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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOSTLY MARY ***

Mostly Mary

by

"CLEMENTIA"

Author of

Uncle Frank's Mary
The Quest of Mary Selwyn
Bird-a-Lea, Etc.



Published by
MATRE & COMPANY
CHICAGO

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To
four little rancheros,
Patricia, George, Edward, and Eleanor,

this story of other little people
is lovingly dedicated.



When at last she entered the sitting-room—with her pet white kitten, a rubber doll in a gay worsted suit, a big brightly colored rubber ball and a teddy bear almost as large as herself clasped in her arms.

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MOSTLY MARY

CHAPTER I.

THE S'PRISE.

"Dickie-Bird, have you seen our Goldilocks?" asked a deep voice at the door of the playroom.

"Here I am, Father!" and a dear little girl, half hidden by the window curtains, dropped the doll which she had been hugging and ran into Mr. Selwyn's arms. "I'm *so* glad you are here! Everything has been so—so different this morning. Liza came, instead of Aunt Mandy, to call me and help me to dress and then she told me to wait here for you, and—and——"

"And you thought Father had forgotten his little lass, eh?"

"I didn't quite think that, Father; but I was beginning to feel lonely, because I had to stay here instead of running right down to have breakfast with you and Mother and Uncle Frank."

"I see. Are you often lonely, pet?" asked her father, stroking the bright hair which fell in a mass of ringlets on her shoulders.

"Not *very* often, Father,—just sometimes, when you and Mother and Uncle Frank all go out to dinner or to a concert or something like that. Then—then I can't help wishing that God hadn't taken my little brothers to heaven. Of course, it's lovely for them to be there; but it would be so nice to have someone to play with *all* the time—not just sometimes, the way it is when Evelyn and Hazel and Rosemary come to see me. Mother says that Robert would be five years old, and Francis, three; and oh! we would have the best times! I wouldn't mind if they broke my dolls once in a while. Hazel won't let her little brother *touch* one of hers. But I think a really, truly, live brother is better to play with than all the dolls in the world. I would never be lonely if I had one."

"Well, pet, I think I can truly say that you will never be lonely again," and taking Mary's frail little hand, Mr. Selwyn led her out into the hall.

She thought they were going to breakfast, and looked up in surprise when they passed the head of the stairs. Her father smiled in a knowing fashion, and paused before the closed door of a sitting-room next to her mother's bedroom.

"Oh, have you a s'prise for me, Father?" whispered the little girl, clasping his hand with both of hers.

"A most beautiful surprise, dear. Perhaps you would like to guess what it is."

Mary looked very thoughtful for some moments; then, "It can't be a new doll, because Uncle Frank brought me one yesterday; and it can't be a letter from Aunt Mary, because that would be under my plate at the table. Besides, those things wouldn't make this morning so different from every other morning, and I can't think of a single thing that would."

"Then we had better waste no more time."

Her father opened the door, and Mary looked eagerly about the room, but could see nothing that had not been there the night before. Mr. Selwyn whispered quickly, "Sit in that big chair, and I shall bring the surprise to you."

He tiptoed into her mother's room, and a moment later, Aunt Mandy, her colored nurse, came out, carefully carrying a white bundle. Mr. Selwyn followed with one just like it.

"Dah yo' is, honey! But yo' ole mammy is 'fraid it am too hebby fo' yo'," chuckled Aunt Mandy, placing her bundle on Mary's lap.

"Oh! oh! oh! See, Father, it's a *baby!*" whispered the little girl. "A dear, sweet, darling, really, truly, live *baby!* Oh!"

"And see what I have," laughed her father, seating himself in a chair beside her.

"*Another* baby! Oh! oh! *oh!*"

"Twins, ma bressed lamb! Dat's what dey is!" declared old Auntie.

"Whose are they, Father?"

"Why, ours, pet,—our very own—your little twin sisters."

"*My—little—twin—sisters!* Both of them *mine!* Oh, *isn't* God good! I have been asking Him for a little sister ever since He sent Rosemary one; but I never dreamed that He would give me *two—never!* *Isn't* He good!" and Mary lightly kissed the lips, cheeks, forehead, eyes, and even the nose of the mite she hugged. "Please take this one, Aunt Mandy, and let me love that one a few minutes."

"You will find this little lady somewhat heavier," warned her father. "Better let me help you hold her."

"There!" said Mary with a happy sigh, "I gave her just as many as this one," holding up her arms for the baby which Aunt Mandy held; "for, of course, I love them both exactly the same. And, Aunt Mandy, you must not bother about me any more. You won't have time, you know. I can dress my own self, all except the buttons 'way up between my shoulders; and I can wash my neck and ears clean, too."

"Bress yo' li'l heart, honey! Does yo' think fo' one instinct dat yo' ole mammy is gwine to let yo' git yo' curls all wet, an' kotch yo' def ob cold dat-a-way? An' who's gwine to bresh de tangles out'n

dem curls, I lak to know?"

"But I can wear my rubber cap when I am washing my neck and ears, just as I did when I went in bathing at the seashore. I suppose, though, that someone will have to help me with my hair. Oh, I know just the thing! I can have it cut off, and then I can fix it my own self."

"What's dat! what's dat yo's sayin', Miss May-ree! Cut off dem curls? No, *sah!* Dey ain't gwine to be no hair-cuttin' round heah! Aunt Mandy's gwine to tek de bes' ob care ob all her li'l bressed lambs; she sho' am!"

"Well, well! what does big sister think about all this?" whispered Doctor Carlton, Mrs. Selwyn's brother, coming into the room as Aunt Mandy left it. "Is her nose out of joint, Rob?"

"My nose, Uncle Frank?" echoed Mary, lifting a happy little face for his good-morning kiss. "It doesn't pain at all, so I'm sure it can't be out of joint. When I put my thumb out of joint, it pained dreadfully until you fixed it for me."

"No, Frank, there is no room for anything here but pure joy. She has been asking God to give her one little sister, and He has sent her two; so her cup of happiness is full to the brim."

"Do you think they will wake soon, Father? I want to see what color their eyes are. What are their names?"

"We think of calling the one you have Elizabeth after Mother. She has blue eyes and will probably resemble Mother just as you do."

"And the little heavy-weight in your father's arms has very dark eyes like his, so she must be named for him—Robert. Elizabeth and Robert—can you improve on those names?"

"They are just the loveliest ones I know; but—but——"

"Out with it," insisted the Doctor.

"Don't you—don't you think they are——well, just a *little* bit too big for such teeny, weeny babies?"

"They are rather imposing names for such mites," agreed Mr. Selwyn, "but the babies will grow up to fit them, you know."

"Perhaps we might shorten them to Betty and Bobbie for the present," proposed the Doctor, with a twinkle in his eye.

"But Bobbie is a boy's name; and Mother told me a story about a *naughty* little girl named Betty, so I wouldn't like to call my little sister by such a name. Let—me—see. E—liz—a—beth.... Oh, I know! We can call this one Beth until she is big; and that one—," Mary knit her brows in deep thought, "how would Berta do?"

"Berta and Beth—capital!" declared the Doctor; and Mr. Selwyn agreed with him.

"When will they be baptized, Father?"

"Next Sunday, probably."

"To-day is Tuesday.

'Monday's child is fair of face, 'Tuesday's child is full of grace,'"

sang the little girl, softly.

"Have you decided on the godparents, Rob?"

"We think of asking Phil and Etta Marvin—Wilhelmina's father and mother, Mary. You remember the little girl whose photograph Uncle brought you from Georgia last spring."

"The one with seven brothers?"

"Yes, dear, that is Wilhelmina Marvin. Uncle and I went to college with her father, and Aunt Mary and her mother were little girls together."

"You must meet Wilhelmina one of these days. She is a great girl—climbs trees, rides horseback like a little Indian, and is as much a boy as any one of her brothers. The next time I go to Sunnymead, I shall take you with me."

"Father and Mother and Berta and Beth must come, too, Uncle."

"That is understood, pet."

"Will you please take this baby—I mean Beth, for a few minutes?"

"Certainly, dear. Your poor little arms must be quite tired."

"Oh, no, Uncle! Why, I am sure that I could hold both babies all day long without being tired. I shall be back in just a little minute," and Mary slipped away, leaving the two men to wonder where she had gone.

Back to the playroom she flew, caught up her two prettiest dolls, and was hurrying from the room

when she paused.

"I'm afraid they might hurt themselves with these. I had better take soft things."

She walked about among her toys, choosing first one, then another, until her father began to think that she was not coming back. When at last she entered the sitting-room, he and the Doctor had quite a time to keep from laughing aloud at sight of her with her pet white kitten, a rubber doll in a gay worsted suit, a big, brightly-colored rubber ball, and a Teddy bear almost as large as herself clasped in her arms.

"I was afraid they might think we don't want them if there is nothing for them to play with when they wake," she explained.

"So you are going to share your toys with them, are you?" and Mr. Selwyn put his arm about her, drawing her to his knee.

"Of course, Father. They can have everything of mine that they want; but most of my dolls are hard ones that might hurt them. I shall save those until they are older. Snowball and Teddy and these other things are nice and soft, you see."

"God bless her!" murmured the Doctor, a mist gathering in his eyes. "No jealousy here; that is certain."

"You have made a very wise choice, pet; but see these tiny fingers. Don't you think that they will have to grow stronger before they can hold even such lovely, soft things? These little folks will be so busy taking naps, you know, that they will not have time to play with toys for some months."

"Why, I forgot all about that," laughed Mary. "You see, Father, I was such a little bit of a thing when Robert was a baby; and Francis stayed with us only a few days, so that I don't know very much about babies. I hope Berta and Beth will stay a long, long time," she added wistfully.

"God grant that they may, darling," said her father, earnestly; for he had felt keenly the loss of his two infant sons.

"There is just one thing that would make everything nicer," said Mary after a long pause.

"And that is——?" inquired the Doctor.

"One more baby."

"But I thought you were more than satisfied with two," laughed her father.

"But if there were three, Father, we could name one Francis after Uncle Frank. That is a boy's name and a girl's name, too; so it wouldn't make a bit of difference whether the baby was a boy or a girl."

The Doctor, greatly touched by the child's love for him, drew her to him, saying, "But one baby was named for me, little one, and I surely cannot expect more than that."

"Oh, I know the very thing! We can buy a Chinese baby for five dollars and name it Francis! Sister told us about it in school last spring; and we gave her all our pennies, and she sent them away to buy a poor little baby so it would be baptized; and we named it Mary for our Blessed Mother. Of course, we could never see the baby that we buy, but—but—well, when it dies, it will go to heaven—that is, if it keeps on being good when it grows up. But I know something else. When Evelyn's big sister was confirmed, she took another name. So when I am confirmed, I shall take Frances; and then I shall be your little girl more than ever."

"All my names could not make you any more my little girl than you are now, pet. But come; it is time you had some breakfast. These little folks intend to take a long sleep this morning."

"Father! Let us call up Aunt Mary after breakfast and tell her the s'prise. Do you think we could take the babies out to see her this afternoon?"

"They are very young for so long a trip, dear. Liza shall take you out to Maryvale, and you may tell Aunt Mary everything that you forget to say over the telephone."

"Will Mother be awake after breakfast?" asked the little girl, with a longing look toward the door of the next room.

"I shall tell Aunt Mandy to send for you the moment she opens her eyes."

CHAPTER II.

A BUSY MORNING.

The morning was a very short one for Mary. After breakfast, her father went to the telephone to call Sister Madeline, Mrs. Selwyn's sister. Mary breathlessly told her aunt of the great surprise and promised to go out to Maryvale on the early afternoon train. Then she went to look after her pets. Snowball must have a saucer of milk. Dick needed seed, fresh water, and a bit of apple.

There was a trip to the garden for some crisp lettuce leaves for her pretty white rabbits, Snowdrop and Snowflake, which she had found, Easter morning, guarding a big nestful of gaily-colored eggs under the lilac bush. She had learned, too, that they were very fond of clover, and it took some time to gather enough for two hungry bunnies. But Mary had found the spots in the big, old-fashioned yard, where the clover grew thickest; and when she returned to Snowflake and Snowdrop, she had a handful for each. After watching them nibble at it for some minutes, she ran down to the barn where Tom, Aunt Mandy's grandson, was busy with the horses.

"Good mawnin', Miss May-ree! Good mawnin'!" he cried, smiling all over his jolly black face. "It 'pears to me yo' is a li'l late dis mawnin'."

"Oh, don't you know why, Tom? Haven't you heard about my new little sisters? You can't begin to think how happy I am."

"Dat's what we all is, Miss May-ree; we sho'ly is dat! I reckon yo' won't be comin' down to de barn ebery mawnin' aftah dis wif sugah lumps fo' *ma* pets, he! he! he!"

"Indeed I shall, Tom. I didn't forget them *this* morning, in spite of the s'prise, so why should I on other mornings," and Mary drew a handful of loaf sugar from her pocket.

"Dem hosses would be powahful hurt ef'n yo' did, Miss May-ree. See ole Fanny watchin' yo'? She knows persackly what yo' has fo' her, she sho'ly does. Dey's in de bestest humor dis mawnin' same's de res' ob us, I reckon."

Tom stood near to see that no harm should come to the little girl while she placed lump after lump of sugar on the palm of her hand and let the horses take them.

"Yo' pa jes' done told me dat Liza am gwine to fotch yo' out to see yo' Aunt May-ree dis aftahnoon, and fo' me to be ready to dribe yo' all to de ferry torreckly aftah lunch. Which one ob dem hosses does yo' want me to dribe, Miss May-ree?"

"Whose turn is it, Tom?"

"I doan' 'membah which one, Miss May-ree. Dey wuz bofe out yeste'day and de day befoah—"

"I think we ought to take both of them to-day, Tom. This is such an important day, you know, and I would not like to hurt the feelings of either of them. Do you think horses have feelings, Tom? I do."

"Wal, now, Miss May-ree, I doan' know persackly what to think 'bout dat. I reckon dey has, same's eberybody else. Ef'n yo' gib Fanny sugah lumps, an' doan' gib Billy none, I 'lows his feelin's ud be hurt a right smaht, I sahtinly does! But yo' pa done told me to tek de runabout and one hoss; so you see, one ob dem hab jes' natchelly *got* to stay home."

"W—ell, if you can't remember, Tom,—oh, I know how we can fix it! Drive Fanny when you take us *to* the ferry, and Billy when you come after us this evening."

"Dat's de ticket, Miss May-ree! Dah's Liza on de back porch. Wondah what she wants now."

"I know! I know!" and Mary flew up the walk.

"Aunt Mandy done told me to fotch yo' in, honey, kase yo' ma's awake now an'—"

But Mary waited to hear no more. Through the hall and up the stairs to her mother's room, she flew on tiptoe. Such a happy quarter of an hour as followed while she told her mother just a few of the plans she had made to show the dear babies how glad she was to have them.

"Are you going to dedicate them to Blessed Mother, too?" she asked; for she herself had, as a tiny baby, been placed under the special protection of the Mother of God, with the promise that she should wear our Lady's colors, blue and white, until her seventh birthday. She had been born in May, the month of our Lady, and had been named "for Blessed Mother first and Aunt Mary second," as she told those who asked about it. Though Mrs. Selwyn knew that her little girl never tired of hearing stories of the Blessed Virgin, she was somewhat surprised when, on Mary's last birthday, the child had asked, "Will you take me to church, please, Mother? It is about the promise, you know. Will you make it again for me? I can't bear to stop wearing Blessed Mother's colors just because I am seven years old. My new white dress with the pink ribbons on it is lovely; but I like blue better."

"I thought you must be tired of blue, dear," her mother had replied, "so I put pink ribbon on the new dress for a little change. But it makes me very happy to know that you love our Blessed Mother so much, and we shall go at once to renew the promise for another seven years."

