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Author: Joanna H. Mathews

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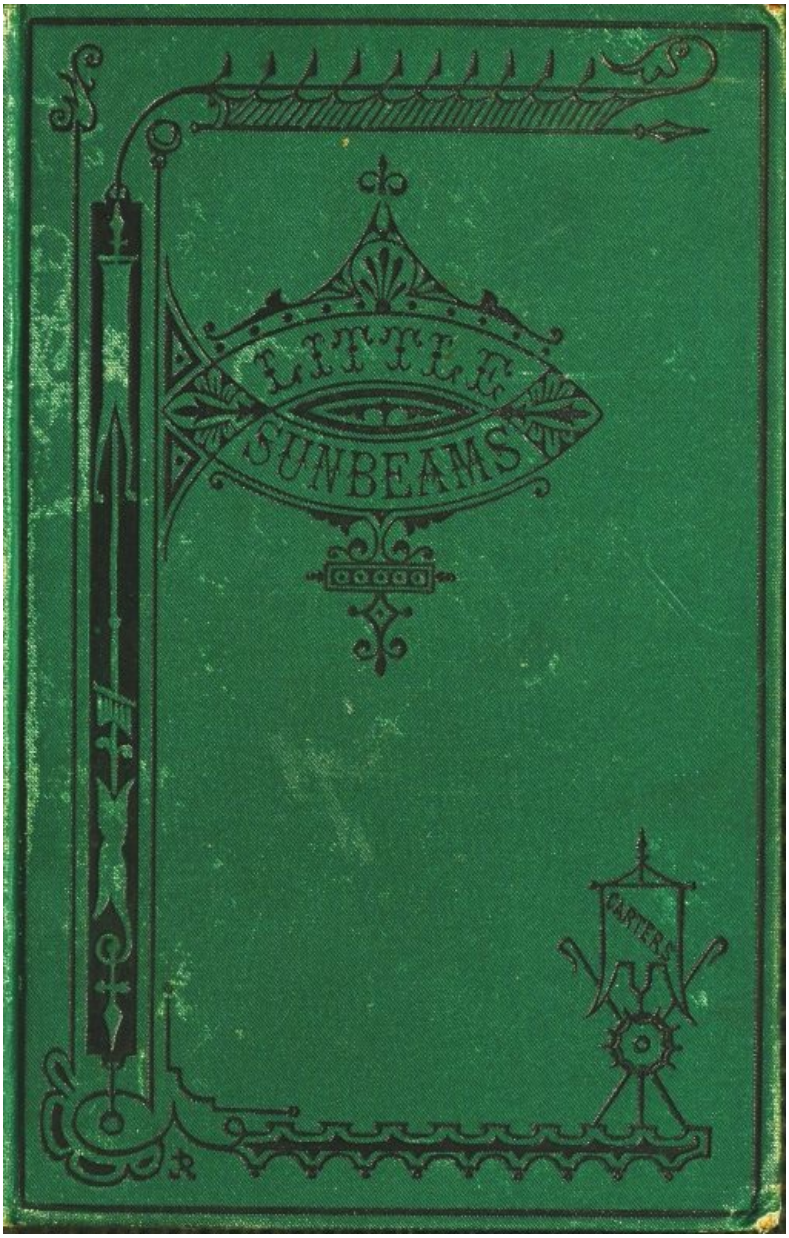

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Mamie's Watchword.

"THOU GOD SEEST ME."

BY

JOANNA H. MATHEWS,
AUTHOR OF THE "BESSIE BOOKS" AND THE "FLOWERETS"

NEW YORK:
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1882.

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MAMIE'S WATCHWORD.

I.

THE DOLL.

"MAMMA! can I have it? Can I, mamma? Buy it for me, buy it; will you, mamma?"

"May be so, dear. I will see about it."

"No, not may be; not see about it, mamma! I must have it, and I know you can afford it!"

The speakers were Mrs. Stone and her little daughter Mamie; the scene, Miss Ashton's broad, shady piazza, where, at this time, a little fair was taking place.

[10] And what was the object on which Mamie's heart was so set; for which she was begging so persistently, you will ask.

Why, just this.

A beautiful doll; a famous, much-talked-of doll, dressed as an infant by Miss Annie Stanton, for the fair; a doll eagerly desired by all the children present, as any little girl will readily believe when she hears that seldom has a doll had such an outfit.

Mamie's eyes were fixed eagerly upon her as she pleaded and entreated with her mother, holding fast to her hand, and almost dancing in her extreme anxiety to secure the much-coveted prize.

"Perhaps I can, dear," said Mrs. Stone's rather languid voice, as she looked smilingly down at her little daughter; "perhaps I can afford it; but you know, Mamie, that the doll is to be sold to whoever shall offer the highest price for her."

[11] "Well, *you* offer the highest price for her, mamma; do, oh, do! Offer a great deal more than any one else, so I shall be sure to have her. I want her so!"

"But it is not to be known what each one offers till the fair is over, Mamie," said her mother; "then, whoever has said they will give the most, is to take the doll."

"Ask Miss Stanton to tell you," pleaded Mamie.

Mrs. Stone shook her head.

"That would not be fair, Mamie; and Miss Stanton would refuse to tell if I asked her. I will make an offer for the doll, but you will have to take your chance with the rest, my darling."

Mamie was so little used to any opposition or contradiction from her over-indulgent mother that she did not know how to meet it; and, though it was made thus plain to her that it might not be within her mother's power to give her the doll, she felt as though the possibility of disappointment were more than she could bear, and as if it would be altogether mamma's fault if the longed-for toy did not fall to her share.

[12] The eager face clouded over, a frown gathered between her eyes, and an ugly pout upon her lips.

Oh, if little children who like to appear well only knew how such pouts and frowns disfigure the faces which God has made to be so pleasant and so fair, they would surely beware how they let Discontent set his hateful mark upon them!

"But I want it so; and I must have it," Mamie muttered fretfully.

"Yes, dear; we shall see," was Mrs. Stone's answer, as she went forward to the table where the baby doll lay in her glory.

"Tell me what you are going to give," said Mamie, as her mother bent forward with a smile, and whispered her offer to Miss Stanton.

"Ah! but that is a secret, Mamie," said the young lady, drawing forth the paper on which she wrote the names of would-be purchasers with the sum each one proposed to give; and putting down Mrs. Stone's, and the amount she had offered for the doll. "No one is to be told till this evening."

"Did you offer the *most*, mamma?" repeated Mamie, upon whose mind it seemed impossible to impress the fact that no one would know this till the appointed time. [13]

"I doubt if any one will give more than I will," said Mrs. Stone, who thought that she had really offered more than the value of the doll, as indeed perhaps she had done, so anxious was she to gratify her little daughter.

Mamie's face cleared a little.

"I do want it so," she said less fretfully, but still with much energy in her tone.

"Yes, I believe the children all do," laughed Miss Annie Stanton; "at least, I can answer for several, Maggie and Bessie among them."

"I don't believe anybody wants it so much as I do," persisted Mamie. "I've been thinking about it and thinking about it till I feel as if I could not bear to give it up. Oh, I must have that doll, I must!"

Somebody who was passing paused at her side as she spoke, and turning her eyes from the doll, they met those of Miss Ashton fixed rather anxiously upon her. Mamie's color deepened, and she looked a little ashamed, for she hardly knew herself how much she valued the good opinion of her teacher, and now it seemed to her that her last speech had been rather obstinate and selfish. [14]

"I mean if I could have it quite fairly, Miss Ashton," she said, as if in answer to the lady's look, for she had spoken no word.

"Of course," said Miss Ashton, smiling; "we would not believe you wished to do what was unfair, even to gain the doll, Mamie."

"No," answered Mamie half reluctantly; "but you can't think how much I want it, Miss Ashton. I'm sure none of the others care as much as I do about it."

"I do not know about that," said Miss Ashton. "Look at Belle, Mamie. How do you think she feels?"

Mamie turned and looked at Belle.

Her little schoolmate stood beside the doll, quite absorbed in regarding its beauties,—not that they were new to her, for she had watched the progress of its magnificent wardrobe from the very commencement,—her eyes wandering from one pretty trifle to another with longing, almost loving, interest; her fingers touching them now and then, but so daintily and so carefully that there was no fear they would come to harm through her handling. Miss Stanton had found it necessary to warn off more than one little pair of hands that day, lest they should mar the splendor of that wardrobe, or its mistress; but there was no need of this with Belle, so gently and delicately did she smooth and touch them. Her face was very wistful as Mamie looked at her, showing plainly that her desire for the beautiful doll was quite as great as Mamie's own, and that her disappointment would be quite as severe if it did not fall to her lot. [15]

Mamie watched her for a moment, and then, leaving her mother's side, walked slowly over to the corner of the table where Belle stood.

"Isn't she lovely?" she said, meaning the doll.

"Yes," answered Belle. "I should think she is! Oh, I want her so! Don't you, Mamie?" [16]

"Indeed, I do," said Mamie with quite as much emphasis as Belle had used. "Indeed, I do."

"But I don't s'pose you want her as much as I do," said Belle; "least I don't s'pose you need her so much."

"Why not?" asked Mamie, half resenting such a supposition.

"'Cause you have your little sister to play with," said Belle, "and I have no sister, nor any mamma to play with me," she added with a half-smothered sigh.

That appeal seldom failed to touch the hearts of Belle's playmates and companions; the child's longing for her lost mother was so great, her sense of loneliness, at times, so pitiful; and the years which had passed since her mother's death seemed to have little or no power to weaken these in her loyal little heart.

Mamie stood silent. The doll was not yet hers to give up; but she now had a feeling as if she [17]

ought to wish that Belle, rather than herself, should be the fortunate possessor.

"I b'lieve if I had a little sister I should not care so much about dolls," continued Belle, with an air of deep consideration; "but this doll does seem so very *real* and live; doesn't she, Mamie?"

Mamie assented, with a half impatient, though unspoken wish that Belle did not care so very much about the doll.

"Belle," she said, "if I do have her, I will let you play with her a great deal; and sometimes I'll let you take her to your own house, if you'll be careful of her."

Belle shook her head.

"That wouldn't be like having her for my very own, Mamie; I'd like to make believe that she was my sister if I had her, she's such a very real doll."

"S'pose none of us have her; but somebody who is a stranger to the school," said Lily Norris, who had just drawn near, and who easily guessed what the other children were talking about. [18]
"Wouldn't that be a shocking occurrence?"

"Yes," said Belle, giving a long sigh at the possibility of such a catastrophe. "Shocking! But we'll have to bear it, perhaps."

"Belle!" called Bessie Bradford from the other end of the piazza where she stood behind the flower-table; "Belle, how long you've been away from our table!" and recalled thus to a sense of her duties as saleswoman, Belle ran back to her post, which she had been tempted to quit for a closer view of the coveted doll, so often seen, but of whose perfections she never tired.

"I hope Mr. Powers will be the one to give the most for the doll, so Belle can have it," said Lily to Mamie, when Belle had left them.

"Don't you want it yourself?" asked Mamie.

"Yes," answered Lily; "but I think I'd 'most rather Belle would have it than any one. She seems to feel as if it would be a kind of company for her; and she's very lonesome sometimes. She don't [19]
have such large families as we do, you know; nothing but herself and her papa. Yes, I think I would rather Belle should have it than to have it myself."

Mamie felt that she could not make up her mind to be as generous as Lily, were the opportunity offered to her; and still she wished that she could be so. Lily was not "one bit selfish," she saw; neither was Belle, spite of her intense desire to possess the doll, at all inclined to be jealous or ill-tempered about it, as Mamie felt she might be herself if another child carried off the prize.

"Belle used to fret and cry like every thing if she didn't have what she wanted," she said to herself; "but she doesn't now. I wonder why;" and again there came a disagreeable consciousness to Mamie that she had not improved in this respect as much as her little schoolmate.

The excitement and anxiety respecting the doll increased rather than lessened as the day wore [20]
on and the fair drew near its close. Every papa and mamma, grandmamma, uncle, or aunt, who came in, was introduced to the young lady, and besought to "offer a whole lot for her."

But none were as eager as Belle and Mamie, though the former did not show the impatience Mamie had displayed. Her papa was seized upon the moment he entered the fair, it is true; and begged to offer so much for the doll that he should be sure to gain it for his little daughter; but she did not insist that she *would* have it, as Mamie had done, or worry and fret her father.

And somehow, she scarcely knew why, this seemed to keep Mamie a little in check. It really appeared as if Belle, lonely little Belle, needed the doll more than she did. True, Belle had "lots of toys," but so had she; and then she had a baby sister at home, and Belle had none, and "no mother;" and Mamie really caught herself wondering if she could resolve to wish that Belle, rather than herself, might have the doll, and if she ever could be so generous as to give it up to [21]
her if it were in her power to do so.

The day passed on, evening came, the fair was drawing to its close, having proved a most triumphant success, and the time for announcing the name of the doll's purchaser had arrived. This was proclaimed by Mr. Stanton's voice from his sister's table at the end of the piazza, and instantly every little saleswoman had deserted her stand, and they all flocked to the place of interest.

"I hope it is you, papa; oh, I hope it's you! I could almost pray it might be you," said Belle, holding fast to her father's hand, and squeezing it tight in breathless expectation, as all waited to hear the name of the happy owner.

Mr. Powers smiled down at her rather sadly. He could not help a feeling of amusement, and still he did not like to see her so eager, so excited over that which might prove a disappointment.

Mamie, who stood near, watched her, too; curious, despite her own interest in the grand affair [22]
of the day, to see what Belle would say and do if another than her papa should prove to be the munificent purchaser.

Mr. Stanton took the list from his sister's hand, and casting his eye over it, proclaimed aloud

that Mrs. Benjamin Howard had offered the largest sum for the doll, and hence it was hers. This was not Gracie Howard's mamma, but her grandmamma; but still each young hearer felt sure that the prize would be bestowed upon Gracie or one of her little sisters. For whom else could Grandmamma Howard want it?

When Mrs. Howard's name was announced, Belle's face wore, for a moment, a look of blank and utter disappointment, and Mamie's was not more pleased. But still the latter kept her eye on Belle, and it seemed as if it only needed a display of temper from her to produce the same from Mamie.

But that did not follow. Choking back her sobs, and dashing some bright drops from her eyes, [23]
Mamie saw her raise her face towards her father, and say some words which did not reach her own ear; saw Mr. Powers smile tenderly down on his little daughter as he answered her, and presently Belle was smiling and bright again.

Mrs. Stone was agreeably surprised that her own little spoiled child made no loud outcry over her disappointment. It is true that Mamie could not or did not refrain from a pout and a fretful "I declare, it's just too bad! I wanted it so, and—and—so did Belle."

And she was half inclined to feel resentful towards kind old Mrs. Howard, and to think she had no right to have purchased the doll; and later, when Maggie and Bessie came to her and said,—

"Mamie, we feel that it would be only taking a polite interest in Mrs. Howard for us all to go and congratulate her on having the doll," she refused to join her companions in doing so.

But when she saw them all, even Belle, going up with cheerful and pleased faces to where the [24]
dear old lady sat, she felt ashamed to be left out, and fell into the ranks, standing by while Lily Norris delivered herself of the following speech, composed on the spur of the occasion by Maggie, who was too shy to speak it herself, and so begged Lily to be spokeswoman.

"Dear ma'am: while we have to mourn for ourselves, we have also to rejoice for you, and to congratulate you because you have the doll; and we do it with all our hearts, 'cause you have been so kind and good to us about the fair."

This little oration was pronounced by Lily without the slightest embarrassment or faltering; for, although not conceited, she was a self-possessed little monkey, and now she felt that the credit of the performance was due to Maggie, and not to herself.

And lest there should be any mistake on this head, she added, almost in the same breath with the concluding words of the speech, "The praise of making that up is Maggie's, not mine;" and [25]
retired within the ranks of her schoolmates.

Their congratulations were received by Mrs. Howard with much pleasure, and by all such as heard them with some amusement; after which a farewell look was taken of the famous doll, who was now carried away by her owner.

Mamie was petted and made much of by her not over-wise mother, because she bore her disappointment so well, for it was something so new to see her conduct herself in such a peaceable and sensible manner when she was crossed in any way, that Mrs. Stone was surprised as well as pleased.

Mr. Stone, too, and even her brother Walter, had each his word of praise for Mamie as they drove home; and she really felt herself quite a heroine, because she had not cried and fretted like any baby.

But in spite of this consciousness of superior virtue, which was all the more pleasing because it was somewhat of a novelty, Mamie felt that Belle had been, to use her own words, "even better" [26]
than she had. Belle had not shown even a shadow of sulkiness or ill temper; and yet her heart had seemed to be set upon the doll even more than Mamie's own.

"Belle is always so good now," she said to herself, "and yet she used to be so spoiled, and to be provoked if she did not have every thing she wanted, and cry about it just—just like me. I wish I could grow as good as she is now. Everybody says she has improved so. I wonder how she does it. Some time I'll ask her."

Such were Mamie's thoughts and resolutions as she lay in her bed that night, and she dropped off to sleep on this last.

The opportunity for putting it in practice came sooner than she had supposed probable; for it was vacation, and she did not expect to see Belle at school every day, as was usual.

II.

HOW BELLE DID IT.

"WHY, Belle! Is that you?"

"Why, yes, Mamie! Is that you?"

These very unnecessary questions were put by the two little schoolmates as they stood facing one another within the saloon of the drawing-room car attached to the train which was on its way to Boston.

There certainly could be no doubt in the mind of either that the one was Belle and the other Mamie; and the above exclamations were only due to the surprise felt by each one at the sight of the other.

"Yes, it is I," was Mamie's answer. "Where are you going, Belle?" she questioned in the next breath. [28]

"To Netasquet," replied Belle; "and Lily Norris is there now."

"Why, I am going there too!" exclaimed Mamie, in a delighted voice; "all of us are,—papa and mamma, and all the boys, and Lulu and me. How very fortunate, Belle, that so many of us are going there together! Won't we have nice times?"

"Um—m, well, maybe so. Maggie and Bessie are not going there," said Belle in a tone which told that she thought all pleasure questionable in which her last-named two little friends did not share.

"They've gone to Newport, haven't they?" said Mamie.

"Yes, their papa has bought a house there, and now they'll go there every summer. Papa and I are going to make them a good long visit by and by; but first we have to go to Netasquet."

Belle said this with a sigh, as if even the prospect of the "good long visit" could scarcely console her for the present separation from Maggie and Bessie. [29]

"Who are you with?" was Mamie's next question.

"Papa and Daphne and Uncle and Aunt Walton," answered Belle.

"Oh! and Ma—bel?" said Mamie, following the direction of Belle's eye, and seeing the head of her little cousin, Mabel Walton, peeping out from the door of a compartment at the end of the car.

"Yes. You don't seem very rejoiced about Mabel," said Belle, who had noticed the tone in which Mamie uttered the last words,—a tone expressive of any thing but pleasure.

"An' no wonder," muttered old Daphne, Belle's nurse, who stood behind her young mistress; but Mamie, thinking it as well to change the subject of conversation, only said,—

"Don't you want to see my little sister Lulu, Belle?"

"Yes," answered Belle with alacrity, and would have followed Mamie at once to that part of the saloon where her friends were seated, if Daphne had not interfered, saying,— [30]

"You just come back to your pa, honey. De hosses done pullin' us now, and dey're gwine for put to de injine, and dere'll be a screechin' an' a shakin' an' a jerkin' fit to knock de bref out of yer. 'Sides, I've foun' out it's best to stick close to yer pa when we're trabellin' roun'. Come to lose sight of him, 'taint easy sayin' what'll become of us."

And with a fearful recollection of having been "gone off with" by the cars on one occasion, when she had been separated from her papa, Belle rushed back to the compartment of her own party, and, in dread of such a catastrophe occurring again, clung to him till the train was speeding on its way. Then she felt safe; neither she nor papa could leave the cars while they were rushing on at this rate.

But after some time, just as she was beginning to tire of looking out of the window, and watching the rapidly changing scene without, Mamie's face showed itself at the open door of the compartment; and having nodded in her own free and easy way to the party in general, she said to Belle's papa,— [31]

"Mr. Powers, couldn't Belle come with me to see our Lulu?"

Mr. Powers consented, finding that his little daughter wished to go, and Belle, slipping from his knee, took Mamie's outstretched hand, looking back, however, at her Cousin Mabel.

"Mabel can come too if she likes," said Mamie; but Mabel, feeling that there was a want of cordiality in the invitation, plumply and poutingly refused it; upon which Mamie looked rather relieved.

Mabel and Mamie were never the best of friends; each one called the other "a horrid child," "selfish," "hateful," and other such uncomplimentary names; not always in one another's hearing, it is true; but Mamie knew pretty well what Mabel thought of her; and Mabel, on her side, felt that Mamie regarded her with no friendly eye.

Some little readers may know the reason why; others may wish to ask it. [32]

It was this:—

Both were spoiled, selfish children, allowed to do pretty much as they pleased, and each one so accustomed to having her own way that they were almost sure to clash and quarrel when they were thrown together. Out of school, that is; in school Miss Ashton's authority and the peace-making efforts of their little classmates kept matters pretty smooth; but in their play-time, or when they met one another elsewhere, there was apt to be some falling out which each always declared to be entirely the fault of the other. Mabel, a quiet child, to whom words did not come easily, would generally relieve her feelings by "making faces" at Mamie, in which ugly practice she had become quite an adept; but Mamie had a sharp little tongue of her own, and put no check upon it if she chose to say biting or taunting things to Mabel.

