

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Mary: A Nursery Story for Very Little Children, by Mrs. Molesworth

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MARY: A NURSERY STORY FOR VERY LITTLE CHILDREN ***

Mrs Molesworth

"Mary"

Chapter One.

A Birthday Morning.



One morning Mary awoke very early. It was in the month of May, and the mornings were light, and sometimes the sun shone in through the windows very brightly. Mary liked these mornings. The sunshine made everything in the room look so pretty; even the nursery furniture, which was no longer very new or fresh, seemed quite shiny and sparkling, as if fairy fingers had been rubbing it up in the night.

"I wonder what day it is," thought Mary. It was difficult for her to remember the days, for she was not yet four years old. She was only going to be four soon. Mamma had told her her birthday would come in May, and that this year it would be on a Thursday. And every day, ever since Mary knew that May had come, she wondered if it was Thursday. But it was rather puzzling. Two Thursdays had come without it being her birthday.

"P'raps mamma has made a mistook," thought Mary. "P'raps my birfday isn't going to be in May this time."

For if it changed about from one day to another—last year it was Wednesday, and next year it would be—oh, it was too difficult to remember that—mightn't it change out of May too? Mary didn't think months were quite so difficult to remember as days, for different things came in months. In April there were showers, and in May flowers. Nurse had told her that, and when the months with the long names came it would be winter.

"I hope it isn't a mistook," thought Mary. "I'd like it best to be in May. 'MAY' is such a nice short little word, and only one letter more makes it 'Mary.' No, I think it can't be a mistook." Mary could read very well, and she could spell little words. She had learnt to read when she was so little that she could not remember it. She thought knitting and cross-stitch work were much harder than reading. But she had to learn them, because mamma said too much reading was not good for such a little girl, and would make her head ache, and mamma bought her pretty coloured wools and nice short knitting needles, and Mary had made a carpet for the drawing-room of her doll-house. But though it looked very pretty Mary still liked reading best. She had also worked a kettle-holder for grandmamma: that is to say she had worked the stitches all round the picture of a kettle, which was already on the canvas when mamma bought it. Mamma called it "grounding it," and while she was working it, Mary often wondered what "grounding" it meant, for a kettle-holder was not meant to lie on the ground. She might have asked mamma to explain, but somehow she did not. She was not a very asking child. Big people did not always understand, not even mamma *quite* always, and it made Mary feel very strange when they did not understand; it almost made her cry. Though even that she did not mind as much as when they told her she would know when she got big. She did not want to wait to know things till when she got big. It made her feel all hot to think what a lot of knowing there would be to do then, it seemed like a very big hill standing straight up in front of her which she would never get to the top of. She thought she would rather go up it in what she called "a roundy-round way." Papa had shown her that way once when it took her breath away to climb up one of the "mountings"—Mary always called hills "mountings"—in grandmamma's garden, and Mary had never forgotten it. She thought the hill of knowing would be much nicer to go up that way, and that she might begin it now—just a little bit at a time. She thought this all quite plain inside her own mind, but she could not have told it to anybody. Very often it is not till children *are* quite big that they can tell their own thoughts, looking back upon them. And Mary did not know that she *was* going up the hill of knowing already, a little bit at a time, just as she fancied she would like to go.

Mary felt glad when she had settled it in her mind that it could not be a mistake about her birthday coming on a Thursday, and she lay quite still, watching the sunshine. It had got on to her bed by now, and it made all sorts of nice things on the counterpane. Mary's bed was rather a big one for such a little girl, for the cot she used to have was now her brother Artie's; Artie slept now in Leigh's room, and there was only a corner there for quite a small bed. Leigh was the big brother of Artie and Mary. He was eight years old.

Yes, the sunshine made the counterpane very pretty. It was quite white, and as Mary's home was in the country, white things did not get a grey dull look as they do in London. There were patterns all over the counterpane, and if Mary bumped up her knees she could make fancies to suit the patterns—like garden paths leading to beautiful castles, or robber caves—the boys told her stories of robber caves which were very interesting, though rather frightening. And this morning the light shone on a pattern she had never noticed so much before. It was a round ring, just in the middle, and flowers and leaves seemed growing inside it.

"It's a fairy ring," thought Mary; "I wonder if the fairies p'raps come and dance on it when I'm asleep." For she had seen fairy rings on the grass in the fields sometimes when she and her brothers were out walking, and nurse had told her about them. Mary had often wished she could get up in the night and go down to the fields to see the fairies, but she knew she could not. She would never be able to open the big door. Besides, it would be naughty to go out without mamma's and nurse's leave. And it would be very cold—even if the moon were shining it would be cold. For Mary had stood in the moonlight once or twice and she knew it did not warm like the sun.

"I suppose they don't burn such big fires in the moon," she thought.

The fancy about the fairy ring on the counterpane was very nice, for she could think about it and "pertend" she saw the fairies dancing without getting out of her warm nest at the top of the bed at all. She thought she would tell Artie about it and perhaps he would help to make some nice stories of fairy rings. Artie was not always very "listening" to Mary's fancies. He did really like them, but he was afraid of Leigh laughing at him. When Leigh was away, and Artie and Mary were alone together, it was very nice. But very often Leigh wanted Artie to play big things with him, and then Mary had to amuse herself alone. Leigh was not an unkind big brother; he would carry Mary if she was tired, and would have read stories to her, if she had not liked best to read them to herself. But he had quite boy ways, and thought little girls were not much more good than the pretty china figures in his mother's cabinets in the drawing-room.

So Mary was often alone. But she did not mind. She had lots of friends of different kinds. Now and then nurse would say to her, "It would be nice, Miss Mary, if you had a little sister, wouldn't it?"

But Mary shook her head. She did not think so.

"No, zank you," she would say, "I doesn't want a little sister."

The waking so early and the thinking about the sun and the moon and fairy rings and how soon it would be her birthday, began to make Mary rather tired at last. And after a while she fell asleep again without knowing it.

When she woke up for the second time the sun was still shining, though not so brightly as before. And she heard voices talking in the next room, that was the day-nursery. There was a door open between it and the night-nursery where Mary slept.

"Thursday, 18th May," said one of the voices. "May's a nice month for a baby, and all the summer before it. 'Thursday's child has far to go.' Perhaps little Missie will marry a hoffer and travel to the Injies. Who can say?"

Then there was a little laugh.

"That's Old Sarah," said Mary to herself. Sarah was the housemaid—the upper housemaid, and though she was not *very* old, the children called her so because her niece, who was also called Sarah, was the nursery-maid. "Little Sarah," they sometimes called her. Her father was the gardener, and he and her mother lived in a cottage which the children thought the prettiest house in the world. And sometimes they were allowed, for a very great treat, to go there to tea.

It was Little Sarah who was talking to Old Sarah just now. Mary heard her voice, but as she spoke rather low she could not quite tell what the nursery-maid said. She only heard the last words—it was something about "nurse will tell her."

This put it into Mary's mind that, though it was quite morning now, she had not seen nurse, and yet she must be up and dressed.

"Nurse," she called out in her little clear voice. "Nurse, where are you?"

The two Sarahs popped their heads in at the door.

"Are you awake, Miss Mary?" asked Little Sarah.

"In course I'm awake. You heard me calling," said Mary.

She thought Little Sarah was very stupid sometimes.

"I'm calling nurse," Mary went on, "I don't want you, Little Sarah. You can go and dress Master Artie."

If Little Sarah was rather stupid, she was also very good-natured. She glanced at Mary with a smile, but with rather an odd look on her face too.

"What does you want? What is you looking at me for?" said Mary.

"Oh, nothing," said Sarah. "I was only thinking whatever would you do without nurse if—if nurse was busy and couldn't be so much with you, Miss Mary."

"Nurse wouldn't never be busy like that," said Mary.

"Oh, well, never mind. I'll dress Master Artie and I dare say nurse—" began Sarah, but she stopped short. Nurse just then came into the room.

"Here's Miss Mary worretting for you," said the girl.

Nurse hurried up to the little girl's bed.

"Have you been awake long, my dear?" she said. "I'm so sorry."

"Nurse," whispered Mary, pulling nurse's head close down so that she could whisper to her, "I heard Old Sarah and Little Sarah talking, and Old Sarah sayed 'Thursday' and 'May.' Is it my birfdy comed, nurse? Mamma sayed it was coming in May, and it would be Thursday."

"My dearie," said nurse, "you've guessed right. It is your birthday—the 18th of May."

Mary felt pleased, but also a little disappointed. She had been waiting for her birthday and thinking about it for such a long time that now she could scarcely believe it had come. For it seemed just like other days. No, not quite like other days, not as nice. For nurse had got up so early and Old Sarah and Little Sarah had been talking in the nursery—she did not like anybody to talk like that in the nursery.

"Dress me quick, please, nurse," she said, "and then I'll go to mamma's room, and then p'raps my birfdy will begin. I don't think it can have begun yet. I thought—" and then she stopped and her lips quivered a little.

"What, my dearie?" said nurse.

She was a very kind, understanding nurse always, but this morning she spoke even more kindly than other mornings to Mary.

"I don't know," said Mary. "I think I thought mamma would come to kiss me in bed like a fairy, and—and—I thought there'd be stockings or somefin' like that—like Kissimas, you know."

Nurse had lifted Mary out of her bath by this time, and was rubbing her with a nice large "soft-roughey" towel—"soft-roughey" was one of Mary and Artie's words—it meant the opposite of "prick-roughey." They did not like "prick-roughey" things. She wrapped Mary all round in the big towel for a minute; it was nice and warm, for it had been hanging in front of the fire; then she gave Mary a little hug.

"You mustn't be unhappy, dear Miss Mary," she said. "Mamma meant to come, I'm sure, but she's fast asleep—and when she wakes I'm afraid she'll have a headache. So I'm afraid your birthday won't be quite like what you planned. But I'm sure there'll be some pretty presents for you—quite sure."



It takes away all the birthday-ness.—P. 13.

But Mary looked up with her lips quivering still more, and the tears beginning to come too.

"It isn't presents I want," she said. "Not presents like that way. I—I want mamma. Mammams shouldn't have headaches. It takes away all the birthday-ness."

Then she turned her head round and pressed it in to nurse's shoulder and burst into tears.

Chapter Two.

Guessing.

Poor nurse was very sorry. But she knew it would not do to be *too* sorry for Mary, for then she would go on crying. And once Mary got into a long cry it sometimes went on to be a very long one indeed. So nurse spoke to her quite brightly.

"My dearie," she said, "you mustn't cry on your birthday morning. It's quite a mistake. Look up, dear. See, the sun's coming out so beautiful again, and we'll have Master Leigh and Master Artie calling for their breakfast. And you'll have to be quick, for your papa gave me a message to say you were to go down to see him in the dining-room."

Mary gave a little wriggle, though she still kept her face hidden. But as nurse went on talking she slowly turned round so that her dressing could go on.

"I've something to say to you before you go down," nurse went on. "There's something that's come just in time for your birthday. I'll give you each two guesses—you and Master Leigh and Master Artie, while you're eating your breakfast."

Mary looked up.

"Where's my hankercher?" she said, and when nurse gave it to her she wiped her eyes.

That was a good sign.

"Let me have my guesses now, nurse," she said coaxingly.

But nurse kept to what she had said.

"No, dear, guesses are much nicer when there's two or three together. Besides, we must be very quick. See, there's your nice frock all ready."

And Mary saw, where nurse pointed to, one of her Sunday afternoon frocks lying on a chair. It was a blue one—blue with tiny white stripes, and Mary was very fond of it. It had a very pretty wide sash, just the same colour, and there were little bows on her shoes the same colour too. Her face got quite smiley when she saw all these things. She was not a vain little girl and she did not care about fine clothes, but it gave her a nice feeling that, after all, her birthday was going to be something different to other days.

Soon she was dressed; her hair, which was not very long but soft and shaggy and of a pretty brown colour, combed out so that no tuggy bits were left; her hands as clean as a little girl's hands could be; a nice white pinafore on the top of the pretty blue frock, so that Mary felt that, as nurse said, she was quite fit to go to see the Queen, if the Queen had asked her.

And when she went into the day-nursery things seemed to get still nicer. There were no bowls of bread and milk, but a regular "treat" breakfast set out. Tea-cups for herself and the boys, and dear little twists of bacon, and toast—toast in a toast-rack—and some honeycomb in a glass dish.

"Oh," said Mary, "it *is* my birthday. I'm quite sure now there's no mistook."

And in a minute Leigh and Artie came running in. I do not know, by the by, that Leigh came *running*, most likely he was walking, for he was rather a solemn sort of boy, but Artie made up for it. He scarcely ever walked. He was always hopping or jumping or turning head over heels, he could *almost* do wheels, like a London street boy. And this morning he came in with an extra lot of jumps because it was Mary's birthday.

"You thought we'd forgotten, Leigh and me, now didn't you?" he said. "But we hadn't a bit. It was Leigh said you liked the bacon twisted up and it was me reminded about the honey. Wasn't it now, nurse? And we've got a present for you after breakfast. It's downstairs with papa's and mamma's. We'll give you them all of us together, Mary."

But the mention of mamma brought a cloud again to Mary's face.

"Nurse says mamma's got a headache, and we can't see her. Not Mary on her birthday."

At this Leigh looked up.

"Is that true?" he said. "Is mamma ill?"

"She's asleep, Master Leigh, and she may sleep a good while. I dare say you'll all see her when she wakes."

"Her shouldn't be 'nill on my birthday," began Mary again.

"Rubbish, Mary," said Leigh. "I dare say she'll be all right. And you should be sorry for mamma if she's ill; it isn't her fault."

"I am sorry," said Mary dolefully; "that's why I can't help crying."

"Come now, Miss Mary," began nurse. "You're forgetting what we fixed. No crying on a birthday, my dear. And you're forgetting about the guesses. I'm going to give you two guesses each, Master Leigh and Master Artie and Miss Mary, about what's come just in time for her birthday. Now don't speak for a minute, but think it well over while you go on with your breakfast."

There was a silence then; all the children looked very grave, though their thinking did not prevent their enjoying their nice breakfast.

"Now, Master Leigh," said nurse, "you guess first."

"A pony," said Leigh. "A new pony instead of Dapple Grey who's getting too old to trot." Nurse shook her head.

"No, it's not a new pony. Besides, I don't think Miss Mary would care as much for a new pony as you boys would."

"No," Mary agreed. "I don't want no pony but Dapple Grey. Nother ponies trot too fast." Leigh thought again. This time he tried to make his guess some quite "girl" thing.

"A doll—a big doll for Mary," he said.

Nurse smiled. No, it was not that—at least—"A wax doll, do you mean, Master Leigh?"

"Yes, a wax doll. But I don't *think* it could be a doll, for that could have been got already for a birthday present, and this is quite an *extra* present, isn't it?" said Leigh.

"Yes, *quite* extra," said nurse. "But now it's Master Artie's turn."

Artie's ideas were very jumbled. He did not keep the inside of his head in nearly such good order as Leigh kept his. First he guessed "a fine day for Mary's birthday," as if any "guessing" could be needed for a thing which was already there before their eyes. Then he guessed a *very* big cake for tea, which was not a very clever guess, as a nice big cake on a birthday was an "of course." So now it came to Mary's own guesses. She looked up eagerly.

"For us all to be doo—" Then with a great effort, for Mary was growing a big girl and wanted to speak quite rightly, "to be g-ood all day. Kite g-ood."

"That would be very nice," said nurse, "and I hope it will come true, but that's more wishing than guessing, Miss Mary. It's something that's come, not going to come, that I want you to guess about."

Mary's face grew very grave. Then it smiled again.

"I know," she said, "mamma's headache to g-go away, now, jimmedjetly, and then we'll go and see her."

"I hope it will," said nurse. "But that wasn't the guess."

She saw that Mary was too little quite to understand.

"See if I can't help you," she said. "What would you like best of anything? Don't you think a doll that could learn to speak and love you and play with you would be a nice birthday present?"

Artie and Mary looked puzzled. They had to think about it. But Leigh was quicker.

"Why, nurse," he said, "a doll like that would be a *living*—oh nurse, I do believe—" but just as he was going to say more there came a tap at the door, and Robert, the footman, came in.

"If you please, Mrs Barley," he began. "Barley" was nurse's own name, and, of course, the other servants were all very respectful, and always called her "Mrs Barley."

"Master wants the young gentlemen and Miss Mary now at once, if so be as they've finished their breakfast."

"I think you should say 'Miss Mary and the young gentlemen,' Robert," said Leigh.

"Specially as it's Mary's birthday," said Artie.

"Oh rubbish," said Leigh; "birthday or no birthday, it's proper."

"I beg the young lady's pardon," said Robert, who was a very well brought up footman. "I'm sure I meant no offence," and he looked towards Mary, but just then he could not see anything of her. For while her brothers were correcting Robert, Mary had been employing herself in getting down from her chair, which took a good while, as it was high and she was very short. Nothing but a sort of fluff of blue skirts and sash and white muslin pinafore and shaggy hair, with here and there a shoe or a little pink hand sticking out, was to be seen. Robert sprang forwards, meaning to be extra polite and set Miss Mary right side uppermost again, but in some mysterious way she managed to get on her feet by herself.



Nothing but a sort of fluff of blue skirts and sash and white muslin pinafore and shaggy hair, with here and there a shoe or a little pink hand.—P. 22.

"No, zank you, Robert," she said with dignity, as she stood there with a rather red face, smoothing down her pinafore. "I can get down alone."

"Miss Mary, my dear," said nurse. "I'm always telling you to ask me to lift you down. The chair will topple over some day and you'll be hurting yourself badly."

"But, nurse, I'm *four*, now," said Mary. "Four is big."

"Of course it is," said Leigh. "Never mind, nurse. The best plan will be for me to hold her chair while she gets down. Are you ready, Artie? Mary and I are."

Artie had managed to "honey" his face and hands, and nurse thought Mary too would not be the worse for a slight sponging.

"Papa likes a sweet kiss, but not a honey one," she said.

But at last they were all ready and on their way down to the dining-room, where they came upon Robert again, ready to throw open the door with great dignity, as he had hurried down the back stairs on purpose to be there before them.

Papa was just finishing *his* breakfast. He looked up with a bright smile.

"Well, young people," he said. "Well, my pet," this was to Mary. "So this is your birthday, my little queen—eh?"

He lifted her on to his knee and kissed her.

Mary loved when papa called her his little queen.

"I have to be off immediately," he said, "but first I have to give you your birthday presents from dear mamma and me."

"And ours, papa, Leigh's and mine. They're all together—mamma put them all together," said Artie.

"All right. They are over there on the side-table. You fetch them," said papa.

"Are you going to a meeting, father?" asked Leigh.

"Yes, my boy, to lots of meetings. I shan't be back till late to-night."

"What are meetings?" Mary was just going to ask, but the sight of Artie and the parcels put it out of her head. There was a beautiful doll's perambulator from papa and mamma, and "a church book," bound in red, and with "Mary" outside, in lovely gold letters; and from Leigh and Artie, a doll's tea-service—cups and saucers and teapot and everything—in white china with little pink flowers, and dear little teaspoons of shining silver, or at least quite as pretty as silver. And then there was the birthday cake—covered with white sugar and with "Mary" in pink letters. There was no fear of Mary forgetting her name this birthday, was there?

How her eyes sparkled, and how quick her breath came with pleasure, and how rosy her cheeks grew!

"Oh papa," she said, "oh Leigh, oh Artie!" and for a minute or two that was all she could say.

"Are you pleased, my pet?" said papa.

"Oh, I *never*, never did have such sp'endid presents," said Mary.

"Dear little Mary," said Artie, kissing her. "I am so glad you like them."

Then another thought struck Mary, as she stood touching gently one of her treasures after the other, as if she did not know which she loved the most.

"Papa, dear," she said, "can't I see dear mamma? I would like to zank dear mamma."

"And so you shall, my pet," said her father. And he picked her up as he spoke and seated her on his shoulder. Mary was very fond of riding on papa's shoulder. "Come along, boys," he said, "you may come with me, if you won't be noisy, to see mamma and something else—Mary's best birthday present of all."