"I think we had better make it for always and always, Mother, for I know I shall never wish to wear any other colors."

And now, in answer to her question about Berta and Beth, her Mother said, "We shall dedicate Beth to our Blessed Mother, and Berta to the Sacred Heart."

"O Mother, that will be lovely! Then Beth will wear blue and white as I do; and Berta, red and white. But I s'pose they will have everything all white while they are such teeny, weeny babies. We won't have to tie red and blue ribbons on them to know them apart, will we, because they don't look one bit alike. Do you know which is which, Aunt Mandy?"

"Does I know which am which, honey! Kotch ole mammy mekin' a 'stake 'bout dese yeah li'l bressed lambs! Does yo' want to see de li'l toes dey has, honey?"

CHAPTER III.

A VISIT TO MARYVALE.

When the gong sounded for luncheon, Mary, ready for her visit to her aunt, ran down to the dining-room. Her father and uncle were already there. Standing before them, she turned slowly around.

"Do you think I will do? Liza says she has never had any practice in dressing little girls to go visiting. Mother always tells Aunt Mandy what I am to wear; but we had so many other things to talk about this morning that neither of us thought of it. So Liza and I had to decide."

"I think you have both shown very good taste," said Mr. Selwyn, smiling. He wondered whether either of the babies would ever make a prettier picture than this sweet little daughter, who looked like some dainty flower in her simple white dress of dotted mull with pale blue ribbons run through the neck, sleeves, and around the waist.

"We couldn't quite decide about my hat. Liza thinks I ought to wear my straw one to keep the sun off, because my parasol is not very big, you know; but I like my new linen one best, because Mother made it. Anything she makes is *so* much nicer than what she buys in the stores. Seven-year-old things are too large, and sixes are too small; but she always makes things just exactly right; and she doesn't say, 'You don't mean to tell me *that* child is seven years old!' Mother put a big blue bow on my white parasol to match the one on the hat, and I would so like to show both of them to Aunt Mary. Sometimes, I am almost certain that she is laughing to herself when I tell her that Mother made this or that; and I am sure I can't see why."

"You could, pet, if your memory would carry you back to the days of Mother's first attempts at sewing," laughed the Doctor. "She married young—just after she had finished school. Our parents died when she and I were quite small. Aunt Mary was our big sister, and looked after us and things in general. She thought that Mother had enough to do with her studies and music, so did not try to teach her sewing and other very useful things. Mother should have saved the first little frocks she made for you; and you would see that Aunt Mary has good reason to laugh, not at the pretty things Mother makes now, but at those which they remind her of. So by all means, wear the linen hat. It will be cooler and lighter on your head; and as Aunt Mary will send the wagonette to the station, you will not be exposed to the sun. Liza will take a large parasol to shade both of you while you are driving to the ferry."

Mary was glad when the warm, dusty ride on the train came to an end.

"There is the wagonette, Liza, and Aunt Mary has let all the girls who are staying at the convent for vacation come to meet us. Oh, I don't see how they can stay away from their fathers and mothers like that!"

"I reckon dey has to, honey. 'Tain't ebery li'l gal has a home lak yo' has. Dey cud be in a lots wuss place dan May-reevale, whar dey has de Sistahs tekin' keer ob dem an' plenty ob room fo' to play outdoahs an' all sech lak."

The little girl was warmly greeted by her friends.

"Guess the grand s'prise I had this morning," she said as she and Liza took their places in the wagonette.

"Why, your beautiful new doll, of course," cried the children, gazing with longing eyes at Annette, whom Mary had brought with her.

"Oh, no, not Annette. Uncle brought her to me yesterday. Would you like to hold her, Effie? The s'prise I mean is a million times grander."

"A—a pony!" ventured one little girl, thinking wistfully of her own pet in distant Texas.

"A big box of candy!" cried five-year-old Effie.

"Give us a little hint, Mary. Every time you come out here you have just had some grand surprise, so I should think there could not be much left to surprise you with," declared Dora, one of the older children, who sat beside our little girl.

"Yes, Dora, I think we are a very s'prising family. Father and Uncle are always doing something to s'prise Mother and me, and then we think up something for them. But this one—well, I know you can never, never guess it, so I shall tell you. I have the two dearest, darlingest, baby sisters in the whole world!"

"Twins! Oh, what are their names?" was the eager chorus.

"Roberta after Father, and Elizabeth after Mother; but we shall call them Berta and Beth until they grow up. Oh, I'm *so* happy!"

"You *are!*" said a pouty-looking little girl. "Dear, me! I should think you would *ever* so much rather be an only child."

Mary looked puzzled.

"Rather be an only child!" she echoed. "Why, Lucille, are you an only child?"

"Indeed I am not! I have three brothers and two sisters."

"How lovely! I have two little brothers in heaven, and I have been so lonely without them. But now, I shall never be lonely again. Anyone who knows how it feels to be an only child, would never like to be one."

"I would be willing to take the risk. I'm sick and tired of having to share everything I get with the whole family. Oh, you needn't look like that, Mary! You always have everything you wish for—whole carloads of it,—and I must say you are generous with your things. Before I would let a baby like Effie hold such a beautiful doll! But you can afford to be generous when you know that your father or mother or that grand uncle of yours will give you something better."

"But—but, Lucille," the look of wonder on Mary's face deepened, "you don't really mean that you would rather have all the toys and candy and everything all by yourself than have brothers and sisters to share them with? Oh, I am sure you can't mean *that!*"

"You will know what I mean well enough three or four years from now when those little sisters of yours cry for everything nice you have. But, no, you won't know! As I say, for everything you give away, you will get something better."

"As if Mary thinks of such a thing!" said Dora, hotly, putting her arm about the little girl. "You wouldn't be happy unless you were dividing up with someone; would you, Mary?"

Mary flashed her a grateful smile.

"I think that is why I have been so lonely sometimes, Dora. There is not much fun playing with dolls all by myself; for no matter how hard I pretend that they hear what I say, I know all the time that they don't. But my little sisters will hear me, and pretty soon they will be able to talk and play with me."

Then the wagonette turned in at the convent gates and rolled up the wide driveway to the front steps.

"Now, Miss May-ree, yo' go 'long in an' see yo' Aunt May-ree an' de Sistahs, an' I'se gwine obah yondah undah dat big tree an' wait fo' yo'."

"But won't you come in, too, Liza? Aunt Mary and the Sisters will be glad to see you, I know."

"I'll see dem byme-by, honey."

Mary ran up the broad, high steps and in at the open doorway, intending to surprise her aunt; but Sister Madeline had heard the wagonette approaching, and was waiting to greet the little girl.

"What a pretty hat! Has Uncle Frank been making you a present?"

"He brought me this lovely doll yesterday, Aunt Mary, but not the hat. Mother made that," and though the child looked closely at her aunt, she could see no twinkle in the dark eyes.

Had that little bird of which Aunt Mandy had so often spoken, been hopping about on the window sill at luncheon time, and could it be possible that it had flown out to Maryvale to chirp a warning note close to Sister Madeline's ear?

"Let me take your hat and parasol. You have your hands full with that beautiful dollie. We shall go to the east parlor, for it is the coolest spot in the house on a warm day."

"I just brought Annette with me to show her to you before I pack her away. I don't care so much about dolls now that I have some really, truly, live babies to play with. O Aunt Mary! I do wish that we could have brought them, too. They are just too sweet for anything!" Mary looked around to be sure that no one was near, then whispered, "They are *not* very pretty,—Annette, this doll, is *ever* so much prettier,—but they are darling, anyway. Aunt Mandy thinks they are beautiful babies, but—but they squeeze their faces all up and cry. Uncle says that they will improve with age; but I don't want them to grow old—I want them to stay little even if they are ug—not very pretty."

"But don't you intend to play with your dollies any more? You spoke of putting them away."

"Dolls! Indeed, no, Aunt Mary! Not when I have two little sisters to play with. I am going to wash and iron all my doll clothes, and dress every doll in her best things, and put them all away in my toy box. Then, I shall close the big doors of my doll house; and the very minute that Berta and Beth are big enough to play, everything will be ready for them. The only things that worry me are Snowball and Snowdrop and Snowflake."

"Dear, dear! What lovely cool names for warm weather! But why should you worry about your kitten and rabbits? Are you afraid that they may be jealous of the babies?"

"No, Aunt Mary; but they will grow bigger and bigger and be too large for the babies to hold; or

maybe they might die just as my little black kitten did. Liza said I killed it with kindness; but I can't see how that could be."

"If anything happens to your pets, Uncle will find some new ones for you, never fear. I would not be at all surprised to hear that he had made you a present of a little white elephant. Now, I am sure that you will enjoy telling the Sisters whom you know best all about those dear little sisters —"

"Why, you don't mean to say that you haven't told them *yet*, Aunt Mary!"

"Not a word. I thought you would like to surprise them. But if you had not come out to see us this afternoon, I must confess that I could not have kept the secret over night."

Presently Sister Austin, Sister Dominic, and several others whom Mary knew very well came in to see her, and heard all about Berta and Beth. Then, while Sister Madeline had a little visit with Liza, Sister Austin went with Mary to the garden. The little girl's love of flowers made her a great favorite with Mr. Daniel, as she insisted on calling the gardener; and the old man always stopped his work to give her a ride around the garden in his wheelbarrow, which he first lined with a clean newspaper. But to-day, Mary felt that she could not delay long enough for her ride, and carefully explained to Dan the reason why she must hurry home.

"Aunt Mandy promised to let me sing them to sleep to-night; and I must sing all the songs first to Mother, so she can tell me which one will be best. I like *Sleep Little Baby of Mine* and *Sweet and Low*; but my little sisters may prefer something else, and Mother will surely know."

So she waited only long enough for Dan to cut the flowers which he insisted on sending to Mrs. Selwyn. As the beautiful roses fell beneath his shears, Mary caught up a tiny red rosebud.

"This will be for Berta; and do you think, Mr. Daniel, that you have a little blue flower for Beth? Oh, I know just the thing! A *white* rosebud!"

On the way back to the playground for a promised romp with the girls, she spied some chickens, hatched only a few days before.

"Baby things are so dear—baby flowers, baby chickens, baby everything; but baby sisters are the dearest of all, Sister."

CHAPTER IV.

MARY'S PLAN.

During the following weeks, Mary was a very, very busy little girl. She had a wash day on the back porch when the suds flew in every direction, and Snowball fled upstairs to escape a bath not meant for her. The ironing was not so easy; but with help from the laundress on tucks and lace-trimmed ruffles, it was at last finished. The dolls themselves had their smiling faces well scrubbed with the nail brush, and their curls combed and brushed, after which they were dressed in their Sunday best and carefully laid in the big oak box which had been made for this purpose.

Next, Mary put her games in order and piled the boxes on the lowest shelf of her own little bookcase in her playroom; and then she sorted her books, putting all those which had only pictures and no reading matter in them on the shelf above the games; the A, B, C books and nursery rhymes on the one above that; and the story books, which she thought the twins would not use for some time, on the top shelf.

She did not finish her task until the Saturday before school opened, for there were many other things to be done every day. She could not neglect her pets nor her own little flower garden which she herself had dug and raked and hoed and planted with seeds, bulbs, and slips which Dan had given her. Every day, she chose the fairest blossoms to place before her mother's beautiful statue of our Blessed Lady.

But by far the greater part of her time was spent with her mother and little sisters. Each morning found her laying out the fresh clothing needed for the twins after their bath. Then she made ready their little beds, and Aunt Mandy always let her hold first one baby and then the other for a few minutes before tucking them in for their nap. It seemed to Mary a very strange hour to go to sleep. She thought every one ought to be quite wide awake by that time of the morning; but she had learned on the first day of her little sisters' lives that there is a great difference between babies and big girls of seven, just as there is between seven-year-olds and grown-ups.

The first of September came all too quickly. The thought of leaving the darling babies for five hours which she must spend at school every day made her wish that her mother would teach her at home as she had done the winter before. Not that Mary disliked school. The few months in the spring, which she had spent at a convent day school, had been such happy ones that she had been really sorry when school closed, and, until the babies came, had longed for September so that she might again sit at her little desk with Sister Florian smiling down at her and ever so many classmates with whom to romp at recess.

But now things were very different; and as she lay in her little brass bed the night before school opened, she wondered how her mother and Aunt Mandy could very well spare her during those long hours at the academy. Only that day, her mother had made her very happy by saying that she did not know what they would do without her. Since that was the case, Mary felt quite sure that it would be much better to have lessons with her mother.

She had done so well the winter before that, when she began to attend school, she was put in a class which had finished the First Reader before Easter and was just beginning the Second. During the summer, she had read all the lessons in that book, going to her mother for help with words that she could not quite make out. She had a habit of reading aloud even when alone, so that Mrs. Selwyn, passing from room to room, was often able to correct words which the child did not pronounce properly. The little girl laughed softly at the memory of one of her mistakes. She was reading a story of a little queen of England, and was calling one man in it the "Duck of Cucumbers." Her mother entered the room just in time to hear the dreadful mistake; and Mary soon saw that her duck was a duke—the Duke of Cumberland. From that time, she was more careful, for she knew that she would not like her father to be called a duck if he were a duke.

Yes, she was quite sure that she could do just as well, or even better, with her lessons at home if—and this was the important point—her mother had time to teach her. This thought had kept her from talking the matter over with her mother as she was in the habit of doing. She knew that the care of two babies takes a great deal of time and that her mother needed rest, too, when they were asleep. But what of her father and uncle? They could help her in the evenings. The Doctor often asked her to read to him after dinner, and why could she not read the lessons in the Third Reader?—for Mary had quite made up her mind that the Second Reader was much too easy for a school book. Sometimes, too, he teased her about the "tootums table." Yes, her uncle would surely help her with reading and number work, and her father with Catechism and spelling. She would slip down stairs to ask them before she went to sleep, and then surprise her mother with the plan in the morning.

Waiting only long enough to put on her pretty blue kimono and slippers, she crept from her room and down the stairs to the library, where the two men sat smoking.

"Why, pet, what is the matter? are you ill?" her father asked anxiously as he took her on his knee.

"Oh, no, Father! It would never do for me to get sick now when Mother and Aunt Mandy are so busy with the babies. Something popped into my head a little while ago, and I couldn't go to sleep until I had asked you about it."

"It would not keep until morning, I suppose," laughed the Doctor.

"Of course it would keep, Uncle; but you know there is never very much time to talk things over in the morning."

"Very true; and beginning with to-morrow, you will be almost too busy to speak to anyone in the morning."

"Oh, I shall find time to say a few things at breakfast; but Mother will be there, too, and this is something that she must not hear a word about until it is all settled."

"Out with it then! You should be sound asleep by this time."

"Yes, pet, Uncle is right; so let us hear your plan quickly."

"I have been thinking for ever so long that Mother and Aunt Mandy need me so much to help with the twins that I ought to stay home to do it. Mother says she doesn't see how they are going to get along without me. I can save them a great many steps, you know, and do ever so many little things while they are doing the big ones; and if I go to school, I shall be away at the very busiest time."

It was well that Mary did not see the twinkle in the eyes of both gentlemen.

"But I thought you so much enjoyed going to school that you were sorry when vacation began."

"Yes, Father, I liked it ever so much in the spring, and I s'pose it would be the same now; but when Mother needs me, I think I ought to stay at home to help her; don't you?"

Mr. Selwyn looked very thoughtful indeed.

"Of course, dear, Mother must have all the help she needs; but it seems to me that it would be too bad to keep you home from school. Your education is a very important thing, you know. Would it not be better to engage another maid to help about the house and let Liza assist Mother and Aunt Mandy?"

