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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROSY ***

ROSY

BY

MRS. MOLESWORTH

AUTHOR OF 'CARROTS,' 'CUCKOO CLOCK,' 'TELL ME A STORY.'

ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER CRANE

[Illustration: MANCHON]

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"IT'S A ROSE FROM ROSY"

CHAPTER I.

ROSY, COLIN, AND FELIX.

"The highest not more
Than the height of a counsellor's bag."
—WORDSWORTH.

Rosy stood at the window. She drummed on the panes with her little fat fingers in a fidgety cross way; she pouted out her nice little mouth till it looked quite unlike itself; she frowned down with her eyebrows over her two bright eyes, making them seem like two small windows in a house with very overhanging roofs; and last of all, she stamped on the floor with first her right foot and then with her left. But it was all to no purpose, and this made Rosy still more vexed.

"Mamma," she said at last, for really it was too bad—wasn't it?—when she had given herself such a lot of trouble to show how vexed she was, that no one should take any notice. "*Mamma*" she repeated.

But still no one answered, and obliged at last to turn round, for her patience was at an end, Rosy saw that there was no one in the room. Mamma had gone away! That was a great shame—really a *great* shame. Rosy was offended, and she wanted mamma to see how offended she was, and mamma chose just that moment to leave the room. Rosy looked round—there was no good going on pouting and frowning and drumming and stamping to make mamma notice her if mamma wasn't there, and all that sort of going on caused Rosy a good deal of trouble. So she left off. But she wanted to quarrel with somebody. In fact, she felt that she *must* quarrel with somebody. She looked round again. The only "somebody" to be seen was mamma's big, *big* Persian cat, whose name was "Manchon" (*why*, Rosy did not know; she thought it a very stupid name), of whom, to tell the truth, Rosy was rather afraid. For Manchon could look very grand and terrible when he reared up his back, and swept about his magnificent tail; and though he had never been known to hurt anybody, and mamma said he was the gentlest of animals, Rosy felt sure that he could do all sorts of things to punish his enemies if he chose. And knowing in her heart that she did not like him, that she was indeed sometimes rather jealous of him, Rosy always had a feeling that she must not take liberties with him, as she could not help thinking he knew what she felt.

[Illustration: ROSY AND MANCHON]

No, Manchon would not do to quarrel with. She stood beside his cushion looking at him, but she did not venture to pull his tail or pinch his ears, as she would rather have liked to do. And Manchon looked up at her sleepily, blinking his eyes as much as to say, "What a silly little girl you are," in a way that made Rosy more angry still.

"I don't like you, you ugly old cat," she said, "and you know I don't. And I shan't like *her*. You needn't make faces at me," as Manchon, disturbed in his afternoon nap, blinked again and gave a sort of discontented mew. "I don't care for your faces, and I don't care what mamma says, and I don't care for all the peoples in the world, I *won't* like her;" and then, without considering that there was no one near to see or to hear except Manchon, Rosy stamped her little feet hard, and repeated in a louder voice, "No, I won't, I *won't* like her."

But some one had heard her after all. A little figure, smaller than Rosy even, was standing in the doorway, looking at her with a troubled face, but not seeming very surprised.

"Losy," it said, "tea's seady. Fix is comed for you."

"Then Fix may go away again. Rosy doesn't want any tea. Rosy's too bovvered and vexed. Go away, Fix."

But "Fix," as she called him, and as he called himself, didn't move. Only the trouble in his delicate little face grew greater.

"*Is* you bovvered, Losy?" he said. "Fix is welly solly," and he came farther into the room.

"Losy," he said again, still more gently than before, "*do* come to tea. Fix doesn't like having his tea when Losy isn't there, and Fix is tired to-day."

Rosy looked at him a moment. Then a sudden change came over her. She stooped down and threw her arms round the little boy's neck and hugged him.

"Poor Fixie, dear Fixie," she said. "Rosy will come if *you* want her. Fixie never bovers Rosy. Fixie loves Rosy, doesn't he?"

"Ses," said the child, kissing her in return, "but please don't skeese Fix *kite* so tight," and he wriggled a little to get out of her grasp. Instantly the frown came back to Rosy's changeable face.

"You cross little thing," she said, half flinging her little brother away from her, "you don't love Rosy. If you did, you wouldn't call her cuddling you *skeesing*."

Fix's face puckered up, and he looked as if he were going to cry. But just then steps were heard coming, and a boy's voice called out, "Fix, Fix, what a time you are! If Rosy isn't there, never mind her. Come along. There's something good for tea."

"There's Colin," said Fix, turning as if to run off to his brother. Again Rosy's mood changed.

"Don't run away from Rosy, Fix," she said. "Rosy's not cross, she's only troubled about somefing Fix is too little to understand. Take Rosy's hand, dear, and we'll go up to tea togever. Never mind Colin—he's such a big rough boy;" and when Colin, in his turn, appeared at the door, Rosy and Fix were already coming towards it, hand-in-hand, Rosy the picture of a model little elder sister.

Colin just glanced at them and ran off.

"Be quick," he said, "or I'll eat it all before you come. There's fluff for tea—strawberry fluff! At least I've been smelling it all the afternoon, and I saw a little pot going upstairs, and Martha said cook said it was for the children!"

Colin, however, was doomed to be disappointed.

There was no appearance of anything "better" than bread and butter on the nursery table, and in answer to the boy's questions, Martha said there was nothing else.

"But the little pot, Martha, the little pot," insisted Colin. "I heard you yourself say to cook, 'Then this is for the children?'"

"Well, yes, Master Colin, and so I did, and so it is for you. But I didn't say it was for to-day—it's for to-morrow, Sunday."

"Whoever heard of such a thing," said Colin. "Fluff won't keep. It should be eaten at once."

"But it's jam, Master Colin. It's regular jam in the little pot. I don't know anything about the fluff, as you call it. I suppose they've eaten it in the kitchen."

"Well, then, it's a shame," said Colin. "It's all the new cook. I've always been accustomed, always, to have the fluff sent up to the nursery," and he thumped impressively on the table.

"In all your places, Master Colin, it was always so, wasn't it?" said Martha, with a twinkle of fun in her eyes.

"You're very impettent, Martha," said Rosy, looking up suddenly, and speaking for the first time since she had come into the room.

"Nonsense, Rosy," said Colin. "I don't mind. Martha was only joking."

Rosy relapsed into silence, to Martha's relief.

"If Miss Rosy is going to begin!" she had said to herself with fear and trembling. She seldom or never ventured to joke with Rosy—few people who knew her did—but Colin was the most good-natured of children. She looked at Rosy rather curiously, taking care, however, that the little girl should not notice it.

"There's something the matter with her," thought Martha, for Rosy looked really buried in gloom; "perhaps her mamma's been telling her what she told me this morning. I was sure Miss Rosy wouldn't like it, and perhaps it's natural, so spoilt as she's been, having everything her own way for so long. One would be sorry for her if she'd only let one," and her voice was kind and gentle as she asked the little girl if she wouldn't like some more tea.

Rosy shook her head.

"I don't want nothing," she said.

"What's the matter, Rosy?" said Colin.

"Losy's bovered," said Fixie.

Colin gave a whistle.

"Oh!" he said, meaningly, "I expect I know what it's all about. I know, too, Rosy. You're afraid your nose is going to be put out of joint, I expect."

"Master Colin, don't," said Martha, warningly, but it was too late. Rosy dashed off her seat, and running round to Colin's side of the table, doubled up her little fist, and hit her brother hard with all her baby force, then, without waiting to see if she had hurt him or not, she rushed from the room without speaking, made straight for her own little bedroom, and, throwing herself down on the floor with her head on a chair, burst into a storm of miserable, angry crying.

"I wish I was back with auntie—oh, I do, I do," she said, among her sobs. "Mamma doesn't love me like Colin and Pixie. If she did, she wouldn't go and bring a nasty, horrible little girl to live with us. I hate her, and I shall always hate her—*nasty* little thing!"

The nursery was quiet after Rosy left it—quiet but sad.

"Dear, dear," said Martha, "if people would but think what they're doing when they spoil children! Poor Miss Rosy, but she is naughty! Has it hurt you, Master Colin?"

"No," said Colin, *one* of whose eyes nevertheless was crying from Rosy's blow, "not much. But it's so *horrid*, going on like this."

"Of course it is, and *why* you can go on teasing your sister, knowing her as you do, I can't conceive," said Martha. "If it was only for peace sake, I'd let her alone, I would, if I was you, Master Colin."

Martha had rather a peevish and provoking way of finding fault or giving advice. Just now her voice sounded almost as if she was going to cry. But Colin was a sensible boy. He knew what she said was true, so he swallowed down his vexation, and answered good-naturedly,

"Well, I'll try and not tease. But Rosy isn't like anybody else. She flies into a rage for just nothing, and it's always those people somehow that make one *want* to tease them. But, I say, Martha, I really do *wonder* how we'll get on when—"

A warning glance stopped him, and he remembered that little Felix knew nothing of what he was going to speak about, and that his mother did not wish anything more said of it just yet. So Colin said no more—he just whistled, as he always did if he was at a loss about anything, but his whistle sometimes seemed to say a good deal.

How was it that Colin was so good-tempered and reasonable, Felix so gentle and obedient, and Rosy, poor Rosy, so very different? For they were her very own brothers, she was their very own sister. There must have been some difference, I suppose, naturally. Rosy had always been a fiery little person, but the great pity was that she had been sadly spoilt. For some years she had been away from her father and mother, who had been abroad in a warm climate, where delicate little Felix was born. They had not dared to take Colin and Rosy with them, but Colin, who was already six years old when they left England, had had the good fortune to be sent to a very nice school, while Rosy had stayed altogether with her aunt, who had loved her dearly, but in wishing to make her perfectly happy had made the mistake of letting her have her own way in everything. And when she was eight years old, and her parents came home, full of delight to have their children all together again, the disappointment was great of finding Rosy so unlike what they had hoped. And as months passed, and all her mother's care and advice and gentle firmness seemed to have no effect, Rosy's true friends began to ask themselves what should be done. The little girl was growing a misery to herself, and a constant trouble to other people. And then happened what her mother had told her about, and what Rosy, in her selfishness and silliness, made a new trouble of, instead of a pleasure the more, in what should have been her happy life. I will soon tell you what it was.

Rosy lay on the floor crying for a good long while. Her fits of temper tired her out, though she was a very strong little girl. There is *nothing* more tiring than bad temper, and it is such a stupid kind of tiredness; nothing but a waste of time and strength. Not like the rather *nice* tiredness one feels when one has been working hard either at one's own business, or, *still* nicer, at helping other people—the sort of pleasant fatigue with which one lays one's head on the pillow, feeling that all the lessons are learnt, and well learnt, for to-morrow morning, or that the bit of garden is quite, quite clear of weeds, and father or mother will be so pleased to see it! But to fall half asleep on the floor, or on your bed, with wearied, swollen eyes, and panting breath and aching head, feeling or fancying that no one loves you—that the world is all wrong, and there is nothing sweet or bright or pretty in it, no place for you, and no use in being alive—all these *miserable* feelings that are the natural and the right punishment of yielding to evil tempers, forgetting selfishly all the pain and trouble you cause—what *can* be more wretched? Indeed, I often think no punishment that can be given can be half so bad as the punishment that comes of itself—that is joined to the sin by ties that can never be undone. And the shame of it all! Rosy was not quite what she had been when she first came home to her mother—she was beginning to feel ashamed when she had yielded to her temper—and even this, though a small improvement, was always something—one little step in the right way, one little sign of better things.

She was not asleep—scarcely half asleep, only stupid and dazed with crying—when the door opened softly, and some one peeped in. It was Fixie. He came creeping in very quietly—when was Fixie anything but quiet?—and with a very distressed look on his tiny, white face. Something came over Rosy—a mixture of shame and sorrow, and also some curiosity to see what her little brother would do; and these feelings mixed together made her shut her eyes tighter and pretend to be asleep.

Fixie came close up to her, peeped almost into her face, so that if she had been really asleep I rather think it would have awakened her, except that all he did was so *very* gentle and like a little mouse; and then, quite satisfied that she was fast asleep, he slowly settled himself down on the floor by her side.

"Poor Losy," he said softly. "Fixie are so solly for you. Poor Losy—why can't her be good? Why doesn't God make Losy good all in a minute? Fixie always akse God to make her good"—he stopped in his whispered talk, suddenly—he had fancied for a moment that Rosy was waking, and it was true that she had moved. She had given a sort of wriggle, for, sweet and gentle as Fixie was, she did not at all like being spoken of as *not* good. She didn't see why he need pray to God to make *her* good, more than other people, she said to herself, and for half a second she was inclined to jump up and tell Pix to go away; it wasn't his business whether she was good or naughty, and she wouldn't have him in her room. But she did *not* do so,—she lay still again, and she was glad she had, for poor Fixie stopped in his talking to pat her softly.

"Don't wake, poor Losy," he said. "Go on sleeping, Losy, if you are so tired, and Fix will watch aside you and take care of you."

He seemed to have forgotten all about her being naughty—he sat beside her, patting her softly, and murmuring a sort of cooing "Hush, hush, Losy," as if she were a baby, that was very touching, like the murmur of a sad little dove. And by and by, with going on repeating it so often, his own head began to feel confused and drowsy—it dropped lower and lower, and at last found a resting-place on Rosy's knees. Rosy, who had really been getting sleepy, half woke up when she felt the weight of her little brother's head and shoulder upon her—she moved him a little so that he should lie more comfortably, and put one arm round him.

"Dear Fixie," she said to herself, "I do love him, and I'm sure he loves me," and her face grew soft and gentle—and when Rosy's face looked like that it was very pretty and sweet. But it quickly grew dark and gloomy again as another thought struck her. "If Fixie loves that nasty little girl better than me or as much—if he loves her *at all*, I'll—I don't know what I'll do. I'd almost hate him, and I'm sure I'll hate her, any way. Mamma says she's such a dear good little girl—that means that everybody'll say *I'm* naughtier than ever."

But just then Fixie moved a little and whispered something in his sleep.

"What is it, Fix?" said Rosy, stooping down to listen. His ears caught the sound of her voice.

"Poor Losy," he murmured, and Rosy's face softened again.

And half an hour later Martha found them lying there together.

CHAPTER II.

BEATA.

"How will she be—fair-haired or dark,
Eyes bright and piercing, or rather soft and sweet?
—All that I care not for, so she be no phraser."
—OLD PLAY.

"What was it all about?" said Rosy's mother the next morning to Colin, She had heard of another nursery disturbance the evening before, and Martha had begged her to ask Colin to tell her all about it. "And what's the matter with your eye, my boy?" she went on to say, as she caught sight of the bluish bruise, which showed more by daylight.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Colin. "It doesn't hurt a bit, mother, it doesn't indeed. I've had far worse lumps than that at school hundreds of times. It's nothing, only—" and Colin gave a sort of wriggle.

"Only what?" said his mother.

"I do so wish Rosy wouldn't be like that. It spoils everything. Just this Easter holiday time too, when I thought we'd be so happy."

His mother's face grew still graver.

"Do you mean that it was *Rosy* that struck you—that hit you in the eye?" she said.

Colin looked vexed. "I thought Martha had told you," he said. "And I teased her, mother. I told her she was afraid of having her nose put out of joint when Be—I can't say her name—when the little girl comes."

"O Colin, how could you?" said his mother sadly. "When I had explained to you about Beata coming, and that I hoped it might do Rosy good! I thought you would have tried to help me, Colin."

Colin felt very vexed with himself.

"I won't do it any more, mother, I won't indeed," he said. "I wish I could leave off teasing; but at school, you know, one gets into the way, and one has to learn not to mind it."

"Yes," said his mother, "I know, and it is a very good thing to learn not to mind it. But I don't think teasing will do Rosy any good just now, especially not about little Beata."

"Mother," said Colin.

"Well, my boy," said his mother.

"I wish she hadn't such a stupid name. It's so hard to say."

"I think they sometimes have called her Bee," said his mother; "I daresay you can call her so."

"Yes, that would be much better," said Colin, in a more contented tone.

"Only," said his mother again, and she couldn't help smiling a little when she said it, "if you call her 'Bee,' don't make it the beginning of any new teasing by calling Rosy 'Wasp.'"

"Mother!" said Colin. "I daresay I would never have thought of it. But I promise you I won't."

This was what had upset Rosy so terribly—the coming of little Beata. She—Beata—was the child of friends of Rosy's parents. They had been much together in India, and had returned to England at the same time. So Beata was already well known to Rosy's mother, and Fixie, too, had learnt to look upon her almost as a sister. Beata's father and mother were obliged to go back to India, and it had been settled that their little girl was to be left at home with her grandmother. But just a short time before they were to leave, her grandmother had a bad illness, and it was found she would not be well enough to take charge of the child. And in the puzzle about what they should do with her, it had struck her father and mother that perhaps their friends, Rosy's parents, might be able to help them, and they had written to ask them; and so it had come about that little Beata was to come to live with them. It had all seemed so natural and nice. Rosy's mother was so pleased about it, for she thought it would be just what Rosy needed to make her a pleasanter and more reasonable little girl.

"Beata is such a nice child," she said to Rosy's father when they were talking about it, "and not one bit spoilt. I think it is *sure* to do Rosy good," and, full of pleasure in the idea, she told Rosy about it.

But—one man may bring a horse to the water, but twenty can't make him drink, says the old proverb—Rosy made up her mind on the spot, at the very first instant, that she wouldn't like Beata, and that her coming was on purpose to vex *her*, Rosy, as it seemed to her that most things which she had to do with in the world were. And this was what had put her in such a temper the first time we saw her—when she would have liked to put out her vexation on Manchon even, if she had dared!

Rosy's mother felt very disappointed, but she saw it was better to say no more. She had told Colin about Beata coming, but not Felix, for as he knew and loved the little girl already, she was afraid that his delight might rouse Rosy's jealous feelings. For the prettiest thing in Rosy was her love for her little brother, only it was often spoilt by her *exactness*. Fixie must love her as much or better than anybody—he must be all hers, or else she would not love him at all. That was how she sometimes talked to him, and it puzzled and frightened him—he was such a very little fellow, you see. And *mother* had never told him that loving other people too made his love for her less, as Rosy did! I think Rosy's first dislike to Beata had begun one day when Fixie, wanting to please her, and yet afraid to say what was not true, had spoken of Beata as one of the people Rosy must let him love, and it had vexed Rosy so that ever since he had been afraid to mention his little friend's name to her.

Rosy's mother thought over what Colin had told her, and settled in her own mind that it was better to take no notice of it in speaking to Rosy.

"If it had been a quarrel about anything else," she said to herself, "it would have been different. But about Beata I want to say nothing more to vex Rosy, or wake her unkind feelings."

But Rosy's mother did not yet quite know her little girl. There was one thing about her which was *not* spoilt, and that was her honesty.

When the children came down that morning to see their mother, as they always did, a little after breakfast, Rosy's face wore a queer look.

"Good morning, little people," said their mother. "I was rather late this morning, do you know? That was why I didn't come to see you in the nursery. I am going to write to your aunt today. Would you like to put in a little letter, Rosy?"

"No, thank you," said Rosy.

"Then shall I just send your love? and Fixie's too?" said her mother. She went on speaking because she noticed the look in Rosy's face, but she wanted not to seem to do so, thinking Rosy would then gradually forget about it all.

"I don't want to send my love," said Rosy. "If you say I *must*, I suppose I must, but I don't *want* to send it."

"Do you think your love is not worth having, my poor little girl?" said her mother, smiling a little sadly, as she drew Rosy to her. "Don't you believe we all love you, Rosy, and want you to love us?"

"I don't know," said Rosy, gloomily. "I don't think anybody can love me, for Martha's always saying if I do naughty things *you* won't love me and father won't love me, and nobody."

"Then why don't you leave off doing naughty things, Rosy?" said her mother.

"Oh, I can't," Rosy replied, coolly. "I suppose I was spoilt at auntie's, and now I'm too old to change. I don't care. It isn't my fault: it's auntie's."

"Rosy," said her mother, gravely, "who ever said so to you? Where did you ever hear such a thing?"

"Lots of times," Rosy replied. "Martha's said so, and Colin says so when he's vexed with me. He's always said so," she added, as if she didn't quite like owning it, but felt that she must. "He said I was spoilt before you came home, but auntie wouldn't let him. *She* thought I was quite good," and Rosy reared up her head as if she thought so too.

"I am very sorry to hear you speak so," said her mother. "I think if you ask *yourself*, Rosy, you will very often find that you are not good, and if you see and understand that when you are not good it is nobody's fault but your own, you will surely try to be better. You must not say it was your aunt's fault, or anybody's fault. Your aunt was only too kind to you, and I will never allow you to blame her."

"I wasn't good last night," said Rosy. "I doubled up my hand and I hit Colin, 'cos I got in a temper. I was going to tell you—I meant to tell you."

"And are you sorry for it now, Rosy dear?" asked her mother, very gently.

Rosy looked at her in surprise. Her mother spoke so gently. She had rather expected her to be shocked—she had almost, if you can understand, *wished* her to be shocked, so that she could say to herself how naughty everybody thought her, how it was no use her trying to be good and all the rest of it—and she had told over what she had done in a hard, *unsorry* way, almost on purpose. But now, when her mother spoke so kindly, a different feeling came into her heart. She looked at her mother, and then she looked down on the ground, and then, almost to her own surprise, she answered, almost humbly,

"I don't know. I don't think I was, but I think I am a little sorry now."

Seeing her so unusually gentle, her mother went a little further. "What made you so vexed with Colin?" she asked. Rosy's face hardened.

"Mother," she said, "you'd better not ask me. It was because of something he said that I don't want to tell you."

"About Beata?" asked her mother.

"Well," said Rosy, "if you know about it, it isn't my fault if you are vexed. I don't want her to come—I don't want *any* little girl to come, because I know I shan't like her. I like boys better than girls, and I don't like good little girls *at all*."

"Rosy," said her mother, "you are talking so sillily that if Fixie even talked like that I should be quite surprised. I won't answer you. I will not say any more about Beata—you know what I wish, and what is right, and so I will leave it to you. And I will give you a kiss, my little girl, to show you that I want to trust you to try to do right about this."

She was stooping to kiss her, when Rosy stopped her.

"Thank you, mother," she said. "But I don't think I can take the kiss like that—I don't *want* to like the little girl."

"Rosy!" exclaimed her mother, almost in despair. Then another thought struck her. She bent down again and kissed the child. "I *give* you the kiss, Rosy," she said, "hoping it will at least make you *wish* to please me."

"Oh," said Rosy, "I do want to please you, mother, about everything *except* that."

But her mother thought it best to take no further notice, only in her own heart she said to herself, "Was there *ever* such a child?"

In spite of all she had said Rosy felt, what she would not have owned for the world, a good deal of curiosity about the little girl who was to come to live with them. And now and then, in her cross and unhappy moods, a sort of strange confused *hope* would creep over her that Beata's coming would bring her a kind of good luck.

"Everybody says she's so good, and everybody loves her," thought Rosy, "p'raps I'll find out how she does it."

And the days passed on, on the whole, after the storm I have told you about, rather more peaceably than before, till one evening when Rosy was saying good-night her mother said to her quietly,

"Rosy, I had a letter this morning from Beata's uncle; he is bringing her to-morrow. She will be here about four o'clock in the afternoon."

"To-morrow!" said Rosy, and then, without saying any more, she kissed her mother and went to bed.

She went to sleep that evening, and she woke the next morning with a strange jumble of feelings in her mind, and a strange confusion of questions waiting to be answered.

