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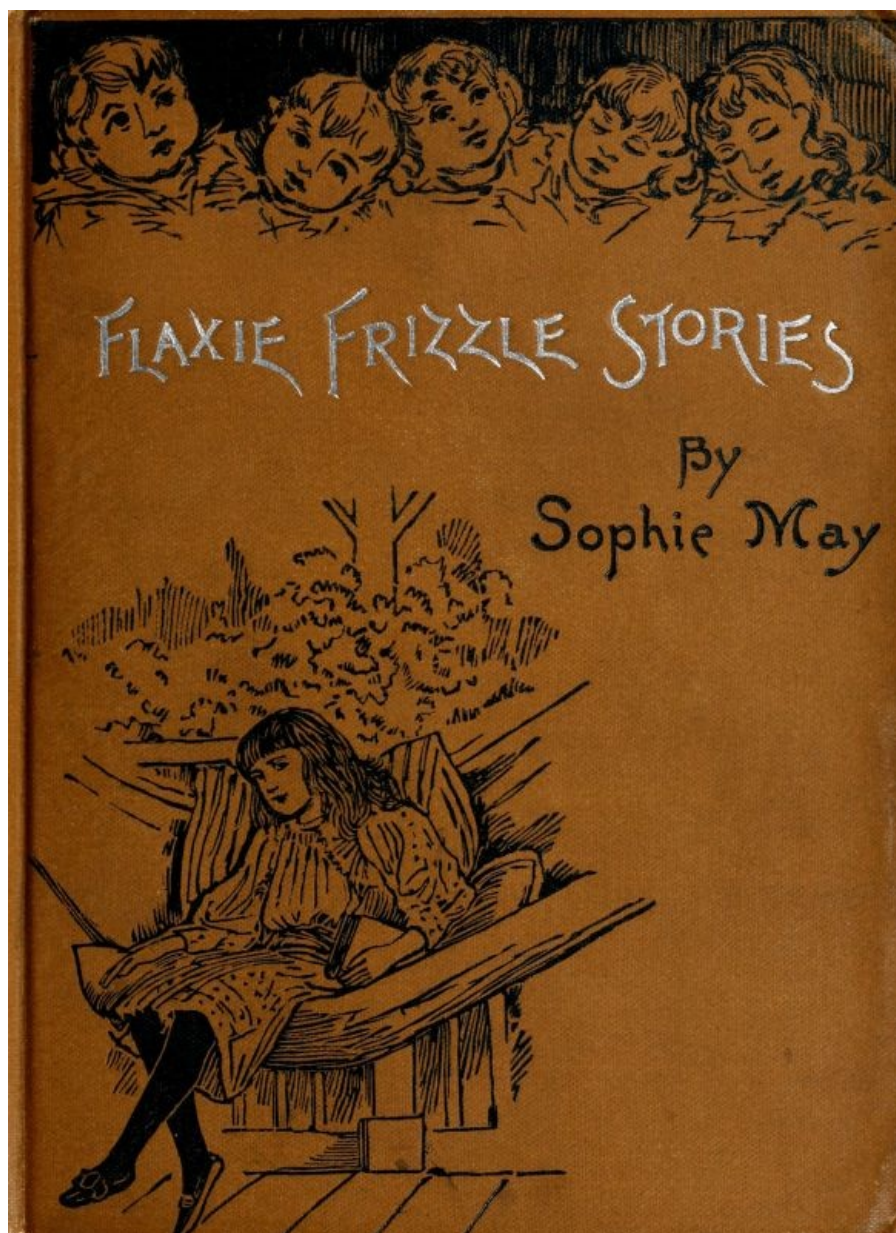
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FLAXIE FRIZZLE STORIES.

LITTLE PITCHERS.

BY
SOPHIE MAY,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE PRUDY STORIES," "DOTTY DIMPLE STORIES,"
"LITTLE PRUDY'S FLYAWAY STORIES," "FLAXIE
FRIZZLE," "DOCTOR PAPA," ETC.

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LITTLE PITCHERS.

CHAPTER I.

POLLIO AND POSY.

THERE were seven Pitchers in the family,—Judge Pitcher and his wife and five children; but, as the twins were the youngest of all, they were often called “the Little Pitchers.”

They were Flaxie Frizzle’s cousins; and the more I think about them, the more I think I will try to put them into a story. They lived so far away from New York, that Flaxie had never seen, and had scarcely ever heard of them. Their home was in a town we will call Rosewood, on the banks of a beautiful river, and so high up that the air was very pure and cool; only it did not seem like living on a hill, for, as far as you could see, the whole country looked nearly as flat as a table. [10]

The twins were four years old. I don’t mean that was always their age; but they were four when our story begins. If you had looked in the great gilt-edged family Bible on the parlor-table, you would have seen that their whole names were Napoleon Bonaparte Pitcher, and Josephine Bonaparte Pitcher; but it did no great harm, for nobody called them any thing worse than Pollio and Posy.

“I don’t fink we’re twins,” said Pollio, the boy; “I fink we’re *odds*. We don’t look any bit alike.”

And they didn’t. Strangers often asked if Pollio belonged to the family; for he looked like a French boy, with his straight dark hair, brown eyes, and brown skin. Posy’s hair fell in golden curls; her eyes were blue, and her face very fair. Pollio was so homely and funny that it made you laugh; and she was so beautiful that it made you smile. [11]

They had two high chairs exactly alike; only Pollio had rubbed the arms of his with his elbows, and scratched them sadly with his fork.

They had each a fur cap and tippet to wear in the winter; only Posy kept hers on a nail, and Pollio threw his down wherever he happened to be.

No, they were not “any bit alike;” but what loving little friends they were, and how gayly they did trudge about the grounds at home, and up and down the village street, with their arms around each other’s waists! The neighbors came to the windows of their houses as the little couple passed by, saying, “See those little Pitchers! Don’t they look like Tom Thumb and his wife?” When people spoke to them, Posy dropped her eyes, and blushed; but Pollio held up his head, and made answer for both. [12]

Once, in the winter, when they were going out walking, and Posy was half stifled with her fur cap and a big comforter wound twice round her neck, Pollio said,—

“She wants to walk *sturbously* free, and not be mumbled up.”

“Sturbously” was one of his big words that mamma had to guess at; but she unwound the comforter, and Pollio said,—

“Fank you. It’s awful mild, and she fought she’d choke. Good-by now: we’re going.”

“Posy would never have complained of the comforter; but she has a brother who is always ready to scold for her,” said mamma, looking fondly after her darlings. [13]

“Don’t you be afraid; there sha’n’t any dogs hurt *you*,” she heard him say to his timid little sister, as Dr. Field’s Fido barked at their heels.

He often promised to protect his mother and his aunt Ann from the same dog, and from all the horses in town; for Pollio was a very brave boy.

“Good-morning, General Pollio! Good-morning, Mrs. *Posio*! Guess what I’ve got in my jug,” called out Bobby Thatcher.

So of course the children followed him; and when they came home from their walk, instead of being “mumbled up,” Pollio had left his ulster at Mrs. Thatcher’s, and his jacket was sticky with maple-sirup.

“What *did* you wipe your hands on?” asked aunt Ann. [14]

“On my apron.” But looking down, and seeing he wore none, he added promptly, “*If I’d had one on.*”

Aunt Ann laughed, and “hoped he had not been teasing the neighbors for something to eat.”

“What you s’pose?” cried Pollio indignantly. “I only told Mrs. Fatcher, ‘Oh, *dear*, we’re so hunger-y!’”

Mrs. Thatcher spoiled the twins a little; and so, I fear, did most of the neighbors, as well as the family at home; but they *did* have such a good time in this bright, fresh, beautiful world! Pollio had what his uncle Rufus called “a strong sense of the funny,” and could imitate all sorts of noises. He could crow, bark, and mew, and even bray like a donkey. Teddy, the boy next older, was handsomer and behaved better; but Posy thought the sun never shone on a boy so bright as “her Pollio.” [15]

Their papa was gone from home a great deal, attending court. The twins had no idea what a court might be; but Pollio “fought” it was some kind of a store, for papa always came home from

it with his pockets full of presents. He was a great fleshy man, a little gray and a little bald, with the most winning smile around the corners of his mouth.

He liked to see his children all about him when he was at home; so he would not stay up stairs in his study, but wrote every evening at the parlor-table between the two front-windows. Nunky—that was uncle Rufus Gilman—sat in the corner, reading; Nanty—that was aunt Ann Pitcher—sat by a little basket-table, sewing; Edith and Dick—the older brother and sister—pretended to study; and mamma—well, mamma spent half her time keeping the three youngest children away from papa's inkstand. [16]

One evening Pollio got down on all-fours, put up his back, and hissed like a cat. His father only laughed till he hit the table and upset the inkstand, and then he had to be sent out of the room. Posy begged to go too: she always wanted to be punished with Pollio.

Eliza Potter, the cook, was washing dishes when they came into the kitchen.

"O you little witch, quit that!" said she to Pollio, as he began to build houses with the knives and forks.

It always amused him to hear her say "Quit that!" and to see her wink her eyelashes. The more she scolded, the faster she winked.

Next evening Pollio was noisy again in the parlor; but nobody minded it till he said,— [17]

"Don't you see I'm naughty, mamma? Why don't you send me out in the kitchen?"

He wanted to tease Eliza again; but his mother punished him this time by sending him to bed. It seemed pretty hard; for he was very wide awake, and, though not afraid, found it rather lonesome without his bed-fellow, Teddy. In a few moments he was heard screaming, and his mother ran up to see what was the matter.

"O Lord! I'm a poor little boy all alone in the dark. Do send me a la-amp, a la-amp, a *la-amp!*"

"Pollio!" exclaimed his mother as soon as she could reach his chamber.

"Why, mamma," said he, looking up in her face very innocently, "I was only *praying!* You want me to pray, don't you?"

Mamma told Nunky afterwards that she did not know what to say to her queer little boy. He and Posy both had such strange ideas about God, that she wished Nunky would talk with them some time and try to make them understand who He is and why we should pray to Him. [18]

Nunky said, perhaps they were too young; but he would do the best he could. He was like a father to them when their own father was gone. He was quite a young man, and an artist. And here I will stop a moment, and tell you more about him.

He had a room at the very top of the house, called a studio; and you climbed some crooked stairs to reach it. He spent all his mornings in this room, with the door locked but once or twice the twins had peeped in and seen him sitting before a great easel painting pictures. He wore a gray dressing gown, and velvet cap with a tassel; and the sun poured straight down on his head through a hole in the roof. [19]

"Ho yo! that's jolly!" shouted Pollio.

Instantly the door was shut in his face. So unkind of Nunky! The twins wouldn't have meddled with his paints, of course: hadn't they *told* him they wouldn't meddle?

"If we once got in, he'd want us to stay: he finks *everyfing* of us," said Pollio to Posy.

"Let's get in," said she.

So one day they crept up stairs and knocked. Posy had her doll, and Pollio his drum; for they meant to make it very pleasant for Nunky.

Knock! knock!

"We won't be *sturbous!*" said Pollio.

"Can't we come in a tinky minute?" pleaded Posy, fumbling at the keyhole; while Pollio's drum tumbled down stairs, rattlety bang.

Instead of answering, Nunky growled like a bear, and roared like a lion; and they were obliged to go at last; for they might have stood all day without getting in. Nunky was a man that couldn't be coaxed. [20]

But that very evening, when his work was done, he was perfectly lovely, and played for them on his flute. The tune Pollio liked best was "The Shepherd's Pipe upon the Mountain." He thought it was a meerscham like papa's, and the shepherd was smoking it as he drove his sheep along. Nunky forgot to say he was making his flute sound like a *bagpipe*.

But the tune Posy liked best was "The Mother's Prayer," low and faint at first, then growing clearer and sweeter.

"Well, darling, what does it make you think of?" said Nunky as she sat on his knee, her wee

hands folded, and her eyes raised to his face.

"Makes me fink of the heaven-folks," replied she solemnly. "I wish little Alice would come down here and live again. Me and Pollio, we'd be very glad." [21]

Alice was a little sister she had never seen.

"I've asked God to send her down," said Pollio; "but He won't. I sha'n't pray to God any more. *You* may if you want to, Posy; but *I* sha'n't. I keep a-talkin', and He don't say a word."

Now was the time for Nunky to tell them something about God; but what should he say? What could they understand?

"God does speak to you, Pollio: not in words; but he speaks to your *heart*."

"Oh! does He? I know where my heart is,—right here under my jag-knife pocket."

"Well, there is a voice in there sometimes, that tells you when you do wrong."

"Is there?—Put your ear down, Posy. Can you hear anyfing?"

"No, no," said Nunky, trying not to smile: "the voice isn't heard; it is *felt*. Tell me, little ones, don't you *feel* sorry when you do wrong?" [22]

"When I get sent to bed I do," said Pollio.

"Once I felt awful bad when I fell down cellar," remarked Posy.

Nunky smiled outright then, and had a great mind not to say any more; but he did so wish to plant a seed of truth in these little minds!

"Was it right, Pollio, to take those tarts yesterday without leave?"

The little boy hung his head, and wondered how Nunky knew about that.

"Didn't something tell you it was wrong?"

"Yes, sir," whispered Pollio faintly.

"Well, that was God's voice. He spoke to your heart then."

"Oh!" [23]

Pollio began to understand.

"That is the way He speaks. Now, I don't want to hear you say again, 'I keep a-talkin' and a-talkin', and He don't say a word.'"

"No, I won't," said Pollio, his brown face lighting up. "He whispers right under your pocket. I'm going to pray some more now: I'd just as lief pray as not."

"So'd I," said Posy. "But I sha'n't ask him to 'bless papa and mamma, and *everybody*,' 'cause I don't want him to bless the naughty Indians; do *you*, Nunky?"

"Ask him to make them good," replied Nunky, stroking the little golden head, and wondering how much Posy understood of what he had been saying.

"Well, I will. I love God and the angels better'n I do you, Nunky. Of course I *ought* to love the heaven-folks best."

"Does God do just what you ask him to when you pray?" said Pollio, who had been for some moments lost in thought. [24]

"Yes, if He thinks it best, he does."

"Well, then, I sha'n't say, 'Accept me through thy Son;' for the *sun* is too hot: I'd rather go through the *moon*."

Nunky had to turn his head away to laugh. He did not try in the least to explain any thing more to Pollio that evening, and he really thought all his words had been thrown away. But this was a mistake. A new idea had entered the children's minds,—an idea they would never forget. Nunky found this out a long while afterward, and was very glad he had taken so much pains.

But just now he had talked long enough; so he dropped the children from his knee suddenly, pretending he hadn't known they were there.

"What! *you* here, little Pitchers? Off with you this minute!—Oh, no! come back: you haven't thanked me for the music." [25]

Nunky was careful of their manners; but I think, too, he had "a strong sense of the funny" as well as Pollio, and enjoyed seeing his nephew pull his front-hair and make a bow; while Posy dropped a deep, deep courtesy, and they both lisped out,—

"Fank you, Nunky."

You know, Pollio's hair was uncommonly straight and black, and he twitched it as if he were pulling a bell-rope; and Posy, being rather fat, bounced up and down like a rubber ball.

I am sure their uncle made them say "Fank you" when there wasn't the least need of it, just to see how comical they looked.

CHAPTER II. GOING TO SCHOOL.

[26]

WHEN the twins were five years old, they began to go to school.

As they were trudging along with Teddy and the dog on the first morning, feeling very happy and very important, Edith called aunt Ann to see how cunning they looked,—Posy in a white frock and sun-bonnet; and Pollio all in blue, with a white sailor-hat. Posy had curled some dandelion-stems, and Teddy had tied them to the dog's ears; so Beppo was as fine as the twins.

Dr. Field met the merry party on the street.

"Good-morning, little *twimlings!* Going to school? Well, don't be *sturbous*, my dears."

[27]

Pollio pulled Posy along with a jerk.

"Oh! give my regards to the family when you go home, and tell your mamma I disapprove of your studying too hard."

Pollio ran faster yet. He never could see the least fun in the doctor's jokes.

