AUNT JO'S SCRAP BAG

My Boys.
Shawl-Straps.
Cupid and Chow-Chow.
My Girls.
Jimmy's Cruise in the Pinafore.
An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving.

Aunt Jo's Scrap-Bag

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AUNT JO'S SCRAP-BAG.

I.

CUPID AND CHOW-CHOW.

(*With Illustrations by Addie Ledyard*)

Mamma began it by calling her rosy, dimpled, year-old baby Cupid, and as he grew up the name became more and more appropriate, for the pretty boy loved every one, every one loved him, and he made those about him fond of one another, like a regular little god of love.

Cupid.
Cupid.

Especially beautiful and attractive did he look as he pranced on the door-steps one afternoon while waiting the arrival of a little cousin. Our Cupid's costume was modernized out of regard to the prejudices of society, and instead of wings, bandage, bow and arrow, he was gorgeous to behold in small buckled shoes, purple silk hose, black velvet knickerbockers, and jacket with a lace collar, which, with his yellow hair cut straight across the forehead, and falling in long, curling love-locks behind, made him look like an old picture of a young cavalier.

It was impossible for the little sprig to help being a trifle vain when every one praised his comeliness, and every mirror showed him a rosy face, with big blue eyes, smiling lips, white teeth, a cunning nose, and a

dimple in the chin, not to mention the golden mane that hung about his neck.

Yes, Cupid was vain; and as he waited, he pranced, arranged the dear buckled shoes in the first position, practised his best bow, felt of his dimple, and smiled affably as he pictured to himself the pleasure and surprise of the little cousin when he embraced her in the ardent yet gentle way which made his greetings particularly agreeable to those who liked such tender demonstrations.

Cupid had made up his mind to love Chow-chow very much, both because she was his cousin, and because she must be interesting if all papa's stories of her were true. Her very name was pleasing to him, for it suggested Indian sweetmeats, though papa said it was given to her because she was such a mixture of sweet and sour that one never knew whether he would get his tongue bitten by a hot bit of ginger, or find a candied plum melting in his mouth when he tried that little jar of Chow-chow.

"I know I shall like her, and of course she will like me lots, 'cause everybody does," thought Cupid, settling his love-locks and surveying his purple legs like a contented young peacock.

Just then a carriage drove up the avenue, stopped at the foot of the steps, and out skipped a tall, brown man, a small, pale lady, and a child, who whisked away to the pond so rapidly that no one could see what she was like.

A great kissing and hand-shaking went on between the papas and mammas, and Cupid came in for a large share, but did not enjoy it as much as usual, for the little girl had fled and he *must* get at her. So the instant Aunt Susan let him go he ran after the truant, quite panting with eagerness and all aglow with amiable intentions, for he was a hospitable little soul, and loved to do the honors of his pleasant home like a gentleman.

A little figure, dressed in a brown linen frock, with dusty boots below it, and above it a head of wild black hair, tied up with a large scarlet bow, stood by the pond throwing stones at the swans, who ruffled their feathers in stately anger at such treatment. Suddenly a pair of velvet arms

embraced her, and half turning she looked up into a rosy, smiling face, with two red lips suggestively puckered for a hearty kiss.

Chow-chow's black eyes sparkled, and her little brown face flushed as red as her ribbon as she tried to push the boy away with a shrill scream.

"Don't be frightened. I'm Cupid. I must kiss you. I truly must. I always do when people come, and I like you very much."

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"Don't be frightened. I'm Cupid. I must kiss you. I truly must."

With this soothing remark, the velvet arms pressed her firmly, and the lips gave her several soft kisses, which, owing to her struggles, lit upon her nose, chin, top-knot, and ear; for, having begun, Cupid did not know when to leave off.

But Chow-chow's wrath was great, her vengeance swift, and getting one hand free she flung the gravel it held full in the flushed and smiling face of this bold boy who had dared to kiss her without leave.

Poor Cupid fell back blinded and heart-broken at such a return for his warm welcome, and while he stood trying to clear his smarting eyes, a fierce little voice said close by,—

"Does it hurt?"

"Oh! dreadfully!"

"I'm glad of it."

"Then you don't love me?"

"I hate you!"

"I don't see why."

"I don't like to be hugged and kissed. I don't let anybody but papa and mamma do it, ever,—so, now!"

"But I'm your cousin, and you *must* love me. Won't you, please?" besought Cupid, with one eye open and a great tear on his nose.

"I'll see about it. I don't like crying boys," returned the hard-hearted damsel.

"Well, you made me; but I forgive you," and Cupid magnanimously put out his hand for a friendly shake. But Chow-chow was off like a startled deer, and vanished into the house, singing at the top of her voice a nursery rhyme to this effect,—

> "And she bids you to come in,
> With a dimple in your chin,
> Billy boy, Billy boy."

When Cupid, with red eyes and a sad countenance, made his appearance, he found Chow-chow on her father's knee eating cake, while the elders talked. She had told the story, and now from the safe stronghold of papa's arm condescended to smile upon the conquered youth.

Cupid went to mamma, and in one long whisper told his woes; then sat upon the cushion at her feet, and soon forgot them all in the mingled joys of eating macaroons and giving Chow-chow smile for smile across the hearth-rug.

"I predict that we shall be much amused and edified by the progress of the friendship just begun," said Cupid's papa, a quiet man, who loved children and observed them with affectionate interest.

"And I predict a hard time of it for your young man, if he attempts to tame my strong-minded little woman here. Her mother's ideas are peculiar, and she wants to bring Chow-chow up according to the new lights,—with contempt for dress and all frivolous pursuits; to make her hardy, independent, and quite above caring for such trifles as love, domestic life, or the feminine accomplishments we used to find so charming."

As Chow-chow's papa spoke, he looked from the child in her ugly gray frock, thick boots, and mop of hair tied up in a style neither pretty nor becoming, to his wife in *her* plain dress, with *her* knob of hair, decided mouth, sarcastic nose, and restless eyes that seemed always on the watch to find some new wrong and protest against it.

"Now, George, how can you misrepresent my views and principles so? But it's no use trying to convince or out-talk you. We never get a chance, and our only hope is to bring up our girls so that they may not be put down as we are," returned Mrs. Susan, with a decided air.

"Show us how you are going to defend your sex and conquer ours, Chow-chow; give us your views generally. Now, then, who is in favor of the Elective Franchise?" said Uncle George, with a twinkle of the eye.

Up went Aunt Susan's hand, and to the great amusement of all up went Chow-chow's also and, scrambling to her feet on papa's knee, she burst into a harangue which convulsed her hearers, for in it the child's voice made queer work with the long words, and the red bow wagged belligerently as she laid down the law with energy, and defined her views, closing with a stamp of her foot.

"This is our platform: Free speech, free love, free soil, free every thing; and Woman's Puckerage for ever!"

Even Aunt Susan had to laugh at that burst, for it was delivered with such vigor that the speaker would have fallen on her nose if she had not been sustained by a strong arm.

Cupid laughed because the rest did, and then turned his big eyes full of wonder on his mother, asking what it all meant.

"Only fun, my dear."

"Now, Ellen, that's very wrong. Why don't you explain this great subject to him, and prepare him to take a nobler part in the coming struggle than those who have gone before him have done?" said Mrs. Susan, with a stern

look at her husband, who was petting the little daughter, who evidently loved him best.

"I don't care to disturb his happy childhood with quarrels beyond his comprehension. I shall teach him to be as good and just a man as his father, and feel quite sure that no woman will suffer wrong at his hands," returned Mrs. Ellen, smiling at Cupid's papa, who nodded back as if they quite understood each other.

"We never did agree and we never shall, so I will say no more; but we shall see what a good effect my girl's strength of character will have upon your boy, who has been petted and spoiled by too much tenderness."

So Aunt Susan settled the matter; and as the days went on, the elder people fell into the way of observing how the little pair got on together, and were much amused by the vicissitudes of that nursery romance.

In the beginning Chow-chow rode over Cupid rough-shod, quite trampled upon him in fact; and he bore it, because he wanted her to like him, and had been taught that the utmost courtesy was due a guest. But when he got no reward for his long-suffering patience he was sometimes tempted to rebel, and probably would have done so if he had not had mamma to comfort and sustain him. Chow-chow was very quick at spying out the weaknesses of her friends and alarmingly frank in proclaiming her discoveries; so poor Cupid's little faults were seen and proclaimed very soon, and life made a burden to him, until he found out the best way of silencing his tormentor was by mending the faults.

"My papa says you are a dandy-prat, and you are," said Chow-chow, one day when the desire to improve her race was very strong upon her.

"What is a dandy-prat?" asked Cupid, looking troubled at the new accusation.

"I asked him, and he said a vain fellow; and you are vain,—so now!"

"Am I?" and Cupid stopped to think it over.

"Yes; you're horrid vain of your hair, and your velvet clothes, and the dimple in your chin. I know it, 'cause you always look in the glass when you are dressed up, and keep feeling of that ugly hole in your chin, and I see you brush your hair ever so much."

Poor Cupid colored up with shame, and turned his back to the mirror, as the sharp-tongued young monitor went on:—

"My mamma said if you were her boy she'd cut off your curls, put you in a plain suit, and stick some court-plaster over that place till you forgot all about it."

Chow-chow expected an explosion of grief of anger after that last slap; but to her amazement the boy walked out of the room without a word. Going up to his mother as she sat busy with a letter, he asked in a very earnest voice,—

"Mamma, am I vain?"

"I'm afraid you are a little, my dear," answered mamma, deep in her letter.

With a sad but resolute face Cupid went back to Chow-chow, bearing a pair of shears in one hand and a bit of court-plaster in the other.

"You may cut my hair off, if you want to. I ain't going to be a dandy-prat any more," he said, offering the fatal shears with the calmness of a hero.

Chow-chow was much surprised, but charmed with the idea of shearing this meek sheep, so she snipped and slashed until the golden locks lay shining on the floor, and Cupid's head looked as if rats had been gnawing his hair.

"Do you like me better now?" he asked, looking in her eyes as his only mirror, and seeing there the most approving glance they had ever vouchsafed him.

"Yes, I do; girl-boys are hateful."

He might have retorted, "So are boy-girls," but he was a gentleman, so he only smiled and held up his chin for her to cover the offending dimple, which she did with half a square of black plaster.

"I shall never wear my velvet clothes any more unless mamma makes me, and I don't think she will when I tell her about it, 'cause she likes to have me cure my faults," said Cupid when the sacrifice was complete, and even stern Chow-chow was touched by the sweetness with which he bore the rebuke, the courage with which he began the atonement for his little folly.