"What would Beata be like? She was sure to be pretty—all people that other people love very much were pretty, Rosy thought. And she believed that she herself was very ugly, which, I may tell you, children, as Rosy won't hear what we say, was quite a mistake. Everybody is a *little* pretty who is sweet and good, for though being sweet and good doesn't alter the colour of one's hair or the shape of one's nose, it does a great deal; it makes the cross lines smooth away, or, rather, prevents their coming, and it certainly gives the eyes a look that nothing else gives, does it not? But Rosy's face, alas! was very often spoiled by frowns, and dark looks often took away the prettiness of her eyes, and this was the more pity as the good fairies who had welcomed her at her birth had evidently meant her to be pretty. She had very soft bright hair, and a very white skin, and large brown eyes that looked lovely when she let sweet thoughts and feelings shine through them; but though she had many faults, she was not vain, and she really thought she was not pleasant-looking at all.

"Beata is sure to be pretty," thought Rosy. "I daresay she'll have beautiful black hair, and blue eyes like Lady Albertine." Albertine was Rosy's best doll. "And I daresay she'll be very clever, and play the piano and speak French far better than me. I don't mind that. I like pretty people, and I don't mind people being clever. What I don't like is, people who are *dedfully good* always going on about how good they are, and how naughty *other* people is. If she doesn't do that way I shan't mind so much, but I'm sure she *will* do that way. Yes, Manchon," she said aloud, "I'm sure she will, and you needn't begin 'froo'in' about it."

For Rosy was in the drawing-room when all these thoughts were passing through her mind—she was there with her afternoon frock on, and a pretty muslin apron, all nice to meet Beata and her uncle, who were expected very soon. And Manchon was on the rug as usual, quite peacefully inclined, poor thing, only Rosy could never believe any good of Manchon, and when he purred, or, as she called it, "froo'ed," she at once thought he was mocking her. She really seemed to fancy the cat was a fairy or a wizard of some kind, for she often gave him the credit of reading her very thoughts!

The door opened, and her mother came in, leading Fixie by the hand and Colin just behind.

"Oh, you're ready, Rosy," she said. "That's right. They should be here very soon."

"Welly soon," repeated Fixie. "Oh, Fixie will be so glad to see Beenie again!"

"What a stupid name," said Rosy. "*We're* not to call her that, are we, mother?"

She spoke in rather a grand, grown-up tone, but her mother knew she put that on sometimes when she was not really feeling unkind.

"I shall call her Bee," said Colin. "It would do very well, as we've"—he stopped suddenly—"as we've got a wasp already," he had been going to say—it seemed to come so naturally—when his mother's warning came back to his mind. He caught her eye, and he saw that she couldn't help smiling and he found it so difficult not to burst out laughing that he stuffed his pocket-handkerchief into his mouth, and went to the window, where he pretended to see something very interesting. Rosy looked up suspiciously.

"What were you going to say, Colin?" she asked. "I'm sure—" but she too stopped, for just then wheels were heard on the gravel drive outside.

"Here they are," said mother. "Will you come to the door to welcome Beata, Rosy?"

Rosy came forward, though rather slowly. Colin was already out in the hall, and Fixie was dancing along beside his mother. Rosy kept behind. The carriage, that had gone to the station to meet the travellers, was already at the door, and the footman was handing out one or two umbrellas, rugs, and so on. Then a gray-haired gentleman, whom Rosy, peeping through a side window, did not waste her attention on—"He is quite old," she said to herself—got out, and lifted down a much smaller person—smaller than Rosy herself, and a good deal smaller than the Beata of Rosy's fancies. The little person sprang forward, and was going to kiss Rosy's mother, when she caught sight of the tiny white face beside her.

"O Fixie, dear little Fixie!" she said, stooping to hug him, and then she lifted her own face for Fixie's mother to kiss. At once, almost before shaking hands with the gentleman, Rosy's mother looked round for her, and Rosy had to come forward.

"Beata, dear, this is my Rosy," she said; and something in the tone of the "my" touched Rosy. It seemed to say, "I will put no one before you, my own little girl—no stranger, however sweet—and you will, on your side, try to please me, will you not?" So Rosy's face, though grave, had a nice look the first time Beata saw it, and the first words she said as they kissed each other were, "O Rosy, how pretty you are! I shall love you very much."

CHAPTER III.

TEARS.

"'Twere most ungrateful."—V. S. LAKDOH.

Beata was not pretty. That was the first thing Rosy decided about her. She was small, and rather brown and thin. She had dark hair, certainly like Lady Albertine's in colour, but instead of splendid curls it was cut quite short—as short almost as Colin's—and her eyes were neither very large nor very blue. They were nice gray eyes, that could look sad, but generally looked merry, and about the rest of her face there was nothing very particular.

Rosy looked at her for a moment or two, and she looked at Rosy. Then at last Rosy said,

"Will you come into the drawing-room?" for she saw that her mother and Beata's uncle were already on their way there.

"Thank you," said Beata, and then they quietly followed the big people. Rosy's father was not at home, but he would be back soon, her mother was telling the gray-haired gentleman, and then she went on to ask him how "they" had got off, if it had been comfortably, and so on.

"Oh yes," he replied, "it was all quite right. Poor Maud!—"

"That's my mamma," said Beata in a low voice, and Rosy, turning towards her, saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"What a queer little girl she is!" thought Rosy, but she did not say so.

"—Poor Maud," continued the gentleman. "It is a great comfort to her to leave the child in such good hands."

"I hope she will be happy," said Rosy's mother. "I will do my best to make her so."

"I am very sure of that," said Beata's uncle. "It is a great disappointment to her grandmother not to have her with her. She is a dear child. Last week at the parting she behaved like a brick."

Both little girls heard this, and Beata suddenly began speaking rather fast, and Rosy saw that her cheeks had got very red.

"Do you think your mamma would mind if I went upstairs to take off my hat? I think my face must be dirty with the train," said Beata.

"Don't you like staying here?" said Rosy, rather crossly. "I think you should stay till mother tells it to go," for she wanted to hear what more her mother and the gentleman said to each other, the very thing that made Beata uncomfortable.

Beata looked a little frightened.

"I didn't mean to be rude," she said. Then suddenly catching sight of Manchon, she

exclaimed, "Oh, what a beautiful cat! May I go and stroke him?"

"If you like," said Rosy, "but he isn't *really* a nice cat." And then, seeing that Beata looked at her with curiosity, she forgot about listening to the big people, and, getting up, led Beata to Manchon's cushion.

"Everybody says he's pretty," she went on, "but I don't think so, because *I* think he's a kind of bad fairy. You don't know how he froos sometimes, in a most horrible way, as if he was mocking you. He knows I don't like him, for whenever I'm vexed he looks pleased."

"Does he really?" said Beata. "Then I don't like him. I shouldn't look pleased if you were vexed, Rosy."

"Wouldn't you?" said Rosy, doubtfully.

"No, I'm sure I wouldn't. I wonder your mamma likes Manchon if he has such an unkind dis—I can't remember the word, it means feelings, you know."

"Never mind," said Rosy, patronisingly, "I know what you mean. Oh, its only *me* Manchon's nasty to, and that doesn't matter. *I'm* not the favourite. I *was* at my aunty's though, that I was—but it has all come true what Nelson told me," and she shook her head dolefully.

"Who is Nelson?" asked Beata.

"Aunty's maid. She cried when I came away, and she said it was because she was so sorry for me. It wouldn't be the same as *there*, she said. I shouldn't be thought as much of with two brothers, and Nelson knew that my mamma was dreadfully strict. I daresay she'd be still more sorry for me if she knew—" Rosy stopped short.

"Why don't you go on?" said Beata.

"Oh, I was going to say something I don't want to say. Perhaps it would vex you," said Rosy.

Beata considered a little.

"I'm not very easily vexed," she said at last. "I think I'd like you to go on saying it if you don't mind—unless its anything naughty."

"Oh no," said Rosy, "it isn't anything naughty. I was going to say Nelson would be still more sorry for me if she knew *you* had come."

"*Me!*" said Beata, opening her eyes. "Why? She can't know anything about me—I mean she couldn't know anything to make her think I would be unkind to you."

"Oh no, it isn't that. Only you see some little girls would think that if another little girl came to live with them it wouldn't be so nice—that perhaps their mammas and brothers and everybody would pet the other little girl more than them."

"And do you think that?" said Beata, anxiously. A feeling like a cold chill seemed to have touched her heart. She had never before thought of such things—loving somebody else "better," not being "the favourite," and so on. Could it all be true, and could it, *worst* of all, be true that her coming might be the cause of trouble and vexation to other people—at least to Rosy? She had come so full of love and gratitude, so ready to like everybody; she had said so many times to her mother, "I'm *sure* I'll be happy. I'll write and tell you how happy I am," swallowing bravely the grief of leaving her mother, and trying to cheer her at the parting by telling her this—it seemed very hard and strange to little Beata to be told that *anybody* could think she could be the cause of unhappiness to any one. "Do *you* think that?" she repeated.

Rosy looked at her, and something in the little eager face gave her what she would have called a "sorry" feeling. But mixed with this was a sense of importance—she liked to think that she was very good for not feeling what she said "some little girls" would have felt.

"No," she said, rather patronisingly, "I don't think I do. I only said *some* little girls would. No, I think I shall like you, if only you don't make a fuss about how good you are, and set them all against me. I settled before you came that I wouldn't mind if you were pretty or very clever. And you're not pretty, and I daresay you're not very clever. So I won't mind, if you don't make everybody praise you up for being so *good*."

Beata's eyes filled with tears.

"I don't want anybody to praise me," she said. "I only wanted you all to love me," and again Rosy had the sorry feeling, though she did not feel that she was to blame.

"I only told her what I really thought," she said to herself; but before she had time to reflect that there are two ways of telling what one thinks, and that sometimes it is not only foolish, but wrong and unkind, to tell of thoughts and feelings which we should try to *leave off* having, her mother turned round to speak to her.

"I think we should take Beata upstairs to her room, Rosy," she said. "You must be tired, dear," and the kind words and tone, so like what her own mother's would have been, made the cup of Beata's distress overflow. She gave a little sob and then burst into tears. Rosy half sprang forward—she was on the point of throwing her arms round Beata and whispering, "I *will* love you, dear, I *do* love you;" but alas, the strange foolish pride that so often checked her good feelings, held her back, and jealousy whispered, "If you begin making such a fuss about her, she'll think she's to be before you, and very likely, if you seem so sorry, she'll tell your mother you made her cry." So Rosy stood still, grave and silent, but with some trouble in her face, and her mother felt a little, just a very little vexed with Beata for beginning so dolefully.

"It will discourage Rosy," she said to herself, "just when I was so anxious for Beata to win her affection from the first."

And Beata's uncle, too, looked disappointed. Just when he had been praising her so for her bravery!

"Why, my little girl," he said, "you didn't cry like this even when you said good-bye at Southampton."

"That must be it," said Rosy's mother, who was too kind to feel vexed for more than an instant; "the poor child has put too much force on herself, and that always makes one break down afterwards. Come, dear Beata, and remember how much your mother wanted you to be happy with us."

She held out her hand, but to her surprise Beata still hung back, clinging to her uncle.

"Oh, please," she whispered, "let me go back with you, uncle. I don't care how dull it is—I shall not be any trouble to grandmother while she is ill. Do let me go back—I cannot stay here."

Beata's uncle was kind, but he had not much experience of children.

"Beata," he said, and his voice was almost stern, "it is impossible. All is arranged here for you. You will be sorry afterwards for giving way so foolishly. You would not wish to seem *ungrateful*, my little girl, for all your kind friends here are going to do for you?"

The word ungrateful had a magical effect. Beata raised her head from his shoulder, and digging in her pocket for her little handkerchief, wiped away the tears, and then looking up, her face still quivering, said gently, "I won't cry any more, uncle; I *will* be good. Indeed, I didn't mean to be naughty."

"That's right," he answered, encouragingly. And then Rosy's mother again held out her hand, and Beata took it timidly, and followed by Rosy, whose mind was in a strange jumble, they went upstairs to the room that was to be the little stranger's.

It was as pretty a little room as any child could have wished for—bright and neat and comfortable, with a pleasant look-out on the lawn at the side of the house, while farther off, over the trees, the village church, or rather its high spire, could be seen. For a moment Beata forgot her new troubles.

"Oh, how pretty!" she said, "Is this to be my room? I never had such a nice one. But when they come home from India for always, papa and mamma are going to get a pretty house, and choose all the furniture—like here, you know, only not so pretty, I daresay, for a house like this would cost such a great deal of money."

She was chattering away to Rosy's mother quite in her old way, greatly to Rosy's mother's pleasure, when she—Mrs. Vincent, opened a door Beata had not before noticed.

"This is Rosy's room," she said. "I thought it would be nice for you to be near each other. And I know you are very tidy, Bee, so you will set Rosy a good example—eh, Rosy?"

She said it quite simply, and Beata would have taken it in the same way half an hour before, but looking round the little girl caught an expression on Rosy's face which brought back all her distress. It seemed to say, "Oh, you're beginning to be praised already, I see," but Rosy's mother had not noticed it, for Rosy had turned quickly away. When, however, Mrs. Vincent, surprised at Beata's silence, looked at her again, all the light had faded out of the little face, and again she seemed on the point of tears.

"How strangely changeable she is," thought Mrs. Vincent, "I am sure she used not to be so; she was merry and pleased just as she seemed a moment or two ago."

"What is the matter, dear?" she said. "You look so distressed again. Did it bring back your mother—what I said, I mean?"

"I think—I suppose so," Beata began, but there she stopped. "No," she said bravely, "it wasn't that. But, please—I don't want to be rude—but, please, would you not praise me—not for being tidy or anything."

How gladly at that moment would she have said, "I'm not tidy. Mamma always says I'm not,"

had it been true. But it was not—she was a very neat and methodical child, dainty and trim in everything she had to do with, as Rosy's mother remembered.

"What *shall* I do?" she said to herself. "It seems as if only my being naughty would make Rosy like me, and keep me from doing her harm. What *can* I do?" and a longing came over her to throw her arms round Mrs. Vincent's neck, and tell her her troubles and ask her to explain it all to her. But her faithfulness would not let her think of such a thing. "That *would* do Rosy harm," she remembered, "and perhaps she meant to be kind when she spoke that way. It was kinder than to have kept those feelings to me in her heart and never told me. But I don't know what to do."

For already she felt that Mrs. Vincent thought her queer and changeable, *rude* even, perhaps, though she only smiled at Beata's begging not to be praised, and Rosy, who had heard what she said, gave her no thanks for it, but the opposite.

"That's all pretence," thought Rosy. "Everybody likes to be praised."

Mrs. Vincent went downstairs, leaving the children together, and telling Rosy to help Beata to take off her things, as tea would soon be ready. Beata had a sort of fear of what next Rosy would say, and she was glad when Martha just then came into the room.

"Miss Rosy," she said, "will you please to go into the nursery and put away your dolls' things before tea. They're all over the table. I'd have done it in a minute, but you have your own ways and I was afraid of doing it wrong."

She spoke kindly and cheerfully.

"What a nice nurse!" thought Beata, with a feeling of relief—a sort of hope that Martha might help to make things easier for her somehow, especially as there was something very kindly in the way the maid began to help her to unfasten her jacket and lay aside her travelling things. To her surprise, Rosy made no answer.

"Miss Rosy, please," said Martha again, and then Rosy looked up crossly.

"Miss Rosy, please," she said mockingly. "You're just putting on all that politeness to show off. No, I won't please. You can put the dolls away yourself, and, if you do them wrong, it's your own fault. You've seen lots of times how I do them."

"Miss Rosy!" said Martha, as if she wanted to beg Rosy to be good, and her voice was still kind, though her face had got very red when Rosy told her she was "showing off."

Beata stood in shocked silence. She had had no idea that Rosy could speak so, and, sad as it was, Martha did not seem surprised.

"I wonder if she is often like that," thought little Bee, and in concern for Rosy her own troubles began to be forgotten.

They went into the nursery to tea. Martha had cleared away Rosy's things and had done her best to lay them as the little girl liked. But before sitting down to the table, Rosy would go to the drawer where they were kept, and was in the middle of scolding at finding something different from what she liked when Colin and Fixie came in to tea.

"I say, Rosy," said Colin, "you might let us have one tea-time in peace,—Bee's first evening."

Rosy turned round upon him.

"I'm not a pretender," she said. "I'm not going to sham being good and all that, like Martha and you, because Bee has just come."

"I don't know what you've been saying to Martha," said Colin, "but I can't see why you need begin at me about shamming before Bee. You've not seen me for two minutes since she came. What's the matter, Fix? Wait a minute and I'll help you," for Fixie was tugging away at his chair, and could not manage to move it as he wanted.

"I want to sit, aside Bee," he said.

Rosy threw an angry look at him—he understood what she meant.

"I'll sit, aside you again to-morrow, Losy," he hastened to say. But it did no good. Rosy was now determined to find nothing right. There came a little change in their thoughts, however, for the kitchen-maid appeared at the door with a plate of nice cold ham and some of the famous strawberry jam.

"Cook thought the young lady would be hungry after her journey," she said.

"Yes, indeed," cried Colin, "the young lady's very hungry, and so are the young gentlemen, and so is the other young lady—aren't you, Rosy?" he said good-naturedly, turning to her. "He is really a very kind boy," thought Beata. "Tell cook, with my best compliments, that we are very much obliged to her, and she needn't expect to see any of the ham or the strawberry jam again."

It was later than the usual tea-hour, so all the children were hungry and, thanks to this, the meal passed quietly. Beata said little, though she could not help laughing at some of Colin's funny speeches. But for the shock of Rosy's temper and the confusion in her mind that Rosy's way of speaking had made, Bee would have been quite happy, as happy at least, she would have said, "as I can be till mamma comes home again," but Rosy seemed to throw a cloud over everybody. There was never any knowing from one minute to another how she was going to be. Only one thing became plainer to Bee. It was not only because *she* had come that Rosy was cross and unhappy. It was easy to see that she was at all times very self-willed and queer-tempered, and, though Bee was too good and kind to be glad of this, yet, as she was a very sensible little girl, it made things look clearer to her.

"I will not begin fancying it is because I am in her place, or anything like that," she said to herself. "I will be as good as I can be, and perhaps she will get to like me," and Rosy was puzzled and perhaps, in her strange contradiction, a little vexed at the brighter look that came over Bee's face, and the cheery way in which she spoke. For at the first, when she saw how much Bee had taken to heart what she said, though her *best* self felt sorry for the little stranger, she had liked the feeling that she would be a sort of master over her, and that the fear of seeming to take *her* place would prevent Bee from making friends with the others more than she, Rosy, chose to allow.

Poor Rosy! She would have herself been shocked had she seen written down in plain words all the feelings her jealous temper caused her. But almost the worst of jealousy is that it hides itself in so many dresses, and gives itself so many names, sometimes making itself seem quite a right and proper feeling; often, very often making one think oneself a poor, ill-treated martyr, when in reality, the martyrs are the unfortunate people that have to live with the foolish person who has allowed jealousy to become his master.

Beata's uncle left that evening, but before he went away he had the pleasure of seeing his little niece quite herself again.

"That's right," he said, as he bade her good-bye, "I don't know what came over you this afternoon."

Beata did not say anything, but she just kissed her uncle, and whispered, "Give my love to dear grandmother, and tell her I am going to try to be very good."

CHAPTER IV.

UPS AND DOWNS.

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary."—NURSERY RHYME.

That night when Bee was in her little bed, though not yet asleep, for the strangeness of everything, and all she had to think over of what had happened in the day, had kept her awake longer than usual, she heard some one softly open the door and look in.

"Are you awake still, dear?" said a voice which Bee knew in a moment was that of Rosy's mother.

"Yes, oh yes. I'm quite awake. I'm not a bit sleepy," Beata answered.

"But you must try to go to sleep soon," said Mrs. Vincent. "Rosy is fast asleep. I have just been in to look at her. It is getting late for little girls to be awake."

"Yes, I know," said Bee. "But I often can't go to sleep so quick the first night—while everything is—different, you know—and new."

"And a little strange and lonely, as it were—just at first. Don't be afraid I would be vexed with you for feeling it so."

"But I don't think I do feel lonely," said Bee, sitting up and looking at Rosy's mother quite brightly. "It seems quite natural to be with you and Fixie again."

"I'm very glad of that," said Mrs. Vincent. "And was it not then the strange feeling that made you so unhappy this afternoon for a little?"

Beata hesitated.

"Tell me, dear," said Mrs. Vincent. "You know if I am to be a 'make-up mother' for a while, you must talk to me as much as you *can*, as if I were your own mother."

She listened rather anxiously for Bee's answer, for two or three little things—among them something Colin had said of the bad temper Rosy had been in at tea-time—had made her afraid

there had been some reason she did not understand for Beata's tears. Bee lay still for a minute or two. Then she said gently and rather shyly,

"I am so sorry, but I don't know what's right to do. Isn't it sometimes difficult to know?"

"Yes, sometimes it is." Then Mrs. Vincent, in her turn, was silent for a minute, and at last she said,

"Would you very much rather I did not ask you why you cried?"

"Oh yes," cried Bee, "much, much rather."

"Very well then, but you will promise me that if the same thing makes you cry again, you *will* tell me?"

"*Should* I?" said Bee. "I thought—I thought it wasn't right to tell tales," she added so innocently that Mrs. Vincent could not help smiling to herself.

"It is not right," she said. "But what I ask you to promise is not to tell tales. It is to tell me what makes you unhappy, so that I may explain it or put it right. I could not do my duty among you and my other children unless I knew how things were. It is the *spirit* that makes tell-tales—the telling over for the sake of getting others blamed or punished—*that* is what is wrong."

"I see," said Beata slowly. "At least I think I see a little, and I'll try to think about it. I'll promise to tell you if anything makes me unhappy, *really* unhappy, but I don't think it will now. I think I understand better what things I needn't mind."

"Very well, dear. Then good-night," and Rosy's mother kissed Bee very kindly, though in her heart she felt sad. It was plain to her that Rosy had made Bee unhappy, and as she passed through Rosy's room she stopped a moment by the bed-side and looked at the sleeping child. Nothing could be prettier than Rosy asleep—her lovely fair hair made a sort of pale golden frame to her face, and her cheeks had a beautiful pink flush. But while her mother was watching her, a frown darkened her white forehead, and her lips parted sharply.

"I won't have her put before me. I tell you I *won't*," she called out angrily. Then again, a nicer look came over her face and she murmured some words which her mother only caught two or three of.

"I didn't mean"—"sorry"—"crying," she said, and her mother turned away a little comforted.

"O Rosy, poor Rosy," she said to herself. "You *do* know what is right and sweet. When will you learn to keep down that unhappy temper?"

* * * * *

The next morning was bright and sunny, the garden with its beautiful trees and flowers, which Beata had only had a glimpse of the night before, looked perfectly delicious in the early light when she drew up the window-blind to look out. And as soon as she was dressed she was only too delighted to join Rosy and Colin for a run before breakfast. Children are children all the world over—luckily for themselves and luckily for other people too—and even children who are sometimes ill-tempered and unkind are sometimes, too, bright and happy and lovable. Rosy was after all only a child, and by no means *always* a disagreeable spoiled child. And this morning seeing Bee so merry and happy, she forgot her foolish and unkind feelings about her, and for the time they were all as contented and joyous as children should be.

"Where is Fixie?" asked Beata. "May he not come out a little before breakfast too?"

"Martha won't let him," said Rosy. "Nasty cross old thing. She says it will make him ill, and I am sure it's much more likely to make him ill keeping him poking in there when he wanted so much to come out with us."

"I don't see how you can call Martha cross," said Colin. "And certainly she's never *cross* to Fixie."

"How do *you* know?" said Rosy, sharply. "You don't see her half as much as I do. And she can always pretend if she likes."

