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BESSIE
ON
HER TRAVELS.

[4]

BY

JOANNA H. MATHEWS.

“Glad hearts, without reproach or blot,
Which do thy work, and know it not.”

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DEDICATED
TO
LITTLE FLORENCE GUERNSEY,

AS

A SMALL TOKEN OF APPRECIATION OF HER FATHER'S LONG
AND FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP; AND WITH THE HOPE THAT THIS
LAST MAY NOT PROVE TO HER THE LEAST OF THE "BESSIE
BOOKS."

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BESSIE ON HER TRAVELS.

I.

PACKING UP.



hat a twitter and flutter and chirping there was in the pretty nest which Maggie and Bessie Bradford called their own room; for there were four little girls, who were to start together the next day on their travels, and there was so much to be talked over. All the new places they were to visit, all the wonderful things they were to see and do; and, more than all, that sea voyage of three or four days. For none of them but Belle had ever been to sea, and it would be quite a new thing to all the rest.

Then there was the packing, about which both Maggie and Bessie, especially the former, had been greatly concerned for the last week; for it seemed impossible to them that nurse and Jane could make all the necessary preparations for this important journey on the day before that on which they were to start. [10]

That morning Maggie's excitement and impatience had overflowed. Waking at a very early hour, and finding Bessie still sleeping, she lay a few moments thinking of all that was to be done that day, and wondering that the household should still be so quiet, with the prospect of such important business before them.

"I just expect the end of the matter will be that every one in the house, even poor mamma, who is not so very well yet, will have to turn to and help to make up for their pro-cras-to-na-tion!" said she to herself, indignantly; "and I've just a great mind to begin packing up myself, to set them a good example, and make them ashamed of a little girl like me taking time by the forelock so much better than they do." [11]

No sooner said than done; and Maggie scrambled out of bed and into her dressing-gown and slippers quite forgetting to pause and think whether or no mamma would approve of her running about the house in such a guise, and if she would not be giving more trouble than help by meddling with what she did not understand.

Upstairs she trotted to the topmost story, where was a room which Fred called the "put-all-room," and which held, not only trunks and boxes of all shapes and sizes, but a couple of great, old-fashioned presses, and many another article not in common daily use, and stored there to be out of the way. The children thought it rather a treat to go in now and then with mamma or nurse, to rummage there and see what they could spy out: but none of them had ever gone there alone or without permission; and if Maggie had taken time to reflect, I think she would have known that her mamma would not wish her to do so, though she had never positively forbidden it. [12]

But just now the busy little head was too full of plans for making herself useful, to take heed of any thing else; and finding what she had hoped for, that the door was unlocked, she opened it, and went in. The trunks were not piled together at one end as they usually were, but stood singly, here and there about the room, just as Patrick had left them the day before, when he had examined them to see if they were in good order; and this Maggie observed with great satisfaction.

"It just seems as if it was fixed to be convenient for me," she said to herself; "and now I can try which is the heaviest one I can pull. I know I could not take those largest downstairs, but I think I could one of the middlings."

But, after various trials, she found to her great disappointment, that she could by no means move even one of the "middlings;" and was at last forced to content herself with a small black leather trunk, in which she thought she would put some of her own and Bessie's clothes. [13]

"For a pack in time saves nine," said Maggie to herself; "and even if it does not hold much, this little trunk is a better beginning than nothing."

Having fixed upon this prize, she contrived with some trouble to drag it from the room, and push and pull it to the head of the stairs. But here a new difficulty arose. She could by no means lift the trunk and carry it down: small as it was for the amount of packing she wished to do, it was quite too heavy for her little strength; and though for one moment she thought of pushing it over the edge of the top stair, and allowing it to slide down by its own weight, she soon reflected this would not do.

"For it will just go and smash itself all to pieces, I suppose, and then make a horrid noise to wake the people all up," she said again, feeling rather vexed with the innocent trunk. "Oh! I know what I'll do: I'll go in front of it and pull it down very gently, one step at a time." [14]

But in spite of all the pains she took, the trunk seemed to Maggie to make the most outrageous noise, sliding over each stair with a grating sound, and coming down from the edge of one to another with a thump and a bang, which all her efforts could not silence. She was soon heartily sorry that she had ever touched it; but she must go on now, for she could not possibly pull it up again, and if she left her hold of it, it would go tumbling headlong to the bottom.

However, she took heart of grace again by the time she had reached the foot of the top flight, for no one seemed to have been disturbed; the servants having all gone down stairs, and the boys, who slept in the third story, being sound sleepers. So she concluded to go on and not have all her pains thrown away; but she had gone only two or three steps on the second flight, her [15]

troublesome prize bumping after her, when she heard her father's voice from below.

"What are you busy with there, Patrick?" he said. "You are disturbing Mrs. Bradford, and will wake the children. Leave it till later in the day."

"O papa!" said Maggie, feeling rather guilty, and very much mortified, "it's not Patrick, but me;" and as she spoke, she appeared round the turn of the stairs, while her attention being for the moment diverted, the trunk slid after her with a bang which seemed to jar the house.

"You, my daughter!" said Mr. Bradford, coming up to where Maggie stood; "and what *are* you doing here at this time in the morning?" and he looked down in great surprise at the small figure whose cheeks matched her scarlet dressing-gown, and whose curls were tossed and tumbled in the wildest confusion.

"It's this mean old trunk, papa," said Maggie, pettishly; "the more I try to make it go softly, the more it won't, but just squeaks and bumps all it can, the horrid thing!" and now she gave up the trunk very willingly into her father's strong grasp. [16]

"What were you doing with it?" asked Mr. Bradford.

"Taking it downstairs, so I could pack it with my things and Bessie's, papa. I wanted to take mamma by surprise to see how useful I could be."

"You have taken mamma rather too much by surprise," said her father, unable to help smiling; "for you have wakened and startled her. It is well to try to be useful, but one should try to be thoughtful and considerate at the same time, or our pains will be quite thrown away, as yours are now. You must go back to your bed, my daughter, and let this trunk alone;" and lifting the trunk he carried it to the third-story hall, Maggie looking on with a very crestfallen feeling.

"It may stay there till we see if it is needed," said Mr. Bradford, soothingly, as he saw her disturbed face; "and by and by, at the proper time, you may ask mamma if you can help her;" and taking the little hand which was trembling with cold and over-exertion, he led her back to her own room. Papa had been very kind, and could scarcely be said to have found fault with her; but Maggie, who began to feel that she had been somewhat to blame, would rather have been scolded than hear him laugh as he did when he told mamma how and where he had found her. She did not hear what he said, but she knew very well what he was talking about, and drew the bed-clothes over her head that she might shut out the sound of his laughter. [17]

"It's too bad," she thought: "most always when I try to be very superior, I make a mistake and people laugh at me about it. I feel as if I'd like to be mad at some one, but I can't be mad at papa, and I don't want to be mad at myself, 'cause I didn't mean to do wrong; and it's no use to be mad at the trunk, but I b'lieve I do feel a little provoked at it, it has made my hands hurt, and my arms do ache so. I'm real tired too." And coming to the surface for air, Maggie turned over on her side, and presently dropped off into a sound morning nap; so that when nurse came to tell her she might get up, she found her still sleeping instead of wide awake as usual, and was bidden by Mrs. Bradford to let her sleep as long as she would after her exertion. [18]

Maggie was rather subdued and quiet all the first part of the morning, and more than ever grateful to papa, when she found that he had not told the boys, and so given them the opportunity to tease and laugh at her.

"I suppose you couldn't let me help you after my *unconsiderate* unusefulness this morning: could you, mamma?" she said, when she saw her mother gathering together the articles Jane was to stow in the trunks.

"Well, yes: I think I can find something for you and Bessie to do," said mamma: "you may take all these tapes, needles, spools, and so forth, into your own room, and see how neatly you can put them into this box; and all these ribbons may go into that one." [19]

"Oh! thank you, mamma: I will let Bessie do the ribbons, 'cause they are the prettiest;" and away ran generous Maggie with her sister to begin the pleasant task.

That done, mamma gave them leave to pack the clothes belonging to Miss Bessie Margaret Marian, and Miss Margaret Colonel Horace Rush Bradford, in another box; saying that since she did not feel as if she could do without her own little daughters, she would not ask them to leave the whole of their large family behind, and thought the dolls might prove a great diversion when they were tired, or perhaps shut up in some hotel on a rainy day.

They were busy deciding what dresses should be taken and what left, when Mrs. Norris came round to see Mrs. Bradford for a few moments, bringing Lily with her; and while the ladies talked in one room, the little girls chattered away in the other, Belle coming in about the same time.

"Oh!" said Lily, "is your mamma going to let you take your large dolls? my mamma will only let me take a tiny, weeny one that can go in a travelling-bag." [20]

"I wouldn't take any then," said Belle. "I'm going to take my largest, biggest one of all."

"Not Belle Maggie Bessie?" questioned Maggie.

"Yes: Belle Maggie Bessie!" repeated Belle, in a tone of determined obstinacy and snappishness, which showed that the subject was a sore one with her.

"But your papa said last night that you could not take her, 'cause such a large doll would be too much trouble," said Bessie.

"Well, anyhow, I'm going to: he said I could this morning," answered Belle.

"Then you cried and cried and bothered him, till he said yes: I know you," said Maggie, reproachfully.

"I don't care," said Belle; but she did care, and now was ashamed that her little playmates should guess how she had worried her too indulgent papa. [21]

"You might repent yet and tell him you won't take her," said Bessie.

"Yes, do, and make a Rip Van Winkle of her," said Maggie.

"I shan't make her that ugly thing, and I shall take her," said Belle, indignantly.

"You needn't be so cross," said Maggie: "Bessie and I made all our other dolls Rip Van Winkles and William Tells, and it was good fun. Don't you want to see them, Lily?"

Lily assented; and, opening a deep drawer in the bureau, Maggie showed her all the various dolls belonging to herself and Bessie, lying with bandages on their eyes.

"I don't see what you call them William Tells and that other name for," said Lily. "William Tell was the man Miss Ashton told us about, who shot an apple off his son's head."

"Yes," answered Maggie; "and we told Harry and Fred about it, but they knew before, and told us that the Swiss people believe that he and his companions went fast asleep in a cave for a great many hundred years, and some day they would wake up and rule over them." [22]

"And who was the Winkle man?" asked Belle.

"He was another old fellow who went up into the mountains and went to sleep for ever so many years; and when he woke up nobody knew him, and he did not know anybody. Harry told us about him. I don't see how people can be so foolish as to sleep for so long; but it came into my head to make our dolls Rip Van Winkles and William Tells till we came back, and then we wouldn't feel as if they were so lonely when they were asleep all the time."

"It's only pretend, you know, and one can make b'lieve about dolls even better than about people," said Bessie. "And it's a great relief to suffering to go to sleep and forget it," she added, as gravely as though there were no "pretend" about it, and the dolls were real children, feeling deeply the separation from their little mammas. [23]

"That's a very nice thing to do. You do make such nice plays, Maggie," said Lily, admiringly. "I shall do it with my dolls: you'd better too, Belle."

"Well, I don't know; but I'm going to think about it," said Belle, in whose little heart Maggie's reproach had awakened a feeling of remorse for the selfishness and obstinacy she had shown about her doll. "I b'lieve Belle Maggie Bessie *is* most too large. I can't carry her much myself, and papa did say she'd be in everybody's way. I guess I'll make a William Tell of her, if Maggie and Bessie will let me put her with theirs."

"Yes, we will; and you can take a doll of moderation," said Maggie, meaning that Belle could take a doll of moderate size.

"Do you think you'll be seasick on the steamer?" asked Lily.

"Pooh! no, I shan't. I won't be," said Maggie. [24]

"Perhaps you can't help it," said Belle. "I'm sure I didn't mean to be seasick when I came here in the steamer, but I couldn't help it; and oh dear!—it's—it is horrid."

"Is being seasick any thing like being homesick?" asked Bessie.

"Not exactly; but the two things very often go together, darling," said Aunt Bessie, laughing, and speaking from the next room.

"Then I'm more determined than ever not to be it," said Maggie, meaning seasick by "it." "But then I couldn't be homesick either, when I have so many of my own home people with me."

But, in spite of her determination, Maggie had privately a great dread of this same seasickness. She could not bear to be sick; not that she was impatient or cross when this was the case with her, but that she thought sickness, like sleep, was "a great waste of being alive." She wanted to be able to run about and amuse herself all the time; and it was "such fun" to go to sea, that she was very much afraid lest any thing should interfere with her enjoyment of it. [25]

"They give people sour things when they are seasick," said Belle, who, having once suffered in this way, thought herself entitled to give all necessary information on the subject. "That's the only nice thing about it. They gave me lots of sour oranges and lemons."

"But Bessie and I don't like sour things, so that won't make it any better for us," said Maggie, soberly. Nevertheless, she treasured Belle's remark; and not seeing her way clearly to a private stock of oranges and lemons, she watched her opportunity when her little playmates were gone, and taking Patrick into her confidence, begged him to give her "two pickles and a whole lot of vinegar," not to eat herself, because mamma would not allow that, but to be prepared, when all the rest of the family were seasick and she had to take care of them.

The good-natured Irishman, expressing great admiration at the "forethought of her," furnished her with what she wanted; and Maggie went off, rejoicing in her spoils. [26]

The pickles were stowed away in the soup-tureen belonging to her doll's dinner-set; and she contrived, when nurse and Jane were not looking, to slip them into a corner of one of the trunks. The vinegar she poured into a vial she had also obtained from Patrick; and as the cork did not fit very tightly, and she feared the liquid might run out if she put it into the trunk, she hid it in her

bosom, heroically enduring the smell of the vinegar, which was exceedingly disagreeable to her, "for the sake of my family," as she told Bessie.

For Bessie's quick little nose soon smelt out the vinegar, which she also disliked very much; and after several sniffs and exclamations of disgust from her, and much wondering as to where that "horrid, vinegarish smell did come from," Maggie felt forced to tell her the secret which she had meant to keep until they were safely on board the steamer. [27]

But Bessie was by no means so struck with admiration as Patrick had been, and for once did not think Maggie's plan a good one; at least not unless she could be persuaded to tell her mamma of it.

"For you know, dear Maggie," she said with a doubtful shake of her head, "mamma does not like us to keep secrets from her; and don't you think she will know what is best to take?"

"Well, I don't know," said Maggie, unwilling to give up her cherished plan; "maybe she won't think about sour things, and I'm sure she'd be very thankful when she's seasick, and finds an unexpected pickle just on hand."

"I think she'll like it just as well if she knows about it before," said Bessie. "And I don't believe it is quite right; and, besides, it is such a very bad-smelling secret to have. Tell her, and see what she will say." [28]

But even as they were talking, they found that the "bad-smelling secret" had betrayed itself; for nurse, going to finish the packing of the trunk where the pickles were concealed, also perceived the scent of vinegar.

"What have you been putting in here that smells so of vinegar?" she said to Jane.

"Nothing," was the answer. "I've had no vinegar."

"But it's here, surely," said nurse, sniffing around in her turn: "it's about this trunk, spilled on something I suppose: that's some of your carelessness, Jane." And Mammy, who was rather apt to snub her younger helpmate, lifted several articles in turn to her nose.

"Oh dear! I'll have to tell: she's scolding poor Janey for it," whispered Maggie, in great dismay.

"What's this?" exclaimed nurse, when, having pulled out half a dozen things, she came upon the tiny tureen. "Pickles! and the vinegar dribbled out of them on the master's clean shirts. Well! that naughty Frankie! he's gone beyond himself in such a trick as that. He's been busy with your doll's china, Maggie, my honey; but where in the world did he lay his mischievous hands on pickles? I'll just speak my mind to Patrick for leaving them in the child's reach. Pickles indeed! but he's a pickle!" [29]

This was too much for Maggie. She could not hear her little brother and Patrick blamed, and she spoke out at once.

"It was not Frankie who put them there," she said: "it was I, and I want them to stay there."

"Indeed, they'll not then," said nurse. "Ye know your mother never lets ye touch them; and what a way would that be to take them anyhow? What ails ye the day, Maggie? I think the spirit of mischief has hold of ye."

Maggie was displeased in her turn, and, as usual, was dignified and made use of all the long words she could think of, which were suitable to the case.

"If you interfere with my pickle arrangements, I shall not be responsible for the seasickness," she said solemnly. [30]

"Responsible for the seasickness! I should think not," said nurse, forgetting her vexation in her amusement, and bursting into a hearty laugh, in which she was joined by Jane; while Maggie stood swelling and indignant; "responsible for the seasickness! and what put that into your head, my lamb, and what do you think pickles stuffed into trunks have to do with it?"

But Maggie was too much hurt and disappointed to answer, and could only reply with a nod to Bessie's plea that she would let her explain.

This was soon done; and nurse, sorry to see Maggie so grieved, said,—

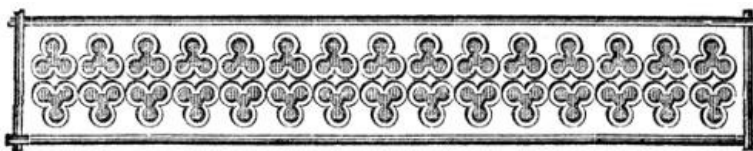
"The pickles would have done ye little good packed away in the trunk which ye will not see till we come to land again, honey; and don't ye fret your little soul about it, for your mamma has provided all things needful; and I promise you if all the rest are taken down but yourself, ye shall play nurse to your heart's content, and wait on everybody. Ye did mean to be considerate and thoughtful, I'm sure; but it's always best for such young heads to take counsel of those that are wiser and older in such things." [31]

Having allowed so much to be confessed, Maggie thought she might as well make a clean breast of the whole affair; and produced the bottle of vinegar, with many entreaties to be allowed to keep it. Nurse shook her head; but Mrs. Bradford came into the room just then, and she turned the matter over to her.

Mamma laughed too when she heard the story, and told Maggie to give up her pickles and vinegar, and she would provide her with something better; so taking both the little girls into her own room, she delighted them by presenting each with a beautiful morocco satchel, just of a right size for small travellers, and with lock and key all complete, to say nothing of a light chain by which they could be hung over the shoulder. [32]

Maggie was farther consoled by a bottle of smelling salts, one of hartshorn, and three lemons;

and this she appeared to think a sufficient safeguard against seasickness for all the passengers and crew of the steamer. For the rest of the day her restless energies found satisfaction in locking and unlocking, arranging and rearranging this satchel and its contents, and the busy head and fingers were kept from farther mischief or hindering "help."



[33]

II. AT SEA.



"Are we at sea now, papa?" said Maggie, holding by her father's hand as she jumped up and down on the deck of the steamer; "are we really at sea?"

"Hardly at sea yet, little daughter: we are still going down the bay. When we are fairly at sea we shall lose sight of our own great city, where we have left grandmamma and the boys, and all the other dear ones."

"Yes," said Bessie, who was by no means in such overflowing spirits as Maggie; "it's rather sorrowful to leave so many of our own people behind us. I wish everybody could have come with us."

"Then we'd have no one to write to," said Maggie, who found consolation in all partings in the thought of letter-writing, in which she delighted.

[34]

"But, papa, will you tell us when we are really and truly at sea?"

"You'll be apt to know that without telling, little maiden," said a gentleman who was passing: "we have had high winds the last three days, and shall find it rough enough outside, I take it;" and he passed on.

"Who's that, papa?" asked Bessie.

"That is the captain," said Mr. Bradford.

"What a nice face he has," said the little girl.

"What did he mean by 'outside'?" asked Maggie.

"He meant outside of the bay or harbor. We are going now through what is called the Narrows, then we shall pass Sandy Hook, where the light-house is, and be fairly out at sea."

"And what did he mean by 'rough'?" asked Maggie.

"Well, he meant the waves might be rather high, and toss and roll the ship about more than you would find quite comfortable."

[35]

"Oh! I shan't mind it," said Maggie. "It will be fun."

"He meant you'd be seasick," said Belle, with a wise shake of her head.

"I don't believe he ever meant that," answered Maggie, in a tone which said she considered the idea almost an insult. "He must see how well and strong I look."

"I hope you may be able to keep to your determination, my little girl," said her father, smiling.

"Why, is this what people make such a fuss about?" said Maggie, when some time after the threatened rolling and pitching began: "I think it is lovely. But, then, papa," she added presently, "perhaps it would be nicer if you would ask that good-natured-looking captain not to let the ship do it quite so much. It seems to make my head so very *bobbly*."

"The captain cannot help it, dear," said her father, looking half in pity, half in amusement, at the face which Maggie was making such desperate efforts to keep smiling and unconcerned. "The waves roll the vessel about in this way, and you know the captain does not rule them. We must bear it as we can; but I hope by and by you will become used to it, and not mind it so much."

[36]

"Oh! I don't *mind* it, papa," said Maggie, still determined that these rolling waves should not conquer her; "at least not so very much, and I'm not a bit seasick; only—only—I don't think the sea is quite so very comfortable to be on as the land: do you?"

Hapless little Maggie! Half an hour more, and the "bobbly" head lay in mamma's lap, hands and feet hung helplessly, chattering tongue was still, save for an occasional piteous, "O mamma!" and the merry dancing eyes, usually so wide-open and quick to notice all around them, were

closed as though they never cared to lift their lids again. Even the new satchel had lost its charm, and hung unheeded at her side. Its cherished contents, which she had intended to be of so much use to others, proved of none to herself. Lemons, smelling salts, hartshorn, and many other remedies, were tried without success; and it would have been hard to find a more wretched little girl than was poor Maggie, for the next twenty-four hours. Belle and Lily were too ill themselves to feel at all inclined to triumph over the failure of Maggie's "determination;" though I do not think they would have been unkind enough to do so, had they been ever so well. [37]

As for Bessie, she made what the captain called "a capital little sailor," and to her fell the part of nurse, which Maggie had intended to fill. And never was a more gentle, tender, thoughtful young nurse than our little "princess," handy and knowing enough for seven-and-twenty instead of seven years old. Now she was rubbing Maggie's cold hands, now bathing Belle's dizzy, aching head with such soothing fingers; now coaxing Lily to take one of those oranges which were to work such wonders; now amusing baby, for Mammy was in a bad way too, and mamma's attention was pretty well taken up with her poor Maggie; now showing a picture-book to some fretful child whose mother was too ill to attend to it. Always ready not only to do, but to see where and how she could do, some small service for a sufferer, she went about from one to another like some dainty little fairy, with a mission of healing and kindness. So long as she could keep her feet, which was not always possible, the rolling of the ship only troubled her by the distress it brought to others, especially Maggie; but all her pleasure in her beloved sea was lost in her sympathy for her sister. It was so strange and unusual to see Maggie lying helpless and subdued, with no thought or care for any thing about her, that it made Bessie herself very miserable; and she could scarcely believe her father's assurances that Maggie was not going to die, and would probably soon feel better. [38]

But she thought despair and misery could go no farther upon the following morning, when, having dressed Margaret Bessie Marion and Margaret Colonel Horace Rush in the new travelling suits Aunt Annie had made for them, and combed their "real live hair," she brought them and placed one on each side of Maggie, as she lay among the pile of pillows and shawls papa had arranged for her upon the deck. [39]

"Maggie dear," she said coaxingly, "would it not comfort you a little to hold Bessie Margaret Marion? She looks so sweet."

"No," moaned Maggie, without opening her eyes: "I never want her again, Bessie, never. You can have her."

"Oh, no!" said Bessie, cheerily: "you'll want her when you feel better, and I hope that will be pretty soon."

"No," said Maggie again: "I'll never be better. And, Bessie, I think I'd better tell you my will. I'm too sick to write it myself, but you can remember."

"But you're not going to die," answered Bessie, dropping the doll upon her lap and looking at Maggie in fresh dismay. [40]

"Yes, I feel it," said Maggie, with a tragic whisper and shake of her head.

"Oh, no, dear! Papa said not, and the doctor said so too. They said people hardly ever died of seasickness."

"Then I'm one of the 'hardly evers,' Bessie," persisted Maggie, seeming, poor child, to find some relief in the idea; "and I'd better make my will, and tell you who I want my playthings and other *possessions* to go to."

Bessie did not know whether to be most alarmed at Maggie's words, or consoled by her belief that her father and the doctor must know best; and she listened in silence while Maggie went on, speaking slowly and with many pauses.

"You can have all my dolls, Bessie, 'cept Josephine Matilda, and she'll be good for Baby, 'cause she's Indian rubber and can't be broken; and mamma my prize writing-desk, and papa my new satchel; and my doll's tea set, the white and gilt one for you, and the blue one for Lily; same with the dinner-sets—only, red for Belle—and my tin kitchen too—oh! I can't tell any more—oh! mamma—mamma!" and here poor Maggie's will came abruptly to an end. [41]

But things brightened towards the latter part of that day, for they came into smoother waters; and Maggie, as well as all the other seasick passengers, began to feel easier.

"Hallo!" said the captain, pausing as he came by to look at the little, pale, tired face upon the pillows: "is this the jolly little woman who came on board yesterday afternoon? Why, this will not do. I shall have to take her in hand myself, Mrs. Bradford: will you let me turn doctor?"

"Most certainly, Captain, if you can do any thing to relieve her. Every thing seems to fail except time and patience, and of the last my poor child has shown a fair sample," answered the anxious mother.

With a nod to Maggie, who, at the sound of his hearty, cheery voice had half opened her eyes to look at him, and another to Bessie, who sat upon the edge of her sister's couch, he walked away; coming back after a little while, followed by the steward carrying a small tray. On the tray were two plates, the one holding a crisp slice of brown toast; the other, something which Bessie thought very uninviting, a dry, rather black-looking herring. [42]

"I wonder if he is going to ask Maggie to eat that thing," she said to herself. "Idea of it! I know she never can do it. I'm afraid he's not so very nice as he looks, and that he has very poor sense."

But the captain asked Maggie nothing about the herring; but, sitting down beside her, he took the tray from the steward, and cutting a small bit from the fish, he held it to Maggie's lips. Maggie turned away her head in disgust, in which Bessie sympathized.

"Come, come," said the captain, "every one has to do as I say on this ship, especially when I turn doctor." [43]

He did not smile, though he looked as good-natured and pleasant as ever; and, doubtful if he were in joke or in earnest, Maggie reluctantly took the bit of fish from the fork, and then a mouthful of the toast, which she swallowed with the same martyr-like air. Another and another followed, taken with less and less reluctance; till at last Bessie was surprised to see Maggie's eyes remain open, and fix themselves rather longingly upon the plate, as if she wished the captain would make the intervals shorter. He took no notice, however, but fed her slowly, till fish and toast had both entirely disappeared, when he said,—

"I think we shall do now. I'll be back in half an hour, Mrs. Bradford, to see how my patient here is getting on," and walked away.

"Maggie," said Bessie, as soon as he had gone, "wasn't that meal very nas—, I mean rather disagreeable?"

"Why, no," said Maggie, "it was delicious; and I think that captain is lovely, Bessie. He's the best doctor ever I saw. The next time I come to sea—which I hope I never will again—I'll put herring in my satchel 'stead of lemons. They never did me a bit of good." [44]

Bessie privately thought this worse than the "pickle arrangement;" but since the captain's prescription had done Maggie so much good, she had nothing more to say against it or him; and when he came back at the promised time it was to find his little patient beginning to look like herself, and talking and smiling with something of her accustomed brightness.

This was the last of Maggie's seasickness, and by the next morning she was nearly as lively and well as usual; though she now and then fell into a fit of thought, as if she were considering some knotty question; and she was observed to regard Margaret Bessie Marion with more than usual interest, and to give her a great amount of petting and tending. At length the question which was weighing on her mind found words.

"Papa," she said, "don't lawyers know about wills?" [45]

"They ought to, Maggie," answered Mr. Bradford. "Why, you don't want to make yours, do you?"

"I have made it, papa," said Maggie, with all the gravity of a judge. "I told Bessie about it, but I want to know if it's against the law to undo the things you've willed, if you don't die when you thought you were going to."

"Not at all," said papa, laughing: "you may make your will, and 'undo it' as often as you please, while you are living."

"For the people won't be disappointed as long as they don't know you've willed them the things," said Maggie, meditatively. "Anyhow, I s'pose my people would be more disappointed to have me die, than not to have my things."

"They would indeed, little daughter," said her father, drawing her tenderly to him: "to lose our Maggie would be to take a great deal of sunshine out of the lives of 'your people.'" [46]

"And I know Bessie don't care for my dollies so long as we can play with them together: do you, Bessie?"

"Oh, no! Maggie; and if I hadn't you, I should never play again, but be sorrowful all my life;" and Bessie put on an air of extreme melancholy at the bare idea of such a possibility.

So this matter being settled to the satisfaction of all, and Maggie feeling like her own self once more, she and Bessie were free to enjoy all the new pleasures about them.

They were a merry, happy party, those four little girls, Maggie, Bessie, Belle, and Lily; always pleasant and good-natured with one another; never fretting or quarrelling in their play. As for Maggie, her new friend the captain used to call her "Little Make-the-best-of-it;" for her sunny temper found so much good in all things, and so many reasons why all that was, was best.

He escorted the young quartette all over the steamer, taking them down into the machine rooms, where they saw the great furnaces glowing with hot coals, and tended by strong men in scarlet shirts, with their sleeves rolled up to the shoulders; where the iron beam and pistons went up and down, up and down, without a moment's pause or irregularity; where each little wheel and joint went steadily on doing its appointed work, without which the huge machinery must have stood motionless and useless. [47]

The sympathies of the children, especially those of Maggie, were greatly excited in behalf of a man whom they saw watching the steam dial plates at the upper end of the engine room. There were three of these plates, the centre one very large, the other two smaller; and the man paced up and down the narrow platform in front, almost without a moment's pause, turning his eyes every now and then to the dials.

"What funny clocks," said Bessie, "and how that man watches them! Why is he so anxious about the time?" [48]

"Only one of them is a clock," said the captain; "the others are to show how much steam we have on, and how it is working, and if all is right."

Bessie did not understand, and said so; and the captain, taking her up in his arms, tried to explain the use and working of the dials to the little girls; but it was rather a difficult matter for them to take in, and I do not know that he made it very clear to them.

"But I want to know about that man," said Maggie: "does he have to walk here and look at these things all the time?"

"All the time," said Captain Brooks.

"Doesn't he eat and sleep?" asked Belle.

"Oh! to be sure," said the captain. "I said he was here all the time; but I should have said a man was here all the time; for there is another who takes his turn while this one rests."

"But are you not tired sometimes?" Bessie asked of the man, who just then came to the end of the platform where she was.

He nodded assent as he turned, but made no answer in words, did not even smile, being a grum-looking man, and seeming altogether intent on his dials. [49]

"He's not very polite just to nod at you and not speak," said Lily.

"It is against the rule of the ship for him to talk while he is on duty, and he always keeps the rule," said the captain.

"Oh!" said Maggie, her pity more than ever roused for the object of her interest: "does he have to walk on this little bit of a place with nothing to amuse him, and can't even talk? I think that is pretty hard: *I* never could do it."

"But if he were talking and chatting with every one who came along, and thinking only of his own amusement, he would forget his work and have his attention taken off from those plates which it is his business to watch constantly," said the captain.

"And then we'd be blown up or burnt up or drowned or something," said Maggie.

"Not as bad as that, I hope," said Captain Brooks, smiling; "but something might readily go wrong before he perceived it." [50]

"It seems like watching conscience all the time for fear we do something naughty," said Bessie, who had been thoughtfully regarding the man since she last spoke. "If we forget conscience, or don't pay attention where it points, we can be naughty before we know it."

"Just so," said the captain, looking at her half in amusement, half in surprise; "but tell me, little one, do you find some moral lesson in every thing?"

"I don't know what 'moral' is, sir," said Bessie, demurely; "but I think that man is a pretty good lesson to us."

Here roguish Lily, for whom the prospect of being "blown up or burnt up or drowned or something," did not seem to have any terrors, and who had been all this time trying to distract the watchman's attention by shaking her head and finger at him, flirting her pocket-handkerchief, and giving little squeaks and "hems," all without any avail, suddenly astonished him and accomplished her object, by firing a paper pellet which hit him directly between the eyes. The gruff old fellow only gave her a growl in return, however, and recommenced his pacing up and down; but Lily went capering about in an ecstasy of delight at her unlooked-for success, till the captain, who could not help laughing, called her to order with,— [51]

"Here, here, you elf! have done with your monkey tricks, or I shall shut you up in a cage till we get to shore."

"You've none large enough," said laughing Lily.

"There are plenty of hencoops on board," said the captain, pretending to look fierce, "and carpenters too, to make any sized cage I may order. You had better look out."

"I don't think it's fair to tease the poor man," said Bessie, "he has to be so stupid all the time, and he is so dutiful too. Let's go away, Captain Brooks, and not let him be teased any more." [52]

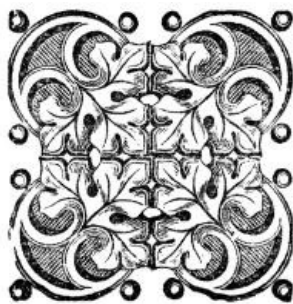
So the captain took them away in search of other novelties; but Maggie and Bessie did not forget "the poor, stupid man," as the latter called him, meaning only that she thought he passed his time in such a dull, uninteresting manner; and they set their young wits to work to see if they could not do him some kindness.

"I don't see the good of it," said Lily. "The captain said he was a surly old fellow, any way, and didn't care to talk much when he could. I guess we'd better just let him alone."

"We oughtn't to judge by appearances," said Maggie, gravely. "Bessie and I have learned that."

"But not till we'd performed some pretty bad mistakes," said Bessie: "so take a lesson of us."

"Tell us about them," said Belle; and accordingly Belle and Lily were much interested in hearing of Lem and the silver cup, and of Aunt Patty; Maggie also confessing how she had for a long time misjudged Mrs. Jones, of Quam Beach, because she had a disagreeable manner. [53]



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III. LUCY.