When he appeared at dinner, great was the outcry; and when the story was told, great was the effect produced. Aunt Susan said with satisfaction, —

"You see what an excellent effect my girl's Spartan training has on her, and how fine her influence is on your effeminate boy."

Uncle George laughed heartily, but whispered something to Chow-chow that made her look ashamed and cast repentant glances at her victim. Cupid's papa shook hands with the boy, and said, smiling, "I am rather proud of my 'dandy-prat,' after all."

But mamma grieved for the lost glory of her little Absalom, and found it hard to pardon naughty Chow-chow, until Cupid looked up at her with a grave, clear look which even the big patch could not spoil, and said manfully,—

"You know I *was* vain, mamma, but I won't be any more, and you'll be glad, because you love me better than my hair, don't you?"

Then she hugged the cropped head close, and kissed the hidden dimple without a word of reproach; but she laid the yellow locks away as if she *did* love them after all, and often followed the little lad in the rough gray suit, as if his sacrifice had only made him more beautiful in her eyes.

Chow-chow was quite affable for some days after this prank, and treated her slave with more gentleness, evidently feeling that, though belonging to an inferior race, he deserved a trifle of regard for his obedience to her teachings. But her love of power grew by what it fed on and soon brought fresh woe to faithful Cupid, who adored her, though she frowned upon his little passion and gave him no hope.

"You are a 'fraid-cat," asserted her majesty, one afternoon as they played in the stable, and Cupid declined to be kicked by the horse Chow-chow was teasing.

"No, I ain't; but I don't like to be hurt, and it's wrong to fret Charley, and I won't poke him with my hoe."

"Well, it isn't wrong to turn this thing, but you don't dare to put your finger on that wheel and let me pinch it a little bit," added Chow-chow, pointing to some sort of hay-cutting machine that stood near by.

"What for?" asked Cupid, who did object to being hurt in any way.

"To show you ain't a 'fraid-cat. I know you are. I'm not, see there," and Chow-chow gave her own finger a very gentle squeeze.

"I can bear it harder than that," and devoted Cupid laid his plump forefinger between two wheels, bent on proving his courage at all costs.

Chow-chow gave a brisk turn to the handle, slipped in doing so, and brought the whole weight of the cruel cogs on the tender little finger, crushing the top quite flat. Blood flowed, Chow-chow stopped aghast; and Cupid, with one cry of pain, caught and reversed the handle, drew out the poor finger, walked unsteadily in to mamma, saying, with dizzy eyes and white lips, "She didn't mean to do it," and then fainted quite away in a little heap at her feet.

The doctor came flying, shook his head over the wound, and drew out a case of dreadful instruments that made even strong-minded Aunt Susan turn away her head, and bound up the little hand that might never be whole and strong again. Chow-chow stood by quite white and still until it was all

over and Cupid asleep in his mother's arms; then she dived under the sofa and sobbed there, refusing to be comforted until her father came home. What that misguided man said to her no one ever knew, but when Cupid was propped up on the couch at tea-time, Chow-chow begged piteously to be allowed to feed him.

The wounded hero, with his arm in a sling, permitted her to minister to him; and she did it so gently, so patiently, that her father said low to Mrs. Ellen,—

"I have hopes of her yet, for all the woman is not taken out of her, in spite of the new lights."

When they parted for the evening, Cupid, who had often sued for a good-night kiss and sued in vain, was charmed to see the red top-knot bending over him, and to hear Chow-chow whisper, with a penitent kiss, "I truly didn't mean to, Coopy."

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"The wounded hero, with his arm in a sling, permitted her to minister to him."

The well arm held her fast as the martyr whispered back, "Just say I ain't a 'fraid-cat, and I don't mind smashing my finger."

Chow-chow said it that night and thought it next day and for many following days, for each morning, when the doctor came to dress the "smashed" finger, she insisted on being by as a sort of penance. She forced herself to watch the bright instruments without shivering, she ran for warm water, she begged to spread the salve on the bandage, to hold the smelling-bottle, and to pick all the lint that was used.

And while she performed these small labors of love, she learned a little lesson that did her more good than many of mamma's lectures. For Cupid showed her the difference between the rash daring that runs foolish risks, and the steady courage that bears pain without complaint. Every day the same scene took place; Chow-chow would watch for and announce the

doctor; would bustle out the salve-box, bandage, and basin, set the chair, and call Cupid from his book with a new gentleness in her voice.

The boy would answer at once, take his place, and submit the poor swollen hand to the ten minutes' torture of little probes and scissors, caustic and bathing, without a word, a tear, or sound of suffering. He only turned his head away, grew white about the lips, damp on the forehead, and when it was all over would lean against his mother for a minute, faint and still.

Then Chow-chow would press her hands together with a sigh of mingled pity, admiration, and remorse, and when the boy looked up to say stoutly, "It didn't hurt very much," she would put his sling on for him, and run before to settle the pillows, carry him the little glass of wine and water he was to take, and hover round him until he was quite himself again, when she would subside close by, and pick lint or hem sails while he read aloud to her from one of his dear books.

"It is a good lesson in surgery and nursing for her. I intend to have her study medicine if she shows any fondness for it," said Aunt Susan.

"It is a good lesson in true courage, and I am glad to have her learn it early," added Uncle George, who now called Cupid a "trump" instead of a "dandy-prat."

"It is a good lesson in loving and serving others for love's sake, as all women must learn to do soon or late," said gentle Mrs. Ellen.

"It is teaching them both how to bear and forbear, to teach and help, and comfort one another, and take the pains and pleasures of life as they should do together," concluded Cupid's papa, watching the little couple with the wise kind eyes that saw a pretty story in their daily lives.

Slowly the finger healed, and to every one's surprise was not much disfigured, which Cupid insisted was entirely owing to Chow-chow's superior skill in spreading salve and picking lint. Before this time, however, Chow-chow, touched by his brave patience, his generous refusal to blame her for the mishap, and his faithful affection, had in a tender

moment confessed to her little lover that she did "like him a great deal," and consented to go and live in the old swan-house on the island in the pond as soon as he was well enough.

But no sooner had she enraptured him by these promises than she dashed his joy by adding certain worldly conditions which she had heard discussed by her mamma and her friends.

"But we can't be married until we have a lot of money. Nobody does, and we *must* have ever so much to buy things with."

"Yes, but papa said he'd give us some little furniture to put in our house, and mamma will let us have as much cake and milk-tea as we want, and I shall be very fond of you, and what's the use of money?" asked the enamoured Cupid, who believed in love in a cottage, or swan-house rather.

"I shan't marry a poor boy, so now!" was the mercenary Chow-chow's decision.

"Well, I'll see how much I've got; but I should think you would like me just as well without," and Cupid went away to inspect his property with as much anxiety as any man preparing for matrimony.

But Cupid's finances were in a bad state, for he spent his pocket-money as fast as he got it, and had lavished gifts upon his sweetheart with princely prodigality. So he punched a hole in his savings-bank and counted his small hoard, much afflicted to find it only amounted to seventy-eight cents, and a button put in for fun. Bent on winning his mistress no sacrifice seemed too great, so he sold his live stock, consisting of one lame hen, a rabbit, and a choice collection of caterpillars. But though he drove sharp bargains, these sales only brought him in a dollar or two. Then he went about among his friends, and begged and borrowed small sums, telling no one his secret lest they should laugh at him, but pleading for a temporary accommodation so earnestly and prettily that no one could refuse.

When he had strained every nerve and tried every wile, he counted up his gains and found that he had four dollars and a half. That seemed a

fortune to the innocent; and, getting it all in bright pennies, he placed it in a new red purse, and with pardonable pride laid his offering at Chow-chow's feet.

But alas for love's labor lost! the cruel fair crushed all his hopes by saying coldly,—

"That isn't half enough. We ought to have ten dollars, and I won't like you until you get it."

"O Chow-chow! I tried so hard; do play it's enough," pleaded poor Cupid.

"No, I shan't. I don't care much for the old swan-house now, and you ain't half so pretty as you used to be."

"You made me cut my hair off, and now you don't love me 'cause I'm ugly," cried the afflicted little swain, indignant at such injustice.

But Chow-chow was in a naughty mood, so she swung on the gate, and would not relent in spite of prayers and blandishments.

"I'll get some more money somehow, if you will wait. Will you, please?"

"I'll see 'bout it."

And with that awful uncertainty weighing upon his soul, poor Cupid went away to wrestle with circumstances. Feeling that matters had now reached a serious point, he confided his anxieties to mamma; and she, finding that it was impossible to laugh or reason him out of his untimely passion, comforted him by promising to buy at high prices all the nosegays he could gather out of his own little garden.

"But it will take a long time to make ten dollars that way. Don't you think Chow-chow might come now, when it is all warm and pleasant, and not stop until summer is gone, and no birds and flowers and nice things to

play with? It's so hard to wait," sighed Cupid, holding his cropped head in his hands, and looking the image of childish despair.

"So it is, and *I* think Chow is a little goose not to go at once and enjoy love's young dream without wasting precious time trying to make money. Tell her papa said so, and he ought to know," added Uncle George, under his breath, for he *had* tried it, and found that it did not work well.

Cupid did tell her, but little madam had got the whim into her perverse head; and the more she was urged to give in, the more decided she grew. So Cupid accepted his fate like a man, and delved away in his garden, watering his pinks, weeding his mignonette, and begging his roses to bloom as fast and fair as they could, so that he might be happy before the summer was gone. Rather a pathetic little lover, mamma thought, as she watched him tugging away with the lame hand, or saw him come beaming in with his posies to receive the precious money that was to buy a return for his loyal love.

Tender-hearted Mrs. Ellen tried to soften Chow-chow and teach her sundry feminine arts against the time she went to housekeeping on the island, for Mrs. Susan was so busy hearing lectures, reading reports, and attending to the education of other people's children that her own ran wild. In her good moods, Chow-chow took kindly to the new lessons, and began to hem a table-cloth for the domestic board at which she was to preside; also swept and dusted now and then, and once cooked a remarkable mess, which she called "Coopy's favorite pudding," and intended to surprise him with it soon after the wedding. But these virtuous efforts soon flagged, the table-cloth was not finished, the duster was converted into a fly-killer, and her dolls lay unheeded in corners after a few attempts at dressing and nursing had ended in *ennui*.

How long matters would have gone on in this unsatisfactory way no one knows; but a rainy day came, and the experiences it gave the little pair brought things to a crisis.