"Anoder birfday present," said Mary, so surprised that she felt quite breathless. "*Anoder*, papa?"

"Yes, old woman—you couldn't guess what, if you tried for a week of Sundays," said papa.

Papa did say such funny things sometimes! Mary would have begun wondering what a week of Sundays could be like, if her thoughts had not been so busy with the idea of another birthday present, that she could not take in anything else.

What *could* it be?

"There's been nothing but guessing to-day," said Artie. "Nurse *was* making us guess so at breakfast, about something that's comed for Mary's birthday. Could it be this other present, papa? I'm tired of guessing."

"Well, don't guess any more," said papa. "I'm going to show you."

Chapter Three.

A Wonderful Birthday Present.

There was a room next to Mary's mother's room which was not often used. Mary was rather surprised when her father carried her straight to this room instead of to her mother's. And when he lifted her down from his shoulder she was still more surprised to see that there was a nice little fire burning in the grate, and that the room looked quite cheerful and almost like another nursery, with a rocking-chair in front of the fire, and the blinds drawn up to let the pretty summer morning brightness in.

There was something in the corner of the room which Mary would have stared at a great deal if she had seen it. But just now she did not look that way, for she was surprised for the third time by seeing that a door stood open in the corner near the window, where she had never known before that there was a door.

"Where does that go to, papa?" she said, and she was running forward to look when her father stopped her.

"It goes into mamma's room, my pet," he said, "but I don't want you to go in there yet. Perhaps mamma's asleep."

"It's all dark," said Mary; she had been peeping in. She felt rather strange, and a very tiny, weeny bit frightened. Everything seemed "funny" this birthday morning. She almost felt as if she was dreaming.

"Why is mamma's room all dark?" she said again. "Is her asleep?"

"I'm not sure, dear. Wait here a minute and I'll see," and her father went into the next room, closing the door a little after him.

Mary and her brothers stood looking at each other. What was going to happen?

"It's to be a surprise, I s'pose," said Artie.

"It's the guesses, / say," said Leigh.

"It's a birfday present for me. Papa said so," said Mary.

"We're speaking like the three bears," said Artie laughing. "Let's go on doing it. It's rather fun. You say something, Leigh—say 'somebody's been in my bed'—that'll do quite well. Say it very growlily."

"Somebody's been in my bed," said Leigh, as growlily as he could. Leigh was a very good-natured boy, you see.

"Now, it's my turn," said Artie, and he tried to make his voice into a kind of gruff squeak that he thought would do for the mamma bear's talking. "Somebody's been in *my* bed," he said. "Come along, Mary, it's you now."

Mary was laughing by this time.

"Somebody," she began in a queer little peepy tone, "somebody's—" but suddenly a voice from the other side of the door made them all jump.

"My dear three bears," it said—it was papa, of course, "be so good as to shut your eyes *tight* till I tell you to open them, and then Mary can finish." They did shut their eyes—they heard papa come into the room and cross over to the corner which they had not looked at. Then there was a little rustling—then he called out:

"All right. Open your eyes. Now, Mary, Tiny Bear, fire away. Somebody's lying—"

"In my bed," said Mary, as she opened her eyes, thinking to herself how *very* funny papa was.

But when her eyes were quite open she did stare. For there he was beckoning to her from the corner where he was standing beside a dear little bed, all white lace or muslin—Mary called all sorts of stuff like that "lace"—and pink ribbons.

"Oh," said Mary, running across the room, "that's *my* bed. Mamma showed it me one day. It were my bed when I was a little girl."

"Of course, it's your bed," said her father. "I told you to be Tiny Bear and say, 'somebody's lying in my bed.' Somebody *is* lying in your bed. Look and see."

Mary raised herself up on her tiptoes and peeped in. On the soft white pillow a little head was resting—a little head with dark fluffy curls all over it—Mary could not see all the curls, for there was a flannel shawl drawn round the little head, but she could see the face and the curls above the forehead. "It," this wonderful new doll, seemed to be asleep—its eyes were shut, and its mouth was a tiny bit open, and it was breathing very softly. It had a dear little button of a nose, and it was rather pink all over. It looked very cosy and peaceful, and there seemed a sweet sort of lavender scent all about the bed and the pretty new flannel blankets and the embroidered coverlet. That *was* pretty—white cashmere worked with tiny rosebuds. Mary remembered seeing her mamma working at it, and it was lined with pale pink silk. But just then, though Mary saw all these things and noticed them, yet, in another way, she did not see them. For all her real seeing and noticing went to the living thing in this dear little nest, the little, soft, sleeping, breathing face, that she gazed at as if she could never leave off. And behind her, gazing too, though Mary had the best place, of course, as it was her birthday and she was a girl—behind her stood her brothers. For a few seconds, which seemed longer to the children, there was perfect silence in the room. It was a strange wonderful silence. Mary never forgot it.

Her breath came fast, her heart seemed to beat in a different way, her little face, which was generally rather pale, grew flushed. And then at last she turned to her father who was waiting quietly. He did not want to interrupt them. "Like as if we were saying our prayers, wasn't it?" Artie said afterwards. But when Mary turned she felt that he had been watching them all the time, and there was a *very* nice smile on his face.

"Papa," she said. She seemed as if she could not get out another word, "papa—is it?"

"Yes, darling," he replied, "it is. It's a baby sister. Isn't that the nicest present you ever had?"

Then there came back to Mary what she had often said about "not wanting a baby sister," and she could scarcely believe she had ever felt like that. She was sorry to remember she had said it, only she knew she had not understood about it.

"I never thought her would be so pretty," she said. "I never thought her would be so sweet. Oh papa, her is a *lubby* birfday present! When her wakes up, mayn't I kiss her?"

"Of course you may, and hold her in your arms if you are very careful," said her father, looking very pleased. He had been very anxious for Mary to love the baby a great deal, for sometimes "next-to-the-baby" children are rather jealous and cross at being no longer the pet and the youngest. It was a very good thing he and her mamma agreed that the baby had come as a birthday present to Mary.

The idea of holding her in her own arms was so delightful that again for a moment or two Mary felt as if she could not speak.

"And what do you two fellows think of your new sister?" said papa, turning to the boys. Leigh leant over the cradle and peered in very earnestly.

"She's something like," he said slowly, "something like those very tiny little ducklings," and seeing a smile on his father's face he went on to explain, though he grew rather red, "I don't know what makes me think that. She looks so soft and cosy, I suppose. You know the little ducklings, papa? They're like balls of fluffy down."

"I don't think she's a bit like them," said Artie, who in his turn had been having a good examination of the baby. "I think she's more like a very little monkey. Do you remember that tiny monkey with a pink face, that sat on the organ in the street at grandmamma's one day, Leigh? It *was* like her."

He spoke quite gravely. He had admired the monkey very much. He did not at all mean that the new baby was not

pretty, and his father's smile grew rather comical.

"See how she scroozles up her face," he went on; "she's *just* like the monkey now. It was a very nice monkey, you know, papa."

But Mary was not pleased. She had never seen a monkey, but there was a picture of one for the letter "M" in what she called her "animal book," and she did not think it pretty at all.

"No," she said, "no, Artie, her's not a' inch like a monkey. Her's *booful*, just booful, and monkeys isn't."

Then suddenly she gave a little cry.

"Oh papa, dear, do look," she called out, "her's openin' her eyes. I never 'amembered her could open her eyes," and Mary nearly danced with delight.

Yes indeed, Miss Baby was opening her eyes and more than her eyes—her little round mouth opened too, and she began to cry—quite loud!

Mary had heard babies cry before now, of course, but somehow everything about *this* baby was too wonderful. She did not seem at all like the babies Mary saw sometimes when she was out walking; she was like herself and not anything else.

Mary's face grew red again when she heard the baby cry.

"Oh papa, dear," she said. "Has her hurt herself?"

"No, no, she's all right," said papa. But all the same he did not take baby out of her cot—papas are very fond of their babies of course, but I do not think they like them *quite* so much when they cry—instead of that, he turned towards the door leading into the next room.

"Nurse," he said in a low voice, but nurse heard him.

"Yes, sir," said a voice, in reply, and then came another surprise for Mary. The person who came quickly into the room was not "nurse" at all, but somebody quite different, though she had a nice face and was very neatly dressed. Who could she be? The world did seem *very* upside down this birthday morning to Mary!

"Nurse," she repeated to her father, with a very puzzled look.

"Yes, dear," said the stranger, "I'm come to be baby's nurse. You see she needs so much taking care of just now while she's still so very little—your nurse wouldn't have time to do it all."

"No," said Mary, "I think it's a good plan," and she gave a little sigh of satisfaction. She loved the baby dearly already and she would have been quite ready to give her anything—any of her toys or pretty things, if they would have pleased her—but still she did feel it would have been rather hard for *her* nurse to be so busy all day that she could not take care of Artie and her as usual.

The strange nurse smiled. Mary was what people call an "old-fashioned" child, and one of her funny expressions was saying anything that she liked was "a good plan." She stood staring with all her eyes as the nurse cleverly lifted baby out of the cot and laid her on her knee in a comfortable way, so that she left off crying. But her eyes were still open, and Mary came close to look at them.

"Is her going to stay awake now?" she said. "Perhaps she will, for a little while," said the nurse. "But such very tiny babies like to sleep a great deal."

Mary stood quite still. She felt as if she could stay there all day just looking at the baby—every moment she found out some new wonder about her.

"Her's got ears," she said at last.

"Of course she has," said the strange nurse. "You wouldn't like her to be deaf?"

"Baby," said Mary, but baby took no notice.

"Her *it* deaf," she went on, looking very disappointed. "Her doesn't look at me when I call her."

"No, my dear," said the nurse. "She hasn't learnt yet to understand. It will take a good while. You will have to be very patient. Little babies have a great, great deal to learn when they first come into this world. Just think what a great many things you have learnt yourself since you were a baby, Miss Mary."

Mary looked at her. She had never thought of this.

"I wasn't never so little, was I?" she said.

"Yes, quite as little. And you couldn't speak, or stand, or walk, or do anything except what this little baby does."

This was very strange to think of. Mary thought about it for a moment or two without speaking. Then she was just going to ask some more questions, when she heard her father's voice.

"Mary," he said, "mamma is awake and you may come in and get a birthday kiss. Leigh and Artie are waiting for you

to have the first kiss as you're the queen of the day."

"I'd like there to be two queens," said Mary, as she trotted across to her father. "'Cos of baby coming on my birfday. When will her have a birfday of hers own?" she went on, stopping short on her way when this thought came into her head.

Her father laughed as he picked her up.

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait a whole year for that," he said. "Next year, if all's well, your birthday and baby's will come together."

"Oh, that will be nice," said Mary, but then for a minute or two she forgot all about baby, as her father lifted her on to her mother's bed to get the birthday kiss waiting for her.

"My pet," said her mother, "are you pleased with your presents, and are you having a happy day?" Mary put up her little hand and stroked her mother's forehead, on which some little curls of pretty brown were falling.

"Mamma dear," she said, "your hair isn't very tidy. Shall I call Larkin to brush it smooove?" and she began to scramble off the bed to go to fetch the maid.

"What a little fidget you are," said her mother. "Never mind about my hair. I want you to tell me what you think of your little sister."

"I think her *sweet*," said Mary. "And her curls is somefin like yours, mamma. But Leigh says hers like little ducks, and Artie says hers like a pink monkey."

Mamma began to laugh at this, quite loud. But just then the nurse put her head in at the door.

"Baby's opening her eyes so wide, Miss Mary," she said. "Do come and look at her, and you, Master Leigh and Master Artie too. You shall come and see your mamma again in the afternoon."

So they all three went back into the other room to have another look at baby.

"I say, children," called their father after them. "We've got to fix what baby's to be called. It'll take a lot of thinking about, so you must set your wits to work, and tell me to-morrow what name you like best."

Chapter Four.

Babies.

There was plenty to think of all that day. Mary's little head had never been so full, and before bedtime came she began to feel quite sleepy.

It had been a very happy day, even though everything seemed rather strange. Their father would have liked to stay with them, but he was obliged to go away. Nurse—I mean Artie's and Mary's own nurse—was *very* good to them, and so were cook and all the other servants. The birthday dinner was just what Mary liked—roast chicken and bread-sauce and little squirly rolls of bacon, and a sponge-cake pudding with strawberry jam. And there was a very nice tea, too; the only pity was that baby could not have any of the good things, because, as nurse explained, she had no teeth.

"She'll have some by next birthday, won't she?" asked Leigh.

"I hope so, poor dear," said nurse, "though she'll scarcely be able to eat roast chicken by then."

"Why do you say 'poor dear'?" asked Leigh.

"Because their teeth coming often hurts babies a good deal," said nurse.

"It would be much better if they were all ready," said Leigh. "I don't see why they shouldn't be. Baby's got hands and eyes and everything else—why shouldn't she have teeth?"

"I'm sure I can't say, Master Leigh," nurse answered. "There's many things we can't explain."

Mary opened her mouth wide and began tugging at her own little white teeth.

"Them doesn't hurt me," she said.

"Ah but they did, Miss Mary," said nurse. "Many a night you couldn't sleep for crying with the pain of them, but you can't remember it."

"It's very funny," said Mary.

"What's funny?" asked Leigh.

"About 'amembering," answered Mary, and a puzzled look came into her face. "Can you 'amember when you was a tiny baby, nurse?"

"No, my dear, nobody can," said nurse. "But don't worry yourself about understanding things of that kind."

"There's somefin in my head now that I can't 'amember," said Mary, "somefin papa said. It's that that's teasing me, nurse. I don't like to not 'amember what papa said."

"You must ask him to-morrow, dearie," nurse answered. "You'll give yourself a headache if you go on trying too hard to remember."

"Isn't it *funny* how things go out of our minds like that?" said Leigh. "I'll tell you what I think it is. I think our minds are like cupboards or chests of drawers, and some of the things get poked very far back so that we can't get at them when we want them. You see the newest things are at the front, that's how we can remember things that have just happened and not things long ago."

"No," said Artie, "'t isn't quite like that, Leigh. For I can remember what we had for dinner on my birthday, and that was very long ago, before last winter, much better than what we had for dinner one day last week."

"I can tell you how that is," said nurse, "what you had for dinner on your birthday made a mark on your mind because it was your birthday. Everything makes marks on our minds, I suppose, but some go deeper than others. That's how it's always seemed to me about remembering and forgetting. And if there's any name I want to remember very much I say it out loud to myself two or three times, and that seems to press it into my mind. Dear, dear, how well I remember doing that way at school when I was a little girl. There was the kings and queens, do what I would, I couldn't remember how their names came, till I got that way of saying two or three together, like 'William and Mary, Anne, George the First,' over and over."

The children listened with great interest to nurse's recollections, the boys especially, that is to say; the talk was rather too difficult for Mary to understand. But her face looked very grave; she seemed to be listening to what nurse said, and yet thinking of something behind it. All at once her eyes grew bright and a smile broke out like a ray of sunshine.

"I 'amember," she said joyfully. "Nursie said her couldn't 'amember names. It was names papa said. He said us was to fink of a name for baby."

"Oh, is that what you've been fussing about?" said Leigh. "I could have told you that long ago. I've fixed what I want her to be called. I've thought of a *very* pretty name."

Mary looked rather sorry.

"I can't fink of any names," she said; "I can only fink of 'Mary.' Can't her be called 'Mary,' 'cos it's my birfday?"

Leigh and Artie both began to laugh.

"What a silly girl you are," said Leigh; "how could you have two people in one family with the same name? Whenever we called 'Mary,' you'd never know if it was you or the baby we meant."

"You could say 'baby Mary,'" said Mary, who did not like to be called a silly girl.

"And when she was big," said Leigh, "how would she like to be called 'baby'?"

Mary had not thought of this, still she would not give in.

"Peoples has the same names," she said. "Papa's name's 'Leigh,' and your name's 'Leigh,'—there now—" and as another idea struck her, "and us *all* is called Bertum. Papa's Mr Bertum and mamma's Mrs Bertum and—and—"

"And you're 'Miss Bertum,'" said Leigh, laughing. "But that's because Bertram is our *family* name, you see, Mary. We've each got a first name too. It doesn't much matter papa and me being the same, except that sometimes I think mamma's calling me when she means papa, but it would never do if Artie and I had the same name. Fancy, if we were both called 'Artie,' we'd never know which you meant."

"No," said Mary, laughing too, "it would be a very bad plan. I never thought of that. But I *can't* think of a pitty name for dear little baby."

"There's lots," said Artie, who had been sitting very silent—to tell the truth, he had forgotten all about choosing a name, but he did not want to say so. So he had been thinking of all the names he could, so that he might seem quite as ready as Leigh. "There's Cowslip and Buttercup and Firefly and—"

"Nonsense," said Leigh, "considering you're six years old, Artie, you're sillier than Mary. Those are cows' names, and —"

"They're not—not all of them," said Artie, "Firefly's a pony's name. It's little Ella Curry's pony's name, and I think it's very pretty."

"For a pony perhaps," said nurse, "but then you see, Master Artie, your little sister isn't a pony."

"I wish she was," said Leigh, and when nurse looked up astonished he looked rather ashamed. "Of course I don't mean that it isn't nice for her to be a little girl," he went on, "but I do so wish we had a pony."

"You may just be patient for a while, Master Leigh," said nurse; "you know your papa's promised you a pony when you're ten years old, and by that time baby will be nearly two."

"That won't matter," said Leigh, "even Mary won't be able to ride my pony. It's to be a real sensible one, not a stupid donkey sort of pony, with panniers or a basket on its back."

"No," said Artie, "it's to be a gallopy-trot one! Won't we make him go, Leigh."

"I shall," said Leigh; "you won't have much to say to it. You'll be too little too."

Artie's face fell. Mary, who was sitting beside him, slipped her little hand into his.

"Nebber mind, Artie," she said. "We'll ask papa to give us anoder pony. A very gentle one for you and me and baby."

"A perambulator will be more in baby's way," said nurse. "Miss Mary's old one is quite worn out and they do make such pretty ones nowadays. I hope your mamma will get her a very nice one."

"And may we push it sometimes?" said Artie, brightening up again, "that would be nice."

Leigh gave a little laugh.

"What a baby you are, Artie," he was beginning, but nurse, who saw that he was in one of his teasing humours, looked up quickly.

"It's such a fine evening," she said, "and it's scarcely five o'clock. How would you like to go out a little walk? We didn't go very far to-day. We might go as far as the Lavender Cottages, I've something to take there from your mamma."

The boys looked very pleased.

"Oh yes, nurse," they said, "do let's go out."

"And mayn't we stop and see the puppies at the smithy on the way?" Leigh went on.

"I'm f'ightened of those little barky dogs," said Mary; "I don't want to go out, nurse, I'm sleepy."

"It'll do you good, my dear, to have a little walk before you go to bed; you'll sleep all the better for it and wake all the fresher in the morning," and a few minutes afterwards, when the little party were walking down the drive, Mary looked quite bright again.

It was a very lovely evening. The way to the Lavender Cottages lay across the fields, and, as every one knows, there is nothing prettier than a long stretch of grass land with the tender spring green lighted up by late afternoon sunshine.

Mary trotted along contentedly, thinking to herself.

"My birfday's going to bed soon," she thought, "and to-morrow morning it'll be gone—gone away for a long, long time," and she gave a little sigh. "But somefins won't be gone away, all my birfday presents will stay, and baby sister will stay, and when my birfday comes back again it will be hers too. Dear little baby sister! I wish her had comed out a walk wif us, the sun is so pitty."

The smithy was at the foot of the road leading up to the cottages, just opposite the stile by which they left the fields. This stile had three steps up and three steps down, with a bar of wood to clamber across at the top. It was one of the children's favourite stiles, as the boys always pretended that the bar was a pony on which they had a ride on the way over. To-day nurse and Mary waited patiently till they had ridden far enough. Then Artie hopped down the other side and Leigh stood at the top to help his sister over, for though he was a teasing boy sometimes, he never forgot that she was a little girl and that it was his place to take care of her.

"Leigh," said Mary, as he was lifting her down, "I is so f'ightened of those little dogs! Please don't go to see them."

