah!" cried Hesse. "Do you remember how you laughed at the idea, Polly, and said it would be horrid?"

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"Yes, and I did think so," said Polly; "but somehow it looks very nice on you. When it is hanging up in the closet, I don't care much for it."

"Well, luckily, no one need look at it when it is hanging up in the closet," retorted Hesse, laughing.

Her freshness, her sweet temper, and bright capacity for enjoyment had speedily made Hesse a success among the young people of her cousins' set. Girls liked her, and ran after her as a social favorite; and she had flowers and german favors and flatteries enough to spoil her, had she been spoilable. But she kept a steady head through all these distractions, and never forgot, however busy she might be, to send off the long journal-letter, which was the chief weekly event to Uncle and Aunt.

Three months had been the time fixed for Hesse's stay in New York, but, without her knowledge, Mrs. De Lancey had written to beg for a little extension. Gayeties thickened as Lent drew near, and there was one special fancy dress ball, at Mrs. Shuttleworth's, about which Hesse had heard a great deal, and which she had secretly regretted to lose. She was, therefore, greatly delighted at a letter from Aunt, giving her leave to stay a fortnight longer.

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"Uncle will come for you on Shrove-Tuesday," wrote her Aunt. "He has some business to attend to, so he will stay over till Thursday, and you can take your pleasure till the last possible moment."

"How lovely!" cried Hesse. "How good of you to write, Cousin Julia, and I *am* so pleased to go to Mrs. Shuttleworth's ball!"

"What will you wear?" asked Pauline.

"Oh, I haven't thought of that, yet. I must invent something, for I don't wish to buy another dress, I have had so many things already." [97]

"Now, Hesse, you can't invent anything. It's impossible to make a fancy dress out of the ragbag," said Pauline, whose ideas were all of an expensive kind.

"We shall see," said Hesse. "I think I shall keep my costume as a surprise,—except from you, Cousin Julia. I shall want you to help me, but none of the others shall know anything about it till I come down-stairs."

This was a politic move on the part of Hesse. She was resolved to spend no money, for she knew that her winter had cost more than Uncle had expected, and more than it might be convenient for him to spare; yet she wished to avert discussion and remonstrance, and at the same time to prevent Mrs. De Lancey from giving her a new dress, which was very often that lady's easy way of helping Hesse out of her toilet difficulties. So a little seamstress was procured, and Cousin Julia taken into counsel. Hesse kept her door carefully locked for a day or two; and when, on the evening of the party, she came down attired as "My great-grandmother," in a short-waisted, straight-skirted white satin; with a big ante-revolutionary hat tied under her dimpled chin; a fichu of mull, embroidered in colored silks, knotted across her breast; long white silk mittens, and a reticule of pearl beads hanging from her girdle,—even Pauline could find no fault. The costume was as becoming as it was queer; and all the girls told Hesse that she had never looked so well in her life. [98]

Eight or ten particular friends of Pauline and Grace had arranged to meet at the De Lanceys', and all start together for the ball. The room was quite full of gay figures as "My great-grandmother" came down; it was one of those little moments of triumph which girls prize. The door-bell rang as she slowly turned before the throng, to exhibit the back of the wonderful gored and plaited skirt. There was a little colloquy in the hall, the butler opened the door, and in walked a figure which looked singularly out of place among the pretty, fantastic, girlish forms,—a tall, spare, elderly figure, in a coat of old-fashioned cut. A carpet-bag was in his hand. He was no other than Uncle, come a day before he was expected. [99]

His entrance made a little pause.

"What an extraordinary-looking person!" whispered Maud Ashurst to Pauline, who colored, hesitated, and did not, for a moment, know what to do. Hesse, standing with her back to the door, had seen nothing; but, struck by the silence, she turned. A meaner nature than hers might have shared Pauline's momentary embarrassment, but there was not a mean fibre in the whole of Hesse's frank, generous being.

"Uncle! dear Uncle!" she cried; and, running forward, she threw her arms around the lean old neck, and gave him half a dozen of her warmest kisses. [100]

"It is my uncle," she explained to the others. "We didn't expect him till to-morrow; and isn't it too delightful that he should come in time to see us all in our dresses!"

Then she drew him this way and that, introducing him to all her particular friends, chattering, dimpling, laughing with such evident enjoyment, such an assured sense that it was the pleasantest thing possible to have her uncle there, that every one else began to share it. The other girls, who, with a little encouragement, a little reserve and annoyed embarrassment on the part of Hesse, would have voted Uncle "a countrified old quiz," and, while keeping up the outward forms of civility, would have despised him in their hearts, infected by Hesse's sweet happiness, began to talk to him with the wish to please, and presently to discover how pleasant his face was, and how shrewd and droll his ideas and comments; and it ended by all pronouncing him an "old dear,"—so true it is that genuine and unaffected love and respect carry weight with them for all the rest of the world. [101]

Uncle was immensely amused by the costumes. He recalled the fancy balls of his youth, and gave the party some ideas on dress which had never occurred to any of them before. He could not at all understand the principle of selection on which the different girls had chosen their various characters.

"That gypsy queen looked as if she ought to be teaching a Sunday-school," he told Hesse afterward. "Little Red Riding Hood was too big for her wolf; and as for that scampish little nun of yours, I don't believe the stoutest convent ever built could hold her in for half a day."

"Come with us to Mrs. Shuttleworth's. It will be a pretty scene, and something for you to tell Cousin Marianne about when you go back," urged Mrs. De Lancey.

"Oh, do, do!" chimed in Hesse. "It will be twice as much fun if you are there, Uncle!" [102]

But Uncle was tired by his journey, and would not consent; and I am afraid that Pauline and Grace were a little relieved by his decision. False shame and the fear of "people" are powerful influences.

Three days later, Hesse's long, delightful visit ended, and she was speeding home under Uncle's care.

"You must write and invite some of those fine young folk to come up to see you in June," he told

her.

"That will be delightful," said Hesse. But when she came to think about it later, she was not so sure about its being delightful.

There is nothing like a long absence from home to open one's eyes to the real aspect of familiar things. The Sparlings-Neck house looked wofully plain and old-fashioned, even to Hesse, when contrasted with the elegance of Madison Avenue; how much more so, she reflected, would it look to the girls!

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She thought of Uncle's after-dinner pipe; of the queer little chamber, opening from the dining-room, where he and Aunt chose to sleep; of the green-painted woodwork of the spare bedrooms, and the blue paper-shades, tied up with a cord, which Aunt clung to because they were in fashion when she was a girl; and for a few foolish moments she felt that she would rather not have her friends come at all, than have them come to see all this, and perhaps make fun of it. Only for a few moments; then her more generous nature asserted itself with a bound.

"How mean of me to even think of such a thing!" she told herself, indignantly,—*"to feel ashamed to have people know what my own home is like, and Uncle and Aunt, who are so good to me! Hesse Reinike, I should like to hire some one to give you a good whipping! The girls shall come, and I'll make the old house look just as sweet as I can, and they shall like it, and have a beautiful time from the moment they come till they go away, if I can possibly give it to them."*

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To punish herself for what she considered an unworthy feeling, she resolved not to ask Aunt to let her change the blue paper-shades for white curtains, but to have everything exactly as it usually was. But Aunt had her own ideas and her pride of housekeeping to consider. As the time of the visit drew near, laundering and bleaching seemed to be constantly going on, and Jane, the old housemaid, was kept busy tacking dimity valances and fringed hangings on the substantial four-post bedsteads, and arranging fresh muslin covers over the toilet-tables. Treasures unknown to Hesse were drawn out of their receptacles,—bits of old embroidery, tamboured tablecloths and "crazy quilts," vases and bow-pots of pretty old china for the bureaus and chimney-pieces. Hesse took a long drive to the woods, and brought back great masses of ferns, pink azalea, and wild laurel. All the neighbors' gardens were laid under contribution. When all was in order, with ginger-jars full of cool white daisies and golden buttercups standing on the shining mahogany tables, bunches of blue lupines on the mantel, the looking-glasses wreathed with traveller's joy, a great bowl full of early roses and quantities of lilies-of-the-valley, the old house looked cosey enough and smelt sweet enough to satisfy the most fastidious taste.

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Hesse drove over with Uncle to the station to meet her guests. They took the big carryall, which, with squeezing, would hold seven; and a wagon followed for the luggage. There were five girls coming; for, besides Pauline and Grace, Hesse had invited Georgie Berrian, Maud Ashurst, and Ella Waring, who were the three special favorites among her New York friends.

The five flocked out of the train, looking so dainty and stylish that they made the old carryall seem shabbier than ever by contrast. Maud Ashurst cast one surprised look at it and at the old white mare,—she had never seen just such a carriage before; but the quality of the equipage was soon forgotten, as Uncle twitched the reins, and they started down the long lane-like road which led to Sparlings-Neck and was Hesse's particular delight.

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The station and the dusty railroad were forgotten almost immediately,—lost in the sense of complete country freshness. On either hand rose tangled banks of laurel and barberries, sweet-ferns and budding grapevines, overarched by tall trees, and sending out delicious odors; while mingling with and blending all came, borne on a shoreward wind, the strong salt fragrance of the sea.

"What is it? What can it be? I never smelt anything like it!" cried the girls from the city.

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"Now, girls," cried Hesse, turning her bright face around from the driver's seat, "this is real, absolute country, you know,—none of the make-believes which you get at Newport or up the Hudson. Everything we have is just as queer and old-fashioned as it can be. You won't be asked to a single party while you are here, and there isn't the ghost of a young man in the neighborhood. Well, yes, there may be a ghost, but there is no young man. You must just make up your minds, all of you, to a dull time, and then you'll find that it's lovely."

"It's sure to be lovely wherever you are, you dear thing!" declared Ella Waring, with a little rapturous squeeze.

I fancy that, just at first, the city girls did think the place very queer. None of them had ever seen just such an old house as the Reinikes' before. The white wainscots with their toothed mouldings matched by the cornices above, the droll little cupboards in the walls, the fire-boards pasted with gay pictures, the queer closets and clothes-presses occurring just where no one would naturally have looked for them, and having, each and all, an odd shut-up odor, as of by-gone days,—all seemed very strange to them. But the flowers and the green elms and Hesse's warm welcome were delightful; so were Aunt's waffles and wonderful tarts, the strawberries smothered in country cream, and the cove oysters and clams which came in, deliciously stewed, for tea; and they soon pronounced the visit "a lark," and Sparlings-Neck a paradise.

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There were long drives in the woods, picnics in the pine groves, bathing-parties on the beach, morning sittings under the trees with an interesting book; and when a northeaster came, and

brought with it what seemed a brief return of winter, there was a crackling fire, a candy-pull, and a charming evening spent in sitting on the floor telling ghost-stories, with the room only lighted by the fitfully blazing wood, and with cold creeps running down their backs! Altogether, the fortnight was a complete success, and every one saw its end with reluctance.

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"I wish we were going to stay all summer!" said Georgie Berrian. "Newport will seem stiff and tiresome after this."

"I never had so good a time,—never!" declared Ella. "And, Hesse, I do think your aunt and uncle are the dearest old people I ever saw!" That pleased Hesse most of all. But what pleased her still more was when, after the guests were gone, and the house restored to its old order, and the regular home life begun again, Uncle put his arm around her, and gave her a kiss,—not a bedtime kiss, or one called for by any special occasion, but an extra kiss, all of his own accord.

"A dear child," he said; "not a bit ashamed of the old folks, was she? I liked that, Hesse."

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"Ashamed of you and Aunt? I should think not!" answered Hesse, with a flush.

Uncle gave a dry little chuckle.

"Well, well," he said, "some girls would have been; you weren't,—that's all the difference. You're a good child, Hesse."

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THE CORN-BALL MONEY, AND WHAT BECAME OF IT.

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DOTTY and Dimple were two little sisters, who looked so much alike that most people took them for twins. They both had round faces, blue eyes, straight brown hair, cut short in the neck, and cheeks as firm and pink as fall apples; and, though Dotty was eleven months the oldest, Dimple was the taller by half an inch, so that altogether it was very confusing.

I don't believe any twins could love each other better than did these little girls. Nobody ever heard them utter a quarrelsome word from the time they waked in the morning, and began to chatter and giggle in bed like two little squirrels, to the moment when they fell asleep at night, with arms tight clasped round each other's necks. They liked the same things, did the same things, and played together all day long without being tired. Their father's farm was two miles from the nearest neighbor, and three from the schoolhouse; so they didn't go to school, and no little boys and girls ever came to see them.

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Should you think it would be lonely to live so? Dotty and Dimple didn't. They had each other for playmates, and all outdoors to play in, and that was enough.

The farm was a wild, beautiful spot. A river ran round two sides of it; and quite near the house it "met with an accident," as Dotty said; that is, it tumbled over some high rocks in a waterfall, and then, picking itself up, took another jump, and landed, all white and foaming, in a deep wooded glen.

The water where it fell was dazzling with rainbows, like soap-bubbles; and the pool at the bottom had the color of a green emerald, only that all over the top little flakes of sparkling spray swam and glittered in the sun. Altogether it was a wonderful place, and the children were never tired of watching the cascade or hearing the rush and roar of its leap.

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All summer long city people, boarding in the village, six miles off, would drive over to see the fall. This was very interesting, indeed! Carryalls and big wagons would stop at the gate, and ladies get out, with pretty round hats and parasols; and gentlemen, carrying canes; and dear little children, in flounced and braided frocks. And they would all come trooping up close by the house, on their way to see the view. Sometimes, but not often, one would stop to get a drink of water or ask the way. Dotty and Dimple liked very much to have them come. They would hide, and peep out at the strangers, and make up all kinds of stories about them; but they were too shy to come forward or let themselves be seen. So the people from the city never guessed what bright eyes were looking at them from behind the door or on the other side of the bushes. But all the same, it was great fun for the children to have them come, and they were always pleased when wheels were heard and wagons drove up to the gate.

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It was early last summer that a droll idea popped into Dotty's head. It all came from a man who, walking past, and stopping to see the fall, sat down a while to rest, and said to the farmer:—

"I should think you'd charge people something for looking at that ere place, stranger."

"No," replied Dotty's father. "I don't calculate on asking folks nothing for the use of their eyes."

"Well," said the man, getting up to go, "you might as well. It's what folks is doing all over the country. If 't was mine, I'd fix up a lunch or something, and fetch 'em that way."

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But the farmer only laughed. That night, when Dotty and Dimple were in bed, they began to whisper to each other about the man.

"Wasn't it funny," giggled Dimple, "his telling Pa to fix a lunch?"

"Yes," said Dotty. "But I'll tell you what, Dimple! when he said that, I had such a nice plan come into my head. You know you and me can make real nice corn-balls."

"'Course we can."

"Well, let's get Pa, or else Zach, to make us a little table,—out of boards, you know; and let's put it on the bank, close to the place where folks go to see the fall; and every day let's pop a lot of corn, and make some balls, and set them on the table for the folks to eat. Don't you think that would be nice?"

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"I'm afraid Mother wouldn't let us have so much molasses," said the practical Dimple.

"Oh, but don't you see I mean to have the folks *pay* for 'em! We'll put a paper on the table, with 'two cents apiece,' or something like that, on it. And then they'll put the money on the table, and when they're gone away we'll go and fetch it. Won't that be fun? Perhaps there'd be a great, great deal,—most as much as a dollar!"

"Oh, no," cried Dimple, "not so much as *that!* But we might get a greenback. How much is a greenback, Dot?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Dotty. "A good deal, I know, but I guess it isn't so much as a dollar."

The little sisters could hardly sleep that night, they were so excited over their plan. Next morning they were up with the birds; and before breakfast Mother, Father, and Zach, the hired man, had heard all about the wonderful scheme.

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Mother said she didn't mind letting them try; and Zach, who was very fond of the children, promised to make the table the very first thing after the big field was ploughed. And so he did; and a very nice table it was, with four legs and a good stout top. Dotty and Dimple laughed with pleasure when they saw it.

Zach set it on the bank just at the place where the people stood to look at the view; and he drove a stake at each corner; and found some old sheeting, and made a sort of tent over the table, so that the sun should not shine under and melt the corn-balls. When it was all arranged, and the table set out, with the corn-balls on one plate and maple-sugar cakes on another, it looked very tempting, and the children were extremely proud of it. Dotty cut a sheet of paper, and printed upon it the following notice:

"Corn bals 2 sents apece.
Sugar 1 sent apece.
Plese help yure selfs and put the munney
on the table."

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This was pinned to the tent, right over the table.

The first day four people came to visit the waterfall; and when the children ran down to look, after they had driven away, half the provisions were gone, and there on the table lay four shining five-cent pieces! The next day was not so good; they only made four cents. And so it went on all summer. Some days a good many people would come, and a good many pennies be left on the table; and other days nobody would come, and the wasps would eat the maple-sugar, and fly away without paying anything at all. But little by little the tin box in Mother's drawer got heavier and heavier, until at last, early in October, Dotty declared that she was tired of making corn-balls, and she guessed the city-folks were all gone home; and now wouldn't Mother please to count the money, and see how much they had got?