The morning was devoted to pasting pictures and playing horse all over the house, with frequent pauses for refreshment and an occasional squabble. After dinner, as the mammas sat sewing and the papas talking or

reading in one room, the children played in the other, quite unconscious that they were affording both amusement and instruction to their elders.

"Let's play house," suggested Cupid, who was of a domestic turn, and thought a little rehearsal would not be amiss.

"Well, I will," consented Chow-chow, who was rather subdued by the violent exercises of the morning.

So a palatial mansion was made of chairs, the dolls' furniture arranged, the stores laid in, and housekeeping begun.

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"Now, you must go off to your business while I 'tend to my work," said Chow-chow, after they had breakfasted off a seed-cake and sugar and water tea in the bosom of their family.

Cupid obediently put on papa's hat, took a large book under his arm, and went away to look at pictures behind the curtains, while Mrs. C. bestirred herself at home in a most energetic manner, spanking her nine dolls until their cries rent the air, rattling her dishes with perilous activity, and going to market with the coal-hod for her purchases.

Mr. Cupid returned to dinner rather early, and was scolded for so doing, but pacified his spouse by praising her dessert,—a sandwich of sliced apple, bread, and salt, which he ate like a martyr.

A ride on the rocking-horse with his entire family about him filled the soul of Mr. Cupid with joy, though the trip was rendered a little fatiguing by his having to dismount frequently to pick up the various darlings as they fell out of his pockets or their mother's arms as she sat behind him on a pillion.

"Isn't this beautiful?" he asked, as they swung to and fro,—Mrs. Cupid leaning her head on his shoulder, and dear little Claribel Maud peeping out of his breast-pocket, while Walter Hornblower and Rosie Ruth, the twins,

sat up between the horse's ears, their china faces beaming in a way to fill a father's heart with pride.

"It will be much nicer if the horse runs away and we all go smash. I'll pull out his tail, then he'll rear, and we must tumble off," proposed the restless Mrs. C., whose dramatic soul delighted in tragic adventures.

So the little papa's happy moment was speedily banished as he dutifully precipitated himself and blooming family upon the floor, to be gathered up and doctored with chalk and ink, and plasters of paper stuck all over their faces.

When this excitement subsided, it was evening, and Mrs. Cupid bundled her children off to bed, saying,—

"Now, you must go to your club, and I am going to my lecture."

"But I thought you'd sew now and let me read to you, and have our little candles burn, and be all cosey, like papa and mamma," answered Cupid, who already felt the discomfort of a strong-minded wife.

"My papa and mamma don't do so. He always goes to the club, and smokes and reads papers and plays chess, and mamma goes to Woman's Puckerage meetings,—so I must."

"Let me go too; I never saw a Puckerage lecture, and I'd like to," said Cupid, who felt that a walk arm-in-arm with his idol would make any sort of meeting endurable.

"No, you can't! Papa *never* goes; he says they are all gabble and nonsense, and mamma says his club is all smoke and slang, and they *never* go together."

So Chow-chow locked the door, and the little pair went their separate ways; while the older pair in the other room laughed at the joke, yet felt that Cupid's plan was the best, and wondered how Ellen and her husband managed to get on so well.

Chow-chow's lecture did not seem to be very interesting, for she was soon at home again. But Mr. Cupid, after smoking a lamp-lighter with his feet up, fell to reading a story that interested him, and forgot to go home until he finished it. Then, to his great surprise, he was told that it was morning, that he had been out all night, and couldn't have any breakfast. This ruffled him, and he told madam she was a bad wife, and he wouldn't love her if she did not instantly give him his share of the little pie presented by cook, as a bribe to keep them out of the kitchen.

Mrs. C. sternly refused, and locked up the pie, declaring that she hated housekeeping and wouldn't live with him any more, which threat she made good by quitting the house, vowing not to speak to him again that day, but to play alone, free and happy.

The deserted husband sat down among his infants with despair in his soul, while the spirited wife, in an immense bonnet, pranced about the room, waving the key of the pie-closet and rejoicing in her freedom. Yes, it was truly pathetic to see poor Mr. Cupid's efforts at housekeeping and baby-tending; for, feeling that they had a double claim upon him now, he tried to do his duty by his children. But he soon gave it up, piled them all into one bed, and covered them with a black cloth, saying mournfully, "I'll play they all died of mumps, then I can sell the house and go away. I can't bear to stay here when *she* is gone."

The house was sold, the dead infants buried under the sofa, and then the forsaken man was a homeless wanderer. He tried in many ways to amuse himself. He travelled to China on the tailless horse, went to California in a balloon, and sailed around the world on a raft made of two chairs and the hearth-brush. But these wanderings always ended near the ruins of his home, and he always sat down for a moment to watch the erratic movements of his wife.

That sprightly lady fared better than he, for her inventive fancy kept her supplied with interesting plays, though a secret sense of remorse for her naughtiness weighed upon her spirits at times. She had a concert, and sang surprising medleys, with drum accompaniments. She rode five horses in a circus, and jumped over chairs and foot-stools in the most approved manner. She had a fair, a fire, and a shipwreck; hunted lions, fished for

crocodiles, and played be a monkey in a style that would have charmed Darwin.

But somehow none of these festive games had their usual relish. There was no ardent admirer to applaud her music, no two-legged horse to help her circus with wild prancings and life-like neighs, no devoted friend and defender to save her from the perils of flood and fire, no comrade to hunt with her, no fellow-monkey to skip from perch to perch with social jabberings, as they cracked their cocoa-nuts among imaginary palms. All was dull and tiresome.

A strong sense of loneliness fell upon her, and for the first time she appreciated her faithful little friend. Then the pie weighed upon her conscience; there it was, wasting its sweetness in the closet, and no one ate it. She had not the face to devour it alone; she could not make up her mind to give it to Cupid; and after her fierce renunciation of him, how could she ask him to forgive her? Gradually her spirits declined, and about the time that the other wanderer got back from his last trip she sat down to consider her position.

Hearing no noise in the other room, Uncle George peeped in and saw the divided pair sitting in opposite corners, looking askance at each other, evidently feeling that a wide gulf lay between them, and longing to cross it, yet not quite knowing how. A solemn and yet a comical sight, so Uncle George beckoned the others to come and look.

"My boy will give in first. See how beseechingly he looks at the little witch!" whispered Mrs. Ellen, laughing softly.

"No, he won't; she hurt his feelings very much by leaving him, and he won't relent until she goes back; then he'll forgive and forget like a man," said Cupid's papa.

"I hope my girl will remain true to her principles," began Aunt Susan.

"She'll be a miserable baby if she does," muttered Uncle George.

"I was going on to say that, finding she has done wrong, I hope she will have the courage to say so, hard as it is, and so expiate her fault and try to do better," added Aunt Susan, fast and low, with a soft look in her eyes, as she watched the little girl sitting alone, while so much honest affection was waiting for her close by, if pride would let her take it.

Somehow Uncle George's arm went round her waist when she said that, and he gave a quick nod, as if something pleased him very much.

"Shall I speak, and help the dears bridge over their little trouble?" asked Mrs. Ellen, pretending not to see the older children making up their differences behind her.

"No; let them work it out for themselves. I'm curious to see how they will manage," said papa, hoping that his boy's first little love would prosper in spite of thorns among the roses.

So they waited, and presently the affair was settled in a way no one expected. As if she could not bear the silence any longer, Chow-chow suddenly bustled up, saying to herself,—

"I haven't played lecture. I always like that, and here's a nice place."

Pulling out the drawers of a secretary like steps, she slowly mounted to the wide ledge atop, and began the droll preachment her father had taught her in ridicule of mamma's hobby.

"Do stop her, George; it's so absurd," whispered Mrs. Susan.

"Glad you think so, my dear," laughed Uncle George.

"There is some sense in it, and I have no doubt the real and true will come to pass when we women learn how far to go, and how to fit ourselves for the new duties by doing the old ones well," said Mrs. Ellen, who found good in all things, and kept herself so womanly sweet and strong that no one could deny her any right she chose to claim.

"She is like so many of those who mount your hobby, Susan, and ride away into confusions of all sorts, leaving empty homes behind them. The happy, womanly women will have the most influence after all, and do the most to help the bitter, sour, discontented ones. They need help, God knows, and I shall be glad to lend a hand toward giving them their rights in all things."

As papa spoke, Chow-chow, who had caught sight of the peeping faces, and was excited thereby, burst into a tremendous harangue, waving her hands, stamping her feet, and dancing about on her perch as if her wrongs had upset her wits. All of a sudden the whole secretary lurched forward, out fell the drawers, open flew the doors, down went Chow-chow with a screech, and the marble slab came sliding after, as if to silence the irrepressible little orator forever. How he did it no one knew, but before the top fell Cupid was under it, received it on his shoulders, and held it up with all his might, while Chow-chow scrambled out from the ruins with no hurt but a bump on the forehead. Papa had his boy out in a twinkling, and both mammas fell upon their rescued darlings with equal alarm and tenderness; for Susan got her little girl in her arms before Mr. George could reach her, and Chow-chow clung there, sobbing away her fright and pain as if the maternal purring was a new and pleasant solace.

"I'll never play that nasty old puckerage any more," she declared, feeling of the purple lump on her brow.

"Nor I either, in that way," whispered her mamma, with a look that made Chow-chow ask curiously,—

"Why, did you hurt yourself too?"

"I am afraid I did."

"Be sure that your platform is all right before you try again, Poppet, else it will let you down when you least expect it, and damage your best friends as well as yourself," said Mr. George, setting up the fallen rostrum.

"I'm not going to have any flatporm; I'm going to be good and play with Coopy, if he'll let me," added the penitent Chow-chow, glancing with shy,

wet eyes at Cupid, who stood near with a torn jacket and a bruise on the already wounded hand.

His only answer was to draw her out of her mother's arms, embrace her warmly, and seat her beside him on the little bench he loved to share with her. This ready and eloquent forgiveness touched Chow-chow's heart, and the lofty top-knot went down upon Cupid's shoulder as if the little fortress lowered its colors in token of entire surrender. Cupid's only sign of triumph was a gentle pat on the wild, black head, and a nod towards the spectators, as he said, smiling all over his chubby face,—

"Every thing is nice and happy now, and we don't mind the bumps."

"Let us sheer off, we are only in the way," said Mr. George, and the elders retired, but found it impossible to resist occasional peeps at the little pair, as the reconciliation scene went on.

"O Coopy! I *was* so bad, I don't think you can love me any more," began the repentant one with a sob.

"Oh yes I can; and just as soon as I get money enough, we'll go and live in the swan-house, won't we?" returned the faithful lover, making the most of this melting mood.