"But I don't mean that I would stop studying my lessons every day. Sister Florian said that Mother must be a fine teacher when I could skip Kindergarten and Primer and First Reader; but she has no time to help me now. The thing that popped into my head is that I would ask you and Uncle Frank to teach me in the evenings if you wouldn't mind doing it."

"Rather young to attend night school, eh, Rob? I, for one, should enjoy teaching you, Goldilocks; but for little girls of your age, I object strongly to night study. The morning and early afternoon are the proper times for you to study and recite, and the evening is the time to pet your old uncle."

"I, too, would gladly help you with your studies, but I agree with Uncle about the proper time for such things. If there were no good schools for you to attend, we should engage a governess for you; but such an arrangement is not always best, either. In a schoolroom, a child learns much from hearing the others recite, and is taught many, many things not in books. At school, too, she has playmates of her own age. So be ready to keep me company in the morning. I have missed by little companion very much during these weeks of vacation. The walk to school and back will do you good. I fear that you have been in the house entirely too much of late."

"O Father, I was just going to ask you to have Tom drive you to your office and drop me off at the convent. Then I wouldn't have to be away from the darling babies *quite* so long, you know."

"But what of us, I should like to know? Your father and I leave the house as early as you do, and do not return until six or after in the evening. He cannot even come home to luncheon. How about that, eh?"

"That *is* so, Uncle, isn't it? From half-past eight to six—how many hours is that?"

"Nine and one-half hours."

"Oh, dear, *me!* Well, if you and Father can stand it all that time, I ought to be able to stay away during school hours."

"In wet weather, of course, Tom will drive you to and from school, but on fine days you must be out of doors as much as possible. Then your appetite will improve, and you will grow strong, and those rosy cheeks which you brought from the seashore, but have since lost, will return. I fear that you are taking the babies too seriously. Remember, dear, you are not much more than a baby yourself."

"Why, *Father!* I am seven whole years and three whole months old!"

"Add three or four days and you will have it exactly. But in spite of all these years, months, and days, you are our *little* Mary and will still be so when you are twice seven and even three times seven years old."

"Twice seven is the same as seven twos, and three times seven is seven threes—*then* I shall have to fast. Surely, by *that* time, Father, you can't call me *little*. No one could call you and Uncle little, and I s'pose you are about twenty-one."

"You will have to add many years to seven threes for my age. Make it between seven fives and sixes, and Uncle's something more than seven fours."

"M, 'm,—then how many sevens is Mr. Conway, Father? He *looks* almost as old as Santa Claus."

"He was seven times eleven years old last month."

"I know! the elevens are easy up to ten times eleven. Mr. Conway is seventy-seven; but I shall have to think about you and Uncle."

"No fair peeping into your arithmetic, young lady!" laughed the Doctor.

"That just reminds me of something. Will you please see Sister Florian in the morning, Father, and ask her to give me a new reader?"

"Have you lost your book, or is it worn out?"

"Neither, Father. It is too easy. It is only the Second Reader, and I can read all the lessons in it; so I think I had better have the Third; don't you?"

"Sister Florian will be the best judge of that, pet. Are you as well up in your other studies as you are in reading? How about number work?"

"That is the hardest thing of all, Father."

"Then it would be well to devote to that study the time when the other children are preparing their reading; would it not?"

"Ye—es, Father, I s'pose it would."

"And remember what I have said, dear, about Berta and Beth. Just look upon them as playmates, and Liza will attend to the many, many things that you have been doing to help Mother. Your studies will be duties enough for you until you are quite a little older; and all the daylight hours when you are not in school must be spent outdoors playing with Rosemary and those other little girls whom Mother said you might bring home from school with you last spring. Their parents are friends of ours."

"But can't I be with Mother and the babies at *all*, Father?"

"Indeed, yes! Mother or Aunt Mandy will walk down to the convent with the babies in their carriage to meet you every afternoon, and you may come home the long way if you like. You will have the whole evening to enjoy yourself in the house; and as the days grow shorter, you will not be able to stay outdoors until dinner time."

"Oh, goody! Will they soon begin to grow shorter, Father?"

"They began to do so two months ago," was the laughing reply.

"But if I eat more at meals, may I come in about five o'clock even if it is not getting dark?"

"Well, if you eat a *great deal* more, I may relent a little. A child of your age should not have it to say that she is not hungry when meal time comes."

"Why, I do believe I am hungry right now!"

"So am I! Come, let us play 'Old Mother Hubbard' and see if Susie put away any necks or backbones of those chickens we had for dinner," and the Doctor caught her up and carried her off to the kitchen.

"He is almost as much a child as she is," thought Mr. Selwyn. "Strange that her little head should be filled with such grown-up ideas and childish notions at the same time."

But it was not really so strange as Mr. Selwyn thought; for Mary's life had been spent for the most part among grown people, and the thoughtful care shown by her parents and uncle for one another had taught her many lessons of unselfishness and regard for the feelings of others. At the same time, she loved her dolls and toys, and played wonderful games of make believe, when she peopled her playroom with the little girls and boys who sometimes visited her. So, in one way, she showed a wisdom beyond her years and behaved in a very motherly manner toward the twins, in another, she was just a happy child of seven, quite ready to join in the games and frolics of little children her own age, or of big children like the Doctor.

"The cupboard will surely be bare, Uncle, for it is too warm to keep things to eat in there now."

"We shall make believe that the icebox is the cupboard.... Oh, *my!*"

"Have you found something good? What is it?"

"Quite enough for a little spread for two. Hold this while I get these other things," and the Doctor handed her a platter with the greater part of a chicken on it. Then, with a chuckle, he took lettuce, celery, and fruit from the icebox.

"We shall have our spread on the kitchen table. Now for the pantry! This reminds me of old times. I remember well the many times Aunt Mandy caught me at the jam jar in this same old pantry."

"But surely Aunt Mandy didn't say anything to *you* for taking it."

"Didn't she, indeed! But it was not what she *said*, but what she *did*, that really counted. I was only a little shaver of five, though I am not excusing myself on that account; for I grew worse with age, and treated my friends through the pantry window. Where *is* that bread box!—Come, now, pull up a chair and begin. Your father does not know what he is missing. He thinks late suppers do not agree with old folks like him; but for young people like us—"

He was interrupted by a merry laugh from the little girl, who sat facing the open door, and turning, he saw his sister in the doorway.

"You two rogues! I came down to find Mary, for I was afraid she was walking in her sleep. Beth has been so restless that I have not been able to go to bed; and after she became quiet, I stole into Mary's room and found it empty."

"Come and have a few bites with us. You look worn out. Goldilocks came down to plan a surprise for you, which Rob and I nipped in the bud. I fear that she is somewhat disappointed; but you would agree with us, I am sure."

Many a time during the latter part of October did the two men regret that they had not granted the little girl's wish—not that their ideas on the subject had changed in the least, but because of an event which plunged every member of the household into intense suffering and grief.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST FRIDAY.

All went well during the pleasant, sunny days of September. The people on the avenue learned to watch every morning for the tall, dark, handsome man, carrying the tiny suit-case for the fair little companion tripping along beside him in her simple white dress with its pale blue ribbons; her deep blue eyes looking out from under her big shade hat; her hair like a golden cloud, shining and glistening in the sunlight. At the convent gate they parted—Mary waiting for a last wave from her father after he had boarded the car at the next corner. Then she entered the yard for a romp with her little friends before the school-bell rang.

October came; and the noon hour of the First Friday found the little girl breathlessly mounting the front steps of her home.

"I do wish Father was home. Perhaps I can telephone and catch him at the bank before he goes to luncheon. But no—I shall tell Mother and Uncle Frank the secret now, and then tell Father this

evening, and make two good times of it."

Entering the hall, she called to her mother, who was coming down the stairs, "S'prise, Mother! S'prise! Guess!"

"Judging from the way you are holding your chain, I think Sister must have given you a little medal for being a good girl in school."

"You're warm, Mother, but not hot. Two more guesses. Remember, this is the First Friday, and I told you what would happen to-day——"

"Is it possible that you——"

"Well, well, well! What is going on here? Something wrong with your neck, pet? Come, let me see what ails it."

"No, no, Uncle! It is a s'prise, and you may have three guesses. Mother was very hot just before you came in, and I am sure she knows."

"But if holding your neck with both hands has anything to do with it, I fear that it is not a very pleasant surprise."

"I am holding my neck to hide something on my chain."

"Ah, I see. Well, I shall guess one of those tiny pencils that fit into a small note book."

"Cold as ice! *Freezing!* Why, that wouldn't be worth making a s'prise about."

"Oh, it is something of value, eh?—a piece of Chinese money. The hole in such a coin would make it an easy matter to slip it on your chain."

"Uncle! as if I would put a piece of Chinese money on a chain with the beautiful miraculous medal you gave me when I was baptized! Only one more guess. It is the First Friday, you know."

"You don't mean to say that you have come out on top! Hurray!" cried the Doctor as Mary took down her hands and showed a little silver medal next to the gold one. "That *is* a surprise worth while!" and tossing her up to his shoulder, he marched into the dining-room, whistling, *Hail the Conquering Hero Comes!*

"Now, tell us all about it," he insisted when the three were seated.

"Oh, it was the most exciting morning! Everyone was almost sure that Mildred Ryan would get the medal, because she is the smartest girl in our class. She never has to stop to think before she spells a word; and *tables!* she rattles them off like lightning! So we thought she would surely get the medal, even though Sister said yesterday afternoon that it isn't always the smartest girl who comes out ahead, but often it is the one who *applies* herself best. I didn't know what Sister meant until recess, and then Rosemary said that she meant the girl who sticks and sticks and *sticks* at her lessons, and doesn't sit nibbling her pencil and looking out the window. Mildred does that sometimes, so maybe Sister thinks she doesn't apply herself.

"Well, just after recess this morning, Father Lacey came into our room to call the reports. We stood up and said, 'Good *morn—n—ing*, Father!' I am *so* glad it *was* morning; for no matter how late in the afternoon it is, some of the girls always forget and say, 'Good *morning*,' to visitors; and I do feel so sorry for Sister. Then we sat down again, and Father Lacey began to call the names. Each girl stood up when he said her name and listened to her marks, and then she made a step-back bow and sat down again.

"I thought my turn would never come. Sister writes the names beginning with A first, then those beginning with B, and so on. Of course, the X, Y, Z's come at the end of the list. There are no T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z's in our room, so my name is the very last one. I stood up when I heard it; but I was so excited that I didn't hear a single mark, and I forgot all about my step-back bow; but I jumped up again and made it. The next minute, I heard my name again, and I thought I must be dreaming until Father Lacey called it *again* and held up the medal. And what do you *think!* What *do* you think! The medal had a yellow ribbon on it! *Yellow!* Oh, I didn't know what to do! I *couldn't* let Father Lacey pin a yellow ribbon on *me* when I never wear any colors but blue and white. But he didn't know that, and I s'pose Sister forgot about it. And all the time, Father Lacey sat there smiling and holding out the medal; and the girls whispered, 'Go up! Go up!' and the one behind me gave me the worst poke; and—and *then* I thought of my chain!

"So I took it off and walked just as fast as I could up the aisle; but I stood far enough away from Father Lacey so he just couldn't reach me to pin that yellow ribbon on me. I couldn't speak a word, but stood there holding out the chain to him. Then Sister remembered and told him; and he took the medal off the ribbon and slipped it on the chain and fastened the chain around my neck himself and patted me on the head and said for me always to love our Blessed Mother next best to our Lord. And then the girls clapped, and I was so happy that I couldn't see where I was going and nearly fell over the front desk."

"You did, indeed, have a very exciting morning, dear," laughed Mrs. Selwyn.

"Times have certainly changed, Elizabeth. In our day, the worst part of prize winning was the work one had to do, not the walking up the aisle to receive the reward of one's labors."

"But that was later on in school life, Frank. The first time my name was called for a prize, I think I felt very much as Mary did this morning."

"It wouldn't have been so bad if we had not been so sure that Mildred would get the medal. Still, I believe it would have been more exciting; because then everyone in the class could hope that she *might* get it. But no one had any hope, because Mildred is so smart. Poor thing! She was in school only until Christmas last year; for after that, she was very sick, and the doctor wouldn't let her come back."

"She must be a very bright little girl to be able to go on with her class after missing more than a half year's work."

"Oh, no, Mother, she had to stay in the same class, and she was so disappointed."

"Then the work you are doing now is not new to her," said the Doctor. "Small wonder that she is able to rattle off her tables and spell all the words without any trouble! She would have good reason to be ashamed of herself if she could not do so. Sister Florian's ideas on the subject seem to be the same as mine; so you may leave Mildred out of the race until she begins new work after Christmas."

"You mean, Uncle, that we all have just as good a chance for the medal as Mildred has?"

"A better chance, Mary."

"Then I am going to get it again next month."

"Don't be too sure of that," warned Mrs. Selwyn.

"But I did it once, Mother, so why can't I do it again? I wasn't thinking of the medal, either, when I studied my lessons. I just studied so I would know them."

"That is the best way to do and the surest way to win the prize. Sometimes, little girls work themselves up to a great pitch over a reward; and if they do not win it, they are almost sick over their failure."

"Dear, me, how silly! As if they couldn't try again, Mother. Mildred didn't act that way. She seemed not to mind it a bit."

"Sister probably explained to her that she could not expect to get the medal until after Christmas."

"Well, next month when Father Lacey comes to call the reports, I shall be all ready with my chain in my hand in case I get it again. Then I will not have to keep him waiting."

"You can save yourself that trouble by putting a blue ribbon on the medal when you return it to Sister at the end of this month," advised the Doctor, his eyes twinkling.

"And have Sister think that I expect to get it? Why, Uncle!"

"But you *do* expect to get it again, do you not? So why try to hide your feelings?"

"I don't exactly *expect* to get it, but I *hope* I shall; and I mean to work harder than ever."

"The medal shows that you have worked quite hard enough, pet. Better slow up a little and give some other girl a chance. Suppose you eat your luncheon. You have not tasted a morsel. This excitement is too much for you," declared the Doctor, noting the child's bright eyes and flushed face.

Having finished his own meal, he went around the table and took her hand.

"You have really earned a half holiday. Take a long nap and have a nice quiet time with the babies this afternoon. Quite feverish," he added in an undertone to his sister.

"A half holiday! Why, Uncle, you must be joking! Don't you know that we lose our marks when we stay home from school? Besides, I have been head of the class in spelling for a whole week; and if I don't miss this afternoon, I shall get a beautiful holy picture."

"I shall bring you a whole package of beautiful pictures this evening if you do as I say. A little girl who has held first place in spelling for a week deserves more than *one* picture."

"But—but, Uncle, it wouldn't be quite the same."

"I know exactly how Mary feels about it, Frank. I think you had better let her go to school. The afternoon is short, and she will go to bed early to-night and take a long sleep in the morning. By that time the excitement will have worn off."

"Well, see that she eats something before she goes back, Elizabeth. I must be off."

CHAPTER VI.

A LITTLE CROSS.

At three o'clock, Mary joined Aunt Mandy and her little sisters at the convent gate. The old nurse watched her in surprise as she came down the walk, her feet lagging instead of skipping and dancing in their usual manner. However, Aunt Mandy said nothing until Mary made no offer to push the baby carriage, a thing which she had never failed to do. Instead, she asked if she might put her little suit-case in the carriage.

"What's de mattah, honey chile? Did de Sistah done gib ma bressed lamb a scoldin' dis aftahnoon?"

"No, Aunt Mandy, she gave me a lovely holy picture of Blessed Mother for staying at the head of the class in spelling all week. I am just tired—that's all—my arms and every bit of me. It is so warm that my head aches."