"How can you be frightened of them, Mary?" said Leigh. "It's really very silly! They're only baby dogs, don't you understand; they couldn't hurt anybody."

This was quite a new idea to Mary, and she stopped short on the second step of the stile to think about it.

"*Baby dogs*," she said, "I never thought little dogs was babies. Is there babies of everything, Leigh?"

"Of course there are. Don't you remember the baby ducks? And the little lambs are baby sheep, and even the tiny buds are baby flowers."

"And *babies* never hurts nobody, does they?" said Mary, as she got safely to the ground again with the help of her brother's hand. "Then I won't be f'ightened, Leigh, of the little doggies. You may take me to see them," and as Leigh hurried on to the smithy, which he thought the most delightful place in the world, Mary trotted beside him as fast as her little legs could go, holding firmly to him while she said over to herself, though in rather a trembling voice—

"I never thought them was *baby dogs*, *babies* don't hurt nobody."

Yakeman the smith was standing in front of his forge, taking a rest after the day's work.

"Good-evening, Master Leigh," he said, as the children came up to him. "Come for a look at the puppies, sir? They're getting on finely. Would Missie like to see them too?" and he turned to open a little gate leading into his garden.

Leigh looked down at Mary, not quite sure what she would feel about it. Her face was rather red, and she pinched his hand more tightly.

"Would you like to see them, Mary?" he asked.



Yakeman stooped down and picked one up with his big hand and held it close to Mary.—P. 51.

"Oh, yes, I'm not frightened now," she answered bravely.

"You've no call to be afraid," said Yakeman, as he led the way.

"No," said Mary, "'cos them's only babies."

The puppies were all tumbling over each other in a comfortable nest of hay in the corner of a shed. There were four of them, brown curly balls, nearly as soft and fluffy as Leigh's favourite ducklings.

Yakeman stooped down and picked one up with his big hand and held it close to Mary. She stroked it gently with the very tip of her fingers.

"It *are* sweet," she said, with a rather shaky little laugh, and as no harm came of her touching it, she grew still braver.

"May I kiss its little head?" she said, looking up at the tall blacksmith, who smiled down on her.

"To be sure, Missie," said he, so Mary buried her nose in the brown fur, suddenly giving a little cry as she felt something warm and wet on her cheek.

"He's licking you," said Leigh; "I dare say he means it for kissing though. I say, Mary, wouldn't it be nice if papa would let us have a puppy for our very own."

"A baby puppy and a baby sister," said Mary. "Did you know us had got a baby sister?" she went on, to the smith. "Her comed to-day 'cos it were my birfday."

"That was a fine birthday present," said Yakeman, "and you'd be welcome to this puppy if your papa would allow you to have it. I've promised two and I'm keeping one myself, but this here I'd not settled about."

Mary's eyes sparkled, and so did Leigh's. "We'd have him between us, Mary," said Leigh. "We must ask papa. *You'd* better ask him because of its being your birthday, you know."

Just then they heard nurse's voice, she had been waiting for Artie while he had another ride on the stile.

"Master Leigh and Miss Mary, where are you?" she said. "We must be getting on."

The children thanked the smith and ran after her, full of the offer which had been made to them.

"Oh, nurse," said Mary, when they had told her of it. "Just think of all my birthday presents! A baby sister and a baby dog, and all my other things," and she gave a great sigh of pleasure.

"Yes, indeed, Miss Mary," said nurse. "I don't think you'll ever forget your fourth birthday."

Chapter Five.

With Papa.

The children's father came back late that night, but too late for them to see him. And the next morning he had to be off again, this time for two whole days together, so there was no chance of asking him about the dog. Leigh and Mary spoke of it to their mother, but dogs are things that papas have most to do with, and she could only say, "You must ask papa."

It was rather trying to have to wait so long to know about it, or at least it would have been so if Mary had not had so many other interesting things to think about just then. There were all her birthday presents, her "regular" birthday presents, as the boys called them, which were still of course quite new, not to speak of the baby, which seemed to Mary more wonderful every time she saw her.

Unless you really live with a baby, and that, as you know, had never happened to Mary before, you can have no idea how very interesting babies are, even when they are so tiny that they can do nothing but go to sleep and wake again, and cry when they are hungry, and stretch themselves and yawn, and make oh! such funny faces! Why, that is quite a long list of things to do already, and there are ever so many more queer little ways about a baby when you come to notice them. Even its little pink toes seemed to Mary the prettiest and funniest things she had ever seen in her life.

Leigh and she fixed together that, till they had asked their father about the dog, they would not go past the smithy.

"It only makes us think about it," said Mary.

And nurse, who, to tell the truth, was not very eager for them to get the puppy, was not sorry when the children asked her not to pass that way.

"Miss Mary is still frightened of Yakeman's dogs," she thought to herself, "and it's just as well. I don't know whatever we'd do if we had to take a puppy out walks with us as well as Miss Baby."

For of course nurse knew that before long, when the baby grew a little bigger, she would come to live in the nursery altogether and go out walks with the others. Just at first nurse would carry her, but after awhile she would go in the new perambulator which nurse had set her heart upon getting.

That reminds me of Mary's present from her father and mother, which, as I told you, was a doll's perambulator. It was a great amusement to them all, not only to Mary. You have no idea what a lot of fun you can get out of a doll's perambulator. It was not only the dolls that went drives in it; the children tried several other things which did not succeed very well. The kitten for one did not like it at all. Leigh caught it one day, when there was no one else to take a drive, for the dolls had all got very bad colds, and Doctor Artie had said that they must on no account go out. Mary looked very grave at this, but of course the doctor's orders had to be obeyed.

"What shall we do?" she said sadly. "It will be so dull to go out a walk without the perambulator," for till now the dolls had had a drive every day.

"Leave it to me," said Leigh, "you'll find some one all ready waiting when you come down to go out."

And sure enough when nurse and Mary arrived at the door, there was the perambulator, and seated in the doll's place, or rather tied into it, was a very queer figure indeed—the kitten, as I told you, looking and feeling perfectly miserable.

Leigh had done his best to make it comfortable. He had tied it in with a large soft handkerchief very cleverly, but it was mewing piteously all the same.

"Come along quick, Mary," he said, "Kitty's in a great hurry to be off; she doesn't like being kept waiting, that's what she's saying."

Mary looked as if she was not quite sure if that was what Kitty's mews really meant, but of course, as Leigh was so much bigger and older, she thought he must know best. So she began pushing the perambulator, very gently at first, for fear of frightening poor pussy, who was so much astonished at feeling herself moving that for a moment or two she left off mewing.

"There now," said Leigh, "you see how she likes it. Go faster, Mary."

Mary set off running as fast as she could, which was not very fast, however, for at four years old, one's legs are still very short, but she did her best, as she wanted to please Leigh and the kitten too. The garden path was smooth and it was a little down hill. Leigh scampered on in front, Mary coming after him rather faster than she meant. Indeed she began to have a queer feeling that her legs were running away with her, when all of a sudden there came a grand

upset. Mary found herself on the ground, on the top of the perambulator, and even before she had time to pick herself up her little voice was heard crying out:

“Oh poor Kitty! I’ve felled on the top of poor Kitty!”

But no, Kitty was not as much to be pitied as Mary herself, for the poor little girl’s knees were sadly scratched by the gravel and one of her hands was really bleeding. While, there was Kitty, galloping home in great glee—Leigh’s handkerchief spreading out behind her like a lady’s train.

Mary scarcely knew whether to laugh or *cry*. I think she did a little of both. Leigh wanted to catch pussy again, but nurse would not hear of it, and proposed instead that they should use the perambulator to bring home a beautiful lot of primroses for their mother, from the woods.

After this adventure with the kitten, Leigh tried one or two other “tricks,” as nurse called them. He wanted to make a coachman of one of his guinea-pigs, who sat quite still as long as he had a leaf of lettuce to munch, but when that was done let himself roll out like a ball over and over again, till even Leigh got tired of catching him and putting him back. Artie’s pet rabbit did no better, and then it was decided that when the dolls were ill it would be best to use the perambulator as a cart, for fetching flowers and fir-cones and all sorts of things. This was such fun that the dolls were often obliged to stay at home, even when their colds were not very bad.

And for nearly a week the children kept away from the smithy. Papa had been home during that week, of course, and they had tried to ask about the puppy. But he was very busy and hurried; all he could say was that he must see the dog first, and that of course he had had no time for.

At last there came a morning on which, when the children went down to see their father after the nursery breakfast, they found him sitting comfortably at the table pouring himself out a second cup of nice hot coffee and reading the newspaper, as if he was not in a hurry at all.

“Oh papa,” said Leigh, “how jolly it is to see you like that, instead of gobbling up your breakfast as if the train was at the door.”

“If the train came as near as that I shouldn’t be so hurried,” said his father laughing, but Mary did not look quite pleased.

“Papa doesn’t gobble,” she said. “Leigh shouldn’t speak that way, it’s like geese and turkeys.”

“I didn’t mean that kind of gobbling,” said Leigh. “Turkeys gobble-wobble—it’s their way of talking. I didn’t mean *that* of papa.”

Mary still looked rather doubtful, but her father caught her up and set her on his knee with a kiss.

“Thank you, my princess,” he said, “for standing up for your poor old father. Now, what can I do for you? I’ve got a nice long holiday before me, all to-day and all to-morrow at home, so I’m quite at your service.”

Mary looked up. She did not quite understand what “quite at your service” meant, and it was her way when she did not understand anything to think it over for a moment or two before she asked to have it explained. It is not a bad way to do, because there are often things a child can get to understand by a little thinking, and some children have a silly way of never using their own minds if they can help it.

“Why don’t you answer, Mary?” said Leigh. “I know what *I’d* say, if papa offered to do anything I wanted, and I think you might remember what we’re all wanting so much.”

Mary’s face cleared.

“I didn’t understand,” she said. “But I do now. O papa dear, will you come and see the sweet little doggie at the smiffy? We’ve been waiting and waiting.”

“Oh dear,” said her father, “I’d forgotten all about it. Yes, of course I’ll take a look at it. Let’s see: they’re retriever pups, aren’t they?” Leigh did not answer for a moment. To tell the truth, he was not quite sure what kind of dogs Yakeman’s were, though he did not like to say so. “They are brown and curly,” he said at last. “And the top of our one’s head is nearly as soft as—as baby,” added Mary.

“Baby would be flattered,” said her father. “We’re going to call it Fuzzy,” Mary went on. “It are so very soft.”

“And oh, by the by,” said papa, “you’ve never chosen a name for your little sister, so mamma and I have had to fix on one. What do you think of Dorothea?”

The children looked at their father doubtfully.

“Dorothea,” said Leigh.

“Doro—” began Artie, stopping in the middle, as he forgot the rest.

“Dodo—” said Mary, stopping too. “It’s a difficult name, papa.”

“And I don’t think it’s very pretty,” said Leigh.

“Wait a minute,” said papa. “You’ll like it when I explain about it. You know that baby came on Mary’s birthday?”

"Yes," said Mary. "She were my best birfday present."

"That's just it," her father went on. "'Dorothea' means a present—a present from God, which must mean the best kind of present."

"Oh," said Mary, "that's very nice! Please say it again, papa, and I'll try to learn it. Dodo—"

"No," said Artie, looking very superior. "Doro—not Dodo."

"You needn't look down upon Mary," said Leigh, "if you can't get any further than that. It's Dorothea. I can say it well enough of course, but I do think it's a very long name, papa, for such a very little baby."

"She'll grow up to be a big girl some day, I hope," said their father. "But you're all in such a hurry you won't let me finish explaining. Besides having a nice meaning, we like Dorothea because there's such a pretty way of shortening it. We're going to call your little sister 'Dolly.'"

"That's not difficult," said Mary. "Only it seems as if she was a dolly."

"No it doesn't," said Leigh. "Your dolls have all got their own names. I like Dolly very much, papa, and I think we'll better call her it now. 'Baby' is so common, there's such lots of babies."

"There's a baby at the baker's shop," said Artie, who did not like being left out of the conversation. "It's a lot bigger than our baby, it goes in a sitting-up perambulator all alone."

"Dear me," said his father. "How very curious! I should like to see it! We shall be having babies riding tricycles next."

Artie stared, he did not understand, but Leigh began to laugh.

"How funny you are, papa," he said. "Of course, Artie doesn't mean that it pushes itself along, though I think that pushing a perambulator is very stupid. If I had a baby I know what I'd do."

"On the whole, I'd rather not be your baby, I think, Leigh. But if we're going to the smithy this morning, we'd better set off. Run and get ready, boys."

Leigh and Artie scampered off, and their father was following them, when a sudden sound made him stop short. It was a wail from Mary.

"What is the matter, my darling?" he said, turning back to her.

"I does so want to come too," said Mary through her tears. "'Cos the little dog were for me."

"You shall come, dear," said her father; "but why didn't you ask me without beginning to cry? That's not being a sensible girl."

Mary's face was very like an April day. She smiled up at her father in a minute.

"I won't cry," she said, "I'll be very good. Will you wait for me if nurse dresses me very quick, papa?" and she set off after her brothers, mounting upstairs as fast as she could, though "could" was not very fast, as right leg was obliged to wait on each step till left leg made up to it.

Chapter Six.

"Fuzzy."

Yakeman at the smithy looked very pleased to see his visitors, especially as their father was with the children.

"The puppies are getting on finely," he said. "Two of them are going to their new masters to-morrow. But I've held on to the one as Miss Mary fancied, thinking you'd be looking in some day soon."

"We've wanted to come ever so often," said Leigh.

"We was waiting for papa," added Mary. "And we didn't come round this way 'cos it made us want the dear little dog so much."

Yakeman listened gravely.

"I thought I hadn't seen you passing the last few days," he said. "But I wouldn't have let the dog go, not without sending up to ask you."

"Oh, we knowed you'd keep him," said Mary, and then Yakeman led the way round to the side of the house again, where the four puppies were rolling and tumbling about in perfect content, their mother watching their gambols with great pride.

Suddenly a new thought struck Mary.

"Won't her be very unhappy when them all goes away?" she asked Yakeman anxiously. "And won't them cry for their mamma?"

The smith smiled.

"They're getting old enough to do without her now," he said. "But she'll miss them, no doubt, will poor old Beauty," and he patted the retriever's head as he spoke. "It's the way of the world, bain't it, sir?" turning to the children's father. "Dogs and humans. The young ones leave the old ones cheery enough. It's the old ones as it's hard on!"

Mary did not quite understand what he meant, but something made her catch hold of her father's hand.

"You won't never let me go away, will you, papa?" she whispered. "Not *never*, will you?"

"Not unless you want to go, certainly," said her father, smiling down at her. "But now show me which is the puppy you'd like to have."

Mary looked rather puzzled, and so, though they would not have owned it, were the boys.

"I think," began Leigh, not at all sure of what he was going to say, but just then, luckily, Yakeman came to their help by picking up one of the puppies.

"This here is Miss Mary's one. We've called it hers—the missis and I, ever since the last time you was here."

He gave a little laugh, though he did not say what he was laughing at. To tell the truth, Mrs Yakeman and he had called the puppy "Miss Mary!"

Mary rubbed her nose, as she had done before, on the puppy's soft curly head.

"It are so sweet," she said. "We're going to call him 'Fuzzy.' But, oh papa!" and her voice began to tremble. "Oh Leigh and Artie, I don't think we should have him if it would make his poor mother unhappy to be leaved all alone."

"It won't be so bad as that, Miss Mary," said the smith, who, though he was such a big man, had a very tender heart, and could not bear to see the little girl's face clouded. "We're going to keep Number 4 for ourselves, and after a day or two Beauty will be quite content with him. You can look in and see for yourselves when you're passing."

"Of course," said Leigh, in his wise tone. "It'll be all right, Mary. And we can bring Fuzzy to see his mother sometimes, to pay her a visit, you know."

Mary's face cleared. Yakeman and Leigh must know best, and papa would not let them have the dog if it was unkind. It was not what *she'd* like—to live in a house across the fields from mamma, only to pay her a morning call now and then. But still, dogs were different, she supposed.

All this time papa had been looking at Fuzzy, as I think we may now begin to call him.

"He's a nice puppy," he said, "a very nice little fellow. Of course, he'll want to be properly taken care of, and careful training. But I can trust Mellor—you know Mellor, of course, the coachman?" he went on to the smith. "He's not bad with dogs."

"No, sir, I should say he's very good with 'em," Yakeman replied. "Feedin's a deal to do with it—there's a many young dogs spoilt with over feedin'."

"I'll see to that," said Mr Bertram. "Now, children, we must be moving on, I think."

But the three stood there looking rather strange.

"I thought—" began Leigh.

"Won't we—" began Artie.

"Oh, papa," began Mary.

"What in the world is the matter?" said their father in surprise. "Aren't you pleased about the puppy? I'll send Mellor to fetch him to-morrow."

"It's just that," said Leigh.

"Yes," said Artie.

"We thought he'd be ours, our very own," said Mary, at last explaining what they were in trouble about. For though the three had said nothing to each other, each knew that the others were thinking and feeling the same.

"We meant to fetch him ourselves," said Leigh again.

"We was going to give him his breakfast and dinner and tea in the nursery," chimed in Artie.

"I was p'annin'," added Mary, "that he'd sleep in our beds in turns. I didn't tell Leigh and Artie. I were going to 'apprise them. But I meant to let it be in turns."

Papa began to laugh. So did Yakeman. They could not help it.

"Sleep in your cots," said papa. "There wouldn't be much left of the cots or you by the morning."

"He wouldn't *eat* us," said Leigh, looking rather startled.

"Not exactly," said his father. "But if he took to rolling on the top of you and making hay of the bedclothes—just look at him now tumbling about in the straw with his brothers—you would not be likely to have a very good night."

"And if he had three meals a day in the nursery, there'd not be much left of *he* in a week or less," said Yakeman.

The children looked very surprised.

"*We* always have breakfast and dinner and tea," said Artie, "and little dogs is hungry too."

"Ah! yes," said the smith; "but they couldn't do with as much as that. And it'd never do neither for the puppy to eat all as you eats, Master Artie. Puppies isn't little young gentlemen and ladies, and every creature has its own ways. He'll be all right in the stable, never you fear, and Mr Mellor'll see as he has all he should."

But still the three faces did not clear. Leigh moved away as if he were going to the gate, flicking his boots with a little whip he had in his hand, to seem as if he did not care, though in reality he was very nearly crying. And Artie's and Mary's faces grew longer and longer.

"I don't think I want to have him," she said at last. "Zank you, Mr Yakeman, and zank you, papa; but him wouldn't be *nours*—him'd be Mellor's," and then there came a little choke in Mary's voice and a misty look in her eyes, and in a moment Artie's pocket-handkerchief was out of his pocket and he was rubbing her cheeks with all his might.

"*Don't* cry, Mary," he said; "*please*, don't cry. P'raps papa won't—"

I am not quite sure what he was going to say. I am not sure that he knew himself. But whatever it was, he was interrupted. For before Mary's tears had had time to begin their journey down her face, papa had picked her up in his arms and was busy comforting her. He could not bear to see her cry! Really, it was rather a wonder that she was not spoilt.

"My pet," he said, "there is truly nothing to cry about. The puppy—what is it you call him, Fudge or Fuss—"

Mary could not help laughing a little. Fancy calling a puppy "Fudge."

"No, papa dear; *Fuzzy*—that's what we was going to call him."

"Well, darling, Fuzzy shall be your very own. You shall go to see him in the stables whenever you like; I'll tell Mellor. And he will go out walks with you—the puppy, I mean, not Mellor—as soon as ever he has learnt to follow." This made Mary laugh again. The idea of Mellor going out a walk with them all, following behind like a well-behaved dog. For Mellor was not very young, and he had a broad red face and was rather fat.

Papa was pleased to hear Mary laughing, even though it was rather a shaky little laugh, and he went on to explain more.

"You see he's not the sort of dog that you can have in the house, particularly not in the nursery," he said. "Indeed, I hardly think that any dog except a very old and tried one is safe in a nursery, above all, where there's such a little baby as—"

"Dolly," said Mary quietly, to show that she had not forgotten what baby was to be called.