"I'll go right away to-morrow, I don't care about the money. I like the nice bright pennies, and we don't need much, and I've got my new saucepan to begin with," cried Chow-chow in a burst of generosity, for, like a true woman, though she demanded impossibilities at first, yet when her heart was won she asked nothing but love, and was content with a saucepan.

"O Goody! and I've got my drum," returned the enraptured Cupid, as ready as the immortal Traddles to go to housekeeping with a toasting fork and a bird-cage, or some such useful trifles.

"But I *was* bad about the pie," cried Chow-chow as her sins kept rising before her; and, burning to make atonement for this one, she ran to the

closet, tore out the pie, and, thrusting it into Cupid's hands, said in a tone of heroic resolution, "There, you eat it *all*, and I won't taste a bit."

"No, *you* eat it all, I'd like to see you. I don't care for it, truly, 'cause I love you more than a million pies," protested Cupid, offering back the treasure in a somewhat ruinous state after its various vicissitudes.

"Then give me a tiny bit, and you have the rest," said Chow-chow, bent on self-chastisement.

"The fairest way is to cut it 'zactly in halves, and each have a piece. Mamma says that's the right thing to do always." And Cupid, producing a jack-knife, proceeded to settle the matter with masculine justice.

"NOW LET'S KISS AND BE FRIENDS."
"NOW LET'S KISS AND BE FRIENDS."

So side by side they devoured the little bone of contention, chattering amicably about their plans; and as the last crumb vanished, Cupid said persuasively, as if the league was not quite perfect without that childish ceremony,—

"Now let's kiss and be friends, and never quarrel any more."

As the rosy mouths met in a kiss of peace, the sound was echoed from the other room, for Mr. George's eyes made the same proposal, and his wife answered it as tenderly as Chow-chow did Cupid. Not a word was said, for grown people do not "'fess" and forgive with the sweet frankness of children; but both felt that the future would be happier than the past, thanks to the lesson they had learned from the little romance of Cupid and Chow-chow.

II.

HUCKLEBERRY.

Coming home late one night, my eye was caught by the sight of a spotted dog sitting under a lamp all alone, and, as I passed, I said to him,—

"Go home, little doggie! It is too late for you to be out, and you'll get rheumatism if you stay there."

Alas for the poor fellow! he had no home to go to; and, evidently feeling that I had invited him to share mine by a friendly remark, he came pattering after us down the street, and when we reached our door stood wagging his tail, as if to say,—

"Thank you; yes, I *should* be most grateful if you'd allow me to lie on your door-mat till morning."

His handsome, wistful eyes, and the insinuating wag of his thin tail, expressed this as plainly as any words could have done, and it grieved me much to see that I had awakened hopes which I could not fulfil.

I explained to him how it was; that this was not my house, and I really could not take him into my room; that there were five cats downstairs, and several old ladies upstairs; one snarly, fat poodle on the first floor; and half-a-dozen young men about the house, ready for mischief at all hours of the day or night. Such being the case, it was evidently no home for a strange doggie, so like a huckleberry pudding in appearance that I named him Huckleberry on the spot.

He seemed to understand it, for he stopped wagging and retired from the steps; but he was bitterly disappointed; and when I had gently closed the door, apologizing as I did so, he gave one disconsolate howl, and went to sit under the lamp again, as if that little circle of light made the dull November night less cold and lonely.

A day or two afterward, as I stood looking at the ruins of the great fire, a spotted dog lying on the edge of a smoking cellar attracted my attention.

"Faithful fellow! he is still watching his master's property, I dare say, though every thing is ashes. How beautiful that is!" I thought to myself, and went a little nearer to enjoy the touching spectacle.

As I approached, doggie looked up, and I knew him at once by the queer black patch on his left eye, and he knew me, for he sat up and began to beat the ground with his tail by way of welcome.

"Why, Huckleberry, is it you? Was your master burned out? and don't you know where he is gone?" I asked.

Now, I am very stupid about learning languages, and nearly died of German; but the language of animals I understand without any grammar or dictionary; and I defy any one to read it better than myself. So, when Huckleberry gave a bark, I knew it meant, "Yes, ma'am;" and when he came fawning about my very muddy boots, he added this touching remark as plainly as if he had said it in the most elegant English:—

"Dear woman, I'm homeless, friendless, and forlorn; pity me, and I will be a faithful servant to you, on the word of an honest, grateful dog!"

It was very hard to say no, but I tried to soften my refusal by offering him some nice little cakes which I was intending to give my boys that evening; for when they come home from college Saturday night, we always have a jubilee in honor of the class of '76, to which I belong.

Doggie evidently needed them more than the lads, and gobbled up the whole dozen with a rapidity that made me wish I had a beefsteak or two in my pocket. While he was finishing the last one, I slipped away, and devoutly hoped I should see the poor, dear thing no more, for it rent my heart to leave him out in the cold; yet what could I do with him in my one room?

A week or two passed, and I forgot my spotted friend in the absorbing task of getting Christmas presents ready. Every one else seemed to have forgotten him, too; for, late one snowy afternoon, as I hurried home, quite worn out with trying to shop among a mob of other women as busy and as

impatient as myself, I saw a sight that made the tears come to my eyes in spite of the snow-flakes roosting on my lashes.

On the upper step of a church, close to the door, is if waiting for it to open to him, lay poor Huckleberry, dirty, thin, and evidently worn out with the hardships of his lot. Tired of asking for admittance at men's doors, he had gone to God's house, and no one had turned him away. If he had lain there all that stormy night, I think by morning he would have been safe in the little lower heaven which I am sure awaits the faithful, brave, and good among animals, when their long and often unacknowledged service is over in this world.

That mute reproach went to my heart, for now it seemed as if this small charity had been sent to me especially, and that I had neglected it till it was nearly too late. Huckleberry seemed to feel as if it was no use to appeal to human kindness any more, for he made no sign of recognition, and lay quite still, as if waiting till his dumb prayer for help was heard and answered by Him who sees the sparrow's fall.

Up the steps I went, and, putting down my parcels, patted the head that seemed almost too tired to be lifted up, and with remorseful tenderness I said,—

"My poor dear, come home with me. I truly mean it now. Forgive me, and let me show you that in charitable Boston not even a dog need starve!"

He didn't believe me. He was tired of false hopes, worn out with following people home to find the doors shut in his face, and seemed to have made up his mind to stay in the only refuge left him.

I wondered as I watched him if he had ever seen that door open, and, remembering the light, the warmth, the music, and the quiet figures moving in and out, had thought it was a better world, and so, when every other hope failed, came back to wait for a chance to creep in and lie humbly in some corner, feeling safe and happy.

I shall never know, for I had not time to ask about it, and he was too tired to talk. Feeling that my duty was very plainly to give poor doggie a

lift, I coaxed him home with great difficulty, and he slowly followed, looking so incredulous and amazed that I felt bound to redeem the character of the human race in his eyes.

Once in my room, with a plate of cold meat before him and a warm rug placed at his disposal, Huckleberry gave in, believed, rejoiced, and was so grateful that he stopped now and then, even when bolting lumps of cold steak, to look at me and wag his tail with a whine of thanks.

Dear thing! how dirty, lean, and ugly he was! with one lame foot, a torn ear, and a bit of old rope round his neck where the collar should have been. Never mind; I loved him, and went on petting him with a reckless disregard of consequences and fleas. I had no more idea what I should do with him than if he had been an elephant; but remembering the blessed society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, I felt that I could fall back on them when all other hopes failed.

So, while Huckleberry lay on the rug, roasting first one side and then the other, with his nose on a bone, just to make him feel sure it wasn't all a dream, I sat staring at him and planning a future for him such as few dogs enjoy. He seemed to feel this, for he gurgled and grunted in his sleep, woke up now and then with a start, and stared back at me with eyes full of doggish loyalty as he whacked the floor with his grateful tail.

"One of our fellows shall take him!" I decided; and, having picked out the most tender-hearted boy among my large and choice collection, I wrote to this victim an alluring epistle, offering him a lovely carriage-dog whom I had been so fortunate as to find. Would he like to have the first look at him and become his owner free of cost?

This being finished and sent to the post, I ordered a big tub of hot water to be ready early in the morning for my dog's bath, and heartily wished I could fatten him up over night, as at present he was not an inviting animal.

Then I retired to my bed, leaving Huckleberry asleep on the rug. Bless my heart, how he did snore! and when a very loud one woke him up, he seemed to feel that it was necessary for him to come and put his cold nose on my face, or paw at the pillow, till I flew up, thinking it was robbers.

Then he would apologize in the most contrite manner, and explain that he only came to see if I was all right, and to express his thanks all over again.

After which he returned to his rug with a sigh of satisfaction, and fell asleep much quicker than I could.

In the morning he was escorted to the shed for his bath, to the great amusement of the servants and the fierce indignation of the cats. All five spit and glared from the various elevated refuges to which they had flown on his entrance; and one black kit made darts at him, looking like a little demon in her wrath.

Huckleberry behaved like a dog of good manners and temper, and, after vainly trying to appease the irate pussies, took no notice of them, being absorbed in his own afflictions.

He did not like the bath, but bore it like a hero, and let me scrub him till he was as clean as a very spotted bow-wow could be. He even submitted to the indignity of a little blanket pinned about his neck like an old woman, and trotted meekly upstairs after me, leaving the men and maids in fits of laughter, and the cats curling their whiskers with scorn at the whole proceeding.

Leaving my wash to dry, I flew out and bought a fine red collar for him; then I devoted the rest of my day to fussing over him, that he might be as presentable as possible.

Charley did not come till the next day, and the agonies I went through, meantime, with that blessed dog, "no mortal creeter knows," as Mrs. Gamp would say.

I'm afraid I gave him too much meat, or else joy flew to his head and made him wild, for he developed such a flow of spirits that I felt as if I had an unchained whirlwind in my room. He bounced to the window every time a cart went by; growled at every dog he saw; barked at every one who entered the room; drank out of my pitcher; worried the rosettes off my slippers; upset my work-basket, the fire-irons, and two bottles in his artless play; scratched the paint off the door trying to get out, and, when he

got to the yard, chased all the cats till they fled over the walls in every direction.

When exhausted with these little amusements, he would come and try to lick my face, put his paws in my lap, and languish at me with his fine eyes; and when I told him I couldn't have it, he cast himself at my feet and squirmed rapturously.

