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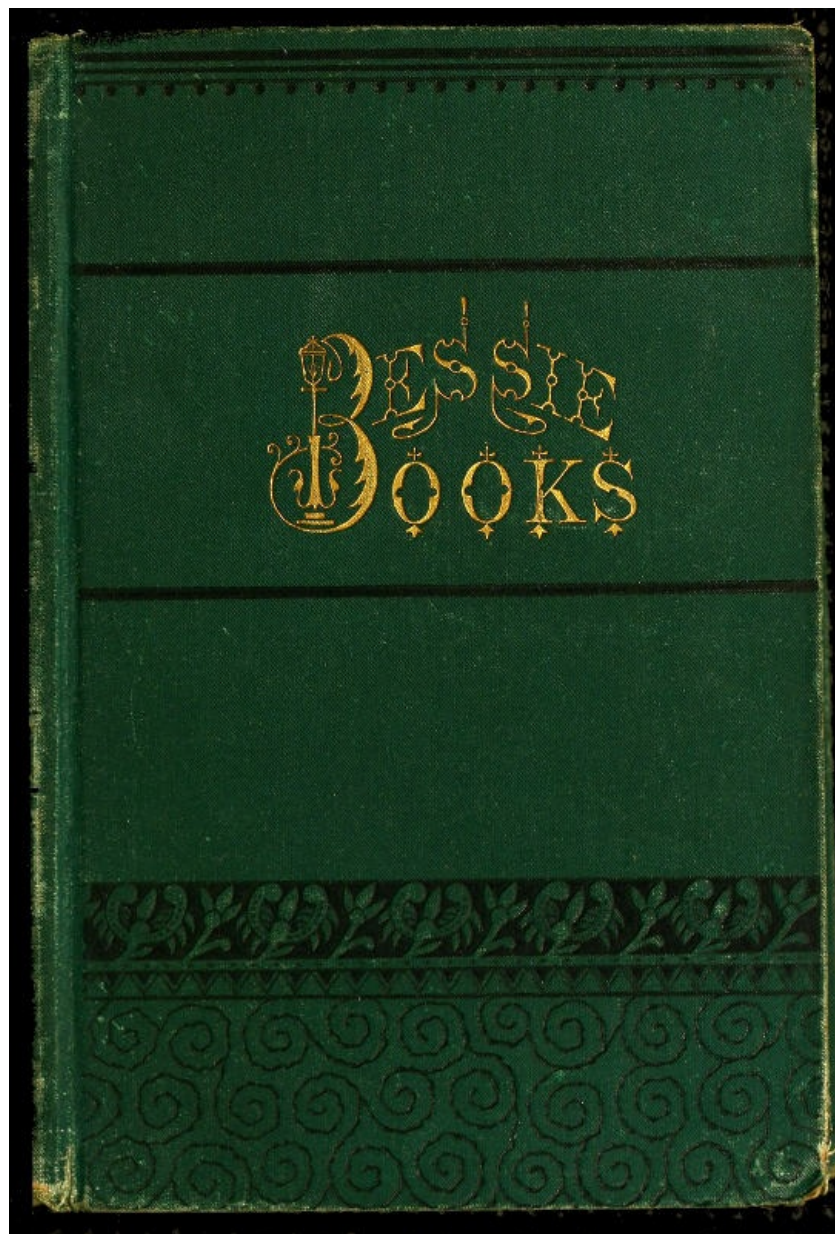
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BESSIE AT THE SEA-SIDE.

BY
JOANNA H. MATHEWS

“And a Little Child shall lead them.”

NEW YORK:
Robert Carter & Brothers,
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To my dear Mother,

Whose "children arise up and call her blessed,"
IS THIS LITTLE VOLUME
Lovingly and gratefully dedicated

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BESSIE AT THE SEA-SIDE.

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I.

THE SEA-SHORE.



HE hotel carriage rolled away from Mr. Bradford's door with papa and mamma, the two nurses and four little children inside, and such a lot of trunks and baskets on the top; all on their way to Quam Beach. Harry and Fred, the two elder boys, were to stay with grandmamma until their school was over; and then they also were to go to the sea-side.

The great coach carried them across the ferry, and then they all jumped out and took their seats in the cars. It was a long, long ride, and after they left the cars there were still three or four miles to go in the stage, so that it was quite dark night when they reached Mrs. Jones's house. Poor little sick Bessie was tired out, and even Maggie, who had enjoyed the journey very much, thought that she should be glad to go to bed as soon as she had had her supper. It was so dark that the children could not see the ocean, of which they had talked and thought so much; but they could hear the sound of the waves as they rolled up on the beach. There was a large hotel at Quam, but Mrs. Bradford did not choose to go there with her little children; and so she had hired

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all the rooms that Mrs. Jones could spare in her house. The rooms were neat and clean, but very plain, and not very large, and so different from those at home that Maggie thought she should not like them at all. In that which was to be the nursery was a large, four-post bedstead in which nurse and Franky were to sleep; and beside it stood an old-fashioned trundle-bed, which was for Maggie and Bessie. Bessie was only too glad to be put into it at once, but Maggie looked at it with great displeasure.

"I sha'n't sleep in that nasty bed," she said. "Bessie, don't do it."

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"Indeed," said nurse, "it's a very nice bed; and if you are going to be a naughty child, better than you deserve. That's a great way you have of calling every thing that don't just suit you, 'nasty.' I'd like to know where you mean to sleep, if you don't sleep there."

"I'm going to ask mamma to make Mrs. Jones give us a better one," said Maggie; and away she ran to the other room where mamma was undressing the baby. "Mamma," she said, "won't you make Mrs. Jones give us a better bed? That's just a kind of make-believe bed that nurse pulled out of the big one, and I know I can't sleep a wink in it."

"I do not believe that Mrs. Jones has another one to give us, dear," said her mother. "I know it is not so pretty as your little bed at home, but I think you will find it very comfortable. When I was a little girl, I always slept in a trundle-bed, and I never rested better. If you do not sleep a wink, we will see what Mrs. Jones can do for us to-morrow; but for to-night I think you must be contented with that bed; and if my little girl is as tired as her mother, she will be glad to lie down anywhere."

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Maggie had felt like fretting a little; but when she saw how pale and tired her dear mother looked, she thought she would not trouble her by being naughty, so she put up her face for another good-night kiss, and ran back to the nursery.

"O, Maggie," said Bessie, "this bed is yeal nice and comf'able; come and feel it." So Maggie popped in between the clean white sheets, and in two minutes she had forgotten all about the trundle-bed and everything else.

When Bessie woke up the next morning, she saw Maggie standing by the open window, in her night-gown, with no shoes or stockings on. "O, Maggie," she said, "mamma told us not to go bare-footed, and you are."

"I forgot," said Maggie; and she ran back to the bed and jumped in beside Bessie. "Bessie, there's such lots and lots of water out there! You never saw so much, not even in the reservoir at the Central Park."

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"I guess it's the sea," said Bessie; "don't you know mamma said we would see water and water ever so far, and we couldn't see the end of it?"

"But I do see the end of it," said Maggie; "mamma was mistaken. I saw where the sky came down and stopped the sea; and, Bessie, I saw such a wonderful thing,—the sun came right up out of the water."

"O, Maggie, it couldn't; *you* was mistaken. If it went in the water it would be put out."

"I don't care," said Maggie, "it *was* the sun, and it is shining right there now. It isn't put out a bit. I woke up and I heard that noise mamma told us was the waves, and I wanted to see them, so I went to look, and over there in the sky was a beautiful red light; and in a minute I saw something bright coming out of the water away off; and it came higher and higher, and got so bright I could not look at it, and it was the sun, I know it was."

"But, Maggie, how didn't it get put out if it went in the water?"

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"I don't know," said Maggie, "I'm going to ask papa."

Just then nurse and Jane came in with water for the children's bath, and before they were dressed, there was papa at the door asking if there were any little girls ready to go on the beach and find an appetite for breakfast. After that, nurse could scarcely dress them fast enough, and in a few moments they were ready to run down to the front porch where papa was waiting for them.

"O, papa, what a great, great water the sea is!" said Bessie.

"Yes, dear; and what a great and wise God must He be who made this wide sea and holds it in its place, and lets it come no farther than He wills."

"Papa," said Maggie, "I saw the wonderfulest thing this morning."

"The most wonderful," said her father.

"The most wonderful," repeated Maggie. "It was indeed, papa, and you need not think I was mistaken, for I am quite, quite sure I saw it."

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"And what was this most wonderful thing you are so very sure you saw, Maggie?"

"It was the sun, papa, coming right up out of the water, and it was not put out a bit. It came up, up, away off there, where the sky touches the water. Mamma said we could not see the end of the ocean, but I see it quite well. Do not you see it, too, papa?"

"I see what appears to be the end of the ocean, but these great waters stretch away for many hundred miles farther. If you were to get on a ship and sail away as far as you can see from here, you would still see just as much water before you, and the sea and the sky would still appear to touch each other: and however far you went it would always be so, until you came where the land bounds the ocean on the other side. The place where the sky and water seem to meet, is called the horizon; and it is because they do seem to touch, that the sun appeared to you to come out of the water. It is rather a difficult thing for such little girls as you and Bessie to understand, but I will try to make it plain to you. You know that the earth is round, like a ball, do you not, Maggie?"

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"Yes, papa."

"And I suppose that you think that the sun is moving when it seems to come up in the morning, and goes on and on, till it is quite over our heads, and then goes down on the other side of the sky until we can see it no more, do you not?"

"Yes, papa."

"But it is really the earth on which we live, and not the sun, which is moving. Once in twenty-four hours, which makes one day and one night, the earth turns entirely round, so that a part of the time one side is turned to the sun, and a part of the time the other side. See if you can find me a small, round stone, Maggie."

Maggie looked around till she found such a stone as her father wanted, and brought it to him. "Now," he said, "this stone shall be our earth, and this scratch the place where we live. We will take off Bessie's hat and have that for the sun. Now I will hold the mark which stands for our home, directly in front of our make-believe sun. If a bright light were coming from the sun and shining on our mark here, it would be the middle of the day or noon, while it would be dark on the other side. Then, as our earth moved slowly around in this way, and we turned from the sun it would become afternoon; and as we turned farther yet till we were quite away from the sun, it would be night. But we do not stay there in the dark, for we still go moving slowly round until our side of the earth comes towards the light again, and the darkness begins to pass away. The nearer we come to the sun the lighter it grows, until, if some little girl who lives on our scratch is up early enough and looks out at the horizon, or place where the earth and sky seem to meet, she sees the sun showing himself little by little; and it looks to her as if he were coming up out of the sea, while all the time the sun is standing still, and the earth on which we live is moving round so as to bring her once more opposite to him."

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"And is it night on the other side of the world?" asked Maggie.

"Yes, there is no sun there now, and it is dark night for the little children who live there."

"And are they going to have their supper while we have our brexif?" asked Bessie.

"Just about so, I suppose," said papa.

"But, papa," said Maggie with very wide open eyes, "do you mean that the world is going to turn way over on the other side tonight?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then we will fall off," said Maggie.

"Did you fall off last night?" asked papa.

"No, sir."

"And you have been living for nearly seven years, and every day of your life the earth has turned around in the same way, and you have never yet fallen off, have you?"

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"No, papa."

"Nor will you to-night, my little girl. The good and wise God who has made our earth to move in such a way as to give us both light and darkness as we need them, has also given to it a power to draw towards itself, all things that live or grow upon its surface. Do you know what surface means?"

"Yes, papa,—the top."

"Yes, or the outside. Suppose you were to fall off the top of the house, Maggie, where would you fall to?"

"Down in the street and be killed," said Maggie.

"Yes, down to the street or ground, and probably you would be killed. And it is because of this power which the earth has of drawing to itself all things that are upon it, that you would not fly off into the air and keep on falling, falling, for no one knows how many miles. It is too hard a thing for you to understand much about now, but when you are older you shall learn more. But we have had a long enough lesson for this morning. We will walk about a little, and see if we can find some shells before we go in to breakfast."

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They found a good many shells: some little black ones which Maggie called curleques, and some white on the outside and pink inside. Then there were a few which were fluted, which the children said were the prettiest of all. They thought the beach was the best playground they had

ever seen, and they were about right. First, there was the strip of smooth, white sand, on which the waves were breaking into beautiful snowy foam, with such a pleasant sound; then came another space full of pebbles and stones and sea-weed, with a few shells and here and there a great rock; then more rocks and stones with a coarse kind of grass growing between them; and beyond these, a few rough fir trees which looked as if they found it hard work to grow there. Last of all was a long, sloping bank, on top of which stood Mr. Jones's house and two or three others; and farther down the shore, the great hotel. And the air was so fresh and cool, with such a pleasant smell of the salt water.

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Maggie was full of fun and spirits, and raced about till her cheeks were as red as roses. There were several other people on the beach, and among them were some little boys and girls. Two or three of these, when they saw Maggie running about in such glee began to race with her, but the moment she noticed them she became shy and ran away from them to her father and Bessie who were walking quietly along.

"Papa," said Bessie "isn't it delicious?"

"Is not what delicious, my darling."

"I don't know," said Bessie. "*It*. I like Quam Beach, papa. I wish New York was just like this."

"It is this cool, fresh sea-breeze that you like so much, Bessie."

"And I like to see the water, papa, and to hear the nice noise it makes."

"Yes, it's so pleasant here," said Maggie. "Let's stay here always, papa, and never go home."

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"What! and sleep in the trundle-bed all your lives?" said papa.

"Oh, no," said Maggie, "I hate that bed. I believe I *did* sleep a little bit last night, because I was so tired; but I know I can't sleep in it to-night."

"Well," said papa, "I think we will try it for a night or two longer."

And then they all went in to breakfast.

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II.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW.



FTER breakfast they went out again. Mr. Bradford and his little girls were standing in the porch waiting for mamma who was going with them, when Mr. Jones came up from the shore. He had been fishing, and looked rather rough and dirty, but he had a pleasant, good-natured face.

"Mornin' sir," he said to Mr. Bradford; "folks pretty spry?"

"Pretty well, thank you," said Mr. Bradford; "you have been out early this morning."

"Yes, I'm generally stirrin' round pretty early; been out since afore day-light. S'pose these are your little girls. How are you, Miss Bradford?" he said, holding out his hand.

But shy Maggie hung her head and drew a little away behind her father.

"Why, Maggie," said Mr. Bradford, "you are not polite; shake hands with Mr. Jones, my daughter."

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"Not if she hain't a mind to," said Mr. Jones. "I see she's a bashful puss, but she'll feel better acquainted one of these days."

"Yes, she will;" said Bessie, "and then she won't be shy with you; but I'm not shy now, and I'll shake hands with you."

Mr. Jones took the tiny little hand she offered him with a smile.

"No, I see you ain't shy, and I don't want you to be; you, nor your sister neither. Goin' down to the shore, eh?"

"Yes, when mamma comes," said Bessie.

"Well, you see that big barn out there; when you come back you both come out there. You'll find me inside, and I'll show you something will soon cure all shyness; that is, if you like it as much as most young folks do."

"What is it?" asked Bessie.

"It's a scup."

"Will it bite?" said Bessie.

"Bite! Don't you know what a scup is?"

"She knows it by the name of a swing," said Mr. Bradford.

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"Oh, yes! I know a swing; and I like it too. We'll come, Mr. Jones."

"Is it quite safe for them?" asked Mr. Bradford.

"Quite safe, sir. I put it up last Summer for some little people who were staying here; and Sam, he's my eldest son, he made a seat with back and arms, and a rung along the front to keep them in,—a fall on the barn floor wouldn't feel good, that's a fact; but it's as safe as strong ropes and good work can make it. I'll take care they don't get into no mischief with it; but come along with the little ones and see for yourself." And then with a nod to Maggie, who was peeping at him out of the corners of her eyes, Mr. Jones took up his basket of fish and walked away to the kitchen.

"Bessie," said Maggie, as they went down to the beach, "do you like that man?"

"Yes, I do," said Bessie; "don't you?"

"No, not much. But, Bessie, did you hear what he called me?"

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"No," said Bessie, "I did not hear him call you anything."

"He called me Miss Bradford," said Maggie, holding up her head and looking very grand.

"Well," said Bessie, "I suppose he was mad because you wouldn't shake hands with him."

"No," said Maggie, "it was before that; he said, 'how do you do, Miss Bradford;' and, Bessie, I like to be called Miss Bradford; and I guess I'll like him because he did it, even if he *does* smell of fish. I think he only wanted to be *respectable* to me."

They found a good many people upon the beach now, and among them were some ladies and gentlemen whom Mr. and Mrs. Bradford knew, and while they stopped to speak to them, Maggie and Bessie wandered off a little way, picking up shells and sea-weed and putting them into a basket which their mother had given them.

Presently a boy and girl came up to them. They were the children of one of the ladies who was talking to Mrs. Bradford, and their mother had sent them to make acquaintance with Maggie and Bessie.

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"What's your name," said the boy, coming right up to Maggie. Maggie looked at him without speaking, and, putting both hands behind her, began slowly backing away from him.

"I say," said the boy, "what's your name? My mother sent us to make friends with you; but we can't do it, if you won't tell us what your name is."

"Her name is Miss Bradford," said Bessie, who wanted to please her sister, and who herself thought it rather fine for Maggie to be called Miss Bradford.

"Oh! and you're another Miss Bradford, I suppose," said the boy, laughing.

"Why! so I am," said Bessie; "I didn't think about that before. Maggie we're two Miss Bradfords."

"Well, two Miss Bradfords, I hope we find you pretty well this morning. My name is Mr. Stone, and my sister's is Miss Stone."

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"'Tain't," said the little girl, crossly, "it's nothing but Mary."

"Sure enough," said her brother; "she's just Miss Mary, quite contrary; whatever you say, she'll say just the other thing; that's her way."

"Now, Walter, you stop," said Mary in a whining, fretful voice.

"Now, Mamie, you stop," mimicked her brother.

"I think we wont be acquainted with you," said Bessie. "I am afraid you are not very good children."

"What makes you think so," asked Walter.

"'Cause you quarrel," said Bessie; "good children don't quarrel, and Jesus won't love you if you do."

"What a funny little tot you are," said Walter. "I won't quarrel with you, but Mamie is so cross I can't help quarrelling with her. I like girls, and I want to play with you, and your sister, too, if she'll speak. I have a splendid wagon up at the hotel and I'll bring it and give you a first-rate ride if you like. Come, let us make friends, and tell me your first name, Miss Bradford, No. 2."

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"It's Bessie, and my sister's is Maggie."

"And don't you and Maggie ever quarrel?"

"Why, no," said Maggie, coming out of her shy fit when she heard this, "Bessie is my own little sister."

"Well, and Mamie is my own sister, and you see we quarrel for all that. But never mind that now. I'll go for my wagon and give you a ride; will you like it?"

"I will," said Bessie.

In a few minutes Walter came back with his wagon. Maggie and Bessie thought he was quite right when he called it splendid. They told him it was the prettiest wagon they had ever seen. He said he would give Bessie the first ride, and he lifted her in and told Maggie and Mamie to push behind.

"I sha'n't," said Mamie; "I want a ride, too; there's plenty of room, Bessie's so little."

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"No, it will make it too heavy," said Walter. "You shall ride when your turn comes."

Mamie began to cry, and Bessie said she would get out and let her ride first; but Walter said she should not.

"There comes Tom," said Mamie; "he'll help you pull."

The children looked around, and there was a boy rather larger than Walter coming towards them.

"Why, it's Tom Norris!" said Maggie; "do you know him?"

And sure enough it was their own Tom Norris, whom they loved so much. He ran up to them and kissed Maggie and Bessie, as if he were very glad to see them.

"Why, Tom," said Bessie, "I didn't know you came here."

"I came night before last, with father," said Tom. "We came to take rooms at the hotel, and I wanted to stay; so father left me with Mrs. Stone, and he has gone home for mother and Lily, and the whole lot and scot of them; they're all coming to-morrow."

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"Oh! I am so glad," said Maggie.

"Tom! can't I ride?" asked Mamie.

"You must ask Walter," said Tom; "the wagon is his; what are you crying about, Mamie?"

Walter told what the trouble was.

"Come, now, Mamie, be good, and you shall ride with Bessie, and I will help Walter pull." Mamie was put into the seat by Bessie, and then Tom said they must find room for Maggie, too. So he made her sit on the bottom of the wagon, and off they started. Of course they were crowded, but the two children who were good-natured did not mind that at all, and would have been quite happy had it not been for Mamie. She fretted and complained so much that at last the boys were out of patience and took her out of the wagon.

"You see," said Walter, as the cross, selfish child went off screaming to her mother, "Mamie is the only girl, and the youngest, and she has been so spoiled there is no living with her."

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They were all happier when she had gone, and had a nice long play together.

Tom Norris was twelve years old, but he did not think himself too large to play with or amuse such little girls as Maggie and Bessie, who were only seven and five; and as he was always kind and good to them, they loved him dearly. Grown people liked him too, and said he was a perfect little gentleman. But Tom was better than that, for he was a true Christian; and it was this which made him so kind and polite to every one.

When Mr. Bradford came to call his little girls to go home, he found them telling Tom and Walter about the swing which Mr. Jones had promised them, and he invited the boys to go with them and see it. So they all went back together.

When they reached home Mr. Bradford told them they might go on to the barn while he went into the house for a few minutes. The great barn-doors were open, and Mr. Jones and his son, Sam, were busy inside. Just outside the door sat Mrs. Jones with a pan full of currants in her lap which she was stringing. There was a sheep skin on the ground beside her, and on it sat her fat baby, Susie. Two kittens were playing on the grass a little way off, and Susie wanted to catch them. She would roll herself over on her hands and knees, and creep to the edge of her sheep skin, but just as she reached it her mother's hand would take her by the waist and lift her back to the place from which she started. Susie would sit still for a moment, as if she was very much astonished, and then try again, always to be pulled back to the old spot. But when she saw Maggie and Bessie she forgot the kittens and sat quite still with her thumb in her mouth staring at them with her great blue eyes.

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"Mr. Jones," said Bessie, "these are our friends. One is an old friend, and his name is Tom; and one is a new friend, and his name is Walter. They have come to see that thing you don't call a swing."

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"They're both welcome if they're friends of yours," said Mr. Jones. "I'll show you the scup in a few minutes, as soon as I finish this job I'm about."

"Mrs. Jones," said Bessie, "is that your baby?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Jones, "what do you think of her?"

"I think she is fat," answered Bessie. "May we help you do that, Mrs. Jones?"

"I'm afraid you'll stain your frocks, and what would your ma say then?"

"She'd say you oughtn't to let us do it."

"Just so," said Mrs. Jones. "No, I can't let you help me, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I am going to make pies out of these currants and I'll make you each a turnover; sha'n't you like that?"

"What is a turnover," asked Maggie.

"Don't you know what a turnover is? You wait and see; you'll like 'em when you find out. You can play with Susie if you've a mind to." [Pg 33]

But Susie would not play, she only sat and stared at the children, and sucked her thumb. Pretty soon papa came, and when Mr. Jones was ready they all went into the barn.

The swing was fastened up to a hook in the wall, but Mr. Jones soon had it down; and Mr. Bradford tried it and found it quite safe and strong. The seat was large enough to hold both the little girls, if they sat pretty close, so they were both put into it, and papa gave them a fine swing. Then the boys took their turn; and Mr. Jones told them they might come and swing as often as they liked.

III.

THE LETTER.



YOU are not going to hear all that Maggie and Bessie did every day at the sea-shore, but only a few of the things that happened to them.

They liked Quam Beach more and more. Maggie did not mind the trundle-bed so very much after a night or two, though she never seemed to grow quite used to it; and Bessie, who had been weak and sick when they left home, became stronger, and was soon able to run about more with the other children.

After a few days they began to bathe in the sea. Maggie was afraid at first, and cried when she was carried into the water; but the second time she was braver, and she soon came to like it almost as well as Bessie, who never was ready to come out when it was thought she had been in long enough. She would beg her father or the bathing-woman to let her stay just one minute more; and she would laugh when the waves came dashing over her, so that sometimes the salt water would get into her little mouth. But she did not mind it, and begged for another and another wave, until papa would say that it was high time for her to come out. Mamma said she had never seen Bessie enjoy anything so much, and it made her feel very happy to see her little girl growing well and strong again. [Pg 35]

Bessie loved the sea very much, and often when her sister and little companions were playing, she would sit quietly on some rock, looking away out over the wide, beautiful waters, or watching and listening to the waves as they came rolling up on the beach. People who were passing used to turn and look at her, and smile when they saw the sweet little face, which looked so grave and wise. But if any stranger asked her what she was thinking about, she would only say, "Thoughts, ma'am."

Maggie did not like to sit still as Bessie did. She was well and fat and rosy, and full of fun when she was with people she knew; and she liked to play better than to sit on the rocks and watch the water, but she seldom went far away from Bessie, and was always running to her with some pretty shell or sea-weed she had found. She and Bessie and Lily Norris would play in the sand and make little ponds or wells, and sand pies, or pop the air bags in the sea-weed; or have some other quiet play which did not tire Bessie. Very often Walter Stone and Tom Norris gave them a ride in the wagon; or Tom told them nice stories; and sometimes they all went out on the water in Mr. Jones's boat, or took a drive with papa and mamma. Before they had been at Quam Beach many days, they knew quite a number of the children who were staying there; and they liked almost all of them, except fretful Mamie Stone, who made herself so disagreeable that no one cared to play with her. In short, there were so many things to do, and so much to see, that the day was never long enough for them. [Pg 36]

Then they made friends with Toby, Mr. Jones' great white dog. He was an ugly old fellow, and rather gruff and unsociable; but, like some people, he was in reality better than he appeared. He would never allow any grown person but his master to pet him; and if any one tried to pat him or make him play, he would walk away and seat himself at a distance, with an offended air which seemed to say, "What a very silly person you are; do you not know that I am too grave and wise a dog to be pleased with such nonsense!" [Pg 37]

But he was not so with little children. Though he would not play, he let Susie and Franky pull his ears and tail, and roll and tumble over him as much as they liked without giving them one growl. Maggie and Bessie were rather afraid of him at first, but they soon found he was not as fierce as he looked, and after Mr. Jones had told them how he saved a little boy from drowning the last summer, they liked him better, and soon came to have no fear of him.

This boy had been one of those who were boarding in the house last year, and was a disobedient, mischievous child. One day he wanted to go down on the beach, but it was not convenient for any one to go with him, and his mother told him he must wait. He watched till no one saw him, and [Pg 38]

then ran off followed by Toby, who seemed to know that he was in mischief.

When the child reached the beach, he pulled off his shoes and stockings and went to the water's edge where the waves could dash over his feet. He went a little farther and a little farther, till at last a wave came which was too strong for him. It threw him down and carried him out into deeper water, and in another minute he would have been beyond help had not Toby dashed in and seized hold of him. It was hard work for Toby, for he was not a water-dog; but he held the boy till a man, who had seen it all, came running to his help and pulled the boy out.

After this, Toby would never let the child go near the water all the time he staid at Quam Beach. If he tried to go, Toby would take hold of his clothes with his teeth, and no coaxings or scoldings would make him let go till the boy's face was turned the other way. [Pg 39]

Toby was of great use to Mrs. Jones; she said that he was as good as a nurse. Every day she used to put Susie to sleep in a room at the head of the garret stairs. Then she would call the dog, and leave him to take care of the baby while she went about her work; and it seemed as if Toby knew the right hour for Susie's nap, for he was never out of the way at that time. He would lie and watch her till she woke up, and then go to the head of the stairs and bark till Mrs. Jones came. Then he knew that his duty was done, and he would walk gravely down stairs. Sometimes Mrs. Jones put Susie on the kitchen floor, and left Toby to look after her. He would let her crawl all round unless she went near the fire, or the open door or kitchen stairs, when he would take her by the waist and lift her back to the place where her mother had left her. Susie would scold him as well as she knew how, and pound him with her little fist; but he did not care one bit for that. [Pg 40]

After a time Bessie grew quite fond of Toby. Maggie did not like him so much. She liked a dog who would romp and play with her, which Toby would never do. If his master or mistress did not want him, Toby was generally to be found lying on the porch or sitting on the edge of the bank above the beach, looking down on the people who were walking or driving there. Bessie would sit down beside him and pat his rough head, and talk to him in a sweet, coaxing voice, and he would blink his eyes at her and flap his heavy tail upon the ground in a way that he would do for no one else.

"Bessie," said Maggie, one day, as her sister sat patting the great dog, "what makes you like Toby so much; do you think he is pretty?"

"No," answered Bessie, "I don't think he is pretty, but I think he is very good and wise."

"But he is not so wise as Jemmy Bent's Shock," said Maggie; "he does not know any funny tricks." [Pg 41]

Jemmy Bent was a poor lame boy, and Shock was his dog,—a little Scotch terrier with a black shaggy coat, and a pair of sharp, bright eyes peeping out from the long, wiry hair which hung about his face. He had been taught a great many tricks, and Maggie thought him a very wonderful dog, but Bessie had never seemed to take much of a fancy to him.

"But he is very useful," said Bessie, "and I don't think Shock is pretty either; I think he is very ugly, Maggie."

"So do I," said Maggie; "but then he looks so funny and smart: I think he looks a great deal nicer than Toby."

"I don't," said Bessie, "I don't like the look of Shock; the first time I saw him I didn't think he was a dog."

"What did you think he was?"

"I thought he was *a animal*," said Bessie, "and I was afraid of him."

"And are you afraid of him now?" [Pg 42]

"No, not much; but I had rather he'd stay under the bed when I go to see Jemmy."

"I wouldn't," said Maggie, "and I can't like Toby so much as Shock. No, I can't, Toby, and you need not look at me so about it."

Maggie's opinion did not seem to make the least difference to Toby; he only yawned and blinked his eyes at her.

When Maggie and Bessie had been at Quam Beach about a week, they woke one morning to find it was raining hard, and Mr. Jones said he hoped it would keep on, for the rain was much needed. The little girls hoped it would not, for they did not like to stay in the house all day. About eleven o'clock they went to their mother and told her they had promised to write a letter to Grandpapa Duncan, and asked if they might do it now. Mamma was busy, and told them that she could not write it for them at that time.

"But, mamma," said Maggie, "we don't want you to write it for us; grandpapa will like it better if we do it all ourselves. I can print it, and Bessie will help me make it up." [Pg 43]

So mamma gave them a sheet of paper and a pencil, and they went off in a corner to write their letter. They were very busy over it for a long while. When it was done they brought it to their mother to see if it was all right. There were a few mistakes in the spelling which Mrs. Bradford corrected; but it was very nicely printed for such a little girl as Maggie. This was the letter:—

"DEAR GRANDPAPA DUNCAN,—

"Maggie and Bessie are making up this letter, but I am printing, because Bessie is too little. We hope you are well, and Bessie is better and I am very well, thank you, and every body. It rains, and we have nothing to do, and so we are writing you a letter. We like this place; it is nice. There is a great deal of sea here. There are two kittens here. Mrs. Jones made us a turnover. The old cat is very cross. Mrs. Jones put currants in it, and she put it in the oven and the juice boiled out and made it sticky, and it was good and we eat it all up. Dear grandpa, we hope you are well. This is from us, Maggie and Bessie. Good-by, dear grandpa. P. S.—We can't think of anything else to say. My hand is tired, too.

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"Your beloved

"MAGGIE AND BESSIE.

"Another P. S.—God bless you."

Mamma said it was a very nice letter, and she folded it and put it in an envelope. Then she directed it to Mr. Duncan, and put a postage stamp on it, so that it was all ready to go with the rest of the letters when Mr. Jones went to the post-office in the evening.

But you must learn a little about the dear old gentleman to whom the children had been writing. His name was Duncan, and he lived at a beautiful place called Riverside, a short distance from New York. He was not really the children's grandfather, but his son, Mr. John Duncan, had married their Aunt Helen; and as they were as fond of him as he was of them, he had taught them to call him Grandpapa Duncan.

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A little way from Riverside lived a poor widow named Bent. She had a son, who a year or two since had fallen from a wall and hurt his back, so that the doctor said he would never walk or stand again. Day after day he lay upon his bed, sometimes suffering very much, but always gentle, patient, and uncomplaining.

Jemmy was often alone, for hours at a time; for his mother had to work hard to get food and medicine for her sick boy; and his sister, Mary, carried radishes and cresses, and other green things to sell in the streets of the city. But Jemmy's Bible and Prayer-book were always at his side, and in these the poor helpless boy found comfort when he was tired and lonely.

To buy a wheel chair, in which Jemmy might be out of doors, and be rolled from place to place without trouble or pain to himself, was the one great wish of Mrs. Bent and Mary; and they were trying to put by money enough for this. But such a chair cost a great deal; and though they saved every penny they could, the money came very slowly, and it seemed as if it would be a long while before Jemmy had his chair.

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Now Mrs. Bradford was one of Mary's customers; so it happened that the children had often seen her when she came with her basket of radishes. Bessie used to call her "yadishes," for she could not pronounce *r*: but neither she nor Maggie had ever heard of the poor lame boy, till one day when they were at Riverside. Playing in the garden, they saw Mary sitting outside the gate, counting over the money she had made by the sale of her radishes: and as they were talking to her, it came about that she told them of the sick brother lying on his bed, never able to go out and breathe the fresh air, or see the beautiful blue sky and green trees, in this lovely Summer weather; and how she and her mother were working and saving, that they might have enough to buy the easy chair.