The schoolhouse was a large brick building, half a mile away; and the teacher seemed very glad to see the twins (of course they knew she would be), and she let them sit together. They liked it extremely, till Pollio happened to observe that he was one boy in the midst of forty girls: whereupon he stalked out to Miss Chase, and said with great dignity,—

"If you'll scuse me, I want to sit the way the other folks do."

Miss Chase smiled, and seated him beside Jamie Cushing (a boy of eight), and Posy beside a lame girl of seven. Pollio liked Jamie, because he had a pop-gun in his desk, and promised to show him at recess how to fire it off. Posy liked *her* seat-mate, because she had a very sweet face, and because she hopped on one foot, and dragged the other as a tired bird does; but her clothes were very ragged.

[28]

"I know who you are: you are Posy Pitcher."

Posy nodded.

"And I'm Lucinda Outhouse."

"Oh! are you? And does your mamma know you have such big holes in your clo'es, *Lucy-vindy?*"

"Oh! this woman I live with isn't my mamma: my mamma's dead."

Posy looked sorry.

"My papa died first, and my mamma married me another papa; and then my mamma died, and *he* married me another *mamma*. But *she* don't belong to me, and *he* don't belong to me; and I haven't any papa and mamma."

[29]

Posy could not understand.

"Don't you live anywhere?"

"Yes, they let me live with 'em; but they don't like me. Don't cry, darling," added *Lucy-vindy* with a smile and nod: "God'll take care o' *me*."

"Oh, yes! He's one o' that kind that don't have anyfing to do but take care o' folks," said Posy, her face brightening.

And then her class was called. How her little heart beat under her white frock! and how the blushes came in her soft cheeks! She could hardly read above her breath; but Pollio, who had never been to school before any more than she had, and didn't know quite so much, poked her with his elbow, and whispered, "What you 'fraid of?" And, when his turn came, he read so loud, you could have heard him in the street.

[30]

"Well, how do you like it, my dears?" asked papa at night.

"Oh, she's the best teacher *I* ever had!" said Pollio promptly.

"Indeed! Have you learned any thing to-day?"

"Yes, sir," said Posy, eager to speak: "*the world walks!*"

"You know what she means; 'the earth moves,'" laughed Teddy. "She heard 'em say that in the jography-class."

Posy could see no difference between walking and moving; but she did wish Teddy wouldn't laugh at every thing she said.

Papa shook his head at Teddy, and went on questioning Posy, who sat on his knee. [31]

"Did my little girl whisper in school?"

"Yes, sir: once or twice or *three*."

"Oh my! I should think"—

"Hush, Teddy! Did you carry your slate, Pollio?"

"Yes, sir; and I can make pictures better'n any of 'em."

His father presumed this was true; for Pollio's drawings were rather remarkable for a small child.

"And I draw horses for the fellow that sits with me. He's a jolly boy,—fires 'tatoes out of a gun."

"Well, the girl with me hops lame," said Posy, determined not to be outdone by Pollio. "She's a *hypocrite*."

"*Cripple!*" explained Teddy.

"I think it must be the little girl I meet on the street so often," said Nunky. "I call her 'Hop-clover.' She has a very sweet face." [32]

"Her father's an awful drunkard," remarked Teddy.

"Well, he isn't her truly papa, and she hasn't any truly mamma. Her name's *Lucy-vindy*, and she hasn't anybody to take care of her but just God. I wish I could give her my pink dress," begged Posy.

"We will see about that," said mamma.

Next day it "rained so hard, the water couldn't catch its breath;" but the little Pitchers were so eager for school, that their mother let them go. They marched off very proudly under an umbrella; while Teddy walked before them with the books, and Beppo behind with the dinner-pail.

"Hop-clover" carried her dinner too; but at noon, when she saw Posy giving Beppo a piece of cold lamb, she thought,—

"I 'most wish I was Posy Pitcher's dog, so she'd give *me* some meat." [33]

"Where's your dinner?" said Posy.

"Hop-clover" spread it out then on her desk, looking ashamed as she did so; for it was nothing but dry bread and *very* dried apple-pie. Posy thought that was what came of having such a queer mother that *wasn't* a mother; and offered her new friend an orange.

"Oh, thank you ever so much!" said Hop-clover, her sad eyes sparkling. "I've seen oranges lots of times, but I never ate one before."

Posy looked up in surprise.

"What a baby that is!" thought Jimmy Cushing, spying Posy's innocent face just then as he came along, swinging his arms, and whistling. "Guess I'll plague her a little."

"Oh! is that you, Posy Pitcher?" said he aloud. "Well, I've got something for you."

She blushed and smiled. [34]

"Put out your hand," said he, offering her a clam. "There, just feel of that: isn't it smooth? Put your fingers inside."

She knew no better than to do as he said; and the clam, which was alive, knew no better than to seize her little hand with a dreadful grip. Dear little Posy screamed fearfully, and some of the larger boys had to come in and break the clam-shell with a hammer before her hand was set free.

Pollio knew nothing about it till it was all over, and he found her drying her eyes on Addie Thatcher's neck.

"Hurt you bad, dear?" asked he tenderly.

"Yes, it did; and that boy *saw* how I cried. Why, I cried awf'ly!"

The angry brother clinched his fists, and ran to find Jimmy. He did not stop to think of Jimmy's age and size, but rushed at him wildly, exclaiming, "Take *that* for 'busing my sister!" [35]

It was the last sentence Pollio spoke for five minutes. How *could* he speak, with Jimmy's foot on his back, and his own face close to the earth, eating dirt? It was as much as *he* could do to breathe.

"Want to whip me *again*, my son? I'm ready for you!" called out that dreadful Jimmy with a gay laugh.

Wasn't it hateful, when Pollio couldn't hurt him any more than a fly at the best of times, and needed both hands now to stop the nose-bleed?

Pollio ran home in a fever of rage; but when the rain had cooled him a little he dreaded to see his mother, and let her know he had been quarrelling.

His aunt Ann met him at the door with a look of amazement; for he had no umbrella, his clothes were soaking with water, and the handkerchief he held to his nose was red with blood. [36]

"Fought I'd come home," stammered he, darting into the entry. "Dr. Field sent his 'gards to you, Nanty."

"You didn't come home in the rain to tell me that? How *did* you get hurt so, my child?"

Pollio wondered how she knew he was hurt, when he hadn't told her a word.

"Dr. Field *did* sent his 'gards to you, Nanty."

"Yes, yes."

"And he sent his 'gards to Nunky, and he sent 'em to the whole fam-i-ly."

The last word ended in a wail. His nose did ache so! and—oh, dear!—it was bleeding again.

Aunt Ann screamed for his mother. He had taken away the handkerchief, and revealed the worst-looking nose you ever saw on a human boy. She thought it was broken, but it was not. [37]

"Jimmy Cushion did that,—the boy I liked that had a pop-gun," said Pollio after his mother had bathed his face with arnica, and asked him fifty questions.

"What! that large boy?"

"Yes: he'll be nine years old 'fore I am," said little Pollio.

"Several years before. Of course, my dear, you had done something to Jimmy?"

"No, mamma. You see, I tried to; but I couldn't!"

"Tried to! What made you try, my son?"

"Why, you s'pose I'm going to let him 'buse my little sister,—nipping up her hands like a pair o' tongs with a pair o' clams?" [38]

"Oh! was that it?"

Mrs. Pitcher couldn't help hugging Pollio; for he didn't seem to mind his own sufferings when he thought of his precious Posy.

"Well, my son, if Jimmy pinched her, that was wrong. I like to see you so ready to protect your sister; but you needn't fly at anybody like a little savage. I *can't* have my darling boy fight!"

Pollio buried his aching nose in his mother's bosom. He didn't want to fight again that day, you may be sure.

It was a whole week before he could go to school again; for his nose was hideous. It was red, blue, green, and yellow; and Nunky said nobody could get an education who looked like that.

Posy would not go without her brother, and mourned very much because people laughed at him. [39]

"Don't cry about *me*," said Pollio: "I'm only a boy! If 'twas a girl, 'twould be awful!"

CHAPTER III. "THE FINNY-CASTICS."

 [40]

POLLIO didn't learn much during his first term at school, except mischief. He learned to whoop like a wild Indian, and stand on his head like the clown at a circus. Eliza said that whoop was "enough to split her ears in two," and he never entered the house without it.

But it was midsummer now, and vacation had begun. Fourth of July was coming; and Judge Pitcher, before going away to attend court, had bought Teddy and Pollio a good supply of pin-wheels and fire-crackers. Posy did not fancy such noisy playthings, and he had given *her* some money to buy "Hop-clover" a dress. [41]

It would not be the Fourth till to-morrow; but Pollio had fired off nearly all his crackers, and was now frightening Posy by climbing the ridge-pole of the barn. While she was running back and forth, clasping her hands, and begging him to come down, their kind old Quaker friend, Mr. Littlefield, drove up to the gate.

"Hurry, hurry!" cried Posy: "the *Earthquake's* coming."

The Quaker laughed to hear himself called an *earthquake*: though he did shake the floor a little when he walked; for he was a fleshy man,—as large as Judge Pitcher.

"How does thee do, Josephine?" said he, patting her curls as he entered the yard. "Where's thy little brother?"

Then, spying him on the roof of the barn, he exclaimed, "Napoleon, Napoleon, come down here! Thee shouldn't play the monkey like that!" [42]

"Napoleon" obeyed quickly.

"Now tell me what makes thee climb such high places? Thee'll break thy neck yet."

"Oh! I told Posy I was going to; and you wouldn't have me tell her a lie, would you?" replied Pollio with a very serious face.

The Quaker would not allow himself to smile at this. "Is thy mother willing to have thee do so?"

Pollio knew she was not; and he hung his head, and began to beat the dirt in the road with a stick. He was very fond of Mr. Littlefield, and did not like to have the good man know he ever did wrong.

"Stop, my son! Is it possible thee kills snakes?"

For Pollio was crushing a little snake with his stick.

"No, sir: 'twas dead in the first place, and I just killed it a little more." [43]

The Quaker smiled, and went into the house with the children. He staid to tea; and at the table he observed once or twice that Pollio did not obey his mother the very moment she spoke, and he feared his little pet was growing naughty. "Napoleon," said he, as the little boy came skipping out after supper to see him mount his horse. (He would never call him Pollio, though he disliked his real name, for "Napoleon Bonaparte was a fighting-man.") "Napoleon!"

"Sir?" said Pollio.

"Thee is a great favorite of mine, Napoleon; but I have a word to say against thy conduct to-day."

Pollio cast down his eyes. Mr. Littlefield was an old-fashioned man, who did not use very good grammar; but everybody loved him dearly, and Pollio would rather have been chidden by almost any one else. [44]

"Thee has one of the best mothers that ever lived, my boy. I want thee always to mind thy mother."

"Yes, sir."

"And remember this: A child that won't mind its mother won't mind its God!"

"Click, clack," went the horse's hoofs; and Pollio stood on the fence till horse and rider were far out of sight. Still these words rang in his ears:—

"A child that won't mind its mother won't mind its God."

Next morning he and Teddy were wakened by the firing of guns; and both sprang out of bed with a bound, and Pollio with a "whoop." He had a new "pair o' clo'es," which he was not to wear till next Sunday; but I grieve to say, that, thinking he could not do too much for his country, he put them on, and ran down stairs after Teddy. [45]

Posy, who slept in the next room with Edith, wished also to do something for her country, but fell asleep, and forgot it.

The two boys rushed out of doors as if there were no time to be lost; but it was so very early that nobody was to be seen but Beppo, and Muff the gray cat, whose tail had a yellow tip, as if it had been scorched. The village-boys, who had been firing guns and ringing bells, had gone to bed to make up their sleep; and there was no sound now except from time to time the crowing of a cock, or the braying of Judge Pitcher's donkey, which Pollio called by mistake "the Yankee."

There were "fairies' tablecloths" on the grass,—I mean spiders' webs,—covered with dew: the flowers hung their heads, and the trees hardly stirred. The world did not look natural to the two little boys at this early hour. [46]

"Let's go in the barn and take a nap," yawned Teddy, not half as wide awake as his brother.

"How now, boys? what makes you so sober?" called out somebody from the piazza. "Come up here and see what I've got for you."

The words were very refreshing; but at the same time Nunky let fly three beautiful red, white, and blue balloons, the largest and gayest ever seen.

Teddy was as wide awake now as Pollio, and cut as many capers of delight.

"So you like them, do you?" laughed Nunky. "They are for you and Posy, from your 'thee-and-thou friend.'"

"Oh! he's the goodest man that ever lived, 'cept you!" shouted Pollio.

"Can't you say thank you?"

[47]

"Fank you," said Pollio with a fearful pull at his front-hair; and over he went in a somerset.

The strings were long, and the balloons flew up like birds into the morning sky.

"Oh, if they had only made such things when I was a boy! It's sad to think how much I've lost!" said Nunky with a make-believe sigh.

Pollio was very sorry for his uncle. It must be hard to grow up and not care for balloons! Nunky would never, never, be a boy again: his good times were over.

"Poor Nunky! He has got to stay old," thought Pollio as the young man walked into the house with a bounding step.

He was very far from old, and, as for good times, felt much happier than either of his little nephews, if they had only known it. Teddy had gone in swimming the day before without leave, and naughty Pollio had just got a grass stain on the knees of his new "pair o' clo'es;" so how could either of the boys be quite happy?

[48]

When they went in to breakfast, their mother and aunt Ann were talking about the Fantastics.

"Billy Barstow and a few other wild boys are to ride colts and mules," said aunt Ann; "and I'm afraid somebody will get hurt."

"Oh, no! everybody will keep out of the way," returned uncle Rufus. "The Fantastics will pass by at eight o'clock, and then the danger will be over."

"I want to see the 'Finny-castics,'" said Pollio, flourishing his fork.

"Do you know what they are, General?"

"Yes, sir. Wigs on their faces, and things; but they won't scare *me* a bit!"

[49]

"No, they won't scare you if you stand close by Nunky or me," said mamma; "but you must keep out of the streets."

"Now, little ones," added she, holding up a warning finger as they all left the table, "I have your father's orders that you are not to go off the grounds to-day, or even out of the yard, without leave. You can see the Fantastics from the fence perfectly well; but remember you are not to go into the street, Pollio. Do you hear?"

"Yes, mamma."

He rushed past her as he spoke, lest she should see his Sunday clothes. He had heard all she said, and fully intended to obey; but what he wanted just now was to teach Posy to fly her new balloon.

She was quite as pleased with it as he had expected.

"Which do you love best, Posy,—Nunky, or the thee-and-thou man?"

[50]

"Which gave me the b'loon?"

"Mr. Littlefield."

"Then I love *him* best."

As the gay toys rose higher and higher, she thought how her angel sister Alice would like them, and wondered if this wasn't a good time to send her a present.

Pollio thought not. He didn't believe they could find a string in town long enough to reach to heaven.

"Why Posy," said he with some contempt for her ignorance, "heaven's the other side the moon: it's more'n twenty miles off."

Posy gave it up then: twenty miles was too far. And she was rather glad she need not part with her balloon, even to the "heaven-folks."

In talking, Pollio, who always flourished his arms a great deal, had let go the string; and now his balloon had flown up, up, out of reach. Oh, dear! It seemed so glad to go, like a bird let out of a cage! How far would it fly? Pollio forgot entirely that he was forbidden to leave the yard, and darted out, leaving little Posy gazing up, half hoping the baby would get a present, after all.

[51]

The balloon was a long time in coming down; but Pollio found it at last sticking fast to the top of the fence on the other side of the street, quarter of a mile from home. It was entirely ruined, of course.

"Well, I never!" sighed he, surveying it mournfully.

In climbing back over the sharp-pointed fence, he tore his new clothes badly; but by that time bugles and tin horns were sounding in the distance, and he could see a moving black mass, which he knew must be the Fantastics.

[52]

"Guess I'll stay here and watch 'em come up," thought he, rubbing the dirt off his knees. "Oh, but mamma said I mustn't!" was his next thought.