He was a great plague, but I was fond of him, and when Charley came was sorry that he must leave me. But he had been on the rampage all that second night, for I put him in the hall to sleep, and he had scratched and howled at every door till I let him in to save him from the shower of boots hurled at him by the young gentlemen whose slumbers he had disturbed; so it was high time he went.

Charley laughed at him, but, when I had told the story, the good lad took pity on him and led him away after I had kissed and bade him be a good dog. He didn't seem satisfied, but consented to go to please me, and trotted round the corner, looking so neat and respectable it did my heart good to see him.

"Now he is settled, and what a comfort that is!" I said to myself as I restored my devastated home to order.

But he wasn't: oh, dear, no; for in two days back he came, all his own naughty self, and I found him boldly erect upon the steps waiting for me. He had run away and come home to his first friend, sure of a welcome.

It was very flattering, but also inconvenient; so he was restored to his master after a scolding and a patting which probably spoilt the effect of the lecture.

Three times did that dear deluded dog come back, and three times was he bundled home again. Then Charley shut him up in an old shed, and kept him there except when he led him out by a chain for an airing.

But Huckleberry's grateful passion could not be restrained, and cost him his life in the end. He amused his leisure hours scratching and

burrowing at the foundation stones of the shed wall, and, being loosely built, a big one fell on him in some way, hurting him so badly that there was no cure for his broken bones.

A note from Charley came to me, saying, "If you want to say good-by to poor old Huckleberry, come out and do it, for I've got to kill him, he is so hurt."

Of course I went, and there I found him lying on a soft bed of hay, with his wounds bound up, and tender-hearted Charley watching over him. How glad he was to see his "missis!" How hard he tried to come and meet me! and how satisfied he looked when I bent down to stroke him, and let him feebly lick my hand as much as he liked!

He could hardly breathe for pain, and his eyes were already dim, but his dear old tail wagged to the last; and when I had said the tenderest good-by I knew, he laid down his head with a sigh that seemed to say,—

"Now I'm content, and can die in peace. I've thanked her, and she is sorry for me, so it's all right. You may put me out of pain as soon as you like. Master Charley; I'm ready."

It was soon done. I heard a shot, saw my lad go into the garden with a pick-axe and a spade, and then I knew that doggie was ready for his grave. We wrapped him in a bit of cheerful red carpet, and when a bed had been delved out for him, we laid the little bundle in, covered it up, and left the winter snow to spread a soft white pall over poor Huckleberry's last home.

III.

NELLY'S HOSPITAL.

Nelly sat beside her mother picking lint, but while her fingers flew, her eyes often looked wistfully out into the meadow, golden with buttercups, and bright with sunshine. Presently she said, rather bashfully, but very earnestly, "Mamma, I want to tell you a little plan I've made, if you'll please not laugh."

"I think I can safely promise that, my dear," said her mother, putting down her work that she might listen quite respectfully.

Nelly looked pleased, and went on confidingly. "Since brother Will came home with his lame foot, and I've helped you tend him, I've heard a great deal about hospitals, and liked it very much. To-day I said I wanted to go and be a nurse, like Aunt Mercy; but Will laughed, and told me I'd better begin by nursing sick birds and butterflies and pussies before I tried to take care of men. I did not like to be made fun of, but I've been thinking that it would be very pleasant to have a little hospital all my own, and be a nurse in it, because, if I took pains, so many pretty creatures might be made well, perhaps. Could I, mamma?"

Her mother wanted to smile at the idea, but did not, for Nelly looked up with her heart and eyes so full of tender compassion, both for the unknown men for whom her little hands had done their best, and for the smaller sufferers nearer home, that she stroked the shining head, and answered readily: "Yes, Nelly, it will be a proper charity for such a young Samaritan, and you may learn much if you are in earnest. You must study how to feed and nurse your little patients, else your pity will do no good, and your hospital become a prison. I will help you, and Tony shall be your surgeon."

"O mamma, how good you always are to me! Indeed, I am in truly earnest; I will learn, I will be kind, and may I go now and begin?"

"You may, but tell me first where will you have your hospital?'

"In my room, mamma; it is so snug and sunny, and I never should forget it there," said Nelly.

"You must not forget it anywhere. I think that plan will not do. How would you like to find caterpillars walking in your bed, to hear sick

pussies mewing in the night, to have beetles clinging to your clothes, or see mice, bugs, and birds tumbling downstairs whenever the door was open?" said her mother.

Nelly laughed at that, thought a minute, then clapped her hands, and cried: "Let us have the old summer-house! My doves only use the upper part, and it would be so like Frank in the story-book. Please say yes again, mamma."

Her mother did say yes, and, snatching up her hat, Nelly ran to find Tony, the gardener's son, a pleasant lad of twelve, who was Nelly's favorite playmate. Tony pronounced the plan a "jolly" one, and, leaving his work, followed his young mistress to the summer-house, for she could not wait one minute.

"What must we do first?" she asked, as they stood looking in at the dim, dusty room, full of garden tools, bags of seeds, old flower-pots, and watering-cans.

"Clear out the rubbish, miss," answered Tony.

"Here it goes, then," and Nelly began bundling every thing out in such haste that she broke two flower-pots, scattered all the squash-seeds, and brought a pile of rakes and hoes clattering down about her ears.

"Just wait a bit, and let me take the lead, miss. You hand me things, I'll pile 'em in the barrow and wheel 'em off to the barn; then it will save time, and be finished up tidy."

Nelly did as he advised, and very soon nothing but dust remained.

"What next?" she asked, not knowing in the least.

"I'll sweep up, while you see if Polly can come and scrub the room out. It ought to be done before you stay here, let alone the patients."

"So it had," said Nelly, looking very wise all of a sudden. "Will says the wards—that means the rooms, Tony—are scrubbed every day or two, and

kept very clean, and well venti—something—I can't say it; but it means having a plenty of air come in. I can clean windows while Polly mops, and then we shall soon be done."

Away she ran, feeling very busy and important Polly came, and very soon the room looked like another place. The four latticed windows were set wide open, so the sunshine came dancing through the vines that grew outside, and curious roses peeped in to see what frolic was afoot. The walls shone white again, for not a spider dared to stay; the wide seat which encircled the room was dustless now, the floor as nice as willing hands could make it; and the south wind blew away all musty odors with its fragrant breath.

"How fine it looks!" cried Nelly, dancing on the doorstep, lest a footprint should mar the still damp floor.

"I'd almost like to fall sick for the sake of staying here," said Tony, admiringly. "Now, what sort of beds are you going to have, miss?"

"I suppose it won't do to put butterflies and toads and worms into beds like the real soldiers where Will was?" answered Nelly, looking anxious.

Tony could hardly help shouting at the idea; but rather than trouble his little mistress, he said very soberly: "I'm afraid they wouldn't lay easy, not being used to it. Tucking up a butterfly would about kill him; the worms would be apt to get lost among the bedclothes; and the toads would tumble out the first thing."

"I shall have to ask mamma about it. What will you do while I'm gone?" said Nelly, unwilling that a moment should be lost.

"I'll make frames for nettings to the window, else the doves will come in and eat up the sick people."

"I think they will know that it is a hospital, and be too kind to hurt or frighten their neighbors," began Nelly; but, as she spoke, a plump white dove walked in, looked about with its red-ringed eyes, and quietly pecked

up a tiny bug that had just ventured out from the crack where it had taken refuge when the deluge came.

"Yes, we must have the nettings. I'll ask mamma for some lace," said Nelly, when she saw that; and, taking her pet dove on her shoulder, told it about her hospital as she went toward the house; for, loving all little creatures as she did, it grieved her to have any harm befall even the least or plainest of them. She had a sweet child-fancy that her playmates understood her language as she did theirs, and that birds, flowers, animals, and insects felt for her the same affection which she felt for them. Love always makes friends, and nothing seemed to fear the gentle child; but welcomed her like a little sun who shone alike on all, and never suffered an eclipse.

She was gone some time, and when she came back her mind was full of new plans, one hand full of rushes, the other of books, while over her head floated the lace, and a bright green ribbon hung across her arm.

"Mamma says that the best beds will be little baskets, boxes, cages, and any sort of thing that suits the patient; for each will need different care and food and medicine. I have not baskets enough; so, as I cannot have pretty white beds, I am going to braid pretty green nests for my patients, and, while I do it, mamma thought you'd read to me the pages she has marked, so that we may begin right."

"Yes, miss; I like that. But what is the ribbon for?" asked Tony.

"Oh, that's for you. Will says that if you are to be an army surgeon, you must have a green band on your arm; so I got this to tie on when we play hospital."

Tony let her decorate the sleeve of his gray jacket, and, when the nettings were done, the welcome books were opened and enjoyed. It was a happy time, sitting in the sunshine, with leaves pleasantly astir all about them, doves cooing overhead, and flowers sweetly gossiping together through the summer afternoon. Nelly wove her smooth, green rushes, Tony pored over his pages, and both found something better than fairy legends in the family histories of insects, birds, and beasts. All manner of wonders

appeared, and were explained to them, till Nelly felt as if a new world had been given her, so full of beauty, interest, and pleasure that she never could be tired of studying it. Many of these things were not strange to Tony, because, born among plants, he had grown up with them as if they were brothers and sisters, and the sturdy, brown-faced boy had learned many lessons which no poet or philosopher could have taught him, unless he had become as childlike as himself, and studied from the same great book.

When the baskets were done, the marked pages all read, and the sun began to draw his rosy curtains round him before smiling "Good-night," Nelly ranged the green beds round the room, Tony put in the screens, and the hospital was ready. The little nurse was so excited that she could hardly eat her supper, and directly afterwards ran up to tell Will how well she had succeeded with the first part of her enterprise. Now brother Will was a brave young officer, who had fought stoutly and done his duty like a man. But, when lying weak and wounded at home, the cheerful courage which had led him safely through many dangers seemed to have deserted him, and he was often gloomy, sad, or fretful, because he longed to be at his post again, and time passed very slowly. This troubled his mother, and made Nelly wonder why he found lying in a pleasant room so much harder than fighting battles or making weary marches. Any thing that interested and amused him was very welcome, and when Nelly, climbing on the arm of his sofa, told her plans, mishaps, and successes, he laughed out more heartily than he had done for many a day, and his thin face began to twinkle with fun as it used to do so long ago. That pleased Nelly, and she chatted like any affectionate little magpie, till Will was really interested; for when one is ill, small things amuse.

"Do you expect your patients to come to you, Nelly?" he asked.

"No, I shall go and look for them. I often see poor things suffering in the garden, and the woods, and always feel as if they ought to be taken care of as people are."