So now you will understand the reason of Mamie's dissatisfied "oh! and Ma—bel?" when she heard of whom Belle's party was composed. Probably Mabel was not much more pleased when her cousin told her whom she had met without in the saloon. [33]

But Belle, who was at peace with Mamie, and who was extremely fond of babies and very little children, was only too glad to accept the latter's invitation, and go with her to play with her little sister.

Lulu, a bright, cunning child nearly three years old, soon made friends with Belle, and graciously received all the petting and coaxing that were lavished upon her.

But, pet and darling though she was, and though Mamie seemed both proud and fond of her, Belle could not but perceive that Mamie domineered over the little one, and sometimes needlessly contradicted or crossed her. Sometimes Lulu would take such things quietly; at others she would resist or fret, thereby making a disturbance, and annoying those about her.

Belle noticed all this, though she made no remark; but Mamie did not fail to perceive that she looked at her once or twice with wondering disapproval, when some petty act of tyranny or selfishness showed itself towards the little sister. [34]

And once, although Belle meant no reproof, Mamie felt reproached and ashamed.

For Mrs. Stone had given to each of the three children a cake. Mamie's and Belle's were alike, being the only two of the kind that the stock on hand afforded. Lulu's was quite as good if she could have thought so; but it did not strike her in that light, and she clamored for "a tate lite Mamie's."

"There are no more, my darling. Change with her; will you not, Mamie?" said her mother.

But no; Mamie, too, fancied her own cake the best, and she flatly refused to exchange with her sister, who sat upon papa's knee, holding the despised cake at arm's length, and regarding it with a comical expression of displeasure. Lulu put up a grieved lip at this, and would probably have burst into a loud cry, for there is no denying that she, too, was somewhat over-petted and spoiled; but Belle stepped forward and put her own cake in the baby's hand, taking the rejected dainty in exchange. [35]

"That is a kind, unselfish little girl," said Mr. Stone; "but are you sure you like that cake quite as well, my dear?"

"I can eat this one quite as well, sir," answered Belle, too truthful to say that she did really like the one as well as the other, and then added, "Lulu is so little, sir, I s'pose it makes more difference to her than to me."

She did not look at Mamie, nor did her manner seem to throw any blame on her; but the latter did feel thoroughly ashamed to think that a stranger should yield that which she had refused to give up for the sister over whom, at times, she made so much ado; and she ate her cake with very little real enjoyment. At first, too, she felt rather provoked with Belle for being more unselfish than herself; but presently that feeling passed away, and she looked at her with admiration, as she thought, "She is better than I, a great deal better." [36]

For spoiled though she was, and at times extremely perverse, fretful, and selfish, there was much that was good in Mamie Stone; and one of her best qualities was that she was always quick to see and acknowledge what was worthy of praise in others, and she was also honest with herself, and ready to confess her faults.

But then the trouble was that she was too often satisfied with allowing that she had been wrong, and took little or no pains to correct herself, and to strive against such naughtiness for the future.

Of late, however, Mamie had felt the wish to be a better and more amiable child; and she would often please herself with imagining how she would grow less selfish and exacting, more willing to give up her own will to that of others, more obedient and respectful to her parents and elders.

But when the time arrived for these good resolutions to be put in practice they always seemed [37]
to fail her; temptation came in her way, some small trifle crossed her, and she saw herself, her own wilful, pettish, perhaps disobedient little self, not one whit improved by all those good resolutions and delightful dreams of the wonderfully good child she had intended to become.

Still she did honestly wish to do better; but she did not seem to know the right way to set about this; perhaps she had not a good motive; perhaps it was from the desire to have people say what a good girl she had become; how much she had improved; to receive such praise as she often heard bestowed upon some of her young companions,—Belle for instance.

"A kind, unselfish little girl," her father had called Belle; and Mamie would have been very much pleased to hear papa say that to her; but he never did,—and why? Because she never deserved it. Mamie felt that, although it did vex her that it was so. And she would really like to [38]
deserve it, she thought.

"But I never can remember in time," she said to herself. "I wonder how Belle does it. People used to say she was spoiled when she first came to this country, and knew Maggie and Bessie and all of us, and went to Miss Ashton's school; and now every one says she is so good and sweet; and so she is too. And she has a right not to be so good as me, too, I s'pose, 'cause she has no mother, and her father and old Daphne do spoil her dreadfully, every one knows that."

If "spoiling" meant indulgence, Belle certainly had her share of that; but, only child and motherless though she was, it was not the weak and foolish yielding to every whim and temper which had nearly been the ruin of poor Mamie's mind and character, and which were fast doing their own ill work even with little Lulu's sweeter and more docile disposition.

"I'm going to ask Belle how she does it," Mamie said again to herself; and saying this recalled [39]
to her mind that she had made the same resolve on the day of the fair; but until now she had never had the opportunity to carry it out.

Now, ever since that time, Mamie had not ceased to plume herself on her good behavior on the occasion, and her mamma had bestowed upon her praise enough to turn half a dozen little heads.

So, her mind full of this, Mamie began the conversation in this manner.

"Weren't we good that day, Belle?"

"What day?" asked Belle, surprised, as she had reason to be, at this sudden reference to a matter she had well-nigh forgotten.

"Why, *that* day; the fair day," answered Mamie; "were we not good?"

"Oh, yes," said Belle, still rather surprised; "every one was very good; and we made such a lot of money for Jessie and her grandfather. It was all very nice."

"But *us*, *we*, you and I, I mean," persisted Mamie. "Were we not good about the doll?"

"Well, yes, I s'pose so," said Belle, her great black eyes fixed wonderingly on Mamie. "But I [40]
don't know if we were any better than all the rest, and I think maybe I was not so good; for I was real provoked, at first, that I could not have it, and it was very hard work for me not to cry. But, do you know, Mamie, I think now I am glad Mrs. Howard had it, and gave it to Nellie Ransom, 'cause Nellie does not have so many toys and pretty things as most of us children in the school, and she was so very pleased to have it."

"Um—well, I don't know about that," said Mamie, reflectively. "Mamma says I behaved beautifully about that doll, and the next morning she took me to Bruner's, and let me choose the prettiest one that was there; but it wasn't so lovely as *that* one; but I don't think I'm such a mountain of goodness as to be so very glad Nellie had it instead of me. I'd 'most as lief *you* had had it as to have it myself, Belle."

"Oh, thank you, dear!" said Belle, flushing with pleasure, and kissing her playmate with as [41]
much gratitude as if she had really bestowed the doll upon her.

"I would," repeated Mamie, feeling more and more virtuous; "and I do think that you were real good. Tell me how you do it, Belle;" and she lowered her voice and drew closer to Belle, so that no one might overhear her.

"Do what?" asked Belle, more and more mystified by Mamie's obscure manner of expressing herself.

"How is it that you try not to be—well—not to be spoiled—or—or—selfish—or to stop yourself when you feel like being naughty. For you do try, Belle, I know; and I would like to, too, and to have people say I try to cure myself and am good; but every time I make up my mind, I will go

and forget, and am naughty again, and then it is too late."

"But I'm *not* always good," said Belle; "sometimes I am quite naughty, though I do know better than I used to. But you see, Mamie, papa is always sorry then, and that helps me to remember about being obstinate or selfish or naughty. I don't like to grieve papa, so I have to try to be good, so as to keep him as glad as I can." [42]

"Is that the reason?" said Mamie. "Well, I like to please my papa and mamma too; but then it is such a bother, and I cannot remember always."

"Well," said Belle, solemnly, and with the air of one giving advice in a grave matter, as indeed she was; "there's another thing that might help you more than that if you could think about it, Mamie. Bessie put me in mind of it. She said it always helped her when she felt provoked, and felt like being in a passion with any one; and it does help me to be good. It is remembering that our Father in heaven sees us all the time, and knows all the naughty things we do, whether they are much naughty, or only a little naughty; and what He thinks about it."

"Oh, yes," said Mamie, slowly, as if the thought had struck her for the first time. Presently she added: "Belle, do you suppose God noticed just now when I wouldn't give Lulu the cake?" [43]

"Yes, of course He did," answered the little Mentor.

"And do you believe He thought I was dreadful?" asked Mamie.

"Well, yes," said Belle. "I'm afraid He did. Pretty dreadful. You see Lulu is so little, and I s'pose He thinks such a big girl as you ought to know better and give up more."

"Yes," said Mamie; "but, Belle, I don't know if I like to think God sees *every* thing I do. It's a little uncomfortable."

"When you're not good it is," answered Belle; "but that's the help, you see. And we can't help His seeing us whether we like it or not. And then you know if He sees when we're naughty, He knows right away when we're sorry too."

Mamie sat as if thinking for one moment; then speaking in a still lower whisper than she had done before, she said,—

"Belle, don't tell anybody; but I believe I quite enjoy being naughty sometimes." [44]

"I'm not surprised," said her young teacher. "I do, too, sometimes, and so I thought there was not much hope of me; and I told Maggie Bradford about it, and she said she enjoyed it very much sometimes, but afterwards she felt so horridly about it that it did not make up for that. And that was just like me, so it encouraged me a good deal."

"Yes," said Mamie, after another pause for reflection; "every one thinks Maggie is such a nice child that that is rather encouraging. It seems as if I couldn't help being obstinate or cross sometimes, or liking to fret mamma when she don't want to do what I want her to. She 'most generally does though, 'cause I fuss till she lets me."

Mamie said these last words in a tone of some triumph, very different from the rather subdued way in which she had spoken before, and Belle was much shocked.

"O Mamie!" she said; "s'pose your mamma was to go away from you to heaven."

Mamie turned and looked at her mother, who was leaning back in her chair with a languid, weary air; and, smitten with a sudden fit of remorse for many past offences in the way of fretting and "fussing,"—one no longer ago than this very morning,—she rushed at her and half smothered her with penitent kisses; then, without giving her any explanation of this unexpected burst of affection, she returned to her conversation with Belle. [45]

"I don't see how I'm to remember always about God noticing what I do," she said.

"That is bad habits," answered Belle. "You've never been accustomed to it, and so it seems hard at first. But you know that text, 'Thou God seest me.' Take that to remember by."

"I don't want to," said Mamie, with a disdainful shrug of her shoulders; "that's too old-fashioned. I've known that ever since I was born. (I'd rather have something new.")

"There's a Bible verse I had the other Sunday," said Belle, "that means the same, I believe. Maybe you'd like that."

"Let's hear it," said Mamie, with an appearance of real interest. [46]

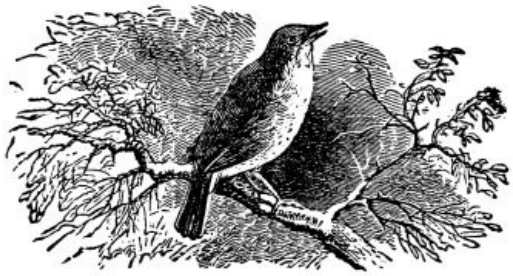
"'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,'" said Belle. "I s'pose you understand it."

"Yes," said Mamie. "It means He sees us whether we are good or whether we are naughty. It's nice to think He sees us when we're good. Yes, I like that, and I think I'll have it to remember myself by. Tell it to me again, Belle."

Belle did as she was asked, repeating the text till Mamie knew it quite well.

"I'd be rather surprised at myself if I did turn good," she said, when this was accomplished; "but we will see. Now let's stop being sober, and play."

[47]



III.

THE BREAKWATER.

NOW perhaps you may think that Mamie was irreverent and careless, and did not really wish to improve herself; but, heedless as she seemed, she had really in her heart a desire to be a better girl, less troublesome and wilful and disobedient. It was a wish that came and went; sometimes she felt as if she did not care at all about curing herself of her fretful, unruly ways; at others, she felt as if she "would give any thing to be as good as Maggie, Bessie, and Belle," who all were so much happier and brighter than she was, because—Mamie knew this—they were so much more contented and amiable.

[48] So, when Belle had left her and gone back to her own friends, she sat for a while quietly in her corner, thinking over what her little friend had said to her, and the verse she had given her for—a—a—what was it? Mamie had the idea in her mind, but she could not think of the word she wanted.

It would be, as she had said to Belle, rather pleasant to know that the Father in heaven was watching her attempts to be a better girl, and she really thought it would be a help to have such a—what was that word?

"Papa," she said at last, "when people take a text or any thing to remember by, what do they call it?"

"To remember what by, daughter?" asked Mr. Stone.

"Well, to remember—to remember how to behave themselves by; to keep good by. Don't you know what I mean?"

"A motto, do you mean?" asked her papa.

[49] "No, not a motto. I s'pose it's the same as a motto, but it has another name. Dora Johnson had a motto; so I want something else."

Now it is not very surprising that Mr. Stone did not immediately hit upon the word which Mamie wanted; but after he had suggested one or two which would not answer, she grew pettish and irritable, as she was too apt to do, leaning back in her seat with raised shoulders and pouting lips, and giving snappish, disrespectful replies to her father's efforts to help her.

"Oh, don't! you bother me so I can't think myself." "You're real mean not to help me;" and such dutiful little speeches found their way from her lips.

"Well," said Mr. Stone, after he had shown more patience with the spoiled child than most fathers would or should have done, "perhaps the word you want is 'watchword.'"

"Yes, that is it," said Mamie, her face clearing, and her lips and shoulders settling themselves into their proper places; "watchword! I am going to have a watchword, and behave myself by it." [50]

"And what is your watchword?" asked Mr. Stone.

"Now stop! you shan't laugh, or I won't tell you," pouted Mamie. "It is 'the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' So when I am good, He sees me, and is pleased."

"Yes," said her father, becoming grave; "but how is it when a little girl wears a scowling brow and puckered lips at her papa? For 'the eyes of the Lord are in *every* place.'"

Mamie sat silent, quite confounded for the moment. This *was* bringing it closely home to her. That All-seeing Eye had then marked the cross, fretful face she had put on to her father; that All-hearing Ear—for it flashed across her mind that the ear of the Lord was as quick to hear as His eye to see—had heard her disrespectful words to him when he was so kindly trying to help her out of her difficulty. Here, within a few moments, she had been selfish and unkind to Lulu, [51] undutiful to her father; just, too, when she had been saying she wanted to be a good girl; and

"the eyes of the Lord" had been watching her all the time. It was not a pleasant thought.

Mamie turned her face away from her father, and, planting both elbows upon the window-frame, gazed out, but without seeing or heeding much of the rapidly changing landscape. She was thinking, half ashamed of herself, half vexed at she scarcely knew what. But she began to doubt if, after all, she would have "a watchword." It seemed likely to prove troublesome, perhaps more of a reproach than a help to her; and she half resolved that she would keep it in mind no longer. She "wished Belle had not told it to her."

However, her reflections, unpleasant though they were, kept her quiet and thoughtful for so long, that her father, not wishing to see her make herself unhappy, spoke to her, saying,—

"There, never mind then, daughter. Papa did not mean to make you fret. We will think no more about it." [52]

But Mamie's thoughts had done her this much good. Turning to her father, she said, in a half shamefaced manner, so unused was she to making apologies when she had been in the wrong: "I'm sorry I was cross, papa, and spoke so to you."

Mr. Stone was pleased, and showed that he was so, which restored Mamie's good-humor with herself; and she was much more amiable and tractable than usual during the remainder of the journey, which did not come to an end till quite late in the evening.

They reached the station where they were to quit the cars some time before sunset, it is true; but then there was a ride of several miles in a great, jolting stage-coach,—rather a severe trial to the young travellers, tired with a long day's journey. Perhaps older and stronger people than Mamie, Belle, and Lulu were inclined to be fretful at the prospect, and to feel as if a very small trifle were too great to be borne after the heat and fatigue of the day. [53]

A large number of passengers had left the train at this point, all bound for the same watering-place as our friends, and had to be accommodated with places in the stage-coaches which were waiting their arrival. There was a choice of seats in the lumbering vehicles, those upon the top being generally preferred, as being cooler now that the day was drawing to its close, and also as affording a better view of the country than those inside.

"I speak for a seat up on top! I speak for a seat up on top!" cried Mamie, as she saw several people climbing to the coveted places. "Papa, I want a seat up there."

"Please, papa, go on top of the stage-coach, and take me," pleaded Belle; and Mr. Powers, who had his eye already on that airy position, and who had no one but Belle and old Daphne to care for, speedily swung his little daughter to her high seat, and, following himself, established her in comfort on his knee.

"I want to go too; I will go too!" said Mabel Walton, who had been unusually fretful and aggravating during the last hour of the journey; but her mother interfered, saying that Mabel had not been very well, and she did not wish her to ride outside in the night air. [54]

Mamie's brothers, four in number, had clambered up, some on the top of one stage, some on another; but Mr. Stone, who had his wife, baby, and nurse to render comfortable, was too late to secure one of these seats. Every one was filled, and Mamie and her papa were obliged to ride inside.

Mr. and Mrs. Stone both dreaded an outcry from their little girl, or at least some wayward behavior; and indeed there were signs of a coming storm on Mamie's lips and brow, as her father lifted her within the stage-coach. But it was perhaps held in check by the terrific howl which burst from Mabel when she found she could not have her own way, and ride where she chose; for while she had been arguing and fretting with her mother on the subject, every place without was filled, and when Mrs. Walton gave way it was too late to indulge the whim of the ungoverned child. [55]

Mamie saw the frowns, shrugs, and looks of annoyance with which the other occupants of the coach regarded the screaming, struggling Mabel, and at once resolved to form a pleasing contrast to her; and it was with a delightful consciousness of superior virtue that she nestled into her own corner. Her mother's praises added not a little to this, and altogether Mamie felt well satisfied with herself and her own behavior throughout the day. And in this state of feeling she resolved to keep to her "watchword" after all, for it was rather pleasant to believe that "the eyes of the Lord" had beheld more good than evil in her.

Now, I cannot say that the state of Mamie's mind was altogether right, or that she was not a little self-righteous; but she certainly enjoyed it, and it had, at least, one good result, that it was productive of great comfort to those about her. For Mabel, even after she had screamed herself hoarse, did not cease to whine and fret till they had nearly reached their destination, and there could be no doubt that all the other passengers were ready to declare her a nuisance. To do her justice, it was some time since Mabel had shown herself so wilful and fractious, for her fits of perverseness were becoming less frequent than they once were. [56]

At last, however, her interest in the new scenes to which she was approaching took her thoughts from her own woes, and she ceased to grumble and complain.

When they reached the shore it was almost too dark for the children to see more than the long

line of hotels, the greater part painted white with green blinds, standing each in its plot of ground, surrounded by its white-washed picket fence, their piazzas thronged with people, their windows gleaming with lights.

On the other hand was the sea,—the grand, glorious old ocean, calm and quiet to-night, as its gentle waves rippled and glanced in the beams of a young moon, and beat out their ceaseless [57] song in a measured murmur on the shore.

And now they parted company, Belle and her papa, Mabel and her parents, being left at one hotel, while Mr. Stone's family passed on to another.

However, the houses were quite near enough for the little girls to feel sure they could have each other's society whenever they were so inclined.

Belle was enchanted to be met by Lily Norris at the very door of the hotel; for Lily had heard that her little friend was coming, and was on the watch to welcome her.

To Mabel, the pleasure of the meeting was more doubtful, for Lily sometimes took rather a high hand with some of her shortcomings, and teased her now and then when she was cross, so that they were not always the best of friends. But on the present occasion, Lily was gracious and rather patronizing, as was thought to become one who had been already on the ground for three [58] days, and who was therefore entitled to do the honors of the place.

There never was such a charming spot as Netasquet, according to Lily's showing; but just at present, supper and bed were the first things to be thought of for our tired, hungry little travellers, and all other pleasures must be postponed till to-morrow morning.

Directly after breakfast, Mamie sauntered out upon the piazza, and stood gazing at the sea, not knowing exactly what to do with herself. Her brothers had started off on their own discoveries, the other children in the house were strangers to her, and she was just wishing for Belle and Lily, when she saw all three of her little playmates coming towards her, bright, good-natured, and gay.

"Ask your mamma to let you come with us," said Lily; "we're going to have some fun, and I expect she'll be very glad to have you out of the way while the unpacking is being done; and mamma says my nurse can go with us to take care of us all."

Mamie was only too glad to go, and at once signified her readiness to accept the invitation, not [59] even thinking it necessary to ask the permission Lily had suggested, but contenting herself with simply telling her mother that she *was going*.

The other children were too much used to such independence on her part, however, to pay much heed to it; and they all four went off pleasantly together.

"Now, what shall we do?" said Lily. "You shall choose, 'cause you're the newest come. There's the beach, and there's the rocks and the river and the spring and the ditch and the breakwater,—lots of places to go, and lots of things to do."

"What is the breakwater?" asked Mamie, for whom the name had a great attraction.

"There it is, over there," answered Lily, pointing to where a long, narrow pier jutted out into the sea, the central part broken and ruined, the heavy stones of which it had been built lying in a confused mass, some on one side, some on the other. Useless as a pier, the only purpose it now [60] served was that which its name denoted, to break the force of the waves as they rolled in on the bathing beach, save that it was also a fine, though not always a very safe spot from which to watch the breakers.