"There! God spoke to me then!" whispered he to himself with a look of awe; for he had never forgotten Nunky's talk about "God's voice." "He spoke to me then: I *felt* him speak!"

Pollio stood for a moment with his hand on his "jag-knife pocket." So far, he had not meant to do wrong. He had run out of the yard and down the street without once thinking of his mother's warning, and, if he would go back now, she was sure to forgive him. But *would* he go back?

He looked down the street. The Fantastics were so near by this time, that he could discern the horses. Wouldn't it be fun to wait till they came in sight, and then throw up his cap and shout!

[53]

"Poh! anybody must be a baby to be afraid of the 'Finny-castics'! Mamma fought I'd better stay side of *her*!" Then he remembered Mr. Littlefield's words: "The child that won't mind its mother won't mind its God;" and there was another thump under the "jag-knife pocket."

He knew very well he ought to run back to the house before the "Finny-castics" got any nearer; but the noise of the trumpets and tin pans was so lively, that it set his feet dancing, and his arms flying. He could see his mother and all the rest of the family in the front-yard; though they could not see him, for he was hidden by a clump of trees and a bend in the road.

"I won't stop—yes, I will! I'll go home—no, I won't!"

[54]

Thus his thoughts swung back and forth; and, before he had made up his mind whether to stay or not, he *had* staid, and the "Finny-castics," with their horses and mules, were close at hand.

Pollio had seen the same sight the year before, but not so near; oh, not *half* so near! And weren't they awful?

They did not look like men, but like all sorts of horrid creatures that you dream of at night, after eating too much supper. Some wore coats and hats; and some wore gowns and bonnets, with paper flowers the size of dinner-plates, and bunches of feathers as big as brooms.

But it was not the dress Pollio minded, so much as the faces. How they did stare at him, and grin at him, those faces!—with mouths wide enough to take him right in, with monstrous noses, puffed cheeks, glaring eyes,—white faces, yellow faces, monkey's faces, and faces as black as a shoe.

[55]

Pollio knew that these were all masks, or what he called "wigs," and that they were worn by harmless Rosewood boys, who did it only for fun. Pollio knew this well enough. But you can't always recollect all you know: you hardly ever can when you are taken by surprise. Before he stopped to think, he screamed; but, after he had screamed, he laughed to think how silly it was.

"Poh, nothing but *wigs*! Glad Posy isn't here. Guess *she'd* be scared!"

While he stood trembling and gazing, he saw an object that fairly made his hair stand on end. It was Billy Barstow, with a wolf's head on his shoulders, and on the head a big ruffled cap. It was the very image of the wolf that ate up Red Riding Hood.

[56]

Billy was seated on a frisky colt that wouldn't walk soberly along with the horses and mules, but danced round and round on one side of the procession. Pollio never thought of being afraid of the colt; but the wolf with the frilled cap on was fearful.

"Rum te dum diddlety dum! Hullo, my little man! Get up here and ride?" cried the wolf, shaking his cap-strings, opening his jaws, and showing his long white teeth.

Pollio knew it wasn't a wolf; for it drummed with its hands on a tin pan. But, oh, it did *seem* awful! It seemed exactly like *the* wolf that pretended to be Red Riding Hood's grandmother; and, if poor Red Riding Hood felt much worse than Pollio, I am sorry for her.

"Oh, oh! lemme 'lone!" screamed the little fellow, running, or trying to run; for he was in such a panic that his legs hardly moved, except to tremble.

[57]

Instead of being sorry that he had frightened a poor little child, Billy Barstow thought it fine sport, and turned his colt round to chase Pollio. Cruel Billy! But no: he did not mean to be cruel; he was only thoughtless. Billy *never* stopped to think.

The colt, as full of fun as his master, pranced up and down, then whirled about, reared, and planted his fore-feet upon Pollio, who had fallen flat on the ground.

It was now Billy Barstow's turn to be frightened; for the child lay as still as if he were dead.

"Help, help!" screamed Billy. But the Fantastics had gone some distance by this time, and were making such a din with their pans and horns, that they scarcely heard the scream; or, if any of them did hear it, I suppose they thought Billy was a noisy fellow not worth minding.

[58]

Mrs. Pitcher, aunt Ann, Nunky, and the children, were still standing in the yard. They had seen the colt prancing round and round; and aunt Ann had said, "I'm so glad none of the children are

out there!" for they all thought Pollio was in the yard. Nobody had missed him yet, not even Posy.

So when they heard the wolf call out "Help, help!" they only laughed, and thought it was some of Billy's nonsense. But in half a minute more the wolf had ridden to the gate with flying cap-ruffles, and shouted out through his long white teeth,—

"Quick, quick! He'll be dead before you get there! And I can't leave my colt! Run,—run to Pollio!"

Wasn't it too bad for Billy to tell the story in that dreadful way, especially as he didn't really know whether Pollio was much hurt or not? But it was just like Billy. [59]

Everybody was terribly frightened; and Posy screamed so, that Edith had to hold her, while the others ran as fast as they could down the street to Pollio.

He was not killed: they knew that very soon, for he cried lustily.

"O my precious!" said mamma, kneeling beside him, "tell me where you are hurt. Is it your head?"

But the child was too bewildered to answer. He did not seem to know what had happened, only it was something horrible, and he could not stir.

"It's of no use talking to him yet, sister Frances: the first thing is to get him home," said Nunky. "Here, Dick, I'll try to take him up in my arms if you'll help by raising his feet." [60]

Dick did his best, but he hurt Pollio; and aunt Ann had to take Dick's place, because her touch was more gentle. She and Nunky, between them, managed somehow to get the child home, though it was hard work; and they were forced to walk very slowly. Pollio groaned and sobbed all the way.

"Why doesn't he speak? I'm afraid his head is hurt," said his mother, walking beside him very anxiously.

"Oh! he'll talk by and by, and tell us all about it: he's a little stunned now," replied Nunky, who never thought any thing was quite as bad as it seemed.

CHAPTER IV. NOT THE END OF IT.

 [61]

THE moment Dr. Field arrived, Pollio set up a perfect howl. The doctor was a cross-looking man, with black eyebrows that met over his nose, and the children had always been afraid of him. Pollio said once he "couldn't see his eyes, his *eye-bushes* were so fick."

"You need not fancy this boy's brain is injured," said Dr. Field. "You see he knows me, and dislikes me as much as ever."

He smiled sadly as he spoke; for he was sorry to be disliked.

"The colt has bruised his back a little; but I cannot tell how much till he stops screaming. I think I will go away now, and come again when he is calmer." [62]

Everybody but mamma left the room; and they tried to keep the house quiet, or as quiet as they could on Fourth of July. Billy Barstow had turned his colt into the meadow, and was pacing the dining-room in great distress, with no head on his shoulders but his own. The wolf's head was in the stable-yard, and the dog was smelling at it, and wondering to what tribe it belonged.

"How's Pollio?" was Billy's question of everybody he saw. "O Eliza! mayn't I go up and listen at the keyhole? I want to see if I can hear him groaning."

"Hush! You've done enough mischief for one day, Billy Barstow!—knocking the senses out of that dear little innocent child! There's no knowing as he'll ever speak again," sobbed Eliza.

"Billy, you mustn't 'sturb my Pollio," said little Posy sternly. [63]

"Come here to me, you darling precious Posy!" said Eliza, seizing the pale child in her arms. "Don't you want some jelly?"

This was Eliza's idea of "pacifying children." But Posy was too wretched to care for jelly.

When Pollio had been left alone with his mother for an hour or so, he grew calmer. She bathed his head, but did not talk, except to say in a soothing tone,—

"Poor little Pollio! Mamma's little Pollio!"

"O mamma!" said he, speaking for the first time, "I don't feel as well as I used to."

"No, dear, we all know it."

"The wolf stepped on me,—with a cap on."

"The wolf was only Billy Barstow, dear."

"Well, but it hurt," cried Pollio, hiding his head in the bed-clothes.

[64]

When the doctor came again, he found his little patient better than he had expected.

"But," said he, "we can't tell even yet how much his back is injured. Keep him very quiet, and don't let him sit up for a day or two."

"O doctor! wait a minute, doctor!" cried Billy, catching the good man by the coat-tail as he passed through the hall. "Is he hurt bad? Just tell me *how* bad he's hurt!"

The doctor wasn't a very patient man, and he fairly glared on the boy.

"Well, he isn't killed; but he might have been. Don't you ever let me hear of your frightening a baby again, Billy Barstow."

But, when Billy cried, the doctor softened a little, and said it wasn't so dreadful, after all; for Pollio was likely to be quite well in a few days. So Billy wiped his eyes, and ran off to help about firing a cannon: but he didn't have as much fun as he had expected; he had spoiled the day for himself as well as for Pollio.

[65]

Poor Pollio! He lay on his white bed in his pretty chamber, pale and fretful, seeing no one but Nunky, aunt Ann, and mamma.

"I want my Posy!"

"No, dear: she would forget, and jump up on the bed."

"Then I want my Teddy."

"See this!" said mamma: "it is a picture-book Billy Barstow just sent you."

But it happened to be the story of Red Riding Hood; and Pollio threw away the book with a shudder.

"I'm going to bring in the little clock from my room, and set it on the mantel, so he can watch the hands," said aunt Ann.

"It isn't hands, it's fingers," said Pollio, determined not to be pleased.

[66]

"Well, fingers, then."

Aunt Ann was a small lady, with a pleasant voice and sweet smile. Posy looked like her. She set the clock on the mantel; and it was a comfort to Pollio, for it gave him a chance to ask endless questions.

"What makes the long finger go faster than the little finger? What time is it now? What time will it be in five minutes? What time will it be to-morrow morning?"

Aunt Ann replied to all these foolish inquiries very kindly, and told Mrs. Pitcher she thought Pollio must be better, or he would not wish to talk.

"Yes, mamma, I'm all better," said Pollio, his black eyes shining brightly. "My back gave one great sting, and then stopped. Now I want to get up."

"But, my little love, the doctor says you must lie still."

[67]

"*He* don't know. You didn't tell him 'bout my fire-crackers. Got a million of 'em; *must* fire 'em off! I don't like Dr. Field, with his great black eye-bushes. And it's Fourf of July too!"

Presently there was another wail. Pollio had thought of the fireworks which were to go up that evening from the top of Tower Hill.

"Great red rockets just like stars! O mamma! Posy'll go, and Teddy'll go. I *must* put my clo'es on and get up."

Nunky whispered to mamma that she might as well let the child try to sit up, as he probably could not do it.

Nunky was right. The moment Pollio was raised in bed, his head felt very strangely. He thought the clock and pictures began to dance, while the bed spun round like a top.

Mamma laid his head back on the pillow, and sponged his face with cold water; and then the room and the things in it stood still, and he felt better.

[68]

Nunky was not at all surprised to see him so weak, but it grieved his mother. He did not ask again to sit up, but lay twisting his fingers, and thinking what a long day it was.

"Oh, dear! what made God make me, mamma? I'm tired of being made."

Pollio knew just as well as you do that he had been a naughty boy, and that he was suffering for it. He disliked himself exceedingly; and I think that was one reason he was so cross, and begged his aunt Ann to go away.

"Aren't you willing mamma should leave you a while, and lie down?" asked Nunky, who saw

that she looked pale.

"Yes, I guess so, if you'll play 'The Shepherd's Pipe,'" replied Pollio, scowling; for he could not bear to look pleasant a moment. [69]

When he had made Nunky play "The Shepherd's Pipe" till he was quite out of breath, Pollio said, "Fank you," and pulled a lock of front-hair without raising his head from the pillow.

Nunky smiled to see, that, sick and cross as he was, he did not forget his manners.

"Well, my little general, is there any thing else I can do for you?"

"You may show me some o' your pictures."

Nunky brought two landscapes from his studio. One was a brook half hidden by bushes, and so natural that you could almost see the leaves and grass flutter, and the water slip bubbling over the stones.

"Rocky Brook!" cried Pollio, clapping his hands.

He had "tagged" Dick to that brook many a time when Dick went trouting. [70]

"Wish I could dip my feet right in there!" sighed he. "Oh, please give me a drink o' water!"

Somehow the picture made him thirsty. The next one was of Yellowstone Falls, which came tumbling down so fast you could almost hear them rumble.

"Oh, splendid!" exclaimed Pollio. "Can't I have some cream beer?"

For the falls reminded him of something foamy to drink. Nunky kindly brought him some sarsaparilla-mead, wondering what would be wanted next.

"More pictures, Nunky: I mean, *please!*"

Nunky brought another beautiful painting, which he placed against the foot-board of the bed.

"Oh! Jesus talking to the woman. Isn't it splendid? Did he always look so sober, Nunky?" [71]

"No, I presume not."

"Well, I don't fink he did, 'cept when little children were naughty, or Jerusalem got out of order," remarked Pollio, glancing at an engraving on the wall called "Christ weeping over Jerusalem." Of course Jerusalem must have "got out of order," or he would not have wept over it.

Pollio moved his head on the pillow uneasily. He remembered that he, too, had "got out of order;" and he did not like to look at that beautiful, sad face at the foot of the bed, for it seemed to know and feel sorry he had been so naughty.

"Wish you'd take that picture away, *please!*" said Pollio, twisting his mouth as if in pain.

"Why, what's the matter, General?"

"Wish I'd runned away! Wish I *had* runned away!" groaned the child, in such a tone of anguish that Nunky began to fear he was losing his reason. [72]

"Wish you'd runned away? Why, I should think you'd had trouble enough for one day, without wishing for more."

"Wish I'd runned away from the 'Finny-castics'—*there!* They kep' a-comin', and I kep' a-stayin'. That's why I got stepped on, 'cause I kep' a-stayin'."

"Yes, I don't doubt you are right, General: if you had not staid, you would not have been stepped on. But how did you happen to be in the street?"

"I was hunting for the disappearance of my lost b'loon," said Pollio, who still used large words in the wrong place sometimes.

"Well, did you find the disappearance?"

"Yes, sir. But 'twas all busted up, sticking on the fence; and I lost it again. Oh, dear! I ought to not gone, and I ought to not staid, and I ought to not—where's mamma?" [73]

"Asleep, I hope. What do you want of her?"

"Well, I—I want to ask her, 'Will she forgive me?'"

"Do you? That's a very good question to ask. And here she comes," said Nunky, slipping out of the room; for he had waited upon cross Pollio for four hours, and needed rest.

Pollio confessed his naughtiness, and his mother forgave him at once. Did you ever hear of a mother that wouldn't forgive her darling child?

"O mamma! I sha'n't ever do anyfing bad any more," said Pollio, laying his little brown cheek against hers, so glad his sins were over for life. "I felt awful bad, and that was why I wanted that water and that cream beer; but it didn't do me any good. But now—O mamma!" [74]

"What, dear?"

"If I only had some lemonade!"

"But I dare not give it to you, my child. Won't you try to be happy without it?"

"Yes, mamma," sighed Pollio. "I'll be happy if I can see my Posy. But, if I don't see her pretty soon, I'm afraid I'll die!"

This touched his mother's heart, and she called Nunky to send for Posy. The little girl entered the room with a look of the deepest grief on her little face; but Pollio said bravely, as Nunky lifted her up to kiss him,—

"Poh, I'd twice as rather get hurt than have *you*, Posy! I'm a *boy!*"

Posy's only answer was to stroke his cheek softly, and sob.

"That wolf stepped on me, that's all. Don't cry, Posy! No, 'twas Billy Barstow—I mean the colt." [75]

"Naughty fing! I don't like Fourfs of July!" said the gentle sister, not quite sure whether to blame the colt, the wolf, or Billy.

"O Nunky! won't you set her up on the bed side o' me?" said Pollio, who found her remarks very consoling.

"I've lost my b'loon Posy: where's yours?"

"Well, I didn't lost mine: a hole came into it."

"Where's Teddy's?"

"A hole camed into Teddy's."

"What!" cried Nunky, "those three balloons all spoiled in one day!"