Beata looked rather anxiously at Colin. He was on the point of answering Rosy crossly in his turn, and again Bee felt that sort of nervous fear of quarrels or disagreeables which it was impossible to be long in Rosy's company without feeling. But Colin suddenly seemed to change his mind.

"Shall we run another race?" he said, without taking any notice of Rosy's last speech.

"Yes," said Bee, eagerly, "from here to the library window. But you must give me a little start—I can't run half so fast as you and Rosy."

She said it quite simply, but it pleased Rosy all the same, and she began considering how

much of a start it was fair for Bee to have.

When that important point was settled, off they set. Bee was the first to arrive.

"You must have given me too much of a start," she said, laughing. "Look here, Colin and Rosy, there's the big cat on the window-seat. Doesn't he look solemn?"

"He looks very cross and nasty—he always does," said Rosy. Then, safely sheltered behind the window, she began tapping on the pane.

"Manchon, Manchon," she said, "you can't scratch me through the glass, so I'll just tell you what I think of you for once. You're a cross, mean, *pretending* creature. You make everybody say you're so pretty and so sweet when *really* you're—" she stopped in a fright—"Bee, Bee," she cried, "just look at his face. I believe he's heard all I said."

"Well, what if he did?" said Beata. "Cats don't understand what one means."

"*Manchon* does," said Rosy. "Come away, Bee, do. Quick, quick. We'd better go in to breakfast."

The two little girls ran off, but Colin stayed behind at the library window.

"I've been talking to Manchon," he said when he came up to them. "He told me to give you his compliments, Rosy, and to say he is very much obliged to you for the pretty things you said to him, and the next time he has the pleasure of seeing you he hopes to have the honour of scratching you to show his gratitude."

Rosy's face got red.

"Colin, how *dare* you laugh at me?" she called out in a fury. She was frightened as well as angry, for she really had a strange fear of the big cat.

"I'm not laughing," Colin began again, looking quite serious. "I had to give you Manchon's message."

[Illustration: 'WHAT IS ZE MATTER WIF YOU, BEE?' HE SAID]

Rosy looked at Bee. If there had been the least shadow of a smile on Bee's face it would have made her still more angry. But Beata looked grave, because she felt so.

"Oh, I wish they wouldn't quarrel," she was thinking to herself. "It does so spoil everything. I can't *think* how Colin can tease Rosy so."

And sadly, feeling already tired, and not knowing what was best to do, Beata followed the others to the nursery. *They* did not seem to care—Colin was already whistling, and though Rosy's face was still black, no one paid any attention to it.

But little Fixie ran to Bee and held up his fresh sweet face for a kiss.

"What is ze matter wif you, Bee?" he said. "You's c'ying. Colin, Losy, Bee's c'ying," he exclaimed.

"You're *not*, are you, Bee?" said Colin.

"Are you, really?" said Rosy, coming close to her and looking into her face.

The taking notice of it made Bee's tears come more quickly. All the children looked sorry, and a puzzled expression came into Rosy's face.

"Come into my room a minute, Bee," she said. "Do tell me," she went on, "what are you crying for?"

Beata put her arms round Rosy's neck.

"I can't quite tell you," she said, "I'm afraid of vexing you. But, oh, I do so wish—" and then she stopped.

"What?" said Rosy.

"I wish you would never get vexed with Colin or anybody, and I wish Colin wouldn't tease you," said Bee.

"Was that all?" said Rosy. "Oh, *that* wasn't anything—you should hear us sometimes."

"*Please* don't," entreated Beata. "I can't bear it. Oh, dear Rosy, don't be vexed with me, but please do let us be all happy and not have anything like that."

Rosy did not seem vexed, but neither did she seem quite to understand.

"What a funny girl you are, Bee," she said. "I suppose it's because you've lived alone with big people always that you're like that. I daresay you'll learn to tease too and to squabble, after you've been a while here."

"Oh, I *hope* not," said Bee. "Do you really think I shall, Rosy?"

"I shall like you just as well if you do," said Rosy, "at least if you do a *little*. Anyway, it would be better than setting up to be better than other people, or *pretending*."

"But I *don't* want to do that," said Beata. "I want to *be* good. I don't want to think about being better or not better than other people, and I'm *sure* I don't want to pretend. I don't ever pretend like that, Rosy. Won't you believe me? I don't know what I can say to make you believe me. I can't see that you should think it such a very funny thing for me to want to be good. Don't *you* want to be good?"

"Yes," said Rosy, "I suppose I do. I do just now, just at this minute. And just at this minute I believe what you say. But I daresay I won't always. The first time Colin teases me I know I shall leave off wanting to be good. I shall want nothing at all except just to give him a good hard slap—really to hurt him, you know. I do want to *hurt* him when I am very angry—just for a little. And if you were to say anything to me *then* about being good, I'd very likely not believe you a bit."

Just then Martha's voice was heard calling them in to breakfast.

"Be quiet, Martha," Rosy called back. "We'll come when we're ready. Do leave us alone. Just when we're talking so nicely," she added, turning to Bee. "What a bother she is"

"I think she's very kind," said Bee, "but I don't like to say anything like that to you, for fear you should think I'm pretending or 'setting up,' or something like that."

Rosy laughed.

"I don't think that just now," she said. "Well, let's go into the nursery, then," and, as they came in, she said to Martha with wonderful amiability, "We aren't very hungry this morning, I don't think, for we had each such a big hunch of bread and some milk before we ran out."

"That was quite right, Miss Rosy," said Martha, and by the sound of her voice it was easy to see she was pleased. "It is never a good thing to go out in the morning without eating something, even if it's only a little bit."

Breakfast passed most comfortably, and by good luck Fixie hadn't forgotten his promise to sit "aside Losy." "It was her turn," he said, and he seemed to think the honour a very great one.

"Do you remember on the steamer, Fixie?" said Bee, "how we liked to sit together, and how hot it was sometimes, and how we used to wish we were in nice cool England?"

"Oh ses," said Fixie, "oh it *were* hot! And the poor young lady, Bee, that was so ill?"

"Oh, do you remember her, Fixie? What a good memory you have!"

Fixie got rather red.

"I'm not sure that I 'membered her all of myself," he said, "but mamma telled me about her one day. Her's quite welldened now."

Bee smiled a little at Fixie's funny way of speaking, but she thought to herself it was very nice for him to be such an honest little boy.

"How do you know she's got well?" said Rosy, rather sharply.

"Mamma telled me," said Fixie.

"Yes," said Colin, "it's quite true. And the young lady's father's going to come to see us some day. I don't remember his name, do you, Bee?"

"Not quite," said Bee, "yes, I think it was something like *furniture*."

"Furniture," repeated Colin, "it couldn't be that. Was it 'Ferguson'?"

"No," said Bee, "it wasn't that."

"Well, never mind," said Colin. "It was something like it. We'll ask mamma. He is going to come to see us soon. I'm sure of that."

Later in the day Colin remembered about it, and asked his mother about it.

"What was the name of the gentleman that you said was coming to see us soon, mamma?" he said—"the gentleman whose daughter was so ill in the ship coming home from India."

"Mr. Furnivale," replied his mother. "You must remember him and his daughter, Bee. She is

much better now. They have been all these months in Italy, and they are going to stay there through next winter, but Mr. Furnivale is in England on business and is coming to see us very soon. He is a very kind man, and always asks for Fixie and Bee when he writes."

"That is very kind of him," said Bee, gratefully.

But a dark look came over Rosy's face.

"It's just as if *she* was mamma's little girl, and not me," she said to herself. "I hate people mamma knew when Bee was with her and I wasn't."

"Mr. Furnivale doesn't know you are with us," Mrs. Vincent went on; "he will be quite pleased to see you. He says Cecilia has never forgotten you; Cecilia is his daughter, you know."

"Yes, I remember *her* name," said Bee. "I wish she could come to see us too. She was so pretty, wasn't she, Aunt—Lillias?" she added, stopping a little and smiling. Lillias was Mrs. Vincent's name, and it had been fixed that Beata should call her "aunt," for to say "Mrs. Vincent" sounded rather stiff. "You would think her pretty, Rosy," she went on again, out of a wish to make Rosy join in what they were talking of.

"No," said Rosy, with a sort of burst, "I shouldn't. I don't know anything about what you're talking of, and I don't want to hear about it," and she turned away with a very cross and angry face.

Bee was going to run after her, but Mrs. Vincent stopped her.

"No," she said. "When she is so very foolish, it is best to leave her alone."

But though she said it as if she did not think Rosy's tempers of very much consequence, Beata saw the sad disappointed look on her face.

"Oh," thought the little girl, "how I *do* wish I could do anything to keep Rosy from vexing her mother."

It was near bed-time when they had been talking about Mr. Furnivale and his daughter, and soon after the children all said good-night. Rather to Bee's surprise, Rosy, who had hidden herself in the window with a book, came out when she was called and said good-night quite pleasantly.

"I wonder she doesn't feel ashamed," thought Bee, "I'm sure I never spoke like that to my mamma, but if ever I had, I couldn't have said good-night without saying I was sorry."

And it was with a slight feeling of self-approval that Beata went up to bed. When she was undressed she went into the nursery for a moment to ask Martha to brush her hair. Fixie was not yet asleep, and the nurse looked troubled.

"Is Fixie ill?" said Bee.

"No, I hope not," said Martha, "but he's troubled. Miss Rosy's been in to say good-night to him, and she's set him off his sleep, I'm sure."

"I'm so unhappy, Bee," whispered Fixie, when Beata stooped over him to say good-night. "Losy's been 'peaking to me, and she says nobody loves her, not *nobody*. She's so unhappy, Bee."

A little feeling of pain went through Bee. Perhaps Rosy *was* really unhappy and sorry for what she had said, though she had not told any one so. And the thought of it kept Bee from going to sleep as quickly as usual. "Rosy is so puzzling," she thought. "It is so difficult to understand her."

CHAPTER V.

ROSY THINKS THINGS OVER.

"Whenever you find your heart despair
Of doing some goodly thing,
Con over this strain, try bravely again,
And remember the spider and king."
—TRY AGAIN.

She did go to sleep at last, and she slept for a while very soundly. But suddenly she awoke, awoke quite completely, and with the feeling that something had awakened her, though what she did not know. She sat up in bed and looked about her, if you can call staring out into the dark where you can see nothing "looking about you." It seemed to be a very dark night; there was no chink of moonlight coming in at the window, and everything was perfectly still. Beata could not help wondering what had awakened her, and she was settling herself to sleep again when a little

sound caught her ears. It was a kind of low, choking cry, as if some one was crying bitterly and trying to stuff their handkerchief into their mouth, or in some way prevent the sound being heard. Beata felt at first a very little frightened, and then, as she became quite sure that it was somebody crying, very sorry and uneasy. What could be the matter? Was it Fixie? No, the sounds did not come from the nursery side. Beata sat up in bed to hear more clearly, and then amidst the crying she distinguished her own name.

"Bee," said the sobbing voice, "Bee, I wish you'd come to speak to me. Are you asleep, Bee?"

In a moment Beata was out of bed, for there was no doubt now whose voice it was. It was Rosy's. Bee was not a timid child, but the room was very dark, and it took a little courage to feel her way among the chairs and tables till at last she found the door, which she opened and softly went into Rosy's room. For a moment she did not speak, for a new idea struck her,—could Rosy be crying and talking in her sleep? It was so very unlike her to cry or ask any one to go to her. There was no sound as Beata opened the door; she could almost have believed it had all been her fancy, and for a moment she felt inclined to go back to her own bed and say nothing. But a very slight sound, a sort of little sobbing breath that came from Rosy's bed, made her change her mind.

"Rosy," she said, softly, "are you awake? Were you speaking to me?"

She heard a rustle. It was Rosy sitting up in bed.

"Yes," she said, "I am awake. I've been awake all night. It's dreadful to be awake all night, Bee. I've been calling and calling you. I'm so unhappy."

"Unhappy?" said Bee, in a kind voice, going nearer the bed. "What are you so unhappy about, Rosy?"

"I'll tell you," said Rosy, "but won't you get into my bed a little, Bee? There is room, if we scrudge ourselves up. One night Fixie slept with me, and you're not so very much bigger."

"I'll get in for a little," said Beata, "just while you tell me what's the matter, and why you are so unhappy."

She was quite surprised at Rosy's way of speaking. She seemed so much gentler and softer, that Bee could not understand it.

"I'll tell you why I'm so unhappy," said Rosy. "I can't be good, Bee. I never have cared to be good. It's such a lot of trouble, and lots of peoples that think they're very good, and that other peoples make a fuss about, are very pretending. I've noticed that often. But when we had been talking yesterday morning all of a sudden I thought it would be nice to be good—not pretending, but *real* good—never cross, and all that. And so I fixed I would be quite good, and I thought how pleased you'd be when I never quarrelled with Colin, or was cross to Martha, or anything like that. And it was all right for a while; but then when mamma began talking about Mr. Furniture, and how nice he was, and his daughter, and you knew all about them and I didn't, it *all went away*. I told you it would—all the wanting to be good—and I was as angry as angry. And then I said that, you remember, and then everybody thought I was just the same, and it was all no use."

"Poor Rosy," said Bee. "No, I don't think it was no use."

"Oh yes," persisted Rosy, "it was all no use. But nobody knew, and I didn't mean anybody to know. Mamma and Colin and nobody could see I was sorry when I said good-night—*could* they?" she said, with a tone of satisfaction. "No, I didn't mean anybody to know, only after I was in bed it came back to me, and I was so vexed and so unhappy. I thought everybody would have been *so* surprised at finding I could be just as good as anybody if I liked. But I don't like; so just remember, Bee, to-morrow morning I'm not going to try a bit, and it's no use saying any more about it. It's just the way I'm made."

"But you do care, Rosy," said Bee, "I know you care. If you didn't you wouldn't have been thinking about it, and been sorry after you were in bed."

"Yes, I *did* care," said Rosy, with again a little sob. "I had been thinking it would be very nice, But I'm not going to care—that's just the thing, Bee—that's what I wanted to tell you—I'm not going to go on caring."

"Don't you always say your prayers, Rosy?" asked Bee, rather solemnly.

"Yes, *of course* I do. But I don't think they're much good. I've been just as naughty some days when I'd said them *beautifully*, as some days when I'd been in a hurry."

Beata felt puzzled.

"I can't explain about it properly," she said. "But that isn't the way, I don't think. Mother told me if I thought just saying my prayers would make me good, it was like thinking they were a kind of magic, and that isn't what we should think them."

"What good are they then?" said Rosy.

"Oh, I know what I mean, but it's very hard to say it," said poor Bee. "Saying our prayers is like opening the gate into being good; it gives us a sort of feeling that *He*, you know, Rosy, that God is smiling at us all day, and makes us remember that He's *always* ready to help us."

"*Is He?*" said Rosy. "Well, I suppose there's something worser about me than other peoples, for I've often said, 'Do make me good, do make me good, quick, quick,' and I didn't get good."

"Because you pushed it away, Rosy. You're always saying you're not good and you don't care. But I think you *do* care, only," with a sigh, "I know one has to try a great, great lot."

"Yes, and I don't like the bother," said Rosy, coolly.

"There, now you've said it," said Bee. "Then that shows it isn't that you can't be good but you don't like to have to try so much. But please, Rosy, don't say you'll leave off. *Do* go on. It will get easier. I know it will. It's like skipping and learning to play on the piano and lots of things. Every time we try makes it a little easier for the next time."

"I never thought of that," said Rosy, with interest in her tone. "Well, I'll think about it any way, and I'll tell you in the morning what I've settled. Perhaps I'll fix just to be naughty again to-morrow, for a rest you know. How would it do, I wonder, if I was to be good and naughty in turns? I could settle the days, and then the naughty ones you could keep out of my way."

"It wouldn't do at all," said Bee, decidedly. "It would be like going up two steps and then tumbling back two steps. No, it would be worse, it would be like going up two and tumbling back three, for every naughty day would make it still harder to begin again on the good day."

"Well, I won't do that way, then," said Rosy, with wonderful gentleness. "I'll either *go on* trying to climb up the steps—how funnily you say things, Bee!—or I'll not try at all. I'll tell you to-morrow morning. But remember you're not to tell anybody. If I fix to be good I want everybody to be surprised."

"But you won't get good all of a sudden, Rosy," said Bee, feeling afraid that Rosy would again lose heart at the first break-down.

"Well, I daresay I won't," returned Rosy. "But don't you see if nobody but you knows it won't so much matter. But if I was to tell everybody then it would all seem pretending, and there's nothing so horrid as pretending."

There was some sense in Rosy's ideas, and Bee did not go against them. She went back to her own bed with a curious feeling of respect for Rosy and a warm feeling of affection also.

"And it was very horrid of me to be thinking of her that way to-night," said honest Bee to herself. "I'll never think of her that way again. Poor Rosy, she has had no mother all these years that I've had my mother doing nothing but trying to make me good. But I am so glad Rosy is getting to like me."

For Rosy had kissed her warmly as they bade each other good-night for the second time.

"It was very nice of Bee to get out of bed in the dark to come to me," she said to herself. "She is good, but I don't think she is pretending," and it was this feeling that made the beginning of Rosy's friendship for Beata—*trust*.

The little girls slept till later than usual the next morning, for they had been a good while awake in the night. Rosy began grumbling and declaring she would not get up, and there was very nearly the beginning of a stormy scene with Martha when the sound of Bee's voice calling out "Good-morning, Rosy," from the next room reminded her of their talk in the night, and though she did not feel all at once able to speak good-naturedly to Martha, she left off scolding. But her face did not look as pleasant as Beata had hoped to see it when she came into the nursery.

"Don't speak to me, please," she said in a low voice, "I haven't settled yet what I'm going to do. I'm still thinking about it."

Bee did not say any more, but the morning passed peacefully, and once or twice when Colin began some of the teasing which seemed as necessary to him as his dinner or his breakfast, Rosy contented herself with a wriggle or a little growl instead of fiery words and sometimes even blows. And when Colin, surprised at her patience went further and further, ending by tying a long mesh of her hair to the back of her chair, while she was busy fitting a frock on to one of the little dolls, and then, calling her suddenly, made her start up and really hurt herself, Beata was astonished at her patience. She gave a little scream, it is true—who could have helped it?—and then rushed out of the room, but not before the others had seen the tears that were running down her cheeks.

"Colin," said Bee, and, for a moment or two, it almost seemed to the boy as if Rosy's temper had passed into the quiet little girl, "I am ashamed of you. You naughty, *cruel* boy, just when poor Rosy was—"

She stopped suddenly—"just when poor Rosy was beginning to try to be good," she was going

to have said, forgetting her promise to tell no one of Rosy's plans,—“just when we were all quiet and comfortable,” she said instead.

Colin looked ashamed.

“I won't do it any more,” he said, “I won't really. Besides there's no fun in only making her cry. It was only fun when it put her into a rage.”

“Nice *fun*,” said Bee, with scorn.

“Well, you know what I mean. I daresay it wasn't right, but I never meant really to hurt her. And all the fellows at school tease like that—one can't help getting into the way of it.”

“I never heard such a foolish way of talking,” answered Bee, who was for once quite vexed with Colin. “I don't think that's a reason for doing wrong things—that other people do them.”

“It's bad example—the force of bad example,” said Colin so gravely that Beata, who was perhaps a little matter-of-fact, would have answered him gravely had she not seen a little twinkle in his eyes, which put her on her guard.

“You are trying to tease *me* now, Colin,” she said. “Well, I don't mind, if you'll promise me to leave Rosy alone—any way for a few days; I've a very particular reason for asking it. Do promise, won't you?”

She looked up at him with her little face glowing with eagerness, her honest gray eyes bright with kindly feeling for Rosy. “You may tease me”—she went on—“as much as you like, if you must tease somebody.”

Colin could not help laughing.

“There wouldn't be much fun in teasing you, Bee,” he said. “You're far too good-natured. Well, I will promise you—I'll promise you more than you ask—listen, what a grand promise—I'll promise you not to tease Rosy for three whole months—now, what do you say to that, ma'am?”

Bee's eyes glistened.

“Three whole months!” she exclaimed. “Yes, that is a good promise. Why, by the end of the three months you'll have forgotten how to tease! But, Colin, please, it must be a secret between you and me about you promising not to tease Rosy. If she knew I had asked you it wouldn't do half as well.”

“Oh, it's easy enough to promise that,” said Colin. “Poor Bee,” he went on, half ashamed of having taken her in, “you don't understand why I promised for three months. It's because tomorrow I'm going back to school for three months.”

“*Are* you?” said Beata, in a disappointed tone. “I'm very sorry. I had forgotten about you going to school with your being here when I first came, you know.”

“Yes; and your lessons—yours and Rosy's and Fixie's, for he does a little too—they'll be beginning again soon. We've all been having holidays just now.”

“And who will give us lessons?” asked Beata.

“Oh, Miss Pink, Rosy's governess. Her real name's Miss Pinkerton, but it's so long, she doesn't mind us saying Miss Pink, for short.”

“Is she nice?” asked Bee. She felt a little dull at the idea of having still another stranger to make friends with.

“Oh yes, she's nice. Only she spoils Rosy—she's afraid of her tempers. You'll see. But you'll get on all right. I really think Rosy is going to be nicer, now you've come, Bee.”

“I'm so glad,” said Bee. “But I'm sorry you're going away, Colin. In three months you'll have forgotten how to tease, won't you?” she said again, smiling.

“I'm not so sure of that,” he answered laughingly. In her heart Bee thought perhaps it was a good thing Colin was going away for a while, for Rosy's sake. It might make it easier for her to carry out her good plans. But for herself Bee was sorry, for he was a kind, merry boy, and even his teasing did not seem to her anything very bad.

Rosy came back into the nursery with her eyes rather red, but the other children saw that she did not want any notice taken. She looked at Colin and Bee rather suspiciously. “Have you been talking about *me*?” her look seemed to say.

“I've been telling Bee about Miss Pink,” said Colin. “She hadn't heard about her before.”

“She's a stupid old thing,” said Rosy respectfully.

“But she's kind, isn't she?” asked Beata.

"Oh yes; I daresay you'll think her kind. But I don't care for her—much. She's rather pretending."

"I can't understand why you think so many people pretending," said Bee. "I think it must be very uncomfortable to feel like that."

"But if they *are* pretending, it's best to know it," said Rosy.

Beata felt herself getting puzzled again. Colin came to the rescue.

"I don't think it is best to know it," he said, "at least not Rosy's way, for she thinks it of everybody."

"No, I don't," said Rosy, "not *everybody*."

"Well, you think it of great lots, any way. I'd rather think some people good who aren't good than think some people who *are* good *not* good—wouldn't you, Bee?"

Beata had to consider a moment in order to understand quite what Colin meant; she liked to understand things clearly, but she was not always very quick at doing so.

"Yes," she said, "I think so too. Besides, there *are* lots of very kind and good people in the world—really kind and good, not pretending a bit. And then, too, mother used to tell me that feeling kind ourselves made others feel kind to us, without their quite knowing how sometimes."

Rosy listened, though she said nothing; but when she kissed Beata in saying good-night, she whispered, "I did go on trying, Bee, and I think it does get a very little easier. But I don't want *anybody* to know—you remember, don't you?"

"Yes, I won't forget," said Bee. "But if you go on, Rosy, everybody will find out for themselves, without *my* telling."

And in their different ways both little girls felt very happy as they fell asleep that night.

CHAPTER VI.

A STRIKE IN THE SCHOOLROOM.

"Multiplication's my vexation,
Division is as bad."

Colin went off to school "the day after to-morrow," as he had said. The house seemed very quiet without him, and everybody felt sorry he had gone. The day after he left Miss Pinkerton came back, and the little girls' lessons began.

