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Lady Daisy AND OTHER STORIES BY CAROLINE STEWART

Author of "A Kitten's Adventures" &c.



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"LADY DAISY." A DOLL STORY.

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Little Flora's father gave her a small china doll on her fourth birthday. It was only a little one, but Flora's father said that his little girl was very small too, and he thought she could not carry a big doll yet. When Flora was five years old her father gave her a larger one, and when she was six her father presented her with a beautiful baby doll in long clothes, that was almost as tall as Baby Henry, her brother, in the nursery. Nurse even said the dollie's long gowns would fit Baby if they were only wider, for, of course, Baby Henry was much heavier and fatter

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than Dollie, though Dollie was almost as tall. Now came the question of a name. Nurse said that in the last house where she lived the little girl had had a doll called Lady Sarah Maria, but Flora said she was not going to call her doll by that name, because the funny old lady who lived opposite was Miss Sarah Maria Higginson, and her doll was far too pretty to be like that old lady. Miss Higginson had once looked very angrily at Flora when her ball had happened to bounce over the wall into her precious flower-garden, so Flora did not like her. Perhaps the old lady did not like Flora for spoiling her flowers! Well, at last, after much thinking, the doll had a name given to it. It was called Lady Emily Mary Julia Gwendoline. Nurse thought it was too long, but Flora reminded her that Emily was after her eldest sister, Mary after the parlour-maid, whom Flora liked very much, Julia after Flora's Aunt Julia, and Gwendoline after Flora's little sister; so that her doll was like them all in something, of course, or she would not have given her so many names. She had Emily's blue eyes, and Mary's pink cheeks, and Aunt Julia's sweet smile, and Gwendoline's pretty light hair.

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"And, Nurse, I do think she has fingers like yours, rather stumpy at the ends!" exclaimed Flora, after a pause.

"No, no!" cried Nurse. "I won't have her called Ruth after me, that I won't; and you're a very rude little girl Miss Flora!"

So Flora contented herself with four names, and wrote them in her copy-book lest she should forget them. After a while she grew tired of calling her doll by four names, and changed them all to Daisy, for short, she said; though Nurse said that Daisy was the short name for Margaret, and not for Emily.

Lady Daisy went out for many a long walk in the tender arms of her little mother. Flora hardly ever let her out of her sight, except while she went to dinner and breakfast. At tea-time Lady Daisy always sat on a chair by her little mother, and was quite content to look at her bread and honey without wanting any of it.

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The doll led a very happy life till one day when the whole family set off to the seaside, and then her misfortunes began. Flora thought that she was as careful as ever of her dear Lady Daisy, but I am afraid she had grown a little tired of looking after her as much as before. At first she had carefully kept her out of Baby Henry's reach, because he pulled about everything till it was torn or spoiled; and also Snip, the terrier, had such a way of worrying anything that he was never allowed to go near Lady Daisy's cradle. Therefore, when the whole party set off for the seaside the doll was as fresh and beautiful as at first. But, alas, a change came! Little Flora was so excited about going to the seaside, that after she had put her favourite on the cushion of the railway carriage she forgot all about her in the delight of looking out of the window. When they at last came to a large station where the train was going to stop for ten minutes, half the party got out of the carriage to go and have some tea in the refreshment rooms. Little Flora begged to be allowed to go too; and though her mother meant her to stay with Nurse, Charlie, and Baby in the carriage, she let her come as a great treat for once in a way. So Flora jumped out in the highest spirits, and quite forgot Lady Daisy in her hurry.

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Nurse put Baby Henry on the cushion, as she wanted to untie the basket that held a bottle of milk and some biscuits. While she was busy doing this Baby Henry looked about him. He soon spied Lady Daisy sitting bolt upright against the cushions, staring with her blue eyes at Charlie. He stretched out his little hand and took her by the arm. Charlie looked up at this moment and saw him do it, and though Charlie was only a little boy himself he felt he ought to look after Baby Henry.

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"Give Dollie to me, Baby," he said sharply. "You're not to have her, bad boy!"

But Baby only clasped Lady Daisy tighter by the arm.

Charlie stretched out his hand and caught hold of Dollie by the hair and tried to pull her away from Baby. Charlie pulled and Baby pulled. They pulled and pulled, till poor Lady Daisy's hair came off in Charlie's hand and her arm broke off in Baby's hand, and then she tumbled right down on to the floor!

"Oh, Nurse, see how naughty Baby has been!" cried Charlie.

Nurse turned round, and when she saw the mischief that they had both done she gave Charlie a good shaking that made him cry, and scolded Baby Henry well till he roared out loudly.

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"Now, stop that noise, you bad children!" said Nurse angrily. "I can't do anything for a minute but directly my back is turned you behave as bad as bad can be. And now, what Miss Flora will say when she comes back I don't know. I think I had better hide away Dollie till we get to the seaside, and then we can get her mended, and trust to Miss Flora forgetting all about her till then."