"Mamma never allows me to go there alone," added Lily; "and she will not let me go even with some one to take care of me, if the waves are very high; but they are not high to-day, so Nora will take us."

"Let's go there, then," said Mamie; and the others assented.

But just then Mrs. Stone's voice was heard calling to Mamie from the piazza they had left.

"Mamie," she said, "I do not wish you to go near that breakwater, my darling."

Mamie ran back a few steps and then stood still, where all she said reached both her mother and the children.

"Now," she said, in her most obstinate tones, "that's too bad, and I'm just going. We're all [61] going, and Lily's nurse is going to take care of us."

"No," said her mamma, far more decidedly than she was accustomed to speak to Mamie, "I cannot allow it. I am afraid for you to go there."

Lily came forward as Mamie stood fuming and pouting. "Mrs. Stone," she said respectfully, "mamma thinks it is safe when the waves are so low as they are to-day, and she lets me go quite often with Tom or Nora, and sometimes she takes me herself. Nora will take good care of us all."

"No, dear," said Mrs. Stone, who was rather a nervous, anxious mother; "I should not know one moment's peace till Mamie came back. I really cannot let her go. I think it a very unsafe place for children to play. Why cannot you amuse yourselves on the beach?"

Now, having made up their minds to go to the breakwater, this proposal did not suit any of the children; but probably Belle and Lily would have submitted to the change of plan without murmuring, if Mamie had done so. [62]

But Mamie was the last to think of this; her mother's words and her mother's wishes had little weight with the spoiled child when they interfered with her own pleasure; and she shocked both Lily and Belle by declaring passionately that she *would* go to the breakwater, and she was "not going to stay away for such old nonsense as that."

"Children!" exclaimed Mrs. Stone, who knew too well the uselessness of contention with Mamie when she was in a contrary mood; "children! my dear little girls! Lily! I do beg of you not to tempt Mamie down on that dreadful breakwater! my dears, do give it up!"

"Don't you be afraid, ma'am," answered Lily, magnificently, but quite oblivious in her indignation of her parts of speech; "don't you be afraid; neither us nor my nurse will help her to disobey you; and Nora never takes children when she knows their mothers don't want them to go. She won't let Mamie go on the breakwater." [63]

Mamie turned upon her angrily, with the words, "What business is it of yours?" upon her lips; but as she did so, she caught Belle's eye fixed reproachfully and anxiously upon her. She hesitated for one second, then tried to go on, and to put from her the thought which came to her mind; but somehow she could not, she *dared* not; for Belle's reproachful eye had recalled the recollection of that other All-seeing Eye which even now was watching her. She was not yet penitent, not yet even thoroughly ashamed and subdued; but she was afraid; afraid to brave that Eye in the face of her forgotten resolution. She stood silent, still looking vexed and unamiable, but making no reply, when her mother said to Lily,—

"Be sure then to make Nora understand she is not to venture upon the breakwater."

"Come on," whispered Lily, putting her arm through Belle's; "come on, Belle, and leave her to be sulky by herself. A child who speaks that way to her mother ought to be treated with lofty scorn;" and Lily threw her head back, and looked very stern in an attempt to manifest the feeling she spoke of. [64]

Belle suffered herself to be drawn on a few steps, Mabel following; but presently turning her head, and seeing Mamie still standing with downcast looks, she stopped, and said,—

"Don't let's be offended with her for that, Lily; I think she's sorry now, and she'll be good if we coax her. Come on, Mamie," in a louder tone.

"Yes, come on," said Lily, forgetting her "lofty scorn," and already reproaching herself for having been so severe with her young playmate; "come on, there's lots of fun in other places. Shall we go to the beach?"

With a mixed feeling of shame, repentance, and vexation, Mamie hung back for a moment, half resolving that she would not go; but reflecting that it would be "very stupid at home with nobody to play with," she thought better of it, and followed the others.

Her thoughts, and those of her companions, were presently diverted from her misdoings by Lily saying,— [65]

"Oh, there now! You have no spades and pails, and the beach is not a bit of fun without. You can buy them at the store. There's all your fathers standing by the gate. Why don't you go and ask for money to buy them?"

No sooner said than done. Mr. Powers, Mr. Stone, and Mr. Walton, who were standing talking together, were immediately besieged by three eager little voices, begging for money to buy the articles which Lily had pronounced necessary for proper enjoyment of the beach. Their demands were readily gratified; and Lily having called Nora, the whole troop sallied down to the store, where Lily caused great amusement by asking the salesman for "pades and spails." This mistake served as a good joke for some time, and restored good humor and merriment to the young party.

The beach proved quite as attractive as Lily had pictured it, and the time was happily whiled away there till the hour for bathing arrived, and people began to flock down for that purpose. Among them came the older friends of our little girls; and now there was a new delight for Lily and Belle, Mamie considering the pleasure of a surf bath, at the best, doubtful; and Mabel positively refusing to try it. [66]

Mabel chose to accept her mother's offer of driving home in the great, red "beach wagon" which was waiting on the sands for those who wished to use it; but the other children preferred to walk; and as little Belle, as usual, went clinging to her father's hand, it came to pass that Mamie and Lily were left to walk together, and they fell rather behind the rest of the party.

"See here, Mamie," said Lily; "I didn't know you were really trying to improve yourself. You know it didn't look much like it this morning when you spoke so to your mother; but are you, really now?"

"Yes, I am," answered Mamie; "and I've taken a watchword to help me, out of the Bible." [67]

"That is a good plan," said Lily approvingly. "What is it?"

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place," repeated Mamie; "and this morning when I was mad

because mamma wouldn't let me go to the breakwater, I just thought the eye of the Lord saw me then, and that stopped me. But I think mamma might have let me go, don't you?"

"Well, yes, I think she might as well have let you go," said Lily, trying to mingle a mild disapprobation of Mrs. Stone's objections with the teaching of a due submission on Mamie's part, and a modest consciousness of her own better fortune; "and my mamma always lets me go with some one to take care of me. But then, Mamie, mammas are different, you know, and their children can't expect to alter them."

"No," said Mamie, feeling, as perhaps Lily meant she should, that her little companion was more blessed in an accommodating mamma than she was, at least, in the matter of the [68]
breakwater; "no, but it is so stupid in mamma to be afraid of nothing. She ought to know that 'the eyes of the Lord' see me there, and He will take care of me."

Lily looked at her doubtfully. She had a feeling that it was not quite proper for Mamie to speak of her Maker in this careless way, and still she did not wish to take her to task about it; nor, if she had, would she have exactly known how to express the feeling in words. But she felt herself called upon, at least, to show her disapproval of the manner in which Mamie spoke of her mother, and she said gravely,—

"I wouldn't call my mamma 'stupid,' anyway, whatever she wouldn't let me do."

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[69]

IV.

FORBIDDEN PLEASURES.

THEY were nearing the breakwater as Lily spoke these last words, and the rest of the party paused when they came opposite to it, and Mr. Norris held out his hand to his little daughter, saying,—

"We are going on the breakwater for a few moments, Lily, and Mr. Powers is going to take Belle. Do you want to come?"

Lily assented, and seized upon her papa's hand, all the more eagerly because she saw her brother Tom and the Stone boys upon the pier, and Lily always liked to go where Tom was.

Mamie rushed up to her father. [70]

"You come too, papa; you come too, and take me; will you?" she exclaimed.

"Mamma does not wish you to go upon the breakwater, Mamie," answered Mr. Stone. "I promised her this morning that I would not take you there, nor allow you to go under any circumstances."

"It's not fair," whined Mamie, her good resolutions and her watchword once more forgotten; "it's not fair! The other children are going, and why can't I, with you to take care of me?"

"Because I *promised* mamma, dear," said Mr. Stone. "I am sorry she has this fear of your going upon the breakwater; but since it is so, we must give way to it, for we do not wish to trouble her, and you know she seldom crosses any of your wishes."

Ah! but Mamie had no thought for that now. She was crossed just at the present moment, and she forgot all her mother's indulgence; and it only seemed to her that she was very ill used, and [71]
her mamma very unkind and provoking.

She begged and fretted, but all in vain; her father was usually firmer with her than her mother was, and now having, as he said, given a promise that he would not allow Mamie to go, he would not yield to her desire.

In this mood she was led home, where she increased her own discontent and longing for a

forbidden pleasure by refusing to employ or amuse herself in any other way; and standing sullenly at one end of the long piazza, idly leaning against a pillar, and watching the distant breakwater where she could see several figures, among whom she distinguished Belle and Lily, sitting or clambering around.

"It was too bad," "too mean," "real hateful," she said to herself; she "knew the breakwater was just the very pleasantest spot in the whole place; it must be so grand to see the waves come up there;" and, resolutely putting from her all better thoughts and feelings, she nursed her ill-humor [72] till she was thoroughly miserable.

And from that time the desire to go upon the breakwater took complete possession of Mamie's mind. Not that she knew of any very special attraction there; there were half a dozen play-grounds quite as pleasant, some far more so than the forbidden spot; but I am sorry to say that it was for that very reason, because it *was* forbidden, that she longed to go, and was determined to do so if she could possibly find the way. To *worry* her mother into withdrawing her refusal was her first idea; but she soon found this was useless; all her teasing, oft-repeated though it was, could not move Mrs. Stone. She believed the place to be dangerous, was nervous and uneasy even when her great boys were there, and nothing could persuade her to give Mamie the desired permission.

Still it must not be supposed that Mamie exactly planned an act of deliberate disobedience, and carried such a purpose about with her in her heart. But she was rebellious and discontented; [73] thought her mother was "mean" and "foolish;" and nursed other undutiful feelings, and so paved the way for sin when temptation and opportunity came. She was not openly naughty and disobedient, as yet; and she forgot that the Eye which saw all her actions, good and bad, marked quite as plainly every thought of her heart.

She was playing with Lulu that afternoon, when Lily came rushing over to her in a state of great excitement.

"Come over to our house, and see the very cunningest and queerest thing you ever saw in your life," she said.

"What is it?" asked Mamie.

"Come and see," repeated Lily. "Can she come, Mrs. Stone?" to Mamie's mamma, who sat upon the piazza near by.

Mrs. Stone gave the permission which Lily judged necessary, but which Mamie probably would not have thought of asking; and the latter dropped the tongue of the wagon which she was [74] drawing, in the character of Lulu's horse.

"Lulu do too," said the little one, who had no mind to be shut out from the promised entertainment.

"O you pet! Could she come too, Mrs. Stone?" asked Lily. "We'd be very careful of her, and it's a very safe place, just behind the house, that we are going to."

Permission was given for this also; Mamie, who was very fond of her little sister, and generally very good to her, also begging for it; and the delighted baby was led away by her two proud young protectors.

Lily guided her guests to the back of "our house," as she called the hotel where she boarded; and there were gathered not only Belle and Mabel, but most of the other children who were staying there, even her brother Tom and some boys quite as large among them, much interested in a mixed brood of newly hatched chickens and ducklings which were running about a coop.

Within was the mother hen, ruffling up her feathers till she was twice her natural size, [75] clucking and scolding at what she plainly considered this unwarrantable intrusion upon her premises, and thrusting her head through the bars of her coop in wild but vain efforts to follow her nestlings.

"There!" said Lily, "did you ever see any thing so cunning? The little ducks are rather ugly, but then they are funny; and it is so queer for a hen to have ducks for her children. I never heard of any thing so romantic. Now, you need not laugh, Tom. Does it not seem very strange?"

"Not so strange when you know that they gave the old hen duck's eggs, as well as her own, to set on," said Tom.

"But the little ducks' heads don't fit; they are too big for them. Is that because a hen set on them?" asked Belle, which question sent all the large boys into a fit of laughter, whereupon poor Belle looked as if she had half a mind to run away.

But Tom Norris kindly drew her to him, and told her that young ducklings were always such [76] awkward, top-heavy looking little things.

"They're not one bit pretty, only funny," said Lily; "but the chickens are real cunning and pretty; dear little downy things. I'd like to have one in my hands; can I, Tom?"

"No," answered Tom, "you must not touch them. Mrs. Clark would not like it, for you might hurt it; and it would distress the old hen."

"She couldn't make much more fuss than she is making now, the cross old thing!" said Lily, shaking her fist at the hen, "and we're not doing a thing to her or her chickens."

"She's afraid we will, you see," said Tom. "Hi! and there's Lulu after one now;" and dropping Belle's hand which had been confidingly nestling in his, he darted upon the little one just as she had succeeded in grasping a tiny chicken.

For Lily and Mamie, in their own excitement over the birds, had left their hold of the child's [77] hands, and being seized with the same desire which Lily had expressed, she had improved her opportunities, and made off after a chicken.

She had barely secured her prize when Tom's hand was upon her, not rudely or roughly, but with a firm, though gentle hold; and Tom's voice was telling her that she "must let the poor little chickie go."

"No, no. Lulu want it so. Lulu love it," lisped the little one in coaxing tones, holding up the peeping, struggling thing against Tom's cheek as if to persuade him by its downy charms to let her keep it.

"But Lulu hurts it, and it is God's little chickie, and He don't want it to be hurt," said Tom, gently unclasping the fat, dimpled fingers, and releasing the poor, terrified bird before it had received much farther injury than a good fright.

"Lulu dest only 'queeze it a little; dest only," said the child, with whom these last words, [78] meaning "just only," were a favorite expression; and the distressed tone of voice and grieved lip told that she was taking the release of the chicken much to heart.

"But it hurts it to squeeze it," said Tom, taking her up in his arms; "and Mrs. Clark will be angry if you hurt it or kill it."

"Tlart don't see," said Lulu, looking around her to make sure of the truth of her argument.

"But God sees," said Tom, "and He wants Lulu to be good and not catch the little chickens or ducklings."

"Does He say Lulu naughty dirl if she tuts 'em?" asked Lulu, raising her eyes to the sky where she had been told God lived, as if she expected to see Him.

"He says Lulu is naughty if she hurts the birdies, or don't mind what she is told," said Tom.

"Den Lulu won't," said the little one; "but Lulu want de chittee so-o-o," she added, with a long-drawn sigh which told that the sacrifice was almost too much for her.

"That's a good girl. Don't you want me to give you some pretty shells?" said Tom approvingly. [79]

This attempt to divert her attention proved quite successful, and Tom carried her away with all her smiles restored.

"What a dear, good little thing!" said one and another of the childish group, all of whom had heard what passed.

"Yes, so she is," said Mabel; "but Tom might have let her have the chicken a few moments. It was no such great harm, and it was real mean and silly of him."

Lily turned upon her with threatening voice and manner.

"Don't you dare to talk that way of my Tom," she said. "He's *not* mean and silly, but he's wise as any thing, and knows a whole lot about what is right; and he is un-meaner than any one you know!"

"I shall touch the chickens and ducks if I want to, and Tom shan't say any thing about it," said Mabel, defiantly.

"It's none of my affairs if you do," returned Lily; "but you're not going to talk horridly about my [80] Tom."

That she would take very decided measures to prevent this, or, at least, to punish any repetition of the offence, Lily plainly showed by the very emphatic little nod of her head, with which she treated Mabel.

The latter turned pettishly away, knowing that Lily generally had the best of it in any war of words, but she muttered as she did so,—

"I'll touch them when Tom's not here."

"She forgets 'the eyes of the Lord' are everywhere," said Mamie, rather jauntily, for Lulu being her sister, she felt very proud of her good behavior on this occasion, and as if it reflected some credit on herself; "and she's not half as good as Lulu."

Lily turned her eyes upon her with a look in which Mamie read some disapproval and questioning.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing much. I was only thinking," said Lily, not feeling quite sure that she would be [81]

justified in calling Mamie to account for what she felt to be a careless way of speaking. Moreover, one quarrel was as much as she cared to manage at once; and, considering Mabel as the greater offender of the two, she allowed Mamie to go unreproved for the time.

But, having spoken her mind on the subject of Mabel's criticism of Tom's conduct, her feelings were relieved, and she was ready to be friends again, which she showed by saying,—

"Let's all go to the Rocks now if our mothers will let us. Come, Mabel, make up, and come with us."

Mabel certainly meant to go with the others, but she was resentful, and had no intention of "making up" so soon; and for some time she held aloof from Lily, regarding her with frowning and angry looks, and refusing to walk near her.

"The Rocks make the most splendid place to play in that you ever went to," said Lily, with the [82]
confidence of one who was familiar with the spot in question, and therefore fully entitled to express an opinion; "and I'm going to take down some little boats Tom made me, and we'll sail them in a lovely pool that I know of. But then everybody must be pleasant and nice if they expect me to lend them to them," she added, by way of a persuasive admonition to the still sullen Mabel.

But even this inducement did not move Mabel, and her good humor was not restored till they reached the Rocks, and the charms of the wonderful place made her forget all cause of offence.

Lily had not, indeed she could not, say too much in praise of these magnificent rocks. They lay in a vast stretch along the coast, now low and shelving to the water's brink, now abrupt and precipitous, rising in huge masses piled one upon the other, or here and there standing out boldly in some single, grand bluff. All over them were curious natural steps worn in the solid stone. You [83]
might go some distance, and imagine you had come to a place whence there was no outlet for farther progress, and lo! turning to the right hand or the left, you would seldom fail to find these stepping-places to help you onwards. A light and active foot was an advantage, it is true; and now and then a good jump was necessary, unless one was contented to turn ignominiously back, and search for some easier way. But a rich reward for any amount of hard scrambling awaited you when you had reached some choice spot, and resting in a natural seat, carved by nature out of the stone, looked out over the great expanse of blue ocean before you, or cast your eye down the long line of coast where the white, curling waves were breaking in masses of snowy foam.

Here in one spot, below where the great boulders lay massed in wild confusion, the waters came rolling in, in one grand, massive sweep; there, in another, they were boiling and churning [84]
as in some great caldron; farther on still, where some huge rock rose frowning and stern, thrusting itself into the sea far beyond its fellows, they were broken into countless showers of spray which, now and then, caught the sun's rays, and sparkled with all the colors of the rainbow.

But perhaps the whole beauty and grandeur of the place could scarcely be felt by our little friends; and for them, the chief attractions were the cosey nooks these rocks afforded for playing baby-house; the famous hiding-places; and, most of all, the numerous pools either left by the tide, or collecting on higher ground, after some recent rain. These were extremely convenient for sailing vessels of various sizes and shapes, building docks and piers, bathing any dolls which might be made of such materials as would stand a bath, or which were past injury; in short, there were various ways in which they might be, and were made useful by the young frequenters of the spot.

And many of the salt-water pools were miniature gardens, filled with tiny sea-plants of all [85]
lovely shades of green, purple, and brown, and here and there of a bright red like coral; and among them lived curious little fish and water animals, anemones, starfish, with others whose names are too hard for you to remember.

None knew their advantages better than Lily, who jumped and sprang and clambered like a goat,—I beg her pardon, a gazelle would have been more complimentary. Nora and the other nurses who accompanied the young party held their breath as they saw her almost fly from point to point, graceful and fearless, seeming as if her tiny feet scarcely touched the ground; but the children themselves looked on admiringly, and were fired, by her example, with the desire to do likewise, rebelling against the restraining hands which were laid upon them when they tried to follow too rapidly.

Ah! those famous rocks made a capital play-ground with an endless variety of entertainment. [86]

"Miss Lily'll be satisfied now, I suppose, for here's where she always likes to come and play," said Nora with a sigh of relief, as the roguish sprite paused upon a high, bold rock, and snatching off her hat turned towards the others and waved it triumphantly, calling out, "Come on! Here's a *splendid* place, with a great, big puddle and lots of stones about."

"'Pears like a temptin' ob Probidence," wheezed old Daphne, Belle's nurse, as puffing and blowing, with one eye fixed anxiously on her little charge, who fearlessly followed Lily's guidance, she awkwardly slid and rolled from ledge to ledge. "It's de uncanniest place eber *I* see. We don't hab none sech down Souf to home. De shore am smoof and de water quiet and well-behaved most times down dere. None ob yer splutterin' and fussin' like dis, nor sech awful hard walkin';" and Daphne's injured groan and sniff but added force to her uncomplimentary comparison; but it was [87]
with a hopelessly resigned expression of countenance which much amused the other nurse-maids, that she, at last, settled herself into a shady nook, declaring that "dese are de hardest

stones I *eber did* see."

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[88]

V.

THE DUCKLING.

THE spot chosen by Lily for the afternoon's amusement was indeed universally pronounced to be "splendid." On the very top of a broad, flat rock lay a pool of water (fresh water this; the waves seldom washed so high even in the most furious of storms), it collected here from the rains and dew and fogs, and but rarely dried up. Just now it was unusually full, and the most unaccommodating of nurses could scarcely have refused permission to make the most of such a delightful sheet of water. All four of our young friends and two other little girls, named Alice and Julia Gordon, who had been invited to join them, were soon busily at work. [89]

Lily produced, from the depths of her pocket, some tiny dolls "made to be drowned and upset and such misfortunes," and the boats being launched, these unfortunate passengers were speedily consigned to the probable fate which awaited them.