Old ocean seemed to wish to make amends, during the last two days of the short voyage, for the tossing and rolling he had given our friends during the first. It was as smooth as a river almost, and broke itself up into little wavelets which seemed formed only to sparkle and catch the sunshine. The weather was warm and summer-like, growing more and more so the farther south they went; and the children spent the whole of their time on deck, even taking their meals there: for though Maggie declared herself "all right now," she could not eat when taken below, and it was "such fun" to have breakfast, dinner, and tea, sent up to them and eaten on deck in such *impromptu* fashion, that the others were only too glad of the excuse of bearing her company. Mamma and Mrs. Norris preferred it too; so they had quite a sociable, cosey time of it.

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As for Bessie, she wanted "no better contentment" than to sit watching the sea. The sky; the waves; the white sea-gulls, which now and then came sailing round on their snowy wings; the other vessels they saw in the far distance, or sometimes near at hand; the huge porpoises which threw themselves with a sudden leap and plunge out from the water and back again,—each and all had their charm for her; and, if undisturbed, she would sit for hours, her doll clasped in her arms, gazing her fill, and thinking her own thoughts. Happy, peaceful thoughts they were too, if one might judge by the expression of her sweet little face.

"How my Bessie loves the sea, does she not?" said her father, sitting down beside her one time when he found her thus absorbed.

"Yes, papa, dearly; but then I love the real sea better."

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"But this is the real sea, darling."

"But I mean the *real, real* sea, papa; the true, *very* sea," said the little girl.

"I do not know how you could have more real sea than this, dear," said her father, rather at a loss to know what she could mean. "We are many, many miles from land. You can see none on any side. It is water, water, the real true ocean, all around us, as far and farther than our eyes can reach. You do not mean that you would have it rough and stormy?"

"Oh, no, papa!" Bessie answered, rather puzzled herself how to make her meaning plain to her father; "but I mean that kind of sea where the waves come slowly, slowly on the beach, all white and curly, and make that nice sound I like so much. It does not come in this kind of a sea."

"Oh, ho!" said her father, "I understand. It is the *seashore* you are longing for, even more than the open sea itself. Well, perhaps one of these days, you may be there again."

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"Oh! do you think I might be, papa? Oh, that would be so delightful!" and she turned her little, eager, wistful face to her father with such a sparkle in her eye.

"I think it more than likely that such a thing will come to pass, Bessie," said Mr. Bradford; but he did not tell her what a pleasant surprise awaited her in the course of her summer travels.

"Papa," she said again presently, "do not these dear little waves we have to-day make you think of our Maggie? They seem just like her, as if they were dancing and laughing, and so glad and gay."

"Yes," said her father, pleased at the pretty conceit of the affectionate little sister, "and God's sunshine, pouring down upon these merry waves and touching them with light and sparkle, is like the love and tenderness which make our Maggie's heart so gay and happy."

"And I am a little bit of Maggie's sunshine: am I not, papa?" asked the sweet Bessie.

The reply came in a squeeze, half a dozen smothering kisses, and a squeal meant to express affection and delight, from Maggie herself, who, coming up behind them and hearing Bessie's

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question, answered after her own peculiar fashion.

Yes: they were both true sunbeams, these two dear little girls: sunbeams as all children may be, because they were happy; happy because they were good and generous and loving; sunbeams to one another and to all around them, shedding light and brightness wherever they passed.

"Bessie," said Maggie, when she had done hugging and kissing her sister, "I've made a very surprising discovery. Do you see that little girl sitting over there? I've seen her before."

"Yes," answered Bessie. "She's a kind of errand girl and helps the stewardess. Yesterday morning when you were so sick she brought some ice for you; but I didn't speak to her, 'cause I felt so bad about you."

"But, do you know who her father is, Bessie?"

[59]

"No," said Bessie. "Who?"

"That man downstairs, the steam-clock man. Isn't that very curious?"

"Why, yes. How did you find out, Maggie?"

"Well, Belle and Lily and I were there, while you looked at the water, and that child came and stood by us; and she looked so very wishful at our dolls, that I told her she might hold Bessie Margaret Marion a little while if she would be careful of her; and you don't know how pleased she seemed then; and, Bessie, what do you think, the poor child never had a doll in her life, 'cept only a rag one, and she has no mother or sisters or any one but her father; and the captain lets her live with her father on board the steamer; and she tries to help the stewardess and run about; and she don't like the sea a bit, she is so tired of being on it most all the time; and she's just my age, only a year older; and Lily asked her if her father was a cross patch to her, and she was rather mad at that, and said no: he was good and kind as could be, and she loved him dearly. And so I told her Lily did not mean to make her mad,—only we thought perhaps she did not find him very interesting 'cause he would not talk much. But she did not seem to like that very much either: so I said, very quickly, that maybe the reason her father did not talk much was because he had so much thinking to do; and then she looked pleased again, and said yes, that was it, but he always talked enough to her. And then I told her I felt so very sorry for him, 'cause he had to walk up and down that little place, with nothing to do but to look at those old clock things; and I knew I never could be so strict with my duty, for I would be sure to laugh or talk or something."

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"And didn't she look pleased when you said that about her father?" asked Bessie, when Maggie had come to the end of this long story.

"Oh, yes! And she said he did not like to do it, but he had to make a living," answered Maggie.

"I'm real sorry for both of them," said Bessie. "You know, Maggie, we said we would like to be kind to him if we could, 'cause he had such a stupid time; and I s'pose he would be just as pleased if we did a kind thing to his girl."

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"Yes," said Maggie: "if he's a dutiful father, he would. I was thinking we might give her a doll to amuse herself with."

"Not one of ours?" said Bessie, holding Margaret Colonel Horace fast, as if she thought she was to be taken from her at once.

"Oh, no! We never could give up these dolls," said Maggie. "We love them too much; and besides the Colonel gave them to us, so it would never do. But then, you know, we have some of our own money with us; and I thought when the steamer stopped going and we come to that part of the world that is land again, maybe we might find a toy-store and buy her a doll of her own."

"Yes," said Bessie. "Papa, do they have stores in Savannah?"

"Plenty," answered papa, "and doubtless we shall find a toy-store without trouble."

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"And we may buy Lucy a doll, may we not, papa?" said Maggie. "You see, it's pretty hard for a child to have no relations, or dolls, or other advantages, except only a father."

"Yes," said Mr. Bradford, laughing, "if you choose to spend your money to give pleasure to this little girl, who is so poorly off, you may certainly do so."

The children were delighted with their papa's consent; and when Belle and Lily heard of the plan, they begged Maggie and Bessie to let them join in giving this pleasure to the poor child who had so few enjoyments. Maggie and Bessie readily agreed: and it was settled that when they reached Savannah, one of the first things to be done should be the purchase of a doll for Lucy Waters; for such was the name of the little girl.

Our four young friends were not the only children on the steamer with whom Lucy had something to do, as you shall hear.

"Father," she said, as she sat upon his knee that evening, while he was off duty, "there are some nice little girls on board, this trip."

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"Humph!" was all the answer she received; for, in spite of Lucy's assertion that her father talked enough to her, he did not throw away too many words, even upon her: but Lucy was used to his way, and did not mind it, for she knew he loved her dearly.

"There are," she insisted. "One of them let me take her doll, and it can turn its head; and she let me do it, and move its arms too. And another one was kind to me when some other children said bad things to me. There they are, father: don't you see them?" and she pointed to where Maggie and Bessie were sitting, with their father and mother.

"Thought so," said Waters, who was not really surly, but only silent and unsociable.

"Why how, father! Did you know about it?"

"No," replied her father, "but thought like enough it was them when you said some spoke nice to you. Seem like kindly, loving, little souls." [64]

"There are two more nice ones, that play with 'em," said Lucy.

"Humph!" said Waters again, "one of 'em is a saucy mischief, I guess."

"Oh!" said Lucy, "I know which one you mean. They call her Lily. I didn't like her so much at first; but I do now, 'cause she slapped a boy's face who said hateful things to me."

If Lucy imagined her father would ask what the boy had said, she was mistaken; for he smoked away without a word more. But the memory of her wrongs was too great to be borne in silence, and presently she said,—

"Are not my clothes very nice, father?"

"Nice as I can afford, anyhow," he answered without taking his pipe from his lips.

"I told that boy and his sisters they were as nice as anybody's," said Lucy; "but maybe they're not." And taking off her bonnet, she turned it round and round, eying it rather mournfully. "I don't think this kind of a hat is so nice as those little girls', father; nor this long apron so nice as their short frocks. I wonder if I couldn't make 'em look better, so folks wouldn't laugh at me." [65]

Now, I think Waters was somewhat mistaken when he said Lucy's clothes were as nice as he could afford. He had good wages, and his little girl did not want for what was necessary to make her neat and comfortable: but he did not know how to dress her; and the enormous shaker bonnet, which would have fitted a grown woman; and long, scant apron which came to her feet,—cost no less, perhaps more, than the short frock and round straw hat, which would have been more convenient and suitable for a girl of her age.

Poor Lucy knew she looked very different from most children of her own size; but, although she kept herself very tidy, she did not see how she was to remedy this difficulty. She was a funny little figure, certainly: more so than she was aware of; but it had never troubled her much until this afternoon, when some rude but well-dressed boys and girls, who would have been very indignant if they had been told they were not half so well-bred and polite as the engineer's little daughter, had annoyed her very much. [66]

Maggie and Bessie had noticed these children, but, seeing how rough and boisterous they were, had rather avoided them. But that afternoon, while they, with Belle and Lily, were talking to Lucy, and asking her some questions about her homeless, seafaring life, these boys and girls came up to them.

Not having at that moment any dispute to settle among themselves, they were ready to band together against any one else; and Lucy presented a tempting mark for attack.

"Ho! you seem to have picked up a fine acquaintance there!" said Arthur Lathrop, the eldest of the brothers.

"She is dressed in the last fashion," said Charlotte, his sister, with a scornful look at Lucy. [67]

"Quite the style," joined in the other boy. "You brought your bonnet from the Paris Exposition: did you not, ma'am?"

Poor Lucy had not the least idea what the Paris Exposition was; but she knew very well that these unkind children were making fun of her, and she drew back with a hurt and angry look.

"Couldn't you give my sisters the pattern of that lovely bonnet?" said Arthur.

"And of that outside toggery too," said William, "whatever its name is. Not being used to such an elegant style of dress, I don't know what to call it."

"You ought to be ashamed to talk so," said Bessie, indignantly. "She's a nice, good, little girl, who tries to be a help to every one; and if her clothes are not so very pretty, she can't help it. It is better to have good clothes and be bad, than to have bad clothes and be good," added the little girl, saying just the opposite of what she intended.

But no one noticed her mistake. The Lathrops were all too intent on their victim, the other little ones too full of sympathy and indignation, to pay much heed to a choice of words. [68]

"Well," returned William, provokingly, "don't we say she is the most stylish, fashionable young lady we have seen this long time. For me, I am struck dumb with admiration."

"To be sure," said Charlotte, "didn't you say that bonnet was the latest fashion from the Exposition?"

"Or from Noah's ark: which is it? Pray tell us, miss," put in Arthur with a loud laugh.

"Let her be, you bad boys," said Belle.

"She looks a great deal nicer than any of you," said Lily, too anxious to take up Lucy's defence to think of the exact truth of her statement.

"Oh! of course, of course," retorted Arthur. "She is quite a model. I propose we all ask our mothers to buy us just such clothes. Don't leave us, Miss Elegance;" and he caught hold of poor Lucy, who had turned to run away. [69]

"Let her be," said Lily.

"You're very ungrateful," said Maggie. "This morning when you called the stewardess, I saw Lucy run very quick to call her. You ought to be ashamed all of you. You're as bad as the Elisha children in the Bible, that were eaten up."

"Are you going to let her go?" asked Lily, with a threatening shake of her head at the young tyrant, who still held Lucy fast.

"As soon as she tells us how many hundred dollars she paid for this love of a bonnet," said Arthur, tossing off the unlucky shaker with a jerk of his thumb and finger.

Without another word, Lily reached up her small hand, and gave the big boy a sounding slap upon his cheek. In his surprise, he loosed his hold of Lucy, who quickly snatched up her bonnet, and made good her escape.

Arthur turned fiercely upon Lily; but she stood her ground, and not exactly caring, bully though he was, to strike back at a girl so much smaller than himself, he contented himself with catching her still uplifted hand in his, and saying,—

"How dare you do that?"

"Cause you deserved it," said Lily, sternly.

"And I've a good mind to give you another," said Belle.

"Children! Children!" said Mr. Powers, who had seen from a distance that trouble was threatening, and had come to prevent it. "What is the matter here? Quarrelling and striking?"

"I'm striking," said Lily, rather proud of having given a blow in what she considered a just cause; "but I'm not quarrelling, sir."

"No, papa," said Belle. "We're not quarrelling: it's only those bad, mean ones;" and she pointed at the Lathrops with as much scorn in her tone and manner as they had used towards Lucy.

But these children, knowing right well that their share in the dispute was by far the worst, did not choose to face Mr. Powers's inquiries, and now scattered in all directions.

"Striking and calling names look a good deal like quarrelling," said Mr. Powers, smiling.

"But we had to take Lucy's side, papa," said Belle; and neither she nor Lily was to be persuaded that it was not right for the latter to strike a blow in Lucy's defence. Indeed, Maggie and Bessie were rather inclined to hold the same opinion, and all four were quite excited over Lucy's wrongs.

While Lucy was telling her father the story, they were talking it over among themselves; and knowing, in spite of their sympathy, that she presented rather a comical figure, were trying to think of some means by which they might help her to dress herself more like other children. But they did not see exactly how it was to be done, nor did Mrs. Bradford when they consulted her.

"I fear it would not do to offer Lucy clothes, my darlings," she said: "those she wears, though odd-looking, are good and comfortable; and her father might be offended if we offered her any thing which seemed like charity, or let him know that we do not think her properly dressed."

"Mamma," said Bessie, gravely, "do you think a thing is comfortable when it makes a child laughed at?"

"Well, no, dear, perhaps not," answered Mrs. Bradford, smiling, "and I am very sorry for Lucy. Mrs. Norris and I were saying this morning that we wished we might tell the poor child how to make herself look less like a little old woman, but we thought it would not do to interfere."

"I'd wish somebody would interfere if it was me," said Maggie. "It must be most *too* much to have a father who won't talk, and who has such very bad taste."

This was said with so much emphasis, and with such a long-drawn sigh at the end, as if the mere thought of such misfortune were almost too much for Maggie, that every one laughed.

Bessie had less to say about Lucy's troubles than any of the others; but she thought more of them: for we know how sensitive she herself was to ridicule, and she could not bear to think that Lucy might have to undergo the same trial again.

"Mamma," she said, coming to her mother's side that evening, "there are Lucy and her father sitting at the head of those steps, and she is showing him those queer dressing-gown frocks of hers. Could I go and speak to them?"

Mrs. Bradford turned to see if it was a proper place for Bessie to go to, and then gave her permission, thinking that her little girl might possibly see some way to help Lucy, and trusting to her good sense and kind heart not to say any thing that might give offence.

"Maybe they're not just the right shape," said the engineer, as Bessie came near; "but I don't know how you are to better them;" and he turned over and over the two frocks, just like the one Lucy had on, which lay across his knee. "Maybe Dorothy would show you."

"I don't like to ask her," said Lucy; or Dorothy the stewardess, was rather sharp and short with her.

Bessie came close.

"Would you be offended if some one tried to be kind to Lucy?" she asked, seizing her opportunity.

She was quite surprised to see how pleasantly Waters smiled as he answered,—

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"Not I. Those that are friends to my Lucy are friends to me."

"Some children laughed at her," said Bessie, wishing to put the case as gently as she could.

The engineer frowned and nodded.

"I told him," said Lucy.

"There's no excuse for them," continued Bessie, looking out over the waters as if she were talking more to herself than to the man, "but perhaps they would not have done it, if—if—if Lucy's clothes were—were a little prettier."

"And I'll warrant if your power was as good as your will, you'd make them prettier for her," answered the engineer. "You're a kind little lady. Lucy was just asking me if I could tell her how to fix up her things a bit; but I don't know. Old Mrs. Sims, who does her washing and sewing, she bought them, and I didn't see but they were all right; but now Lucy says they're not, and she can't do 'em over." [75]

Lucy stood listening in amazement to this unusually long speech from her father, who was very rarely so sociable with any one as he now was with Bessie.

"But you wouldn't mind if mamma was to try and help her, would you?" Bessie asked in a coaxing voice.

"Mind!" said the engineer, "I'd be only too thankful, and so would my Lucy; but such a lady as your mamma doesn't want to bother with a little stranger girl."

"Oh, yes, she does!" said Bessie, eagerly, "and mamma don't think it a bit of bother if she can do a kind thing for some one; and she said she would like to fix Lucy up, 'cause she was such a nice, tidy child. Come and show her these, Lucy;" and without waiting for more words, she snatched up one gown, and taking Lucy by the hand drew her after her, telling her to bring the other two with her. [76]

Lucy obeyed rather timidly; but the kind manner and words of the two ladies, Mrs. Bradford and Mrs. Norris, soon put her at her ease, and she became deeply interested in the plans for putting what Bessie called "the dressing-gown" frocks into proper shape.

There were four of them, all alike, of a good but dull gingham, without the least shape or fit, save what was given by a string about the waist; very long and scant,—so scant, that the ladies decided it would take two to make one suitable frock. Lucy asked and readily obtained leave from her father for this; and Mrs. Bradford allowed the four little girls to begin the work that very night by ripping apart the seams.

She and Mrs. Norris went to work also that evening; and when the steamer came into port the following night, Lucy was made happy by having one dress made in a manner proper for a girl of her age; and knowing that the second was surely promised to her by Mrs. Bradford. Belle presented her with "the doll of moderation," which she had brought with her, she and her young friends having concluded to keep their money for another purpose instead of buying a new one. [77]

The day on which the vessel started on her return voyage, Mr. Bradford and Mr. Powers drove down with their little daughters and Lily Norris; and the children brought Lucy not only her own gingham frock, but also two others, of bright, simple calico, all nicely made up; and a straw hat with a blue ribbon upon it. These were all their own presents, bought with their own money, only the making having been paid for by their mammas; so that the engineer could find no fault with the kindness done to his little girl by these thoughtful young strangers.

Lucy was contented beyond measure with her new clothes; but no words could do justice to her satisfaction and pleasure in her doll. What a treasure it was! What a delight in her rather lonely little life! She talked to it, and caressed it, slept with it in her arms at night, kissed it the first thing in the morning, dressed and undressed it, and learned to use her needle in fashioning clothes for it. Her father might be too busy to attend to her; Dorothy might snub her; fretful, impatient passengers send her hither and thither till she was ready to drop from fatigue,—she had one solace and delight that repaid her for all: the recollection of that little china head, and the staring, blue eyes which lay upon the pillow in her berth, the kisses which she would run and snatch now and then, till her time was her own once more, and she could pet and nurse her little treasure to her heart's content. [78]

And so our four little travellers have begun their journey with a kind deed which brought pleasure and comfort, such as they did not dream of, into this poor, craving, young heart, which had had so little to feed upon; and went upon their way followed by blessings and grateful, happy memories. [79]





IV.

AN OLD ENEMY BUT NEW FRIEND.

It was late at night when our travellers reached Savannah, so late and so dark that even quick-sighted, wide-awake Maggie could see nothing about her as they rode to the hotel, save the twinkling street-lamps; and she was as ready as the other children to be put to bed at once and postpone all questions and sight-seeing until the morning.

But you need not fear I am going to trouble you with a long description of the beautiful, quaint, old city, with its numberless green squares which make it so bright and airy; its broad avenues planted with three rows of trees, so tall and wide-spread that their branches have laced overhead, making lovely, leafy arches for one to pass beneath; its roses—such roses! the like of which we do not see in our colder northern climate; roses, which with us are only bushes, growing there into trees, or running into luxuriant vines which clothe the fronts and sides of the old-fashioned houses, covered with a profusion of blossoms, and filling the air with their delicious fragrance. They were just in the perfection of their glory when our friends arrived, and it would be impossible to tell the delight Bessie took in them. Her love of flowers here had full enjoyment in these her favorites. Morning, noon, and night, she was seen with her little hands filled with roses,—for the family were kept well supplied, thanks to the graceful southern fashion of sending flowers to all newcomers and strangers; they were twisted among her curls and worn in her bosom, laid beside her plate at meals, and she would even have slept with them on her pillow, if mamma would have allowed it.

She made a pretty picture as she sat upon the staircase of the — House, the day after their arrival, her lap full of red, white, and yellow roses, which she was arranging with no small taste and daintiness into bouquets for her people.

Three pair of eyes were watching her,—those of a grave-looking gentleman, who stood at the foot of the stairs; and those of Arthur and Charlotte Lathrop, who were peering at her over the banisters from above. But Bessie noticed neither until Arthur called her attention by making a sound like a snarling dog. Bessie started and looked up, then went on with her work in silence.

“I say,” said Arthur, “are you making a wreath of roses for that old Mother Hubbard you took such a fancy to on board the steamer?”

Bessie made no answer.

“Why don’t you speak when you’re spoken to?” said Arthur. “Did you give your tongue to Mother Hubbard?”

“When I’m talked to politely, I always do speak,” said the little girl.



Bessie's Travels. p. 82.

"Oh! and we're not polite enough to suit you, I suppose," said Arthur, sneeringly. [83]

"'Tis only engineers' daughters and the like who are fit company for her," joined in Charlotte.

"We might go and take lessons from Mother Hubbard, and then perhaps she'd like us better," said Arthur. "I say, Miss Bradford, what school did you learn your manners in, that you don't speak when you're spoken to?"

Bessie remained silent again.

"Do you hear?" shouted Arthur.

"Once I heard of a school where they only paid two cents for learning manners," said Bessie, demurely.

"What then?" asked Arthur.

"I should think that was the kind of a school you had been to," answered Bessie.

"And why, I'd like to know?"

"'Cause I shouldn't think they could teach much manners for two cents."

Arthur was a clever boy with a quick sense of humor; and he was so struck with what he considered the wit and smartness of the retort, that he forgot to be angry, and, instead of making a sharp answer, broke out into a hearty laugh. [84]

"Pretty good that!" he said. "You'll do yet."

"Pretty good, and pretty well deserved too, my lad," said the gentleman, who had been standing below, coming up the stairs. "See here, Clara, here is the Queen of the Fairies, I believe," and he turned around to a lady who ran lightly up behind him.

"Queen of the Fairies, indeed," said the lady, with a laughing look at the little figure before her, in its white dress and shining hair, and lap covered with brilliant flowers: "or Queen of the"—What she would have said was lost, for after a pause of astonishment she exclaimed, "Why! it is—yes, it is Bessie Bradford—dear little Bessie!"

And regardless of her muslin dress with its fluted flounces and ruffles, down went the lady on the stairs before Bessie; and, greatly to her surprise, the little girl found herself held fast in the embrace of a supposed stranger. [85]

But it was no stranger, as she found when she could free herself a little from that tight clasp, and look in the lady's face.

"Don't you know me, Bessie?" asked the lady.

"Why! it's Miss Adams!" cried Bessie, in as great amazement as the new-comer herself.

"And you are a little glad to see me, are you not?" asked the lady, seeing with pleasure the smile and glow on Bessie's face.

"Not a *little*, but very, Miss Adams," she replied. "I was very interested about you, and always thought I'd like to see you again after I heard you'd"—here she hesitated for a word.

"Well," said the lady.

"I can't think of the word," said Bessie. "Oh, yes! reformed, that's it,—after you'd reformed. [86] You know you wrote and told us about it yourself."

At this "Miss Adams" went off into a fit of laughter, which sounded very natural to Bessie's ears; and yet there was a difference in that and in her manner from those of the old days at Quam Beach; something softer and more gentle; "more as if she remembered to be a lady, mamma," Bessie said afterwards.

The gentleman smiled too.

"Her words are to the point when she does find them," he said.

"They always were," said the lady, giving Bessie another kiss. "Bessie, this is the gentleman I found to make me 'behave myself.' I hope you'll find the 'kitchen lady' improved under his teaching."

Bessie colored all over face and neck.

"Oh! please don't," she said. "I'm so sorry I said that; but I was such a little child then, I didn't [87] know any better. I wouldn't say such a saucy thing now for a great deal."

"You need not be sorry about it, Bessie: I am not."

"Please don't speak about it any more, ma'am," pleaded the child. "Couldn't you let bygones be bygones?"

"What do you mean by 'bygones'?" asked the gentleman.

"I thought it meant, sir," said Bessie, modestly, "when a person had done something they were sorry for, not to say any thing more about it."

"Very well," said the lady, still smiling. "It shall be so, if you wish it, Bessie. And now tell me how your mamma and Maggie and all the rest are."

"Oh! they are all very well, except mamma, and she is better, and we are travelling to do her good; and a great many things happened to us, Miss Adams, since you knew us before."

"I don't think it has 'happened' to you to grow much," said the lady.

"Oh, yes'm!" answered Bessie. "I used to be five, and now I'm seven; and I've been to school [88] too. We've all grown pretty old. Baby can walk and talk now."

"And how do you like my doctor?" asked "Miss Adams," as Bessie still called her, glancing round at the gentleman who stood beside her.

Bessie looked up at him, and he looked down at her, and when their eyes met, both smiled.

"I like him: he looks good and nice;" and the little girl, who had already twisted a rose or two into the bosom of the lady's dress, now handed two or three to the doctor in her own graceful, gracious little way.

"What are you going to do with all those bouquets you have tied up so tastily?" asked Dr. Gordon.

Bessie told him whom they were for.

"And who is this for?" asked Mrs. Gordon,—for so she told Bessie to call her,—pointing to that which the small fingers were now arranging.

"It's for a little girl down at the steamer, who is rather hard off, and does not have a nice time, [89] and has extremely ugly clothes," answered Bessie. "But then if they are the best she has, and she has no mother, no one ought to laugh at her: ought they?"

"Certainly not: who was so unkind?" asked Mrs. Gordon.

"Some children who didn't behave half so nice as she did, ma'am."

"Ah!" said the doctor; "and was that boy you were talking to just now one of them?"

"Why, yes, sir," said Bessie, with some hesitation. "But how did you know it?"

"Oh! I am a good guesser," answered Dr. Gordon.

"I don't know if I ought to have said that to him," said Bessie, thoughtfully. "I b'lieve I was pretty severe."

At this Mrs. Gordon went off into another fit of laughter; and the doctor smiled as he answered, —

"It was pretty severe, it is true, Bessie; but not more so than he deserved, especially if he had [90] been teasing some poor child who could not defend herself."

Bessie colored, and answered, "But I'm afraid I did it more 'cause I was angry for his being impolite to me than for his teasing Lucy."

"But tell us all about it; and did you say the child had no mother?" said Mrs. Gordon.

In reply, Bessie told all she knew about Lucy, omitting, however, to give any account of the unkindness of Arthur Lathrop and his brother and sisters to the poor child. This was noticed by both Dr. and Mrs. Gordon, but they pressed her no farther, seeing she did not wish to speak of it.

"There's another will be glad to come," said Mrs. Gordon, eagerly, to her husband. "That will make five. You'll see this engineer and speak to him about it: won't you, Aleck?"

"All in good time, dear," he answered quietly.

Five what? Bessie wondered; and where would Lucy be glad to come? But as she supposed they would tell her if they wished her to know, she asked no questions. [91]

But her curiosity was not gratified just then, for the doctor now said to his wife,—

"Come, Clara, we are keeping our friends waiting. You must tell little Bessie about your plans some other time."

"Yes," said Mrs. Gordon. "We have to go to a sick friend here in the house, Bessie; but I shall come to call on your mamma to-morrow, and then I shall see you again and ask her to let you come to me; for I have something to tell you, in which I think you will be interested."

"Don't you live here, ma'am?" asked Bessie.

"Here? yes, here in Savannah, but not in the hotel; and I want you to come to my house. By the way, where is Maggie? I thought you were always together."

"Most always," said Bessie; "but Maggie and the other children went with Mr. Powers and papa to see a cotton-press; and mamma thought I was too tired, so I told Maggie she need not mind leaving me. And now I am glad I did not go." [92]

"And I am sure I am glad," said Mrs. Gordon, as she kissed Bessie for good-by, and once more told her she should be sure to see her the next day, and would arrange with her mamma the time when she and Maggie might come and spend the day with her.

Bessie was very anxious to know what Mrs. Gordon could have to tell her which was to interest her so much, and which seemed in some way to concern Lucy Waters; but she was a little doubtful regarding the prospect of spending the whole day with her old enemy "Miss Adams," not feeling at all sure that she would like it, or that she might not fall into some trouble, in spite of the very evident and pleasing change in that lady.

Maggie was not at all doubtful, and positively declared that she would not go on any account; and she tried to persuade Bessie to join her in begging their mother to refuse Mrs. Gordon's invitation to them. [93]

"For Bessie," she said, "you know a 'bird in the hand is worth two in the bush;' and so, even if Miss Adams is so much better than she used to be, it is wiser to stay away from her, and not give her the chance of being disagreeable if she wanted to be."

Maggie had been much given to the use of proverbs lately, as you will have perceived; and if one could possibly be fitted to her purpose, it was made to serve, as on this occasion.

But Bessie did not feel as if they had any excuse for refusing the invitation so kindly given, nor did mamma when she was appealed to.

"You certainly need not go if you do not wish it, my darlings," she said; "but do you think it likely, Maggie, that Mrs. Gordon would invite you to her house, and then treat you unkindly? She must be a good deal changed, it seems to me; and would it not look as if you were unforgiving, if you refuse her kindness?" [94]

"Oh! I forgive her, mamma," said Maggie, "though it *was* my own Bessie she plagued so, but then I thought her old habits might be too strong for her, and break out again."

"You forgive, but don't forget, eh, Maggie? Suppose you were Mrs. Gordon, how would you like Miss Adams' faults to be treasured up against you, and allowed to stand in the way when you wished to show good-will and kindness?"

"I wouldn't like it at all, mamma; and I suppose it's not very Golden Ruley for me to say I won't go; so, if she asks us, I'll make up my mind to it."

Mrs. Gordon came the next day, according to promise, to call on Mrs. Bradford; and invited not only Maggie and Bessie, but also Belle and Lily, to spend the whole of Friday with her, promising to call for them in the morning and bring them back at night.

But perhaps you will find it more interesting to read Maggie's own account of this visit, which she wrote to Colonel Rush.

"DEAR UNCLE HORACE,—Things are so very surprising in this world that you never quite know how they are going to turn out, of which the case is at present, Miss Adams or who was Miss Adams but now Mrs. Gordon and you will remember her at Quam Beach but under unpleasant circumstances to which we will not refer but forget as well as forgive as mamma reminded me. But you would be surprised to see how much she is improved and so different to what she used to be which was greatly to be desired of all her friends and a pleasure to all who wish her well. So seeing she wished to make up for past offenses we went to spend the day with her and she was very hospitable. She came in her carriage to take us to her house which is most handsome with roses and flowers of many kinds of which she brought mamma a whole lot at [95]

the same time and invited all the big people to dinner the next day. I think all this shows she repents sincerely and is not the same woman but much changed and ought to be encouraged to keep on doing well. She has a nice husband named Dr. Gordon, but sober which is not his own fault if he was born so and I pity him. And a sweet baby boy named Aleck and crows and laughs with pleasure at us. But I hope by no means you think we think him so sweet as May Bessie which he is not and May Bessie is so near to us, which also he is not and we love her far the best. Miss Adams was very kind to us all day, indeed quite fond but most of all to Bessie, and she played with us and amused us and I was glad I did not let the devil which is a word that is not best to write unless it is necessary get the upper hand and make me stay away out of revenge or being shy.

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“But the most surprising and best thing of all, Uncle Horace is what she is going to do with some of her money. You know in those days of which we will not speak she had a great deal more than she knew what to do with. Well, now she has found a good use for some of it in a way well pleasing to God and men. But I am too tired to write more to-day and will finish it to-morrow— Well, to return on this day to Miss Adams and her good works which shows she has read her Bible which urges to repentance of sins and prophets by it which is a sight to make the coldest heart to rejoice. She has a house not very far from her own where she lives and she is going to have six little girls there in the care of a nice, kind lady. And these little girls are not to be happy children with mothers to take care of them, but orfuns or without mothers or teaching or training in the way they should go. For Miss Adams says she knows what it is to be without a mother or some wise person to guide her, and now that God has been so good to her she wants to give a helping hand to some little girls who would be left too much to themselves and not properly taught. She does not mean to have very poor children, and if their friends wish it they may pay a little money for them but the contrary if they do not, and prefer charity though she does not think it such and would like them to come without any pay. And here they will have a happy home and be taught to be desirable women fit for teachers or other good things and so it will be their own fault if they don't do it. And she has chosen four girls who are to come in the fall when Miss Adams comes back from the north because things cannot be quite ready till then, as the lady has a sailor son who is to go to sea which I think a hard case for his friends to have him leave his native land. And then the house will be ready and the lady will go and the children will come and Miss Adams is going to see if Lucy Waters' father who you know I told you about in my last will let her come too. I think if he does not he will be much wanting in sence and proper behaviour, but I think he will dont you? Miss Adams, Mrs. Gordon I mean but I always forget to put her wedding name says she feels so sorry for all little motherless girls, and I am glad of it are not you? And so is Bessie and we think the reason Miss Adams takes so much trouble for these little girls is because she is afraid that if they do not have good care they may grow up to be such women as she used to be when we knew her before but which is not to be mentioned in these pages and now she is quite ashamed of it. We cannot tell just yet if Lucy's father will let her come, but papa and the doctor are going to the steamer this evening to ask him and when we know Bessie will write and tell you all about it. And Bessie and I have quite made up our minds to take Miss Adams for one of our friends because we find her most sencible and kind and so changed from her old ways which we will not remember if we can help it.

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“And dear Uncle Horace and Aunt May we wish you were here 'cause we are having such a nice time and I wrote such a long letter I am afraid you will be tired of it but such an interesting subject my brains were quite full and I had to and you must excuse it. We send two kisses for May Bessie and four for you and hope to see you once more in the future when we come home. And we send a great deal of love from your loving

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“MAGGIE AND BESSIE.”

“P. S. Savannah is such a fine city and so many trees and roses that it seems strange to me that Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte did not try to take it, being both men who never minded their own business but always trying to take what did not belong to them, speshally the latter whom in my heart I heartily despise because he never did as he would be done by.”



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V.

BELLE'S HOME.