"How do you like her?" said Rosy to Beata the first morning.

"I think she is kind," said Bee, but that was all she said.

It was true that Miss Pinkerton meant to be kind, but she did not manage to gain the children's hearts, and Bee soon came to understand why Rosy called her "pretending." She was so afraid of vexing anybody that she had got into the habit of agreeing with every one without really thinking over what they meant, and she was so afraid also of being blamed for Rosy's tempers that she would give in to her in any way. So Rosy did not respect her, and was sometimes really rude to her.

"Miss Pink," she said one morning a few days after lessons had begun again, "I don't want to learn any more arithmetic."

"No, my dear?" said Miss Pink, mildly. "But what will you do when you are grown-up if you cannot count—everybody needs to know how to count, or else they can't manage their money."

"I don't want to know how to manage my money," replied Rosy, "somebody must do it for me. I won't learn any more arithmetic, Miss Pink."

Miss Pink, as was a common way of hers in a difficulty with Rosy, pretended not to hear, but Beata noticed, and so, you may be sure, did Rosy, that they had no arithmetic that morning, though Miss Pink said nothing about it, leaving it to seem as if it were by accident.

Beata liked sums, and did them more quickly than her other lessons. But she said nothing. When lessons were over and they were alone, Rosy threw two or three books up in the air, and caught them again.

"Aha!" she said mischievously, "we'll have no more nasty sums—you'll see."

"Rosy," said Bee, "you can't be in earnest. Miss Pink won't leave off giving us sums for always."

"Won't she?" said Rosy. "She'll have to. *I* won't do them."

"I will," said Bee.

"How can you, if she doesn't give you any to do?"

"If she really doesn't give us any to do I'll ask her for them, and if she still doesn't, then I'll tell your mother that we're not learning arithmetic any more."

"You'll tell mamma," said Rosy, standing before her and looking very fierce.

"Yes," said Beata. "Arithmetic is one of the things my mother wants me to learn very well, and if Miss Pink doesn't teach it me I shall tell your mother."

"You mean tell-tale," cried Rosy, her face getting red with anger. "That's what you call being a friend to me and helping me to be good, when you know there's nothing puts me in such a temper as those *horrible* sums. I know now how much your kindness is worth," and what she would have gone on to say there is no knowing had not Fixie just then come into the room, and Rosy was not fond of showing her tempers off before her little brother.

Beata was very sorry and unhappy. She said nothing more, hoping that Rosy would come to see how mistaken she was, and the rest of the day passed quietly. But the next morning it was the same thing. When they came to the time at which they usually had their arithmetic, Rosy looked up at Miss Pink with a determined air.

"No arithmetic, Miss Pink, you know," she said.

Miss Pink gave a sort of little laugh.

"My dear Rosy," she said, "you are so very comical! Come now, get your slate—see there is dear Beata all ready with hers. You shall not have very hard sums to-day, I promise you."

"Miss Pink," said Rosy, "I won't do *any* sums. I told you so yesterday, and you know I mean what I say. If Bee chooses to tell tales, she may, but *I* won't do any sums."

Miss Pink looked from one to the other.

"There is no use my doing sums without Rosy," said Bee. "We are at the same place and it would put everything wrong."

"Yes," said Miss Pink. "I cannot give you separate lessons. It would put everything wrong. But I'm sure you're only joking, Rosy dear. We won't say anything about the sums to-day, and then to-morrow we'll go on regularly again, and dear Beata will see it will all be right."

"No," said Rosy, "it won't be all right if you try to make me do any sums to-morrow or any day."

Bee said nothing. She did not know what to say. She could hardly believe Rosy was the same little girl as the Rosy whom she had heard crying in the night, who had made her so happy by talking about trying to be good. And how many days the silly dispute might have gone on, there is no telling, had it not happened that the very next morning, just as they came to the time for the arithmetic lesson, the door opened and Mrs. Vincent came in.

"Good morning, Miss Pinkerton," she said. "I've come to see how you are all getting on,"—for Miss Pinkerton did not live in the house, she only came every morning at nine o'clock—"you don't find your new pupil *very* troublesome, I hope?" she went on, with a smile at Beata.

"Oh dear, no! oh, certainly not," said Miss Pinkerton nervously; "oh dear, no—Miss Beata is very good indeed. Everything's very nice—oh we're very happy, thank you—dear Rosy and dear Beata and I."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Mrs. Vincent, but she spoke rather gravely, for on coming into the room it had not looked to her as if everything *was* "very nice." Beata looked grave and troubled, Miss Pinkerton flurried, and there was a black cloud on Rosy's face that her mother knew only too well. "What lessons are you at now?" she went on.

"Oh, ah!" began Miss Pinkerton, fussing among some of the books that lay on the table. "We've just finished a chapter of our English history, and—and—I was thinking of giving the dear children a dictation."

"It's not the time for dictation," said Rosy. And then to Bee's surprise she burst out, "Miss Pink, I wonder how you can tell such stories! Everything is not quite nice, mamma, for I've just been telling Miss Pink I won't do any sums, and it's just the time for sums. I wouldn't do them

yesterday, and I won't do them to-day, or any day, because I hate them."

"You 'won't' and you 'wouldn't,' Rosy," said her mother, so sternly and coldly that Bee trembled for her, though Rosy gave no signs of trembling for herself. "Is that a way in which I can allow you to speak? You must apologise to Miss Pinkerton, and tell her you will be ready to do *any* lessons she gives you, or you must go upstairs to your own room."

"I'll go upstairs to my own room then," said Rosy at once. "I'd 'pologise to you, mamma, if you like, but I won't to Miss Pink, because she doesn't say what's true."

"Rosy, be silent," said her mother again. And then, turning to Miss Pinkerton, she added in a very serious tone, "Miss Pinkerton, I do not wish to appear to find fault with you, but I must say that you should have told me of all this before. It is most mistaken kindness to Rosy to hide her disobedience and rudeness, and it makes things much more difficult for me. I am *particularly* sorry to have to punish Rosy to-day, for I have just heard that a friend is coming to see us who would have liked to find all the children good and happy."

Rosy's face grew gloomier and gloomier. Beata was on the point of breaking in with a request that Rosy might be forgiven, but something in Mrs. Vincent's look stopped her. Miss Pinkerton grew very red and looked very unhappy—almost as if she was going to cry.

"I'm—I'm very sorry—very distressed. But I thought dear Rosy was only joking, and that it would be all right in a day or two. I'm sure, dear Rosy, you'll tell your mamma that you did not mean what you said, and that you'll do your best to do your sums nicely—now won't you, dear?"

"No," said Rosy, in a hard, cold tone, "I won't. And you might know by this time, Miss Pink, that I always mean what I say. I'm not like you."

After this there was nothing for it but to send Rosy up to her own room. Mrs. Vincent told Miss Pinkerton to finish the morning lessons with Beata, and then left the schoolroom.

Bee was very unhappy, and Miss Pink by this time was in tears.

"She's so naughty—so completely spoilt;" she said. "I really don't think I can go on teaching her. She's not like you, dear Beata. How happily and peacefully we could go on doing our lessons—you and I—without that self-willed Rosy."

Bee looked very grave.

"Miss Pink," she said, "I don't like you to speak like that at all. You don't say to Rosy to her face that you think her so naughty, and so I don't think you should say it to me. I think it would be better if you said to Rosy herself what you think."

"I couldn't," said Miss Pink. "There would be no staying with her if I didn't give in to her. And I don't want to lose this engagement, for it's so near my home, and my mother is so often ill. And Mr. and Mrs. Vincent have been very kind—very kind indeed."

"I think Rosy would like you better if you told her right out what you think," said Bee, who couldn't help being sorry for Miss Pinkerton when she spoke of her mother being ill. And Miss Pink was really kind-hearted, only she did not distinguish between weak indulgence and real sensible kindness.

When lessons were over Mrs. Vincent called Bee to come and speak to her.

"It is Mr. Furnivale who is coming to see us to-day," she said. "It is for that I am so particularly sorry for Rosy to be again in disgrace. And she has been so much gentler and more obedient lately, I am really *very* disappointed, and I cannot help saying so to you, Bee, though I don't want you to be troubled about Rosy."

"I do think Rosy wants—" began Bee, and then she stopped, remembering her promise. "Don't you think she will be sorry now?" she said. "Might I go and ask her?"

"No, dear, I think you had better not," said Mrs. Vincent. "I will see her myself in a little while. Yes, I believe she is sorry, but she won't let herself say so."

Beata felt sad and dull without Rosy; for the last few days had really passed happily. And Rosy shut up in her own room was thinking with a sort of bitter vexation rather than sorrow of how quickly her resolutions had all come to nothing.

"It's not my fault," she kept saying to herself, "it's all Miss Pink's. She knew I hated sums—that horrid kind of long rows worst of all—and she just gave me them on purpose; and then when I said I wouldn't do them, she went on coaxing and talking nonsense—that way that just *makes* me naughtier. I'd rather do sums all day than have her talk like that—and then to go and tell stories to mamma—I hate her, nasty, pretending thing. It's all her fault; and then she'll be going on praising Bee, and making everybody think how good Bee is and how naughty I am. I wish Bee hadn't come. I didn't mind it so much before. I wonder if *she* told mamma as she said she would, and if that was why mamma came in to the schoolroom *this* morning. I *wonder* if Bee could be so mean;" and in this new idea Rosy almost forgot her other troubles. "If Bee did do it I shall never

forgive her—never," she went on to herself; "I wouldn't have minded her doing it right out, as she said she would, but to go and tell mamma that sneaky way, and get her to come into the room just at that minute, no, I'll never—"

A knock at the door interrupted her, and then before she had time to answer, she heard her mother's voice outside. "I'll take it in myself, thank you, Martha," she was saying, and in a moment Mrs. Vincent came in, carrying the glass of milk and dry biscuit which the children always had at twelve, as they did not have dinner till two o'clock with their father's and mother's luncheon.

"Here is your milk, Rosy," said her mother, gravely, as she put it down on the table. "Have you anything to say to me?"

Rosy looked at her mother.

"Mamma," she said, quickly, "will you tell me one thing? Was it Bee that made you come into the schoolroom just at sums time? Was it because of her telling you what I had said that you came?"

Mrs. Vincent in her turn looked at Rosy. Many mothers would have refused to answer—would have said it was not Rosy's place to begin asking questions instead of begging to be forgiven for their naughty conduct; but Rosy's mother was different from many. She knew that Rosy was a strange character to deal with; she hoped and believed that in her real true heart her little girl *did* feel how wrong she was; and she wished, oh, how earnestly, to *help* the little plant of goodness to grow, not to crush it down by too much sternness. And in Rosy's face just now she read a mixture of feelings.

"No, Rosy," she answered very gently, but so that Rosy never for one instant doubted the exact truth of what she said, "no, Beata had not said one word about you or your lessons to me. I came in just then quite by accident. I am very sorry you are so suspicious, Rosy—you seem to trust no one—not even innocent-hearted, honest little Bee."

Rosy drew a long breath, and grew rather red. Her best self was glad to find Bee what she had always been—not to be obliged to keep to her terrible resolutions of "never forgiving," and so on; but her *worst* self felt a strange kind of crooked disappointment that her suspicions had no ground.

"Bee *said* she would tell you," she murmured, confusedly, "she said if I wouldn't go on with sums she'd complain to you."

"But she would have done it in an open, honest way," said her mother. "You *know* she would never have tried to get you into disgrace in any underhand way. But I won't say any more about Bee, Rosy. I must tell you that I have decided not to punish you any more to-day, and I will tell you that the reason is greatly that an old friend of ours—of your father's and mine—"

"Mr. Furniture!" exclaimed Rosy, forgetting her tempers in the excitement of the news.

"Yes, Mr. Furnivale," said her mother, and she could not keep back a little smile; "he is coming this afternoon. It would be punishing not only you, but your father and Bee and myself—all of us indeed—if we had to tell our old friend the moment he arrived that our Rosy was in disgrace. So you may go now and ask Martha to dress you neatly. Mr. Furnivale *may* be here by luncheon-time, and no more will be said about this unhappy morning. But Rosy, listen—I trust to your honour to try to behave so as to please me. I will say no more about your arithmetic lessons; will you act so as to show me I have not been foolish in forgiving you?"

The red flush came back to Rosy's face, and her eyes grew bright; she was not a child that cried easily. She threw her arms round her mother's neck, and whispered in a voice which sounded as if tears were not very far off,

"Mamma, I *do* thank you. I will try. I will do my sums as much as you like to-morrow, only—"

"Only what, Rosy?"

"Can you tell Miss Pink that it is to please *you* I want to do them, not to please *her*, mamma—she isn't like you. I don't believe what she says."

"I will tell Miss Pink that you want to please me certainly, but you must see, Rosy, that obeying her, doing the lessons she gives you by my wish, *is* pleasing me," said her mother, though at the same time in her own mind she determined to have a little talk with Miss Pink privately.

"Yes," said Rosy, "I know that."

She spoke gently, and her mother felt happier about her little girl than for long.

Mr. Furnivale did arrive in time for luncheon. He had just come when the little girls and Fixie went down to the drawing-room at the sound of the first gong. He came forward to meet the children with kindly interest in his face.

"Well, Fixie, my boy, and how are you?" he said, lifting the fragile little figure in his arms. "Why, I think you are a little bit fatter and a little bit rosier than this time last year. And this is your sister that I *don't* know," he went on, turning to Rosy, "and—why, bless my soul! here's another old friend—my busy Bee. I had no idea Mrs. Warwick had left her with you," he exclaimed to Mrs. Vincent.

Mrs. Warwick was Beata's mother. I don't think I have before told you Bee's last name.

"I was just going to tell you about it, when the children came in," said Rosy's mother. "I knew Cecilia would be so glad to know Bee was with us, and not at school, when her poor grandmother grew too ill to have her."

"Yes, indeed," said Mr. Furnivale, "Cecy will be glad to hear it. She had no idea of it. And so when you all come to pay us that famous visit we have been talking about, Bee must come too—eh, Bee?"

Bee's eyes sparkled. She liked kind, old Mr. Furnivale, and she had been very fond of his pretty daughter.

"Is Cecy much better?" she asked, in her gentle little voice.

"*Much* better. We're hoping to come back to settle in England before long, and have a nice house like yours, and then you are all to come to see us," said Mr. Furnivale.

They went on talking for a few minutes about these pleasant plans, and in the interest of hearing about Cecilia Furnivale, and hearing all her messages, Rosy, who had never seen her, and who was quite a stranger to her father too, was naturally left a little in the background. It was quite enough to put her out again.

"I might just as well have been left upstairs in my own room," she said to herself. "Nobody notices me—nobody cares whether I am here or not. *I* won't go to stay with that ugly old man and his stupid daughter, just to be always put behind Bee."

And when Beata, with a slight feeling that Rosy might be feeling herself neglected, and full of pleasure, too, at Mrs. Vincent's having forgiven her, slipped behind the others and took Rosy's hand in hers, saying brightly, "*Won't* it be nice to go and stay with them, Rosy?" Rosy pulled away her hand roughly, and, looking very cross, went back to her old cry.

"I wish you'd leave me alone, Bee. I hate that sort of pretending. You know quite well nobody would care whether *I* went or not."

And poor Bee drew back quite distressed, and puzzled again by Rosy's changeableness.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. FURNITURE'S PRESENT.

"And show me any courtly gem more beautiful than these."
—SONG OF THE STRAWBERRY GIRL.

"Your little girl is very pretty, unusually pretty," Mr. Furnivale was saying to Rosy's mother, as he sat beside her on the sofa during the few minutes they were waiting for luncheon, "and she looks so strong and well."

"Yes," said Mrs. Vincent, "she is very strong. I am glad you think her pretty," she went on. "It is always difficult to judge of one's own children, I think, or indeed of any face you see constantly. I thought Rosy very pretty, I must confess, when I first saw her again after our three years' separation, but now I don't think I could judge."

Mrs. Vincent gave a little sigh as she spoke, which made Mr. Furnivale wonder what she was troubled about. The truth was that she was thinking to herself how little she would care whether Rosy was pretty or not, if only she could feel more happy about her really trying to be a good little girl.

"Your little girl was with Miss Vincent while you were away, was she not?" said Mr. Furnivale.

"Yes," said Rosy's mother, "her aunt is very fond of her. She gave herself immense trouble for Rosy's sake."

"By-the-bye, she is coming to see you soon, is she not?" said Mr. Furnivale. "She is, as of course you know, an old friend of ours, and she writes often to ask how Cecy is. And in her last letter she said she hoped to come to see you soon."

"I have not heard anything decided about it," replied Mrs. Vincent. "I had begun to think she would not come this year—she was speaking of going to some seaside place."

"Ah, but I rather think she has changed her mind, then," said Mr. Furnivale, and then he went on to talk of something else to him of more importance. But poor Mrs. Vincent was really troubled.

"I should not mind Edith herself coming," she said to herself. "She is *really* good and kind, and I think I could make her understand how cruel it is to spoil Rosy. But it is the maid—that Nelson—I cannot like or trust her, and I believe she did Rosy more harm than all her aunt's over-indulgence. And Edith is so fond of her; I cannot say anything against her," for Miss Vincent was an invalid, and very dependent on this maid.

Little Beata noticed that during luncheon Rosy's mother looked troubled, and it made her feel sorry. Rosy perhaps would have noticed it too, had she not been so very much taken up with her own fancied troubles. She was running full-speed into one of her cross jealous moods, and everything that was said or done, she took the wrong way. Her father helped Bee before her—that, she could not but allow was right, as Bee was a guest—but now it seemed to her that he chose the nicest bits for Bee, with a care he never showed in helping her. Rosy was not the least greedy—she would have been ready and pleased to give away anything, *so long* as she got the credit of it, and was praised and thanked, but to be treated second-best in the way in which she chose to imagine she was being treated—*that*, she could not and would not stand. She sat through luncheon with a black look on her pretty face; so that Mr. Furnivale, whom she was beside, found her much less pleasant to talk to than Bee opposite, though Bee herself was less bright and merry than usual.

Mrs. Vincent felt glad that no more was said about Aunt Edith's coming. She felt that she did not wish Rosy to hear of it, and yet she did not like to ask Mr. Furnivale not to mention it, as it seemed ungrateful to think or speak of a visit from Miss Vincent except with pleasure. After luncheon, when they were again in the drawing-room, Mr. Furnivale came up to her with a small parcel in his hand.

"I am so sorry," he began, with a little hesitation, "I am so sorry that I did not know Beata Warwick was with you. Cecy had no idea of it, and she begged me to give *your* little girl this present we bought for her in Venice, and now I don't half like giving it to the one little woman when I have nothing for the other."

He opened the parcel as he spoke; it contained a quaint-looking little box, which in its turn, when opened, showed a necklace of glass beads of every imaginable colour. They were not very large—each bead perhaps about the size of a pea—of a large pea, that is to say. And some of them were long, not thicker, but twice as long as the others. I can scarcely tell you how pretty they were. Every one was different, and they were beautifully arranged so that the colours came together in the prettiest possible way. One was pale blue with little tiny flowers, pink or rose-coloured raised upon it; one was white with a sort of rainbow glistening of every colour through it; two or three were black, but with a different tracery, gold or red or bright green, on each; and some were a kind of mixture of colours and patterns which seemed to change as you looked at them, so that you could *fancy* you saw flowers, or figures, or tiny landscapes even, which again disappeared—and no two the same.

"Oh how lovely," exclaimed Rosy's mother, "how very, very pretty."

"Yes," said Mr. Furnivale, "they *are* pretty. And they are now rare. These are really old, and the imitation ones, which they make in plenty, are not half so curious. Cecy thought they would take a child's fancy."

"More than a *child's*," said Mrs. Vincent, smiling. "I think they are lovely—and what a pretty ornament they will be—fancy them on a white dress!"

"I am only sorry I have not two of them," said Mr. Furnivale, "or at least *something* else for the other little girl. You would not wish me, I suppose, to give the necklace to Beata instead of to Rosy?" he added.

Now Mrs. Vincent's own feeling was almost that she *would* better like it to be given to Beata. She was very unselfish, and her natural thought was that in anything of the kind, Bee, the little stranger, the child in her care, whose mother was so far away, should come first. But there was more to think of than this feeling of hers—

"It would be doing no real kindness to Bee," she said to herself, "to let Mr. Furnivale give it to her. It would certainly rouse that terrible jealousy of Rosy's, and it might grow beyond my power to undo the harm it would do. As it is, seeing, as I know she will, how simply and sweetly Beata behaves about it may do her lasting good, and draw the children still more together."

So she looked up at Mr. Furnivale with her pretty honest eyes—Rosy's eyes were honest too—and like her mother's when she was sweet and good—and said frankly,

"You won't think me selfish I am sure—I think you will believe that I do it from good motives—when I ask you not to change, but still to give it to Rosy. I will take care that little Bee does not

suffer for it in the end."

"And I too," said Mr. Furnivale, "If *can* find another necklace when I go back to Venice. I shall not forget to send it—indeed, I might write to the dealer beforehand to look out for one. I am sure you are right, and on the whole I am glad, for Cecy did buy it for your own little girl."

"Would you like to give it her now?" said Mrs. Vincent, and as Mr. Furnivale said "Yes," she went to the window opening out on to the lawn where the three children were now playing, and called Rosy.

"I wonder what mamma wants," thought Rosy to herself, as she walked towards the drawing-room rather slowly and sulkily, leaving Bee and Fixie to go on running races (for when I said "the children" were playing, I should have said Beata and Felix—not Rosy). "I daresay she will be going to scold me, now luncheon's over. I wish that ugly old Mr. Furniture would go away," for all the cross, angry, jealous thoughts had come back to poor Rosy since she had taken it into her head again about Bee being put before her, and all her good wishes and plans, which had grown stronger through her mother's gentleness, had again flown away, like a flock of frightened white doves, looking back at her with sad eyes as they flew.

Rosy's good angel, however, was very patient with her that day. Again she was to be tried with *kindness* instead of harshness; surely this time it would succeed.

"Rosy dear," said her mother, quite brightly, for she had not noticed Rosy's cross looks at dinner, and she felt a natural pleasure in the thought of her child's pleasure, "Mr. Furnivale—or perhaps I should say *Miss* Furnivale—whom we all speak of as "Cecy," you know, has sent you such a pretty present. See, dear—you have never, I think, had anything so pretty," and she held up the lovely beads before Rosy's dazzled eyes.

"Oh, how pretty!" exclaimed the little girl, her whole face lighting up, "O mamma, how very pretty! And they are for *me*. Oh, how very kind of Miss Furni—of Miss Cecy," she went on, turning to the old gentleman, "Will you please thank her for me *very* much?"

No one could look prettier or sweeter than Rosy at this moment, and Mr. Furnivale began to think he had been mistaken in thinking the little Vincent girl a much less lovable child than his old friend Beata Warwick.

"How very, very pretty," she repeated, touching the beads softly with her little fingers. And then with a sudden change she turned to her mother.

"Is there a necklace for Bee, too?" she said.

Mrs. Vincent's first feeling was of pleasure that Rosy should think of her little friend, but there was in the child's face a look that made her not sure that the question was quite out of kindness to Bee, and the mother's voice was a little grave and sad, as she answered.

"No, Rosy. There is not one for Bee. Mr. Furnivale brought it for you only."

Then Rosy's face was a curious study. There was a sort of pleasure in it—and this, I must truly say, was not pleasure that Bee had *not* a present also, for Rosy was not greedy or even selfish in the common way, but it was pleasure at being put first, and joined to this pleasure was a nice honest sorrow that Bee was left out. Now that Rosy was satisfied that she herself was properly treated she found time to think of Bee. And though the necklace had been six times as pretty, though it had been all pearls or diamonds, it would not have given Mrs. Vincent half the pleasure that this look of real unselfish sorrow in Rosy's face sent through her heart. More still, when the little girl, bending to her mother, whispered softly,

"Mamma, would it be right of me to give it to Bee? I wouldn't mind very much."