Ah, such a fate! Spite of the smiling, sunny face of that miniature sea, what "horrible accidents" and "shocking disasters" took place thereon! what storms arose, caused by the violent stirring up of its waters with whirling of sticks and splashing of stones! how those gallant vessels ran into one another, turned bottom upwards, lost masts and rudders! how they spilled their passengers, who were saved only to be sent forth on another perilous voyage!

By and by it was decided to build a pier,—a breakwater where the distressed vessels might run for shelter now and then; and all proceeded to hunt up small stones and pebbles for the structure. [90]

Away went Lily, springing up here and down there, across rifts and chasms, swinging herself lightly from ridge to ridge, peering into holes and clefts, and, whenever she found a stone suitable for her purpose, passing it on to her less venturesome companions. Coming round a corner of the rock, she found Belle standing alone, and gazing thoughtfully over the blue waters of the sea.

"Why, Belle!" she exclaimed, "what are you thinking of so solemnly? Why don't you pick up stones?"

"I was thinking about Mamie," answered Belle. "Lily, I believe she wants to be good, but she don't quite know how to set about it."

"Oh, ho! and I s'pose you want to take pattern by Maggie and Bessie, and help her, do you?" said Lily, going down on her hands and knees, and thrusting her arm into a cleft where she spied a suitable stone.

"I'd like to, but I don't know how very well," said Belle; "and it was not that I was thinking about so much. I was just wishing Maggie was here to give me a proverb to make a proverb-picture out of. Lily, do you know of one about a breakwater?" [91]

"No," answered Lily, giving a violent tug to the stone which refused to be dislodged from its position,—"oh! you obstinate old thing, come out,—no, I don't, Belle. But why do you want one about a breakwater?"

"'Cause I think Mamie feels very naughty to her mamma about it," answered Belle. "She keeps

saying how mean it is in her not to say she can go, and calls her foolish and stupid; and she says she will coax her papa to take her. And you know she ought not to talk so about her mother, even if she is—Lily, do you think Mrs. Stone is a very wise mamma to Mamie?"

"Wise!" repeated Lily. "I should think not! There! why did you not come before, when you had to come?"—this to the stone, which she had at length succeeded in bringing up; then again to [92] Belle,—"Belle, I think she's just about the foolishest mother I ever did see. Augh! if my mamma was so foolish as that, I should be too ashamed of her for any thing;" and Lily sprung to her feet, and flourished her stone in the air as if to give emphasis to her opinion. "But I'll tell you, Belle; I have a very good idea. I think we could manage to give Mamie a lesson without offending her, and just pretending it's all play. As soon as our breakwater is finished, we'll have a game about a disobedient child,—no, ever so many children, so Mamie won't think we mean her,—ever so many disobedient children who went on it when their mothers did not want them to, and were very severely punished by terrible things which happened to them. Don't you think that would do?"

"Well, yes," answered Belle, rather doubtfully, for Lily's attempts at moral teaching were apt to be more personal than agreeable, and to give offence where she did not intend it; "but you'll have to be very sure Mamie don't think we mean it for a hint to her, Lily; else she'll be mad." [93]

"Oh, yes! we'll be careful," said Lily; and, secure of the success of her plan, she ran back to the pool, followed by Belle.

Meanwhile Mamie and Mabel had been busily at work raising the breakwater which was now nearly finished, and enough stones having been gathered, Lily also lent a hand to its completion; while Belle, feeling rather tired, sat quietly by, looking on.

"I wish I had my magnet swans and fishes up here," said Alice Gordon; "would not this be a nice place to swim them!"

"Yes," said Belle; "and wouldn't it be fun if we had some of the new little *ducklies* here to teach them to swim!"

"Duck-ly-*ings*, they are called," said Lily, jamming down a refractory stone which, as she said, would not "stay *put*" and thereby spattering the water over herself and her playmates. But no one minded such a trifle as that. Builders of breakwaters cannot always expect to keep quite dry.

"I thought Tom called them *ducklies*," said little Belle. [94]

"*Ings*—lyings—duck—ly—ings," repeated Lily with emphasis. "Yes, indeed, it would be too cunning and funny to have them here, and teach them to swim. This would make just about a big enough pond for them."

"Let's bring one to-morrow," said Mabel.

"Mrs. Clark wouldn't let us," said Lily. "She's an awfully cross old patch."

"Let's take one without asking her then," said Mabel. "We can put it back all safe, and she'll never know it."

"That would be very naughty, though," said Belle.

"And God would see, if Mrs. Clark didn't," said Mamie. "Mabel, you forget 'the eyes of the Lord are in every place.'"

"See here," said Lily, who had just put the last stone upon the miniature pier, and then plumped herself down upon the rock beside Belle,—"see here, Mamie; it seems to me you're getting rather intimate with the Lord."

"I'm not," said Mamie resentfully; for she had felt rather grand when she made her speech to [95] Mabel, and did not like to have her weapons turned upon herself. "We ought to remember God sees us all the time."

"Course we ought," returned Lily; "but then I don't b'lieve it's proper to talk about it in that familiar kind of a way—so—so—well, I don't know exactly how to tell it, but as if the Lord was not any thing so very great, you know," and Lily's voice took a graver tone. "He hears us all the time, too, and we ought to be a little careful how we speak about Him in our play."

"He sees us and hears us now, just this very minute; don't He?" said Belle thoughtfully.

A moment's silence fell upon the little group as to one and all came the solemn recollection of the Almighty presence here among them; a silence broken, of course, by Lily, who, turning again to Mamie, said, "It's very nice of you, Mamie, certainly, to try to remember that text of yours all [96] the time; but then I mean we ought to think a little more soberly, and speak a little more piously about it; or it's not likely to do us much good. Now let's play."

The proposed play was successfully carried out, both Lily and Belle being careful to avoid looking at Mamie during its performance lest she should guess that it was intended expressly for her benefit, take offence, and so fail to profit by it.

Nevertheless, Mamie had her own doubts on the subject; and, as the play progressed, withdrew from any active share in it, sitting down and watching the others with a solemn countenance.

The truth was that her conscience was not at rest; not that she planned any deliberate disobedience, but she knew that she was cherishing rebellious and undutiful feelings in her heart, because she would not make up her mind to give up, without farther murmuring and teasing, the pleasure her mother had forbidden.

The oft-shipwrecked and oft-rescued rag dolls, now in a most distressed and bedraggled condition, as became their various misfortunes, were supposed to be a family of children seized with an uncontrollable desire to go upon the breakwater in spite of the commands of their parents that they should keep away from it. One after another yielded to the temptation, and all met with the most disastrous fates. Two were swept away by an uncommonly high wave sent for the purpose, and, as they were carried into the depths of the sea, raised pitiful voices to their comrades, crying, "Be warned by us! depart from disobedience, and be warned by us!" A part of the pier gave way with others, precipitating them into the briny deep; another child fell through a hole, and became wedged in between the stones, "where she had to stay all the rest of her life, and grew up there, but never got out, and had a horrid time." In short, some terrible but well-deserved catastrophe overtook each one, till the whole family were destroyed. [97]

"That's not a bit real," said Mamie, in a tone of great dissatisfaction, when the last survivor had been disposed of. "I know children *don't* usually be drowned and squeezed up in stones just because they go on breakwaters." [98]

"No," said Belle, "not *usually*; but then they might be, you know. Accidents *sometimes* happen, 'specially if people don't mind."

"Children don't *usually* be ate up by bears," said Lily; "but the Elisha children were; and I don't s'pose they expected the bears at all. So that shows punishments may come to us that we never thought about, besides the punishment of a very bad conscience."

Lily had said "we" and "us" lest Mamie should feel that she intended a particular thrust at her; but as she spoke the last words, she could not refrain from giving a sidelong glance to see if her moral lesson were taking a proper effect, and Mamie caught it, and it increased her suspicion that she was to receive a reproof and warning under this friendly disguise.

"I just believe Lily does mean that play for me," she said to herself, "and she has no right to. I wish she'd mind her own business." Then, rising and moving away with a very superb air, she said aloud, "That's a very foolish, tiresome play, and I shan't stay to see any more of it." [99]

"Oh! it's done," said Lily; "the disobedient children are all used up. We'll fish them out now, and lay them in the sun to dry. I do wish we could have some of the ducklings here; it would be such fun."

Other people were now beginning to flock down to the rocks, for this was the favorite resort in the afternoons; and numerous groups were to be seen, scattered here and there, in such convenient resting-places as they might find, watching the breaking of the waves, and all the mingled beauties of sea and sky. Among them came Mr. Powers, Mr. and Mrs. Norris, Mrs. Stone and the little Gordons' mother; and Mr. Norris asked if there were not a cluster of "Sunbeams" who would like to shed the light of their rays upon "Indian Rock." [100]

Yes, indeed! Lily had painted the glories of "Indian Rock" in such glowing terms, that they were only too eager to accept the invitation; and with the help of many a lift, pull, and push from the strong arms of the gentlemen, the whole party, great and small, were soon landed on that enchanting spot. For there each one of the children had been forbidden to venture, unless in company with some older and experienced person; and their nurses had been told not to lead them there. For "Indian Rock" was a dangerous spot, unless one trod it with care, or had the guidance and support of a strong, firm hand.

"Papa," said Mamie, as her father helped her up to the top of a slippery ledge, "I'm sure I do not think the breakwater could be more dangerous than this, and I don't see why you could not let me go there just as well as here. Lily's mamma lets her go there with only Nora or Tom, and I'm sure I don't see why I can't."

Much to Mamie's surprise, and somewhat to her alarm, her father now spoke quite sternly to her, bidding her put all thought of the breakwater out of her head, since, dangerous or not, her mother was afraid to have her go there, and his word had been passed that she should not be allowed to do so. [101]

After this, she dared say no more; but still she silently fretted and murmured, and thought herself hardly used, thereby losing half her pleasure in the beautiful scene before her.

It was two or three days before any of the children came down to play in their pool again. Other pleasures took up their time and attention; but, at last, one bright, sunny afternoon, it was proposed to go.

When the hour arrived, however, Lily and Belle were invited to go for a drive and a visit to the light-house; and the juvenile party was reduced to four. Lily kindly lent her ships and boats, and a new supply of unhappy passengers had been provided; but these did not satisfy Mabel, who, since the day on which she had first seen the ducklings, had never ceased to wish that she could see them swim. [102]

"You've been here the longest; would you mind asking Mrs. Clark to lend us one of the

ducklings to take down to the Rocks this afternoon?" she said to Lily, as the latter, ready dressed for the drive, stood upon the piazza, waiting for the carriage.

"I should think I *would* mind!" exclaimed Lily. "I would not do it for any thing. Why, Mabel, she's the crossest old thing that ever lived. This morning when I came up from the bath, I asked her for a ginger-cake, and she told me I was always stuffing! Stuffing! Such a horrid word to say! And besides, it's not true. I'm not eating all the time, and mamma gave me leave to ask for the cake."

"Didn't she give it to you?" asked Mabel.

"Oh, yes, she gave me a whole plateful; at least, she was going to; but you don't think I was going to take them after that! No, indeedy!"

"But I don't want her to *give* us a duckling, only to lend us one to swim it down in our pool," [103]
said Mabel. "Wouldn't you dare to ask her?"

"I'd dare enough," answered Lily, who seldom confessed to dread of living thing, unless it were a horse; "but I know it would be of no use; and I never ask people for things when I'm sure they don't want to give them to me. Here's the carriage."

This was not Mabel's doctrine. Like Mamie Stone, she had a great deal of faith in fretting or worrying for that which other people did not wish to grant, knowing from experience that she often, by this means, gained her point.

Having seen Belle and Lily off, she sauntered out to the back lot where the chickens and ducks were kept, and stood looking at the ducklings with a growing desire to have one to play with. Should she go and ask Mrs. Clark?

Before she had fully made up her mind to do so, the woman herself came around the corner of [104]
the house, and the next moment her loud, sharp voice struck disagreeably on Mabel's ear, and put all thoughts of asking a favor from her quite out of the little girl's mind.

"Now look here! What are you about there? You let them chickens alone, and go round to your own side of the house. I don't want the boarders' children meddling round here."

Such was the greeting which Mabel received; not very encouraging certainly, and she moved away with a scowl at Mrs. Clark which did not make her look much more amiable than the loud-voiced scold herself.

"I wasn't touching your old chickens," she called out as soon as she thought herself at a safe distance.

But, instead of going back to the house, she walked on to the end of the lot where it was divided from the next field by a row of currant bushes and a stone wall. Walking along by the bushes, without any particular purpose, and thinking it was time for her to go and see if the other [105]
children were ready for the walk to the Rocks, she heard a curious little noise among the bushes.

Stooping down and peering in at the spot whence it seemed to come, she saw one of the ducklings lying on the ground, and making the faint sound which had attracted her attention.

"I wonder how it came here, so far from its hen-mother and the other ducklings," she said to herself. "I could take it up now if I liked, and carry it to the Rocks, and neither the hen nor Mrs. Clark could see me."

The temptation was strong. Mrs. Clark had vanished into the house; and the next moment Mabel had the duckling in her hand, hand and bird both hidden beneath the little overskirt of her dress, and she was running rapidly out of the gate which opened on a cross road by the side of the house.

Then she heard Alice and Julia Gordon calling her.

"Mabel! Where are you, Mabel? We are ready to go;" and Nanette's voice, "Ou êtes-vous donc, [106]
Mademoiselle?" and although she had no intention of keeping her prize a secret, it was with a half-guilty feeling that she went forward and joined them, still keeping her hand hidden beneath her overskirt. She would let the other children see what she had there when they reached the rocks, but not now.

But she was not allowed to keep her secret so long; for as they were walking along the path which lay above the cliffs, Julia Gordon said,—

"What do you keep your hand under your skirt for, Mabel?"

Mabel looked around before she answered. She had tried to persuade herself that she had done nothing wrong in "borrowing" the duckling for an afternoon's play, since no one had told her she was not to have it; but, nevertheless, she felt rather doubtful of what the nurses would say when they knew what she had there.

The three women in charge of the little party had fallen somewhat behind; and Mamie, having [107]
taken it into her head to draw the wagon in which Lulu was seated, was also with them, and out of hearing for the moment, if she lowered her voice.

"Don't tell if I tell you something," said Mabel, in answer to Julia's question, and speaking to

both her and Alice.

"No, what is it?"

"You and Alice come close, one on each side of me," said Mabel. "I don't want any one else to know it till we are at the pool." Then, as her companions obeyed, full of eager curiosity, "It's a duckling; one of the new little ducklings that have the hen for a mother; and we'll swim it in the pool."

"Oh, what fun!" said Julia.

"Did Mrs. Clark lend it to you?" asked Alice.

"No, I didn't ask her, she's so cross," answered Mabel; "but it wasn't any harm, for the duckling had come away from its mother, anyhow. I found it under the currant bushes, and I [108] expect it will do it a great deal of good to teach it to swim. Mrs. Clark ought to be very much obliged to us."

"Perhaps the poor little thing had run away to see if it could find any water," said Julia. "Ducks always want to swim, I believe, and this one had no mother duck to teach it."

"Yes; so you see it's quite a kindness," said Mabel.

"Let's see it," said Alice.

"Presently, when we are at the rock where the pool is," said Mabel. "I don't want to take him out now for fear he begins to wiggle again before I get him in the water, and he knows what we are going to do with him. Won't he be glad?"

"Yes," said Julia. "Does he wiggle much?"

"Not now," said Mabel. "At first he wiggled dreadfully, but I held him tighter, so he couldn't; and he made a little noise, too, but I shut up his bill close, so he couldn't. He's very quiet and good now."

"Aren't you going to let Mamie see him?" asked Alice. [109]

"Oh, yes, when we are ready to put him into the water; but I dare say she'll go and say something hateful about him when she sees him. Mamie's real ugly to me, and I can't bear her."

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[110]

VI.

POOR LITTLE WAGTAIL.

ARRIVED at the Rocks, the children speedily made their way to the pool which they considered their own special property, but, to their great disgust, found that their rights there had not been properly appreciated; for not only had some intruders been making free with their breakwater, but it was, as Mamie said, actually "unbuilt," and the stones lying scattered about in all directions.

But this was soon lost sight of in the new interest of the duckling; and Mamie was speedily taken into the secret.

She was pleased with this addition to the afternoon's entertainment, and therefore did not [111] express the disapprobation which Mabel had rather looked for, saying "nothing hateful," but becoming as eager as the other children to give the poor little bird his first "lesson in swimming." In fact, I am afraid that all four intensely enjoyed this bit of mischief,—the outwitting of Mrs. Clark being considered a great triumph, and quite a feat on Mabel's part.

And now they felt secure from interference. Lulu could not be brought here upon the rocks,

and her nurse must keep her above on the bank; and the maids who attended Mabel and the little Gordons, having made their charges promise not to leave the broad, flat rock where they were quite safe, had preferred to join her, and keep an eye upon the children from a little distance. No one else was near, save some strangers seated upon a ledge above them; and now, closing around the pool, they were ready for "such fun."

Stooping down to the tiny sheet of water, Mabel at last hastily withdrew her hand from [112] beneath her skirt, and gently dropped the duckling into it.

Mamie. p. 112.

But instead of seeming to enjoy his introduction to the new element, and beginning to swim fearlessly about, as some of the children knew young ducks usually do, he rolled over on his side with drooping head and wings, and lay floating helplessly on the water, the only motion he made being a feeble opening and shutting of his bill, as though gasping for air.

"What a stupid little duck!" said Mamie. "He ought to swim right away. Once I saw a whole litter of ducklings go right in the water, and swim as well as the big ducks. Here, sir! get up and swim."

And she lifted the duckling's head with her finger, and tried to put him in an upright position; but the instant she let him go he fell over again.

"You naughty, lazy thing!" said Mabel. "Now you've *got* to swim, sir, so you may as well do it. [113] Here, let's poke him with this stick."

"I think there's something the matter with him," said Julia. "He looks kind of flabby and sick; don't you think he does?"

"Oh, yes! look at his eyes; they're growing all white," said Mamie.

"Take him out of the water," said Alice. "You, Mabel; he's yours."

But if the duckling were sick or ailing, Mabel had no desire to claim him. She was frightened now, and the words of the other children added to her alarm.

"What have you done to him, Mabel?" asked Julia.

"I didn't do any thing," she answered snappishly; "and you shan't say I did."

"Was he this way when you found him?" asked Alice, lifting the duck out of the water.

"I don't know," pouted Mabel. "No, he wasn't; 'cause he wiggled and squirmed so I could hardly hold him at first."

"I expect you've hurt him then," said Mamie. "You ought to be ashamed to touch him." [114]

Alas, poor little Wagtail! As Alice laid him upon the rock he fluttered his wings feebly, stretched out his feet, gasped once more, and lay quite motionless. No wonder that he had, at last, lain "quiet and good" in the thoughtless little hand which had grasped him so tightly to still his "wiggling."

"O Mabel! you *have* hurt him. He's dead, I believe," said Julia in a tone of horrified distress.

Thoroughly ashamed and sorry now that she believed herself to have done such fearful mischief, Mabel raised a doleful cry which speedily brought her own nurse and the maid of the little Gordons to inquire into the cause of the trouble.

The story was told by Julia, for Mabel could not make herself understood; but, to the surprise of all the children, it was looked upon as a good joke by both the women, who laughed immoderately when they heard it.

Nannette, knowing that she would be called to account if Mabel appeared with red eyes and [115]
swollen cheeks, hastened to soothe and comfort her little mistress, telling her she need not be troubled, since her mamma would make good the loss of the duckling to Mrs. Clark, and would not let the latter scold her.

But Mabel was hard to be comforted. She felt as if she had been cruel as well as naughty, and it made her very uncomfortable to think that the poor little bird had come to its death in her hands. Though wilful and rather selfish, she was a tender-hearted child where pain or suffering was concerned, and now it was with a kind of sick horror that she shuddered and cried over her work. So great was her distress that even Mamie, forgetting the smothered ill-will between them, tried to console her, but all in vain; and she made such an ado that it attracted the attention of the party on the rock beyond them, and one of the ladies rose and came towards them.

"What is the trouble? Can I be of any help here?" she asked in a kind voice. Then seeing the [116]
dead bird, she added, "Ah! I see, your duckling is dead. How did it come, my dear?" laying her hand on Mabel's head.

Mabel had ceased her cries at sound of the strange voice, but she did not speak; and Mamie answered for her.

"She killed it herself, ma'am. She didn't mean to, but then she had no business to touch it."

At this indisputable but unpleasant truth, Mabel broke out again, having first relieved her feelings by making her "very ugliest face" at Mamie for "telling tales of her." Then turning to the lady, she said with a heavy sob, "Indeed, I didn't mean to hurt it, ma'am; indeed, I didn't."

"I am sure you did not," said the lady soothingly, sitting down on the rock beside Mabel. "But where did the duckling come from? Was it yours?"

No; there was an added trouble. Mabel did not speak, but hung her head; while Julia, after a [117]
moment's hesitation, answered,—

"No, ma'am, it was not hers; it was not any of ours. It was Mrs. Clark's, a very cross woman who keeps the house where we board; and I s'pose Mabel is afraid of her too. I know I would be."

"There's no need of saying any thing about it to Mrs. Clark, I'm thinking," said the nurse of the little Gordons. "Put it under the bank where you found it, Miss Mabel, and she'll never know."