So Nurse picked up the bits of arm and all the small pieces of yellow hair, and stuffed them all together, with Lady Daisy, under the cushion of the railway carriage; and then she looked out of the window and said, "Here they all come back again. Ah, Master Charlie, you may well look ashamed!"

Charlie was very much frightened at what he and Baby had done; but, of course, he thought it was all Baby's fault, being like so many people who prefer to put the blame on others, instead of bravely bearing a share of it themselves. He did so hope Nurse wouldn't tell. I think he ought to have told himself; don't you? But he did not. Just then Flora came running up to the carriage door with a huge Bath bun in her hand.

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"Oh, Charlie, it's so nice out here!" she cried; "and I've had a lot of refreshment. And, oh, I've bought you a big bun with my own money!"

Charlie was just putting out his hand for the bun when his conscience pricked him, and told him he hardly deserved to take Flora's gift after what had happened.

He suddenly withdrew his hand and said, "I'm not hungry, Flo, thank you."

"Oh, but do take it!" cried Flora. "It cost twopence."

Charlie put out his hand slowly and took the bun; but it tasted heavy to him, as he was not happy. Soon the rest of the party were settled back in their former seats, and the engine steamed on again. And poor Lady Daisy was quite forgotten! One by one the children dropped off to sleep, and only once did little Flora murmur her doll's name in her dreams. At last they came to the end of their journey, and everyone had to bustle out so quickly. Nurse had to carry the sleepy children into the waiting-room whilst the luggage was being got out, and in five minutes the engine gave a puff and a shriek and the train rolled on somewhere else, with Lady Daisy crushed under one of the cushions of a carriage. Nurse had quite forgotten her!

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Poor thing, she hardly deserved such a fate! I think we must follow her on her journey, for somebody must look after her. Well, at the next station an old gentleman got into that very carriage, and he sat down at the end by the window and began to curl himself up comfortably in the corner. But somehow something prevented him. He thought the cushion edged up-hill very

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oddly, and the seat seemed very hard. So he threw off his travelling rug again, in which he had wrapped himself, and stood up to search, thinking it might be crackers or squibs or something horrid. When he pulled up the seat and found poor Lady Daisy he was very angry.

"I'll speak to the guard!" he muttered to himself, while he held the battered, crushed doll at arm's length. "Some wretched child has left this here for I don't know how long, and they never take the trouble to settle the cushions properly, these railway people. Lazy set!"

By which remark he did the hard-working railway people a great injustice, so I am glad there was no one in the carriage to hear. [Pg 17]

He threw the doll roughly down on the opposite side, and composed himself once more to rest. When people are angry they are very often unjust. *We* know—you and I—that it was not the guard's fault nor the porter's fault that poor Lady Daisy disturbed the rest of this grumbling old gentleman. *We* know that she had only been left in that carriage ten minutes by herself. However, at the next station the guard was called to the door and shown the poor battered doll, and angrily asked why the cushions were not made smooth before the train started on its journey?

The guard said he was sorry for any discomfort the gentleman might have had, but explained that he remembered a party of children had only just got out at the last station, so he was sure they must have left it there. In the meantime he would take "Miss Doll," as he called her, into his own van; and he lifted her up, and picked up the broken arm and all the yellow hair and rolled them into a big bundle, and went off to his part of the train. [Pg 18]

"It'll do for my little Polly," thought the guard to himself.

All this while what was Flora doing? Hard-hearted little girl, she was thinking how hungry she was as they rolled along the streets in a cab to their lodgings. When the family were all seated at tea, and Flora was busy with a plateful of bread and jam, Nurse suddenly came into the room looking rather sad, and she whispered something to Flora's mother. Flora heard some of the words. They were, "Break it to her, please, ma'am; I'm afraid."

All at once, like a flash, Flora remembered Lady Daisy. She darted up from her chair, crying out, "Oh, Nurse, where *is* my doll? I've left her in the train! Oh, Mother, please send to the station and ask them for her! Oh, Mother, how could Nurse forget her? Nurse, Nurse, are you sure you haven't got her? I heard you say you were afraid! I know you've left her behind!" And thus Flora ran on—now accusing Nurse, now mourning the loss of her doll, now asking her mother to send for her—till her mother drew her calmly to herself, and said, "Flora, dear, do not blame Nurse for forgetting your doll when she had a hundred other things to think of. If you forgot her, don't accuse others of it. I am afraid my little girl forgot her Lady Daisy for many hours, too, in the train. Nurse tells me you left your dollie all alone when you got out of the train at B— Station, and that Charlie and Baby Henry got hold of her, and pulled her very much about, so that she had to put the poor broken thing under the seat lest you should see it, and it would grieve you. She meant to act kindly to you, and it was hardly her fault if, when we got out, she should forget Lady Daisy was still there, since Lady Daisy's own mistress, my little Flora, never missed her at all; was it?" [Pg 19]

Flora hung her head. "No, Mother," she whispered. "But I *did* love her."

"Then my little girl must be more thoughtful," said her mother; "and I am afraid, as the train has gone on a long way, that Lady Daisy must have gone too, so she won't be at the station. But think of this: perhaps some other little girl may find her, and take care of her, and love her too."