"Yes, as Dolly," her father went on. "They would be two babies together, and they might hurt each other without meaning it. Dolly might pull Fuddle's hair—"

At this all three children burst out laughing, quite a hearty laugh this time.

"Oh, papa dear," said Mary, "what a very bad mem'ry you've got! It isn't *Fuddle*! Can't you say *Fuzzy*?"

"*Fuzzy, Fuzzy, Fuzzy*," said papa, speaking like the three bears turned the wrong way. "There, now, I think I've got it into my stupid old head at last. Well, as I was saying, Miss Dolly might pull Master Fuzzy's hair, without meaning to hurt him of course, and he might turn round and snap at her, not exactly meaning to hurt her either, but still—it might be rather bad, you see." Mary's face grew very grave.

"I never thought of that," she said solemnly. "It would be dedful for dear little baby Dolly to be hurted, though I'm kite sure Fuzzy wouldn't mean it."

"But when Dolly's a good bit bigger, and when Fuzzy is quite a trained dog, he may come into the house sometimes, mayn't he?" said Leigh.

"At Auntie Maud's," said Artie, "there's *free* dogs always lying in the hall. They get up and come and sniff you when you go in. When I was a little boy I was frightened of them, but they never bit me."

"Ah! well," said his father, "when Dolly's a big girl and Fuzzy's a big dog, we'll see. Some dogs are very good indeed with little children; I hope he'll be. I remember seeing a great Newfoundland that let his master's children ride on his back, just as if he was a little pony. He stalked along as steadily as possible."

"And in some countries," said Leigh eagerly, "dogs are taught to draw little carriages, aren't they? I've seen pictures of them, up where there's such lots of snow near the top of the world. Squim—something, those people are called."

"Esquimaux, you mean, I suppose," said his father laughing. He had put down Mary by this time, and they were

walking on slowly up the hill towards the Lavender Cottages. "Yes, and in other countries not so far off I've seen dogs drawing little carts as soberly as possible."

"I *would* like to see that!" said Artie, his eyes sparkling.

"And so would I!" said Mary.

And Leigh, though he said nothing, took the idea into his mind more than either of the others.

By this time they were close to the top of the little hill where stood the cottages of which we have spoken so often—the Lavender Cottages as they were called; because once, a good many years ago, an old man lived there, whose lavender was famed all about that part of the country. He had a garden, almost like a little field, quite full of it. This garden belonged to one of the end cottages, and it was now a regular cottage kitchen-garden, with potatoes and cabbages and other vegetables growing in it, though in one corner there was still a nice little stock of the old lavender bushes. Here lived an old woman and her son, named Sweeting. Mrs Sweeting had once been cook at the hall when the children's father was a little boy, and she was always pleased to have a visit from any of them.

"I hear poor old Mrs Sweeting has been ill," said papa; "I'll just go in for a minute or two to see her. You children can wait outside for me."

The boys and Mary were not sorry to do so. They were always fond of coming to the Lavender Cottages, not only to see Mrs Sweeting who was very kind to them, but because they were much interested in the family of children who lived next door. There were such a lot of them! The cottage would never have held them all; but luckily, in the third cottage, at the other end again, lived the grandfather and grandmother of the large family, and some of the bigger boys had a room in their house. Still there were plenty left in the middle cottage, as you will hear.

Chapter Seven.

The Perry Family and Papa's Story.

Besides the three big boys, the children had counted six more young Perrys in the middle one of the Lavender Cottages, and by degrees they had found out most of their names. The eldest girl was about twelve, and her name was a very funny one—it was Comfort.

"How tired she must be of people saying to her that they hope she's a comfort to her father and mother," said Leigh, when he first heard her name. I think nurse told it him, for she knew something of the Perrys, and the odd name had taken her fancy.

Comfort was rather a tall girl for her age, and she was clever at school, where she often got prizes. But the next to her, a short, rosy-faced child called Janie, who was generally seen carrying about the baby, a very motherly little girl, seemed as if her elder sister's name would have suited her better. After Janie came Ned, and after Ned three little creatures so near each other that they all looked like babies together, and it was difficult to tell whether they were boys or girls. The quite youngest—the one that all the rest of them called "baby"—spent most of its life seemingly in Janie's arms. I *suppose* Janie went to school sometimes, but, anyway, the Bertram children never passed the cottages or met the little Perrys in the lanes without seeing the baby in its usual resting-place. The other two babies seemed to spend their lives in a queer old-fashioned kind of double perambulator. It was made of wicker; and in fine weather, and indeed sometimes in weather that was not so very fine, was almost always to be seen standing at the cottage-door or just outside the gate leading into the little garden, with the two small people tied into it, one at each side.

To-day they were there as usual. There, too, was Janie with number three baby in her arms, while Comfort was strolling about with a book in her hand, out of which she seemed to be learning something.

"Good-morning," said Leigh, by way of opening the conversation. "Where's Ned? He can't be at school; it's a half-holiday, isn't it?"

"Please, sir—no, sir, if Ned was at school, Comfort and me would be at school too," said Janie.

And Comfort, hearing the talking, came up to where they were standing. They were all in the lane just outside the little garden.

"Ned's run in just to get a bit of cord," said the elder girl. "We're goin' a walk in the woods. We must take the little ones, 'cos mother's washing's got late this week, and she wants them out of the way."

It was rather curious that Mrs Perry's washing often did get late. She was a kind, good-natured woman, but "folks said," according to nurse, not the best of good managers.

"What's Ned going to do with the cord?" asked Leigh, Artie and Mary standing by, listening with the greatest interest, and holding each other's hands tightly, as they felt just a little shy.

"Oh, it's a notion of Ned's," said Janie, rather scornfully. "It's just his nonsense: he don't like pushing p'ram, 'cos he says it's girls' work, and Comfort don't hold with pushing it neither, 'cos she wants to be reading her book."

Here Comfort broke in.

"'Tisn't that I'm so taken up with my book," she said,—“leastways not to please myself; but I want to get moved up after next holidays. When I'm big enough I'm to be a pupil teacher.”

"That would be very nice," said Leigh. "And then, when you're quite big, you'll get to be a schoolmistress, I suppose."

Comfort murmured something and got very red. To be a schoolmistress was the greatest wish she had.

"But I don't see," Leigh went on, "what Ned and the cord's got to do with it."

"Bless you, sir," said Janie, "he's going to make hisself into a pony to draw the p'ram, so as Comfort need do nothing but walk behind pushing with one hand and a-holding of the book with the other, and no need to look out where they're going."

"Oh, I see," said Leigh slowly. He could not help admiring the idea. Then, as Ned at that moment ran out of the cottage, the three little visitors stood in a row watching with the greatest interest while Ned harnessed himself to the front of the wicker carriage. It was a little difficult to manage, but luckily the Perry family were very good-natured, and the two babies in the perambulator only laughed when they got joggled about. And at last, with Leigh's help, the two-legged pony was ready for the start.

Off they set, Comfort holding on behind. She was so interested in it all, by this time that her book was given to one of the babies to hold.

This was lucky, as the first start was rather a queer one. Ned was not tied in quite evenly, so when he set off at a trot the perambulator ran to one side, as if a crab instead of a boy were drawing it. And but for Comfort behind, no doubt, in another minute it would have turned over.

"Stop, Ned, stop!" shouted his sisters, Leigh and Artie and Mary joining in, and the babies too.

Then they all burst out laughing; it did seem so funny, and it took a minute or two before they could set to work to put things right. When Ned's harness was made quite even, he set off again more slowly. This time it was a great success, or it seemed so anyway, though perhaps it was as much thanks to Comfort's pushing behind as to Ned's pulling in front.

Mary and her brothers stood watching the little party as they made their way along the smooth path leading to the wood.

"It's a good thing," said Leigh, "they're not going the smithy way, for if they went down hill, I believe the carriage would tumble over; it's such a shaky old thing."

"When our baby gets a perambulator it'll not be like that ugly old thing, will it?" said Artie. "It will be a reg'lar nice one."

"Of course it will," said Mary. "I'd like it to be the same as the one in my animal book. 'G' for goats, with little goats drawing it."

"We can't have a goat," said Leigh; "but we might have something. Of course it's rubbish to harness a boy into a carriage, but—I've got something in my head."

There was no time for Artie and Mary to ask him what he meant, for just then they saw their father coming out of the gate.

"I've kept you waiting a long time, I'm afraid," he said. "Poor old Sweeting was so glad to see me, and when she begins talking, it goes on for a good while."

"We didn't mind, papa dear," said Mary, slipping her hand into her father's. "We've been speaking to the children in the next cottage. There's such lotses of them. When you was a little boy, papa, did you have lotses of brothers and sisters—did you?"

"No, my pet, I hadn't any at all," papa answered. "That was rather sad, wasn't it? But I had a very kind father and mother. Your grandfather died many years ago, but you know for yourselves how kind grandmother is."

"Grandmother," said Artie and Mary together, looking rather puzzled.

"I don't understand," said Mary, and Artie did not understand either, though he would not say so.

"How silly you are!" said Leigh; "of course grandmother is papa's mother."

"Oh," said Mary, with a little laugh, "I never thought of that! I understand now. Then grandmother used to be a mamma!"

"Yes, indeed, and a very sweet one," said papa. "I'm afraid, perhaps, she spoilt me a very little. When I was a child the rules for small people were much stricter than they are now. But I was never at all afraid of my mother."

"Were you afraid of your father?" asked Leigh with great interest.

"Well, just a little perhaps. I had to be a very obedient boy, I can tell you. That reminds me of a story—"

"Oh, papa, do tell it us!" said all three at once, while Mary, who was holding his hand, began giving little jumps up and down in her eagerness.

"It was ever so long ago, almost thirty years! I was only six at the time. My father had to go up to London for a few days, and as my mother was away from home—nursing her mother who was ill—"

"What was *she* to us?" interrupted Leigh, who liked to get things straight in his head.

"Great-grandmother," answered his father; "*one* of your great-grandmothers, not the one that we have a picture of, though."

"I thought we had pictures of all our grand—I don't know what you call them—for hundreds of years," said Leigh.

"Ancestors, you mean," said his father, "but mostly the Bertram ones of course. But if I begin explaining about that now, we'll never get on with my story. Where was I? Oh, yes! I was telling you that my father took me up to London with him, rather than leave me alone at home. I was very pleased to go, for I'd never been in a town before, and I thought myself quite a great man, going off travelling alone with my father. We stayed at an hotel—I'm not sure where it was, but that doesn't matter; I only know it was in a quiet street running out of another large wide street, where there were lots of shops of all kinds, and carriages and omnibuses and carts always passing by. My father took me out with him as much as he could; sometimes he would leave me waiting for him in a cab at the door of the houses where he had to see people on business, and once or twice he found me fast asleep when he came out. He didn't think that good for me; so after that, he sometimes left me in the hotel in the care of the landlady who had a nice little girl just about my age, with whom I used to play very happily.

"One day—the day before we were to leave—my father took me out shopping with him. He had to buy some presents, for it was near Christmas-time, to take home for the little cousins who were coming to stay with us. We went off to a large toy-shop in the big street I told you of. It was a very large shop, with a door at each end—one out of the big street, and the other opening on to a smaller back street nearer our hotel. And besides the toy-shop there was another part where they sold dressing-cases and travelling-bags and things of that kind.

"We were a good while choosing the toys; among them, I remember, was a fine rocking-horse which my father was very anxious to hear what I thought of, for though I didn't know it at the time, he meant it for me myself."

"Like *our* old rocking-horse in the nursery?" asked Leigh.

Papa smiled.

"More than like it," he said; "it is that very horse. I've kept it ever since, and I had it done up with a new mane and tail when you got big enough to ride it, Leigh."

"Oh, how nice," said Mary, "to think it's papa's own horse! But, please, go on with the story, papa."

"Well, when we had chosen the horse and all the other things, my father had something else to buy that he thought I wouldn't care about in the other part of the shop. And I think he wanted to tell them where to send the horse to without my hearing. He looked at his watch and seemed vexed to find it so late. He asked me if I should be afraid to run back to the hotel alone, and turned towards the door opening on to the back street, from which we could see the hotel as it faced the end of that small street. But I think he must have fancied that I looked a little frightened, for then he changed and pointed to the front door of the shop, telling me to stay there till he came back. He said it would amuse me to stand just outside in the entrance where I could both see the shop window and watch the carriages passing.

"'But whatever you do, Charlie,' he said, 'don't move from there till I come back for you!'"

Chapter Eight.

Papa's Story Continued.

"For some time, a quarter of an hour or so, I dare say, I stood at the shop door very contentedly. It was very amusing, as my father had said, to watch the bustle in the street. I don't think I looked much at the things in the shop window; I'd seen so many of the toys inside. But after awhile I began to wish that my father would be quick. He did seem to be a very long time. I peeped in through the glass door, but I couldn't see him anywhere near. I even opened it a tiny bit to listen if I could hear his voice, but I couldn't. People often passed me to go into the shop and to come out, but nobody specially noticed me; they were all too busy about their own affairs; besides, there's nothing uncommon in a little boy standing at a toy-shop window.

"It seemed to grow colder too. I should have liked to run up and down on the pavement in front to warm myself a little; but I dared not move from where I was. At last some one belonging to the shop happened to come to the door to reach down some large toys hanging in the entrance, and this shopman noticed me. By this time, though I scarcely knew it, the tears were running down my face; I was growing so very tired with waiting. He said to me—

"'Is there anything the matter? Have you hurt yourself?'"

"I answered No, I was only waiting for my father who was in the shop. 'But I don't know why he's such a long time,' I said; 'I am so tired of waiting,' and somehow the saying it out made me begin to cry much more.

"The young man was very kind and seemed sorry for me. He wanted me to come inside where it would be warmer, while he went to look for my father; but I shook my head and told him that papa had said I must stay just there where I was. I wouldn't even come the least bit inside the door. I remembered papa's words so well—

"'Whatever you do, Charlie, don't move from there till I come back for you!'"

"In a few minutes the shopman came back again. He was shaking his head now; there was no one in the shop with a

little boy belonging to them. There were one or two ladies whom he had asked, which I thought very ridiculous, as if I could have mistaken papa for a lady, but there was no gentleman at all, and he tried again to persuade me to come inside. He said there must be some mistake; my father had most likely gone on somewhere else; perhaps he'd be back in a little while; he'd never want me to stay out there in the cold. But there was no getting me to move. I can remember, even now, the sort of fixed feeling in my mind that I *wouldn't* do the least differently from what he had told me.

"Then the young man went off to fetch some one else—the owner of the shop most likely. I remember two or three people coming up and all talking to me and trying to get me to come inside. But I wouldn't—even though by this time I couldn't leave off crying—I just went on shaking my head and saying—

"He said I was to stay here."

"I dare say they thought me a very tiresome little boy, but they were very kind. The young man, my first friend, brought me out a chair, and then I heard them talking about what was to be done. They had asked me my name, which I told them, but I couldn't tell them the name of the hotel where we were staying, for I didn't know it, and I *wouldn't* tell them that it was in a street close by, because I was afraid they would carry me off there. I think I was getting rather confused by this time; I could only remember that I must stay where I was if ever I was to see papa again. I heard them saying that the gentleman had only given his country address, as the toys were to be sent straight home.

"After awhile, in spite of the cold and my unhappiness, I think I must have fallen asleep a little. I was almost too young to be anxious about my father and to fear that some accident must have happened to him, but yet I can quite remember that I had really very dreadful feelings. As the evening went on and the street grew darker and darker, and there began to be fewer passers-by, it seemed worse and worse. Once I remember bursting out into fresh crying at seeing, by the light of the gas-lamp, a little boy passing along chattering merrily to the gentleman whose hand he was holding. I felt like a poor shipwrecked mariner on a desert island—all the lonelier that I was in the middle of a great town.



You must see you can't sit there the whole night.—P. 99.

"No doubt the shop people must have been getting uncomfortable and wondering what was to come of it. It must have seemed very strange to them; and, at last, the head man came out again and spoke to me—this time rather sharply, perhaps he thought it the best thing to do—

"'Young gentleman,' he said, 'this really can't go on! You must see you can't sit there the whole night. Try and think again of the name of the place you're staying at.'

"'I don't know it,' I said, and I dare say I seemed rather sulky, for he grew crosser.

"Well, if you can't or won't tell us, something'll have to be done," he answered. "It's the police's business, not ours, to look after strayed children, or children that won't say where they come from. Here, Smith," he called out to the young shopman, "just look up and down the street if there's a policeman to be seen."

"He didn't really mean to do anything unkind, but he thought it the best way to frighten me into coming inside the shop, or into telling where I lived, for I don't think they quite believed that I didn't know. But the word 'policeman' terrified me out of my wits; I suppose I was already half-stupefied with tiredness and crying. If I had dared, I would have rushed out into the street and run off anywhere as fast as I could. But, through all, the feeling never left me that I must stay where I was, and I burst into loud screams.

"Oh, papa, papa!" I cried, "why won't you come back? The police are coming to take me; oh, papa, papa!"

"I was crying so that for a moment or two I didn't hear a bustle at the other end of the shop. Then, all at once, I saw some one hurrying to me from the door leading into the other street, and as soon as I saw who it was, I rushed to meet him and threw myself into his arms, for of course it was my father. I don't think, in all my life, I have ever felt greater happiness than I did then.

"Oh, Charlie," he said, "my poor little boy! Have you been waiting here all these hours—my good, obedient, little son?"

"Then he turned to the shopman who was now a little ashamed of himself—I dare say the poor man had been getting really afraid that I was to be left on his hands altogether—and explained the whole mistake. He had gone straight on to the city after finishing his orders in the other part of the shop, forgetting that the *last* thing he had said to me was to wait for him at the front door of the shop; for his thoughts were very much taken up that morning with some very serious business, and it was actually not till he got back to the hotel, late in the afternoon, and found I wasn't there, that he remembered that the plan of my running back alone had been given up.

"Then he was terribly frightened and rushed off to the shop, hardly daring to hope he would find me still there. He kept saying he could scarcely forgive himself, and even years after, I often heard him say that he couldn't understand what had come over his memory that day.

"When the shop people saw how troubled he was about it, they began telling him how they had tried to make me come inside, but that it had been no use, and all the way home papa kept saying to me—

"My faithful little Charlie"—which pleased me very much.

"He carried me to the hotel, and I felt so weak and tired that I didn't mind, even though I was a big boy of six years old. And I remember, even now, how delightful it was to get well warmed at the fire, and what a nice tea papa ordered for me.

"And the next day I was none the worse; luckily I hadn't caught cold, which papa was very glad of, as my mother came up to London that day to meet us, and we all three travelled home together."

The children had been listening with all their ears to papa's story. When he stopped Mary gave a deep sigh.

"That's a bee-yu-tiful story, papa," she said. "But it nearly made me cry for the poor little boy."

"You shouldn't say that, Mary," said Leigh. "The poor little boy was papa himself! Don't you understand?"

"Yes, in course I do," said Mary. "But papa *were* a little boy then, so I might call him the poor little boy."

"That's right, Mary," said her father. "Stick up for yourself when you know what you mean to say. Yes, indeed, I did feel a very poor little boy that day: the thought of it has always made me so sorry for children who are lost, or think they're lost. It's a dreadful feeling."

"Papa," said Mary—she was trotting beside her father, holding his hand very tight,—“I think, please, I don't want never to go to London, for fear I should get losted; and, please, never take Leigh or Artie either—not to London—'cos, you see, it was when you was a little boy your papa nearly losted you, and Leigh and Artie are little boys."

"Rubbish, Mary," said Leigh. "I'm eight, and papa was only six, not much bigger than you are now. If I was with papa in London at a shop I could find my way home ever so far; there's always people in the street you can ask. It's not like getting lost when there's nobody to tell you the way."

"The worst kind of getting lost," said Artie, "is in the snow. Up on those mountains, you know, where the snow comes down so thick that you can't see, and then it gets so deep that you are buried in it."

"Oh, how dedful!" said Mary; "you won't ever take us to that place, will you, papa? I'd be more f'ighted than in London! Where is that country, papa?"

"I suppose Artie means Switzerland," said their father.