"*Wahm*, honey! Why, dis yeah chile had to go back in de house to git her li'l shawl. It's a right putty day on de sunny side ob de street, but mighty chilly in de shade. Did yo' eat de apple and de li'l sandwiches what yo' ma done gibbed yo' fo' recess? Yo' nebah teched nuffin fo' lunch."

"I couldn't eat them, Aunt Mandy, but I took three drinks of water and three more on my way out just now. I have been so thirsty all day."

"Huh! I done told yo' ma dat all dis book larnin' ud be de def ob yo' yet. De bery idea ob sendin' a li'l gal lak yo' is to school!"

"Why, Aunt Mandy, there are ever so many little girls younger than I am at the convent. Some of them are only five."

"Laws a massy! Why, honey, dey's nuffin but babies! *Babies!* An' dat's all yo' is yo' own self. Wait twell yo's as ole as I is, honey chile. Eben yo' ma seems lak a li'l gal to me. 'Tain't no time sence I done toted her round in ma ahms same's I'se doin' now wif dese yeah bressed lambs. I nebah had no book larnin', t'ank de good Lawd! an' I'se libbed longah dan mos' folks what did, an' I 'spects to keep on libbin' fo' a long time yit, I sahtinly does! Ma muddah an' gran'muddah bofe wuz moah dan a hund'ed an' ten when dey ups and died on ma hands. Yo' great-gran'muddah wah eighty; but sho', dat's nuffin! I'se past sebenty ma own self. Nebah yo' mind, honey, we's gwine to be home soon, an' den yo' kin go to bed an' git a good sleep. Hol' on to ma ahm, honey chile. Dat'll help a li'l."

Aunt Mandy made up her mind then and there to give Mrs. Selwyn some advice on the school question. She had been a servant in the family since she was twelve years of age; and while always respectful, she still looked on "Miss Lisbuf" and "Massa Frank" as mere children, and did not hesitate to speak her mind freely to them.

That evening, she was at the front door to meet Doctor Carlton, who listened kindly to her account of the homeward walk, and then hastened up to Mary's room. One of his first questions was, "Have any of the children in your class been absent?"

"Hazel hasn't been in school all week nor her little brother, either. Marian has been out a few days, too."

"Hm! You play with those little girls a great deal, do you not?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle, and we sit near one another in the classroom, too; and sometimes Sister lets us sit two in a seat to help each other."

"I see. Well, try to sleep a little while, pet," and down to the telephone went the Doctor. He soon returned to Mary's bedside, and in his own jolly way began, "So you are not content to follow the styles in dress, but must take up with everything going, I see."

"*You* know that I never bother about styles, Uncle. I just wear whatever mother gets for me," said Mary, with a tired little smile.

"Well, you are very much in style just now. I have been talking with Mrs. Burns and Mrs. Lee, and they tell me that Hazel and her brother and Marian have measles."

Mary gave a pitiful cry.

"And I have them, too, Uncle? And will I have to be sent away somewhere? But I will go—I will do anything to keep the darling babies from catching them, and—and—don't let Mother come *near* me! I want her—oh, I do want her! but she mustn't come on account of the babies."

"There, there, pet, you haven't the small-pox! Who has said anything about sending you away? Of course, Mother must not be with you, just as you say, nor Aunt Mandy, either; but Father and I shall come in to see you very often——"

"But you might carry the measles to the babies——"

"Oh, we shall go out and run around the block after our visits to you; so don't worry any more about it. I shall get the very best nurse I know. All my little patients who have had her to take care of them, love her very much."

"But can't I be moved to the little back room so as to be as far away from the babies as I can be?"

"An idea popped into my head as I came up from the telephone. I am glad now that Mother insisted on giving the third floor a house-cleaning two weeks ago, though, at the time, I did not

enjoy being ordered to clear out my old den up there. That big front room had been my private property since my twelfth birthday, and the treasures which I had hoarded there would make a junkman happy. Of course, I had not been near the room for years, and it was high time that I should put things in order. So I spent several evenings destroying more than I saved.

"Out of curiosity, I went up there last Sunday, and what do you think? But I suppose you have seen it for yourself. I thought I was in the wrong house when I saw my old den dressed up in pale blue walls and white woodwork. It seems to me that is the very room in which to get over measles quickly, and you will have no reason to worry about the babies. The third floor is not an attic, you know, though it has always been used for storing away old things. It is what is called a mansard roof."

"I wouldn't mind if it *were* an attic, Uncle. I should much rather live in an attic all my life than have any harm come to the babies."

"I am sure you would, pet. Now, I shall send Debby to dust and air the room, and you may lie on the couch in my room while Tom and I carry up your bed."

In less than a half hour, the little patient was comfortably settled in the "hospital," as the Doctor playfully called his old den. He had the next room fitted up for the nurse; but as she could not come before morning, he occupied it himself that night.

It was a great surprise to the little girl when, just after breakfast the next day, he ushered the nurse into the room. Mary had expected a white-gowned, white-capped young lady—not a smiling, rosy-cheeked, little Sister, wearing a big white apron over her black habit and a long, pale blue veil.

"You wear our Blessed Mother's colors, too; don't you, Sister?" was Mary's first remark after she and Sister Julia had been introduced.

"Oh, by the way, Sister," the Doctor paused in the doorway, "there is one thing of great importance which I must ask you to remember, please. Any colors but blue and white have a very bad effect on this patient—yellow in particular. Please see that she closes her eyes while you give her the medicine and, above all, orange-ade. A few drops of wash-bluing in the water might help matters," and he was gone before Mary could say a word.

The little girl soon learned to love her nurse very much; and, though she sorely missed her mother, Sister Julia's beautiful stories kept her from becoming too lonely.

"No wonder your little patients love to have Sister Julia take care of them, Uncle," she said that evening when he came up to sit with her while the nurse went to her dinner. "I could lie here all day and listen to her stories—*true* stories about our Lord and Blessed Mother and the Saints, and about children she has taken care of—some of them so poor that they didn't have enough to eat or clothes to keep them warm. But Sister knows a good, kind doctor who took care of them while they were sick and gave them medicine and fruit all for nothing; and he told the Saint Vincent de Paul Society about them; so they are getting along better now.

"I am going to ask Mother not to buy that blue velvet coat and hat for me that she was looking at when we were down town last Saturday, but to give the money to some poor family instead. The white ones I had last winter are perfectly good, and Mother can have them dyed if she would like me to have blue things this year. They can dye white any color, you know. Hazel has a beautiful red dress trimmed with tiny, black velvet ribbon; and when I told her how pretty it is, she said that it is an old white tennis skirt of her mother's dyed. There is another thing that I would like to do; but I don't know—would you—do you mind what I do with that five dollar gold piece you gave me for my birthday, Uncle?"

"Do I mind, pet? Of course I do not mind! You are to do exactly what you please with that money. I gave it to you just to see what you *would* do with it. You have never handled any money of your own, except a few pennies."

"But I didn't need to buy anything when you and Father were always giving me things—even pretty pencils for school. But there is something that I would like to buy now. You can tell me whether it is just the best thing to get for those poor, sick children. I might have asked Sister Julia, but she was reading her prayer book when I thought of it."

"Let me hear what you have in mind for them."

"I think it would be nice to send each of them a little blooming plant. It would last ever so much longer than cut flowers, and they could watch it grow and see the new flowers come out. See that chrysanthemum on the window sill? Mr. Daniel at Maryvale sent it in to me this morning; and the sun made two buds blossom right out."

"It is a beautiful plant. I have been wondering where it came from, but you have not given me a chance to ask. As for your little plan, it is an excellent one and will make several little folks, who never see so much as a dandelion, very happy indeed."

Thinking of others who had never known the blessings with which her own life was overflowing, and planning with her father and uncle to bring a little sunshine into their cheerless homes, Mary did not find the days of her illness so very, very long. She was doing so well that everyone in the house was looking forward to having her once more among them; and she herself was counting

the hours until she could again be with her mother and little sisters.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHADOW FALLS.

"I s'pose the twinnies have grown ever so much, Father," she remarked one evening when she was able to sit up in a big arm chair.

"Well, I have not seen Mother letting out any tucks or hems in their dresses; but," and Mr. Selwyn's eyes danced, "I must admit that they are somewhat better-looking."

Surely, the little bird *must* have been at Maryvale that day, and Mary thought it very strange that she had not caught a glimpse of it. She had seen some sparrows, robins, and thrushes; but she was quite sure that the particular little bird of which Aunt Mandy had so often spoken was different from any of these. It certainly had very large ears to be able to hear what she had *whispered* to her aunt when they were sitting at such a distance from the window. She started at a thought which came to her.

"Father, have you ever seen the little bird that tells Aunt Mandy so many things? Do you think it can hear what a person is just *thinking* about?"

Mr. Selwyn coughed to hide a smile.

"No, dear, I have never seen that particular little bird; and no one but God knows our thoughts unless we show them in our faces or actions."

"Please take me on your lap, Father, and tell me more about the babies. Has Beth any hair yet?"

"Only a little soft, yellow down; but Berta's is actually beginning to turn up at the ends in tiny, silky curls."

"Oh, she must look darling! Just forty-eight hours more—no, forty-seven, because it is exactly an hour since Uncle was here—and I can see them both again."

"So Uncle Frank said at dinner. That reminds me—here is a note for you from Mother."

"Please read it to me, Father. I can't read writing very well, though Mother tries to make hers plain. Besides, Uncle has asked me not to look closely at anything until my eyes are stronger. They have been so weak that I had to ask Sister to keep the shades down. But she thought it would be too bad to shut out the sunshine; so sometimes she bandaged my eyes and let the shades roll all the way up to the top.

"Then we played a game something like the little boy who was half-past three played with his grandmother, only ours was *Blind Man's Buff*. Of course, I couldn't go catch Sister, but I tried to guess where she was; and when I guessed right, she was 'it.' Then I would *pretend* that I was somewhere, and Sister had to guess. She had a much harder time than I had, because I could pretend to be up the chimney or on top of the wardrobe or in ever so many places where I knew she couldn't be when I was 'it.' But please read Mother's letter. She has written to me every day since I came up here," and the little girl snuggled close to her father while he read the following:

My Darling,

Uncle has just told us the good news. It will not do you any harm now to know how much we have missed you. Aunt Mandy said to me to-day that she cannot understand how you always succeeded in putting the babies to sleep when she failed to do so; but I think I know the secret.

The babies are growing more cunning every day. Two or three days ago, Beth discovered that she has fingers; and this morning when I was dressing her, she kicked up one little foot and caught hold of her toes. Then I found Berta holding on to both ears. But I must not tell you all the surprises we have for you.

I have gone into your room very often. It makes me think of a pretty nest from which the little bird has flown. But the wings of my little bluebird are not strong enough to carry her very far away, so she is coming back to the nest again. I shall give Father a kiss and a hug to carry to my birdie away up in the treetop.

MOTHER.

"And here are a kiss—and a hug—to carry down to Mother; but before you give them to her, you must walk around the block to let the wind blow the measles off of you."

"There, there, dear, you must not exert yourself so much. You are not quite strong enough to give such bear hugs."

"Well, well, well! Not in bed yet? I was almost sure that I heard you snore as I came upstairs."

"Uncle! I am going to ask Sister Julia if I snore when I am asleep."

"You certainly do not do so while you are awake. But perhaps it was Snowball that I heard. She is asleep on the lowest step."

"Poor little Snowball! I do hope Debby is taking good care of her. Is she very black, Uncle?"

"Who? Debby or the kitten?"

"Why, the kitten, of course. Debby is s'posed to be black, but Snowball is s'posed to be white."

"I see. Well, set your mind at rest, pet, for your kitten looks her name to perfection, curled up as she now is. Indeed, for a moment I was on the point of bringing her up here to wash your face and coax a little color into it. Oh, another thing! I noticed that she has quite a jaunty bow of ribbon on her neck. You would have the nightmare if I should tell you what color it is."

"Every color looks pretty on Snowball. I think the ribbon must be pink, because Debby likes pink herself. No?" as the Doctor shook his head. "Red, then. Debby likes red, too."

"I suppose I may as well tell you. It is *yellow*! A glorious, golden yellow."

"How lovely! Yes, Uncle, I mean it. I think yellow is a beautiful color; but it wouldn't do for me to wear it, you know. Why, the sun and moon and stars and Dick and ever so many of my favorite flowers are yellow, so you can't tease me about that color."

"I am a naughty old chap to tease you about anything. Come, Rob, it is long past her bedtime. It will be a case of

'You can't get 'em up,
You can't get 'em up,
You can't get 'em up in the morning,'"

sang the jolly man.

On the way down stairs he said, "As far as the measles are concerned, she could be with the family now; but she is weaker than I like to see her, and the little excitement of being with the babies again would be more than is good for her at present. So I have put her off another two days. She will not try to exert herself as much with Sister Julia as she would down stairs. She is getting along better, however, than I expected, for she has had a pretty severe attack; but I have every reason now to hope that it will leave no bad effects."

"How about her eyes? is the sight in any danger?" was the father's anxious question.

"Not now. The disease often affects the eyes; but Sister Julia has been very careful, and the danger is passed. We may all go to sleep to-night with light hearts."

Ah, how little the wisest of us know! How little we suspect what the next hour may bring!

The tick-tock—tick-tock—of the big clock at the foot of the stairs was the only sound that broke the stillness of the night. Midnight came and went.—One o'clock—two o'clock—a piercing scream rang through the silent house! The Doctor, whose room was nearest the stairs, was the first to reach the sick room. He found the little girl in the nurse's arms, imploring her to chase away the man with the terrible knife.

"He stuck it—into me—Uncle! 'Way, 'way into—my side! Oo! It's there yet!—Take it out, Uncle! *please* take it out! Oh! oh! oh!"

"There, there, darling! No, no! there is no knife. It is only a bad dream," soothed the nurse.

"But it hurts, Sister!—Oo, oo! Ouch!—every time—I breathe. Take it *out!* Oh, Uncle—*please* take it *out!*"

"There is absolutely nothing there, pet,—nothing! Sister is right. You have been lying in a cramped position which caused a pain in your side and made you dream of the man with a knife. Lie down and let Sister rub the place where you feel the pain."

But though the Doctor made light of the matter to the little girl, his sister and brother-in-law saw the anxiety written in every line of his face. Sister Julia, too, looked worried as she tried to soothe the moaning child.

"M—Mother!"

"Yes, darling, yes!"

"It hurts so, Mother—oo!—oo! It shoots—right through me. I'm wide awake now, Mother, so—why doesn't it go—away? Oh, oh!"

"She has been restless all night, Doctor,"—Sister Julia had left the little girl to her mother's care for a moment—"so restless that I disobeyed your orders about going to bed myself and remained beside her for fear she would throw off the covering and take cold. She has not been quiet long enough for the muscles to cramp—"

"I know, Sister, I know. I said that merely to quiet her. This is what I have feared all along. She is a frail mite, but I really thought that we had pulled her over the danger line. I hope it is nothing

worse than pleurisy. We shall try hot applications first. I shall be back in a moment."

Sister Julia busied herself heating water and making other preparations; and the Doctor soon returned with his "telephone," as Mary called the instrument with which he had several times listened to her lungs.

"Now, dear, let me see whether I can find out just where the pain is——"

"Oh, it is right here, Uncle! On both sides right where my hands are—you don't need to listen—and it shoots—through me and—comes out under those bones—where the angels' wings grow."

"But we can do more to relieve the pain if I listen for a few minutes, pet."

The father and mother did not take their eyes off his face, which grew more and more grave. By the time he had finished the examination, there was little need for him to call the nurse to the bedside and motion them into the hall.