At which Flora burst into a flood of tears, and it took a long time for her to get over the idea that Lady Daisy was lost for ever!

They stayed at the seaside for six weeks, and one day Nurse packed up all their things and said they were going home again. Flora watched her fastening all the boxes and bags. She had a sorrowful look on her face. Even now she had not forgotten Lady Daisy. [Pg 20]

"Nurse, I've nothing to carry in my hands *this* time," she said, and then turned away to look out of the window. She did not try to blame anyone else now for her forgetfulness of her poor Lady Daisy. She saw it was her own fault having left her, alone and forgotten, so long that day when they first came to the sea.

When they got to the station they had to cross over to the other side of the railway. There was a train just coming up, and they waited till it should go by. However, it was going to stop there altogether, and the guard got out and was walking towards them, when suddenly Nurse recognized his face as being that of the same man who had been with them in the train when they came down to the sea. She remembered faces very well, and as she was still sorry for poor Flora, she ran up to him, and said hastily: [Pg 21]

"Please, sir, did you happen to find a doll in your train some six weeks ago? My little lady's doll, that was!"

The guard stood still with a puzzled face for a moment, then suddenly a smile lit up his face, and he answered quite briskly:

"Oh! are *you* the party as got out of my train about that time and left a doll under the seat?"

"Yes, sure enough!" exclaimed Nurse.

"Ah! I see 'twas you now!" replied the guard. "You know where it was; and there is the little missy, too, whom I remembers lifting out dead-asleep in my arms that day. Yes, yes. I found it right enough; not but what it were a bit crushed through an old party sitting on it at the next station; but, bless you, I took it home all right, and give it to my poor Poll in hospital. Not afore I'd mended it, though. I'm a good hand at carpentering, though sticking on the yellow hair was a bit of a puzzle." And he laughed loud.

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Flora had ran up to her nurse at this moment.

"Dollie's found," said Nurse, quickly turning round to her.

"Did you find her, please, guard?" inquired Flora rather shyly.

"Yes, missy; and if I'd known where you lived I'd have fetched her back to you. As it is, my Poll's had a lot of fun out of her; but you shall have her back—you shall have her back."

As Flora's mother just then came out of the ticket-office and joined the group, she heard the whole history. The end of it was that she gave the guard sixpence to send Lady Daisy back by parcel post, as he declared he wouldn't let his Polly keep her a day longer, no, "not if the lady wished it ever so." I think he had seen Flora's sorrowful face turn quite joyful when he had mentioned Lady Daisy.

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"And, Mother," whispered Flora, "if he so kindly sends dear Daisy back, will you take my four-and-sixpence out of my money-box and buy Polly another great big doll instead. You see, it won't matter to *her* losing Daisy as it mattered to me, and if I buy her another doll she will be just as happy; don't you think so? You see, she didn't have her *always*, as I did."

And so it was settled; and when poor little Poll in the hospital with the broken leg one day received a lovely new doll by the post, she said wonderingly to her father:

"I can't think, Father, why that little lady liked that battered old thing instead of keeping this here lovely new one!"

But you and I know why. We all like our old favourites best, don't we? And so Lady Daisy came back after all safe and sound to her first home at the Grange, and you may be sure Flora never lost sight of her again.

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PAPA'S CHRISTMAS STORY.



Papa, do please tell us one of your nice stories," said Clement Percival to his father, as the family drew their chairs round the fire after dinner one bitterly cold winter's evening just before Christmas Day.

"Oh, do, do!" struck in a chorus of youthful voices.

"I should like a funny tale," said Clement.

"I don't mind rather a sad one," said Lucy. "I mean one about naughty children."

"I like just what Papa likes to tell," said George, who had set himself down on a footstool at his father's feet.

"Mamma, dear," said little Nelly, the youngest of the party, "do please shut your eyes and go to sleep, that you mayn't be able to say, 'Nelly, it's time for you to go to bed' *just* in the middle."

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"Well," said Mr. Percival laughing, "I will try what I can do to please you all. Let me think a minute. Oh, I know!"

"Once upon a time—"

"*Once upon a time!* That is the way you *always* begin, Papa," said Lucy.

"Well, then, will this do for you, young lady?"

It was getting dusk on a September evening when a young traveller entered the village of Seely. Foot-sore and weary, he sank upon a grassy bank to rest.

He had not been there long before a strange sound met his ears. At first it seemed to be nothing but one continued buzz. He listened closely.

What could it be?

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The noise came from behind a garden wall at his back. He rose quietly, and climbing up into an oak-tree from which he could look over into that garden, he seated himself safely amongst the

branches and held his breath, for—the fruit-trees and vegetables were talking! and he wished to hear what they could be saying.

"It is no use asking me this evening," said a portly Cauliflower. "My head is so heavy I cannot take my turn. Ask the Scarlet-runner."

"Me!" said the Scarlet-runner. "Don't ask me! I've been running all day, and have got to run all night, to get up to the top of these sticks. You may see by the colour of my flowers how hot and tired I am! Try the Parsley."