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So Mother emptied the tin box into her lap, with a great jingle of pennies and rustling of fractional currency. And how much do you think there was? Three dollars and seventy-eight cents! The seventy-eight cents Mother said would just about pay for the molasses; so there were three dollars all their own,—for Dotty and Dimple to spend as they liked!

You should have seen them dance about the kitchen! Three dollars! Why, it was a fortune! It would buy everything in the world! They had fifty plans, at least, for spending it; and sat up so late talking them over, and had such red cheeks and excited eyes, that Mother said she was afraid they wouldn't sleep one wink all night. But, bless you! they did, and were as bright as buttons in the morning.

For a week there was nothing talked about but the wonderful three dollars. And then one evening Father, who had been over to the village, came home with a very grave face, and, drawing a newspaper from his pocket, read them all about the great fire in Chicago.

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He read how the flames, spreading like wind, swept from one house to another, and how people

had just time to run out of their homes, leaving everything to burn; how women, with babies in their arms, and frightened children crouched all that dreadful night out on the cold, wet prairie, without food or clothes or shelter; how little boys and girls ran through the burning streets, crying for the parents whom they could not find; how everybody had lost everything.

"Oh," said Dimple, almost crying, as she listened to the piteous story, "how dreadful those little girls must feel! And I suppose all their dollies are burned up too. I wouldn't have Nancy burned in a fire for anything!" and, picking up an old doll, of whom she was very fond, she hugged her with unspeakable affection. [121]

That night there was another long, mysterious confabulation in the children's bed; and, coming down in the morning, hand in hand, Dotty and Dimple announced that they had made up their minds what to do with the corn-ball money.

"We're going to send it to the Sicago," said Dimple, "to those poor little girls whose dollies are all burned up!"

"How will you send it?" asked their Mother.

"In a letter," said Dotty. "And please, Pa, write on the outside: 'From Dotty and Dimple, to buy some dollies for the little girls whose dollies were burned up in the fire.'"

So their father put the money into an envelope, and wrote on the outside just what Dotty said. And, when he had got through, he put his hands in his pockets and walked out of the room. The children wondered what made his face so red, and when they turned round, there was Mother with tears in her eyes. [122]

"Why, what's the matter?" cried they. But their Mother only put her arms round them and kissed them very hard. And she whispered to herself: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

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THE PRIZE GIRL OF THE HARNESSING CLASS. [123]



It was the day before Thanksgiving, but the warmth of a late Indian summer lay over the world, and tempered the autumn chill into mildness more like early October than late November. Elsie Thayer, driving her village cart rapidly through the "Long Woods," caught herself vaguely wondering why the grass was not greener, and what should set the leaves to tumbling off the trees in such an unsummer-like fashion,—then smiled at herself for being so forgetful.

The cart was packed full; for, besides Elsie herself, it held a bag of sweet potatoes, a sizable bundle or two, and a large market-basket, from which protruded the unmistakable legs of a turkey, not to mention a choice smaller basket covered with a napkin. All these were going to the little farmstead in which dwelt Mrs. Ann Sparrow, Elsie's nurse in childhood, and the most faithful and kindly of friends ever since. Elsie always made sure that "Nursey" had a good Thanksgiving dinner, and generally carried it herself. [124]

The day was so delightful that it seemed almost a pity that the pony should trot so fast. One would willingly have gone slowly, tasting drop by drop, as it were, the lovely sunshine filtering through the yellow beech boughs, the unexpected warmth, and the balmy spice of the air, which had in it a tinge of smoky haze. But the day before Thanksgiving is sure to be a busy one with New England folk; Elsie had other tasks awaiting her, and she knew that Nursey would not be content with a short visit.

"Hurry up, little Jack!" she said. "You shall have a long rest presently, if you are a good boy, and some nice fresh grass,—if I can find any; anyway, a little drink of water. So make haste." [125]

Jack made haste. The yellow wheels of the cart spun in and out of the shadow like circles of gleaming sun. When the two miles were achieved, and the little clearing came into view, Elsie slackened her pace: she wanted to take Nursey by surprise. Driving straight to a small open shed, she deftly unharnessed the pony, tied him with a liberal allowance of halter, hung up the harness, and wheeled the cart away from his heels, all with the ease which is born of practice. She then gathered a lapful of brown but still nourishing grasses for Jack, and was about to lift the parcels from the wagon when she was espied by Mrs. Sparrow.

Out she came, hurrying and flushed with pleasure,—the dearest old woman, with pink, wrinkled cheeks like a perfectly baked apple, and a voice which still retained its pleasant English tones, after sixty long years in America. [126]

"Well, Missy, dear, so it's you. I made sure you'd come, and had been watching all the morning; but somehow I missed you when you drove up, and it was just by haccident like, that I looked out of window and see you in the shed. You're looking well, Missy. That school hasn't hurt you a bit.

Just the same nice color in your cheeks as ever. I was that troubled when I heard you wa'n't coming home last summer, for I thought maybe you was ill; but your mother she said 'twas all right, and just for your pleasure, and I see it was so. Why,"—her voice changing to consternation,—"if you haven't unharnessed the horse! Now, Missy, how came you to do that? You forgot there wasn't no one about but me. Who's to put him in for you, I wonder?"

"Oh, I don't want any one. I can harness the pony myself."

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"Oh, Missy, dear, you mustn't do that! I couldn't let you. It's real hard to harness a horse. You'd make some mistake, and then there'd be a haccident."

"Nonsense, Nursey! I've harnessed Jack once this morning already; it's just as easy to do it twice. I'm a member of a Harnessing Class, I'd have you to know; and, what's more, I took the prize!"

"Now, Missy, dear, whatever do you mean by that? Young ladies learn to harness! I never heard of such a thing in my life! In my young time, in England, they learned globes and langwidges, and, it might be, to paint in oils and such, and make nice things in chenille."

"I'll tell you all about it, but first let us carry these things up to the house. Here's your Thanksgiving turkey, Nursey,—with Mother's love. Papa sent you the sweet potatoes and the cranberries; and the oranges and figs and the pumpkin pie are from me. I made the pie myself. That's another of the useful things that I learned to do at my school."

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"The master is very kind, Missy; and so is your mother; and I'm thankful to you all. But that's a queer school of yours, it seems to me. For my part, I never heard of young ladies learning such things as cooking and harnessing at boarding-schools."

"Oh, we learn arts and languages, too,—that part of our education isn't neglected. Now, Nursey, we'll put these things in your buttery, and you shall give me a glass of nice cold milk; and while I drink it I'll tell you about Rosemary Hall,—that's the name of the school, you know; and it's the dearest, nicest place you can think of."

"Very likely, Miss Elsie," in an unconvinced tone; "but still I don't see any reason why they should set you to making pies and harnessing horses."

"Oh, that's just at odd times, by way of fun and pleasure; it isn't lessons, you know. You see, Mrs. Thanet—that's a rich lady who lives close by, and is a sort of fairy godmother to us girls—has a great notion about practical education. It was she who got up the Harnessing Class and the Model Kitchen. It's the dearest little place you ever saw, Nursey, with a *perfect* stove, and shelves, and hooks for everything; and such bright tins, and the prettiest of old-fashioned crockery! It's just like a picture. We girls were always squabbling over whose turn should come first. You can't think how much I learned there, Nursey! I learned to make a pie, and clear out a grate, and scour saucepans, and," counting on her fingers, "to make bread, rolls, minute-biscuit, coffee,—delicious coffee, Nursey!—good soup, creamed oysters, and pumpkin-pies and apple-pies! Just wait, and you shall see!"

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She jumped up, ran into the buttery, and soon returned, carrying a triangle of pie on a plate.

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"It isn't Thanksgiving yet, I know; but there is no law against eating pumpkin-pie the day before, so please, Nursey, taste this and see if you don't call it good. Papa says it makes him think of his mother's pies, when he was a little boy."

"Indeed, and it is good, Missy, dear; and I won't deny but cooking may be well for you to know; but for that other—the harnessing class, as you call it,—I don't see the sense of that at all, Missy."

"Oh, Nursey, indeed there is a great deal of sense in it. Mrs. Thanet says it might easily happen, in the country especially,—if any one was hurt or taken very ill, you know,—that life might depend upon a girl's knowing how to harness. She had a man teach us, and we practised and practised, and at the end of the term there was an exhibition, with a prize for the girl who could harness and unharness quickest, and I won it! See, here it is!"

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She held out a slim brown hand, and displayed a narrow gold bangle, on which was engraved in minute letters, "What is worth doing at all, is worth doing well."

"Isn't it pretty?" she asked.

"Yes," doubtfully. "The bracelet is pretty enough, Missy; but I can't quite like what it stands for. It don't seem ladylike for you to be knowing about harnesses and such things."

"Oh, Nursey, dear, what nonsense!"

There were things to be done after she got home, but Elsie could not hurry her visit. Jack consumed his grass heap, and then stood sleepily blinking at the flies for a long hour before his young mistress jumped up.

"Now, I must go!" she cried. "Come out and see me harness up, Nursey."

It was swiftly and skilfully done, but still Nurse Sparrow shook her head.

"I don't like it!" she insisted. "'A horse shall be a vain thing for safety'—that's in Holy Writ."

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"You are an obstinate old dear," said Elsie, good-humoredly. "Wait till you're ill some day, and I

go for the doctor. *Then* you'll realize the advantage of practical education. What a queer smell of smoke there is, Nursey!" gathering up her reins.

"Yes; the woods has been on fire for quite a spell, back on the other side of Bald Top. You can smell the smoke most of the time. Seems to me it's stronger than usual, to-day."

"You don't think there is any danger of its coming this way, do you?"

"Oh, no!" contentedly. "I don't suppose it could come so far as this."

"But why not?" thought Elsie to herself, as she drove rapidly back. "If the wind were right for it, why shouldn't it come this way? Fires travel much farther than that on the prairies,—and they go very fast, too. I never did like having Nursey all alone by herself on that farm."

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She reached home, to find things in unexpected confusion. Her father had been called away for the night by a telegram, and her mother—on this, of all days—had gone to bed, disabled with a bad headache. There was much to be done, and Elsie flung herself into the breach, and did it, too busy to think again of Nurse Sparrow and the fire, until, toward nightfall, she noted that the wind had changed, and was blowing straight from Bald Top, bringing with it an increase of smoke.

She ran out to consult the hired man before he went home for the night, and to ask if he thought there was any danger of the fire reaching the Long Woods. He "guessed" not.

"These fires get going quite often on to the other side of Bald Top, but there ain't none of 'em come over this way, and 'tain't likely they ever will. I guess Mis' Sparrow's safe enough. You needn't worry, Miss Elsie."

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In spite of this comforting assurance, Elsie did worry. She looked out of her west window the last thing before going to bed; and when, at two in the morning, she woke with a sudden start, her first impulse was to run to the window again. Then she gave an exclamation, and her heart stood still with fear; for the southern slopes of Bald Top were ringed with flames which gleamed dim and lurid through the smoke, and showers of sparks, thrown high in air, showed that the edges of the woods beyond Nursey's farm were already burning.

"She'll be frightened to death," thought Elsie. "Oh, poor dear, and no one to help her!"

What should she do? To go after the man and waken him meant a long delay. He was a heavy sleeper, and his house was a quarter of a mile distant. But there was Jack in the stable, and the stable key was in the hall below. As she dressed, she decided.

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"How glad I am that I can do this!" she thought, as she flung the harness over the pony's back, strapped, buckled, adjusted,—doing all with a speed which yet left nothing undone and slighted nothing. Not even on the day when she took the prize had she put her horse in so quickly. She ran back at the last moment for two warm rugs. Deftly guiding Jack over the grass, that his hoofs should make no noise, she gained the road, and, quickening him to his fastest pace, drove fearlessly into the dark woods.

They were not so dark as she had feared they would be, for the light of a late, low-hung moon penetrated the trees, with perhaps some reflections from the far-away fire, so that she easily made out the turns and windings of the track. The light grew stronger as she advanced. The main fire was still far distant, but before she reached Nurse's little clearing, she even drove by one place where the woods were ablaze.

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She had expected to find Mrs. Sparrow in an agitation of terror; but, behold! she was in her bed, sound asleep. Happily, it was easy to get at her. Nursey's theory was that, "if anybody thought it would pay him to sit up at night and rob an old woman, he'd do it anyway, and needn't have the trouble of getting in at the window;" and on the strength of this philosophical utterance, she went to bed with the door on the latch.

She took Elsie for a dream, at first.

"I'm just a-dreaming. I ain't a-going to wake up; you needn't think it," she muttered sleepily.

But when Elsie at last shook her into consciousness, and pointed at the fiery glow on the horizon, her terror matched her previous unconcern.

"Oh, dear, dear!" she wailed, as with trembling, suddenly stiff fingers she put on her clothes. "I'm a-going to be burned out! It's hard, at my time of life, just when I had got things tidy and comfortable. I was a-thinking of sending over for my niece to the Isle of Dogs, and getting her to come and stay with me, I was indeed, Missy. But there won't be any use in that *now*."

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"Perhaps the fire won't come so far as this, after all," said the practical Elsie.

"Oh, yes, it will! It's 'most here now."

"Well, whether it does or not, I'm going to carry you home with me, where you will be safe. Now, Nursey, tell me which of your things you care most for, that we can take with us,—small things, I mean. Of course we can't carry tables and beds in my little cart."

The selection proved difficult. Nurse's affections clung to a tall eight-day clock, and were hard to be detached. She also felt strongly that it was a clear flying in the face of Providence not to save "Sparrow's chair," a solid structure of cherry, with rockers weighing many pounds, and

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quite as wide as the wagon. Elsie coaxed and remonstrated, and at last got Nursey into the seat, with the cat and a bundle of her best clothes in her lap, her tea-spoons in her pocket, a basket of specially beloved baking-tins under the seat, and a favorite feather-bed at the back, among whose billowy folds were tucked away an assortment of treasures, ending with the Thanksgiving goodies which had been brought over that morning.

"I can't leave that turkey behind, Missy, dear—I really can't!" pleaded Nursey. "I've been thinking of him, and anticipating how good he was going to be, all day; and I haven't had but one taste of your pie. They're so little, they'll go in anywhere."

The fire seemed startlingly near now, and the western sky was all aflame, while over against it, in the east, burned the first yellow beams of dawn. People were astir by this time, and men on foot and horseback were hurrying toward the burning woods. They stared curiously at the oddly laden cart. [139]

"Why, you didn't ever come over for me all alone!" cried Nurse Sparrow, rousing suddenly to a sense of the situation. "I've be'n that flustered that I never took thought of how you got across, or anything about it. Where was your Pa, Missy,—and Hiram?"

Elsie explained.

"Oh, you blessed child; and if you hadn't come, I'd have been burned in my bed, as like as not!" cried the old woman, quite overpowered. "Well, well! little did I think, when you was a baby, and I a-tending you, that the day was to come when you were to run yourself into danger for the sake of saving my poor old life!"

"I don't see that there has been any particular danger for me to run, so far; and as for saving your life, Nursey, it would very likely have saved itself if I hadn't come near you. See, the wind has changed; it is blowing from the north now. Perhaps the fire won't reach your house, after all. But, anyway, I am glad you are here and not there. We cannot be too careful of such a dear old Nursey as you are. And one thing, I think, you'll confess,"—Elsie's tone was a little mischievous,— "and that is, that harnessing classes have their uses. If I hadn't known how to put Jack in the cart, I might at this moment be hammering on the door of that stupid Hiram (who, you know, sleeps like a log) trying to wake him, and you on the clearing alone, scared to death. Now, Nursey, own up: Mrs. Thanet wasn't so far wrong, now was she?" [140]

"Indeed, no, Missy. It'd be very ungrateful for me to be saying that. The lady judged wiser than I did."

"Very well, then," cried Elsie, joyously. "If only your house isn't burned up, I shall be glad the fire happened; for it's such a triumph for Mrs. Thanet, and she'll be so pleased!" [141]

Nursey's house did not burn down. The change of wind came just in time to save it; and, after eating her own Thanksgiving turkey in her old home, and being petted and made much of for a few days, she went back, none the worse for her adventure, to find her goods and chattels in their usual places, and all safe.

And Mrs. Thanet *was* pleased. She sent Elsie a pretty locket, with the date of the fire engraved upon it, and wrote that she gloried in her as the Vindicator of a Principle, which fine words made Elsie laugh; but she enjoyed being praised all the same.

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DOLLY PHONE.

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DUSTY workshop, dark except where one broad ray of light streamed through a broken shutter, a row of mysterious objects, with a tiny tin funnel fitted into the front of each, and a cloth over their tops, odd designs in wood and brass hanging on the wall, a carpenter's bench, a small furnace, a general strew of shavings, iron scrape, and odds and ends, and a little girl sitting on the floor, crying. It does not sound much like the beginning of a story, does it? And no one would have been more surprised than Amy Carpenter herself if any one had come as she sat there crying, and told her that a story was begun, and she was in it.