"I mean the picture in my book," said Artie; "where there's dogs, you know, snuffing to find the poor people under the snow."

"Oh, the great Saint Bernard mountain you mean!" said papa; "it's sure to be that. You often see pictures of it in children's books; there are such pretty stories about the good dogs and the kind monks who live there."

"Can you teach any dogs to do things like that?" asked Leigh.

"No; they have to be a particular kind," answered papa; "but a dog like your puppy can be taught to fetch anything out of the water, from a bit of stick to a baby. He's what you call a retriever: that means fetching or finding something. You can teach a good retriever almost anything."

"I thought so," said Leigh, nodding his head wisely. "I'll see what I can't teach Fuzzy."

They were back in the park by this time. It was a beautiful May day, almost as warm as summer. The children's father stood still and looked round with pleasure.

"It is nice to have a holiday sometimes," he said. "What a lovely colour the grass is in the sunshine!"

"And how happy the little lambs are; aren't they, papa?" said Mary. "I wish I had one of my very own—like Mary and the lamb in my nursery book."

"You couldn't have a lamb *and* a dog," said Artie. "Fuzzy would soon knock the lamb over."

"I never thought of that," said Mary. "Oh, papa dear," she went on, "I do so want baby Dolly to get big quick! There's such lotses of pretty things to show her in the world. The grass and the trees and the lambs"—and while she spoke her blue eyes wandered all round her,—and the birds and the sky and—and—oh! the daisies, and"—as at that moment she caught sight of the old woman at the lodge crossing the drive with her red cloak on—"and old Mrs Crutch and her pussy-cat, and—"

"You're getting to talk nonsense, Mary," said Leigh. "Old Mrs Crutch isn't a pretty thing!"

"Her *cloak's* very pretty," said Mary, "and she does make such nice ginger-b'ead cake."

Chapter Nine.

Tears and Smiles.

The spring turned into summer, and with the longer days and warmer sunshine and gentle rain there grew up a great many more "pretty things" for Mary to show to her little sister Dolly; and Dolly herself grew like the flowers and the lambs. By the time she was three months old she could not only smile, she could even give little chuckling laughs when she was very pleased. Mary was quite sure that the baby understood all she said to her, and I do not think she would have been very surprised any day if Dolly had begun to talk.

"Why can't she talk, mamma?" she asked her mother one morning.

"No little baby learns to do everything at once," mamma answered. "She has to learn to walk and run and use her little hands the way you do. Just think what a lot of things babies have to learn; you must have patience."



Baby was lying on the ground out on the lawn . . . and Mary was sitting beside her, taking care of her for a minute or two all by herself.—p. 108.

Mary tried to have patience; she did not so much mind baby's not being able to stand or walk or things of that kind, for she could understand that her little legs needed to grow stronger and firmer, but for a long time she could not understand about the not talking, and it got to be quite a trouble to her.

"She can cry and she can laugh and she can coo, and she hears all the words we say to her," said Mary, with a little sigh; "I can't think why she won't talk. Oh, baby dear! don't you think you could if you tried? It's *kite* easy."

Baby was lying on the ground out on the lawn, where nurse had spread a nice thick shawl for her in case the grass might be damp, and Mary was sitting beside her, taking care of her for a minute or two all by herself. Nurse had gone in to fetch some more work. Mary was very proud of being trusted with baby. Leigh and Artie were at their lessons.

"Baby dear," she said again, "don't you think you could say just some little words if you tried? Nurse would be so pleased when she comes out if she could hear you saying, 'Dear little sister Mary' to me!"

She was leaning over baby, and gave her a little kiss. Baby looked up and opened her mouth very wide. Mary could see her little pink tongue, but that was all there was to be seen; and just at that moment there started into Mary's head what must be the reason that baby could not speak.

"She hasn't got no teeth!" cried Mary. "She's opening her mouth wide to show me! Oh, poor little darling baby! Has they been forgotten? The baby at the Lavender Cottages has got teeth!"

Baby did not seem to mind; she lay there smiling quite happily, as if she was pleased that Mary understood her, but Mary felt very unhappy indeed. Something came back into her mind that she had heard about baby's teeth, but it was a long time ago, and she could not remember it clearly. Was it something about them having been forgotten?

"I'm afraid there's been a mistook," said Mary to herself. "Oh, poor baby! A'posing she never can speak! Oh, nurse, nurse, do come; I want to tell you something about poor baby!"

But nurse was still in the house and could not hear Mary calling, and Mary dared not go to fetch her because baby must not be left alone. So she did what most little girls, and little boys too sometimes, do when they're in trouble,—she began to cry.

"Oh, nurse, nurse!" she wailed through her tears, "do come—oh, do come?"

And though baby could not speak she certainly could hear. She half-rolled herself round at the sound of her sister's sad sobs and cries, and for a moment or two her own little face puckered up as if she were going to cry too—it is wonderful how soon a tiny baby learns to know if the people about it are in trouble—but then she seemed to change her mind, for she was a very sensible baby. And instead of crying she gave a sort of little gurgling coo that was very

sweet, for it said quite plainly that she knew Mary was grieving, and she wanted to be told what it was all about. At first Mary did not hear her, she was so taken up with her own crying. That is the worst of crying; it makes one quite unnoticing of everything else.

Then baby rolled herself still nearer; if only she had understood about catching hold of things, no doubt she would have given Mary a little tug. But she had not learnt that yet. So all she could do was to go on with her cooing till at last Mary heard it. Then the big sister turned round, her poor face all red and wet with her tears; and when she saw baby staring up at her with her sweet, big, baby eyes, and cooing away in her dear little voice, which sounded rather sad, she stooped down and gave her *such* a hug that, if Dolly had not been really very good-natured, I am afraid her cooing would have been changed into crying.

"Oh, baby, you sweet—you dear little innocent sweet!" said Mary; "you're too little to understand what I'm crying for. I'm crying 'cos the angels or the fairies has forgotten about your teeth, and I'm afraid you'll never be able to speak—not all your life, poor baby!"

But baby only cooed louder than before. And Mary, looking up, saw what baby saw too—that nurse was coming over the lawn; and baby's face broke out into quite a wide smile; she was very fond of nurse.

Poor nurse did not smile when she got close to the two little girls, for she saw that Mary was crying, and she was afraid there was something the matter.

"Have you hurt yourself, Miss Mary?" she said. "Miss Baby's all right, but what are you crying about?"

"Oh, nurse, I've been calling you so," said Mary,—"*calling* and *calling*. I'm so unhappy about baby;" and then she told nurse the sad thought that had come into her mind, and how troubled she was about it.

Nurse listened very gravely, but—would you believe it?—when Mary had finished all her story, what do you think she did? She sat down on the grass and picked up baby in her arms and burst out laughing. I do not think she had laughed so much for a long time.

"Oh, Miss Mary, my dear," she said, "you are a funny child!"

Mary looked up at her, her face still wet with tears and with a very solemn expression; she did not quite like nurse's laughing at her when she had been so unhappy.

"I'm not funny," she said. "It's very sad for poor baby," and new tears came into her eyes at the thought that even nurse did not care.

But nurse had left off laughing by this time. "Miss Mary, my dear," she said, "don't make a trouble about it. Miss Baby's teeth will come all in good time. I shouldn't wonder if she has several dear little pearls in her mouth to show you before Christmas. Don't you remember that day when we were talking about her teeth, I told you how yours had come, one after the other, and that they used to hurt you sometimes."

Mary's face cleared at this.

"Oh, yes," she said, "I 'amember. Does everybody's teeth come like that? Doesn't any babies have them all ready?"

"No," said nurse; "why, even the Perrys' baby that's more than a year old hasn't got all its teeth yet, and it can't say many words. Don't you trouble, Miss Mary, the teeth and the talking will come all right. There now," as little Dolly looked up with a crow in nurse's smiling face, "Miss Baby knows all about it, you see!"

Mary put her arms round baby and gave her another big hug.

"Oh, you dear little sweet!" she said. "Oh, nurse, I do think she's got such lots of things to tell me if only she could speak!"

Baby gave a little chuckle as much as to say, "No fear, I'll talk fast enough before long;" and Mary, who was rather like an April day, set off laughing so much that she did not hear steps coming along the terrace till a voice said, quite close to her—

"Well, Mary, darling, what are you and baby so merry about?"

It was mamma. Mary looked at her, and then mamma saw that her eyes were red.

"It's all right now ma'am," said nurse, for she knew that mamma was wondering what was the matter even though she had not asked; so mamma went on to tell them what she had come out about, for she knew that when Mary had had a fit of crying the tears were rather ready to come back again if anything more was said about her troubles.

"Nurse," she said, "I want you to dress Miss Mary as quickly as possible after her dinner. I'm going to take her a drive with me—quite a long drive; I'm going to the town to choose a perambulator for baby."

"Oh, mamma!" said Mary in great delight, "how lovely! And may I get into the p'ram-bilator to see if it's comfor'ble for baby?"

"Yes," said mamma, "though a tight fit for you will be all right for baby. And I've other things to buy as well! You've got a list ready for me, nurse, haven't you? I'm quite sure the boys need new boots, and wasn't there something about a sash for Mary?"

"She wouldn't be the worse for another blue one, ma'am," said nurse. "Her papa always likes her in blue."

"Ah! well, I won't forget about it. I like her in blue best too. And baby—doesn't she want anything?" asked mamma.

Of course she did, ever so many things. I never knew a baby that did not want a lot of things—or a baby's nurse perhaps we should say—when there was a chance. Ribbons to tie up its sleeves, and little shoes and tiny socks, and some very fine kind of soap that would not make its soft skin smart, and more things than I can remember. Babies have plenty of wants, though they are such small people. And mamma wrote them all down, saying each aloud as she did so, and Mary stood listening with a very grave face. For she thought to herself, "Just *supposing* mamma lost the paper or couldn't read all the pencil words, or forgot to write down everything, it would be a very good thing for *her* to know them all and 'amind mamma."

Soon it was time to go in to dinner, and Mary was so full of the thought of going to the town with mamma, that at first she sat with her spoon and fork in her hands, looking at her plate without eating at all.

"Why don't you eat your dinner, Mary?" said Leigh.

"My nungryness has gone away with thinking of going out with mamma and buyin' such lotses of things," said Mary.

"How silly you are!" said Leigh. "Why, when I've something nice to think of, it makes me all the hungrier! If you don't eat your dinner, I don't believe mamma will take you."

"Yes, Miss Mary, you must eat it," said nurse. "You'll be later than usual of getting your tea, too, so you should make an extra good dinner."

Mary did not feel as if she *could* be hungry, but she did not want to be left behind, so she began to try to eat, and after one or two mouthfuls it got rather easier. Nurse went on talking, for she knew the less Mary thought about not being hungry the better it would be.

"Perhaps your mamma, will let you bring home a nice bagful of buns for tea," she said. "That would be a treat for Master Leigh and Master Artie, to make up for their not going to the town too."

"I don't want to go," said Leigh. "I hate shopping. It's such rubbish—taking half an hour to choose things you could settle about in half a minute. Of course I suppose it's different for women and girls."

Nurse smiled a little.

"Have you nothing for Miss Mary to get for you?" she said.

"What shops are you going to?" asked Leigh.

"Are you going to the confectioner's?" asked Artie.

Mary was not quite sure what the confectioner's was. You see, she did not often see shops, as the children's home was quite in the country. But she knew Leigh would laugh at her if she asked, so she just said—

"We're going to all the shops there is, I think. We're going to buy Baby Dolly's p'ram-bilator."

She got rather red as she spoke; but Leigh did not notice it, for he was very much interested by this news.

"To buy the p'rambulator," he repeated. "Oh, I say—I wouldn't mind going to choose that! But I couldn't stand the rest of the shopping. Mary—" and he hesitated.

"What?" said Mary.

"There's one thing I want, if you think you could choose it for me; it's a pair of reins. I've got money to pay for them—plenty; so you can tell mamma if she'll pay them in the shop, she can take the money out of my best purse that she keeps for me, when she comes home. They'll cost about—" he stopped again, for he really did not know.

"Do you mean red braid ones, Leigh, like my old ones with the bells on?" asked Artie.

"No, of course not. I want regular good strong leather ones—proper ones, d'you hear, Mary?"

"Yes," said Mary, "I'm listenin'."

"Well, look here then; they must be of nice brown leather, and you must pull it well to be sure it's strong. And they must have a kind of front-piece, stiff, you know, that they are fastened to, or perhaps they cross over it, I'm not sure. And they must be about as long as from me, where I'm sitting now, to where Artie is. And if you can't get them nice in one shop, you must ask mamma to let you go to another, and you mustn't be in a hurry to just take the first ones they show you. You must *choose* well, Mary, and—"

"Don't take half an hour about it when half a minute would do," said nurse, in rather an odd voice.

Leigh grew very red.

"Nurse," he said, "reins are very pertickler things to get. Leather things have to be *good*, you know."

"And so have silk things and cotton things and all the other things that ladies take so long to shop about," said nurse. "But, I'm sure poor dear Miss Mary's head will never hold all the explaining you've been giving her. If you take my

advice, Master Leigh, you'll run off to your mamma and tell her what you want and settle about the price and everything. She will be just finishing luncheon, I should think. It was to be early to-day."

Leigh thought it a good idea, and did as nurse proposed. Mary was very glad not to have to remember all about the reins; her little head was full enough already. She was looking quite pale with excitement when nurse began to dress her in her best things to go out with her mamma. But it was very interesting to have all her Sunday things on on a week-day, and by the time she was ready—her best boots buttoned and her little white silk gloves drawn on, and her fair curls, nicely brushed, hanging down under her big straw hat, which had white bows and tufty feathers at one side—Mary's face had grown rosier again.

Chapter Ten.

Shopping.

She felt *quite* happy when she found herself at last settled by mamma's side in the victoria. She gave a deep sigh—it was a sigh of content—just because she was so happy.

But mamma turned round quickly.

"My darling," she said, "is there anything the matter? Why are you sighing so?"

Mary cuddled a little bit nearer to mamma, and looked up in her face with a smile.

"I'm quite *drefffully* happy, mamma dear," she said. "The breaving comes like that when I'm drefffully happy. But oh, mamma," she went on, with an anxious look creeping over her face, "I *hope* we'll 'amember all the lotses of things there is to buy!"

"I wrote them down, dear," said mamma. "You saw me?"

"Yes, but doesn't writing sometimes get rubbed out? I think I can 'amember neely all if you asked me. Did Leigh tell you all about his reins, mamma?"

"Yes, dear. He was very particular indeed. I can't think what has put reins in his head again. He told me some time ago that he thought he was getting too big for playing at horses. Perhaps it's to amuse Artie."

"I wonder," said Mary, "if p'raps it's something to do with Fuzzy."

But her mother did not hear, or at least did not notice what she said. She had taken the paper with the list of things she had to do, out of her bag and was looking it over.

It seemed a long way to the town to Mary. It was between five and six miles, and she had not often driven so far, for you know she was still a very little girl. Now and then her mamma looked at her to see if she was getting sleepy, but every time she seemed quite bright. Her little mind was so full of all the messages they had to do that I don't think she *could* have grown sleepy.

And there were a great many pretty and strange and interesting things to notice as they went along. Mamma kept pointing them out to her and talking about them. There were the flowers in the hedges to begin with—some late ones were still in bloom—here and there stray sprays of honeysuckle even, and low down, nearer the ground, there came now and then little glimpses of pretty colours where smaller wild-flowers, such as "ragged robin," "speedwell," "crow's-foot," and a few others were still peeping out.

"If I were a tiny flower," said mamma, "I think I would choose my home on the inside of the hedge—the field-side. It would be so hot and dusty near the road."

But Mary thought it would be nice to see the carriages and carts passing, and that it would be rather dull to see nothing but the grass, and then she and mamma laughed at their funny fancies, as if flowers had eyes and ears like children.

Then they passed a very queer-looking waggon lumbering along. It seemed like a house built of baskets and straw chairs and brushes instead of brick or stone, and Mary's mamma told her it was a travelling shop, and that the people lived inside and had a little kitchen and a little bedroom, and that *sometimes* they were quite clean and tidy and nice people. There was a tiny window with a red curtain at the side of the waggon they passed, and Mary saw a little girl, with a nice rosy face, peeping out at her. She nearly jumped when she saw the little girl, and she pulled mamma to make her look.

"See, see, mamma!" she cried. "They must be nice people that lives in that basket shop, mustn't they, for that little girl's got a clean face, and she's smilin' so sweetly?"

"Yes," said mamma; "it looks as if she had a kind father and mother, and I hope she has. For many poor children have quite as kind fathers and mothers as rich children have, you know, Mary."

"Like the Perrys—the Perrys at the Lavender Cottages," said Mary.

And then she went on thinking to herself how nice it would be to live in a "going-about house," as she called it. And she wished very much indeed she could have seen inside the waggon.

The next thing they passed after that, was a great high carriage with four horses; a man in a red coat was blowing a horn, and there were ever so many ladies and gentlemen sitting up on the top. It made *such* a dust! Mary began to think mamma was right about the field-side of the hedges, for even though she was a little girl in a carriage and not a flower, she felt quite choked for a minute. Mamma told her it was a stagecoach, and that long ago, before clever men had found out how to make railway trains go, drawn by steam-engines instead of horses, people were obliged to travel in these big coaches.

Mary was very much surprised. She thought there had always been railways, but mamma had not time to explain any more about them to her, for just then the carriage began to make a very rattling noise over the stones, so that they could scarcely hear each other speak. They were entering the town.

Mary looked about her with great interest. It was a long time since she had been there, and the last day she remembered being driven through the streets it had only been to go to the railway station. For the children and their mother were then on their way to visit their grandmamma. That was six months ago, half a year—before Mary's birthday, which had brought her the wonderful present of Baby Dolly—a very long time ago.

But Mary remembered how she had wished that day to stop at the shops and look in at the windows. And now she was not only going to look in; she was going to *go* in to help mamma to choose all the things she had to buy.

It was very nice, but it seemed rather to take away her breath again to think of all they had to do. Mary gave a deep sigh, which made her mamma turn round.

"Mary, my dear, you are looking quite troubled," she said; "what is it?"

"It's on'y the lotts of things," said Mary.

"But you mustn't be like that, or I shall be afraid to bring you out shopping with me," said mamma. "It will be all right, you'll see. Here we are at the first shop—the draper's. That's right; give Thomas your hand and get out slowly."

Thomas was quite ready to have lifted her out, but Mary did not like being lifted. It seemed as if she was a baby. Mamma knew this, and unless she was in a great hurry she let Mary manage for herself like a big girl.

Mary was not like some children, who do not care about any shops except a toy-shop and a confectioner's; she was interested in all the things mamma had to buy, and she liked to watch the careful way mamma went about it. She had a list all ready, and she had put the same sorts of things together on it, so that she did not need to go backwards and forwards from one counter to another. It was a large shop, but there were not many people in it, so Mary climbed up on a chair and sat there comfortably watching, while mamma chose tape and buttons and reels of cotton and needles, and lots of what are called "small-wares."

Mary enjoyed seeing them all brought out in their neat boxes and drawers; she thought to herself that she would like very much to have a shop and have all these interesting things to take care of. And then, when they moved a little farther down, to that part of the counter where pretty silks and ribbons were hanging up—silks and ribbons of all sorts of colours and shades—she was still more delighted.

"We are going to choose a sash for you now, Mary," said mamma.

"And ribbins to tie up Baby Dolly's sleeves. Weren't you forgetting about the ribbins?" said Mary.

Mamma had not forgotten, but she did not say so, for she saw her little girl was proud of remembering; and she was pleased too to see that Mary thought of Dolly before herself.

"Yes; of course there are baby's bows to get," she said. "Thank you for reminding me. What colour shall they be? Would you like to choose?"

The shopman—I think it was the draper himself, who knew Mary's mamma and was pleased to wait upon her—smiled as he brought out a large box full of ribbons of the right width for tying up babies' sleeves. There were so many pretty colours that Mary felt as if she *could not* choose.

"I'd like some of all of them," she said.

But mamma helped her by putting aside those that would not do. Yellow would not be pretty for baby, she said, nor green, nor bright red, nor deep blue or purple; and that left only the soft delicate colours—pale pink and pale blue and very pale lilac. There were pretty white ribbons too, with very fine little checks and spots over them, which she said would be very nice.