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Our little girls were very much interested, and went back to the house very eager and anxious to help buy the chair for Jemmy; and finding Grandpapa Duncan on the piazza, they told him the whole story. Now our Maggie and Bessie had each a very troublesome fault. Bessie had a quick temper, and was apt to fly into a passion; while Maggie was exceedingly careless and forgetful, sometimes disobeying her parents from sheer heedlessness, and a moment's want of thought. When Mr. Duncan heard about Jemmy Bent, he proposed a little plan to the children, that pleased them very much.

This was about a month before they were to leave the city for the sea-shore. Grandpapa Duncan promised that for each day, during the next three weeks, in which Bessie did not lose her temper and give way to one of her fits of passion, or in which Maggie did not fall into any great carelessness or disobedience, he would give twenty cents to each little girl. At the end of three weeks this would make eight dollars and forty cents. When they had earned this much he would add the rest of the money that was needed to buy the wheel chair, and they should have the pleasure of giving it to Jemmy themselves.

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The children were delighted, and promised to try hard, and they did do their best. But it was hard work, for they were but little girls,—Bessie only five, Maggie not quite seven. Bessie had some hard battles with her temper. Maggie had to watch carefully that she was not tempted into forgetfulness and disobedience. And one day Maggie failed miserably, for she had trusted to her own strength, and not looked for help from above. But Grandpapa Duncan gave her another trial; and, as even such young children may do much toward conquering their faults if they try with all their hearts, the money was all earned, the chair bought, and Maggie and Bessie carried it to lame Jemmy. Then it would have been hard to tell who were the most pleased, the givers or the receivers.

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IV.

THE QUARREL.



R. JONES had another errand to do when he went to the post-office, which was to go to the railway station for Harry and Fred, whose vacation had begun. Grandmamma and Aunt Annie came with them, but they went to the hotel, and Maggie and Bessie did not see them till the next morning. How glad the little girls were to have their brothers with them; and what a pleasure it was to take them round the next day and show them all that was to be seen!

"Maggie and Bessie," said Harry, "I saw a great friend of yours on Saturday; guess who it was."

"Grandpa Hall," said Maggie.

"No; guess again. We went out to Riverside to spend the day, and it was there we saw him."

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"Oh, I know!" said Bessie, "it was lame Jemmy."

"Yes, it was lame Jemmy, and he was as chirp as a grasshopper. He was sitting up in his chair out under the trees; and you never saw a fellow so happy, for all he is lame. Why, if I was like him, and couldn't go about, I should be as cross as a bear."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't, Harry," said Bessie; "not if you knew it was God who made you lame."

"Oh, but I should, though; I'm not half as good as he is."

"But you could ask Jesus to make you good and patient like Jemmy, and then He would."

"Well," said Harry, "he's mighty good, anyhow; and Fred and I gave him a first-rate ride in his chair ever so far up the road. He liked it, I can tell you; and he asked such lots of questions about you two. And what do you think he is learning to do?"

"What?" asked both his little sisters.

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"To knit stockings for the soldiers."

"What! a boy?" said Maggie.

"Yes; Aunt Helen sent some yarn to his mother to knit socks; and Jemmy wanted to learn so that he could do something for his country, if he was a lame boy, he said. Aunt Helen pays Mrs. Bent for those she makes, but Jemmy told her if he might use some of her yarn he would like to do it without pay, and she gave him leave; so his mother is teaching him, and you would think he is a girl to see how nicely he takes to it. He is not a bit ashamed of it either, if it is girl's work."

"And so he oughtn't," said Bessie. "Girl's work is very nice work."

"So it is, Queen Bess; and girls are very nice things when they are like our Midget and Bess."

"I don't think boys are half as nice as girls," said Maggie, "except you and Tom, Harry."

"And I," said Fred.

"Well, yes, Fred; when you don't tease I love you; but then you do tease, you know. But Mamie Stone is not nice if she is a girl; she is cross, and she did a shocking thing, Harry. She pinched Bessie's arm so it's all black and blue. But she was served right for it, 'cause I just gave her a good slap."

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"But that was naughty in you," said Tom, who was standing by; "you should return good for evil."

"I sha'n't, if she evils my Bessie," said Maggie, stoutly. "If she hurts me I won't do anything to her, but if she hurts Bessie I will, and I don't believe it's any harm. I'm sure there's a verse in the Bible about it."

"About what, Maggie?"

"About, about,—why about my loving Bessie and not letting any one hurt her. I'll ask papa to find one for me. He can find a verse in the Bible about everything. Oh, now I remember one myself. It's—little children love each other."

"And so you should," said Tom; "and it is very sweet to see two little sisters always so kind and loving to each other as you and Bessie are. But, Maggie, that verse does not mean that you should get into a quarrel with your other playmates for Bessie's sake; it means that you should love all little children. Of course you need not love Mamie as much as Bessie, but you ought to love her enough to make you kind to her. And there's another verse,—'blessed are the peace-makers.' You were not a peace-maker when you slapped Mamie."

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"I sha'n't be Mamie's peace-maker," said Maggie; "and, Tom, you ought to take my side and Bessie's; you are very unkind."

"Now don't be vexed, Midget," said Tom, sitting down on a large stone, and pulling Maggie on his knee. "I only want to show you that it did not make things any better for you to slap Mamie when she pinched Bessie. What happened next after you slapped her?"

"She slapped me," said Maggie; "and then I slapped her again, and Lily slapped her, too; it was just good enough for her." [Pg 55]

"And what then?" asked Tom.

"Why Mamie screamed and ran and told her mother, and Mrs. Stone came and scolded us; and Jane showed her Bessie's arm, and she said she didn't believe Mamie meant to hurt Bessie."

"What a jolly row!" said Fred. "I wish I had been there to see."

"Nurse said she wished she had been there," said Maggie, "and she would have told Mrs. Stone —"

"Never mind that," said Tom; "there were quite enough in the quarrel without nurse. Now, Maggie, would it not have been far better if you had taken Bessie quietly away when Mamie hurt her?"

"No," said Maggie, "because then she wouldn't have been slapped, and she ought to be."

"Well, I think with you that Mamie was a very naughty girl, and deserved to be punished; but then it was not your place to do it." [Pg 56]

"But her mother would not do it," said Maggie; "she is a weak, foolish woman, and is ruining that child."

The boys laughed, when Maggie said this with such a grand air.

"Who did you hear say that?" asked Harry.

"Papa," said Maggie,— "so it's true. I guess he didn't mean me to hear it, but I did."

"Oh, you little pitcher!" cried Harry; and Tom said, "Maggie dear, things may be quite right for your father to say, that would not be proper for us; because Mrs. Stone is a great deal older than we are; but since we all know that she does not take much pains to make Mamie a good and pleasant child, do you not think that this ought to make us more patient with her when she is fretful and quarrelsome?"

"No," said Maggie; "if her mother don't make her behave, some one else ought to. I will hurt her if she hurts Bessie." [Pg 57]

"Maggie," said Tom, "when wicked men came to take Jesus Christ and carry him away to suffer a dreadful death on the cross, do you remember what one of the disciples did?"

"No; tell me," said Maggie.

"He drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of those wicked men; not because he was doing anything to him, but because he was ill-treating the dear Lord whom he loved."

"I'm glad of it," said Maggie; "it was just good enough for that bad man, and I love that disciple."

"But the Saviour was not glad," said Tom, "for he reproved the disciple, and told him to put up his sword; and he reached out his hand and healed the man's ear."

"That was because he was Jesus," said Maggie. "I couldn't be so good as Jesus."

"No, we cannot be as holy and good as Jesus, for he was without sin; but we can try to be like him, and then he will love us and be pleased with what he knows we wish to do. Maggie, the other day I heard you saying to your mother that pretty hymn, 'I am Jesus' Little Lamb;' now, if you are really one of Jesus' little lambs you will also be one of his blessed peace-makers. I think if you and Lily had not struck Mamie, she would have felt much more sorry and ashamed than she does now, when she thinks that you have hurt her as much as she hurt Bessie." [Pg 58]

"Do you want me to be a peace-maker with Mamie, now?" asked Maggie.

"Yes, if you are not friends with her yet."

"Oh, no, we are not friends at all," said Maggie; "for she runs away every time she sees Lily or me; and we make faces at her."

"And do you like to have it so?"

"Yes," said Maggie slowly, "I think I do; I like to see her run."

"And do you think it is like Jesus' little lamb for you to feel so."

"No, I suppose not; I guess it's pretty naughty, and I won't make faces at her anymore. What shall I do to make friends, Tom?" [Pg 59]

"Well," said Tom, "I cannot tell exactly; but suppose the next time that Mamie runs away from you, you call her to come and play with you; will not that show her that you wish to be at peace again?"

"Yes," said Maggie; "and if you think Jesus would want me to, I'll do it; but, Tom, we'll be very sorry if she comes. You don't know what an uncomfortable child she is to play with; she's as cross as—as cross as—*nine* sticks."

"Perhaps you'll find some other way," said Tom, who could not help smiling. "If we wish for a chance to do good to a person we can generally find one. But I must go, for there is father beckoning to me to come out in the boat with him. You will think of what I have said, will you not, Maggie?"

"Oh, yes I will, and I will do it too, Tom; and if Mamie pinches Bessie again, I won't slap her, but only give her a good push, and then we'll run away from her." [Pg 60]

Tom did not think that this was exactly the way to make friends, but he had not time to say anything more, for his father was waiting.

V.

TOM'S SUNDAY-SCHOOL.



HERE'S Tom," said Maggie, on the next Sunday afternoon, as she looked out of the window; "he is talking to Mr. Jones, and now they are going to the barn. I wonder if he is going to swing on Sunday."

"Why, Maggie," said Bessie; "Tom wouldn't do such a thing."

"I thought maybe he forgot," said Maggie. "I forgot it was Sunday this morning, and I was just going to ask Mr. Jones to swing me. I wonder what they are doing. I can see in the door of the barn and they are busy with the hay. Come and look, Bessie."

Tom and Mr. Jones seemed to be very busy in the barn for a few minutes, but the little girls could not make out what they were doing. At last Tom came out and walked over to the house. Maggie and Bessie ran to meet him. [Pg 61]

"Here you are," he said, "the very little people I wanted to see. I am going to have a Sunday-school class in the barn. Mr. Jones has given me leave, for I could find no place over at the hotel. We have been making seats in the hay. Will you come?"

"Oh, yes, indeed we will," said Maggie, clapping her hands.

Bessie shook her head sorrowfully. "Tom," she said, "mamma wont let me go to Sunday-school; she says I am too little."

"I think she will let you go to mine," said Tom; "we'll go and ask her."

They all went in together to the room where papa and mamma sat reading. "Mrs. Bradford," said Tom, when he had shaken hands with her, "I am going to hold a little Sunday-school class over in the barn; will you let Maggie and Bessie come?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Bradford. "Who are you to have, Tom?"

"Only Lily, ma'am, and Mamie Stone, and a few more of the little ones from the hotel; they were running about and making a great noise in the hall and parlors, and I thought I could keep them quiet for a while if Mr. Jones would let me bring them over to his barn, and have a Sunday-school there. Walter is coming to help me." [Pg 63]

"A good plan, too," said Mr. Bradford; "you are a kind boy to think of it, Tom."

"May I come?" asked Harry.

"And I, too?" said Fred.

"I don't know about you, Fred," said Tom; "I should like to have Harry, for neither Walter nor I can sing, and we want some one to set the tunes for the little ones. But I am afraid you will make mischief."

"Indeed I won't, Tom. Let me come and I will be as quiet as a mouse, and give you leave to turn me out if I do the first thing."

"Well, then, you may come, but I shall hold you to your word and send you away if you make the least disturbance. I don't mean this for play."

"Honor bright," said Fred. [Pg 64]

They all went out and met Walter who was coming up the path with a troop of little ones after him. There were Lily and Eddie Norris, Gracie Howard, Mamie Stone, Julia and Charlie Bolton, and half a dozen more beside.

Tom marched them into the barn, where he and Mr. Jones had arranged the school-room.

And a fine school-room the children thought it; better than those in the city to which some of them went every Sunday. There were two long piles of hay with boards laid on top of them,—one

covered with a buffalo robe, the other with a couple of sheep skins, making nice seats. In front of these was Tom's place,—an empty barrel turned upside-down for his desk, and Fred's velocipede for his seat. The children did not in the least care that hay was strewn all over the floor, or that the old horse who was in the other part of the barn, would now and then put his nose through the little opening above his manger, and look in at them as if he wondered what they were about.

"Oh, isn't this splendid?" said Maggie. "It is better than our Infant school-room, in Dr. Hill's church." [Pg 65]

"So it is," said Lily. "I wish we always went to Sunday-school here, and had Tom for our teacher."

Some of the little ones wanted to play, and began to throw hay at each other; but Tom put a stop to this; he had not brought them there to romp, he said, and those who wanted to be noisy must go away. Then he told them all to take their seats.

Maggie had already taken hers on the end of one of the hay benches, with Bessie next to her, and Lily on the other side of Bessie. Gracie Howard sat down by Lily, and Mamie Stone was going to take her place next, when Gracie said, "You sha'n't sit by me, Mamie."

"Nor by me," said Lily.

"Nor me, nor me," said two or three of the others.

Now Mamie saw how she had made the other children dislike her by her ill-humor and unkindness, and she did not find it at all pleasant to stand there and have them all saying they would not sit by her. [Pg 66]

"I want to go home," she said, while her face grew very red, and she looked as if she were going to cry.

"Who is going to be kind, and sit by Mamie," asked Tom.

"I should think none of them who know how she can pinch," said Fred.

"Oh, we are going to forget all that," said Tom. "Come, children, make room for Mamie."

"This bench is full," said Lily, "she can't come here."

Mamie began to cry. "There is plenty of room on the other bench," said Tom; "sit there, Mamie."

"I don't want to," answered Mamie; "there's nothing but boys there, and I want to go home."

"Why," said Tom, "what a bad thing that would be, to begin our Sunday-school by having one of our little scholars go home because none of the rest will sit by her. That will never do." [Pg 67]

All this time Maggie had sat quite still, looking at Mamie. She was thinking of what Tom had said to her, and of being Jesus' little lamb. Here was a chance to show Mamie that she was ready to be friends with her, but it was hard work. She did not at all like to go away from her little sister whom she loved so much, to sit by Mamie whom she did not love at all, and who had been so unkind to Bessie. She rose up slowly from her seat, with cheeks as red as Mamie's and said,—

"Tom, I'll go on the other seat and sit by Mamie."

"And just get pinched for it," said Lily: "stay with us, Maggie."

Mamie took her hand down from her face and looked at Maggie with great surprise.

"She wants some one to sit with her," said Maggie, "and I had better go."

"Maggie is doing as she would be done by," said Tom.

Then Maggie felt glad, for she knew she was doing right. "Come, Mamie," she said, and she took hold of Mamie's hand, and they sat down together on the other bench. [Pg 68]

"You are a good girl, Midget," said Harry, "and it's more than you deserve, Miss Mamie."

"I don't care," said Mamie. "I love Maggie, and I don't love any of the rest of you, except only Tom."

Here Tom called his school to order and said there must be no more talking, for he was going to read, and all must be quiet. He went behind his barrel-desk, and opening his Bible, read to them about the Saviour blessing little children. Then they sang, "I want to be an Angel." Harry and Fred, with their beautiful clear voices, started the tune, and all the children joined in, for every one of them knew the pretty hymn.



Bessie at Sea Side. p. 68

Next, Tom read how Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in a rough stable and laid not in a pretty cradle such as their baby brothers and sisters slept in, but in a manger where the wise men of the east came and worshipped Him: and how after Joseph and Mary had been told by God to fly into the land of Egypt with the infant Saviour, the wicked king, Herod, killed all the dear little babies in the land, with the hope that Jesus might be among them. When he came to any thing which he thought the children would not understand, he stopped and explained it to them. "Now we will sing again," he said, when he had done reading, "and the girls shall choose the hymns. Maggie, dear, what shall we sing first?"

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Maggie knew what she would like, but she was too shy to tell, and she looked at Tom without speaking. Tom thought he knew, and said, "I'll choose for you, then. We will sing, 'Jesus, little lamb;' whoever knows it, hold up their hand."

Half a dozen little hands went up, but Tom saw that all the children did not know it. "What shall we do?" he said. "Maggie would like that best, I think; but I suppose all want to sing, and some do not know the words."

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"Never mind," said Gracie Howard, who was one of those who had not held up her hand, "if Maggie wants it we'll sing it, because she was so good and went and sat by Mamie. If we don't know the words we can holler out the tune all the louder."

Some of the children began to laugh when Gracie said this, but Tom said, "I have a better plan than that. I will say the first verse over three or four times, line by line, and you may repeat it after me; then we will sing it, and so go on with the next verse."

This was done. Tom said the lines slowly and distinctly, and those who did not know the hymn repeated them. While they were learning the first verse in this way, Mamie whispered to Maggie, "Maggie, I love you."

"Do you?" said Maggie, as if she could not quite believe it.

"Yes, because you are good; don't you love me. Maggie?"

"Well, no, not much," said Maggie, "but I'll try to."

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"I wish you would," said Mamie; "and I wont snatch your things, nor slap you, nor do anything."

"I'll love you if you do a favor to me," said Maggie.

"Yes, I will, if it is not to give you my new crying baby."

"Oh, I don't want your crying baby, nor any of your toys," said Maggie. "I only want you to promise that you won't pinch my Bessie again. Why, Mamie, you ought to be more ashamed of yourself than any girl that ever lived; her arm is all black and blue yet."

"I didn't mean to hurt her so much," said Mamie, "and I was sorry when Bessie cried so; but then

you slapped me, and Lily slapped me, and Jane scolded me, and so I didn't care, but was glad I did it; but I am sorry, now, and I'll never do it again."

"And I sha'n't slap you, if you do," said Maggie.

"What will you do, then?"

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"I'll just take Bessie away, and leave you to your own 'flections."

"I don't know what that means," said Mamie.

"I don't, either," said Maggie; "but I heard papa say it, so I said it. I like to say words that big people say. Bessie won't say a word if she don't know what it means; but I'd just as lief. I guess it means conscience."

"Oh, I guess it does, too," said Mamie, "for Walter said he should think I'd have a troubled conscience for hurting Bessie so; but I didn't. And Tom talked to me too; but I didn't care a bit, till you came to sit by me, Maggie, and now I am sorry. Did you tell Tom about it?"

"I talked to him about it, but he knew before. Why, everybody knew, Mamie, because your mamma made such an awful fuss about those little slaps."

Now Maggie made a mistake in saying this; she did not mean it to vex Mamie, but it did.

"They were not little slaps," she said, "they were hard slaps, and they hurt; and you sha'n't say my mamma makes an awful fuss."

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Before Maggie had time to answer, Tom called upon the children to sing, and Maggie joined in with her whole heart. The first verse was sung over twice; and by the time this was done, Mamie felt good-natured again, for she remembered how Maggie had come to sit with her when none of the other little girls would do so. She had been quite surprised when Maggie had offered to do it, and had thought that she could not have been so good.

"I'll never be cross with Maggie again," she said to herself.

When Tom began to teach the second verse she whispered, "Maggie, will you kiss me and make up?"

"Yes, by and by, when some of the other children are gone," said Maggie.

"Why won't you do it, now?"

"I don't like to do it before them; I'm afraid they'll think I want them to see."

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When Tom thought the children all knew the hymn pretty well, they sang it over two or three times, and then he told them a story. After they had sung once more, he dismissed the school; for he did not want to keep them too long, lest the little ones should be tired. He invited all those who liked it, to come again the next Sunday afternoon, for Mr. Jones had said that they might have Sunday-school in the barn as often as they liked. Every one of the children said that they would come. When most of them had left the barn, Maggie said, "Now I will kiss you, Mamie."

"I want to kiss Bessie, too," said Mamie, as the little girl came running up to her sister; "will you kiss me, Bessie?"

"Oh, yes," said Bessie; and Mamie kissed both of her little playmates, and so there was peace between them once more.

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VI.

THE POST-OFFICE



ON Monday Mr. Bradford went up to New York to attend to some business. He was to come back on Wednesday afternoon; and on the morning of that day, grandmamma sent over to know if Mrs. Bradford would like to have her carriage, and drive to the railway station to meet him. Mamma said yes; and told Maggie and Bessie they might go with her. She offered to take Harry and Fred, too; but they wanted to go clam-fishing with Mr. Jones; so she took Franky and baby instead, and carried baby herself, telling nurse and Jane that they might have a holiday for the afternoon. The little girls were delighted at the thought of going to meet their dear father; for he had been gone three days, and they had missed him very much.

The first part of the ride was through the sand, where the wheels went in so deep that the horses had hard work to draw the carriage and went very slowly, but the children did not mind that at all. They liked to hear the sound of the wheels grating through the sand, and to watch how they took it up and threw it off again as they moved round and round. At last the carriage turned off to the right, and now the road was firmer and harder, and, after a time, ran through the woods. This was delightful, it was so cool and shady. Baby seemed to think this was a good place for a nap, for she began to shut her eyes and nod her little head about, till mamma laid her down in her lap, where she went fast asleep. James took Franky in front with him and let him hold the end of the reins, and Franky thought he was driving quite as much as the good-natured coachman, and kept

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calling out "Get up," and "Whoa," which the horses did not care for in the least.

There was a little stream which ran along by the side of the road, and at last bent itself right across it, so that the carriage had to go over a small bridge. Just beyond the bridge the stream widened into quite a large pool. James drove his horses into it, and stopped to let them take a drink. [Pg 77]

It was a lovely, shady spot. The trees grew close around the pool and met overhead, and there were a number of small purple flowers growing all around. James tried to reach some of them with his whip, but they were too far away, so the children were disappointed. When the horses had stopped drinking, there was not a sound to be heard but the twittering of the birds in the branches, and the little ripple of the water as it flowed over the stones.

"Let's stay here a great while, mamma," said Bessie, "it is so pleasant."

"And what would papa do when he came and found no one waiting for him?" said Mrs. Bradford.

"Oh, yes! let us make haste then," said Bessie; "we mustn't make him disappointed for a million waters." [Pg 78]

But mamma said there was time enough; so they staid a few moments longer, and then drove on. At last they passed from the beautiful green wood into a space where there was no shade. There were bushes and very small trees to be sure, but they were low and scrubby and grew close together in a kind of tangled thicket. These reached as far as they could see on either side, and came so near to the edge of the road, that once, when James had to make way for a heavy hay wagon, and drew in his horses to let it pass, Maggie stretched her hand out of the carriage and pulled some sprigs from one of the bushes.

"Mamma, do you know that funny old man?" asked Bessie, as the driver of the hay wagon nodded to her mother, and Mrs. Bradford smiled and nodded pleasantly in return.

"No, dear; but in these lonely country places it is the custom for people to nod when they pass each other."

"Why, we don't do that in New York," said Maggie. [Pg 79]

"No, it would be too troublesome to speak to every one whom we met in the streets of a great city; and people there would think it very strange and impertinent if you bowed to them when you did not know them."

"Mamma," said Maggie, "I don't like the kind of country there is here, at all. What makes all these bushes grow here?"

Then mamma told how all this ground was once covered with just such beautiful woods as they had passed through, and how they were set on fire by the sparks from a train of cars, how the fire spread for miles and miles, and burned for many days; and the people could do nothing to stop it, until God sent a change of wind and a heavy rain which put it out. She told them how many poor people were burnt out of their houses, and how the little birds and squirrels and other animals were driven from their cosy homes in the woods, and many of them scorched to death by this terrible fire. Then for a long time the ground where these woods had grown was only covered with ashes and charred logs, till at last these tangled bushes had sprung up. Mamma said she supposed that by and by the people would cut down the underbrush, and then the young trees would have space to grow. [Pg 80]

By the time she had finished her long story they reached the Station and found that they had a few moments to wait, for it was not yet quite time for the train.

There was a locomotive standing on the track, and when the horses saw it they began to prick up their ears and to dance a little; so James turned their heads and drove them up by the side of the depot, where they could not see it. On the other side of the road was a small, white building, and over the door was a sign with large black letters upon it.

"P-O-S-T, porst," spelled Maggie.

"Post," said mamma.

"Post, O double F."

"O-F, of," said mamma again.

"O-F, of, F-I-C-E; oh, it's the post-office. I wonder if there is a letter there for us from Grandpapa Duncan." [Pg 81]

"Perhaps there may be," said Mrs. Bradford. "I told Mr. Jones we would inquire for the letters. James, will it do for you to leave the horses?"

"I think not, ma'am," said James. "They are a little onasy yet, and if she squeals they'll run."

"And I cannot go because of baby," said mamma; "we must wait till papa comes."

"I wish we could get our letter if it is there," said Maggie; "we could read it while we are waiting for papa."

"There's a nice civil man there, Mrs. Bradford," said James, "and if you didn't mind Miss Maggie going over, I could lift her out, and he'll wait on her as if it was yourself."

"Oh, James," said Maggie; "I couldn't do it, not for anything. I couldn't indeed, mamma."

"Well, dear, you need not, if you are afraid."

"But I would like to have our letter so much, mamma."

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"So would I," said Bessie. "And when dear papa comes we will want to talk to him and not to yeard our letter."

"Maybe it is not there," said Maggie.

"But we would like to know," said Bessie. "Could I go, mamma?"

"You are almost too little I think, dear."

"Well," said Maggie, slowly, "I guess I'll go. Mamma, will you look at me all the time?"

"Yes, dear, and there is nothing to hurt you. Just walk in at that door, and you will see a man there. Ask him if there are any letters to go to Mr. Jones's house."

"Yes, mamma, and be very sure you watch all the time."

James came down from his seat and lifted Maggie from the carriage. She walked very slowly across the road, every step or two looking back to see if her mother was watching her. Mrs. Bradford smiled and nodded to her, and at last Maggie went in at the door. But the moment she was inside, her mother saw her turn round and fly out of the post-office as if she thought something terrible was after her. She tore back across the road and came up to the carriage looking very much frightened.

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"Why, Maggie, what is it, dear?" asked her mother.

"Oh, mamma, there is a hole there, and a man put his face in it; please put me in the carriage, James."

"Oh, foolish little Maggie," said mamma; "that man was the post-master, and he came to the hole as you call it, to see what you wanted. If you had waited and told him, he would have looked to see if there were any letters for us."

"He had such queer spectacles on," said Maggie.

"I wish I could go," said Bessie; "I wouldn't be afraid of him. I do want to know if Grandpapa Duncan's letter is there."

"Then you may try," said her mother; "take her out, James."

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So Bessie was lifted out of the carriage, and went across the road as Maggie had done. She walked into the post-office and saw the hole Maggie had spoken of, but no one was looking out of it. It was a square opening cut in a wooden partition which divided the post-office. On one side was the place where Bessie stood, and where people came to ask for their letters; on the other was the postmaster's room, where he kept the letters and papers till they were called for.

Bessie looked around and saw no one. She always moved very gently, and she had come in so quietly that the post-master had not heard her. There was a chair standing in front of "the hole." Bessie pushed it closer, and climbing upon it, put her little face through, and looked into the post-master's side of the room. He was sitting there reading. He was an ugly old man, and wore green goggles, which Maggie had called "such queer spectacles." But Bessie was not afraid of him.

"How do you do, Mr. Post Officer?" she said. "I came for our letter."

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The post-master looked up. "Well, you're a big one to send after a letter," he said. "Who is it for?"

"For Maggie and me, and it is from Grandpapa Duncan; has it come?"

"Where are you from?" asked the post-master, laughing.

"From Mr. Jones's house. Oh, I forgot, mamma said I was to ask if any letters had come for Mr. Jones's house."

"Then I suppose you are Mr. Bradford's daughter?"

"Yes, I am," said Bessie.

"And are you the little girl who came in here just now, and ran right out again?"

"Oh, no, sir; that was Maggie. Poor Maggie is shy, and she said you looked out of a hole at her."

"And you looked in a hole at me, but I did not run away. If I was to run away you could not get your letter."

"Is it here, sir?" asked Bessie.

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"Well, I reckon it may be," said the post-master; "what's your name?"

"My name is Bessie, and my sister's is Maggie."

"Here is one apiece then," said the post-master, taking up some letters. "Here is one for Miss Bessie Bradford; that's you, is it? and one for Miss Maggie Bradford, that's your sister, I reckon."

"What! one for myself, and one for Maggie's self," said Bessie. "Are they from Grandpapa Duncan?"

"I don't know," said the post-master. "You will have to open them to find that out."

"Oh, how nice; please let me have them, sir; I am very much obliged to you."

"Stop, stop," cried the post-master, as Bessie jumped down from the chair, and was running off with her prizes. "Here are some more papers and letters for your folks."

But Bessie did not hear him; she was already out of the door, running over to the carriage with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, holding up a letter in each hand. "Oh, Maggie, Maggie," she called, "that nice post-officer gave me two letters, one for you, and one for me; wasn't he kind?" [Pg 87]

"I think it was a kind Grandpapa Duncan, who took the trouble to write two letters," said Mrs. Bradford.

"So it was," said Maggie. "Mamma, will you read them for us?"

"In a moment," said Mrs. Bradford; and then she turned to speak to the post-master, who had followed Bessie to the carriage with the papers and letters which she had been in too great a hurry to wait for. She thanked him, and he went back and stood at the door watching the eager little girls while their mother read to them. She opened Maggie's letter first. It said,

"MY DEAR LITTLE MAGGIE:—

"I cannot tell you how pleased I was to receive the very nice letter which you and Bessie sent me. I have put it in a safe place in my writing desk, and shall keep it as long as I live. As you wrote it together, perhaps you expected that I would make one answer do for both; but I thought you would be better pleased if I sent a letter for each one. [Pg 88]

"I am glad to hear that you like Quam Beach so much; but you must not let it make you forget dear old Riverside. I am fond of the sea myself, and do not know but I may take a run down to see you some day this summer. Do you think you could give a welcome to the old man? and would Mrs. Jones make him such a famous turnover as she made for you?

"I went this morning to see your friend Jemmy, for I thought you would like to hear something about him. He was out in the little garden, on the shady side of the house, sitting in his chair with his books beside him, and a happier or more contented boy I never saw. He was alone, except for his dog and rabbits, for his mother was washing, and Mary was out. Mrs. Bent brought me a chair, and I sat and talked to Jemmy for some time. I asked him which of all his books he liked best. 'Oh, my Bible, sir,' he said. 'I think it is with the Bible and other books, just like it is with people, Mr. Duncan.' 'How so?' I asked. 'Why, sir,' he answered, 'when Mary and mother are away, the neighbors often come in to sit with me and talk a bit. They are very kind, and I like to have them tell me about things; but no matter how much they make me laugh or amuse me, 'tain't like mother's voice; and if I am sick, or tired, or uncomfortable, or even glad, there ain't nobody that seems to have just the right thing to say, so well as her. And it's just so with the Bible, I think; it always has just the very thing I want: whether it's comfort and help, or words to say how happy and thankful I feel. The other books I like just as I do the neighbors; but the Bible I love just as I do mother. I suppose the reason is that the Bible is God's own words, and he loved and pitied us so that he knew what we would want him to say, just as mother loves and pities me, and so knows what I like her to say.' Happy Jemmy! he knows how to love and value God's holy book, that most precious gift, in which all may find what their souls need. May my little Maggie learn its worth as the poor lame boy has done. [Pg 89]

"I really think your chair has done Jemmy good. He looks brighter, and has a better color and appetite since he has been able to be out of doors so much. I do not suppose he will ever be able to walk again, but he does not fret about that, and is thankful for the blessings that are left to him. If you and Bessie could see how much he enjoys the chair, you would feel quite repaid for any pains you took to earn it for him. And now, my darling, I think I must put the rest of what I have to say, in your little sister's letter. Write to me soon again, and believe me

"Your loving grandpapa,

"CHARLES DUNCAN."

Just as mama was finishing this letter, the train came in sight, and she said she must leave Bessie's letter till they were at home. In a few minutes they saw their dear father coming towards them, and a man following with his bag and a great basket. Then papa was in the carriage, and such a hugging and kissing as he took and gave. Franky came inside that he might have his [Pg 91]

share, too; and baby woke up, good-natured as she always was, and smiled and crowed at her father till he said he really thought she knew him, and was glad to see him. Mamma was quite sure she did.

When they had all settled down once more, and papa had asked and answered a good many questions, he said, "Maggie and Bessie, I met a very curious old gentleman to-day; what strange question do you think he asked me?"

The children were sure they did not know.

"He asked me if there were any little girls down this way who wrote letters to old gentleman?"

Maggie and Bessie looked at each other, and Maggie shook her head very knowingly; but they waited to hear what papa would say next. [Pg 92]

"I told him I thought I knew of two such young damsels, and what do you think he did then?"

"What?" asked both the little girls at once.

"He handed me these two parcels and told me if I could find any such little letter-writers, to ask them if they would prove useful."