"No, darling, no; but I am *very* glad you thought of it. We will do something to make up for it to Bee." And she added aloud,

"Mr. Furnivale may *perhaps* be able to get one something like it for Bee, when he goes back to Italy."

"Then I may show it to her. It won't be unkind to show it her?" asked Rosy. And when her mother said "No, it would not be unkind," feeling sure, with her faith in Bee's goodness that Rosy's pleasure would be met with the heartiest sympathy—for "sympathy," dears, can be shown to those about us in their joys as well as in their sorrows—Rosy ran off in the highest spirits. Mr. Furnivale smiled as he saw her delight, and Mrs. Vincent was, oh so pleased to be able to tell him, that Rosy, of herself, had offered to give it to Bee, that that was what she had been whispering about.

"Not that Beata would have been willing to take it," she added, "she is the most unselfish child possible."

[Illustration: 'DID YOU EVER SEE ANYTHING SO PRETTY, BEE?' ROSY REPEATED.]

"And unselfishness is sometimes, catching, luckily for poor human nature," said the old

gentleman, laughing. And Mrs. Vincent laughed too—the whole world seemed to have grown brighter to her since the little gleam she believed she had had of true gold at the bottom of Rosy's wayward little heart.

And Rosy ran gleefully off to her friend.

"Bee, Bee," she cried, "stop playing, do. I have something to show you. And you too, Fixie, you may come and see it if you like. See," as the two children ran up to her breathlessly, and she opened the box, "see," and she held up the lovely necklace, lovelier than ever as it glittered in the sunshine, every colour seeming to mix in with the others and yet to stand out separate in the most beautiful way. "Did you *ever* see anything so pretty, Bee?" Rosy repeated.

"*Never*," said Beata, with her whole heart in her voice.

"Nebber," echoed Fixie, his blue eyes opened twice as wide as usual.

"And is it *yours*, Rosy?" asked Bee.

"Yes mine, my very own. Mr. Furniture brought it me from—from somewhere. I don't remember the name of the place, but I know it's somewhere in the country that's the shape of a boot."

"Italy," said Bee, whose geography was not quite so hazy as Rosy's.

"Yes, I suppose it's Italy, but I don't care where it came from as long as I've got it. Oh, isn't it lovely? I may wear it for best. Won't it be pretty with a quite white frock? And, Bee, they said something, but perhaps I shouldn't tell."

"Don't tell it then," said Bee, whose whole attention was given to the necklace. "O Rosy, I *am* so glad you've got such a pretty thing. Don't you feel happy?" and she looked up with such pleasure in her eyes that Rosy's heart was touched.

"Bee," she said quickly, "I do think you're very good. Are you not the least bit vexed, Bee, that *you* haven't got it, or at least that you haven't got one like it?"

Beata looked up with real surprise.

"Vexed that I haven't got one too," she repeated, "of course not, Rosy dear. People can't always have everything the same. I never thought of such a thing. And besides it is a pleasure to me even though it's not my necklace. It will be nice to see you wearing it, and I know you'll let me look at it in my hand sometimes, won't you?" touching the beads gently as she spoke. "See, Fixie," she went on, "what lovely colours! Aren't they like fairy beads, Fixie?"

"Yes," said Fixie, "they is welly *pitty*. I could fancy I saw fairies looking out of some of them. I think if we was to listen welly kietly p'raps we'd hear fairy stories coming out of them."

"Rubbish, Fixie," said Rosy, rather sharply. She was too fond of calling other people's fancies "rubbish." Fixie's face grew red, and the corners of his mouth went down.

"Rosy's only in fun, Fixie," said Bee. "You shouldn't mind. We'll try some day and see if we can hear any stories—any way we could fancy them, couldn't we? Are you going to put on the beads now, Rosy? I think I can fasten the clasp, if you'll turn round. Yes, that's right. Now don't they look lovely? Shall we run back to the house to let your mother see it on? O Rosy, you can't *think* how pretty it looks."

Off ran the three children, and Mrs. Vincent, as she saw them coming, was pleased to see, as she expected, the brightness of Rosy's face reflected in Beata's.

"Mother," whispered Rosy, "I didn't say anything to Bee about her perhaps getting one too. It was better not, wasn't it? It would be nicer to be a surprise."

"Yes, I think it would. Any way it is better to say nothing about it just yet, as we are not at all *sure* of it, you know. Does Bee think the beads very pretty, Rosy?"

"*Very*," said Rosy, "but she isn't the least *bit* vexed for me to have them and not her. She's *quite* happy, mamma."

"She's a dear child," said Mrs. Vincent, "and so are you, my Rosy, when you let yourself *be* your best self. Rosy," she went on, "I have a sort of feeling that this pretty necklace will be a kind of *talisman* to you—perhaps it is silly of me to say it, but the idea came into my mind—I was so glad that you offered to give it up to Bee, and I am so glad for you really to see for yourself how sweet and unselfish Bee is about it. Do you know what a talisman is?"

"Yes, mamma," said Rosy, with great satisfaction. "Papa explained it to me one day when I read it in a book. It is a kind of charm, isn't it, mamma?—a kind of nice fairy charm. You mean that I should be so pleased with the necklace, mamma, that it should make me feel happy and good whenever I see it, and that I should remember, too, how nice Bee has been about it."

"Yes, dear," said her mother. "If it makes you feel like that, it *will* be a talisman."

And feeling remarkably pleased with herself and everybody else, Rosy ran off.

Mr. Furnivale left the next day, but not without promises of another visit before very long.

"When Cecy will come with you," said Mrs. Vincent.

"And give her my bestest love," said Fixie.

"Yes, indeed, my little man," said Mr. Furnivale, "and I'll tell her too that she would scarcely know you again—so fat and rosy!"

"And my love, please," said Beata, "I would *so* like to see her again."

"And mine," added Rosy. "And please tell her how *dreadfully* pleased I am with the beads."

And then the kind old gentleman drove away.

For some time after this it really seemed as if Rosy's mother's half fanciful idea was coming true. There was such a great improvement in Rosy—she seemed so much happier in herself, and to care so much more about making other people happy too.

"I really think the necklace *is* a talisman," said Mrs. Vincent, laughing, to Rosy's father one day.

Not that Rosy always wore it. It was kept for dress occasions, but to her great delight her mother let her take care of it herself, instead of putting it away with the gold chain and locket her aunt had given her on her last birthday, and the pearl ring her other godmother had sent her, which was much too large for her small fingers at present, and her ivory-bound prayer-book, and various other treasures to be enjoyed by her when she should be "a big girl." And many an hour the children amused themselves with the lovely beads, examining them till they knew every one separately. They even, I believe, had a name for each, and Fixie had a firm belief that inside each crystal ball a little fairy dwelt, and that every moonlight night all these fairies came out and danced about Rosy's room, though he never could manage to keep awake to see them.

Altogether, there was no end to the pretty fancies and amusement which the children got from "Mr. Furniture's present."

CHAPTER VIII.

HARD TO BEAR.

"Give unto me, made lowly-wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice."
—ODE TO DUTY.

For some weeks things went on very happily. Of course there were little troubles among the children sometimes, but compared with a while ago the nursery was now a very comfortable and peaceful place.

Martha was quietly pleased, but she had too much sense to say much about it. Miss Pink was so delighted, that if Bee had not been a modest and sensible little girl, Miss Pink's over praise of her, as the cause of all this improvement, might have undone all the good. Not that Miss Pink was not ready to praise Rosy too, and in a way that would have done her no good either, if Rosy had cared enough for her to think much of her praise or her blame. But one word or look even from her mother was getting to be more to Rosy than all the good-natured little governess's chatter; a nice smile from Martha even, she felt to mean *really* more, and one of Beata's sweet, bright kisses would sometimes find its way straight to Rosy's queerly hidden-away heart.

"You see, Rosy, it *does* get easier," Bee ventured to say one day. She looked up a little anxiously to see how Rosy would take it, for since the night she had found Rosy sobbing in bed they had never again talked together quite so openly. Indeed, Rosy was not a person whose confidence was easy to gain. But she was honest—that was the best of her.

She looked up quickly when Bee spoke.

"Yes," she said, "I think it's getting easier. But you see, Bee, there have only been nice things lately. If anything was to come to vex me very much, I daresay it would be just like it used to be again. There's not even been Colin to tease me for a long time!"

Rosy's way of talking of herself puzzled Bee, though she couldn't quite explain it. It was right, she knew, for Rosy not to feel too sure of herself, but still she went too far that way. She almost

talked as if she had nothing to do with her own faults, that they must come or not come like rainy days.

"What are you thinking, Bee?" she said, as Bee did not answer at once.

"I can't tell you quite how I mean, for I don't know it myself," said Bee. "Only I think you are a little wrong. You should try to say, 'If things come to vex me, I'll *try* not to be vexed.'"

Rosy shook her head.

"No," she said, "I can't say that, for I don't think I should *want* to try," and Beata felt she could not say any more, only she very much hoped that things to vex Rosy would *not* come!

The first thing at all out of the common that did come was, or was going to be, perhaps I should say, a very nice thing. A note came one day to Rosy's mother to say that a lady, a friend of hers living a few miles off, wanted to see her, to talk over a plan she had in her head for a birthday treat to her two little daughters. These two children were twins; they were a little younger than Rosy, and she did not know them *very* well, as they lived some way off; but Mrs. Vincent had often wished they could meet oftener, as they were very nice and good children.

And when Lady Esther had been, and had had her talk with Rosy's mother, she looked in at the schoolroom a moment in passing, and kissed the little girls, smiling, and seeming very pleased, for she was so kind that nothing pleased her so much as to give pleasure to others.

"Your mother will tell you what we have been settling," she said, nodding her head and looking very mysterious.

And that afternoon Mrs. Vincent told the children all about it. Lady Esther was going to have a *fête* for the twins' birthday—a garden-*fête*, for it was to be hoped by that time the weather could be counted upon, and all the children were to have fancy dresses! That was to be the best fun of it all. Not very grand or expensive dresses, and nothing which would make them uncomfortable, or prevent their running about freely. Lady Esther's idea was that the children should be dressed in *sets*, which would look very pretty when they came into the big hall to dance before leaving. Lady Esther had proposed that Rosy and Bee should be dressed as the pretty French queen, Marie Antoinette, whom no doubt you have heard of, and her sister-in-law the good princess, Madame Elizabeth. Fixie was to be the little prince, and Lady Esther's youngest little girl the young princess, while the twins were to be two maids of honour. But Rosy's mother had said she would like better for her little girls to be the maids of honour, and the twins to be the queen and princess, which seemed quite right, as the party was to be in their house. And so it was settled.

A few days later Lady Esther sent over sketches of the dresses she proposed to have, and the children were greatly pleased and interested.

"May I wear my beads, mamma?" asked Rosy.

Mrs. Vincent smiled.

"I daresay you can," she said, and Rosy clapped her hands with delight, and everything seemed as happy as possible.

"But remember," said Mrs. Vincent, "it is still quite a month off. Do not talk or think about it *too* much, or you will tire yourselves out in fancy before the real pleasure comes."

This was good advice. Bee tried to follow it by doing her lessons as usual, and giving the same attention to them. But Rosy, with some of her old self-will, would not leave off talking about the promised treat. She was tiresome and careless at her lessons, and Miss Pink was not firm enough to check her. Morning, noon, and night, Rosy went on about the *fete*, most of all about the dresses, till Bee sometimes wished the birthday treat had never been thought of, or at least that Rosy had never been told of it.

One morning when the children came down to see Mr. and Mrs. Vincent at their breakfast, which they often were allowed to do, though they still had their own breakfast earlier than the big people, in the nursery with Martha, Beata noticed that Rosy's mother looked grave and rather troubled. Bee took no notice of it, however, except that when she kissed her, she said softly,

"Are you not quite well, auntie?" for so Rosy's mother liked her to call her.

"Oh yes, dear, I am quite well," she answered, though rather wearily, and a few minutes after, when Mr. Vincent had gone out to speak to some of the servants, she called Rosy and Bee to come to her.

"Rosy and Bee," she said kindly but gravely, "do you remember my advising you not to talk or to think too much about Lady Esther's treat?"

"Yes," said Bee, and "Yes," said Rosy, though in a rather sulky tone of voice.

"Well, then, I should not have had to remind you both of my advice. I am really sorry to have

to find fault about anything to do with the birthday party. I wanted it to have been nothing but pleasure to you. But Miss Pink has told me she does not know what to do with you—that you are so careless and inattentive, and constantly chattering about Lady Esther's plan, and that at last she felt she must tell me."

Bee felt her cheeks grow red. Mrs. Vincent thought she felt ashamed, but it was not shame. Poor Bee, she had *never* before felt as she did just now. It was not true—how could Miss Pink have said so of her? She knew it was not true, and the words, "I *haven't* been careless—I did do just what you said," were bursting out of her lips when she stopped. What good would it do to defend herself except to make Mrs. Vincent more vexed with Rosy, and to cause fresh bad feelings in Rosy's heart? Would it not be better to say nothing, to bear the blame, rather than lose the kind feelings that Rosy was getting to have to her? All these thoughts were running through her mind, making her feel rather puzzled and confused, for Bee did not always see things very quickly; she needed to think them over, when, to her surprise, Rosy looked up.

"It isn't true," she said, not very respectfully it must be owned, "it isn't true that Bee has been careless. If Miss Pink thinks telling stories about Bee will make me any better, she's very silly, and I shall just not care what she says about anything."

"Rosy," said Mrs. Vincent sternly, "you shall care what *I* say. Go to your room and stay there, and you, Beata, go to yours. I am surprised that you should encourage Rosy in her naughty contradiction, for it is nothing else that makes her speak so of what Miss Pink felt obliged to say of you."

Rosy turned away with the cool sullen manner that had not been seen for some time. Bee, choking with sobs—never, *never*, she said to herself, not even when her mother went away, had she felt so miserable, never had Aunt Lillias spoken to her like that before—poor Bee rushed off to her room, and shutting the door, threw herself on the floor and wondered *what* she should do!

Mrs. Vincent, if she had only known it, was nearly as unhappy as she. It was not often she allowed herself to feel worried and vexed, as she had felt that morning, but everything had seemed to go wrong—Miss Pink's complaints, which were *not* true, about Bee had really grieved her. For Miss Pink had managed to make it seem that it was mostly Bee's fault—and she had said little things which had made Mrs. Vincent really unhappy about Bee being so very sweet and good before people, but not *really* so good when one saw more of her.

Mrs. Vincent would not let Miss Pink see that she minded what she said; she would hardly own it to herself. But for all that it had left a sting.

"*Can* I have been mistaken in Bee?" was the thought that kept coming into her mind. For Miss Pink had mixed up truth with untruths.

"*Rosy*," she had said, "whatever her faults, is so very honest," which her mother knew to be true, but Mrs. Vincent did not—for she was too honest herself to doubt other people—see that Miss Pink liked better to throw the blame on Bee, not out of ill-will to Bee, but because she was so very afraid that if there was any more trouble about Rosy, she would have to leave off being her governess.

Then this very morning too had brought a letter from Rosy's aunt, proposing a visit for the very next week, accompanied, of course, by the maid who had done Rosy so much harm! Poor Mrs. Vincent—it really was trying—and she did not even like to tell Rosy's father how much she dreaded his sister's visit. For Aunt Edith had meant and wished to be so truly kind to Rosy that it seemed ungrateful not to be glad to see her.

Rosy and Bee were left in their rooms till some time later than the usual school-hour, for Mrs. Vincent, wanting them to think over what she had said, told Miss Pink to give Fixie his lessons first, and then, before sending for the little girls to come down, she had a talk with Miss Pink.

"I have spoken to both Rosy and Bee very seriously, and told them of your complaints," she said.

Miss Pink grew rather red and looked uncomfortable.

"I should be sorry for them to think I complained out of any unkindness," she said.

"It is not unkindness. It is only telling the truth to answer me when I ask how they have been getting on," said Mrs. Vincent, rather coldly. "Besides I myself saw how very badly Rosy's exercises were written. I am very disappointed about Beata," she added, looking Miss Pink straight in the face, and it seemed to her that the little governess grew again red. "I can only hope they will both do better now."

Then Rosy and Bee were sent for. Rosy came in with a hard look on her face. Bee's eyes were swollen with crying, and she seemed as if she dared not look at her aunt, but she said nothing. Mrs. Vincent repeated to them what she had just said about hoping they would do better.

"I will do my best," said Beata tremblingly, for she felt as if another word would make her burst out crying again.

"Oh, I am sure they are both going to be very good little girls now," said Miss Pink, in her silly, fussy way, as if she was in a hurry to change the subject, which indeed she was.

Bee raised her poor red eyes, and looked at her quietly, and Mrs. Vincent saw the look. Rosy, who had not yet spoken, muttered something, but so low that nobody could quite hear it; only the words "stories" and "not true" were heard.

"Rosy," said her mother very severely, "be silent!" and soon after she left the room.

The schoolroom party was not a very cheerful one this morning, but things went on quietly. Miss Pink was plainly uncomfortable, and made several attempts to make friends, as it were, with Bee. Bee answered gently, but that was all, and as soon as lessons were over she went quietly upstairs.

Two days after, Miss Vincent arrived. Rosy was delighted to hear she was coming, and her pleasure in it seemed to make her forget about Bee's undeserved troubles. So poor Bee had to try to forget them herself. Her lessons were learnt and written without a fault—it was impossible for Miss Pink to find anything to blame; and indeed she did not wish to do so, or to be unkind, to Beata, so long as things went smoothly with Rosy. And for these two days everything was very smooth. Rosy did not want to be in disgrace when her aunt came, and she, too, did her best, so that the morning of the day when Miss Vincent was expected, Miss Pink told the children, with a most amiable face, that she would be able to give a very good report of them to Rosy's mother.

Bee said nothing. Rosy, turning round, saw the strange, half-sad look on Bee's face, and it came back into her mind how unhappy her little friend had been, and how little she had deserved to be so. And in her heart, too, Rosy knew that in reality it was owing to *her* that Beata had suffered, and a sudden feeling of sorrow rushed over her, and, to Miss Pink's and Bee's astonishment, she burst out,

"You may say what you like of me to mamma, Miss Pink. It is true I have done my lessons well for two days, and it is true I did them badly before. But if you can't tell the truth about Bee, it would be much better for you to say nothing at all."

Miss Pink grew pinker than usual, and she was opening her lips to speak, when Beata interrupted her.

"Don't say anything, Miss Pink," she said. "It's no good. *I* have said nothing, and—and I'll try to forget—you know what. I don't want there to be any more trouble. It doesn't matter for me. O Rosy dear," she went on entreatingly, "*don't* say anything more that might make more trouble, and vex your mamma with you, just as your aunt's coming. Oh, *don't*."

She put her arms round Rosy as if she would have held her back, Rosy only looking half convinced. But in her heart Rosy *was* very anxious not to be in any trouble when her aunt came. She didn't quite explain to herself why. Some of the reasons were good, and some were not very good. One of the best was, I think, that she didn't want her mother to be more vexed, or to have the fresh vexation of her aunt seeming to think—as she very likely would, if there was any excuse for it—that Rosy was less good under her mother's care than she had been in Miss Vincent's.

Rosy was learning truly to love, and what, for her nature, was almost of more consequence, really to *trust* her mother, and a feeling of *loyalty*—if you know what that beautiful word means, dear children,—I hope you do—was beginning for the first time to grow in her cross-grained, suspicious little heart. Then, again, for her own sake, Rosy wished all to be smooth when her aunt and Nelson arrived, which was not a *bad* feeling, if not a very good or unselfish one. And then, again, she did not want to have any trouble connected with Bee. She knew her Aunt Edith had not liked the idea of Bee coming, and that if she fancied the little stranger was the cause of any worry to her darling she would try to get her sent away. And Rosy did not now *at all* want Bee to be sent away!

These different feelings were all making themselves heard rather confusedly in her heart, and she hardly knew what to answer to Bee's appeal, when Miss Pink came to the rescue.

"Bee is right, Rosy," she said, her rather dolly-looking face flushing again. "It is much better to leave things. You may trust me to—to speak very kindly of—of you *both*. And if I was—at all mistaken in what I said of you the other day, Bee—perhaps you had been trying more than I—than I gave you credit for—I'm very sorry. If I can say anything to put it right, I will. But it is very difficult to—to tell things quite correctly sometimes. I had been worried and vexed, and then Mrs. Vincent rather startled me by asking me about you, Rosy, and by something she said about my not managing you well. And—oh, I don't know *what* we would do, my mother and I, if I lost this nice situation!" she burst out suddenly, forgetting everything else in her distress. "And poor mamma has been *so* ill lately, I've often scarcely slept all night. I daresay I've been cross sometimes"—and Miss Pink finished up by bursting into tears. Her distress gave the finishing touch to Bee's determination to bear the undeserved blame.

"No, poor Miss Pink," she said, running round to the little governess's side of the table, "*don't* think you are cross. I shouldn't mind if you were a little sometimes. And I know we are often troublesome—aren't we, Rosy?" Rosy gave a little grunt, which was a good deal for her, and showed that her feelings, too, were touched. "But just then I *had* been trying. Aunt Lillias had

spoken to us about it, and I *did* want to please her"—and the unbidden tears rose to Bee's eyes. "Please, Miss Pink, don't think I don't know when I *am* to blame, but—but you won't speak that way of me another time when I've not been to blame." A sort of smothered sob here came from Miss Pink, as a match to Rosy's grunt. "And *please*," Bee went on, "don't say *anything* more about that time to Aunt Lillias. It's done now, and it would only make fresh trouble."

That it would make trouble for *her*, Miss Pink felt convinced, and she was not very difficult to persuade to take Bee's advice.

"It would indeed bring *me* trouble," she thought, as she walked home more slowly than usual that the fresh air might take away the redness from her eyes before her mother saw her. "I know Mrs. Vincent would never forgive me if she thought I had exaggerated or misrepresented. I'm sure I didn't want to blame Bee; but I was so startled; and Mrs. Vincent seemed to think so much less of it when I let her suppose they had *both* been careless and tiresome. But it has been a lesson to me. And Beata is *very* good. I could never say a word against her again."

Miss Vincent arrived, and with her, of course, her maid Nelson. Everything went off most pleasantly the first evening. Aunt Edith seemed delighted to see Rosy again, and that was only kind and natural. And she said to every one how well Rosy was looking, and how much she was grown, and said, too, how nice it was for her to have a companion of her own age. She had been so pleased to hear about little Miss Warwick from Cecy Furnivale, whom she had seen lately.

Bee stared rather at this. She hardly knew herself under the name of little Miss Warwick; but she answered Miss Vincent's questions in her usual simple way, and told Rosy, when they went up to bed, that she did not wonder she loved her aunt—she seemed so very kind.

"Yes," said Rosy. Then she sat still for a minute or two, as if she was thinking over something very deeply. "I don't think I'd like to go back to live with auntie," she said at last.

"To leave your mother! No, *of course* you wouldn't," exclaimed Bee, as if there could be no doubt about the matter.

"But I did think once I would," said Rosy, nodding her head—"I did."

"I don't believe you really did," said Bee calmly. "Perhaps you *thought* you did when you were vexed about something."

"Well, I don't see much difference between wanting a thing, and *thinking* you want it," said Rosy.