"I'm sure *I* have not a moment to tell a tale," said the Parsley. "I'm *so* busy curling my leaves ready to make the dishes to-morrow, for I heard the gardener tell the cook I should have a place on the table, and I like to be pretty." [Pg 29]

"Vain creature!" said the Cauliflower. "Black Currant! what say you to taking your turn now?"

"Better not ask me," drawled the Black Currant. "You see by my dress how dismal my story would be, and as for my sisters Red and White, the birds have been pecking at them all day, till there is nothing but their stalks left. It is no use to ask *them*."

"I *would* take my turn," said a large Pear hanging against the brick wall, "but I'm *so* sleepy I am sure I should fall down with the exertion."

"I am longing to speak," cried a Potato from under the ground, "but I can't make my voice heard through the mould. There are many wonderful things going on down here which I, with eyes about me, can see, that you have no idea of, but I must wait till I am dug up to take my turn."

"You are all very tiresome to-night," said the Cauliflower. "I *would* ask the Cabbage, because I know it has a good heart, but I heard the Fig-tree say the other day it wouldn't give a fig for its stories, they are so vulgar. Who is that coughing?" [Pg 30]

"I," said the Artichoke. "I was thinking I might be the speaker to-night; but you see I could only get half through what I had to say before I was stopped by coughing, so it's no use *my* trying."

"French Bean! could not *you* oblige us?"

"If so, I must speak in French," said the French Bean.

"Oh, that will never do!" cried several voices at once; "we cannot understand that language."

The French Bean hung its head and was silent.

"Did I not see a head peeping from that tall red pot?" said the Cauliflower. "Sea-kale! is that you? Come! it is really your turn to-night." [Pg 31]

"No, no!" said the Sea-kale. "The gardener can force me to grow; but you can't force me to tell a story. My stories are only fit for the shells and fishes to listen to. None of you land creatures would understand them."

"*I* could, for I—I have relations amongst the shells," said the Crab-apple proudly.

"And I'm sure I'm *well* known to one of the fishes," said the Fennel, "for whenever the Mackerel comes to dinner I'm always asked to meet him."

"I see we must fall back upon the Mustard and Cress," said the Cauliflower.

"Us, indeed!" cried hot angry voices from a box in a corner, "what could *we* tell of, who live only for a few days, and can never look over the wall? Surely the old Apple-tree who has lived for so many years, and can stretch out its branches far enough to see what is going on outside, is the one to tell us something worth listening to." [Pg 32]

"Yes! yes! the Apple-tree!" cried all the vegetables at once, making a very loud confused noise.

"My friend," said the Apple-tree, "my fruit is blushing rosy red with the compliment you pay me. What the Mustard and Cress say is quite true. I *can* see the world beyond, and I have a tale to tell. It is not a merry one; but if you like to hear it you shall."

"I'm quite ready to cry," said the Onion, "so pray begin."

The Apple-tree shook off a few dead leaves and two over-ripe apples, and began as follows:—

"The earliest thing that I can remember is standing in a neat row of young apple-trees in a nursery-garden. An old gentleman came and bought me, carried me off in his carriage and had me planted here. He lived in the house you see over the wall. No, by the by, you can hardly any of you see the house till your heads are cut off and the gardener carries you through the gate; but there *is* a house, and I will tell you what it is like." [Pg 33]

"It is a large white house, with a roof of gray slates. There are only three windows on this side, but then this is not the grand side. I only saw the other sides once, and that was when I was taken out of the carriage and brought round here, and I passed plenty of windows and a large house-door then. Well, for many a long year I lived a dull quiet life, seeing nobody but the gardener. When first I had apples, beautiful rosy apples, I was in hopes the old gentleman would come and see them, but no—as soon as they were ripe the gardener took them all from me, or else they fell upon the grass below, and the slugs came and ate them. At last the old gentleman

died.

"I heard the gardener tell the bees this one fine morning, and he wiped the corner of his eyes with his coat sleeve as he did so, which showed he had been a good master to him. After this the place looked very lonely, with the windows of the house closed and not a creature to be seen about except the gardener, and he seldom appeared.

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"A fine battle with the wind now and then was the only fun I had. It would come gently at first and rock me to and fro as if it would lull me to sleep, then, suddenly it would rush at me in all its fury and try to tear me to pieces; but although it used to bend me down almost to touch the ground, I would start up again as if I didn't mind it a bit. Somehow or other I always gained the victory, for the poor wind died away while I was the stronger and better for the fight.

"In course of time I became so stout and firm it couldn't shake me at all. When it did rise up and try to do its worst, it could only whistle round me and make my branches dance. Late one evening I was surprised by seeing a small head peering over the wall. At first there was only a pair of eyes, presently the whole head, and then the body of a small boy, who scrambled over and crept up to me.

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"He got up into my branches and filled his pockets as full as they could hold. Then he slid down and climbed back over the wall by which he came.

"The next day the gardener happened to pay me a visit."

"'Holloa! who's been here?' he said; 'this won't do!' and he went to his toolhouse and took out something which he laid in the grass at my roots, and went away.