As Mr. Bradford spoke, he produced two parcels. Like the letters, they were directed one to Miss Maggie Bradford, and the other to Miss Bessie Bradford. They were quickly opened, and inside were two purple leather writing cases, very small, but as Bessie said, "perfaly pretty." They had steel corners and locks, and a plate with each little girl's name engraved upon her own. In each were found a small inkstand, a pen, and two pencils, two sticks of sealing wax, and best of all, tiny note paper and envelopes stamped M. S. B., and B. R. B. [Pg 93]

It would have done Grandpapa Duncan good to have seen his pets' pleasure. Maggie fairly screamed with delight. "Oh, such paper, such lovely stamped paper."

"And such *embelopes*," said Bessie, "with our own name letters on them."

"I am going to write to every one I know in the world," cried Maggie.

"Mamma," said Bessie, when they had looked again and again at their beautiful presents, "I do think God has made all my people the very best people that ever lived. I don't think any little girls have such people as mine."

"I suppose every other little girl thinks the same thing, Bessie."

"Mamma, how can they? they don't have you, nor papa, nor Maggie, nor Grandpapa Duncan, nor grandmamma;" and Bessie went on naming all the people whom she loved, and who loved her.

Papa asked if they had not each had a letter from Grandpapa Duncan. The writing cases had almost made them forget the letters; but now they showed them to papa, and he told Bessie he would read hers. He let her open it herself, and taking her on his knee, read: [Pg 94]

"MY DEAR LITTLE BESSIE,—

"Maggie will tell you how much I was pleased with the letter you both sent me, but I must thank you for your share in it. Your old grandpapa is very happy to know that his little pets think about him, and care for him when they are away. I am glad to hear that you are better, and hope you will come home with cheeks as red as Maggie's.

"We are all well here except poor little Nellie, who is cutting some teeth which hurt her very much, and make her rather fretful. She has learned to say two or three words, and among them she makes a curious sound which her mamma declares to be a very plain grandpapa; as she looks at me every time she says it, I suppose I must believe it is so; but I must say it does not sound much like it to my ears. However, she loves her old grandpapa dearly, which is a great pleasure to me. [Pg 95]

"Your little dog Flossy is growing finely. He is very pretty and lively, and will make a fine playmate for you and Maggie when you come home. I went down to Donald's cottage the other day and found all four of the puppies playing before the door while Alice sat on the steps watching them. She says they are growing very mischievous and have already broken two or three of Donald's fine plants, so that when she lets them out for a play, she has to keep her eye on them all the time. Alice asked about you and Maggie, and I could not help wishing with her that you were there to see your little doggie. It will be pleasant to have you at Riverside again in the autumn. Send me another letter, if you wish to please

"Your loving grandpapa,

"CHARLES DUNCAN."

A NEW FRIEND.



NE morning Bessie was sitting on a large rock on the beach, looking at the waves as they rolled up, one after another, and listening to the pleasant sound they made. The other children and Jane were playing a little way off.

Presently a lady and gentleman came walking slowly along the beach. The gentleman used crutches, for he had only one foot. They stopped at the rock where Bessie sat, and the lady said, "You had better sit down, Horace, you have walked far enough."

The gentleman sat down beside Bessie, who looked at him for a minute and then got up.

"I'll sit on that other stone," she said, "and then there'll be room for the lady: that is big enough for me."

"Thank you, dear," said the lady; and the gentleman said, "Well, you are a polite little girl."

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Bessie liked his looks, but it made her sorry to see that he had only one foot. She sat opposite to him looking at him very gravely; and he looked back at her, but with a smile. Now that Bessie had given up her seat to the strangers, she felt they were her company and she must entertain them, so she began to talk.

"Is your foot pretty well, sir?" she said.

"Which foot?" asked the gentleman.

"The one that is cut off."

"How can it be pretty well if it is cut off?" he said; "you see it is not here to feel pretty well."

"I mean the place where it was cut off," said Bessie.

"It pains me a good deal," he said. "I am a soldier, and my foot was hurt in battle and had to be cut off, but I hope it will feel better one of these days. I have come down here to see what the sea air will do for me."

"Oh, then you'll feel better, soon," said Bessie. "I used to feel very *misable*, but now I am most well."

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"Why, is your foot cut off, too?" asked the gentleman.

"Oh, no; don't you see I have both my two?"

"So you have," said the gentleman, laughing as she held up two little feet; "but there is not half as much in those two tiny feet, as there is in my one big one."

"I had yather have two little ones than one big one," said Bessie.

"So would I, but you see I cannot choose, and all the sea air in the world will not bring me back my other foot."

"Don't you like the sea, sir?" asked Bessie, "I do."

"Why do you like it so much?"

"Because I like to see the waves, and I think it sounds as if it was saying something all the time."

"What does it seem to say?"

"I don't know, sir. I listen to it a great deal, and I can't find out, but I like to hear it for all. I think it must be telling us to yemember our Father in heaven who made it."

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"What a strange child," the gentleman whispered to the lady; "who is she like?"

"I do not know, but she is lovely;" said the lady; "I should like to take her picture as she sits there."

"What is your name, fairy?" asked the gentleman.

"Bessie," said the little girl.

"Bessie what?"

"Bessie Bradford."

"Bessie Bradford! and what is your father's name?"

"His name is Bradford, too."

"But what is his first name?"

"Mr." said Bessie, gravely.

The gentleman laughed. "Has he no other names?"

"Oh, yes;" said Bessie, "all his names are Mr. Henry, Lane, Bradford."

"I thought so," said the gentleman, "she is the very image of Helen Duncan. And where is your father, Bessie?" [Pg 100]

"Up in the house, yeading to mamma," said Bessie, looking away from him to the lady. She was very pretty and had a sweet smile. Bessie liked her face very much and sat gazing at her as earnestly as she had before done at the gentleman who presently said, "Well, what do you think of this lady?"

"I think she is very pretty," said Bessie, turning her eyes back to him.

"So do I," said the gentleman, "do you think that I am very pretty, too?"

"No," said Bessie.

"Then what do you think about me?"

"I think you are pretty 'quisitive," said the little girl, at which both the lady and gentleman laughed heartily; but Bessie looked very sober.

"Will you give me a kiss, little one?" asked the stranger.

"No," said Bessie, "I had yather not."

"Why, you are not afraid of me?"

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"Oh, no!" said Bessie, "I am not afraid of soldiers; I like them."

"Then why won't you kiss me?"

"I don't kiss strangers, if they're gentlemen," said Bessie.

"And that is very prudent, too," said the soldier, who seemed very much amused; "but then you see I am not quite a stranger."

"Oh, what a—I mean I think you are mistaken, sir," said Bessie.

"Don't tease her, dear," said the lady.

"But, little Bessie," said the gentleman, "do you call people strangers who know a great deal about you?"

"No," said Bessie; "but you don't know anything about me."

"Yes, I do; in the first place I know that you are a very kind and polite little girl who is ready to give up her place to a lame soldier. Next, I know that your father's name is Mr. Henry, Lane, Bradford, and that yours is Bessie Rush Bradford, and that you look very much like your aunt, Helen Duncan. Then I know that you have a little sister, whose name is—let me see, well, I think her name is Margaret, after your mother; and you have two brothers, Harry and Fred. There is another little one, but I have forgotten his name."

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"Franky," said Bessie; "and we have baby, too."

"Ah, well, I have never made baby's acquaintance. And this is not your home, but you live in New York, at No. 15 — street, where I have spent many a pleasant hour. And more than all this, I know there is a lady in Baltimore named Elizabeth Rush, who loves you very much, and whom you love; and that a few days since you wrote a letter to her and told her how sorry you were that her brother who was 'shot' had had his foot cut off."

While the gentleman was saying all this, Bessie had slipped off her stone and come up to him, and now she was standing, with one little hand on his knee, looking up eagerly into his face.

"Why, do you know the lady whom I call my Aunt Bessie?" she said.

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"Indeed I do; and now if you are so sorry for Aunt Bessie's brother, would you not like to do something to help him?"

"I can't," said Bessie; "I am too little."

"Yes, you can," said the colonel, "you can give me a kiss, and that would help me a great deal."

"Why," said Bessie, again, "do you mean that you are Colonel Yush, dear Aunt Bessie's brother?"

"To be sure I am," said the colonel; "and now are you going to give me the kiss for her sake?"

"Yes, sir, and for your own sake, too."

"Capital, we are coming on famously, and shall soon be good friends at this rate," said the colonel as he stooped and kissed the rosy little mouth which Bessie held up to him.

"Will you tell me about it?" she said.

"About what?"

"About how you was in that country, called India, which papa says is far away over the sea, and how the wicked heathen named, named—I can't yemember."

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"Sepoys?" said the colonel.

"Yes, Sepoys: how the Sepoys, who you thought were your friends, made a great fight, and killed the soldiers and put the ladies and dear little babies down a well. And how brave you was and how you was fighting and fighting not to let the Sepoys hurt some poor sick soldiers in the hospital; and the well soldiers wanted to yun away, but you wouldn't let them, but made the Sepoys yun away instead, and went after them. And then they came back with ever so many more to help them, and you and your soldiers had to go away, but you took all the sick men with you and did not let them be hurt. And you saw a soldier friend of yours who was dying, and he asked you not to let the Sepoys find him, and you put him on your horse and carried him away, and the Sepoys almost caught you. And how the very next day there was a dreadful, dreadful battle when more soldiers came, and your foot was shooted and your side; and your foot had to be cut off in the hospital, and would not get well for a long, long while. And how there was a lady that you wanted for your wife, and you came to our country to get her—oh, I guess that's the lady!" Bessie stopped as she looked at the pretty lady, and the colonel smiled as he said,—

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"You are right, Bessie; and what more?"

"And when you were coming in the ship, there was a little boy who fell in the water and you forgot your lame foot and jumped in after him, and your foot was hurt so much it had to be cut off some more. So please tell me all about it, sir."

Bessie said all this just as fast as her little tongue would go, and the colonel sat watching her with a very amused look on his face. "Upon my word, you are well posted, little one. I do not know that I could tell the story better myself; how did you learn so much?"

"Oh, Aunt Bessie put it in the letters she yote to mamma, and mamma told us about it, and Harry yeads and yeads it; and Maggie made a nice play about it. Harry gets on the yocking horse and plays he is Colonel Yush, and Fred is the soldier that you helped."

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"Very good," said the colonel, "and what are you and Maggie?"

"Oh! we are Harry's soldiers, I mean *your* soldiers, and Franky is, too; and we have the nursery chairs for horses, and our dolls for sick soldiers, and we have the pillows for Sepoys, and we poke them; and nurse don't like it, 'cause she says we make a yumpus and a muss in the nursery."

"I should think so," said the colonel, laughing heartily.

"Will you tell me the story?" asked Bessie.

"I think I had better tell you another, since you know that so well," said Colonel Rush; "I will tell you one about a drummer boy."

But just as he began the story Bessie saw her father coming towards them, and in another minute he and the colonel were shaking hands and seeming so glad to see one another. Then Mr. Bradford turned and looked at the pretty lady, and the colonel said, "Yes, this is the lady of whom you have heard as Miss Monroe, now Mrs. Rush. She has taken charge of what is left of me."

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"Isn't she *perfal*y lovely, papa?" asked Bessie, as Mr. Bradford took off his hat and shook hands with the lady, and she saw a pretty pink color come into her cheeks which made her look sweeter than ever. Papa looked as if he quite agreed with his little daughter, but he only smiled and said, "My Bessie speaks her mind on all occasions."

"So I see," said the colonel, looking very much pleased.

"Did I talk too much, sir?" asked Bessie, not knowing exactly whether he meant to find fault with her, for she was sometimes told at home that she talked too much.

"Not one word," he answered; "and I hope you will often come and see me at my rooms in the hotel, and talk to me there. I am very fond of little children."

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"If mamma will let me," said Bessie; "but I can't come *very* often, 'cause I don't want to be away from Maggie."

"Oh, Maggie must come, too," said the colonel.

"Maggie is shy," said Bessie.

"Well, you bring her to my room, and we will see if I have not something there that will cure her shyness."

But papa called Maggie to come and see Colonel and Mrs. Rush, and when she heard that this was the brave English soldier about whom she had made the famous play, her shyness was forgotten at once, and she was quite as ready to be friends as Bessie, though she had not much to say.

"You know, Bessie," she said afterwards, "we're so very acquainted with him in our hearts, he is not quite a stranger."

The next morning, Mrs. Bradford went to the hotel to call on Mrs. Rush, taking Maggie and Bessie with her; and from this time the little girls and the colonel were the best friends possible, though Bessie was his particular pet and plaything, and she always called him her soldier. When he felt well enough, and the day was not too warm, he would come out and sit on the beach for an hour or two. The moment he came moving slowly along on his crutches, Bessie was sure to see

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him, and no matter what she was doing, off she would run to meet him. As long as he stayed she never left him, and her mother sometimes feared that the colonel might grow tired of having such a little child so much with him, but he told her it was a great pleasure to him; and indeed it seemed to be so, for though there were a great many people at Quam Beach who knew him and liked to talk to him, he never forgot the little friend who sat so quietly at his side, and had every now and then a word, or smile, or a touch of his hand for her.

Bessie had been taught that she must not interrupt when grown people were speaking; so, though she was a little chatterbox when she had leave to talk, she knew when it was polite and proper for her to be quiet. [Pg 110]

If the colonel could not come down to the shore, he was almost sure to send for Maggie and Bessie to come to his room, until it came to be quite a settled thing that they were to pass some time there every day when he did not go out, and many a pleasant hour did they spend there. He told them the most delightful and interesting stories of people and things that he had seen while he was in India, being always careful not to tell anything that might shock or grieve them, from the day that he was speaking of the sad death of a little drummer boy, when, to his great surprise and distress, both children broke into a violent fit of crying, and it was some time before they could be pacified. Then such toys as he carved out of wood! He made a little boat with masts and sails for each of them, which they used to sail in the pools that were left by the tide; and a beautiful set of jack-straws, containing arrows, spears, swords, trumpets, and guns. [Pg 111]

One day he asked Harry to bring him some sprigs from the spruce tree, and the next time Maggie and Bessie came to see him, there was a tiny set of furniture,—a sofa and half a dozen chairs to match, all made of those very sprigs. He used to lie and carve, while Mrs. Rush was reading to him; and sometimes he worked while the children were there, and it was such a pleasure to watch him. Then he had some books with fine pictures, and oh! wonder of wonders, and what the children liked best of all, such a grand musical-box, they had never seen one like it. Mamma had a small one which played three tunes, but it was a baby musical-box to this, which was so very much larger, and played twenty. They never tired of it, at least Bessie did not; and she would sit looking into it and listening so earnestly that often she seemed to see and hear nothing else around her. Maggie was fond of it, too, but she could not keep quiet so long as Bessie, and often wanted to be off and playing out of doors long before her sister was ready to go. [Pg 112]

There were many days when the colonel was suffering too much pain to talk or play with them, and they had to be very still if they went into his room. Then Maggie never cared to stay very long, nor indeed did the colonel care much to have her; for though she tried her best to be gentle and quiet, those restless little hands and feet seemed as if they must be moving; and she was almost sure to shake his sofa, or to go running and jumping across the room, in a way that distressed him very much, though her merry ways amused him when he was able to bear them. Quiet little mouse of a Bessie went stealing about so softly that she never disturbed the sick man; and so it came about that she spent many an hour in his room without Maggie. Maggie never half enjoyed her play, if her sister was not with her; but she was not selfish, and did not complain if Bessie sometimes left her for a while.

VIII.

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BESSIE'S LITTLE SERMON.



ONE afternoon when the children had gone over to the hotel to see grandmamma, a basket of fine fruit came, from Riverside. They had not been to the colonel's room for two or three days, for he had been suffering very much, and was not able to see any one. When the fruit came grandmamma put some on a plate, and sent Bessie with it to the colonel's door, but told her that she must not go in.

Bessie went to the door, and, putting her plate down on the hall floor, knocked very gently. Mrs. Rush came and opened the door, and, taking up her plate again, Bessie handed it to her, gave her grandmamma's message, and was going away, when she heard the colonel's voice. "Is that my pet?" he said.

"Yes, sir; and I love you very much, and I am so sorry for you; but grandmamma said I must not come in." [Pg 114]

"But I want to see you," said the colonel.

"You can come in, darling," said Mrs. Rush; "he is better this afternoon, and would like to see you."

"But I better mind grandma first; bettern't I?" said Bessie. "I'll yun and ask her, and if she'll let me, I can come back."

Mrs. Rush smiled, and said, "Very well;" and the obedient little girl ran to ask her grandmamma's permission.

Grandmamma said, "Certainly, if the colonel wanted her."

"Didn't he invite me?" said Maggie, with rather a long face.

"No," said Bessie. "Would you yather I would not go? I'll stay with you, if you want me."

"I guess you had better go, if he wants you," said Maggie; "but don't stay very long, Bessie; it's very sorrowful without you."

"Poor Maggie," said Walter, who was standing by at the time; "it is very cruel in the colonel not to ask you. Never mind, you shall come and take care of me when I lose my foot." [Pg 115]

"Oh, no, it's me you ought to call cruel," said Maggie, in a very doleful voice; "you know I am such a fidget, Walter, and I can't help it. The other day the colonel was so sick, and I meant to be so quiet, and yet I did two shocking things."

"What did you do?" asked Walter.

"I knocked over a chair, and I slammed the door; and so mamma said I must not go again till he was better."

"But what do you do without Bessie, when she goes?" said Walter; "I thought you two could not live apart."

"We can't," said Maggie; "but then, you see, the colonel is a sick, lame soldier, with a foot cut off and a hole in his side; so, if he wants Bessie, I ought to make a sacrifice of myself and let her go."

The boys laughed; but Tom said, "That is right, little woman, do all you can for the soldiers; they have sacrificed enough for us." And Bessie kissed her sister and ran back to the colonel's room. [Pg 116]

"Why, is he better?" she asked, as Mrs. Rush lifted her up to kiss him. "I think he looks very worse. Oh, how big his eyes are!"

The colonel laughed. "I am like the wolf in Red Riding-Hood; am I not, Bessie?" he said.

"No," she answered, "not a bit; you are just like my own dear soldier, only I wish you did not look so white."

"I think he will look better to-morrow, Bessie," said Mrs. Rush. "He has suffered terribly the last two days; but he is easier now, though he is very tired and weak, so we must not talk much to him."

"I wont talk a word, only if he speaks to me," said Bessie; and she brought a footstool and sat down by the side of the sofa. The colonel held out his hand to her, and she put her own little one in it and sat perfectly quiet. He lay looking at her, with a smile, for a few minutes, but presently his eyes closed, and Bessie thought he was asleep. He looked more ill when his eyes were shut than when they were open; his face was so very, very pale, and his black hair and beard made it look whiter still. Mrs. Rush sat by the sofa fanning her husband, while the little girl watched him with earnest, loving eyes. [Pg 117]

At last she whispered, "If he dies, he'll go to heaven, 'cause he's so very brave and good; wont he?"

Mrs. Rush did not speak, but Bessie did not need any answer. She was quite sure in her own mind; for she never imagined that this brave soldier did not love his Saviour. "He could not be so brave and good if he did not love Jesus very much," she said, looking up at Mrs. Rush. She could not see the lady's face very plainly, for she was bending it down almost close to the pillows. Bessie went on very softly and gravely: "I suppose that's the yeason he's so patient too. Papa says he never saw any one so patient; and I guess he's like lame Jemmy. Jemmy said he couldn't help being patient when he thought how much his Saviour suffered for him, and I guess the colonel is just like him; and he was so brave in the battles, 'cause he knew Jesus loved him and would take him to heaven if he was killed. He would have been afraid, if he didn't know that. And I suppose when he was hurt in that battle and lay on the ground all night, and his own soldiers didn't know where he was, but thought the Sepoys had him, he thought about Jesus and his Father in heaven all the time, and yemembered how Jesus died for him, and kept saying his prayers to them; and so they took care of him, and let his own soldiers come and find him. Oh, I know he must love Jesus very much. And don't you think Jesus took such care of him so he could love him more yet?" Mrs. Rush's face was quite down on her husband's pillows now, and Bessie looked back at him. He had turned his head, and she could not see his face either, but she felt the hand, in which her own was lying, moving a little uneasily. [Pg 118]

"I'm 'fraid I esturb him," she said; "I mustn't whisper any more."

She kissed his hand very gently, and laid her head on the sofa beside it. The room was rather dark, and very still, and in a few moments she was fast asleep. After a while the colonel turned his head again, opened his eyes and looked at her. Then Mrs. Rush lifted up her face.

"Were you asleep, Horace?" she asked.

"No," he said, rather crossly, and moving his head impatiently; "I wish you would take her away."

Mrs. Rush was glad that Bessie did not hear him; she knew that this would have grieved her. She lifted the little darling in her arms, and carried her across the floor to her grandmamma's room. Mrs. Stanton herself opened the door; there was no one else in the room.

"This precious child is asleep," said Mrs. Rush, in a low voice. "Shall I leave her with you?" [Pg 120]

Mrs. Stanton asked her to lay Bessie on the bed. She did so, and then bent over her for a moment, and when she raised her head, Mrs. Stanton saw how very pale and sad her sweet face was.

"What is it, my child?" asked the kind old lady, taking her hand. Mrs. Rush burst into tears.

"Is your husband worse? Do you think him in danger?"

"Not for this life, but for that which is to come," sobbed Mrs. Rush, laying her head on Mrs. Stanton's shoulder.

"My poor child! and is it so?" said grandmamma.

"Yes, yes, and he will not hear a word on the subject; he has forbidden me to mention it to him. And if he would let me, I do not know how to teach him. I am only a beginner myself. These things are all so new to me; for it was not until I feared that I was to lose him that I felt my own need of more than human strength to uphold me. Bessie, dear little unconscious preacher, has just said more in his hearing than he has allowed me to say for months. God, in his mercy, grant that her innocent words may touch his heart. Dear Mrs. Stanton, pray for him and for me."

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Mrs. Stanton tried to comfort her, and then the old lady and the young one knelt down together, while little Bessie slept on, knowing nothing of the hopes and fears and sorrows of those who prayed beside her.

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IX.

FAITH.



NURSEY," said Bessie, the next morning, as nurse was putting on her shoes and stockings, after giving her her bath, "I can't think how it is."

"How what is, dear?"

"About the Trinity."

"Well!" said nurse. "The Trinity! and what put that into your head?"

"It's not in my head," said Bessie; "I can't get it there. I try and try to think how it can be, and I can't. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God," she repeated, slowly; "how can it be, nurse? I know the Father means our Father in heaven, and the Son means Jesus, and the Holy Ghost means Heavenly Spirit; but there's only one God, and I don't understand."

"And wiser heads than yours can't understand it, my lamb," said nurse; "don't bother your little brains about that. It's just one of those things we must take upon faith; we must believe it without understanding it. Don't you think about it any more till you are older."

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But Bessie did think about it; and her thoughtful little face looked more grave and earnest than usual all that day. Mamma wondered what she was considering, but said nothing, for she was sure that Bessie would soon come to her if she was in any difficulty.

"What are you thinking about, Bessie?" asked the colonel that afternoon, when she was in his room. He was much better, and was sitting up in his easy-chair.

"What is faith?" asked Bessie, answering his question by another, and turning her great serious, brown eyes on his face. The colonel looked surprised.

"Faith?" he said. "Why, to have faith in a person is to believe in him and trust in him."

Bessie did not look satisfied.

"When you first went in bathing," said the colonel, "did you not feel afraid?"

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"No, sir," answered Bessie.

"Why not? Did you not fear that those great waves would wash you away and drown you?"

"No, sir; before I went in, I thought I would be very 'fraid; but papa said he would carry me in his arms, and wouldn't let me be drowned."

"And did you believe him?"

"Why, yes," answered Bessie, opening her eyes very wide at this question; "my father don't tell stories."

"And you were not afraid when he carried you in his arms?"

"No, sir."

"That was faith,—faith in your father. You believed what he told you, and trusted in his care."

Bessie still looked puzzled.

"Well," said the colonel, "don't you understand yet?"

"I don't know how it is about things," said the little girl.

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"What things?"

"Things that I don't know how they can be."

"Do you mean, Bessie," said Mrs. Rush, "that you do not know how to have faith in what you do not understand?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"See here, little old head on young shoulders," said the colonel, drawing Bessie closer to him, and seeming much amused, "when I told you that this box would make sweet music, did you believe me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you understand how it could?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know what this paper-knife is made of?"

"No, sir."

"It is made of the shell of a fish; do you believe it?"

"Why, yes," answered Bessie.

"But you did not see it made; how can you believe it?"

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"Cause you tell me so."

"Well, then, that is faith; you believe what I say, even when you cannot understand how it is, because you trust me, or have faith in me, for you know I never tell you anything that is not true. If I sometimes told you what is false, you could not have faith in me; could you?"

"No," said the little girl, "but you never would tell me *falses*."

"Indeed, I would not, my pet," he said, smiling, and twisting one of her curls over his finger.

She stood for a few minutes, as if thinking over what he had told her, and then, her whole face lighting up, she said, "Oh, yes, I know now! I believe what papa tells me when he says he'll take care of me, 'cause he always tells me true, and I know he can do it; and that's faith; and I believe what you tell me, 'cause you tell me true; and that's faith; and we believe what God tells us, even if we can't understand how it can be, 'cause he tells us what is true; and that's faith. Now I know what nursesey meant."

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"What did nurse say, dear?" asked Mrs. Rush.

"She said we must have faith about three Persons in one God, and believe what we could not understand; but I think I do understand about that too. I thought about it when I was sitting on the yocks this morning, and I am going to ask mamma if it is yight."

"And what do you think about it, Bessie?"

"Why," said Bessie, holding up her little finger, "don't you know I have a silver three cent piece? Well, there's three pennies in it—mamma said so,—but it's only one piece of money, and I suppose it's somehow that way about three Persons in one God,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—three Persons in one God."^[A]

If the colonel had looked surprised before, he looked still more so now, while Mrs. Rush laid down her work and gazed at the child.

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"Who told you that, Bessie?" she asked.

"Oh, nobody," said Bessie, innocently; "I just thinned it; maybe it is not yight. I couldn't ask mamma about it all day, 'cause she was busy, or some one came to see her; and I don't like to ask her things when somebody is there."

Mrs. Rush looked out of the window by which she sat, and seemed to be watching the sea; and Bessie stood, softly patting the colonel's knee with her hand, while for a moment or two no one spoke. Suddenly Bessie looked up in the colonel's face.

"Colonel Yush," she said, "don't you have a great deal of faith?"

"In some people, Bessie," he answered. "I have a great deal of faith in my little wife, and a great deal in my pet Bessie, and some few others."

"Oh, I mean in our Father," she said. "I should think you'd have more faith than 'most anybody, 'cause he took such good care of you in the battles."

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"What?" said the colonel, "when my leg was shot off?"

Bessie did not know whether he was in earnest or not, but she did not think it was a thing to joke about, and he did not look very well pleased, though he laughed a little when he spoke.

"Oh, don't make fun about it," she said, "I don't think He would like it. He could have let you be killed if He chose, but He didn't; and then He took such care of you all that night, and let your men come and find you. Don't you think He did it 'cause He wanted you to love Him more than you did before? Oh, I know you must have a great deal of faith! Didn't you keep thinking of Jesus all that night, and how he died for you so his Father could forgive your sins, and take you to heaven if you died?"

"I was very thankful when I heard my men coming, Bessie; but I was too weak to think much," said the colonel. "Come, let us wind the box and have some music; hand me that key." [Pg 130]

"But you think a great deal about it when you don't feel so bad; don't you?" persisted the child, as she gave him the key of the musical box.

"Pshaw!" said the colonel, throwing it down again on the table; "what absurdity it is to fill a child's head—"

"Horace!" said Mrs. Rush, in a quick, startled voice.

The colonel stopped short, then taking up the paper-cutter, began tapping the table in a very impatient manner. "I am sick of the whole thing," he said; "there seems to be no end to it. Wife, sister, and friend, from the parson to the baby, every one has something to say on the same subject. I tell you I will have no more of it from any one. I should have supposed I would have been safe there. And my own words turned into a handle against me too." And he looked at Bessie, who had drawn a little away from him and stood gazing at him with fear and wonder in her large eyes. She had never seen him angry before, and she could not think what had made him so now. [Pg 131]

"Am I naughty?" she asked.

"No, darling," said Mrs. Rush, holding out her hand.

Bessie ran over to her. Mrs. Rush lifted her up in her lap.

"Did I talk too much?" asked Bessie. "I did not mean to tease him."

"See that steamship coming in, Bessie," said Mrs. Rush, in a voice that shook a little. "I think it must be the 'Africa,' which is to bring Gracie Howard's father. Will she not be glad to see him?"

"Yes," said Bessie; but she did not look at the steamer, but watched the colonel, who still seemed vexed, and kept up his tattoo with the paper-cutter.

Nobody spoke again for a few moments, and Bessie grew more and more uncomfortable. Presently she gave a long sigh, and leaned her cheek on her hand. [Pg 132]

"Are you tired, dear?" asked Mrs. Rush.

"No," said Bessie, "but I'm so uncomfable. I think I had yather go to mamma in grandmamma's yoom."

Mrs. Rush put her down, and was leading her away, but when they reached the door, Bessie drew her hand from hers and ran back to the colonel. "I am sorry I teased you," she said. "I didn't know you didn't like people to talk about that night; I'll never do it any more again."

The colonel threw down the paper-cutter, and catching her in his arms, kissed her heartily two or three times. "You do not tease me, my pet," he said; "you did not know how cross your old soldier could be; did you?"

"You was not so very cross," she said, patting his cheek lovingly with her little hand. "Sick, lame people can't be patient all the time, and I do talk too much sometimes; mamma says I do. Next time I come, I'll be so quiet." Then she ran back to Mrs. Rush, who took her to her grandmamma's room and left her at the door. [Pg 133]

Bessie went to mamma, and tried to climb upon her lap. Mrs. Bradford lifted her up, but she was talking to her mother, and did not notice her little girl's troubled face till Mrs. Stanton signed to her to look at Bessie. Then she asked, "What is it, dearest?"

"I don't know, mamma," said Bessie.

"Has something troubled you?" asked mamma.

"Yes," said Bessie; "I teased the colonel."

"Oh!" said Maggie, "did you slam the door?"

"No, I talked about what he didn't like," said Bessie, with a quivering lip; "I talked about that night, and it teased him. I didn't know he didn't like to hear about it, mamma. I s'pose it's because he suffered so much he don't like to think of it."

Mamma had no need to ask what night she meant; ever since Bessie had heard of the terrible night when the colonel had lain upon the battle-field, faint and almost dying from his dreadful wounds, thinking that he should never see his home and friends again, the story had seemed to be constantly in her mind; and she spoke of it so often that her mother knew quite well what she meant. "What did you say about it, dear?" she asked. [Pg 134]

Bessie could not remember all, but she told enough to let her mother see what had displeased the colonel. But Mrs. Bradford did not tell her little girl, for she knew it would distress her very much to know that the brave soldier of whom she was so fond did not like to be reminded, even by a little child, of his debts and duty to the merciful Father who had kept him through so many dangers and who had sent his dear Son to die for him.

FOOTNOTES:

[A] The above train of reasoning was actually carried out by a child of five years.

X.

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THE SICK BABY.



ONE night the dear little baby was very sick. Bessie woke many times, and as often as she did so, she found that nurse had not come to bed, and when she looked through the open door which led into her mother's room, she saw either her father or mother walking up and down with the baby, trying to hush her pitiful cries and moans. In the morning the doctor was sent for, and grandmamma came over to the cottage and stayed all day; but the baby grew worse and worse. In the afternoon Maggie and Bessie went into their mamma's room and stood by her side looking at their little sister, who was lying on her lap. The baby seemed very restless, and was moaning and throwing its arms about; suddenly it threw back its head with a very strange look on its face, and clinched its tiny hands. Mamma caught it in her arms, and she and grandmamma called for nurse to bring warm water. Mrs. Jones came with it in a minute, saying, "I had it all ready, for I thought it would be wanted." Maggie ran away; she could not bear to see baby look and act so strangely; but Bessie stayed till grandmamma sent her out of the room. In a short time, Jane came to take the little girls to the beach. They did not want to go, and begged her to let them stay at home; but she said she could not keep Franky in the house all the afternoon, and she thought their mamma would wish them to go out as usual; so they said no more, and went with her, like the obedient children they were.

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They found Colonel and Mrs. Rush down on the beach. Mrs. Rush talked to Jane a little, and then said she would go up and see baby. She left the little girls with the colonel, and he tried to amuse them; but although he told them a very interesting story, they did not care about it half as much as usual.

Mrs. Rush stayed a good while, and came back with a very grave face, and when her husband asked, "How is the child?" she looked at him without speaking; but Maggie and Bessie knew by this that the baby was worse. Then Mrs. Rush asked them if they did not want to go to the hotel and have tea with her and the colonel, but they said "No," they wanted to go home.