"You won't like to carry insane bugs, lame toads, and convulsive kittens in your hands, and they would not stay on a stretcher if you had one. You

should have an ambulance, and be a branch of the Sanitary Commission," said Will.

Nelly had often heard the words, but did not quite understand what they meant. So Will told her of that great and never-failing charity, to which thousands owe their lives; and the child listened with lips apart, eyes often full, and so much love and admiration in her heart that she could find no words in which to tell it. When her brother paused, she said earnestly: "Yes, I will be a Sanitary. This little cart of mine shall be my ambulance, and I'll never let my water-barrels go empty, never drive too fast, or be rough with my poor passengers, like some of the men you tell about. Does this look like an ambulance, Will?"

"Not a bit; but it shall, if you and mamma like to help me. I want four long bits of cane, a square of white cloth, some pieces of thin wood, and the gum-pot," said Will, sitting up to examine the little cart, feeling like a boy again, as he took out his knife and began to whittle.

Upstairs and downstairs ran Nelly till all necessary materials were collected, and almost breathlessly she watched her brother arch the canes over the cart, cover them with the cloth, and fit in an upper shelf of small compartments, each lined with cotton wool to serve as beds for wounded insects, lest they should hurt one another or jostle out. The lower part was left free for any larger creatures which Nelly might find. Among her toys she had a tiny cask which only needed a peg to be water-tight: this was filled and fitted in before, because, as the small sufferers needed no seats, there was no place for it behind, and, as Nelly was both horse and driver, it was more convenient in front. On each side of it stood a box of stores. In one were minute rollers, as bandages are called, a few bottles not yet filled, and a wee doll's jar of cold-cream, because Nelly could not feel that her outfit was complete without a medicine-chest. The other box was full of crumbs, bits of sugar, bird-seed, and grains of wheat and corn, lest any famished stranger should die for want of food before she got it home. Then mamma painted "U. S. San. Com." in bright letters on the cover, and Nelly received her charitable plaything with a long sigh of satisfaction.

"Nine o'clock already! Bless me, what a short evening this has been!" exclaimed Will, as Nelly came to give him her good-night kiss.

"And such a happy one," she answered. "Thank you very, very much, dear Will. I only wish my little ambulance was big enough for you to go in,—I'd so like to give you the first ride."

"Nothing I should like better, if it were possible, though I've a prejudice against ambulances in general. But, as I cannot ride, I'll try and hop out to your hospital to-morrow, and see how you get on,"—which was a great deal for Captain Will to say, because he had been too listless to leave his sofa for several days.

That promise sent Nelly happily away to bed, only stopping to pop her head out of the window to see if it was likely to be a fair day to-morrow, and to tell Tony about the new plan as he passed below.

"Where shall you go to look for your first load of sick folks, miss?" he asked.

"All round the garden first, then through the grove, and home across the brook. Do you think I can find any patients so?" said Nelly.

"I know you will. Good-night, miss," and Tony walked away with a merry look on his face, that Nelly would not have understood if she had seen it.

Up rose the sun bright and early, and up rose Nurse Nelly almost as early and as bright. Breakfast was taken in a great hurry, and before the dew was off the grass this branch of the S. C. was all astir. Papa, mamma, big brother and baby sister, men and maids, all looked out to see the funny little ambulance depart, and nowhere in all the summer fields was there a happier child than Nelly, as she went smiling down the garden path, where tall flowers kissed her as she passed, and every blithe bird seemed singing a "Good speed."

"How I wonder what I shall find first," she thought, looking sharply on all sides as she went. Crickets chirped, grasshoppers leaped, ants worked busily at their subterranean houses, spiders spun shining webs from twig to twig, bees were coming for their bags of gold, and butterflies had just begun their holiday. A large white one alighted on the top of the ambulance, walked over the inscription as if spelling it letter by letter, then floated away from flower to flower, like one carrying the good news far and wide.

"Now every one will know about the hospital, and be glad to see me coming," thought Nelly. And indeed it seemed so, for just then a blackbird, sitting on the garden wall, burst out with a song full of musical joy, Nelly's kitten came running after to stare at the wagon and rub her soft side against it, a bright-eyed toad looked out from his cool bower among the lily-leaves, and at that minute Nelly found her first patient. In one of the dewy cobwebs hanging from a shrub near by, sat a fat black and yellow spider, watching a fly whose delicate wings were just caught in the net. The poor fly buzzed pitifully, and struggled so hard that the whole web shook; but the more he struggled, the more he entangled himself, and the fierce spider was preparing to descend that it might weave a shroud about its prey, when a little finger broke the threads and lifted the fly safely into the palm of a hand, where he lay faintly humming his thanks.

Nelly had heard much about contrabands, knew who they were, and was very much interested in them; so, when she freed the poor black fly, she played he was her contraband, and felt glad that her first patient was one that needed help so much. Carefully brushing away as much of the web as she could, she left small Pompey, as she named him, to free his own legs, lest her clumsy fingers should hurt him; then she laid him in one of the soft beds with a grain or two of sugar if he needed refreshment, and bade him rest and recover from his fright, remembering that he was at liberty to fly away whenever he liked, because she had no wish to make a slave of him.

Feeling very happy over this new friend, Nelly went on singing softly as she walked, and presently she found a pretty caterpillar dressed in

brown fur, although the day was warm. He lay so still she thought him dead, till he rolled himself into a ball as she touched him.

"I think you are either faint from the heat of this thick coat of yours, or that you are going to make a cocoon of yourself, Mr. Fuzz," said Nelly. "Now I want to see you turn into a butterfly, so I shall take you, and if you get lively again I will let you go. I shall play that you have given out on a march, as the soldiers sometimes do, and been left behind for the sanitary people to see to."

In went sulky Mr. Fuzz, and on trundled the ambulance till a golden-green rose-beetle was discovered, lying on his back kicking as if in a fit.

"Dear me, what shall I do for him?" thought Nelly. "He acts as baby did when she was so ill, and mamma put her in a warm bath. I haven't got my little tub here, or any hot water, and I'm afraid the beetle would not like it if I had. Perhaps he has pain in his stomach; I'll turn him over, and pat his back, as nurse does baby's when she cries for pain like that."

She set the beetle on his legs, and did her best to comfort him; but he was evidently in great distress, for he could not walk, and instead of lifting his emerald overcoat, and spreading the wings that lay underneath, he turned over again, and kicked more violently than before. Not knowing what to do, Nelly put him into one of her soft nests for Tony to cure if possible. She found no more patients in the garden except a dead bee, which she wrapped in a leaf, and took home to bury. When she came to the grove, it was so green and cool she longed to sit and listen to the whisper of the pines, and watch the larch-tassels wave in the wind. But, recollecting her charitable errand, she went rustling along the pleasant path till she came to another patient, over which she stood considering several minutes before she could decide whether it was best to take it to her hospital, because it was a little gray snake, with a bruised tail. She knew it would not hurt her, yet she was afraid of it; she thought it pretty, yet could not like it; she pitied its pain, yet shrunk from helping it, for it had a fiery eye, and a sharp quivering tongue, that looked as if longing to bite.

"He is a rebel, I wonder if I ought to be good to him," thought Nelly, watching the reptile writhe with pain. "Will said there were sick rebels in his hospital, and one was very kind to him. It says, too, in my little book, 'Love your enemies.' I think snakes are mine, but I guess I'll try and love him because God made him. Some boy will kill him if I leave him here, and then perhaps his mother will be very sad about it. Come, poor worm, I wish to help you, so be patient, and don't frighten me."

Then Nelly laid her little handkerchief on the ground, and with a stick gently lifted the wounded snake upon it, and, folding it together, laid it in the ambulance. She was thoughtful after that, and so busy puzzling her young head about the duty of loving those who hate us, and being kind to those who are disagreeable or unkind, that she went through the rest of the wood quite forgetful of her work. A soft "Queek, queek!" made her look up and listen. The sound came from the long meadow grass, and, bending it carefully back, she found a half-fledged bird, with one wing trailing on the ground, and its eyes dim with pain or hunger.

"You darling thing, did you fall out of your nest and hurt your wing?" cried Nelly, looking up into the single tree that stood near by. No nest was to be seen, no parent-birds hovered overhead, and little Robin could only tell its troubles in that mournful "Queek, queek, queek!"

Nelly ran to get both her chests, and, sitting down beside the bird, tried to feed it. To her great joy it ate crumb after crumb as if it were half starved, and soon fluttered nearer with a confiding fearlessness that made her very proud. Soon Baby Robin seemed quite comfortable, his eye brightened, he "queeked" no more, and but for the drooping wing would have been himself again. With one of her bandages Nelly bound both wings closely to his sides for fear he should hurt himself by trying to fly; and, though he seemed amazed at her proceedings, he behaved very well, only staring at her, and ruffling up his few feathers in a funny way that made her laugh. Then she had to discover some way of accommodating her two larger patients, so that neither should hurt nor alarm the other. A bright thought came to her after much pondering. Carefully lifting the handkerchief, she pinned the two ends to the roof of the cart, and there swung little Forked-tongue, while Rob lay easily below.

By this time Nelly began to wonder how it happened that she found so many more injured things than ever before. But it never entered her innocent head that Tony had searched the wood and meadow before she was up, and laid most of these creatures ready to her hands, that she might not be disappointed. She had not yet lost her faith in fairies, so she fancied they too belonged to her small sisterhood, and presently it did really seem impossible to doubt that the good folk had been at work.

Coming to the bridge that crossed the brook, she stopped a moment to watch the water ripple over the bright pebbles, the ferns bend down to drink, and the funny tadpoles frolic in quieter nooks where the sun shone, and the dragon-flies swung among the rushes. When Nelly turned to go on, her blue eyes opened wide, and the handle of the ambulance dropped with a noise that caused a stout frog to skip into the water heels over head. Directly in the middle of the bridge was a pretty green tent, made of two tall burdock leaves. The stems were stuck into cracks between the boards, the tips were pinned together with a thorn, and one great buttercup nodded in the doorway like a sleepy sentinel. Nelly stared and smiled, listened, and looked about on every side. Nothing was seen but the quiet meadow and the shady grove, nothing was heard but the babble of the brook and the cheery music of the bobolinks.

"Yes," said Nelly softly to herself, "that is a fairy tent, and in it I may find a baby elf sick with whooping-cough or scarlet fever. How splendid it would be! only I could never nurse such a dainty thing."