"I shall be perfectly honest with you," he began, "for I know that you are prepared for the worst. I fear pneumonia, but hope that we have caught the trouble in time. I can tell you nothing definite for some hours. The condition in which I find her now is the very one which Sister Julia and I have been guarding against; but I was so sure that all danger was past that I told Sister, when I came home this evening, to change her program and, instead of going to rest at that time and leaving Mary to us, Rob, to go to bed as soon as she had tucked her in for the night. This she did not do, but remained at the bedside until we came up, just as she has done every night from eleven o'clock on.

"With any other nurse, I might fear that some neglect had brought matters to this pass; but not with Sister Julia. She is a wonderful nurse, and we are blessed to have her, especially now. I have never lost a pneumonia patient when she was on the case. So we shall hope for the very best."

But though the Doctor tried to speak cheerfully, a cold fear gripped the hearts of all.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RUSTLE OF ANGELS' WINGS.

When daylight came, they carried Mary down to her own pretty room and did all that science and love could suggest to relieve her sufferings; but in spite of everything, the child grew steadily worse; and the Doctor was at last obliged to admit that double pneumonia had set in.

"You had better bring the babies to her for a few minutes," he said to his sister. "She has a very high fever and is liable to become delirious. A peep at the twins will satisfy her and perhaps ease her mind later on."

"Sweet—darling—" Mary murmured as the babies were held up before her. "Soon—again?"

"Yes, pet, Mother will bring them to see you very often. Try to sleep now," urged her uncle.

Oh, the long, long days and nights of suffering and grief and anxiety. Though the twins were the delight of the household, they had not been members of the family long enough to twine themselves about the hearts of all as had the dear little girl who was never happier than when making others happy. The servants vied with one another to do her some little service. Old Susie surpassed herself with her delicious broths and gelatines over which she spent more time than she did on the meals for the family; Liza hurried with her other duties so as to be able to devote more time to the babies and leave Aunt Mandy free to help Sister Julia; Tom sat by day and night on the top step of the stairs, ready to run errands,—a task which, by the way, he had always disliked. Even Debby, who had known the little girl less than two months, almost sobbed aloud at sight of the wan little face framed in a mass of golden hair. Indeed, so blinded was she by her tears, that she stumbled about and upset so many things that Sister Julia gently took her dust cloth from her and finished putting the room in order. As for the father, mother, and uncle, Mrs. Selwyn's words just after her brother had told them the dreaded truth, will best express the thoughts that filled their minds.

"Perhaps it is wrong to feel as I do, Rob,—that it would be far easier to lose both of our babies than our little Mary."

"You are merely speaking the thought that is in all our hearts, Elizabeth, and it is only natural that we should feel as we do. In one sense, the babies are just as dear to us as Mary is; but they have not yet entered into our very life as she has done by her own winning ways. So, if she is taken from us, we shall miss her far more than we should either, or even both, of the twins. I doubt whether Berta or Beth could ever quite fill the void which her loss would cause in our lives. But we shall not think of that now. Let us hope for the best and pray that, if it be God's will, our darling may be spared to us. We can trust Frank to see that everything possible is done for her."

"Poor Frank! He could not love her better if she were his own child. I have telephoned to Sister Florian to ask the prayers of the Sisters and pupils, and, of course, I called Maryvale early this morning. Mary asked me to let her know Frank's decision."

"I shall go now to telephone to her. Try to get a little rest before dinner."

Alone with Mary, Sister Julia seized the chance to have a little talk with her.

"There is one very important thing, dear, in this kind of illness, and that is the fight which the patient herself makes."

"Fight, Sister? You mean that I must punch something the way I saw boys doing to each other out on the sidewalk one day?"

"No, dear, I mean that you must make up your mind that you are going to get well as soon as possible and——"

"And I am, Sister. I take my medicine even though it has a very bad taste. I try to remember what you told me about our Lord—that they gave Him a bitter, bitter drink when He was hanging on the cross and said, 'I thirst.' But—but I can't help screaming sometimes when the pain is so dreadful. I seem to forget everything then."

"Indeed, you have been very good and patient, dear; but in spite of the pain and the bad dreams, you must say to yourself, 'I am going to be well and strong very soon.'"

Often in the days which followed, when Mary was delirious from fever and pain, the hearts of those at her bedside were wrung by her cry, "But I am going to be well and strong soon, I am, I *am*!" Then she would beg them not to let her fall into the big, black hole where wicked men were waiting to stick long knives into her. Sometimes, she knew those about her for a few minutes, but the greater part of the time she was not conscious. Sister Madeline and Sister Austin came in from Maryvale to see her; Sister Florian with a companion called several times; but the little girl had no memory of their visits when asked later about them. Father Lacey called one afternoon and read a Gospel over her; but she gave no sign that she knew he was there until after he had left the room. Then she murmured, "Sister—was Father Lacey—here?"

"Yes, dear, he has just left the room."

"I—would like—to see him,—please."

The priest, who had stopped in the hall to speak to Mrs. Selwyn, returned and seated himself at the bedside, saying cheerily, "Do not try to talk to me, dear child. I am glad you are awake so that I can tell you how much all your little friends at the convent miss you. They are praying very hard for you every day, and so are all the Sisters. Yes, I know you wish me to thank them for you."

"Did—the girls—go to—Confession—yet, Father?"

"Yes, Mary, they made their first Confession last week."

"Mine—now?—I know—how."

"Certainly, my dear child; but you must let me do most of the talking. I shall ask you questions, and you will just answer them," and Father Lacey again slipped his stole about his neck as Sister Julia left the room.

After he had said with her the *Hail Mary* which he had given as a penance, Mary's mind again began to wander; and when Sister Julia returned, she was babbling of those tell-tale, little white birds with blue heads and red tails and yellow ribbons about their necks.

"Truly an angelic little soul, Sister," said the priest. "I greatly fear that she will not be with us long. What does Doctor Carlton say of her condition?"

"He will not say anything, Father."

"And I suppose it is not quite the thing for you to express your opinion. When is the Doctor at home?"

"This is the first time in several days that he has left the house, Father. He spends the greater part of the day and night with the child. His devotion to her is touching. I have sometimes wondered at his great gentleness with children, even though he has several times spoken of his small niece and repeated her quaint remarks to amuse his little patients; but I understand it all now. If she does not recover, more than half of his life will go out with hers. And the poor father and mother! They have already lost two little boys, yet they are so patient and resigned. You will have to know Mary better than you do, Father, to understand just what her loss would mean to this home. The servants fairly worship her. No little queen could have more faithful subjects. It is a marvel that she is not badly spoiled."

"Her mother is too wise a woman to permit that, Sister. I admit that I do not know the child as you do, but I have seen enough of her to feel sure that she is all that you say of her, and that her loss would be a great blow. I find her so well instructed that, if the Doctor thinks she will not recover, I shall allow her to make her First Communion.^[1] I have not mentioned the matter to her, however. Speak to the Doctor as soon as he comes in, and if he thinks that there is grave danger, let me know when she again becomes conscious, and I shall come at once. At all events, I shall call again to-morrow."

The next morning, three of the finest doctors of New York gathered with Doctor Carlton about the sick child, sadly shook their heads, and quietly went away. In the afternoon, the Doctor

himself opened the door for the priest and drew him into the library.

"I would have telephoned to you last evening, Father, but it was useless to do so, for my little niece has not been conscious since your visit yesterday. I have little hope that she will become so before—the end. I have known from the first that she could not pull through except by a miracle. Humanly speaking, it is now merely a question of how long her heart can hold out."

"*Humanly* speaking, yes, Doctor; but the days of miracles are not passed, and He Who raised the dead to life is still the all-powerful God. Mary became conscious yesterday just after I had read a Gospel over her. I feel that our Divine Lord permitted it so that she might make her first Confession for which she was preparing when she became ill. He may permit the same thing to happen to-day so that she may make her First Communion. I am going now to the church for the Blessed Sacrament. Ask Sister Julia to have all in readiness when I return."

But though Father Lacey prayed long and earnestly over the little girl, and her mother and the nurse spoke close to her ear of the happiness awaiting her, Mary gave no sign that she understood. Then the priest anointed her and raised the Blessed Sacrament in benediction above her; and promising to come again the moment he should hear that she had become conscious, he returned to the church.

The long night began. The house was very quiet, for Mary had ceased to moan and cry out, and lay perfectly still, her breath coming in little gasps. Close by her pillow sat the Doctor, his watch in his left hand, the fingers of his right on the child's fluttering pulse. Across from him knelt Sister Julia, her eyes never wavering from his haggard, gray face as she watched for the least sign from him that something was needed. Her lips moved in prayer as the beads slipped through her fingers. At the foot of the bed knelt Mr. Selwyn, his arm supporting his wife, his head bowed on the railing where Mary had so often during the past week seen the strange little birds hopping about. Tom was at his post at the head of the stairs; and Aunt Mandy and Liza had taken the babies down to the kitchen so that nothing would disturb the little sufferer.

The hours dragged on. Midnight passed. The child's breathing grew fainter—then a great stillness fell upon the room. Mr. Selwyn looked up with a start, and his wife clung closer to him. The Doctor had slipped to his knees, his eyes on the still, white face. Suddenly, the little eyelids fluttered open, the big blue eyes looked straight into Mr. Selwyn's, then rested for an instant on the Doctor, while a wan little smile flitted across the child's face. A faint sigh issued from her parched lips, and her eyes closed. The Doctor raised his hand. No one stirred. Was it life or death? Did they hear the rustle of angels' wings, or was it the murmur of the night wind?

The father's eyes sought the Doctor's face, and soon a look of wonder and doubt crept over it. By degrees, the wonder increased, and the doubt disappeared, and two great tears of relief rolled down the haggard face which turned toward Mr. Selwyn with a smile, while the warning hand remained uplifted.

Close to the mother's ear, the father whispered just one little word; then carried her into the next room where, some minutes later, the Doctor joined them. Mr. Selwyn stepped out into the hall, and the next instant, Tom, shoes in hand, was making all possible speed toward the kitchen.

Slowly, oh, so slowly, the little girl crept back from the chill, dark shadow into the warm, bright love-light waiting to envelope her. It would be many and many a long day before she would be able to play with the babies and romp with her little friends; but to those who loved her, it was happiness enough just to have her still among them.

Several remarks that were made caused Mary quite a little surprise.

"But I tried and tried to tell you ever so many times that I was going to get well, Mother. Didn't you hear me?"

"Yes, darling; but, for once, we did not believe you. You can hardly blame us for that, however, when Uncle Frank and three of the finest doctors in the city had said that you could not recover."

"Hm! I think I shall ask Uncle to take me to see those doctors some day just to prove to them that God can make people well if He wants them to get well."

CHAPTER IX.

A GRAVE QUESTION.

"I am sorry, Rob, that my answer is not what you wish it to be."

"But, Frank, think what a winter in Italy would mean to the child."

"Yes, if you can get her over there by wireless. But you speak of going by steamer, and I need not remind you of the cold and dampness of an ocean voyage at this season."

"I had not thought of that." Mr. Selwyn rose and began pacing to and fro. "How soon *will* Mary be equal to the trip, Frank?"

"Not before the first of June at the earliest. Her recovery, judging from the past two weeks, will be very, very slow. Why do you take this trip just now? Can't you put it off for six or seven months?"

"No, Frank, that is not possible. We have been waiting for this chance to open a branch of the business in Rome, and now that it has come, we must act promptly."

"Then let Bryce or Ryan go. Bryce has no one but himself to think of."

"His father would have been just the man to put the thing through; but young Bryce is not his father by any means. For one thing, he does not know the business well enough. Ryan says that he is too old to begin to learn Italian; and as I have a fair knowledge of that language, he thinks I should go. I made no objection, because I thought it would be a splendid chance to take Mary away from the winter here. Do you really think that it would be a risk, Frank?"

"So great a risk that I am almost sure you would have a burial at sea."

"*Frank!*"

"I mean it, Rob. A mere trifle would bring on a relapse; and a long sea voyage is no trifle."

"But what are we to do? Elizabeth will never consent to my living in Italy for a year unless she and the children can be with me."

"She is right about that. Her place is with you."

"But she cannot leave Mary——"

"Why not, Rob?—You know that I would be the last one to ask that question if there was any other way of solving the problem; but since there is not, why cannot Mary be left with me? I need not assure you that she will be taken care of to the best of my ability."

"You have more than proved that, Frank. If she were your own child, you could not show greater love for her. And she almost worships you."

"Yes, I flatter myself that I come a close second to you and Elizabeth and the babies, and I promise to do all in my power to lessen the pain of this separation for her. She is the one who will suffer most, for she is not old enough to see the matter in the proper light. To us, a year is only twelve short months which pass all too quickly; but to a child, it is an eternity. I am sorry that this trial should come upon her now after all that she has been through."

"That is just it, Frank,—not only for her but for all of us. It seems a terrible thing to be separated from her now for so long a time, when we came so near to losing her. I am sure that Elizabeth will not consent to leave her——"

"Then Elizabeth will have to remain at home. Here she is to speak for herself."

"What plan is afoot now, gentlemen? You look as sober as judges," laughed Mrs. Selwyn.

"An ocean voyage followed by a year in Italy is a subject for rather serious thought, is it not?"

"No, indeed, Rob. I should say it is a very pleasant subject. Who among our friends has this treat in store for him?"

"It happens that, in this case, the pleasure is not unmixed with pain."

"But is it not always so, Rob? Is there not a thread of sorrow running through every earthly joy?"

"Yes, even our little Mary has found that out. I think I told you how perfectly happy she was over the twins; but in less than fifteen minutes, she found cause for sorrow in the fact that there was not a third baby to be called Frank."

"Yes, I remember. But you have not answered my question about our friends who are planning a trip to Europe."

"Your husband's name heads the list, Elizabeth; and it remains for you to decide whether he will go alone, or have the company of any other members of the family."

"You are joking, Frank."

"I was never more in earnest."

"I wish from my heart that he was joking, Elizabeth," and Mr. Selwyn repeated some of the facts of the case.

"And are your partners aware that your wife has not only herself but three children to get ready for this trip? However, we shall manage. As you say, the pleasure will be marred to some extent by the pain of parting from this good, old brother of ours; but after all," and Mrs. Selwyn seated herself on the arm of the Doctor's chair and ran her fingers through his hair, "a year passes quickly, and the thought that Mary is growing well and strong in the wonderful Italian climate will help you through the lonely hours. But, Frank," an anxious note sounded in her voice, "do you think she will be equal to the trip in another week? She is doing nicely, I know, but she has not yet been up even in a chair."

"No, Elizabeth, Mary will not be able to make that trip next week nor next month," the Doctor

gently replied. "I have just explained to Rob that an ocean voyage for her before the first of June will, without doubt, have a very sad ending."

"Why, Frank! what are we to do? I cannot think of allowing Rob to go away alone and live hotel life for a whole year! And Mary—oh, after the agony of that awful week, I cannot bear to be parted from her now when she needs me so much!"

"I have just thought of a plan which I think should work pretty well. I shall sail alone next Monday, and you and the children, with Aunt Mandy, of course, will follow me early in June."

"No, no, Rob, I cannot listen to such a plan." Mrs. Selwyn crossed the room to her husband's side. "If it were a case of a month or six weeks, I might consider it; but I shall never consent to your living hotel life for half a year. What if you should become ill? Think of the time it would take me to reach you. No, no, I must be with you. We shall find a cosy little place on the outskirts of Rome and make it our home. But Mary——" and the poor little mother bowed her head on the father's shoulder.