You may be sure there was not much trouble in gaining the consent of Lucy's father to the plan proposed for her welfare. He was only too glad and thankful to feel that his motherless little daughter would be placed where she would have a kind and prudent eye to oversee and guide her; and where she would have the opportunity of growing up into a useful and steady woman. This he knew she could not do in the unsettled life she now led on board ship with him, and he had long been considering what he should do with her.

Lucy, though thankful, was not as much pleased, and shed some bitter tears over the prospect. The poor child wanted to learn, and was glad to have a settled home; but she dreaded the thought of parting from her father, who would only be able to see her at such times as his vessel should be at the port of Savannah, and who was the only person whom she had to love her. But, in a day or two after, when she had seen Mrs. Gordon, and heard her talk so kindly of all the pleasures and comforts she would find in this promised home, she became more reconciled to it, especially as the autumn still seemed a long way off to her, and she had all the summer to go back and forth with her father on the sea.

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So she told her troubles to her doll; and the steady, blue eyes, which never winked or softened, brought comfort to her, and seemed to give her the assurance that she need not be parted from her, even to go to her new home. If she had not had this beloved companion, it would have gone much harder with poor little Lucy.

Our little girls did not see her again; but last autumn, when they were settled once more in their city home, after all their summer wanderings, Mrs. Gordon wrote to them, saying that Lucy was quite contented and happy under her care; and that she was a very good child, being trustworthy and obedient, and showing a great desire to learn.

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So there we will leave her, hoping that she will, as Maggie says, "prophet by all that is done for her and make a useful and happy woman." The doll went with her; and all the other toys and amusements which were provided for her never made her tired or forgetful of this, her first love, or of the dear little girls who had taken so much interest in her.

Our party did not remain long in Savannah, for the weather was becoming warm and oppressive; but before they went away, they all spent a day on Mr. Powers' plantation.

This was several miles from the city; and starting in the morning, soon after breakfast, they drove out in the cool of the day. Their way lay through dense pine woods; tall, stately pines, with long, straight trunks; shooting upwards, without leaf or branch, for many a foot, till they neared their height, when they put forth their dark-green crowns, which cast such a sombre shade below. The shade was no objection on this warm day, and a light breeze was stirring, which was very refreshing; but it sounded rather mournful to Maggie and Bessie, as it moaned through the mighty stems, and rustled the thick, fragrant leaves overhead. It has a strange, peculiar sound, the wind in those dark, pine forests of the South,—a sound rather saddening to any listener.

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Maggie did not like it at all, and said so, which rather displeased Belle, who, in her delight at returning to her beloved Southern home, found every thing there perfect. However, as they drove on, both Maggie and Bessie spied out so many objects which called forth their surprise and admiration, that she was presently consoled, and concluded that they "liked her own country pretty well, after all."

Here and there was a magnolia with its magnificent cream-white blossoms, their delicious perfume mingling with the fragrance of the pines; there a group of scarlet cardinal flowers, or a little pool bordered with bright blue flags and spotted tiger-lilies; while through the deep stillness of the woods came the sweet notes of the blue-jay and mocking-bird. Once, as they were passing

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over a bridge which crossed a marsh, Maggie called the attention of the others to two turtles, great big fellows, larger than any the children had ever seen at the North; "swamp turtles" Belle said they were. They scuttled out of the way in their clumsy fashion, diving out of sight into the mud; and Bessie said she thought they must be some of the unclean animals spoken of in the Bible, since they liked to live in such a dirty place.

The entrance to the plantation was through an avenue of magnificent live-oaks, some of them so large that two or three men could not have encircled them with their outstretched arms; and these splendid trees were studded all over the lawn, spreading far and wide their branches, which, unlike their neighbors the pines, they sent out very low,—so near the ground in fact, that even Bessie could reach the gray Spanish moss which hung over them in long festoons and wreaths. The children had seen this curious moss before in the beautiful old cemetery of Bonaventure, where the oaks are perfectly clothed with it; and Bessie had admired it so much, that Maggie had taken up the idea of carrying home enough to make "a bower" for her in their own little room. But she thought it best to gain the consent of her father and mother to this arrangement; not only because it was right, but also because nurse was rather apt to call such things "truck and trash," and to put them out of the way as fast as possible. If papa and mamma said they might have it, nurse might *call* it what she pleased, but she could not throw it away. [106]

Mr. Powers stood awaiting them on the steps of the veranda, for he had been at the plantation for three or four days, while Belle and Daphne had been left in Mrs. Bradford's charge at the hotel; for he did not think it best for Belle to sleep on the plantation at that time of the year. [107]

She shrieked with delight when she saw him; and, in her hurry to reach him, had nearly thrown herself from Daphne's lap underneath the carriage-wheels. There would have been an end to the day's pleasure then; but Daphne's hand grasped her skirts, and saved her from a terrible death.

As it was, the whole party were startled; and her father's face had lost its smile of welcome, and looked rather pale as he came down the steps and took her in his arms.

"My pet!" he said, "always in too much of a hurry. This would have been a sad meeting for papa, if you had fallen; but a good God took care of you for me."

Belle clung about his neck and did not speak; for whether it were the fright, or the sight of her father, or the return to the old home which she had left at such a sad time, or perhaps all three, her feelings took a sudden turn, and when Mr. Powers had brought his friends in and welcomed them, and raised the little face to kiss it again, he found it drowned in tears. [108]

"Why! my darling," he said, "were you so frightened?"

"I don't know, papa," sobbed the excitable little thing; "but, this is home—only—only—mamma is not in it."

Tears, or something very like them, came to the eyes of all, even of Mr. and Mrs. Norris, who had never known Belle's dead mother; and Mr. Powers turned hastily away, and stepped with her out on the veranda.

"*Only* mamma was not in it!" Ah, yes! that was the *only* that made all the difference in the world, so that home did not seem like home any longer.

It was some few moments before either of them were composed enough to return; and when Mr. Powers came back he was alone, and told Bessie that Belle wanted her to go to her.

Bessie went out upon the veranda, which ran on all four sides of the house, and around the corner she found Belle curled up on a settee where her father had placed her. She stretched out her arms to Bessie when she saw her, saying,— [109]

"Bessie, I do remember mamma so much in my home, and you are a comfit. You are my next best comfit to papa, ever since the first day you spoke to me in school."

This was a pleasant thing for Bessie to hear; but she put aside her own pleasure for the present, and thought only of being the "comfit" her poor little friend called her. I wonder if there was any one among all the people who knew her, who could have said that our dear Bessie was not more or less of a comfort to them.

Her sweet sympathy and gentle tenderness soon did Belle good, and Bessie let her talk on about her mother as long as she would.

Belle had been very bright and cheerful lately,—thanks to the friends with whom she had been so much thrown,—and it was a good while since she had had a fit of longing for her mother; but the coming to her home had brought her great loss back to her, and just now she could think of nothing else. [110]

"Do you know where they put my mamma before she went to heaven?" said Belle.

"No. Where?" answered Bessie.

"Do you see those high trees over there, Bessie? They put her where little brother and sister are, and ever so many grandpas and grandmas."

"But they didn't put her soul there," said Bessie.

"No," said Belle, "'cause that was God's part, and it went to him. And then she couldn't speak or hear me or see me, but was all deaded away; and so they put the rest of her over there, and put a great many flowers over her. But that was a long, long while ago, before I went away to the North, and I didn't see where they put mamma this ever so long. Maybe the flowers are all faded. Will you come and see, Bessie?" [111]

"We must ask mamma or your papa first," said Bessie.

"They would let us," said Belle: "it's a very safe place. I used to often go there when mamma was alive, to be by little brother and sister, and she is there now. There couldn't any danger come to us where mamma is: could there, Bessie?"

"No: I guess not," said Bessie. "I s'pose mother-angels take care of their little children. I'll go with you, Belle dear, if you're quite sure your papa will let us."

"I know he would, Bessie; and I'd just as lief ask him; only then Maggie and Lily will come too. I'd like Maggie to come, but Lily laughs so much. I love Lily; but I don't want any one to laugh where my mamma is dead."

"No," said Bessie, with the most caressing tenderness of tone and manner, "they shan't; and I'll go, Belle."

With their arms about one another's necks, the two little things ran down the piazza steps, and the shady path, through which Belle led the way; but as they came near the small burying-ground, their steps grew slow and more reverent. [112]

It was an exquisite spot. An iron railing enclosed it, but the rails were hidden by the green vines which overran them, and within it was beautifully sodded; the green broken here and there by the white marble monuments and slabs which marked the resting-place of Belle's relations. Flowers of the loveliest kinds were blossoming over and around them, and all showed the utmost care and loving remembrance. Over the entrance was an arch, also of white marble, and on the stone were cut the words, "He giveth His beloved sleep."

"How sweet it is!" exclaimed Bessie, struck at once with the lovely quiet and peace of the place; and then she looked up and spelled out the letters on the arch.

"Sleep! that was what mamma said: it was only like a sleep if we loved Jesus and tried to do what He wanted us to, and I think it must mean Him when it says, 'giveth His beloved sleep.' What dear words! are they not, Belle?" [113]

"Yes," said Belle, but without paying much attention to what Bessie was saying, for her eye had caught sight of a new object in the enclosure.

"See!" she went on, catching Bessie by the arm: "there's a stone there where they put mamma;" and drawing Bessie with her, she pushed open the light gate.

It swung easily back, for it was unfastened. There were none here to intrude, no one came here who would not guard with the greatest love and reverence the little spot sacred to "His beloved."

"His beloved!" For of those who lay there, not one but had closed their eyes in the full faith that they should open them again upon the brightness of His face. Truly that was "God's Acre."

The "stone" which had attracted Belle's attention was a shaft of pure white marble upon her mother's grave. The centre had been cut away so as to leave four small arches, one on each side, and beneath there was a cross, with the letters "I. H. S.;" before that an open Bible, with the words, "I will not leave you comfortless." [114]

The sculptor had done his work perfectly; and the snowy marble showed in beautiful contrast with the dark, glossy leaves of the bay tree which spread its arms above it.

"Papa put it there, I know he did," said Belle, after she and Bessie had stood looking at it in silence for a moment or two.

"Yes: I s'pose he did," said Bessie: "let's see what these words are, Belle."

By standing on tiptoe, the little ones could manage to see the letters carved upon the book; and Bessie read them out as she had done those over the gateway.

"I will not leave you comfortless," Belle repeated after her. "Why! mamma said that herself a little while before she went to heaven. Maybe that was why papa put it there." [115]

"And Jesus said it," replied Bessie. "It's in the Bible, in a chapter I've heard very often. Don't you remember, Belle? It begins, 'Let not your heart be troubled;' and Jesus said it Himself. Perhaps the reason He told people not to be troubled was He was going to promise to comfort them when they had something very bad to bear. It's the best comfort to know He loves you and will take you to heaven to see your mamma some day: isn't it, Belle?"

"He will if I'm good," passing her little hand slowly and caressingly over the marble; "but then I'm not always good."

"No," said Bessie, "not always; but mamma said you was not near so spoiled as you used to be. I think you're pretty good now, Belle."

"I slapped Daphne's face this morning," whispered Belle, remorsefully.

"Oh! did you?" said Bessie. "Well, Belle, I used to slap people sometimes, even when I had mamma to teach me better, and there was no excuse for me." [116]

"But my own mamma *did* teach me better, Bessie. I slap Daphne pretty often, but she never tells papa; and I promise myself I'll never do it again, and then I just do."

"Did you ever promise Jesus and ask Him to help you not to do it?" asked Bessie.

"No," answered Belle. "I didn't think of it. I could do it now, couldn't I?"

"Yes," said Bessie.

They knelt down together side by side, and Belle said in a soft but steady voice, for her tears had now ceased,—

“Dear Jesus, I promise not to slap Daphne any more, or not to be naughty any more if I can help it; and you will help me to be good. Amen.”

Then pressing her lips to the cold stone, as if it were the warm, living cheek she had once caressed, she said in a pleading, pathetic whisper,—

“Dear mamma, your little Belle will try to be just as good as you would want her to be if you were here wif her.” [117]

Will any doubt that the “mother-angel” heard and rejoiced over the simple promise uttered by her little one’s trusting lips?

“Do you think it really makes Jesus glad when I’m good?” asked Belle, when they had risen from their knees.

“Oh! to be sure it does,” answered Bessie.

“And He *did* leave me some comfit: didn’t He, Bessie? He left me papa, and He gave me you and Maggie too; and your mamma is a great comfit too.”

“Mamma’s the best comfort of anybody,” said Bessie.

“Oh, no, Bessie! oh, no! Papa best—you next.”

Bessie did not contradict her, though she thought it a very strange opinion for Belle to hold, and was not at all convinced herself.

“I wish papa was here to stay with me by mamma a little while,” said Belle, presently.

“Shall I go ask him to come?” asked Bessie.

“Yes,” said Belle. “Do you know the way?” [118]

“Oh, yes! It’s right up that path, isn’t it?”

Then she kissed Belle and left her, turning back as she passed through the gate, to look at her little playmate sitting by her mother’s grave and leaning her head pensively against the monument. But Belle smiled as she met Bessie’s eye, and the little girl felt that she had not been left quite “comfortless.” Her own heart was very full of love and sympathy.

Bessie ran up the path till she was nearly half way to the house, when she was brought to a sudden stand-still by what she thought a very alarming object. Just before her was a large black dog, broad-chested, tall, and fierce-looking, standing directly in the path, and seeming as though he meant to dispute the way.

Bessie’s heart was in her mouth and her knees shook; but she did not scream. She looked at the dog and he looked at her, but he did not bark or growl. Then she found her voice, and tried what coaxing would do.

“Nice doggie, nice little doggie,” she said to the great creature. “Does little doggie want Bessie to go away? Well, she will. But then the good little fellow mustn’t bark at Bessie and frighten her.” [119]

Bessie had an idea that her seeming enemy could bite as well as bark if he saw fit occasion; but she did not think it wisest to suggest it to him.

It must have been a hard-hearted dog, indeed, which could have resisted that insinuating voice and smile, and either bark or bite; and this one did not seem inclined to do the one or the other; but then neither did he seem to intend to move out of the path, but stood stock still gazing at his unwilling little companion.

Seeing that he appeared peaceable, Bessie took courage, and, edging off upon the grass, went a few steps forward. But as she passed the dog, he turned and placed himself before her, though still without any show of attacking her.

Bessie was pretty well frightened; but she began her wiles again, talking to him as she would have done to Baby Annie or Flossy. [120]

“Poor fellow! nice doggie. Bessie wouldn’t hurt little doggie for any thing. Doggie, doggie, doggie! He’ll let Bessie go to the house, won’t he? Don’t he want to go and see Belle down there?”

Now you must not think that Bessie wanted to save herself by exposing her little friend; for she knew that this must be Duke, the great English blood-hound, of which Belle had often spoken, saying how loving and good Duke was to her, although he was fierce and unfriendly with strangers.

But no, all coaxing proved useless: the dog stood his ground and would not suffer her to pass, even giving a low growl and seizing the skirt of her dress when she tried once more to do so.

Bessie was dreadfully frightened, and was about to call aloud for help, when she saw Mr. Powers coming towards her from the house. As he came down the path, a great snake glided from beneath some low bushes on the other side, passed swiftly over the narrow path, and would have been out of sight in an instant, had not the dog, suddenly all alert, bounded forward, seized it by the back of the neck, and giving it a violent shake, left it lying dead. [121]

“How is this, dear child?” said Mr. Powers, looking from the dog and snake to the child. “Old

Ben told me he had seen you and Belle going to the burying-ground. Where is Belle?"

"Yes, sir, we did," answered Bessie; "and Belle is there now, waiting for you to come to her mamma's grave. I was just coming to tell you, and that dog stopped me. He's a pretty naughty dog; he wouldn't let me go on, and he killed the poor snake that did not do a bit of harm, but was just running away as fast as he could."

"Duke knew he would do harm if he but found the chance, my child," said Mr. Powers. "That is a very venomous snake, and the dog's care may have saved you from being badly bitten. Good Duke! brave fellow!" and Mr. Powers patted the dog's head. "It is years and years since we have seen a snake of this kind upon the plantation, and I hope it may be long before we see another. You and Belle have each escaped a great danger this morning, Bessie. I am glad too that old Duke was not bitten."

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Bessie was very grateful to Duke now, and she too patted and caressed him. He seemed to think himself, that he had performed a great feat, as indeed he had; and kept looking up at his master and thrusting his nose into his hand as if to call for more thanks. Bessie's attentions he received more coolly, though he permitted them.

"Run up to the house now, you steady little woman," said Mr. Powers: "your mother is wondering where you can be, though she said you were to be trusted not to get into mischief. It is a good thing to have such a character, Bessie."

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When Duke saw that Bessie and his master were going in different directions, he seemed to be divided in his own mind as to which one he had better accompany. But after looking from one to the other he seemed to decide that Bessie needed his protection, and trotted gravely along by her side till she reached the house, when he turned about and raced after his master.

Bessie went in and told her story, but so simply and with so little fuss that her mother had no idea of the danger she had been in, till Mr. Powers came with Belle and told how she, as well as Belle, had been mercifully preserved from harm that morning.

When Belle came back with her father, she was quite composed, and soon became cheerful again, though she was rather more quiet than usual all the morning.

As soon as the party were rested after their drive, they all went out for a walk about the place. Mr. Powers' estate was a rice plantation, and the children were greatly interested in going through the mills and seeing how the rice, so familiar to them as an article of food, was prepared for the market. They were particularly so, in watching the husking of the rice. The grain was stored on the second story of the buildings, in great boxes or bins. There was a little sliding-door in each of these, just above the bottom of the bin; and when the men were ready to go to work, a trough was placed leading from that, through a trap-door, to a hopper on the floor below. Then the bin door was opened, and the rice in its brown husks slid through the trough into the hopper beneath, and from thence into the mill, on each side of which stood a man who turned the arms of the mill. In this, the outer husk was stripped from the rice; then it passed through another wide, covered trough, into the sifting or winnowing machine. This was a large box with a wheel at the bottom which turned the rice over and over. As it came to the top, the chaff was blown away by a great "four sided fan," as Bessie called it, made of four pieces of canvas stretched in different directions, and fixed upon a roller which was turned round by a man, and fanned away the light husks broken from the grain on its passage through the mill. But this was only the outer husk; and it had to go down a third trough into another mill, where the inner covering was taken off; then through a second fanning machine, from which it came out clean and white; and lastly into a third building, where it was led into another range of bins, till it should be necessary to put it into the bags and barrels in which it was sent to market.

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Maggie, as usual, wanted to "help;" and the good-natured colored men who were about let her try her hand at just what she chose, provided it was safe for her. Indeed, all the children, even Belle, to whom the amusement was not new, were greatly pleased to pull up the sliding panels of the bins, and see the rice come pouring down into the mill-hopper, and to thrust their hands and arms into the white grain, and shovel it into the bags. So entertained were they with this business, that the older people walked on when they had satisfied their own curiosity, leaving the children in the care of old Cato, who promised to see that they came to no harm.

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"We've done a whole lot of work, Mr. Powers," said Maggie, when they were called back to the house to dinner. "I think your men must be pretty glad we came."

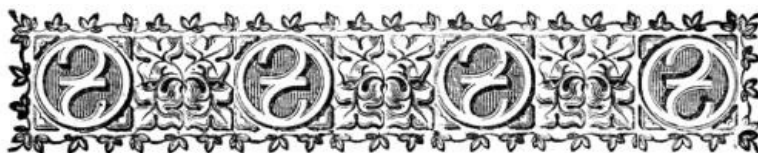
"Yes," said Lily: "we've most filled two bags and a barrel."

"And we didn't spill very much either," said Bessie, who was at that moment laboring away with a wooden shovel, on which she contrived to take up about two table-spoonsful of rice.

"Capital!" said Mr. Powers: "you've earned your dinner to-day, have you not?"

Whether the dinners were fairly earned or no, the exercise had given them all good appetites, and they were not sorry to go in and take their seats at the well-furnished table.

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VI. LETTERS.



Maggie had seized the opportunity when Bessie was not near, to ask Mr. Powers for the Spanish moss.

"Mr. Powers," she said, "is not that moss private moss?"

"Private moss? How private, Maggie?" said the gentleman.

"I mean is it not your own to do what you like with?"

"Certainly: if growing upon my trees and on my grounds can make it mine, it is, dear?"

"Then could you let me have some of it, quite a good deal?" said Maggie, to whom it had been a great effort to ask this; but the thought of pleasing Bessie upheld her courage. [128]

"Oh! to be sure; a whole wagon-load if you want it," said Mr. Powers, smiling, and without the least idea that Maggie would take his words almost literally.

The next thing was to ask mamma's consent to carry it home, and this also was obtained without difficulty; Mrs. Bradford having no idea of the extent of Maggie's ideas, and supposing she only wanted a small quantity as a curiosity.

Accordingly, Maggie took the other children into her confidence as soon as they were all sent out again to play under Daphne's care. Bessie was delighted with the plan, and kissed and thanked her many times; and the other two were quite ready to lend their aid.

So they all set to work to gather the moss, Daphne, too, giving a helping hand, at her little lady's request; though as she saw the great pile they heaped together, she was more than doubtful as to the use of such exertion. To gather it might be allowed,—it would never be missed from the trees,—but to carry it home was another thing. [129]

But she let them take their own way; for she could never bear to refuse Belle any thing, least of all to-day, when Belle had come and put her arms around her neck, and laid her soft fair cheek against her old nurse's dark one; telling her she was "sorry for every time she had slapped her; but she would never do it again, for Jesus was going to help her, and mamma would ask Him to, she was sure."

So if Belle had asked to dance upon Daphne's head, or do any other extraordinary or unheard-of thing, I think the old woman would have contrived in some way to grant her darling's wish; and she meekly stood pulling off the long, gray, pendant mosses, and heaping them in the little, eager, outstretched arms which returned to her again and again.

Great was the amazement of the grown people to see the procession which appeared, when at last the carriages came to the door to take them back to the city, and the children were called to make ready. [130]

First came a negro lad whom Maggie and Belle had pressed into the service, showing his two rows of white teeth, and rolling up his eyes with enjoyment of the fun; while he pushed before him a small hand-cart filled with the precious material, which was to make such a lovely "Bessie's Bower" of the familiar little room far away at the North; next Bessie and Belle trotting along, half hidden beneath the moss which Maggie had heaped in their arms and around their necks; then followed Maggie herself, and Lily, toiling away at a large wheelbarrow piled with the spoil; old Daphne bringing up the rear, also carrying her share and looking rather sheepish.

"Here's 'Birnam wood come to Dunsinane,'" said Mr. Bradford, laughing, as he first perceived the approaching show. "What are the little ones about? Some freak of Maggie's, doubtless. What a busy, contriving little head it is. What is all that for, Maggie?" as the children came within hearing. [131]

"To take home to New York to make a bower for Bessie in our room, papa. Mamma gave us leave, and Mr. Powers said we might take all we wanted," answered Maggie, not in the least doubting that she was quite secure with both these safe-guards.

"Dearest child!" said Mrs. Bradford when she could speak for laughing. "I never supposed you had any idea of taking such a quantity."

"I told you I wanted quite a good deal, mamma," answered Maggie, beginning to quake for the success of her plan, when she saw how astonished and amused the grown people were.

Poor Maggie! So many of her fine plans had come to grief lately, and still she must always be forming new ones.

"And how do you propose carrying all this home, Maggie?" asked Mr. Bradford.

"Oh! Belle says there are boxes under all the seats of the carriage, papa; and we can carry it to the hotel in these. And then I thought maybe you could find some way to send it home in the steamer, when Mr. Powers sends the sweet potatoes and things to grandmamma." [132]

"And if there's too much to go into the carriage boxes, we have a great many baskets, and we will lend Maggie some," said Belle.

"And we are all going to carry some on our laps, we are anxious for Bessie to have her bower," said Lily.

"I'd like it very much, mamma," pleaded Bessie, last of all.

"My dear children," said Mrs. Bradford, "I am sorry to disappoint you; but it would be impossible to carry all that moss home. Not the half of it could go in the carriage, even if we all made ourselves uncomfortable for the sake of carrying it; and you would soon grow tired of such a bower."

"But it is useful as well as ornamental, mamma," said Maggie, with an air as if this quite settled the matter in her favor; "for Belle says the poor people here make beds of it, and if we ever do grow tired of it we could give it to some poor person, and they might be very glad of it." [133]

"And I never *will* be tired of it, mamma, even when I'm grown up, Maggie made it," said Bessie.

"My darlings," said mamma, "it is impossible. You may carry home a basket full if you will, but I could not allow your room to be filled with it, and it would be too much trouble to pack such a quantity, and send it to New York. You must rest content with a little, dear Maggie. There are a great many reasons why your plan will not do, though it was kind in you to think of pleasing Bessie; but we will find some other way of doing that."

Maggie's disappointment was very great, as was that of all the little girls; but when mamma said a thing, it was to be; and Maggie knew she would never deprive them of any pleasure that was best for them to have. So she tried to bear it as cheerfully as she might, though there were tears in her eyes, and she gave a sigh which seemed to come from her very shoes, as she dropped the arm of the wheelbarrow. [134]

"I'm afraid you would have to call your room the 'Spider's Bower,' if you decked it with that moss, Maggie," said Mr. Powers; "for those insects are very fond of it, and will gather where it is."

"Ugh!" said Maggie; and the Spanish moss at once lost half its charm for her, for she had a great dislike to spiders.

Seeing that she bore her disappointment so well, Mr. Bradford took an opportunity of telling Maggie a secret, which went a great way towards consoling her. But she had some time to wait before this secret bore fruit; and as we are not going back with Maggie and Bessie to their city home, perhaps you would like to know what it was.

In the autumn when their travels were ended, and they reached home, where a great deal of papering and painting had been done during their absence, they found their own little room decked forth with the most enchanting wall-paper that ever was seen. On a pearl-colored ground ran a vine of green leaves, and bright berries, and here and there, perched upon the stems, or hovering over and pecking at the berries, were the most brilliant colored birds. Never was seen a prettier paper, or one more suited to a little girls' room; and both Maggie and Bessie were quite satisfied with such a "bower" as it made of their cosey little nook; and the Spanish moss, well beaten and shaken, to destroy all spiders who might have found a retreat therein, was consigned to the boys' play-room in the top story of the house. Though by that time it had lost its first novelty and charm, both Maggie and Bessie still had a clinging to it, as a memento of their pleasant visit to Belle's beautiful Southern home. [135]

Maggie was still farther consoled that evening when they reached the city, by finding two letters awaiting her, and one for Bessie. Maggie's were from Uncle Ruthven and Fred, and Bessie's was from Harry. [136]

You shall have them all. Uncle Ruthven says,—

"I cannot tell you, dear little Maggie, how much we all miss you and darling Princess. I do not like to go to your house and find no smiling faces looking out of the window, or running to the front door, or head of the stairs when Uncle Ruthven comes. So I do not go very often; only now and then to see that all is going right during your absence. I hear nothing from the William Tells and Rip Van Winkles, and therefore conclude they are still enjoying their long nap.

"Our house is quite gay, however, what with the three boys, Flossy, and Marygold, all of whom are flourishing.

"Flossy was very mopish for a day or two after you left; and kept himself hidden under sofas and behind curtains, in a most melancholy manner, refusing to play, and eating very little. He is in better spirits now, however, though not as frisky as usual; and Harry and Fred take him out every day for a walk; but when they come towards home, he always insists on turning into your street; and when they take him up and bring him to our house, he falls into low spirits again, and retires into private life until the next meal-time. [137]

"Marygold is well, and sings away as merrily as he did in your own room at home. Aunt Annie wanted to put him in the conservatory with the other birds, but grandmamma said, no: he must hang in the bow-window of her own sitting-room; for since she could not have you, she must have something

which belonged to you about her. So there he swings and sings, reminding us constantly of our Maggie and Bessie so far away.

"As for Frankie, he is as mischievous and roguish as ever, and pretty saucy into the bargain. He seems very much afraid that grandmamma will think she is to take his mamma's place altogether; and every morning when he comes down to breakfast, enters the room with,—

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"'Damma, I'll stay wis oo, and mind oo des dis one more day. Den I do back my mamma's house and mind her.'

"If grandmamma tells him to do or not to do any thing, he says: 'Yes, I'll mind oo dis once; but oo're not my mamma.'

"'But she is my mamma, and I make all little boys mind her,' I said to him this morning.

"He looked gravely at me for a moment, and then said, 'Den be a dood boy ouself, and den I will see 'bout it.'

"The rogue gave us a good fright yesterday. I was writing letters in the library, when he came in, and asked if he might stay with me. I gave him leave, provided he was quiet; and for a wonder, he was so; standing for some time looking out of the window, till he saw a poor drunken man go by, when he turned to me and said,—

"'When tipseys walk, they run.'

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"After that he came down, and I gave him the great book of animals you know so well, with which he amused himself for some time, telling the animals about the 'poor tipseys.' He was very sweet and good, and being much engaged with my letters, I did not pay much attention to him. But, after a time, I looked around to see if he was in mischief, and he was nowhere to be seen.

"The book lay open on the floor, and one or two toys beside it, but no Frankie. The door stood open, and thinking he must have slipped out, I went in search of him. He was not to be found. Grandmamma, your two aunts, and all the servants were soon alarmed, and joined in the search, but all in vain; and we were just about sending to mamma's house, to see if he had run away there, when Aunt Bessie saw a little fat hand peeping out of the almost closed door of one of the bookcases. She ran and pulled it open, and there lay our lost boy, fast asleep. He had crept in among the papers and pamphlets, and, drawing the door nearly to, had fallen asleep without meaning to, in his quiet nook. He woke to find us all looking at him, and was very angry at himself for going to sleep; exclaiming, 'I des b'lieve I went to seep, and I tates no more naps in de daytime. I 'samed of myself.'

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"Harry and Fred are going to write to you, so I will leave them to speak for themselves. We are all well here, and last evening had the great pleasure of reading the letters you and Bessie wrote to the Colonel and Mrs. Rush, and which they kindly brought around to us.

"Write to me soon, and tell all your adventures to your affectionate uncle,

"RUTHVEN STANTON."

Harry's letter to Bessie came next, and ran thus:—

"PRECIOUS PET PRINCESS,—It seems to me as if it were two months instead of two weeks since you went away, and I can't tell you how I want to see you. But it is all right, for I know you are having first-rate times, and dear mamma is getting ever so much good. We're not having such a bad time either, though it's not like having you all home. Uncle Ruthven is a first-rate fellow to stay with, I can tell you, and when we have finished our lessons, he always has some fun on hand for us. So we don't have time to feel very lonely. But I am glad for your sakes that you and Mag were not left behind, for you would have felt worse about it than Fred and I do.

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"Last Saturday we all went to Riverside, we boys on our ponies, of course, and had a famous day. Uncle John has a new boat, and he and Uncle Ruthven rowed us across the river,—they let Fred and me take an oar by turns, too,—and we went up the Palisades. Isn't there a splendid view up there, though? You can see ever and ever so far. There were lots of Bob Whites about, and we heard them all round us, and we came upon two fellows with dogs and guns hunting them. I hope they didn't have much luck, the old rascals!

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"Haven't we had a time this afternoon? I don't know just how it happened, but I think Master Marygold must have opened the door of his cage himself,—for we have seen him pecking away at the catch several times lately; and Uncle Ruthven, only this morning, told Jane to twist a piece of wire round it when she cleaned the cage. But Jane forgot it, and so this afternoon Frankie came running in saying, 'Marydold's few away;' and sure enough the cage was empty and no Marygold to be seen. But after awhile we heard a saucy

'cheep,' and there, on the top of grandpapa's picture, sat my gentleman as independent as you please; and, before we had time to shut the window, out he flew into the yard. Weren't we in a way though, thinking what you and Maggie would say to come home and find him lost. He hopped around for a while, flying off every time any one went near him, and at last flew clear away over the neighbors' gardens, and we gave him up for lost.

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"Grandmamma put his cage outside, hoping he would grow homesick and come back. And sure enough; for she was taking a nap in her bow-window about sunset, when she was waked by a 'cheep, cheep,' and there was Marygold hopping about on her work-table, and asking pardon for his naughtiness as plainly as any bird could. She brought his cage, and in he popped, glad enough to be at home. So he's all safe once more, and his cage made secure, so he can't try that dodge again.

"You know Colonel Rush has taken a house at Newport for the summer, and he wants us all to come there when we get through with our other wanderings. Won't it be jolly? Then you know we are to spend October at dear, old Chalecoo; so you will have change enough for one six months. What travelled young ladies you and Maggie will be!

"I think I have written the most correct and proper letter in the world, and hope your dear little highness will not find any 'unproper impressions,' as you once said when Fred used some slang word; and that it will altogether suit your notions. Lots of love and kisses to all from

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"Your loving brother,

"HARRY."

Here is Fred's letter to Maggie.

"DEAR OLD MIDGET,—Don't I wish you were here that I might give you a good squeeze and hear you call out, 'O Fred! you are cur-r-rushing me!' I'll play the bear in the matter of hugs, when I do get you back,—that is certain. By the way, there's a mean chap leading a poor, old, black bear about the streets here, making him dance, and scrape a fiddle, and other jigs of that kind. It is not a bit of fun to see the poor, poky, old thing perform, and he must have been beaten ever so much before he could be taught. You can see that by the way he is frightened when his master lifts his stick. It's a mean shame, so it is. Don't you say so, Mag?