Stooping eagerly, she peeped over the buttercup's drowsy head, and saw what seemed a tiny cock of hay. She had no time to feel disappointed, for the haycock began to stir, and, looking nearer, she beheld two silvery-gray mites, who wagged wee tails, and stretched themselves as if they had just waked up. Nelly knew that they were young field-mice, and rejoiced over them, feeling rather relieved that no fairy had appeared, though she still believed them to have had a hand in the matter.

"I shall call the mice my Babes in the Wood, because they are lost and covered up with leaves," said Nelly, as she laid them in her snuggest bed, where they nestled close together, and fell fast asleep again.

Being very anxious to get home, that she might tell her adventures, and show how great was the need of a sanitary commission in that region, Nelly marched proudly up the avenue, and, having displayed her load, hurried to the hospital where another applicant was waiting for her. On the step of the door lay a large turtle, with one claw gone, and on his back was pasted a bit of paper with his name, "Commodore Waddle, U.S.N." Nelly knew this was a joke of Will's, but welcomed the ancient mariner, and called Tony to help her get him in.

All that morning they were very busy settling the new-comers, for both people and books had to be consulted before they could decide what diet and treatment was best for each. The winged contraband had taken Nelly at her word, and flown away on the journey home. Little Rob was put in a large cage, where he could use his legs, yet not injure his lame wing. Forked-tongue lay under a wire cover, on sprigs of fennel, for the gardener said that snakes were fond of it. The Babes in the Wood were put to bed in one of the rush baskets, under a cotton-wool coverlet. Greenback, the beetle, found ease for his unknown aches in the warm heart of a rose, where he sunned himself all day. The Commodore was made happy in a tub of water, grass, and stones, and Mr. Fuzz was put in a well-ventilated glass box to decide whether he would be a cocoon or not.

Tony had not been idle while his mistress was away, and he showed her the hospital garden he had made close by, in which were cabbage, nettle, and mignonette plants for the butterflies, flowering herbs for the bees, chickweed and hemp for the birds, catnip for the pussies, and plenty of room left for whatever other patients might need. In the afternoon, while Nelly did her task at lint-picking, talking busily to Will as she worked, and interesting him in her affairs, Tony cleared a pretty spot in the grove for the burying-ground, and made ready some small bits of slate on which to write the names of those who died. He did not have it ready an hour too soon, for at sunset two little graves were needed, and Nurse Nelly shed tender tears for her first losses as she laid the motherless mice in one smooth hollow, and the gray-coated rebel in the other. She had learned to care for him already, and, when she found him dead, was very glad she had been kind to him, hoping that he knew it, and died happier in her hospital than all alone in the shadowy wood.

The rest of Nelly's patients prospered, and of the many added afterward few died, because of Tony's skilful treatment and her own faithful care. Every morning when the day proved fair the little ambulance went out upon its charitable errand; every afternoon Nelly worked for the human sufferers whom she loved; and every evening brother Will read aloud to her from useful books, showed her wonders with his microscope, or prescribed remedies for the patients, whom he soon knew by name and took much interest in. It was Nelly's holiday; but, though she studied no lessons, she learned much, and unconsciously made her pretty play both an example and a rebuke for others.

At first it seemed a childish pastime, and people laughed. But there was something in the familiar words "Sanitary," "hospital," and "ambulance" that made them pleasant sounds to many ears. As reports of Nelly's work went through the neighborhood, other children came to see and copy her design. Rough lads looked ashamed when in her wards they found harmless creatures hurt by them, and going out they said among themselves, "We won't stone birds, chase butterflies, and drown the girls' little cats any more, though we won't tell them so." And most of the lads kept their word so well that people said there never had been so many birds before as all that summer haunted wood and field. Tender-hearted playmates brought their pets to be cured; even busy fathers had a friendly word for the small charity, which reminded them so sweetly of the great one which should never be forgotten; lonely mothers sometimes looked out with wet eyes as the little ambulance went by, recalling thoughts of absent sons who might be journeying painfully to some far-off hospital, where brave women waited to tend them with hands as willing, hearts as tender, as those the gentle child gave to her self-appointed task.

At home the charm worked also. No more idle days for Nelly, or fretful ones for Will, because the little sister would not neglect the helpless creatures so dependent upon her, and the big brother was ashamed to complain after watching the patience of these lesser sufferers, and merrily said he would try to bear his own wound as quietly and bravely as the "Commodore" bore his. Nelly never knew how much good she had done Captain Will till he went away again in the early autumn. Then he thanked her for it, and though she cried for joy and sorrow she never forgot it,

because he left something behind him which always pleasantly reminded her of the double success her little hospital had won.

When Will was gone, and she had prayed softly in her heart that God would keep him safe and bring him home again, she dried her tears and went away to find comfort in the place where he had spent so many happy hours with her. She had not been there before that day, and when she reached the door she stood quite still and wanted very much to cry again, for something beautiful had happened. She had often asked Will for a motto for her hospital, and he had promised to find her one. She thought he had forgotten it; but even in the hurry of that busy day he had found time to do more than keep his word, while Nelly sat indoors, lovingly brightening the tarnished buttons on the blue coat that had seen so many battles.

Above the roof, where the doves cooed in the sun, now rustled a white flag with the golden "S.C." shining on it as the west wind tossed it to and fro. Below, on the smooth panel of the door, a skilful pencil had drawn two arching ferns, in whose soft shadow, poised upon a mushroom, stood a little figure of Nurse Nelly, and underneath it another of Dr. Tony bottling medicine, with spectacles upon his nose. Both hands of the miniature Nelly were outstretched, as if beckoning to a train of insects, birds, and beasts, which was so long that it not only circled round the lower rim of this fine sketch, but dwindled in the distance to mere dots and lines. Such merry conceits as one found there! A mouse bringing the tail it had lost in some cruel trap, a dor-bug with a shade over its eyes, an invalid butterfly carried in a tiny litter by long-legged spiders, a fat frog with gouty feet hopping upon crutches, Jenny Wren sobbing in a nice handkerchief, as she brought poor dear dead Cock Robin to be restored to life. Rabbits, lambs, cats, calves, and turtles, all came trooping up to be healed by the benevolent little maid who welcomed them so heartily.

Nelly laughed at these comical mites till the tears ran down her cheeks, and thought she never could be tired of looking at them. But presently she saw four lines clearly printed underneath her picture, and her childish face grew sweetly serious as she read the words of a great poet, which Will had made both compliment and motto:—

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

IV.

GRANDMA'S TEAM.

"It's no use, I can't find a horse anywhere, for love or money. All are either sick or kept quiet to-day for fear of being sick. I declare I'd almost rather lose Major than disappoint mother," said Farmer Jenks, coming in on Sunday morning from a fruitless visit to his neighbors.

It was in the height of the horse distemper, and his own valuable beast stood in the stall, looking very interesting, with his legs in red flannel bandages, an old shawl round his neck, his body well covered by blankets, and a pensive expression in his fine eyes as he coughed and groaned distressfully.

You see it was particularly unfortunate to have Major give out on Sunday, for grandma had been to church, rain or shine, every Sunday for twenty years, and it was the pride of her life to be able to say this. She was quite superstitious about it, and really felt as if her wonderful health and strength were given her as a reward for her unfailing devotion.

A sincerely pious and good old lady was Grandma Jenks, and her entry into the church always made a little sensation, for she was eighty-five years old, yet hale and hearty, with no affliction but lame feet. So every Sunday, all the year round, her son or grandsons drove her down to service in the wide, low chaise, got expressly for her benefit, and all the week seemed brighter and better for the quiet hour spent in the big pew.

"If the steeple should fall, folks wouldn't miss it any more than they would old Mrs. Jenks from her corner," was a saying among the people, and grandma felt as if she was not only a public character, but a public example for all to follow, for another saying in the town was,—

"Well, if old Mrs. Jenks can go to meeting, there's no excuse for our staying at home."

That pleased her, and so when the farmer came in with his bad news, she looked deeply disappointed, sat still a minute tapping her hymn-book, then took her two canes and got up, saying resolutely,—

"A merciful man is merciful to his beast, so I won't have poor Major risk his life for me, but I shall walk."

A general outcry followed, for grandma was very lame, church a mile away, and the roads muddy after the rain.

"You can't do it mother, and you'll be sick for the winter if you try," cried Mrs. Jenks, in great trouble.

"No, dear; I guess the Lord will give me strength, since I'm going to His house," answered the old lady, walking slowly to the door.

"Blest if I wouldn't carry you myself if I only could, mother," exclaimed the farmer, helping her down the steps with filial gentleness.

Here Ned and Charley, the boys, laughed, for grandma was very stout, and the idea of their father carrying her tickled them immensely.

"Boys, I'm ashamed of you!" said their mother, frowning at them. But grandma laughed too, and said pleasantly,—

"I won't be a burden, Moses; give me your arm and I'll step out as well as I can, and mebby some one may come along and give me a lift."

So the door was locked and the family set off. But it was hard work for the old lady, and soon she said she must sit down and rest a spell. As they stood waiting for her, all looking anxious, the boys suddenly had a bright

idea, and, merely saying they had forgotten something, raced up the hill again.

"I'm afraid you won't be able to do it, mother," the farmer was just saying, when the sound of an approaching carriage made them all turn to look, hoping for a lift.

Nearer and nearer drew the rattle, and round the corner came, not a horse's head, but two felt hats on two boys' heads, and Charley and Ned appeared, trotting briskly, with the chaise behind them.

"Here's your team, grandma! Jump in, and we'll get you to meeting in good time yet," cried the lads, smiling and panting as they drew up close to the stone where the old lady sat.

"Boys, boys, it's Sunday, and we can't have any jokes or nonsense now," began Mrs. Jenks, looking much scandalized.

"Well, I don't know, wife. It's a new thing, I allow, but considering the fix we are in, I'm not sure it isn't a good plan. What do *you* think, mother?" asked the farmer, laughing, yet well pleased at the energy and good-will of his lads.

"If the boys behave themselves, and do it as a duty, not a frolic, and don't upset me, I reckon I'll let 'em try, for I don't believe I can get there any other way," said grandma.

"You hoped the Lord would give you strength, and so He has, in this form. Use it, mother, and thank Him for it, since the children love you so well they would run their legs off to serve you," said the farmer, soberly, as he helped the old lady in and folded the robes round her feet.

"Steady, boys, no pranks, and stop behind the sheds. I can lend mother an arm there, and she can walk across the green. This turn-out is all very well, but we won't make a show of it."

Away went the chaise rolling gently down the hill, and the new span trotted well together, while the old lady sat calmly inside, frequently

saying,—

"Don't pull too hard, Ned. I'm afraid I'm very heavy for you to draw, Charley. Take it easy, dears; there's time enough, time enough."