"When night came the same small head appeared again, and the boy was close upon me, when suddenly he was brought to a stand-still, and uttered a loud cry. He had been caught in a trap, and the harder he tried to get out the faster he was held, and there he stayed till the gardener came and gave him a good thrashing. You may be sure I never saw that little boy again!

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"Autumn, winter, and spring, all passed away very quietly, and then came a stir in the place. Windows were opened; workmen began to hammer and paint; the gardener made the walks and borders all so neat and trim; and one fine afternoon a carriage covered with boxes drove up to the door. Then the bustle was greater than ever. Servants ran about, horses clattered in the yard, dogs barked, and children's voices were louder than all. The next morning the garden gate opened and a lady and gentleman walked in, arm in arm, followed by two fine-grown lads.

"They paced round the gravel walks, then came up to me and admired my beautiful blossoms. Then and there the gentleman told the boys they should each have a garden of their own, and he pointed to the piece of ground by the Sweet-brier, and made the gardener divide it into two equal portions. After this the boys seemed to live out of doors.

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"I soon found out that their names were 'Richard' and 'Joe,' although they called one another 'Dick' and 'Joey.' They dug, and planted, and sowed, and watered from morning till evening. The poor little trembling plants did not know what to be about. If they came above the ground, as often as not they were plucked up and thrown upon the dirt-heap as weeds. If they stayed below, the mould was grubbed up to see why they were so long coming. These boys often quarrelled, but their quarrels did not last long. They would begin with hard words, then go on to throwing mud and stones upon one another's ground; at last it would come to fighting, till Joey burst out crying, when they made up and were good friends again.

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"What I did feel pity for was that poor old Pump at the end of the terrace walk. She was *once* a tidy-looking, green-coloured, upright Pump, with a stone basin to catch the water.

"See what she is now—a broken-down, good-for-nothing ruin! The boys were for ever filling their watering-pots and soaking their flower-beds with water. Then they must needs sink wells made of large flower-pots with the hole at the bottom stopped up with clay. These they filled and refilled till they overflowed and made the gravel-walk a pond.

"The gardener often got angry with them, and they begged pardon, but went on the same as ever.

"At last the weather became very hot and sultry, and the Pump would only give a thin stream of water and that only with hard pumping. The boys couldn't stand this. They got upon the stone basin, lifted off her head, and threw a stone down to hear how much water there was in the well. The sound of the splash was so charming to their ears that nothing would satisfy them but that they must needs go on throwing in stone after stone, till the poor thing was quite choked and could only give a drop at a time, and that with a gurgle.

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"And then, what do you think they did? Why, they lifted up her handle as high as it could go and let it fall again with a sudden jerk. That almost shook the poor thing to pieces. At last, her arm slipped quite out of its socket, and dropped down useless!

"No wonder that the Willow sprang up by her side to cry over her, and has been weeping there ever since, for she has never been pumped again.

"The gardener became furious, and I think he must have had the boys punished, for it was weeks before they came to work in their little gardens again, and the weeds had a fine time of it then. They ran in and out, and up and down, and round and round about the plants just as they liked.

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"The Sweet-brier was of no sort of use in keeping them in order. She only looked down, and smiled to see them so wild.

"As the boys grew bigger I saw less of them. They went away for long seasons, and only came home now and then.

"I must say they always let me know directly they did return. I think they liked me the best of all the trees in the garden."

"You think so," said a voice from behind a netting on the wall; "but that is because we wall-fruit are so rich and rare, young fingers are forbidden to touch us, while they are allowed to play with you; and besides, we keep a large army of wasps, in bright yellow uniforms, to protect us against thieves. Late one evening Master Richard came into the garden. He crept up to me and stared me full in the face. 'I know what you want, my young man,' thought I; and I gently dropped one of my very ripest to the ground. He looked round to see that no one was watching, then he made a dart forward; but no sooner had he picked it up than a wasp flew out and stung his hand so sharply he let it fall, and went back yelling into the house. But I beg your pardon, Apple-tree. Pray, go on with your story, for we are much interested in all you are telling us."

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"Yes, I must make haste," said the Apple-tree, "for the night is passing away very rapidly. Well, one bright afternoon the boys came with their books in their hands and threw themselves on the grass under me to learn their holiday tasks, which I heard them say must be perfect before they left home the next day.

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"They had not been there long before two splendid blackbirds flew up into the tree at the bottom of the garden. Every now and then they dived down into the gooseberry bushes and then flew back again, chattering to one another in a language which I did not understand, but which sounded very pretty and joyous.

"'Oh!' exclaimed Dick, 'how I should like to have a shot at those birds! Wouldn't they be nice in a pie?'

"'I'll set a trap,' said Joe.

"'A trap?' said Dick. 'They won't be caught in a trap at this time of year. If I had only a gun I could pick them off so easily,' and he made as though he was holding a gun and pointing at them.

"'I say, Joey, I'll go and get father's gun and have a shot,' he added.

"'You mustn't,' said Joe. 'Father said we were never to touch his gun, or go out shooting without him.'