This was one of the speeches which Bee did not find it very easy to answer all at once, so she told Rosy she would think it over in her dreams, for she was very sleepy, and she was sure Aunt Lillias would be vexed if they didn't go to bed quickly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOLE IN THE FLOOR.

"And the former called the latter 'little Prig.'"—EMERSON.

"And how well that sweet child is looking, Nelson," said Miss Vincent that evening to her maid as she was brushing her hair.

"I am glad you think so, ma'am," replied Nelson, in a rather queer tone of voice.

"Why, what do you mean?" said Miss Vincent. "Do *you* not think so? To be sure it was by candlelight, and I am very near-sighted, but I don't think any one could say that she looks ill. She is both taller and stouter."

"Perhaps so, ma'am. I wasn't thinking so much of her healthfulness. With the care that *was* taken of her, she couldn't but be a fine child. But it's her *feelin's*, ma'am, that seems to be so changed. All her spirits, her lovely high spirits, gone! Why, this evening, that Martha—or whatever they call her—a' upsetting thing *I* call her—spoke to her that short about having left the nursery door open because Master Fixie chose to fancy he was cold, that I wonder any young lady would take it. And Miss Rosy, bless her, up she got and shut it as meek as meek, and 'I'm very sorry, Martha—I forgot,' she said. I couldn't believe my ears. I could have cried to see her so kept down like. And she's so quiet and so grave."

"She is certainly quieter than she used to be," said Miss Vincent, "but surely she can't be unhappy. She would have told me—and I thought it was so nice for her to have that little companion."

"Umph," said Nelson. She had a way of her own of saying "umph" that it is impossible to

describe. Then in a minute or two she went on again. "Well, ma'am, you know I'm one as must speak my mind. And the truth is I *don't* like that Miss Bee, as they call her, at all. She's far too good, by way of being too good, I mean, for a child. Give me Miss Rosy's tempers and fidgets—I'd rather have them than those smooth-faced ways. And she's come round Miss Rosy somehow. Why, ma'am, you'd hardly believe it, she'd hardly a word for me when she first saw me. It was 'Good-evening, Nelson. How do you do?' as cool like as could be. And it was all that Miss Bee's doing. I saw Miss Rosy look round at her like to see what she thought of it."

"Well, well, Nelson," said Miss Vincent, quite vexed and put out, "I don't see what is to be done. We can't take the child away from her own parents. All the same, I'm very glad to have come to see for myself, and if I find out anything not nice about that child, I shall stand upon no ceremony, I assure you," and with this Nelson had to be content.

It was true that Rosy had met Nelson very coldly. As I have told you before, Rosy was by no means clever at *pretending*, and a very good thing it is *not* to be so. She had come to take a dislike to Nelson, and to wonder how she could ever have been so under her. Especially now that she was learning to love and trust Beata, she did not like to let her know how many wrong and jealous ideas Nelson had put in her head, and so before Beata she was very cold to the maid. But in this Rosy was wrong. Nelson had taught her much that had done her harm, but still she had been, or had meant to be, very good and kind to Rosy, and Rosy owed her for this real gratitude. It was a pity, too, for Bee's sake that Rosy had been so cold and stiff to Nelson, for on Bee, Nelson laid all the blame of it, and the harm did not stop here, as you will see.

Miss Vincent never got up early, and the next morning passed as usual. But she sent for Rosy to come to her room while she was dressing, after the morning lessons were over, which prevented the two little girls having their usual hour's play in the garden, and Beata wandered about rather sadly, feeling as if Rosy was being taken away from her. At luncheon Rosy came in holding her aunt's hand and looking very pleased.

"You don't know what lovely things auntie's been giving me," she said to Bee as she passed her. "And Nelson's making me such a *beautiful* apron—the newest fashion."

Nelson had managed to get into Rosy's favour again—that was clear. Beata did not think this to herself. She was too simple and kind-hearted to think anything except that it was natural for Rosy to be glad to see her old nurse again, though Bee had a feeling somehow that she didn't much care for Nelson and that Nelson didn't care for her!

"By-the-bye, Rosy," said Mrs. Vincent, in the middle of luncheon, "did you show your aunt your Venetian beads?"

"Yes," said Miss Vincent, answering for Rosy, "she did, and great beauties they are."

"*Nelson* didn't think so—at least not at first," said Rosy, rather spitefully. She had always had a good deal of spite at Nelson, even long ago, when Nelson had had so much power of her. "Nelson said they were glass trash, till auntie explained to her."

"She didn't understand what they were," said Miss Vincent, seeming a little annoyed. "She thinks them beautiful now."

"Yes *now*, because she knows they must have cost a lot of money," persisted Rosy. "Nelson never thinks anything pretty that doesn't cost a lot."

These remarks were not pleasant to Miss Vincent. She knew that Mrs. Vincent thought Nelson too free in her way of speaking, and she did not like any of her rather impertinent sayings to be told over.

"Certainly," she thought to herself, "I think it is quite a mistake that Rosy is too much kept down," but just as she was thinking this, Rosy's mother looked up and said to her quietly, "Rosy, I don't think you should talk so much. And you, Bee, are almost too silent!" she added, smiling at Beata, for she had a feeling that since Miss Vincent's arrival Bee looked rather lonely.

"Yes," said Rosy's aunt, "we don't hear your voice at all, Miss Beata. You're not like my chatter-box Rosy, who always must say out what she thinks."

The words sounded like a joke—there was nothing in them to vex Bee, but something in the tone in which they were said made the little girl grow red and hot.

"I—I was listening to all of you," she said quietly. She was anxious to say something, not to seem to Mrs. Vincent as if she was cross or vexed.

"Yes," said Rosy's mother. "Rosy and her aunt have a great deal to say to each other after being so long without meeting," and Miss Vincent looked pleased at this, as Rosy's mother meant her to be.

"By-the-bye," continued Mrs. Vincent, "has Rosy told you all about the *fête* there is going to be at Summerlands?" Summerlands was the name of Lady Esther's house.

"Oh yes," said Miss Vincent, "and very charming it will be, no doubt, only *I* should have liked my pet to be the queen, as she tells me was at first proposed."

This was what Mrs. Vincent thought one of Aunt Edith's silly speeches, and Rosy could not help wishing when she heard it that she had not told her aunt that her being the queen had been thought of at all. She looked a little uncomfortable, and her mother, glancing at her, understood her feelings and felt sorry for her.

"I think it is better as it is," she said. "Would you like to hear about the dresses Rosy and Bee are to wear?" she went on. "I think they will be very pretty. Lady Esther has ordered them in London with her own little girls'." And then she told Miss Vincent all about the dresses, so that Rosy's uncomfortable feeling went away, and she felt grateful to her mother.

After luncheon the little girls went out together in the garden.

"I'm so glad to be together again," said Bee, "it seems to me as if I had hardly seen you to-day, Rosy."

"What nonsense!" said Rosy. "Why, I was only in auntie's room for about a quarter of an hour after Miss Pink went."

"A quarter of an hour," said Bee. "No indeed, Rosy. You were more than an hour, I am sure. I was reading to Fixie in the nursery, for he's got a cold and he mayn't go out, and you don't know what a great lot I read. And oh, Rosy, Fixie wants so to know if he may have your beads this afternoon, just to hold in his hand and look at. He can't hurt them."

"Very well," said Rosy. "He may have them for half an hour or so, but not longer."

"Shall I go and give them to him now?" said Bee, ready to run off.

"Oh no, he won't need them just yet. Let's have a run first. Let's see which of us will get to the middle bush first—you go right and I'll go left."

This race round the lawn was a favourite one with the children. They were playing merrily, laughing and calling to each other, when a messenger was seen coming to them from the house. It was Samuel the footman.

"Miss Rosy," he said as he came within hearing, "you must please to come in *at onst*. Miss Vincent is going a drive and you are to go with her."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rosy, "I don't think I want to go."

"I think you must," said Bee, though she could not help sighing a little.

"Miss Vincent is going to Summerlands," said Samuel.

"Oh, then I *do* want to go," said Rosy. "Never mind, Bee—I wish you were going too. But I'll tell you all I hear about the party when I come' back. But I'm sorry you're not going."

She kissed Bee as she ran off. This was a good deal more than Rosy would have done some weeks ago, and Bee, feeling this, tried to be content. But the garden seemed dull and lonely after Rosy had gone, and once or twice the tears would come into Bee's eyes.

"After all," she said to herself, "those little girls are much the happiest who can always live with their own mammas and have sisters and brothers of their own, and then there can't be strange aunts who are not their aunts." But then she thought to herself how much better it was for her than for many little girls whose mothers had to be away and who were sent to school, where they had no such kind friend as Mrs. Vincent.

"I'll go in and read to Fixie," she then decided, and she made her way to the house.

Passing along the passage by the door of Rosy's room, it came into her mind that she might as well get the beads for Fixie which Rosy had given leave for. She went in—the room was rather in confusion, for Rosy had been dressing in a hurry for her drive—but Bee knew where the beads were kept, and, opening the drawer, she found them easily. She was going away with them in her hand when a sharp voice startled her. It was Nelson. Bee had not noticed that she was in a corner of the room hanging up some of Rosy's things, for, much to Martha's vexation, Nelson was very fond of coming into Rosy's room and helping her to dress.

"What are you doing in Miss Rosy's drawers?" said Nelson; and Bee, from surprise at her tone and manner, felt herself get red, and her voice trembled a little as she answered.

"I was getting something for Master Fixie—something for him to play with." And she held up the necklace.

Nelson looked at her still in a way that was not at all nice. "And who said you might?" she said next.

"Rosy—*of course*, Miss Rosy herself," said Bee, opening her eyes, "I would not take anything of hers without her leave."

Nelson gave a sort of grunt. But she had an ill-will at the pretty beads, because she had called them rubbish, not knowing what they were; so she said nothing more, and Bee went quietly away, not hearing the words Nelson muttered to herself, "Sly little thing. I don't like those quiet ways."

When Bee got to the nursery, she was very glad she had come. Fixie was sitting in a corner looking very desolate, for Martha was busy looking over the linen, as it was Saturday, and his head was "a'ting dedfully," he said. He brightened up when he saw Bee and what she had brought, and for more than an hour the two children sat perfectly happy and content examining the wonderful beads, and making up little fanciful stories about the fairies who were supposed to live in them. Then when Fixie seemed to have had enough of the beads, Bee and he took them back to Rosy's room and put them carefully away, and then returned to the nursery, where they set to work to make a house with the chairs and Fixie's little table. The nursery was not carpeted all over—that is to say, round the edge of the room the wood of the floor was left bare, for this made it more easy to lift the carpet often and shake it on the grass, which is a very good thing, especially in a nursery. The house was an old one, and so the wood floor was not very pretty; here and there it was rather uneven, and there were queer cracks in it.

"See, Bee," said Fixie, while they were making their house, "see what a funny place I've found in the floor," and he pointed to a small, dark, round hole. It was made by what is called a knot in the wood having dried up and dropped out long, long ago probably, for, as I told you, the house was very old.

"What is there down there, does you fink?" said Fixie, looking up at Bee and then down again at the mysterious hole. "Does it go down into the middle of the world, p'raps?"

Beata laughed.

"Oh no, Fixie, not so far as that, I am sure," she said. "At the most, it can't go farther than the ceiling of the room underneath."

Fixie looked puzzled, and Bee explained to him that there was a small space left behind the wood planking which make the floor of one room and the thinner boards which are the ceiling of an under room.

[Illustration: 'WHAT IS THERE DOWN THERE, DOES YOU FINK?' SAID FIXIE]

"The ceiling doesn't need to be so strong, you see," she said. "We don't walk and jump on the ceiling, but we do on the floor, so the ceiling boards would not be strong enough for the floor."

"Yes," said Fixie, "on'y the flies walks on the ceiling, and they's not very heavy, is they, Bee? But," he went on, "I would like to see down into this hole. If I had a long piece of 'ting I could *fish* down into it, couldn't I, Bee? You don't fink there's anything dedful down there, do you? Not fogs or 'nakes?"

"No," said Bee, "I'm sure there are no frogs or snakes. There *might* be some little mice."

"Is mice the same as mouses?" said Fixie; and when Bee nodded, "Why don't you say mouses then?" he asked, "it's a much samer word."

"But I didn't make the words," said Bee, "one has to use them the way that's counted right."

But Fixie seemed rather grumbly and cross.

"I like mouses," he persisted; and so, to change his ideas, Bee went on talking about the knot hole. "We might get a stick to-morrow," she said, "and poke it down to see how far it would go."

"Not a 'tick," said Fixie, "it would hurt the little mouses. I didn't say a 'tick—I said a piece of 'ting. I fink you'se welly unkind, Bee, to hurt the poor little mouses," and he grew so very doleful about it that Bee was quite glad when Martha called them to tea.

"I don't know what's the matter with Fixie," she said to Martha, in a low voice.

"He's not very well," said Martha, looking at her little boy anxiously. But tea seemed to do Fixie good, and he grew brighter again, so that Martha began to think there could not be much wrong.

Nursery tea was long over before Rosy came home, and so she stayed down in the drawing-room to have some with her mother and aunt. And even after that she did not come back to the other children, but went into her aunt's room to look over some things they had bought in the little town they had passed, coming home. She just put her head in at the nursery door, seeming in very high spirits, and called out to Bee that she would tell her how nice it had been at Summerlands.

But the evening went on. Fixie grew tired and cross, and Martha put him to bed; and it was

not till nearly the big people's dinner-time that Rosy came back to the nursery, swinging her hat on her arm, and looking rather untidy and tired too. "I think I'll go to bed," she said. "It makes me feel funny in my head, driving so far."

"Let me put away your hat, Miss Rosy," said Martha, "it's getting all crushed and it's your best one."

"Oh, bother," said Rosy, and the tone was like the Rosy of some months ago. "What does it matter? *You* won't have to pay for a new one."

Martha said nothing, but quietly put away the hat, which had fallen on the floor. Bee, too, said nothing, but her heart was full. She had been alone, except for poor little Fixie, all the afternoon; and the last hour or so she had been patiently waiting for Rosy to come to the nursery to tell her, as she had promised, all her adventures.

"I'm going to bed," repeated Rosy.

"Won't you stay and talk a little?" said Bee; "you said you would tell me about Summerlands."

"I'm too tired," said Rosy. Then suddenly she added, sharply, "What were you doing in my drawers this afternoon?"

"In your drawers?" repeated Bee, half stupidly, as it were. She was not, as I have told you, very quick in catching up a meaning; she was thoughtful and clear-headed but rather slow, and when any one spoke sharply it made her still slower. "In your drawers, Rosy?" she said again, for, for a moment, she forgot about having fetched the necklace.

"Yes," said Rosy, "you were in my drawers, for Nelson told me. She said I wasn't to tell you she'd told me, but I told her I would. I don't like mean ways. But I'd just like to know what you were doing among my things."

It all came back to Bee now.

"I only went to fetch the beads for Fixie," she said, her voice trembling. "You said I might."

"And did you put them back again? And did you not touch anything else?" Rosy went on.

"Of course I put them back, and—*of course* I didn't touch anything else," exclaimed Bee. "Rosy, how can you, how dare you speak to me like that? As if I would steal your things. You have no *right* to speak that way, and Nelson is a bad, horrible woman. I will tell your mother all about it to-morrow morning."

And bursting into tears, Beata ran out of the nursery to take refuge in her own room. Nor would she come out or speak to Rosy when she knocked at the door and begged her to do so. But she let Martha in to help her to undress, and listened gently to the good nurse's advice not to take Miss Rosy's unkindness to heart.

"She's sorry for it already," said Martha. "And, though perhaps I shouldn't say it, you can see for yourself, Miss Bee dear, that it's not herself, as one may say." And Martha gave a sigh. "I'm sorry for Miss Rosy's mamma," she added, as she bid Bee good-night. And the words went home to Bee's loving, grateful little heart. It was very seldom, very seldom indeed, that unkind or ungentle thoughts or feelings rested there. Never hardly in all her life had Beata given way to anger as she had done that afternoon.

CHAPTER X.

STINGS FOR BEE.

"And I will look up the chimney,
And into the cupboard to make quite sure."
—AUTHOR OF LILLIPUT LEVEE.

Fixie was not quite well the next morning, as Martha had hoped he would be. Still he did not seem ill enough to stay in bed, so she dressed him as usual. But at breakfast he rested his head on his hand, looking very doleful, "very sorry for himself," as Scotch people say. And Martha, though she tried to cheer him up, was evidently anxious.

Mother came up to see him after breakfast, and she looked less uneasy than Martha.

"It's only a cold, I fancy," she said, but when Martha followed her out of the room and reminded her of all the children's illnesses Fixie had *not* had, and which often look like a cold at the beginning, she agreed that it might be better to send for the doctor.

"Have you any commissions for Blackthorpe?" she said to Miss Vincent when she, Aunt Edith, came down to the drawing-room, a little earlier than usual that morning. "I am going to send to ask the doctor to come and see Fixie."

Aunt Edith had already heard from Nelson about Felix not being well, and that was why she had got up earlier, for she was in a great fright.

"I am thankful to hear it," she said; "for there is no saying what his illness may be going to be. But, Lillias, *of course* you won't let darling Rosy stay in the nursery."

"I hadn't thought about it," said Rosy's mother. "Perhaps I am a little careless about these things, for you see all the years I was in India I had only Fixie, and he was quite out of the way of infection. Besides, Rosy has had measles and scarlet fever, and——"

"But not whooping-cough, or chicken-pox, or mumps, or even smallpox. Who knows but what it may be smallpox," said Aunt Edith, working herself up more and more.

Mrs. Vincent could hardly help smiling. "I *don't* think that's likely," she said. "However, I am glad you mentioned the risk, for I think there is much more danger for Bee than for Rosy, for Bee, like Fixie, has had none of these illnesses. I will go up to the nursery and speak to Martha about it at once," and she turned towards the door.

"But you will separate Rosy too," insisted Miss Vincent, "the dear child can sleep in my room. Nelson will be only too delighted to have her again."

"Thank you," said Rosy's mother rather coldly. She knew Nelson would be only too glad to have the charge of Rosy, and to put into her head again a great many foolish thoughts and fancies which she had hoped Rosy was beginning to forget. "It will not be necessary to settle so much till we hear what the doctor says. Of course I would not leave Rosy with Fixie and Bee by herself. But for to-day they can stay in the schoolroom, and I will ask Miss Pinkerton to remain later."

The doctor came in the afternoon, but he was not able to say much. It would take, he said, a day or two to decide what was the matter with the little fellow. But Fixie was put to bed, and Rosy and Bee were told on no account to go into either of the nurseries. Fixie was not sorry to go to bed; he had been so dull all the morning, playing by himself in a corner of the nursery, but he cried a little when he was told that Bee must not come and sit by him and read or tell him stories as she always was ready to do when he was not quite well. And Bee looked ready to cry too when she saw his distress!

It was not a very cheerful time. The children felt unsettled by being kept out of their usual rooms and ways. Rosy was constantly running off to her aunt's room, or to ask Nelson about something or other, and Bee did not like to follow her, for she had an uncomfortable feeling that neither Nelson nor her mistress liked her to come. Nelson was in a very gloomy humour.

"It will be a sad pity to be sure," she said to Rosy, "if Master Fixie's gone and got any sort of catching illness."

"How do you mean?" said Rosy. "It won't much matter except that Bee and I can't go into the nursery or my room. Bee's room has a door out into the other passage, I heard mamma saying we could sleep there if the nursery door was kept locked. I think it would be fun to sleep in Bee's room. I shouldn't mind."

Nelson grunted. She did not approve of Rosy's liking Beata.

"Ah, well," she said, "it isn't only your Aunt Edith that's afraid of infection. If it's measles that Master Fixie's got, you won't go to Lady Esther's party, Miss Rosy."

Rosy opened her eyes. "Not go to the party! we *must* go," she exclaimed, and before Nelson knew what she was about, off Rosy had rushed to confide this new trouble to Bee, and hear what she would say about it. Bee, too, looked grave, for her heart was greatly set on the idea of the Summerlands fete.

"I don't know," she replied. "I hope dear little Fixie is not going to be very ill. Any way, Rosy, I don't think Nelson should have said that. Your mother would have told us herself if she had wanted us to know it."

"Indeed," said a harsh voice behind her, "I don't require a little chit like you, Miss Bee, to teach me my duty," and turning round, Beata saw that Nelson was standing in the doorway, for she had followed Rosy, a little afraid of the effect of what she had told her. Bee felt sorry that Nelson had overheard what she had said, though indeed there was no harm in it.

"I did not mean to vex you, Nelson," she said, "but I'm sure it is better to wait till Aunt Lillias tells us herself."

Nelson looked very angry, and walked off in a huff, muttering something the children could not catch.

"I wish you wouldn't always quarrel with Nelson," said Rosy crossly. "She always gets on with *me* quite well. I shall have to go and get her into a good humour again, for I want her to finish my apron."

Rosy ran off, but Bee stayed alone, her eyes filled with tears.

"It *isn't* my fault," she said to herself. "I don't know what to do. Nothing is the same since they came. I'll write to mother and ask her not to leave me here any longer. I'd rather be at school or anywhere than stay here when they're all so unkind to me now."

But then wiser thoughts came into her mind. They weren't "all" unkind, and she knew that Mrs. Vincent herself had troubles to bear. Besides—what was it her mother had always said to her?—that it was at such times that one's real wish to be good was tried; when all is smooth and pleasant and every one kind and loving, what is easier than to be kind and pleasant in return? It is when others are *not* kind, but sharp and suspicious and selfish, that one *has* to "try" to return good for evil, gentleness for harshness, kind thoughts and ways for the cold looks or angry words which one cannot help feeling sadly, but which lose half their sting when not treasured up and exaggerated by dwelling upon them.

And feeling happier again, Bee went back to what she was busy at—making a little toy scrap-book for Fixie which she meant to send in to him the next morning as if it had come by post. And she had need of her good resolutions, for she hardly saw Rosy again all day, and when they were going to bed Nelson came to help Rosy to undress and went on talking to her so much all the time about people and places Bee knew nothing about, that it was impossible for her to join in at all. She kissed Rosy as kindly as usual when Nelson had left the room, but it seemed to her that her kiss was very coldly returned.

"You're not vexed with me for anything, are you, Rosy?" she could not help saying.

"Vexed with you? No, I never said I was vexed with you," Rosy answered. "I wish you wouldn't go on like that, Bee, it's tiresome. I can't be always kissing and petting you."

And that was all the comfort poor Bee could get to go to sleep with!

For a day or two still the doctor could not say what was wrong with Fixie, but at last he decided that it was only a sort of feverish attack brought on by his having somehow or other caught cold, for there had been some damp and rainy weather, even though spring was now fast turning into summer.

The little fellow had been rather weak and out of sorts for some time, and as soon as he was better, Mrs. Vincent made up her mind to send him off with Martha for a fortnight to a sheltered seaside village not far from their home. Beata was very sorry to see them go. She almost wished she was going with them, for though she had done her best to be patient and cheerful, nothing was the same as before the coming of Rosy's aunt. Rosy scarcely seemed to care to play with her at all. Her whole time, when not at her lessons, was spent in her aunt's room, generally with Nelson, who was never tired of amusing her and giving in to all her fancies. Bee grew silent and shy. She was losing her bright happy manner, and looked as if she no longer felt sure that she was a welcome little guest. Mrs. Vincent saw the change in her, but did not quite understand it, and felt almost inclined to be vexed with her.

"She knows it is only for a short time that Rosy's aunt is here. She might make the best of it," thought Mrs. Vincent. For she did not know fully how lonely Bee's life now was, and how many cold or unkind words she had to bear from Rosy, not to speak of Nelson's sharp and almost rude manner; for, though Rosy was not cunning, Nelson was so, and she managed to make it seem always as if Bee, and not Rosy, was in fault.