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When they went back to the house, Jane left the little girls sitting on the door-step, while she took Franky in to give him his supper. It was a very quiet, lovely evening. The sun had gone down, but it was not dark yet. The sky was very blue, and a few soft gray clouds, with pink edges, were floating over it. Down on the beach they could see the people walking and driving about; but not a sound was to be heard except the cool, pleasant dash of the waves, and Farmer Jones' low whistle as he sat on the horse-block with Susie on his knee. Susie sucked her fat thumb, and stared at the children. They sat there without speaking, with their arms round each other's waists, wishing they knew about the baby. Presently Mrs. Jones came down stairs and called out over the children's heads, "Sam'l." Mr. Jones got up off the horse-block and came towards them. "Here," said Mrs. Jones, handing him a paper, "they want you to go right off to the station and send up a telegraph for the city doctor. Here it is; Mr. Bradford writ it himself, and he says you're to lose no time. 'Taint a mite of use though, and it's just a senseless wastin' of your time."

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"Not if they want it done," said Jones. "Why, Susan, s'pose everybody hadn't done everything they could when we thought this one was going to be took, wouldn't we have thought they was hard-hearted creeturs? I aint done thanking the Almighty yet for leaving her to us, and I aint the man to refuse nothing to them as is in like trouble,—not if it was to ride all the way to York with the telegram."

"I'm sure I don't want you to refuse 'em," said Mrs. Jones,— "one can't say no to them as has a dyin' child; but I do say it's no use. It will all be over long before the doctor comes; all the doctors in York can't save that poor little lamb. Anyhow, if I was Miss Bradford, I wouldn't take on so; she's got plenty left."

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"I'll do my part, anyhow," said the farmer, as he handed Susie to her mother, and then hurried off to saddle his horse and ride away to the station as fast as possible, while Mrs. Jones carried Susie off to the kitchen.

"Maggie," whispered Bessie, "what does she mean?"

"The bad, hateful thing!" answered Maggie, with a sudden burst of crying; "she means our baby is going to die. She wouldn't like any one to say that of her Susie, and I don't believe it a bit. Bessie, I can't bear her if she does make us cookies and turnovers. I like Mr. Jones a great deal

better, and I wish he didn't have Mrs. Jones at all. Mamma wont have plenty left if our baby dies; six isn't a bit too many, and she can't spare one of us, I know."

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"But perhaps Jesus wants another little angel up in heaven," said Bessie, "and so he's going to take our baby."

"Well, I wish he would take somebody else's baby," said Maggie. "There's Mrs. Martin, she has thirteen children, and I should think she could spare one very well; and there's a whole lot of little babies at the Orphan Asylum, that haven't any fathers and mothers to be sorry about them."

"Perhaps he thinks our baby is the sweetest," said Bessie.

"I know she is the sweetest," said Maggie, "but that's all the more reason we want her ourselves. She is so little and so cunning; I think she grows cunninger and cunninger every day. Day before yesterday she laughed out loud when I was playing with her, and put her dear little hands in my curls and pulled them, and I didn't mind it so very much if she did pull so hard I had to squeal a little; and oh! I'd let her do it again, if she would only get well. Don't you think, Bessie, if we say a prayer, and ask Jesus to let us keep her, he will?"

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"I think he will," said Bessie; "we'll try."

"Let us go into the sitting-room," said Maggie, "there is no one there."

"Oh! let us stay out here," answered Bessie, "there's such a beautiful sky up there. Perhaps Jesus is just there looking at us, and maybe he could hear us a little sooner out here. Nobody will see us."

They knelt down together by the seat on the porch. "You say it, Bessie," said Maggie, who was still sobbing very hard. She laid her head down on the bench, and Bessie put her hands together, and with the tears running over her cheeks said, "Dear Jesus, please don't take our darling little baby to be an angel just yet, if you can spare her. She is so little and so sweet, and poor mamma will feel so sorry if she goes away, and we will, too, and we want her so much. Please, dear Jesus, let us keep her, and take some poor little baby that don't have any one to love it, Amen."

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They sat down again on the door-step till Harry and Fred came in.

"How is baby?" asked Harry.

"We don't know," said Maggie; "nobody came down this ever so long."

"Go up and see, Midget."

"Oh! I can't, Harry," said Maggie. "I don't want to see that strange look on baby's face."

"Then you go, Bessie," said Harry; "my shoes make such a noise, and you move just like a little mouse. You wont disturb them."

Bessie went up stairs and peeped in at the door of her mother's room. There was no one there but papa and mamma and the baby. Papa was walking up and down the room with his arms folded, looking very sad and anxious, and mamma sat on a low chair with baby on her lap. The little thing lay quiet now, with its eyes shut and its face so very, very white. Mamma was almost as pale, and she did not move her eyes from baby's face even when Bessie came softly up and stood beside her.

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Bessie looked at her baby sister and then at her mother. Mamma's face troubled her even more than the baby's did, and she felt as if she must do something to comfort her. She laid her hand gently on her mother's shoulder, and said, "Dear mamma, don't you want to have a little angel of your own in heaven?" Mamma gave a start and put her arm farther over the baby, as if she thought something was going to hurt it. Papa stopped his walk and Bessie went on,—

"Maggie and I asked Jesus to spare her to us, if he could; but if he wants her for himself, we ought not to mind very much; ought we? And if you feel so bad about it 'cause she's so little and can't walk or speak, I'll ask him to take me too, and then I can tell the big angels just how you took care of her, and I'll help them. And then when you come to heaven, you will have two little angels of your own waiting for you. And we'll always be listening near the gate for you, dear mamma, so that when you knock and call us, we'll be yeady to open it for you; and if we don't come yight away, don't be frightened, but knock again, for we'll only be a little way off, and we'll come just as fast as I can bring baby; and she'll know you, for I'll never let her forget you. And while you stay here, dear mamma, wont it make you very happy to think you have two little children angels of your own, waiting for you and loving you all the time?"^[B]

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Mamma had turned her eyes from the baby's face, and was watching her darling Bessie as she stood there talking so earnestly yet so softly; and now she put her arm around her and kissed her, while the tears ran fast from her eyes and wet Bessie's cheeks.

"Please don't cry, mamma," said the little girl; "I did not mean to make you cry. Shall I ask Jesus to take me, too, if he takes the baby?"

"No, no, my darling, ask him to leave you, that you may be your mother's little comforter, and pray that he may spare your sister too."

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"And if he cannot, mamma?"

"Then that he may teach us to say, 'Thy will be done,'" said her father, coming close to them and laying his hand on Bessie's head. "He knows what is best for us and for baby."

"Yes," said Bessie, "and I suppose if he takes her, he will carry her in his arms just as he is carrying the lambs in the picture of the Good Shepherd in our nursery. We need not be afraid he wont take good care of her; need we, mamma?"

"No, darling," said Mrs. Bradford, "we need not fear to give her to his care, and my Bessie has taught her mother a lesson."

"Did I, mamma?" said the little girl, wondering what her mother meant; but before she could answer, grandmamma came in with the country doctor.

Mr. Bradford took Bessie in his arms, and after holding her down to her mother for another kiss, carried her from the room. When he had her out in the entry, he kissed her himself many times, and whispered, as if he was speaking to himself, "God bless and keep my angel child."

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"Yes, papa," said Bessie, thinking he meant the baby, "and Maggie and I will say another prayer about her to-night; and I keep thinking little prayers about her all the time, and that's just the same, papa; isn't it?"

"Yes, my darling," said her father; and then he put her down and stood and watched her as she went down stairs.

It was not the will of our Father in heaven that the dear little baby should die. Late in the night the doctor came from New York, and God heard the prayers of the baby's father and mother and little sisters, and blessed the means that were used to make it well; and before the morning it was better, and fell into a sweet, quiet sleep.

FOOTNOTES:

[B] Almost the exact words of a very lovely child of a friend of the writer.

XI.

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THE HAPPY CIRCUMSTANCE.



HE next morning, when Bessie woke up, it was very quiet in the nursery. She lay still a moment, wondering what it was that had troubled her last night; and just as she remembered about the baby, she heard a little discontented sound at her side. She turned her head and looked around, and there sat Maggie on the floor beside the trundle-bed, with one sock and one shoe on, and the other shoe in her hand. She looked rather cross.

"Maggie," said Bessie, "has the baby gone to heaven?"

"No," said Maggie, "and I don't believe she's going just yet. Our own doctor came in the night, and she's a great deal better; and now she's fast asleep."

"And don't you feel glad then?"

"Oh, yes! I am real glad of *that*," said Maggie.

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"Then why don't you look glad? What is the matter?"

"I can't find my clo'," said Maggie, in a fretful tone.

"What clo'?"

"Why, my sock."

"Why don't nurse or Jane find it for you?" asked Bessie.

"I can't wait," said Maggie; "I want it now; nurse is holding baby because mamma has gone to sleep too, and Jane has taken Franky to Harry's room to dress him, because she was afraid he would make a noise; and she said if I put on my shoes and socks, and all the rest of my under-clo's before she came back, I might put on yours, if you waked up. And that's a great 'sponsibility, Bessie; and I want to do it, and now I can't."

"Look some more," said Bessie, who was very well pleased at the thought of having her sister dress her.

"I have looked all over," said Maggie. "I just expect a robber came in the night and stole it."

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"Why, it would not fit him!" said Bessie.

"Well, I guess he has a bad little robber girl of his own that he has taken it to," said Maggie. "Anyhow, she'll be bare one foot, and I'm glad of it."

Bessie sat up in the bed and looked around the room. "I see a pair of clean socks over there on

your petticoats," she said.

"So there is," said Maggie; and quite good-natured again, she began to dress as fast as she could.

"Maggie," said Bessie, as she lay down again to wait till her sister was ready, "what was the name of that word you said?"

"What,—'sponsibility?"

"Yes, that's it; say it again."

"Spons-er-bil-er-ty," said Maggie, slowly.

"Oh!" said Bessie, with a long breath, as if that word was almost too much for her, "what does it mean?"

"It means something to do or to take care of."

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"Then when mamma put baby on the bed the other day, and told me to take care of her, was that a great spons-er-bil-er-ty?"

"Yes," said Maggie.

"It's a nice word; isn't it, Maggie?"

"Yes, but it is not so nice as happy circumstance."

"Oh, that is very nice? What does that mean, Maggie?"

"It means something very nice and pleasant. I'm going to say happy circumstance to some one to-day, if I get a chance."

"Whom are you going to say it to?"

"I don't know yet; but I shall not say it to the boys, for they laugh at us when we say grown-up words. You may say it, Bessie, if you want to."

"Oh, no," said Bessie, "I would not say your new words before you say them yourself; that would not be fair, and I would not do it for a hundred dollars."

"Well," said Maggie, "I would not let any one else do it, but you may say any of my words you want to, Bessie."

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While they were talking away, Maggie was putting on her clothes, and then Bessie got up; and by the time Jane came back, Maggie had nearly dressed her sister too. Jane called Maggie a good, helpful little girl, which pleased her very much, for she liked praise.

After breakfast, as the children were standing on the porch waiting for Jane to take them for their walk, Harry came along and told them, if they would come out to the barn, he would give them a swing. They never said no to the offer of a swing, and, much pleased, followed him to the barn, where they found Mr. Jones sitting outside of the door mending his nets. He took down the swing for them, lifted Bessie in, and then went back to his work. Maggie had said that Bessie should take her turn first, and that, while Harry was swinging her, she would go out and talk to Mr. Jones. They were very good friends now, and Maggie was not at all afraid of him, but sat watching him with great interest as he filled up the broken places in his nets.

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"Well, and so the little sister is better this morning?" said Mr. Jones.

"Yes," said Maggie; "and we are very much obliged to you, Mr. Jones."

"What for?" asked Jones.

"Because you went so quick to send for our own doctor."

"Deary me, that wasn't nothing," said Mr. Jones. "I'd ha' been a heathen if I hadn't."

Maggie stood silent for a few moments, watching him, and then said, slowly, but very earnestly, "Mr. Jones, do you think Mrs. Jones is a very happy circumstance?"

Mr. Jones looked at her for a moment as if he did not quite understand her, and then he smiled as he said, "Well, yes, I reckon I do; don't you?"

"No, I *don't*," said Maggie. "What did make you marry her, Mr. Jones?"

"Because I thought she would make me a good wife."



Bessie at Sea Side. p. 152.

"And does she?"

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"First-rate; don't you think she does?"

"I don't know," said Maggie, "I don't like her very much; I like you a great deal better than I do her; I think you are a very nice man, Mr. Jones."

"I guess I'm about of the same opinion about you," said Mr. Jones; "but what is the reason you don't like Mrs. Jones?"

"Oh," said Maggie, "because she—she—does things. She makes me just as mad as a hop."

"What things?"

"She goes and has trundle-beds," said Maggie.

Mr. Jones laughed out now as he said, "Oh, you haven't got over that trouble yet, eh? Well, what else does she do?"

"She said we could spare our baby, and we couldn't," said Maggie, angrily; "and she didn't want you to go send the message for our own doctor. I think she ought to be ashamed."

"She didn't mean it," said Mr. Jones, coaxingly.

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"People ought not to say things they don't mean," said Maggie.

"No more they oughtn't, but yet you see they do sometimes."

"And she said mamma took on," said Maggie, "and mamma would not do such a thing; mamma is a lady, and ladies do not take on."

This seemed to amuse Mr. Jones more than anything else, and he laughed so loud and so long that Mrs. Jones came out to the kitchen door. "Sam'l," she called, "what are you making all that noise about?"

"Oh, don't tell her!" said Maggie; while Mr. Jones laughed harder than ever, and she saw that Mrs. Jones was coming towards them.

"Don't you be afraid," said Mr. Jones, "I aint goin' to tell her."

"Now aint you just ashamed of yourself, Sam'l," said Mrs. Jones as she came up, "to be making all that hee-hawing, and poor Miss Bradford and that little sick lamb lying asleep? Do you want to wake 'em up? Is he laughing at you, Maggie?"

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Maggie hung her head, and looked as if she would like to run away.

"I s'pose he's just tickled to death about some of your long words, that he thinks so funny," said Mrs. Jones. "It does not take much to set him going. Never you mind him, come along with me to

the kitchen, and see the nice ginger cakes I am makin' for your supper. I'll make you and Bessie a gingerbread man apiece. Such good children you was yesterday, keeping so quiet when the baby was sick, and trying to help yourselves when your poor 'ma and your nurse was busy. If it had been them young ones that was here last summer, they'd have kept the house in a riot from night till morning when they was left to themselves. Jane was tellin' me how nicely you dressed yourself and Bessie this morning. Now, Sam'l, you stop bein' such a goose."

Poor Maggie did not know which way to look. Here was Mrs. Jones, whom she had just been saying she did not like, praising and petting her and promising gingerbread men; and oh, Mr. Jones was laughing so! He was not laughing out loud now, but he was shaking all over, and when Maggie peeped at him from under her eyelashes, he twinkled his eyes at her, as much as to say, "Now, what do you think of her?" Right glad was she when Harry called her to take her turn at the swing, and she could run away out of sight of Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

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In a few days the dear baby was quite well and bright again, while her little sisters thought they loved her more than ever, now that she had been spared to them when they had so much feared they were to lose her.

XII.

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MISS ADAMS.



AMONG the many pleasures which Maggie and Bessie Bradford enjoyed at Quam Beach, there was none which they liked much better than going over to the hotel to see the dear friends who were staying there. Sometimes it was to stay a while with grandmamma and Aunt Annie; perhaps to take a meal with them at the long hotel table; to hear grandmamma's stories, or to have a frolic with Aunt Annie and their little playmates. Aunt Annie was a young girl herself, merry and full of mischief, and liked play almost as well as Maggie. Then there were those delightful visits to Colonel and Mrs. Rush, which the colonel said he enjoyed more than they did; but they thought that could not be possible. They knew a good many of the other people, too, and almost every one was pleased to see the two well-behaved, ladylike little girls.

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But there was staying at the hotel a lady who used to amaze Maggie and Bessie very much. Her name was Miss Adams. She was very tall and rather handsome, with bright, flashing black eyes, a beautiful color in her cheeks, and very white teeth. But she had a loud, rough voice and laugh, and a rude, wild manner, which was more like that of a coarse man than a young lady. Then she talked very strangely, using a great many words which are called "slang," and which are not nice for any one to use, least of all for a lady. Maggie ran away whenever she came near; but Bessie would stand and watch her with a grave, disapproving air, which was very amusing to those who saw it.

Miss Adams generally had a number of gentlemen around her, with whom she was very familiar, calling them by their names without any "Mr.," slapping them on the shoulder, laughing and talking at the top of her voice, and altogether behaving in a very unladylike way. But Bessie thought it very strange that sometimes, when Miss Adams had been acting in this rough, noisy manner, after she went away, the gentlemen would shrug their shoulders, and laugh and talk among themselves, as if they were making unkind remarks about her. She thought they could not like her very much, after all, when they did so.

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One evening Harry came home from the hotel in a state of great indignation. Miss Adams had a beautiful dog named Carlo. He was a water spaniel, and was a great favorite with all the boys, who often coaxed him to the shore, where they could play with him. Miss Adams was generally willing enough to have him go; but that afternoon, when she was going out in her pony carriage, she wanted him to go with her, and he was not to be found. Something had happened before to put her out, and she was very angry at Carlo's absence. She had gone but a little way, when it began to rain, and she had to turn back. This vexed her still more; and just as she jumped from her carriage, Carlo ran up.

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"So, sir," she said, with an angry frown, "I'll teach you to run away without leave!" and taking the poor dog by the back of the neck, she thrashed him with the horse-whip she held in her other hand. Carlo whined and howled, and looked up in her face with pitiful eyes; but she only whipped him the harder. The ladies turned pale and walked away, and the gentlemen begged her to stop, but all in vain; she kept on until her arm was quite tired, and then the poor dog crept away shaking and trembling all over. The boys were furious, and Maggie and Bessie were very much distressed when they heard the story, and disliked Miss Adams more than ever.

When the baby was quite well again, Mr. and Mrs. Bradford took a drive of some miles, to spend the day with an old friend. They took only baby and nurse with them, and Maggie and Bessie went up to the hotel to stay with their grandmamma. It was a very warm day, and grandmamma called them indoors earlier than usual. But they did not care much, for Aunt Annie was a capital playmate, and she amused them for a long time.

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But just as she was in the midst of a most interesting story, some ladies came to make a visit to grandmamma. One of the ladies was old and rather cross, and she did not like children, and Aunt Annie thought that it would not be very pleasant for her little nieces to be in the room while she

was there. So she gave them a pack of picture cards and a basket of shells, and said they might go and play with them on one of the long settees which stood on the piazza.

There were only one or two people on the piazza, and the children spread out their shells and pictures, and were very busy and happy for some time. They heard Miss Adams' loud voice in the hall, but did not pay any attention to her.

Presently she came out on the piazza, followed by three or four gentlemen, and looked around for a shady place. She saw none that she liked as well as that where Maggie and Bessie were playing, and coming up to them, she sat down on the other end of the bench. The gentlemen stood around. [Pg 162]

"Here, Thorn," said Miss Adams, "sit down here;" and she moved nearer to Bessie, sweeping down some of the shells and pictures with her skirts. Mr. Thorn obeyed, and Maggie whispered to Bessie, "Let's go away." Bessie said, "Yes;" and they began to gather up their treasures, Maggie stooping to pick up those which Miss Adams had thrown down. Presently Bessie felt a pretty hard pull at one of her long curls. She was sure it was Miss Adams, although she did not see her; but she said nothing, only shook back her hair, and put on the look she always did when Miss Adams was doing anything of which she did not approve.

There came another pull, this time a little harder. "Don't," said Bessie.

A third pull, just as Maggie raised her head and saw Miss Adams' hand at Bessie's hair. [Pg 163]

"Don't!" said Bessie again, in a louder and more impatient tone.

"Come now, Lovatt," said Miss Adams, "are you not ashamed to be pulling a young lady's hair?"

"Oh!" said Maggie, astonished out of her shyness, "you did it yourself! I saw you."

Miss Adams shook her fist at Maggie, and then gave a longer and harder pull at Bessie's hair.

"When I tell you *to don't*, why *don't* you don't?" said Bessie, furiously, stamping her foot, and turning to Miss Adams, her face crimson with anger.

Miss Adams and the gentlemen set up a shout of laughter, and Mr. Lovatt, who was standing just behind Bessie, caught her up in his arms and held her high in the air.

Now Bessie disliked Mr. Lovatt almost as much as she did Miss Adams. He was a great tease, and was always running after her and trying to kiss her. He had never done it yet, for she had always managed to run away from him, or some of her friends had interfered to save her from being annoyed. [Pg 164]

"Put me down!" she said.

"Not until you have given me three kisses," said Mr. Lovatt. "I have you now, and you cannot help yourself."

"Put me down!" screamed Bessie, furious with passion.

"For shame, Lovatt!" said Mr. Thorn, and Mr. Lovatt looked for a moment as if he was going to put Bessie down; but Miss Adams laughed and said,—

"You are not going to let that little mite get the better of you? *Make* her kiss you. Such airs!"

Mr. Lovatt lowered the struggling child a little, but still held her fast in his arms, while Maggie ran off to call her grandmamma.

"Kiss me, and I'll let you go," said Mr. Lovatt.

"I wont, I wont!" shrieked Bessie. "I'll tell my papa." [Pg 165]

"Your papa is far away," said Miss Adams.

"I'll tell Colonel Yush!" gasped Bessie.

"Do you think I care a *rush* for him?" said Mr. Lovatt, as he tried to take the kisses she would not give. Bessie screamed aloud, clinched one little hand in Mr. Lovatt's hair, and with the other struck with all her force upon the mouth that was so near her own.

"Whew!" said Mr. Lovatt, as he quickly set Bessie upon her feet, "who would have thought that tiny hand could have stung so?"

"You little tiger!" said Miss Adams, seizing Bessie by the shoulder and giving her a shake. "You are the child they call so good; are you? Why, there's not another in the house would have flown into such a passion for nothing. What a furious temper!"

Bessie had never been shaken before. It was a punishment which Mr. and Mrs. Bradford would not have thought proper for a child, were she ever so naughty, and she had never been punished at all by any one but her father or mother, and that but seldom. But it was not so much the shaking as Miss Adams' words which sobered Bessie in an instant. She had been in a passion again! She stood perfectly silent, her lips and cheeks growing so white that Miss Adams was frightened, but just then Mrs. Stanton stepped out on the piazza and came quickly toward them. They all looked ashamed and uncomfortable as the stately old lady lifted her little granddaughter [Pg 166]

in her arms and spoke a few words of stern reproof to the thoughtless young people who could find amusement in tormenting a little child. Then she carried Bessie away.

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XIII.

BESSIE'S REPENTANCE.



RS. STANTON would have come sooner, but her visitors were just leaving when Maggie came in, and she did not quite understand at first how it was. Miss Ellery, a young lady who had been standing by, rushed into Mrs. Stanton's room after she carried Bessie in, and told her how the little girl had been treated. Mrs. Stanton was very much displeased, but just now she could think of nothing but the child's distress. She shook all over, and the sobs and tears came faster and faster till grandmamma was afraid she would be ill. She soothed and comforted and petted in vain. Bessie still cried as if her heart would break. All she could say was, "Oh, mamma, mamma! I want my own mamma!"

At last Mrs. Stanton said kindly but firmly, "Bessie, my child, you *must* be quiet. You will surely be sick. Grandmamma is very sorry for you, but your head cannot hurt you so very much now." [Pg 168]

"Oh, no!" sobbed the little girl, clinging about her grandmother's neck, "it isn't that, grandmamma; I don't care much if she did pull my hair; but oh, I was so wicked! I was in a passion again, and I was *so* bad! I struck that man, I know I did. Jesus will be sorry, and he will be angry with me too. He will think that I don't want to be his little child any more, 'cause I was so very, very naughty. Oh! what shall I do?"

"Tell Jesus that you are sorry, and ask him to forgive you, Bessie," said grandmamma, gently.

"Oh! I am 'fraid he can't," sobbed Bessie; "he must be so very angry. I didn't think about him, and I didn't try one bit, grandmamma. I just thought about what Miss Adams and that man did to me, and I was in such a dreadful passion; I never was so bad before. Oh, I wish I could tell my own mamma about it!" [Pg 169]

All this was said with many sobs and tears and catchings of her breath, and grandmamma wished that Miss Adams could see the distress she had caused.

"Bessie," she said, "why did Jesus come down from heaven and die on the cross?"

"So our Father in heaven could forgive us," answered the child more quietly.

"And do you not think that his precious blood is enough to wash away our great sins as well as those which we may think are smaller?"

"Yes, grandmamma."

"Now, no sin is small in the eyes of a just and holy God, Bessie; but when he made such a great sacrifice for us, it was that he might be able to forgive *every one* of our sins against him, if we are truly sorry for them. And he will surely do so, my darling, and help and love us still, if we ask him for the sake of that dear Son."

"And will he listen to me *now*, grandmamma, just when I was so very naughty?" [Pg 170]

"Yes, he is always ready to hear us. No matter how much we have grieved him, he will not turn away when we call upon him."

Bessie was silent for some minutes with her face hidden on her grandmother's neck, and her sobs became less violent. At last she whispered, "Grandmamma, do you think Jesus can love me just as much as he did before?"

"Just as much, my precious one," said grandmamma, drawing her arms close about Bessie, and pressing her lips on the little curly head. Then Bessie raised her face and turned around in her grandmamma's lap. A very pale little face it was, and very weak and tired she looked; but she lay quite quiet now except for a long sob which still came now and then. Maggie wondered why grandmamma bit her lip, and why her eyebrows drew together in a frown, as if she were angry. She could not be displeased with Bessie now, she thought.

Presently grandmamma began to sing in a low voice,— [Pg 171]

"Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God! I come.

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God! I come.

"Just as I am thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God! I come.

"Just as I am,—thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone
O Lamb of God! I come."

When she had sung one verse, Maggie joined in, and Bessie lay listening. When they were through, Mrs. Stanton put Bessie down in a corner of the lounge, and said the children must have some lunch. First she rang the bell, and then went to a little cupboard at the side of the fireplace and brought out two small white plates, which Maggie and Bessie knew quite well. Presently the waiter came to the door to know what Mrs. Stanton wanted. This was James, the head waiter. He knew Maggie and Bessie, and they were great favorites with him. His wife washed for some of the ladies in the hotel, and once when she came there with some clothes, she brought her little girl with her, and left her in the hall with her father, who was busy there. She was a *very* little girl, and could just walk alone, and while she was toddling about after her father, she fell down and knocked her head against the corner of a door. She cried very hard, and James tried to quiet her, lest she should disturb some of the boarders. But she had a great bump on her head, and she did not see any reason why she should be still when it hurt her so. She was still crying when Maggie and Bessie came through the hall. Each had a stick of candy, which some one had just given them. When they heard the little one crying, they stopped to ask what ailed her.

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"I'll give her my candy," said Maggie.

"Yes, do," said Bessie, "and I'll give you half of mine."

The child stopped crying when she had the nice stick of candy. James was very much pleased, and after that he was always glad to wait upon our little girls. He had just now heard the story of Bessie's trouble, for Miss Ellery had taken pains to spread it through the house, so vexed was she at Miss Adams, and James had been by when she was telling some of the ladies. He felt very sorry for Bessie, and wished that he could do something for her. When he came to answer Mrs. Stanton's ring, she asked him to bring some bread and butter.

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"Is it for the little ladies, ma'am?" asked James. Mrs. Stanton said, "Yes," and James asked if they would not like toast better. Two or three times when Maggie and Bessie had taken tea with their grandmamma, he had noticed that Bessie always asked for toast. Mrs. Stanton thanked him and said yes, for she thought perhaps Bessie would eat toast when she would not eat bread.

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"But can I have it at this time of the day?" she said.

"No fear, ma'am," said James. "You shall have it, if I make it myself;" and with a nod to the children, he went away.

Bessie sat quiet in a corner of the sofa, still looking very grave.

"Don't you feel happy now, Bessie?" said Maggie, creeping close to her, and putting her arm around her. "I am sure Jesus will forgive you."

"Yes, I think he will," said Bessie; "but I can't help being sorry 'cause I was so naughty."

"You was not half so bad as Miss Adams, if you did get into a passion," said Maggie, "and I don't believe he'll forgive her."

"Oh, Maggie!" said Bessie.

"Well, I don't believe she'll ask him."

"Then I'll ask him," said Bessie.

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"Now, Bessie, don't you do it!"

"But I ought to ask him, if I want him to forgive me," said Bessie. "When we say 'Our Father in heaven,' we say 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us.' I think Miss Adams sinned against me a little bit; don't you, Maggie?"

"No, I don't," said Maggie. "No little bit about it. *I* think she sinned against you a great bit,—as much as the whole ocean."

"Then if I want Jesus to forgive me, I ought to forgive her, and to ask him to forgive her too. I think I ought. I'm going to ask mamma to-night."

"I sha'n't do it, I know," said Maggie. "I wish I was as tall as she is; no,—as tall as papa or Colonel Rush, and oh! wouldn't she get it then!"

"What would you do?" asked Bessie.

"I don't know,—something. Oh, yes! don't you know the pictures of Bluebeard's wives, where they're all hanging up by their hair? I'd just hang her up that way, and then *her* hair would be nicely pulled. And I'd get the boys to come and poke her with sticks." Maggie said this, shaking her head with a very determined look.

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The idea of Miss Adams hanging up by her hair made Bessie laugh; but in a moment she looked grave again. "I don't believe that's yight, Maggie," she said.

"I don't care," said Maggie. "I'm going to say it."

Just then James came back, and they forgot Miss Adams for a while. He brought a nice plate of toast and some butter. Grandmamma spread two pieces of toast and laid them on the little plates, and then went back again to the famous cupboard and brought out—oh, delicious!—a box of guava jelly. She put a spoonful on each plate, and gave them to the children. "Now, remember," she said, "the jelly goes with the toast."

Bessie looked rather doubtfully at her toast. "Grandmamma, I don't feel very hungry."

"But you must eat something, Bessie; it is long after your luncheon time, and it will not do for you to go until dinner without eating. Mamma will think I did not take good care of you."

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But the toast tasted so good with the guava jelly that Bessie eat the whole of hers and even asked for more, to grandma's great pleasure. When she brought it to her with some more jelly, she saw that Bessie had still some of the sweetmeats left on her plate. "Don't you like your jelly, dear?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," said Bessie, "but I didn't know if I could eat all the toast, and I thought perhaps you only wanted me to eat just so much share of the guava as I eat a share of the toast; so I eat that first to be sure."

Grandma smiled, but she did not praise her honest little granddaughter, for she did not think it best.

When Aunt Annie heard Miss Ellery tell how Bessie had been treated, she was very angry, and said some things about Miss Adams and Mr. Lovatt which her mother did not wish to have her say before the children. She told her so, speaking in French; so Annie said no more just then; but as soon as Bessie ceased crying, she ran out to tell Miss Adams what she thought of her conduct. But happily Miss Adams was not to be found, and before Annie saw her again, her mother had persuaded her that it was better to say nothing about it.

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But now when she could not find Miss Adams, she went off to Mrs. Rush's room and told her and the colonel the whole story. The colonel was angry enough to please even Annie. He said so much, and grew so excited, that Mrs. Rush was sorry Annie had told him. He was far more displeased than he would have been with any insult to himself, and when, soon after, he met Mr. Lovatt in the hall, he spoke so severely and angrily to him that Mr. Lovatt was much offended. Very high words passed between the two gentlemen, and the quarrel might have become serious, if Mr. Howard had not interfered.

Miss Adams heard all this, and when she found how much trouble and confusion she had caused by her cruel thoughtlessness, she felt rather ashamed, and wished she had not tormented the little child who had never done her any harm. But this was not the last of it, for Miss Adams was to be punished a little by the last person who meant to do it.

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XIV.

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WHO IS A LADY?



IN the afternoon the children asked their grandmother if they might go down upon the beach, but she said it was still too warm, and she did not wish Bessie to go out until the sun was down.

"Grandma is going to take her nap now," said Aunt Annie; "suppose we go out on the piazza and have a store, and ask Lily and Gracie to come play with you."

"Is Miss Adams there?" asked Maggie.

"No, but the colonel has had his arm-chair taken out, and is sitting there with Mrs. Rush, and I am going there with my work; so you will be quite safe."

"Oh, then we'll go," said Bessie. She did not feel afraid where the colonel was.

"Are you going to sew with Mrs. Rush again?" asked Maggie.

Aunt Annie laughed and pinched her cheeks, telling her not to be inquisitive. For the last few days Aunt Annie had always seemed to be sewing with Mrs. Rush, and they were very busy, but they did not appear to wish to let the little girls know what they were doing. Annie was always whisking her work out of their sight, and if they asked any questions, they were put off, or told, as Maggie was now, not to be curious.

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Once when they were staying with the colonel, when Mrs. Rush had gone out for a while, he sent Bessie to a certain drawer to find a knife. Bessie did as she was told, but as she was looking for it, she suddenly called out, "Oh, what a dear darling little cap! just like a dolly's. Why, does Mrs. Yush play with dolls when nobody looks at her?"

"Holloa!" said the colonel, "I forgot; come away from that drawer. I'm a nice man; can't keep my own secrets."