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"What jolly times you are having! so are we for the matter of that. Uncle Ruthven is a regular brick,—though I always knew that,—and so are grandmamma and the colonel, and all the rest. School breaks up the twentieth of June, and then, hurrah! for the country. Uncle John has invited Tom Norris to go with us to Riverside, and stay all the time that we stay. First-rate in him, wasn't it? Tom is the jolliest good boy I ever saw: you never catch him in the least thing that isn't just up to the right, and yet he's the best company and merriest fellow in the world. He keeps me out of a heap of mischief, many a time, dear, old chap! that's so, I know. Dear, old, steady-going Hal! he often wonders at my tantrums, I know; but he's good too, and it is awful hard work to keep out of scrapes in school when you've a quick temper like mine, and not too much thought. I'll tell you a secret, Mag: I believe it has helped me a good deal to see you and Queen Bess take so much pains to cure yourselves of those two very faults,—you, with your carelessness, and Bessie, with her passionate temper. I thought it was a shame if you two little girls did it, that a great fellow like me shouldn't. And for that reason I'm going to let you tell dear mamma some thing that will make her dear eyes dance. Mr. Peters called me to him this morning,—and I thought for sure I must be in some row, though I didn't see what,—and he said he wanted to tell me that no boy in the school had improved in character, or taken so much pains with his faults, as I had during the last year. I don't want to be puffed up, but didn't I feel some pumpkins; but I could most have cried that mamma wasn't home for me to tell the good news to. However, when I went home, there sat grandmamma, the dear, precious, old soul, so sweet and good and loving; so I just pitched into her and gave her the news, and a tight squeeze into the bargain. She was as pleased as could be, but then she isn't mamma; so just you tell the darling mother, and bid her shut her eyes, and do you give her a good choke for me, just as I do, Ducky-Daddles! and see if she don't gasp out, 'Oh, my dear boy!' and you write it to me, Mag. And tell papa, Mr. Peters told me if I turned out such a man as my father,—a true Christian, a perfect gentleman, and a thorough scholar,—no one could ask more for me. I never expect to be all that, but it's something to have one's father spoken of that way, and, Mag, do you believe, I just bawled. And old Peters—I'll never call him that again if I remember, only it comes so handy—asked me to go of a little errand for him. I knew that it was just that he knew I didn't want to go back to the school-room with red eyes, and I was all right again before I came back. He's a jolly old soul, if he is strict. But I just tell

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you, you and her royal highness can take some of the credit to yourselves; for I know you have helped me without meaning it. And Uncle Ruthven is as pleased as any thing, and he said he had seen it himself, and he had meant to give me a handsome pony for taking pains with myself; but as papa had given me one when he gave Hal a watch just before you went away, he would let me say what the present should be.

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“And so, Midget, I told him I should like him to give you and Bess the pony between you; and he said I had better take a couple of days to think it over, and he would give me leave to change my mind. I suppose he thinks I’ll slink out of it; but I shan’t, so you two may just count on a pony of your own. I guess there’ll be a side-saddle too, for Uncle Ruth don’t do things by halves. I’m awfully sleepy, and anybody but you would be tired of this long letter.

“Your loving brother,

“FREDERICK TALBOT BRADFORD, ESQ.”

Maggie answered her Uncle Ruthven’s letter the very next morning in these words:—

“DEAR UNCLE RUTHVEN,—Whenever I think of the pleasure of writing to my absent friends who are away from me in distant lands I am always very thankful that I am not a quadreped or other animal which has only legs and no arms to write with. And if it had, no brains or ideas, but only instinct which is not enough to write with. So I thank God He gave me a sencible soul which thinks, and arms and also pen, ink, and paper. And also pencils for Bessie has to print with them, and also friends which we can write to, for if I was an orfun and had no friends I would be badly of and very lonesome and my ideas of no use. So I think every one ought to be very grateful for these things (if they have them) and if they have not let them say God knows best; and I think it is the duty of the human race to make use of these things and to write long letters to all their friends, for it is such a pleasure to have letters and to answer them. And I am going to write you the longest letter I ever wrote in my life, because the Bible says, ‘Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them.’

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“But, dear Uncle Ruthven, we have had no adventures to tell you about. I mean *real real* adventures; except only one which was most terrible to hear and was that Bessie met a snake that was poisonous and nearly bit her, but a good dog of Mr. Powrs would not let her go on, and so she did not come in the way of the snake which was a wonderful blessing or she might have died. And then I would have been like the king Miss Ashton told us about, whose son was drowned and he never smiled again nor would I if my Bessie came to such a sad end but would be unhappy all the days of my existence and never laugh at the funniest thing that could happen. And I pray our Father in Heaven that my Bessie will not die while I am alive even to go to Heaven for I would miss her so very, very much. But I will not write any more of this most unhappy thing or else my beloved uncle you will say ‘what a sad, stupid letter Maggie has written to me,’ and I would not wish any one to take the liberty of saying such a thing about me.

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“Belle’s home which is named Oakdale is a place most beautiful to behold with such large oak trees that make the most pleasant of shades and magnolias and vines of jessamine and other sweet smells most delicious to the nose. I do wish there was a nicer name to call a nose, it don’t sound nice in a letter. And such lots and heaps of rice, enough for a million dinner and breakfasts I should think but I hope I shall never be in the necessity to eat it for I hate rice. But Bessie likes it very much so I am glad it grows for her and others. And we had such fun playing with it and working too for we helped the men a great deal. Now you need not laugh Uncle Ruthven nor the boys either if you let them read this letter, for the men said we did and if you had seen the great bag we filled you would know it. It was real funny to see the rice run down the wooden gutters into the hoppers. Isn’t that a queer name?

“Papa said such a funny thing. He said he knew a hopper that would not be of much use in that mill because it always shut its mouth whenever any rice came near it, and he meant me. It made us all laugh so. The next day after tomorrow we are going to take adieu of Savannah and all the kind people we have come to know; and of Miss Adams and the doctor; and most of all of Mr. and Mrs. Norris and Lily. Lily cries about it and wants to stay with us but her parents have to stay in this place for a short time and to go home by the steamer, and I am glad and thankful such is not my fate to be seasick again. Oh! Uncle Ruthven! it is awful! and you can’t help it if you make up your mind ever so much. But we go by land which is much better than the sea to travel on and shall visit many places and see many surprising things which I shall advertise you of when I know them myself.

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“Bessie and I think we never heard of any thing so kind and generous as Fred to say he wanted you to give us a pony for his present and never no never again will I say Fred teases, no not if he plagues me ever so much. But I

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think he does not plage so much as he used to. Mamma was so pleased about him and is at this present moment writing to him. It is a very charming thing to have sencible and religious parents and I suppose also it must be so for the parents to have their children improve and be as sencible and good as is in their natures. But it is not in mine to be so good as Bessie and I despair of it for it is not in me. The other day a lady was talking to Bessie and I heard her say afterwards, 'That child is a little angel.' I suppose she meant *like* an angel which would be far better for her to say as it is always best to say just what you mean but I thank her for the complement to my Bessie and think she must be a woman of sense.

"Harry wrote to Mamma and said something that hurt my feelings. He said I wrote very nice letters but they were so full of moral reflexions and centiment that he almost killed himself laughing. Now I know he didn't almost kill himself and Miss Ashton never taught us reflexions and centiment and I don't know what they mean and I wouldn't do such a thing as to put them in my letters. I don't think Harry is very kind to say that and make fun of me. But don't you tell any one I said so for you know I tell you all my secrets dear Uncle Ruthven and maybe Harry would think I was cross.

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"Please give my love to every body I know if I do love them and if I don't my compliments and most of all to all my own people. It took me two days to write all this letter which I hope will give satisfaction from your affectionate beloved

"MAGGIE."

Last of all here is a little letter which Bessie wrote to her grandmamma,—

"DEAR DARLING GRANMAMMA,—Your Bessie is going to send a letter to you to tell you how I love you but I cant rite such nice leters as Maggie. Dont Maggie make nice leters and she said she would help me but I toled her I wanted to make it all myself so you would kno how much I love you. Please dear Granmamma to rite me an answer to my leter and I hope you will keep alive till we come home or if you are not dear Manma will cry and all the rest of us two. I saw a carf in a cart with all its legs tied and it mad me sorry and I wish it was mine to let it luse. Baby is so sweet and she has a new trik that is so cuning. All the time she pulls off her shoes and soks and Mamma don't want her to so Nursey says shame shame when she does it and when baby sees any one else do it now she always calls shame and she saw a gentelman in the parlor who did not kno how to be very polite and he sat with his slipper hanging on his toe and Baby pointed her finger at him and called out very loud Oh shame shame and every boddy lafed it was so funny. Every day I am more and more glad for dear Manma feels so much better and it makes such a joy in my hart that I can't tell it but you kno it don't you dear Granmanma for you are her own mother and you love her just like she loves me. I am too tired to make it any longer and I love you and my solger and all my peple and I send them kisses.

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"Good by dear Granmanma

"Your little pet

"BESSIE."



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VII.

A "REAL, REAL ADVENTURE."

hey were all in the railway train bound for —; that is, Mr. and Mrs. Bradford, with their three little girls and nurse, Mr. Powers, Belle, and old Daphne.

Maggie, Bessie, and Belle, with their dolls, had two whole seats to themselves, one having been



turned so as to face the other, and give them what Bessie called a "nice, cunning travelling-house." Here they had established themselves in great comfort, papa and mamma being just behind; while Mr. Powers, and the two nurses with Baby, were seated on the opposite side of the car.

And here, by and by, seeing the nice play that was going on, did Miss Baby think it best to betake herself and her own doll, named Peter Bartholomew. This gentleman with the long name, which had been given to him by Fred, was made entirely of worsted, face, cap, coat, and pants, all knit of the brightest colors, and could be knocked about or thrown from any height without damage to his head or limbs. So for this reason he had come travelling with Baby Annie, as her dolls were apt to receive some hard knocks and severe falls, not altogether wholesome for more brittle materials. [158]

But Annie was not very fond of Peter Bartholomew, and he received some pretty hard usage at her tiny hands; so that it was well he was not a gentleman of tender feelings, and was able to take thumps, hard squeezes, and scoldings with the utmost composure.

However, on this occasion she thought it wise to praise Peter Bartholomew, by way of persuading her sisters that his company, as well as her own, was desirable; and, putting her little head on one side in the most insinuating manner, she spoke thus from nurse's lap,—

"Baby tome too. Peter tome too. Baby dood. Peter dood. Nice Peter. Oh, pitty Peter!" [159]

"Oh! isn't she too cunning, the darling?" said Bessie. "Let's let her come play with us."

"Yes, we'll take her in our house," said Belle.

So baby was taken into the enclosure, which Maggie had made quite complete by fastening a handkerchief from the arm of one seat to that of the other, and calling it "the door." Nurse could have lifted baby at once into the place which was offered for her; but that would not do at all. Baby must wait till the door was untied, and she admitted in due form.

Once there, and seated in a snug corner, she behaved herself very well for a long time, watching her little sisters and Belle with grave admiration and wonder, and submitting to be played and "*pretended*" with just as they chose, only now and then insisting that they should all "tiss Peter," a thing which she would by no means be induced to do herself. [160]

But at last she took it into her head to look out of the window, and in order to do that she must stand upon her feet, which was not safe to let her do without some careful hand to guard her; and as she objected very decidedly to returning to the other side of the car where nurse sat, there was nothing for it but to let nurse come to her.

Now this interfered very much with the arrangements of the three little girls, who were having a grand "family" play; and not one of them was at all inclined to be so disturbed, and there was even some pouting when nurse said they must make room for her for a short time.

But Maggie, Bessie, and Belle could all understand better than Baby Annie, that in travelling one must consider the comfort and convenience of one's fellow-passengers, as well as one's own. Baby was very little, and not very well: they had a long day's journey before them, and it was necessary that she should be indulged in a measure, and kept in a good humor as long as possible; and Bessie was the first to think of this. [161]

"Now, just let me in here for a bit, my honeys," said nurse, as Maggie stood with her hand on the pocket-handkerchief door, determined to defend her "house" as long as possible. "Baby'll fret if I take her to the other side when she don't like it, and that will worry your mother; besides it's sunny there when we come out of the woods. Let her look out of your window awhile, with me to hold her, and it will soon be her sleepy time, when ye may have your place to yourselves."

Now old nurse was by no means a small woman; and the children knew that their quarters would be very much narrowed when she should find entrance there, and she might have found it hard work to persuade them to yield without interference from their father or mother, had not Bessie bethought herself when nurse spoke of her mother.

"Oh, yes!" she said to her sister and Belle, "you know we came on our travels to do mamma good, and so we mustn't let any thing trouble her. If we do, maybe our Father would think we didn't care very much that He made her better, and that we are ungrateful. Any thing must be choosed 'cept to worry mamma. And baby don't know any better; so let's give up to her this time, if she cries everybody will be uncomf'able." [162]

"Well," said Maggie, once more untying the handkerchief, "I won't be selfish."

"Nor I," said Belle, who had been the most unwilling to give up her own way.

The "cunning house" was certainly far less roomy when Mammy was seated therein; but having made up their minds to do a kind act, our little girls did it pleasantly and made no fussing about it; the only thing that was said being when Bessie remarked,—

"Nursey, it would be rather convenienter if you were not *quite* so fat," which nurse thought a great joke, and laughed heartily, saying,—

"And there's nobody knows that better than your old Mammy, my pet; but just put by your play till baby's had her fill of looking out, and I'll tell ye a story." [163]

Nurse's stories always found a market; and the three little girls ranged themselves in the seat facing her, and listened eagerly while she told them the most marvellous of fairy tales.

Meanwhile, Baby Annie, happy and contented, amused herself with watching the swiftly

passing objects; and Peter Bartholomew, held by one foot, hung dangling head downwards from the car window. How much he enjoyed this novel mode of riding, neither he nor his little mistress ever told, though baby had enough to say both to herself and him while nurse talked to the other children.

But at last Mrs. Bradford suddenly exclaimed,—

“Take care, nurse; baby has her head out!” and Mammy, who had turned her face for a moment from her charge, drew her in and seated her on her lap.

“Baby must not put her head out,” said mamma: “she’ll be hurt.”

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“Peter out,” said baby.

“Why! she’s lost Peter Barfolomew,” said Belle.

“Sure enough,” said nurse, when she had shaken out her skirts, and looked on the floor, without finding that gentleman.

“Bad Peter. Peter all don,” chuckled the baby.

“Did ye throw Peter out?” asked Mammy.

Baby could not say yes; but she nodded her little head till it seemed as if she would wag it off, seeming to think she had done something very praiseworthy.

“Oh, you naughty girl!” said nurse.

“No, no: baby dood; bad Peter. Peter all don, Peter out,” said baby again, clapping her hands, and laughing with the most self-satisfied air.

Yes, Peter Bartholomew was “all gone,” left far behind as the train sped on its way; and though the children went off into merry peals of laughter at little Annie’s bit of mischief, Mrs. Bradford was rather sorry, since Aunt Patty had taken such pains to make him for her. However, the baby knew no better, and his loss could not trouble her much.

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Nurse had not finished her story, and when the children’s mirth had subsided, she went on with it. Having disposed of Peter Bartholomew, and finding that she was not allowed to put her head out, the window lost its charms for baby, and she sat still on nurse’s lap for a few moments, gravely regarding her fellow-passengers, and trying to find amusement in them.

Nor was it long before she found a new object of interest. In the seat next to Mammy and herself, and of course with his back towards them as they rode backwards, was a gentleman who wore an enormous Panama straw hat. The older children had remarked this hat and wondered at it, but after the first moment they forgot both the hat and its wearer, and noticed them no more. But I cannot say that the gentleman had not noticed them, although he gave no sign of doing so.

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The hat by no means took baby’s fancy: perhaps she thought it took up more than its share of room in the world; however that may be, she concluded to take a closer look at it, and raised herself upon her little feet on the cushioned seat beside Mammy. First she looked at the hat on one side, then on the other; then she peeped under it; then tried to lift herself on the tips of her small toes and peer over it; then carefully touched it with one little finger, and finally expressed her opinion in a loud, emphatic,

“Bad hat!”

But the owner of the offending article of dress did not turn his head or appear to take the slightest notice, not even when baby repeated,—

“Bad, bad hat! Off hat!”

“Sh! sh! my lamb. What’s come to ye to-day?” said nurse.

Not the spirit of a lamb certainly, for baby was in a contrary mood, and determined to have her own way by one means or another; and, finding the hat remained in its place in spite of her orders, she seized hold of it; and, before nurse could stop her, had snatched it from the stranger’s head and tossed it into his lap. Still, without turning his head or seeming at all disturbed, the gentleman put it on again, while baby struggled to free herself from nurse’s hold, shouting,—

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“Off hat, off! Bad hat!” again and again, till her mother was obliged to call her to order.

Little as she was, baby had learned to obey when mamma spoke; but the sight of that hat was not to be endured by any baby of taste, and even when seated upon mamma’s lap, and treated to a bit of sponge-cake and papa’s watch, she could not forget it, but now and then broke forth in a wailing tone with,—

“Oh dear! Bad hat, off hat!” till at last the gentleman removed the hat, and submitted to ride bareheaded till his little tormentor should be asleep.

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This was soon the case when the cause of her trouble was out of sight; for it was, as nurse said, “her sleepy time,”—one reason perhaps why she was so fractious,—and she forgot hat, watch, and cake in a sound mid-day nap.

Her two sisters and Belle thought all this remarkably funny, and had had much ado to stifle their laughter, so that it should not reach the ears of the stranger with whom baby had made so free. But in spite of their amusement, which had been shared by more than one of the grown people around, Bessie was rather troubled lest mamma should be worried by the little thing’s misbehavior and crying, and also lest the gentleman should have been vexed.

To tell the truth, he was rather annoyed at the notice which all this had brought upon him and his unfortunate hat; but his vexation passed away the moment he heard a soft voice at his ear, whispering,—

“Thank you very much, sir, for taking off your hat; and will you please to s’cuse baby, she don’t know any better than to take a liberty. As soon as she can understand, mamma will teach her to be polite.” [169]

The gentleman turned his face towards her. A pleasant, good-natured face it was, with a merry twinkle in the eyes just now.

“Mamma is a first-rate teacher of politeness and some other good things, I see,” he said, smiling.

“Yes, sir; ’deed she is,” answered Bessie; wondering what mamma had said or done since they had been in the cars by which this stranger could know so much; and then, thinking her duty done, she turned away and began her play with the other children again. After this, all went smoothly and quietly enough till they reached a town where they were to change cars, and where two different railroads crossed one another at the depot. Here they had to wait for an hour until their train should be ready to start; and here Mrs. Bradford thought she might have a good rest after her long ride. [170]

But a fair was going on in the small town, and the dirty little hotel was full to overflowing; so that the only place that could be had for Mrs. Bradford and her sleeping baby was an eight feet square room with a hard sofa, and two equally uninviting chairs. However, by means of cloaks and shawls, a tolerably comfortable resting-place was arranged for these two; and the three children who had no mind to be shut up in the tiny room, were taken for a walk by Mr. Bradford and Daphne; Mr. Powers going to call on an old friend who lived near by.

But there was a good deal of noise, dust, and confusion in the street, and the little girls soon tired of it and wanted to go back to the hotel. When they reached it, two trains were standing at the station, and Daphne exclaimed, pointing to the nearest,—

“Dere’s de train, Massa Bradford. S’posin’ I jis takes de little ladies into de cars. Better for dem waitin’ dere dan in de verandy where all dem folks is; an’ we’ll wake Miss Baby for sure all goin’ into dat little room.” [171]

This last was more than likely; and the veranda where all those men were lounging about, smoking and drinking and swearing, was certainly no place for little ladies; and Daphne’s idea seemed a good one to Mr. Bradford.

“You are sure that is our train, Daphne?” he asked.

“Sure, Massa Bradford. Ain’t I been in it a hundred times?”

“Is this the train for —?” asked Mr. Bradford of a man standing beside the cars.

“All right, sir. Last car, sir,” was the reply.

Mr. Bradford thinking himself quite sure, helped the children and Daphne into the car, found them good places, and looking at his watch, said,—

“We have half an hour still. Keep these seats for the rest of our party, and I will bring them all soon. You are right, Daphne: it is more comfortable here than in the hotel.” [172]

Then he went away; and for a few moments the children were well amused, watching all the bustle around the station, and now and then dipping rosy little fingers into a basket of delicious strawberries just given to Daphne by a friend whom she had met. The old woman’s pleasure in the splendid fruit, was to see her young mistress and her little friends enjoy it, and she encouraged them to eat as long as they would.

But presently a steam whistle sounded, and she looked about her uneasily, saying,—

“‘Pears like this train ain’t maybe right, after all. I go see ’bout him, Miss Belle. Jes you sit still one minute.”



Bessie's Travels. p. 172.

If Daphne had not been so engaged in feeding her young charge, she would have known that this was the second time the whistle had sounded; and she was terribly startled when just as she set her foot upon the ground in order to seek Mr. Bradford and make all sure, it was blown again, there was a call of "all aboard," and before the bewildered old woman had collected her senses, the train steamed out of the station. Had she instantly made known her trouble to those about her, it might not even then have been too late; but instead of that she rushed after the cars, gesticulating and beckoning with an umbrella which was the pride of her heart, and which she always carried, and crying aloud,—

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"Hi there! Hi! Hold on dem cars; hold on till I get my chillen. Hi! Hi!"

The people about thought her crazy, and laughed and cheered as she tore after the fast receding train; but to poor old Daphne it was no joke, and as it turned a curve in the road and was lost to sight, she dropped her umbrella and stood still wringing her hands, and crying,—

"Oh, de chillen, de chillen! Oh, my little Miss Belle! what I gone and done, and what dey faders say?"

But we must leave Daphne, and go in the cars with our three little girls.

For the first few moments they did not understand it, and even after the cars were in rapid motion, looked about them expecting to see their parents and nurses come in. The truth came first to Maggie, and her poor little heart almost stood still with terror and dismay.

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"Why, we're going!" exclaimed Belle. "Where's papa?"

"And papa and mamma, and all our people?" cried Bessie in a terrified voice.

Then Maggie broke forth.

"Oh, we're gone off with! They're left behind! What shall we do? Oh! what shall we do? There's nobody to take care of us: we're gone off with."

Belle immediately set up the most violent screams; and Maggie and Bessie were as much distressed, though they did not cry as loudly.

The people around them soon understood the cause of their trouble: indeed Maggie's exclamations left no room for doubt, that they were really "gone off with;" though it was some time before either of the three could speak coherently enough to say how it had happened. In fact the poor little things hardly knew themselves: all they could tell was that Daphne had thought they were in the wrong train, had gone to see, and before she came back they were speeding away, they knew not where, without their natural protectors, and in the midst of perfect strangers.

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Bessie was the first to collect herself enough to make the story understood, though even then,

her tears would hardly let her speak to the group of curious and sympathizing people, who gathered around the three as they clung weeping together.

"And now we're quite, quite lost; and there's no policeman to help us," she sobbed; "and what will mamma do?"

"Poor little dears," said a lady, pressing forward, and laying her hand soothingly on the little, pitiful, upturned face. "Don't cry so, my children: you'll be taken back in some way to your parents." [176]

"I'm all papa has," gasped Belle: "he can't do wifout me."

"Please let us get out," moaned Maggie: "we could run back to where our papa and mamma are."

"The train must be put back," said one of the by-standers, and he went to find the conductor, and see what could be done; while the lady who had spoken to the children sat down beside them and tried to quiet them with assurances that their parents would certainly find them again.

"But dear mamma will be so frightened and worried, and it's so bad for her," said Bessie; her first thought always that tender care for her mother.

The story had spread through the train; and people were coming in from the other cars to look at the three little waifs, who, all by themselves, were each instant being taken farther from their friends; and Belle, looking up as the door was opened afresh, spied a familiar object.

"Oh! there's the 'bad hat' man!" she cried, glad to see any thing on which she had ever laid her eyes before, even though it might be that ugly hat with the strange face beneath it. [177]

At the same moment there came in also the conductor, and the gentleman who had gone to find him; and now the children felt a faint hope that there might be some way out of this trouble.

But the conductor was surly, and absolutely refused to put back,—which indeed would have been hardly safe,—or to stop the train and let out the children, as was proposed by some person, and pleaded for by the little ones themselves.

And here the "bad hat" man put in his word.

"That would never do," he said; "those little things could not possibly walk back to —, and no conveyance could be found along here. They must come on to the next station, and there we will see what can be done." [178]

Down went the three heads and up went Belle's voice again at these unwelcome words; but the "bad hat" had a kind heart beneath it, and the wearer at once set himself to comfort the forlorn children.

"Come, come, take heart," he said cheerily. "Now let us see how soon we shall get back to papa and mamma. It will not take us more than one hour or so, to reach the next station, and then—well, to be sure, we'll have to wait awhile there for the up-train,"—he did not think it best to say it would be more than four hours,—“but we'll telegraph them and let them know you are all safe, and will be with them before long.”

"Do you know the children sir?" asked a lady.

"Well, no, madam, and they don't know me; but they know my *hat* pretty well, and I think that is ground for an acquaintance. It's a broad one, anyhow, is it not?" he said with a nod at Belle, "and we're going to take advantage of it." [179]

"It's a great while for poor mamma to wait for us, and she'll be very frightened," said Bessie, wiping the tears from her eyes, though they were immediately filled again. "I s'pose she'll think we're never coming back to her."

"Not a bit of it," said "Bad Hat:" "she'll think you'll find some one to look after you and bring you back; and how delighted she'll be to see you safe after such an adventure."

At this last word all the children pricked up their ears, especially Maggie. She, being the most timid of the three, had been the most broken down by terror, and had, until now, remained in the very depths of despair. But it was really almost a consolation to hear this called "an adventure," and to remember that here was a subject for the most interesting of letters, provided they ever again reached home and friends, and had the opportunity of writing such. She was still rather doubtful how this was to be brought about, in spite of Mr. "Bad Hat's" assurances.

"Why! so it is an adventure," said Bessie; "and Maggie said she wished we'd have some great adventure, but she didn't mean this kind of a one; did you, Maggie?" [180]

"No, *indeed* I didn't," sobbed Maggie.

"But you can write a letter about it," said Belle, catching her breath between almost every two words; "and it will be so interesting: all the people you know will want to read it."

Belle, as well as Bessie, had the greatest admiration for Maggie's letters, and thought them the most marvellous works of genius.

"Of course they will," said the gentleman, whom our little strays were already beginning to look upon as a friend. "And so, Maggie writes letters, does she? I wish she would write one to me one of these days."

"But she don't know your name," said Bessie.

"Well, perhaps she might find out. I am not ashamed of it. But I think this little lady has found a [181]

name for me. When I came in the car I heard her say, 'There's the bad hat man.' Now suppose Maggie writes a letter and directs it to the 'bad hat man,' do you think it would reach me?"

"Yes, I fink it would," said Belle with emphasis, and eyeing the hat with a look which seemed to add, "there's no possibility of mistaking that hat."

So, in pleasant, cheerful talk, the friendly stranger tried to beguile the way, and help the little ones to bear their troubles; and he partly succeeded, though now and then a heavy sigh, or a murmured "Are we most at the next station?" or "Oh, mamma!" showed that they were not forgotten. The other people, who had gathered round in pitying sympathy, saw that they had fallen into good hands, and went back to their seats, leaving them to his care.

"But what shall we do now?" asked Maggie, in new alarm, as they at last approached the longed-for station where they were to leave this train, and at least feel that they were to be borne no farther from their friends. "I don't know about the streets."

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Now it was rather a strange, but a very good thing that, timid as Maggie was, she seldom lost her presence of mind; and, however frightened she might be, could still think what was best to do for herself and others. You will remember how she thought of her own sash and Bessie's, as a means for saving Aunt Bessie's life when she fell over the precipice at Chalecoo. So now feeling as if the care of Bessie and Belle rather fell upon her, since she was the oldest of the three, she tried to collect her thoughts and plan how she should act. But it was all useless, this was such a new and untried place, and so many dangers and difficulties seemed to beset her, that she could not see her way out of them. But her fears were speedily set at rest.

"Oh! you are only going to do as I tell you," said their new friend. "I shall see you safe in your parents' hands."

"Will you, sir?" cried Maggie joyfully, and slipped her hand into his, in her great relief.

"Are you going to get out here?" asked Bessie, as the train slackened its speed.

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"Yes: you did not think I would leave you to shift for yourselves?"

"Do you live here?" asked Belle.

"No: I live down in Florida," was the answer.

"And are you going to get out here just to take care of us?" asked Bessie.

He smiled and nodded assent.

"You are very good, sir," said Bessie. "Is it just as convenient as not for you?"

"Well, no," he returned. "I cannot say it is; but then I heard a little girl say, this morning, that 'any thing was to be choosed before mamma should be worried,' so after that I think I must do all I can to relieve mamma's anxiety, and get you back to her as soon as possible."

So Bessie's thoughtfulness and care for her dear mother was reaping its own reward.



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VIII. OLD JOE.



Station was not much of a place. There were only about half a dozen houses, as many barns, and one store, which was part of the little station-house. And there was no telegraph; but when our little girls and their protector left the train, another gentleman promised to send a message to their parents from the next stopping-place.

There was not much to entertain the children, even had they been in a mood to be amused; and the hours dragged very wearily. The kind gentleman would have taken them for a walk in the pleasant pine woods, but they were so fearful lest they should miss the up train, which was to carry them back to their mother and father, that they could not be induced to lose sight of the railroad track. Maggie and Belle could be persuaded to do nothing but sit on the low bank at the side of the road, and look up and down the long line of rail for the train, which was still so far away. Bessie, naturally more trusting and less timid than the others, had more confidence in their new friend and what he told her; but she would not leave her sister and Belle, and, moreover, was too tired to do more than wait with what patience she might. So the "bad hat" let them do as they would, furnishing them with some dinner, for which they had little appetite, and telling them droll stories, which could not draw forth more than faint smiles. But at last Bessie found something to interest her.

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There was an old colored man working around the station, cutting wood, drawing water, and so forth, and he cast many a pitying glance toward the sorrowful little strangers. Nor did he content

himself with looking; for, having finished his work for the time, he walked away into the woods, and soon came back with a large leaf full of wood-strawberries, and a bunch of scarlet cardinal flowers and yellow jasmine, which he offered to them. [186]

Bessie took them, and, after thanking him prettily, divided them with Maggie and Belle; then, out of her own share, arranged a little bouquet for Mr. Travers; for that, the "bad hat man" had said was his name.

"How pale and tired you look, my little girl!" he said as she fastened it in his button-hole: "suppose you lie down and take a sleep? It would be well if the others would do it too."

They all thought they could not possibly do such a thing, "the train might go by" while they were asleep; but when Mr. Travers proposed that he should spread his railway rug under the shade of the pine-trees, where they could not miss hearing the train, and said he would sit beside them and wake them the moment it was near, Bessie and Belle felt as if they should be glad to take advantage of his kindness. For it was true that they were all three quite worn out with fatigue and excitement. But Maggie was very decided in her refusal to take a nap, saying that she "never went to sleep except at night, when it was no use to stay awake, there was nothing to do." [187]

But when the rug was spread beneath the trees, she took her seat upon it with the others, leaning her back against a great pine, with Bessie's head in her lap. Belle, too, cuddled close up to her; and Mr. Travers seated himself opposite, with his book.

"I wish I had a story-book for you, Maggie," he said.

"It's no matter, sir," said Maggie, dolefully. "I'm not in good enough spirits to read. I'd rather think about going back."

"Suppose you pass the time by composing that letter you are to send home, telling of this adventure?" said the gentleman. "Here are a pencil, and the back of a letter, if you'll have them." [188]

Maggie brightened considerably at this suggestion, and gratefully accepted the kind offer.

Bessie lay with her head in Maggie's lap, drowsily thinking how pleasant it would be to go to sleep in this nice place, if papa and mamma and baby were only here too. It was so cool and quiet. No one seemed to be stirring in the cottages or the small station; not a sound was heard but the gentle whisper of the breeze in the tree-tops, the chirp of the crickets, and the varied notes of a mocking-bird perched not far from them. Then the spicy smell of the pines was so delicious and balmy.

Not a human being was to be seen but their own party, and the old negro man, who now sat upon a wheelbarrow at a little distance, reading what looked like a leaf or two from a book. He seemed to read very slowly and with great pains, pointing his finger along from word to word, and forming the words with his mouth, as people do who cannot read very well; but he appeared to be very intent over it.

"I wonder what he is reading," said Bessie to herself, as she sleepily watched him: "it looks like a piece out of an old torn book. Maybe it's a newspaper, and they have such a very little one this is such a very little place, and there isn't much to tell about. I shouldn't think it was very interesting here." [189]

The last thing she saw before she went to sleep, was the old negro; and the first on which her eyes opened was the white-haired man, still sitting there, poring over his leaf, as if he had not moved from that spot; and yet she felt as if she had taken quite a long, refreshing nap.

She gently turned her head, and looked at her companions. Belle did not appear to have moved, lying fast asleep with her cheek on Maggie's dress, and her hat over her eyes, just as she had lain down. Mr. Travers sat with his back against a tree, his arms folded, his eyes closed, and bareheaded. Bessie turned a little more, so that she could see Maggie.

Why! was it possible? Yes, surely: watchful Maggie was fast asleep too. The pine-tree against which she leaned did not shoot up with a straight, unbroken trunk, as they generally do, but was a kind of twin tree, parting into two a foot above the ground, and forming a crook or fork. In this fork was the "bad hat," and on the "bad hat" lay Maggie's head, as peacefully as though it were the pillow of her own pretty bed at home; and Maggie was as sound asleep as if it were that same familiar pillow. One dimpled hand loosely held Mr. Travers' pencil, and the paper lay fluttering unheeded on the ground at her feet. Bessie picked it up lest the breeze should blow it away, and Maggie's precious thoughts be lost. But it was evident that the letter had not made much progress, for Bessie found only these words written:— [190]

"OH, DEAR, DARLING UNCLE RUTHVEN,—Such a horrible, dreadful adventure!"

She would not disturb any of the others, but sat quiet a moment watching them, then turned her eyes again towards the old negro. [191]

"I think I'll go speak to him," she said to herself. "He is a great while reading his paper, and I s'pose he can't make it out very well. Maybe I could help him, and he was very kind to us."

She rose softly, and walked slowly towards the old man. He looked up and smiled, saying,—

"Little Miss want for any ting ole Joe can do for her?"

"No, thank you," said Bessie, now feeling rather shy of asking him if she could help him; then after a moment's pause she added, "You were reading when I went to sleep, and you are reading now."

"Yes, little Miss," he answered, "Joe read most all de time when no trains on hand and he work

all done up."

"Is it a little newspaper?" asked Bessie.