"Whew! that's mean!" said Pollio. "But then," added he, brightening, "now you won't feel so bad any more, Nunky, if you *didn't* have any b'loons when you were a little boy; for *they don't pay.*" [76]

Nunky laughed, and called Pollio "a little comforter."

Pollio thought he might eat some supper, if Posy would feed him: so mamma, wishing to please the sick boy, tucked a napkin under his chin, spread a table-cloth on the bed, and gave him a silver waiter with dry toast, plum-preserves, and sponge-cake.

Of course the children spilled milk, and dropped crumbs; but they were as happy as a pair of nestlings till Pollio suddenly swallowed a plum-stone.

"O mamma! you pat him on the back while I pray," cried Posy, clasping her hands. "Don't you be afraid, Pollio. I prayed when Teddy got choked, and *he* didn't die; and I'll pray for you now, and *you* won't die."

Pollio was soon relieved, but his little sister would give him no more plums. [77]

"Mamma, won't you please stop making plum-preserves?" said she anxiously. "It keeps me praying all the time."

Pollio thought he should be very wretched if he could not see the fireworks; but, when Posy declared she would not go without him, he was consoled. And indeed, before it was time for the rockets to go up, both the children were fast asleep, their heads on the same pillow, and their arms around each other's necks.

Thus ended Pollio's Fourth of July; but I am sorry to say it was not the end of his illness.

Here is a rhyme that Nunky chanted over to him just for fun:—

"Saddled and bridled and booted rode he,
Wolf's head on his shoulders, tin pan on his knee:
Home came the saddle, and home came the pan;
But where is the wolf that rode like a man?" [78]

CHAPTER V. ON ALL-FOURS. [79]

POLLIO was better next day, and still better the day after. By the time his father came home he was feeling as well as ever, and the sad affair was almost forgotten.

But, alas! a week after the accident Pollio was seized with a very strange ailment.

It was morning. His bed-fellow, Teddy, had dressed and gone down stairs, leaving him playing with the yellow-tailed kitten; but a little while after, when Posy went into the chamber to say "Good-morning!" she found her dear brother crying.

"O Posy! I can't get up. When I try to get up, I tumble down."

[80]

She helped him with all the strength of her little arms, but it did no good; for no sooner was he fairly on his feet than he fell again to the floor.

Very much frightened, she ran down stairs, exclaiming,—

"My Pollio's very sick: he can't stand up!"

"I think that must be a mistake, dear," said mamma, kissing her; "for I just heard him and Teddy laughing together."

"I didn't know he was sick," said Teddy.

"Well, *I* know it," returned Posy with trembling lips. "He's awful sick!"

When mamma saw that the little girl was so much in earnest, she went up stairs with her, though she did not suppose for a moment that any thing really ailed Pollio.

When she saw him half dressed, and crying helplessly, she put her arm round him, and asked if his head ached.

[81]

"No'm: head doesn't ache."

"Is your throat sore?"

"No'm: froat isn't sore."

"Well, darling, where do you feel sick?"

"Not sick anywhere, mamma."

"Are you crying because you and Teddy have quarrelled?"

"No'm: we didn't krorrel."

"Then tell me, my little son, what is it?"

"*Can't walk*, mamma," sobbed the poor child, plunging headlong upon the floor, and crawling upon his hands and knees.

"Fie! that's not nice. Get up, my son: you'll soil your clothes."

"*Can't get up*, mamma."

"I *said* he couldn't get up: my Pollio's very sick," repeated Posy, hoping her mother would believe her now.

"Let me see if there isn't a pin or bit of glass in his shoe," said Mrs. Pitcher. But when she had hunted, and found nothing, she began to be alarmed, and sent Posy to call her father. Posy went eagerly, for she wanted papa to see and pity her Pollio.

[82]

Judge Pitcher was shocked to find his little son creeping about like a baby, and sent presently for Dr. Field.

When the doctor entered the room, Pollio hid his face in his purple-bordered handkerchief, with his forehead touching the floor.

"Well, my little man, what's this? Are you playing baby? Oh, no! I guess you are a black dog, like Beppo: let us hear you bark."

Pollio jerked both elbows angrily. He did not like to be laughed at when he was in trouble. But, if he had only known it, the doctor pitied him very much, and was hiding two big tears under his "eye-bushes." For he saw now that Pollio's back had been hurt worse than he supposed. There was a sore spot on it; and, strange as it may seem, *that* was why he could not walk.

[83]

"Well, how do you like being a dog?" asked the doctor, scowling away another tear.

"I'm not a dog," exclaimed Pollio, turning over on his side. "But my legs are spoiled: they won't go."

"How do they feel?"

"They feel like India-rubber boots," snapped Pollio, thinking the doctor very inquisitive.

"Well, I am going to give you some medicine, and I hope in a few days they will feel as stiff as *calfskin* boots," said the doctor, writing something on a slip of paper.

After he was gone, Judge Pitcher took Pollio in his lap and tried to soothe him; while the children clustered around, all talking together.

[84]

"It seems queer," said Teddy, "that his legs won't go, just because his back is hurt. But I suppose the bones are all hitched together somehow."

"Wish the doctor'd unhitch 'em," groaned Pollio. "Oh, dear! I'm tired of being hitched."

"We hope this won't last long, my son: you will get over it by and by, and run as fast as ever,"

said his father. "Won't you try to be patient for a little while?"

"I don't want to be patient!" cried Pollio, swinging his arms. "I hate to awfully!"

Posy came then, and threw both her little arms about his neck, as if to say, "I'll help you bear it, my Pollio."

Mamma was going to help him too: you could see that by the tender smile on her face. Her heart ached for her darling boy, but she would not let him know it: she would always smile whenever she possibly could. [85]

The first day was pretty long. If you don't believe it, just shove yourself about on the floor for half an hour, and see how it seems.

"Oh, dear!" said Pollio, "I'd give ten cents to buy some hinges for my legs."

"Please, darling, don't you s'pose if you'd get on my back, I could carry you?" said Posy.

It was the first time Pollio had smiled that day; but it was such a funny speech from that mite of a girl! He would as soon have thought of leaning on a good-sized flower, say a honeysuckle.

"Why, *Teddy* couldn't hardly carry me: *he* isn't big enough," said the poor boy, feeling suddenly that he was very heavy. [86]

"Well, papa can carry you, and Nunky can carry you, and Dick."

"Now, you stop! Do you s'pose I want to go pickapack *all* the time?" whined unhappy Pollio.

To comfort him, Posy took a glass of lemonade from the table, and raised it to his lips, and of course spilled it on his neck.

"Needn't do that again, miss! Guess I can drink my own self, 'thout *you* helping!"

Posy was deeply grieved, for this did not sound like Pollio.

"No, I sha'n't go pickapack, Posy Pitcher! I shall go on my hands and knees long as *I* live!"

Posy slid round to the arm of the sofa, dropped her head, and began to cry softly. It was hard to have him so cross; but she could have borne that: it was the idea of his never walking again that broke her heart. [87]

"Where's Beppo?—Beppo, come here!" called Pollio.

The dog came wagging his tail, and, seeing his master lying down and looking so sad, trotted up to him, and licked his face lovingly.

"Poor fellow! I'm awful worse. I'm going to be a doggie just like you. The doctor says so. How do you like being a dog?"

Beppo snuggled his head close to Pollio's, and licked his cheek again. The two heads were of nearly the same color; but Beppo's hair was curly, and Pollio's straight. Beppo's eyes were black, like his master's, and had just now a wistful look.

"He wants something: I guess he wants to talk," said Pollio.

"I guess so too," said Posy, trying not to sob. [88]

Pollio lay for some time stroking the dog's nose. Did Beppo grieve about not talking as boys did about not walking? That *would* be sad indeed.

It was a long day and a very long week. Pollio had friends enough. Oh, no lack of those! Nunky, papa, and Dick carried him pickapack; mamma and aunt Ann read to him; *Teddy* was as kind as he could be; and, as for Posy, there was nothing in the world she wouldn't have done for her Pollio. Then the little boys in town—why, they rushed in in an army! or you would have thought so if you had heard *Eliza* scold about the mud they brought on their shoes. Even *Jimmy Cushing* came with a basket of fruit, and begged forgiveness for hitting Pollio's nose ever so long ago.

Hop-clover came, for Pollio wanted to see her. "Poh! I s'pose you think you're lame; but look here," said he, dropping on all-fours. "Can you beat that?" [89]

Hop-clover humbly confessed that she couldn't. *Her* lameness wasn't much: a horse never stepped on *her*; she only fell down stairs when she was a baby, and she *'spected* she lost out one o' the bones. But now she could read in the Second Reader, and *she* didn't care.

Mrs. Pitcher was so charmed with Hop-clover's sweet little face and patient ways, that she gave her some of *Edith's* dresses, and asked her to come twice a week and stay to tea. This made the little girl perfectly happy.

"Oh, how good your mamma is!" said she to Posy. "It's wicked to wish you was cats and dogs, and I don't; but I *'most* wish I was your Muff or your Beppo, so I could live in this house. I like a house that has a *sign* to it," added she, looking wistfully at the framed motto over the nursery-door: "God bless our home." [90]

Sometimes Pollio was as patient as Hop-clover, and said he was "glad he had something the rest of the family couldn't catch." Sometimes, too, he thought he shouldn't live long. "When I die,

I'll ask God to let me come down and see you *once*, Posy."

"Perhaps I'll die first," returned she.

"Well, then, I guess there'll be a row if *I* can't go up and see *you*," said Pollio.

He really meant no harm; but he did say very improper things sometimes, and it troubled Posy.

When Nunky told him a story, he begged that it might be about Indians, for he liked to feel his hair stand on end. Posy could not understand that at all: there were many things about her dear brother she never *would* understand. [91]

But Nunky refused to tell horrible stories, and chose only such as the children would be the better and happier for remembering. He was very kind, too, about drawing pictures on the slate for Pollio to copy; and this was a thing the little fellow greatly enjoyed.

Indeed, everybody was so kind to him, that the small boys in town rather envied Pollio. "I'd 'most be willing to creep round as he does, if my mamma'd give me such nice things to eat," said they; which shows that they had no idea of Pollio's trials.

When he was down stairs, he wanted to go up; and, when he was up stairs, he wanted to come down. You would feel just as he did if you couldn't walk. Everybody was ready to carry him, and nobody complained, But Pollio found after a while that he did not need so many "horses:" he could travel on all-fours nearly as fast as Beppo or Muff. [92]

You ought to have seen him run! How he did run away from his medicine! Why, he went so fast that his aunt Ann could not catch him. It was her business to give him his drops three times a day; but the moment she began to shake the vial he was missing. He could slip out of the room without any noise, then up stairs or down cellar,—anywhere to get away from that hateful vial and spoon.

"Pollio, this is very naughty," said his auntie, quite out of breath. "Your little sister Alice didn't behave like this: she took *her* medicine without any trouble."

"Did she? Then what made her die?" exclaimed Pollio, slipping under a chair.

It was too hard for aunt Ann to be led such a chase; and Nunky said he would take charge of the medicine. Pollio knew then that it was all over with him, for Nunky could run like a fox. But Nunky had no idea of running. He was a man who believed that little children should be taught to obey. [93]

"Pollio, you have made enough trouble, my boy; and from this time I expect you to swallow your medicine as soon as I have counted 'One, two, three.'"

Pollio looked up, and saw his uncle was in earnest.

"Sha'n't you catch me first?"

"Catch you? No, sir! you're already caught! Open your mouth, General, 'One, two, *three!*'"

Pollio swallowed, and sighed; and after that there was no more trouble about the drops.

CHAPTER VI. BEPP0 TALKING.

 [94]

MR. LITTLEFIELD came to see Pollio while he was lame, and brought some fine honey which his wife "Liddy" had sent.

"It is hard for thee to learn the lesson of patience so young; but it will do thee good, my boy," said he, patting Pollio's head with a smile.

"Is Dr. Field any *'lotion* to you, Mr. *Littlefield*?" asked Pollio anxiously; and was very glad to learn he was not. Pollio loved Mr. Littlefield dearly; but he would never love the doctor on account of his dreadful jokes.

While Mr. Littlefield was at the house, something happened to Beppo which I must tell you about. [95]

Now, Beppo was not only a pleasant playfellow for the children, he was also a dog of very fine character. But he had one fault: he would bark in the night whenever the least noise roused him, and bark so furiously, too, that he waked everybody in the house. For this reason it was thought best that he should sleep in the stable; but even there he sometimes made such a noise as to disturb the family.

The children had often heard their father say he meant to punish Beppo for this; but they did not believe he would ever do it, for he was as gentle-hearted as a woman, and extremely fond of the good dog.

But, on the very night when the Quaker was



"BEPPU WAS HUGGED HALF TO DEATH BY THE CHILDREN."

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visiting them, the judge and his wife were wakened by the terrific barking of Beppo. It kept on and on, louder and louder, till the judge grew very nervous.

"Why haven't I whipped that dog long ago?" said he.

"I think you ought to have done it," replied his wife. "He is a dear old fellow, but it is our duty to cure him of his faults."

"I declare I've a great mind to go out to the stable this minute," said the judge.

"Well, if you do go, you won't whip him, my dear: so I advise you to take brother Rufus with you."

"Rufus, indeed! Why, I'm not quite a baby," said the judge, springing out of bed: "if I make up my mind to whip that dog, I can do it."

I dare say if Mrs. Pitcher had not spoken of calling uncle Rufus, her husband would not have gone, and then Beppo would not have been punished.

I must confess he did not hurt the dog one bit. Beppo did not feel the horse-whip any more than if it had been a wisp of straw; but he hung his head in grief, for it was the first blow he had ever received. When all was over, he gave a side-glance at his master, as if to say, "I'll never do so again: I won't bark any more." And then he lay down very meekly on a cushion of hay; and the judge went back to bed, thinking he had done his duty, but feeling sorry enough to cry.

There was no more noise that night from Beppo; though two or three carriages passed, and he must have heard them, and wanted to bark.

Next morning he lingered about the yard, ashamed to come into the house.

"Poor fellow, he takes it to heart!" said the judge; and then told what happened.

The children looked sober; and Posy gazed through her tears at Pollio, who winked hard, and tried to brave it out. Friend Littlefield was glad to see that they all cared so much for the dog.

But, just as the breakfast-bell rang, Teddy rushed into the parlor, exclaiming,—

"Papa, our pears are stolen!"

"Pears, child! What pears?"

"Why, you know those two trees bending down to the ground,—the nicest pears there are in the world. Well, there isn't a thing left but just the leaves!"

"And that must have been what Beppo was barking for. No doubt he heard the thieves at work, and was trying to let us know it. The faithful old creature!" said the judge, looking distressed, but thinking much more about the dog than about the pears.

"O papa! And you w'ipped him!" cried Pollio, whirling round and round on the floor.

"Yes," sighed papa, "I whipped him."

Pollio didn't try any longer to brave it out: he swept through the room like a hurricane, to go and have a cry on his dear dog's neck.

"How'd I feel if my papa had w'ipped *me* when I wasn't naughty!" said he. But he couldn't possibly imagine it; for he had never been punished even by a "love-pat" in his whole little life.

Beppo was hugged half to death by the children; and the judge himself stroked his head, called him "fine fellow," and fed him from his own hand with broiled beef-steak.

"Does he know you're sorry, papa?" asked Pollio.

"Well, I think he has some notion of it: at any rate, he knows we're good friends once more. See, he wags his tail, and looks quite cheerful again."

"So he does," laughed Posy, clapping her hands. "Real cheerful! I guess he'll get over it, don't you? He won't think you are a bad man now."

Posy could not bear to have him think her father a bad man; and it was plain that he did not,

for he licked the judge's hand after finishing the steak, and looked up in his face as if he trusted him with his whole heart.

"Dogs know 'most as much as folks," said Posy. "I'll make a chain of flowers, and we'll put it on his neck, and I guess he'll like it; don't you?"

Pollio was sure he would be charmed. And, whether Beppo enjoyed the flowers or not, he must have known he was treated uncommonly well that day; for he had a dish of cream for dessert, and was allowed to spend most of his time in the parlor. [101]

Now, what follows is not a dream or a fairy-story, though I know it will sound very strange. It really happened that morning, while the twins and uncle Rufus were in the parlor, and Beppo was lying on the rug, watching Pollio.