"Where is Bee?" said Mrs. Vincent one afternoon when she went into the nursery, where, at this time of day, Nelson was now generally to be found.

"I don't know, mamma," said Rosy. Then, without saying any more about Bee, she went on eagerly, "Do look, mamma, at the lovely opera-cloak Nelson has made for my doll? It isn't *quite* ready—there's a little white fluff—"

"Swansdown, Miss Rosy, darling," said Nelson.

"Well, swansdown then—it doesn't matter—mamma knows," said Rosy sharply, "there's white stuff to go round the neck. Won't it be lovely, mother?"

She looked up with her pretty face all flushed with pleasure, for nobody could be prettier than Rosy when she was pleased.

"Yes dear, *very* pretty," said her mother. It was impossible to deny that Nelson was very kind and patient, and Mrs. Vincent would have felt really pleased if only she had not feared that Nelson did Rosy harm by her spoiling and flattery. "But where can Bee be?" she said again. "Does she not care about dolls too?"

"She used to," said Rosy. "But Bee is very fond of being alone now, mamma. And I don't care

for her when she looks so gloomy."

"But what makes her so?" said Mrs. Vincent. "Are you quite kind to her, Rosy?"

"Oh indeed, yes, ma'am," interrupted Nelson, without giving Rosy time to answer. "Of that you may be very sure. Indeed many's the time I say to myself Miss Rosy's patience is quite wonderful. Such a free, outspoken young lady as she is, and Miss Bee *so* different. I don't like them secret sort of children, and Miss Rosy feels it too—she—"

"Nelson, I didn't ask for your opinion of little Miss Warwick," said Mrs. Vincent, very coldly. "I know you are very kind to Rosy. But I cannot have any interference when I find fault with her."

Nelson looked very indignant, but Mrs. Vincent's manner had something in it which prevented her answering in any rude way.

"I'm sure I meant no offence," she said sourly, but that was all.

Beata was alone in the schoolroom, writing, or trying to write, to her mother. Her letters, which used to be such a pleasure, had grown difficult.

"Mamma said I was to write everything to her," she said to herself, "but I *can't* write to tell her I'm not happy. I wonder if it's any way my fault."

Just then the door opened and Mrs. Vincent looked in.

"All alone, Bee," she said. "Would it not be more cheerful in the nursery with Rosy? You have no lessons to do now?"

"No" said Bee, "I was beginning a letter to mamma. But it isn't to go just yet."

"Well, dear, go and play with Rosy. I don't like to see you moping alone. You must be my bright little Bee—you wouldn't like any one to think you are not happy with us?"

"Oh no," said Bee. But there was little brightness in her tone, and Mrs. Vincent felt half provoked with her.

"She has not really anything to complain of,"

she said to herself, "and she cannot expect me to speak to her against Aunt Edith and Nelson. She should make the best of it for the time."

As Bee was leaving the schoolroom Mrs. Vincent called her back.

"Will you tell Rosy to bring me her Venetian necklace to the drawing-room?" she said; "I want it for a few minutes." She did not tell Beata why she wanted it. It was because she had had a letter that morning from Mr. Furnivale asking her to tell him how many beads there were on Rosy's necklace and their size, as he had found a shop where there were two or three for sale, and he wanted to get one as nearly as possible the same for Beata.

Beata went slowly to the nursery. She would much rather have stayed in the schoolroom, lonely and dull though it was. When she got to the nursery she gave Rosy her mother's message, and asked her kindly if she might bring her dolls so that they could play with them together.

"I shan't get no work done," said Nelson crossly, "if there's going to be such a litter about."

"I'm going to take my necklace to mamma," said Rosy. "You may play with my doll till I come back, Bee."

She ran off, and Bee sat down quietly as far away from Nelson as she could. Five or ten minutes passed, and then the door suddenly opened and Rosy burst in with a very red face.

"Bee, Nelson," she exclaimed, "my necklace is *gone*. It is indeed. I've hunted *everywhere*. And somebody must have taken it, for I always put it in the same place, in its own little box. You know I do—don't I, Bee?"

Bee seemed hardly able to answer. Her face looked quite pale with distress.

"Your necklace gone, Rosy," she repeated. Nelson said nothing.

"Yes, *gone*, I tell you," said Rosy. "And I believe it's stolen. It couldn't go of itself, and I *never* left it about. I haven't had it on for a good while. You know that time I slept in your room, Bee, while Fixie was ill, I got out of the way of wearing it. But I always knew where it was, in its own little box in the far-back corner of the drawer where I keep my best ribbons and jewelry."

"Yes," said Bee, "I know. It was there the day I had it out to amuse Fixie."

Rosy turned sharply upon her.

"Did you put it back that day, Bee?" she said, "I don't believe I've looked at it since. Answer,

did you put it back?"

"Yes," said Bee earnestly, "yes, indeed; *indeed* I did. O Rosy, don't get like that," she entreated, clasping her hands, for Rosy's face was growing redder and redder, and her eyes were flashing. "O Rosy, *don't* get into a temper with me about it. I did, *did* put it back."

But it is doubtful if Rosy would have listened to her. She was fast working herself up to believe that Bee had lost the necklace the day she had had it out for Pixie, and she was so distressed at the loss that she was quite ready to get into a temper with *somebody*—when, to both the children's surprise, Nelson's voice interrupted what Rosy was going to say.

"Miss Warwick," she said, with rather a mocking tone—she had made a point of calling Bee "Miss Warwick" since the day Mrs. Vincent had spoken of the little girl by that name—"Miss Warwick did put it back that day, Miss Rosy dear," she said. "For I saw it late that evening when I was putting your things away to help Martha as Master Fixie was ill." She did not explain that she had made a point of looking for the necklace in hopes of finding Bee had *not* put it back, for you may remember she had been cross and rude to Bee about finding her in Rosy's room.

"Well, then, where has it gone? Come with me, Bee, and look for it," said Rosy, rather softening down,—*"though I'm sure I've looked everywhere."*

"I don't think it's any use your taking Miss Warwick to look for it," said Nelson, getting up and laying aside her work. "I'll go with you, Miss Rosy, and if it's in your room I'll undertake to find it. And just you stay quietly here, Miss Bee. Too many cooks spoil the broth."

So Bee was left alone again, alone, and even more unhappy than before, for she was *very* sorry about Rosy's necklace, and besides, she had a miserable feeling that if it was never found she would somehow be blamed for its loss. A quarter of an hour passed, then half an hour, what could Rosy and Nelson be doing all this time? The door opened and Bee sprang up.

"Have you found it, Rosy?" she cried eagerly.

But it was not Rosy, though she was following behind. The first person that came in was Mrs. Vincent. She looked grave and troubled.

"Beata," she said, "you have heard about Rosy's necklace. Tell me all about the last time you saw it."

"It was when Rosy let Fixie have it to play with," began Bee, and she told all she remembered.

"And you are sure—*quite* sure—you never have seen it since?"

"*Quite* sure," said Bee. "I never touch Rosy's things without her leave."

Nelson gave a sort of cough. Bee turned round on her. "If you've anything to say you'd better say it now, before Mrs. Vincent," said Bee, in a tone that, coming from the gentle kindly little girl, surprised every one.

"Bee!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent, "What do you mean? Nelson has said *nothing* about you." This was quite true. Nelson was too clever to say anything right out. She had only hinted and looked wise about the necklace to Rosy, giving her a feeling that Bee was more likely to have touched it than any one else.

Bee was going to speak, but Rosy's mother stopped her. "You have told us all you know," she said. "I don't want to hear any more. But I am surprised at you, Bee, for losing your temper about being simply asked if you had seen the necklace. You might have forgotten at first if you had had it again for Fixie, and you *might* the second time have forgotten to put it back. But there is nothing to be offended at, in being asked about it."

She spoke coldly, and Bee's heart swelled more and more, but she dared not speak.

"There is nothing to do," said Mrs. Vincent, "that I can see, except to find out if Fixie could have taken it. I will write to Martha at once and tell her to ask him, and to let us know by return of post."

The letter was written and sent. No one waited for the answer more anxiously than Beata. It came by return of post, as Mrs. Vincent had said. But it brought only disappointment. "Master Fixie," Martha wrote, "knew nothing of Miss Rosy's necklace." He could not remember having had it to play with at all, and he seemed to get so worried when she kept on asking about it, that Martha thought it better to say no more, for it was plain he had nothing to tell.

"It is very strange he cannot remember playing with it that afternoon," said Mrs. Vincent. "He generally has such a good memory. You are sure you *did* give it to him to play with, Bee?"

"We played with it together. I told him stories about each bead," the little girl replied. And her voice trembled as if she were going to burst into tears.

"Then his illness since must have made him forget it," said Mrs. Vincent. But that was all she said. She did not call Bee to her and tell her not to feel unhappy about it—that she knew she could trust every word she said, as she once would have done. But she did give very strict orders that nothing more was to be said about the necklace, for though Nelson had not dared to hint anything unkind about Bee to Mrs. Vincent herself, yet Rosy's mother felt sure that Nelson blamed Bee for the loss, and wished others to do so, and she was afraid of what might be said in the nursery if the subject was still spoken about.

So nothing unkind was actually said to Beata, but Rosy's cold manner and careless looks were hard to bear.

And the days were drawing near for the long looked forward to fete at Summerlands.

CHAPTER XI.

A PARCEL AND A FRIGHT.

"She ran with wild speed, she rushed in at the door,
She gazed in her terror around."
—SOUTHEY.

But Beata could not look forward to it now. The pleasure seemed to have gone out of everything.

"Nobody loves me now, and nobody trusts me," she said sadly to herself. "And I don't know why it is. I can't think of anything I have done to change them all."

Her letter to her mother was already written and sent before the answer came from Martha. Bee had hurried it a little at the end because she wanted to have an excuse to herself for not telling her mother how unhappy she was about the loss of the necklace.

"If an answer comes from Martha that Fixie had taken it away or put it somewhere, it will be all right again and I shall be quite happy, and then it would have been a pity to write unhappily to poor mother, so far away," she said to herself. And when Martha's letter came and all was not right again, she felt glad that she could not write for another fortnight, and that perhaps by that time she would know better what to say, or that "somehow" things would have grown happier again. For she had promised, "faithfully" promised her mother to tell her truly all that happened, and that if by any chance she was unhappy about anything that she could not speak easily about to Mrs. Vincent,—though Bee's mother had little thought such a thing likely,—she would still write all about it to her own mother.

But a week had already passed since that letter was sent. It was growing time to begin to think about another. And no "somehow" had come to put things right again. Bee sat at the schoolroom window one day after Miss Pink had left, looking out on to the garden, where the borders were bright with the early summer flowers, and everything seemed sunny and happy.

"I wish I was happy too," thought Bee. And she gently stroked Manchon's soft coat, and wondered why the birds outside and the cat inside seemed to have all they wanted, when a little girl like her felt so sad and lonely. Manchon had grown fond of Bee. She was gentle and quiet, and that was what he liked, for he was no longer so young as he had been. And Rosy's pullings and pushings, when she was not in a good humour and fancied he was in her way, tried his nerves very much.

"Manchon," said Bee softly, "you look very wise. Why can't you tell me where Rosy's necklace is?"

Manchon blinked his eyes and purred. But, alas, that was all he could do.

Just then the door opened and Rosy came in. She was dressed for going out. She had her best hat and dress on, and she looked very well pleased with herself.

"I'm going out a drive with auntie," she said. "And mamma says you're to be ready to go a walk with her in half an hour."

She was leaving the room, when a sudden feeling made Bee call her back.

"Rosy," she said, "do stay a minute. Rosy, I am so unhappy. I've been thinking if I can't write a letter to ask mother to take me away from here. I would, only it would make her so unhappy."

Rosy looked a little startled.

"Why would you do that?" she said. "I'm sure I've not done anything to you."

"But you don't love me any more," said Bee. "You began to leave off loving me when your aunt and Nelson came,—I know you did,—and then since the necklace was lost it's been worse. What can I do, Rosy, what can I say?"

"You might own that you've lost it—at least that you forgot to put it back," said Rosy.

"But I *did* put it back. Even Nelson says that," said Bee. "I can't say I didn't when I know I did," she added piteously.

"But Nelson thinks you took it another time, and forgot to put it back. And I think so too," said Rosy. To do her justice, she never, like Nelson, thought that Bee had taken the necklace on purpose. She did not even understand that Nelson thought so.

"Rosy," said Bee very earnestly, "I did *not* take it another time. I have never seen it since that afternoon when Fixie had had it and I put it back. Rosy, *don't* you believe me?"

Rosy gave herself an impatient shake.

"I don't know," she said. "You might have forgotten. Anyway it was you that had it last, and I wish I'd never given you leave to have it; I'm sure it wouldn't have been lost."

Bee turned away and burst into tears.

"I *will* write to mamma and ask her to take me away," she said.

Again Rosy looked startled.

"If you do that," she said, "it will be very unkind to *my* mamma. Yours will think we have all been unkind to you, and then she'll write letters to my mamma that will vex her very much. And I'm sure *mamma's* never been unkind to you. I don't mind if you say *I'm* unkind; perhaps I am, because I'm very vexed about my necklace. I shall get naughty now it's lost—I know I shall," and so saying, Rosy ran off.

Bee left off crying. It was true what Rosy had said. It *would* make Mrs. Vincent unhappy and cause great trouble if she asked her mother to take her away. A new and braver spirit woke in the little girl.

"I won't be unhappy any more," she resolved. "I know I didn't touch the necklace, and so I needn't be unhappy. And then I needn't write anything to trouble mother, for if I get happy again it will be all right."

Her eyes were still rather red, but her face was brighter than it had been for some time when she came into the drawing-room, ready dressed for her walk.

"Is that you, Bee dear?" said Mrs. Vincent kindly. She too was ready dressed, but she was just finishing the address on a letter. "Why, you are looking quite bright again, my child!" she went on when she looked up at the little figure waiting patiently beside her.

"I'm very glad to go out with you," said Bee simply.

"And I'm very glad to have you," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Aunt Lillias," said Bee, her voice trembling a little, "may I ask you one thing? *You* don't think I touched Rosy's necklace?"

Mrs. Vincent smiled.

"*Certainly* not, dear," she said. "I did at first think you might have forgotten to put it back that day. But after your telling me so distinctly that you *had* put it back, I felt quite satisfied that you had done so."

"But," said Bee, and then she hesitated.

"But what?" said Mrs. Vincent, smiling.

"I don't think—I *didn't* think," Bee went on, gaining courage, "that you had been quite the same to me since then."

"And you have been fancying all kinds of reasons for it, I suppose!" said Mrs. Vincent. "Well, Bee, the only thing I have been not quite pleased with you for *has* been your looking so unhappy. I was surprised at your seeming so hurt and vexed at my asking you about the necklace, and since then you have looked so miserable that I had begun seriously to think it might be better for you not to stay with us. If Rosy or any one else has disobeyed me, and gone on talking about the necklace, it is very wrong, but even then I wonder at your allowing foolish words to make you so unhappy. *Has* any one spoken so as to hurt you?"

"No," said Bee, "not exactly, but—"

"But you have seen that there were unkind thoughts about you. Well, I am very sorry for it,

but at present I can do no more. You are old enough and sensible enough to see that several things have not been as I like or wish lately. But it is often so in this world. I was very sorry for Martha to have to go away, but it could not be helped, Now, Bee, think it over. Would you rather go away, for a time any way, or will you bravely determine not to mind what you know you don't deserve, knowing that *I* trust you fully?"

"Yes," said Bee at once, "I will not mind it any more. And Rosy perhaps," here her voice faltered, "Rosy perhaps will like me better if I don't seem so dull."

Mrs. Vincent looked grave when Bee spoke of Rosy, so grave that Bee almost wished she had not said it.

"It is very hard," she heard Rosy's mother say, as if speaking to herself, "just when I thought I had gained a better influence over her. *Very* hard."

Bee threw her arms round Mrs. Vincent's neck.

"Dear auntie," she said, "*don't* be unhappy about Rosy. I will be patient, and I know it will come right again, and I won't be unhappy any more."

Mrs. Vincent kissed her.

"Yes, dear Bee," she said, "we must both be patient and hopeful."

And then they went out, and during the walk Beata noticed that Mrs. Vincent talked about other things—old times in India that Bee could remember, and plans for the future when her father and mother should come home again to stay. Only just as they were entering the house on their return, Bee could not help saying,

"Aunt Lillias, I *wonder* if the necklace will never be found."

"So do I," said Mrs. Vincent. "I really cannot understand where it can have gone. We have searched so thoroughly that even if Fixie *had* put it somewhere we would have found it. And, if possibly, he had taken it away with him by mistake, Martha would have seen it."

But that was all that was said.

A day or two later Rosy came flying into the schoolroom in great excitement. Miss Pinkerton was there at the time, for it was the middle of morning lessons, and she had sent Rosy upstairs to fetch a book she had left in the nursery by mistake. "Miss Pink, Bee!" she continued, "our dresses have come from London. I'm sure it must be them. Just as I passed the backstair door I heard James calling to somebody about a case that was to be taken upstairs, and I peeped over the banisters, and there was a large white wood box, and I saw the carter's man standing waiting to be paid. Do let me go and ask about them, Miss Pink."

"No, Rosy, not just now," said Miss Pink. She spoke more firmly than she used to do now, for I think she had learnt a lesson, and Rosy was beginning to understand that when Miss Pink said a thing she meant it to be done. Rosy muttered something in a grumbling tone, and sat down to her lessons.

"You are always so ill-natured," she half whispered to Bee. "If you had asked too she would have let us go, but you always want to seem better than any one else."

"No, I don't," said Bee, smiling. "I want dreadfully to see the dresses. We'll ask your mother to let us see them together this afternoon."

Rosy looked at her with surprise. Lately Beata had never answered her cross speeches like this, but had looked either ready to cry, or had told her she was very unkind or very naughty, which had not mended matters!

Rosy was right. The white wood box did contain the dresses, and though Mrs. Vincent was busy that day, as she and Aunt Edith were going a long drive to spend the afternoon and evening with friends at some distance, she understood the little girls' eagerness to see them, and had the box undone and the costumes fully exhibited to please them. They were certainly very pretty, for though the material they were made of was only cotton, they had been copied exactly from an old picture Lady Esther had sent on purpose. The only difference between them was that one of the quilted under skirts was sky blue to suit Rosy's bright complexion and fair hair, and the other was a very pretty shade of rose colour, which, went better with Bee's dark hair and paler face.

The children stood entranced, admiring them.

"Now, dears, I must put them away," said Mrs. Vincent. "It is really time for me to get ready."

"O mamma!" exclaimed Rosy, "do leave them out for us to try on. I can tell Nelson to take them to my room."

"No, Rosy," said her mother decidedly. "You must wait to try them on till to-morrow. I want to see them on myself. Besides, they are very delicate in colour, and would be easily soiled. You

must be satisfied with what you have seen of them for to-day. Now run and get ready. It is already half-past three."

For it had been arranged that Rosy and Bee, with Nelson to take care of them, were to drive part of the way with Mrs. Vincent and her sister-in-law, and to walk back, as it was a very pretty country road.

Rosy went off to get ready, shaking herself in the way she often did when she was vexed; and while she was dressing she recounted her grievances to Nelson.

"Never mind, Miss Rosy," said that foolish person, "we'll perhaps have a quiet look at your dress this evening when we're all alone. There's no need to say anything about it to Miss Bee."

"But mamma said we were not to try them on till to-morrow," said Rosy.

"No, not to try them on by yourselves, very likely you would get them soiled. But we'll see."

It was pretty late when the children came home. They had gone rather farther than Mrs. Vincent had intended, and coming home they had made the way longer by passing through a wood which had tempted them at the side of the road. They were a little tired and very hungry, and till they had had their tea Rosy was too hungry to think of anything else. But tea over, Bee sat down to amuse herself with a book till bed-time, and Rosy wandered about, not inclined to read, or, indeed, to do anything. Suddenly the thought of the fancy dresses returned to her mind. She ran out of the nursery, and made her way to her aunt's room, where Nelson was generally to be found. She was not there, however. Rosy ran down the passages at that part of the house where the servants' rooms were, to look for her, though she knew that her mother did not like her to do so.

"Nelson, Nelson," she cried.

Nelson's head was poked out of her room.

"What is it, Miss Rosy? It's not your bed-time yet."

"No, but I want to look at my dress again. You promised I should."

"Well, just wait five minutes. I'm just finishing a letter that one of the men's going to post for me. I'll come to your room, Miss Rosy, and bring a light. It's getting too dark to see."

"Be quick then," said Rosy, imperiously.

She went back to her room, but soon got tired of waiting there. She did not want to go to the nursery, for Bee was there, and would begin asking her what she was doing.

"I'll go to mamma's room," she said to herself, "and just look about to see where she has put the frocks. I'm *almost* sure she'll have hung them up in her little wardrobe, where she keeps new things often."

No sooner said than done. Off ran Rosy to her mother's room. It was getting dusk, dark almost, any way too dark to see clearly. Rosy fumbled about on the mantelpiece till she found the match-box, and though she was generally too frightened of burning her fingers to strike a light herself, this time she managed to do so. There were candles on the dressing-table, and when she had lighted them she proceeded to search. It was not difficult to find what she wanted. The costumes were hanging up in the little wardrobe, as she expected, but too high for her to reach easily. Rosy went to the door, and a little way down the passage, and called Nelson. But no one answered, and it was a good way off to Nelson's room.

"Nasty, selfish thing," said Rosy; "she's just going on writing to tease me."

But she was too impatient, to go back to her own room and wait there. With the help of a chair she got down the frocks. Bee's came first, of course, because it wasn't wanted—Rosy flung it across the back of a chair, and proceeded to examine her own more closely than she had been able to do before. It *was* pretty! And so complete—there was even the little white mob-cap with blue ribbons, and a pair of blue shoes with high, though not very high, heels! These last she found lying on the shelf, above the hanging part of the wardrobe.

"It is *too* pretty," said Rosy. "I *must* try it on."

And, quick as thought, she set to work—and nobody could be quicker or cleverer than Rosy when she chose—taking off the dress she had on, and rapidly attiring herself in the lovely costume. It all seemed to fit beautifully,—true, the pale blue shoes looked rather odd beside the sailor-blue stockings she was wearing, and she wondered what kind of stockings her mother intended her to wear at Summerlands—and she could not get the little lace kerchief arranged quite to her taste; but the cap went on charmingly, and so did the long mittens, which were beside the shoes.

"There must be stockings too," thought Rosy, "for there seems to be everything else; perhaps they are farther back in the shelf."

[Illustration: BY STRETCHING A GOOD DEAL SHE THOUGHT SHE COULD REACH THEM.]

She climbed up on the chair again, but she could not see farther into the shelf, so she got down and fetched one of the candles. Then up again—yes—there were two little balls, a pink and a blue, farther back—by stretching a good deal she thought she could reach them. Only the candle was in the way, as she was holding it in one hand. She stooped and set it down on the edge of the chair, and reached up again, and had just managed to touch the little balls she could no longer see, when—what was the matter? What was that rush of hot air up her left leg and side? She looked down, and, in her fright, fell—chair, Rosy, and candle, in a heap on the floor—for she had seen that her skirts were on fire! and, as she fell, she uttered a long piercing scream.

CHAPTER XII. GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity."—SHAKESPEARE.

A scream that would probably have reached the nursery, which was not very far from Mrs. Vincent's room, had there been any one there to hear it! But as it was, the person who had been there—little Bee—was much nearer than the nursery at the time of Rosy's accident. The house was very silent that evening, and Nelson had not thought of bringing a light; so when it got too dark to read, even with the book pressed close against the window-panes, Bee grew rather tired of waiting there by herself, with nothing to do.