Yet that is the way in which stories in real life often do begin. Dust, dulness, every-day things about one, tears, temper; and out of these unpromising materials Fate weaves a "happening" for us. She does not wait till skies are blue and suns shine, till the room is dusted, and we are all ready, but chooses such time as pleases her, and surprises us. [143]

Amy was in as evil a temper as little girls of ten are often visited with. Things had gone very wrong with her that day. It began with a great disappointment. All Miss Gray's class at school was going on a picnic. Amy had expected to go too, and at the last moment her mother had kept

her at home.

"I'm real sorry about it," Mrs. Carpenter had said, "but you see how it is. Baby's right fretty with his teeth, and your father's that worried about his machine that I'm afraid he'll be down sick. If we can't keep Baby quiet, father can't eat, and if he don't eat he won't sleep, and if he can't sleep he can't work, and then I don't see what will become of us. I've all that sewing to finish for Mrs. Judge Peters, and she's going away Monday; and if she don't have it in time, she'll be put out, and, as like as not, give her work to some one else. Now, don't cry, Amy. I'm right sorry to disappoint you, but all of us must take our turn in giving up things. I'm sure I take mine," with a little patient sigh. [144]

"Father's sure that this new machine of his is going to make our fortune," she went on, after an interval of busy stitching. "But I don't know. He said just the same about the alarm-clock, and the Imferno Reaper and Binder, and that thing-a-my-jig for opening cans, and the self-registering Savings Bank, and the Minute Egg-Beater, and the Tuck Measurer, and none of them came to anything in the end. Perhaps it'll be the same with this." Another sigh, a little deeper than the last. [145]

Some little girls might have been touched with the tired, discouraged voice and look, but Amy was a stormy child, with a hot temper and a very strong will. So instead of being sorry and helpful, she went on crying and complaining, till her mother spoke sharply, and then subsided into sulky silence. Baby woke, and she had to take him up, but she did it unwillingly, and her unhappy mood seemed to communicate itself to him, as moods will. He wriggled and twisted in her arms, and presently began to whimper. Amy hushed and patted. She set him on his feet, she turned him over on his face, nothing pleased him. The whimper increased to a roar.

"Dear! dear!" cried poor Mrs. Carpenter, stopping her machine in the middle of a long seam. "What is the matter? I never did see anybody so unhandy with a baby as you are. Here I am in such a hurry, and you don't try to amuse him worth a cent. I'm really ashamed of you, Amy Carpenter." [146]

Amy's back and arms ached; she felt that this speech was cruelly unjust. What she did not see was that it was her own temper which was repeated in her little brother. Like all babies, he knew instinctively the difference between loving tendance and that which is bestowed from a cold sense of duty, and he resented the latter with all his might.

"Do walk up and down and sing to him," said Mrs. Carpenter, who hated to have her child unhappy, but still more to leave her sewing,— "sing something cheerful. Perhaps he'll go to sleep if you do."

So Amy, feeling very cross and injured, had to walk the heavy baby up and down, and sing "Rock me to sleep, Mother," which was the only "cheerful" song she could think of. It quieted the baby for a while, then, just as his eyelids were drooping, a fresh attack of fretting seized upon him, and he began to cry; Amy was so vexed that she gave him a furtive slap. It was a very little slap, but her mother saw it. [147]

"You naughty, bad girl!" she cried, jumping up; "so that's the way you treat your little brother, is it? Slapping him on the sly! No wonder he doesn't like you, and won't go to sleep!" She snatched the child away, and gave Amy a smart box on the ear. Mrs. Carpenter, though a good woman, had a quick temper of her own.

"You can go up-stairs now," she said in a stern, exasperated tone. "I don't want you any more this afternoon. If you were a good girl, you might have been a real comfort to me this hard day, but as it is, I'd rather have your room than your company."

Frightened and angry both, Amy rushed up-stairs, and into her father's workshop, the door of which stood open. He had just gone out, and the confusion and dreariness of the place seemed inviting to her at the moment. Flinging the door to with a great bang, she threw herself on the floor, and gave vent to her pent-up emotions. [148]

"It's unjust!" she sobbed, speaking louder than usual, as people do who are in a passion. "Mamma is as mean as she can be! Scolding me because that old baby wouldn't go to sleep! I hate everybody! I wish I was dead! I wish everybody else was dead!"

These were dreadful words for a little girl to use. Even in her anger, Amy would have been startled and ashamed at the idea of any one's ever hearing them.

But Amy had a listener, though she little suspected it, and, what was worse, a listener who was recording every word that she uttered!

The "new machine" of which Mrs. Carpenter had spoken was really a very clever and ingenious one. It was the adaptation of the phonographic principle to the person of a doll. Mr. Carpenter had succeeded in interesting somebody with capital in his project, and the dolls were at that moment being manufactured for the apparatus, the construction of which he kept in his own hands. This apparatus was held in small cylinders, just large enough to fit into the body of a doll and contain, each, a few sentences, which the doll would seem to speak when set in an upright position. [149]

These cylinders were just ready, and standing in a row waiting to receive their "charges," which were to be put into them through the tin funnels fitted for the purpose. Amy, as she sat on

the floor, was exactly opposite one of these funnels, and all her angry words passed into, and became a part of, the mechanism of the doll. After this, no matter how many pretty words might be uttered softly into that cylinder, none of them could make any impression; the doll was full. It could hold no more.

But no one knew that the doll was full. Amy, her fit of passion over, fell asleep on the floor, and when her father's step sounded below, waked in a calmer mood. She was sorry that she had been so naughty, and tried to make up for it by being more helpful and patient in the evening and next day. Her mother easily forgave her, and she did not find it hard to forgive herself, and soon forgot the event of that unhappy afternoon. Mr. Carpenter sat down in front of his cylinders that night, and filled them all, as he supposed, with nice little sentences to please and surprise small doll owners, such as "Good morning, Mamma. Shall I put on my pink or my olive frock this morning?" or "Good-night, Mamma. I'm so sleepy!" or bits of nursery rhymes,—Bo Peep or Jack and Jill or Little Boy Blue. Then, when the phonographs were filled, the machinery went away to be put in the dolls, and Mr. Carpenter began on a fresh set.

Mrs. Carpenter, meanwhile, had finished her big job of sewing, so she felt less hurried, and had more time for the baby. The weather was beautiful, things went well at school, and altogether life seemed pleasant to Amy, and she found it easy to be kind and good-natured.

This agreeable state of things lasted through the autumn. The Dolliphone, as Mr. Carpenter had christened his invention, proved a hit. Orders poured in from all over the United States, and from England and France, and the manufactory was taxed to its utmost extent. At last one of Mr. Carpenter's inventions had turned out a success, and his spirits rose high.

"We've fetched it this time, Mother," he told his wife. "The stock's going up like all possessed, and the dolls are going out as fast as we can get them ready. Why, we've had orders from as far off as Australia! China'll come next, I suppose, or the Cannibal Islands. There's no end to the money that's in it."

"I'm glad, Robert, I'm sure," returned Mrs. Carpenter; "but don't count too much upon it all. I've thought a heap of that self-acting churn, you remember."

"Pshaw! the churn never did amount to shucks anyhow," said her husband, who had the true inventor's faculty for forgetting the mischances of the past in the contemplation of the hopes of the future. "It was just a little dud to make folks open their eyes, any way. This Dolliphone is different. It's bound to sell like wild-fire, once it gets to going. We'll be rich folks before we know it, Mother."

"That'll be nice," said Mrs. Carpenter, with a dry, unbelieving cough. She did not mean to be as discouraging as she sounded, but a woman can scarcely be the wife of an unsuccessful genius for fifteen years, and see the family earnings vanish down the throat of one invention after another, without becoming outwardly, as well as inwardly, discouraged.

"Now, don't be a wet blanket, Mother," said Mr. Carpenter, good-humoredly. "We've had some upsets in our calculation, I confess, but this time it's all coming out right, as you'll see. And I wanted to ask you about something, and that is what you'd think of Amy's having one of the dolls for her Christmas? Don't you think it'd please her?"

"Why, of course; but do you think you can afford it, Robert? The dolls are five dollars, aren't they?"

"Yes, to customers they are, but I shouldn't have to pay anything like that, of course. I can have one for cost price, say a dollar seventy-five; so if you think the child would like it, we'll fix it so."

"Well, I should be glad to have Amy get one," said Mrs. Carpenter, brightening up. "And it seems only right that she should, when you invented it and all. She's been pretty good these last weeks, and she'll be mightily tickled."

So it was settled, but the pile of orders to be filled was so incessant that it was not till Christmas Eve that Mr. Carpenter could get hold of a doll for his own use, and no time was left in which to dress it. That was no matter, Mrs. Carpenter declared; Amy would like to make the clothes herself, and it would be good practice in sewing. She hunted up some pieces of cambric and flannel and scraps of ribbon for the purpose, and when Amy woke on Christmas morning, there by her side lay the big, beautiful creature, with flaxen hair, long-lashed blue eyes, and a dimple in her pink chin. Beside her was a parcel containing the materials for her clothes and a new spool of thread, and on the doll's arm was pinned a paper with this inscription:—

"For Amy, with a Merry Christmas from Father and Mother.

"Her name is Dolly Phone."

Amy's only doll up to this time had been a rag one, manufactured by her mother, and you can imagine her delight. She hugged Dolly Phone to her heart, kissed her twenty times over, and examined all her beauties in detail,—her lovely bang, her hands, and her little feet, which had brown kid shoes sewed on them, and the smile on her lips, which showed two tiny white teeth. She stood her up on the quilt to see how tall she was, and as she did so, wonder of wonders, out of these smiling red lips came a voice, sharp and high-pitched, as if a canary-bird or a Jew's-harp

were suddenly endowed with speech, and began to talk to her!

What did the voice say? Not "Good-morning, Mamma," or "I'm so sleepy!" or "Mistress Mary quite contrary," or "Twinkle, twinkle, little star,"—none of these things. Her sister dolls might have said these things; what Dolly Phone said, speaking fast and excitedly, was,—

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"It's unjust! Mamma is as mean as she can be! Scolding me because that old baby wouldn't go to sleep! I hate everybody! I wish I was dead! I wish everybody else was dead!" And then, in a different tone, a good deal deeper, "Good-morning, ma-m—" and there the voice stopped suddenly.

Amy had listened to this remarkable address with astonishment. That her beautiful new baby could speak, was delightful, but what horrible things she said!

"How queerly you talk, darling!" she cried, snatching the doll into her arms again. "What is the matter? Why do you speak so to me? Are you alive, or only making believe? I'm not mean; what makes you say I am? And, oh! why do you wish you were dead?"

Dolly stared full in her face with an unwinking smile. She looked perfectly good-natured. Amy began to think that she was dreaming, or that the whole thing was some queer trick.

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"There, there, dear!" she cried, patting the doll's back, "we won't say any more about it. You love me now, I know you do!"

Then, very gently and cautiously, she set Dolly on her feet again. "Perhaps she'll say something nice this time," she thought hopefully.

Alas! the rosy lips only uttered the self-same words. "Mean—unjust—I hate everybody—I wish everybody was dead," in sharp, un pitying sequence. Worst of all, the phrases began to have a familiar sound to Amy's ear. She felt her cheeks burn with a sudden red.

"Why," she thought, "that was what I said in the workshop the day I was so cross. How could the doll know? Oh, dear! she's so lovely and so beautiful, but if she keeps on talking like this, what shall I do?"

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Deep in her heart struggled an uneasy fear. Mother would hear the doll! Mother might suspect what it meant! At all hazards, Dolly must be kept from talking while mother was by.

She was so quiet and subdued when she went downstairs to breakfast, with the doll in her arms, that her father and mother could not understand it. They had looked forward to seeing her boisterously joyful. She kissed them, and thanked them, and tried to seem like her usual self, but mothers' eyes are sharp, and Mrs. Carpenter detected the look of trouble.

"What's the matter, dear?" she whispered. "Don't you feel well?"

"Oh, yes! very well. Nothing's the matter." Amy whispered back, keeping the terrible Dolly sedulously prone, as she spoke.

"Come, Amy, let's see your new baby," said Mr. Carpenter. "She's a beauty, ain't she? Half of her was made in this house, did you know that? Set her up, and let's hear her talk."

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"She's asleep now," faltered Amy. "But she's been talking up-stairs. She talks very nicely, Papa. She's tired now, truly she is."

"Nonsense! she isn't the kind that gets tired. Her tongue won't ache if she runs on all day; she's like some little girls in that. Stand her up, Amy, I want to hear her. I've never seen one of 'em out of the shop before. She looks wonderfully alive, doesn't she, Mother?"

But Amy still hesitated. Her manner was so strange that her father grew impatient at last, and, reaching out, took the doll from her, and set it sharply on the table. The little button on the sole of the foot set the curious instrument within in motion. As prepared phrases were rolled off in shrill succession, Mr. Carpenter leaned forward to listen. When the sounds ended, he raised his head with a look of bewilderment.

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"Why—why—what is the creature at?" he exclaimed. "That isn't what I put into her. 'I Wish I was dead! Wish everybody else was dead!' I can't understand it at all. I charged all the dolls myself, and there wasn't a word like that in the whole batch. If the others have gone wrong like this, it's all up with our profits."

He looked so troubled and down-hearted that Amy could bear it no longer.

"It's all my fault!" she cried, bursting into tears. "Somehow it's all my fault, though I can't tell how, for it was I who said those things. I said those very things, Papa, in your workshop one day when I was in a temper. Don't you recollect the day, Mother,—the day when I didn't go to the picnic, and Baby wouldn't go to sleep, and I slapped him, and you boxed my ears? I went up-stairs, and I was crying, and I said,—yes, I think I said every word of those things, though I forgot all about them till Dolly said them to me this morning, and how she could possibly know, I can't imagine."

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"But I can imagine," said her father. "Where did you sit that day, Amy?"

"On the floor, by the door."

"Was there a row of things close by, with tin funnels stuck in them and a cloth over the top?"

"I think there was. I recollect the funnels."

"Then that's all right!" exclaimed Mr. Carpenter, his face clearing up. "Those were the phonographs, Mother, and, don't you see, she must have been exactly opposite one of the funnels, and her voice went in and filled it. It's the best kind of good luck that that cylinder happened to be put into her doll. If all that bad language had gone to anybody else, there would have been the mischief to pay. Folks would have been writing to the papers, as like as not, or the ministers preaching against the dolls as a bad influence. It would have ruined the whole concern, and all your fault, Amy."

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"Oh, Papa, how dreadful! how perfectly dreadful!" was all Amy could say, but she sobbed so wildly that her father's anger melted.

"There, don't cry," he said more kindly; "we won't be too hard on you on Christmas Day. Wipe your eyes, and we'll try to think no more about it, especially as the spoiled doll has fallen to your own share, and no real harm is done."

In his relief Mr. Carpenter was disposed to pass lightly over the matter. Not so his wife. She took a more serious view of it.

"You see, Amy," she said that night when they chanced to be alone, "you see how a hasty word sticks and lasts. You never supposed that day that the things you said would ever come back to you again, but here they are."

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"Yes—because of the doll,—of her inside, I mean. It heard."

"But if the doll hadn't heard, some one would have heard all the same."

"Do you mean God?" asked Amy, in an awe-struck voice.

"Yes. He hears every word that we say, the minister tells us, and writes them all down in a book. If it frightened you to have the doll repeat the words you had forgotten, think how much more it will frighten you, and all of us, when that book is opened and all the wrong things we have ever said are read out for the whole world to hear."

Mrs. Carpenter did not often speak so solemnly, and it made a great impression on Amy's mind. She still plays with Dolly Phone, and loves her, in a way, but it is a love which is mingled with fear. The doll is like a reproach of conscience to her. That is not pleasant, so she is kept flat on her back most of the time. Only, now and then, when Amy has been cross and said a sharp word, and is sorry for it, she solemnly takes Dolly, sets her on her feet, and, as a penance, makes herself listen to all the hateful string of phrases which form her stock of conversation.

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"It's horrid, but it's good for me," she tells the baby, who listens with a look of fascinated wonder. "I shall have to keep her, and let her talk that way, till I'm such a good girl that there isn't any danger of my ever being naughty again. And that must be for a long, long time yet," she concludes with a sigh.

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A NURSERY TYRANT.

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T was such a pleasant old nursery that it seemed impossible that anything disagreeable should enter into it. The three southern windows stood open in all pleasant weather, letting in cheerful sun and air. For cold days there was a generous grate, full of blazing coals, and guarded by a high fender of green-painted wire. There were little cupboards set in the deep sides of the chimney. The two on the left were Barbara's and Eunice's; the two to the right, Reggy's and Roger's.