So then Mary found it easier, and she chose four sets—blue, with a little white line down the edge; and white, with a pink check over it; and another, with tiny blue spots, and one of the pale pinky lilac. It was like wild geranium colour, mamma said, and as Mary did not know what that flower was, mamma promised to look for one in the fields to show her.

Then there came the choosing of Mary's sashes. Mamma got two, and Mary was quite pleased, for she saw that mamma was the best chooser after all. One was pale blue, very wide, and with a white line down the side. It was just "like the mamma of *Dolly's* blue ribbon," Mary said, and the other was all pink, very pretty pale pink. Mary did not like it quite so well, but still she felt sure it would look nice, or else mamma "wouldn't have chosened it."

It would take too long to tell you about all the things mamma bought. After she had finished at the draper's she went to the shoemaker's and got boots for the boys and slippers for Mary, and dear sweet little blue silk shoes for Dolly. They were to be her very best ones, to match her blue ribbons. Mary was so pleased that her mamma got them.

After that came the great thing of all—that was the perambulator. There was a man in that town who made pony-carriages, and he made perambulators too. Mamma took Mary into a large room which was all glass at the front, and was quite filled with pony-carriages. They did look so shiny and nice—some of them were wicker, and some were made of wood like big carriages. Mary would have liked to get into them all, one after the other, to see which was the most comfortable, and she could not help thinking how very nice it would be to be a pony-carriage man's little girl. What lovely games she and Leigh and Artie could have in this big room! It would be even nicer than having a draper's shop. She did not know that carriage-builders' children and drapers' children are not allowed to play with their fathers' carriages and ribbons any more than she and her brothers would be allowed to pull about the books in the library, or to gather all the fruit and flowers in the garden.

They passed through the big room with the glass front to a smaller one behind, where there were a good many perambulators. The man who had shown them in explained to Mary's mamma about the different kinds and told her the prices; and mamma chose three which she made the man draw out by themselves in front of all the others.

"It must be one of those," she said; "I want a really good one, but still rather plain and strong, as it is for the country roads."

Mary thought to herself what a good way of choosing mamma had; it makes choosing so much easier if you put away the things that *won't* do. And while she was thinking this, mamma told her she wanted her to get into the perambulator standing next, and say if it was comfortable.

"I will lift her in," she said to the man. "It's quite strong enough, I suppose?"

"Oh, dear, yes, ma'am!" he answered. "It could bear a child twice this little lady's weight. The springs are fust-rate."

It was very comfortable, and when Mary jiggled up and down a little gently, it felt quite "dancey," she said.

"It's the springs," the man repeated; "they're fust-rate."

Mary wondered what "fust-rate" meant. She thought she would ask her mamma. Then she was lifted into the next perambulator—the man lifted her in. He meant to be quite kind, but Mary did not like it, and when at last she found herself on the floor again she stroked down her skirts and gave herself a little shake. Mamma saw that she did not like it, but afterwards she told Mary that sometimes it is best to hide that you do not like things, when they are done out of kindness.

"It didn't matter to-day," said mamma, "for the man was busy talking to me and he didn't see you shaking yourself; but you must remember for another time."

Mary felt very sorry. She did not forget what her mamma said. Even when she grew to be a big girl she remembered about the man meaning to be kind, and how glad she was he had not seen her shake herself.

The other perambulators were not quite as wide as the first one. Mary said they felt rather squeezey, so mamma fixed on the first one. But it could not be sent home at once because the lining had to be changed. It was brown, and the linings of mamma's victoria and pony-carriage were dark red, and mamma liked Dolly's carriage to match. So the man promised it should be ready in two or three days; but Mary looked at it a great deal, because she knew Leigh and Artie would want to know exactly what it was like.

After that they went to the grocer's, but mamma did not stay long there, and then they went to the toy-shop to get a rattle for baby and reins for Leigh. But neither mamma nor Mary liked the reins much. There were some of red braid, but they were too common, and the leather ones did not seem strong, and they were not made of the right sort of leather; Mary was quite distressed.

"What shall we do?" she said. "Leigh will be so disappointed." She said the word quite right, but it took her a good while.

Then mamma had a capital thought.

"I know," she said. "We'll go to the saddler's. Even if he hasn't got any toy-reins ready he can easily make them."

And fancy—was not it lucky?—the saddler had a pair quite ready—beauties, just like what Leigh wanted. Mamma was so pleased, and so was Mary; though I do not think mamma would have been quite so pleased if she had known what Leigh had in his head about the reins. Then mamma went to the confectioner's, where she bought some very nice little cakes for Mary to take home for the nursery tea, and, as she thought Mary looked a little tired and must be beginning to feel hungry, she asked for a glass of milk for her and a bun, and then she put Mary on a chair close up to the counter, where she could reach the milk. And then, just as she was going to pay for what she had bought, poor mamma started.

"Oh, dear!" she said, "where is my little bag with my purse in it? I must have left it somewhere; I was carrying so many parcels."

"Mamma, dear," said Mary, "you had it at the reins' shop. I sawed it in your hand."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said mamma. "Then it'll be all right. I'll run back for it. You finish your milk and bun, dear, and I will come for you as quickly as I can."

Mary did not quite like waiting alone, but she did not want to trouble her mother, so she said, "Very well, mamma dear."

Her milk and bun did not take long to finish, but she sat on still on the high chair, partly because she thought her mamma would look for her there, partly because she could not get down alone, and she was too shy to ask to be lifted off. But mamma did not come as quickly as Mary hoped, though the time seemed longer to her than it really was.

In a few minutes she heard the door open, and she looked up gladly, thinking it was her mamma; but it was not. Instead of mamma in came a rather fat lady, with two boys and a girl. The lady had a red face, and they all talked very loudly.

“Now, what will you have, my loveys?” said the lady. “Puffs, cheesecakes, macaroons?”

The three children pushed up to the counter and began helping themselves. It was not a large shop, and they crushed against Mary, who was growing very uncomfortable.

“Dear, dear,” said the fat lady, “I am ’ot!” and she fanned herself with her handkerchief. “Haven’t you got a chair for me?”

The shop-woman looked at the girl who had seated herself on the only chair besides Mary’s one.

“I dare say Miss isn’t tired,” she said; “won’t you give the lady your chair?”

But the girl would not move.

“No,” she said; “that child isn’t eating anything. She can give her chair. Put her down, Fred.”

And the bigger of the boys lifted Mary roughly down from her perch before the shop-woman could interfere, and then they all burst out laughing, and Mary, whose face had been getting whiter and whiter, rushed to the open door and ran with all her might down the street.

Chapter Eleven.

Nursery Tea.

I dare say it was silly of Mary to be so frightened; but then, you know, she was only a very little girl, and she was not used to rude or rough ways.

“Mamma, mamma!” she cried as she ran along. And she did not even think or know which way she was going. But the town was not a big one, not like London, where her papa had been left alone in the toy-shop—and the street was quiet. Several people noticed the prettily-dressed little girl running so fast, the tears rolling down her face.

“She’s lost her way, poor dear,” said one woman, standing at the door of a greengrocer’s shop.

“She’s been bitten by a dog,” said another.

But nobody did anything till, luckily, Mary flew past the draper’s where she had been with her mamma; one of the young men in the shop was reaching something out of the window and saw her. He called to the draper—Mr Mitcham—and Mr Mitcham, who was a kind man and had little girls of his own, hurried after Mary and soon caught her up, for she was getting very tired now. Her legs were shaking sadly, and her breath seemed to choke her, and her heart,—oh, how her poor heart was thumping—it seemed to come right up into her ears.

“Are you looking for your mamma, my dear?” said Mr Mitcham. He was rather out of breath himself though he had only run a short way, for he was a fat little man, and he seldom took more exercise than walking about his shop.

“Zes, zes!” cried Mary, who went back to her baby talk when she was unhappy or frightened. “Her is gonied away, and the naughty boy pulled me off my chair, and—oh, oh, where is my mamma gonied?”

Mr Mitcham, could not make out what was the matter, but, luckily, just at that moment her mamma came round the corner of the street. She had found her bag at the saddler’s, but she had had to wait a few minutes for it, as he had locked it up in a drawer while he went to the inn, where the carriage was, to ask if Mrs Bertram was still in the town.

Mamma looked quite startled when she saw poor Mary all in tears, but Mary soon got happy again when she felt her own dear mamma’s hand clasping hers firmly. And then, when mamma had thanked the draper, she turned back to the confectioner’s again, to get the cakes to take home and to pay for them. Mary did not much want to go; she was afraid of seeing the rude boy and his mother again. But mamma told her she must try not to be so easily frightened.

“For, you see, dear, when you ran away in that wild way, I might not have been able to find you for some time, and think how unhappy it would have made me.”

Mary squeezed mamma’s hand very tight. She was beginning to see she had been rather silly.

“I won’t do like that again,” she said. “When I’m a big girl I won’t be frightened. But, please, mamma, let me *always* stay ’aside you when we go to shops.”

When they got to the confectioner’s, they found the young woman there very sorry about Mary having run away, as she felt she should have taken better care of her. The stout lady and her children were still there, and the lady was looking very ashamed, for the confectioner had been telling her that Mary was little Miss Bertram of the Priory—the Priory was the name of Mary’s home—and that Mrs Bertram would be very vexed. So the rude boy’s mother came up

with a very red face, and told Mary's mamma if they had only known who the young lady was, they would never have made so free as to disturb her. Mary's mamma listened gravely, and then she said, "I think you should teach your son to be gentle and polite to everybody, especially little girls, *whoever they are*. Of course I know he did not mean to hurt her, but she is accustomed to her brothers behaving very nicely to her at home."

Then she turned away rather coldly, and the children and their mother looked very red and ashamed, and just then the victoria came up to the door, with the two pretty bay horses, all so smart and nice. And mamma took Mary's hand to lead her away. But Mary pulled it out of hers for a moment and ran back to the boy.

"Please, don't be sorry any more," she said. "I were a silly little girl, but I don't mind now," and she held out her hand. The boy took it and mumbled something about "beg your pardon." And then Mary got up into the carriage beside mamma.

"I am glad you did that, Mary dear," she said; "I hope it will make the boy remember."

"And I *were* a silly little girl," said Mary, as she nestled up to her mamma.

They did not talk very much going home. Mary was rather tired, and I think she must have had a little nap on the way; for she looked all right again, and her eyes were scarcely at all red when they drove up to the door of Mary's own dear house. There were Leigh and Artie waiting for them; they had heard the carriage coming and they ran up to the door to be there to help their mamma and Mary out, and to tell them how glad they were to see them again.

"Tea's all ready waiting," said Leigh; "and, oh, mamma—we were wondering—nurse has put out a 'nextra cup just in case. *Would* you come up and have tea with us? Then we could hear all about all you've been buying and everything, for Mary mightn't remember so well."

"I don't think I'd forget," said Mary; "on'y we *have* had lotses of 'ventures. Doesn't it seem a long, long time since we started off after dinner? I *would* like mamma to have tea with us!"

Mamma could not resist all these coaxings, and I think she was very pleased to accept the nursery invitation, for it seemed to her a long time since she had seen dear Baby Dolly. So she told Leigh to run up and tell nurse she was coming, and then, when all the parcels were brought into the hall, she chose out some which she sent upstairs; but the parcel of cakes for tea she gave to Artie to carry up.

That was a very happy tea-party. There was so much to tell, and so much to ask about. Mary chattered so fast that mamma had to remind her that her tea would be getting quite cold and everybody would have finished before her if she did not take care. But Mary said she was not very hungry because of the afternoon luncheon she had had at the confectioner's; and that reminded her of what had happened there, and she told Leigh and Artie and nurse and Dolly—though I am not sure if Dolly *quite* understood—the story of the rude boy and how frightened she had been.

"Horrid cad," said Leigh; "I'd like to knock him down."

"He were much bigger than you, Leigh," said Mary.

"What does that matter?" said Leigh. "I'd knock any fellow down who was rude to my sister."

Mary thought it was very brave of Leigh to talk like that. She wondered if he would be vexed if he heard she had forgiven the boy afterwards.

"I think he was sorry," said mamma. "He had no idea Mary would have minded so much, you see."

"I cried," said Mary,—she felt rather proud of herself now for having had such an adventure,—"I cried lotses."

"I hope he didn't see you crying," said Leigh. "He would think you a baby and not a lady if he saw you crying."

"I leaved off crying when mamma came," said Mary; "but my eyes was reddy."

"You shouldn't have cried," said Artie. "You should have looked at him grand—like this."

And Artie reared up his head as high as he could get it out of his brown-holland blouse, and stared round at Dolly, who was cooing and laughing at him over nurse's shoulder, with such a very severe face, that the poor baby, not knowing what she had done to vex him, drew down the corners of her mouth and opened her blue eyes very wide and then burst into a pitiful cry. Artie changed all at once.

"Darling baby, kiss Artie," he said. "Sweet baby Artie wasn't angry with you."

But nurse told him he should not frighten Miss Baby. She was such a noticing little lady already.

"And I forgaved the boy," said Mary. "I shaked hands with him."

Nobody could quite see what this had to do with Artie and baby, but Mary seemed to know what she meant. Perhaps she thought that if she had "looked grand" at the boy, he would have set off crying like poor Dolly.

Then when tea was over and grace had been said—it was Artie's turn to say grace, and he was always very slow at his tea, so they had some time to wait—mamma undid the parcels that she had sent up to the nursery. The children all came round to see the things, and Mary was very pleased to be able to explain about them.

"I helped mamma to choose, didn't I, mamma dear?" she kept saying.

She was most proud of all, I think, about Baby Dolly's ribbons. And nurse thought them very pretty indeed, and so I suppose did baby, for she caught hold of them when Mary held them out and tried to stuff them all into her mouth. That is a baby's way of showing it thinks things are pretty; it fancies they must be good to eat.

"And my reins, mamma?" said Leigh at last; "when are you coming to my reins?"

He had been rather patient, considering he was a boy, for boys do not care about ribbons and sashes and those sorts of things, though he was very pleased with his own boots. So mamma looked out the parcel of his reins before she undid the tapes and cottons and buttons she had got for nurse.

"They are really very good reins," she said. "I told you we got them at the saddler's. They are much better and stronger than those you buy at a toy-shop."

Leigh turned them over in his hands and pulled them and tugged them in a very knowing way.

"Yes," he said, "they're not bad—not bad at all. In fact they are beauties. And what did they cost?"

"They cost rather dear," she said,—"dearer than you expected. But if you pay me two shillings, I will give you a present of the rest."

"Whew!" said Leigh, "more than two shillings. But they are first-rate. Thank you very much indeed, mamma."

"And you won't over-drive your horses or your horse, will you?" said mamma. "I suppose Artie will be your regular one, or do you mean to have a pair—Mary too?"

Leigh did not answer at once.

"I shall drive Artie sometimes, and Mary sometimes, if she likes," he said. "But I've, another horse too, better than them."

Mamma did not pay much attention to what he said; she thought he meant one of the gardener's boys or the page, with whom he was allowed to play sometimes, as they were good boys.

"And the p'ram-bilator?" Leigh asked. "When is it coming, mamma? and is it a very nice one? Does it go smoothly? and has it good springs?"

"I think it's a very nice one," mamma replied. She was pleased to see Leigh so interested about his little sister's carriage. "But it won't be here for some days—a week or so—as they have to change the linings."

"Oh," said Leigh to himself in a low voice, "all the better! I'll have time to break him in a little."

The next day, and every day after that for some time, Leigh was very busy indeed. He begged nurse to let him off going regular walks once or twice, because he had something he was making in the shed, where he and Artie were allowed to do their carpentering and all the rather messy work boys are so fond of, which it does not do to bring into the house. He was not "after any mischief" he told nurse, and she quite believed it, for he was a very truthful boy; but he said it was a secret he did not want to tell till he had got it all ready.

So nurse let him have his way, only she would not allow Artie to miss his walk too, for she did not think it safe to leave him alone with Leigh, with all his "hammering and nailing and pincering" going on. And I think nurse was right.

I wonder if you can guess what was Leigh's "secret"—what it was he was so busy about? He did not tell either Artie or Mary; he wanted to "surprise" them.

The truth was, he was making harness for Fuzzy and trying to teach him to be driven. He had begun the teaching already by fastening the reins to an arrangement of strong cord round the dog's body, and he was also making better harness with some old straps he had coaxed out of the coachman. He really managed it very cleverly.

It took him two or three days to get it finished, and in the meantime he "practised" with the cord. Poor Fuzzy! He was a big strong dog by this time, but still only a puppy. I am sure he must have wondered very much what all the tying up and pulling and tugging and "who-ho"-ing and "gee-up"-ing meant; but he was very good-tempered. I suppose he settled in his own mind that it was a new kind of play; and, on the whole—once he was allowed to start off running, with Leigh holding the reins behind him, trying to imagine *he* was driving Fuzzy, while it was really Fuzzy pulling *him*—he did not behave badly, though Leigh found "breaking him in" harder work than he had expected.

By the fourth day the "proper harness," as Leigh called it, was ready. He had got the coachman's wife, who was very fond of the children and very clever with her fingers, to stitch some of the straps which he could not manage to fasten neatly with boring holes and passing twine through, though that did for part. And as the coachman did not see that this new fancy could do any harm, he was rather interested in it too. So when it was all complete, and Fuzzy was fitted into his new attire, or it was fitted on to him, perhaps I should say, Mr and Mrs Mellor, and the grooms, and two or three of the under-gardeners all stood round admiring, while Leigh started off in grand style, driving his queer steed.

"If you had but a little cart now, Master Leigh," said one of the boys; "it'd be quite a turn-out."

"Yes," said Leigh, with a smile; "I mean to get to something like that some day. But driving with reins this way is how they often begin with young horses, isn't it, Mellor?"

"To be sure it is!" the coachman replied, as he went off, smiling to himself at the funny notions children take up. "The

very idea of harnessing a puppy." For Mellor had never been in Flanders, you see, nor in Lapland.

Chapter Twelve.

Leigh's Plan.

Ever since the day the children had waited for their father outside the Lavender Cottages—the day when it was settled that they were to have Fuzzy—the idea of training the dog to be driven, and making him draw the perambulator as he had seen Ned drawing the Perrys' old wicker carriage, had been in Leigh's head. That was why he was so interested about the new carriage for his little sister.

He was sensible in some ways. He knew it would be no use harnessing the dog into a cart or anything till he had accustomed him a little to being driven. That was what had made him think of buying reins. He had waited a good while too, till the dog was nearly full-grown and had grown pretty obedient to his voice and call. But when he heard that the perambulator was really to be bought, he thought to himself that it was quite time Fuzzy's "breaking-in" should begin.

For it was now late September. Baby Dolly was close upon her fifth "month-day," as the children called it, and growing so big and lively that nurse could scarcely manage to carry her any distance without feeling rather tired, as Dolly was very fond of sitting straight up and looking about her and giving little jumps and springs when Mary or the boys ran up to her. And "Fuzz," as Leigh generally called him—for he thought "Fuzzy" rather a girl's name—was a very big puppy indeed—so big and playful that, when he came galloping over the lawn to the children, Mary used to run behind nurse, if she was there, for fear of being knocked over.

It was fun and affection, of course, and when he stood still Mary would pat him and call him "dear Fuzzy," "poor old Fuzzy," quite bravely, but at the bottom, of her heart she was a little afraid of him. And though she did not like to say so to the boys, she often wished that he had stayed a roly-poly, soft, tumbling-about creature, as he was when she had first seen him—only a few weeks old.

But Leigh would not have liked that at all, of course.

Well, the driving-lessons went on, and thanks to Leigh's patience, of which he had a good deal when he chose, Fuzz became more manageable, as I said. After a while Leigh found an old remains of a little cart on wheels—it was really a sort of small dray which some of his young uncles had knocked together years ago for dragging wood on—which he managed to harness the dog to, to accustom him to feeling something behind him. Fuzz kicked and spluttered and ran away ever so many times; he did not like the rattling noise coming after him, but after a while he grew used to it and would scamper off quite merrily, and so fast that Leigh could scarcely keep up with him. That was the great difficulty—to make him go slowly.