The lady looked with grave eyes at Mabel, as if watching her to see if she would listen to such wrong advice. Neither Mabel nor the other children noticed this; but she was pleased to see the former shake her head decidedly, as she answered, sobbing,—

"No, no, I wouldn't do that. I'll have to tell. Once I hid something, and didn't tell I did it,—Belle and Lily knew about it, and Mamie too,—and it made me such a lot of trouble; and I'm never going to not tell again. But I don't care for that old Mrs. Clark. Papa won't let her scold me. But, [118]
oh, dear! I wish I hadn't squeezed the poor little duck; I wish I hadn't! I never thought he'd go and kill himself just for that. I squeezed him pretty softly too. Oh, dear! and I meant to put him back safely, too, when we had done swimming him."

And looking confidingly up in the lady's sweet, sympathizing face, Mabel told the whole story of the finding of the duckling beneath the currant bush, and how she had brought him away.

"I am glad, dear," said the lady, when Mabel had finished, "that you have made up your mind to confess what you have done, and not to attempt to hide it. I believe you acted without thought, and perhaps did not intend to do any thing very naughty; but you would make a little wrong a great wrong by trying to hide it."

"Yes," said Mamie to herself, "and God would know it anyway, for 'the eyes of the Lord are in [119]
every place,' and He sees whatever we do; so He saw Mabel take that little duck."

Mamie had been somewhat mindful of Lily's reproof since the last day they were here, and was more careful how she took the words of the Bible heedlessly upon her lips; but I am sorry to say she was rather more anxious to test the conduct of others by her watchword than she was her own, unless indeed she imagined herself particularly well-behaved and virtuous; when she would feel as if she was laying up a very good account for herself in the eyes of her Maker.

She almost started; for it seemed as if the stranger lady must have read her thoughts when the latter said to Mabel,—

"And even if you had hidden this from us all, dear, you know there is one Eye from which you could not hide it; an Eye which sees even the very wish to do wrong, and you could not have been comfortable or happy knowing that, could you?"

"No, ma'am," said Mabel, recalling the misery of the time she had spoken of; the time when [120]

she had taken a locket belonging to her Cousin Belle, not with the intention of keeping it, it is true; but when she knew Belle did not wish her even to touch it, and the locket had mysteriously disappeared, and so she had been brought into great trouble and disgrace for a time. "Yes, ma'am, and I'm always going to tell, always."

There is no saying how far the consciousness that her father and mother would shield her from blame, and make good the loss to Mrs. Clark, went to support Mabel's resolution to confess all; but as she was by no means a deceitful or dishonest child, we will hope that she would have made this amends, even with the prospect of a severe scolding as the consequence.

So perhaps the lady's words made less impression on her than they did upon Mamie, on whose conscience they smote unpleasantly, as she could not help feeling that, in her heart, there was the wish, and even the half-formed intention, to do wrong if opportunity should offer. [121]

"And now what will you do with the poor little duckling?" said the lady, taking the dead bird in her hand, and smoothing its downy back. "Shall we let one of the women toss it away in the waves?"

"Oh, no, ma'am!" said Mabel; "don't you think I ought to give it back to Mrs. Clark, even if it is dead? She might want to have it stuffed and put under a glass shade like a canary of mine that died, and papa had him stuffed for me."

The lady could hardly keep back a smile at the idea of the ugly little duck preserved beneath a glass shade, like some rare and valued pet; but she only said, approvingly,—

"Very well; perhaps you are right to wish to give it back to the owner."

"And if Mrs. Clark don't want him any more we might have a grand funeral for him, and bury him to-morrow," said Julia Gordon.

"Oh, I hope she won't want him," said Mabel, rather cheered by the prospect of funeral honors to her victim. [122]

"Would you like," said the lady, "that I should tell you a thing which happened to me when I was a little girl?"

"Yes'm," said Mabel, brightening afresh at the suggestion; and in the eager faces which were turned towards her the kind stranger saw that her offer met with general approval. Our little friends, like most children, were always ready for a story.

"When I was a child," she began, "I was not the best-behaved one in the world. I do not think I meant to be very naughty, but I was thoughtless and wilful, perhaps a little obstinate when I had once made up my mind to do or have a thing; and although I had a good, wise, and tender mother, I was impatient of contradiction even from her. As to my brothers and sisters, all older than I was, I would not listen to the least advice or interference from them.

"I was about ten years old, and we were spending the summer, as usual, at my grandfather's country-seat up in the mountains. On the side of the hill, at a short distance from grandpapa's, were the farm-house, dairy, orchard, and kitchen-garden; and all these I thought much more amusing places than the house, lawn, and flower-garden where I properly belonged, and where my mother generally preferred to have me play. For there were more ways and places for me to get into mischief down at the farm than there were at the house; and I am afraid mother knew very well that my heedlessness and self-will led me often to do the thing I wished rather than the thing that was *right*. Still I was not forbidden to go to the farm; and, so long as my brothers or sisters were with me, she never objected. [123]

"The thing of all others which attracted me most at the farm was a half-grown black kitten. Mother could not bear cats, so we never had one at home, or at grandpapa's; but up at the farm-house, I could amuse myself by the hour with this playful little creature, which grew very fond of me.

"One morning we had some young visitors; and of course we must show them all the beauties and curiosities of the place. Among them was the orchard, although the apples there were as yet hardly larger than nuts. [124]

"As we were passing through it one of my brothers spied a nest in a tree.

"'Hallo, Annie!' he said, 'there's a nest. I'll bring it down for you if you want it.'

"I did want it; but one of my sisters begged Will to make sure that it was empty.

"'Oh, it must be empty; it's too late for birds to be in it,' said Will, who like myself was rather headstrong and heedless; and raising a whip he carried, he whisked the lash over and around the nest.

"Ah! the nest was not empty, though it really was late in the season for the young ones; and, the next moment, a beautiful bird fell fluttering at our feet, its wing broken by the blow from Will's whip, while its mate flew from the nest, terrified almost out of her life.

"A more crestfallen, distressed being than Will it would have been hard to find; for he was very tender-hearted, and would not hurt a living thing purposely. We were all much disturbed, and at once set about doing all we could for the poor little sufferer. My eldest brother bound up its wing [125]

as well as he was able, and we brought some hay with which Will climbed the tree, and made a bed in a forked branch near the nest. He said there were four half-fledged birds in the nest, and was more disturbed than ever at the mischief he had done. But he promised himself and us that he would care for parent-birds as well as nestlings, as long as either should need it; knowing that the poor little mother would have too much to do to feed both husband and children.

"Brother Ned handed up the wounded bird, and Will put it carefully in the bed he had made for it; after which, the rest of us went on, and left him digging a supply of worms which he intended to put in a convenient place, as a store from which the mother-bird might help herself without the [126] trouble of looking for them. He was still quite quiet and out of spirits when he joined us at the dairy some half-hour later, though he told us the mother-bird had returned, and her poor mate had eaten a caterpillar placed handy for him.

"That afternoon my sister Rosa and I went up to the orchard with Will to see about his birds, and carry them food and water.

"As we passed the door of the farm-house, Blackie, the kitten, came running out to see us, and I took her up in my arms to take her with me.

"'Don't bring that cat,' said Will. 'She might get at the birds.'

"'No, she won't. I shan't let her,' I answered.

"'But she might,' said Rosa; 'she's so quick and active, she'd be up the tree before you knew it.'

"'No, she shan't,' I repeated positively; 'I'll keep her in my arms all the time, and I'm going to take her.'

"And though Will begged me, and was even angry about it, I persisted in taking the cat with [127] me.

"And I did keep her fast in my arms, although she struggled to be free, and even scratched me severely when she saw, as she immediately did, what Will was at.

"He found the little creature somewhat better than when he had left it in the morning, and it was quite tame, fluttering but little when he climbed the tree, and almost taking the worm he offered from his hand. He supplied it with all it needed, and came down as soon as possible, as the mother-bird had again flown from the nest when he came near.

"How kitty's eyes gleamed and sparkled, and how fiercely she struggled in my arms! It was all I could do to keep my hold; and I was so afraid that she would escape in spite of me, that I was sorry that I had not listened to my sister and brother and left her behind.

"But at last we were ready to go; and when I put puss down at the farm-house door, I relieved [128] my feelings and visited my own obstinacy on her by giving her two or three good cuffs. It never came into the mind of any one of us as she scampered away and hid beneath the stoop, that she might find her way back to the nest by herself, or of all the mischief she would work there.

"You may be very sure that the first thing to be thought of in the morning was the helpless birds up in the orchard; and directly after breakfast Will and I went over to the farm. As we passed the house-door, kitty came frisking out to me, as usual; but mindful of the trouble I had had with her the day before, I bade her stay at home.

"All in vain, however; puss was determined to follow. Whether she guessed where we were going or no, I cannot tell; but it really seemed as if she did, and, feeling guilty, wanted to be on the spot when we discovered her cruelty. Come she would, although Will threw stones at her, and I beat her with a stick, and chased her back many times; we would take only a few steps onwards, [129] and there she was after us again. At last Will turned an empty barrel over her, put a stone on top of it, and there we left her mewing piteously.

"But we might have let her come on; the mischief was done. When we reached the tree, what destruction was there! The lame bird was gone from his bed of hay, and a few bright feathers scattered about told what his fate had been; the nest hung, torn and ragged, empty of its young inhabitants; while the mother-bird was flying wildly to and fro, wheeling round and round her ruined home, and uttering piteous, mournful notes.

"Will looked at me, and I at him; but for the moment, neither of us could find words for the thought that was in both our minds; but if the painful truth had needed to be made plainer, it was done so at that instant by puss, who sprang suddenly forward, and pounced on something among the long grass beneath the tree. Will was upon her like a flash, and with some difficulty succeeded in taking her prey from her. It was one of the nestlings, but quite dead and stiff. [130] Perhaps he had been killed by a fall from the tree when the cat attacked his home, or perhaps her cruel claws had crushed the life out of him when she had gorged herself upon his father and brothers, and could eat no more.

"Will, great boy though he was, could not keep back his tears, and vowed all manner of vengeance on puss for the destruction of his adopted family. As for me, I was heart-broken, for I could not but feel that it was all my fault; and while poor pussy had only followed her own natural instincts in destroying the birds, I had been obstinate and wilful, and so brought about such a sad thing; for if I had not carried the cat there, she would probably not have discovered the nest.

"And I am forced to believe that Will made good his word in the most severe manner; for from that day I never saw kitty again, although I went to the farm as often as before; but I never had the courage to ask any questions, feeling quite sure that puss and birds had all come to a violent death through my obstinacy." [131]

"Is that all, ma'am?" asked Mabel, when the lady had ceased speaking.

"That is all," she answered; "and, judging from your grave little faces, I should think it was enough."

"Oh, we like it very much, and we are sorry it is finished," Julia hastened to say.

"Yes," said Mabel with a long sigh; "and I think that story is rather a comfort."

"How so?" asked the lady.

"'Cause it's nice to know you could be naughty once when you are so good now."

"How do you know I am good now, or that I have improved any since I was a child?" said the lady smilingly.

"I should think you must be good when you are so kind to us," answered Mabel, slipping her hand confidingly into that of her new friend.

"Well, perhaps I may have improved in the way of believing others could be as wise as myself, and in giving up my own will now and then," said the lady; "for that was a severe lesson to me." [132]

"But how did the pussy get out from the barrel?" asked Mamie.

"Oh! I forgot that. Some one of the family had heard her mewing, and let her out, not knowing of any particular reason why she should be kept a prisoner."

Then she bade the children good-by, and leaving them to their play went back to her own friends.

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[133]

VII.

THE "FIRST STEP."

BUT the spirit had gone from their play for that afternoon; the pool, beside which the dead duckling still lay, had lost its attraction for them all; and after spending some little time scrambling about over the rocks and watching the waves, they concluded to go back to the hotel.

Mabel gave the dead duckling into Nannette's hands to be carried home; but arrived there, she took it at once to her father, and made an honest confession of the whole affair.

Mr. Walton was a good deal amused at the tragic account she gave of the duckling's death and her own despair; but he did not let her see that, and, praising her for her readiness to make what amends she could, he offered to go with her to see the formidable Mrs. Clark. [134]

Passing through the hall on the way to Mrs. Clark's quarters, they met Mr. Clark, a man as good-natured and easy-going as his wife was sharp and bustling, and inquired of him where that good woman was to be found.

"Wal, she's up to her elbows in a lot of varieties she's fixin' up for tea jest now," answered Mr. Clark, raising his hat with one hand, and scratching his head with the other, as his custom was whenever he made a remark or gave an answer; "an' I donno as she cares to be disturbed. Things is raythe in a chaos round kitchen ways, Mr. Walton. Is there any thing I could do for you, sir?"

"Here is a little girl," said Mr. Walton, "who feels that she has not done right, and wants to

confess what she has done. Speak to Mr. Clark, my dear."

But poor Mabel, whatever she might wish or be willing to do, could find no words beyond "I—I —you—I"—and here she hung her head, and with gathering tears brought forward the hand which held the dead duckling, which until now she had kept hidden. [135]

"Shall I tell Mr. Clark?" asked her father.

Mabel nodded assent.

"It seems she picked up this duckling and carried it down to the Rocks this afternoon," said Mr. Walton, "intending to give it a swim in some pool, and then bring it back; but she has handled it too roughly, I suppose; for when she reached there it was dying. She is very sorry now, and feels that she did wrong to take it without permission; but I will make it all right with you, Mr. Clark, and Mabel will promise not to meddle again with what is not her own."

"Whew!" said Mr. Clark, staring at the duckling as if he had not heard the latter part of Mr. Walton's speech; "there's two of 'em. Won't my wife be in a takin' though? I found another on 'em lyin' sick under the currant bushes this arternoon, an' it's dead or dyin' by this time. I see it warn't no use coddlin' it up; 'twas too fur gone, so I let it be." [136]

"I found this one under the currant bushes," said Mabel, regaining her voice. "It was just lying there, so that was the way I came to take it."

"Did you, though?" said Mr. Clark; "well, sure enough, it's the very same fellow I left there. Don't you fret then, child; you've only put it out of its misery a little sooner, for it wouldn't ha' come round no way. 'Tain't no odds about it, Mr. Walton; jes' let it go, and I'll fix it with my old woman so she won't blame the little girl."

Very much relieved, and thankful that she had made up her mind to confess, Mabel ran away to her mother, receiving permission from Mr. Clark to keep the duckling for the proposed funeral honors. The roar of laughter with which he heard her intentions did not sound very pleasant in her ears, but she was too grateful to escape a scolding to find fault with the good-natured man. [137]

Mabel had imagined that Belle and Lily would be very much shocked when they came home and heard of the fate of the duckling; but they were not half as much so as she feared; for she did not fail to tell them that Mr. Clark had said the little bird could not possibly have lived and thriven; and besides, its burial afforded the prospect of a pleasant entertainment for the next day.

"And Maggie and Bessie are coming over to spend the day to-morrow," said Belle. "Papa had a letter from Mrs. Bradford saying so. We'll wait till they come, shan't we?"

"Yes," said Mabel, "we will; and maybe Maggie would make up some poetry for us about him."

The promised visit of Maggie and Bessie Bradford made quite a jubilee; and the next morning, when they landed with their papa from the boat which had brought them from Newport, they were met on the dock by a host of eager little friends. [138]

They were soon told the story of the duckling, but as they had only a few hours to spend in the place, and there was much to be seen and to do, Maggie declined to spend any portion of her time in composition, save so much as would answer for the purpose of a short epitaph.

Mabel had sacrificed "the sweetest sugarplum box with the loveliest lady on the cover," to the service of the duckling, and he was tenderly laid therein. The procession was a large one, comprising not only most of the children in the house, but several others from the neighboring hotels; and Wagtail was buried with military honors; that is, to the beating of a drum and tooting of two tin trumpets, after which the assembly sang "Shoo Fly" about the grave.

These imposing ceremonies afforded so much consolation to Mabel that she privately informed Belle and Lily that she would like to have a duck funeral every day, only she would not like to be the one to kill it. [139]

Maggie also composed a most touching epitaph for him, of mixed poetry and prose, which ran as follows:—

"Oh, pause, and drop a virtuous tear,
Whatever footsteps wander here;
For here's the body of Wagtail Duck,
Whom cruel Death so soon did pluck!

To the memory of Wagtail Duck, Esq.,
who
Died in the fifth day of his age,
after
A short life
in
Which he was never known to do wrong
and
Painful illness.
Reader, go and do likewise."

This gem of composition, having been greatly approved by the mourners, was carried to Tom Norris in order that he might print it upon the board which, by Lily's request, he had prepared for a headstone. He read it without a smile, gravely shaking his head, and saying,— [140]

"Yes, that is the usual fate of ducks; they are only made to be plucked."

That the inscription excited general admiration after it was printed and put in its place, might be judged from the visits which were paid to it in the course of the day by nearly all the grown people in the house. But this admiration did not appear to be of a melancholy character, as they usually returned from the grave with the broadest of smiles on their faces.

This was not observed by Maggie, however, who soon forgot both epitaph and duckling in the various pleasures provided for her entertainment.

Tom Norris had been presented by his grandfather, just before leaving home, with a very handsome row-boat. This boat had, of course, been brought to the sea-shore; for Tom was a great boy now, and so wise and prudent that he was to be trusted to take care of himself and those who [141] might be with him. It is true that his mother always gave a sigh of relief when she saw him come safely home from rowing; and while he was out, she would send many an anxious glance over the surface of the sea; but she never objected or interfered with him, and Tom was careful of her feelings, and did not venture when the sea was rough, lest she should be worried or alarmed for his safety.

Mamma never would suffer Lily to go in the boat when Tom went in the deep water; not that she doubted her brother's care for her, but because Lily was such a heedless little thing, so quick and impulsive in all her movements, that she feared some sudden jerk or motion might send her into the water. Lily longed for the forbidden pleasure; but she was so accustomed to a ready obedience that she never thought of fretting about it, or worrying her mother to let her go. She did not even speak of it to Mamie when the latter complained of her mother's unkindness in not [142] allowing her to go upon the breakwater. Mamma had said that it was not to be, and Lily had no more to say, but strove to content herself with the numerous pleasures left to her.

But on this afternoon, as it was an extra occasion on account of the visit of Maggie and Bessie, dear, kind Tom proposed, and obtained his mother's permission, to take his boat up a little river which came down from the back country and crossed the beach, and to give the children a row there.

They were all enchanted at the prospect, and Mamie had leave to go with the rest, Tom refusing to take her unless she asked her mamma first.

Tom kept his boat tied to a stake on the inner side of the ruined breakwater, which shielded it and several others from the force of the waves when the sea was high, and made a kind of little harbor where they might ride in safety.

Soon after dinner Tom gathered his passengers together, the company consisting of all our old [143] young acquaintances, Maggie and Bessie, Belle, Lily, Mabel, and Mamie. Walter and Ned Stone were to go with them, and help Tom row.

Down the road they went, a merry, happy flock, till they reached the breakwater, at the lower end of which stood Mr. Powers and Mr. Bradford, awaiting them.

Tom hauled up his boat where the stones had fallen so as to make quite a convenient landing-place, while the other boys ran to bring the oars which were left in the care of the storekeeper hard by. The boat rocked up and down on the gentle swell within the shelter of the pier with a regular, undulating motion, which looked very pleasant in the eyes of the children, with one exception.

"Tom, my boy," said Mr. Bradford, "I think I'll step in and take an oar with you as far as the river, if you'll have me."

"Certainly, sir; most happy," answered Tom; and the gentleman stepped into the boat, which was kept from floating out by the rope which Tom had noosed about one of the heavy stones of [144] the pier.

"O papa!" said Bessie, "how I do wish I could come in the boat now, and be rocked up and down that way. I do like it so."

"Come, then," said her father, and, guided by Mr. Powers' hand, the little girl made her way over the rugged ruins of the pier, and was lifted by her father into the boat.

"Anybody else want a little tossing about?" asked Tom. "Maggie?" fixing his laughing eyes on her face, quite sure what her answer would be.

"No—I—thank—you," said Maggie, with long-drawn emphasis on each word. "Tom, it's very plain that you don't know what sea-sickness is. Oo—o—o!"

"Poor Maggie! she shuddered at the very thought," said Tom.

"Papa, I'd like to go; could I?" asked Belle; and her father put her beside Bessie.

"Lily?" said Mr. Powers, holding out his hand towards her as he saw how wistful she looked.

But Lily shook her head. [145]

"Mamma has forbidden me to go in the boat when it is on the sea, sir," she said.

"I think your mamma would not object here, dear, and with Mr. Bradford in the boat," said Mr. Powers.

"But she might, sir, and I think I'd better not," said obedient Lily. "She told me so very spressly not to go; and she only gave me leave to row this afternoon because Tom was going on the river."

"You are a dear, good child," said Mr Powers. "Mamie, are you for the boat?"

Mamie had, until this minute, been standing farther back than the other children, not actually *on* the breakwater, but as near to the forbidden ground as she could possibly be. She had never been so near to it before; and I am afraid that if her playmates had not known of her mother's command, she would have disregarded it altogether. She had no further thought for it when she heard Mr. Powers invitation, but started forward.

"Mamie," said Tom, "did not your mother forbid you to come upon the breakwater?" [146]

"I can't go in the boat if I don't," pouted Mamie, stopping short where she was.