Maggie was going to ask some questions; but the colonel began to talk about something else, and they both forgot the little cap. But they were very curious to know why Aunt Annie and Mrs. Rush were always whispering and laughing and showing each other their work, as well as why it was so often put away when they came near. To-day Aunt Annie was embroidering a little piece of muslin, but she did not put it out of their sight, though she would answer no questions about it.

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They all went out on the piazza to set about making what Maggie called, "A Grocery and *Perwision* Store." The piazza steps ended in two large blocks of wood, and on one of these they were to play. Aunt Annie made some paper boxes to hold some of their things, and they had clam shells for the rest. They had sand for sugar, blades of timothy grass for corn, sea-weed for smoked beef and ham, and small pebbles for eggs, with larger ones for potatoes. In short, it was quite wonderful to see the number of things they contrived to have for sale. When the colonel found what they were about, he called for a couple of clam shells, and sent his man for a piece of wood and some twine; with these he made a pair of scales, which Maggie and Bessie thought quite splendid. To be sure, one side was ever so much heavier than the other, but that did not matter in the least; neither they nor their customers would be troubled by a trifle like that. Then he gave them a couple of bullets and some shot for weights, so that the whole thing was fixed in fine style.

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Maggie went to call Lily and Gracie, and when Mamie Stone heard what was going on, she asked if she might come too. Maggie said "Yes," for Mamie was not so disagreeable as she used to be when she first came to Quam Beach. However fretful and selfish she was when she was playing with other children, she was almost always pleasant when she was with Maggie and Bessie.

Maggie went back with her to their little playmates, and in a few moments they were all as busy as bees. Maggie said Bessie must be store-keeper, for she knew she did not feel like running about.

They had been playing but a little while, when Walter came up, and when he saw what they were doing, he said he would be a customer too. He was a capital playfellow, and pretended to be ever so many different people. First, he was an old negro man, then he was a naughty boy, who meddled with everything on the counter, and gave the little shop-woman a great deal of trouble, which she enjoyed very much; then he was a Frenchman, who spoke broken English; and after that, he pretended to be a cross old Irishman.

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While they were playing so nicely, who should come sweeping down the piazza but Miss Adams, dressed in her riding-habit? Away went all the little girls like a flock of frightened birds. Mamie and Lily ran into the parlor, where they peeped at her from behind the blinds; Gracie scrambled into Annie Stanton's lap; Maggie squeezed herself in between the colonel and Mrs. Rush; and Bessie walked to the other side of the colonel, where she stood with her hand on his chair.

Miss Adams was vexed when she saw them all fly off so, for she had not come with any intention of interrupting or teasing them. She was going out to ride, and had walked to the window of the hall above, to see if the horses were at the door, and there she had noticed the children at their play.

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Bessie stood quietly behind her counter, while the rest ran about after Maggie. She looked more pale and languid than usual that afternoon, as she always did when she had been tired or excited. All the soft pink color which had come into her cheek since she had been at Quam Beach was quite gone; it was no wonder that grandma frowned and bit her lip to keep herself from saying sharp things when she looked at her darling that day.

Now, Miss Adams always said that she was afraid of nobody, and did not care what people said of her; but as she watched the delicate little child, who she knew had been brought by her parents to the sea-shore that she might gain health and strength, she felt sorry that she had plagued her so, and thought that she would like to make it up with her. She went into her room, put a large packet of sugar-plums into her pocket, and then went down stairs. She came up to Bessie just as the little girl reached the colonel's side, and, standing before her, said,—

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"Well, Bessie, are you in a better humor yet?"

Bessie was certainly not pale now. A very bright color had come into her cheeks, as Miss Adams spoke to her, but she said nothing.

"Come," said Miss Adams, holding out the parcel, "here are some sugar-plums for you; come, kiss me and make up."

"I'll forgive you," said Bessie, gravely; "but I don't want the sugar-plums."

"Oh, yes, you do!" said Miss Adams; "come and kiss me for them."

"I don't kiss people for sugar-plums," said Bessie; "and I'm sure I don't want them."

"Then come and kiss me without the sugar-plums."

"No," said Bessie, "I'll shake hands with you, but I don't kiss people I don't like."

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"Oh!" said Miss Adams, "I suppose you keep all your kisses for your friend, the colonel."

"Oh, no," answered Bessie, "a great many are for papa and mamma, and the yest of the people I like."

Miss Adams saw that the colonel was laughing behind his newspaper, and she was provoked.

"And you don't like me, eh?" she said, sharply. "Don't you know it's very rude to tell a lady you don't like her, and won't kiss her?"

Bessie opened her eyes very wide. "Are you a lady?" she asked, in a tone of great surprise.

Mrs. Rush did not wish to have Miss Adams go on talking to the child, for she was afraid straightforward Bessie would say something which would cause fresh trouble; and she begged Annie Stanton to take her away; but Annie would not; she rather enjoyed the prospect, and when Mrs. Rush would have spoken herself, her husband put out his hand and stopped her.

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"A lady!" repeated Miss Adams; "what do you take me for? Don't you know a lady when you see one?"

"Oh, yes," answered Bessie, innocently. "Mamma's a lady, and grandma and Aunt Annie and Mrs. Yush, and ever so many others."

"And I'm not, eh?" said Miss Adams, angrily.

Bessie did not answer, but peeped up under the colonel's paper, to see if he would help her; but he did not seem inclined to interfere. His eyes were fixed on the paper which he held before his face, and his other hand was busily engaged in smoothing his moustache.

Miss Adams was very angry. She would not have cared if she had been alone with Bessie; but she was provoked that she should tell her she was not a lady, before so many people, for two or three gentlemen had gathered near, and the colonel's amusement vexed her still more.

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"You don't call me a lady, eh?" said Miss Adams again.

"How can you quarrel with such a baby about nothing, Miss Adams?" said Mrs. Rush, rising from her seat.

"She is no baby. She knows very well what she is about, and she has been put up to this," said Miss Adams, with a furious look at the colonel. "Who told you I was not a lady?"

"Nobody; I just knew it myself," said Bessie, drawing closer to the colonel, as Miss Adams came nearer to her. He threw down his paper, and put his hand over her shoulder.

"You little impertinent!" said Miss Adams, "who made you a judge, I should like to know? Not a lady, indeed!"

Poor Bessie! She would not say what she did not think, and she did not like to say what she did think; but she was tired of the dispute, and thought Miss Adams would have an answer. She gave a long sigh, and said,—

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"Well, perhaps you are a kind of a lady; but if you are, it must be a kitchen or stable lady."

The gentlemen who were standing by walked quickly away; Mrs. Rush looked frightened; Annie bent her head down on Gracie's shoulder, and shook with laughter; and the colonel reached his crutches and, rising, began to steady himself.

Miss Adams stood silent a moment, and then began to speak in a voice almost choked with rage, "You little—" when the colonel interrupted her.

"Excuse me, madam," he said, "if I remind you that you have no one to blame for this but yourself. The child is straightforward and honest, accustomed to speak as she thinks; and if she has said what was better left unsaid, remember that you forced her to it. I cannot permit her to be annoyed any farther."

Helpless as he was, he looked so grand and tall as he stood there with his eyes fixed sternly on Miss Adams, that she felt abashed. Mrs. Rush had taken Bessie into her room, Annie had followed with Maggie and Gracie, and there was no one left to quarrel with but the colonel. Just at that moment the horses were led up, and she turned away and went down the steps to mount.

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But Miss Adams had never been so annoyed. She had no mother, or perhaps she would not have been so rough and unladylike; but she had had many a reproof from other people. Many a grave, elderly lady, and even some of her own age, had spoken, some kindly, some severely, upon the wild, boisterous manner in which she chose to behave. But she had always laughed at all they said, and went on as before. But that this innocent little child, to whom she had been so unkind,

should see for herself that she had acted in an improper way, and one that was only fit for the kitchen or stable, and should tell her so, and show such surprise at hearing her call herself a lady, was very mortifying, and she could not forget it.

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That evening, when Mr. and Mrs. Bradford came home, they went over to the hotel for their little girls, and Annie told them all that had happened that day. After Bessie was undressed, and had said her prayers, she sat on her mother's lap, and told her of all her troubles, and then she felt happier.

"Mamma, I'm afraid I made Miss Adams mad, when I said that, and I didn't mean to," she said.

"But why did you say it, Bessie?—it was saucy."

"Why, I had to, mamma; I didn't want to; but I couldn't *break the truth*; she asked me and asked me, so I had to."

"Oh, my Bessie, my Bessie!" said mamma, with a low laugh, and then she held the little girl very close in her arms, and kissed her. Bessie nestled her head down on her mamma's bosom, and her mother held her there, and rocked her long after she was fast asleep. Sometimes she smiled to herself as she sat thinking and watching her child; but once or twice a bright tear dropped down on Bessie's curls. Mamma was praying that her little girl might live to grow up and be a good Christian woman, and that she might always love the truth as she did now, even when she was older and knew it was not wise to say such things as she had done to-day.

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XV.

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UNCLE JOHN.



LETTER from Uncle John!" said mamma, at the breakfast-table. "I hope Nellie is no worse. No, she is better; but the doctor has ordered sea air for her, and they all want to come here, if we can find room for them, either in this house or in the hotel."

"The hotel is full, I know," said Mr. Bradford; "I do not think there is a room to be had. I wonder if Mrs. Jones can do anything for us."

"I think not," said Mrs. Bradford. "Old Mr. Duncan must be with them wherever they go, for John is not willing to leave his father alone."

"We can ask her, at least," said Mr. Bradford.

So the next time Mrs. Jones came in with a plate full of hot cakes, she was asked if she could possibly take in Mr. Duncan's family.

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"Couldn't do it," she said. "If you didn't mind scrounging, I could give 'em one room; but two, I can't do it. I've plenty of beds, but no more rooms."

Maggie and Bessie looked very much disappointed. It would be such a pleasure to have Grandpapa Duncan, and all the rest.

"Suppose we gave up this little dining-room, and took our meals in the sitting-room," said Mr. Bradford; "could you put old Mr. Duncan in here?"

"Oh, yes, well enough," said Mrs. Jones. "Didn't suppose you'd be willing to do that, York folks is so partickler."

"We would be willing to do far more than that to accommodate our friends," said Mrs. Bradford, smiling.

After a little more talk with Mrs. Jones, it was all settled; so mamma sat down to write to Uncle John, telling him they might come as soon as they chose.

"Mamma," said Maggie, "what did Mrs. Jones mean by 'scrounging'?"

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"She meant to crowd."

"I sha'n't take it for one of my words," said Maggie; "I don't think it sounds nice."

"No," said mamma, laughing, "I do not think it is a very pretty word; crowd is much better."

The children went out in the front porch, greatly pleased with the idea of having their Riverside friends with them. Dear Grandpapa Duncan and Aunt Helen, merry Uncle John and little Nellie! Maggie went hopping about the path, while Bessie sat down on the steps with a very contented smile. Presently she said,—

"Maggie, if you was on the grass, what would you be?"

"I don't know," said Maggie; "just Maggie Stanton Bradford, I suppose."

"You'd be a grasshopper," said Bessie.

Maggie stopped hopping to laugh. She thought this a very fine joke; and when, a moment after, her brothers came up to the house, she told them of Bessie's "conundrum." They laughed, too,

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and then ran off to the barn.

Maggie sat down on the step by her sister. "Bessie," she said, "don't you think Mrs. Jones is very horrid, even if she does make us gingerbread men?"

"Not very; I think she is a little horrid."

"I do," said Maggie; "she talks so; she called papa and mamma 'York folks.'"

"What does that mean?" asked Bessie.

"I don't know; something not nice, I'm sure."

"Here comes papa," said Bessie; "we'll ask him. Papa, what did Mrs. Jones mean by York folks?"

"She meant people from New York," said Mr. Bradford.

"Then why don't she say that?" said Maggie; "it sounds better."

"Well, that is her way of talking," answered Mr. Bradford.

"Do you think it a nice way, papa?"

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"Not very. I should be sorry to have you speak as she does; but you must remember that the people with whom she has lived are accustomed to talk in that way, and she does not know any better."

"Then we'll teach her," said Maggie. "I'll tell her she doesn't talk properly, and that we're going to teach her."

"Indeed, you must do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Bradford, smiling at the idea of his shy Maggie teaching Mrs. Jones; "she would be very much offended."

"Why, papa," said Bessie, "don't she like to do what is yight?"

"Yes, so far as I can tell, she wishes to do right; but probably she thinks she speaks very well, and she would think it impertinent if two such little girls were to try to teach her. It is not really wrong for a person to talk in the way she does, if they know no better. It would be wrong and vulgar for you to do so, because you have been taught to speak correctly."

"And do we do it?" said Bessie. "Do we speak coryectly?"

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"Pretty well for such little girls," said papa.

"Mrs. Jones laughs at us because she says we use such big words," said Maggie; "and Mr. Jones does too. They ought not to do it, when they don't know how to talk themselves. I like grown-up words, and I am going to say them, if they do laugh."

"Well, there is no harm in that, if you understand their meaning," said papa; "but I would not feel unkindly towards Mrs. Jones; she means to be good and kind to you, and I think she is so; and you must not mind if her manner is not always very pleasant."

"But she called you and mamma particular," said Maggie, who was determined not to be pleased with Mrs. Jones.

"Well, if Mrs. Jones thinks we are too particular about some things, we think she is not particular enough; so neither one thinks the other quite perfect."

Maggie did not think this mended the matter at all. But just then the nurses came with the younger children, and after their father had played with them for a while, they all went for their morning walk on the beach.

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Two days after, the party came from Riverside, and, with some crowding, were all made comfortable. They almost lived out of doors in this beautiful weather, and so did not mind some little inconveniences in the house.

Uncle John was always ready for a frolic. Now he would hire Mr. Jones' large farm wagon and two horses, cover the bottom of the wagon with straw, pack in Aunt Annie and the little Bradfords, and as many other boys and girls as it would hold, and start off for a long drive. Then he said they must have a clam-bake, and a clam-bake they had; not only one, but several. Sometimes Uncle John would invite their friends from the hotel, and they would have quite a grand affair; but, generally, they had only their own family, with Mrs. Rush, and the colonel when he was well enough to come; and the children enjoyed the smaller parties much more than they did the larger ones. First, a large, shallow hole was made in the sand, in which the clams were placed, standing on end; a fire was built on top of them, and they were left until they were well roasted, when they were pulled out and eaten with bread and butter.

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When Mrs. Jones found how fond the children were of roast clams, she often had them for their breakfast or supper; but they never tasted so good as they did when they were cooked in the sand and eaten on the shore.

One cool, bright afternoon, Mr. Bradford and Mr. Duncan went down to the beach for a walk. The children had been out for some time: Maggie was racing about with the boys; Bessie, sitting on the sand beside a pool of salt water, looking into it so earnestly that she did not see her father

and uncle till they were quite close to her.

"What is my little girl looking at?" said her father, sitting down on a great stone which was near.

"Such an ugly thing!" said Bessie.

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Papa leaned forward and looked into the pool, and there he saw the thing Bessie thought so ugly. It was a small salt-water crab which had been left there by the tide. He was very black and had long, sprawling legs, spreading out in every direction. He lay quite still in the bottom of the pool, with his great eyes staring straight forward, and did not seem to be in the least disturbed by the presence of his visitors.

"What do you suppose he is thinking about, Bessie?" said Uncle John.

"I guess he thinks he looks pretty nasty," said Bessie; "I do."

"Bessie," said her father, "it seems to me that you and Maggie say 'nasty' very often. I do not think it is at all a pretty word for little girls to use."

"Then I wont say it," said Bessie; "but when a thing looks—looks *that* way, what shall I say?"

"You might say ugly," said Mr. Bradford.

"But, papa, sometimes a thing looks ugly, and not nasty. I think that animal looks ugly and nasty too." [Pg 203]

"Tell us of something that is ugly, but not nasty," said Uncle John.

Bessie looked very hard at her uncle. Now Mr. Duncan was not at all a handsome man. He had a pleasant, merry, good-natured face, but he was certainly no beauty. Bessie looked at him, and he looked back at her, with his eyes twinkling, and the corners of his mouth twitching with a smile, for he thought he knew what was coming.

"Well?" he said, when Bessie did not speak for a moment.

"Uncle John," said she, very gravely, "I think you are ugly, but I do not think you are nasty, a bit."

Uncle John laughed as if he thought this a capital joke; and Mr. Bradford smiled as he said, "It don't do to ask Bessie questions to which you do not want a straightforward answer."

"But I want to know about 'nasty,'" said Bessie. "Is it saying bad grammar, like Mrs. Jones, to say it?" [Pg 204]

"Not exactly," said Mr. Bradford, "and you may say it when a thing is really nasty; but I think you often use it when there is no need. Perhaps this little fellow does look nasty as well as ugly; but the other day I heard Maggie say that Mamie Stone was a nasty, cross child. Now, Mamie may be cross,—I dare say she often is,—but she certainly is not nasty, for she is always neat and clean. And this morning I heard you say that you did not want 'that nasty bread and milk.' The bread and milk was quite good and sweet, and not at all nasty; but you called it so because you did not fancy it."

"Then did I tell a wicked story?" asked Bessie, looking sober at the thought of having said what was not true.

"No," said papa, "you did not tell a wicked story, for you did not mean to say that which was not so. But it is wrong to fall into the habit of using words which seem to say so much more than we mean. But do not look so grave about it, my darling; you did not intend to do anything that was not right, I am sure."— [Pg 205]

"But, papa," said Bessie, "why did God make ugly things?"

"Because he thought it best, Bessie. He made everything in the way which best fitted it for the purpose for which he intended it. This little crab lives under the sea, where he has a great many enemies, and where he has to find his food. With these round, staring eyes which stand out so far from his head, he can look in every direction and see if any danger is near, or if there is anything which may do for him to eat. With these long, awkward legs, he can scamper out of the way, and with those sharp claws, he fights, for he is a quarrelsome little fellow. He can give a good pinch with them, and you had better not put your fingers too near them. Under that hard, black shell, he has a tender body, which would be hurt by the rocks and stones among which he lives, if he had not something to protect it." [Pg 206]

Uncle John took up a stick. "Here, Johnny Crab," he said, "let us see how you can fight;" and he put the stick in the water and stirred up the crab. The moment he was touched, the crab began to move all his legs, and to scuttle round the pool as if he wanted to get out. But Uncle John did not mean to let him come out until he had shown Bessie what a nip he could give with those pincers of his. He pushed him back, and put the stick close to one of his larger claws. The crab took hold of it, as if he were very angry, and such a pinch as he gave it!

"See there, Bessie," said Uncle John, "are you not glad it is not one of your little fingers he has hold of?"

"Yes," said Bessie, climbing on her father's knee as the crab tried to get out. "I didn't know he could pinch like that."

"Or you would not have sat so quietly watching him, eh, Bessie?" said Uncle John. "Well, romp,"—to Maggie, as she rushed up to them, rosy and out of breath, and jumping upon the rock behind him, threw both arms around his neck,—"well, romp, here is a gentleman who wishes to make your acquaintance."

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"Why, Uncle John, what a horrid, nasty thing! What is it?" said Maggie, as her uncle pushed back the crab, which was still trying to get out of the pool.

"There it goes again," said Uncle John,—"horrid, nasty thing! Poor little crab!"

"Maggie," said Bessie, "we must not say 'nasty.' Papa says it means what we do not mean, and it's improper. Tell her about it, papa."

"No," said papa, "we will not have another lecture now. By and by you may tell her. I think you can remember all I have said."

"Now see, Maggie," said Uncle John, "you have hurt the crab's feelings so that he is in a great hurry to run off home. I am sure his mother thinks him a very handsome fellow, and he wants to go and tell her how he went on his travels and met a monster who had the bad taste to call him 'a horrid, nasty thing.'"

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"Oh," said Bessie, laughing, "what a funny Uncle John you are! But I should think it would hurt the crab's feelings a great deal more to be poked with a stick, and not to be let to go home when he wants to. I don't believe he knows what Maggie says."

"I think you are about right, Bessie; I guess we must let him go."

So the next time the crab tried to come out of the pool, Uncle John put the stick by his claw, and when he took hold of it, lifted him out of the water and laid him on the sand. Away the crab scampered as fast as his long legs could carry him, moving in a curious side-long fashion, which amused the children very much. They followed him as near to the water's edge as they were allowed to go, and then ran back to their father.

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XVI.

THE BIRTHDAY PRESENTS.



THE tenth of August was Maggie's birthday. She would be seven years old, and on that day she was to have a party. At first, Mrs. Bradford had intended to have only twenty little children at this party, but there seemed some good reason for inviting this one and that one, until it was found that there were about thirty to come.

Maggie begged that she might print her own invitations on some of the paper which Grandpapa Duncan had sent. Mamma said she might try, but she thought Maggie would be tired before she was half through, and she was right. By the time Maggie had printed four notes, her little fingers were cramped, and she had to ask her mother to write the rest for her. Mrs. Bradford did so, putting Maggie's own words on Maggie's and Bessie's own stamped paper. Maggie said this was Bessie's party just as much as hers, and the invitations must come from her too. So they were written in this way.

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"Please to have the pleasure of coming to have a party with us, on Tuesday afternoon, at four o'clock.

"MAGGIE AND BESSIE."

Among those which Maggie had printed herself, was one to Colonel and Mrs. Rush.

"What do you send them an invitation for?" said Fred. "They wont come. The colonel can't walk so far, and Mrs. Rush wont leave him."

"Then they can send us a *refuse*," said Maggie. "I know the colonel can't come, but maybe Mrs. Rush will for a little while. We're going to ask them, anyhow. They'll think it a great discomplement if we don't."

Such busy little girls as they were on the day before the birthday! The dolls had to be all dressed in their best, and the dolls' tea things washed about a dozen times in the course of the morning. Then Bessie had a birthday present for Maggie. She had been saving all her money for some time to buy it. Papa had bought it for her, and brought it from town the night before. Every half-hour or so, Bessie had to run and peep at it, to be sure it was all safe, taking great care that Maggie did not see.

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They went to bed early, that, as Maggie said, "to-morrow might come soon," but they lay awake laughing and talking until nurse told them it was long past their usual bedtime, and they must go right to sleep.

The next morning Bessie was the first to wake. She knew by the light that it was very early, not time to get up. She looked at her sister, but Maggie showed no signs of waking.

"Oh, this is Maggie's birthday!" said the little girl to herself. "My dear Maggie! I wish she would wake up, so I could kiss her and wish her a happy birthday. 'Many happy yeturns,' that's what

people say when other people have birthdays. I'll say it to Maggie when she wakes up. But now I'll go to sleep again for a little while." [Pg 212]

Bessie turned over for another nap, when her eye was caught by something on the foot of the bed. She raised her head, then sat upright. No more thought of sleep for Bessie. She looked one moment, then laid her hand upon her sleeping sister.

"Maggie, dear Maggie, wake up! Just see what somebody brought here!"

Maggie stirred, and sleepily rubbed her eyes.

"Wake up wide, Maggie! Only look! Did you ever see such a thing?"

Maggie opened her eyes, and sat up beside Bessie. On the foot of the bed—one on Maggie's side, one on Bessie's—were two boxes. On each sat a large doll—and such dolls! They had beautiful faces, waxen hands and feet, and what Bessie called "live hair, yeal live hair." They were dressed in little white night-gowns, and sat there before the surprised and delighted children as if they had themselves just wakened from sleep. Maggie threw off the bed-covers, scrambled down to the foot of the bed, and seized the doll nearest to her. [Pg 213]

"Who did it, Bessie?" she said.

"I don't know," said Bessie. "Mamma, I guess. I think they're for your birthday."

"Why, so I s'pose it is!" said Maggie. "Why don't you come and take yours, Bessie?"

"But it is not my birthday," said Bessie, creeping down to where her sister sat. "I don't believe somebody gave me one; but you will let me play with one; wont you, Maggie?"

"Bessie, if anybody did be so foolish as to give me two such beautiful dolls, do you think I'd keep them both myself, and not give you one? Indeed, I wouldn't. And even if they only gave me one, I'd let it be half yours, Bessie."

Bessie put her arm about her sister's neck and kissed her, and then took up the other doll. [Pg 214]

"What cunning little ni'-gowns!" she said. "I wonder if they have any day clo's."

"Maybe they're in these boxes," said Maggie. "I'm going to look. Gracie Howard's aunt did a very unkind, selfish thing. She gave her a great big doll with not a thing to put on it. I don't believe anybody would do so to us. Oh, no! here's lots and lots of clo's! Pull off your cover quick, Bessie. Oh, I am so very, very pleased! I know mamma did it. I don't believe anybody else would be so kind. See, there's a white frock and a silk frock and a muslin one, and—oh! goody, goody!—a sweet little sack and a round hat, and petticoats and drawers and everything! Why don't you look at yours, Bessie, and see if they are just the same?"

"Yes," said Bessie; "they are, and here's shoes and stockings, and oh! such a cunning parasol, and here's—oh, Maggie, here's the dear little cap that I saw in Mrs. Yush's drawer the day the colonel sent me to find his knife! Why, she must have done it!" [Pg 215]

"And look here, Bessie, at this dear little petticoat all 'broidered. That's the very pattern we saw Aunt Annie working the day that 'bomnable Miss Adams pulled your hair. Isn't it pretty?"

"And see, Maggie! Mrs. Yush was sewing on a piece of silk just like this dear little dress, and she wouldn't tell us what it was. I do believe she did it, and Aunt Annie and maybe the colonel."

"How could the colonel make dolls' clothes?" said Maggie. "Men can't sew."

"Soldier men can," said Bessie. "Don't you yemember how Colonel Yush told us he had to sew on his buttons? But I did not mean he made the dolly's clothes, only maybe he gave us the dolls, and Mrs. Yush and Aunt Annie made their things. Oh, here's another ni'-gown,—two ni'-gowns!"

"Yes," said Maggie. "I was counting, and there's two ni'-gowns, and two chemise, and two everything, except only dresses, and there's four of those, and they're all marked like our things, —'Bessie,' for yours, and 'Maggie' for mine. Oh, what a happy birthday! Bessie, I'm so glad you've got a doll too! Oh, I'm so very gratified!" [Pg 216]

"I have something nice for you too, Maggie. Please give me my slippers, and I'll go and get it."

Maggie leaned over the side of the trundle-bed, to reach her sister's slippers, but what she saw there quite made her forget them. She gave a little scream of pleasure, and began hugging up her knees and rolling about the bed squealing with delight. Bessie crept to the edge of the bed, and peeped over. There stood two little perambulators, just of the right size for the new dolls, and in each, lay neatly folded, a tiny affghan.

When this new excitement was over, Bessie put on her slippers and went for her present for Maggie. This was a little brown morocco work-bag, lined with blue silk, and fitted up with scissors, thimble, bodkin, and several other things. She gave it to her sister saying, "I make you many happy yeturns, dear Maggie." Then Maggie had another fit of rolling, tumbling, and screaming, until nurse, who was watching the children from her bed, though they did not know it, could stand it no longer, but broke into a hearty laugh. [Pg 217]

"Now, nursey," said Maggie.

"Is it a pig or a puppy we have got here for a birthday?" said nurse. "Sure, it is a happy one I wish you, my pet, and many of 'em, and may you never want for nothing more than you do now. Now don't you make such a noise there, and wake Franky. I s'pose I may just as well get up and wash and dress you, for there'll be no more sleep, I'm thinking."

"Who gave us these dolls and all these things, nursey?" asked Maggie.

"Indeed, then, Bessie was just right," said nurse. "Colonel Rush gave you the dolls, and his wife, with Miss Annie, made the clothes; and did you ever see dolls that had such a fittin' out? It was your mamma that bought the wagons and made the blankets." [Pg 218]

"We didn't see her," said Bessie.

"No, but she did them when you were out or asleep; but you see Mrs. Rush and Miss Annie had to be working all the time on the clothes, lest they wouldn't be done; and you're round there so much, they had to let you see."

"But we never knew," said Maggie.

The children could scarcely keep still long enough to let nurse bathe and dress them; but at last it was done, and then the dolls were dressed, and the rest of the clothes put nicely away in the boxes. As soon as baby awoke, they were off to their mamma's room, scrambling up on the bed to show their treasures, and talking as fast as their tongues could go.

"I was so very surprised, mamma!" said Maggie.

"You were not; were you, Bessie?" said mamma, laughing. [Pg 219]

"Why, yes, I was."

"Didn't you see or hear something last night?" asked mamma.

Bessie looked at her mother for a minute, and then exclaimed, "Oh, yes, I do yemember, now! Maggie, last night I woke up and somebody was laughing, and I thought it was Aunt Annie; but when I opened my eyes, only mamma was there, and when I asked her where Aunt Annie was, she said, 'Go to sleep; you shall see Aunt Annie in the morning.' Mamma, I thought you came to kiss us, as you do every night before you go to bed. I suppose you put the dolls there that time?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Bradford.

"That's what I call being *mysteyious*," said Bessie.

"Do you like people to be mysterious, Bessie?" asked her father, laughing.

"About dolls, I do, papa; but about some things, I don't."

"What things?" [Pg 220]

"When they're going to say what they don't want me to hear, and they send me out of the yoom. I don't like that way of being mysterious at all. It hurts children's feelings very much to be sent out of the yoom."

"What are these magnificent young ladies to be named?" asked Uncle John, at the breakfast-table.

"Mine is to be Bessie Margaret Marion," said Maggie,—"after mamma and Bessie and Mrs. Rush."

"Why, all your dolls are named Bessie," said Harry; "there are big Bessie and little Bessie and middling Bessie."

"I don't care," said Maggie; "this is going to be Bessie too. She will have two other names, so it will be very nice. Besides, I am not going to play with middling Bessie again. The paint is all off her cheeks, and Franky smashed her nose in, and yesterday I picked out her eyes, to see what made them open and shut, so she is not very pretty any more. I am going to let Susie have her."

"And what is yours to be, Bessie?" [Pg 221]

"Margayet Colonel Hoyace Yush Byadford," said Bessie, trying very hard to pronounce her r's.

The boys shouted and even the grown people laughed.

"That is a regular boy's name,—all except the Margaret," said Fred, "and the Colonel is no name at all."

"It is," said Bessie,—"it is my own dear soldier's, and it is going to be my dolly's. You're bad to laugh at it, Fred."

"Do not be vexed, my little girl," said her father. "Colonel is not a name; it is only a title given to a man because he commands a regiment of soldiers. Now young ladies do not command regiments, and Horace is a man's name. You may call your doll what you please, but suppose you were to name her Horatia; would not that sound better?"

But Bessie held fast to the Horace; it was her soldier's name, and she was quite determined to give her doll the same.

After breakfast, Mrs. Bradford called Maggie up stairs for a while. "Maggie, dear," she said, when she had taken the little girl up into her lap, "have you remembered this morning that our Father in heaven has brought you to the beginning of another year of your life?" [Pg 222]

"Oh, yes, mamma," said Maggie; "I have done nothing but think it was my birthday ever since I woke up. You know I could not forget it when every one was so kind and gave me such lots and lots of lovely things."

"But have you remembered to thank God for letting you see another birthday, and for giving you all these kind friends, and so many other blessings? And have you asked him to make you wiser and better each year, as you grow older?"

"I am afraid I did not think much about it that way," said Maggie, coloring; "but I *am* very thankful. I know I have a great many blessings. I have you and papa and Bessie, and my new doll, and all the rest of the family. But I want to know one thing, mamma. Isn't it wrong to pray to God about dolls? Bessie said it wasn't, but I thought it must be." [Pg 223]

"How to pray about them, dear?"

"To thank God because he made Colonel Rush think of giving us such beautiful ones. Bessie said we ought to, but I thought God would not care to hear about such little things as that. Bessie said we asked every day for our daily bread; and dolls were a great deal better blessing than bread, so we ought to thank him. But I thought he was such a great God, maybe he would be offended if I thanked him for such a little thing as a doll."

"We should thank him for every blessing, dear, great and small. Though we deserve nothing at his hands, all that we have comes from his love and mercy; and these are so great that even our smallest wants are not beneath his notice. He knows all our wishes and feelings,—every thought, whether spoken or not; and if you feel grateful to him because he put it into the hearts of your kind friends to give you this pretty present, he knew the thought, and was pleased that you should feel so. But never fear to thank him for any mercy, however small. Never fear to go to him in any trouble or happiness. He is always ready to listen to the simplest prayer from the youngest child. Shall we thank him now for all the gifts and mercies you have received to-day, and for the care which he has taken of you during the past year?" [Pg 224]

"Yes, mamma."

"And, Maggie, I think you have one especial blessing to be grateful for."

"What, mamma?"

"That you have been able, with God's help, to do so much towards conquering a very troublesome fault."

"Oh, yes, mamma! and I do think God helped me to do that, for I asked him every night and morning, since I meddled with papa's inkstand. I mean, when I said, 'God bless,' when I came to 'make me a good little girl,' I used to say quite quick and softly to myself, 'and careful too.'" [Pg 225]

"That was right, dear," said Mrs. Bradford, tenderly smoothing Maggie's curls, and kissing her forehead; "you see he did hear that little prayer, and help you in what you were trying to do."

Then Mrs. Bradford knelt down with Maggie, and thanked God that he had spared her child's life, and given her so many blessings, and prayed that each year, as she grew older, she might be better and wiser, and live more to his glory and praise.