There was nothing remarkable about Beppo, except that he was a large, handsome dog. His eyes just now had an asking look, as if he longed to say something: but you have seen that sort of look in any dog's eyes; it isn't at all uncommon.

"Beppo wants to speak, I know he does," said Pollio to Posy.

The dog wagged his tail, as if to reply, "You understand my feelings, my dear little master."

"Well, try it: see if you can't speak." Beppo raised his eyes, wagged his tail again, and, to the intense surprise of the children, said, or seemed to say, in a fine, piping voice,— [102]

"I was w'ipped last night."

Pollio rolled over; and Posy sprang up, exclaiming,—

"Who said that?"

"Why, who did?" cried Pollio, almost turning a somerset.

There was no person in the room but themselves and Nunky, who was too busy reading the newspaper to take any notice. Who had spoken? It *couldn't* be Beppo!

"Your papa w'ipped me!" said the piping voice again, Beppo still gazing straight at Pollio.

How wonderful! It was exactly the sort of voice a dog would be likely to speak with, if he could speak at all: it was thin and babyish. [103]

"Oh, oh!" cried Posy.

"My sakes!" cried Pollio.

They knew as well as you do that dogs are dumb animals; but here was Beppo looking right up in their faces, and talking. They were greatly excited.

"Uncle Rufus, uncle Ru-*fus!*"

But they had to run up to him, and pull his sleeve, before he would pay any attention.

"Uncle Ru-*fus!* Beppo is talking!"

"Oh! is he? Well, why shouldn't he talk? He has lived so long among chatter-boxes that I should think he might by this time."

"But you needn't make fun, Nunky. He did talk just now. I'll leave it to Posy."

"That's so!" replied Beppo, wagging his tail.

"Oh, hear him!" exclaimed Posy, dancing about in a great flutter; while Pollio rolled over and over, and jerked his elbows, crying,— [104]

"I never, never, never! Did *you* ever, uncle Rufus?"

"Your papa w'ipped me!" repeated Beppo.

Uncle Rufus seemed very much interested now, and watched the dog closely; but he was a man who was seldom surprised at any thing.

"No, I never heard a dog talk before; but what is there so very remarkable about it? Parrots can talk; and parrots don't know half as much as dogs."

"O Nunky, Nunky! it *is* queer," exclaimed Pollio, astonished at his uncle's coolness. "Why, he has lived here ever so long, and didn't ever talk before."

"No," said Posy; "no more'n the cat."

"How did he happen to speak now?" [105]

"Why, I asked him to."

"Oh! you did, did you?"

"But don't you think it's queer, Nunky? don't you think it's queer?"

"Well, rather so, perhaps; but I always knew Beppo was a bright dog.—Come here, old fellow, and tell us why you never talked before."

"*Afraid you'd laugh at me,*" replied Beppo, looking up in Mr. Gilman's face rather bashfully.

"Oh, I must tell mamma! I must tell everybody!" burst forth the twins with one voice.

Mamma was busy up stairs with her dressmaker; and nobody was to be found but Teddy, who smiled in the most provoking way when told that Beppo was talking.

"You expect me to believe that story, do you?" said he, entering the parlor with a curling lip. [106]

"*Now see!*" cried Pollio. "There, Beppo, sir, this is Teddy. Now say, 'How do you do, Teddy?'"

Beppo held out his paw as he had been taught to do, but said nothing.

"*That's* the way he talks, is it?" said Teddy scornfully. "I've seen him do as much as that a good many times."

"Oh! but he *did* talk, now truly.—We didn't cheat; did we, Posy?—Talk again, Beppo. Say, 'Your papa w'ipped me,' and I'll give you some cream."

Beppo rolled his soft brown eyes as if trying to speak, but not a sound passed his lips.

"Say one word; say 'Teddy,' and I'll give you some chicken."

No answer.

"Well, say some other word. I don't care what word." [107]

Still Beppo was speechless.

"Poh! I can't stop any longer for this: it's too foolish," said Teddy.

"Oh! just a minute, Teddy. He did talk before you came in. I'll leave it to Nunky.—Didn't Beppo talk?"

Uncle Rufus dropped his newspaper upon his knee with a roguish smile.

"Teddy, will you believe me if I say he did?"

"No, sir: I *can't* believe you," said Teddy stoutly, "because there's no common sense in saying a dog talks."

"Then I sha'n't say it."

"O Nunky, that's too, *too* bad!" cried Posy.

"Up and down mean!" cried Pollio; "for you *heard* him talk."

"I, my child? Why, I never heard a dog talk in my life!" [108]

"O Nunky, Nunky Gilman! When you were the very one that sat right there and looked straight at Beppo, and heard him say, 'Your papa w'ipped me.'"

"I heard him say nothing of the kind," returned uncle Rufus, rising, and planting himself on the rug, with his arms folded.

"There, there! I knew better all the time," said Teddy, snapping his fingers.

This *was* very trying.

"O Nunky, Nunky!" cried angry Pollio, "you've told a"—

"You've made a little mistake," struck in Posy, as angry as her brother, but more polite.

"They say 'little Pitchers have great ears,'" said uncle Rufus, smiling: "perhaps they hear what isn't to be heard. Think a minute, children, and see if you can't be wrong. If a dog *should* talk, it would be a miracle." [109]

"But we heard him," said Pollio.

"Did you see his lips move?"

"Oh! I—I don' know. I didn't think of that."

"Well, I want to teach you to think, my boy; and that is why I have teased you a little. Beppo will speak again; and perhaps you'll watch his lips this time, won't you?"

"*Your papa w'ipped me,*" squeaked the fine little voice; but the twins both observed that Beppo never opened his mouth. They saw now that their uncle had been playing a trick upon them.

"Oh, now I know, now I know! Nunky did it himself."

"Of course he did, you goosie! 'Fore I'd be so silly as you and Posy," said Teddy, proud of his own wisdom.

"Not so fast, Teddy," said his uncle. "I could have cheated you in the same way a year or two [110]

ago. And I don't believe now you can tell how I do it. Look at me while I speak so again."

Teddy did look; but uncle Rufus scarcely stirred his lips, as he said in a voice that seemed to come from the very depths of the cellar,—

"I'm a rat! I'm drowning in the pork-barrel!"

"Oh! how *do* you do it?" cried Teddy. "How can you make your voice sound *way off*, and so different from *your* voice? Do you do it down in your stomach?"

"Yes, I suppose so. It is called 'ventriloquism.' I have cheated wiser people than our little Pitchers in this way."

"Well, you can't cheat *me* again," said little Pollio, deeply mortified.

"No: because next time you will *think*. But here comes friend Littlefield. Now, Teddy, don't you tell him about this; please don't." [111]

It was well Nuncky said that; for Teddy was rather apt to report "the children's" little mistakes, and they were very sensitive about it.

Pollio had now been lame for several weeks, and everybody thought it might be months before he would get well. But, one morning not long after this, Posy swung open the dining-room door, drawing her brother after her, and saying gleefully,—

"O mamma! O papa! my Pollio can walk!"

Yes, he was actually walking. Never was Napoleon Bonaparte any prouder after a great victory than our little hero as he stalked into that dining-room.

They all rose from the table just as surprised as they had been on the first morning when he *couldn't* walk. Then what a clapping of hands, what a shouting! Eliza Potter and Jane Roarty, who were in the kitchen, wondered what could have happened; and so did Ike, who was passing by the dining-room windows. [112]

Ike saw Mrs. Pitcher hugging Pollio as if he were the best boy in the world, just because his legs had stopped feeling like India-rubber boots; and then they hugged him all round, and his father tossed him up to the ceiling.

"Let's celebrate; let's have a picnic at Rocky Brook," said Dick.

"But Pollio can't walk so far," objected Edith.

"Why, yes, I can. I can walk all over the world," exclaimed Pollio, trying to dance, but tipping backward against Teddy.

CHAPTER VII. THE LAKE OF LILIES.

 [113]

"SIX'M."

Teddy laughed, for that was what Posy said one day when a lady asked how old she was.

A whole year had passed since the twins began to go to school, and nearly a year since Pollio was hurt. People had almost forgotten the time when he crept on all-fours; for he was as active as ever now, indeed, the "spryest" boy in town.

But his lameness had done him a little good. He was more careful to obey his mother, and he was more thoughtful of sick people. He did not whoop quite so loud now when aunt Ann had the headache; and he was very kind indeed to Hop-clover, who never, never, would be able to walk without limping. [114]

Hop-clover's mother, who *wasn't* her mother, had run away; and sometimes the man she called father didn't come home all night, and poor Hop-clover had to go to the neighbors' houses to sleep: but she was a happy child, for all that, and still said to Posy, with a smile, "God will take care o' *me*!" Her own mother had told her so, and she always believed it.

"Pollio, my son," said Judge Pitcher one morning. Pollio came hobbling along, with a mallet under his arm for a make-believe crutch. He and Posy were playing croquet.

"Will you run to the 'little woman's' store for me?"

The children called Miss Rounds "the little woman," because she was small, and had a hump on her back. [115]

"Come, Posy," said Pollio, rushing for his hat.

"Wait a bit, my son. What are you going for?"

Pollio looked a little ashamed; but he always *was* in such a hurry! He and Posy came back for

the errand, and saw that their father was holding out his beautiful cream-colored meerschaum, with a lady's head carved on the bowl. He wanted some tobacco.

"O papa!" said Posy, looking grieved.

"Well, darling, you needn't go with brother unless you choose. But why don't you want papa to smoke?"

Posy blushed, but could not answer.

"Come here, my love, and whisper it in my ear," said her mother.

"So his mouth'll be sweet to kiss, like Nunky's," whispered the little girl, with another blush. [116]

"Dear papa! I wish you'd cure him of smoking. Will you try?" whispered mamma.

Posy looked up to see if she were in earnest.

"Yes, mamma, I'll try," said she gravely, and ran to join Pollio.

"What were you whispering about?"

"Oh, you'll see!" replied Posy, with an air of importance. "Let *me* buy the tobacco."

When they reached "the little woman's" store, Posy walked up to the counter ahead of Pollio, and said with much decision, "If you please'm, we want the worst tobacco you've got."

Miss Rounds stared.

"The *worst!*" exclaimed she, looking along the row of glass boxes, and then back again at solemn Miss Posy. "Did your papa say so?" [117]

"No'm; but we want to cure him of smoking."

The little woman laughed, and the next time she saw the judge she told him about it.

"Well, well," said he thoughtfully, "if my little daughter is taking me in hand, it is high time I tried to do better."

He knew Posy did not like his pipe, and he began to think that was why Nunky got more of her kisses than he did. Dainty little Posy! The touch of her sweet, pure lips was very precious to her father.

He tried her that night. He did not take out his meerschaum; and she remained sitting on his knee, looking very happy, instead of slipping off, and running to Nunky. She kissed him, too, a great many times.

"You do love papa; don't you, darling?" [118]

"Oh, dearly I do! But I wish your head wasn't so bald," said Posy, patting it mournfully. "I'm afraid you'll be my grandpa 'fore I know it."

The judge laughed.

"Well, poor papa can't help growing bald. But do you think he's nicer when he doesn't smoke?"

"Oh, ever and *ever* so nicer!"

"And how many sweet kisses will you give me every day I'm good and don't smoke?"

"Five hundred million thousand!" cried Posy, clapping her hands.

Papa smiled, and said that was one too many; and then he looked sober, for he had a great mind to begin, for Posy's sake, to stop smoking. Dr. Field said the pipe was making him sick, and had often scolded; but Posy's kisses touched him much more than the scoldings. [119]

From this time he really broke off the habit entirely; and it was his little daughter who cured him.

One day Posy was crying on the street, as she was walking with Pollio; and, before she could wipe her eyes, Dr. Field crossed over, and asked,—

"Ah, what's the matter, Mrs. Thumb?"

"She's crying about your whiskers," spoke up Pollio, who needn't have told. "I said I was going to have some just like 'em when I grow up, and then she cried."

Dr. Field laughed, and said,—

"Well, well, Mrs. Thumb, I suppose he will; but don't cry about 'em till they begin to grow."

If he hadn't called her Mrs. Thumb! and if he hadn't laughed! Dr. Field was a wise man in every thing else, but he didn't understand little folks. [120]

He had really crossed the street to say something delightful, for a wonder. The sabbath school was to have a picnic next day, and he wanted to be the one to tell the good news; but, in laughing at Posy, he had forgotten it.

The children went home. Pollio led Posy into the parlor, and was affectionately drying her eyes with the lace curtain, when Mr. Lane, the new minister, called. Eliza went for Mrs. Pitcher; and Posy was going too, but her brother held her back. He thought they both ought to stay and entertain the stranger till mamma came down.

"Good-morning, my dears," said Mr. Lane, with a smile very different from Dr. Field's: "I suppose this is Judge Pitcher's little daughter?"

"Yes, sir," said Posy, blushing.

[121]

"Me, too," cried Pollio, stepping up, and offering his little hand. He was tired of being told that he did not look like the rest of the family, and meant to explain matters at once. "Folks think I'm French or Latin, but I'm not. I'm my father's youngest son."

"Oh! I'm very glad to hear it. Pardon me for not knowing you at once," laughed the minister. "So you are this dear little girl's brother?"

"Yes, sir," replied Pollio, much pleased to hear her called "a dear little girl." "Oh, I tell you, she's a jolly good sister! Sometimes I think she's better than ME!"

The minister laughed again, but very pleasantly. He had a fair, sunny face, and kind manner; and children always opened their little hearts to him at once. He took Posy on his knee, and she sat there quietly; blushing, it is true, but more for Pollio's speeches than for fear of Mr. Lane. It was strange what things that boy would say sometimes. Posy being so very silent, he thought *he* ought to keep up the conversation: so he leaned his elbow on the minister's other knee, and asked the first question that came into his little head:—

[122]

"How many p'licemen s'pose you could lick?" For he thought Mr. Lane looked pretty strong. Posy blushed; and so did Mrs. Pitcher, who was just entering the room.

But Mr. Lane only smiled. He knew a good deal about children; for he had three little boys of his own, and *they* did not always talk properly.

He could not stay very long. He had called to invite all the family to a sail to-morrow on the Lake of Lilies. The whole sabbath school was to go in the cars to a steamboat, and spend the day on the water.

On hearing this, Pollio shouted. The Lake of Lilies!—he knew no more about it than he did about the hanging-gardens of Babylon; but that was all the better, "Hurrah! Going to the Lake of Lilies!"

He was *so* happy that his mother was obliged to send him out of the room. Of course she couldn't let him turn somersets before an entire stranger. Posy was just as happy as he was, but she didn't make so much noise about it.

"What dear little creatures!" thought Mr. Lane, as they both left the room. "The boy is slightly rough, but his love for his sister atones for every thing."

Pollio hadn't known so long a day since his lameness. Have you ever observed how long the day always seems when something pleasant is going to happen to-morrow?

"I think a picnic is perfectly splendid! I've forgot what you pick, though," said Posy, looking puzzled.

"You pick people's cupboards, *I* should say," replied Eliza, measuring out sugar. "I hate the very sound of a picnic! I thought I had all I could do before, but now here's queen-cake"—

"Oh, that's right, 'Liza! And some strawb'ry-jelly tarts, and cherry-turnovers, and peach-pie!" cried Pollio, turning a somerset in the middle of the floor. Eliza winked her eyelashes, and said something about children's being seen, and not heard. Pollio thought they had a right to be heard, and so do I at proper times; but I must say these little Pitchers did trouble Jane and Eliza too much. Jane was a saint, and could sweep a floor with children under her broom; but Eliza couldn't make cake unless the kitchen was clear, and said so much about "going crazy," and "wanting to fly," that Pollio really thought she wasn't quite right in her mind.