But Leigh was not discouraged.

"It'll be all right," he thought, "when he feels he's pulling something heavier."

And still he kept it all a secret, except of course from Mellor and the outdoor servants, and they did not know anything about his plan for the perambulator.

It came, about ten days after it had been promised. Mary had been growing very impatient. She thought it was *never* coming, and even her mamma was on the point of writing to the place where she had ordered it, to ask why they were so long of sending it, when all of a sudden one afternoon it arrived.

Everybody admired it extremely. It was really a very pretty little carriage, and Baby Dolly liked it very much, to judge by the way she crowed and chattered in her own sweet baby language the first time she was tucked into it for a drive.

This was the very morning after it came. For it was luckily a fine, mild day, and the nursery dinner was made a little earlier than usual, so that Baby Dolly should have the best of the afternoon for the first trial of her perambulator; and Mary and the boys and the under-nurse and Fuzzy were all to go too.

Nurse had a holiday indeed! She began by pushing the new carriage herself, just to make sure that baby would not be frightened. But frightened—no, indeed; the little lady chuckled and crowed, and was as happy as could be. So then nurse let Leigh push it for a while, and then Artie, and then even Mary for a little bit, though not for very long, as, though it was beautifully light, it was tiring for her to stretch up her arms, and of course she was too small to see in front if the road was getting at all rough, or if there were stones or ruts to get out of the way of.

And then nurse told Emma, the under-nurse (I think I have forgotten to say that "Little Sarah" was not big enough to help with Dolly, so a new under-nurse had come), to push it for a while—not that Leigh and Artie were not most eager to do so, but nurse wanted to make sure that Emma pushed it carefully, for there are two ways of doing even such a simple thing as pushing a perambulator, though you might not think it. And Emma was rather a silly girl, though she was very good-natured.

"Now, we've *all* pushed it except Fuzzy," said Mary. She was dancing along holding nurse's hand and feeling very happy and safe. For, to tell the truth, she was often a little frightened of the doggie knocking her over if she was walking along alone or with only Artie. "Poor Fuzzy!" Mary was always very affectionate to Fuzz when she felt herself well protected; "don't you think, nursie, he'd like to puss it too? If Leigh made him walk like a bear,"—for walking like a bear was one of the tricks Leigh had taught Fuzz,—"on his two behind legs, and then put his two before legs on the

passing place; don't you think he could do it a little, nursie dear? And then we'd all have took turns?"

Nursie laughed at Mary's funny idea.

"I'm afraid Miss Dolly and the perambulator would soon all be in a heap on the road if Fuzzy was to have a try at pushing," she said.

And Fuzz, who always seemed to know when they were talking of him, came close to nurse and looked up wistfully in her face with his bright sweet eyes as if he would say, "I'm rather afraid so too."

Leigh gave him a pat.

"*Pushing* the p'rambulator," he said. "No, indeed. You know something better than that; don't you, Fuzz?"

And Fuzz wagged his tail as much as to say, "Yes, indeed; *Leigh* knows what I can do. But we'll keep our secret."

No one paid any attention to what Leigh said however; no one had any idea there was any secret to keep.

So the little party finished their walk very happily, and returned home greatly pleased with the new perambulator.

It was about a fortnight later that something happened which I must tell you about.

All this time Leigh kept on patiently with his training or "breaking-in" of Fuzz. Whenever he had a chance of getting off to the stables alone, for half an hour or so, he harnessed the dog to the remains of a cart that I told you of, and drove him up and down the paths. No one but the stablemen and the gardeners knew about it, and they only thought it was a fancy of the boy's and never spoke about it.

And Leigh told nobody—not even Artie—of what he had got in his head.

He kept saying to himself he wanted to "surprise" them all, and that if he told Artie every one would be sure to hear of it.

"And I must manage to try it first without nurse fussing," he thought. "She'd never believe it would do. She's so stupid about some things."

But at the bottom of his heart, I think he knew that what he was meaning to do was not a right thing for him to try without leave from the grown-up people, and that it was the fear of their stopping it much more than the wish to "surprise" everybody that made him keep his plan so secret.

So he said nothing, but waited for a chance to come.

And before long the chance did come. It does seem sometimes as if chances for wrong things or not-right things come more quickly and more surely than for good things, I am afraid. Or is it, perhaps, that we are more ready to catch at them?

Now I must tell you that Emma, the under-nurse, was not a very sensible girl. She was more taken up with herself and her dresses and chattering to whoever would listen to her than with her own work and duties; and she was very fond of calling nurse old-fashioned and fussy and too strict, which was not right. She spoke of her in that way to Leigh, and made him fancy he was too big a boy to be treated like a nursery child, which was very mischievous. But she was a good-natured girl, and she was what is called "civil-spoken" to nurse and to the other servants, so nurse hoped she would improve as she got older, though she found her lazy and careless very often.

Just about this time, unfortunately, poor nurse sprained her ankle. It did not make her ill, for it was not very bad and soon began to get better, but it stopped her going out walks for two or three days.

The first day this happened was one of the afternoons that Leigh had Latin lessons with a tutor, so only Artie and Mary went out a walk with Baby Dolly in the perambulator and Emma pushing it.

Nurse spoke a great deal to Emma about being very careful, and not going near the field where the bull was, and not crossing the little bridge which was soon going to be mended, and about several other "nots." And Emma listened to what she said, and that day all went well. Artie and Mary trotted along very peacefully, and now and then, when the road was smooth, Emma let them push baby for a little bit, and baby cooed and crowed when they talked to her. They went near the Perrys' cottage and they met all the children—Janie as usual carrying the baby, Comfort pushing the old wicker carriage with the two other babies, and staring away at the open book in her hand at the same time, so that Janie had to keep calling out every minute or two to warn her where she was going. Ned was not with them, that was the only difference. For Ned was beginning now to do a little work out of school hours.

The Perrys all came to a stop when they met the other party.

"How do you do?" said Mary and Artie politely. "How do you like our new p'ram-bilator?"

"It do be a beauty, Miss," said Janie.

Poor Janie looked tired and hot, though it was not a warm day; the baby was growing heavy.

"Law," said Emma, "I'd never carry that child if I was you. Why don't you put it in the cart and make one of the others walk?"

"Law" is not a pretty word; but Emma was not very particular when she was alone with the children.

"Comfort'd never get her reading done if she had to look after Sammy walking," said Janie. "And I'd have to push the carriage if the dear baby was in it."

"Where's Ned?" asked Artie. "And why doesn't he pull the carriage?"

Emma stared.

"Law, Master Artie—" she was beginning, but Janie, who did not seem at all surprised at the question, for of course she had seen Ned's attempts to make a horse of himself, answered quietly—

"It didn't do—not so very well, sir, and it gave me a turn, it did, to see Sammy and Bertie a-tumblin' about, and all but overturned. No, 'tweren't no good; so Ned, he's give it up."

"What a pity!" said Artie and Mary together, "isn't our p'ram-bilator nice, Janie?"

"'Tis indeed, the wheels *is* beautiful *and* the springs," said Janie, as she stood watching, while Artie pushed it up and down, to let her see how it went; while even Comfort took her eyes off her book for a minute or two to join in, the admiration. "And Miss Baby do be getting on finely," the little nurse-sister added.

"You've not come our way for a good bit, Miss," said Comfort to Mary. "It's a nice road past the cottages and on to the wood—so smooth, I can go on reading all the way. No need to look to one side nor the t'other."

And then the Perrys moved on, with a curtsy from Janie, which she managed with some difficulty on account of the fat baby, and a kind of nod from Comfort, as she let her eyes drop on to her book again.

That evening at tea, Mary and Artie told Leigh and nurse about meeting the Lavender Cottages children, and how tired poor Janie looked.

"Isn't it a pity Ned couldn't dror the carriage?" said Artie.

"*Draw*, not *dror*," said Leigh. "How vulgar you are, Artie. No, I don't see that it could do much good to Janie, for somebody'd have to drive, and so she'd still have the baby to carry. The big sister should take turns with her."

"Yes, indeed," said nurse. "That'd be much better than nonsense about harnessing boys. It's a wonder those children weren't driven into bits, that day you told us of."

"Oh, but Ned was so stupid," said Leigh. "He hadn't got proper reins, and he fastened the rope in a perfectly silly way. I could show him how to do it properly. In Lapland, you know, nurse, and in some other country, even dogs pull carts quite nicely."

"They must be a different kind of dog from ours then," said nurse. "I know dogs used to turn the spit with the meat to roast it before the fire, but they were a queer kind, and I suppose they were trained to it when they were little puppies."

"Yes," said Leigh, "that's it. It's all the training. It's no good unless you begin to teach a dog while he's a puppy."

He did not say anything more just then; but that evening he said to Emma that he was going out a walk with the little ones the next day, as he would not have any lessons that afternoon.

"I suppose nurse won't be able to go out to-morrow," he added.

"No, not till the day after, if then," said Emma. "But never mind, Master Leigh, I'll go any way you like to name, and we'll have a nice walk, if it's a fine day."

"I hope it will be a fine day," said Leigh.

And the next morning, quite early, before his lessons, he took Fuzz a regular "exercising" up and down the long avenue leading to the stables at the back of the house—cart and all—the dog had really learnt to go pretty well. But then a rough little wooden sledge, on wheels, is a very different thing from a beautiful new perambulator with a sweet baby sister inside it.

Chapter Thirteen.

Brave Janie.

At dinner that day there was some talk of nurse going out to walk with the children.

"Oh do come, nursie dear," said Mary. "It *are* so much nicer when you come too," and baby cooed up in nurse's face for all the world as if she were saying "do come," too.

"I'd like to, dearly," said nurse. "But I think I'd better rest my ankle one day more, and then I hope it will be quite well. I feel quite ashamed of having been so stupid about it."

"It wasn't *your* fault," said Artie. "It was the carpet's fault for being loose."

"And mine for not seeing it and getting it fastened," said nurse. Though really I think it was more Emma's fault, for she had charge of the passage where nurse had tripped and fallen.

"I think you'd much better wait another day," said Leigh gravely.

And nurse said to herself that Master Leigh was very thoughtful for his age.

But Leigh had a reason of his own for not wanting nurse to go out with them that day, and if he had let himself think about it honestly he would have seen that his dislike to nurse coming showed that he was not doing right. But all he would allow to himself was "Nurse is so fussy."

"If we could put you in the p'ram-bilator, that would be nice," said Mary. "But I'm afraid it wouldn't be big enough."

"Of course not, you silly girl," said Leigh rather crossly. He did not want the perambulator spoken of, for fear nurse should say something about not playing any tricks with it. But Mary stared at him. She could not understand why he was so cross.

It was again a very fine day for October. And as soon as they could be got ready after dinner the children set off for their walk.

"I'll follow you in a moment," said Leigh, as they were waiting at the side door into the garden while Emma got out the perambulator.

"If you go slowly down the drive I'll make up to you. I'm going to fetch Fuzzy."

Mary's face fell. She was frightened of the dog, you know, when nurse was not there for her to walk beside, for Emma only laughed at her. "I *wiss* poor Fuzzy wasn't coming," she said. "Rubbish," said Leigh, and then he said more kindly, "You needn't be frightened of him, Mary, you'll see. He can't knock you down to-day;" and then, as he ran off, he cried back to Emma, "If I don't catch you up in the drive, turn to the right. We're going round by the smithy and the Lavender Cottages—it's the best road for the p'ram-bilator."

No one paid much attention to what he said, or they might have wondered what he meant, for there were plenty of good roads for the perambulator. Mary kept as close as she could to Emma and baby, and every now and then she looked round over her shoulder for fear of Fuzz coming full bang upon her in his affection, and knocking her down. But till they had got some little way along the road there was no sign of him or of Leigh.

Suddenly there came a whoop and cry from behind them. Mary caught hold of Emma's skirt, and in another moment Leigh rushed past them, "driving Fuzz," he would have said, though it looked more like Fuzz dragging *him*. The dog had his harness on, and Leigh was holding the reins and shouting to him.

"I'm taking it out of him," he called out, "just to quiet him down. Doesn't he go well?"

It was certainly a comfort to Mary to see that Fuzz was not loose; and in a minute or two, when the pair came back again, running more slowly, she left off trembling and began to laugh a little.

"Doesn't Fuzzy go just like a little pony?" she said. "Hasn't Leigh taught him cleverly?"

Then Leigh showed off all he had trained the dog to do. He made him walk quite slowly, and then run, and then stop short when he called out "Woa-wo-a, now; gently, old man," till they all admired it greatly.

"He'd soon learn to pull a cart," said Emma.

"He *can* pull a cart, that's what I've been teaching him for," said Leigh. "He could draw the p'ram-bilator beautifully."

"Law!" said Emma, "could he now, really?"

"Of course he could," said Leigh, "as soon as we get into the lane I'll let you see. The road's nice and smooth there."

Mary clapped her hands. She thought it would be lovely. But Emma did hesitate a little.

"Are you sure it's quite safe, Master Leigh?" she said.

"Safe, of course it's safe," said Leigh. "But if you're afraid you can hold on behind just like you're doing now, and then you can stop us going faster than you like."

The lane, when they got into it, ran almost straight to the cottages. Leigh meant to pass them and come home by the smithy, for he wanted Yakeman to admire him driving Fuzzy. There was a hill to go down, as you may remember, from the cottages to Yakeman's, and I do not know how Leigh meant to manage there. But as things turned out he did not get so far as that.

The little party stopped when they had got some way down the lane, and Leigh began to fasten Fuzz to the perambulator. He had got everything ready—for he had secretly tried it before, and he had straps of the right length which he brought out of his pocket. Mary and Artie stood admiring his cleverness, but Baby Dolly was not pleased. She wanted to go on, and of course she did not understand what they were all stopping for. So she began to cry. Poor little girl, what else could she do?

"P'raps she's cold," said Mary. "It *are* raver cold standing still."

"Cold, Miss Mary, oh dear no," said Emma. "She's that wrapped up she *couldn't* be cold. But she's very fractious to-day; she was crying and fretting all the time nurse was dressing her. Nurse spoils her—if she were my baby I'd be a bit sharper with her."

"Poor Dolly—dear Dolly," said Mary, going up to her little sister and trying to sooth her. "Don't cry—Dolly's going to have a beauty drive and go *so* fast."

"Get out of the way, Mary," shouted Leigh. "We're just starting, don't you see?"

He held the reins in his hand and ran back behind the perambulator. Then he made Emma take her place as usual, holding the bar—not that there was any *need* for her, he said, but just to make quite sure of Fuzz not running away—they were a funny-looking party, Emma between the reins and Fuzzy wagging his tail in his hurry to be off. Dolly left off crying and stared about her, wondering what it all meant.

"Gee-up, old fellow," said Leigh, Emma giving a little starting push at the same time, and off they went, Mary and Artie at each side, breathless with excitement.

At first it seemed all right. They went slowly, and Fuzzy did nothing worse than stand still every minute or two, and look over his shoulder to see what was behind him. The first and second times he did this Leigh only called out, "All right, old fellow—gee-up then." But when it got to the third and fourth time Leigh grew impatient.

"Get on with you, you stupid fellow," he shouted, cracking the whip he held.

And poor Fuzzy, meaning no harm, not understanding what all the unusual noise and fuss were about, did the only thing he could—he *did* "get on." He started off, running as fast as he could, and that was pretty fast, for the carriage was very light and Emma was pushing—she could not have helped pushing as she was holding the bar and running. And for a minute or two she laughed so that she could not speak. The silly girl thought it was such fun. And seeing her laughing, Leigh thought it was all right and laughed too. But—on went Fuzz, excited by the laughter, and thinking *he* was doing all right, till—at the corner where the lane they were in crossed another lane or road, wider but much rougher, and full of deep cart-ruts—instead of keeping straight on he turned sharply round, for some doggy reason or other, and rushed, still at the same speed, along this road to the right.

"Fuzz," shouted Leigh, tugging at the left rein. "Fuzz, wo-a then, wo-a."

"Stop, stop," screamed Emma.

But it was no use; in another instant Emma, already panting with running and laughing, found herself flung off as it were, and Leigh, a moment after, lay sprawling at full length on the road, the reins torn out of his grasp, while Fuzzy in the greatest delight rushed on, on—the perambulator after him, swaying from side to side; and, oh dear, dear—sweet baby Dolly inside!

Mary and Artie were some little way behind, but when they came up, this was what they saw: Emma sitting on the road crying and rubbing her arm, Leigh tearing along as fast as he could go, and a small dark thing far in front of him, bumping up and down among the cart-ruts, and swinging from side to side, as if every moment it would tumble over, or else be broken to pieces.

Mary stood still and screamed. Artie ran on at once, shouting at the top of his voice, though I do not quite know what good he thought that would do. And then Mary ran after him and left off screaming, which was sensible. Indeed, I think both of them showed more sense than silly Emma, though she was grown up and they were little children. For what could be less use than to sit on the ground crying and rubbing her bruised arm?

But somebody else—somebody none of them was thinking of at all—showed the most sense of any one.

The Perry children were coming along a field-path at one side of the road—it was dry weather, and the path was pretty hard and smooth, so Comfort and the old wicker perambulator got on pretty well with Janie and the baby beside them of course—when the sound of Leigh's shouts came across the hedge. Janie had quick ears and still quicker wits.

"Someat's wrong," she cried, and she plumped the baby into her sister's arms. "Now hold he," she added, and for once Comfort had to leave off reading—indeed the flop of the baby made her book drop to the ground—and get it into her head that the care of her three baby brothers was *her* business for the present, while Janie flew to the gate, which she scrambled over or crept under, I am not sure which, in less time than it takes to tell it, and found herself in the middle of the road.



Coming nearer every instant.—p. 178.

Leigh was some little way off still; but nearer than he, and coming nearer every instant, was something else which made even Janie's stout little heart rise up to her mouth, as she afterwards said. It was the perambulator from the Hall, the beautiful new perambulator, banging and dashing along, dragged by something that looked just then very like a little wild beast instead of a well-disposed tame doggie. And yet it was only looks, for Fuzzy was in the best of spirits, quite pleased with himself, and thinking that Leigh's shouts only meant he was to go faster and faster.

But Janie had not time to think anything. She only saw that the perambulator was not empty; she only took in that it must be stopped. She would not have been frightened, even if she had thought the dog was mad, for she was very brave. But she knew that her voice would have no power over him, and she made her plan in a moment. Just as the wildly excited dog came close to her—luckily just then he was going pretty evenly—she threw herself in his way, which made him slacken his pace, and then, somehow or other, she got hold of the edge of the carriage, holding on to it with all her strength, and she was very strong for her size. And then—what happened exactly she could not tell—I fancy Fuzzy must have given a bound forward to get rid of this troublesome interruption to his grand race—but before she knew where she was they were all in a jumbled-up heap on the ground, Janie, Baby Dolly, perambulator, and dog—Fuzzy barking loudly; baby, Janie was thankful to hear, crying and roaring, but, as far as the small sister-nurse could make out, unhurt.

She had got her safely in her motherly little arms by the time Leigh came up. The first thing he did was to seize hold of the reins which had been dragging behind, for after a glance had shown him that the baby was in good hands, Leigh's next thought was for the new perambulator.

"She's not hurt?" he exclaimed.

"No, no, sir. I think not," said Janie. "She fell soft—right atop of me, Master Leigh. Hush, hush now, Miss Baby dear. Don't 'ee cry. There's Miss Mary a-coming along. Hush, hush, my dearie."

And in surprise at the strange voice, and pleased by the sweet tones, Dolly actually did leave off crying. She opened her eyes wide, and by degrees a smile—a real smile—crept out of her mouth, and brightened up all the little face, still shining with tears. So that when poor wee Mary, all out of breath, and white with fear for her darling sister, came up to the little group, Janie was able to say, while Dolly stretched out her hands in welcome—

"She's not hurt, Miss Mary, dear. She's not hurt."

Leigh by this time had unfastened Fuzz, and set the perambulator on its legs, or wheels, again. He was all trembling; and though it was not a hot day of course, the drops were standing out on his forehead. Wonderful to say, the perambulator was not broken or spoilt.