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"'Why, he taught me to shoot,' said Dick; 'and he says I'm a very good shot. I'm not a child now. I understand all about a gun, and I'm very careful. Besides, father is out for the whole day, and he won't know anything about it, if you don't tell, for I can load it again and put it back just as it was before. Oh, I *must* have those birds!' and saying this he got up.

"'Pray, pray, don't!' said Joe.

"But Richard did go, and came back with the loaded gun.

"'Now, Joe,' said he, 'keep out of the way. Get behind the tree and you'll be quite safe.'

"Joe ran behind me, and Dick fired. One of the blackbirds fell into the bushes.

"'Here, Joe,' said Dick, 'just hold the gun while I go and look for the bird. Wasn't it a fine shot! Take care, for the other barrel is loaded! Don't move an inch for fear you should pull the trigger, and I'll be back in one minute!' Joe came forward and took the gun from his brother. Away ran Dick, and there sat poor Joe, afraid almost to breathe for fear of what might happen. Presently Dick appeared at the end of the walk holding up the unfortunate blackbird by its extended wings.

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"Joe jumped up and went down to meet him. I couldn't see how it happened, but as they met there was a loud report, and I heard Dick call out, 'Oh, Joey, you have killed me!'

"Joe threw away the gun which he had been carrying, and ran screaming into the house.

"Then there *was* a hubbub! All the servants ran out. The gardener picked up Dick, the footman picked up the gun, the housekeeper scolded at the pitch of her voice, and the housemaid shrieked, while Joe himself shed bitter tears of grief and wrung his hands in despair.

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"They all passed through the gate. If you remember, I told you there were three windows on this side of the house. Well, one of the rooms seemed seldom used; but now I saw people moving about in it till the housekeeper came and drew down the blind.

"Then there was such a clattering of horses in the yard; the groom rode off in one direction, the coachman put the horses to and drove off in another, and then they all came back, and another carriage stood for ever so long at the door. I could just see the tips of the wheels round the corner till it got dusk.

"Then lights appeared in the room, and figures passed and repassed behind the blind.

"Now, the other windows belonged to the boys' rooms, and I thought I would just stretch out my highest branch and see if I could look into them. Richard's room was empty, but Joe was sitting in

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his.

"There he was, poor fellow, with his arms upon the table and his head resting upon them. A plate was near him, but he didn't seem to have tasted the food.

"While I was watching the door opened, and his mother came in. She leant over him and pointed to the bed. Then, putting down a candle, she left the room. Joe undressed and got into bed, but he seemed so restless he could not keep still for a minute. When the clock in the old church-tower struck ten I think he must have fallen asleep, for his mother crept in again softly, went up to him, and pushing back the hair from his forehead, gave him a kiss, and he didn't seem to notice it.

"The clock in the old church-tower struck eleven, and everything about the house was so quiet.

"The only light was in the room with the blind down, and on that blind the figure of the mother, sitting watching all through the long hours of the night, might be clearly seen.

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"The clock in the old church-tower struck twelve! The glimmering of a light in Joe's room drew my attention. I peeped in again. He was out of bed, had lit his candle, and was putting on his clothes! As soon as he was dressed, he went to his chest of drawers, took out a pocket-handkerchief, and spread it upon the table. Into this handkerchief he put a pair of boots, a brush and comb, and a clean shirt; then he tied it up with two knots, and proceeded to take down a desk from a shelf. Out of this he took some money, counted it, and put it into his purse."

"I wonder how much he put in!" exclaimed the Mint from its bed of herbs.

"As much as he had got, and no more, you may be sure," answered the Sage.

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"I hope it was not all silver," said the Pennyroyal.

"Oh, pray, don't interrupt!" cried the Thyme, "for the moments are flying, the minutes are running so fast, and the half-hours declare the hours are about to strike! Do, please, go on, Apple-tree!"

"Well, having put his purse in his pocket, Joe went to the fireplace, and unhooking a small picture from the wall, he wrapt it in a clean handkerchief and put it in another pocket. Then he came to the window, drew it gently up, and looked out. First, he threw his bundle down on the flower-border below, then he scrambled out upon the trellis-work and crept down by his hands and feet till he reached the ground. Picking up his bundle, he passed quietly through the gate into the yard, and going up to a rabbit-hutch, he took out a most beautiful large white rabbit. This he hugged in his arms and talked to, but I couldn't hear what he said. He rubbed his cheek several times up and down against its soft fur, then put it back, and taking his bundle under his arm, unlatched the gate leading into the fields, and set off running as fast as his legs could carry him.

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"When he came to the stile he jumped over, and stood still to take one long last look at the old white house standing out so clear in the bright moonshine.

"I saw him kiss his hand towards it, then turn round and set off running again. He was soon quite out of sight, and from that day to this he has never been seen here again. And he needn't have gone after all. I heard the groom tell the gardener the foolish servants had frightened him by telling him 'he had murdered his brother, and must take the consequences.' But Dick wasn't killed. He got all right again, although he was ill for a very long time, and never looked the same bright lad he was before he lost his brother. But, hark! I hear a human being near—silence all!"