"Go back!" said Tom decidedly; "you cannot come in till you go down to the river. Stay with Lily and Maggie."

Mamie began to cry, but did not go back.

"Hi, there, you Mamie! come off the breakwater!" said Walter the next moment, dashing past her with a pair of oars; and Ned, following with another, said, "O you disobedient thing! if you're not headstrong. See if I don't tell mamma of you."

Mamie drew back, but feeling more than ever discontented and rebellious.

"It's too bad!" she said passionately, as she saw Mabel placed beside Belle and Bessie in the boat. "Everybody else can do every thing they want to, and I never can, and just for such stupid nonsense. There! I have been on the breakwater, and never had a bit of harm happen to me."

"Then you should be thankful for your mercies, and that your sins were not visited upon you," [147]
said Maggie solemnly.

"Yes," said Lily; "and the way you talk about your mother is just too much, Mamie."

"My dear children," said Mr. Powers, "do not spoil your afternoon's pleasure by fretfulness and quarrelling. If Mamie has, for a moment, forgotten her mother's orders, we will hope that she will be more careful another time. Come, we must walk on, or the boat will be at the river before we are."

But no; Mamie had not forgotten her mother's orders; she had only hoped that others had done so, and had herself wilfully disregarded them; and she was to find the truth of the old proverb, that "it is only the first step that counts." Her "watchword," as she called it, was quite forgotten or put aside now; it was no longer a check upon her; and she had made up her mind that she would disobey her mother and go again upon the breakwater at the first opportunity. The
disappointment about the boat was more than her wilful little heart could or would bear; and she [148]
was indignant to think that the other children should have any pleasure of which she was deprived. She forgot that Lily had been obliged to give up the same; but that she had done so in a cheerful, docile spirit, which would not even run the chance of doing that which her mother would not approve.

So now Lily was gay, light-hearted, and full of spirits, chattering away merrily with Maggie and Mr. Powers as they crossed the beach on their way to the river where they were to meet the boat; while she, Mamie, came moodily and discontentedly behind, finding the sand heavy, the sun hot, the way "so long," and contriving to pick up half a dozen troubles in the course of the walk.

Things were no better after she was in the boat. It was "no fun on that stupid river;" the boat was "too crowded," although Mr. Bradford had left it now; one "pushed" her, and another
"shoved" her; although if you had asked the other children, they would probably have said that it [149]
was she herself who did the pushing and shoving; and, in short, she made herself so disagreeable that Maggie afterwards privately confided to Bessie that she found Mamie "very much re-dis-improved, and like the Mamie of old days."

Her brothers were very much vexed with her, and even threatened to set her upon the river-bank, and leave her there by herself till they were ready to land; a threat which was, at last, carried out after she had become quite unbearable, and destroyed the pleasure of the whole party.

However, it was not much more agreeable to have her shrieking upon the river-bank than it was to have her grumbling in the boat; and she was taken in again on promise of better behavior.

This promise she fulfilled by sitting sullenly in her own corner of the boat without opening her lips; but the sounds which had come from them before were not so sweet as to make her companions regret her silence.

And for such a trifle Mamie was making herself and all about her uncomfortable; for the sake [150]

of this one forbidden pleasure set against so many comforts and enjoyments, she had forgotten, or wilfully put out of sight, all her good resolutions, and the remembrance of that Eye which watched every thought and feeling of her heart.

And yet, perhaps it was the consciousness of this, the guilty, uneasy conscience, which helped to make her so fretful and irritable, so hard to please, and captious to all about her. She was more ready, as we have seen, to test the conduct of others by her "watchword" than she was her own, now that the first novelty of it had worn off; but she could not quite put away the reproachful echo in her own heart.

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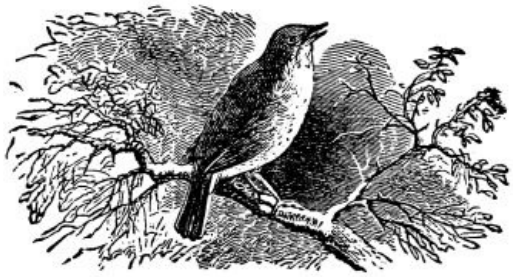
[151]



VIII.

DISOBEDIENCE.

LILY lay upon her back on the grass, her hands beneath her head, her eyes looking up into the sky. She had been lying thus some time, perfectly quiet, though Belle and Mamie sat beside her, playing with Lulu.

"Lily," said Belle at last, "what are you doing?"

"Thinking," answered Lily.

"Oh!" said Belle, surprised, perhaps, at this unusual process; for Lily generally had too many other things on hand to devote much time to thought; "you look as if you were thinking sober too." [152]

"Well, yes," said Lily, without bringing her eyes down from the sky; "it was rather pious thinking I was doing."

"Would you mind telling us about it?" asked Belle, interested in the novelty.

"Oh, no, not at all," answered Lily. "I was thinking about conscience, and what a dreadful bother it is; but how it improves us, and how awful we'd be without it. It's a great mercy it was given to us,—to me, at least; or I should be all the time doing bad things. I think we might call conscience a bother blessing, because, though it is best for us to have it, it is a great inconvenience."

"Is it an inconvenience to you now?" asked Belle.

"No, not particular," said Lily, rolling over on her side, and plucking a head of thistle-down which grew close at hand. "Here, Lulu, blow this;" and she held it up that the little one might blow off the feathery seed-vessels; "not particular just now; but it was a great inconvenience before dinner. You see, Belle,—once more, Lulu; there they go!—you see I wanted to do a thing very much, but I did not feel sure mamma would let me, and she had gone to make a call, so I could not ask her; and I made up my mind I'd just do it; and do you know, I really believe I felt quite glad mamma was not there, so she couldn't forbid me; but then my conscience,—I suppose it was my conscience,—puff away, Lulu,—began to feel badly about it, and so I put it off till mamma came, and sure enough, she did forbid it. So, you see, there's a sign that conscience is a bother and a blessing too." [153]

"Yes," said Belle approvingly.

"And then," proceeded Lily, thinking she might as well continue to give her companions the benefit of her moral reflections, "and then I was wondering what conscience was. We're so queer inside of us; our thoughts and our consciences and our remorses, and all that, you know."

"Yes," said Belle again. "Lily, I suppose conscience is a kind of 'Thou God seest me' feeling; don't you?" [154]

"Why, yes," answered Lily, looking admiringly at Belle. "I never thought about it that way, but I believe it is; and that was a very clever idea of yours, Belle. Mamie, what do you think about it?

You seem to have thought a good deal lately about God seeing you all the time."

"I don'no," muttered Mamie. The conversation was not pleasant to her, and she did not choose to take any part in it.

"I s'pose heathen can't have consciences as long as they don't know about God," said Belle thoughtfully.

"No, I'm quite sure they do not," said Lily confidently.

"Hafed, Mr. Stanton's servant boy, used to be a heathen," said Belle.

"Yes, but he's turned now, and a Christian," said Lily. "Belle, I know three turned heathen," with an air of great satisfaction in the extensiveness of her acquaintance with converted [155]
idolaters. "There's Hafed, and there's that Chinese pedler that mamma buys matches of, and there's that old black man on your papa's plantation who used to be a king in his own country. Belle, when that old black man gets to heaven, won't he make a queer, awfully ugly old angel?"

"He won't be black then," said Belle; "at least, I b'lieve he won't. But he's very good if he is so ugly; papa says so."

"How will he get white, I wonder?" queried Lily; "he's so awfully black; and such a mouth!"

Mamie was glad that the solving of this knotty question diverted the thoughts of her two little playmates from the subject of conscience and the all-seeing Eye of God. It really seemed that people had a great deal to say about it, and were always bringing it up before her mind at a time when she would have chosen to forget it. She was almost vexed with dear little Belle because she had, at her own request, given her the text which, not long since, she had chosen as her [156]
watchword, but which she now strove to put away from her thoughts, and by which she would not rule her conduct.

"Come, Lulu, we're going home now," she said, fearing that the other children might go back to the unwelcome subject of conversation.

"No, no; Lulu will tay here. Lulu tay wis Belle and Lily," said the little one. "Mamie tay too."

"No, I'm going," persisted Mamie; "you come, and Mamie will take you on a nice, pretty walk."

Lulu obediently scrambled to her feet and put her hand in her sister's, tempted by the prospect of the promised walk. Belle and Lily did not urge their stay, partly because Mamie was not in a pleasant mood that afternoon; secondly, because they both knew that they would shortly be called to be made ready for a drive with their parents. And there came Daphne now to bring her little mistress, and to tell Lily to go to her nurse. So good-by was said to Mamie and Lulu, and the [157]
four children parted and went their different ways.

Mamie was generally kind and good to Lulu, so the pet child always liked to be with her; and their mother was not afraid to trust them together within the safe shelter of the enclosures which ran about their hotel, and the next one where Belle and Lily stayed. Gates opened in each of the rows of picket fences which divided the grounds, so that one might pass in and out, and from one house to another without going upon the high road or plank-walk which bordered it.

And it was only within these enclosures that Mamie had intended to take her little sister; but the plank-walk had charms for Lulu far beyond those of the grass-plots and gravel-path about the houses. Lulu liked to see the world, and thought she could do so to better advantage on the road.

"We do on de plant-walt, an' see de hosseys an' bow-wows," she said coaxingly.

Mamie hesitated. Mamma had never told her she must not take Lulu on the plank-walk; but [158]
she was pretty sure she would not allow her to do so if she were asked. She could not ask her, that was certain; for mamma was lying down with a bad headache, and she knew she would not be suffered to go near her. Certainly she found conscience "a bother" now, as Lily had done that morning; but she would not listen to its calls, as her young friend had done, and put temptation from her. Papa was away, gone to town; of course he was out of the question; but there was her nurse. She could ask leave from her, but with the certainty of being refused, Mamie was sure of that. The nurse was rather careless and indifferent, disposed, so long as she believed the children were safe, to take her ease and enjoy her own gossip with her fellow-servants, as she was doing now; but Mamie knew very well that she would promptly refuse permission to go outside of the gates.

Mamie was herself anxious to take her pretty, cunning little sister out upon the plank-walk, [159]
and parade her up and down, and show her off to the passers-by; any other little girl would have liked to do the same; the temptation was strong, and in her present rebellious, undutiful mood, she did not even try to resist it.

Lulu pleaded again.

"Pease, Mamie, do out dere on de plant-walt;" and what did Mamie do?

She salved her still uneasy conscience by running back to where her nurse sat sewing and talking with some other maids, and asked,—

"Maria, could Lulu and I walk about a little?"

"To be sure, child; just as if you didn't always walk about as much as you pleased," answered the nurse, not dreaming that Mamie meant to take her little sister, or to go herself, beyond the safe permitted enclosure about the house, if, indeed, she gave it any thought at all.

"Come, then, Lulu; Maria says we may go," said Mamie; and, taking good care to pass out of [160] Maria's sight as she did so, she led the little one out upon the plank-walk.

Once there, all uneasy thoughts were flung to the winds; and although she had intended "only to walk up and down a very little way," she was tempted farther and farther on, and away from the house. Lulu prattled and chattered away, delighted with all that she saw; and to Mamie the novelty of having her baby-sister in charge upon the public walk, and the pleasure with which she saw one and another turn to notice her, was quite enough to still the last lingering reproaches of conscience. Perhaps some of those passers-by wondered to see those two young children wandering alone by a much-travelled highroad; indeed, an old gentleman stopped, and said, "Where now, alone by yourselves, my little ones?" to which Mamie hastily made answer, "Oh, just taking a walk, sir; Maria said we might;" and, believing all was right, the gentleman passed on, [161] only saying, "Don't go too far then; Maria had best have come with you."

Mamie did not think so, and made no reply.

She was opposite the breakwater now, the object of so many desires, so many rebellious and undutiful murmurings; she was alone, at least with only her little sister for company, and Lulu could not interfere with her. The long-wished-for opportunity had come.

To do her justice, she had not started from home with any thought of the breakwater, or intention of going upon it, and had only turned that way in order to be out of the range of Maria's eyes; but now was her chance except for Lulu. How was she to take the child over those ruined, uneven stones?

She looked about her up and down the road. There was no one near; the friendly old gentleman was quite a distance down the plank-walk; neither carriages nor foot passengers coming by now, not even a soul to be seen on the piazzas of the neighboring hotels. There was no time to be lost; she did not want any one to find her upon the breakwater, and she would stay there but a [162] moment.

"Come, Lulu," she said; and the two children had crossed the road, and were at the lower end of the pier.

"Now, Lulu," she said, "you sit down here a moment on this stone. Mamie is just going up there one minute, and it is too hard for Lulu. If you are good and sit still, Mamie will give you some pretty shells when we go home."

The little one wagged her head, and sat down contentedly on the stone at which Mamie pointed.

"Mamie will only go a very little way," said her sister, and away she went, scrambling over the stones and rubbish till she reached the extreme end of the pier.

Her heart beat fast, but it was less with the feeling of guilt, for she did not take time to listen to that, than with haste and excitement.

"Only one minute," she had said; but as she grasped the wooden pile by which she stood, and [163] peered over the edge of the breakwater, she forgot how moments were passing. No wonder Lily and the other children liked to come there. It was so curious and so beautiful to see the waves come rolling in right beneath her eyes, and break against the mass of masonry, solid and resisting still, ruined though it was; so pretty, when the wave rolled back, to watch the water running out in a hundred little jets and waterfalls from between the crevices of the stones; so wonderful to seem to look down into the very heart of those transparent green rollers with their crests of snowy foam! And with what a booming sound they came against the obstacle which barred their farther progress, and would not suffer them to finish their rightful march upon the beach beyond! Oh, it was grand, glorious!

Mamie was perfectly fascinated. Every thing was forgotten but the sight and the sounds before her. Her own disobedience, her mother, her little sister, had for the time quite passed from her [164] thoughts, as she hung over the edge and looked down upon the sea. A gentle summer sea it was that day, or it may be that the breaking of some furious wave would have startled her from her hold, and given her a thorough shower-bath, if no worse; for Mamie's position was by no means a safe one, though she did not think of that.

And meanwhile what was Lulu doing?

The little creature sat still for a moment or two as her sister had bidden her, singing softly to herself and looking up and down the road. But presently she tired of this; Mamie stayed too long, and there was no amusement at hand, nothing to do. She called to Mamie several times, but she did not hear; the sound of the booming waters below her drowned all other voices. Then Lulu fretted a little, then looked about her again, and there came a great, big dog trotting along the road.

Now, although Lulu had begged to be allowed to go and see the "bow-wows," she preferred to view them at a safe distance, or at least under the shelter of some protecting hand. And she was [165]

not acquainted with this particular "bow-wow," and to her infant eyes he wore a ferocious and unfriendly aspect. So she must move out of the way before he came near; and, since Mamie would not come to her, she must go to Mamie.

Lulu was a great climber for a child of her age, and the roughness of the path she had to cross had no terrors for her. Rising from her seat with the fear of that "bow-wow" before her eyes, the baby-feet soon carried her over jagged stones and crumbling masonry, till she thought herself at a safe distance from the dog, at whom she peeped from behind a sheltering pile as he passed by, and then turned once more to go to Mamie.

Oh, if the poor, timid mother lying suffering upon her bed had but seen her children then! Mamie on the forbidden spot, leaning over the leaping waters, with only the clasp of her own small arm about the wooden pile to keep her from falling headlong into their depths; her baby-girl clambering with faltering, unsteady steps over that rough and rugged way. [166]

But now a new object took Lulu's attention, and diverted her thoughts from Mamie.

Tom Norris had gone over to Newport for the day, and had lent his boat to Walter and Ned Stone; they were careless boys, especially the latter, and it was with many a charge to be sure and take good care of the boat that he had granted the favor.

They had been out rowing that morning, and had come back with a quantity of spoils in the shape of shells and sea-weeds which they had gathered. They had returned just before the hour for dinner, and, meaning to go out again as soon as that meal was over, had not made the boat properly fast to the stake, but had contented themselves with carrying off the oars, and knotting a rope over one of the stones of the pier.

But after dinner some new and greater attraction, *what* is of no consequence, had taken their time and thoughts; and, forgetting all about the neglected boat, they had gone off, leaving it so carelessly fastened, and liable to slip its hold at any moment when the waves might become a little stronger; rubbing its pretty painted sides too, now and then, against the rough stones when the wash of the waves carried it too near. [167]

But still worse mischief than this was to come from the thoughtlessness of those heedless boys, joined as it was to Mamie's deliberate disobedience.

Making her way as she best could to her sister, the eye of the little child was caught by the pretty boat bobbing up and down upon the waves; and farther, oh, priceless treasure! by the sight of a few gay shells which the boys in their hurry had dropped in the bottom of the boat.

"Dere's Mamie's pitty sells," said the darling to herself; "me will det 'em."

And the little feet slipped and slid themselves over the stones, till she stood at the very water's edge.

You will remember that this was on the sheltered side of the breakwater, where the waves had little or no force, but only rippled and washed with a gentle murmur at Lulu's feet. [168]

The boat was still beyond her reach, but the dear little tot generally managed to gain what she wanted, if her own small hands or own small brains could bring it about.

"Dere's de wope dat pulls it," she said to herself, and in a moment she had laid hold of the rope, and drawn the boat in so that she could step within it. How she ever did so without falling into the water was matter of wonder to all who afterwards heard of it, but a kind Hand guarded the baby steps, and she gained the boat without harm.

Here she found enough to amuse her and keep her quiet for a few moments longer, till Mamie, suddenly rousing to the recollection that Lulu was waiting for her, drew back from her dangerous position and turned around.

Where was her little sister?

"Lulu, Lulu!" she called in terrified tones, not seeing her where she had left her as she started forward. [169]

"Here me are," answered the little voice from the other side of the breakwater; and, making her way in haste, there she found Lulu deeply interested in something at the bottom of the boat, over which she was bending.

"O you naughty little thing! How did you go there, and how am I going to take you out?" said Mamie.

"Here's a funny ittle lanimal wants to sate hans wiz me," said Lulu, quite unmoved by her sister's reproaches. "Tome see him, Mamie. Tome in de boat."

"What will mamma say? How can I take you out?" repeated Mamie again.

"Lulu not tome out; dere's de wope, Mamie, pull it, and tome see dis funny fellow," urged Lulu; and Mamie, seeing her coolness, and that she could herself easily manage to step into the boat by drawing it towards her as Lulu must have done, lost her fears, and grew anxious to see what it was that interested the child so much. Besides, she would have to get in the boat herself to take Lulu out. [170]

In another moment, it was done; the boat drawn close to the landing-place, and she had stepped within it as safely as Lulu had done.

"Only for one moment, Lulu," she said. "You were very naughty to come in here, and I must take you out. Oh! oh dear! how it rocks!" as the boat, shaken by her weight, rocked back and forth.

Was it Mamie herself, or innocent little Lulu, on whom the blame justly rested?

There was another thing which she had forgotten, or rather which she had not considered, namely, how the boat was to be drawn in again; nor had she observed that the rope, carelessly fastened in the beginning, was slipping farther and farther from its hold upon the stone, as the boat rocked to and fro.

The "funny ittle lanimal" proved to be a very small crab, which was feeling about him with his claws, in an uncomfortable manner; and in inquiring into his habits, and "poking him" about the [171] bottom of the boat, several moments passed away.

And as the movements of the children gave a little added motion, that treacherous rope slid gradually from its stay, and—the boat was loose, and at the mercy of the out-going tide!

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[172]

IX.

ADRIFT.

DRIFTING! drifting! slowly, but steadily, the boat floated out from the shelter of the pier.

Quite absorbed by the droll movements of the tiny crab, Mamie did not notice their danger, till, passing out from the shadow which the breakwater had thrown upon it, the boat glided into the broad sunlight which flooded the waves beyond.

Then, startled by the burst of sunshine which fell upon her, she raised her head, and saw the dreadful truth.

Out on the waters, alone, alone! she and Lulu, two little helpless children, with no eye to [173] watch, no hand to help!

For a moment or two she sat perfectly stunned, motionless where she was, crouched at the bottom of the boat, her eyes fixed upon the now fast-receding shore, her lips seeming glued together with horror and affright, a sick, faint feeling coming over her.

Out on the sea! out on the sea! alone! alone!

And so the precious moments were lost.

Little Lulu prattled away, all unconscious of fear or danger, and still interested in her captive, and his efforts to escape. But presently she too looked up.

"Where we doin', Mamie?" she asked, turning great eyes of wonder upon her sister.

Then Mamie found voice and breath, and, clasping the little one in her arms, shrieked aloud for help.

But none heard, although Lulu, terrified by her sister's cries, now joined her own, seeing something was wrong, though she could not yet understand their peril. For the wind, blowing as [174] it did from the shore, carried away the sound of their voices, and floated the piteous tones far out over the sea.

Mamie. p. 174.

Farther, still farther, and faster now, as the blue waves, crisping and sparkling in the sunlight, toyed with the frail boat, and its precious, helpless freight, and tossed it from one to another, but ever carrying it farther from home!

Was there no one to see? no one to hear? Why was it that no one looked out at that time over the dancing waters, and discovered what terrible plaything they had seized upon?