"I am not quite careful yet, mamma," said Maggie, when they rose from their knees. "You know the other day, when nurse told me to bring in Bessie's best hat, I forgot and left it out on the grass, and the rain spoiled it; but I mean to try more and more, and maybe, when I am eight, I will be as careful as Bessie."

XVII.

 [Pg 226]

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY.



MAGGIE said this was the very best birthday she had ever had. The whole day seemed one long pleasure. She and Bessie walked over, with their father and Uncle John, to see Colonel and Mrs. Rush, leaving mamma, Aunt Helen, and Aunt Annie all helping Mrs. Jones to prepare for the evening. There were cakes and ice cream and jelly to make, for such things could not be bought here in the country as they could in town.

The new dolls went too, seated in the perambulators and snugly tucked in with the affghans, though it was such a warm day that when they reached the hotel, Bessie said she was "yoasted."

"So this is a pleasant birthday; is it, Maggie?" said the colonel.

"Oh, yes!" said Maggie; "I wish every day was my birthday or Bessie's." [Pg 227]

"Then in sixty days you would be old ladies. How would you like that?" said Uncle John.

"Not a bit," answered Maggie; "old ladies don't have half so much fun as children."

"So you will be content with one birthday in a year?"

"Yes, Uncle John."

"And you liked all your presents, Maggie?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir, except only one."

"And what was that?"

"Mrs. Jones gave me a white *Canting* flannel rabbit, with black silk for its nose, and red beads for its eyes. Idea of it! just as if I was a little girl, and I am seven! I told nurse if baby wanted it, she could have it; and I didn't care if she did put it in her mouth. Nurse said I was ungrateful; but I am not going to be grateful for such a thing as that."

The colonel and Uncle John seemed very much amused when Maggie said this, but her father looked rather grave, though he said nothing. [Pg 228]

"Colonel Yush," said Bessie, "you didn't send me a yefuse."

"A what?"

"A yefuse to our party note."

"Oh, I understand. Did you want me to refuse?"

"Oh, no, we didn't *want* you to; but then we knew you couldn't come, because you are so lame."

"Will it do if you get an answer to-night?" said the colonel.

Bessie said that would do very well.

When they were going home, Mr. Bradford fell a little behind the rest, and called Maggie to him. "Maggie, dear," he said, "I do not want to find fault with my little girl on her birthday, but I do not think you feel very pleasantly towards Mrs. Jones."

"No, papa, I do not; I can't bear her; and the make-believe rabbit too! If you were seven, papa, and some one gave you such a thing, would you like it?" [Pg 229]

"Perhaps not; but Mrs. Jones is a poor woman, and she gave you the best she had, thinking to please you."

"Papa, it makes Mrs. Jones very mad to call her poor. The other day I asked her why she didn't put pretty white frocks, like our baby's and Nellie's, on Susie. Bessie said she supposed she was too poor. Mrs. Jones was as cross as anything, and said she wasn't poor, and Mr. Jones was as well off as any man this side the country; but she wasn't going to waste her time doing up white frocks for Susie. She was so mad that Bessie and I ran away."

"Then we will not call her poor if she does not like it," said Mr. Bradford; "but Mrs. Jones is a kind-hearted woman, if she is a little rough sometimes. She tries very hard to please you. Late last night, I went into her kitchen to speak to Mr. Jones, and there she sat making that rabbit, although she had been hard at work all day, trying to finish her wash, so that she might have the whole of to-day to make cakes and other nice things for your party. Yet this morning when she brought it to you, you did not look at all pleased, and scarcely said, 'Thank you.'" [Pg 230]

"Ought I to say I was pleased when I was not, papa?"

"No, certainly not; but you should have been pleased, because she meant to be kind, even if you did not like the thing that she brought. It was not like a lady, it was not like a Christian, to be so ungracious; it was not doing as you would be done by. Last week you hemmed a handkerchief for Grandpapa Duncan. Now you know yourself that, although you took a great deal of pains, the hem was rather crooked and some of the stitches quite long, yet grandpapa was more pleased with that one than with the whole dozen which Aunt Helen hemmed, and which were beautifully done, because he knew that you had done the best you could, and that it was a great effort for you. It was not the work, but the wish to do something for him, that pleased him. Now, if grandpa had frowned, and looked at the handkerchief as if it were scarcely worth notice, and grumbled something that hardly sounded like 'Thank you,' how would you have felt?" [Pg 231]

"I'd have cried," said Maggie, "and wished I hadn't done it for him."

"Suppose he had told other people that he didn't like work done in that way, and was not going to be grateful for it?"

Maggie hung her head, and looked ashamed. She saw now how unkindly she had felt and acted towards Mrs. Jones.

Mr. Bradford went on: "I think Mrs. Jones was hurt this morning, Maggie. Now, I am sure you did not mean to vex her; did you?"

"No, papa, indeed, I did not. What can I do? I don't think I ought to tell Mrs. Jones that I think the rabbit is pretty when I don't."

"No, of course you must not. Truth before all things. But you might play with it a little, and not put it out of sight, as you did this morning. Perhaps, too, you may find a chance to thank her in a [Pg 232]

pleasanter way than you did before."

"I'll make a chance," said Maggie.

When they reached the house, Maggie ran up to the nursery. "Nurse," she said, "where is my rabbit; did baby have it?"

"No, indeed," said nurse; "I wasn't going to give it to baby, to hurt Mrs. Jones' feelings,—not while we're here, at least. When we go to town, then my pet may have it, if you don't want it; and a nice plaything it will make for her then. It's up there on the mantel-shelf."

"Please give it to me," said Maggie; "I'm going to cure Mrs. Jones' feelings."

Nurse handed it to her, and she ran down stairs with it. She took her doll out of the little wagon, put the rabbit in its place, and tucked the affghan all round it. Then she ran into the kitchen, pulling the wagon after her.

"Now, come," said Mrs. Jones, the moment she saw her, "I don't want any children here! I've got my hands full; just be off."

"Oh, but, Mrs. Jones," said Maggie, a little frightened, "I only want you to look at my rabbit taking a ride in the wagon. Don't he look cunning? I think you were very kind to make him for me." [Pg 233]

"Well, do you know?" said Mrs. Jones. "I declare I thought you didn't care nothing about it,—and me sitting up late last night to make it. I was a little put out when you seemed to take it so cool like, and I thought you were stuck up with all the handsome presents you'd been getting. That wasn't nothing alongside of them, to be sure; but it was the best I could do."

"And you were very kind to make it for me, Mrs. Jones. I am very much obliged to you. No, Susie, you can't have it. Maybe you'd make it dirty, and I'm going to keep it till I'm thirteen; then I'll let baby have it, when she's big enough to take care of it."

"Oh, it will be in the ash-barrel long before that," said Mrs. Jones. "Here's a cake for you and one for Bessie."

"No, thank you," said Maggie; "mamma said we musn't eat any cakes or candies this morning, because we'll want some to-night." [Pg 234]

"That's a good girl to mind so nice," said Mrs. Jones; "and your ma's a real lady, and she's bringing you up to be ladies too."

Maggie ran off to the parlor, glad that she had made friends with Mrs. Jones. She found her mother and Aunt Helen and Aunt Annie all making mottoes. They had sheets of bright-colored tissue paper, which they cut into small squares, fringed the ends with sharp scissors, and then rolled up a sugar-plum in each. They allowed Maggie and Bessie to help, by handing the sugar-plums, and the little girls thought it a very pleasant business. And once in a while mamma popped a sugar-plum into one of the two little mouths, instead of wrapping it in the paper; and this they thought a capital plan. Then came a grand frolic in the barn with father and Uncle John and the boys, Tom and Walter being of the party, until Mrs. Bradford called them in, and said Bessie must rest a while, or she would be quite tired out before afternoon. So, taking Bessie on his knee, Grandpapa Duncan read to them out of a new book he had given Maggie that morning. After the early dinner, the dolls, old and new, had to be dressed, and then they were dressed themselves, and ready for their little visitors. [Pg 235]

The piazza and small garden and barn seemed fairly swarming with children that afternoon. And such happy children too! Every one was good-natured, ready to please and to be pleased. And, indeed, they would have been very ungrateful if they had not been; for a great deal of pains was taken to amuse and make them happy. Even Mamie Stone was not heard to fret once.

"I do wish I had an Uncle John!" said Mamie, as she sat down to rest on the low porch step, with Bessie and one or two more of the smaller children, and watched Mr. Duncan, as he arranged the others for some new game, keeping them laughing all the time with his merry jokes,—"I do wish I had an Uncle John!" [Pg 236]

"You have an Uncle Robert," said Bessie.

"Pooh! he's no good," said Mamie. "He's not nice and kind and funny, like your Uncle John. He's as cross as anything, and he wont let us make a bit of noise when he's in the room. He says children are pests; and when papa laughed, and asked him if he said that because he remembered what a pest he was when he was a child, he looked mad, and said no; children were better behaved when he was a boy."

"I don't think he's very better behaved to talk so," said Bessie, gravely.

"No, he's not," said Mamie. "He's awful. He's not a bit like Mr. Duncan. And I like your Aunt Annie too. She plays so nice, just as if she were a little girl herself; and she helps everybody if they don't know how, or fall down, or anything."

"Are we not having a real nice time, Bessie?" asked Gracie Howard.

"Yes," said Bessie; "but I do wish my soldier and Mrs. Yush could come to our party." [Pg 237]

"What makes you care so much about Colonel Rush?" asked Gracie. "He's such a big man."

"He isn't any bigger than my father," said Bessie; "and I love my father dearly, dearly. We can love people just as much if they are big."

"Oh, I didn't mean that," said Gracie; "I meant he's so old. You'd have to love your father, even if you didn't want to, because he is your father, and he takes care of you. But Colonel Rush isn't anything of yours."

"He is," said Bessie; "he is my own soldier, and my great, great friend; and he loves me too."

"I know it," said Gracie. "Mamma says it is strange to see a grown man so fond of a little child who doesn't belong to him."

"I think it is very good of him to love me so much," said Bessie, "and I do wish he was here. I want him very much."

"And so do I," said Maggie, who had come to see why Bessie was not playing; "but we can't have him, 'cause he can't walk up this bank, and the carriage can't come here, either. I just wish there wasn't any bank." [Pg 238]

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Uncle John. "Here is the queen of the day looking as if her cup of happiness was not quite full. What is it, Maggie?"

"We want the colonel," said Maggie.

"Why, you disconsolate little monkey! Are there not enough grown people here already, making children of themselves for your amusement, but you must want the colonel too? If he was here, he could not play with you, poor fellow!"

"He could sit still and look at us," said Maggie.

"And we could look at him," said Bessie. "We are very fond of him, Uncle John."

"I know you are," said Uncle John, "and so you should be, for he is very fond of you, and does enough to please you. But I am very fond of you too, and I am going to make a fox of myself, to please you. So all hands must come for a game of fox and chickens before supper." [Pg 239]

Away they all went to join the game. Uncle John was the fox, and Mrs. Bradford and Aunt Annie the hens, and Aunt Helen and papa were chickens with the little ones; while grandpa and grandma and Mrs. Jones sat on the piazza, each with a baby on her knee. The fox was such a nimble fellow, the mother hens had hard work to keep their broods together, and had to send them scattering home very often. It was a grand frolic, and the grown people enjoyed it almost as much as the children.

Even Toby seemed to forget himself for a moment or two; and once, when the chickens were all flying over the grass, screaming and laughing, he sprang up from his post on the porch, where he had been quietly watching them, and came bounding down among them with a joyous bark, and seized hold of the fox by the coat tails, just as he pounced on Harry and Walter, as if he thought they had need of his help. How the children laughed! But after that, Toby seemed to be quite ashamed of himself, and walked back to his old seat with the most solemn air possible, as if he meant to say,— [Pg 240]

"If you thought it was this respectable dog who was playing with you just now, you were mistaken. It must have been some foolish little puppy, who did not know any better." And not even Bessie could coax him to play any more.

But at last fox, hen, and chickens were all called to supper, and went in together as peaceably as possible. The children were all placed round the room, some of them on the drollest kind of seats, which Mr. Jones had contrived for the occasion. Almost all of them were so low that every child could hold its plate on its lap, for there was not half room enough round the table.

They were scarcely arranged when a curious sound was heard outside, like a tapping on the piazza. [Pg 241]

"That sounds just like my soldier's crutches," said Bessie. "But then it couldn't be, because he never could get up the bank."

But it seemed that the colonel could get up the bank, for as Bessie said this, she turned, and there he stood at the door, with Mrs. Rush at his side, both looking very smiling.

"Oh, it is, it is!" said Bessie, her whole face full of delight. "Oh, Maggie, he did come! he did get up! Oh, I'm *perferly* glad."

And indeed she seemed so. It was pretty to see her as she stood by the colonel, looking up at him with her eyes so full of love and pleasure, and a bright color in her cheeks; while Maggie, almost as much delighted, ran to the heavy arm-chair in which Grandpapa Duncan usually sat, and began tugging and shoving at it with all her might.

"What do you want to do, Maggie?" asked Tom Norris, as he saw her red in the face, and all out of breath.

"I want to take it to the door, so that he need not walk another step. Please help me, Tom," said Maggie, looking at the colonel who stood leaning on his crutches, and shaking hands with all the friends who were so glad to see him. [Pg 242]

"Never mind, little woman," said he; "I shall reach the chair with far less trouble than you can bring it to me, and I can go to it quite well. I could not have come up this bank of yours, if I had not been 'nice and spry,' as Mrs. Jones says. I told you you should have the answer to your invitation to-night; did I not?"

"Oh, yes; but why didn't you tell us you were coming?"

"Because I did not know myself that I should be able to when the time came; and I was vain enough to think you and Bessie would be disappointed if I promised and did not come after all. I knew I should be disappointed myself; so I thought I would say nothing till I was on the spot. Would you have liked it better if I had sent you a 'refuse'?"

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"Oh, no, sir!" said Maggie. "How can you talk so?"

"You gave us the best answer in the world," said Bessie.

Certainly the colonel had no reason to think that all, both old and young, were not glad to see him. As for Maggie, she could not rest until she had done something for him. As soon as she had seen him seated in the great chair, she rushed off, and was presently heard coming down stairs with something thump, thumping after her, and in a moment there she was at the door dragging two pillows, one in each hand. These she insisted on squeezing behind the colonel's back, and though he would have been more comfortable without them, he allowed her to do it, as she had taken so much trouble to bring them, and smiled and thanked her; so she was quite sure she had made him perfectly easy. Neither she nor Bessie would eat anything till he had taken or refused everything that was on the table, and he said he was fairly in the way to be killed with kindness.

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After supper Fred whispered to his father, and receiving his permission, proposed "three cheers for Bessie's soldier, Colonel Rush." The three cheers were given with a hearty good-will, and the room rang again and again.

"Three cheers for all our soldiers," said Harry; and these were given.

Then Walter Stone cried, "Three cheers for our Maggie, the queen of the day," and again all the boys and girls shouted at the top of their voices.

But Maggie did not like this at all. She hung her head, and colored all over face, neck, and shoulders, then calling out in a vexed, distressed tone, "I don't care," ran to her mother, and buried her face in her lap.

"Poor Maggie! That was almost too much, was it not?" said her mother, as she lifted her up and seated her on her knee.

"Oh, mamma, it was dreadful!" said Maggie, almost crying, and hiding her face on her mother's shoulder. "How could they?"

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"Never mind, dear; they only did it out of compliment to you, and they thought you would be pleased."

"But I am not, mamma. I would rather have a discompliment."

Maggie's trouble was forgotten when Uncle John jumped up and began a droll speech, which made all the children laugh, and in a few moments she was as merry as ever again.

"So this has been a happy day?" said the colonel, looking down at Bessie, who was sitting close beside him, as she had done ever since he came in.

"Oh, yes," said Bessie; "it is the best birthday we have ever had."

"We?" said the colonel. "It is not your birthday, too; is it?"

"No," said Bessie; "but that's no difference. I like Maggie's birthday just as much as mine, only I like hers better, 'cause I can give her a present."

"Does she not give you a present on your birthday?"

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"Yes; but I like to give her one better than to have her give me one; and it was such a great part of the happiness 'cause you came to-night."

"Bless your loving little heart!" said the colonel, looking very much pleased.

"You know, even if you did not give me that beautiful doll, it would be 'most the same; for Maggie would let me call hers half mine; but I am very glad you did give it to me. Oh, I'm *very* satisfied of this day."

"Wasn't this a nice day?" Bessie said to her sister, when their little friends were gone, and they were snug in bed.

"Yes, lovely," said Maggie, "only except the boys hollering about me. I never heard of such a thing,—to go and holler about a girl, and make her feel all red! I think, if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't know what to do 'cause of my gladness."

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THE ADVENTURE.



HERE was a dreadful storm that week, which lasted several days, and did a great deal of damage along the coast. The sky was black and angry with dark, heavy clouds. The great waves of the ocean rolled up on the beach with a loud, deafening roar, the house rocked with the terrible wind, and the rain poured in such torrents that Maggie asked her mother if she did not think "the windows of heaven were opened," and there was to be another flood.

"Maggie," said her mother, "when Noah came out of the ark, what was the first thing he did?"

Maggie thought a moment, and then said, "Built an altar and made a sacrifice."

"Yes; and what did the Lord say to him?"

"Well done, good and faithful servant," said Maggie, who, provided she had an answer, was not always particular it was the right one. [Pg 248]

Mrs. Bradford smiled a little.

"We are not told the Lord said that," she answered, "though he was doubtless pleased that Noah's first act should have been one of praise and thanksgiving. Indeed, the Bible tells us as much. But what did he place in the clouds for Noah to see?"

"A rainbow," said Maggie.

"What did he tell Noah it should be?"

"I forgot that," said Maggie; "he said it should be a sign that the world should never be drowned again."

"Yes; the Lord told Noah he would make a covenant with him 'that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy the earth;' and he made the rainbow for a sign that his promise should stand sure."

"I am glad God made the rainbow, 'cause it is so pretty," said Maggie; "but I think Noah might have believed him without that, when he took such care of him in the ark."

"Probably he did; we are not told that Noah did not believe, and it was of his own great goodness and mercy that the Almighty gave to Noah, and all who should live after him, this beautiful token of his love and care. But if my little girl could have believed God's promise then, why can she not do so now? His word holds good as surely in these days as in those of Noah." [Pg 249]

"So I do, mamma," said Maggie; "I forgot about the rainbow and God's promise. I wont be afraid any more, but I do wish it would not rain so hard, and that the wind would not blow quite so much."

"We are all in God's hands, Maggie. No harm can come to us unless he wills it."

"Franky don't like this great wind either, mamma," said Maggie, "and he said something so funny about it this morning. It was blowing and blowing, and the windows shook and rattled so, and Franky began to cry and said, 'I 'fraid.' Then nurse told him not to be afraid, 'cause God made the wind blow, and he would take care of him. A little while after, he was standing on the chair by the window, and it galed harder than ever, and the wind made a terrible noise, and Franky turned round to nurse and said, 'How God do blow!' and then the poor little fellow began to cry again." [Pg 250]

"Yes, and Maggie was very good to him," said Bessie; "she put her new doll in the wagon, and let him pull it about the nursery, only we watched him all the time, 'cause he's such a misfit." (Bessie meant mischief.) "Mamma, will you yead us about Noah?"

Mrs. Bradford took the Bible and read the chapter in Genesis which tells about the flood, and the children listened without tiring until she had finished.

At last the storm was over,—the wind and rain ceased, and the sky cleared, to the delight of the children, but they still heard a great deal of the storm and the damage which had been done. Many vessels had been wrecked, some with men and women on board, who had been drowned in the sea. Some miles farther up the shore, a large ship had been cast upon the rocks, where she was driven by the gale. The guns of distress she had fired had been heard by the people of Quam the night before the storm ceased. It was an emigrant ship coming from Europe, and there were hundreds of poor people on board, many of whom were drowned; and most of the saved lost everything they had in the world, so there was much suffering among them. Mr. Howard and Mr. Norris drove over to the place, to see if anything could be done for them, and came back to try and raise money among their friends and acquaintances to buy food and clothing. [Pg 251]

Maggie and Bessie were down on the beach with their father and Colonel Rush when Mr. Howard joined them, and told them some of the sad scenes he had just seen. The little girls were very much interested, and the gentlemen seemed so too. Mr. Bradford and Mr. Duncan gave them money, and the colonel, too, pulled out his pocket-book, and taking out a roll of bills, handed Mr. Howard two or three. Mr. Howard was still talking, and the colonel, who was listening earnestly, [Pg 252]

and who was always careless with his money, did not pay much heed to what he was doing. He put the roll of bank-notes back in his pocket-book, and, as he thought, put the book in his pocket; but instead of going in, it dropped upon the sand behind the rock on which he sat, and no one saw it fall, but a bad boy standing a little way off.

Now this boy was a thief and a liar. Perhaps no one had ever taught him better; but however that was, he was quite willing to do anything wicked for the sake of a little money. He saw the soldier take out the roll of bank-notes, put them back again, and then drop the pocket-book on the sand, and he hoped no one would notice it, so that he might pick it up when they had gone.



Bessie at Sea Side. P. 252.

By and by the colonel said he was tired, and thought he would go home. Mr. Bradford and the other gentlemen said they would go with him, Mr. Bradford telling his little girls to come too. [Pg 253]

"In a minute, papa," said Bessie; "my dolly's hat has come off, and I must put it on."

"We'll go on then," said her father; "you can run after us."

The gentlemen walked on, while Bessie began to put on Miss Margaret Horace Rush Bradford's hat.

"Oh, Maggie!" she said, "there's Lily Norris going out in the boat with her father, and mamma said we might ask her to tea. I know she'd yather come with us; you yun ask her, while I put on my dolly's hat, and then I'll come too."

Maggie ran on, leaving Bessie alone. The boy came a little nearer. Bessie put on her doll's hat, and was going after her sister, when she dropped her doll's parasol, and as she stooped to pick it up, she saw the pocket-book.

"Oh, there's my soldier's porte-monnaie!" she said to herself; "I know it is; I'll take it to him. My hands are so full, maybe I'll lose it. I'll put it in my bosom, and then it will be all safe." [Pg 254]

She laid doll, parasol, and the little basket she held in her hand upon the rock, picked up the pocket-book, and pulling down the neck of her spencer, slipped it inside. Just at this moment the boy came up to her.

"Give me that," he said.

"What?" asked Bessie, drawing back from him.

"Don't you make believe you don't know,—that pocket-book. It's mine."

"It isn't," said Bessie; "it's the colonel's."

"No, 'taint; it's mine. Hand over now, else I'll make you."

"I sha'n't," said Bessie. "I know it's the colonel's. I've seen it a great many times, and just now he gave Mr. Howard some money out of it for the poor people who lost all their things."

"Are you going to give it to me?" said the boy, coming nearer to her.

"No," said Bessie, "I am not. I am going to give it to the colonel, and I shall tell him what a very naughty boy you are. Why, I'm afraid you're a stealer! Don't you know—" [Pg 255]

Bessie was stopped by the boy taking hold of her, and trying to drag away the spencer, beneath which he had seen her slip the pocket-book. Just at this moment Maggie turned her head, to see if Bessie were coming, and saw her struggling in the grasp of the boy. Down went her new doll, happily in a soft place in the sand, where it came to no harm, and forgetting all fear, thinking only of her little sister, she ran back to her help.

"Leave my Bessie be! Leave my Bessie be!" she screamed, flying upon the boy, and fastening with both her hands upon the arm with which he was tearing away the spencer and feeling for the pocket-book, while he held Bessie with the other.

"Let go!" he said, fiercely, between his teeth. But Maggie only held the tighter, screaming,—

"Leave my Bessie be! Oh! papa, papa, do come!" [Pg 256]

Both terrified children were now screaming at the top of their voices, and they were heard by their father and the other gentlemen, who turned to see what was the matter. Although they were at a distance, Mr. Bradford saw his little girls were in great trouble. Back he came, as fast as he could, Mr. Howard and Uncle John after him, the colonel, too, as quick as his crutches would carry him.

"Let go!" cried the boy, as he saw Mr. Bradford, letting go his own hold on Bessie, and giving Maggie a furious blow across the face. But fearing he would seize Bessie again, brave little Maggie held fast.

"Take that, then!" said the boy, giving her another and a harder blow.

Maggie fell, striking her head against the edge of the rock, and the boy turned to run before Mr. Bradford reached the spot. But all this time another pair of eyes had been upon him. Four swift feet were coming toward him, and ever so many sharp teeth were set for a grip of him. While the children had been with their father, Toby, Mr. Jones' great white dog, had been seated on the edge of the bank before the house, watching the people as he was accustomed to do. [Pg 257]

Now between Toby and Joe Sands, the boy who tried to take the pocket-book, there was great enmity. Joe never saw Toby without trying to provoke him to a quarrel by making faces at him, and throwing sticks and stones; but though the dog would growl and show his teeth, he had never yet tried to bite him.

This afternoon, the moment Joe appeared, Toby seemed to suspect mischief. He straightened himself up, put his head on one side, cocked up one ear and drooped the other. Toby was not a handsome dog at the best of times, and it was not becoming to him to hold his ears in this fashion. He looked very fierce as he sat thus, but Joe did not see him, or he might have been afraid to meddle with Bessie.

Toby never told whether he saw the colonel drop the pocket-book, but from the minute it fell, he looked all ready for a spring, and never took his eyes from Joe. When the boy spoke to Bessie, he appeared still more uneasy, rose to his feet, snarled, and gave short, angry barks, but did not think it was time to interfere till Joe laid his hand upon the little girl. Then his patience was at an end, and with a furious, rough bark, he rushed over the bank, down the beach, and just as Joe turned to run from Mr. Bradford, seized fast hold of his leg. Happily for Joe, he had on a thick, strong pair of boots; but even through these Toby's teeth came in a way far from pleasant. Not a step could he stir, and in an instant Mr. Bradford and the other gentlemen came up. Mr. Bradford stooped to pick up Maggie, while Mr. Howard collared Joe. Even then Toby would not let go, but gave Joe a good shake, which made him cry out with pain. Poor Maggie was quite stunned for a moment by the blow which Joe had given her, and there was a bad cut on her head, where it had struck the rock, while one side of her face was much bruised and scratched. But when, a moment after, she came to herself, her first thought was still for Bessie, who was crying loudly with terror and distress for her sister. [Pg 258]

"Oh, my Bessie, my Bessie! leave her be!" she said, as she slowly opened her eyes.

"Bessie is safe, my darling," said her father. "She is not hurt at all. My poor little Maggie!" and sitting down on the rock, with her on his knee, he tenderly bound up her head with his handkerchief. By this time, Colonel Rush and two or three more people had come up, and Uncle John went on to the house, to tell Mrs. Bradford what had happened, so that she might not be startled when she saw Maggie.

Mr. Howard kept his hand on Joe's shoulder, but there was not much need, for Toby still held him fast, and if he made the least move, gave him a hint to keep still, which Joe thought it best to mind.

Mr. Bradford carried Maggie to the house, and the rest followed; but it was a long time before any one could make out what had happened. Bessie was too much frightened to tell, Maggie too sick, and Joe too sullen. And Maggie did not know about the pocket-book. All she could tell was, that she had seen Bessie struggling with the boy, and had run to help her. At last Bessie was quieted, and then told the story in her straightforward way, putting her hand in her bosom and [Pg 260]

pulling out the pocket-book.

"Oh, you villain!" said Mrs. Jones, who was holding the basin while Mrs. Bradford washed the blood from Maggie's face and head. "Oh, you villain! Aint it enough to go robbin' orchards and melon patches, and farmers' wagons market-days, but you must be fighting and knocking down babies like these to get what's not your own? If you don't see the inside of the county jail for this, my name's not Susan Jones. And you'd have been there long ago, only for your poor mother, whose heart ye're breakin' with your bad ways. That's you, Toby, my boy; you know when you've a rascal fast; but you may let him go now, for there's your master, and he will take him in hand."

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Mr. Jones was the constable, and Toby knew this quite as well as if he went on two feet instead of four. When Mr. Jones was sent to arrest any one, he always took Toby with him, and it was curious to see how the dog would watch the prisoner, and seem to feel that he had quite as much share as his master in bringing him to be punished for the wicked things he had done. As soon as Mr. Jones came in the room, he let go of Joe, but sat down close to him, ready to take another grip, if he tried to run away.

"And what's to be done about your poor mother?" said Mr. Jones, when he had heard the story. "I shall have to have you up for this. It will go nigh to kill her."

Joe made no answer, only looked more sullen and obstinate than ever.

"Mr. Jones," said Maggie, in a weak little voice, "please take him away; it frightens me to see him."

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"I'm going to take him right off where he wont trouble you for one while," said Mr. Jones. "But how is it that you are afraid of him just standing here, and you weren't afraid of him when he was handling you and Bessie so rough?"

"I didn't think about that," said Maggie, "and if I had, I couldn't let anybody do anything to my Bessie. I thought he was going to kill her. Oh, dear! oh, dear!" and Maggie began to cry again; she could not have told why, except that she could not help it.

"Come along," said Mr. Jones, taking hold of Joe's arm.

"Mr. Jones," said Bessie, "are you going to take him to the jail?"

"I am going to take him to the squire, and I guess he'll give him a few days of it. Serve him right too."

"But I'm 'fraid it will break his mother's heart," said Bessie; "Mrs. Jones said it would."

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"He's breakin' his mother's heart fast enough, any way," said Mr. Jones. "Drinkin' and swearin' and stealin' and idlin' round, when he ought to be a help to her, poor, sick body! It isn't goin' to do him nor his mother no harm for him to be shut up for a little while where he can think over his bad ways. He wants bringin' up somewhere, and Toby knows it too."

Toby growled and wagged his tail, as if to say he agreed with Mr. Jones. The growl was for Joe, the wag for his master.

"You surely don't think he ought to be let off," said Mrs. Jones, "when he hurt Maggie that way? Why, she's going to have a black eye, sure as a gun!"

Joe walked away with Toby at his heels. Maggie's head was bound up, and her bruises washed with arnica, and both she and Bessie were petted and comforted.

As for the new doll, which Maggie had thrown down in her haste to run to her little sister's help, it was picked up by one of the gentlemen, who brought it safe and unbroken to Maggie. To be sure, Miss Bessie Margaret Marion's dress was rather soiled by the wet sand on which she had fallen; but as it was of muslin, it could easily be washed, and Mrs. Jones soon made it quite clean again.

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XIX.

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SOUL AND INSTINCT.



APA," said Maggie, the next morning, as she sat on his knee at the breakfast-table, leaning her aching little head against his breast,—"papa, is there anything in the paper about our 'sault and battery?"

"About what?"

"Our 'sault and battery," said Maggie. "The other day, Uncle John was reading to Aunt Helen how Mr. King was knocked down, and beaten by a man who didn't like him; and he called it an 'unprovoked 'sault and battery.' I thought that meant when somebody hit somebody that didn't do anything to him."

"So it does," said her father, trying not to smile, "and yours was a most 'unprovoked assault and battery,' my poor little woman; but there is nothing in the paper about it."

"Do you think that there should be?" asked Mrs. Bradford.

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"Oh, no, mamma; I'm very glad there isn't. I thought maybe the paper-maker would hear about it, and put it into his paper; and I didn't want people to be reading about Bessie and me. Do you think he would do it another day, papa?"

"I think not, dear; you need not be afraid."

"I don't see what's the reason then," said Harry. "Maggie is a real heroine, and so is Bessie. Why, there isn't a boy at Quam, however big he is, that would dare to fight Joe Sands; and to think of our mite of a Bess standing out against him, and holding fast to the pocket-book, and Maggie running to the rescue!"

"Yes, you little speck of nothing ground down to a point," said Uncle John, catching Bessie up in his arms, "how dared you hold your ground against such a great rough boy as that?"

"Why, it was the colonel's pocket-book," said Bessie, "and he was going to take it, and it wasn't his; so I *had* to take care of it, you know. I couldn't let him do such a naughty thing."

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"They're bricks, both of them," said Harry.

"So they are," said Fred; for both of the boys were very proud of their little sisters' courage; "and Maggie has the right stuff in her, if she is shy. She is a little goose where there is nothing to be afraid of, and a lion where there is."

"Holloa! what is all this heap of pennies for?" asked the colonel, a while after, as he came into Mrs. Jones' parlor, and found Maggie and Bessie, like the famous king, "counting out their money." He had come up the bank and paid them a visit two or three times since Maggie's birthday, so that they were not very much surprised to see him.

"But first tell me how that poor little head and face are, Maggie? Why, you do look as if you'd been to the wars. Never mind, the bruises will soon wear away; and as for the cut, your hair will hide that. It is not every soldier that gets over his scars so easily; and you must not be ashamed of yours while they last. But you have not told me what you are going to do with so much money," he added, when he was comfortably seated in the arm-chair.

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"Oh, it isn't much," said Maggie; "it is only a little, and we wish it was a whole lot."

"And what do you and Bessie want with a whole lot of money? I should think you had about everything little girls could wish for."

"Yes, we have," said Bessie, "and we don't want it for ourselves."