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At that moment there was a crash as of a bough of a tree snapping, and the young traveller was over the wall with a bound.

"Tell me, tell me!" he cried, "are they all alive?"

There was a dead silence.

He stamped his foot, and implored the voices to speak once more, but no answer came.

"Can I," he said, striking his forehead with his hand—"can I have been dreaming?"

He rushed to the garden gate, passed through, and shut it with such a slam that the poor sleepy Pear fell at once to the ground.

A very short time after, the sun came laughing up from behind the horizon, the birds began to sing, smoke danced merrily out of the kitchen chimney, the church-bells rang out a merry peal, and all to celebrate Joey's return to his home!

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That afternoon there was a grand feast in the old white house, to which all the fruit and vegetables were invited.

"What a very strange story, Papa!" exclaimed Clement.

"It is a very nice one," said Lucy; "only I suppose it isn't quite true."

"I wish I had got Joey's soft white rabbit," murmured George.

STORY OF A GLOWWORM.



Did you ever see a glowworm? There are plenty of them shining on the grass during the long nights of June and July. Shall we come out on to the lawn one evening and see them? Look! there they are! shining like little fairy lamps all over the grass. If you try to disturb them they will hide their light, for they like to keep quiet. Now you cannot find them, for they are all dark again. I do not think a glowworm is a pretty insect when it has no light. Shall we catch one very quietly while it is shining and place it on a leaf? In the morning you will see it is a rather long insect, with brown scales over its back and it has some tiny legs, in front. You must give it some lettuce leaf, and a few of those little dead flies we found on the window-sill this morning. Do you want to keep it altogether? I think you had better not do so, it would soon die. It can feed itself better than you can. And now, shall I tell you the story of a glowworm while you put this one carefully on a lettuce leaf which I have placed in a pot? [Pg 53]

Many years ago, when I was a little girl, I was very fond of pets of all sorts. I was a funny little girl, for I did not even dislike spiders! and I often wished I could catch and tame a little mouse for my very own. There were plenty of them behind the wainscot in our large London house; but the cat would eat them one by one, so that I never got a chance of keeping one to myself. Indeed I do not think old nurse would have let me do so. She hated all such horrid creepy things, she said; but I told her I was sure a mouse was anything but horrid, because I had just been watching one come out of his hole that the carpenter had forgot to stop up. [Pg 54]

"And indeed, Nurse," I said, "he ran so prettily about the room, and got into your basket of work. I was so happy to think he had found a warm snug corner this windy day, but directly you came in again he ran away."

You may be sure old nurse looked very frightened on hearing about the mouse in her basket, and the carpenter had no peace till he had brought his tools and put a board neatly across the hole. So I never saw my little mouse again. And it had such a soft little coat of fur too! When I grumbled to Nurse she told me not to be a tiresome little girl; that mousey was all very well to look at, but he was very, very mischievous, and would eat up everything in the cupboard if we would let him.

Well, to return to my story, one evening my eldest brother, who was a great tall fellow fresh from school, and much older than I was, came to the foot of the stairs and called out, "Elsie! I've brought something for you." [Pg 55]

Now, I knew he had just returned from a cricket match in the country, where he had gone that morning by train, and I thought it very kind of him to think of me at all.

"What is it, George?" I asked eagerly as I bounded down the nursery stairs.

George stood under the gas-lamp of the second landing waiting for me, and now he pulled out a pocket-handkerchief. Out of the handkerchief he drew a little cardboard box, with air holes pricked in it, and when he opened the lid I stood on tiptoe and looked into it.

"Why, George, you've only brought me a caterpillar!" I said not quite pleased.

"No, it isn't," replied George, "it's a glowworm. After the cricket match we went to supper at the squire's, and on the lawn there were hundreds of these pretty things, so I brought you one." [Pg 56]

"But I thought a glowworm had fire in its tail?" said I.

"You are quite right," replied George. "It has; but then you can only see it in the dark, and there is the gas-lamp burning over us. Suppose we take it into the dark greenhouse and put it in a pot?"

I thanked George very much for his trouble in bringing me such a treasure, and we hastened to a sort of glass place we had built out over an extra room, and in which my mother placed all her favourite plants. We put the little creature on to a flower-pot, and true enough when it was left quite quiet it began to shine.

"What is that light for?" I asked George.

"I believe it is a lamp for it to see its food by in the dark as it crawls over the grass. And another thing, nightingales are fond of glowworms, and nightingales too must live, so you see they can easily spy them out, can't they?" [Pg 57]

"I'm glad, George, you saved this one from the nightingale," I said. "Now it will shine here every night like a little fairy lamp, and when we give my party it will be of great use, won't it?"

George laughed at me, and said he thought the glowworm would have to grow a good deal larger before it could do that. Nurse now called me to bed, so after we had put some leaves close to the glowworm we left it shining brightly.

The next morning I ran to see if my glowworm was pretty or ugly by daylight, but it was gone!

I looked in every pot, but I could not find anything like a caterpillar.