"Mary will be safe with me, Elizabeth," urged the Doctor. "She will be loved and cared for as if she were my own child. I shall arrange my affairs so as to take her South to a warm, dry climate, after Christmas, and remain there until the first of May. Then, I think Maryvale will be the best place for her with our own sister to keep a watchful eye on her. The Sisters and many of the pupils are old friends of hers, and I shall go out to see her two or three times a week. She will have country air and country food; and when you return in the fall, you will not know your tanned, rosy-cheeked little lass. Yes, Mary will be far better off there than alone here during the day with the servants. You, Elizabeth, will need Aunt Mandy, and I think you will find Tom very useful, Rob. I shall close the house and take some apartments in the building where my office is. Liza will keep house for me. But I would advise you to say nothing of all this to Mary before Saturday. She will be stronger then and better able to bear the thought of separation from you."

CHAPTER X.

A SEVERE TEST.

"Italy, Mother! Father must go to Italy? Where is that?"

It was Saturday morning. During the week, every one had been busy helping to prepare for the voyage; but as Mary was still too weak to do more than sit up in a big chair for a short time every day, she saw and heard nothing that was going on outside her own room.

"Italy is a country in the southern part of Europe, dear. Have you ever seen a map of Europe?"

"I am not sure, Mother. One warm day at school, Sister took us across the hall to a cooler room. There were big maps hanging on the walls; and she showed us the one of our country, and put her pointer right on New York. She couldn't find Maryvale; but only large cities are shown on that map; and Maryvale is not even in the village, you know. It is more than a mile beyond it."

"Maryvale is the name of the convent grounds only; and though they are very large, they could not be shown on such a map."

"But about Europe, Mother. There is another map hanging next to the one where New York is. P'r'aps that is Europe. There is one country at the lower part of it shaped exactly like a boot sticking out into the sea. Rome, the city where the Pope lives, is in that country."

"And that country is Italy, dear, and Rome is the very city to which Father is going."

"Oh, will Father see the Pope?"

"He will surely go to see the Holy Father."

"Father Lacey saw the Holy Father last summer when he went to Rome and took the audience with him. Of course, the whole audience didn't go—you and Father and Uncle Frank and Rosemary's mother and some others who were in the audience on the last day of school didn't go."

Mrs. Selwyn laughed merrily.

"If you were to ask Father Lacey about his companions, he would tell you that he made that trip alone. He *had* an audience with the Holy Father, dear; that is, he was allowed to see the Pope and speak with him. The word *audience*, like many other words, has more than one meaning."

"Dear, me," sighed the little girl, "there is so much to learn; isn't there, Mother? It seems to me that I just get a thing all fixed in my mind when I have to upset it and fix it over again a different way."

"Then your first idea was not the correct one. You should ask the meaning of new words instead of trying to decide for yourself?"

"That's exactly what I shall do after this. But—but, Mother,—don't you— isn't it just a little strange

for Father to go to Italy by himself? He has never gone away without us, you know. But I s'pose he will be back in a few days, and he thinks it would be too hard for you to travel with the babies. Is he going soon?"

"The steamer sails at two o'clock Monday afternoon and will take a week to reach England where Father must stay for two or three days. Then, there is the trip across the Channel to France, and from there by train to Italy. We must allow two weeks for the entire trip."

"Two weeks! Two *weeks!* Why, Mother! Father to be away *two whole weeks!*—But no,—he will be gone much longer, because it will take two more weeks to come home, and besides that, he will have to stay in Italy a few days to attend to that business. Two weeks and two weeks are four weeks and—why, he will be gone at *least* five weeks, and what shall we ever do without him, Mother?"

Mrs. Selwyn's heart sank. How was she to tell the child of the long, long separation to come? But Mary must hear of it without more delay; and taking the little girl on her lap, she began: "I have something to say to you, darling, that you will not like to hear any better than I like to tell it. Father cannot put off this trip. If he had only himself and us to think of, he would surely do so even though he would lose the chance of opening a branch of the business in Rome. But he must think of his partners in the bank. Now, this is where the trouble lies. Father must be away from home, not for five or six weeks, but for a year, and Mother should be with him. It would never do, you know, to have him living alone in a hotel for a year. In case of illness or accident, it would take me nearly two weeks to reach him."

"Of *course* you should be with him, Mother. That is why I said it seemed strange for Father to go away without us. But Uncle Frank—can he go, too?"

"No, dear."

"But—but—won't he be very lonely without us, Mother? Oh, dear, me! How *can* we go away for a whole year and leave him here all by himself? But I s'pose there isn't any other way to fix it. Mother, I think I ought to try to walk to-day. I am sure I can if you and Sister will hold my hands. Then to-morrow, I shall try going down stairs so as to be ready for Monday."

"No, no, Mary, you are far too weak to do any walking yet. I fear that it will be many days before Uncle will allow you to try that. Remember, he said that you must not sit up in the big chair longer than an hour at a time. Whether you could walk or not by Monday would make no difference if you were strong enough otherwise. Father or Uncle Frank could easily carry you down to the carriage and on the steamer; but—"

"Why—why, Mother!" Mary fixed her startled eyes on Mrs. Selwyn's face. "You—you sound as if—as if you mean that I am not—not able to go!"

"That is what Mother does mean, darling," Mrs. Selwyn murmured in a husky voice, pressing her lips to the bright little head. "Uncle says that the voyage at this time of year would kill you; that the cold and dampness would bring on a relapse, and you would die before we could reach England. Oh, my baby! Father and Mother feel very, very bad about leaving you. What we should do were it not for dear Uncle Frank, I do not know. It will be a great comfort to us to feel that you are safe with him, darling, and that you are helping him not to be too lonely. He loves you so dearly and has the most beautiful plans to keep you happy and make you well and strong. He will help you to write long letters to us every Sunday, and I shall write to you every day to tell you just what we are doing and how fast the babies are growing and—"

Mary had been very, very quiet; but at this—"O Mother, Mother! don't—*don't* take the babies away from me," she wailed. "I can't b—bear *that!* I d—d—don't see how—I can—l—let you and Father—g—go, but oh! d—don't t—t—take the b—babies away from m—m—me! Aunt Mandy—a—and Liza will—t—take good care of them, a—and I will h—help; oh!—I will, I *will!* I d—don't care wh—what Uncle s—s—says! I d—don't care if I n—n—*never* learn—a—anything! I don't care if—I gr—grow up to b—be a d—*dunce!* I'm going—t—to help—t—take care of the b—b—*babies!*"

"Darling, darling! there, there! You will make yourself ill again! Listen to Mother a moment!"

Mrs. Selwyn was really alarmed, for never before had the child given way to such an outburst. She knew that Mary felt things more deeply than do most children of her age, and had dreaded the hour when she should be obliged to tell her the sad news. She saw that the little girl was much weaker after her illness than she had thought. By degrees, she quieted her, and then resolved to appeal to her generous nature.

"Of course, dear, Father will go alone to Italy rather than have you make yourself ill again. He loves you so much that he would suffer loneliness and many other things all his life if by so doing he could keep you well and happy. If Mother goes with him, she *must* take the babies. They are too young to be left with even so good a nurse as dear old Aunt Mandy. But I am going to let you decide whether I shall go or stay. I know that will be very, very hard for you to do, because you are not selfish; and I am perfectly sure of what your answer would be if you were a little stronger. I know my little bluebird too well to doubt it. But if you really feel that you cannot do without Father and Mother and the babies and Aunt Mandy—for, of course, I shall need her—you must not fear to tell me so. Now, I am going to put you to bed and give you some broth; and then I shall go away for a little while to let you have time to think."

The frail little arms went round her neck as Mary whispered, "No, no, Mother, I don't need time

to think. I know now. I will stay," she gulped hard, "with Uncle. I'm sorry—I was so selfish and horrid, and that I said I wouldn't mind Uncle. I will, Mother, everything he tells me. But—but I'll just have to cry a little bit now."

CHAPTER XI.

WELCOME VISITORS.

When the Doctor went up to Mary's room after luncheon to make his usual visit, he found a very quiet little girl waiting for him. His sister had told him no more than was necessary of the scene an hour earlier, so that he was more than surprised to find the child in bed and oh, so tired!

"I fear that you stayed up too long this morning, little one. Better take a nap and not try to sit up again to-day. You are going to have company this afternoon. Can you guess who it is?"

"To-day is Saturday. Aunt Mary, Uncle?"

"Exactly. She and Sister Dominic are in town doing some shopping, and she called me up at the office to know at what hour they might see my patient. I told them to come about three o'clock. That will give you plenty of time for a little rest."

"Uncle—please put your head down." Her little arms clasped his neck, and she whispered close to his ear, "I love to be with you, but—but I just can't help wishing that I could go——"

"I know, dear, I know. I, too, wish that you were able to go—that we might both go; but you have no idea what it is going to mean to me to have you with me. I have so many lovely plans that I fear we shall never have time to carry them all out. One is about the pony you will learn to ride when we go South after Christmas to a beautiful, warm place where we shall almost live outdoors under such a bright blue sky that you may have to wear black spectacles. Green ones might be more to your taste, or those new style amber-colored ones."

"What is amber color, Uncle?"

"A deep, golden yellow. Oh, I *beg* your pardon! Yellow is not your favorite color, nor green, either."

"Nor black, *either*. If I *must* wear glasses, they will have to be clear ones like Aunt Mandy's or blue ones."

"But black is not a color. It is the absence of all color. Do you know, it seems to me strange that your hair has escaped——"

"My hair escaped!" Mary felt her head. "Why, Uncle, it is on my head just as tight as ever. You frightened me. I thought it was flying away. I s'pose *escaped* has more than one meaning just as so many words have. When I forgot to close the door of Dick's cage, and he flew out, Mother said he had escaped."

"In this case, I mean that I am surprised that you have not dyed your hair blue or bleached it white."

"Now, Uncle, you are just teasing me. Have *you* ever seen anyone with blue hair?"

"I must admit that I have not. Such a person would soon make her fortune in a dime museum or in a side-show at a circus."

"You know very well, sir, that the promise doesn't mean that a person has to change the color of her hair and lips. Why, no one's face is pure white; and who ever heard of blue lips?"

"Two weeks ago, the lips of a certain person, not a thousand miles away, were as blue as I should ever care to see anyone's, and her face looked as white as the pillow. But I am glad to know that you do not intend to blue your hair. It brightens things up as a sudden burst of sunshine does on a gloomy day. Let me punch up that pillow for you, and then go to sleep just as fast as you can so as to be ready for Aunt Mary and Sister Dominic."

When Mary opened her eyes two hours later, the sound of voices in the next room told her that her visitors had arrived. Presently, her mother peeped in, and finding the little girl awake, propped her up against the pillows and put a fluffy white shawl about her shoulders.

This was Sister Madeline's first visit since Mary had begun to recover.

"I'm so sorry that I didn't know you were here those other times, Aunt Mary. Mother told me afterwards when the bad dreams went away. It seems strange that I had them nearly all the time then, and they never bother me now."

"That is a very good sign that you are much better. You will soon be able to spend the day with us at Maryvale. By the way, Elizabeth, where did you put that famous black bag at which you are always poking fun? Mary will have greater respect for it than you have when she sees what there is in it for her. Now," and Sister Madeline drew from her cloth bag a large oblong package, "can

you guess what this is?"

"Some of Sister Wilfred's cookies?"

"Oh, dear, no! But remember that, Sister Dominic, for our next visit. You are so 'cold,' Mary, that I am sure you can never guess. Just see how your little friends spent their library hour last evening."

"Letters! and such a pile of them!"

"Yes, it will take you some time to read them. I was so afraid that the postman might object to bringing such a number to one little girl that I thought I had better carry them myself. Some of the children feared that they would not look like real letters; so they took the stamps from old envelopes to paste on theirs and made circles with spools for postmarks and asked some of the larger girls to print in them the names and dates. I am very sure that no little girl has ever received so many letters from distant lands. Here is one with the Cuban stamp, one from Brazil, several from Canada, one from China, one from Italy——"

"Oh, please let me look at that stamp, Aunt Mary—Now I shall know which letters are from Father and Mother the very minute the postman brings them," Mary murmured wistfully.

"Do you think, Sister, that the boy with our suit-case is lost? We had something else for Mary packed in a black suit-case, Elizabeth; and as we did not care to carry it about town with us, we sent a boy out here with it."

"It is safe in Sister Julia's room. The boy handed it to Liza with the message, 'For the Sister;' and as Sister Julia has returned to her convent for a few hours, we thought, of course, that she had sent back some clothing by him. I shall get it."

"Perhaps you will make a warmer guess this time, Mary," said Sister Dominic, placing the suit-case on a chair beside the bed. "I assure you that it is nothing Sister Julia would think of wearing."

"I guess books, Sister."

"The suit-case is not heavy enough for books, dear. Indeed," laughed Mrs. Selwyn, "I rather think that Aunt Mary is playing a joke on you."

"Not at all!" and Sister Madeline threw back the cover.

"Oh, oh! what beauties!"

Mary's eyes shone with delight at sight of the great mass of chrysanthemums—big, ragged yellow ones; fluffy pink ones; curly white ones; "and see, Mother, see the long sprays of little baby ones!"

"Dan has had great success with his chrysanthemums this year," explained Sister Madeline. "I tell him that they would win the prize at the flower show; but he insists that he raises his flowers for the altar, not for prizes."

"I think that is where these ought to be, Aunt Mary. Do you think Mr. Daniel would mind if Mother sends the big ones to Father Lacey for the altar, and keeps just the little ones for us?—the little white ones to put before Blessed Mother's statue, the pink ones for the dinner table, and the yellow ones in here to prove to Uncle that I do like yellow."

"I am quite sure that Dan would be pleased with your plan, dear."

"Then I shall pack the large ones in a box," said Mrs. Selwyn, "and Tom may leave them at the rectory when he returns after driving you to the ferry."

"Please thank Mr. Daniel, Aunt Mary, and the girls, too, for their letters; but tell them I am afraid that I can't answer them very soon."

"But the children do not expect you to answer those letters, Mary."

"I know the very thing! I shall ask Uncle to write one letter to all of them, and I shall tell him what to say. We can do the same thing to the girls in my class. Every one of them wrote to me, too, and said prayers for me while I was so sick."

CHAPTER XII.

THOSE PRECIOUS LAST HOURS.

Sunday evening found the trunks packed and strapped. Except for a while in the morning and afternoon, when Mary was resting, the whole family spent the day in her room. Perhaps it would have been better for the child if they had not done so; for the more she saw of her little sisters, the harder it became for her to think of parting with them. It seemed to her that the hours fairly flew, and as evening drew near, her poor little heart grew heavier and heavier. But she bore up bravely—so bravely that her mother was more than surprised. Then bedtime came; and Mrs.

Selwyn herself, instead of the nurse, tucked the little girl in for the night and sat by the bedside until she thought Mary was asleep.

An hour later, she tiptoed into the room. All was quiet; but as she bent to give the child a last good-night kiss and to smooth her pillow, she found the little face wet with tears and the pillow soaked. Wrapping Mary in a blanket, she took her in her arms, and seating herself, rocked quietly for some time. The child's big wistful eyes never left her face. At last the mother spoke.

"When Father told me, dear, that he must go away for a year and found that you must remain at home, he made a plan to which I would not listen. He said that he would sail now, and that we should follow in June. I could not bear to think of his being alone in a strange country with none of his own near him for six or seven months; but neither can I bear to leave my little girl in such a state. I know that this is a very great trial for you, darling, and I fear that we are asking too much of you in your present weakness. So I think I had better place Father in our dear Lord's hands, and let him carry out his plan. Perhaps something will happen so that he need not be away so long; but if by the first of June he cannot return, we shall go to him. So try to sleep now, my darling. Mother will not leave you."

"But you must, you *must*, Mother!" whispered Mary. "We would just die thinking of Father and how lonely he would be and—and everything. I won't cry any more—truly, I won't. I shall go to sleep just as fast as I can. Is it very late, Mother?"

"No, dear, only half-past nine."

"Then will you stay with me until I go to sleep? It will be only a little minute."