"A newspaper?" he answered, spreading the sheet on his knee, and laying his hand reverently upon it. "Yes, Missy, a newspaper what habs great news in it, de best news in de worl',—de news how de Lord Jesus come down to save sinners, and old Joe among 'em. Do little Miss know dat news?" [192]

"Oh, yes!" said Bessie, simply. "I always knew it. I'm glad you think it's good news, Joe, then I know you love Him."

"Sure, Missy," said Joe, "how I gwine for help love Him when I knows He done such a ting for Joe?"

Feeling on the instant a bond of sympathy between herself and the old negro, Bessie slipped her soft little hand into his hard, black palm, as she said,—

"But some people who know it don't love Him."

Joe shook his head sorrowfully.

"Yes, an' I bery sorry for dem folks; but I bery glad for Joe, and for little Miss too, for I 'spect she love Him by de way she speak, an' I know de Lord love her." [193]

"Did you mean that was out of the Bible?" asked Bessie, looking at the printed sheet which she now saw was torn, scorched, and soiled.

"Yes," answered Joe, triumphantly, "it out ob de Bible;" and he placed it in Bessie's hand.

Yes, it was out of the Bible, two leaves: one containing the second chapter of Luke, with the account of the Saviour's birth; the other, part of the fifteenth and the whole of the sixteenth of Mark, relating his death and resurrection.

"I hab de beginnin' an' de end," said Joe, "an' I hab some more too, some ob my Lord's own bressed words what He preach to His people;" and he drew from his pocket a single leaf, containing most of the sixth chapter of Matthew.

"Is that all you have of the Bible?" asked Bessie.

"Dat's all, Missy, but dey's a deal ob preciousness in it: dey's words what bears readin' ober and ober. To be sure, dey's times when I gets longin' for more; but I jes says, 'Come now, old Joe, don't be so ongrateful. Ef de Lord had meant you to hab more He would ha' sent it you;' and I tank Him for not lettin' dis be burn up an' for lettin' me fin' it 'fore it was blowed away by de wind." [194]

"Where did you find it, and how did it come so burnt and torn?" asked Bessie.

"Foun' it ober by Miss Sims' house. 'Spect she use it for her bakin', and when de bread done she trow it out, an' de Lord He let old Joe fin' it. Bress His holy name."

"Do you mean she baked her bread on the leaves of the Bible?" asked Bessie, exceedingly shocked.

"'Pears like it, Missy. I 'spect she don't know its wort', poor woman!" said Joe, with a pitying thought for the owner of the pretty, comfortable cottage, who was so much poorer than himself.

Bessie stood looking at him with a multitude of feelings struggling for expression on her sweet, wistful, little face. Indignation at the treatment received by God's Holy Word; pity, respect, and tender sympathy for the old negro,—were almost too much for her, and her color rose, and the tears came to her eyes. [195]

"Little Miss feel so bad 'bout it as did old Joe," he said, "but, Missy, dat was de Lord's way to help old Joe. Long time he ben wantin' a Bible an' save up he money, and hab mos' enough; an' one day a poor feller come along what hab no shoes an' hab cut he foot awful, an' he mus' go on to de city to see his chile what dyin'; an' de Lord say in my heart, 'Joe, you gib dat money for shoes for dis poor feller,' an' I couldn't help it no way, Missy, an' I buys him de shoes out de store. An' he ain't gone but little time, an' I walkin' roun' by Miss Sims' feelin' down in de mout' along ob my Bible; an' a piece ob paper come blowin' to my feet, an' I picks him up, an' ain't he a bit out my Lord's book, an' I sarch roun' an' fin' noder one. Praise de name ob de Lord what sen' Joe such comfort till he hab more money!" [196]

Bessie still stood silent, her heart too full for words at the simple story of this old disciple's self-sacrifice. And he had only these three leaves out of God's precious Book, while at home there were Bibles without number for all who needed them. Oh! if she only had one to give him. But here there was none,—yes, there was too.

Just before they left home, grandmamma had given to each of the little girls a Testament and Psalms bound together. She thought they might be more convenient for daily use in travelling, than the handsomely bound Bibles which they generally used at home; and if they should happen to be lost would not be so much regretted. They had been carried in the little satchels all the way; and now, as usual, Bessie's satchel hung by her side. The book was not large; but the print was good and clear, far better than that on old Joe's cherished leaf, and what a world of riches it would hold for him.

"I could give him mine," thought Bessie, "and he would be so glad. I don't b'lieve grandmamma would mind if I gave away her present for such a reason as this; and Maggie will let me use hers when I want to read. I think I ought to give it to him, and I know I would like to." [197]

"S'pose little miss kin read fus' rate," said Joe, interrupting her thoughts.

"Mamma says I can read very nicely," she answered.

"Maybe she wouldn't min' readin' out a piece. Some words most too hard for Joe, but he kin listen fus' rate."

Bessie drew her satchel around, and unfastened it.

"Shall I read you some out of my own little Testament?" she said, drawing forth the book.

Joe's eyes brightened.

"If Missy be so good," he said, eagerly. "She hab it all dere: all how de Lord Jesus lib an die, an lib again, an' talk for his people?" [198]

"Yes," said Bessie. "What would you like me to read?"

"If Missy read where He say, 'Let not your heart be trouble'; an' how He go to make a place for dose what follers Him."

Bessie found the fourteenth of John, and read it carefully and distinctly, the old man listening intently. When she came to the fourteenth verse, he raised his hand and said,—

"I t'ought so. I t'ought dere war a promise like dat. Now I know sure some day He gib me a Bible, I allers do ax it in His name, an' He promise allers stan' sure."

"Yes," said Bessie, thoughtfully; then added, in a tone of some self-reproach, "but, Joe, I forgot that promise once this morning."

"But Missy mind it now?"

"Yes," answered Bessie. "You see we had such a dreadful trouble, Joe, and it's not quite over yet. Somehow the cars took us away without papa and mamma, and we didn't know where we were going, and there was no one to take care of us. It was worse than once when I was lost in New York; cause that was my own country where I live, and the policemen were there; and it seemed to me that even our Father couldn't help us in such a trouble as this. But in a minute I knew that was wrong, and I asked Him to send us help: and right away he did; for a kind gentleman came who we saw in the cars before, and he is taking care of us, and will take us back to papa and mamma. That is the gentleman there by the tree." [199]

Joe nodded, as much as to say he knew, as indeed he did; for the story of the little wayfarers had come to his ears. Little he thought when he first heard it, what a blessing they had brought to him.

"And, Joe," continued the child, "I think maybe our Father had a purpose in letting us be run away with, and bringing us to this place."

"Sure, Missy," replied the old man. "He allers hab a purpose in what He do, an' a good one too; but sometimes we don't see it, we ain't fait' enough." [200]

"But I think I do see it now," said Bessie, her tiny fingers still resting on the blessed words of Jesus' promise. "I think He sent me here, so I could bring you my little Testament."

"Yes, Missy. I 'spect He did, dat's a fac'," answered Joe, not taking in at once that she meant to give him the book; "an' dose words done Joe a heap of good. Yes: He send you here for read 'em to Joe."

"But you don't understand," said Bessie. "I mean He sent me here to *give* you the Testament. I think He meant you to have it, you asked it in His name. It isn't all the Bible: but it has all about Jesus, and a good deal besides, and the Psalms too; and you will love it very much, won't you?"

"Missy don't mean she gwine fur gib Joe her own book?"

"Oh yes, I do," answered Bessie. "I have another Bible at home, and papa would give me as many as I want, and I can read my sister's till we go home. I am going to give it to you for your own, Joe." [201]

The old man sat for a moment speechless with wonder and gratitude, then covered his face with his hands.

"I t'ank de Lord fust, and you next, Missy," he said, when he removed them. "I t'ank Him, and bress His name, fur sen' his little white dove to bring His word to ole black Joe. Yes, yes; for sure His promise stan' in all place an' all time. Missy fin' it, an' Joe fin' it: de ole an' de young, de black an' de white, de rich an' de poor,—all who lub and trust Him. He hear all, an' do for all."

He took the baby hand, and kissed it with a tender reverence that was very touching to see, but which the child in her innocence scarcely understood.

"Shall I read some more?" she asked.

Joe thankfully assented; and she finished the chapter, and read also the fifteenth then, closing the book, placed it in the old black man's hand.

"De Lord know what's in my heart, but I can't speak it out no way," he said, as he received it, drawing his rough coat-sleeve across his eyes; "but, Missy, I t'ink it a great t'ing to be de Lord's little messenger to bring His word to his poor ole servant, what been thirstin' for it so long." [202]

Belle had wakened while Bessie was reading, and sat up rather surprised at her little friend's occupation, but did not interrupt it.

"It's just like my dear Bessie," she said to herself; "she's always doing somefin' for somebody."

She looked about her as she listened to the reading; for every word came distinctly in the deep stillness around. Maggie was asleep still, and Mr. Travers' eyes remained closed; but as Belle watched his face she said to herself,—

"I guess he's just pretending. If he was papa, I'd go and wake him up, and tell him he is. Maybe he finks Bessie would be too bashful to read before him if she fought he was awake." [203]

Perhaps Belle was right; for Mr. Travers woke or seemed to wake very suddenly when Bessie ceased reading; and, looking at his watch, said that it was time for the train, and they must rouse the sleeping Maggie. This was done; and Maggie woke rather indignant at herself for going to sleep at all, and a little ashamed at finding all the others awake before her.

"Why! Did you put that there, sir?" she asked, as Mr. Travers picked up the hat which had proved such a comfortable pillow, and put it on his head.

"Yes," he answered, "I thought the tree rather a hard resting-place for that little head in spite of the mass of curls which came between them, so when I saw it going down I popped in the 'bad hat' without your knowing it."

"I'm very much obliged to you, sir," said Maggie. "I *wish* I could do something for you."

All the children were very grateful to this kind stranger who had taken such good care of them, and Belle said,— [204]

"I wish I could too. If I was big I'd ask you when your birfday was; and I'd make you a pair of slippers, and a pin-cushion, and a watch-case, and every fing nice for a birfday present."

"And I'd help," said Maggie.

"And I," said Bessie.

Here was ground for Maggie to build a new plan upon; and, in the few minutes which passed before the train came, she had enough to think about to keep her from feeling very impatient for its arrival.

And there it came, rushing up the long line of rail,—yet hardly fast enough for the little ones who had been so long away from their dear friends,—hailed with clapping of hands, dancing steps, and glad exclamations: never was a train more welcome.

The place was alive in a moment. Women and children came out to the doors and gates of the cottages, dogs barked, and hens cackled. Half a dozen men, white and colored, seemed to spring out of the ground, ready to busy themselves on the arrival of the cars; and old Joe drew up his wheelbarrow to the side of the track, ready for any chance trunk or box which might need to be wheeled away, and bring him a few pennies. Joe was a rich man now, to be sure, rich in the wealth which should pave with shining gold the path he must tread to the heavenly mansion his Saviour had gone to prepare for him: but he must still have a care for his few worldly needs; and now that his one great desire had been granted, he would yet put by something that he might have a little to help along such of his Lord's work as should be given into his hand. [205]

His hand was shaken, not only by the three children, but also by Mr. Travers; and they were gone: but their coming had brought light and gladness to old Joe; and, in his own simple language, he "will nebber disremember dis day while de Lord remembers me." [206]

There they were,—mamma, and the two papas, baby, nurse, and Daphne,—still at the station at —, and watching as eagerly for the train which was to bring back the sorely missed darlings, as those same little darlings were looking for the first glimpse of the dearly loved faces of their "own people." What joy there was! What huggings and kissings! some happy tears too; and as for Mr. Travers, if he had had six arms to be shaken instead of two, they would all have been in use at once. There was some time to spare before the arrival of the train which was to carry them on the right route, which had been missed that morning; and it would be still longer before kind Mr. Travers would be able to proceed on the journey he had so generously interrupted, at some inconvenience to himself, for the sake of the little fellow-passengers who had so unconsciously attracted his notice that morning.

They gathered in the small room, which seemed large enough to hold them all now, and Mr. Travers was thanked over and over again, his address taken by Mr. Bradford, and a promise drawn from him that he would make his house his home when he should come to New York. More than this, Maggie privately drew from him the date of his "birfday," which happened to be on the twenty-fifth of December: and you may like to know that this "plan" of Maggie's was successfully carried out; and, last Christmas, Mr. Travers received a box containing a pair of slippers worked by Maggie, a pin-cushion by Bessie, and a watch-case by Belle. I do not believe that Mr. Travers thought the less of them because there were some crooked stitches in them,—especially in the two last,—and that the pocket of the watch-case was so small that by no possibility could a watch be squeezed therein. [207]

But he did not part from the children that day without some token of remembrance, for when Maggie inquired about his birthday, and repeated,—

"I would so like to do something for you, sir, you was so kind to us," he answered,— [208]

"You can do something for me, Maggie. Give me your little Testament, if you will; and when I look at it, it will bring back to me some very sweet recollections of this day."

Dear Maggie, only too happy when she could give or do any thing which brought pleasure to

another, readily consented, thinking as Bessie had done, that "grandmamma wouldn't mind when she knew the reason;" and the second little Testament went forth on its mission of love and life, in the hands of a new owner.

And pray what do you think had been that ungrateful baby's greeting to her little sisters' new friend? Nothing less than that oft-repeated "Oh, bad hat!" But being rested and at her ease now, she was not fretful, and was more astonished than displeased at its reappearance. We ought not to call her ungrateful either. She was glad to see her sisters, and offered plenty of "love Maggies'" and "love Bessies'," which meant a tight squeeze of the little arms about the neck; but she could not understand the distress and anxiety their absence had occasioned on all sides, nor did she know what care had been bestowed upon them by the owner of the hat.

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But Mr. Travers having taken off the hat and placed it beneath his chair, Baby made the most of her opportunities, and, seating herself on the carpet behind him, pulled it forth, and turned it over and over on her lap. Finding on a closer acquaintance that it was not so objectionable as she had thought it, she proceeded to try it on; and, nothing daunted by the fact that she was nearly extinguished by it, was, greatly to the amusement of all, presently discovered toddling blindly about the room, with her small head and dimpled shoulders quite hidden; while from beneath the hat came a muffled voice saying, in lisping tones,—

"Nice hat! oh, nice hat! Baby on nice hat."

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Bessie almost fell from her mother's lap, and Belle from her father's knee, with laughing at this joke, and Maggie hopped around and squealed in an ecstasy of fun and delight; and even the grown people could not help laughing heartily at the little "turncoat," as nurse called her pet.



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IX. KATE.



It would take too long to follow Maggie and Bessie through all their travels, or to visit all the places visited by them, going from one to another by easy stages, as best suited mamma; and staying a day or two, or a week or two, according to the amount of interest and pleasure they found in each. Charleston and Richmond, Virginia Springs, the famous Natural Bridge, and many another spot, were described in Maggie's letters to her friends at home; but the place of which she most delighted to write, because there she found the most to describe, was Washington. Here is one of her letters from that city:—

"MY BELOVED UNCLE HORACE,—I think Washington is the most interesting city I ever met with. It has so much to see and buildings which are quite surprising and such a credit to themselves and the people who built them that I am proud of the nation to which I belong. But the most interesting place I find is the *Pattern* Office where are to be seen thousands and thousands of things one can never be tired of looking at. There are jewels and beautiful birds and butterflies, and very nasty bugs and spiders and oh! Uncle Horace an awful spider so large with his legs out he is as big as a dinner plate, I am thankful I do not live in that country, for he bites too and the people die, and I don't see the use of spiders but I suppose some, or God would not have made them. And there are machines but we children did not care much for those and Indian things very interesting and all kinds of curiosities and beautiful toys. But the most interesting of all General Washington's furniture and his clothes. But his furniture was very shabby and I think his grateful country ought to make him a present of some better and his coat—why, Uncle Horace it was all ragged and if it was not the father of his country's I would say it looked like an old beggar man's. But please do not think I am a traitor because I say this, for I would not be such a thing I hope, nor a Benedict Arnold either, I shan't

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call him Mr. for he is not good enough, and I think he was the meanest man that ever lived not to take his own punishment but to let poor Mr. Andre be killed for him. And Bessie and I do think the father of his country might have let Mr. Andre off that once if he would promise never to do so again and we are afraid he forgot that time that Jesus wanted us to forgive one another as He forgave us. Papa says he had to make an example of Mr. Andre but I think he would have been a better example himself if he had showed mercy. And in the Pattern Office are some stufed animals some very pretty and some ugly as is in the nature of animals to be, for we all know they did not make themselves any more than people who are some ugly and some very handsome and they can't help it. And so I don't see why they have animals for patterns for no man nor woman either could make an animal but only God, but they are interesting to see though it must be disagreeable to stuff them.

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"We saw the President and we are very much disappointed for he looks just like another man, not a bit better, and we did not expect it of him but thought he would be very grand and somehow different. I don't care a bit if I never see another President. I think it is real mean. But he has a very grand house and he lets people come in and see it which is very kind of him, for I would not like people I did not know to come in my house, and pass remarks about it; but Papa says Presidents and kings and things of that kind have to do a great many things they do not like very much, so I hope I will never be a President or his wife either and if he asks me to marry him I will certainly say no and Bessie will too.

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"There are a great many lovely toys in the Pattern Office but I will not say I wish they were mine because I cannot have them so it is of no use and it might be to break the tenth commandment. Papa says they belong to the government, but I don't see what the government which is nothing but a lot of big men wants of playthings, and I think they would be much more use if children had them to take pleasure in them. If they were mine I would give the largest share to my Bessie, and then divide them with all my children friends and send some to the little cripples' hospital.

"To-morrow Papa is going to take us to the Smithsonian *Institute* where they say are a great many curious and wonderful things and lots of animals dead ones I mean from all parts of the world. Which must be very instructif and if I do not improve my advantages I ought to be ashamed of myself and deserve to be a dunce. Mamma says it is time for us to go to bed, which I wish it was not and I wish there was no such place as bed but I do not tell dear Mamma so or she might think I did not honor her and I hope I may never be such an unnatural child. So good night dear Uncle Horace and Aunt May and May Bessie the same from your devoted till death do us part friend

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"MAGGIE."

They did not stay long in Washington; for the weather was growing warm and oppressive, and our party were anxious to hurry northward, where it was cooler and pleasanter. We will not stop with them at Baltimore or Philadelphia, where nothing particularly interesting occurred; or even in their own city, where they stopped for a few days to rest and have a sight of all the dear home-faces, as well as to leave all the "curiosities and wonderful memories," as Maggie called them, which they had collected in their southern rambles: but start off with them once more on their further journeyings.

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They had parted from Mr. Powers and Belle: but Uncle Ruthven and Aunt Bessie had joined the party, adding much to the enjoyment of all; and they were now on their way to beautiful Trenton and Niagara Falls.

A young lady and two gentlemen were coming up the brass-covered staircase of the steamboat which was carrying our friends up the river.

"Hallo!" said one of the latter as some small object fell at his feet. "What is this? Who is pelting me with flowers? No: it's not a flower either. What is it, Mary?" and he stooped and picked it up, turning it round and round very gingerly, as if afraid it would fall to pieces in his fingers. "Looks like a small edition of that thing on your head."

"Just what it is," replied his sister. "It is a doll's hat. Ah! there is the little owner, I suppose," and she looked up at Bessie who was peeping over the banisters with watchful, earnest eyes, and holding Margaret Colonel Horace in her arms.

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"Are you the young lady who has been pelting me with dolls' hats, and trying to make me think they were flowers?" asked the young man as he came to the top of the stairs.

"It is only one hat, and I didn't try to make you think it was a flower, and I didn't pelt you with it, and I'm only a little girl," answered Bessie, demurely. "It fell off my dolly's head; but I'm very glad you came up just then, before any one stepped on it."

The gentleman put the hat on the forefinger of one hand, and twirled it slowly round with the other, while Bessie looked on, rather aggravated.

"Give it to her, George; aren't you ashamed to tease her?" said the young lady.

"What will you give me for it?" asked he.

"I'll give you 'thank you,' sir," replied the child.

"Nothing else?"

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"No, sir, nothing else," answered Bessie, with as much dignity as any young lady could have worn.

He felt the silent reproof of the child's manner; and, ashamed of having teased her, he handed her the little hat, saying, almost without intending it,—

"I beg your pardon."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," she said, now smiling again. "I was 'fraid it would be spoiled 'fore I could call some one to pick it up."

"Why didn't you run down, and pick it up yourself?" asked the young lady.

"I thought maybe mamma wouldn't want me to," said Bessie, putting on her doll's hat. "She told me on the Savannah steamer never to go up and down the stairs alone; and I didn't know if she would like me to here."

"Here's a match for Kate's paragon of obedience and straightforwardness," said the young lady, laughing as she turned to the other gentleman who had not yet spoken.

"What is your name, little lady?" he asked.

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Bessie looked up at him. Where had she seen that face before? Those sparkling black eyes, the roguish curve of the lips, seemed very familiar to her; and yet she was sure the gentleman was a stranger, as the others were.

But she had a fancy that these same strangers were making rather free with her; and she put on her dignified air again as she answered slowly,—

"Bessie Bradford, sir," and turned away. But her steps were again checked as she heard her last questioner exclaim,—

"Why, it is Kate's pet! The paragon herself!"

"Kate's pet!" The old school-name so often given to her by the older girls at Miss Ashton's, and now uttered by the owner of the black eyes which seemed so familiar, made it at once clear to her who it was. Perhaps it was just as well that she did not know what paragon meant: she only thought it rather an ugly-sounding name, and at another time she might have been displeased and thought it was intended to tease her; but, as it flashed upon her who he was, vexation was lost in pleased surprise.

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"Oh!" she exclaimed, in the tone she sometimes used when she was both gratified and astonished, and looking up at him with flushed and sparkling face.

"Well?" said the gentleman, laughing; as did both of his companions.

"I just believe you are Katie's brother," cried the child.

"That is an accusation I cannot deny," he said, much amused. "Yes; I am Charlie Maynard. But how did you know that?"

"'Cause you look a great deal like her, sir," answered Bessie; "and she used to talk about you very often. She thinks you are very nice."

"That shows her good taste," he said.

"She is very, very nice herself," said the little girl, no longer feeling as if she were talking to a stranger; "and I am very fond of her. But it is a great while since I have seen her. Will you please to give her my love when you see her, sir?"

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"On one condition," he answered; "that you come with me now and let me show you something. Something I think you will like to see," he added, seeing that she hesitated.

"I must ask mamma first," she said. "She only gave me leave to wait here until Uncle Ruthven and Maggie came up."

She ran to where her mother sat, and eagerly asked if she might go with Katie Maynard's brother to "see something." Mamma gave permission; and, putting her hand confidently in that of her new acquaintance, Bessie suffered him to lead her to the other side of the boat.

Like what he had brought her to see! Bessie thought so indeed, when she caught sight of the "something;" and Margaret Colonel Horace nearly fell from her mamma's arms as the latter sprang into those of Katie Maynard herself.

Kate was as much delighted and surprised as the child, and kissed Bessie over and over again; while the loving little soul nestled close to her, and looked up with eyes which left no need for words.

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Then Bessie had to be introduced to Katie's father and mother, who were with her; but her brother said there was no occasion for him to go through with this ceremony, since he and Bessie had already made acquaintance; and he took a good deal of credit to himself for having guessed that the demure little damsel, who was so careful about obeying her mamma, might be his sister's favorite and pet, whose name he had so often heard. The other lady and gentleman were friends of the Maynards, and travelling with them; and the whole party were, like our friends, bound for Niagara.

"And where is the honey-bee?" asked Kate, who had heard Colonel Rush call Maggie by that

name, and from that time used it for her. "We'll go and bring her too."

But Maggie,—who had by this time come upstairs, having chosen to go down with Uncle Ruthven to buy some papers and "see what she could see" below, while Bessie preferred to wait above,—Maggie was by no means to be persuaded to join a party consisting of so many strangers. So Kate, who was really rejoiced to see her little schoolmates, and wanted to talk to both, must needs accept Bessie's invitation, and stay with them for a while. [224]

"For you know you're not a bit troubled with bashfulness," said Bessie, innocently; "and poor Maggie is;" a speech which made Kate's friends smile, and Kate herself laugh outright.

But Bessie was mistaken; for Kate, in spite of her laugh, was for once "a bit troubled with bashfulness" before Mrs. Bradford. For she had a little feeling of consciousness in the presence of Bessie's mother, which rose from the recollection of the affair of the clock at school, and the knowledge that Mrs. Bradford had heard of it. Mrs. Ashton had told Kate that she had thought it only right to tell Mrs. Bradford of Bessie's trial, and her steadfast resistance to temptation; and Kate, who had not seen Mrs. Bradford since the day of the giving of the prizes, felt a little doubtful how she would be received. But the lady's kind and friendly greeting soon put the young girl at her ease, and she felt there was no need for any feeling of embarrassment now that her own conscience was at rest. She had a pleasant talk with the little girls, hearing of their travels and adventures, and telling them in return of all that had taken place at school after they left. [225]

The acquaintance between the young folks brought about one between their elders, which gave much pleasure all around; and, during the next two or three weeks, the two parties saw a good deal of one another.

The children took a great fancy to the younger Mr. Maynard, Kate's brother, as he did to them; and even Maggie was quite friendly with him from the time that he came and took his place near his sister, as she sat a little apart with Bessie on her lap, and Maggie close beside her, talking of all that had happened since they parted. He was very much amused with Bessie's quaint ways and sayings, and with Maggie's glowing descriptions of all they had seen and done during their travels; but he did not let his amusement appear, and they talked away without restraint before him. Now and then he would join in the conversation, putting a question, or making a remark, as though he were interested in what they were saying, but not so as to embarrass them at all; and he was so kind and pleasant in his manner to them, that they both speedily honored him with their "approval," and a place in the ranks of their friends. [226]

Not so with Mr. Temple, Charlie Maynard's companion. When, after a time, he sauntered up and joined the group, he soon put a check upon the merry chatter of the little girls. Not intentionally, for he had more to say to them, and asked more questions than Mr. Maynard himself: but it was done with a tone and manner which they did not like; in a half-mocking way, which irritated Bessie, and brought on a fit of shyness with Maggie. Indeed, the latter would not stand it long, but moved away to her mamma. [227]

"What is it, dear?" asked her mother, seeing that something had disturbed her.

"That hateful man, mamma," said Maggie, lowering her voice that she might not be heard by the object of her displeasure.

"Do not call names, dear," said her mother. "What has he done to you?"

"He talks disagreeable nonsense, mamma."

"I thought you liked nonsense once in a while," said Mr. Stanton.

"Oh! it's not nice, amusing nonsense like yours, Uncle Ruthven. He talks compliments, and compliments he don't mean either. He is horrid, and very silly, too."

"Perhaps he thinks you like it," said Mr. Stanton.

"He has no business to think so," said Maggie, waxing more indignant. "We were having a very nice time with Miss Kate, and he made himself a great interruption. He teased us about our dolls; and then he asked us a great many ridiculous questions, and talked a great many foolish things about Bessie's eyes and my hair. If it was grown ladies he talked to that way they would say he was impertinent, and I don't see what children have to stand it for. It is horrid nonsense." [228]

Mamma thought it horrid nonsense too. She did not like to have such things said to her little girls, and was glad that they were too wise to be pleased with such foolish flattery, which might otherwise have made them vain.

Meanwhile, Mr. Temple was continuing his "horrid nonsense" to Bessie, in spite of more than one reproof from Kate and her brother; but the little "princess" received it in the most disdainful silence, which greatly amused not only the two last, but also the offender himself. But at last it became more than Bessie could bear, and she too slipped from Kate's hold and went back to her mother. From this time, the children avoided Mr. Temple as much as possible; and, if they could help it, would not join the Maynards when he was with them. [229]

"What is the reason you don't like George Temple?" asked Kate of Bessie one day.

"I don't know," said Bessie, coloring: for she did not know she had made her dislike so plain; and she really found it difficult to put in words the cause of her annoyance. "I don't know, Miss Kate; but I *don't* like him. I believe I don't approve of young men," she added doubtfully, as if she were not quite sure of the latter fact.

"But you like Charlie, don't you?" said Kate, smiling, "and he is a young man, younger than Mr. Temple."

"Yes," answered Bessie, with an air of deep reflection, "but—then—I b'lieve the reason is, that Mr. Temple is not so very gentleman as Mr. Maynard. Your brother plays with us, and makes fun for us, but he is just as polite as if we were big ladies; but I think Mr. Temple is one of those people who seem to think children don't have feelings. You know there is such a kind of people, Miss Kate."

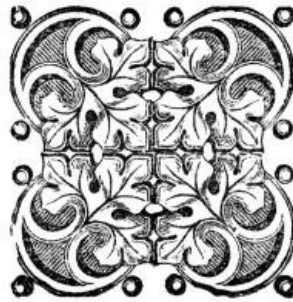
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"She knows the ring of the pure metal," said Kate afterwards to her mother, "and distinguishes the true gentleman in heart and feeling, as well, or better than her elders. She did not mean her words for me, I am sure; but I could not but remember that it is not so long since I was myself one of that "kind of people who seem to think children don't have feelings";" and Kate laughed at the recollection of Bessie's solemn air, when she had pronounced her opinion of Mr. Temple. "Poor Maggie! how I used to tease her."

"Yes, indeed, Kate," said Mrs. Maynard, "grown people, I fear, too often forget how easily a child's feelings are wounded; how the word, the look, or laugh, which to us is a matter of indifference, or some passing moment's amusement, may mortify and grieve some sensitive little heart, and leave there a sore spot long after we have forgotten it."

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"Yes," said Kate, regretfully, "my conscience is not at ease on that point. And you may thank darling Bessie, mother, for giving me more than one innocent lesson in consideration and thoughtfulness for others, both old and young. The honey-bee, too, with all her heedlessness,—and she is naturally a careless little thing,—leaves no sting behind her, for she never forgets the rule which she calls, 'doing unto others.'"



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X. *MAGGIE'S POEM.*



Isn't it a nice day, Maggie?" said Bessie, coming to her sister, who was leaning with both arms on the railing which guarded the upper-deck, watching the flashing water, the magnificent mountains, the blue sky, and all the other beauties around and above her.

"Yes," answered Maggie; "and we're having such a nice sail, except for that man. Bessie, my head is quite full of poetry about it."

"Write some then," said Bessie; "and we'll send it to my soldier. He'll be so pleased. I'll ask papa for a pencil and some paper;" and she made her request to her father, who let her take his memorandum-book for the purpose; and, furnished with this and excited by all the beauty around, Maggie broke forth into the following verses, the first of which was thought remarkably fine by Bessie and herself, as being not only extremely poetical, but also as containing a great deal of religious sentiment very touchingly expressed:—

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"POEM ON A STEAMBOAT SAIL.

"I have so very many mercies,
I have to write them down in verses;
Because my heart in praise goes up
For such a full and heaped-up cup.

"But, ah! 'tis my unhappy fate
To see on board a man I hate:
I know I should not be so mad;
But he behaves so very bad."

"'Hate' there only means 'can't bear,'" said Maggie, when she had finished this last verse and read it aloud to her sister: "but you see 'can't bear' don't rhyme very well with 'fate;' and I want

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to put that, it is such a very poetical word, and sounds so very grown-up-y. I had to put that verse about Mr. Temple for a relief to my feelings; and 'hate' must be excused."

"That first verse is lovely," said Bessie. "It sounds so very nice; and, besides, it is so pious."

"Yes," said Maggie. "I thought I'd better begin with a little religion and gratitude. Besides, it was that made the poetry come into my ideas, Bessie. I was thinking how very good and grateful we ought to be, when God gives us such a very beautiful world to look at, and travel about in."

"Yes," said Bessie, putting her head on one side and giving her sister a look which expressed as much admiration and affection as a look could do, "yes: what a very smart, nice girl you are, Maggie!"

"You think so," said Maggie; "but everybody don't."

"That's they don't know any better," said Bessie, whose praise might have spoiled Maggie, if the latter had been at all vain and conceited.

"The second verse isn't very pious," said Maggie, looking at it doubtfully; "but I guess I'll leave it in." [235]

"And you can explain it to Uncle Horace when you write to him," said Bessie. "But make some more, Maggie: your poetry is splendid."

Thus encouraged, Maggie went on,—

"I look upon the blue, blue sky,
That spreads above us there on high:
Below, the water sparkles bright,
And all around the land is light.

"The sun is shining, too, above,
And whispers to us, 'God is love!'
The moon, also, will shine to-night,
And pretty stars will twinkle bright."

"Oh, what lovely description you do make!" exclaimed Bessie, when Maggie read these two verses.

"This world is all so beautiful,
We should be very grateful;
But then, you know, sometimes we're not,
And do forget our happy lot."

"We'll have to read gra-te-ful to make it come right with beautiful," said Maggie, "but it sounds good enough." [236]

"Oh! it's perfectly lovely," said Bessie.

"Our father and our mother dear,
Each sitting in a steamboat chair;
Aunt Bessie too, the darling dear,
And Uncle Ruthven sitting near.

"Oh! it doth make my heart rejoice
To hear each loved and pleasant voice;
And then I have my sisters sweet,
Who with kind smiles me always greet."

"What does 'greet' mean?" asked Bessie.

"It means something like welcome," answered Maggie. "I can't explain exactly; but I know it is a word poetry-writers use a great deal, and I thought I had better put it in."

Maggie wrote on,—

"And then I've lots of friends at home,
From whom just now away I roam;
I trust they'll all be safe and sound
When I again at home am found."

"That is enough for to-day," said Maggie "but I am going to make a long poem out of it, and I'll do some more another time. I s'pose Niagara will be a good thing to put in it. You know they say it is splendid." [237]

"What is 'roam'?" asked Bessie, who must always inquire the meaning of every word she did not understand.

"To travel about. Just what we're doing," answered Maggie.

"Then why don't you say travel? I think it's the nicest word."

"But it is not so uncommon," said Maggie; "and you know when people write poetry they always put in all the uncommon words they can find."

"Do they?" said Bessie, as if she did not quite approve of this rule.

"Yes, to be sure," answered Maggie. "You know prose is just common talking; but poetry is uncommon talking, and you have to make it sound as fine as you can, and put words you don't use every day."

"Oh!" said Bessie. "Well, if you have done, I guess we'd better give papa back his book." [238]

Accordingly, the book was carried to papa, who had not had any idea that Maggie's poetical fancy would carry her so far, and who was rather surprised to see several pages scribbled over with verses that were lined and interlined, scratched out and written over, in a manner which did not add to the beauty or neatness of the book.