Far off, so far off it seemed to poor Mamie's straining eyes, and growing each moment more distant, figures were moving upon the shore; some up and down the road; others, she could distinguish them well at first, playing croquet upon the lawns; little children, like themselves, running up and down the long piazzas of the hotels: but no one, no one, turned an eye towards [175] their peril, or lent an ear to the frantic cries which rang from their lips.

Oh, how cruel, how cruel, it seemed!

The boat drifted onward till it was a long distance from the shore, almost in a straight line, keeping directly in the flood of sunshine which fell across the waters; and it may be that if any eye did turn seaward, it was dazzled by the blaze of light, and, even if it saw the boat, could notice nothing amiss. Kind hearts were there that would almost have stood still at the thought of the fearful peril about those little ones; feet which would have flown, hands which would have strained every nerve to rescue them. But ah! to poor Mamie the whole world seemed so heartless, so cruel!

On, on, till she could no longer distinguish any thing more than the long line of hotels on the shore; the beach glistening on the one hand, the bare, stern rocks upon the other.

What was to become of them, herself and Lulu? Would they toss gently about in this way till they died of hunger, or would great fishes come and eat them up? Or would some terrible storm [176] arise, and the waves, now so gentle and playful, grow high and fierce, as she had seen them the other day, and swallow up their frail boat? And the night, the night! What should they do when the darkness came, and the last faint, lingering hope that some one would yet see them should be gone? The sun was sinking towards the west even now; by and by it would be quite dark. What would mamma do when she missed her little girls, and knew not where to look? Would she ever know what had become of them? Would they be found all dead and drowned?

She had ceased to cry aloud now, and sat crouched, in a kind of dumb, helpless despair, at the bottom of the boat, with both arms clasped fast about Lulu, who had also hushed her screams, and sat with questioning, wistful eyes, wandering from Mamie's face over the waves, up to the sky, and back again to her sister. She did not understand: how could she? She only knew that Mamie had been frightened, and cried; and so she had cried too. [177]

It was well that they both sat quite still in the bottom of the boat, or they might have fallen into the water; but Mamie, in the midst of all her terror, had sense enough left to know that they were safer so, and she would not suffer Lulu to stir from her encircling arms.

So on, still on, farther and farther out upon the lonely waters, away from home and friends, drifted the little helpless ones.

What though all was now bustle and alarm in that home,—indeed, throughout all the various houses on the shore; that Maria, missing her charges, so shamefully neglected, had hunted for

them in vain, first about their own hotel, then in every other one, hoping that they might have gone visiting, or been taken away by some friend; that, hearing nothing of them, she had first alarmed the other servants of the house, then the ladies, next roused the sick mother, who grew frantic and desperate as moment after moment went by, and brought no news of her darlings? [178] Who dreamed of all the truth?

The alarm was general now; the news went forth like wildfire: two little children lost! and so many dangerous places where they might have come to harm!

Stony shore and sandy beach were searched in vain to their farthest extent; one party explored the little river; others started for the green, cultivated country lying back of the shore, thinking that the stray lambs might have been tempted by its beauty to wander too far; others again hurried down upon the rocks, hoping to find them, perhaps, hidden in some of their many nooks or niches; the old pier, the dock, the very bathing-houses, were all searched; but who thought of looking out to sea, where the cockle-shell of a boat floated, floated far away?

It was not even missed, the little boat; for Mamie's brothers and Tom Norris were all away, and probably they would not have guessed at the truth, had they known of its loss. [179]

And so hope grew fainter and fainter as one after another returned from the fruitless search only to set forth again; and the dreadful fear grew stronger and stronger that in some way the missing children had fallen into the water, and would never be seen again; while the poor mother went from one fainting fit into another, and those about her scarcely cared to call her back to her misery.

And so the sun sank low in the west, and the twilight gathered, and the night came down upon land and sea, and still no word came to those anxious, aching hearts of the little lost ones for whom they watched and waited.

How was it meanwhile with those poor little waifs?

With that dull, hopeless feeling that nothing could save them now seeming to benumb her, Mamie sat silent a long time,—silent, that is, but for the heavy, gasping sobs that struggled up [180] from her poor little bosom, her eyes fixed on the distant stretch of shore, now fast receding into one gray, undistinguishable line; Lulu, awed by this strange, new grief of her sister's into stillness likewise.

But the baby tired at last. She wanted home and mamma, or, at least, her nurse. The boat and the water had been all very wonderful at first, and had perhaps lent their charm to keep her quiet; but she was wearied of them now. She fretted a little; then, finding this failed to draw Mamie's attention, she spoke.

"Lulu want mamma. Lulu want no more water," she said plaintively.

"O darling! what shall I do? What will become of us?" answered Mamie, roused by her words from the sort of stupor into which she had fallen.

"Tate Lulu home. Lulu want to do home. Lulu want mamma tate tare of her," said the little child, whose vague feeling of trouble was beginning to settle itself into a longing for her mother's care and comforting.

"O Lulu, Lulu!" broke forth Mamie, "there's no one to take care of us, there's no one to see us, [181] there's no one to hear us. We're all alone, all alone, all alone!" her voice dying away to a low murmur of despair.

Was there no Eye to see? Was there no Ear to hear? Was there no Hand to save?

Whose Hand guided the fragile boat over the deep waters, and held their waves in check that they might not deal too roughly with the slight thing which was the sole refuge of those little ones? Whose was the Ear which bent to hear those piteous tones? Whose the Eye which watched them on their perilous way?

A few light clouds were sailing overhead on the deep blue sky; and, as the sun sank in the west, they were tinged with purple, pink, and gold, changing every instant from one hue to another. All around, on sea, earth, and sky, poured a flood of golden glory, the little curling waves breaking into a thousand diamond sparkles as they caught it on their crests.

Lulu gazed wonderingly into Mamie's face as she spoke so piteously, then put up a grieved lip; [182] but, before breaking out into a cry again, she looked about her as if questioning the truth of her words.

The beauty of the sky above caught her eye; a golden-edged cloud fixed her attention for a moment, and her baby thoughts took a new turn.

Lulu had heard that God lived in the sky; she had been told, too, that God loved her, and would take care of her; and the little creature startled her sister with the words,—

"Mamie, where are Dod?"

And across Mamie's mind flashed her watchword. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

"In every place!" Here, now, watching her and Lulu! For a moment it seemed to bring new terror to her, speaking, as it did, to her guilty conscience; but the next there came comfort in the thought.

Not all alone, if His eye watched them there.

"Where are Dod?" repeated Lulu. [183]

"God is in the sky, but He sees us here," she said more calmly than she had spoken before.

"Den He not tate tare of Mamie and Lulu?" questioned the little child.

"Yes, I think He will; I do believe He will," sobbed Mamie. "I b'lieve He'll take care of you any way, Lulu darling, 'cause this wasn't your fault, but only mine. Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"Tell him tate tare of us, tate de boat home to mamma," lisped the baby lips. "Tell Him loud up in de sty, Mamie; and tell Him we so 'faid."

Innocent darling! she did not know why or of what she was afraid; only that she and Mamie were in some great trouble, that she wanted mamma, that mamma was not here, and that somehow the beauty of the sunset sky had brought to her mind the thought of God and of His care, of which she had been told.

"So afraid!"

Poor Mamie was indeed afraid, stricken with such awful dread as, happily, seldom finds its way into childish heart; but Lulu's words brought another verse into her mind. It almost seemed to her as if a voice came over the water, and sounded it into her ear, so suddenly and so strongly did it come to her. [184]

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee."

Bessie Bradford had told it to her one day in the early part of the summer.

Mamie had a great terror of a thunder-storm; so had Bessie; but once, when they had happened to be together when one was passing, the former had shrieked and cried at every flash and peal, while the latter, though pale and shrinking, had remained perfectly quiet. Afterwards Mamie had said to her,—

"Bessie, how can you keep from crying when you are frightened in a thunder-storm?"

And Bessie had answered,—

"When I am very much frightened, I try to think of a verse mamma taught me to comfort me: 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.'" [185]

At the moment it had not made much impression on Mamie; but she had not forgotten the words; and now, in her time of need, they came to her so clearly, as I have said, that it almost seemed as if they were spoken to her:—

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee."

What a sense of hope and comfort, almost of relief, crept over the poor, miserable little child with the recollection!

And "the eyes of the Lord are in every place."

How she clung to the thought now,—the thought that she had been so ready to put from her for many a day past, which she had tried to forget because it was a reproach to her conscience, a check upon the purpose of disobedience which had led to such a terrible result!

"O God!" she said with quivering lips, "I am afraid, so afraid! please let me trust in Thee; and take a great deal of care of my Lulu and me on this dreadful water; and if there could be any way for us to go home to mamma, let us; and help me not to be naughty and disobedient again; and don't let mamma be very much frightened about us. Amen." [186]

"Is mamma tomin' pitty soon now?" asked Lulu.

"I asked God, darling, to let us go back to her," moaned Mamie, "and He can help people a great deal; but I don't know but this is 'most too much even for Him."

Lulu understood, or noticed, only the first part of her speech, and it satisfied her, at least for the time; and, nodding her pretty head contentedly, she said,—

"Den Lulu will love Dod, an' be dood dirl."

Still the boat drifted onward, farther and farther from home and safety, out from the friendly waters of the bay, and more and more towards the open sea, where, on the distant horizon, hung a misty veil, soft purplish gray beneath, brightening above into tints of pink and amber which melted away again into the clear blue of the heaven above. [187]

Not a sound was to be heard but the plashing of the water against the sides and keel of their boat; not a living thing was to be seen save their own two little selves. God's curtain of night was falling; and still they were alone out on the sea!

The sun was gone now; even the glorious colors which he left painted on the clouds after he had himself sunk from sight, had faded out; the evening breeze, cool and refreshing on the land, came chilly and damp over the water; and Lulu shivered as it struck through the thin muslin covering upon her tiny shoulders.

She had sat uncomplainingly after Mamie had told her she had asked God to take care of them, waiting in her own docile way to go to mamma; but now her baby patience was exhausted, as it well might be; for she was cold, hungry, and tired.

She broke into a pitiful cry. [188]

"Lulu so told; Lulu want hupper; Lulu want mamma," she said appealingly to her sister, with oh! such a grieved, piteous face and voice, that Mamie's heart was quite broken; and now all thought of self was forgotten; and she prayed, poor little soul, that darling Lulu, at least, might be saved, and taken back to mamma, even if she might not.

Then she tried to speak words of comfort to her baby-sister. Ah, how hard it was, and what a mockery they seemed! and, taking off her own little jacket, she wrapped it about Lulu's shoulders, and, resting the weary little head against her own bosom, petted and soothed, until the long eyelashes drooped upon the dimpled cheek, and Lulu was asleep in her arms.

And then it was so lonely, oh, so lonely! far more so than when Lulu was awake, with her sweet voice prattling broken words now and then; but so great was Mamie's sense of the wrong she had done to her innocent sister, that she would not wake her, even for the comfort of her voice and look. [189]

She had no thought or wish for sleep herself; the child's senses were all strained to the utmost, listening and watching for she knew not what.

How still it was, how very still! and deeper and yet deeper grew the dusky shadows, shrouding the distant white sails which all the afternoon had specked the far horizon, shutting them out from sight, and with them the last faint hope of help, which Mamie had somehow connected with them, leaving her no ray of comfort to cling to but those words:—

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee."

And night was upon the sea where drifted the lost baby voyagers; but "the eyes of the Lord are in every place."

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[190]

X.

RESCUED

A SHOUT, a loud halloo, broke the stillness; a hail so sharp and sudden, so near at hand, that it startled Mamie into new terror for one moment; then, as it was repeated, brought a fluttering of hope to her sinking young heart.

A glimmer over the water; then, as she turned her head, and glanced half fearfully over her shoulder, a light shining brightly through the surrounding darkness, and coming nearer.

Another hail, to which she still made no answer; perhaps she did not understand that she would be expected to do so; then a boat coming near,—a boat from which shone the welcome light, a torch held high above the head of the boy who carried it. [191]

Then the stranger boat was close to her own, with two people in it, an old man and a boy; and the light of the torch was falling over the little figures crouched close together; over the white face and straining eyes of the elder, over the peaceful, sleeping form of the younger.

Exclamations of wonder were exchanged between the man and boy, and questions poured upon her; this Mamie knew from the tone of voice in which they were uttered, but not one word could she understand; and their language seemed so harsh and rough to her that it almost made her afraid of them.

The end of a rope was thrown towards her, but she did not know that she was expected to catch it; and the directions the man and boy shouted out only confused and frightened her the more.

Poor child! she did not know whether to look upon these rough creatures as friends or foes. [192]

Several times they threw the rope, but each time it fell with a dull splash into the water; and at last a boat-hook was thrown out, and grappled her own boat. All the while, she heard the man and boy talking eagerly together in their own uncouth tongue, and she wondered what they were going to do with her and her little sister. All manner of wild fancies flitted through her over-excited brain, and made her poor little frame quiver at one moment with dread, at another with hope.

Who were these people, and where were they taking her? To some far-off foreign land, where every one spoke that strange, rough language, and no one would understand a word she might say when she told who she was, and begged to be taken back to her friends; or could it really be that they were taking her home? No, that could not be, for they did not know where she belonged, and she had no way of telling them, or so she believed. [193]

They had now made her boat fast to their own, and were drawing it after them; the man was rowing, the boy steering; the light from their torch falling over both figures, and casting a red glare upon the waves around. It was a curious scene, and one so new to Mamie that she watched it with a feeling of there being something unreal about it all.

"It's 'most like a fairy tale, or a book story," she said to herself. "I wonder what they are going to do with us;" and she drew her arms close about Lulu, who still slept quietly on her breast.

She wished that the daylight would come, and show her more plainly the faces of those who now had her in their keeping; for she believed that it must be nearly morning, so long did the time seem since the light had died out of the far west; whereas it was scarcely an hour since dark, and it was still comparatively early in the evening.

Except for the measured dash of the oars, and the ripple of the waters as the two boats cut through the waves, it was almost as still now as it had been before her new companions had appeared; for man and boy had ceased talking, and rowed steadily forward without exchanging a word. [194]

Oh, if she only could know whether these were kind and good people, who would be ready to take her home, or if they were bad and cruel, and would do something dreadful to her and Lulu! She thought of every terrible thing which she had ever heard of as happening to children, and tormented herself with imagining her little sister and herself in like situations.

Then she tried to turn her thoughts another way, picturing to herself the going home, back to her mamma, and how glad mamma would be to see her and Lulu, and how she would forgive all her naughtiness for very joy at seeing them. And then she thought how distressed mamma must be now, and again a heavy sob shook her breast, and two or three scalding tears ran down upon Lulu's head. [195]

Oh! if she could but be with mamma once more, she would try so hard never to vex and worry her again; and she was so sure that she would always be attentive and obedient to her wishes.

But should she ever have the chance? She looked up to the sky, now thickly studded with stars,—more stars than she had ever seen before; and how bright and beautiful they were, seeming as if they looked down upon her right out of heaven,—the heaven where God was! and again there came to her the thought,—

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee;" and once more she asked that no further harm might befall her and Lulu, but that these people into whose hands they had fallen might be kind to them, and find some way to take them home.

By and by another light shone out of the darkness, burning unsteadily, but more and more brightly as the boat moved on; and Mamie knew that they were nearing it. Then a long, low line, growing each instant more distinct; and presently she saw that the light came from a fire that was built upon—yes, it was the shore! The land once more! the land where mamma was! far off it might be, perhaps in another country even; for it seemed to the poor little voyager that she had come from such a distance; but still it was the *land*, and she felt as if she must be nearer home than upon the water. [196]

She could see two figures moving about the fire which cast its fitful light upon shore and sea, now dying down, now flashing up brightly, but serving always as a point to guide them landwards.

Not very far off, and burning with a clear, steady flame, was another light which seemed high up, and looked to Mamie like that of the light-house which she could see every evening from the piazza of the hotel. Was it possible it was the same? It would seem almost like a friend if it were so.

Now the man rowed slower and slower, and presently the foremost boat made a harsh, grating sound upon the beach. The boy jumped out, and then Mamie's boat was hauled up, and she and Lulu lifted out, while a woman and a girl pressed eagerly forward with wondering faces to see what strange cargo the men had brought to shore. [197]

But alas! the hope that Mamie had felt that these females might understand her was soon put to flight. They talked fast enough, pouring out question after question; but she could not

comprehend one word; and when the man had put her down upon her feet on the beach, and she turned to the woman, and begged, oh, so earnestly! to be taken home to mamma, the latter shook her head, and only gazed helplessly and wonderingly into her pitiful face.

Then Lulu, roused from her sleep by the change, and frightened by the strange scene and faces about her, broke into a loud, distressed cry, in which Mamie herself could not help joining, as she [198] stretched out her arms for her little sister, whom the man had now given into the woman's care.

The woman did not give her up, but spoke a few words to Mamie in a coaxing voice, and then set off with long, rapid strides, while the girl seized upon Mamie's hand and followed, leaving the man and boy to attend to the boats and their fish; for they were fishermen, as Mamie afterwards found out.

A few steps brought them to a small, a very small house, a mere hut; and, pushing open the door, the woman entered with Lulu in her arms, Mamie and the girl coming as closely after as the tired, cramped limbs of the poor little child could carry her.

The place was neat and clean, though poor; and to Mamie, after the dark and chill of the sea, it seemed a very haven of refuge. Summer night though it was, she was not sorry to see a fire of logs burning upon the open hearth, over which the kettle was singing, while the table was set for supper. She had not known she was hungry before; but now the brown loaf upon the table looked [199] very inviting to her, though, at another time, she would probably have scorned it.

But just now she could attend to nothing but Lulu, who had not ceased her frantic cries for mamma and "hupper" from the moment she had been awakened in lifting her from the boat.

Whether the woman understood, or whether she only imagined that the poor children must be hungry, she sat down beside the fire with Lulu upon her knee, and, hastily pouring some milk into a cup, held it to the little one's lips.

Lulu seized upon it, and while Mamie stood close beside her, looking on with satisfaction, took a long drink, put it from her to take breath, and ejaculated, "Dood!" then drank again; looked up into the kind, good-natured face smiling above her, and said, "Mamie some too."

Meanwhile the girl had done a like good office for Mamie, bringing her also a cup of milk; but [200] she would not touch it till she saw Lulu satisfied. Their care for one another evidently gratified the woman and the girl, who both looked on admiringly; and then, Lulu making it quite plain without the use of words that she wished her sister to share the privileges of the broad, comfortable lap where she was resting, the kindly Dutch woman lifted Mamie to her knee, and, in soothing but still unintelligible tones, tried to find out something of her story, while the girl bustled about, and soon had ready some more substantial food in the shape of great bowls of bread and milk, which she brought to the children.

But it was all in vain that Mamie, encouraged by so much kindness, endeavored to make the women understand her. She tried them with all the appropriate words she could think of, speaking to them in a very loud voice, as if they could comprehend the better for that. "Sea" and "boat" and "pier" and "lost," shrieked as loud as they might be, made no impression upon the minds of her hearers. Then she tried them with such French words as she knew, believing that [201] one foreign language was as good as another, and Frenchifying the English words she was obliged to mix with them to make her story at all clear. "Nous came-ez over l'eau dans le boat-ez," she said with emphasis, "et pauvre mamma will être très frighten-ez."

These and many other such sentences she composed and delivered with great care, but *French* proved of no greater use than English; and Mamie began to feel very despairing and desperately homesick again. Lulu, too, was incessantly pleading, "Tome home, Mamie; Mamie tate Lulu to mamma;" and fretted piteously.

By and by the man and boy came in, and then there was more talk in Dutch between the family; and at last the boy turned to Mamie, and, pointing with his finger, said,—

"Netasquet coom?"

One word, at least, was familiar; Mamie understood him to ask her if they had come from the [202] right direction, and she nodded her head assentingly. The boy nodded back as if to say, "That is all right;" and, believing she had now found a satisfactory method of communication, she kept on nodding her head, and repeating the word "Netasquet" in answer to all farther questions that were poured upon her.

Presently the man put on his hat again, and, taking Mamie in his arms with many encouraging nods and jerks of his thumb over his shoulder, carried her out of the house, closely followed by the woman, still carrying Lulu, who, wide awake, and in utter amazement at all the new and wonderful things which were befalling her at this hour, when she was accustomed to be fast asleep in her little bed, gazed solemnly about her with grave, intent eyes, but, strange to say, was perfectly quiet, and neither cried nor fretted. Perhaps the little one guessed that these kind, good-natured people were their friends, and meant them no harm; though she found it necessary [203] to inform the good woman, over and over again, that she was "mamma's baby," and therefore must "do home," and could not be expected to stay with her.

Out under the starry night again; and now their bearers walked rapidly on towards that steady, bright light Mamie had noticed from the boat, while she looked wistfully through the darkness for

some sign or landmark which might tell her that they were on their way home. For she could not help hoping that this was the purpose of these good people, and yet her poor little heart was full of uncertainty and dread.

They went steadily onwards, the man and woman now and then exchanging a few words, but for the most part in silence, coming nearer and nearer to the light; and now Mamie saw that it was really in a light-house, which gradually loomed tall and white out of the dark night.

But even as she saw this she drew a heavy sigh; the light-house she saw each night was very [204]
far away from home, over the water too, and she shrank from going upon the sea again to-night. Oh! she never, never would be disobedient, or fret at mamma's orders again. How severely she had been punished!