[125]

"No: not strawb'ry-jelly tarts, but plum-jelly tarts, and ice-cream, and—oh, dear, Posy! *you* say what else.—I want a basketful, 'Liza, and Posy wants a basketful, and Teddy wants a basketful, and Edy wants"—



"Pollio led Posy into the Parlor, and was affectionately drying her Eyes with the Lace Curtain."

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Before Pollio could finish, he was on the other side of the kitchen-door, and the door was shut in his face.

Eliza was ashamed of her temper next minute, and sent Posy after him with a hot cream-cake.

"Won't Eliza make a queer angel, though, when she dies?" said Pollio, as he broke the cake in two pieces, to divide with Posy. "If she acts like this, they won't have her in the parlor with the rest of the angels, *you'd* better believe."

But he always forgave Eliza very sweetly; and her putting him out of the kitchen never made any difference about his going right back again to be as troublesome as ever. [126]

CHAPTER VIII. POSY'S ROSEBUD.

 [127]

ELIZA was cross all day; but, as Dick said, the crosser she was, the better she cooked. At any rate, there was food enough next morning, and of the most delicious sort, to fill three large baskets; and only seven people were going.

There were tarts and turnovers, and crumpets and cake, and Washington-pie, not to mention cold corned beef and boiled ham.

"All that for seven mouths? Why, it will feed half the party!" exclaimed Nunky, as he helped Nanty pack it into the baskets.

"Wait till we come home, and see if we bring any thing back," said she, finding room for two dozen boiled eggs in the corners, with a little paper bag of pepper and salt. [128]

"What we don't eat ourselves, we shall give to little Hop-clover and the other stray birds. Oh! there's no danger of taking too much," added Nanty, fastening down the covers.

She and Nunky were going, and were to take care of the children, while Judge Pitcher and his wife staid at home. "How dreary it would be in that great lonesome house all day, with no noise but the ticking of the clocks!" thought the little Pitchers, and wondered their parents could look so cheerful. For them this trip to the Lake of Lilies was the great event of the summer, and everybody who could not go was very much to be pitied.

When Posy was dressed all in white for the ride, she looked so beautiful, that the whole family had to kiss and keep kissing her, till Pollio was out of all patience; for he was in a hurry to get to the cars. He had been up ever since sunrise, and had filled every one of his pockets with peanuts to eat on the way in case of "hungriness." Nanty had sternly declared the picnic-baskets should not be opened till dinner-time; and he did have a perfect horror of "hungriness." [129]

"Well, I believe, after all, I'll go with you as far as the steamboat, if your mother doesn't mind," said Judge Pitcher, snatching up his hat at the last minute.

The cars were full. All the children in town seemed to be going; and, by the smiles on their faces, you would think they were all in love with the Lake of Lilies, and would rather see it than any other spot in the world.

Judge Pitcher took Posy on his knee; and a gentleman in the next seat touched him on the shoulder, and said,— [130]

"Well, you must be a proud father to have such a lovely little girl as that!"

He was a perfect stranger; but he looked at Posy with a smile, of course, and offered her a rosebud. She blushed, and thanked him, and was going to give it to papa to keep for her; but papa pinned it into the bosom of her frock. He *was* proud: he did think his little girl and the pink rosebud looked very much alike,—both so sweet, so pure, so beautiful!

When they reached the steamboat, "The Lady of the Lake," he went on board with the party, and said to the twins,—

"Now I leave you in charge of uncle Rufus and aunt Ann."

"Just's if *I* couldn't take care o' my little sister *myself!*" cried Pollio, quite offended. [131]

"Well, see that you do it," said papa, laughing.

"Won't you please take care of me too?" asked Miss Crowell, their sabbath-school teacher.

Pollio saw at once that she was making sport of him: so he did not answer, but drew himself up like a little man, and threw one arm protectingly around his sister.

Then papa kissed all the children, and the twins twice over, saying to Posy,—

"Good-by, my own little rosebud."

And, when he walked up the wharf, he carried a picture in his mind of a beautiful little girl

with a pink rosebud on her bosom.

There was such a crowd on the boat, that uncle Rufus and aunt Ann watched the little ones every moment; while Edith took care of Teddy. None of the children knew they were watched, however: they thought they were all helping Dick look out for the baskets. [132]

"Did you ever see a merrier party?" said Nanty to Nunky, as she held Posy's hand, and looked round upon the bright little faces.

Hop-clover was there in a faded but clean calico frock, hugging a paper bag of crackers, which was all she could find for her dinner; but, if it had been roast turkey and plum-pudding, she could not have looked gayer.

"Nunky, please let go my hand," said Pollio. "I want to show Posy how the paddles work."

"Do you think I'll let you both pitch overboard?" said Nunky, grasping the little general's hand the closer.

But he led him along to the side of the boat, while Nanty and the rest followed. [133]

"Now you may show Posy how the paddles work," said he. "Dick, perch her up on the railing, while I attend to Pollio."

Pollio looked rather sulky. It was strange that people thought he ought to be "attended to," when he felt quite able to take care of the whole party.

"The Lady of the Lake" was a fast-sailing steamer, and moved with proud grace, as if alive, and pleased to hear the children praising her.

"See what waves of light we leave behind us!" said Nunky, pointing to the stern of the boat, where the pale-green water was churned into foam.

"Oh, how beautiful! It looks like roses and diamonds and gold rings, and—and *every thing!*" cried Posy, watching the many-colored bubbles that shone in the sun as if a million jewels were broken up, and dancing in the water. [134]

The boat landed at last at the town of Gray; and the party of children formed a line, and marched to Aspen Grove, where dinner was to be served. It had been very bright all the morning; but, by the time they reached the grove, the sun wrapped himself in a cloud, like an invalid in a great-coat; and it seemed so much like rain, that the teachers thought best to dine in the Town Hall.

What a blow to the children! They had seen the grove, and it was beautiful. There were swings dangling from the trees; there were croquet-sets lying about in boxes ready to be put up; but the most welcome sight of all was the row of long wooden tables where the food was to have been placed. Must they leave all this, and be shut up in the house? [135]

"Humph! T'won't rain, you see 'f it does! my papa didn't say nuffin' 'bout it," sniffed Pollio, as they turned, and formed a line again to march to the hall.

They had no sooner entered than it began to pour. There were no tables in the hall; and the teachers said each family might eat in a seat by itself, and call it a "basket picnic."

Nobody liked this; but perhaps there was not a child present so disappointed as little Hop-clover. She did not suppose any one knew what she carried in her paper bag; and she had meant to set the bag on the table beside the baskets, where it would not be noticed. But now she must eat with several other children, beside Miss Ware her teacher, who was a fine lady in a beautiful silk dress and lace shawl. She had eaten very little breakfast, but she would almost rather starve than open that paper bag. [136]

"Why don't you eat, Cindy?" asked the little girl at her left, with a bit of nice cake in her mouth.

"I guess my head aches some," replied Hop-clover; and it did really ache, and her heart too.

Aunt Ann, who was three seats behind Hop-clover, happened to look up just as she was passing the boiled eggs, and saw that hungry, friendless look on the poor lame girl's face.

"Why, how I've been neglecting that child!" said she. "Make room for her, Dick and Edy, and I'll go bring her into our seat."

So she went and brought her, and Hop-clover's headache went off in a twinkling; though I fancy it wasn't Nanty's gold smelling-bottle that cured it, so much as the cream-biscuits, cold meat, and crumpets. [137]

"Oh, I wish she was my auntie!" thought little Hop-clover, gazing at pretty Miss Ann wistfully.

Posy, thinking she looked sober about something, crept closer to her, and laid her cheek against her hand.

"Isn't every thing so nice?" said she. It was all she could think of to say; but she wanted Hop-clover to know she liked her in their seat, eating with them.

Before dinner was over, the sun had thrown off his great-coat of clouds; and the children were

soon rushing out of the house, gayer than ever. There were running and laughing, and playing and singing. It was a day of almost perfect delight; and, when "The Lady of the Lake" whistled to call them back, nobody was ready to go except the grown people.

"I shall be thankful if we once get these children home," remarked Nanty aside to Nunky, after they were all on board. "I'm so afraid somebody will fall into the water!" [138]

Alas! there was a far greater danger; though nobody thought of it, not even the man who was putting coal under the boiler. This man was proud of "The Lady of the Lake," and wanted her to skim over the water as fast as possible: so perhaps he made too much fire; and perhaps, too, there was a crack in the red-hot iron. I don't quite know what *was* the trouble; but something terrible happened,—the boiler blew up.

I shall not describe the scene on the boat; for, even if I knew how to do it, it is too dreadful to write or even think about.

That night there were terror and distress throughout the whole town of Rosewood. Everybody knew that "The Lady of the Lake" had met with an awful accident, and that some of the children who had gone on the excursion would not come home alive, while many others were fearfully hurt. [139]

Judge Pitcher and his wife did not know of it for some hours. While out riding, they were stopped on the street by "the little woman," who exclaimed with a white face,—

"A despatch from Muldoon! 'The Lady of the Lake' blown to pieces!"

The judge did not wait for another word, but drove furiously to the telegraph-office. There he learned that the cars were to arrive half an hour later than usual, bringing the dead and wounded.

"Let us hurry home. Let us be ready," whispered Mrs. Pitcher.

There was not the least color in her face, but her husband knew she would not faint. A mother has no time to faint when she is waiting to hear whether her children are alive or dead. [140]

I don't know why; but the judge was thinking of Posy, and fancying, if any of his children were lost, it would be this darling of the family.

He was right. All the rest were safe; but dear little Posy was brought home on cushions, her sweet eyes closed, and their golden fringe quite still against the white cheeks. The faded rosebud on her bosom did not stir: her heart had ceased beating.

It was the loveliest, sweetest, saddest sight. Papa wept, and wrung his hands; but there were no tears in mamma's eyes as she knelt beside her darling.

"O God! she isn't dead yet; don't let her die! She isn't dead yet; don't let her die!"

That was what mamma said again and again, with her hand upon Posy's heart.

"Lemme kiss her! She's *my* twin-sister," cried frantic Pollio, springing away from Nanty, who tried to hold him. "I shall die if you don't lemme kiss her." [141]

"Hush!" whispered his mother, with a wonderful light in her eyes, "her heart flutters! Go away, everybody: leave her to papa and me."

That was the end of sorrow, the beginning of joy. Posy opened her beautiful eyes: God let her live, and not die.

It was a happy, happy house; but was any one happier than Pollio when they brought him in, and told him he might kiss her on her white lips?

"I tried to take care of her," sobbed the brave boy; "but the boat went and busted right up, and I couldn't help it."

"To be sure you couldn't, my little man: we all know you did your best," replied papa, not laughing at all.

Then he picked up something from the floor, and gave it to his wife, saying,— [142]

"Let us always keep this precious token."

It was Posy's rosebud.

They did not know till next day that Hop-clover had been in the kitchen all the while, waiting for news from Posy.

"The child has a feeling heart," said Jane Roarty; "and so you'd ha' thought, Miss Pitcher, if you'd seen her cry in my arms last night."

GOING VISITING.

ONE day after Posy was quite well, she sat by the roadside near the house, moulding doll's furniture out of clay. A little soft chair about as big as a grasshopper stood drying on a board, and she was now making a sofa, and embroidering the sides with a pin.

"Look," said Pollio, "see who's coming!"

It was dear Mr. Littlefield on horseback, stopping every now and then to pick a fly off his sleek horse. The children could not hear him; but he was saying to the horse,—

"There now, keep thy temper, good beast: I won't let the flies bite thee."

[144]

But he was too kind to kill the flies; and what do you suppose he did with them? Dropped them tenderly into his coat-pocket!

Before he reached Judge Pitcher's the three children rushed out to meet him.

"Good-morning, Edward, and Napoleon and Josephine," said he, as they alighted on him like a flock of birds. "Is thy mother well, and about the house? There now, I must hurry and let out my prisoners."

The children followed him into the stable, where he opened his coat-pockets, and out jumped a handful of dizzy, crazy flies.

"I've kept them in jail, where they couldn't do any mischief," laughed the Quaker; "but now they can get an honest living in your stable, and not trouble anybody."

Little Pollio and Posy laughed aloud at this, and, seizing their tender-hearted old friend by the arms, led him into the house through the kitchen. Eliza looked up very pleasantly, for she knew Friend Littlefield and liked him; but she was in the act of doing something which made him unhappy. Some flies had settled on the table to sip a few drops of molasses, and she was pouncing down on them with a wet towel.

[145]

"Eliza, Eliza," said he sorrowfully, "those are God's creatures. Consider! *Thee* can't make a fly!"

"And I'm sure I shouldn't want to," said Eliza, with another dash of the towel. "I'm sorry you feel so, sir; but I've no notion of being turned out of the house by an army of flies."

Mr. Littlefield sighed, and Pollio drew him along to the parlor. There were no flies there; and the room was so beautiful with pictures and flowers, that the good man smiled, and forgot Eliza's cruelty. He took Posy on his knee, and talked to her mother about the dreadful accident to the steamboat, and thanked God again and again that the little girl was saved.

[146]

"How did thee feel when the boat blew up, Napoleon?"

"I thought I was a *gone man*," replied Pollio; "and, I tell you, I tried hard to keep the children still."

This was so droll, that everybody laughed. By and by the Quaker told Mrs. Pitcher he had come to Rosewood to take home a new "chaise," and he had just happened to think that this would be a good time for the twins to pay him a visit. He could take them as well as not, and his wife Liddy was sure to be glad to see them.

Pollio began to turn a somerset, but caught himself by the hair, and changed it into a dance. Posy was quite as eager, but did not dance with any thing but her eyes.

[147]

"Wait a moment," said their mamma. "Mr. Littlefield is very kind to give this invitation; but the truth is, my poor little Posy has nothing fit to wear. The cow has eaten up her two best dresses."

The Quaker looked surprised, as well he might. He knew that toads eat their own clothes, but he had never heard that any animals eat little girls' dresses.

"Yes," said Mrs. Pitcher, "our new cow strayed into the clothes-yard last Monday, and chewed up some of the fine clothes lying in a tub. We would not have bought such a strange cow if we had known her habits."

"O mamma!" pleaded Posy in a whisper. "Don't you s'pose the lady would 'scuse it? My other dresses are not *very* homely,—not so homely as Hop-clover's."

[148]

"Hop-clover!" exclaimed Pollio aloud. "Why, when the cow has chewed Posy's things all up, they look better'n Hop-clover's. Hop-clover's things are *all* rags."

"Is Hop-clover the cow?" asked the Quaker.

"Oh, no, sir! It's a little girl. And that isn't her name, either. Her name is—What is her name, mamma?"

"Lucinda Outhouse."

"Oh, yes! I knew 'twas a shed, or some kind of a barn. Her name's Lucy-vindy Outhouse."

"Outhouse, Outhouse!" exclaimed the Quaker. "I never knew but one man of that name; and he

married a good friend of mine,—Lucinda Fearing. But they went to Ohio. This can't be Lucinda's child."

"Why, perhaps it is. We will send for Hop-clover, and you shall talk with her," said Mrs. Pitcher, looking very much interested. [149]

"How glad I *should* be if it is Lucinda's child! Liddy and I thought so much of Lucinda!"

"She's lame. Posy used to call her a *hypocrite*," said Teddy. Whereupon Posy blushed, and hid behind her mother.

"Poor little girl! So she is lame? I'm sorry," said the kind Quaker, looking sober, though he had never heard of Hop-clover before. He seemed to forget that he had invited company; and, without waiting to hear whether they could go or not, he kept on asking questions about the lame girl.

When he heard her mother was dead, he sighed, and said, "Poor thing, poor thing!" And, when he heard she lived alone with a bad step-father, he wiped his spectacles, as if this touched him far more than Eliza's killing flies. [150]

"Did thee say I could see the child?"

"Pollio!" said his mother.

Pollio was always ready to run for his hat, but just now he was lost in surprise. *Were* he and Posy to be cheated out of their visit? He started at once, however, to go after "Lucy-vindy."