"Of course it had crawled away somewhere!" said Nurse, and she gave a shudder as she felt sure it would come up to her bed-room. I was very unhappy at my loss. However, nothing could be done. But what was my surprise and delight when, that same evening, as it grew dark, my mother called to me as she was passing the greenhouse, "Elsie! Elsie! is not this your fairy lamp on the floor?" [Pg 58]

I ran down quickly, and found my dear little glowworm shining merrily on the stone pavement of the greenhouse. It was walking across to the other side of the wall, "only just to take an airing," as I said to mother.

She said, "Look, it has saved itself because of its light, otherwise I would have put my foot on it when I came to shut the windows." I quickly got a leaf and put "Glowy" back again into the pot till I had got something else.

"You are not going to run away again, my little dear," said I. "No, no, you must go into a cage now." So I got an old tumbler with a chip in it and put some leaves in it, and then tumbled my glowworm in, head-foremost, and covered up the top with a piece of paper. [Pg 59]

But my mother said that would not do, as there was no air; so she pricked the paper full of holes as I remembered George had done to his box, and we put on the lid again. The next morning I found my pet quite alive; but it had not eaten any of the lettuce leaf, and I was very sorry. Still it was alive, which was a great deal. I gave "Glowy" some fresh leaves and left it there. George said he thought "Glowy" would not like so much hot sun beating down upon him through the glass roof; but I reminded George that glowworms liked hot countries, for Uncle Bob told me he had seen splendid ones abroad when he went on voyages.

That was all very well, said George, but did I not know that they came out when it was quite cool in the evenings? Still I had my way, and left my little friend in the blue glass tumbler, because he would look so pretty shining through it at night. I was so afraid he would run away again. When evening came there he was crawling on a leaf and shining so brightly. I gave him some mustard and cress to eat, for a change, and felt quite delighted. [Pg 60]

The next day I found he had not eaten anything. Perhaps he did not like the green food. I resolved to try him with flies; but after hunting I could not find any that were dead, so he had to go without. The next day I found little "Glowy" all curled up at the bottom of the glass as if he was going to faint. "Oh, George," I said, "I quite forgot he had no water to drink!" and I ran to fetch a few drops in a cup.

"You'll drown him in all that," laughed George; but I was very careful and only dropped a few drops close to him on the leaf. But he would not move. I was so afraid he would get ill that I took him out and placed him on a pot of Virginian creeper to see if he would recover. To my delight he began to crawl again, so I left him to roam about. [Pg 61]

I knew I should find him again in the evening by his light, as I did before. But when I came in from my afternoon walk with Miss Smith, our governess, Nurse told me that John the man-servant had been watering all the plants that afternoon, and she hoped there was an end to my funny fancies.

Oh, how silly I was not to tell everybody where "Glowy" was! for, of course, Nurse hoped he was drowned; but John wouldn't have done it if he had known. I hunted by daylight in vain for him; but when evening came to my joy I found him feebly shining, and perched on the edge of the earthenware saucer in which the Virginian creeper pot stood. The saucer was full of water, so I don't know how he had got across; I wondered if glowworms could swim. I pushed little "Glowy" gently on to a leaf with a piece of stick, and put the whole on an orange plant for him to get dry again. [Pg 62]

Alas, the next morning poor "Glowy" looked very ill—at least George said he must be, because he had not moved from the spot, and glowworms always like to crawl about in search of food. I looked forward to the evening to see if he would shine again; but no, poor "Glowy" was quite still and would not shine. George said he was dead because I did not feed him properly; but it was not my fault, it was John's for watering him. I was very sorry, because I had had a little pet for a week, and now I did not know where to find another one so pretty. But George after a while showed me it was my fault. You see I had not let the glowworm roam about in the back garden to look for his own food, because I thought I could feed him much better. But it was not so much that; it was the glass cage into which I put poor "Glowy" that he did not like. It was too hot in the greenhouse. So I made a mistake. We learn to do better by experience—we learn that we are often in the wrong. But I would not believe it when George told me so; when I lost my little glowworm I had to believe it, but it was too late, and my fairy lamp had gone out. [Pg 63]

George told me he had also learnt the same thing by experience, when he caught three very young blackbirds once. We were living in the country then. He thought he could feed them, though the gardener said they would die, because, while they could not feed themselves, the old blackbird could do it best and not George. So they did die one by one. The bread and milk George gave them was not enough to keep them alive. So I think now, it is very cruel of boys when they take little birds out of their nest, and besides it makes the mother-bird so unhappy. [Pg 64]

Well, I had lost my little glowworm. It was an ugly little insect in itself, but you get fond of a thing you have taken care of, and I felt quite sorry when I had no fairy lamp left.

Now that is the end of my story. So, shall we profit by it and take this little one you have found and put it on the lawn again? If we want it to go on shining, night after night, we had better leave it to feed itself. In hot countries they are far more brilliant than in England. I remember them in India, where they are perfectly beautiful; but I never tried to catch one there, as I recalled my experience when I was a little girl in England.

THE END.

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