Here they kept their own particular treasures under lock and key; while little May, the left-over one, was accommodated with two shelves inside the closet where they all hung their hats and coats.

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No one slept in this nursery, but all the Erskine children spent a good part of the daytime in it. Here they studied their lessons, and played when it was too stormy to go out; there the little ones were dressed and undressed, and all five took their suppers there every night. They liked it better than any other room in the house, partly, I suppose, because they lived so much in it.

Barbara was the eldest of the brood. It would have shocked her very much, had she guessed that any one was ever going to speak of her as a "tyrant." Her idea of a tyrant was a lofty personage with a crown on his head, like Xerxes, or King John, or the Emperor Nero. She had not gotten far enough in life or history to know that the same thing can be done in a small house that is done on a throne; and that tyranny is tyranny even when it is not bridging the Dardanelles, or

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flinging Christians to the wild beasts, or refusing to sign Magna Charta. In short, that the principle of a thing is its real life, and makes it the same, whether its extent or opportunities be more or less.

This particular tyrant was a bright, active, self-willed little girl of eleven, with a pair of brown eyes, a mop of curly brown hair, pink cheeks, and a mouth which was so rosy and smiled so often that people forgot to notice the resolute little chin beneath it. She was very good-humored when everybody minded her, warm-hearted, generous, full of plans and fancies, and anxious to make everybody happy in her own way. She also cared a good deal about being liked and admired, as self-willed people often do; and whenever she fancied that the children loved Eunice better than herself (which was the case), she was grieved, and felt that it was unfair. "For I do a great deal more to please them than Eunice does," she would say to herself, forgetting that not what we do, but what we are, it is which makes us beloved or otherwise.

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But though the younger ones loved Eunice best, they were much more apt to do as Barbara wished, partly because it was easier than to oppose her, and partly because she and her many ideas and projects interested them. They never knew what was coming next; and they seldom dared to make up their minds about anything, or form any wishes of their own, till they knew what their despot had decided upon. Eunice was gentle and yielding, Mary almost a baby; but the boys, as they grew older, occasionally showed signs of rebellion, and though Barbara put these down with an iron hand, they were likely to come again with fresh provocation.

The fifteenth of May was always a festival in the Erskine household. "Mamma's May Day," the children called it, because not only was it their mother's birthday, but it also took the place of the regular May Day, which was apt to be too cold or windy for celebration. The children were allowed to choose their own treat, and they always chose a picnic and a May crowning. Barbara was invariably queen, as a matter of course, and she made a very good one, and expended much time and ingenuity in inventing something new each year to make the holiday different from what it had ever been before. She always kept her plans secret till the last moment, to enhance the pleasure of the surprise.

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It never occurred to any one, least of all to Barbara herself, that there could be rotation in office, or that any one else should be chosen as queen. Still, changes of dynasty will come to families as well as to kingdoms; and Queen Barbara found this out.

"Eunie, I want you to do something," she said, one afternoon in late April, producing two long pieces of stiff white tarlatan; "please sew this up *there* and *there*, and hem it *there*,—not nice sewing, you know, but big stitches."

"What is it for?" asked Eunice, obediently receiving the tarlatan, and putting on her thimble.

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"Ah, that is a secret," replied Barbara. "You'll know by and by."

"Can't you tell me now?"

"No, not till Mother's May Day. I'll tell you then."

"Oh, Barbie," cried Eunice, dropping the tarlatan, "I wanted to speak to you before you began anything. The children want little Mary to be the queen this year."

"Mary! Why? I've always been queen. What do they want to change for? Mary wouldn't know how to do it, and I've such a nice plan for this year!"

"Your plans always are nice," said the peace-loving Eunice; "but, Barbie, really and truly, we do all want to have Mary this time. She's so cunning and pretty, and you've always been queen, you know. It was the boys thought of it first, and they want her ever so much. Do let her, just for once."

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"Why, Eunice, I wouldn't have believed you could be so unkind!" said Barbara, in an aggrieved tone. "It's not a bit fair to turn me out, when I've always worked so hard at the May Day, and done *everything*, while the rest of you just sat by and enjoyed yourselves, and had all the fun and none of the trouble."

"But the boys think the trouble is half the fun," persisted Eunice. "They would rather take it than not. Don't you think it would be nice to be a maid of honor, just for once?"—persuasively.

"No, indeed, I don't!" retorted Barbara, passionately. "Be maid of honor, and have that baby of a Mary, queen! You must be crazy, Eunice Erskine. I'll be queen or nothing, you can tell the boys; and if I backed out, and didn't help, I guess you'd all be sorry enough." So saying, Barbara marched off, with her chin in the air. She was not really much afraid that her usually obedient subjects would resist her authority; but she had found that this injured way of speaking impressed the children, and helped her to carry her points.

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So she was surprised enough, when that evening, at supper, she noticed a constraint of manner among the rest of the party. The children looked sober. Reggy whispered to Eunice, Roger kicked Reggy, and at last burst out with, "Now, see here, Barbie Erskine, we want to tell you something. We're going to have Baby for queen this time, and not you, and that's all there is about it."

"Roger," said the indignant Barbara, "how dare you speak so? You're not going to have anything of the kind unless I say you may."

"Yes, we are. Mamma says we ought to take turns, and we never have. Nobody has ever had a turn except you, and you keep having yours all the time. We don't want the same queen always, and this year we've chosen Mary."

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"Roger Erskine!" cried Barbara, hotly. "You're the rudest boy that ever was!" Then she turned to the others. "Now listen to me," she said. "I've made all my plans for this year, and they're perfectly lovely. I won't tell you what they are, exactly, because it would spoil the surprise, but there's going to be an angel! An angel—with wings! What do you think of that? You'd be sorry if I gave it up, wouldn't you? Well, if one more word is said about Mary's being queen, I will give it up, and I won't help you a bit. Now you can choose."

Her tone was awfully solemn, but the children did not give way. Even the hint about the angel produced no effect. Eunice began, "I'm sure, Barbie—" but Reggy stopped her with, "Shut up, Eunice! Everybody in favor of Mary for queen, can hold up their hands," he called out.

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Six hands went up. Eunice raised hers in a deprecating way, but she raised it. "It's a vote," cried Roger. Barbara glared at them all with helpless wrath; then she said, in a choked voice, "Oh, well! have your old picnic, then. I sha'n't come to it," and ran out of the room, leaving her refractory subjects almost frightened at their own success.

Two unhappy weeks followed. True to her threat, Barbara refused to take any share in the holiday preparations. She sat about in corners, sulky and unhappy, while the others worked, or tried to work. Sooth to say, they missed her help very much, and did badly enough without her, but they would not let her know this. The boys whistled as they drove nails, and *sounded* very contented and happy.

Presently Fate sent them a new ally. Aunt Kate, the young aunt whom the children liked best of all their relations, came on a visit, and, finding so much going on, bestirred herself to help. She was not long in missing Barbara, and she easily guessed out the position of affairs, though the children made no explanations.

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One afternoon, leaving the others hard at work, she went in search of Barbara, who had hidden herself away with a book, in the shrubbery.

"Why are you all alone?" she asked, sitting down beside her.

"I don't know where the others are," said Barbara, moodily.

"They are tying wreaths to dress the tent to-morrow. Don't you want to go and help them?"

"No, they don't want me! Oh, Aunt Kate!" with a sudden burst of confidence, "they have treated me so! You can't think how they have treated me!"

"Why, what have they done?"

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"I've always been queen on mother's May Day,—always. And this year I meant to be again. And I had such a nice plan for the coronation, and then they all chose Mary."

"Well?"

"They insisted on having Mary for queen, though I told them I wouldn't help if they did," repeated Barbara.

"Well?"

"Well? That's all. What do you mean, Aunty?"

"I was waiting to hear you tell the real grievance. That the children should want Mary for queen, when you have been one so many times, doesn't seem to be a reason."

Barbara was too much surprised to speak.

"Yes, my dear, I mean it," persisted her aunt. "Now let us talk this over. Why should you always be queen on Mamma's birthday? Who gave you the right, I mean?"

"The children liked to have me," faltered Barbara.

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"Precisely. But this year they liked to have Mary."

"But I worked so hard, Aunty. You can't think how I worked. I did everything; and sometimes I got dreadfully tired."

"Was that to please the others?"

"Y-es—"

"Or would they rather have helped in the work, and did you keep it to yourself because you liked to do it alone?" asked Aunt Kate, with a smile. "Now, my Barbie, listen to me. You have led always because you liked to lead, and the others submitted to you. But no one can govern forever. The rest are growing up; they have their own rights and their own opinions. You cannot go on always ruling them as you did when they were little. Do you want to be a good, useful older sister, loved and trusted, or to have Eunice slip into your place, and be the real elder sister, while you gradually become a cipher in the family?"

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Barbara began to cry.

"Dear child," said Aunty Kate, kissing her, "now is your chance. Influence, not authority, should be a sister's weapon. If you want to lead the children, you must do it with a smile, not a pout."

The children were surprised enough that evening when Barbara came up to offer to help tie wreaths. Her eyes looked as if she had been crying, but she was very kind and nice all that night and next day. She was maid of honor to little Queen Mary, after all. Eunice gave her a rapturous kiss afterward, and said, "Oh, Barbie, how *dear* you are!" and, somehow, Barbara forgot to feel badly about not being queen. Some defeats are better than victories.

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WHAT THE PINK FLAMINGO DID.

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HE great pink flamingo roused from his resting-place among the sedges when the noise began. At first he only stirred sleepily, and wondered, half awake, at the unusual sounds; but as they increased, curiosity began to trouble him. Party after party in launches or bright-hued gondolas glided past, all gay and chattering, and full of excitement about something, he did not know what. It was the first night on which the buildings and grounds of the Chicago Fair were illuminated, and the flamingo could not tell what to make of it, any more than could the herons and swans, the Muscovy ducks, the cranes, or any other of the winged creatures which had learned to make themselves at home on the banks of the lagoons.

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The pink flamingo's name was Coco. He had been "raised" on the shore of the St. Johns River, in Florida, as the pet and *protégé* of Cecil Schott, a boy who had taught him many tricks,—to catch fish and fetch them out in his mouth, as a retriever fetches a bird, to eat caramels, to dive after objects thrown into the water and bring them up in his beak:—after Cecil himself even, so long as he was small enough to be counted as an "object." Often and often had Coco plunged into the deep river, following the downward sweep of his little master, and seized him by the arm or foot before he was anywhere near the bottom. He would eat from Cecil's hand, also, and stand by his side, folding one wide wing across the boy's shoulder, as though it were an arm. Cecil was growing up now, and had been sent to school; so when Mr. Schott heard that the Chicago directors were making a collection of birds for the Fair Grounds, he offered Coco, whose fearlessness and familiarity with human beings seemed peculiarly to adapt him for a public position.

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When the fifth electrical launch had sped past the sedges, and strange, hovering lights began to burn in the sky, and ring the domes and roofs in the distance toward the south, Coco could endure it no longer, and, betaking himself to the water, started on a tour of investigation. He looked very big in the dim light of the upper waterways,—almost as big as the smaller of the gondolas. The people in the boats exclaimed with astonishment as he passed them, his broad wings raised above him, like rose-colored sails, and his stout legs beating the water into foam behind, like a propeller.

At first his course lay amid soft shadows. The upper part of the Fair Grounds was not illuminated, and only a bird's keen vision could have made out accustomed objects. But the flamingo had no difficulty in seeing. He knew exactly where to look for the nest of the female swan on the wooded island. He could even make out her dim white shape in the gloom, and hear the disturbed flutter of her wings. There was the plantation of white hyacinths, and there the outline of the shabby old "Prairie Schooner," into which he had more than once poked his inquisitive head. There stood the "Log Cabin," and beyond, the twinkling lanterns of the Japanese Tea Garden. The pink flamingo recognized them all. Under one graceful bridge after another, past one enormous beautiful building after another, he swept, following the curves and turnings of the waterways, startled here and there by unaccustomed lights and the sounds of a hurrying crowd, till at last, with one bold sweep, he glided under the last arch and out into the broad basin of the Court of Honor.

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He had been there before. Catch the pink flamingo leaving any part of the Fair Grounds unexplored! He was not that sort of bird. He had even been there in the evening, when the moon shone clearly on the water, with only a point of light here and there on the surrounding shores, and no sounds to break the stillness but the splash of waves washing in from the lake, and the low talk of little groups of late-stayers, sitting on the steps before the Liberal Arts Building, looking across to the fountain and the dim row of sculptured forms on the summit of the Peristyle. But now all was different. The gilded dome of the Administration Building was ringed with lines of fire. The façade of the Agricultural blazed with lights, which shone on the bas-reliefs and sculptures, on the winged Diana above, and the great bulls which guard the approach to the boat-landing. Every figure which topped the long double lines of the Peristyle stood out distinctly against the transparent sky; the gilding of the broad arch toward the lake glowed ruddy in the

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light, and so did the majestic figure of the Republic, its noble outline reflected in the shimmering waters beneath. The great fountain opposite caught the blaze, and sent its smooth shoots over the basin edges with a white phosphorescent radiance. Then a wide beam from a search-light swept across, and seemed to turn the figures into life; made the form of the Discoverer and the beautiful figures of the rowing women on either side, throb and pulsate, fluctuating with the fluctuating ray, till they seemed to bend and move. On either side, the electrical fountains lifted high in air great sheaves of iridescent colors, scarlet, green, and blue, like a flag of upheaving jewels, while the faces of the immense throng along the esplanades and on the dome of the Administration Building changed from gloom to glory and back again to gloom as the dancing ray wandered to and fro.

It was a scene from fairyland; but it did not altogether please Coco, who, startled and affrighted, made a dive, and disappeared under water by way of a relief to his feelings. Then he came up again, and, growing by degrees accustomed to these novel splendors, he recovered confidence, and began to look about him. [185]

"Oh, what a beautiful bird!" he heard some one say; and though he did not understand the words, he knew well enough that he was being admired, and thereupon proceeded to make himself a part of the show. He splashed, dived, extended his wide wings, curved his long neck, and generally exhibited himself to the best of his ability, all the time maintaining an absent-minded air, as if he were not aware that any one else was present. Coco was very conceited for a bird.

Meanwhile, at about the same moment in which the pink flamingo was roused from his slumbers, a small Turkish boy named Hassan awoke from his, in the retirement of the Midway Plaisance. He had not been at all a good little Turk since he came to America, his parents thought. Something in the air of freedom had apparently demoralized him. It might be that domestic discipline had been relaxed since their arrival, for there had been much to do in getting the Turkish Bazaar and the Mosque and the Village ready; but certain it is that Hassan had been naughtier and given more trouble during the past ten weeks than in all the previous years of his short life. Once, in a great rain-storm, he had actually run away, slipping past the guard at the gate, and tearing wildly down the street. Where he was going, he did not know or care; all he wanted was to run. How far he might have gone, or what would have become of him in the end, no one can say, had his father not caught a glimpse of the small fleeting figure. [186]

"Beard of the Prophet!" ejaculated the scandalized Mustapha. "That son of Sheitan, the enemy of true believers, will be run over by the horses of the infidel if I do not overtake him speedily." [187]

He tucked up his blue robe, which almost touched the muddy ground, it was so long, revealing, as he did so, yellow boots topped with American socks, and, above these, a pair of green drawers, and started in pursuit. Alas! the guard at the turnstile stopped him, and demanded his pass. In vain Mustapha remonstrated, and explained, in fluent Turkish, that his sole object was to capture his evil child, who had escaped from home. The guard did not understand the language of Turkey, and persisted, explaining, in the tongue of Chicago, that he was acting under orders, and that no "foreigner" could go in or out without proper authority.

"Permit! Permit! Pass! Pass! You must show your pass!" cried the guard. "*Backsheesh*, you know."