You never saw a worse looking house than the one she lived in. The windows were half glass, half rags: outside stood a tub, a rake with one or two stumpy teeth, an old mop, and a battered tin pail. Hop-clover was seated on the doorstep, mending the skirt of her dress with some blue cotton yarn drawn through a darning-needle. She had never been taught to sew, and was wearing her brass thimble on the wrong finger. Pollio did not know that; but he thought it was funny to use such a monstrous needle, and jerk so hard to get it through the calico. [151]

"What you doing?" said he, leaning over to watch her.

"Oh! the holes are awful: I want to pucker 'em up a little," replied Hop-clover, pulling with such a jerk that she scratched Pollio's face.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" said she. But it was a mercy she had not put out his eyes.

"Poh! it don't hurt much: it isn't as bad as a butcher-knife," said he, spreading the blood over his cheek, as he rubbed the scratch with his finger. "But, Hop-clover, I want you to go to my house: there's a man wants to see you."

"Wants to see *me*!"

Hop-clover's eyes were big with wonder.

"Yes. Come, hurry; for Posy and I are going to ride in his chaise,—I guess; and I never saw a chaise." [152]

"Well, wait, till I put on my good dress."

"Oh, come along! Your dresses are all just alike."

"Why, Pollio! I've got a pink one that's most whole."

And she hopped joyfully into the house to put it on. I suppose it *had* been pink when Edith Pitcher owned it; but Hop-clover had let it lie on the grass so many days and nights, that it was faded and spotted and streaked. Poor child! When people gave her any thing, she did not know how to take care of it.

Pollio thought she was a long while getting ready. He stood on the doorstone whistling, while she scrubbed her face and neck, and smoothed her hair with a comb which had about nine teeth in it. By the time she came out he was cross; but she did not know it. She was thinking how nice it was that somebody "wanted her," somebody had "sent" for her. [153]

The Quaker kissed her when he saw her. Perhaps she was cleaner and prettier than he had expected; for he kept saying, "Thee looks like a good little girl, a nice little girl. So thee has no mother? How long has she been dead?"

Hop-clover did not know; but Mrs. Pitcher said two years. She did not live very long after the family came to Rosewood.

"Where did thee move from when thee came here, my child?"

"We moved from Ohio."

"This *must* be Lucinda Fearing's child," said Mr. Littlefield, rising and sitting down again. "Does thee remember how thy mother looked, my dear?"

"She had black curls. Oh, I remember her *so* well! She used to say thee and thou to me sometimes, just as you do." [154]

"Ah! that was *our* Lucinda! I'm so glad I have found her little girl!" said the Quaker, walking

about the room, then stooping to kiss Hop-clover again.

"How would thee like to ride with me to my house this afternoon for a visit?"

Hop-clover looked at the carpet as if a star had fallen out of the sky at her feet. She never once thought of her gown; though it had stains and grease-spots, and a hole under each arm. She forgot her leaky shoes, and her coarse old shawl. What did she care about her clothes if for once in her life she could take a ride out of town!

She threw back her hat with such a look of delight, that Nunky drew a hasty picture of her, as he stood in the door with sketch-book and pencil in his hand. Everybody was glad for Hop-clover —I mean everybody but the twins. [155]

"I tell you it's mean," said the injured Pollio to his injured sister, as they stole out of the room, and stood in the front-hall, with their arms around each other's waists, "asking *her* to go instead of us!"

"So I think! If the cow did eat up my white dresses, how did *he* know I wasn't a-going to go in my blue dress that the cow *didn't* eat!"

"That's so, Posy! And how'd he know *I* wouldn't go? Mamma never said 'no' about *that*; for the cow didn't eat up *my* clothes, 'cept my handkerjiff with ships in the corner."

The good Quaker would have been quite surprised if he had overheard these remarks, for he had no idea of leaving his little pets behind. What he called his "chaise" was a large, handsome carriage with two seats; and, when the children were snuggled into it that afternoon, Pollio declared there was room enough for three more and the dog. [156]

The serene old Quaker chirruped to his serene old horse, while the children shouted "Good-by, everybody!" and jumped up and down to try the new velvet cushions. And then the gay little party drove off.

Hop-clover wore Edith's outgrown blue cambric dress, tucked up and taken in, and Posy's second-best hat, and looked as respectable as any child in town.

"I'm so glad I'm lame!" thought she; "for that's what makes everybody love me."

Was it? Then why didn't people love Jake Flint, a lying, stealing little boy in Rosewood, who was as lame twice over as Hop-clover?

CHAPTER X. QUAKER MEETING.

[157]

AFTER a lovely ride of twenty miles the carriage stopped at a large yellow farm-house in the midst of trees and flowers. Hop-clover hoped this was Mr. Littlefield's home; for it looked like just the place where she would wish to go visiting.

They drove round to a side-door. A girl was seated in the entry with her lap full of silver, which she was polishing with all the strength of her big, strong arm.

"How does thee do, Dorothy? Where's my wife? I've brought her some company," said the Quaker, smiling as he handed out the three children. [158]

The girl rose, slipped off her apron, and rolled the silver into it in a heap on the floor. There were six visitors in the house already, who had come since Mr. Littlefield went away; but Dorothy was not like Eliza Potter, she did not know how to be cross. She asked Hop-clover if her foot was "asleep;" but, when she found the little girl was lame, she seemed very sorry. Then she led the children into the parlor to her mistress; while Mr. Littlefield drove into the stable with his man John, to put up the carriage.

Mrs. Littlefield was a lovely little lady, in a drab silk dress and fine white cap, with a white kerchief crossed upon her bosom. She was seated with her guests, four Quaker ladies, who also wore white caps and kerchiefs. She rose when the children entered, and said with a kind smile that she was very glad they had come. But I am sure she wondered where her husband had picked them up; for she had never seen one of them before. [159]

Hop-clover was quite alarmed by the row of Quakers, but she did nothing worse than to put her finger in her mouth; while Posy blushed crimson, and Pollio bowed five times,—once for each lady,—not forgetting to twitch his front-hair. He had never seen women dressed so strangely before; but he wished them to understand that he thought none the worse of them for it.

When Mr. Littlefield came in and said the twins were Judge Pitcher's children, his wife kissed them again, and said she had always wanted to see them.

"And thee wants to see this one just as much, when I tell thee who she is," said her husband, leading up Hop-clover. "This is Lucinda Fearing's child." [160]

"What? Thee doesn't mean *our* Lucinda,—the one that came to us when our little grandchild

Samuel was born, and lived here five years?" said Mrs. Littlefield, taking Hop-clover in her arms, and hugging her right against the starched kerchief. "Bless thy little heart! Why, thee looks like thy mother!"

"I knew thee would be glad to see her, Liddy," said Mr. Littlefield, smiling.

The Quaker ladies all looked on with the kindest interest, and said they remembered "that good Lucinda."

"She made my caps for me," said Mrs. Mott.

"She was very steady about going to meeting," said Mrs. Swan.

"Didn't she marry a man by the name of Outhouse?" asked Mrs. Crane.

Hop-clover pressed her cheek against the soft kerchief, and felt so happy that she couldn't help crying. It was beautiful to see people who had known and loved her own dear mother. [161]

"This child looks very pale," said Mr. Littlefield; "but I thought it might do her good to play with the calves and chickens awhile. What does *thee* think, Liddy?"

The twins looked on, and listened to all this with surprise. Hop-clover was almost a little beggar-child; yet the people in this house seemed to care more about her than they did about Judge Pitcher's children. Posy was glad of it; but Pollio didn't quite like it, he was used to a great deal of attention. Supper was now ready, however,—the very nicest supper; and, Mr. Swan and Mr. Crane coming in, no more was said about "that good Lucinda."

Next morning the children made a telegraph in the barn with the clothes-line, and sent printed messages back and forth, making a clicking noise with two sticks while they were going. Hop-clover did not print, like the others, but wrote remarkably well for a child of her age. This was her message: "Click, Click. *Dorrythe* is coming out here." [162]

And, before the message had gone "across the wires," Dorothy really did appear, with a bowl of corn-meal dough; and the children clustered around to see her feed the late chickens. It was a pretty sight, especially to Hop-clover.

"*You're* having a good time, I guess," said Dorothy, smiling down upon the lame girl kindly.

"Oh, I never was so happy! I never saw such cunning chickens! But don't you wish they'd been born sooner? I'm afraid they won't grow up before the snow comes." [163]

"No, they won't, unless we take good care of them. But this is a famous place for taking care of every thing,—chickens and folks too," added Dorothy, smiling again.

"Why don't you say *thee* and *thou*?" asked Pollio, who had been watching the girl's speech.

"Because I'm not a Quaker."

"Don't you like the Quakers?"

"Oh, yes! I love them dearly. I've lived with Mrs. Littlefield ever since I was twelve years old. She took me when I didn't know much, and hadn't any home or any parents, and she has been a mother to me ever since. The Littlefields like folks all the better for being poor, or sick, or in trouble, *I* believe," said Dorothy, with another smile at Hop-clover.

"Why, that's just like"—began Posy. [164]

"Like Jesus Christ," said Pollio.

"To be sure it is: they try to be like Him."

"Dorothy," said Hop-clover, drawing near the girl, and speaking low, "did you know my mother?"

"No: she went away just before I came; but I've always heard about her."

"They say she was awful good," said Pollio, spattering dough rather spitefully: "what did she do that was so nice?"

"Well, she went to meeting pretty steady, I guess, for one thing."

"Poh, so does *my* mother: she goes every Sunday."

"Quakers go oftener than that: they go every Thursday. They call Sunday First Day, and Thursday Fifth Day."

"I'd like to go to Quaker meeting, 'cause my mother used to," said Hop-clover thoughtfully. [165]

"Well, perhaps you can: there will be meeting to-day, and all our folks will go but the hired men," said Dorothy, going into the house with her empty bowl.

When Mrs. Littlefield heard of Hop-clover's wish, she seemed pleased; and Pollio said at once that he and Posy wished to go too. He knew he could sit as still in church as anybody, not even excepting "Lucy-vindy's" mother.

So they all went off together,—the eight good Quakers in drab, and the three little children in

pink and blue. Hop-clover had the place of honor; for she walked between Mr. and Mrs. Littlefield, holding a hand of each. She looked too gay for a Quaker maiden; and so did Posy, for Posy wore a pink frock and pink stockings, and swung a pink parasol. She knew she was looking well, and that Pollio's hat and jacket were nice; and I fear she tossed her head a little, as she whispered,—

[166]

“Don't take hold of my hand, Pollio: it isn't *stylish!*”

Posy was a dear little girl; but Nanty and Nunky had asked each other lately if she wasn't growing just the least bit vain.

The Quaker meeting-house was brown, and not very pretty. It had no pulpit, but the children did not know there was no minister either. They went in and took their seats, which had very high backs. Pollio sat with Mr. Littlefield, on the men's side; and Hop-clover and Posy were wedged in between Mrs. Swan and Mrs. Crane, on the women's side.

They waited and waited for the minister, but he didn't come. They waited and waited for the music, but nobody sang. Then Pollio observed that the “other men” wore their hats: so he put his on again, and peeped roguishly across the aisle at the little girls, who peeped back again, and tried not to smile.

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Then they waited longer, and watched the flies, and wondered why meeting didn't begin.

Meeting *had* begun. These good people, with their hats and bonnets on, were talking to God; and that is what they call a Quaker meeting. Perhaps somebody would speak by and by, perhaps not; but, at any rate, it was a Quaker meeting all the same.

It was so warm, and so still, that Pollio fell asleep, but was wakened by hearing a sing-song voice say,—

“While I mused, the fire burned.”

It was Mr. Littlefield. Pollio half rose on his toes, and stared at the stove. Where *was* the fire?

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But Mr. Littlefield meant the “fire of love.” He loved God and all God's children; and what he said was very beautiful, only Pollio could not quite understand it.

Then he sat down again, and sat so still, that one fly washed its face on his hand, and another walked over his nose and peeped at his eyes, as if to see if he was asleep.

This was too much for Pollio. Perhaps they were Quaker flies, and had come out of Mr. Littlefield's pocket; and, when he thought of that, he giggled outright.

It was too bad, for he was generally a very well-behaved boy in church. He could not believe his own ears. Posy could not believe hers, either, though she blushed crimson, and hid behind Hop-clover. If he had only waited one minute! The Quakers were shaking hands all round for good-by: Quaker meeting was done!

[169]

Pollio rushed out in an agony of shame; but Mr. Littlefield stopped him in the entry, by laying his hand kindly on his shoulder.

“I suppose thee got pretty tired, Napoleon. Thee isn't used to our kind of meetings.”

Oh, to think the man should speak to him again! Pollio had supposed he was too bad to be noticed.

Posy peeped up at him from under her parasol, and he saw her face was covered with blushes. Hop-clover gave him a pitying look as she walked off with Mr. and Mrs. Littlefield; and Pollio knew she never would say again she wished she had a brother like him.

I suppose he turned fifty somersets after dinner. He always turned them when he was happy, and still more when he was sad.

“There is something about that little boy that makes me want to laugh,” said Dorothy to John. “I don't know whether it's his straight hair, or his black eyes, or the way he has of standing on his head.”

[170]

“He is the *limberest* little chap I ever saw,” said John: “and I can't keep my face straight when he quirks himself up in such shapes; but I wish I could, for he is a great rogue, and bothers me by meddling.”

The next John saw of Pollio he was dangling from the hub of one of the new carriage-wheels, like a young monkey.

“Come away from there, youngster! you mustn't meddle with that carriage,” said John rather sharply, trying not to laugh.

Pollio had never heard the word “youngster” before, and thought it did not sound very respectful as addressed to the son of Judge Pitcher. Perhaps it had something to do with his laughing in meeting. Oh, of course! He dropped lightly on the barn-floor; but his lip curled, and there was a spark in his eye that meant mischief. The moment John's back was turned, he was climbing the wheel, “hand over hand,” into the carriage.

[171]

"O Pollio, get right down!" cried Posy. "You know what John said."

"Who's John? He's no business with *me!*" said Pollio, turning a somerset on the back-seat.

"O Hop-clover! mustn't he get down?"

"Of course he must," replied Hop-clover, chewing some wheat she had found in a barrel.

"Tell you what it is!" said Pollio, dancing up and down, "if Mr. Littlefield had a boy, my father'd let him play in *our* carriage as easy as nothing."

"Well, Ike wouldn't," returned Posy.

[172]

"I can't help it about Ike, and I can't help it about John: I guess Mr. Littlefield wants to be polite to his company," said Pollio, cracking the whip.

The little girls had to run away for fear of being hit. It troubled them to see Pollio climb the wheels, and walk on the thills; but, the more they begged, the more he was determined to have his own way.

"Oh, what little cowards! 'Fraid of a whip, and 'fraid of a carriage without any horse! See me now! I can turn a somerset right on the wheel!"

Whether he would have tried to do it and broken his neck, I can't say; for, as he was prancing up and down on the thill, he was stopped suddenly by a crackling noise, as if wood was splitting in two. He knew what it was: he had broken the thill!

His brown face turned almost white as he slipped back into the carriage.

[173]

"O boys! carry me 'long,'" sang he in a husky voice, as if nothing had happened.

The girls had not heard the noise, for they had been screaming to him not to turn a somerset on the wheel.

"O boys! carry me 'long.' 'Swing low, sweet chariot!'" said pale, guilty Pollio, scrambling slowly down from the carriage. "Let's go find some eggs."

What would he have given now if it were this forenoon instead of this afternoon! What would he have given if he had obeyed John, and not broken the beautiful new carriage, and disgraced himself forever!

But need anybody know he had broken it? John was coming back with the colts; and, as Pollio saw him, he plunged headlong into a barrel of straw. John laughed, and thought that was a boy's way of hunting for eggs. He did not suppose Pollio had climbed into the carriage at all.

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"Glad I got out before he came," thought Pollio, his heart beating fast.

CHAPTER XI.

[175]

POLLIO MAKES UP HIS MIND.

BUT Pollio's conscience was not easy. He danced about as if the barn-floor were covered with thistles and every step hurt him. As he flew from barrel to hay-mow, and from hay-mow to hogshead, he kept talking to himself in this way:—

"Poh! what do I care? Smart carriage to break so easy as that! My papa wouldn't keep one 'thout it was strong enough to jump on. What do *I* care?"