However, he only laughed, and taking out his penknife carefully cut out the scribbled leaves and gave them to the little poetess, who rolled them up, and tying them round with a bit of twine, stowed them away in her satchel, till such time as she should be ready to copy and add to them.

But she did not find leisure for this till they had been at Niagara for two or three days; and then, when she looked in her travelling-bag for the precious poem, lo! it was gone! In vain did she and Bessie take out all the other contents from the satchel, shake it, and feel in each corner and pocket: no poem came to light, and great was the sorrowing over its loss. [239]

"Then I s'pose I'll never hear of it again," said Bessie, regretfully, when mamma said she thought Maggie must have pulled it out with some of the other things her bag contained, and so dropped it, unseen.

But poor Maggie *was* to hear of her poem again; to hear a little too much of it.

The two parties spent a week or more at Niagara Falls, visiting many a point of interest and beauty,—sometimes together, sometimes apart; now standing below the level of the Rapids, and looking backward at their white foaming crests drawn sharply against the blue sky, as the mad waters went whirling and rushing over the slope; now, in the early morning, looking up to the top of the Great Fall, which shone and flashed like jewels in the rays of the sun, the gray mist curling below, and a glorious rainbow stretching from shore to shore; now taking the little steamer which plies to the foot of the cataract, into the very midst of the thick, blinding spray. Mamma did not think it best for Bessie to go on this expedition; but strong, hardy, little Maggie was allowed to go, well wrapped in water-proof, and held fast in papa's or Uncle Ruthven's arms. On the whole, however, Maggie did not enjoy this as much as she did the other excursions. In the first place, Bessie was not with her, and then she wanted to laugh at the droll, miserable-looking figures about her, but would not do so, lest she should "hurt their feelings, when they looked so very unhappy, and as if they wished they had not come." [240]

Then again they would pass over to some of the lovely little islands, which here and there break the rapids above the American Fall. Two of them, Ship and Brig Islands, had a special interest for the children, from their resemblance to ships under full sail. Even Bessie, who could never be persuaded to imagine any thing which she did not distinctly see, noticed this, and said she felt almost sorry for them, for it seemed as if they were "real live ships trying to sail out of the waters that were hurrying them away so fast." [241]

Mr. Bradford and Mr. Stanton had gone over to Goat Island one afternoon, taking the little girls with them. Here they were lying and sitting under the overarching trees, looking at the Hermit's Cascade, and listening to the deep, never-ceasing voice of the great cataract, when they were joined by the younger portion of the Maynard party,—Kate and her brother, and Mr. and Miss Temple.

Maggie and Bessie had by this time taken Mr. Charlie Maynard into special favor, looking upon him with eyes nearly as friendly as those with which they regarded his sister; and they were glad to see both him and Kate. Miss Temple, too, a quiet, lady-like girl, they liked very well, and did not object to her; but they could very well have dispensed with her brother's society. However, he did not on this occasion seem at first disposed to prove teasing or troublesome, but stretched himself upon the grass, with his head supported on his arm and his hat half over his eyes. [242]

But, by and by, Mr. Bradford and Mr. Stanton, seeing an old friend at a little distance, went to speak to him; the former telling his little girls to remain where they were till he returned. They were scarcely out of hearing, when George Temple, turning lazily over so as to face Maggie, though he still kept his eyes shaded by his hat, said,—

"This is delightful! One could dream half one's life away in this enchanting place and in such pleasant company. Have we not a poet or poetess among us to put it all into verse? What! no answer to the call? Then I shall have to try my hand at it."

"You making verses!" said his sister, laughing, and playfully pulling the brown locks which escaped from beneath his hat. "You making verses! a lame style of poetry that would be, to be sure." [243]

"I don't know," said George. "Certainly I never appeared to have much talent that way; but no one can tell what he may be able to do when a fitting time arrives. I feel on the present occasion like the gifted authoress who says so touchingly,—

'I have so very many mercies
I have to write them down in verses.'"

Maggie started, and looked up from the little bunch of wild flowers she was arranging to carry home to her mother.

Mr. Maynard and the young ladies laughed; and Charlie said,—

“What a gem! Who is your authoress?”

“She is Anon., I believe,” said George, sleepily. “She closes the couplet with,—

‘Because my heart in praise goes up
For such a full and heaped-up cup.’

Now I am in just such a frame of mind, and quite agree with her when she goes on to say,—

“This world is all so beautiful,
We should be very gra-te-ful;
But then, you know, sometimes we’re not,
And do forget our happy lot.”

“George,” said Miss Temple, “how can you be so foolish?” but she laughed again, and the others, too, went on laughing and joking him about his “nonsense;” while poor Maggie sat,—with downcast-eyes, changing color, and beating heart,—listening intently to every word her tormentor uttered, and wondering how much more pain he would put her through. As for Bessie, she had at first heard in wondering surprise those strangely familiar lines; but surprise soon changed to sympathy for her Maggie, and indignation against Mr. Temple. [244]

Suddenly Kate turned her eyes towards the two little faces, and the expression of both left no room for doubt as to who was the author of the unfortunate verses. Maggie was in an agony of embarrassment: too well did Kate know the signs, and remember with shame how, not long since, she herself had found as much amusement in them as George Temple was probably now doing, since he was taking so much pains to excite them. But Kate had learned better, and had grown more thoughtful and considerate, more careful not to give pain to another for the sake of a little passing enjoyment to herself. How cruel Mr. Temple’s teasing seemed to her now, and how she felt for Maggie! [245]

For Bessie, too, who she saw was trying to keep down her rising temper, she was very sorry. She must come to the rescue in some way.

“I might have known from the first,” she said to herself, “that those were Maggie’s verses. They sound just like her,—just like her happy, grateful, little heart, always so ready and eager to give praise and gratitude where they are due. They are not bad for such a child, either; but I must help her out of this. Poor little Maggie!”

“There’s another sentiment of the talented writer, to which I shall also say amen,” began Mr. Temple again,—

“‘And then I’ve lots of friends at home
From whom just now away I roam;
I hope they’ll all be safe and sound
When I again at home am found.’”

“I thought you meant to try your own powers of rhyming,” said Kate. “I am glad you have not, for I know you could not do nearly as well as the writer you quote; and I am sure you have not half as feeling a heart. But we have had enough.” [246]

This was an unlucky speech of Kate’s; for it gave Mr. Temple an opportunity of doing still worse.

“A feeling heart!” he repeated: “well, I don’t know about that; her feelings seem to have been mixed, for she says,—

‘Alas! ’tis my unhappy fate
To see on board a man I hate:
I know I should not be so mad;
But he behaves so very bad.’

Now, I am in a much more amiable frame of mind; for I do not see in this present company a single person whom it is ‘my unhappy fate’ to hate. How is it with you, Maggie?”

But Maggie was overwhelmed, and could not possibly have answered if she had wished to do so ever so much.

“Maggie,” said Kate, seeing no way to spare the child further confusion but by taking her away, “you have not enough green with those flowers. Come over there, I see some pretty leaves, and we will gather them.” [247]

Maggie sprang to her feet, letting the flowers fall to the ground, and seized eagerly upon the kind hand held out for her relief. The tears, which she had been struggling to hold back, flowed freely the moment she was beyond the sound of her tormentor’s voice; but she felt better for them and for Kate’s sympathy.

“Never mind, dear,” said Kate, soothingly. “I know the poetry is yours, Maggie, and it is very nice indeed; but I would not say so before Charlie and Mary. I thought you would not like it.

George Temple could not have written it himself, and he ought to be ashamed to tease you so."

"It's *too, too* mean," sobbed Maggie; "and that man is too horrid. I didn't really mean I hated him; but now I most feel as if I did." [248]

Meanwhile Bessie, who had lingered a moment to pick up Maggie's flowers, was receiving in dignified silence Mr. Temple's questions as he asked "what ailed her sister?"

"What is the matter, George?" said Miss Temple, seeing something was wrong. "Are you teasing Maggie? Are those verses hers?"

"I told you they were Anon.," replied her brother.

This was a little too much. It was quite bad enough for Mr. Temple to torment Maggie so; but that he should give the credit of those beautiful verses to another, was more than could be borne, and Bessie turned upon him, saying, with the utmost severity, but without passion,—

"They're not. Miss Anon. didn't write them. My Maggie did; and you know it, and you took them out of her bag."

Mr. Temple laughed with the others at the first part of the speech, but looked grave again at its ending.

"Hallo!" he said, rousing himself from the lazy attitude he had kept until now, "do you know what you are saying, little lady? That would be stealing." [249]

Bessie stood looking at him for a moment in silence.

"I picked them up off the deck of the steamboat," said the young gentleman, a shade of vexation crossing his face as he noted the expression of the child's.

With grave reproach in her great, serious eyes, she made answer,—

"I don't see why it's not just the same."

"The same as what, as stealing?"

"You knew they were not yours, sir," answered the child. "I don't suppose it was just stealing, but I think it was"—

"Well," said Mr. Temple, seeing she hesitated.

"I had better go away," said Bessie: "I feel pretty saucy and I might say something you deserved;" with which she turned away, and ran after Kate and Maggie.

Mr. Temple looked, as he felt, uncomfortable. The joke had proved more serious than he had intended; and the remarks made by his two companions, and their amusement at Bessie's words, did not tend to make him better pleased with the consequences of his own conduct. [250]

Kate added her reproaches when she returned, after leaving Maggie and Bessie in their father's care, saying,—

"I had rather, for your own sake, that you had done this thing to any other children than those two, George. They are both so truly just, and have such a high sense of honor, which you have rudely shocked."

"A child's sense of honor," repeated George, rather scornfully. "I am sorry I teased them, and had no idea Maggie would take it so hardly; but I am not troubled in regard to my self. A child's opinion does not signify much."

"It does with me," said Kate, "and I can tell you a story to the point, and which may show you what a child's sense of honor is worth. I think they sometimes see the right and wrong more clearly than we do." [251]

"You seem to have great faith in these little friends of yours," said Mr. Temple.

"Yes," replied Kate, "I have reason. They have been tried and not found wanting, as you shall hear;" and Kate told the story of the prize composition,—the hopes and fears regarding it, its loss and recovery, and the noble way in which our little girls had acted.

"Capital!" said Charlie, as she ended. "They judge others only by the rules by which their own conduct is guided; and there is a wise saying in an old book we all know of, which we would do well to remember: namely, 'Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones.' I take that to mean, not only that we are to set a good example to them, and that we must so act and speak as not to confuse and disturb their ideas of right and wrong; but also, that whoever purposely hurts or grieves one of them, commits a sin in the eyes of Him who gave them His special care and blessing. Which of us could have calmly borne ridicule thrown upon some cherished work of our own, such as you cast, George, on the simple verses of that shy, sensitive, little Maggie? Poor little poetess! And I honor Bessie, baby though she is, for the way in which she struggled with her temper, and removed herself from the temptation to give way to it, and 'say something you deserved.' Could there have been a more severe reproof than that?" and Mr. Maynard laughed again at Bessie's speech and manner, though he felt that this had become no laughing matter. [252]

"They have both forgiven him now," said Kate, dryly; "and Bessie made the excuse for him which she usually makes for others who do what she considers wrong, that 'maybe Mr. Temple had never been taught better, and so didn't know what was very true and honest, or he wouldn't have kept Maggie's verses, when he knew they were hers, for such a very unkind purpose as to tease her.' 'And maybe he didn't know how very bad I felt, and never thought much about doing unto others,' added Maggie. I cannot believe you meant to be as cruel as you were, George; for [253]

you did not know how much Maggie dreads notice drawn upon herself. You see," she added, playfully, "I have myself so lately learned the lesson how much suffering such thoughtlessness may cause another, that I feel entitled to preach on the subject to others."

Mr. Temple took the preaching in good part. He had a lazy kind of good-nature which would not allow him to take offence readily; and, besides, he was really sorry and vexed with himself for what he had done. Perhaps he would have regretted it still more, had he seen part of a letter written that afternoon by Maggie to Colonel Rush:—

"DEAR UNCLE HORACE,—I think there are a kind of people in the world who seem to be created only for a very bad business, namely, to tease poor children and make their shyness come back to them when they have been trying very hard to cure themselves of it. Of this nature is a man whose name I will not mention, for some day you might know him and say 'there is the trecherous man who was so cruel to Maggie and I will not be acquainted with him' which would be a punishment I would not wish even him to bear because I am trying to forgive him but it is very hard. He picked up a poem I wrote on the boat to send to you, and he kept it and said it before me just to plage me and there was a verse in it about him which was not at all a compliment and oh! dear Uncle Horace he said that too, and it was dreadful I was so frightened. I am quite sure he knew it was mine and Bessie is too and I don't think it was very honest not to give it right back do you? but to read it which was not like what a gentleman should do. He made believe he thought it was nice but he did not and was only making fun of it which was a hard distress to bear and I think I shall never recover it and feel as pleasant with that man as I would wish to feel with all my fellow cretures. Miss Kate was very nice and took me away and she is much improved and never teases any more and now I love her dearly; but she never teased me so badly as that man who I will not name and I pity Miss Temple for having such a brother for she is a very nice young lady and deserves better. When Harry and Fred are young men which I wish they did not have to be I hope they will remember this and take pattern by Mr. Maynard and not by M—— that other man I mean. But no more on this melancorly subject so sad to think on but I will tell you about Niagara Falls.

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"N. B. Mr. Temple is a very good looking young man in his appearance but I find all is not gold that glitters."



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XI. *GOOD SEED.*



Y OWN DEAR SOLGER,—I do want to see you so much I don't know what to do and Ant May too and May Bessie. I did not see you ever so long and it is such a grate wile I miss you so. But Mamma says some day we will go to your house in that place where you live and I will be so glad and my Maggie too. They are indians in Nigra Falls and they have pretty things and we bort some for all our peple and a basket for Ant May and a rattel for May Bessie and something for you that is a secret. Plese dont tell them so they will be surprised and Nigra Falls is so fast you cant think. I never saw such fast water and it makes such a noise but not so nice as the sea and I like it best when we go on the ilans or up the river where it is not so much noise or such hie water to fall over. Some ilans are named the three sisters and we call one Maggie and one Bessie and one Annie don't you think that is nice. I want to see Belle so much. Belle loves me and I love Belle and Maggie does too and I love her more that her mama went away to Jesus and she wants her but I know she loves her yet and is glad when she is good. And Belle is sweet. Don't you love Belle? I send you forty nine kisses and I love you dear Uncle Horace from your pet

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It would be hard to tell who took the most pleasure in these letters from our little travellers,—those who wrote them, or those who received them. One thing is certain,—that they were all carefully kept and laid away, and some time, when they are older, Maggie and Bessie may find some amusement in looking over these records of their childish days. Many a pleasant scene and circumstance will they bring back to them, and some not so bright perhaps; for the little ones have their trials, as we know, and do not, I fear, forget as readily as we grown people would believe. It is strange we do not see that too; looking back, as we often do, with a sort of tender pity for our own former grieved and mortified *little* selves, and remembering with such distinctness the sharp or quick word of reproof, the thoughtless teasing, or the loud, sudden laugh at some innocent speech or action. [258]

Little did Bessie think when she wrote that last letter, how soon her wishes to see her dear friends were to be gratified.

It had been intended to take the steamer down Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence to Montreal: but on the day before that on which our friends were to leave Niagara, there was a severe storm which tossed and roughened the waters of the great lake; and fearing that Maggie might have an attack of the old enemy she so dreaded, and knowing that fresh water seasickness is even worse than that which comes from the salt water, the elders of the party decided not to take the boat down the lake. [259]

They therefore went by the cars to Kingston, in Canada, and, after passing a day there, took the boat down the river St. Lawrence; for here Maggie had nothing to fear from her foe. There was no part of their long journey which the children enjoyed more than their passage down this beautiful river, so different from any thing they had yet seen. The Lake of the Thousand Isles, as the entrance to the St. Lawrence is called, full of little islets up to the number that is named, a thousand: some larger, and covered with graceful, feathery trees; some so small as scarce to afford room for some solitary tree or bush; clustering together so as scarce to leave room for the steamer to pass, then again separating, with a broad, clear sheet of water between them.

Here something occurred which greatly interested not only the children, but also the grown people on board. As the steamer was slowly making her way between two small islands, the passengers saw a very exciting chase before them. A fine stag was swimming across the river, pursued by dogs and two boats with men in them. The poor beast was trying with all his strength to escape from his cruel enemies, and the sympathies of all the passengers were with him. The men in the boats had no guns, but a net, which they were trying to throw over his head; but each time they neared him, he shot forward beyond their reach. Maggie and Bessie were in a state of the wildest excitement, as they watched the innocent and beautiful creature panting with terror and fatigue; and their elders were hardly less so. Bessie held fast her father's hand, gazing with eager eyes and parted lips, her color coming and going, her little frame trembling with distress and indignation; and Maggie seized upon Uncle Ruthven and danced up and down in frantic suspense and alarm at the danger of the poor beast. His courage seemed giving out, and his pursuers cheered in triumph; when, summoning up all his strength, he suddenly turned, and, passing almost under the bow of the steamer, made for the opposite and nearer shore, thus gaining upon his enemies as they took time to turn their boats; and cleaving the water, almost like lightning, he reached the thickly wooded bank, bounded up, and was lost to sight among the forest trees, and beyond the reach of his would-be destroyers. A cheer burst from those on board, as the noble creature disappeared in safety,—a cheer in which Maggie joined with all her heart, "for I couldn't help it, and most forgot it was rather tomboyish," she afterwards said. But no one found fault with her: indeed no one could. As for Bessie, she fairly cried, but it was only with pleasure and the feeling of relief. [260] [261]

Later in the day, they were greatly interested in seeing the shooting of the Rapids, as the passage of the steamer over the foaming waters is called. It was a curious sight. The water foamed and bubbled around the steamer, seeming as though it were eager to draw it down; but the vessel glided on, rose a little to the billows, plunged, rose again, and was once more in smooth waters. There were several of these rapids to be passed; and, although our little girls had been rather frightened at the first, they soon became accustomed to it, and enjoyed the swift descent. The crew of the steamer were all Canadians; and, as they came to each rapid, they struck up some cheery boat-song, which rose sweet and clear above the roar of the waves, and put heart and courage into the more timid ones among the passengers. [262]

They soon reached Montreal, where they spent a week; and here again the opportunity to do a kind act, and leave a blessing behind them, came in the way of our little sisters.

They were one day passing through the long upper hall of the hotel at which they stayed, when they met the chamber-maid who waited on their rooms, crying bitterly. The girl, who was quite young, had her apron thrown over her head, and seemed in great distress. [263]

"What is the matter, Matilda?" asked nurse, who was with the children.

"I've lost my place," sobbed Matilda; "and I've my mother and my two little brothers to take care of. Oh! whatever will I do?"

"Why are you turned away?" asked nurse, who thought the girl attended to her duties very well, and was civil and obliging.

Then Matilda took down her apron, showing her face all streaked with tears, and told her story.

She had, it appeared, been unfortunate,—perhaps rather careless,—and had broken one or two

articles, the loss of which had greatly vexed the house-keeper, who had told her she should leave her place the next time she broke any thing. This had made her more careful; but that morning an accident had occurred which might have happened to any one. Turning the corner of a corridor, with a pitcher full of water in her hand, some one had run against her, the pitcher was knocked from her hold, and broken into a hundred pieces. The house-keeper would hear of no excuse, and bade her leave the house at once, or pay for the pitcher.

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"And I haven't a penny," said the girl; "for I sent all my wages to my mother yesterday to pay her rent, and there's nothing for it but I must go. And what is to become of us all, if I don't get another place right away?"

Nurse tried to comfort her, by saying she would soon find another situation; but Matilda replied that was not so easy, and she feared they would all suffer before she found it; and went away, still crying bitterly. Maggie and Bessie were very sorry for her.

"I wonder if we haven't money enough to pay for the pitcher, Bessie," said Maggie. "If we had, then maybe the house-keeper would let her stay; and if she won't we could give Matilda the money to keep her mother and brothers from starving."

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"Yes, that's a good thought of you, Maggie," said Bessie; "and there's the house-keeper now. Let's run and ask her quick: may we, nurse?"

Nurse gave permission, though she did not think the children would be successful in their errand of kindness; and said low, either to herself or baby, whom she carried in her arms,—

"Eh! the little dears will do naught with her. She's a cross-grained creature, that house-keeper, and as short in her way as a snapping-turtle."

Maggie's courage began to fail her when she and Bessie ran up to the house-keeper, and heard the severe tone in which she was speaking to another servant. It was true that her manner and speech were apt to be rather harsh and short in dealing with those about her, especially to the girls who were under her orders; but it must be said in her excuse that she led rather a trying life, and had a good deal to vex and trouble her.

Maggie and Bessie stood waiting behind the house-keeper's stout figure, till she had, as Maggie afterwards said, "finished up her scoldings," when Bessie said rather timidly:—

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"Mrs. Housekeeper?"

"Well, what's wanted now?" asked the woman, turning sharply round; but, when she saw who was speaking to her, her face softened and her manner changed.

Now the worst of all this poor woman's troubles was the long tedious sickness of her only child, a little girl about Bessie's age, but not bright and happy, and able to run about and play like our little "princess." This poor child had been ailing for more than six months, sometimes suffering a great deal, and always very weak; and her mother had not much time to give to her, since she was obliged to attend to her duties about the hotel of which she had charge.

When the child was well enough, she was put into a perambulator and taken out for fresh air; and she had just returned from one of these rides on the day before this, as Maggie and Bessie came in from a drive with the elders of their party. They had been to visit an Indian encampment just outside the city, and returned laden with all manner of pretty trifles purchased for the dear ones at home, and some for themselves.

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They had each of them also a handful of flowers given to them by some friend; and, as they passed the sick child lying in her wagon, and turned towards her with a look of sympathy, Bessie saw her eyes fixed longingly on the sweet blossoms she held.

She stopped and turning to Maggie said,—

"I think I'll give my flowers to that sick child, she looks as if she'd like them," and then going to the child she put the flowers in her hand, and said, "Here are some flowers for you, and I am sorry you are sick."

"And here's a basket for you," said Maggie, coming forward with her offering too; and she gave a pretty little basket, the work of the Indians, which she had bought for her own use: "you can put Bessie's flowers in it, and it will look lovely. See, let me fix them for you," and in two minutes her skilful little fingers had arranged the flowers most tastefully, greatly to the child's delight.

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"And am I to keep the basket?" asked the sick child.

"Oh, yes! for ever and ever if you like," said Maggie; "and when the flowers are faded you can take them out and put some more in."

"I don't often have flowers," said the child; "but I love them so: only I don't like to take all yours," she added, looking at Bessie.

"Oh! she is going to have half mine," said Maggie; "you needn't be troubled about that. Good-by now," and she and Bessie ran after their parents, leaving the sick child brightened and happy.



Bessie's Travels. p. 268.

Her mother had been standing near enough to hear and see all that had passed; and so you will not wonder that now, when she turned and saw Maggie and Bessie, her harsh look and tone became gentle and pleasant. [269]

"Oh! it's you, you little dears," she said. "Now, is there ever a thing I can do for you?"

"Yes," said Bessie. "We are so sorry for Matilda, and we wanted to know if you would let us pay for the pitcher she broke if we have money enough, and try her just once more?"

"I like to please you," said the woman; "but Matilda is so careless I cannot put up with her."

"But it really wasn't her fault this time," pleaded Bessie; "she says a man ran against her, and knocked it out of her hand when she was carrying it so carefully."

"And we'll pay for it if we have enough," said Maggie.

"And her mother is sick," said Bessie; "and you know we ought to be sorry and kind to sick people; and you know, too, we ought to forgive as we want to be forgiven. Couldn't you do it for the sick mother's sake? And maybe this will be a good lesson to Matilda." [270]

"I'll keep her for your sake, and strive to be more patient with her too," said the house-keeper; "and I think you'll never lack for comfort and kindness when you're sick yourselves: at least, not if the Lord repays what's done for Him, as the good book says He does."

"And how much must we pay for the pitcher?" asked Bessie.

"Not a penny. I don't know as Matilda was to blame this time, and I didn't listen to her story as I should, I own; but I've been so put about this morning. You go your ways, you little dears; and Matilda shall stay for your good word."

Now the children did not know it, but probably the good word of the two little strangers would have gone but little way with the angry house-keeper, had it not been for the kindness done to her sick child the day before; but so it was, and so the one good thing sprang from the other.

They left Montreal the next morning, and then came two long days of railway travelling, ending in Boston. Here they stayed only a few hours, and then started afresh about six o'clock in the evening, bound "for Narragansett Bay," papa said, when he was asked where they were now going. Bessie was so thoroughly tired that she was soon glad to nestle her head against her father and go to sleep: a very comfortable sleep it was too, from which she did not wake even when she was carried from the cars to a carriage, and from the carriage into a certain house. Maggie, too, after refusing similar accommodation from Uncle Ruthven, and holding herself very upright, and stretching her eyes very wide open, at last gave in, and accepted the repeated offer of his arm as a pillow. [271]

But they both roused up at last when they were brought into that house. Where were they now?

and whose voices were those, so familiar and so dear, but not heard for many weeks?

Maggie opened her eyes with a start, wide-awake on the instant, and, immediately understanding all, gave a shriek of delight, sprang off the sofa where Uncle Ruthven had placed her, and was fast about Mrs. Rush's neck, exclaiming,— [272]

"It's Newport! it is Newport! and this is Aunt May's house, and papa has surprised us. Oh! lovely, lovely! Bessie! Bessie! wake up, and hear the good news."

Bessie slowly opened her eyes at the call, not yet understanding; but as she saw the face that was bending over her, and knew that here was her "own dear solger," whom she had so longed to see, she gave a long sigh of intense satisfaction, and, after her usual manner when her heart was full of love and tenderness, let two words speak for her,—

"Uncle Horace."

There was no surprise in the tone, only unspeakable pleasure and affection; and she laid her head against his shoulder with an expression of utter content.

"This is the very best thing in all our travels," said Maggie. "Where is May Bessie, Aunt May?" [273]

"Fast asleep in her cradle, and I can't let you peep at her to-night," said Mrs. Rush. "We'll keep that for the morning."

Mamma said all other pleasures must be kept for the morning, save that of following May Bessie's example; and Bessie, who could scarcely keep her eyes open, even for the purpose of looking at her beloved Colonel Rush, was quite ready to obey; but Maggie thought she had had sleep enough for one night, and would like at once to make acquaintance with all her new surroundings.

"But we are all going to rest, for it is nearly midnight," said the colonel; which caused Maggie to change her mind, as she had no fancy for staying up alone; and she was now eager to go to sleep at once, so that "morning might come before she knew it," and she went off saying,—

"I never saw children who had such heaps and heaps of happiness as we do. I don't know how I'm ever going to make up enough gratitude for it." [274]

Perhaps her gratitude to the kind hand which showered so much happiness upon her was best shown in the sunny spirit with which she took both trials and blessings, and in her readiness to share the latter with all whom she met.



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XII.

"HAPPY DELIGHTS."



oof! woof! woof! woof!"

Was it possible Flossie knew who was in that pretty room where Maggie and Bessie had been snugly tucked away last night? Certain it is that these sounds, accompanied by a violent scratching at the door, as if he were in a great hurry to have it opened, awakened our little sisters in the morning.

"Why!" said Maggie, in great surprise, "if that don't sound like—why, Janie!" as her eyes fell upon the smiling face of Jane, looking at her over the foot-board of her bed.

"Why, Janie!" repeated Bessie in her turn. "Who is barking?" she added, as a fresh burst of scratching, and "woof, woof"-ing, came from the door. [276]

"Shall I open it and see?" asked Jane; and she opened the door, when in rushed Flossie, who, jumping on the bed, went into an ecstasy of delight and welcome that fell little short of speaking. He wriggled and twisted and barked, and nearly wagged his tail off, and behaved altogether as if he were half frantic. His little mistresses almost smothered him; but he did not object, and put his cold nose in their faces, and wagged and wriggled harder than ever. Never was such a

delighted little dog.

Before the children had time to ask any questions, Frankie came running in, exclaiming,—

“Hi! Maddie and Bessie. Flossie and me and Janie found you. All the peoples is downstairs to brekwis.”

Maggie was dismayed. All the people down to breakfast! and she had meant to be awake with the first streak of daylight. Frankie had to be squeezed and kissed of course; and then Jane and nurse were begged to wash and dress them as fast as possible. [277]

“Why, what’s that noise?” asked Bessie while nurse was busy with her. “It sounds just like the sea.”

“The wind is high this morning,” said nurse, who had had her orders.

“How much it sounds like my dear sea,” said Bessie, unsuspectingly, as she glanced up at the window and saw the branches of the trees waving about in what was, as Mammy said, rather a high wind. “Can’t we have the window open, so we could hear it plainer? I could most think it was the sea.”

“It’s cool this morning. Wait for open windows till you’re dressed and downstairs,” said nurse.

Bessie said no more; but she kept turning her head and listening to the sound, which seemed to her to be distinct from that of the wind, and which sounded so very much like her beloved sea. [278]

Meanwhile, Maggie was quite taken up with asking questions; hearing how grandmamma, Aunt Annie, the boys, Jane, and Flossie, had come to Newport by last night’s boat, reaching there early in the morning, before she had been roused from that ridiculously long sleep. Nothing less than having the whole family beneath their hospitable roof, would satisfy Colonel and Mrs. Rush; and they had contrived to carry their point. [279]

Maggie’s “heaps of happiness” were rising higher and higher. When they were ready, Jane took them downstairs; but she led them by a back corridor, and seemed to take pains to keep them away from windows and doors which opened upon the outside of the house. Certainly she and nurse acted in a rather strange and “mysterious” manner that morning. But at last she had them safely at the door of the breakfast room, where she left them.

The whole party were still seated round the table, though the meal was about over when they entered; and they were going from one to another, offering kisses, smiles, and welcomes, when Bessie’s eyes fell through the open sash of a large bow-window, drawn there by that same sound she had heard upstairs. [279]

For an instant she stood speechless with astonishment and delight; then, stretching out her hands towards the window, with her whole face lighting up, she cried,—

“It is, it is, it is the very, very sea! my own true sea!”

Yes: there it was, the “true sea,” as she called it, or more properly the seashore she loved so much. Her friends watched her for a moment with smiling interest. They had expected to see her so pleased; and, wishing to be present when she first beheld it, Mrs. Rush had so arranged that she and Maggie should be on the other side of the house on the first morning, and nurse and Jane had been told to keep them as much as possible from the sight and sound of the sea. [280]

The Colonel rose, and, taking her hand, led her out upon the broad piazza, where she might see the whole extent of land and water which the magnificent view afforded. [280]

The house stood on very high ground, overlooking a cliff in front, which fell sheer down to the water. To the left, was a broad, sweeping curve of beach, on which the waves were breaking; the long white rollers, with their curling tops, following one another in grand procession, and making beautiful and solemn music as their march was ended. Away to the right lay a wilder, but hardly a grander, scene. Here were great, rugged rocks, among and over which dashed and foamed the waves, whose course they barred. Some were hidden beneath the surface of the water, and the feathery foam which boiled and bubbled over their jagged faces, alone told where they lay. Beyond, and far away, stretched the boundless ocean, the sea Bessie so loved; the white crests of its waves flashing and sparkling in the glorious sunshine of that bright morning; the blue and cloudless sky, overhead. And the hymn which the grand old king was sounding in Bessie’s ear, was still that she had so loved two summers ago, the chant of praise which bids all who can hear, “remember our Father who made it.” [281]

She stood holding the Colonel’s hand, gazing and listening, as though eye and ear could not take their fill; breakfast was unheeded, and it was not till grandmamma reproachfully asked if she was to be forgotten for the sea, that Bessie could be persuaded to turn away.

Maggie, too, was delighted to be once more at the seashore; but she had not the longing for it that Bessie had, and all places were about equally pleasant to her, provided she had those she loved with her.

But now May Bessie was brought, and even the sea was for the time forgotten in the pleasure of seeing her and noticing how much she had grown and improved. When a little life is counted by months, two of these make a great difference, and it was as long as that since Maggie and Bessie had seen Mrs. Rush’s baby. She was a sweet, bright, little thing; and it might have been thought that she had seen the children every day, so speedily did she make friends with them. Indeed, Bessie was sure the baby recognized them, and intended to show she was glad to see them; and no one cared to disturb this belief, in which she took great satisfaction. It was funny to see the patronizing airs which little Annie put on towards the younger baby, and the care which [282]

she showed for her. She called her "Dolly," and seemed to think it hard and strange that she was not allowed to pull and carry her about as she would have done a real doll. Aunt Patty, who had taken a great fancy to Mrs. Rush, had made several toys and pretty things for her baby's use, and among them was a worsted doll, in all respects like the lost Peter Bartholomew.

May Bessie had not the same objections to this gentleman that little Annie had to hers, but opened great eyes, and cooed and crowed at him; and altogether showed more pleasure in him than in any other plaything she possessed. Not so Annie, when he was introduced to her. [283]

"See here, baby. Who is this?" said Mrs. Bradford, wishing to see if she would recognize it, and she held up the doll before the eyes of her by no means gratified baby daughter.

The pet drew up her rose-bud of a mouth into the most comical expression of astonishment and disgust at the sight of the old object of her dislike; for, as was quite natural, she took it to be the very same Peter Bartholomew. Then, taking him from her mother's hand, she gravely marched with him to the hearth-rug, and, tucking him beneath it, sat down upon it, saying, "Tit on Peter," in a tone of triumph, as though she thought she had now altogether extinguished the unlucky offender. Great was her indignation when, later in the day, she was brought in from her drive, and found Peter Bartholomew No. 2 had reappeared. Finding the hearth-rug was not a safe hiding-place, she was from this time constantly contriving ways and means for putting him out of sight; but only to find that he as constantly turned up again. In vain did she throw him out of windows, and behind doors; poke him through the banisters, and let him fall in the hall below: tuck him behind sofa-cushions, and squeeze him into the smallest possible corners, with all manner of things piled on top of him: he still proved a source of trouble to her. The other children found great amusement in this, and in pretending to hunt for Peter, while they knew very well where he was. [284]

But on the third day they really hunted in vain. Peter Bartholomew the second seemed to be as thoroughly "all don," as his namesake who had been left on the far-away Southern railroad; and the nurses joined in the search with no better success. Annie seemed to have accomplished her object this time; and the little one herself could not be persuaded to say where she had put him. Her mother tried to make her tell; but the child seemed really to have forgotten, and the matter was allowed to rest. [285]

However, Peter came to light at last, to light very nearly in earnest. In Mrs. Rush's nursery was a large, open fireplace, where wood was always laid ready for lighting when a fire should be needed for the baby. One cool morning, about a week after Peter's disappearance, May Bessie's nurse lit the fire, when Annie, who sat upon Mammy's knee, suddenly exclaimed, as the smoke began to curl up the chimney,—

"Oh, dear, dear! Peter 'moke."