"Who for, then?"

"For those poor shipyocked people. Papa and Uncle John have gone over to see them; and mamma and Aunt Helen have gone to the village to buy some flannel and calico to make things for the poor little children who have lost theirs. Mr. Howard says there's a baby there that hasn't anything but a ni'-gown, and no mother, 'cause she was drowned. A sailor man has it, and he's going to take care of it, but he hasn't any clothes for it. And we wanted to help buy things, but we have such a very little money."

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"Bessie has such a little, 'cause she spent all hers for my birthday present," said Maggie. "Mamma gives us six cents a week, but it's such a little while since my birthday, Bessie hasn't saved much. I have more than she has, but not a great deal."

"And she wanted mamma to let her hem a pock'-han'kerchief and earn some money," said Bessie, "but she can't, for the doctor says she musn't use her eye while it's so black."

"Well," said the colonel, "I think you two have fairly earned the right to dispose of at least half the money that was in that unfortunate pocket-book. You shall say what shall be done with it."

Maggie looked as if she did not know what to say.

"If you mean, sir," said Bessie, "that you're going to give us half that money, papa and mamma would not like it. They don't allow us to yeceive money from people who are not yelations to us."

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"And they are quite right," said the colonel. "I should not like you to do it, if you were my little girls. But I do not mean that I will give *you* the money, only that I will give it away for any purpose you may choose. Your father and mother can have no objection to that. There were fifty dollars in the pocket-book. Half of that is twenty-five. Now, shall I give it all to the shipwrecked people, or shall I give part to something else?"

"Will you please to 'scuse me if I whisper to Maggie?" said Bessie.

"Certainly," said the colonel.

They whispered together for a minute or two, and then Bessie said, "If you didn't mind it, sir, we would like to give half to Mrs. Sands; she's very poor, and sick too; and she's in such a trouble 'cause Joe's so bad. She has no one to work for her or do anything. Mamma sent Jane to see her, and she told us about her; and we're so very sorry for her."

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"Well, you are two forgiving little souls," said the colonel. "Do you want me to give money to the

mother of the boy who treated you so?"

"*She* didn't treat us so," said Maggie, "and we would like her to be helped 'cause she's so very poor. She cried about the pocket-book, and she is a good woman. She couldn't help it if Joe was so bad. We can't help being a little speck glad that Joe is shut up, he's such a dangerous boy; and we'd be afraid of him now; but his mother feels very bad about it. So if you want to do what we like with the money, sir, please give half to the baby in the shipwreck, and half to Joe's mother."

"Just as you please," said the colonel; "twelve and a half to the baby, twelve and a half to Mrs. Sands. I shall give the baby's money to Mrs. Rush, and ask her to buy what it needs. Will not that be the best way?"

The children said yes, and were much pleased at the thought that Mrs. Sands and the little orphan baby were to be made comfortable with part of the money which they had saved. [Pg 272]

"Now, suppose we go out on the piazza," said the colonel; "Mrs. Rush is there talking to Grandpa Duncan, and I told them I would come out again when I had seen you."

"But there's no arm-chair out there," said Maggie.

"Never mind; the settee will do quite as well for a while."

But when Mrs. Jones happened to pass by, and saw the colonel sitting on the piazza, nothing would do but she must bring out the arm-chair, and make a great fuss to settle him comfortably. Maggie could not help confessing she was very kind, even if she did not always take the most pleasant way of showing it.

"What are you thinking of, Bessie?" asked the colonel, after he had talked to Mr. Duncan for some time.

Bessie was sitting on the piazza step, looking at Toby with a very grave face, as he lay beside her with his head in her lap. [Pg 273]

"I am so sorry for Toby," she answered.

"Why, I think he is as well off as a dog can be. He looks very comfortable there with his head in your lap."

"But he hasn't any soul to be saved," said the child.

"He does not know that," said the colonel, carelessly; "it does not trouble him."

"But," said Bessie, "if he had a soul, and knew Jesus died to save it, he would be a great deal happier. It makes us feel so happy to think about that. Isn't that the reason people are so much better and happier than dogs, grandpa?"

"That's the reason they should be happier and better, dear."

"There are some people who know they have souls to be saved, who don't think about it, and don't care if Jesus did come to die for them; are there not, grandpa?" said Maggie.

"Yes, Maggie, there are very many such people." [Pg 274]

"Then they can't be happy," said Bessie,— "not as happy as Toby, for he don't know."

"I don't believe Joe thinks much about his soul," said Maggie.

"I am afraid not," answered Mr. Duncan.

"Grandpa," said Bessie, "if people know about their souls, and don't care, I don't think they are much better than Toby."

"But, grandpa," said Maggie, "Toby behaves just as if he knew some things are naughty, and other things right. How can he tell if he has no soul? How did he know it was naughty for Joe to steal the pocket-book; and what is the reason he knows Susie must not go near the fire nor the cellar stairs?"

"It is instinct which teaches him that," said grandpa.

"What is that?"

"We cannot tell exactly. It is something which God has given to animals to teach them what is best for themselves and their young. It is not reason, for they have no soul nor mind as men, women, and children have; but by it some animals, such as dogs and horses, often seem to know what is right and wrong. It is instinct which teaches the bird to build her nest. I am an old man, and I suppose you think I know a great deal, but if I wanted to build a house for my children, I would not know how to do it unless I were shown. But little birdie, untaught by any one,—led only by the instinct which God has given her,—makes her nest soft and comfortable for her young. It is instinct which teaches Toby to know a man or a boy who is to be trusted from one who is not; which makes him keep Susie from creeping into danger when he is told to take care of her." [Pg 275]

"And, grandpa," said Bessie, "Toby had an instinct about our baby, too. The other day, when nurse left her asleep in the cradle, and went down stairs for a few minutes, she woke up and fretted. Toby heard her, and went down stairs, and pulled nurse's dress, and made her come up [Pg 276]

after him to baby."

"Yes, that was his instinct," said Mr. Duncan. "He knew that baby wanted to be taken up, and that nurse should come to her."

"He did such a funny thing the other day," said Maggie, "when Fred played him a trick. You know he brings Mr. Jones' old slippers every evening, and puts them by the kitchen door, so Mr. Jones can have them all ready when he comes from his work. You tell it, Bessie, it hurts my face to speak so much."

"Well," said Bessie, who was always ready to talk, "Fred took the slippers, and hid them in his trunk, 'cause he wanted to see what Toby would do. Toby looked and looked all over, but the poor fellow could not find them. So at last he brought an old pair of yubber over-shoes, and put them by the kitchen door. Then he went away and lay down behind the door, and he looked so 'shamed, and so uncomf'able, Maggie and I felt yeal sorry for him, and we wanted to show him where the slippers were, but we didn't know ourselves, and Fred wouldn't tell us. Then Fred called him ever so many times, but he was very cross, and growled, and would not go at all till Fred said, 'Come, old dog, come, get the slippers.' Then he came out and yan after Fred, and we all yan, and it was so funny to see him. He was so glad, and he pulled out the slippers and put them in their place, and then he took the old yubbers and put them in the closet, and lay down with his paws on the slippers, as if he thought somebody would take them away again. And now Mrs. Jones says that every morning he hides them in a place of his own, where no one can find them but his own self. I think that is very smart; don't you, grandpa?"

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"Very smart," said Mr. Duncan; "Toby is a wise dog."

"But, grandpa, don't Toby have conscience, too, when he knows what's good and what's naughty? Mamma says it's conscience that tells us when we're good, and when we're naughty."

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"No, dear; Toby has no conscience. If he knows the difference between right and wrong in some things, it is partly instinct, partly because he has been taught. Conscience is that which makes us afraid of displeasing God, and breaking his holy laws, but Toby feels nothing of this. He is only afraid of displeasing his master; he has neither love nor fear of One greater than that master, for he does not know there is such a wise and holy being. If Toby should steal, or do anything wrong, God would not call him to account for it, because he has given to the dog no soul, no conscience, no feeling of duty to his Maker."

"Grandpa," said Bessie, "don't you mean that if Toby is naughty, God will not punish him when he dies, 'cause he didn't know about him?"

"Yes, dear; for Toby there is neither reward nor punishment in another world. For him, there is no life to come."

"Grandpa," said Maggie, "where will Toby's instinct go when he dies?"

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"It will die with the dog. It is mortal; that is, it must die; but our souls are immortal; they will go on living for ever and ever, either loving and praising God through all eternity, or sinking down to endless woe and suffering. Toby is a good, wise, faithful dog, and knows a great deal, but the weakest, the most ignorant boy or girl—that poor idiot you saw the other day—is far better, of far more value in the sight of God, for he has a soul; and to save that precious soul, our Lord left his heavenly home, and died upon the cross. Think what a soul is worth when it needed that such a price be paid for its salvation!"

"I can't help being sorry for Toby, 'cause he has no soul," said Bessie; "but I'm a great deal sorrier for those people that don't think about their souls, and go to Jesus to be saved. How can they help it, when they know he wants them to come? Grandpa, don't they feel ungrateful all the time?"

"I am afraid not, Bessie. If they do not feel their need of a Saviour, they do not feel their ingratitude."

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Bessie was silent for a minute or two, and sat gazing for a while far away over the water, with the thoughtful look she so often had in her eyes, and then she said slowly, as if speaking to herself,—

"I wonder if they think about for ever and ever and ever."

No one answered her. Not a word had the colonel said since Bessie had said that she thought those who did not care for their souls were no better than Toby; but he sat with his eyes sometimes on her, sometimes on the dog, and his face, which was turned from his wife and Mr. Duncan, had a vexed, troubled look. Mrs. Rush had often seen that look during the last few days, and now she guessed it was there, even though she did not see it. But, presently, when the carriage was seen coming back with Mrs. Bradford and Mrs. Duncan, he drove it away, and was soon laughing and talking as usual.

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XX.

NURSE TAKEN BY SURPRISE.



NURSE and Jane had taken all the children for a long walk. About a mile up the shore lived the woman who took in Mrs. Bradford's washing. Mrs. Bradford wished to send her a message, and told Jane to go with it. There were two ways by which this house could be reached: one by the shore, the other by a road which ran farther back, part of the way through the woods. About a quarter of a mile this side of the washer-woman's, it turned off nearer to the shore; and here it was crossed by the brook, which also crossed the road to the station. It was wider here, and deeper, and ran faster towards the sea. Over it was built a rough bridge. Two beams were laid from bank to bank; on these were placed large round logs, a foot or two apart, and above these were the planks, with a miserable broken rail. It was a pretty place though, and the walk to it was shady and pleasant,—pleasanter than the beach on a warm day.

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Nurse said she would walk to the bridge with the children, and rest there, while Jane went the rest of the way. When Harry and Fred heard this, they said they would go too, for the brook was a capital place to fish for minnows. So they all set off, the boys carrying their fishing-rods and tin pails.

But when they reached the bridge, they found there would be no fishing. The rains of the great storm a few days ago had swollen the brook very much, and there had been several heavy showers since, which had kept it full, so it was now quite a little river, with a muddy current running swiftly down to the sea. The tiny fish were all hidden away in some snug hole, and the boys knew it was of no use to put out their lines.

"Oh, bother!" said Harry. "I thought the water would be lower by this time. Never mind, we'll have some fun yet, Fred. Let's go in and have a wade!"

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"I don't believe father would let us," said Fred. "He said we must not the day before yesterday, and the water is as high now as it was then."

"Let's go back, then," said Harry. "I don't want to stay here doing nothing."

"No," said Fred. "Let's go on with Jane to the washer-woman's. She has a pair of guinea-fowls, with a whole brood of young ones. Bessie and I saw them the other day, when Mr. Jones took us up there in his wagon. We'll go and see them again."

Maggie and Bessie asked if they might go too, but nurse said it was too far. Bessie did not care much, as she had seen the birds once, but Maggie was very much disappointed, for she had heard so much of the guinea-fowls, that she was very anxious to have a look at them. So Jane said, if nurse would let her go, she would carry her part of the way. So at last nurse said she might. Then Franky said he wanted to go too, but he was pacified by having a stick with a line on the end of it given to him, with which he thought he was fishing.

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A tree which had been blown down by the gale lay near the bridge, and on this nurse sat down with baby on her knee, and Bessie and Franky beside her. Franky sat on the end of the log, toward the water, where he was quite safe, if he sat still, and nurse meant to keep a close eye on him. But something happened which made her forget him for a moment or two.

"And I'll tell you Cinderella," said nurse to Bessie, as the others went off.

"I'd yather hear about when you were a little girl on your father's farm," said Bessie.

Nurse liked to talk of this, so she began to tell Bessie of the time when she was young, and lived at home in far-off England. Bessie had heard it all very often, but she liked it none the less for that. Franky sat still, now and then pulling up his line, and saying, "Not one fis!" and then throwing it out again.

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Suddenly the sound of wheels was heard, and looking round, they saw Miss Adams' pony carriage, with the lady driving, and the little groom behind.

Several times since the day when Miss Adams had teased Bessie, and Bessie had called her a kitchen lady, she had shown a wish to speak to the little girl; but she could never persuade her to come near her. Once or twice, as Bessie was passing through the hall of the hotel, Miss Adams had opened her door and called to her in a coaxing voice; but Bessie always ran off as fast as possible, without waiting to answer. As Miss Adams passed, she nodded, drove on a little way, and then turned back. She pulled in her horses close to nurse and Bessie. Baby crowed and shook her little hands at the carriage. It was a pretty affair, the low basket, softly cushioned, the black ponies with their bright, glittering harness, and the jaunty groom in his neat livery; but Bessie had no wish to get in it when Miss Adams said, "Come, Bessie, jump in and take a ride."

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"No, thank you, ma'am," said Bessie, drawing closer to nurse.

"Yes, come," said Miss Adams, coaxingly. "I'll give you a nice ride, and bring you back quite safe to your nurse, or take you home, as you like."

"I'd yather not," said Bessie, taking hold of nurse's dress, as if she feared Miss Adams might take her off by force.

"You don't know how pleasant it is," said Miss Adams,— "come."

"I don't want to yide," said Bessie.

All this time nurse had been looking very grim. She was quite an old woman, and had lived in the family a great many years, for she had taken care of Mrs. Bradford herself when she was a little girl. She loved her and her children dearly, and would have done anything in the world for them, and if any one brought harm or trouble to her nurslings, she ruffled up her feathers like an old hen, and thought herself at liberty to do or say anything she pleased.

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"And she wouldn't be let, if she did want to," she said sharply to Miss Adams.

The young lady looked at the old woman with a sparkle in her eye.

"I'll take the baby, too, if you like," she said, mischievously; "I can drive quite well with her on my lap, and Bessie can sit beside me."

"My baby!" said nurse, who seemed to think the baby her own special property,— "my baby! Do you think I'd risk her neck in a gimcrack like that? There isn't one of them I'd trust a hand's breadth with ye, not if ye was to go down on your bended knees."

"I'm not likely to do that," said Miss Adams, turning round and driving off once more, "Well, good-by, Bessie, since you wont come."

She had gone but a short distance, when she drew in the ponies again, jumped out, tossed the reins to the groom, and ran back to the bridge. "Bessie," she said, "I want to speak to you; will you come over on the other side of the road?"

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Bessie looked as shy as Maggie might have done. "No, ma'am," she answered.

"But I have something very particular to say to you, and I shall not tease or trouble you at all. Come, dear, that is a good child. If you do not, I shall think you are angry with me still."

"No, I'm not," said Bessie. "Well, I'll go."

"Not with my leave," said nurse. "If you have anything to say, just say it here, miss. You can't have anything to tell this child her old nurse can't hear."

"Yes, I have," said Miss Adams. "Come, Bessie. I shall not pull your hair. I want to speak to you very much. Don't you wish to do as you would be done by?"

"I think I'd better go; bett'n't I?" said Bessie. "I don't want her to think I'm angry yet."

"Sit ye still," said nurse, without looking at Miss Adams. "I sha'n't let ye go to have I know not what notions put into your head."

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Miss Adams looked vexed, and bit her lip, then she laughed. "Now, don't be cross, nurse. I am not going to say anything to Bessie which you or her mother would not approve."

"Maybe," said nurse, dryly.

"And if Mrs. Bradford were here, I am sure she would let Bessie come."

"Maybe," said nurse again, beginning to trot baby rather harder than she liked.

Miss Adams stood tapping the toe of her gaiter with her riding whip. "I promise you," she said, "that I will let her come back to you in a moment or two, and that I will not do the least thing which could trouble or tease her."

"Promises and fair words cost nothing," said nurse.

"How dare you say that to me?" she said, losing her temper at last. "Whatever else I may have done, I have never yet broken my word! Bessie,"—she said this in a softer tone,— "don't think that of me, dear. I would not say what was not true, or break a promise, for the world." Then to nurse again: "You're an obstinate old woman, and—Look at that child!"

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These last words were said in a startled tone and with a frightened look.

Nurse turned her head, started up, and then stood still with fear and amazement. Finding himself unnoticed, Master Franky had concluded that he had sat quiet long enough, and slipping off his stone, he had scrambled up the bank and walked upon the bridge. About the centre of this he found a broken place in the railing through which he put the stick and line with which he was playing to fish. Putting his head through after it, he saw that it did not touch the water and that just in front of him was the projecting end of one of the logs. Here, he thought, he could fish better, and slipping through, he was now where Miss Adams told nurse to look at him, stooping over, with one fat hand grasping the railing and with the other trying to make his line touch the water. The bridge was four or five feet above the stream, and although a fall from it might not have been very dangerous for a grown person, a little child like Franky might easily have been swept away by the current, which was deepest and swiftest where he was standing.

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"Don't speak," said Miss Adams, hastily, and darting round to the other side of the bridge, she walked directly into the water, and stooping down, passed under the bridge and came out under the spot where Franky stood. As she had expected, the moment he saw her, he started and fell, but Miss Adams was ready for him. She caught him in her arms, waded through the water, and placed him safe and dry on the grass.

"Oh, you naughty boy!" said nurse, the moment she had done so, "what am I to do with you now?"

"Nosin' at all; Franky dood boy. Didn't fall in water."

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"And whose fault is that I should like to know," said Miss Adams, laughing and shaking her dripping skirts, "you little monkey? I do not know but I should have done better to let you fall into the water and be well frightened before I pulled you out."

"Franky not frightened; Franky brave soldier," said the child.

"You're a mischievous monkey, sir," said the young lady.

"That he is," said nurse, speaking in a very different way from that in which she had spoken before. "And where would he have been now but for you and the kind Providence which brought you here, miss? What would I have done, with the baby in my arms and he standing there? I'd never have thought of catching him that way. It was right cute of you, miss."

"I saw it was the only way," said Miss Adams. "I knew he would be off that slippery log if he was startled."

"I thank you again and again, miss," said the nurse, "and so will his mother; there's your beautiful dress all spoiled." [Pg 293]

"Oh! that's nothing," said Miss Adams, giving her dress another shake; "it was good fun. But now, when I have saved one of your chickens from a ducking, you cannot think I would hurt the other if you let me have her for a moment."

"Surely I will," said nurse; "but you are not going to stand and talk in such a pickle as that? You'll catch your death of cold."

"No fear," said Miss Adams, "I am tough. Come now, Bessie." She held out her hand to the little girl, and now that she had saved her brother, she went with her willingly. She was not afraid of her any more, though she wondered very much what the lady could have to say to her which nurse might not hear.

"You'll excuse me for speaking as I did before, miss, but I'm an old woman, and cross sometimes, and then you see—" Nurse hesitated.

"Yes, I see. I know I deserved it all," said Miss Adams, and then she led Bessie to the other side of the road. "Suppose I lift you up here, Bessie; I can talk to you better." She lifted her up and seated her on the stone wall which ran along the road. [Pg 294]

"Now," she said, leaning her arms upon the wall, "I want to ask you something."

"I know what you want to ask me," said Bessie, coloring.

"What is it, then?"

"You want me to say I'm sorry 'cause I said that to you the other day, and I am sorry. Mamma said it was saucy. But I didn't mean to be saucy. I didn't know how to help it, you asked me so much."

"You need not be sorry, Bessie. I deserved it, and it was not that I was going to speak about. I wanted to ask you to forgive me for being so unkind to you. Will you?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am! I did forgave you that day, and mamma told me something which made me very sorry for you."

"What was it? Would she like you to repeat it?" [Pg 295]

"I guess she wont care. She said your father and mother died when you were a little baby, and you had a great deal of money, more than was good for you, and you had no one to tell you how to take care of it; so if you did things you ought not to, we ought to be sorry for you, and not talk much about them."

Miss Adams stood silent a moment, and then she said, slowly,—

"Yes, if my mother had lived, Bessie, I might have been different. I suppose I do many things I should not do if I had a mother to care about it; but there is no one to care, and I don't know why I should myself. I may as well take my fun."

"Miss Adams," said Bessie, "hasn't your mother gone to heaven?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said the young lady, looking a little startled,—"yes, I am sure of it. They say she was a good woman."

"Then don't she care up there?"

"I don't know. They say heaven is a happy place. I should not think my mother could be very happy even there, if she cared about me and saw me now." [Pg 296]

"Do you mean she wouldn't like to see you do those things you say you ought not to do?"

"Yes."

"Then why don't you do things that will make her happy? I would try to, if my mother went to heaven."

"What would you do?"

"I don't know," said Bessie.

"I suppose you would not pull little girls' hair, or tease them, or behave like a kitchen lady."

"Please don't speak of that any more," said Bessie, coloring.

"And your mother thinks I have too much money; does she? Well, I do not know but I have, if having more than I know what to do with is having too much."

"Why don't you give some away?" Bessie asked.

"I do, and then am scolded for it. I drove down the other day to take some to those shipwrecked people, and the next day Mr. Howard came to me with his long face and told me I had done more harm than good; for some of them had been drinking with the money I gave them, and had a fight and no end of trouble. That is always the way. I am tired of myself, of my money, and everything else."

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Bessie did not know what to make of this odd young lady, who was talking in such a strange way to her, but she could not help feeling sorry for her as she stood leaning on the wall with a tired, disappointed look on her face, and said these words in a troubled voice.

"Miss Adams," she said, "why don't you ask our Father in heaven to give you some one to take care of you and your money, and to make you—" Bessie stopped short.

"Well," said Miss Adams, smiling, "to make me what?"

"I am afraid you would not like me to say it," said Bessie, fidgeting on her hard seat. "I think I had better go to nurse."

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"You shall go, but I would like to hear what you were going to say. To make me what?"

"To make you behave yourself," said Bessie, gravely, not quite sure she was doing right to say it.

But Miss Adams laughed outright, then looked grave again.

"There are plenty of people would like to take care of my money, Bessie, and there are some people who try, or think they try, to make me behave myself; but not because they care for me, only because they are shocked by the things I do. So I try to shock them more than ever."

Bessie was sure this was not right, but she did not like to tell Miss Adams so.

"But I am sorry I shocked you, Bessie, and made you think me no lady. Now tell me that you forgive me, and shake hands with me. I am going away to-morrow, and may never see you again."

Bessie put her little hand in Miss Adams', and lifted up her face to her.

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"I'll kiss you now," she said, "and I'm sorry I wouldn't that day."

The young lady looked pleased, and stooping, she kissed her two or three times, then took her hand to lead her back to nurse. Nurse was just rising from her seat and looking anxiously up at the sky.

"There's a cloud coming over the sun," she said; "I'm afraid it is going to rain."

"I expect it is," said Miss Adams; "I saw there was a shower coming as I drove down the hill, but I did not think it would be here for some time yet."

Just then the boys and Jane came running up to them, Jane carrying Maggie in her arms.

"Oh, nursesey!" called Maggie, "it's going to gust. We thought you would be gone home. Why, there's Miss Adams!"—and Maggie stopped. Not only she, but all the rest of the party were very much surprised to see Miss Adams standing there, and seeming so friendly with Bessie and nurse. But there was no time to say anything.

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There was indeed a gust coming. The edge of a black cloud was just showing itself over the woods which had hidden it till now from nurse.

"Make haste!" cried Harry; "I never saw a cloud come up so fast."

"Quick, nurse!" said Miss Adams; "jump into the pony carriage with the little ones, and we will be home in less than no time. Quick, now!"

Nurse made no objections now to the "gimcrack." She thought of nothing but how to get her babies home before the storm should overtake them. She bundled into the carriage with baby, while Miss Adams, laughing as if she enjoyed the fun, packed in Maggie, Bessie, and Franky beside her. "Hurry up, now, Tip!" she said to the groom, and giving the ponies a crack with her whip, away they dashed down the road.

"Now, boys, try if we can outrun the clouds. See who'll be first at the bend in the road. One, two, three, and away!" and off she went, with Fred and Harry after her, while Jane stood still for a moment in amazement at the pranks of this strange young lady, and then followed as fast as her feet could carry her.

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Meanwhile, on went the carriage with its precious load, nurse, as soon as they were fairly started, wishing they were all out again, and every minute begging Tip to drive carefully, and not upset them, to which he did not pay the least attention. But they reached home without accident, and found papa and Uncle John setting out to meet them.

It was growing very dark now. The black cloud had covered nearly the whole sky, and a white line was moving swiftly along the water, showing that a furious wind was sweeping over the waves. In another minute they were in the house, and right glad was the anxious mother to see her little ones.

"But where are Harry and Fred?" she said; "and how came you home in that?" looking at the carriage. [Pg 302]

"Miss Adams sent us," said Maggie, "and the boys are coming with her."

"And she didn't let him fall in, mamma," said Bessie, "and she is all wet. But she only laughed. She's been talking to me, and I was sorry for her, and she's sorry 'cause she pulled my hair. I kissed her, so we are friends now."

"Miss Adams!" said Mrs. Bradford, in great surprise.

"Yes, ma'am, Miss Adams," said nurse, giving baby to her mother, "and surely I think she's turned over a new leaf. She's been talking to Bessie as tame as a lamb, and making friends with her, and that after me giving her a piece of my mind. And she saved that boy there (oh, you naughty fellow!) from drowning; for what could I have done?"

"Saved my boy from drowning!" said Mrs. Bradford, turning pale.

Then nurse told how Miss Adams' presence of mind had saved Franky from a fall, and probably from being carried away and drowned. Just as she finished her story, the young lady and the boys came up. [Pg 303]

Mr. and Mrs. Bradford went out on the piazza, to meet Miss Adams, but she did not mean to come in, nor could she be persuaded to do so, though the large drops of rain were beginning to plash heavily down; nor would she listen to any thanks from Mrs. Bradford.

"But you are heated with your run," said Mrs. Bradford, "come in and have some dry clothes. You will be drenched in this pouring rain, and will take cold."

"No fear," said Miss Adams, laughing. "The second wetting will do me no harm; nothing ever hurts me. Good-by. Good-by, dear little Bessie." She stooped to kiss her, and running down the bank, snatched the reins from the groom, jumped into the carriage, and kissing her hand, drove away through all the rain.

"Strange, wild girl," said Mrs. Bradford, with a sigh, as she turned into the house. [Pg 304]

"But there must be some good in her, mamma, when she gave up her carriage to the children, and walked or rather ran all the way here," said Harry; "and she didn't seem to think she'd done anything at all. How she did scud though! I don't like to see a woman act the way she does, and I can't quite forgive her about Carlo and Bessie; but I do think there's some good in her."

"Ah, Harry," said his mother. "There is some good in every one, if we only knew how to find it."

XXI.

[Pg 305]

THE COLONEL IN TROUBLE.



ESSIE," said Harry, as the children were at their supper, and he saw his little sister sitting with her spoon in her hand and her eyes fixed on the table as if she had forgotten the bread and butter and berries before her,—"Bessie, what are you thinking of."

"Of Miss Adams," said the little girl.

"Nurse said she was talking to you ever so long," said Fred; "what was she saying?"

"I don't think she meant me to talk about it," said Bessie; "she didn't want nurse to hear, and so I shall only tell mamma and Maggie. You know I must tell mamma everything, and I couldn't help telling my own Maggie."

"She is a queer dick," said Fred, "pulling your hair, and tormenting you out of your life one time, and telling you secrets another. The idea of a grown woman telling secrets to a little snip like you!" [Pg 306]

"No snip about it!" said Maggie; "and if I was everybody, I'd tell Bessie every one of my secrets."

"That's right, Maggie. You always stand up for Bessie and fight her battles; don't you?"

"But, Bessie," said Harry, "did Miss Adams tell you you mustn't repeat what she said?"

"No," said Bessie.

"Then there's no harm in telling."

"Oh, Harry!" said Fred. "If Bessie knows Miss Adams don't want her to talk about it, she ought not to tell any more than if she had promised; ought she, father?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Bradford; "it would be unkind as well as dishonorable."

"Yes," said Maggie; "it is not to do to others as I would that they should do to me."

"Exactly, little woman," said her father, "and remember, dear children, that is a very safe rule to be guided by, when we do not feel sure whether a thing is fair or not." [Pg 307]

"Bessie," said Fred, "tell us what ails the colonel. I suppose you know, for all the grown-uppers seem to be telling you their secrets."

"Why, that's not a secret! His leg is cut off."

"Don't think I don't know that. I mean, what makes him so grumpy? He isn't like the same fellow he was when he first came down here."

"Fred," said Bessie, giving him a reproving look, "you're not polite at all to talk that way about my soldier. He's not a fellow, only boys are fellows, and he's a big gentleman. And he's not that other thing you called him,—I sha'n't say it, because it is a very ugly word."

"And it's saucy to say it about the colonel," said Maggie.

"I don't care," said Fred. "It's true; isn't it, Hal? He used to be the best company in the world,—always ready to tell us boys stories by the hour, and full of his fun and jokes. But for the last few days he has been as solemn as an owl, with no fun to be had out of him, and if one can get him to talk, it always seems as if he were thinking of something else. He's as cross as a bear too. Now don't fire up, Bess; it's so. Starr, his man, says he was never half so impatient or hard to please all the time he was sick as he has been for the last ten days." [Pg 308]

"Fred," said Mrs. Bradford, "you should not talk to a servant of his master's faults."

"He didn't, mother," said Harry,— "at least, not in a way you would think wrong. The colonel was dreadfully dull and out of sorts the other day, though he declared that nothing ailed him, and seemed quite provoked that we should ask, though any one could see with half an eye that something was the matter. Starr was hanging round, bringing him this and that, books and newspapers, coaxing him to have something to eat or drink. At last he asked him if there was *nothing* he could do for him, and the colonel thundered at him and said, 'Yes, leave me alone.' Then he got himself up on his crutches and went off, and would not let Starr help him. The man looked as if he had lost every friend he had in the world. So Fred told him he didn't believe the colonel meant anything. Starr said he was sure he did not, for he was the best master that ever lived. But he was troubled about it, for he was sure that something was wrong with him. Fred said perhaps his wounds pained him worse; but Starr said no, the wounds were doing nicely, and the colonel was not a man to make a fuss about them if they did pain him, for all the time he was suffering so dreadfully that no one thought he could live, he never heard a complaint or a groan from him. And it was then he said the colonel was far harder to please, and more impatient than when he was so ill." [Pg 309]

"Maybe he wants to get back to his regiment," said Fred.

"No, it is not that,—at least, Mrs. Rush says it is not; for this morning, when I was standing in the hall, the doctor came out of the room with Mrs. Rush, and he said her husband had something on his mind, and asked if he were fretting to be with his regiment. And she said, 'Oh, no, the colonel never frets himself about that which cannot be.'" [Pg 310]

"Didn't she tell him what it was?" asked Fred.

"No, but I guess she, too, thinks there's something wrong with him, for the doctor told her she must not let anything worry him, and she did not say a word. And when he went, and she turned to go back to her room, her face was so very sad."

"She's just the sweetest little woman that ever was made," said Fred, who was a great admirer of Mrs. Rush, "and I don't know what he can have to make him fret. I should think he had everything a man could want."

"Except the one great thing," said Grandpapa Duncan, in a low voice to himself.

Mr. Bradford, who had been listening to what his children were saying, but had not spoken, now walked out on the piazza, where he stood watching the clearing away of the storm. In a moment or two Bessie followed him, and silently held out her arms to him to be taken up. [Pg 311]

"Papa," she said, as he lifted her, "do you think my soldier has a trouble in his mind?"

"I think he has."

"Wont you help him, papa?" said Bessie, who, like most little children, thought her father able to help and comfort every one.

"I could only show him where he could find help, my darling, and I do not think he cares to have me tell him."

"Then is there no one that can help him, papa?"

"Yes, there is One who can give him all the help he needs."

"You mean the One who lives up there?" said Bessie, pointing to the sky.

"Yes. Will my Bessie pray that her friend may receive all the help he needs from that great merciful Father?" [Pg 312]

"Oh, yes, papa, and you'll ask him, and my soldier will ask him, and he'll be sure to listen; wont he?"

Mr. Bradford did not tell his little girl that the colonel would not ask such aid for himself; he only kissed her and carried her in. Bessie did not forget her friend that night when she said her evening prayers.