But he did care: he cared a great deal.

"Oh, dear! I can't find any eggs," said Posy.

That roused him for a moment; and he lifted his head from a barrel long enough to say,—

[176]

"Why, I meant to told you, Dorothy came out ever so long ago and *got* the eggs."

"Did she? Well, what are you hunting for, then? How queer you do act!" said Hop-clover, as Pollio danced along to the cow's stall, and peeped in at nothing.

But the boy did not hear her; he was thinking:—

"A new carriage too! We are going to ride home in it to-morrow. Yes, that's the carriage we are going to ride home in. Got to be mended. What'll Mr. Littlefield think?"

Here Pollio danced along on thistles to the colt's crib.

"There's that colt. Perhaps Mr. Littlefield will think the colt got in where the carriage is, and chewed the thill.—*Could* he chew the thill?"

[177]

"No: Mr. Littlefield would know better than that. Well, p'rhaps the dog broke it.—*Could* the dog break it?"

Pollio reflected on *that* for a while. Towzer was not as heavy as Beppo. No, Towzer couldn't break a thill: Mr. Littlefield would know better than that.

"Well, p'rhaps the hens roosted on the thill, and broke it."

This was such a silly idea, that Pollio shook his head impatiently.

"He don't hear one word we say," remarked Posy to Hop-clover, after they had asked him half a dozen questions, and received no answer. "He has felt real bad ever since he laughed in meeting. I 'spect he's afraid Teddy will hear of it; but *I* sha'n't tell.—Look up here, Pollio: don't you be afraid. *I* sha'n't tell Teddy."

Pollio made no reply even to this. The two little girls gave him up then, and went to keeping house very cosily in the wheelbarrow. [178]

"Well, I don't know what Mr. Littlefield *will* think," pursued the unhappy boy. "But he won't think 'twas *me*; for nobody saw me but the girls, and *they* didn't hear it crack. I'm *so* glad they didn't hear it crack!"

By this time it seemed as if he could not possibly stay in the barn another minute. The more he thought about the carriage, the worse he felt.

"Come, girls, let's go somewhere else," said he, rushing out with a sort of war-whoop.

The girls were having a very interesting time, nursing some ears of corn through the "yellow-fever;" but at Pollio's call they deserted their poor sick children, and followed him. He led them a very roundabout chase, never stopping long enough to look at any thing, or to let them have any sort of a good time. [179]

He was trying to run away from something. What was it?

From *himself*.

But, quick as his legs were, they were not quick enough for that. Pollio Pitcher was *always* close behind him: he couldn't get away from Pollio Pitcher.

"Seems to me I never saw him act so," said Hop-clover, puffing for breath as he darted off, and rolled over and over in the grass. "I'm getting real lame, running round so long; and I'm afraid we sha'n't get back before supper."

You must pardon Hop-clover for thinking a good deal about her supper. Perhaps you would think as much about it as she did, if you were in the habit of feeling hungry half the time. [180]

"Well, we'll go back now if Pollio will," said Posy, though she wanted to pick flowers. "Come, Pollio."

"Oh, go 'long! I'll come when I get ready," said he, climbing a tree, and dangling from a limb.

They went; and, the moment they were out of hearing, he began to make strange noises,—hooting, barking, crowing, groaning. He thought it would be some relief, but it wasn't: there was only one way to obtain relief, and that was to tell Mr. Littlefield the truth.

"What, tell him I broke his chaise? I needn't, and I sha'n't! He won't like me any more if I do. He doesn't like me much now, 'cause I laughed in meeting."

Pollio writhed and twisted. If the squirrels and tree-toads had stopped to watch him, they would have thought he was crazy. He talked aloud too; but he spoke his bad thoughts, and kept his good thoughts to himself. [181]

"I won't tell! Catch me telling! Do I want him to think my father's got a 'youngster' for a boy?"

Then he pulled up a tuft of grass, and threw it at a toad.

But, all the while, the other half of his thoughts was good. The angels knew it; for they had charge of Pollio. If you had been there, you couldn't have heard the still small voice, deep down in his soul, saying,—

"Think I'd be so mean as *not* to tell?"

But the angels heard it, and smiled. They knew it was hard work for the little fellow to make up his mind, and that was why he scolded and scowled. Mr. Littlefield was fond of him, and Pollio liked to be liked. It did require courage this time to tell the truth and be despised. Of course the good Quaker would say,— [182]

"Well, Napoleon, if this is the way thee behaves, I don't want thee to come to my house visiting again."

Ah, well! but you needn't think Pollio wasn't going to walk up to his duty like a man. What is the use of a father and mother, and uncle and aunt, to tell you what is right, if you won't do it? He wasn't a coward and a liar: if he had been, I wouldn't have written this story about him; but I must confess a snail could have walked faster than he did going back to the house.

"Well, well, Napoleon! Thee came pretty near losing thy supper," said Mr. Littlefield, smiling, as Pollio came slowly toward him, and pulled him by the sleeve.

Supper! Why, his throat was so full of lumps that a crumb would have choked him! Not a word could he speak as he dragged his friend along to the stable.

[183]

The worst was over now; for, the moment Mr. Littlefield saw the broken carriage, he knew the whole story.

I cannot say he wasn't vexed. Pollio had proved more troublesome than he had expected,—chasing the cows, putting the wheelbarrow, rake, and hoe out of place, and now meddling with this new carriage.

But Friend Littlefield knew how to rule his own spirit: he would not speak a word when he was angry. Instead of speaking, he waited, and looked at Pollio, who was trying to double himself into a hard knot. The sight of the child's misery moved him to pity; of course it did, for Mr. Littlefield couldn't bear to see even a fly unhappy.

"Well, Napoleon: so my new carriage is broken. Who broke it?"

[184]

"I did."

"How?"

"Jumping."

"Did John see thee?"

"No, sir."

"Did anybody else see thee?"

"No, sir."

"Then what made thee come and tell?"

"'Cause—'cause"—

"Did thee do it *because it was right?*"

The tone was so gentle, that Pollio ventured to look up; and the old gentleman was beaming down on him so kindly, that he couldn't bear it another minute.

"Oh, I'm *so* sorry!" sobbed he, throwing both arms round one of the Quaker's knees.

"Sorry for what? Sorry thee told?"

"*No, sir!* I wouldn't have *not* told for any thing in this world!" cried Pollio, hunting for his handkerchief.

[185]

But, before he had found it,—and of course it wasn't in his pocket, for he had thrown it at a tree-toad,—Mr. Littlefield had caught him up in his arms, and was giving him a good hugging.

"Thee is one of the Lord's own little ones," said he, kissing him on both cheeks. "Thee didn't do right to meddle with my chaise,—I won't uphold thee in that,—but thee did nobly to tell the truth. The Lord bless thee and keep thee! Why, Napoleon, I never liked thee half so well as I do this minute!"

How did Pollio feel then? I suppose he never was so surprised in his life. The Quaker had to give him the use of his handkerchief for about two minutes; and after that the shower cleared off, and a rainbow shone in his eyes. The lumps had gone out of his throat, the ache had gone out of his heart, and the whole world looked so beautiful, that he wanted to shout and turn somersets all the way to the house.

[186]

Such a supper! Why, Mrs. Littlefield had warm biscuits and honey, just as if she knew they were the very things Pollio liked best. And after tea Mr. Littlefield took him on his knee, and told him a bear-story, which was so funny that I wish I could tell it myself, only I can't make you laugh as the Quaker would have done.

"THE CUB THAT WAS WHIPPED.

"Once a man was out hunting; and, as he was climbing a steep hill, he met a little cub. He thought maybe it had no father and mother, and he would like to carry it home. But, when he took it up in his arms, the cub cried out and made such a noise that its mother heard it from the top of the hill, and came tumbling down, heels over head, to see what was the matter.

[187]

"The man dropped the cub in a moment, and ran and hid behind a tree; for he had left his gun in the valley, and dared not meet the bear without it. He lay very still while the bear hunted everywhere to see what it was that had been troubling her cub. He was *so* afraid she would find him! But she could not smell him, for the wind was the wrong way; and she could not see him, for the tree hid him completely.

"At last she gave it up, and thought the cub had been crying out for fun, and just to tease her.

"But oh, she was so angry! And what do you think she did to teach her child

better manners? She caught up that little cub, and whipped it as hard as she could with her paw! The poor thing cried just like a baby, and the man could not help laughing as he lay there behind the tree. He pitied the little creature, for it did not deserve the whipping; but it certainly was very funny.

[188]

“When the bear had punished it as long as she thought proper, she growled as if to say, ‘Don’t you ever let me know of your doing this again;’ and then she and her baby trotted off to their den, and the man hurried home as fast as he could.”

Mr. Littlefield said this was a true story, for the hunter had told it to him with his own lips.

The rest of the visit was lovely. The carriage was mended next morning, and in the afternoon the children were to start for home. Hop-clover had one of the late chickens in a little box of cotton-wool, and a cup of dough with which to feed it on the way. She thought she could keep the chicken in the back-room at home, and, when the nights grew colder, it should sleep with her in her own bed.

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CHAPTER XII.

HOP-CLOVER’S HOME.

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THEY had just eaten dinner, and John had not gone out as yet to harness the horse.

“Lucinda,” said Mrs. Littlefield as they all went into the parlor, “hast thou had a good visit here? Come and put thy arms round my neck, and tell me.”

“Oh, I’ve had a *beautiful* time!” said little Hop-clover with a sigh of joy; and then she sighed again, to think she was going away to her miserable home, and never, never, should be so happy again.

Mrs. Littlefield looked at her husband; and he came across the room, smiling, and put his arms around her and Hop-clover as they stood together.

[191]

“My wife and I haven’t any little girl,” said he. “How would thee like to come and live with us, Lucinda?”

Now think of that! Hop-clover could not speak for surprise and joy. Besides, she couldn’t believe they meant what they said: it was too good to be true.

“If thee would really like it, Lucinda, thee don’t know how glad we should be.”

“Oh, I’d rather live here than go to heaven!” cried little Hop-clover as soon as she could get her breath.

It pleased the dear old people very much to see her so glad; and they both kissed her at the same moment, while Pollio and Posy looked on in surprise.

“But, Liddy,” said Mr. Littlefield to his wife, “we can’t think of taking her unless her father is willing. I will go to see him when I get to Rosewood.”

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“Oh! he isn’t my truly father: *he* don’t care where I go,” said Hop-clover eagerly.

Mr. Littlefield thought, as she did, that he wasn’t likely to care. If he had not thought so, he would not have spoken to Hop-clover about this until after he had seen him.

“Well, if he says we can have thee, then thee can pack thy clothes, and come back with me to-morrow.”

It was droll to talk about packing Hop-clover’s “clothes.” Those she wore just now were very good, but all the others were fit for nothing but the rag-bag.

“Well, then, I sha’n’t need my chicken; and you may have it,” said she to Pollio, feeling like a crown-princess giving away a casket of jewels. I suppose you have no idea how very, very rich Hop-clover thought herself all in a minute.

“Well, Napoleon, thee can keep the chicken as a memento of this visit; and, next time thee comes, thee shall have something better,” said Mrs. Littlefield, smiling, as Pollio danced about with the box.

[193]

The ride home was as pleasant as a fairy-story; only Pollio couldn’t help looking at the thill that had been mended, and thinking,—

“Mr. Littlefield was a jolly good man to forgive me. Catch me meddling with any of *his* things again!”

Hop-clover and little Posy chatted together in a low voice on the back-seat.

“God did take care of you, didn’t he?” said Posy.

"Oh! I always knew He would," replied Hop-clover with a joyous smile; "but I didn't s'pect he'd do any thing so nice as *this*, you know!"

There wasn't the least trouble about her father's giving her up. He said "Yes," without taking his pipe out of his mouth; and then Mr. Littlefield left Hop-clover at the little brown house to "pack up her things," while he drove to Judge Pitcher's with the twins. [194]

"O mamma! she's going to live with 'em,—live with 'em always!" cried Posy, as they rushed into the house.

And before Mrs. Pitcher could ask who "she" was, and where she was going to live, Pollio was swinging the peeping chicken before her eyes, with a shout,—

"See what I've got for a *tormento*, mamma!"

"I'm afraid Eliza will think it's a *tormento* if you keep it under the kitchen-stove," laughed aunt Ann.

It was not the fault of the twins if the family did not hear what had happened to Hop-clover. Posy ran to tell Jane, Jane told Eliza, and Eliza told Ike. Then Nunky came home from sketching in the glen; and Pollio met him with the glad news before he had turned the street-corner. [195]

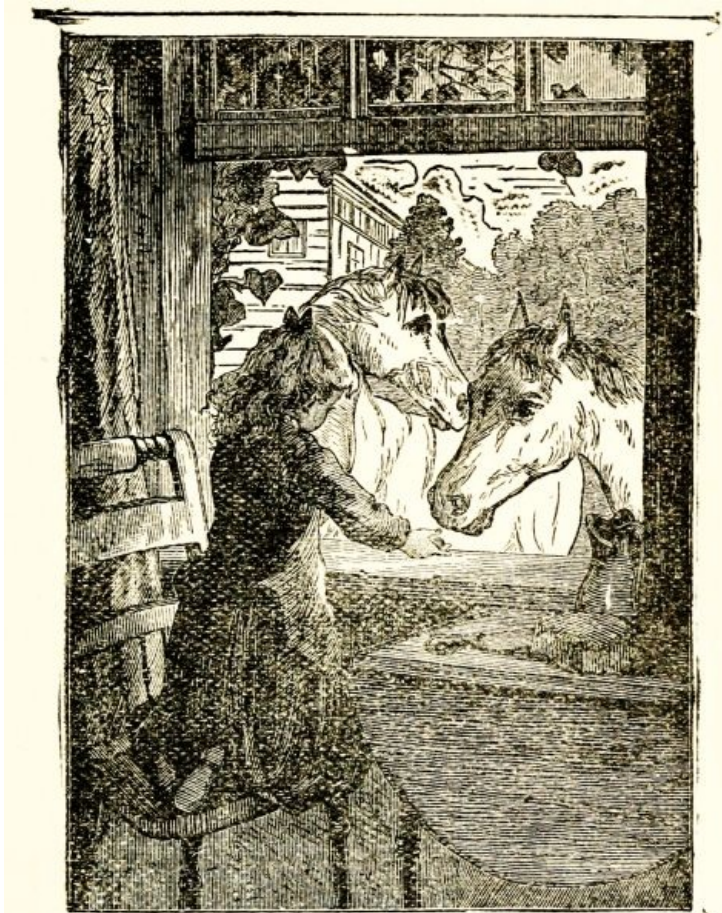
There was a great time of rejoicing. Mrs. Pitcher set out the best china for supper, and everybody drank Friend Littlefield's health in a cup of broma. After that, all the windows were lighted in both parlors, and the judge wheeled up the best chair for the Quaker, while Nunky played "The Shepherd's Pipe upon the Mountain."

A gay fire burned in the grate, for the evening was chill: the pictures on the walls seemed to smile, and so did the flowers in the vases, and the flowers in the carpet. Posy thought the room smiled all over, as she sat on her papa's knee, and listened to the music, and thought of Hop-clover.

"I think it's nice for little girls to live in a home," said she to herself, pressing her cheek against her papa's whiskers. [196]

I could begin to-morrow morning, and tell you ever so much more about her and Pollio,—how new things happened to them day after day, and year after year: but the printer thinks my book is long enough already; so I must stop this very evening, before the fire burns low in the grate. If you really care to hear more about Pollio and Posy, perhaps, by and by, I will write another book; but now we will drop a courtsey, make a bow, and say,—

"Good-night, little Pitchers."



"By and by the colts came to the kitchen window, which was open, and put in their noses to ask for something to eat. Flaxie gave them pieces of bread."

SPECIMEN OF CUT TO "FLAXIE FRIZZLE SERIES."

SOPHIE MAY'S "LITTLE-FOLKS" BOOKS.

[198]

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—

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—

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Transcriber's Note: Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

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