When Mary awoke the next morning, her father was sitting beside the bed, holding on his knee the very dearest doll she had ever seen. It was as large as a real baby, and its arms were stretched out to her. With a cry of delight, she stretched hers out, too, when—how it happened, Mary did not know—the doll was crying and waving its arms and kicking just as the twins did.

"Why—why—oh, the poor little thing! It must have the colic, Father."

Then something happened again, and dollie was once more smiling.

"Is it a live doll, Father?" whispered the little girl in wonder.

"No, pet. See this button at the back of its neck? Watch what happens when I push it."

"Oh, oh! *Now*, I know! Its head turns around inside its cap, and it has a crying face instead of hair at the back of its head. Father, where *did* you find such a darling doll?"

"I happened to see it Saturday on my way from the bank to the steamship office. Mother had just telephoned me that our brave little daughter would not think of letting her old daddy live among strangers—"

"But—but I *wasn't* brave, Father," came the protest in a choked voice. "Didn't Mother tell you how horrid I was?"

"No, dear; and I really cannot believe that you were horrid. I know that you must have felt just as I did when Uncle Frank said that you could not go with us. Sometimes on the spur of the moment, we say things that we do not really mean, and I am sure that is what you did. But here is something that will interest you—a fine kodak. We shall take pictures of the babies every week, and mail them to you, and Uncle will get you a new album to paste them in."

Shortly after luncheon, Aunt Mandy brought the babies in for the last time. Mary hugged them and kissed their rosy little faces over and over again as she whispered, "Take care of them, Aunt Mandy, oh, take care of them and of Father and Mother—"

"'Cose I will, honey chile! Why fo' yo' 'spects old mammy gwine 'long, I lak to know?"

Then her father and mother came; and Mary, winking very fast and swallowing hard, clung to them not daring to speak, but just drinking in every loving word which they uttered. They had hardly left the room when the Doctor appeared. Mary clenched her hands and tried to smile at him.

"They have gone downstairs, have they? I shall be back very soon, Goldilocks." Then, touched by the utter loneliness of the little figure in the big chair, he added, "Just as soon as I put them into the carriage. But you ought to be at a front window to wave to them. Will you please bring some of those sofa cushions, Sister?"

"But—Uncle," said Mary as he hurried with her through the hall, "I thought you were going to see them off."

"I did think of doing so, but I have changed my mind."

"No, Uncle, you must not stay just for me. Please go with them—*please*! But come back soon."

"I shall be back by three o'clock, little one," and he was gone.

Bravely the little girl tried to smile as she pressed her face close to the windowpane and threw a last kiss to her mother before she stepped into the carriage. Her father and uncle, each holding a baby, made them wave and kiss their tiny hands to her, and then passed them in to Mrs. Selwyn

and Aunt Mandy. Another moment, and the door closed after the two men. Mary knelt on the sill with Sister Julia's strong arm to support her, and strained her eyes for the very last glimpse of the handkerchief fluttering from the carriage window. Then she sank upon the cushions, her frail little form shaking with the sobs she could no longer control.

Just before three o'clock, the Doctor returned. In spite of his own sadness, he had tried on his way home to remember the amusing things which he had seen at the docks so that he would have something cheerful to tell Mary. He made a special effort to whistle a lively tune as he mounted the stairs; but at the door of her room, it died on his lips.

"Why—why—" he was at the bedside in three strides.

"O Uncle! I thought you would *never* come!"

"But, dear, I stayed only long enough to see the steamer underway, as I thought you wished me to do. I did not even stop at my office on the way home. What is it? Are you in pain?"

"My head, Uncle."

The Doctor looked with questioning eyes at Sister Julia, who was bathing the child's head. She nodded toward the hall and soon followed him from the room.

"It is nothing more than I feared, Doctor. She has been under a greater strain for the past two days than anyone thought. I have seldom seen such self-control in older people, and certainly did not look for it in a frail child like Mary."

"I knew that she was making an immense effort to keep up, and I feared the result; but this—have you taken her temperature, Sister?"

"Fifteen minutes ago, it was one hundred and two."

"Hm, I thought so. However, as a mere cold throws her into quite a fever, I am not alarmed yet. I shall stay with her for awhile, and you had better take a few hours rest. You will get very little of that to-night."

CHAPTER XIII.

SISTER JULIA.

The following morning, the fever had left her; but Mary was tired and listless, refusing milk, broth, everything. When her uncle was with her, she clung to him, great tears running down her pale little face. Nothing that he or Sister Julia could say comforted her. She was lonely, lonely, lonely! That day passed, as did the next, without any change. The Doctor felt helpless; and when at noon, Thursday, the usual scene took place, he strode from the room, muttering, "I will send a wireless! They must try to be transferred to the first homeward bound steamer that they meet. To Halifax with the business!"

Then Sister Julia made up her mind to take matters into her own hands. Drawing a low chair to the bedside, she began, "I think I shall tell you a story, Mary."

"I—don't seem to care very much about stories any more, Sister."

"I have noticed that, dear; but this is one that I think you really should hear."

"Is it a long one, Sister? Please don't make it very long, because I don't want to think of anything but my darling father and mother and little sisters."

"Very well, I shall make it as short as possible—this true story which I am going to tell you.

"I once had a little patient suffering from the same illness which you have just had. Like you, too, she was blessed with a very loving father and mother and a good, kind uncle. The doctor who attended her had told me how much this uncle thought of the little girl; but it was not until I was sent to take care of her that I saw just how matters stood. There were other children in the family; but before I was in the house one hour, I knew that the sick little girl had first place in her uncle's heart as well as in the hearts of everyone in that home. And she well deserved it; for in all my years of nursing, I have never met a more lovable child. Gentle, patient, obedient, always thinking of others—why, before the first day had passed, I think I loved her almost as dearly as those who had known her all her life. I was quite ready to agree with the doctor in his opinion of her.

"Well, not to make too long a story of it, the child grew steadily worse. My heart ached more for the uncle than for her parents; because they had their other children, while he seemed too wrapped up in his little pet to think of anyone else. Then came a night when we thought the little girl's soul was about to return to God. I shall never forget the face of that poor uncle as he knelt at the bedside. It was gray, Mary, positively *gray*, and the pain in his kind eyes made me long to go away and cry. Great drops stood on his forehead though the room was really chilly, for the doctor had ordered me to keep it very cool.

"Oh, how I prayed to the loving Heart of our Divine Lord that, if it was His holy will, He would spare the child to that good man who had done so much for Him in the persons of His poor, suffering, little ones——"

"Sister, you are telling about Uncle! I know you are! It is all coming back to me about that night—I had forgotten it. I remember that I didn't know anything for a long time. Even the man with the knives was gone—and the silly little birds. Then, I woke; but I didn't open my eyes right away. The pain was all gone, and everything was so quiet that I thought I was alone; so I opened my eyes and saw Father at the foot of the bed looking straight at me. Then I saw Uncle, and he looked so strange that I thought he must be sick, too. But his eyes smiled at me and I tried to smile back, but I was too tired; and before I knew it, I went to sleep again."

"Yes, dear, it all happened just as you say, only that you did smile. But even then, we thought you were slipping away from us, and fully fifteen minutes passed before we knew that God had answered our prayers."

There was a long pause.

"But—but, Sister,—not all of your story is true. I was cross and cranky and screamed when the pain was bad; and I couldn't think of anyone but that dreadful man with the long knives, or of those silly little birds with yellow ribbons around their necks. No wonder Uncle teases me about yellow."

"But, Mary, you were not yourself for many, many days. Do you remember the morning I told you that you must fight to get well? I had good reason to regret that advice; for instead of fighting the illness, you used those little fists on everyone who came near you. When your uncle tried to listen to your lungs, you struck out so well that your mother and I had to hold your hands——"

"Why, *Sister*, you don't mean *that!*"

"Indeed I do! I shall not soon forget the time you caught the Doctor's head between your hands. My! what a boxing you gave his poor ears!"

"*Sister!—I—boxed—Uncle's—ears!—O Sister!*" and Mary buried her burning face in the pillow.

"But, darling, that is nothing to be ashamed of. You did not know what you were doing. We expected worse things than that."

"Worse than boxing poor, dear Uncle's ears? Could anything be worse than that?" came the muffled question.

"Indeed, yes, Mary."

"But, Sister," Mary sat up, "surely not when you think of how awful he looked that night. Poor Father looked oh, so tired! But Uncle—I didn't know him until he smiled in his eyes."

"Did you know him when he was in here a few minutes ago, dear?"

"Why—why of course I knew him. I don't remember whether I looked right at his face——"

"I am quite sure that you did not, Mary, or you would never have let him go away without trying to make him feel better. You are not a selfish little girl; and I am very sure that when you understand the harm you are doing to your good, kind uncle, you will try to put an end to it."

"The *harm—I—am—doing—to—Uncle!* You surely don't know me very well, Sister, if you think I would harm Uncle for anything in the whole world!"

"I am very, very sure, Mary, that you would not intend to harm him."

"But what *is* it, Sister? Won't you please tell me? Am I bad?" the child asked piteously. "Is it bad to be so tired, and not to be hungry, and to like just to think of my darling father and mother and little sisters, and to want Uncle to stay with me every minute he can? Am I a bad girl to do that?"

"I did not mean for an instant that you have been a bad girl, dear. It is weakness that makes you so tired; but unless you try to take food even though you are not hungry, you cannot expect to grow stronger. Surely, since the good God did not take you from those who love you so much, He must wish you to do everything you can to grow well and strong. As for your father and mother and the babies, you would be a strange little girl if you did *not* think of them very, very often; but in the way you have been doing it, dear child, you have, without knowing it, been harming yourself and others. Let me tell you just how it has all seemed to me. First, our dear Lord sent you the measles——"

"Oh, did He, Sister? I thought I caught them at school."

"But if it had not been His will that you should have them, you would not have caught them. That illness meant that you must be away from your mother and little sisters; but you were so good and brave and patient about it all that others would not have guessed how much that separation cost you until they saw how happy you were at the thought of being with them soon again. I am sure that our dear Lord was very much pleased with you, and you must have won many graces.

"Then, for His own wise reasons, He sent you greater suffering. There are some people who think that all pain and sorrow is a punishment from God; but this is not true. Our Lord often sends such trials so that we may grow more like Him and merit a greater reward in heaven. We are told that

suffering is a mark of God's love. Even when He sends it as a punishment, He does so in love; for it is far better to be punished for our sins in this world than in the next.

"In your second illness, I really think that those who love you suffered more from the fear of losing you than you did even from the great pain. However that may be, our dear Lord wished you to do something more for Him—something that you found much harder than your first or second trial. In those you had no choice. The illness came, and you could not escape it. But you might have refused our Lord when He asked you to give up your mother——"

"But—but, Sister, our Lord didn't ask me to do that—nobody really *asked* me. I just couldn't think of letting poor Father go away by himself, you know."

"But has not our Lord said that whatever we do to even the least of His little ones, we do it unto Him? And do you not make your Morning Offering every day?"

"Oh, yes, Sister, the very minute I wake in the morning, even though it isn't time to get up. I make it again when I say my morning prayers; but I have *thoughts* even though I may not *do* anything before I say them; and they ought to be offered up, I think."

"Surely, dear. So last Saturday you had made your Morning Offering of all your thoughts, words, and actions to God; and when the time came to decide whether you wished your mother to go with your father or to stay with you, you had already offered Him the thought and action and suffering, even though you did not think of it that way at the time."

"N—no, Sister, I didn't. I was so—I don't like to say s'prised, because I think a s'prise ought to be something to make someone happy."

"Perhaps *shocked* is the better word."

"That's just exactly it, Sister. I was so shocked that I said dreadful things, and—and—oh, I was horrid! And while Mother was talking to me, I didn't know what to do. Then I remembered that Sister Florian said that when we had to decide something we must ask our Lord to help us, and she told us to say to our Blessed Mother, 'Mother, tell me what am I to do,' We were learning a hymn to her at school and that is the last line of every verse. I remember the first verse:

"O Virgin Mother, Lady of Good Counsel,
Sweetest picture artist ever drew,
In all doubts I fly to thee for guidance,
Mother! tell me, what am I to do?"

"And our Blessed Lady did tell you what to do, and her Divine Son gave you the grace to do it, and you gave Him the gift He was asking of you. Indeed, dear, what you have done is no small thing, but don't you think that it would be too bad to take back part of your gift, or to spoil it in any way? Would not that be a selfish thing to do? In sickness, we must be very careful. It acts in two ways, making the patient either more selfish or more thoughtful of others. Until the last few days, I thought it was having the good effect upon you; but now, I am just a little afraid that you are forgetting others, especially that good, kind uncle, who is trying to make you well and happy."

There was a moment's silence; then, "Sister, please ring for Liza——Oh, why *doesn't* she hurry!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REAL MARY.

"Please tell Uncle to come up again just for a minute, Liza. Don't let him go back to the office until——"

"Why, Miss May-ree, I done t'ought Massa Frank wah up heah wif yo' all dis time. His lunch am gittin' cold, suttin' dah on de table, an' ole Susie am on de rampage, sho' nuff. She jes' done tol' dis yeah chile dat she am plumb tiahed out cookin' fo' a gemplum what doan' eat nuffin but coffee, coffee, coffee, ebery single meal. It's 'bout time yo' put a stop to dat, Miss May-ree. Yo' is de only one dat kin. Yo' ma nebah 'lowed Massa Frank to drink coffee dat-a-way, no-how."

"But—but, Liza,—Uncle was here for just a little minute, and—and you don't mean that he hasn't eaten his luncheon yet? He will never have time to do it now. Please see if he is in his room."

"No, Mary, your uncle went down stairs when he left you. I heard the front door close a few moments later, so I fear that he has gone."

"Laws a massy! Dis yeah chile bettah keep out'n dat kitchen fo' de res' ob *dis* aftahnoon, sho's yo' born!"

"O Liza, Liza! look everywhere downstairs to see if Uncle isn't there, *please!* What shall I do if he has gone—gone without a bite to eat!"

"But dat's persackly what he's done did, Miss May-ree, kase I'se looked fo' him ebery place; an'

dat's what he's been adoin' ebery day, honey; and dat's what fo' ole Susie am so mad; an' dat's what fo' I done said yo's de only one what kin put a stop to it. But dah, honey, doan' yo' fret yo' poah li'l haid 'bout it no-how. Dis crazy niggah ain't got no right to tell yo' nuffin 'bout it."

"Yes, you have, you have, Liza! Oh, I wish you had told me the very first day! Please go right down to Susie, and ask her to cook everything Uncle likes best for dinner this evening; and tell her that he will eat them—every bite."

"Yas'm, Miss May-ree, I sho'ly will do dat. But ef'n ole Susie am gwine to cook *eberyt'ing* what Massa Frank laks bes', honey, I reckon dat gemplum's got to wait mighty late fo' his dinnah; kase yo' know dey's a powahful lot ob t'ings what Massa Frank laks bes'; dey sahtinly is!"

"Then pick out the ones he likes the *very best*, Liza,—the very, *very best*. Come back after while, and I shall help you to remember them."

"Yas'm, Miss May-ree, yas'm," and Liza hurried down to restore peace in the kitchen.

"O Sister, Sister, *Sister!* What shall I *do!* What *shall* I do! Oh, I am bad—*bad!*"

"Come, dear, come! Crying will not mend matters. You did not know that you were doing any harm, and you have already begun to repair it; so let us plan the next step."

"But I must tell Uncle—oh, I don't know *what*, but I must tell him *something!* Do you think he is at his office yet? Will you telephone to him for me, Sister?"

"He has scarcely had time to reach the office, dear; but in ten or fifteen minutes, I shall call him and give him any message you wish to send. In the meantime, you had better take the second step, which is to drink this broth. Cold broth is not very tempting."