Up a flight of steps and through a small door opening into a neat, comfortable room, where a woman was busy mixing bread. She turned around as the new-comers entered, and, as if struck dumb with surprise, stood looking at them with her arms still in the dough she was kneading.

To her the man spoke as if inquiring for some one by name; and she answered him by an upward jerk of her head, as if she, too, could only converse with him by signs.

"Oh!" said Mamie piteously, "can you talk a language? These people can't, and no one seems to know what I say, so I can ask them to take me home."

"Well, do tell now," said the woman, stripping the dough from her fingers, and gazing with interest and curiosity from Mamie to Lulu; "and where did you come from, and where did Muller [205]
and his wife pick *you* up? Talk! yes, I can talk, I reckon, if you don't try me on the Dutch. My old man, he makes out Muller's gibberish, but I ain't no hand at it."

Thankful beyond words to hear the familiar tongue, or "a language," as she called it again, Mamie burst into tears of relief as she poured out her story.

"He picked us up on the sea in a boat that we went into," she sobbed. "Lulu wasn't naughty, 'cause she did not know any better; but I was just awful, 'cause mamma forbid me to go on the breakwater, and I did; and I thought we'd never get back, 'cause these kind people don't know how to talk. Couldn't you show us the way home?"

"To be sure," answered the woman soothingly, while Muller and his wife stood silent, satisfied to let Mamie make her tale clear by herself; "at least, we'll see you get there. You'll be coming from the pier, I reckon?"

"Yes," moaned Mamie. [206]

"Then I'm thinkin' there may be some folks from down your way upstairs now. They are just gone up to see the light, and will be down in a jiffy, and we'll see if they can take you home. If they haven't a mind to,—shame on 'em if they don't!—my man'll just harness up, and take you home. It might be better to put you to bed for the night, for 'tisn't no time for a baby like that to be out; but I reckon your mother must be nigh about crazed if she don't know nothin' about you; so we'll get you down to the pier to-night. Don't you take on no more, you poor lamb; but just wait till John brings the folks down. Here, sit ye down, Mrs. Muller, and you, too, Muller;" shrieking out these last words at the top of her voice, and giving each chair a slap with her hand, as she plumped it energetically down before the good Dutchman and his wife.

Certainly Mamie could not doubt that the light-house keeper's wife could "talk a language" as she poured forth question after question, and made her own remarks on the answers Mamie [207]
gave, while the child sat trembling with impatience to see who "the folks" upstairs might be, and to know if they would really take her home.

The woman would have taken Lulu from Mrs. Muller; but the poor baby, who began to think that she was handed from one to another stranger rather freely to-night, clung to her first friend, and could not be parted from her, which much pleased that good woman, who soothed her with gentlest tones and caresses. The little thing sadly needed petting, for she was quite worn out, and whimpered pitifully again for "mamma," and to be allowed to "do to heep in ittle bed," not understanding why she should be so long deprived of these privileges.

Presently voices were heard coming down the long flight of stairs,—voices to which Mamie listened eagerly; more and more eagerly as they came nearer and nearer; for they seemed to her familiar and well known. Could it be?—yes, it really was—there they came around the turn of the [208]
staircase—Mr. and Mrs. Norris with Lily, Mr. Powers and Belle, Mrs. Walton and Mabel.

"O papa!" she heard Lily saying, "just a few moments longer."

"Not a moment, my daughter. Why! do you know what time it is? after ten now, and the long drive home still to be taken. A nice hour, truly, for such young damsels to be running over light-houses and"—

He was interrupted by a shriek of joy from Mamie, who, springing forward, threw herself wildly upon Mrs. Norris, clinging fast to her skirts, crying and laughing at the same time, raising to the lady's astonished gaze a pitiful, tear-stained, pale little face; while broken words of gladness and pleading came from her lips.

How they all crowded about her and Lulu, who, seeing the familiar face of Mrs. Norris, also

stretched out her arms to her with a glad cry, and was speedily nestling upon her neck! and how astonished every one was! and how they all questioned and pitied!—no one had the heart to blame now, may easily be imagined. [209]

The gentlemen, who were all good German scholars, and could speak with Muller, soon heard from him how and where he had found the little castaways,—how, coming home from deep-sea fishing, his boat had, in the darkness, nearly run down that in which Mamie and her sister were drifting; how he had made it fast to his own, and brought it in, taking the children first to his own house, and then bringing them up here, because, although he had rightly guessed from what quarter they had come, he had no horse or other means of taking them speedily home, and so had come to see if his good friend, the light-house keeper, would not take further steps to restore them to their friends.

There was no need for this now; here were some of their friends on the spot, and they were ready enough to take all further charge of them, and carry them home as fast as possible. [210]

With sympathizing thoughts for the agonized mother, searching vainly for her babies, Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Walton hurried the party away; and presently they were all in the great wagon which had brought Mamie's friends to the light-house, and driving home as fast as the darkness of the evening would allow.

Lulu nestled in Mrs. Norris' arms, and, covered with her shawl, was soon fast asleep; while Mamie sat with one hand clasped in Lily's, the other in that of Belle, who, sitting one on each side of her, could not do enough to show their pity and sympathy. Even Mabel, who sat behind her, quite forgot the chronic feud between them, and was constantly leaning forward to put her arm about Mamie's neck, and kiss her cold cheek, or to ask tenderly, "How do you feel now, Mamie?"

And the rejoicing there was over them when at last they reached home, and the little wanderers were restored to their frantic mother! How fast the glad news spread from house to house, bringing joy and relief even to the hearts of those who had never known or seen them, can be imagined only by those who knew what the suspense and anxiety had been. [211]

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XI.

REPENTANCE.

THERE might have been some danger that Mamie would feel herself too much of a heroine, and forget that all this had been brought about by her own sad disobedience and naughtiness, but for the trouble which followed.

Strange to say, neither of the children suffered much from the exposure and excitement of the evening; and, beyond a little paleness and languor, seemed as well as usual the next day.

But it was far different with their mother. Not very strong at any time, the agony and suspense about her little ones had proved too much for her, and she was very ill; so ill that Mr. Stone was telegraphed for, and for some hours it was believed she could not live. She was quite wild, too; and, though she called and pleaded incessantly for her children, she did not know them when they were brought to her, but thrust them away from her in a way that frightened little Lulu, and quite broke poor repentant Mamie's heart. Oh! was her tender, indulgent mother going to leave her? Would she never know her, never speak to her again, never tell her she forgave all her disobedient, naughty ways, all her disrespect and pettishness? [213]

She sat all day, just outside of her mamma's room, listening to every sound from within, crying bitterly, but silently, and utterly refusing to be comforted or coaxed away.

But at night there was a little change for the better; Mrs. Stone fell into a quiet sleep, and the doctor said he had hope for her now.

So Mamie, utterly worn out, suffered herself to be led away by some of the pitying ladies, and to be put to bed, where she forgot her troubles until the morning. [214]

She had dreaded facing her father when he should come and hear all the sad story; but she was awakened by his kiss; and, though he looked very sober when she poured forth her confession, and offered to submit patiently to any punishment he might think proper, he told her he thought she had brought punishment enough upon herself, and that he hoped this would be a lasting lesson to her.

Mamie thought that it would indeed; she should never forget that terrible night upon the sea, alone with Lulu, who was rather a silent reproach than a comfort to her. She could not believe, poor child! that the night had not been half gone when she was brought home, or that it was hardly an hour after dark when the fisherman had found her, and brought her to land.

She was curious to know, as perhaps you may be, how her young playmates and their parents happened to be at the light-house "in the middle of the night;" and this was soon satisfactorily explained to her. [215]

It was in this way.

The whole party had driven that afternoon to the house of a friend whose beautiful place was situated some distance from the shore; and they had there taken tea, and spent the earlier part of the evening, so that they had known nothing of the alarm about the lost children.

Their way home lay near the old "Point Light;" for this was not the light-house which Mamie saw each evening from the piazza of the hotel, but another, in quite a different direction, though much nearer home; and Lily and the other children, who were wild to see the light-house at night while its revolving lamp was burning, had persuaded their parents to indulge them, late as it was, with a visit there. They had been up to the very top, seen all that was to be seen, had the screeching fog-whistle blown many times for their benefit, and had come down to be astonished by the sight which met them below. [216]

All this, and much more, Belle and Lily poured into Mamie's ears on the morning of the second day, when her mother had been pronounced a little better, and she could be coaxed out of doors.

But mamma was still very ill, and must be kept perfectly quiet; and Mamie, feeling that this was all her fault, and filled with self-reproach, which was perhaps the greater for her father's kindness, had no spirits for play, and sat quite subdued and mournful in the midst of her playmates, who were all ready to devote themselves to her, and to talk to her if she did not choose to play.

"Mamma says," said Lily, when she had concluded her account of the way in which they came to be at the light-house,—"Mamma says that it was quite a providential *dispensary* that we should have gone to the light-house."

"What does that mean?" asked Belle. [217]

"I asked her," answered Lily; "and she said it meant that it really seemed as if God intended us to go there on purpose to find Mamie and Lulu; because she had really thought it was too late for us to be out, and was not very willing to be persuaded."

"Because God knew what trouble we were in, and wanted to help us out of it, I suppose," said Mamie thoughtfully, with the words of her neglected watchword in her mind.

"Yes," said Belle. "If He did not see us always, and take care of us, what would become of us? Mamie, it makes me feel like crying, even now when you're all safe, to think about your being out all alone on the sea in the dark."

"Yes," assented Lily, "it did me, too, at first; but I'm getting used to it now. But I hope there's one good thing come out of it. Mamma doesn't approve at all of children sitting up late; but now, I suppose, she will see that it can have very delightful consequences." [218]

"Does she think that light-house man would not have brought us home if you had not come to his light-house?" said Mamie.

"Well, no; but I suppose you wouldn't have been home quite so soon," said Lily. "Maybe he wouldn't have brought you at all till the morning."

"I never knew the nights were so dreadfully long," said Mamie. "People say the nights and the days are just about as long as each other, and now I know they're not. The nights are a great deal the longest,—oh, so long!"

And Mamie gave a shuddering sigh at the recollection of the long, weary time she had passed upon the waters.

"Mamma said the time seemed longer to you than it really was," said Lily, "because you were alone and frightened; and the days are really the longest now, 'cause it's summer. In the winter the nights are the longest. It must be so, you know, 'cause our jography says so, and our 'Elements of 'Stronomy' too." [219]

"Then they never were up all night, and don't know," said Mamie emphatically, quite resenting the idea that any one could be better informed in the matter than she who had had such an

experience.

"Who were not up all night?" asked Mabel.

"She means the jogra-fers and the 'stron-amers," said Lily; "not the books of course, but the people who wrote them; but they must have been grown up; so I dare say they stayed up all night if they chose."

"I should think that *I* ought to know about it," said Mamie; "and when I'm grown up, I shall write a jography that says all the others don't know; 'cause once I stayed up and up and up, and there was a piece of the night left yet to go to sleep in."

Mamie was not to be convinced, and the others, with a feeling that she was to be indulged, and [220] not contradicted under the present circumstances, left her to her belief.

"What did you think about, Mamie?" asked Belle. "Did you think you were going to be drowned?"

"Yes," said Mamie, her eyes filling with tears; "and, Belle, I thought a good deal about that watchword you gave me, and how, if I'd remembered it all the time, that wouldn't have happened to me; but it did make me feel a little better,—no, not better, there wasn't any better about it,—but not quite so very afraid to think God could see me, and take care of me, even out on the sea and in the dark. I did not see, either, how He was going to help me; and yet the way did come quite easy after all. And now—and now"—Mamie hesitated, and looked doubtfully from one to another of her companions.

"Well," said Lily encouragingly.

"I think," said Mamie, "that now I will have to remember always that God sees me all the time; and that He would think I am very ungrateful, and don't deserve to be taken care of, if I don't try [221] to be good and never disobey mamma."

"Yes, I think so too," said Lily; "and that's the very best kind of a verse to help you to 'resist the hm—hm—and he will flee from you.'"

"The who?" asked Belle, amazed; and Mamie and Mabel also looked inquiringly at this mysterious utterance from Lily.

"The hm—hm," repeated Lily, no ways abashed, and persisting in the ambiguous form of expression; "you know that verse, don't you?"

"I know the verse, 'Resist the *devil*, and he will flee from you,'" said Belle.

"Yes, that's it," said Lily; "but if everybody knows the verse, which 'most all the world does,—and ought to be ashamed of themselves, if they don't,—why, then it's just as well to say hm—hm, and not that other ugly word."

"But the Bible says it," said Mabel.

"Yes," answered Lily, in a tone of indulgence for the Scriptures; "the Bible can say what it [222] pleases, because it *is* the Bible; but mortals ought to be more careful."

"You learned that from Maggie and Bessie, I suppose," said Belle. "They never say that word if they can help it."

"Yes, partly," said Lily with an air of becoming modesty, but yet as one who feels that she has ground of her own to stand upon, "partly from them, but partly from my own self. You see, children, I do it to keep myself from temptation."

"Temptation of what?" asked Belle.

"Temptation to say things I ought not," answered Lily. "Mamma told me I was falling into the habit of talking rather strongly, of saying 'awful' and 'horrid,' and such words to things that were not at all awful or horrid, or saying I was 'most dead, when I was not 'most dead at all; and she said she wanted me to watch myself, and try not to use such strong expressions; and I thought [223] hm—hm was rather a strong expression, so I would not say it right out when there was no need. What's that now?" as a smothered laugh was heard from behind the closed blinds of the parlor. "I just believe some one is there listening to us. Go and see, Mamie; it's your house."

Mamie did as she was bid; but she found no one near the window; and Lily was satisfied that she had been mistaken, as Mamie reported only two or three young ladies in the parlor, who did not seem to be thinking of them.

"You know," she continued, when Mamie had returned, "that when we feel like doing a thing, it is best to keep ourselves quite out of the way of temptation,—I learned that pretty well when I was always putting off,—and I *do* like to talk that kind of a way; so I'm going to keep myself as much as I can without using wrong words at all. I only began this morning; but you see I've improved already."

Mamie drew a long, weary sigh.

"Yes, Lily," she said with a doleful shake of her head, "yes, I know now how one ought not to [224] put one's self in the way of temptation, if they don't want to do a wrong thing. But—but—I'm

afraid I meant all the time to go on the breakwater if I found a chance. And I b'lieve, oh, dear! I b'lieve all these days I have been real mad at mamma 'cause she would not let me go; and now, if she don't get well, I can never tell her how sorry I am, or try to make up for it."

"But she's a little better to-day," said Belle consolingly. "I heard everybody say so."

"Yes, a little," said Mamie, who was again crying bitterly; "but papa says she is very ill yet; and even if she does get well, I shall always have to remember how bad I was to her. I think I never knew before how dreadful it is to be bad to your mother; and, when I was out in that boat, I b'lieve I thought of 'most every naughty thing I ever did to her."

"Then if she gets well now, it will make you very careful how you behave badly or saucily to her again," said Lily; "so that will be a good thing." [225]

"Oh, yes! I should think it might," sighed Mamie.

"Mamie, we are very sorry for you," said Belle, taking her hand and holding it tenderly.

"So am I," said Mabel: "and, Mamie, I believe I know a little how you feel by the duckling."

"Oh, you can't!" said Mamie almost indignantly; "a duckling is nothing to your own mamma. But, Mabel, I was horrid and stuck-up to you about that duckling, and made an awful fuss 'cause you took it without leave; and then I did a great deal worse thing myself, and never remembered or didn't care that God saw me all the time. It's very good in you to be so kind to me now, and never say any thing hateful."

Mamie had on her confession cap now, and was fain to make a clean breast of all her misdemeanors, past and present, feeling, poor child! as if it were somewhat of a relief to do so. [226]

"I'm never going to make faces at you again," said Mabel, moved by this new meekness.

"And I shan't plague you, and try to make you mad on purpose," said Mamie. "Let's make up for all our lives."

And offering her lips to Mabel, a kiss of peace was exchanged between these two little girls, who had never been very good friends, but who had always taken a naughty pleasure in aggravating one another, and in each one making the most of the other's faults.

"Here comes papa. He's been down to the post-office, and brought the mail," said Lily. "Papa, is there a letter for me? Maggie promised to write to me; but perhaps she has not done it yet."

"Well, I rather think she has favored Mamie this time," said Mr. Norris, dropping into Mamie's lap a letter addressed in Maggie Bradford's large, round handwriting. [227]

Brightening instantly at this unexpected consolation, Mamie caught up the letter, and eagerly opened it.

"Maggie never wrote to me before," she said; "and her letters are so nice."

"Yes," said Belle; "but I wonder if there is none for me. Maggie writes to me once a week, and Bessie writes once a week, and this is the day for Maggie's letter. Mr. Norris, didn't any letter come for me?"

Mr. Norris answered in the most satisfactory manner by rapidly turning over the letters in his hand, and selecting one which he teasingly held a moment above her reach; then dropped it into the little eager, outstretched hands.

"I'll read mine aloud," said Mamie, "'cause Maggie's letters are so very interesting.

> "My dear Mamie,—It is the turn for me to write to Belle to-day, but I thought she would not mind if I wrote to you instead, for we heard this afternoon of your going off in the boat, and nearly being lost, and saved by a fisherman, which was the greatest of mercies, and of your mamma being so ill. And so because we should comfort the afflicted, I thought you might like a letter, and Bessie will write to Belle. We are very sorry for you, dear; specially for your feeling so badly about your mamma, which was only to be expected if you had the feelings of human nature; and remorse is hard for mankind to bear, indeed, not to be endured. But I never heard of such a dreadful adventure as you had and dear little Lulu, too, except once when the railroad ran off with Bessie and Belle and me, and no one to take care of us, but a gentleman we did not know, who was very kind, and I believe sent to us by the hand of the Lord, and restored us to the bosom of our family. [228]
>
> "But we are very glad you were saved and not taken away by drowning from your orphaned parents, or made a melancholy accident in the newspapers of, which would try the souls of your friends to read. Bessie and I cried a good deal when we heard about you, and I thought you would like to know about it, because it's always pleasant to know that your friends feel badly about you. We hope that your mamma will soon recover, and I am your [229]
>
> very respected and attached
> friend
> Maggie Stanton Bradford.

"P.S. I would not wish to say any thing unkind about a present my friends gave me, but a cruel young gentleman of my acquaintance presented me a dead bird he shot, and I would not have it, but cried. But I hope my conduct made a sensible impression upon him, for the next time some one asked him to go shooting he said no, which makes me think he may in time come to have a feeling heart which cannot bear to take life.

"Give my love to Lily and tell her I will write to her to-morrow if unexpected [230] circumstances do not prevent.

"M. S. B."

This fine letter met with all the approval which Maggie's compositions generally called forth; and then Bessie's to Belle was read aloud for the benefit of all who might choose to hear.

"My dear Belle,—Maggie writes to Mamie so I write this leter to you but it is not my day but Maggie's. I wish you would come to our hose and see us cors we miss you. i can play 2 tunes Captain Jinks and Lord in the morning thou shalt hear on the piano and i like to play on the piano but Maggie does it better, our new old cook has a gra kitty and it goes to sleep in her pokit and the cook is black and Fred has a white rabit and it stiks up its nose at us and we have 2 new horses and mamma a pony for her faton so we are quite a menagery and we want you and Lily to see them all. So ask your papa to bring [231] you to spend that day with us and give my dear love to Lily and Lulu, and a little skrap of love to Mabel and Mamie but I am sorry for Mamie and Maggie and I cried about her. No I think you may give a good deal of my love to Mamie, but not too much.

from affekshin
Bessie Rush Bradford."

Happily Belle had spelled over this letter to herself before reading it aloud, which Bessie had probably not intended; and the wise little woman had the good sense and good feeling to omit such parts of it as might seem at all slighting to Mabel and Mamie, of whom Bessie, as you will have perceived, was not over fond.

It was many days before Mamie recovered her usual spirits and liveliness, not indeed until her mother was well again; and it was almost touching to see how tenderly she hung about her when she was once more permitted to go to her; watching for the least opportunity to wait on her, or [232] do her some small service; sitting for hours beside her bed, content only to hold her hand or kiss her pale cheek; so subdued, so gentle, so submissive and good, that it was hard to believe she was the Mamie of old.

Nor did the good impression her severe lesson made upon her wear off when mamma had recovered; and Mrs. Stone felt that all she had suffered was well repaid by the new docility and obedience shown by her little daughter.

She was less selfish and wilful with her playmates too, more gentle and amiable than they had ever known her. The memory of that lonely night upon the dark sea,—for it was impossible to persuade Mamie that she did not pass the greater part of the night upon the water,—and the thought of the care which had watched over her there, were not easily shaken off; and perhaps it was as well that for many succeeding weeks she was within sight and sound of the objects which [233] kept it constantly before her mind.

Certain it is that the change in her was very great and plainly to be seen, and, as Belle said to the astonished Maggie and Bessie when they remarked upon it, "more as if she tried to *live* her watchword than to *talk so much* about it."

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors were corrected.

Page 10, word "a" added to text (that seldom has a)

Page 35, "eat" changed to "ate" (she ate her cake)

Page 156, word "on" added to the text (you on a nice)

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