It was his sole Turkish word. He had learned it since the Fair opened from hearing it so often. [188]

"You bet!" responded Mustapha. It was his sole English word. "The Prophet visit you with a murrain and total baldness!" he continued, in his own vernacular. Then, seeing that Hassan, who was having a most enjoyable time, was nearing a corner and about to disappear, he uttered a wild shout of despair, and, thrusting the guard aside, darted through the gate and after the child. His long petticoat waggled in the wind, and blew behind him like a wet umbrella broken loose. The guard was so convulsed with laughter that he could only stand still and hold his sides. Two chairmen, who had trundled two ladies down the Plaisance to the gate, were as much convulsed as he. Little Hassan ran for all he was worth. His gown of drab cotton, as long, in proportion, as his father's, switched and fluttered as he flew along. But longer legs always have the advantage over shorter ones in a race. The pursuer gained on the pursued. When Hassan saw that there was no hope, and he was bound to be overtaken, he just flung himself down in a mud-puddle and kicked and screamed. His exasperated parent pulled him up, and, with a shake, set him on his feet. Hassan made his legs limp, and refused to walk; so Mustapha tucked him under his arm, and strode back toward the Plaisance. The guard was still too doubled up with laughter for speech, so he let him pass unscolded. Once safely inside, Mustapha shifted his wet and dirty little burden on to its feet, whirled aside the drab skirt, and, with trenchant slaps, administered a brief but effectual American spanking. He then conducted Hassan to his veiled mother in her retirement, and intimated his pleasure that he should be made to undergo a further penance. [189]

It was this same naughty little Turk who woke up at the same time with the pink flamingo. He heard music and shouts, and saw the same strange glow toward the southward which had startled the bird from its rest. His father and mother had joined the motley throng of foreign folk of all nationalities, garbs, and shades of complexion,—Arabs, Javanese, Alaskans, Eskimos, South Sea Islanders, Cossacks, American Indians, and East Indians, Chinese, and Dahomyans,—who had flocked out of the Plaisance to see the spectacle. No one was left behind but the sleeping children, and here was Hassan, no longer asleep, but very wide awake indeed. [190]



Down the esplanade sped the little figure.—PAGE
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No time did he lose in hesitation; he knew in a moment what he wanted to do. His queer little clothes were close at hand,—the drab gown, still mud-stained from his run, the yellow slippers, the small fez for his head. Into them he skipped, and, stepping out of the door, he ran down the Plaisance, keeping on the shaded side as far as might be, for fear of being stopped. He need not have been afraid; there was no one to stop him. The great Woman's Building came in sight, with the outlines of the still larger Horticultural beyond. Down the esplanade sped the little figure. The light grew more brilliant with every turn; more and more people passed him, but all were pressing southward. And in a crowd like this, nobody had time to notice the advent of such a very small Turk among them. Hot and breathless after his long run, Hassan at last emerged, as the pink flamingo had done, on the Court of Honor.

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Here his smallness proved an advantage to him, for he could crowd himself into minute spaces in the living mass where a grown person could not go, squeeze between people's legs, and wriggle and twist, all the time pressing steadily forward, till at last he gained the parapet, and, climbing up, seated himself comfortably on the top. Then his eyes and mouth opened simultaneously into an "Ahi!" of wonder, for close before him was one of the electrical fountains, shooting blue and crimson fires, and a little beyond shone the pulsating radiance of the dazzling forms grouped above the Discoverer, the rearing horses, the winged shape in the bow of the boat. Never before had anything so wonderful been seen by our little Turk. The great basin twinkled with reflected lights, like a starry sky set upside down; overhead the statues glittered; a round silver moon hung above, and broad rays, like her own beams intensified and set into motion, wandered to and fro from the search-light opposite, darting now on a splendid façade, now on a towering dome, again on a bridge packed with people, whose expectant faces were all turned skyward, and, finally, on a great pink bird which was wheeling and turning in the water.

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There was a sudden small splash.

"Oh, oh!" shrieked a child's voice, in tones of distress, "my dolly's fallen in! Mamma, Mamma, that was my dolly that fell in. She'll be all drowned! Oh, my dolly!" Then the voice changed to one of amazement and joy: "Oh, Mamma, see that bird! He has got her!"

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Coco had spied the doll as it fell, and, true to his early training, dived after it as a matter of course, and came up with the doll in his bill.

"Oh, you good birdie! you dear birdie!" cried the little one, stretching her arms over the parapet. "Let me have Dolly again, please, dear birdie!"

Coco understood only Flamingo, and had no idea what the little girl was saying; but as a nibble

or two had showed that the doll was not edible, he made no resistance when a gentleman reached over from the edge of a gondola and took it from his beak. It was handed back to its little owner amid a great clapping and laughing, and Coco was given an Albert biscuit instead, which he liked much better, and speedily disposed of. He knew that the applause was meant for him, and, puffed up with pride, sailed vain-gloriously to and fro, waiting another chance to distinguish himself.

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It came! There was another and much louder splash as a small red-capped figure toppled over into the water. It was Hassan, who, leaning over to watch the wonderful bird, had lost his balance.

No one laughed this time, and there was a general cry of "Oh, it was a child! A child has fallen in! Save him, some one!" People shouted for "a boat;" men pulled off their coats, making ready for a plunge; women began to cry; then, all at once, there was a general exclamation of astonishment and admiration.

"The bird has got him" cried a hundred voices.

It was again Coco! To dive after Hassan, to seize the drab skirt in his beak, and bring the child again to the surface of the water, was an easy feat to him; but to the excited multitudes upon the banks it seemed well-nigh a miracle.

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"Never saw such a thing in my life!" declared a man on the bridge. "Don't tell me that bird hasn't an intellect. No, sir! There ain't a man here could have done that better, nor so well as that there pelican. He is smart enough to vote, he is!"

"Too smart," remarked his next neighbor. "He'd never stick to the regular ticket; he'd have a mind of his own. That ain't the sort we want over here. We want voters that don't have independent ideas, but just do as the boss tells 'em."

"That's pretty true, I reckon," replied the first man.

Meanwhile, Hassan was safe on shore. It had been for only one moment that the flamingo had needed to support his burden; then it was lifted from him by a man in a boat, who took time to tell him that he was a "first-rate fellow, a famous fellow, and ought to have a medal from the Humane Society."

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"He *shall* have one!" declared an enthusiastic lady in the crowd. "I will see to it myself." And the next morning she bought a souvenir half-dollar, had "For a Brave Bird" engraved upon it, and a hole bored in its rim, through which she ran a pink ribbon. This she carried over to the Wooded Island, and, with the assistance of two Columbian guards, captured Coco, and tied the ribbon firmly round his neck. He resisted strenuously, and spent much time in trying to peck the decoration off; but as time went on, and he became accustomed to it, and found that wherever he went it made him conspicuous, and that the other birds envied him the notice he attracted, he rather learned to like his "medal;" and he wore it to the very end of the Columbian Exposition.

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Meanwhile, as Fate willed it, the dripping Hassan was handed ashore precisely at that point of the esplanade where stood his father and mother! They had not seen the accident, nor understood that it was a boy who had fallen in and been rescued by a bird; so when a wet little object was set to drip almost at their feet, and they recognized in it their own offspring, whom they supposed to be safely asleep at home, it will be easily imagined that their wrath and astonishment knew no bounds.

"Ahi! child of sin, contaminated by the unbeliever, is it indeed thou?" cried the irate Mustapha. "What djinnie, what imp of Eblis hath brought thee here?"

"He hath been in the water, Allah preserve us!" cried the more tender-hearted mother. "He might have been drowned."

"In the water! Nay, then; wherefore is he not in bed where we left him? We will see if this imp of evil be not taught to avoid the water in the future. On my head be it if he is not, Inshallah!"

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So the weeping Hassan was led home by his family, his garments leaving a trail of drip on the concrete all the way up the long distance; and in the seclusion of the temporary harem he was caused to see the error of his way.

"Thou shalt be made to remember," declared his irate parent in the pauses of discipline. "I will not have thee as the sons of these infidels who despise correction, saying 'I will' and 'I will not,' and are as a blemish and a darkening to the faces of their parents. The Prophet rebuke me if I do! Inshallah!"

But Coco, when the lights were put out and the great crowd streamed away, leaving the Fair Grounds to silence and loneliness, and the lagoons became again a soft land of shadows broken by reaches of moonlight, sailed back to his perch among the sedges with a calm and satisfied mind. He had a right to be pleased with himself. Had he not saved two "people," one very small and hard, and the other very big and soft? Nothing whispered of that dreadful half-dollar which was coming on the morrow to vex his spirit. No one said to *him* "Inshallah." He tucked his head under his wing and went to sleep, a peaceful and contented flamingo; and the moral is, "Be virtuous and you will be happy."

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TWO PAIRS OF EYES.

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Did it ever occur to you what a difference there is in the way in which people use their eyes? I do not mean that some people squint, and some do not; that some have short sight, and some long sight. These are accidental differences; and the people who cannot see far, sometimes see more, and more truly, than do other people whose vision is as keen as the eagle's. No, the difference between people's eyes lies in the power and the habit of observation.

Did you ever hear of the famous conjurer Robert Houdin, whose wonderful tricks and feats of magic were the astonishment of Europe a few years ago? He tells us, in his autobiography, that to see everything at a glance, while seeming to see nothing, is the first requisite in the education of a "magician," and that the faculty of noticing rapidly and exactly can be trained like any other faculty. When he was fitting his little son to follow the same profession, he used to take him past a shop-window, at a quick walk, and then ask him how many objects in the window he could remember and describe. At first, the child could only recollect three or four; but gradually he rose to ten, twelve, twenty, and, in the end, his eyes would note, and his memory retain, not less than forty articles, all caught in the few seconds which it took to pass the window at a rapid walk.

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It is so more or less with us all. Few things are more surprising than the distinct picture which one mind will bring away from a place, and the vague and blurred one which another mind will bring. Observation is one of the valuable faculties, and the lack of it a fault which people have to pay for, in various ways, all their lives.

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There were once two peasant boys in France, whose names were Jean and Louis Cardillac. They were cousins; their mothers were both widows, and they lived close to each other in a little village, near a great forest. They also looked much alike. Both had dark, closely shaven hair, olive skins, and large, black eyes; but in spite of all their resemblances, Jean was always spoken of as "lucky," and Louis as "unlucky," for reasons which you will shortly see.

If the two boys were out together, in the forest or the fields, they walked along quite differently. Louis dawdled in a sort of loose-jointed trot, with his eyes fixed on whatever happened to be in his hand,—a sling, perhaps, or a stick, or one of those snappers with which birds are scared away from fruit. If it were the stick, he cracked it as he went, or he snapped the snapper, and he whistled, as he did so, in an absent-minded way. Jean's black eyes, on the contrary, were always on the alert, and making discoveries. While Louis stared and puckered his lips up over the snapper or the sling, Jean would note, unconsciously but truly, the form of the clouds, the look of the sky in the rainy west, the wedge-shaped procession of the ducks through the air, and the way in which they used their wings, the bird-calls in the hedge. He was quick to mark a strange leaf, or an unaccustomed fungus by the path, or any small article which had been dropped by the way. Once, he picked up a five-franc piece; once, a silver pencil-case which belonged to the *cure*, who was glad to get it again, and gave Jean ten sous by way of reward. Louis would have liked ten sous very much, but somehow he never found any pencil-cases; and it seemed hard and unjust when his mother upbraided him for the fact, which, to his thinking, was rather his misfortune than his fault.

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"How can I help it?" he asked. "The saints are kind to Jean, and they are not kind to me,—*voilà tout!*"

"The saints help those who help themselves," retorted his mother. "Thou art a look-in-the-air. Jean keeps his eyes open, he has wit, and he notices."

But such reproaches did not help Louis, or teach him anything. Habit is so strong.

"There!" cried his mother one day, when he came in to supper. "Thy cousin—thy lucky cousin—has again been lucky. He has found a truffle-bed, and thy aunt has sold the truffles to the man from Paris for a hundred francs. A hundred francs! It will be long before thy stupid fingers can earn the half of that!"

"Where did Jean find the bed?" asked Louis.

"In the oak copse near the brook, where thou mightest have found them as easily as he," retorted his mother. "He was walking along with Daudot, the wood cutter's dog—whose mother was a truffle-hunter—and Daudot began to point and scratch; and Jean suspected something, got a spade, dug, and crack! a hundred francs! Ah, *his* mother is to be envied!"

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"The oak copse! Near the brook!" exclaimed Louis, too much excited to note the reproach which concluded the sentence. "Why, I was there but the other day with Daudot, and I remember now, he scratched and whined a great deal, and tore at the ground. I didn't think anything about it at the time."

"Oh, thou little imbecile—thou stupid!" cried his mother, angrily. "There were the truffles, and the first chance was for thee. Didn't think anything about it! Thou never dost think, thou never wilt. Out of my sight, and do not let me see thee again till bedtime."

Supperless and disconsolate poor Louis slunk away. He called Daudot, and went to the oak copse, resolved that if he saw any sign of excitement on the part of the dog, to fetch a spade and instantly begin to dig. But Daudot trotted along quietly, as if there were not a truffle left in France, and the walk was fruitless. [206]

"If I had only," became a favorite sentence with Louis, as time went on. "If I had only noticed this." "If I had only stopped then." But such phrases are apt to come into the mind after something has been missed by not noticing or not stopping, so they do little good to anybody.

Did it ever occur to you that what people call "lucky chances," though they seem to come suddenly, are in reality prepared for by a long unconscious process of making ready on the part of those who profit by them? Such a chance came at last to both Jean and Louis,—to Louis no less than to Jean; but one was prepared for it, and the other was not. [207]

Professor Sylvestre, a famous naturalist from Toulouse, came to the forest village where the two boys lived, one summer. He wanted a boy to guide him about the country, carry his plant-cases and herbals, and help in his search after rare flowers and birds, and he asked Madame Collot, the landlady of the inn, to recommend one. She named Jean and Louis; they were both good boys, she said.

So the professor sent for them to come and talk with him.

"Do you know the forest well, and the paths?" he asked.

Yes, both of them knew the forest very well.

"Are there any woodpeckers of such and such a species?" he asked next. "Have you the large lunar moth here? Can you tell me where to look for *Campanila rhomboidalis*?" and he rapidly described the variety. [208]

Louis shook his head. He knew nothing of any of these things. But Jean at once waked up with interest. He knew a great deal about woodpeckers,—not in a scientific way, but with the knowledge of one who has watched and studied bird habits. He had quite a collection of lunar and other moths of his own, and though he did not recognize the rare *Campanila* by its botanical title, he did as soon as the professor described the peculiarities of the leaf and blossom. So M. Sylvestre engaged him to be his guide so long as he stayed in the region, and agreed to pay him ten francs a week. And Mother Cardillac wrung her hands, and exclaimed more piteously than ever over her boy's "ill luck" and his cousin's superior good fortune.

One can never tell how a "chance" may develop. Professor Sylvestre was well off, and kind of heart. He had no children of his own, and he was devoted, above all other things, to the interest of science. He saw the making of a first-rate naturalist in Jean Cardillac, with his quick eyes, his close observation, his real interest in finding out and making sure. He grew to an interest in and liking for the boy, which ripened, as the time drew near for him to return to his university, into an offer to take Jean with him, and provide for his education, on the condition that Jean, in return, should render him a certain amount of assistance during his out-of-school hours. It was, in effect, a kind of adoption, which might lead to almost anything; and Jean's mother was justified in declaring, as she did, that his fortune was made. [209]

"And for thee, thou canst stay at home, and dig potatoes for the rest of thy sorry life," lamented the mother of Louis. "Well, let people say what they will, this is an unjust world; and, what is worse, the saints look on, and do nothing to prevent it. Heaven forgive me if it is blasphemous to speak so, but I cannot help it!" [210]

But it was neither "luck" nor "injustice." It was merely the difference between "eyes and no eyes,"—a difference which will always exist and always tell.

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THE PONY THAT KEPT THE STORE. [211]



T was a shabby old store, built where two cross-roads and a lane met at the foot of a low hill, and left between them a small triangular space fringed with grass. On the hill stood a summer hotel, full of boarders from the neighboring city; for the place was cool and airy, and a wide expanse of sea and rocky islands, edged with beaches and wooded points, stretched away from the hill's foot.

In years gone by, the shabby old store had driven quite a flourishing trade during the months of the year when the hotel was open. The boarders went there for their ink and tacks; their sewing-

silk and shoe-buttons; for the orange marmalade and potted ham which they carried on picnics; for the liquid blacking, which saved the boot-boy at the hotel so much labor; the letter-paper, on which they wrote to their friends what a good time they were having; and all the thousand and one things of which people who have little to do with their time and money fancy themselves in want. But a year before the time at which the events I am about to relate took place, the owner of the store built himself a new and better one at a place a mile further on, where there was a still larger hotel and a group of cottages, and removed thither with his belongings. The old building had stood empty for some months, and at last was hired for a queer use,—namely, to serve as stable for a very small Shetland pony, not much larger than a calf, or an extra large Newfoundland dog.

"Cloud" was the pony's name. He belonged to Ned Cabot, who was nine years old, and was not only his pony, but his intimate friend as well. Ned loved him only the better for a terrible accident which had befallen Cloud a few months before.

The Cabots, who had been living on Lake Superior for a while, came back to the East with all their goods and chattels, and among the rest, their horses. It had been a question as to how little Cloud should travel; and at last a box was built which could be set in a freight-car, and in which, it was hoped, he would make the journey in safety. But accidents sometimes happen even when the utmost care is taken, and, sad to relate, Cloud arrived in Boston with his tiny foreleg broken.