"Oh Mary," said Leigh. He could scarcely speak. "Oh Janie, I don't know how to thank you."

Janie opened her eyes. It had never come into her head that she had done anything to be thanked for. But she was, as I said, very sensible.

“Master Leigh,” she replied, “I couldn’t a’ done less—that’s nothing. But I can’t think how Mrs Nurse could a’ let you do such a thing.”

“Nurse is ill; at least she’s hurt her leg,” said Leigh. “It’s Emma that’s with us.”

“Then she oughter be ashamed of herself,” exclaimed Janie, as if she was nineteen and Emma ten, instead of the other way about. “What’s the good of a big person to look after children if she’s as silly as them. I beg your parding, Master Leigh, but this ’ere precious baby’s had a narrer escape, and no mistake.”

Janie was hot with indignation and fright.

“But you tried yourselves, Janie,” said Leigh, feeling rather small. “Ned harnessed himself to—”

“*That* was quite different,” said Janie. “And I told you the other day as it hadn’t turned out a good plan at all. I’m sure if I’d had any notion you were thinking of such a thing, I’d have—” she stopped, then went on again, “But you’ll never try such tricks again, now, will you, Master Leigh? And you’ll go straight to your dear mamma as soon as you get in and tell her all about it.”

“No, I’ll never try it again, I promise you. And of course I’d rather tell about it myself, Janie. You won’t, will you? They’d be making such a song of it all through the village.”

“Very well then, I won’t say nothing,” agreed the little woman. “And I’ll tell Comfort—she’s in the field there behind the hedge with the babies. I’ll see to it that Comfort says nothing neither.”

Then Janie put Baby Dolly tenderly back into her nest again, charging the children to stay close round her till Emma came up, “for fear the sweet little lady should be frightened again.” There was a vision in the distance of Emma slowly making her way to them, and Janie did not want to see her.

“I’ve a sharp tongue in my head, and I’d mebbe say too much,” she thought.

So she hurried back to her own charges, whom she found quite content; *the* baby sprawling on Comfort’s knee, and Comfort seated on the grass, late October though it was, buried in her book. There was no need to warn *her* to say nothing. She looked up with a start as Janie ran up to them.

“What have you been doing, Janie?” she said. She had no idea anything had been the matter!

Emma was very cross when she got to the children. She was vexed at her own arm being bruised, and began scolding Leigh as if he had done it all on purpose to hurt her.

“You said it would be as right as could be, Master Leigh,” she grumbled, “and how was I to know? *I’m* not going to be scolded for it, I can tell you.”

“You needn’t be afraid,” said Leigh, very proudly. “I’ll take all the blame on myself when I tell mamma.”

Then Emma changed her tone and began to cry.

“You’ll not really tell your mamma,” she said. “*Of course* I’d be blamed, and I’d lose a good place, and what my poor mother’d say I don’t know. It’d go near to break her heart, and she’s not well. Oh Master Leigh, you’ll not tell? There’s no harm done, and Miss Dolly’s none the worse, and we’ll never be so silly again. Miss Mary, my dear, do ask Master Leigh not to tell.”

Mary could not bear to see any one cry, least of all a big person. Her lips began to quiver, and she looked timidly at her brother.

“Leigh,” she began.

And Leigh too was very tender-hearted. But both of them, and Artie too, felt deep down in their hearts that however sorry they might be for Emma they were not doing right in giving in to her.

They did promise not to tell, however; and then the little party turned homewards in very low spirits, though they had such great reason for thankfulness that their dear little sister was not hurt.

They hardly spoke all the way; and Dolly, by this time, tired out by all her adventures, had fallen fast asleep.

Chapter Fourteen.

Happy Again.

It was two or three days after Fuzzy’s running away with the perambulator that nurse, who was now quite well again, came in to breakfast in the nursery with a grave face, and without, as usual, Baby Dolly in her arms.

“Where’s baby?” said Leigh; and Mary, who was deeply engaged with her bowl of bread-and-milk, looked up.

“Where’s Baby Dolly, nursie?” she said, in turn.

"In bed," nurse answered, "in bed and fast asleep. She's had a bad night, and she only fell really asleep when it was about time for getting up. So of course I didn't wake her."

"Is she ill?" asked Leigh; and both he, and Mary and Artie, looked at nurse so anxiously that she felt sorry for them.

"I hope not," she said. "I hope she'll be all right when she wakes up. The best and strongest of babies have their little turns. Don't look so troubled, my dears."

Just then Emma, who had had her breakfast before, came into the room, and was crossing to the door which led into the night-nursery, when she was stopped.

"I'll tidy the room myself this morning, Emma," said nurse. "I don't want any one to go in. Miss Dolly's not very well."

"She's been very cross this day or two, crying enough to make herself ill. You spoil her, nurse, that's what I say," said Emma, pertly.

Nurse made no reply, except to repeat her orders to Emma not to enter the bedroom.

As soon as breakfast was over, the three children—Artie and Mary with clean pinafores, and all with smoothed hair and nicely-washed hands—went downstairs as usual to the dining-room for prayers. But to their surprise their mamma was not there, nor was nurse. They did not wonder much about nurse, however, for they knew some one would have to stay beside baby in case she woke.

But to-day several things seemed strange and different from usual. Instead of going up to the nursery again their father told them they were all to go to the little study where Leigh and Artie did their lessons with their tutor.

"For baby must not be disturbed," he said, "and if you were all playing in the nursery the noise would go through to the other room."

"Mayn't I go up to the nursery, papa dear?" asked Mary. "Just me. I'd be *kite* quiet. I don't like to be away from nurse and baby," and her voice sounded as if she were going to cry. "And I don't know what to do when Mr Fibbets comes."

"Mr *Phillips*," said papa. "You're getting too big to talk so babyishly, Mary. And you mustn't be selfish, my dear. If you can play quietly in the nursery you can play quietly in the study, or perhaps I'll send Emma to take you out a little."

"I don't want Emma. I want mamma, and nurse and Dolly," said Mary.

She thought her papa was rather "c'oss," and she was not used to his being the least cross. And she was unhappy about baby; and deep down in her heart was a sort of fear she tried not to think about. Mary had never been so unhappy in all her life before.

The fear was not in *her* heart only. Leigh and Artie were feeling just the same. At first when they found themselves alone in the study they all three tried to pretend there was nothing the matter. They hid away the fear, and covered it up, and told it to go to sleep. But fears like that are very troublesome. They won't go to sleep; just as we think we have got them safely shut in and all seems still, up they jump again, and there they are knocking at the door, not only of our hearts, but of our *consciences*.

"You have done wrong," they say, "and wrongdoing brings trouble."

And after a while the two little brothers and their sister left off pretending. They sat down close together on the hearthrug and looked at each other.

"Leigh," said Artie, in a strange hushed sort of voice, "do you think Baby Dolly's *very* ill?"

Mary did not speak; but she looked up in Leigh's face, so that he turned his head away.

"How should I know?" he said roughly.

"You heard as much as I did. Babies are often ill."

But both the others knew quite well that he was just as unhappy as they were.

"Oh, Leigh," said Mary at last, her voice trembling, "do you think it can be 'cos of—" but here she stopped.

Leigh turned round sharply. His face was white, but still he tried to be angry.

"Why can't you speak out, you silly girl?" he said. "Why don't you say what you mean?—that I've made her ill by the tumbling out of the perambulator? Nonsense, she fell on the top of Janie Perry, and Janie said she came quite softly. How *could* it have hurt her?"

"I don't know," said Mary, but she spoke very sadly.

"There's was a little boy," began Artie, "wot fell out of a winder, and he jumped up and said he wasn't hurt, but then he was killed."

"What do you mean?" said Leigh. "How was he killed if he wasn't hurt?"

"I mean he died soon," said Artie. "P'raps it was the next day. He was hurt inside his head though it wasn't bleeding

outside.”

“And babies are so dellykid,” said Mary.

Leigh gave a sort of angry grunt, something between a sob and a scold. Certainly Mary and Artie were not comforting. But did he deserve comforting? It was true he had meant no harm at all to dear baby. He had thought it would be fun for her as well as for the others and himself—most for himself, I am afraid—if Fuzz could be taught to draw her carriage quite well, like the dogs papa had told them about. But, had it been right to do it secretly, without anybody’s leave? He had turned it and twisted it so in his mind that he had persuaded himself he only wanted to “surprise” everybody, for one reason; and for another, that nurse was so silly and fussy; and for still another, that there was no need to tease papa and mamma about every little plan for amusing themselves that he and the others made.

But now, somehow, none of these reasons seemed any good; they all slipped and melted away as if there was nothing real in them.

And then there was the second piece of concealment—the hiding about the accident. There was no good excuse for that. Leigh’s own first feelings had been to tell at once, and Janie Perry had trusted that he would. Why had he given in to Emma? Was it really out of pity for her and her mother; or was it partly—a good big “partly”—that he was afraid of being very much scolded himself? As he got to this point of his gloomy thoughts Leigh gave another groan; it was much more of a groan this time, as if he could not bear his own unhappiness.

Then, for he had covered up his eyes, he felt a little hand stealing round his neck—it was Mary.

“Oh, Leigh, dear poor Leigh,” she whispered. “I *are* so sorry for you, and I are so miderable.”

Leigh drew the trembling, quivering little creature to him, and left off trying to keep up. Artie crept near to them, and they all cried together.

Then Leigh started up.

“I’ll go and tell now,” he said, “now, this minute. It’s been all my fault, and I don’t care what Emma says, nor how I’m scolded. P’raps, p’raps, the doctor’ll be able to do something, even if her head is hurt inside the way that boy’s was.”

He kissed the two others and started off. He seemed away a long time; but, alas! when he came back there was no look of comfort or hope in his face. It was only very white, and his eyes very red.

“It’s no good,” he said, flinging himself down on a chair and bursting out crying. “It’s no good. That’s my punishment. Now that I want to tell I can’t.”

Mary and Artie could not understand.

“Was you too f’rightened, poor Leigh?” said Mary. “Shall I go?”

“No, no, it’s not about me. It’s this way. Papa’s gone, ever so long ago. He’s gone to the station, and I think he was going to see the doctor on the way. And mamma and nurse are shut up in the night-nursery with baby, not to be disturbed by *nobody*,” said Leigh, forgetting his grammar in his distress. “I saw Emma, but *she’s* no good, she’d only tell stories to keep herself from being scolded. But I do think she looks frightened about baby. Oh dear, what *shall* I do? Darling Baby Dolly, and it’s all my fault. I see it now;” and Leigh flung himself on to the floor and burst out sobbing again.

“Leigh, Leigh, poor Leigh,” said Mary and Artie together.

“Mr Fibbetts will be coming,” said Mary in a moment, “and then I’ll have to go out with Emma. Oh, I don’t want to go.”

Leigh looked up.

“Mr Phillips won’t be coming,” he said, “I forgot. Everything’s been so strange to-day. It’s Saturday, Mary. He doesn’t come on Saturdays. You shan’t go out with Emma if you don’t want. She’s a untrue bad girl; it’s a good deal her fault, though she’s not been half so wicked as me.”

“You’ve not been wicked, dear Leigh. You didn’t mean any harm,” sobbed Mary.

“And we’ve *all* been naughty for not telling,” added Artie.

“Oh, but what *are* we to do?” cried Leigh again. “The doctor’ll be coming and he won’t know, and p’raps he’ll give Dolly the wrong medicines with not knowing, and baby will get worser and worser. Oh, what *shall* we do?”

“I know,” said Mary, in a clear, decided voice, which made both her brothers look at her in surprise. “We’ll hide somewhere, so that we can jump out when the doctor passes and tell *him*. So then he must know what to do for Dolly. Where shall we hide, Leigh?”

Leigh stopped crying to consider.

“Near the lodge would be best,” he said. “The bushes are thick, and he must pass there. But it’s cold, Mary, and we can’t possibly go upstairs to get your things. Artie and I have got our caps and comforters in the hall. And if we left you here Emma would find you.”

"No, no," said Mary, dancing about in her eagerness, "don't leave me here, Leigh. There's shawls in the hall. Can't you wrap me up in one of them? I'll be *quite* good. I won't fuss about at all."

So it was settled. The three set off as silently as they could to the hall, where they caught up the best wraps they could find. Then they made their way through the big drawing-room, which opened into a conservatory, out by a side path to the drive.

Five minutes after they had left the study Emma came to look for them, but found the birds flown. She took no further trouble; for, to tell the truth, she was not sorry to keep out of the children's way; her own conscience was not at all at rest, and she had made up her mind to write to her mother asking for her to come home at once.

Though it was two miles to the village it did not take long to drive there, and Mr Bertram luckily caught Mr Wiseman the doctor just as he was starting on his rounds.



Mr. Wiseman, Mr. Wiseman, please stop.—P. 196.

Mr Wiseman was driving a young horse; he went well, but he was rather timid, and apt to shy when anything startled him. The lodge gates were open; as the children's papa had told the woman that the doctor would be coming, so he drove in without stopping. But, oh dear! Scarcely had he got a few yards up the avenue before there was a great fuss. The young horse was dancing and shaking with fear, and if the groom had not jumped down and got to his head more quickly than it takes me to tell it, who knows what might not have happened.

What had frightened him so?

Three funny-looking little figures had sprung out from among the bushes, calling out in eager but melancholy tones—

"Mr Wiseman, Mr Wiseman, please stop. Oh please stop."

These were Leigh and Artie, one with an old squashy wide-awake of papa's, that was much too big for him, the other with a cloth deer-stalker cap which made him look like a Laplander, for in their hurry they had not been able to find their own things.

And Mary, funniest of all, with a shawl mamma used on the lawn, all huddled up round her, and the fringes trailing elegantly behind. For half a minute the doctor thought they were gypsy children from the van on the common.

But then again came the cry—

"Oh, Mr Wiseman, *please* stay," and his quick eye saw that all the little faces were swollen and tear-stained. Something must be very wrong.

"The baby," he thought to himself, "poor little woman. Surely nothing worse has happened to her since I saw Mr

Bertram? They could never have sent the children to tell me—”

He jumped down, stopping an instant to pat his frightened horse. But he had not the heart to scold the children for startling poor Paddy so.

“What *is* the matter, my dear children?” he said kindly.

The children knew Mr Wiseman well, and were not afraid of him, still it was not easy to get the story clearly from them. The doctor saw he must be patient, and as soon as he heard baby’s name he felt that the matter might be serious, and by careful questioning he at last understood the whole. In his heart he did not feel very uneasy, for little Dolly’s father had told him in what way she seemed ill, and it was not the kind of illness that could have come from a fall. But to the children he was very grave, for he thought it most wrong of them, Leigh especially of course, not to have told exactly what had happened; and he thought, too, that the sooner the under-nurse was sent away the better.

“I don’t think,” he said, “I don’t think I need to tell you how wrong you have been. There is no fear, Leigh, of your ever trying anything of the kind again without leave. And even you two little ones are old enough to know you should not have kept the accident a secret. But I must hurry on to see poor baby as quickly as possible. Come back to the house now, for it is too cold for you to be standing about, and as soon as I can I will let you know how your little sister is. All you can do now is to be as good as possible, and give no trouble while she is ill, even if your mamma and nurse cannot be with you at all.”

With these words he sprang up into his dogcart again and drove off quickly to the house, the children gazing after him.

Then Mary burst into a sad fit of crying again. “Oh Leigh! Oh Artie!” she said. “Does you think Baby Dolly’s going to die?”

Leigh was very pale, and his eyes were still swollen and red, but he had made up his mind not to cry any more. He felt he was so much more to blame than the others that he wanted to try to comfort them.

“I hope God will make her better,” he said in a very low voice. “Please try not to cry, Mary dear. It makes me so very miserable. Let us go home now and wait quietly in the study till Mr Wiseman comes to tell us how baby is.”

Mary slipped her hand into Leigh’s, and choked down her tears.

“I’ll try not to cry,” she said. “But I can’t help thinking about if we have to be all alone with Emma, and she’ll be so c’oss. Do you think, p’raps, we won’t see mamma for a lot of days, Leigh?”

Leigh could only say he did not know, but he squeezed Mary’s hand tight.

“I’ll not let Emma be cross to you, Mary dear,” he said. “I’ll try to be very good to you, for it’s all my fault.”

Artie took Mary’s other hand, and they all three went back to the house. The study was just as they had left it—there was no sign of Emma, which they were very glad of. They felt chilly and tired, though they had walked such a little way, and they were glad all to creep round the fire again, and sit there waiting—oh so very, very anxiously, till they heard Mr Wiseman coming. For Leigh had told him they would be in the study.

It seemed a long time.

“I wonder if he’s *never* coming,” said Mary, more than once.

At last there came the sound of footsteps, quick and firm, running downstairs.

“There he is,” said Leigh, and he ran to the door which he opened and stood there listening. But strange to say the footsteps crossed the hall towards the front door, instead of turning down the passage to the study. Leigh could scarcely believe his ears—surely it *could* not be the doctor?

Yes it was—he heard his voice speaking to the butler in the hall. And then—before Leigh had time to run out and call to him, there came the sound of Mr Wiseman’s dogcart driving away as fast as it had come.

Leigh felt faint with disappointment. He came back into the room again, looking so white that Mary and Artie started up.

“He’s gone,” said Leigh, “gone without coming in to tell us.”

“Can it be that Dolly’s so ill he doesn’t like to tell us?” said Artie.

“P’raps he’s gone to get another doctor,” said Mary. “Peoples has two doctors when they’re very ill, nurse said. Oh Leigh, dear Leigh, I’m afraid I’m going to cry.”

Leigh did not speak. If he had, he would have burst out crying himself, I’m afraid. But just then—just when they were feeling as if they *could not* bear it any more, there came again the sound of some one hastening downstairs, a lighter tread than Mr Wiseman’s this time. And the footsteps did not cross the hall. They came quick and eager, one after the other, down the passages to the study. Then the door opened—and—some one stood there, looking in.

“My poor dears,” said a loving voice with a little tremble in it. And in another second somebody’s arms were round them all—it is wonderful how many children can creep into one pair of arms sometimes!—and they all seemed to be

kissing mamma, for of course it was mamma—and each other at once. And somehow—Mary could not remember how mamma told it them—they knew that there were good news. Baby Dolly was not going to be very ill!

It had nothing to do with the fall—but, till the doctor came, it was thought the little sister had got scarlet fever or measles, and that was why the children had been kept out of the nursery all the morning and not allowed to see the baby, or mamma or nurse who had been with her. For those illnesses are very easily caught.

But it was nothing so bad. It was only a little feverish attack, which would soon pass away if she was kept quiet and warm.

“You shall see her this afternoon, just for a minute or two,” said mamma. “I told the doctor I would come down myself to tell you the good news. And I am going to take you out a walk, so as to leave the nursery quite quiet.”

“Not with Emma?” said Mary. She was not sorry, but she was rather surprised.

“No, dear, not with Emma. You will not be with Emma any more, for I cannot trust her.” Leigh grew very red at this.

“Mamma,” he said, “then you can’t trust *me*.”

“Yes,” she replied. “I do trust you, for I know you have had a lesson you will never forget. Will you, my boy?”

“No, mamma, never,” said Leigh in a very low voice.

The walk was to the Lavender Cottages. Mamma had two reasons for going there. She wanted to thank Janie Perry for the brave way she had behaved; and she also wanted to ask Janie’s mother about a niece of hers, who she thought would make a nice nursery-maid instead of Emma.

It was a very happy walk; they all felt as if they had never loved mamma *quite* so much before.

And a few days later, when Baby Dolly had got quite well and was able to go out in her carriage once more, mamma came with them again for a great treat. And Fuzzy came too.

“Poor old Fuzzy,” said Mary, who was hopping along as merry as a cricket, feeling quite safe with mamma’s hand. “Poor old Fuzzy. He never *meant* to run away, did he, mamma? When Baby Dolly’s a big girl we’ll tell her she needn’t be frightened of poor Fuzzy—it’s only his play; isn’t it, mamma dear?”

The End.

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MARY: A NURSERY STORY FOR VERY LITTLE CHILDREN ***

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