"I wonder where Rosy is," she thought, opening the door, and looking out along the dusky passages.

And just then she heard Rosy's voice, at some little distance, calling, "Nelson, Nelson."

"If she is with Nelson I won't go," thought Bee. "I'll wait till she comes back;" and she came into the empty nursery again, and wished Martha was home.

"She always makes the nursery so comfortable," thought Bee. Then it struck her that perhaps it was not very kind of her not to go and see what Rosy wanted—she had not heard any reply to Rosy's call for Nelson.

"Her voice sounded as if she was in Aunt Lillias's room," she said to herself. "What can she be wanting? perhaps I'd better go and see."

And she set off down the passage. The lamps were not yet lighted; perhaps the servants were less careful than usual, knowing that the ladies would not be home till late, but Bee knew her way about the house quite well. She was close to the door of Mrs. Vincent's room, and had already noticed that it stood slightly ajar, for a light was streaming out, when—she stood for a second half-stupefied with terror—what was it?—what could be the matter?—as Rosy's fearful scream reached her ears. Half a second, and she had rushed into the room—there lay a confused heap on the floor, for Rosy, in her fall, had pulled over the chair; but the first glance showed Bee what was wrong—Rosy was on fire!

It was a good thing she had fallen, otherwise, in her wild fright, she would probably have made things worse by rushing about; as it was, she had not had time to get up before Bee was beside her, smothering her down with some great heavy thing, and calling to her to keep still, to "squeeze herself down," so as to put out the flames. The "great thing" was the blankets and counterpane of the bed, which somehow Bee, small as she was, had managed to tear off. And, frightened as Rosy was, the danger was not, after all, so very great, for the quilted under skirt was pretty thick, and her fall had already partly crushed down the fire. It was all over more quickly than it has taken me to tell it, and Rosy at last, half choked with the heavy blankets, and half soaked with the water which Bee had poured over her to make sure, struggled to her feet, safe and uninjured, only the pretty dress hopelessly spoilt!

And when all the danger was past, and there was nothing more to do, Nelson appeared at the door, and rushed at her darling Miss Rosy, screaming and crying, while Beata stood by, her handkerchief wrapped round one of her hands, and nobody paying any attention to her. Nelson's screams soon brought the other servants; among them, they got the room cleared of the traces of the accident, and Rosy undressed and put to bed. She was crying from the fright, but she had got no injury at all; her tears, however, flowed on when she thought of what her mother would have to be told, and Bee found it difficult to comfort her.

"You saved me, Bee, dear Bee," she said, clinging to her. "And it was because I disobeyed mamma, and I might have been burnt to death. O Bee, just think of it!" and she would not let Beata leave her.

It was like this that Mrs. Vincent found them on her return late in the evening. You can fancy

how miserable it was for her to be met with such a story, and to know that it was all Rosy's own fault. But it was not all miserable, for never had she known her little girl so completely sorry and ashamed, and so truly grateful to any one as she was now feeling to Beata.

And even Aunt Edith's prejudice seemed to have melted away, for she kissed Bee as she said goodnight, and called her a brave, good child.

So it was with a thankful little heart that Beata went to bed. Her hand was sore—it had got badly scorched in pressing down the blankets—but she did not think it bad enough to say anything about it except to the cook, who was a kind old woman, and wrapped it up in cotton wool, after well dredging it with flour, and making her promise that if it hurt her in the night she would call her.

It did not hurt her, and she slept soundly; but when she woke in the morning her head ached, and she wished she could stay in bed! Rosy was still sleeping—the housemaid, who came to draw the curtains, told her—and she was not to be wakened.

"After the fright she had, it is better to sleep it off," the servant said, "though, for some things, it's to be hoped she won't forget it. It should be a lesson to her. But you don't look well, Miss Bee," she went on; "is your head aching, my dear?"

"Yes," Bee allowed, "and I can't think why, for I slept very well. What day is it, Phoebe? Isn't it Sunday?"

"Yes, Miss Bee. It's Sunday."

"I don't think I can go to church. The organ would make my head worse," said Bee, sitting up in bed.

"Shall I tell any one that you're not well, Miss Bee?" asked Phoebe.

"Oh no, thank you," said Bee, "I daresay it will get better when I'm up."

It did seem a little better, but she was looking pale when Mrs. Vincent came to the nursery to see her and Rosy, who had wakened up, none the worse for her fright, but anxious to do all she could for poor Bee when she found out about her sore hand and headache,

"Why did you not tell me about your hand last night, dear Bee?" Mrs. Vincent asked.

"It didn't hurt much. It doesn't hurt much now," said Bee, "and Fraser looked at it and saw that it was not very bad, and—and—you had had so many things to trouble you, Aunt Lillias," she added, affectionately.

"Yes, dear; but, when I think how much worse they might have been, I dare not complain," Rosy's mother replied.

Bee did not go to church that day. Her headache was not very bad, but it did not seem to get well, and it was still rather bad when she woke the next morning.

And that next morning brought back to all their minds what, for the moment, had been almost forgotten—that it was within three days of the fete at Summerlands!—for there came a note from Lady Esther, giving some particulars about the hour she hoped they would all come, and rejoicing in the promise of fine weather for the children's treat.

Rosy's mother read the note aloud. Then she looked at Aunt Edith, and looked at the little girls. They were all together when the letter came.

"What is to be done?" said Miss Vincent; "I had really forgotten the fete was to be on Wednesday. Is it impossible to have a new dress made in time?"

"Quite impossible," said Mrs. Vincent, "Rosy must cheerfully, or at least patiently, bear what she has brought on herself, and be, as I am sure she is, very thankful that it was no worse."

Rosy glanced up quickly. She seemed as if she were going to say something, and the look in her face was quite gentle.

"I—I—I *will* try to be good, mamma," she broke out at last. "And I know I might have been burnt to death if it hadn't been for Bee. And—and—I hope Bee will enjoy the fete."

But that was all she could manage. She hurried over the last words; then, bursting into tears, she rushed out of the room.

"Poor darling!" said Aunt Edith. "Lillias, are you sure we can do nothing? Couldn't one of her white dresses be done up somehow?"

"No," said Mrs. Vincent. "It would only draw attention to her if she was to go dressed differently from the others, and I should not wish that. Besides—oh no—it is much better not."

She had hardly said the words when she felt something gently pulling her, and, looking down, there was Bee beside her, trying to whisper something.

"Auntie," she said, "would you, oh! *would* you let Rosy go instead of me, wearing my dress? It would fit her almost as well as her own. And, do you know, I *wouldn't* care to go alone. It wouldn't be *any* happiness to me, and it would be such happiness to know that Rosy could go. And I'm afraid I've got a little cold or something, for I've still got a headache, and I'm not sure that it will be better by Wednesday."

She looked up entreatingly in Mrs. Vincent's face, and then Rosy's mother noticed how pale and ill she seemed.

"My dear little Bee," she said, "you must try to be better by Wednesday. And, you know, dear, though we are all very sorry for Rosy, it is only what she has brought on herself. I hope she has learnt a lesson—more than one lesson—but, if she were to have the pleasure of going to Summerlands, she might not remember it so well."

Beata said no more—she could not oppose Rosy's mother—but she shook her head a little sadly.

"I don't think Rosy's like that, Aunt Lillias," she said; "I don't think it would make her forget."

Beata's headache was not better the next day; and, as the day went on, it grew so much worse that Mrs. Vincent at last sent for the doctor. He said that she was ill, much in the same way that Fixie had been. Not that it was anything she could have caught from him—it was not that kind of illness at all—but it was the first spring either of them had been in England, and he thought that very likely the change of climate had caused it with them both. He was not, he said, anxious about Bee, but still he looked a little grave. She was not strong, and she should not be overworked with lessons, or have anything to trouble or distress her.

"She has not been overworked," Mrs. Vincent said.

"And she seems very sweet-tempered and gentle. A happy disposition, I should think," said the doctor, as he hastened away.

His words made Mrs. Vincent feel rather sad. It was true—Bee had a happy disposition—she had never, till lately, seen her anything but bright and cheery.

"My poor little Bee," she thought, "I was hard upon her. I did not quite understand her. In my anxiety about Rosy when her aunt and Nelson came I fear I forgot Bee. But I do trust all that is over, and that Rosy has truly learnt a lesson. And we must all join to make little Bee happy again."

She returned to Bee's room. The child was sitting up in bed, her eyes sparkling in her white face—she was very eager about something.

"Auntie," she said, "you see I cannot possibly go to-morrow. And you must go, for poor Lady Esther is counting on you to help her. Auntie, you *will* forgive poor Rosy now *quite*, won't you, and let her go in my dress?"

The pleading eyes, the white face, the little hot hands laid coaxingly on hers—it would not have been easy to refuse! Besides, the doctor had said she was neither to be excited nor distressed.

The tears were in Mrs. Vincent's eyes as she bent down to kiss the little girl, but she did not let her see them.

"I will speak to Rosy, dear," she said. "I will tell her how much you want her to go in your place; and I think perhaps you are right—I don't think it will make her forget."

"*Thank* you, dear auntie," said Bee, as fervently as if Mrs. Vincent had promised her the most delightful treat in the world.

That afternoon Bee fell asleep, and slept quietly and peacefully for some time. When she woke she felt better, and she lay still, thinking it was nice and comfortable to be in bed when one felt tired, as she had always done lately; then her eyes wandered round her little room, and she thought how neat and pretty it looked, how pleased her mother would be to see how nice she had everything; and, just as she was thinking this, her glance fell on a little table beside her bed, which had been placed there with a little lemonade and a few grapes. There was something there that had not been on the table before she went to sleep. In a delicate little glass, thin and clear as a soap-bubble, was the most lovely rose Bee had ever seen—rich, soft, *rose* colour, glowing almost crimson in the centre, and melting into a somewhat paler shade at the edge.

[Illustration: 'IT'S A ROSE FROM ROSY.']

"Oh you beauty!" exclaimed Bee, "I wonder who put you there. I would like to scent you"—Bee, like other children I know, always talked of "scenting" flowers; she said "smell" was not a pretty enough word for such pretty things—"but I am afraid of knocking over that lovely glass. It

must be one of Aunt Lillias's that she has lent."

A little soft laugh came from the side of her bed, and, leaning over, Bee caught sight of a tangle of bright hair. It was Rosy. She had been watching there for Bee to wake. Up she jumped, and, carefully lifting the glass, held it close to Bee.

"It isn't mother's glass," she said; "it's your own. It *was* mother's, but I've bought it for you. Mother let me, because I *did* so want to do something to please you; and she let me choose the beautifullest rose for you, Bee. I am so glad you like it; It's a rose from Rosy. I've been sitting by you such a time. And though I'm so pleased you like the rose, I *have* been crying a little, Bee, truly, because you are so good, and about my going to-morrow."

"You *are* going?" said Bee, anxiously. In Rosy's changed way of thinking she became suddenly afraid that she might not wish to go.

"Yes," said Rosy, rather gravely, "I am going. Mother is quite pleased for me to go, to please you. In one way I would rather not go, for I know I don't deserve it; and I can't help thinking you wouldn't have been ill if I hadn't done that, and made you have a fright. And it seems such a shame for me to wear *your* dress, when you've been quite good and *deserve* the pleasure, and just when I've got to see how kind you are, and we'd have been so happy to go together. And then I've a feeling, Bee, that I *shall* enjoy it when I get there, and perhaps I shall forget a little about you, and it will be so horrid of me, if I do—and that makes me, wish I wasn't going."

"But I want you to enjoy it," said Bee, simply, in her little weak voice. "It wouldn't be nice of me to want you to go if I thought you wouldn't enjoy it. And it's nice of you to tell me how you feel. But I would like you to think of me *this* way—every time you are having a very nice dance, or that any one says you look so nice, just think, "I wish Bee could see me," or "How nice it will be to tell Bee about it," and, that way, the more you enjoy it the more you'll think of me."

"Yes," said Rosy, "that's putting it a very nice way; or, Bee, if there are very nice things to eat, I might think of you another way. I might, perhaps, bring you back some nice biscuits or bonbons—any kind that wouldn't squash in my pocket, you know. I might ask mamma to ask Lady Esther."

"Yes," said Bee, "I'm not very hungry, but just a few very nice, rather dry ones, you know, I would like." "I could keep them for Fixie when he comes back," was the thought in her mind.

She had not heard anything about when Fixie and Martha were coming back, but she was to have a pleasant surprise the next day. It was a little lonely; for, though Rosy meant to be very, very kind, she was rather too much of a chatterbox not to tire Bee after a while.

"Mamma said I wasn't to stay very long," she said; "but don't you mind being alone so much?"

"No, I don't think so," said Bee, "and, you know, Phoebe is in the next room if I want her."

"I know what you'd like," said Rosy, and off she flew. In two minutes she was back again with something in her arms. It was Manchon! She laid him gently down at the foot of Bee's bed. "He's so 'squisitely clean, you know," she went on, "and I know you're fond of him."

"*Very*" said Bee, with great satisfaction.

"I like him better than I did," said Rosy, "but still I think he's a sort of a fairy. Why, it shows he is, for now that I'm so good—I mean now that I'm going to be good always—he seems to like me ever so much better. He used to snarl if ever I touched him, and to-day when I said 'I'm going to take you to Bee, Manchon,' he let me take him as good as good."

But that evening brought still better company for Bee.

She went to sleep early, and she slept well, and when she woke in the morning who do you think was standing beside her? Dear little Fixie, his white face ever so much rounder and rosier, and kind Martha, both smiling with pleasure at seeing her again, though feeling sorry, too, that she was ill.

"Zou'll soon be better, Bee, and Fixie will be so good to you, and then p'raps we'll go again to that nice place where we've been, for you to get kite well."

So Bee, after all, did not feel at all dull or lonely when Rosy came in to say good-bye, in Bee's pretty dress. And Mrs. Vincent, and even Miss Vincent, kissed her so kindly! Even Nelson, I forgot to say, had put her head in at the door to ask how she was; and when Bee answered her nicely, as she always did, she came in for a moment to tell her how sorry she was Bee could not go to the fete. "For I must say, Miss Bee," she added, "I must say as I think you've acted very pretty, very pretty, indeed, about lending your dress to dear Miss Rosy, bless her."

"And, if there's anything I can do for you—" Here Bee's breakfast coming in interrupted her, which Bee, on the whole, was not sorry for.

She did not see Rosy that evening, for it was late when they came home, and she was already asleep. But the next morning Bee woke much better, and quite able to listen to Rosy's account of

it all. She had enjoyed it very much—of course not *as* much as if Bee had been there too, she said; but Lady Esther had thought it so sweet of Bee to beg for Rosy to go, and she had sent her the loveliest little basket of bonbons, tied up with pink ribbons, that ever was seen, and still better, she had told Rosy that she had serious thoughts of having a large Christmas-tree party next winter, at which all the children should be dressed out of the fairy tales.

"Wouldn't it be lovely?" said Rosy. "We were thinking perhaps you would be Red Riding Hood, and I the white cat. But we can look over all the fairy tales and think about it when you're better, can't we, Bee?"

Beata got better much more quickly than Fixie had done. The first day she was well enough to be up she begged leave to write two little letters, one to her mother and one to Colin, who had been very kind; for while she was ill he had written twice to her, which for a schoolboy was a great deal, I think. His letters were meant to be very amusing; but, as they were full of cricket and football, Bee did not find them very easy to understand. She was sitting at the nursery-table, thinking what she could say to show Colin she liked to hear about his games, even though the names puzzled her a little, when Fixie came and stood by her, looking rather melancholy.

"What's the matter?" she said.

"Zou's writing such a long time," said Fixie, "and Rosy's still at her lessons. I zought when zou was better zou'd play wif me."

"I can't play much," said Bee, "for I've still got a funny buzzy feeling in my head, and I'm rather tired."

"Yes, I know," said Fixie, with great sympathy, "mine head was like fousands of trains when I was ill. We won't play, Bee, we'll only talk."

"Well, I'll just finish my letter," said Bee. "I'll just tell Colin he must tell me all about innings and outings, and all that, when he comes home. Yes—that'll do. "Your affectionate—t-i-o-n-a-t-e—Bee." Now I'll talk to you, Fixie. What a pity we haven't got Rosy's beads to tell stories about!"

A queer look came into Fixie's face.

"Rosy's beads," he said.

"Yes, Rosy's necklace that was lost. And you didn't know where it was gone when Martha asked you—when your mother wrote a letter about it."

As she spoke, she drew their two little chairs to what had always been their favourite corner, near a window, which was low enough for them to look out into the pretty garden.

"Don't sit there," said Fixie, "I don't like there."

"Why not? Don't you remember we were sitting here the last afternoon we were in the nursery—before you went away. You liked it then, when I told you stories about the beads, before they were lost."

"Before *zem* was lost," said Fixie, his face again taking the troubled, puzzled look; "I didn't know it was *zem*—I mean it was somefin else of Rosy's that was lost—lace for her neck, that I'd *never* seen."

Bee's heart began to beat faster with a strange hope. She had seen Fixie's face looking troubled, and she remembered Martha saying how her questioning about the necklace had upset him, and it seemed almost cruel to go on talking about it. But a feeling had come over her that there was something to find out, and now it grew stronger and stronger.

"Lace for Rosy's neck," she repeated, "no, Fixie, you must be mistaken. Lace for her neck—" and then a sudden idea struck her,—"*can you mean a necklace?* Don't you know that a necklace means beads?"

Fixie stared at her for a moment, growing very red. Then the redness finished up, like a thundercloud breaking into rain, by his bursting into tears, and hiding his face in Bee's lap.

"I didn't know, I didn't know," he cried, "I thought it was some lace that Martha meant. I didn't mean to tell a' untrue, Bee. I didn't like Martha asking me, 'cos it made me think of the beads I'd lost, and I thought p'raps I'd get them up again when I came home, but I can't. I've poked and poked, and I think the mouses have eatened *zem*."

By degrees Bee found out what the poor little fellow meant. The morning after the afternoon when Bee and he had had the necklace, and Bee had put it safely back, he had, unknown to any one, fetched it again for himself, and sat playing with it by the nursery-window, in the corner where the hole in the floor was. Out of idleness, he had amused himself by holding the string of beads at one end, and dropping them down the mysterious hole, "like fishing," he said, till, unluckily, he had dropped them in altogether; and there, no doubt, they were still lying! He was frightened at what he had done, but he meant to tell Bee, and ask her advice. But that very afternoon the doctor came, and he was separated from the other children; and, while he was ill,

he seemed to have forgotten about it. When Martha questioned him at the seaside, he had no idea she was speaking of the beads; but he did not like her questions, because they made him remember what he *had* lost. And then he thought he would try to get the beads out of the hole by poking with a stick when he came home; but he had found he could not manage it, and then he had taken a dislike to that part of the room.

All this was told with many sobs and tears, but Bee soothed him as well as she could; and when his mother soon after came to the nursery and heard the story, she was very kind indeed, and made him see how even little wrong-doings, like taking the beads to play with without leave, always bring unhappiness; and still more, how wise and right it is for children to tell at once when they have done wrong, instead of trying to put the wrong right themselves. That was all she said, except that, as she kissed her poor little boy, she told him to tell no one else about it, except Martha, and that she would see what could be done.

Bee and Fixie said no more about it; but on that account, I daresay, like the famous parrot, "they thought the more." And once or twice that afternoon, Fixie *could* not help whispering to Bee, "*Do* you fink mamma's going to get the beads hooked out?" or, "I hope they won't hurt the mouses that lives down in the hole. *Do* you fink the mouses has eaten it, p'raps?"

Beata was sent early to bed, as she was not yet, of course, counted as quite well; and both she and Fixie slept very soundly—whether they dreamt of Rosy's beads or not I cannot tell.

But the next morning Bee felt so much better that she begged to get up quite early.

"Not till after you've had your breakfast, Miss Bee," said Martha. "But Mrs. Vincent says you may get up as soon as you like after that, and then you and Miss Rosy and Master Fixie are all to go to her room. She has something to show you."

Bee and Fixie looked at each other. They felt sure *they* knew what it was! But Rosy, who had also come to Bee's room to see how she was, looked very mystified.

"I wonder what it can be," she said. "Can it be a parcel come for us? And oh, Martha, by-the-bye, what was that knocking in the nursery last night after we were in bed? I heard Robert's voice, I'm sure. What was he doing?"

"He came up to nail down something that was loose," said Martha, quietly; but that was all she would say.

They all three marched off to Mrs. Vincent's room as soon as Beata was up and dressed. She was waiting for them.

"I am so glad you are so much better this morning, Bee," she said, as she kissed them all; "and now" she went on, "look here, I have a surprise for you all." She lifted a handkerchief which she had laid over something on a little table; and the three children, as they pressed forward, could hardly believe their eyes. For there lay Rosy's necklace, as bright and pretty as ever, and there beside it lay another, just like it at the first glance, though, when it was closely examined, one could see that the patterns on the beads were different; but any way it was just as pretty.

"Two," exclaimed Fixie, "*two* lace-beads, what *is* the name? Has the mouses made a new one for Bee, dear Bee?"

"Yes, for dear Bee," said his mother, smiling, "it is for Bee, though it didn't come from the mouses;" and then she explained to them how "Mr. Furniture" had sent the second necklace for Bee, but that she had thought it better to keep it a while in hopes of Rosy's being found, as she knew that Bee's pleasure in the pretty beads would not have been half so great if Rosy were without hers.

How happy they all looked!

"What lottes of fairy stories we can make now!" said Fixie—"one for every bead-lace, Bee!"

"And, mamma," said Rosy, "I'll keep on being very good now. I daresay I'll be dreadfully good soon; and Bee will be always good too, now, because you know we've got our talismans."

Mrs. Vincent smiled, but she looked a little grave.

"What is it, mamma?" said Rosy. "Should I say *talismen*, not talismans?"

Her mother smiled more this time.

"No, it wasn't that. 'Talismans' is quite right. I was only thinking that perhaps it was not very wise of me to have put the idea into your head, Rosy dear, for I want you to learn and feel that, though any little outside help may be a good thing as a reminder, it is only your own self, your own heart, earnestly wishing to be good, that can really make you succeed; and you know where the earnest wishing comes from, and where you are always sure to get help if you ask it, don't you, Rosy?"

Rosy got a little red, and looked rather grave.

"I *nearly* always remember to say my prayers," she answered.

"Well, let the 'talisman' help you to remember, if ever you are inclined to forget. And it isn't *only* at getting-up time and going-to-bed time that one may *pray*, as I have often told you, dear children. I really think, Rosy," she went on more lightly, "that it would be nice for you and Bee to wear your necklaces always. I shall like to see them, and I believe it would be almost impossible to spoil or break them."

"Only for my fairy stories," said Fixie, "I should have to walk all round Bee and Rosy to see the beads. You will let them take them off, *sometimes*, won't you, mamma?"

"Yes, my little man, provided you promise not to send them visits down the 'mouses' holes," said his mother, laughing.

This is all I can tell you for the present about Rosy and her brothers and little Bee. There is more to tell, as you can easily fancy, for, of course, Rosy did not grow "quite good" all of a sudden, though there certainly was a great difference to be seen in her from the time of her narrow escape—nor was Beata, in spite of *her* talisman, without faults and failings. Nor was either of them without sorrows and disappointments and difficulties in their lives, bright and happy though they were. If you have been pleased with what I have told you, you must let me know, and I shall try to tell you some more.

And again, dear children,—little friends, whom I love so much, though I may never have seen your faces, and though you only know me as somebody who is *very* happy, when her little stories please you—again, my darlings, I wish you the merriest of merry Christmases for 1882, and every blessing in the new year that will soon be coming!

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROSY ***

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