Horses' legs are hard to mend, you know; and generally when one breaks, it is thought the easiest and cheapest way out of the trouble to shoot the poor animal at once, and buy another to take his place. But the bare mention of such a thing threw Ned into such paroxysms of grief, and he sobbed so dreadfully, that all his family made haste to assure him that under no circumstances should Cloud be shot. Instead, he was sent to a hospital,—not the Massachusetts General, I think, but something almost as superior in its line, where animals are treated, and there the surgeons slung him up, and put his leg into plaster, exactly as if he had been a human being. Had he been a large, heavy horse, I suppose they could hardly have done this; but being a little light pony, it was possible. And the result was that the poor fellow got well, and was not lamed in the least, which made his little master very happy. He loved Cloud all the more for this great escape, and Cloud fully returned Ned's affection. He was a rather over-indulged and overfed pony; but with Ned, he was always a pattern of gentleness and propriety. Ned could lie flat on his back and read story books by the hour without the least fear that Cloud would jump or shy or shake him off. Far from it! Cloud would graze quietly up and down, taking pains not to disturb the reading, only turning his head now and then to see if Ned was comfortable, and when he found him so, giving a little satisfied whinny, which seemed to say, "Here we are, and what a time we are having!" Surely, no pony could be expected to do better than that.

So now little Cloud, with his foreleg quite mended and as strong as ever, was the sole occupant of the roomy old country store. A little stall had been partitioned off for him in a corner where there was a window, out of which he could see the buckboards and cut-unders drive by, and the daisies and long grass on the opposite slope blowing in the fresh sea wind. Horses have curiosity, and like to look out of the window and watch what is going on as well as people do.

There were things inside the store that were worth looking at as well as things outside. When Mr. Harrison, the storekeeper, moved away, he carried off most of his belongings, but a few articles he left behind, I suppose because he did not consider them worth taking away. There were two blue painted counters and some rough hanging shelves, a set of rusty old scales and weights, a row of glass jars with a little dab of something at the bottom of each,—rice, brown sugar, cream-of-tartar, cracker crumbs, and fragments of ginger-snaps. There was also a bottle half full of fermented olives, a paper parcel of musty corn flour, and, greatest of all, a big triangle of cheese, blue with mould, in a round red wooden box with wire sides, like an enormous mouse-trap. It was quite a stock-in-trade for a pony, and Cloud had so much the air of being in possession, that the smallest of the children at the hotel always spoke of the place as his store. "I want to go down to Cloud's store," they would say to their nurses.

Ned and his sister Constance took a great deal of the care of the pony on themselves. A freckled little country lad named Dick had been engaged to feed and clean him; but he so often ran away from his work that the children were never easy in their minds for fear lest Cloud had been forgotten and was left supperless or with no bed to lie upon. Almost always, and especially on Sunday nights, when he of the freckles was most apt to absent himself, they would coax their mother to let them run down the last thing and make sure that all was right. If it were not, Ned would turn to, and Constance also, to feed and bed the pony; they were both strong and sturdy, and could do the work very well, only Constance always wanted to braid his mane to make it kink, and Ned would never let her; so they sometimes ended with quarrelling.

One day in August it happened that Ned's father and mother, his big brother, his two sisters, and, in fact, most of the grown people in the hotel, went off on a picnic to White Gull Island, which was about seven miles out to sea. They started at ten in the morning, with a good breeze, and a load of very attractive-looking lunch-baskets; but at noon the wind died down, and did not spring up again, and when Ned's bedtime came, they had still not returned. Their big sail could be seen far out beyond the islands. They were rowing the boat, Mr. Gale, the hotel-keeper, said; but unless the wind came up, he did not think they would be in much before midnight.

Ned had not gone with the others. He had hurt his foot a day or two before, and his mother thought climbing rocks would be bad for it. He had cried a little when Constance and the rest sailed away, but had soon been consoled. Mrs. Cabot had arranged a series of treats for him, a

row with Nurse, a sea-bath, a new story-book, and had asked a little boy he liked to come over from the other hotel and spend the afternoon on the beach. There had been the surprise of a box of candy and two big peaches. Altogether, the day had gone happily, and it was not till Nurse had put Ned to bed and gone off to a "praise meeting" in the Methodist chapel, that it occurred to him to feel lonely.

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He lay looking out at sea, which was lit by the biggest and whitest moon ever seen. Far away he could catch the shimmer of the idle sail, which seemed scarcely nearer than it had done at supper-time.

"I wish Mamma were here to kiss me for good-night," reflected Ned, rather dismally. "I don't feel sleepy a bit, and it isn't nice to have them all gone."

From the foot of the hill came a sound of small hoofs stamping impatiently. Then a complaining whinny was heard. Ned sat up in bed. Something was wrong with Cloud, he was sure.

"It's that bad Dick. He's gone off and forgotten to give Cloud any supper," thought Ned. Then he called "Mary! Ma-ry!" several times, before he remembered that Mary was gone to the praise meeting.

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"I don't care!" he said aloud. "I'm not going to let my Cloudy starve for anybody."

So he scrambled out of bed, found his shoes, and hastily put on some of the clothes which Mary had just taken off and folded up. There was no one on the piazza to note the little figure as it sped down the slope. Everybody was off enjoying the moonlight in some way or other.

It was, indeed, as Ned had suspected. Dick of the freckles had gone fishing and forgotten Cloud altogether. The moon shone full through the eastern windows of the store, making it almost as light as day, and Ned had no trouble in finding the hay and the water-pail. He watched the pony as he hungrily champed and chewed the sweet-smelling heap and sucked up the water, then he brushed out his stall, and scattered straw, and then sat down "for a minute," as he told himself, to rest and watch Cloud go to sleep. It was very pleasant in the old store, he thought.

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Presently Cloud lay down on the straw too, and cuddled close up to Ned, who patted and stroked him. Ned thought he was asleep, he lay so still. But after a little while Cloud stirred and got up, first on his forelegs and then altogether. He stood a moment watching Ned, who pretended to be sleeping, then he opened the slatted door of his stall, moved gently across the floor and went in behind the old blue counter.

"What *is* he going to do?" thought Ned. "I never saw anything so funny. Constance will never believe when I tell her about it."

What Cloud did was to take one of the glass jars from the shelf in his teeth, and set it on the counter. It was the one which held the gingersnap crumbs. Cloud lifted off the lid. Just then a clatter of hoofs was heard outside, and another horse came in. Ned knew the horse in a minute. It was the yellow one which Mr. Gale drove in his buckboard.

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The yellow horse trotted up to the counter, and he and Cloud talked together for a few minutes. It was in pony language, and Ned could not understand what they said; but it had to do with the gingersnaps, apparently, for Cloud poured part of them out on the counter, and the buckboard horse greedily licked them up. Then he gave Cloud something by way of payment. Ned could not see what, but it seemed to be a nail out of his hind shoe, and then tiptoed out of the store and across the road to the field where the horses grazed, while Cloud opened a drawer at the back of the counter and threw in the nail, if it was one. It *sounded* like a nail.

He had scarcely done so when more hoofs sounded, and two other horses came in. Horse one was the bay which went with the yellow in the buckboard, the other Mr. Gale's sorrel colt, which he allowed no one to drive except himself. Cloud seemed very glad to see them. And such a lively chorus went on across the counter of whinnies and snorts and splutters, accompanied with such emphatic stamps, that Ned shrank into a dark corner, and did not dare to laugh aloud, though he longed to as he peeped between the bars.

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The sorrel colt seemed to want a great many things. He evidently had the shopping instinct. Cloud lifted down all the jars, one by one, and the colt sampled their contents. The cream-of-tartar he did not like at all; but he ate all the brown sugar and the cracker crumbs, tasted an olive and let it drop with a disgusted neigh, and lastly took a bite of the mouldy cheese in the red trap, and expressed his opinion of it by what seemed to be a "swear-word." Then he and the bay-horse and Cloud went to the end of the store where a rusty old stove without any pipe stood, sat down on their haunches before it, put their forelegs on its top, and began, as it seemed, to discuss politics; at least, it sounded wonderfully like the conversation that had gone on in that very corner in Mr. Harrison's day, when the farmers collected to predict the defeat of the candidate on the other side, whoever he might be.

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They talked so long that Ned grew very sleepy, and lay down again on the straw. He felt that he ought to go home and to bed, but he did not quite dare. The strange horses might take offence at his being there, he thought; still, he had a comfortable feeling that as Cloud's friend they would not do him any real harm. Even when, as it seemed, one of them came into the stall, took hold of his shoulder, and began to shake him violently, he was not really frightened.

"Don't!" he said sleepily. "I won't tell anybody. Cloud knows me. I'm a friend of his."

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"Ned! wake up! Ned! wake up!" said some one. Was it the red horse?

No, it was his father. And there was Mamma on the other side of him. And there was Cloud lying on the straw close by, pretending to be asleep, but with one eye half open!

"Wake up!" said Papa; "here it is, after eleven o'clock, and Mamma half frightened to death at getting home and not finding you in your bed. How did you come down here, sir?"

"Cloud was crying for his supper, and I came down to feed him," explained Ned. "And then I stayed to watch him keep store. Oh, it was so funny, Mamma! The other horses came and bought things, and Cloud was just like a real storekeeper, and sold crackers to them, and sugar, and took the money—no, it was nails, I think."

"My dear, you have been dreaming," said Mrs. Cabot. "Don't let him talk any more, John. He is all excited now, and won't sleep if you do." [226]

So, though Ned loudly protested that he had not been asleep at all, and so could not have dreamed, he was put to bed at once, and no one would listen to him. And next day it was just as bad, for all of them, Constance as well as the rest, insisted that Ned had fallen asleep in the pony's stall and dreamed the whole thing. Even when he opened the drawer at the back of the counter and showed them the shoe-nail that Cloud had dropped in, they would not believe. There was nothing remarkable in there being a nail there, they said; all sorts of things were put in the drawers of country stores.

But Ned and Cloud knew very well that it was not a dream.

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PINK AND SCARLET.

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"T'S the most perfect beauty that ever was!"

"Pshaw! you always say that. It's not a bit prettier than Mary's."

"Yes, it is."

"No, indeed, it isn't."

The subject of dispute was a parasol,—a dark blue one, trimmed with fringe, and with an ivory handle. The two little girls who were discussing it were Alice Hoare and her sister Madge. It was Madge's birthday, and the parasol was one of her presents.

The dispute continued.

"I wish you wouldn't always say that your things are better than any one else's," said Alice. "It's ex-exaspering to talk like that, and Mamma said when we exasperated it was almost as bad as telling lies." [228]

"She didn't say "exasperate." That wasn't the word at all; and this is the sweetest, dearest, most perfectly beautiful parasol in the world, a great deal prettier than your green one."

"Yes, so it is," confessed candid Alice. "Mine is quite old now. This is younger, and, besides, the top of mine is broken off. But yours isn't really any prettier than Mary's."

"It is too! It's a great deal more beautiful and a great deal more fascinating."

"What is that which is so fascinating?" asked their sister Mary, coming into the room. "The new parasol? My! that is strong language to use about a parasol. It should at least be an umbrella, I think. See, Madge, here is another birthday gift."

It was a gilt cage, with a pair of Java sparrows. "Oh, lovely! delicious!" cried Madge, jumping up and down. "I think this is the best birthday that ever was! Are they from you, Mary, darling? Thank you ever so much! They are the most perfectly beautiful things I ever saw." [229]

"The parasol was the most beautiful just now," observed Alice.

"Oh, these are much beautifuller than that, because they are alive," replied Madge, giving her oldest sister a rapturous squeeze.

"I wish you'd make me a birthday present in return," said Mary. "I wish you'd drop that bad habit of exaggerating everything you like, and everything you don't like. All your 'bads' are 'dreadfuls,'—all your pinks are scarlets."

"I don't know what you mean," said Madge, puzzled and offended.

"It's only what Mamma has often spoken to you about, dear Madgie. It is saying more than is

quite true, and more than you quite feel. I am sure you don't mean to be false, but people who are not used to you might think you so."

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"It's because I like things so much."

"No, for when you don't like them, it's just as bad. I have heard you say fifty times, at least, 'It is the horriddest thing I ever saw,' and you know there couldn't be fifty 'horriddest' things."

"But you all know what I mean."

"Well, we can guess, but you ought to be more exact. And, besides, Papa says if we use up all our strong words about little every-day things, we sha'n't have any to use when we are talking about really great things. If you call a heavy muffin 'awful,' what are you going to say about an earthquake or tornado?"

"We don't have any earthquakes in Groton, and I don't ever mean to go to places where they do," retorted Madge, triumphantly.

"Madge, how bad you are!" cried little Alice. "You ought to promise Mary right away, because it's your birthday."

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"Well, I'll try," said Madge. But she did not make the promise with much heart, and she soon forgot all about it. It seemed to her that Mary was making a great fuss about a small thing.

Are there any small things? Sometimes I am inclined to doubt it. A fever-germ can only be seen under the microscope, but think what a terrible work it can do. The avalanche, in its beginning, is only a few moving particles of snow; the tiny spring feeds the brook, which in turn feeds the river; the little evil, unchecked, grows into the habit which masters the strongest man. All great things begin in small things; and these small things which are to become we know not what, should be important in our eyes.

Madge Hoare meant to be a truthful child; but little by little, and day by day, her perception of what truth really is, was being worn away by the habit of exaggeration.

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"Perfectly beautiful," "perfectly horrible," "perfectly dreadful," "perfectly fascinating," such were the mild terms which she daily used to describe the most ordinary things,—apples, rice puddings, arithmetic lessons, gingham dresses, and, as we have seen, blue parasols! And the habit grew upon her, as habits will. When she needed stronger language than usual, things had to be "horrid" than horrid, and "beautifuler" than beautiful. And the worst of it was, that she was all the time half conscious of her own insincerity, and that, to use Mary's favorite figure, she *meant* pink, but she *said* scarlet.

The family fell so into the habit of making mental allowances and deductions for all Madge's statements that sometimes they fell into the habit of not believing enough. "It is only Madge!" they would say, and so dismiss the subject from their minds. This careless disbelief vexed and hurt Madge very often, but it did not hurt enough to cure her. One day, however, it did lead to something which she could not help remembering.

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It was warm weather still, although September, and Ernest, the little baby brother, whom Madge loved best of all the children, was playing one morning in the yard by himself. Madge was studying an "awful" arithmetic lesson upstairs at the window. She could not see Ernest, who was making a sand-pie directly beneath her; but she did see an old woman peer over the fence, open the gate, and steal into the yard.

"What a horrid-looking old woman!" thought Madge. "The multiple of sixteen added to—Oh, bother! what an awful sum this is!" She forgot the old woman for a few moments, then she again saw her going out of the yard, and carrying under her cloak what seemed to be a large bundle. The odd thing was, that the bundle seemed to have legs, and to kick; or was it the wind blowing the old woman's cloak about?

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Madge watched the old woman out of sight with a puzzled and half-frightened feeling. "Could she have stolen anything?" she asked herself; and at last she ran downstairs to see. Nothing seemed missing from the hall, only Ernie's straw hat lay in the middle of the gravel walk.

"Mamma!" cried Madge, bursting into the library where her mother was talking to a visitor. "There has been the most perfectly horrible old woman in our yard that I ever saw. She was so awful-looking that I was afraid she had been stealing something. Did you see her, Mamma?"

"My dear, all old women are awful in your eyes," said Mrs. Hoare, calmly. "This was old Mrs. Shephard, I presume. I told her to come for a bundle of washing. Run away now, Madge, I am busy."

Madge went, but she still did not feel satisfied. The more she thought about the old woman, the more she was sure that it was not old Mrs. Shephard. She went with her fears to Mary.

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"She was just like a gypsy," she explained, "or a horrible old witch. Her hair stuck out so, and she had the awfulest face! I am almost sure she stole something, and carried it away under her shawl, sister."

"Nonsense!" said Mary, who was drawing, and not inclined to disturb herself for one of Madge's "cock-and-bull" stories. "It was only one of Mamma's old goodies, you may be sure. Don't you recollect what a fright you gave us about the robber, who turned out to be a man selling

apples; and that other time, when you were certain there was a bear in the garden, and it was nothing but Mr. Price's big Newfoundland?"

"But this was quite different; it really was. This old woman was really awful."

"Your old women always are," replied Mary, unconcernedly, going on with her sketch. [236]

No one would attend to Madge's story, no one sympathized with her alarm. She was like the boy who cried "Wolf!" so often that, when the real wolf came, no one heeded his cries. But the family roused from their indifference, when, an hour later, Nurse came to ask where Master Ernie could be, and search revealed the fact that he was nowhere about the premises. Madge and her old woman were treated with greater respect then. Papa set off for the constable, and Jim drove rapidly in the direction which the old woman was taking when last seen. Poor Mrs. Hoare was terribly anxious and distressed.

"I blame myself for not attending at once to what Madge said," she told Mary. "But the fact is that she exaggerates so constantly that I have fallen into the habit of only half listening to her. If it had been Alice, it would have been quite different."

Madge overheard Mamma say this, and she crept away to her own room, and cried as if her heart would break. [237]

"If Ernie is never found, it will all be my fault," she thought. "Nobody believes a word that I say. But they would have believed if Alice had said it, and Mary would have run after that wicked old woman, and got dear baby away from her. Oh dear, how miserable I am!"