"You monkey," said nurse, "I believe you've put him behind the wood;" and the two nurses hastened to scatter the fire, when, sure enough, Peter Bartholomew was drawn forth, slightly scorched and smelling somewhat of "'moke," but otherwise unhurt. Annie took it hard, however, and was so grieved at his reappearance that Mrs. Rush, who was in the nursery, said he had better be put away while she stayed. Probably the lighting of the fire recalled to baby's mind where she had put the lost Peter. [286]

But we must go back to the first morning of their stay at Newport. The ladies were all rather tired with their journey and were disposed to rest; but the children, refreshed by a good night's sleep, were quite ready to start out with the gentlemen for a ramble on the beach.

"Do you like this as well as Quam Beach?" asked the Colonel of Bessie, as she sat beside him on a rock, with his arm drawn close about her, as in the old days of two summers since: those days when she had come, a little Heaven-sent messenger, across his path, to guide his wandering feet into the road which leads to Eternal Life. Was it any wonder that, thinking of this, he looked down with a very tender love on the dear little one, over whose work the angels of Heaven had rejoiced?

They had both sat silent for some time, the rest of the party having wandered to a short distance, when the Colonel asked this question,— [287]

"Do you like this as well as Quam Beach, Bessie?"

"Oh, yes, sir! better," said Bessie. "I never *did* see such a lovely, lovely place as this, or feel such nice air. It's the best place we went to in all our travels; and then we have you and most all the people we love here. I am so very contented."

She looked so indeed, as she sat smiling and happy, looking out over the sapphire blue waters, and watching the white-capped waves which broke almost at her feet.

"Yes," said the Colonel, smiling. "I thought it would add to your contentment to have all your people here to meet you, if I could bring it about."

"Yes," said Maggie, who came dancing up in time to hear these last words. "It was so very considerate of you and Aunt May. Oh! this is the very happiest world I ever lived in. I wish, I *wish*, I could live a thousand years in it." [288]

"But Maggie," said Bessie, "then you'd be so very long away from heaven."

"Well, yes," said Maggie; "but then I'd hope to go to heaven after the thousand years, and I'd try to be very good all the time."

"But long before the thousand years were past, all whom you love would have gone away to

that still happier home our Lord has prepared for us," said the Colonel, "and then you would be lonely and wish to follow, would you not, Maggie?"

"Yes," answered Maggie, a shade of thoughtfulness coming over her sunny face. "I'm sure I would if all my dear friends went to heaven, and maybe some of them wouldn't want to live a thousand years."

"And it's so hard always to be good," said Bessie, "and sometimes even *we* have troubles, and are sick, even though we are so happy 'most all the time."

"Yes," said Maggie, "so we do. I'm not sick much 'cept when I have the earache: but maybe I'd be lame and deaf and blind and hump-backed, and all kind of things, before I was a thousand years old; and that would be horrid. I wouldn't like to have a great many troubles either; so I guess it's better it is fixed for me just as God chooses." [289]

"We may be sure of that, dear," said the Colonel. "God knows what is best for us, and rules our lives for our good and His glory."

"I'm not sure I mind so very much about the being naughty now and then," said Maggie. "I know I ought to, but I'm afraid I don't. I s'pose when I have so much to make me happy I ought to be full of remorse all the time for ever being naughty, but somehow I can't be. And I do have afflictions sometimes. Oh!" she added, as the thought of her last severe trouble came over her, "we forgot to give Uncle Horace the things we prepared for him. You see, Uncle Horace, one day I found such a very nice proverb, 'though lost to sight to memory dear;' and Bessie and I thought we would like to practise it on you; so I finished up that poem I began, and Bessie drew a picture for you, and here is the poem," and Maggie drew from her pocket the poem, nicely finished and copied out. [290]

"Thank you very much, dear," said the Colonel. "I am very much pleased; but I thought that the poem was lost, or that you had been robbed of it."

"Papa got it back for me," said Maggie.

"Yes," said Bessie; "and I was with papa when he asked Mr. Temple for it; and I was sorry for Mr. Temple, even though he did tease you so, Maggie."

"Why, papa didn't scold him, did he?" asked Maggie.

"No," answered Bessie; "he only said, 'Mr. Temple, may I trouble you for that paper belonging to my little girl;' but he *mannered* him, and I wouldn't like papa to have such a manner to me, and Mr. Temple looked ashamed. He is a very unpleasant gentleman; but I was sorry for him." [291]

"But where is the picture?" asked Colonel Rush.

"Here," said Bessie, and in her turn she produced a paper from her pocket and unfolded it before the Colonel's eyes. "It is Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden," she went on to say: "here they are, and there is the tree with the serpent on it, and there is another with birds and squir'ls on it. The squir'ls are eating nuts, and the birds are pecking peaches, and they are having a nice time."

"This is very interesting," said the Colonel, not thinking it necessary to tell her that peaches and nuts did not usually grow on the same tree; "and what is this in the corner, Bessie?"

"That is the bower they made for a home to live in," said Bessie; "and there is Adam's wheelbarrow and Eve's watering-pot. I s'pose she helped Adam take care of the garden: don't you, sir?"

"And this?" asked the Colonel, pointing to another object which he had vainly been endeavoring to make out. "It is a pigeon house, I think." [292]

"Oh, no, sir!" said Bessie, rather mortified. "It is a flag, the flag of England. I was going to put the 'merican flag: but I thought it would be more a compliment to you to put your own country's; and so I did. There's the lion;" and she pointed out something which looked rather more like a spider than a lion; feeling the while, poor little soul, rather hurt that her compliment had not been appreciated without explanation.

Now Maggie had had her doubts as to whether a flag was altogether a suitable ornament for the garden of Eden, but she had not chosen to say so to Bessie, who had taken great pains with her picture; and she watched the Colonel's face closely to see if she could find any sign of amusement or surprise.

Not the slightest. He sat gravely smoothing down his moustache, as Bessie explained the picture to him, not a smile disturbing the lines of his face, not a twinkle breaking into those black eyes, looking only interested and pleased; and Maggie dismissed her fears and satisfied herself that the flag was not at all out of place. [293]

"This is a compliment, indeed," said the Colonel with the utmost gravity. "You were very, very kind to think of it, Bessie; and Adam and Eve were, as Maggie says, extremely considerate to allow the flag of my country to be planted in the garden of Eden. I must show this to Aunt May, and shall certainly keep it for May Bessie when she is old enough to understand it. But see, who is coming here?"

The children followed the direction of his eye. Two figures were coming down the beach,—a tall one, and a little one. Was it possible? Yes; it really was Mr. Powers and Belle, dear little Belle, whom Bessie had been longing to see.

A shriek from Maggie, who went tumbling over a rock in her haste to reach them, but picked [294]

herself up and rushed on, regardless of grazed knees and elbows; an exclamation, less noisy, but quite as full of pleasure, from Bessie,—and the three little friends had met again. There was Frankie too, who had been carting sea-weed, but had dropped spade and wagon-tongue at sight of Belle, of whom he was very fond; and then there was such a hugging and kissing, such an interlacing of heads and arms and feet, that it would have been difficult to tell to which little person each set belonged. Belle did not object to the smothering she received; on the contrary, she seemed to enjoy it, and Frankie soon relieved her from his share, saying in a tone of great importance,—

“I have bis-er-ness to ‘tend to,” and marched off to his sea-weed.

“I shall call Newport the ‘Country of Happy Delights’ when I write about it in the ‘Complete Family,’” said Maggie. “I never *did* see such a place. Did you happen here, Belle, or did you know you were coming?” [295]

“We happened,” said Belle, “least Daphne and I did; but I think papa knew we were coming when he brought us.”

“That was just the way with us,” said Bessie: “all the big people knew we were coming; but Maggie and I were so glad and surprised. How long have you been here, Belle?”

“Oh! about half a year,” said Belle.

“Why, no,” said Maggie; “for it’s only a month since we left you in New York.”

“Is it?” said Belle. “Well, we came last Friday; and then papa brought me here to see Aunt May. We live in the hotel; but Aunt May says I must come over every day and play with you. It was so lonesome wifout you,” and Belle put an arm about the neck of each of her little playmates, looking from one to the other with loving, satisfied eyes. “You see, Bessie, I grew to love you and Maggie so much, I can’t very well stay away from you; and so I wasn’t very patient till you came.”

“Did you know we were coming?” asked Maggie.

“Yes, Aunt May told me I was so homesick for you; and papa said he brought me here so I could see you sooner. Wasn’t it good of him?” [296]

“Yes,” said Maggie. “Now let’s go and have a good play. Aunt May gave us pails and spades to play in the sand with, Belle, and I will lend you mine.”

But there proved to be no need of this; for Belle had been furnished with a spade and pail of her own, and Daphne now appeared with them; so the little girls joined Frankie.

“What are you doing, Frankie?” asked Belle.

“Helpin’ Dod,” said Frankie.

“Why, Frankie!” said Bessie, rather shocked: “it’s not respectful for you to say you’re helping God. He can do every thing Himself, without any one to help Him.”

“Well,” said Frankie, taking up another spadeful of sea-weed and tossing it into his wagon, “maybe so; but I dess He has too much trouble to make so much waves, and keep pushing dis sea-weed up all de time; so I jest putting it a little way farder for Him,” and away he went with another wagon-load of sea-weed, which he was carting higher up the beach. [297]

The three little girls did not know whether to laugh or not; but, presently, Maggie said,—

“I guess we need not be shocked at him. He thinks he’s doing something right, and we won’t disturb his mind about it. He’s such a funny child.”

He was a droll fellow, to be sure, that Frankie; always making odd speeches; and like Maggie in one thing, that one never knew which way his ideas would turn. Like Maggie, also, he would never allow that he could not reply to any question which might be put to him; but, if he had not the right answer, would contrive one which would fit the occasion more or less well.

He now came running up to his father, who, with the other gentlemen, had joined Colonel Rush, and exclaimed eagerly,—

“Papa, papa, tome quit. I taught a nassy lobster; let’s tate him to the house and eat him.” [298]

This was not a very inviting proposal, certainly; but the little boy was so anxious that some one should see his “nassy lobster,” that Mr. Bradford and Mr. Stanton went with him; the little girls also running to see.

The “nassy lobster” proved to be one of those ugly shell-fish called horseshoes, which had been left there by the tide, and which Frankie had contrived to turn over on its back. He was rather disgusted with his prize, however, now that he had captured it; and, in spite of his request that it should be taken home and cooked, looked very scornfully at it, and pronounced it “degusting as any sing.”

Talking of cooking his fish had put him in mind that he was hungry, after his play in the fresh sea-air; and now, coming back and standing at his father’s knee, he said rather plaintively,—

“I wish Jesus was here.” [299]

“Why, Frankie?” asked Mr. Bradford.

“‘Tause He would dive me some fish and bread lite He did all those many people,” replied Frankie, who had lately heard the story of Christ feeding the multitude with the five loaves and two fishes. He was very fond of Bible stories, this little boy, and liked to apply them to himself and those about him.

"Tell me about that, Frankie, while Daphne goes to the house for some biscuits for you," said the Colonel; and Frankie repeated in a droll, but still sweet and simple way, the story of the grand miracle.

"But how was it that there was enough for so many people when there was so little food, Frankie?" asked Mr. Powers, wishing to hear what the child would say.

The little fellow looked thoughtful for a moment, and stood rubbing up his hair with his hand; but he was not to be conquered even by a question hard as this, and presently, seeing a way out of his difficulty, his face lighted up as he exclaimed,—

"Betause our Lord did not dive 'em dood appetites. You ought to know dat yousef, sir;" and, [300] with this, he ran away to meet Daphne, whom he saw coming with his wished-for biscuits.



XIII.

LITTLE ACTS OF KINDNESS; LITTLE DEEDS OF LOVE.



unt May's invitation to come every day and play with Maggie and Bessie was never once lost sight of by Belle, who was only too glad to accept it, and be with her beloved little playmates as much as possible.

It was surprising to see how much Belle had improved during these months she had been so much with Maggie and Bessie: no, not surprising either to any one who knew how much a good example can do; at least when it shines before eyes which are willing and ready to profit by its light.

And this was so with dear little Belle. She was not naturally an obstinate or selfish child; and her faults had come chiefly from the over-indulgence of her father and Daphne, who seldom or never contradicted her, but allowed her to think that she must always have her own way. She had never been taught the duty and pleasure of yielding to others, until she was thrown so constantly with our little girls; and then the lesson came to her almost without words. She could not have better teaching than she found in the grave surprise in Bessie's sweet eyes when she worried her father, and fretted herself for some forbidden pleasure, or when she was wilful and imperious with her devoted old nurse; or in her gentle, "You wouldn't tease your father when you're his little comfort: would you, Belle?" She could not but learn ready obedience, generosity, and thoughtfulness for others, when she saw them put in daily practice even by Maggie, who had so much natural heedlessness to struggle with; and, almost without knowing it, she strove to copy her little friends, and to put away the old self-will and impatience. [302]

"Why! how obedient and good my little daughter is growing," said her father, one day, surprised at her ready submission when he was obliged to refuse her some pleasure she had begged for. [303]

"'Cause Bessie says mamma and Jesus will be glad when I'm good," Belle answered, laying her cheek against her father's; "and she said that was the best way to make you happy too, papa. She says when we love um we try to please um. Isn't that true, papa?"

"Very true, my darling. Bessie is a dear little girl, and I am glad that you remember when she tells you what is right."

"She *does* it more than she *tells* it, papa: that's why I 'member so much. It makes me feel 'shamed when Maggie and Bessie see I am naughty."

"I won't go to Aunt May's this morning, papa," she said another day when her father told her to go and be made ready.

"What! stay away from your dear Maggie and Bessie?" said Mr. Powers. "How is that?" [304]

"Daphne is sick, papa: she has such a hegget"—Belle meant headache—"she could hardly dress me this morning, and had to lie right down. If she has to get up again, I'm afraid she will be more

worse, so I will stay home to-day."

But Belle's voice shook as she proposed this, for it was a great sacrifice for her. Six months since she would not have thought of denying herself any thing for the sake of her old nurse, and her father was both pleased and touched.

"Then papa's unaccustomed fingers will see what they can do," he said, unwilling that his little girl should lose her day's pleasure; and, if Belle were not quite as neatly dressed as usual, no fault was found, and "Aunt Margaret" soon remedied all that was wrong.

But another bit of self-denial came in Belle's way that day, and that she carried out.

Coming in with two or three bunches of fine hot-house grapes,—the first of the season,—in his hand, Colonel Rush found the children on the piazza, playing "party" with their dolls' teacups and saucers. Two other little girls, the children of a neighbor, were playing with them. He stopped and gave Maggie a bunch to divide amongst them. They were greatly pleased with this little treat; but Maggie and Bessie were rather surprised to see Belle put hers aside on one of the doll's plates, as if she did not intend to eat, or even play with them. [305]

"Are you not going to play with yours?" asked Maggie, rather reproachfully.

Belle colored a little, and said with some hesitation,—

"I wanted to save them."

Belle was not like some children who would rather enjoy a nice thing by themselves, and the others were surprised.

Now Belle would have been ready enough to tell Maggie and Bessie why she wanted to keep the grapes, but she did not care to do so before the young visitors; lest as she afterwards said, they should think she was "proud of herself for doing it." [306]

"She thinks we'll give her some of ours, and then she'll eat up her own afterwards," said Minnie Barlow, one of the little guests.

"I don't either," said Belle, flushing angrily: "I wouldn't eat one of your old grapes, not if you begged and begged me to."

"No," said Bessie, putting her arm about Belle's neck: "Belle never does greedy things. I know she has a very excellent reason if she don't eat them. Are you sick, Belle?"

"No," said Belle; and then she whispered in Bessie's ear, "but poor Daphne is sick, and I am going to keep my grapes for her. She likes them very much."

"And I'll give you mine for her too," said Bessie, "yours make only a few for her when she is sick." Then she said aloud: "I'm going to keep my grapes too; and Maggie, I think you'd keep yours, if you knew the circumstance."

"Then I will," said Maggie; and turning to the little strangers she added, "Bessie knows what's inside of my mind most as well as I do myself; so if she tells me I would do a thing, I just know I would." [307]

So Maggie, too, put by her share of the grapes, till the company had gone, and Belle felt free to tell what she wanted to do with them; when she agreed that Bessie was right, and she was quite ready to save her grapes for such a "circumstance." It was but a small act of self-denial for these little girls to make out of their abundance; but who can tell the pleasure the gift gave to old Daphne. And verily Belle had her reward.

"Now Heaven bress my child," said the old woman, when Belle offered the grapes, and told that she and her young friends had kept them from their play: "if she ain't growin' jes like her dear mamma, who was allus thinkin' for oders."

Nothing could have pleased Belle more than to be told she was like her dear mother; but she said,—

"I didn't used to think for ofers much, Daphne; not till I saw Bessie do it, and Maggie too. They taught me." [308]

"Never min' who taught ye, so long as you're willin' to learn," said Daphne. "But I say Heaven bress them dear little girls too, as I knows it will."

Pleased as Daphne was, she would have been better satisfied if her little mistress had taken back her gift for her own use; but Belle insisted that she should eat the grapes herself, and indeed climbed on her lap and stuffed them one after the other into her mouth, refusing to taste one herself.

"What is that, Uncle Horace?" asked Maggie, one afternoon when she and Bessie were out driving on the Avenue with Colonel Rush, Aunt Bessie, and the boys.

The object of her interest was certainly of a nature to excite curiosity. It was a round building of stone, supported by eight pillars, with open arches between. In the wall, above the pillars, were three narrow loop-holes or openings. It could scarcely have been told, however, that it was built of stone; for pillars and round walls were alike covered with beautiful green vines, just now in all their summer glory. It stood in the centre of a small park or common, where children and nurses were playing and wandering about. [309]

"That," said Colonel Rush, "is the old stone mill."

"I don't think it looks much like a mill," said Bessie: "it don't have any things to go round."

"Probably it had things to go round, as you call them, once upon a time," said the Colonel.

"I thought it was a tower built by the early settlers to defend themselves from the Indians," said Harry. "Willie Thorn told me so."

"Many people think so," said the Colonel, "and some still believe that it was built by the Danes, hundreds of years ago."

"Oh!" said Fred, "this is the tower Longfellow wrote about in his 'Skeleton in Armor,' isn't it, sir?"

"The very same," said the Colonel; "but, I believe, Fred, that it has been pretty well proved, from old papers, that it had no such romantic beginning, but was really and truly a windmill." [310]

"Tell me about the skeleton, Fred," said Maggie.

So Fred told how a skeleton in armor, having been found in a place called Fall River, some miles from Newport, the poet, Longfellow, had written a ballad about it; telling how a viking, or Norwegian sailor of the olden time, had fallen in love with the daughter of a prince, who refused to give his child to the roving sailor; but they had run away together, and crossing the sea had come to this spot, where the viking had built this tower for his wife to live in.

"Here for my lady's bower
Built I the lofty tower,
Which to this very hour
Stands looking seaward,"

chanted Fred, stretching out his hand with a magnificent air towards the old tower.

"That's nice," said Maggie, with a satisfied nod of her curly head. "I shall just believe that. It's a great deal nicer than to think it was just a common old windmill for grinding up corn." [311]

"I shan't," said matter-of-fact Bessie, "not when Uncle Horace says it's not true."

"I don't see that any one can be very *sure* what it was," said Maggie, determined to have faith in the most romantic story, "and I shall make up my mind it was the lady's bower. But what about the skeleton, Fred?"

"Oh! Mr. Longfellow goes on to say how the lady died, and her husband could not bear to live without her; so he went out into the woods and killed himself, and the skeleton in armor which was really found is supposed to be his."

"He oughtn't to kill hisself. He ought to wait till God killed him," said Frankie, who had been listening with great interest to the story. "He could play with all these nice chillen, if he'd 'haved hisself." [312]

"Yes," said Bessie, who had received the story with as much displeasure as she had done that of the "Chief's Head," last summer, at Chalecoo, "if God chooses people to stay here, they ought to do it, even if they are having very hard times."

"So they ought, Bess," said Fred; "but I guess those old vikings did not care much about playing with children. They were very brave, daring fellows."

"People can be brave and like children," said Bessie, slipping her little hand into that of her own hero. "Uncle Horace likes children and plays with them, and no one could be braver than he is. And besides, Fred, if people have very good courage, I should think they would be brave to bear the trouble God sends them, and not go kill themselves out of it."

"Well reasoned, little one," said the Colonel, bending his tall head to kiss her; "that man is certainly a coward who cannot bear what God sends to him, but takes the life his Maker has given." [313]

"And I shall think it is a windmill," said Bessie, quite as resolved to stick to facts as Maggie was to believe the poet's story.

"And I shall think it the viking's tower, and write a story-book about it when I'm grown up," said Maggie. "I'll put it down for a subject."

If Maggie lives to write a book on each "subject" she has put down for that purpose, she will be very old indeed.

Bessie said no more; for if she and Maggie differed on something which was not important, she never argued about it, and this was probably one reason why they never quarrelled; for each was content to let the other be of her own way of thinking, so long as it did no harm. If we could all learn that lesson it would save many hard words and thoughts, and the trouble which arises from such.

They all now went back to the carriage, which they had left for a closer view of the old mill, and drove on to what is called the Point, and around the north-western side of the island, from which road they gained a beautiful view of the harbor and bay. [314]

"What is that over there, Uncle Horace?" asked Fred, "it looks like an old fort."

"Just what it is, my boy," replied Colonel Rush. "That point is called the 'Dumpling Rocks,' and that ruin is old Fort Lewis, or Fort Dumpling."

"What a funny name," said Maggie.

They now crossed the long stone causeway which leads to Coaster's Harbor Island; and, as they

went over this, the children were all greatly delighted with the number of pretty little birds which went whirling round them on every side, darting almost under the horses' feet, and in their very faces; passing round and round, above and beneath the carriage. They were sand-martins, the Colonel said, and being disturbed by the rolling of the wheels, were probably trying to draw attention from their nests, which were built in the crevices of the stones that formed the causeway.

On this island stood the poor-house which they had come to visit; and here another carriage, containing several of the elders of the party, had arrived before them. Papa was there and took the little girls out of the carriage when it stopped. [315]

"What a nice place for the poor people to be in, when they don't have any house of their own!" said Bessie: "I s'pose they're very grateful for it."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Maggie. "I find poor people in this world are not always grateful when they ought to be. Don't you remember Mrs. Bent, Bessie?"

"Yes, I do," said Bessie, in a tone which told that Mrs. Bent's ingratitude, as she and Maggie thought it, was not to be easily forgotten. Indeed, the way in which Mrs. Bent had received the gift of the hospital-bed for her lame boy, had left a very disagreeable impression on the minds of our two little girls.

"But I s'pose rich people are not always so grateful as they ought to be, either," added Bessie. [316]

"No," said Maggie, thoughtfully: "maybe some are not, but I think *we* are, generally. I think I feel my blessings, Bessie,—I think I do, 'specially being in Newport."

"There can be no doubt about that," said Uncle Ruthven, who had overheard this short conversation, to his wife: "if ever there was a grateful, contented, little heart it is that of our sunny Maggie."

Certainly a more comfortable home, or one more beautifully situated, could scarcely have been found for those who could furnish none for themselves. The grown people, as well as the children, were greatly pleased with the order, neatness, and quiet of the whole place. This visit having been planned, the ladies had come provided with little parcels of tea, fruit, and other small delicacies, as a treat for some of the sick and old people. There were a few toys and books also for such of the children as had behaved well, and these things Maggie and Bessie were allowed to present.

"I b'lieve I'll change my mind about poor people being grateful," said Maggie, when she had witnessed the pleasure these trifles gave; "and I'm glad I can, for an ungrateful person is 'sharper than a serpent's tooth,' 'specially if it's an old woman." [317]

Bessie looked at her sister in great admiration, as she always did when Maggie made any of these fine speeches; but Harry turned away lest she should see him laughing. For as Maggie was so careful of other people's feelings, Harry felt bound not to trouble her in that way when he could avoid it.

"The band plays at Fort Adams to-morrow afternoon," said the Colonel, as they drove homeward: "who will be for a drive over there?"

There was no want of assenting voices; and, the next afternoon, the whole family went over to the fort,—some driving, some on horseback, Mr. Powers and Belle being of the party this time.

Maggie and Bessie had never in their lives been inside of a fort, so that this was quite an event to them. Harry and Fred had visited several; but they were all much smaller than Fort Adams, which indeed is the second in size in the country, only Fortress Monroe being larger. Passing around the road, which runs between the water and the immense earthworks which rise above it, they entered the fort beneath a stone arch, and over a stone pavement on which the horses' feet rang with a loud clatter. Just without this gateway, was the guard-house, a low stone building, with grated door and loop-holes, where drunken soldiers, and those who have broken the rules, are confined. Two or three sullen-looking men were peeping through the iron bars of the door, for whom Bessie's tender little heart was much moved; but Maggie was afraid of them, and turned her face away, though they could not possibly have hurt her, and probably had no will to do so. [318]

Within the fort, the children were much astonished at the number of enormous cannon, and at the great black balls and shells piled together in pyramids upon the green in the centre, and beneath the casemates. The side of the fort next the water was entirely taken up with these warlike-looking arrangements; while on the inner side were the officers' quarters, or little houses where they lived, and the soldiers' barracks and mess-rooms. All was neat, clean, and orderly; and, in spite of the purpose for which it was intended, the whole place had a bright, cheerful look. The band were playing delightful music on the green, and the drive was filled with gay equipages. The handsome carriages, fine horses, and beautifully dressed ladies and children, made it a pretty and lively scene, and it was all so new to the children, that each moment some exclamation of pleasure or wonder escaped them. Some of the officers were sauntering about, talking to their acquaintances; and the general who commanded the fort, being a friend of Colonel Rush, came and asked the ladies and children to alight from the carriages, and he would show them over the works. They were glad to accept his invitation, and the general took them over the fort, and explained all that was interesting. [319]

But in spite of the many new and curious things she saw, in spite of the lovely music, and the merry crowd, Bessie's mind was full of the "poor, naughty soldiers in the prison;" and when her [320]

older friends were resting in the general's quarters, while she with the other children stayed without and watched the gay scene, she went quietly to Belle and said,—

"Belle, dear, don't you feel rather bad about those soldiers shut up in that prison place?"

"Not when I don't see 'em," answered Belle. "I guess they were pretty naughty to be put in there."

"May be so," said Bessie; "but wouldn't you like to be kind to them?"

"No," said Belle. "I b'lieve not. One of them looked so cross."

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"Maybe it makes him cross to be shut up there when the music is playing, and every thing is so nice out here," said Bessie. "Let's go and ask them if they will promise to be good if they are let out."

"We can't let them out," said Belle.

"No; but we'll tell some one they have repented and ask for them to be let out. You know that soldier with a gun, that was walking up and down there? well, I guess he's a kind of soldier-policeman and we'll ask him. The prison is just outside of that gate-hole," said Bessie, pointing to the archway by which the fort was entered; "and we will be back in a moment."

"Shall we ask Maggie to go?" said Belle.

"No, Maggie was so frightened at them. She is over there with Harry, looking at those ugly black balls; so we won't 'sturb her, but just go by ourselves."

So, hand in hand, the two little things ran out under the archway, and over to the guard-house beyond. Not unnoticed, however; for though they were not seen by their own friends, they were by some acquaintances, who were driving past at the moment, and who, fearing that they might be run over by the constantly passing carriages, or fall into some other mischief, told Colonel Rush's servants to see after the children. One of the men called his master, and the Colonel speedily followed the little runaways.

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They made for the grated door, with what purpose Bessie hardly knew herself, save that there was kindness in her heart for the poor prisoners; but, as they reached it, the guard or "soldier-policeman," as Bessie called him, stopped them by crossing his musket in their way.

Belle was frightened,—partly by this, partly by the two or three astonished faces that peeped at them through the bars,—and would have drawn back, but Bessie stood her ground, and, looking up at the guard with her innocent, serious eyes, said,—

"We only want to speak to the poor shut-up soldiers."

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The man shook his head.

"It's against the rules, miss," he said.

"But I'm not in rules," said Bessie. "I don't live here you know, and I think I might do it. If you were in prison you would like some one to coax you to be good: wouldn't you?"

The soldier looked at her in astonished silence; but his gun still barred the way.

"You'll let them out, won't you?" she went on with pleading voice and eyes: "you'll let them out so they can come in there where there is such sweet music, and it is all nice and bright? I think they are sorry now."

"Yes," said Belle: "see that poor fellow sitting on the floor with his head down. I'm sure he is sorry, and will be good, and the ofers will too."

While the little girls were speaking, two more soldiers had come round from the other side of the guard-house. One of them was the corporal; and, hearing what the children said, he answered for the sentry.

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"He can't let them out, little ladies," he said: "if he did he'd be put there himself."

As he finished speaking, Colonel Rush stood behind the children. The corporal and the soldiers, even the men behind the grating, saluted the brave English officer, whom they knew by sight, and whom they greatly admired; for the story of his daring and courage were known to the garrison. But the third man, who was hardly more than a lad, still sat with his arms folded, and his head sunk upon his breast.

"My dear children," said the Colonel, "this is no place for you. What brought you here?"

"Oh! Uncle Horace," said Bessie, seizing upon his hand; "won't you ask these policemen-soldiers to let out those poor prisoners? We feel so badly about them."

"My darling," answered the Colonel, "they cannot let out these men. They are under arrest, and shut up here because they have done wrong, and the guard are here to keep them from getting out."

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"But see that poor soldier sitting down there," said Bessie: "he looks so sorry. Maybe, he's thinking of somebody of his, far away, who will hear he has been in prison, and feel badly about it."

In her earnestness, she was using every argument she could think of; but she had innocently touched almost the only soft spot in the man's heart. If he was not at the moment thinking of "somebody of his" who was far away, her words brought the thought of that one to his mind,—that "somebody," his poor young sister, who would be grieved at his disgrace, hurt at his

obstinate wrong-doing, if it ever came to her ears.

He raised his head, and gave a quick glance at the innocent little pleader; and a softened look came over the hard, sullen face.

"He's not sorry, but just sullen, little lady," said the corporal: "that fellow has been in the guard-house four times in the last week, for insubordination, and they'll have to try some harder measures to take it out of him, I'm thinking. Your pity is only wasted." [326]

"Oh, no!" said Bessie; "for you know Jesus said we must be sorry with people when they are in trouble, and happy with them when they are glad. I'm *very* sorry for him and the other men too. Who can let them out, Uncle Horace?"

"Only their officers, Bessie; and I fear they must stay here now till their time is up: but we will hope they will do better in future, and not deserve punishment again. Come away now: your mother will be anxious."

Bessie obeyed; but both she and Belle cast backward pitying looks at the poor prisoners. The man they had noticed most, still sat silent; but the other two, as well as the soldiers without, talked with pleasure and amusement of their pretty ways and innocent simplicity.

But the man who had seemed to pay little or no regard to their words was the one who remembered them the longest, and to whom they brought the most good. He had been hard, obstinate, and disobedient, and, as the corporal said, had been punished four times during the last week. Punishment and persuasion had alike proved useless in bringing him to do better; but he was softened now. He could not resist that sweet little face, the pitying eyes and gentle tones that asked for his release. He thought of them, and of that "somebody of his," all that night as he lay upon the hard floor of the guard-house; and, when he was set free in the morning, went to his commanding officer whom he had disobeyed and insulted; asked forgiveness, and promised that he would try not to offend again. And he kept his word, striving hard with himself for he always felt, from this time, as if there were two "somebodies" who would be grieved to hear of his bad behavior and disgrace. [327]

"Who could let them out, Uncle Horace?" repeated Bessie as the Colonel led her and Belle away. [328]

"Only the officer who ordered them to be shut up, dear," said the Colonel.

"And couldn't we ask him?" said Bessie.

"Not very well, dear: the rules in the army must be strictly kept; and if these men were let out without good reason, it would be a bad example for the other soldiers, who might think they would not be punished if they were disobedient."

"But what had that man on the floor been doing?" asked Belle.

"I do not know, dear. Misbehaving in some way which deserved punishment."

"The soldier-policeman said he had been shut up four times for—for—in—su—such a long word I can't remember it, Uncle Horace, and I didn't know what it meant," said Bessie.

"Insubordination?" said the Colonel.

"Yes, sir: what does it mean?" [329]

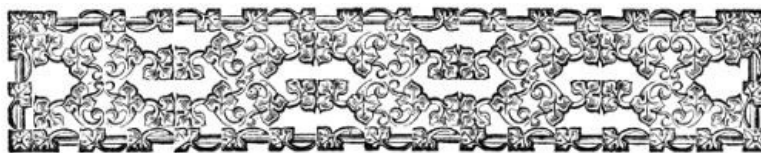
"Disobeying orders, or being impertinent, and so forth," said the Colonel.

"And we'd better not ask the General to let them come out of that dark house?" said Belle.

"No, I think not," said the Colonel. "They would not have been shut up if it had not been necessary, and we had better let the matter rest. We can do no good by interfering."

So thought the Colonel, believing and knowing that discipline must be sternly kept up; knowing nothing the while of the good which had already been done,—of the tiny seed unconsciously dropped upon the hard and stony ground of an obstinate heart, but which had brought "forth fruit meet for repentance."

This was by no means Bessie's last visit to Fort Adams; but she never saw the prisoner soldiers again, at least she did not recognize them; but they saw and knew her, the innocent little fairy, so she seemed to these rough men, who had stood outside the prison bars, pleading so pityingly for their release.