Maggie and Bessie went over to the hotel the next morning with their mother. After making a visit to their grandma, they thought they would go to see the colonel, so they ran away to his room. Mrs. Rush was there busy, and she told them the colonel was out on the piazza. He was reading the newspaper, but threw it down when they came, and was very glad to see them. Bessie looked at him earnestly, to see if she could see any signs of trouble about him. But he seemed much as usual, laughing and talking pleasantly with them. But she could not forget what Harry had said, and she turned her eyes so often upon him with a questioning look that he noticed it, and said, "Well, my pet, what is it? What do you want to know?" [Pg 313]

"Does something trouble you?" asked Bessie.

"Trouble me!" he repeated. "What should trouble me?"

"I don't know," she answered; "but I thought maybe something did."

"What have I to trouble me?" he again asked, carelessly. "Have I not the dearest little wife and two of the dearest little friends in the world, as well as pretty much everything else a reasonable man could want? To be sure, another leg would be a convenience, but that is a small matter, and we will see what Palmer can do for me one of these days; he will make me as good as new again."

Bessie was not quite satisfied. Though the colonel spoke so gayly, she felt sure there had been something wrong, if there was not now. She still watched him wistfully, and the colonel, looking into her loving eyes, said, "If I were in any trouble, you would help me out of it, Bessie; would you not?" [Pg 314]

"If I could," she answered; "but I couldn't do very much, I'm too little. But we know who can help us; don't we? and we can tell Him. Mamma has a book named 'Go and tell Jesus.' Aint that a pretty name? I asked her to read it to me, and she said I couldn't understand it now. When I am older, she will; but I can understand the name, and I like to think about it when I have been naughty or have a trouble."

"May your troubles never be worse than they are now, little one," said the colonel fondly, with a smile; "and one of your troubles is done with, Bessie. Do you know that your enemy, Miss Adams, is gone?"

"Oh, she is not my enemy any more," said Bessie; "we are friends now, and I am glad of it, for I don't like to be enemies with people."

"Ho, ho!" said the colonel. "How did that come about? I thought she wanted to make it up with you, but I did not see how it was to come about when you were off like a lamp-lighter every time she came near you." [Pg 315]

Then Bessie told how Miss Adams' presence of mind had saved Franky from falling into the stream, "And then we talked a little," she said, "and I told her I was sorry I had been saucy, and kissed her, and so we are all made up."

"That was the way; was it?" said the colonel. "I do not think you were the one to ask pardon."

"Oh, she did too," said Bessie; "she said she was sorry she teased me."

"And what else did she say?"

"I don't think she meant me to talk about it, 'cause she didn't want nurse to hear."

"Then I wont ask you, honorable little woman."

"And she sent us home in the pony-carriage when the rain was coming, and ran all the way to our house herself, and mamma was very much obliged to her," said Maggie.

"Well," said the colonel, "I suppose I shall have to forgive her too, since she saved you from a wetting, and took a bad cold in your service. We all wondered how she came to be so drenched, but she would not tell us how it happened." [Pg 316]

"Did she take cold?" asked Maggie. "Mamma said she would, but she said nothing ever hurt her."

"Something has hurt her this time. They say she was really ill when she went away this morning, and some of the ladies tried to persuade her to wait until she was better. But go she would, and go she did. Here comes Mrs. Rush to take me for a walk. Will you go with us?"

The children were quite ready, and, mamma's permission gained, they went off with their friends.

But although this was the last they saw of Miss Adams, it was not the last they heard of her. Mrs. Bradford was right. Miss Adams had been wet to the knees in the brook, and much heated by her long run; and then again thoroughly drenched in the rain, and when she reached home, the foolish girl, for the sake of making people wonder at her, would not change her clothes. She took a violent cold, but, as the colonel had said, insisted on travelling the next morning, and went on till she was so ill that she was forced to give up. She had a long illness, from which it was thought she would never recover, but she afterwards said that this was the happiest thing that had ever happened to her in her life.

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Sometime after this, about Christmas time, came a letter and a little parcel to Bessie. The letter said,—

"MY DEAR LITTLE BESSIE,—

"Tell your mother I scorned her advice the day we were caught in the rain, and paid well for my folly, for I was very ill; but there was a good, kind doctor, who came and cured me, and now he is going to 'take care of me and my money, and make me behave myself.' He thinks he can make the 'kitchen lady' less of a mad-cap; but I do not know but that my long illness has done that already. While I lay sick, I had time to think, and to feel sorry that I had acted so wildly and foolishly as to leave myself without a true friend in the world. I shall never forget you, Bessie, and I hope you will sometimes think kindly of me, and that you may do so, will you ask your mother to let you wear this bracelet in remembrance of

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CLARA ADAMS."

The little parcel contained a very beautiful and expensive bracelet with a clasp which made it smaller or larger, according to the size of the arm of the wearer.

But Mrs. Bradford did not think it a suitable thing for her little girl, and she told Bessie she should put it away till she was grown up.

"I sha'n't wear it then, mamma," said Bessie; "she never sent Maggie one, and I don't want to wear what she don't. We can both look at it sometimes, and then we can both think of Miss Adams: but we can't both wear it, and we don't want to be dressed *different alike*."

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XXII.

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THE BROKEN NOSE.



HERE comes mamma with Mamie Stone," said Maggie, as they were going back to the hotel with Colonel and Mrs. Rush.

When Mamie saw the little girls, she ran to meet them, saying she was going home to spend the morning with them; and Mrs. Bradford took them all back with her. While Maggie and Bessie said their lessons, Mamie amused herself with Franky and Nellie and the baby; and she was delighted when nurse made her sit down on the floor, and putting the baby in her lap, let her hold her for a few minutes. Afterwards they all had a good play together, a doll's tea-party, and a fine swing.

Mamie stayed to dinner, and was very good all day; and very soon after dinner, Mr. Stone came to take his daughter home. He was a grave, serious man, and it was rather unusual to see him with such a bright smile, and looking so happy. He said a few words in a low tone to Mrs. Bradford and Mrs. Duncan, and they seemed pleased too, and shook hands with him.

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"Yes," he said, in answer to something Mrs. Bradford said to him, "I am glad of it; it is the best thing in the world for Mamie."

"What is it, papa?" said Mamie, springing forward; "have you got something for me?"

"Yes," he answered. "Will you come home and see it?"

"What is it,—a new toy?"

"The very prettiest plaything you ever had in your life," he answered, with a smile.

Mamie clapped her hands. "Can Maggie and Bessie come too?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Bradford.

"Not to-day," said Mrs. Bradford, "but they shall come soon."

Mamie went away with her father, while Maggie and Bessie stood and watched her as she went skipping along by his side, looking very happy and eager.

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But when an hour or two later they went down on the beach and found Mamie, she seemed anything but happy. Indeed, she looked as if nothing pleasant had ever happened to her in her life. She was sitting on a stone, the marks of tears all over her cheeks and now and then giving a loud, hard sob. It was more than sulkiness or ill-humor; any one who looked at the child could see

that she was really unhappy. Martha, her nurse, was sitting a little way off knitting, and not taking the least notice of her.

Maggie and Bessie ran up to her. "What is the matter, Mamie?" asked Maggie.

"My nose is broken," sobbed Mamie, "and my father and mother don't love me any more."

"Oh," exclaimed Maggie, paying attention only to the first part of Mamie's speech, "how did it get broken?"

"Baby did it."

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"What baby? Not ours?"

"No, an ugly, hateful little baby that's in my mother's room."

"How did it do it?"

"I don't know; but Martha says it did, and she says that's the reason my papa and mamma don't love me any more."

"Don't they love you?" asked Bessie.

"No, they don't," said Mamie, passionately. "Mamma tried to push me away, and papa scolded me and took me out of the room. He never scolded me before, and he was so angry, and it's all for that hateful little baby. Oh, dear, oh, dear! what shall I do?"

"Wasn't you naughty?" asked Maggie.

"I sha'n't tell you," said Mamie.

"Then I know you was. If you hadn't been, you'd say, 'No!'"

Mamie did not answer. Bessie walked round her, looking at her nose, first on one side, then on the other.

"I don't see where it's broken," she said. "It looks very good. Will it blow now?"

"I don't know," said Mamie. "I'm afraid to try. Oh, dear!"

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"Does it hurt?" asked Bessie.

"No, not much; but I expect it's going to."

"Maybe we can feel where it's broken," said Maggie. "Let's squeeze it a little."

"I wont let you," said Mamie. "But I'll let Bessie, 'cause she's so softly."

Bessie squeezed the nose, first very gently, then a little harder, but it seemed all right, and felt just as a nose ought to feel. Then Mamie let Maggie squeeze; but she pinched harder than Bessie had done, and hurt it a little.

"Oh, you hurt! Go away!" said Mamie, and set up an angry cry.

Martha, who had been talking to Jane, rose at this. "Come, now," she said, "just have done with this. I wont have any more crying, you bad child."

"Go away!" screamed Mamie, as Martha came near; "you're bad yourself. Oh, I want my mamma!"

"Your mamma don't want you then, little broken nose. Have done with that crying."

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"I'll tell mamma of you," said Mamie.

"Oh, you needn't be running with your tales now. Your mamma has got some one else to attend to."

"That's a shame, Martha," said Jane. "She's just teasing you, Miss Mamie; your mamma does care for you."

"Martha," said Bessie, "I'm glad you're not my nurse; I wouldn't love you if you were."

"There's no living with her. She'll be cured of her spoiled ways now," said Martha, as she tried to drag the struggling, screaming child away. But Mamie would not stir a step. She was in a great rage, and fought and kicked and struck Martha; but just then Mrs. Bradford was seen coming towards them.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"She's just going on this way because of the baby, ma'am," said Martha.

"Mamie," said Mrs. Bradford, "you don't look like the happy little girl who left us a short time ago."

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Mamie stopped screaming, and held out one hand to Mrs. Bradford, but Martha kept fast hold of the other, and tried to make her come away.

"Let her come to me, Martha," said the lady; "I want to speak to her."

Martha looked sulky, but she let go of Mamie, and walked away muttering. Mrs. Bradford sat down on the rock and took Mamie on her lap.

"Now, Mamie, what is the matter?" she asked, kindly. "I thought I should find you so pleasant and happy."

"My nose is broken," sobbed Mamie, "and oh, dear! my papa and mamma don't love me any more. I would not care if my nose was broken, if they only loved me."

"They do love you just as much as they ever did," said Mrs. Bradford, "and your nose is not broken. How should it come to be broken?"

"There's an ugly baby in mamma's room," said Mamie. "The bad little thing did it."

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"Oh, nonsense!" said Mrs. Bradford, "how could such a little thing break your nose? Even if it were to give you a blow, which I am sure it did not, that tiny fist could not hurt you much."

"Martha said it did," said Mamie.

"Then Martha told you what was not true. That is a very foolish, wicked way which some people have of telling a little child that its nose is broken, when a baby brother or sister comes to share its parents' love. And it is quite as untrue to say that your father and mother do not love you any longer. They love you just as much as they ever did, and will love you more if you are kind to the baby, and set it a good example."

"But I don't want it to be mamma's," said Mamie. "I'm her baby, and I don't want her to have another."

"But you are six years old," said Mrs. Bradford. "You surely do not want to be called a baby now! Why, Franky would be quite offended if any one called him a baby. This morning, when you were playing with my little Annie, you said you did wish you had a baby at home, to play with all the time; and now, when God has sent you the very thing you wanted, you are making yourself miserable about it."

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"But it isn't a nice, pretty baby like yours," said Mamie. "It don't play and crow like little Annie, and it don't love me either. It made a face and rolled up its fist at me."

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Bradford, "it did not know any better. Such very small babies do not know how to play. For some time this little sister must be watched and nursed very carefully by its mother, for it is weak and helpless; but when it is a little older, though it must be cared for still, it will begin to hold up its head and take notice, and play and crow, as Annie does. Then she will know you, and be pleased when you come, if you are kind to her. By and by you may help to teach her to walk and talk. Think what a pleasure that will be! The first words Franky spoke were taught to him by Maggie, and the first one of all was 'Mag.'"

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Mamie stopped crying, and sat leaning her head against Mrs. Bradford as she listened.

"But I know my father and mother don't love me so much now," she said. "Mamma did try to push me away, and papa scolded me so, and he never did it before."

"Then I am sure you deserved it. I am afraid you must have been very naughty. Now tell me all about it," said Mrs. Bradford, smoothing back Mamie's disordered hair, and wiping her heated, tear-stained face with her own soft, cool handkerchief. "Perhaps we can cure some of your troubles by talking a little about them. When your father came for you this afternoon, it seemed to me that half his own pleasure came from the thought that the baby was to bring so much happiness to you. That did not look as if he did not love you; did it?"

"No, but he was angry with me."

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"Tell me what happened after you went home with him?"

Mamie put her finger in her mouth and hung her head, but after a moment she looked up and said,—

"He took me into mamma's room, and there was a woman there I did not know, and that baby was in the bed with mamma."

"And what then?"

"Mamma told me to come and see my darling little sister, and I cried and said I would not have her for my sister, and she should not stay there. And papa said I was naughty, and that woman said she would not have such a noise there, and I must go away if I was not quiet, and that made me madder. I wasn't going to be sent out of my own mamma's room for that baby. If she was its nurse, she could take it away. It hadn't any business there, and then—then—"

Mamie was beginning to feel ashamed, and to see that the most of her trouble came from her own naughtiness.

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Bradford, gently, "and then?"

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"And then I tried to pull the baby away, and I tried to slap the bad little thing."

"Oh, Mamie!" exclaimed Maggie and Bessie.

"That was the reason your papa was angry, was it not?" asked Mrs. Bradford.

"Yes, ma'am. Mamma pushed me away, and papa carried me out of the room, and oh, he did scold me so! He called Martha, and told her to take me away. Then she said my nose was broken, and papa and mamma would not love me any more, because the baby had come. Oh! I would be good, if they would let me go back to mamma, and she would love me."

"She does love you just as much as ever. You see, my child, you frightened and disturbed her when you tried to hurt that tender little baby. She cares for you just as much as she did before, and I am sure she is grieving now because you were naughty, and had to be sent away from her. And your papa, too, when you see him, only tell him you mean to be a good child, and kind to the baby, and you will find you are still his own little Mamie, whom he loves so dearly, and for whose comfort and pleasure he is always caring. I am sorry Martha has told you such cruel, wicked stories. There is not a word of truth in them, and you must always trust your father and mother. I am sure your dear little sister will be as great a delight to you as Annie is to Maggie and Bessie, and that you will learn to love her dearly; but you must be kind and loving yourself, dear, not selfish and jealous, if you should have to give up a little to baby. It was jealousy which made you so unhappy. Jealousy is a wicked, hateful feeling, one which is very displeasing in the sight of God, and which makes the person who gives way to it very miserable."

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"It was Martha who made her jealous," said Maggie. "Martha is a very bad nurse; she is not fit to have the care of a child. Nurse said so, and that she told wicked stories; so she does, for I have heard her myself she is very *deceptious*."

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"Well," said her mother, "I hope Mamie will be too wise to mind what Martha says after this."

"I will try to be good," said Mamie, "and I do love you, Mrs. Bradford. Do you think, when the baby is older, I can hold her on my lap like I did Annie?"

"I have not a doubt of it. I cannot tell you in how many ways she will be a pleasure to you, if you teach her to be fond of you, and she will be, as your father said, the very prettiest plaything you have ever had. There comes your papa now;" and Mamie, looking up, saw her father coming towards them.

Mr. Stone looked grave and troubled, and turned his eyes anxiously towards Mamie as he spoke to Mrs. Bradford.

"Here is a little girl who thinks she has not behaved well, and wishes to tell you so," said Mrs. Bradford.

Mr. Stone held out his arms to Mamie, and in another moment she was clinging round his neck, with her face against his.

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"Oh, I will be good! Will you please love me again?"

"Love you? and who ever thought of not loving you?" said Mr. Stone. "Poor little woman, you did not think your father would ever cease to love his own Mamie? Not if a dozen daughters came. No, indeed, my pet; and now do you not want to go and see your poor mamma again, and be a good, quiet girl? She is feeling very badly about you."

So Mamie went off with her father, feeling quite satisfied that her nose was as good as ever, and that her father and mother loved her just as much as they had done before the baby came to claim a share of their hearts.

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XXIII.

JESUS' SOLDIER.



ONE warm, bright Sunday morning, Mrs. Rush came over to the cottage. Old Mr. Duncan was sitting on the piazza reading to the children. On the grass in front of the porch, lay Uncle John, playing with Nellie. She shook hands with the gentlemen, and kissed the children—Bessie two or three times with long, tender kisses—and then went into the sitting-room to see their mother. There was no one there but Mr. and Mrs. Bradford.

"Mrs. Bradford," said Mrs. Rush, when she had bidden them good-morning, "I have come to ask you a favor. This is the first Sunday morning since we have been here that my husband has been able and willing to have me leave him to go to church, but to-day he is pretty well, and Mrs. Stanton has offered me a seat in her carriage. I could not leave the colonel quite alone, and he wishes to have Bessie. Will you let her come over and stay with him while I am gone?"

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"Certainly," said Mrs. Bradford. "I do not, as you know, approve of Sunday visiting for my children, except when they may be of some use or comfort, then, indeed, I should never hesitate to let them go."

"Bessie can indeed be of use, and oh! I trust a help and comfort to him. Dear Mrs. Bradford," she went on, the tears starting to her eyes, "I think, I am sure, that God's Spirit is striving with my

dear husband, and he knows not where to look for help. But he has so long hardened his heart, so firmly closed his ears against all his friends could say to him, so coldly refused to hear one word on the subject, that he is now too proud to ask where he must seek it. I am sure, quite sure, that it has been your dear little Bessie's unquestioning faith, her love and trust in the power and goodness of the Almighty and, more than all, her firm belief that one for whom he had done so much, and preserved through so many dangers, must of necessity have a double share of faith and love, which has touched his heart. He is restless and unhappy, though he tries to hide it, and I think he is almost anxious to have me away this morning, that he may have her alone with him, in the hope that he may hear something in her simple talk which will show him where to go for aid. He will hear and ask from her what he will hear and ask from no one else."

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"My little Bessie! That baby!" said Mrs. Bradford, in great surprise. "Do you mean to tell me that anything she has said has had power with him?"

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Rush. "I think the first thing that roused him was one day when he was very ill, and she was in his room. She thought him asleep, and in her pretty, childish way spoke of the love she thought he had for his Saviour, and how he had been spared that he might love and serve him more and more. Horace was touched then, and her words took hold of him I could see, though he tried to seem impatient and vexed, and would not permit me to allude to them. So it was again and again. She was always saying some little thing which would not let him forget or keep his heart closed. She was so fond of him, so pretty and sweet in all her ways, that he had not the heart to check her, even when it annoyed him. And besides, I know he could not bear that her trust in him should be shaken by the knowledge that he was not what she thought him,—a Christian. Then came the day when Bessie fell into such trouble with Miss Adams. Annie came to our room, telling of it, and of the poor child's touching repentance. Horace sat silent for a good while after Annie had gone away; at last he said, 'Poor innocent little lamb! and she is so earnestly seeking forgiveness for the trifling fault which is far more the sin of another than her own, while I—' There he stopped, and indeed it seemed as if he had been speaking more to himself than to me. It was the first word I had ever heard from him which showed that he was allowing the thought of his own need of forgiveness, but I dared not speak. I felt that that baby was doing what I could not do. The tiny grain of mustard seed dropped by that little hand had taken root on a hard and stony ground, it might be; but I could only pray that the dews of heaven might fall upon it, and cause it to grow and bring forth fruit. It is years, I believe, since he has opened a Bible. He made me move mine from the table, for he said he did not want to see it about. I have almost feared he would forbid me to read it, and here I felt I must resist him. Even his wishes or commands must not come between me and the precious words in which I found so much comfort and strength. But the other day I had to leave him alone for a little while. I had been reading my Bible, and left it lying on my chair. When I came back, it lay upon the window-ledge. There had been no one there to touch it but my husband, and he must have left his seat to reach it. With what purpose? I thought, with a sudden hope. Yesterday it was the same. I had been away for a few minutes, and when I came back, the colonel started from the window where he was standing, and walked as quickly as he could to his sofa. My Bible lay where I had left it, but a mark and a dried flower had fallen from it. I was sure now. He had been searching within for something which might help him, but was still unwilling to ask for human or divine guidance. Since then I have left it again on his table, but he has not made me move it, as he would have done a month ago. And this morning, when Mrs. Stanton sent for me, and I asked him if he could spare me, he said so kindly, but so sadly,—

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"Yes, yes, go. I fear I have too often thrown difficulties in your way, poor child; but I shall never do so again. Only, Marion, do not leave your husband too far behind."

"Then I said I would not leave him, but he insisted, and went back to his careless manner, and said, if you would let him, he would have Bessie for his nurse this morning. I said I would ask, but he had better let Starr sit in the room, lest he should want anything she could not do. But he said no, he would have none but Bessie, and told me to send Starr at once. But I came myself, for I wanted to tell you all I felt and hoped. Now, if Bessie comes to him, and he opens the way, as he may with her, she will talk to him in her loving, trusting spirit, and perhaps bring him help and comfort."

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Mr. Bradford had risen from his seat, and walked up and down the room as she talked. Now he stood still, and said, very low and gently, "And a little child shall lead them."

When Mrs. Rush had gone, Mrs. Bradford called Bessie. "Bessie," she said, taking her little daughter in her arms and holding her very closely, "how would you like to go over and take care of your soldier this morning, and let Mrs. Rush go to church?"

"All by myself, mamma?"

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"Yes, dear. Do you think you will be tired? We shall be gone a good while. It is a long ride to church."

"Oh, no, I wont be tired a bit," said Bessie, "and I'll take such good care of him. Mamma, are you sorry about something?"

"No, dear, only very glad and happy."

"Oh," said Bessie, "I thought I saw a tear in your eye when you kissed me; I s'pose I didn't."

When the wagon started for church with the rest of the family, Bessie went with them as far as

the hotel, where she was left, and taken to the colonel's room by Mrs. Rush.

"Now what shall I do to amuse you, Bessie?" said the colonel, when his wife had gone.

"Why, I don't want to be amused on Sunday," said Bessie, looking very grave. "Franky has his playthings, and baby has her yattle, 'cause they don't know any better. I used to have my toys, too, when I was young, but I am too big now. I mean I'm not very big, but I am pretty old, and I do know better. Besides, I must do something for you. I am to be your little nurse and take care of you, mamma said."

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"What are you going to do for me?"

"Just what you want me to."

"Well, I think I should like you to talk to me a little."

"What shall I talk about? Shall I tell you my hymn for to-day?"

"Yes, if you like."

"Every day mamma teaches us a verse of a hymn," said Bessie, "till we know it all, and then on Sunday we say it to papa. I'll say the one for this week, to-night; but first I'll say it to you. It's such a pretty one. Sometimes mamma chooses our hymns, and sometimes she lets us choose them, but I choosed this myself. I heard mamma sing it, and I liked it so much I asked her to teach it to me, and she did. Shall I say it to you now?"

"Yes," said the colonel, and climbing on the sofa on which he sat, she put one little arm over his shoulder, and repeated very slowly and correctly:—

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"I was a wandering sheep;
I did not love the fold;
I did not love my Father's voice;
I would not be controlled.
I was a wayward child;
I did not love my home;
I did not love my Shepherd's voice;
I loved afar to roam.

"The Shepherd sought his sheep;
The Father sought his child;
They followed me o'er vale and hill,
O'er deserts waste and wild.
They found me nigh to death;
Famished and faint and lone;
They bound me with the bands of love;
They saved the wandering one.

"Jesus my Shepherd is;
'Twas he that loved my soul;
'Twas he that washed me in his blood;
'Twas he that made me whole;
'Twas he that sought the lost,
That found the wandering sheep;
'Twas he that brought me to the fold;
'Tis he that still doth keep.

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"No more a wandering sheep,
I love to be controlled;
I love my tender Shepherd's voice;
I love the peaceful fold.
No more a wayward child,
I seek no more to roam;
I love my heavenly Father's voice;
I love, I love his home."

"Isn't it sweet?" she asked, when she had finished.

"Say it again, my darling," said the colonel.

She went through it once more.

"Where is that hymn?" asked the colonel. "Is it in that book of hymns Marion has?"

"I don't know," said Bessie. "Mamma did not say it out of that; but we will see."

She slipped down from the sofa, and going for the hymn-book, brought it to the colonel. He began slowly turning over the leaves, looking for the hymn.

"Why, that is not the way," said Bessie; "don't you know how to find a hymn yet? Here is the way:" and she turned to the end of the book, and showed him the table of first lines. No, it was

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not there. "I'll ask mamma to lend you her book, if you want to read it for yourself," said Bessie. "She will, I know."

"No, no," said the colonel, "I do not wish you to."

"But she'd just as lief, I know."

"Never mind, darling; I would rather not," said Colonel Rush, as he laid down the book.

"Shall I say another?" asked Bessie.

"I should like to hear that one again," said the colonel, "if you do not mind saying it so often."

"Oh, no; I like to say it. I guess you like it as much as I do, you want to hear it so many times. I was glad that I learned it before, but I am gladder now when you like it so;" and the third time she repeated the hymn.

"The Shepherd," she said when she was through; "that means our Saviour,—does it not?—and the big people are the sheep, and the children the lambs. Maggie and I are his lambs, and you are his sheep; and you are his soldier too. You are a little bit my soldier, but you are a great deal his soldier; are you not?"

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The colonel did not answer. He was leaning his head on his hand, and his face was turned a little from her.

"Say, are you not?" repeated Bessie,— "are you not his soldier?"

"I'm afraid not, Bessie," he said, turning his face towards her, and speaking very slowly. "If I were his soldier, I should fight for him; but I have been fighting against him all my life."

"Why?" said the little girl, a good deal startled, but not quite understanding him; "don't you love him?"

"No, Bessie."

It was pitiful to see the look of distress and wonder which came over the child's face. "Don't you love him?" she said again,— "don't you love our Saviour? Oh, you don't mean that,—you only want to tease me. But you wouldn't make believe about such a thing as that. Don't you really love him? How can you help it?"

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"Bessie," said the colonel, with a kind of groan, "I want to love him, but I don't know how. Don't cry so, my darling."

"Oh," said the child, stopping her sobs, "if you want to love him, he'll teach you how. Tell him you want to; ask him to make you love him, and he will. I know he will, 'cause he loves you so."

"Loves me?" said the colonel.

"Yes; he loves you all the time, even if you don't love him. I think that's what my hymn means. Even when we go away from him, he'll come after us, and try to make us love him. I know it's wicked and unkind not to love him, when he came and died for us. But if you're sorry, he won't mind about that any more, and he will forgive you. He will forgive every one when they ask him, and tell him they're sorry. The other day, when I was so wicked and in such a passion, and struck Mr. Lovatt, I asked Jesus to forgive me, and he did. I know he did. I used to be in passions very often, and he helped me when I asked him; and now he makes me better; and he'll forgive you too, and make you better."

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"I fear there can be no forgiveness for me, Bessie. I have lived seven times as long as you, my child, and all that time, I have been sinning and sinning. I have driven God from me, and hardened my heart against the Lord Jesus. I would not even let any one speak to me of him."

"Never matter," said Bessie, tenderly. "I don't mean never matter, 'cause it is matter. But he will forgive that when he sees you are so sorry, and he will be sorry for you; and he does love you. If he didn't love you, he couldn't come to die for you, so his Father could forgive you, and take you to heaven. There's a verse, I know, about that; mamma taught it to me a good while ago. It hangs in our nursery just like a picture, all in pretty bright letters; and we have 'Suffer little children,' too. It is 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' Mamma says the world means everybody."

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"Could you find that verse for me, Bessie?" asked the colonel.

"I don't know, sir; I can't find things in the Bible,—only a few; but Jesus said it to a man named Nicodemus, who came to him and wanted to be taught. He'll teach you, too, out of his Bible. Oh, won't you ask him?"

"I will try, darling," he said.

"I'll get your Bible, and we'll see if we can find that verse," said Bessie. "Where is your Bible?"

"I have none," he answered; "at least, I have one somewhere at home, I believe, but I do not know where it is. My mother gave it to me, but I have never read it since I was a boy."

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"Oh, here's Mrs. Yush's on the table," said Bessie; "she always keeps it on the window-seat, and

she always made me put it back there; but I s'pose she forgot and left it here."

She brought the Bible, and sat down by the colonel.

"I can find, 'Suffer little children,'" she said, turning to the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. "I can yead you a little bit, if you tell me the big words: 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Isn't it sweet?"

"Yes; and I can believe it," he said, laying his hand on Bessie's head; "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Bessie turned to the fifteenth chapter of Luke. "Here's about the prodigal son," she said, "but it's too long for me. Will you please yead it?"

He took the Bible from her, and read the chapter very slowly and thoughtfully, reading the parable a second time. Then he turned the leaves over, stopping now and then to read a verse to himself. [Pg 352]

"If you want what Jesus said to Nicodemus, look there," said Bessie, pointing to the headings of the chapters.

He soon found the third of John, and sat for a long time with his eyes fixed on the sixteenth and seventeenth verses. Bessie sat looking at him without speaking.

"What are you thinking of, my pet?" he asked at last, laying down the book.

"I was thinking how you could be so brave when you didn't love Him," she said "Didn't it make you afraid when you was in a danger?"

"No," he said; "I hadn't even faith enough to be afraid."

"And that night didn't you feel afraid you wouldn't go to heaven when you died?"

"The thought would come sometimes, Bessie, but I put it from me, as I had done all my life. I tried to think only of home and Marion and my sister. Will you say that hymn again for me, Bessie?" [Pg 353]

"Shall I say, 'I need thee, precious Jesus?'" she asked, after she had again repeated, "I was a wandering sheep;" "I think you do need our precious Jesus."

"Yes," he said, and she said for him, "I need thee, precious Jesus."

"Shall I ask papa to come and see you, and tell you about Jesus?" she said, when her father and mother stopped for her on their way from church. "I am so little, I don't know much, but he knows a great deal."

"No, dear, I want no better teacher than I have had," said Colonel Rush.

"Who?" asked Bessie.

But the colonel only kissed her, and told her not to keep her father and mother waiting; and so she went away.

But that afternoon there came a little note to Mr. Bradford from Mrs. Rush:—

"DEAR FRIEND,—

"Can you come to my husband? He has opened his heart to me, and asked for you.

"MARION RUSH."

Mr. Bradford went over directly.

The colonel looked pale and worn, and had a tired, anxious expression in his eye. But after Mr. Bradford came in, he talked of everything but that of which he was thinking so much, though it seemed as if he did not feel a great deal of interest in what he was saying. At last his wife rose to go away, but he called her back, and told her to stay. He was silent for a little while, till Mr. Bradford laid his hand on his arm.

"Rush, my friend," he said, "are you looking for the light?"

The colonel did not speak for a moment then he said in a low voice,—

"No; I *see* the light, but it is too far away I cannot reach to where its beams may fall upon me. I see it. It was a tiny hand, that of your precious little child, which pointed it out, and showed me the way by which I must go; but my feet have so long trodden the road which leads to death, that now, when I would set my face the other way, they falter and stumble. I cannot even stand, much less go forward. Bradford, I am a far worse cripple there than I am in this outer world." [Pg 355]

"There is one prop which cannot fail you," said Mr. Bradford. "Throw away all others, and cast yourself upon the almighty arm which is stretched out to sustain and aid you. You may not see it in the darkness which is about you, but it is surely there, ready to receive and uphold you. Only believe, and trust yourself to it, and it will bear you onwards and upwards to the light, unto the shining of the perfect day."

Colonel Rush did not answer, and Mr. Bradford, opening the Bible, read the 92d and 118th Psalms. Then he chose the chapter which the colonel and Bessie had read in the morning, and after he had talked a little,

"Marion," said the colonel, after some time, "do you know a hymn beginning

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'I was a wandering sheep?'"

"Yes," said Mrs. Rush; and in her low, sweet voice, she sang it to him. Next she sang, "Just as I am," twice over,—for he asked for it a second time,—then both sat silent for a long while.

The rosy light of the August sunset died out of the west, the evening star which little Bessie had once said looked "like God's eye taking care of her when she went to sleep," shone out bright and peaceful; then, as it grew darker and darker, came forth another and another star, and looked down on the world which God had loved so much, till the whole sky was brilliant with them; the soft, cool sea-breeze came gently in at the windows, bringing with it the gentle plash of the waves upon the shore, mingled with the chirp of the crickets and the distant hum of voices from the far end of the piazza; but no one came near or disturbed them; and still the colonel sat with his face turned towards the sea, without either speaking or moving, till his wife, as she sat with her hand in his, wondered if he could be asleep.

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At last he spoke, "Marion."

"Yes, love."

"The light is shining all around me, and I can stand in it—with my hand upon the cross."

"Bessie," said the colonel, when she came to him the next morning, "I have found your Saviour. He is my Saviour now, and I shall be his soldier, and fight for him as long as I shall live."

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Minor punctuation errors were silently corrected.

Twenty-nine instances of "wont" were retained as dialect or the author's preference; "won't" was used 13 times.

Six instances of "aint" were retained as dialect or the author's preference; "ain't" was used 2 times.

Page [26](#): "Mary" and "Mamie" are used interchangeably for the same girl.

Page [216](#): "affghan" may be a typo for "afghan."
(Orig: lay neatly folded, a tiny affghan.)

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