Madge never forgot that long afternoon and that wretched night. Mamma did not go to bed at all, and none of them slept much. It was not till ten o'clock the next morning that Papa and Jim came back, bringing—oh, joy!—little Ernie with them, his pretty hair all tangled and his rosy cheeks glazed with crying, but otherwise unhurt. He had been found nearly ten miles away, locked in a miserable cottage by the old woman, who had taken off his nice clothes and dressed him in a ragged frock. She had left him there while she went out to beg, or perhaps to make arrangements for carrying him farther out of reach; but she had given him some bread and milk for supper and breakfast, and the little fellow was not much the worse for his adventure; and after a bath and a re-dressing, and after being nearly kissed to death by the whole family, he went to sleep in his own crib very comfortably. [238]

"Papa," said Madge that night, "I never mean to exaggerate any more as long as I live. I mean to say exactly what I think, only not so much, so that you shall all have confidence in me. And then, next time baby is stolen, you will all believe what I say."

"I hope there will never be any 'next time,'" observed her mother; "but I shall have to be glad of what happened this time, if it really cures you of such a bad habit, my little Madge."

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DOLLY'S LESSON. [239]

"WHAT is presence of mind, any way?" demanded little Dolly Ware, as she sat, surrounded by her family, watching the sunset.



The sunset hour is best of all the twenty-four in Nantucket. At no other time is the sea so blue and silvery, or the streaks of purple and pale green which mark the place of the sand-spits and shallows that underlie the island waters so defined, or of such charming colors. The wind blows across softly from the south shore, and brings with it scents of heath and thyme, caught from the high upland moors above the town. The sun dips down, and sends a flash of glory to the zenith; and small pink clouds curl up about the rising moon, fondle her, as it were, and seem to love her. It is a delightful moment, and all Nantucket dwellers learn to watch for it. [240]

It was the custom of the Ware family, as soon as they had despatched their supper,—a very hearty supper, suited to young appetites sharpened by sea air;—of chowder, or hot lobster, or a newly caught blue-fish, with piles of brown bread and butter, and unlimited milk,—to rush out *en masse* to the piazza of their little cottage, and "attend to the sunset," as though it were a family affair. It was the hour when jokes were cracked and questions asked, and when Mamma, who was apt to be pretty busy during the daytime, had leisure to answer them.

Dolly was youngest of the family,—a thin, wiry child, tall for her years, with a brown bang lying like a thatch over a pair of bright inquisitive eyes, and a thick pig-tail braided down her back. Phyllis, the next in age, was short and fat; then came Harry, then Erma, just sixteen (named after a German great-grandmother), and, last of all, Jack, tallest and jolliest of the group, who had just "passed his preliminaries," and would enter college next year. Mrs. Ware might be excused for [241]

the little air of motherly pride with which she gazed at her five. They were fine children, all of them,—frank, affectionate, generous, with bright minds and healthy bodies.

"Presence of mind sometimes means absence of body," remarked Jack, in answer to Dolly's question.

"I was speaking to Mamma," said Dolly, with dignity. "I wasn't asking you."

"I am aware of the fact, but I overlooked the formality, for once. What makes you want to know, midget?"

"There was a story in the paper about a girl who hid the kerosene can when the new cook came, and it said she showed true presence of mind," replied Dolly.

"Oh, that was only fun! It didn't mean anything."

"Isn't there any such thing, then?"

"Why, of course there is. Picking up a shell just before it bursts in a hospital tent, and throwing it out of the door, is presence of mind."

"Yes, and tying a string round the right place on your leg when you've cut an artery," added Harry, eagerly.

"Swallowing a quart of whiskey when a rattlesnake bites you," suggested Jack.

"Saving the silver, instead of the waste-paper basket, when the house is on fire," put in Erma.

Dolly looked from one to the other.

"What funny things!" she cried. "I don't believe you know anything about it. Mamma, tell me what it really means."

"I think," said Mrs. Ware, in those gentle tones to which her children always listened, "that presence of mind means keeping cool, and having your wits about you, at critical moments. Our minds—our reasoning faculties, that is—are apt to be stunned or shocked when we are suddenly frightened or excited; they leave us, and go away, as it were, and it is only afterward that we pick ourselves up, and realize what we ought to have done. To act coolly and sensibly in the face of danger is a fine thing, and one to be proud of."

"Should you be proud of me if I showed presence of mind?" asked Dolly, leaning her arms on her mother's lap.

"Very proud," replied Mrs. Ware, smiling as she stroked the brown head,—"very proud, indeed."

"I mean to do it," said Dolly, in a firm tone.

There was a general laugh.

"How will you go to work?" asked Jack. "Shall I step down to Hussey's, and get a shell for you to practise on?"

"She'll be setting the house on fire some night, to show what she can do," added Harry, teasingly.

"I shall do no such thing," protested Dolly, indignantly. "How foolish you are! You don't understand a bit! I don't want to make things happen; but, if they do happen, I shall try to keep cool and have my wits about me, and perhaps I shall."

"It would be lovely to be brave and do heroic things," remarked Phyllis.

"You could at least be brave enough to use your common sense," said her mother. "Yours is a very good resolution, Dolly dear, and I hope you'll keep to it."

"I will," said Dolly, and marched undauntedly off to bed. Later, she found herself repeating, as if it were a lesson to be learned, "Presence of mind means keeping cool, and having your wits about you;" and she said it over and over every morning and evening after that, as she braided her hair. Phyllis overheard, and laughed at her a little; but Dolly didn't mind being laughed at, and kept on rehearsing her sentence all the same.

It is not given to all of us to test ourselves, and discover by actual experiment just how much a mental resolution has done for us. Dolly, however, was to have the chance. The bathing-beach at Nantucket is a particularly safe one, and the water through the summer months most warm and delicious. All the children who lived on the sandy bluff known as "The Cliff" were in the habit of bathing; and the daily dip taken in company was the chief event of the day, in their opinion. The little Wares all swam like ducks; and no one thought of being nervous or apprehensive if Harry struck out boldly for the jetty, or if Erma and Phyllis were seen side by side at a point far beyond the depth of either of them, or little Dolly took a "header" into deep water off an old boat.

It happened, about two months after the talk on the piazza, that Dolly was bathing with Kitty Allen, a small neighbor of her own age. Kitty had just been learning to swim, and was very proud of her new accomplishment; but she was by no means so sure of herself or so much at home in the water as Dolly, who had learned three years before, and practised continually.

The two children had swam out for quite a distance; then, as they turned to go back, Kitty suddenly realized her distance from the shore, and was seized with immediate and paralyzing terror.

"Oh, oh!" she gasped. "How far out we are! We shall never get back in the world! We shall be drowned! Dolly Ware, we shall certainly be drowned!"

She made a vain clutch at Dolly, and, with a wild scream, went down, and disappeared.

Dolly dived after her, only to be met by Kitty coming up to the surface again, and frantically reaching out, as drowning persons do, for something to hold by. The first thing she touched was Dolly's large pig-tail, and, grasping that tight, she sank again, dragging Dolly down with her, backward. [247]

It was really a hazardous moment. Many a good swimmer has lost his life under similar circumstances. Nothing is more dangerous than to be caught and held by a person who cannot swim, or who is too much disabled by fear to use his powers.

And now it was that Dolly's carefully conned lesson about presence of mind came to her aid. "Keep cool; have your wits about you," rang through her ears, as, held in Kitty's desperate grasp, she was dragged down, down into the sea. A clear sense of what she ought to do flashed across her mind. She must escape from Kitty and hold her up, but not give Kitty any chance to drag her down again. As they rose, she pulled her hair away with a sudden motion, and seized Kitty by the collar of her bathing-dress, behind. [248]

"Float, and I'll hold you up," she gasped. "If you try to catch hold of me again, I'll just swim off, and leave you, and then you *will* be drowned, Kitty Allen."

Kitty was too far gone to make any very serious struggle. Then Dolly, striking out strongly, and pushing Kitty before her, sent one wild cry for help toward the beach.

The cry was heard. It seemed to Dolly a terribly long time before any answer came, but it was in reality less than five minutes before a boat was pushed into the water. Dolly saw it rowing toward her, and held on bravely. "Be cool; have your wits about you," she said to herself. And she kept firm grasp of her mind, and would not let the fright, of whose existence she was conscious, get possession of her.

Oh, how welcome was the dash of the oars close at hand, how gladly she relinquished Kitty to the strong arms that lifted her into the boat! But when the men would have helped her in too, she refused. [249]

"No, thank you; I'll swim!" she said. It seemed nothing to get herself to shore, now that the responsibility of Kitty and Kitty's weight were taken from her. She swam pluckily along, the boat keeping near, lest her strength should give out, and reached the beach just as Jack, that moment aware of the situation, was dashing into the water after her. She was very pale, but declared herself not tired at all, and she dressed and marched sturdily up the cliff, refusing all assistance.

There was quite a little stir among the summer colony over the adventure, and Mrs. Ware had many compliments paid her for her child's behavior. Mr. Allen came over, and had much to say about the extraordinary presence of mind which Dolly had shown.

"It was really remarkable," he said. "If she had fought with Kitty, or if she had tried to swim ashore and had not called for assistance, they might easily have both been drowned. It is extraordinary that a child of that age should keep her head, and show such coolness and decision." [250]

"It wasn't remarkable at all," Dolly declared, as soon as he was gone. "It was just because you said that on the piazza that night."

"Said what?"

"Why, Mamma, surely you haven't forgotten. It was that about presence of mind, you know. I taught it to myself, and have said it over and over ever since,—'Keep cool; have your wits about you.' I said it in the water when Kitty was pulling me under."

"Did you, really?"

"Indeed, I did. And then I seemed to know what to do."

"Well, it was a good lesson," said Mrs. Ware, with glistening eyes. "I am glad and thankful that you learned it when you did, Dolly." [251]

"Are you proud of me?" demanded Dolly.

"Yes, I am proud of you."

This capped the climax of Dolly's contentment. Mamma was proud of her; she was quite satisfied.

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.

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T was a dark day for Patty Flint when her father, with that curt severity of manner which men are apt to assume to mask an inward awkwardness, announced to her his intention of marrying for the second time.

"Tell the others after I am gone out," he concluded.

"But, Papa, do explain a little more to me before you go," protested Patty. "Who is this Miss Maskelyne? What kind of a person is she? Must we call her mother?"

"Well—we'll leave that to be settled later on. Miss Maskelyne is a—a—well, a very nice person indeed, Patty. She'll make us all very comfortable."

"We always have been comfortable, I'm sure," said Patty, in an injured tone.

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Dr. Flint instinctively cast a look around the room. It was comfortable, certainly, so far as neatness and sufficient furniture and a hot fire in an air-tight stove can make a room comfortable. There was a distinct lack of anything to complain of, yet something seemed to him lacking. What was it? His thoughts involuntarily flew to a room which he had quitted only the day before, no larger, no sunnier, not so well furnished, and which yet, to his mind, seemed full of a refinement and homelikeness which he missed in his own, though, man-like, he could have in no wise explained what went to produce it.

His rather stern face relaxed with a half-smile; his eyes seemed to seek out a picture far away. But Patty was watching him,—an observant, decidedly aggrieved Patty, who had done her best for him since her mother died, and a good best too, her age considered, and who was not inexcusable in disliking to be supplanted by a stranger. Poor Patty! But even for Patty's sake it was better so, the father reflected, looking at the prim, opinionated little figure before him, and noting how all the childishness and girlishness seemed to have faded out of it during three years of responsibility. She certainly had managed wonderfully for a child of fifteen, and his voice was very kind as he said, "Yes, my dear, so we have. You've been a good girl, Patty, and done your best for us all; but you're young to have so much care, and when the new mother comes, she will relieve you of it, and leave you free to occupy and amuse yourself as other girls of your age do."

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He kissed Patty as he finished speaking. Kisses were not such every-day matters in the Flint family as to be unimportant, and Patty, with all her vexation, could not but be gratified. Then he hurried away, and, after watching till his gig turned the corner, she went slowly upstairs to the room where the children were learning their Sunday-school lessons.

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There were three besides herself,—Susy and Agnes, aged respectively twelve and ten; and Hal, the only boy, who was not quite seven. This hour of study in the middle of Saturday morning was deeply resented by them all; but Patty's rules were like the laws of the Medes and Persians, which alter not, and they dared not resist. They had solaced the tedium of the occasion by a contraband game of checkers during her absence, but had pushed the board under the flounce of the sofa when they heard her steps, and flown back to their tasks. Over-discipline often leads to little shuffles and deceptions like this, and Patty, who loved authority for authority's sake, was not always wise in enforcing it.

"When you have got through with your lessons, I have something to tell you," was her beginning.

It was an indiscreet one; for of course the children at once protested that they were through! How could they be expected to interest themselves in the "whole duty of man," with a secret obviously in the air.

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"Very well, then," said Patty, indulgently,—for she was dying to tell her news,—"Papa has just asked me to say to you that he is—is—going to be married to a lady in New Bedford."

"Married!" cried Agnes, with wide-open eyes. "How funny! I thought only people who are young got married. Can we go to the wedding, do you suppose, Patty?"

"Oh, perhaps we shall be bridesmaids! I'd like that," added Susy.

"And have black cake in little white boxes, just as many as we want. Goody!" put in Hal.

"Oh, children, how can you talk so?" cried Patty, all her half-formed resolutions of keeping silence and not letting the others know how she felt about it flying to the winds. "Do you really want a stepmother to come in and scold and interfere and spoil all our comfort? Do you want some one else to tell you what to do, and make you mind, instead of me? You're too little to know about such things, but I know what stepmothers are. I read about them in a book once, and they're dreadful creatures, and always hate the children, and try to make their Papas hate them too. It will be awful to have one, I think."

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Patty was absolutely crying as she finished this outburst; and, emotion being contagious, the little ones began to cry also.

"Why does Papa want to marry her, if she's so horrid?" sobbed Agnes.

"I'll never love her!" declared Susy.

"And I'll set my wooden dog on her!" added Hal.

"Oh, Hal," protested Patty, alarmed at the effect of her own injudicious explosion, "don't talk like that! We mustn't be rude to her. Papa wouldn't like it. Of course, we needn't love her, or tell her things, or call her 'mother,' but we *must* be polite to her." [258]

"I don't know what you mean exactly, but I'm not going to be it, anyway," said Agnes.

And, indeed, Patty's notion of a politeness which was to include neither liking nor confidence nor respect *was* rather a difficult one to comprehend.

None of the children went to the wedding, which was a very quiet one. Patty declared that she was glad; but in her heart I think she regretted the loss of the excitement, and the opportunity for criticism. A big loaf of thickly frosted sponge cake arrived for the children, with some bonbons, and a kind little note from the bride; and these offerings might easily have placated the younger ones, had not Patty diligently fanned the embers of discontent and kept them from dying out.

And all the time she had no idea that she was doing wrong. She felt ill-treated and injured, and her imagination played all sorts of unhappy tricks. She made pictures of the future, in which she saw herself neglected and unloved, her little sisters and brother ill-treated, her father estranged, and the household under the rule of an enemy, unscrupulous, selfish, and cruel. Over these purely imaginary pictures she shed many needless tears. [259]

"But there's one thing," she told herself,—"it can't last always. When girls are eighteen, they come of age, and can go away if they like; and I *shall* go away! And I shall take the children with me. Papa won't care for any of us by that time; so he will not object."

So with this league, offensive and defensive, formed against her, the new Mrs. Flint came home. Mary the cook and Ann the housemaid joined in it to a degree.

"To be sure, it's provoking enough that Miss Patty can be when she's a mind," observed Mary; "a-laying down the law, and ordering me about, when she knows no more than the babe unborn how things should be done! Still, I'd rather keep on wid her than be thrying my hand at a stranger. This'll prove a hard missis, mark my word for it, Ann! See how the children is set against her from the first! That's a sign." [260]

Everything was neat and in order on the afternoon when Dr. and Mrs. Flint were expected. Patty had worked hard to produce this result. "She shall see that I know how to keep house," she said to herself. All the rooms had received thorough sweeping, all the rugs had been beaten and the curtains shaken out, the chairs had their backs exactly to the wall, and every book on the centre table lay precisely at right angles with a second book underneath it. Patty's ideas of decoration had not got beyond a stiff neatness. She had yet to learn how charming an easy disorder can be made. [261]

The children, in immaculate white aprons, waited with her in the parlor. They did not run out into the hall when the carriage stopped. The malcontent Ann opened the door in silence.

"Where are the children?" were the first words that Patty heard her stepmother say.

The voice was sweet and bright, with a sort of assured tone in it, as of one used always to a welcome. She did not wait for the Doctor, but walked into the room by herself, a tall, slender, graceful woman, with a face full of brilliant meanings, of tenderness, sense, and fun. One look out of her brown eyes did much toward the undoing of Patty's work of prejudice with the little ones.