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XIV.

WATER-LILIES.

ne great object of delight and interest to the children was the immense number of robins around



Newport. These pretty, saucy, little birds were constantly to be seen hopping about the soft, velvety lawns for which this place is famous; picking up whatever crumbs fell in their way, or such unwary worms and caterpillars as had ventured forth for air and exercise; swinging on the branches of the trees, or perched with an independent, look-at-me sort of an air, upon the fences and railings; shaking down showers of diamond dew-drops from slender sprays, in the early morning; charming all ears with their sweet notes; welcome guests whenever and wherever they came.

The first thing done by the children after breakfast, was each morning to beg for crumbs and bits of bread to feed the robins, who would come hopping close to the piazza to receive the welcome gift. Even Baby Annie must throw out her share, and would hold up her tiny little finger to keep off any one who, she feared, would disturb the birds, saying,—

“Ss, ss, badie fy,” which meant, “Hush, hush, birdie fly.”

Then there was the bathing in the sea, now as formerly, such a source of pleasure to Bessie. Maggie, too, enjoyed it, for she had lost all fear of the waves while she was at Quam Beach. It afforded endless amusement, too, to Maggie, to see the droll figures presented by the bathers when they were dressed for their dip in the sea. Her merry, ringing laugh provoked smiles not only from lookers-on, but from the very wearers themselves; for there was no rudeness or unkindness in that laugh, and she was quite as much diverted at her own appearance as she was at that of others.

From nine to twelve, the beach was generally crowded with bathers; some coming from the water, others going from the line of bathing-houses towards it; others still, in every color and style of dress, bobbing up and down in the waves. There were carriages driving back and forth over the yielding sand; many walkers, too,—people who came only to look at the bathers, or who were moving about after their own bath. The beach was a merry, lively place, where there was never a lack of “something to do;” for the children always brought their little pails and shovels with them, and when their frolic in the water was over, they would dig in the sand, or pick up small shells. Sometimes they would watch the clam-fishers turning over the sea-weed with their long-pronged instruments, or sail bits of wood and light scallop-shells down the pretty, shallow stream of fresh water; which, running from the pond beyond, and crossing the beach near its upper end, mingles its pure waters with the salt waves of the sea.

There was a story connected with this beach, told by Mr. Bradford to his children,—a story strange and romantic enough to satisfy even Maggie’s love of the marvellous, yet perfectly true.

One fine, bright morning, more than a hundred years ago, a vessel was seen coming down directly towards the beach, where no vessel had ever been known to venture before. Her sails were all set, her colors flying; and the alarmed spectators watched her with the most painful interest, expecting each instant to see her dashed to pieces upon the rocks. But no: on she came safely; past craggy points and over hidden reefs, and struck her keel into the soft sand of the beach. No person was seen on board; and, when the anxious townspeople reached her decks, the only living creature there was a dog. A cat was found in the cabin, where coffee was boiling, and other preparations made for breakfast; but not a sailor was to be seen. What became of her crew was never known: but it was supposed, that, finding themselves too near the rocks, they took to the life-boat, which was missing, and were lost; while the vessel came safely to land, without hand or eye to guide her.

Beyond this beach, a most lovely drive, with the ocean in view all the way, leads to Purgatory and Paradise. The former is a great gulf or chasm in the solid rock of the point or bluff which separates the first from the second beach; a dark, gloomy-looking place, from which Maggie, Bessie, and Belle drew back in alarm, without the least desire to look down. Neither did they like to hear the stones which the boys threw into the cleft, and which went bounding with a dull sound, from side to side, till they plunged sullenly into the dark waters below.

Reckless Fred ventured too near the edge, where a slip upon the short grass, or a stray pebble would have sent him down into the dark abyss. The Colonel drew him back with no gentle hand, and a sharp reprimand, all of which made the little girls still more ready to seek a pleasanter spot.

“For,” said Maggie, in a tone of great wisdom, “I don’t think it is at all prudent to come into places where one can be killed with such felicity.”

Maggie meant facility.

Paradise, as might be supposed, proved much more attractive. This is a succession of lovely groves and mossy glades lying below and on the sides of a rocky hill, and as great a contrast as can be imagined to its neighbor, Purgatory.

But the place which the children loved the best, and where they spent the most of their time, was the lovely little beach lying just below the bluff on which stood Colonel Rush’s house. Here, too, they often bathed, instead of driving over to the larger and more frequented beach; and here they might be found at almost every hour of the day. Here Bessie would sit, forgetting her play, as she watched the blue billows with their crests of white foam, rolling up one after the other on the smooth sands, and listening to the chiming sound of the waves, the grand music of old ocean sounding ceaselessly, and speaking to all hearts, that will hear, of the power and goodness of the Almighty hand which holds it in its place.

Even in bad weather, when she could not go out, the sea afforded endless pleasure to Bessie; for she could sit at the window watching it, as the waves, lashed into fury by the wind, rushed

foaming and dashing over the rocks and reefs, and sometimes even flung their spray above the edge of the cliff on which the house stood.

And sitting here one day, looking out from her perch over the stormy waters, the leaping waves, and foam-covered rocks, she was the first to observe, and call all the family to see a spectacle which they had long desired to witness.

This was the famous Spouting Rock in full play.

At a little distance from Colonel Rush's house was a ledge of rocks, the under side of which has been worn into deep caverns by the constant fretting of the waves. One of them has an open shaft, or sort of natural chimney, which ends on the surface of the rock. In stormy weather, when the wind has blown for some time in a particular direction, the sea rushes with great power into these caverns, and forces itself up through the spout or chimney, often to a great height. But this does not happen very often, and one may spend months, perhaps years, at Newport, without ever seeing it.

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All of Mr. Bradford's children, and indeed the grown people of the party as well, had been very anxious to see this singular sight; and when Bessie, sitting by the window, and looking over towards these rocks, saw a jet of water forcing itself above them, she knew at once what it was, and called out eagerly,—

"Oh, the horn is horning! it is really horning; come and see, everybody."

The horn spouted all that day, and the children never tired of looking at it; and Frankie, when he was asked if he knew what it was, answered,—

"I dess it is Dod's fountain," than which no answer could have been truer.

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Not very far from Colonel Rush's house, lay a calm, lovely lake, called Lily Pond, separated from the ocean only by a narrow belt of land, and making a striking contrast to the rolling billows of the ocean so near.

As may be supposed, the lake is named from the number of water-lilies with which it is covered during the season when these exquisite flowers are in bloom. They fill the air with their delicious fragrance; and the delicate, pearly, white blossoms are seen by all the passers-by, resting among their green leaves on the surface of the water.

Bessie's mother, and Bessie herself, were both extremely fond of these lovely flowers; and when Harry came in one day with two which he had fished up from their watery bed with some trouble to himself, great was the rejoicing over them.

The next afternoon, Maggie and Bessie were out driving with Mrs. Rush and Aunt Bessie, when they came upon a boy and girl, perched upon a fence at the side of the road, and having a basket half-filled with water-lilies.

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"Water-lilies! oh, water-lilies!" cried Bessie; "where did they gather so many I wonder. Could we find some for dear mamma, do you think, Aunt May?"

"I think those children have them for sale: we can buy some from them," said Mrs. Rush; and she ordered the coachman to stop.

"But we have left all our money at home," said Maggie, in a tone of regret.

"Well, I will buy them, and you may give them to mamma," said Mrs. Rush.

"But that is not at all the same, Aunt May," said Bessie: "it would only be pretend our present."

"Suppose I lend you the money. You may give it back to me if you like, as soon as you go home."

So Maggie and Bessie each bought a bunch of water-lilies from the boy and girl, who had come down from the fence and now stood beside the carriage, and Aunt May purchased the rest, leaving the basket empty.

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The girl tossed her basket above her head, and, after thanking the ladies, bounded across the road and over the fence on the other side, making for Lily Pond as if she were after a fresh supply. The boy followed more slowly.

"I wonder why they sell lilies," said Maggie: "they do not look so very poor. At least they're not ragged and dirty, though the girl has a pretty ugly frock."

"If I was poor and had to make some money, I would choose to be a water-lily girl," said Bessie; "and I would try to be so polite, and ask so nicely, that people would like to buy of me."

"I do not think people would be very apt to refuse you, my lily girl," said Aunt Bessie, with a loving look at the sweet little face before her, which was bent over the lovely white blossoms, not purer than itself.

"I would like to paddle in and pick the lilies," said Maggie; "but I would not like to sit on top of a fence, waiting for people to come and buy my flowers: it must be so stupid."

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"The boy looks as if he were better able to do that than to pick the lilies," said Mrs. Rush. "He has an interesting, thoughtful face, but looks delicate."

"My anxiety is all upsidedown about him," said Maggie. "Maybe he wants money to pay a doctor. Bessie, when we go out to walk to-morrow morning, let's ask nurse to come this way, and see if we can find these children. Maybe we could help them a little. We must have a whole lot of charity money, for you know we have not had much use for it on our travels."

Accordingly, the next morning the children waited for Belle; and, as soon as she came, the whole flock started with Mammy and Jane on the road towards Lily Pond, the little girls having taken care to be provided with money. They found the boy and girl, not sitting on top of the fence this time, but near the lake; the boy lying flat upon a rock with a book in his hand, the girl sitting beside him, busy shelling pease. [342]

They looked up as our party drew near, and the girl said with a pleased look,—

“Oh! it’s the little girls who bought all the lilies yesterday.”

“Yes, it is us,” said Maggie. “Have you more to sell us to-day? We meant to buy a whole lot, and have brought a basket in baby’s wagon.”

“We haven’t picked any to-day,” said the boy: “we don’t generally gather them till later, when it’s time for the gentle-folks to come riding this way; but we can get some for you right away. In a few days, when they’re more plenty, there’ll be lots of fellows up here after them; but they mostly take them down to the beach and around the town to sell.”

“We have a little pond of our own, where there are a few,” said the girl; “but we get most off of this one.”

“Where do you live?” asked Belle.

“Over yonder,” said the girl, pointing to a small farm-house standing among its out-buildings on the other side of the road. “Now, Johnny, I’m ready.” [343]

Johnny went a few steps off, where the bushes grew thickly, and drew from among them two long, hooked sticks. One of these he gave to the girl, and kept the other in his own hand. While they had been talking, the girl had pulled off her shoes and stockings; and now, to the surprise of all the children, she waded into the water, while her brother stayed upon the rock, without offering to follow.

Sallie, so he called her, stepped out till the water touched her knees; and having gathered such lilies as she could reach with her hand, drew others towards her with the hooked stick. The long, slender stems yielded easily; and, as she plucked one after another, she tossed them towards her brother, who drew them in with his own stick.

How lovely and delicious they were, just fresh from their watery bed, with the drops still glittering like diamonds on the rich, creamy-white petals! how they filled the whole air with their fragrance! [344]

“I think if I could carry flowers to heaven, I would like to take these,” whispered Bessie to Maggie and Belle, as all three hung delighted over their prize. “They look as if they were very large stars fallen down out of God’s sky, to tell us how sweet every thing is there.”

“O Bessie, you darling!” said Maggie. “What a lovely idea! That’s good enough to put in a book. Bessie, do you know that is talking prose?”

“What is prose?” asked Belle.

“You know what rhyme is,” said Maggie.

“Yes,” said Belle: “it means cat and hat, and mouse and house, and mean and queen.”

“That’s right,” said Maggie. “Well, if you say a nice thing in rhyme, that’s poetry; but if you say it in unrhyme, then it’s prose.”

“Oh!” said Belle, quite satisfied with Maggie’s explanation. “I wish I were as smart as you two. You write poetry, Maggie; and Bessie can talk prose: and I can’t do either.” [345]

“Never mind,” said Maggie, consolingly. “Maybe you’ll be able to some day.”

“And you’re just good enough for us, any way,” said Bessie, with an affectionate kiss to her little friend; an example which was followed by Maggie.

“Why don’t you go in the water, and let your sister stay out?” said Belle to Johnny, rather reprovingly.

Johnny, who was a gentle-looking boy, colored a little, but answered quietly,—

“They say I ought not to wet my feet, and I want to keep well very much.”

“Yes,” said Sallie, who had just stepped out of the water, and was wringing out her dripping skirts: “it don’t hurt me to go in the water; but it’s not good for him.”

“Are you sick?” asked Bessie.

“No,” said Johnny, looking as if he thought the little girls were blaming him in their own minds for not taking the wetting himself, as indeed they were. [346]

“He’s not just sick,” said Sallie; “but he’s not just strong, and we’re bound he shall go to school this winter, at least for one quarter. He’s an awful fellow for his books and learning.”

“Will one quarter make him too sick to go any more?” asked Bessie.

“Oh! I didn’t mean that,” said Sallie, sitting down on the rock, and spreading out her wet feet and dress to dry in the sun; “but, you see, we’re not sure we’ll put by enough money even to pay for one quarter. Shall I tell you about it?” she added, seeing her little customers looked interested.

“Yes,” said Bessie.

"Well, as I said, Johnny's such a fellow for book learning, and he's smart too; and these two winters he's tried hard for going to the Common School down in the town; but it's a terrible long walk, and so cold; and both years he's been taken down sick, and had to give it up; and the doctor told father he was not to try it again. But there's a young man lives just round the turn of the road who is learning to be a minister, and he's ready to teach a few boys if they pay him for it; and father said he couldn't afford to pay a dollar this winter, for it's been a bad year with him; but he said we might keep all we could make ourselves to pay for Johnny's schooling; but I don't know as we're likely to put by even enough for one quarter. So that's the reason, you see, why I go in the water. I'm hearty, but Johnny takes cold easy, and then he coughs."

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"Yes, 'one man's meat is another man's poison,'" said Maggie. "Well, you're a good girl and a dutiful sister."

"We'll buy water-lilies of you every day," said Bessie, "so we can help along. But we don't come this way every day," she added, thoughtfully.

"We could bring them to you, if you liked," said Johnny. "We do take them every day to a lady down yonder," and he pointed in the direction of the bluff on which Colonel Rush's house stood, with several others.

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This was agreed upon; and the nurse, saying they must be moving homeward, as it was time to go to the beach and bathe, they said good-by to Johnny and Sallie.

"I've a plan in my head," said Maggie; "but then, I've learned experience by a very bad lesson, so I thought I'd better not mention it till I've advised with mamma."

Maggie's bad lesson was this,—

One day, just before they left home for the Southern trip, Maggie was standing on the front stoop, waiting for her mother and Bessie, with whom she was going out, when a poor-looking man spoke to her. He told a most pitiful story; and Maggie, full of sympathy, emptied her little purse into his hand. But this did not satisfy the beggar; and he asked "if the little lady had not an old coat to give a poor soldier."

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"I'll ask mamma," said Maggie, and off she rushed upstairs, leaving the beggar-man standing on the stoop by the open hall-door.

Mamma said she could not give old clothes away, unless she was sure the man was deserving: for she knew of many such who needed them; and told Maggie to go back at once and tell Patrick to shut the door, and she would see the man when she came down.

But when Maggie reached the foot of the stairs, the beggar was gone. So far from waiting for the old coat, it was soon found that he had walked off with a new one of papa's, which lay on the hall table.

Poor Maggie was excessively mortified, and much distressed, not only at the loss of the coat, but at that of her little stock of spending money. Mamma made the last good to her; but told her she should not do so again if she acted without thought; and begged her to take counsel of some older person when she felt inclined to help those she did not know.

So Maggie had "learned experience," and since that time had been careful to ask advice before she allowed her sympathies to run too far with her.

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XV.

"OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

hey all bathed on the little beach near home that morning; and, as soon as they had gone back to the house, Maggie called Bessie and Belle, and they went together to mamma's room to unfold Maggie's plan and ask her consent to it.

What a pretty room that was! Mrs. Rush had taken a fancy to call it the "Lily Room," and to



furnish it accordingly. The carpet was green, and the furniture painted the same color, and ornamented with water-lilies wherever they could be put,—on the head and foot boards of the bed, on each drawer of the dressing bureaus, on the panels of the wardrobe and the backs of the chairs, in short, wherever there was room for them. Over the mantelpiece hung an oil-painting of the same lovely flowers; and now the room was filled with the natural blossoms brought in by the little girls that

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morning.

Mamma lay upon the couch,—this was covered with chintz printed with water-lilies, too,—resting after her salt-water bath. Her long hair was spread over the cushions to dry; and Maggie and Bessie were busy at it in a moment: it was their great delight to comb it and thread their fingers through it; and dearly mamma loved to feel their little hands twisting it into all manner of fantastic braids and loops.

Maggie told her story about the water-lily boy and girl, and then, saying that she thought there must be a good deal of “glove money” due the little box at home, asked her mother if she did not think it would be a “reasonable charity” to pay for Johnny’s schooling next winter.

Bessie looked surprised at this; but Belle clapped her hands, saying,—

“You’ll let me help too, won’t you?”

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“But,” said Mrs. Bradford, “I thought you were saving that money for another purpose.”

“Oh, so we *were*,” said Maggie, biting her underlip; “if I didn’t forget it. What a child I am! always forgetting one thing in another.”

“What is it?” asked Belle.

“To buy a warm cloak and a pair of better *spetacles* for good Mrs. Granby, who is always being kind to other people, and never thinks about herself,” said Bessie.

“And I suppose it wouldn’t be fair to put by a person we’ve known for so long for people we’re hardly acquainted with, only through water-lilies,” said Maggie. “Oh! I wish, I wish, I wish I had the greatest lots of money that ever were seen, so I could give every one every thing they wanted.”

Maggie was always wishing for lots of money; but it is only justice to her to say that it was generally for the benefit of others, and not for herself.

“Did you promise Mrs. Granby?” asked Belle.

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“No, we did not promise, not with words,” said Bessie; “but then, we made up our minds to do it, and we wouldn’t like not to. I think it would seem a little like not being very true in our hearts to Mrs. Granby.”

“Oh, dear!” said Maggie, “there are such lots of things one wants to do; but somehow, one can’t seem to do every thing.”

“Mamma,” said Bessie, “don’t you think papa would like to help this boy? He has enough of money.”

“My dear child,” said mamma, laughing: “you must not think there is no end to papa’s money. He has a good many people to help now, and he cannot do for every one, you know.”

“Well, then,” said Maggie, “we’ll tell Uncle Ruthven and the Colonel, and see what they will do. I don’t mean we’ll ask them to help the lily boy; but we’ll just let them know about him, and then leave it to their own conscience.”

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“Uncle Ruthven has a good deal of conscience about poor people; and so has Uncle Horace too,” said Bessie.

But somehow the children could not find an opportunity to tell their uncle and Colonel Rush about the “lily boy.” For the next few days there was a good deal of company coming and going, and they did not care to talk about it before strangers; then papa, Uncle Ruthven, and the Colonel went off yachting, and stayed a week.

Meanwhile, Johnny and Sallie came to the house every morning, bringing their basket of lilies; and when the little girls had bought as many as they wanted for their daily gift to their mother, Mrs. Rush and the other ladies would purchase the remainder. So Maggie and Bessie knew that they were helping Johnny towards his heart’s desire in this way, even if they had devoted their “charity money” to another object.

Early on the morning after the gentlemen had returned, the children had gone down to the sands, and were playing happily together, when Belle came on her daily visit. Belle considered herself almost as much at home in Mrs. Rush’s house as Maggie and Bessie did.

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“You live at the Ocean House, don’t you?” asked a little girl one day.

“Oh, no!” said Belle; “I don’t live there. I only sleep there, and eat my breakfast there. I live at Aunt May’s, even when it rains, Maggie and Bessie and I can’t do wifout oneanofer.”

She now came running swiftly over the beach towards Maggie and Bessie; and, as soon as she had kissed them for good-morning, said eagerly,—

“O Maggie and Bessie! what do you fink? It is my birfday next week, and papa told me to choose what he should give me, and I can’t think of any thing I want. Do you know any thing I want?”

"Well, no," said Maggie. "I think you have about every thing a sensible child could want. I can't remember a single thing; and that is rather a bad business not to have some thing you *want* for your birthday present. I think, after all, maybe it is a better economy not to have all you want; but to save up your wishes, so you can think of something when any person tells you to choose a present."

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Maggie said this with her wiseacre air, and Belle and Bessie listened with solemn admiration, believing it to be a speech containing a great deal of wisdom; nor, indeed, do I know that they were far wrong.

"How much is your father going to cost for your present?" asked Bessie.

"I asked him that," said Belle; "and he said that 'pended on what I wanted. He said if it was a locket or necklace, or any thing that would keep till I was a big girl, he would not mind giving a good deal of money for it, he had to give me a present from mamma and himself too; but if it was only a toy I could break or be tired of in a little while, it would not be right to frow away much money on it. That is just what he said. I 'member it very well. But I don't want a locket or those kind of things, there's a whole lot of my own mamma's pretty things I can have when I'm a big girl. Papa is keeping them for me, and I like those best. And I can't think of a toy, not one;" and Belle looked quite melancholy over her want of wants.

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"Yes," said Maggie again, "I b'lieve you have every thing in the world a child could want."

"Not my mamma," said Belle, with the touch of sadness which always came over her when she thought or spoke of her dead mother.

"Dear Belle," said Maggie, tenderly. "But then God gives us our mammas; and I only meant things that earth people could give you."

"And, Belle, darling," said Bessie, "your mamma is yours yet, even if she has gone to Jesus! It is only that she is more of Jesus's, and He is more of hers now she is in His home with Him."

Belle wiped away the tears which had gathered in her eyes; and then, with Bessie's arm about her neck, and Maggie holding her hand, sat gazing up into the cloudless, blue sky, almost as if she expected to see the face of her "angel-mother" looking down with tender love upon her.

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They all three sat silent for a few moments. The waves—they were hardly more than wavelets, on this still, calm day—came up with their gentle murmur upon the beach; and there was a sort of golden haze upon the sea, and far off on the horizon, telling, perhaps, of a coming fog later in the day: but the sky was clear above them now, and all was bright and fair around.

The quiet and the peace stole into all three little hearts,—God's peace, which He gives to those who love and trust in Him, and who strive to do His work, and bear His will, with simple faith that He knows best, and will order all things right.

Old Daphne and Jane, each with her work, sat at a little distance, but did not interfere with the children more than to see they did not run into any danger; and were occupied with their own conversation, the burden of which, on Daphne's side, was the extreme loveliness and sweetness of her young mistress; while each story that she told of Belle's goodness and smartness was immediately matched with one from Jane of the wisdom and droll sayings of her particular young charge. Each bird sang loud in praise of her own nestling; but the little birds themselves neither heard nor heeded.

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"Belle," said Bessie, after a little, "a thought came into my mind just now; no, not into my *mind* either. I guess it was into my *heart*, it was such a thought of love."

"What was it?" asked Belle, looking as if all thoughts of love were in *her* heart towards the dear Bessie.

"About your mamma," said Bessie. "You know your papa said he had to give you a present from her. I just thought if maybe you wouldn't like to have her present something that by and by would be fit to go back to heaven like a jewel for our Father."

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"Yes, I would," answered Belle, to whom the oft-repeated, oft-referred-to story was nearly as familiar and as dear as it was to Maggie and Bessie. "Yes, I would; but what thing could I ask for that would be like that? If you want any thing or Maggie, I'll ask papa for it, and give it to you, liever than to have it myself, you're so dear and good to me. I would, Bessie."

"Oh, no, Belle!" said Bessie. "I never would *hint* you to give me a thing. Mamma says that is not a nice thing to do; and I was thinking of something better than that, something that would be a great, great help to some one, and last a great, great while, maybe for ever."

"Well," said Belle, "why don't you tell me what it is? You know I don't have a great deal of *think* in me to find out how to do good for ofers; but I b'lieve I have some *do* in me when I know how."

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"Yes, you have," said Maggie, "and some day you'll learn how to think for yourself. You see you have not been quite so much brought up to it as we have. That's the mercy of having such a papa and mamma as ours."

"Well," said Belle rather hurt, "my papa is very such too, and I'd rafer have him than any papa."

"Oh, yes!" said Maggie quickly, seeing that she had made a mistake, and hastening to heal the wound she had unintentionally given; "to be sure you would, and I didn't mean the least discomplement to your papa, Belle; but you know he has had a great deal of trouble, and so has not had time to teach you so much as our papa and mamma have taught us."

"Yes, I know it," said Belle, quite satisfied with this apology; "but tell me now, Bessie, I can't

think what you mean."

"Water-lily boy," said Bessie, willing to give Belle the credit of thinking out the matter for herself.

Belle looked puzzled.

"Lily boy, Johnny, school," said Bessie, helping her along.

"Oh!" said Belle, as Bessie's meaning came to her, "do you mean I could ask papa to give the money for Johnny to go to school next winter?"

"Yes, dear," said Bessie; "and it's partly your mamma's present it would seem as if you and she were doing good together, and as if the help for Johnny came from heaven."

"Bessie! oh, you precious love!" burst forth Maggie. "You need never say another word about my having good ideas. If I have ideas about compositions and things, you have a great deal better ones about living. I never did see such a child as you are,—no, never; and I hope I never will: one of such a kind as you are is quite enough for *me*;" and Maggie, after gazing at her sister with an air of the most intense pride and satisfaction, threw her arms about her neck and kissed her. "Don't you think that is lovely, Belle?" she said; "and don't you want to do it?"

But little Belle sat silent for a moment, her eyes raised again towards her dear mother's home, her hands clasped, and a gentle, happy smile on her lips.

Then she spoke, with that same, soft smile, and with a peaceful light in her eyes.

"I was just saying a little prayer inside of my mouf," she said, "to ask Jesus to make papa feel like doing it, so dear mamma and I can do some work for Him togefer. And papa will be helping too, all fee of us togefer," added the dear little thing, to whom no thought could bring more happiness than the one that mamma in heaven, waiting for papa and Belle, would know and be glad when she tried to please Jesus and to do His work.

"I shall tell your papa Johnny is an honest boy," said Maggie. "You know we know he is, that day when the lilies were six cents a bunch, and he had no pennies change for the ten cents I gave him, he would not keep it, but pulled four lilies out of another bunch to make it even with me. I told him he could keep it all, too."

"I guess he is a pretty good boy," said Bessie. "Sallie says he is."

"I'll tell papa all about him," said Belle, which she did as her father drove home with her that evening in the starlight. The fog which the morning haze had foretold had lasted but a few hours, and all was now again fair and clear.

"Has my pet thought of what she wants me to give her on her birthday?" said Mr. Powers.

"Yes, papa."

"Ah! Maggie and Bessie helped you to it, I suppose. I thought they would," said Mr. Powers.

"Papa," said Belle, leaning her head upon her father's breast, and gazing upward at the stars, "if a present comes from mamma, it must come from heaven, and so it ought to be somefing very, very good: don't you think so?"

"It shall be what my darling pleases, if papa can bring it about," said Mr. Powers, drawing her closer to him as she sat upon his knee.

"The fought of it came from heaven, I know papa," Belle went on. "Bessie gave it to me; and I am sure Jesus gave it to her."

"What is it, dearest?" asked her father.

So Belle told her father of the "lily boy" and his desire to go to school, and of what she wanted for her birthday gift from him and dear mamma.

"And you would really rather I should do this than to have any thing for yourself, my little girl?" said he.

"Yes, papa, really, really I would; and then you know, papa, if the present comes from mamma and you, it will be as if she and me and you did a little work for Jesus, all fee togefer," and she put up her little soft hand caressingly against his mouth.

He took it in his and kissed it, but no more was said for a little while, as they drove slowly home in the still summer night.

"Will you promise, papa?" said Belle at last.

"Yes, darling, I will promise; that is, you shall send the boy to school if I find he is steady and good, and his parents are deserving people."

"And if not, papa?" questioned his little daughter, fearful lest this plan, which seemed to bring her nearer to her mother, should fail her at the last.

"If not, or if I find any reason why this thing is not wise, I will set aside the sum of money it would have taken, and we will soon find some way in which mamma's gift may do work for Jesus."

Belle was satisfied.

"I am so glad my darling is learning to be unselfish, and to take thought for others," continued Mr. Powers.

"It's all Maggie's and Bessie's fault, papa, all their fault. It never came to me, myself; but they taught me how. And it makes me want to be good when I see them good, even when they don't tell me a word." [368]

"Yes," said her father: "I think it has been a great blessing to you to know Maggie and Bessie."

"They're the best of all my blessings, 'cept only you, papa. I'm a great, great deal happier since I knew them, and I guess gooder too. I don't slap Daphne now; and I don't fret so much when you tell me a thing can't not: do I papa?"

"No, my darling," said her father: "my little Belle is becoming very good and obedient, and I see she takes pains with her quick temper too."

Mr. Powers felt as if he could not bear to part from his darling that night, and when Daphne had undressed her and laid her in her bed, he went and sat beside her, and held her little hand.

"Put out the light, and leave the window open, papa," she pleaded; "so we can look up at dear mamma's home. See how bright the stars are. Bessie says the water-lilies are like the stars come down here, so we can think the stars are heaven's lilies; but they do not fade like the lilies; do they, papa?" She rambled on half sleepily, without waiting for an answer. "And Jesus never fades, nor the angels He takes up to His heaven. Papa, I'll try to be like a little water-lily, and then when Jesus has done wif me on earf, He will gafer me up to His home where mamma is." [369]

So she talked on about mamma and Jesus and heaven till sleep came, and she forgot alike the joys and sorrows of her young life.

But her father sat there, long after she fell asleep, and thought with more pleasure than any thing had given him since his wife's death, of the work which "all fee togefer" might do for Jesus. And as he remembered the many mercies which God had still left to him, especially the blessing of this loving little child, he took shame to himself that he had allowed his own great grief to make him forget the wants and troubles of others; and he resolved that on each Christmas and birthday, from this time forth, Belle's gift from her "mamma in heaven," should be the means of doing good to some one who needed it. [370]

He was as good as his word respecting the water-lily boy; and the very next day went to work to find if Johnny Howe and his parents were worthy of the help his little daughter wished to offer them.

All was satisfactory. Johnny's parents proved to be industrious, deserving people, with whom the world had gone rather hardly for the last year or two. Johnny himself, a bright boy, eager to learn, and who made the most of all his opportunities. His father and mother thankfully accepted the offer Mr. Powers made to provide for his education as long as they should need such help; and dear little Belle was made happy in this "birfday present."

Belle's were not the only young eyes which gazed upward at the starry sky that night with sweet thoughts of the heaven beyond.

Maggie and Bessie had gone out with Colonel Rush to see Mr. Powers and Belle drive away; and the evening was so soft, and warm and lovely, that after they had gone the Colonel sat down upon the steps of the piazza to enjoy it, with one of his pets on either side of him. [371]

It was very quiet: only two sounds broke the stillness; the ceaseless song of the sea,—very low and gentle it was to-night,—and mingling with it came the sweet tones of Mrs. Rush's voice, as she sang her baby to sleep in one of the upper rooms. They all sat listening to the two hymns; so different, yet with no discord between them; the music of the one blending so perfectly with the music of the other.

For a moment the sweet singer above paused; then, unconscious of the listening ears below, began,—

"I was a wandering sheep."

It carried the Colonel back, back to that time, now nearly two years since, when on just such a night as this, with those same mingling voices sounding in his ears, peace and rest had flowed in on his troubled soul; when striving to reach the light pointed out by the beloved little messenger beside him, he had laid hold upon the cross, and felt its brightness all about him. Its rays had beamed clearly for him ever since; for he knew from whence they shone, and that they should never fail him. [372]

The baby slept, and the young mother's voice ceased as she laid it in its cradle: but its father sat on, with the music still sounding in his heart; and, as if the holy spell were on them too, his little companions sat as motionless and silent,—Maggie leaning on his knee, Bessie with her hand nestled in his, her head laid lovingly against his arm.

Suddenly, some one threw back a blind from the library-window, and a stream of light was thrown from within upon the sunny, brown curls which lay against the Colonel's shoulder. He looked down at her.

"Bessie, what were you thinking of, darling?" he asked, as he saw the wistful face and earnest eyes, which seemed as if they saw beyond the stars. [373]

"A good many things, Uncle Horace," answered the little one. "I thought about Belle, and how glad her mamma must be to see how hard she tries to be good, and I know it is hard for Belle to be good sometimes; and about heaven and Jesus. And then I thought about our travels, and how good our Father in heaven has been to us, and how I wished I could do something very much for

Him; and then—and then—Uncle Horace, I don't know what made me, I think it was the sound of the waves—I thought about one night at Quam Beach, when I lay awake a great while, and looked out at the stars and heard the waves making just such a soft sound—and—and—I was saying a good many little prayers about you, Uncle Horace: it was the night before the next morning when you told me you had found Jesus, and was going to be His soldier."

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There was no answer in words; but his arm found its way around her, and clasped her closer, and when the brave soldier could steady his voice, it was to Maggie he spoke.

"And what was my honey-bee thinking of, to keep her so quiet?"

"I was thinking of our travels too, Uncle Horace," answered Maggie; "but not in such a very superior manner as Bessie. I was thinking what a lovely time we have had all these months; and now how glad I am that papa and mamma have come to decision to stay in Newport till it is time to go home in the autumn. I like Chalecoo; but I'd rather stay in this lovely place than to go anywhere else. And now our travels are done."

"For the present, yes," said the Colonel; "but we have all still one road to keep, one journey to go, dear Maggie: that journey that shall end at last in our Father's house."

"Yes," said Maggie, with grave sweetness: "the narrow road, where the golden letters and the silver thread shall guide us, and where our Brother will help us where it is too hard for us to go alone."

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"And where our Father has let us find a few jewels for Him, I b'lieve," chimed in Bessie's soft voice. "I hope we may find some more, but He knows best."

"'They that seek shall find,' if they search by the light of God's Holy Word," said the Colonel, laying a loving hand on each little head; "but we may not know what treasures are ours, till the day when he shall make up His jewels."

And now go forth on your travels, my Maggie and Bessie, followed by the earnest prayer that you may be the means of drawing other little pilgrims to journey beside the green pastures and still waters of the way of salvation, led by the hand of the gentle Shepherd, who has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me;" and who will guide them at last to that perfect home, prepared for such as are of "the kingdom of heaven."

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