Eagerly, the little girl emptied the bowl.

"I shall take the egg and milk after while if you think I ought to, Sister. I am *so* tired of eggs and milk, but——"

"If you take them faithfully for another day or two, I am sure the Doctor will order something new for you."

"If—if I took them about three times this afternoon, do you think I could have some meat soon? Meat makes people strong, doesn't it, Sister?"

"So do eggs and milk," laughed the nurse. "But three times in one afternoon would be too much for you. Now, I am going to darken the room; and while you are taking your nap, I shall telephone to your uncle. For one thing, I shall tell him that he will find our patient better this evening."

"Oh, yes, Sister! And ask him *please* to go to the hotel across the street to get his dinner right now—not luncheon,—*dinner*. And—and—tell him I didn't know——"

"I shall explain that part, darling; and I have just thought of a plan which I am sure you will like. Go to sleep, now; for the sooner you do that, the earlier you will wake to hear about it."

When Mary opened her eyes, she was surprised to find the room filled with the rosy glow of the shaded lamp.

"Is it night, Sister? Has Uncle come?"

"No, dear, it is only half past four; but the afternoon has been so dark that Liza and I needed the light to begin to carry out my plan."

"Oh, please tell me what it is, Sister. The very idea for me to sleep all afternoon!"

"I am glad you did so, because you will be fresh for the evening. How would you like to invite your uncle to have dinner up here?"

Mary clapped her hands, and Sister Julia continued, "I took it for granted that you would approve of my plan, and called Liza to help me carry in this table from your playroom. We shall place it close to your bed. She has gone for the tablecloth and dishes."

"Sister, please ask her to use my great-grandmother's set—the ones with the plain gold band and the beautiful C on them. Uncle likes those best. And flowers—we must have flowers."

"The roses your uncle brought at noon will be just the thing."

"Roses? Oh, now I remember—and I hardly looked at them. Poor Uncle! Is there a pretty bud among them, Sister?—Please cut off part of the stem, and Liza will put it on his dresser for him to wear. *Sister!* wouldn't it be fun to write him an invitation exactly like the kind Mother sends when she has a dinner party? I have a lovely box of paper with M. S. in blue and gold up in the corner. We shall seal it and paste an old stamp on it and make a postmark just as the girls at Maryvale did with the letters they sent me by Aunt Mary. Liza will lay it on the hall table where Uncle will see it the minute he comes in."

Sister Julia seated herself at Mary's little desk and soon had the following invitation written:

Miss Mary Selwyn requests the pleasure of Doctor Francis P. Carlton's company at dinner on Thursday, November eighteenth, at six o'clock.

"That is exactly what Mother says in her invitations. Did—did Uncle say he would go to dinner when you telephoned, Sister?"

"Yes, dear, your message made him so happy that he said he would order a Thanksgiving dinner a week ahead of time."

"That *is* so, isn't it, Sister? A week from to-day will be Thanksgiving. And Father and Mother and the babies won't be here; and they will be away for Christmas and New Year's Day and Mother's birthday and Valentine's Day and Father's birthday and for Easter and my birthday and Fourth of July and Uncle's birthday and the twinnies'——" Mary's voice broke in a sob.

"But think of all the happy days that you will spend with them next year and for many, many years to come, dear. You think the babies very sweet and cunning now, and so they are; but in another year, you will find them far more so. They will be learning to talk and will keep you very busy running after them to see that they do not get into mischief or fall down the stairs. You will be a great help to Aunt Mandy then, for she is scarcely spry enough to run after one baby,—to say nothing of two. So just think of the happy times ahead, dear, and you will be surprised to find how quickly this year will slip by. Come, dry your eyes. It will never do to have your uncle find you crying. Can you think of anything else that will help to make our surprise for him a greater success?"

"Don't you think I ought to dress up for this dinner party, Sister?"

"Beyond washing your face and brushing your hair, I cannot very well see how a little girl sick in bed can dress up."

"You could do up my hair the way mother wears hers, and—and—oh, I have a beautiful new ribbon, pale blue with tiny white rosebuds sprinkled over it. We can twist it and put it around my head like a wreath, with the bow sticking up at one side. Let me see what else we can do—I know! In the middle drawer of the dresser, there is a cute little dressing sack with rosebuds made of white satin ribbon down the front instead of buttons. I just have to loop cords over them."

When Mary was "dressed up" to her taste, the nurse insisted that she must lean back against the pillows to rest.

"You must not overdo, or you will be worn out by the time your uncle comes home."

The little girl gave a sigh of content.

"Sister, you have made me so happy. I thought I could never be happy again, *never!*"

"I think you have done a great deal toward making yourself happy, Mary. You must expect to have many lonely hours; but at such times, you should try to remember how very, very much worse things could be. Suppose you were in the place of a little girl I heard of not long ago, whose father, mother, brothers, and sister all died of black diphtheria within two weeks. She had no good, kind uncle or other relatives to look after her, so there was nothing to do but to place her in an orphan asylum."

Mary was very quiet for some time. Then Liza came in to set the table.

"Wal, Miss May-ree, what yo' reckon Massa Frank gwine t' eat fo' his dinnah, no-how? Dem red roses, or meat an' 'tatahs an' veg'tubbles? Dem flowahs am *mighty* putty, honey; but ef dey's gwine to sot lak dat in de middle ob de table, dey won't be no room fo' de t'ings to eat; and' I reckon dis yeah chile 'll hab to sot dem on chairs, he! he! he!"

"We can place this small table just behind that one, Liza, and stand the flowers on it."

"Dat's de ticket, Sistah! 'Peahs to me yo' alwuz knows jes' de right t'ing."

"What is it, dear?" asked the nurse, for Mary was looking about the room as if in search of something.

"My new doll, Sister, please. Do you know where she is? Uncle hasn't seen her. I couldn't bear to look at her after the babies had gone."

"I put her in the high chair in your playroom, Mary."

"I'se gwine to fotch her fo' yo', honey. She am de lubliest doll-baby yo' has, she sahtinly am! She's done fooled dis yeah chile 'bout fawty times, sottin' dah smilin' wif her li'l hands reachin' out fo' me to tek her."

"Please bring the chair, too, Liza. She can sit right by the bed."

The maid soon returned.

"Dah she am! *Ain't* she jes' too lubly! What's her name, Miss May-ree?"

"Amelia Anabelle."

"Laws a massy, but dat do sound scrumptious!" and Liza turned to the setting of the table.

Mary rested her hand for a moment on the back of the high chair, and the maid whirled about to gaze at the crying, kicking Amelia Anabelle.

"Why—why—what—pull yo' li'l hand away, Miss May-ree! Pull it away! Doan' yo' tech dat t'ing! Somebody done put de conjure on dat doll!" and Liza, her eyes bulging, backed quickly toward the door.

"No, no, Liza, don't be afraid. She will be good. See?"

Amelia Anabelle was again smiling; but Liza stood in the hall, well out of harm's way, crying hoarsely, "Doan' yo' tech it, Miss May-ree, honey. It am a ha'nt!"

"Oh, dear, no!" laughed the little girl. "Father wouldn't give me a haunted doll. Who ever heard of a haunted doll, anyway? Please don't go away, Liza. Come and finish setting the table."

"Not while dat doll am sottin' dah, Miss May-ree!"

"But the doll can't do anything unless I push a button in the back of her neck. You are not afraid of the electric lights, are you?"

"Co'se I isn't, Miss May-ree."

"Well, you push a button to turn them on and off, and I push a button to turn my doll's head around and show her other face. She has two faces, you see. That's all."

"I nebah done laked two-face folkses. Miss May-ree, an' I'se not gwine to begin to lak dem now," and Liza could not be coaxed back until Sister Julia had carried the doll into the next room.

Presently, a cheery whistle broke the stillness of the house.

"There's Uncle, Sister! Please peep over the banisters to see what he does when he finds the invitation. Oh, he sees it!" for the merry time had suddenly ceased.

"I wish you could have seen his face while he read it, Mary," said the nurse a few moments later. "He had a great laugh over the stamp and postmark. Then he started upstairs at such a rate that I was almost caught in the act. I heard him say, 'Well, she won't get ahead of me there!' So what he is up to is hard to tell."

"He is whistling, 'There's a Good Time Coming, Boys!' and there *is*, Sister! Why—why, he has gone to his room!"

"You surely would not expect him to pay you a call when he is coming to dine with you. Perhaps he, too, thinks that he should dress up."

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE FIRELIGHT.

The little girl's patience was pretty well tried; but at last she heard the Doctor's step in the hall, and the next moment he stood in the doorway in his tuxedo, the red rosebud in his buttonhole. Mary almost clapped her hands; but remembering that she was the hostess, she tried to behave in a most grown-up manner and welcomed her uncle as she had seen her mother greet guests. It was a little hard not to forget that she was *Miss Selwyn*, especially when the Doctor started toward the left side of the bed, which was the dining-room, and almost saw behind the screen which hid the table from view.

Liza appeared very promptly with the dinner, the screen was removed, and the Doctor took his place at the table, saying, "I am very sorry, Miss Selwyn, that you cannot partake of anything more than the first course."

"I am quite sure that I am even more sorry than you are, Doctor Carlton," was the very truthful response.

Then the Doctor forgot that he was a guest at a fashionable dinner party, and declared that Mary should have a few bites of meat if she would swallow no more than the juice of it.

Several times, Liza was obliged to hurry from the room so as not to be seen laughing at Mary's quaint remarks. After she had served the dessert, Mary said, "Doctor Carlton, one of my guests is in the playroom waiting to be brought in to dinner. I could not have her here while Liza was in the room."

"I shall be delighted to act as her escort, Miss Selwyn."

The Doctor soon returned with Amelia Anabelle, whom he placed in the high chair, saying, "A fine, little girl, Miss Selwyn, a fine, healthy child, indeed! Is she a relative of yours?"

"Yes, Doctor, she is my niece. On the whole, she is a very good child; but, of course, she has her tantrums sometimes just as other children have."

"Oh, I think you must be mistaken about that, Miss Selwyn. Such a good-natured-looking child could not possibly give way to tantrums," and the Doctor began to eat his pie.

Mary pressed the button; and dropping his fork, he stared at the screaming, kicking Amelia Anabelle.

"You see, Doctor, she can be a very naughty child. I think she is crying for some of your pie."

"No, no, madam, pumpkin pie is very bad for so young a child. Some of the cream on your gelatine will be just the thing for her." Then, when peace was restored, he once more forgot that he was a guest and asked, "How did you manage that? is the face made of rubber?"

"No, Uncle, it is the same as my other dolls' faces. Liza says that Amelia Anabelle is a haunt."

"Nonsense! That doll's antics can be explained as easily as most of the ghosts that we hear about. A string and a spring will work wonders; but I don't quite see how they can make so great a change in a bisque face. Never mind. I shall find out for myself before I go to bed to-night. No wonder that poor Liza is afraid of that doll."

"Uncle, has Liza much book learning?"

"'Education' is a better word, dear. No, Liza has not had much education. If she had had a little more, she would not be so ready to believe in haunts, as she calls them. Why do you ask that question?"

"Aunt Mandy told me that she didn't have any herself, and that she expects to live to be ever so old. She seems to think that book—I mean *education* makes people die young. Does it, Uncle?"

"Not at all. Of course, if one devotes too much time to study and not enough to proper exercise and rest, there is reason to fear that the health will suffer. But there is not much danger that many young people nowadays will die of overstudy. There, I can't begin to tell you how much I have enjoyed this dinner."

"O Uncle, will you let Liza bring your dinner up here every evening until I am well enough to go down stairs?"

"Unless she objects, I shall be only too glad to do so—that is, if you will not expect me to dress up in this fashion."

"Why, Uncle, I didn't expect you to do that even *this* evening."

"But your invitation called for it."

"Then I shall not send you any more invitations. We shall be just our own selves and not pretend anything. Don't you think it would be nice if you took off those stiff things now and put on your smoking jacket and slippers? And—and couldn't we sit by the fire in the sitting-room and talk until oh, ever so late? I took a long, long nap this afternoon."

"I quite agree to part of your plan; but as for sitting up until a very late hour—well, we shall see."

Ten minutes later found him in a big leather chair before the blazing fire with Mary, snugly wrapped in a blanket, on his knee. For some time, he forgot the little girl, and sat watching the dancing flames and thinking of the great steamer plowing its way through the dark waters of the Atlantic. Mary's eyes never left his face; and feeling her gaze upon him, he smiled down at her. She slipped her arm around his neck, drawing his head down; and his kind blue eyes grew misty as, gazing once more into the fire, he listened while she whispered many things into his ear—things which let him see deep down into her loving little heart and bound it more closely to his own with bands which the sad after days only strengthened.

When she had finished, he said nothing—just held her close and pressed his lips to the bright little head resting so trustingly against his arm; and Mary knew that he understood.

After a long, long silence, he began to tell her of the beautiful, old, southern city to which he was planning to take her.

"Is it near Wilhelmina's home, Uncle?"

"No, dear, it is much farther from New York. Wilhelmina's home is in Georgia, too near the sea for you at present. We shall go to Texas, a long, long journey; but we shall be well repaid when we reach San Antonio. That is the Spanish way of saying Saint Anthony. It is a very old city, founded by the Franciscan Fathers more than two hundred years ago, and has an interesting and exciting history."

"And will it really be warm there?"

"So warm that by the first of February you will probably be able to play outdoors in a white dress without wraps. The poorest shanty will be almost hidden by roses."

"Then I won't need to take my winter clothes at all."

"I think it will be well for you to take your warm cloak; for sometimes a cold wind called a 'norther' swoops down on the city, and then the beautiful palm trees and the flowers suffer, and for a few days the children hurry to school bundled up in the warmest clothes they can find. We who see so much snow and ice for several months at a time would look upon such a cold snap as fine, bracing weather; but those southern people do not enjoy it at all."

"I wish Wilhelmina lived in San Antonio."

"So do I, little one. You would have great times together, though I really do not know what you would do in a house with seven boys. They are just about the liveliest little crowd I have ever met, and Wilhelmina is equal to any one of them."

"Is she seven years old, too, Uncle?"

"Not quite seven. Her birthday is in January, so you are nearly eight months older than she is; but she is large and strong for her age. No one but her mother ever thinks of calling her by her full name. Even her father calls her Willie, and I have heard the boys say 'Billy' or 'Bill' when their mother is not around."

"I hope I shall know them all some day. They must have the best times together. They need never invite anyone to spend the day with them."

"No, indeed; though they do sometimes have what they term, 'The Gathering of the Clan,' when their forty-five or fifty first cousins, with their fathers and mothers, pay a visit to Sunnymead, as Wilhelmina's home is called."

"*Forty-five or fifty first cousins! Why, Uncle! And I haven't one!*"

"Perhaps you have some, dear, that we know nothing about. Your father has a brother and a sister of whom he has heard nothing for many years. He was not always a Catholic, you know; and when he became one, your Aunt Bertha would have no more to do with him. Your Uncle Alfred was in Europe at the time. He was not one to trouble himself much about religion and would not care what your father did about it; but he has doubtless been roaming from place to place over there, and any letters which your father has written him have probably gone astray. At all events, men, as a rule, are not great letter-writers, you know."

Then the Doctor told the little girl about her father's old home in Virginia, which was built when George Washington was a little boy. By degrees, her eyes grew heavy, and his voice died away into silence; and when, at the very late hour of half-past seven, Sister Julia came as far as the door to see whether her patient was ready to go to bed, she found the Doctor, a very tender light in his eyes, gazing into the glowing coals, and Mary fast asleep in his arms.

[1] The decree of our late Holy Father, Pope Pius X., concerning the First Communion of little children, had not at this time been issued.

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