"Patty, dear child, where are you?" she said. And she kissed her warmly, not seeming to notice the averted eyes and the unresponding lips. Then she turned to the little ones, and somehow, by what magic they could not tell, in a very few minutes they had forgotten to be afraid of her, forgotten that she was a stranger and a stepmother, and had begun to talk to her freely and at their ease. Dr. Flint's face brightened as he saw the group. [262]

"Getting acquainted with the new mamma?" he said. "That's right."

But this was a mistake. It reminded the children that she was new, and they drew back again into shyness. His wife gave him a rapid, humorous look of warning.

"It always takes a little while for people to get acquainted," she said; "but these 'people' and I do not mean to wait long."

She smiled as she spoke, and the children felt the fascination of her manner; only Patty held aloof.

The next few weeks went unhappily enough with her. She had to see her adherents desert her, one by one; to know that Mary and Ann chanted the praises of the new housekeeper to all their friends; to watch the little girls' growing fondness for the stranger; to notice that little Hal petted and fondled her as he had never done his rather rigorous elder sister; and that her father looked younger and brighter and more content than she had ever seen him look before. She had also to witness the gradual demolition of the stiff household arrangements which she had inherited traditionally from her mother, and sedulously observed and kept up. [263]

The new Mrs. Flint was a born homemaker. The little instinctive touches which she administered here and there presently changed the whole aspect of things. The chairs walked away from the walls; the sofa was wheeled into the best position for the light; plants, which Patty had eschewed as making trouble and "slop," blossomed everywhere. Books were "strewed," as Patty in her secret thought expressed it, in all directions; fresh flowers filled the vases; the blinds were thrown back for the sunshine to stream in. The climax seemed to come when Mrs. Flint turned out the air-tight stove, opened the disused fireplace, routed a pair of andirons from the attic, and set up a wood fire.

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"It will snap all over the room. The ashes will dirty everything. The children will set fire to their aprons, and burn up!" objected Patty.

"There's a big wire fireguard coming to make the children safe," replied her stepmother, easily. "As for the snapping and the dirt, that's all fancy, Patty. I've lived with a wood fire all my life, and it's no trouble at all, if properly managed. I'm sure you'll like it, dear, when you are used to it."

And the worst was that Patty *did* like it. It was so with many of the new arrangements. She opposed them violently at first in her heart, not saying much,—for Mrs. Flint, with all her brightness and affectionate sweetness, had an air of experience and authority about her which it was not easy to dispute,—and later ended by confessing to herself that they were improvements. A gradual thaw was taking place in her frozen little nature. She fought against it; but as well might a winter-sealed pond resist the sweet influences of spring.

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Against her will, almost without her knowledge, she was receiving the impress of a character wider and sweeter and riper than her own. Insensibly, an admiration of her stepmother grew upon her. She saw her courted by strangers for her beauty and grace; she saw her become a sort of queen among the young people of the town; but she also saw—she could not help seeing—that no tinge of vanity ever marred her reception of this regard, and that no duty was ever left undone, no kindness ever neglected, because of the pressure of the pleasantness of life. And then—for a girl cannot but enjoy being made the most of—she gradually realized that Mrs. Flint, in spite of coldness and discouragement, cared for her rights, protected her pleasures, was ready to take pains that Patty should have her share and her chance, should be and appear at her best. It was something she had missed always,—the supervision and loving watchfulness of a mother. Now it was hers; and, though she fought against the conviction, it was sent to her.

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In less than a year Patty had yielded unconditionally to the new *régime*. She was a generous child at heart, and, her opposition once conquered, she became fonder of her stepmother than all the rest put together. Simply and thoroughly she gave herself up to be re-moulded into a new pattern. Her standards changed; her narrow world of motives and ideas expanded and enlarged, till from its confines she saw the illimitable width of the whole universe. Sunshine lightened all her dark places, and set her dormant capacities to growing. Such is the result, at times, of one gracious, informing nature upon others.

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Before her eighteenth birthday, the date which she had set in her first ignorant revolt of soul for escape from an imaginary tyranny, the stepmother she had so dreaded was become her best and most intimate friend. It was on that very day that she made for the first time a full confession of her foolishness.

"What a goose!—what a silly, bad thing I was!" she said. "I hated the idea of you, Mamma. I said I never would like you, whatever you did; and then I just went and fell in love with you!"

"You hid the hatred tolerably well, but I am happy to say that you don't hide the love," said Mrs. Flint, with a smile.

"Hide it? I don't want to! I wonder what did make me behave so? Oh, I know,—it was that absurd book! I wish people wouldn't write such things, Mamma. When I'm quite grown up I mean to write a book myself, and just tell everybody how different it really is, and that the nicest, dearest, best things in the world, and the greatest blessings, are—stepmothers."

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"Blessings in disguise," said Mrs. Flint. "Well, Patty, I am afraid I was pretty thoroughly disguised in the beginning; but if you consider me a blessing now, it's all right."

"Oh, it's all just as right as it can be!" said Patty, fervently.

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A GRANTED WISH.

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HIS is a story about princesses and beggar-girls, hovels and palaces, sweet things and sad things, fullness and scarcity. It is a simple story enough, and mostly true. And as it touches so many and such different extremes of human condition and human experience, it ought by good rights to interest almost everybody; don't you think so?



Effie Wallis's great wish was to have a doll of her own. This was not a very unreasonable wish for any little girl to feel, one would think, yet there seemed as little likelihood of its being granted as that the moon should come down out of the sky and offer itself to her as a plaything; for Effie and her parents belonged to the very poorest of the London poor, and how deep a poverty that is, only London knows.

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We have poor people enough, and sin and suffering enough in our own large cities, but I don't think the poorest of them are quite so badly off as London's worst. Effie and her father and mother and her little sister and her three brothers all lived in a single cellar-like room, in the most squalid quarter of St. Giles. There was almost no furniture in the room; in winter it was often fireless, in summer hot always, and full of evil smells. Food was scanty, and sometimes wanting altogether, for gin cost less than bread, and Effie's father was continuously drunk, her mother not infrequently so. It was a miserable home and a wretched family. The parents fought, the children cried and quarrelled, and the parents beat them. As the boys grew bigger, they made haste to escape into the streets, where all manner of evil was taught them. Jack, the eldest, who was but just twelve, had twice been arrested, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment for picking pockets. They were growing up to be little thieves, young ruffians, and what chance for better things was there in the squalid cellar and the comfortless life, and how little chance of a doll for Effie, you will easily see. Poor doll-less Effie! She was only six years old, and really a sweet little child. The grime on her cheeks did not reach to her heart, which was as simple and ignorant and innocent as that of white-clad children, whose mothers kiss them, and whose faces are washed every day.

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In all her life Effie had only seen one doll. It was a battered object, with one leg gone, and only half a nose, but, to Effie's eyes, it was a beauty and a treasure. This doll was the property of a little girl to whom Effie had never dared to speak, she seemed to her so happy and privileged, so far above herself, as she strutted up and down the alley with other children, bearing the one-legged doll in her arms. It was not the alley in which the Wallises lived, but a somewhat wider one into which that opened. One of Effie's few pleasures was to creep away when she could, and, crouched behind a post at the alley's foot, watch the children playing there. No one thought of or noticed her. Once, when the owner of the doll threw her on the ground for a moment and ran away, Effie ventured to steal out and touch the wonderful creature with her finger. It was only a touch, for the other children soon returned, and Effie fled back to her hiding-place; but she never forgot it. Oh, if only she could have a doll like that for her own, what happiness it would be, she thought; but she never dared to mention the doll to her mother, or to put the wish into words.

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If any one had come in just then and told Effie that one day she was to own a doll far more beautiful than the shabby treasure she so coveted, and that the person to give it her would be the future Queen of England,—why, first it would have been needful to explain to her what the words meant, and then she certainly wouldn't have believed them. What a wide, wide distance there seemed from the wretched alley where the little, half-clad child crouched behind the post, to the sunny palace where the fair princess, England's darling, sat surrounded by her bright-faced children,—a distance too wide to bridge, as it would appear; yet it was bridged, and there was a half-way point where both could meet, as you will see. That half-way point was called "The Great Ormond Street Child's Hospital."

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For one day a very sad thing happened to Effie. Sent by her mother to buy a quarter of gin, she was coming back with the jug in her hand, when a half-tipsy man, reeling against her, threw her down just where a flight of steps led to a lower street. She was picked up and carried home, where for some days she lay in great pain, before a kind woman who went about to read the Bible to the poor, found her out, and sent the dispensary doctor to see her. He shook his head gravely after he had examined her, and said her leg was badly broken, and ought to have been seen to long before, and that there was no use trying to cure her there, and she must be carried to the hospital. Mrs. Wallis made a great outcry over this, for mothers are mothers, even when they are poor and drunken and ignorant, and do not like to have their children taken away from them; but in the end the doctor prevailed.

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Effie hardly knew when they moved her, for the doctor had given her something which made her sleep heavily and long. It was like a dream when she at last opened her eyes, and found herself in a place which she had never seen before,—a long, wide, airy room, with a double row of narrow, white beds like the one in which she herself was, and in most of the beds sick children lying. Bright colored pictures and texts painted gaily in red and blue hung on the walls above the beds; some of the counterpanes had pretty verses printed on them. Effie could not read, but she liked to look at the texts, they were so bright. There were flowers in pots and jars on the window-sills, and on some of the little tables that stood beside the beds, and tiny chairs with rockers, in which pale little boys and girls sat swinging to and fro. A great many of them were playing with toys, and they all looked happy. An air of fresh, cheerful neatness was over all the place, and altogether it was so pleasant that for a long time Effie lay staring about her, and speaking not a word. At last, in a faint little voice, she half whispered, "Where is this?"

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Faint as was the voice, some one heard it, and came at once to the bedside. This somebody was a nice, sweet-faced, motherly looking woman, dressed in the uniform of Miss Nightingale's nurses. She smiled so kindly at Effie that Effie smiled feebly back.

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"Where is this?" she asked again.

"This is a nice place where they take care of little children who are ill, and make them well

again," answered the nurse, brightly.

"Do you live here?" said Effie, after a pause, during which her large eyes seemed to grow larger.

"Yes. My name is Nurse Johnstone, and I am *your* nurse. You've had a long sleep, haven't you, dear? Now you've waked up, would you like some nice milk to drink?"

"Y-es," replied Effie, doubtfully. But when the milk came, she liked it very much, it was so cool and rich and sweet. It was brought in a little blue cup, and Effie drank it through a glass tube, because she must not lift her head. There was a bit of white bread to eat besides, but Effie did not care for that. She was drowsy still, and fell asleep as soon as the last mouthful of milk was swallowed. [277]

When she next waked, Nurse Johnstone was there again, with such a good little cupful of hot broth for Effie to eat, and another slice of bread. Effie's head was clearer now, and she felt much more like talking and questioning. The ward was dark and still, only a shaded lamp here and there showed the little ones asleep in their cots.

"This is a nice place I think," said Effie, as she slowly sipped the soup.

"I'm glad you like it," said the nurse, "almost all children do."

"I like you, too," said Effie, with a contented sigh, "and *that*," pointing to the broth. She had not once asked after her mother; the nurse noticed, and she drew her own inferences.

"Now," she said, after she had smoothed the bed clothes and Effie's hair, and given the pillow a touch or two to make it easier, "now, it would be nice if you would say one little Bible verse for me, and then go to sleep again." [278]

"A verse?" said Effie.

"Yes, a little Bible verse."

"Bible?" repeated Effie, in a puzzled tone.

"Yes, dear,—a Bible verse. Don't you know one?"

"No."

"But you've seen a Bible, surely."

Effie shook her head. "I don't know what you mean," she said.

"Why, you poor lamb," cried Nurse Johnstone, "I do believe you haven't! Well, and in a Christian country, too! If that ain't too bad. I'll tell you a verse this minute, you poor little thing, and to-morrow we'll see if you can't learn it." Then, very slowly and reverently, she repeated, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Twice she repeated the text, Effie listening attentively to the strange, beautiful words; then she kissed her for good-night, and moved away. Effie lay awake awhile saying the verse over to herself. She had a good memory, and when she waked next morning she found that she was able to say it quite perfectly. [279]

That happened to be a Thursday, and Thursday was always a special day in Great Ormond Street, because it was that on which the Princess of Wales made her weekly visit to the hospital. Effie had never heard of a princess, and had no idea what all the happy bustle meant, as nurses and patients made ready for the coming guest. Nothing could be cleaner than the ward in its every-day condition, but all little possible touches were given to make it look its very best. Fresh flowers were put into the jars, the little ones able to sit up, were made very neat, each white bed was duly smoothed, and every face had a look as though something pleasant was going to happen. Children easily catch the contagion of cheerfulness, and Effie was insensibly cheered by seeing other people so. She lay on her pillow, observing everything, and faintly smiling, when the door opened, and in came a slender, beautiful lady, wrapped in soft silks and laces, with two or three children beside her. All the nurses began to courtesy, and the children to dimple and twinkle at the sight of her. She walked straight to the middle of the ward, then, lifting something up that all might see it, she said in a clear sweet voice: "Isn't there some one of these little girls who can say a pretty Bible verse for me? If there is, she shall have this." [280]

What do you think "this" was? No other than a doll! A large, beautiful creature of wax, with curly brown hair, blue eyes which could open and shut, the reddest lips and pinkest cheeks ever seen, and a place, somewhere about her middle, which, when pinched, made her utter a squeaky sound like "Mama." This delightful doll had on a pretty blue dress with a scarlet sash, and a pair of brown kid boots with real buttons. She wore a little blue hat on top of her curly head, and sported an actual pocket-handkerchief, three inches square, or so, on which was written her name, "Dolly Varden." All the little ones stared at her with dazzled eyes, but for a moment no one spoke. I suppose they really were too surprised to speak, till suddenly a little hand went up, and a small voice was heard from the far corner. The voice came from Effie, too, and it was Effie herself who spoke. [281]

"I can say a verse," said the small voice.

"Can you? That is nice. Say it, then," said the princess, turning toward her.

Then the small, piping voice repeated, very slowly and distinctly, this text: "Suffer the little children to come unto—*Nurse Johnstone*—and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven!"

What a laugh rang through the ward then! The nurses laughed, the little ones laughed too, though they did not distinctly understand at what. Nurse Johnstone cried as well as laughed, and the princess was almost as bad, for her eyes were dewy, though a smile was on her sweet lips as she stepped forward and laid the doll in Effie's hands. Nurse Johnstone eagerly explained: "I said 'Come unto Me,' and she thought it meant *me*, poor little lamb, and it's a shame there should be such ignorance in a Christian land!" All this time Effie was hugging her dolly in a silent rapture. Her wish was granted, and wasn't it strange that it should have been granted just *so*?



She stepped forward and laid the doll in Effie's hands.—[PAGE 282.](#)

Do you want to know more about little Effie? There isn't much more to tell. All the kindness and care which she received in Great Ormond Street could not make her well again. She had no constitution, the doctors said, and no strength. She lived a good many weeks, however, and they were the happiest weeks of her life, I think. Dolly Varden was always beside her, and Dolly was clasped tight in her arms when she finally fell asleep to waken up no more. Nurse Johnstone, who had learned to love the little girl dearly, wanted to lay the doll in the small coffin; but the other nurses said it would be a pity to do so. There are so few dolls and so many children in the world, you know; so in the end Dolly Varden was given to another little sick girl, who took as much pleasure in her as Effie had done.

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So Effie's wish was granted, though only for a little while. It is very often so with wishes which we make in this world. But I am very sure that Effie doesn't miss the dolly or anything else in the happy world to which she has gone, and that the wishes granted there are granted fully and forever, and more freely and abundantly than we who stay behind can even guess.

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THE END.

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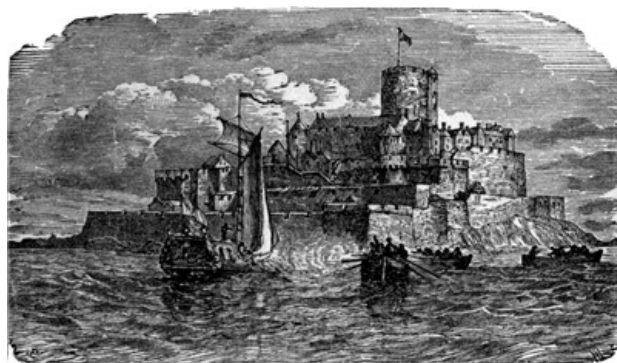
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Punctuation, spelling, hyphenation and language has been retained as it appears in the original publication except as follows:

Page 8

the shoulder of his off horse *changed to* the shoulder [of his horse](#)

Page 194

a "a boat;" men pulled off *changed to* ["a boat;"](#) men pulled off

Page 270
it summer hot always, *changed to*
in summer hot always,

Page 283
dolly was clasped tight in her arms *changed to*
Dolly was clasped tight in her arms

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