"You'll never hear the last of this, Moses; it will be a town joke for months to come," said Mrs. Jenks, as she and her husband walked briskly after the triumphal car.

"Don't care if I do hear on't for a considerable spell. It's nothing to be ashamed of, and I guess you'll find that folks will agree with me, even if they do laugh," answered the farmer, stoutly; and he was right.

Pausing behind the sheds, grandma was handed out, and the family went into church, a little late but quite decorously, and as if nothing funny had occurred. To be sure, Ned and Charley were very red and hot, and now and then stole looks at one another with a roguish twinkle of the eye; but a nudge from mother or a shake of the head from father kept them in good order, while dear old grandma couldn't do enough to show her gratitude. She passed a fan, she handed peppermints in her hymn-book, and when Ned sneezed begged him to put her shawl over his shoulders.

After church the lads slipped away and harnessed themselves all ready for the homeward trip. But they had to wait, for grandma met some friends and stopped to "reminiss," as she called it, and her son did not hurry her, thinking it as well to have the coast clear before his new team appeared.

It was dull and cold behind the sheds, and the boys soon got impatient. Their harness was rather intricate, and they did not want to take it off, so they stood chafing and grumbling at the delay.

"You are nearest, so just hand out that blanket and put it over me; I'm as cold as a stone," said Ned, who was leader.

"I want it myself, if I've got to wait here much longer," grumbled Charley, sitting on the whiffletree, with his legs curled up.

"You're a selfish pig! I'm sure I shall have the horse-cough to-morrow if you don't cover me up."

"Now you know why father is so particular about making us cover Major when we leave him standing. You never do it if you can help it, so how do you like it yourself?"

"Whether I like it or not, I'll warm you when we get home, see if I don't, old fellow."

Up came the elders and away went the ponies, but they had a hard tug of it this time. Grandma was not a light weight, the road pretty steep in places, and the mud made heavy going. Such a puffing and panting, heaving and hauling, was never heard or seen there before. The farmer put his shoulder to the wheel, and even Mrs. Jenks tucked up her black silk skirts, and gave an occasional tug at one shaft.

Grandma bemoaned her cruelty, and begged to get out, but the lads wouldn't give up, so with frequent stoppages, some irrepressible laughter, and much persistent effort, the old lady was safely landed at the front door.

No sooner was she fairly down than she did what I fancy might have a good effect on four-legged steeds, if occasionally tried. She hugged both boys, patted and praised them, helped pull off their harness, and wiped their hot foreheads with her own best Sunday handkerchief, then led them in and fed them well.

The lads were in high feather at the success of their exploit, and each showed it in a different way. Charley laughed and talked about it, offered to trot grandma out any day, and rejoiced in the strength of his muscles, and his soundness in wind and limb.

But Ned sat silently eating his dinner, and when some one asked him if he remembered the text of the sermon, he answered in grandma's words, "A merciful man is merciful to his beast."

"Well, I don't care, that's the only text I remember, and I got a sermon out of it, any way," he said, when the rest laughed at him, and asked what

he was thinking about.

"I seem to know now how Major feels when we keep him waiting, when I don't blanket him, and when I expect him to pull his heart out, with no time to get his breath. I'm going to beg his pardon after dinner, and tell him all about it."

Charley stopped laughing when sober Ned said that, and he saw his father and mother nod to one another as if well pleased.

"I'll go too, and tell the old fellow that I mean to uncheck him going up hill, to scotch the wheels so he can rest, and be ever so good to him if he'll only get well."

"You might add that you mean to treat him like a horse and a brother, for you have turned pony yourself," said his father, when Charley finished his virtuous remarks.

"And don't forget to pet him a good deal, my dears, for horses like to be loved, and praised, and thanked, as well as boys, and we can't do too much for the noble creatures who are so faithful and useful to us," said Mrs. Jenks, quite touched by the new state of feeling.

"It's my opinion that this sickness among the horses will do a deal of good, by showing folks the great value of the beasts they abuse and neglect. Neighbor Stone is fussing over his old Whitey as if he was a child, and yet I've seen that poor brute unmercifully beaten, and kept half starved. I told Stone that if he lost him it would be because kind treatment came too late; and Stone never got mad, but went and poured vinegar over a hot brick under Whitey's nose till he 'most sneezed his head off. Stone has got a lesson this time, and so have some other folks."

As the farmer spoke, he glanced at the boys, who remorsefully recalled the wrongs poor Major had suffered at their hands, not from cruelty, but thoughtlessness, and both resolved to treat him like a friend for evermore.

"Well," said grandma, looking with tender pride at the ruddy faces on either side of her, "I'm thankful to say that I've never missed a Sunday for

twenty year, and I've been in all sorts of weather, and in all sorts of ways, even on an ox sled one time when the drifts were deep, but I never went better than to-day; so in this dish of tea I'm going to drink this toast: 'Easy roads, light loads, and kind drivers to grandma's team.'"

V

FAIRY PINAFORES.

After Cinderella was married and settled, her god-mother looked about for some other clever bit of work to do, for she was not only the best, but the busiest little old lady that ever lived. Now the city was in a sad state, for all it looked so fine and seemed so gay. The old king was very lazy and sat all day in his great easy-chair, taking naps and reading newspapers, while the old queen sat opposite in *her* easy-chair, taking naps and knitting gold-thread stockings for her son. The prince was a fine young man, but rather wild, and fonder of running after pretty young ladies with small feet than of attending to the kingdom.

The wise god-mother knew that Cinderella would teach him better things by and by, but the old lady could not wait for that. So, after talking the matter over with her ancient cat, Silverwhisker, she put on her red cloak, her pointed hat and high-heeled shoes, took her cane and trotted away to carry out her plan. She was so fond of making people happy that it kept her brisk and young in spite of her years; and, for all I know, she may be trotting up and down the world this very day, red cloak, pointed hat, high-heeled shoes, and all.

In her drives about the city, she had been much grieved to see so many beggar-children, ragged, hungry, sick, and cold, with no friends to care for them, no homes to shelter them, and no one to teach, help, or comfort them. When Cinderella's troubles were well over, the good god-mother

resolved to attend to this matter, and set about it in the following manner: —

She went into the poor streets, and whenever she found a homeless child she bade it come with her; and so motherly was her face, so kind her voice, that not one feared or refused. Soon she had gathered a hundred little boys and girls,—a sad sight, for some were lame, some blind, some deformed, many black and many ugly, all hungry, ragged, and forlorn, but all dear children in her sight, for the little hearts were not spoilt, and her fairy power could work all miracles. When she had enough, she led them beyond the city gates into the beautiful country and no one saw them go, for she made them invisible to other eyes. Wondering, yet contented, they trooped along, delighted with all they saw. The strong helped the weak; those who could see described the lovely sights to the blind; the hungry found berries all along the road; the sick gladly breathed the fresh air, and to none did the way seem long, for green grass was underneath their feet, blue sky overhead, and summer sunshine everywhere.

As they came out from a pleasant wood, a great shouting arose, when the god-mother pointed to a lovely place and told them that was home. She had but to wish for any thing and it was hers; so she had wished for a Children's Home, and there it was. In a wide meadow stood a large, low house, with many blooming little gardens before it, and sunny fields behind it, full of pretty tame creatures, who came running as if to welcome and tell the children that their holiday had begun. In they went, and stood quite breathless with wonder and delight, all was so pleasant and so new. There were no stairs to tire little feet with climbing up, or to bump little heads with tumbling down, but four large rooms opening one into the other, with wide doors and sunny windows on every side.

In one stood a hundred clean white beds, with a hundred little, clean white caps and gowns ready for the night. Dark curtains made a comfortable twilight here, and through the room sounded a soft lullaby from an unseen instrument, so soothing that all the children gaped at once and began to nod like a field of poppies.

"Yes, yes, that will work well, I see; but it is not yet time for bed," said the god-mother, and, touching another spring, there instantly sounded a

lively air, which would wake the soundest sleeper and make him skip gayly out of bed.

In the second room was a bath, so large that it looked like a shallow lake. A pretty marble child stood blowing bubbles in the middle, and pink and white shells, made of soap, lay along the brim. The pool was lined with soft sponges, and heaps of towels were scattered about, so that while the little folks splashed and romped they got finely washed and wiped before they knew it.

In the third room stood a long table, surrounded by low chairs, so no one could tip over. Two rows of bright silver porringers shone down the table; a fountain of milk played in the middle, and on a little railway, that ran round the table, went mimic cars loaded with bread, funny donkeys with panniers of berries on either side, and small men and women carrying trays of seed-cakes, gingerbread, and all the goodies that children may safely eat. Thus every one got quickly and quietly served, and meals would be merry-makings, not scenes of noise and confusion, as is often the case where many little mouths are to be filled.

The fourth room was larger than any of the others, being meant for both work and play. The wails were all pictures, which often changed, showing birds, beasts, and flowers, every country, and the history of the world; so one could study many things, you see. The floor was marked out for games of all kinds, and quantities of toys lay ready for the little hands that till now had owned so few. On one side long windows opened into the gardens, and on the other were recesses full of books to study and to read.

At first, the poor children could only look and sigh for happiness, finding it hard to believe that all this comfort could be meant for them. But the god-mother soon made them feel that this was home, for, gathering them tenderly about her, she said,—

"Dear little creatures, you have had no care, no love or happiness, all your short, sad lives; but now you are mine, and here you shall soon become the blithest, busiest children ever seen. Come, now, and splash in this fine pond; then we will have supper and play, and then to bed, for to-morrow will be a long holiday for all of us."

As she spoke, the children's rags vanished, and they sprang into the bath, eager to pick up the pretty shells and see the marble child, who, smiling, blew great bubbles that sailed away over their heads.

Great was the splashing and loud the laughter as the little people floated in the warm pool and romped among the towel-cocks, while the god-mother, in a quiet corner, bathed the sick and bound up the hurts of those whom cruel hands had wounded.

As fast as the children were washed, they were surprised to find themselves clothed all in a minute in pretty, comfortable suits, that pleased their eyes, and yet were not too fine for play. Soon a ring of happy faces shone round the table. The fountain poured its milky stream into every porringer, the mimic cars left their freight at each place, the donkeys trotted, and the little market-men and women tripped busily up and down, while the god-mother went tapping about, putting on bibs, helping the shy ones, and feeding the babies who could not feed themselves. When all were satisfied, the fountain ceased to play, the engine let off steam, the donkeys kicked up their heels to empty the panniers, the bibs folded themselves up, the porringers each turned a somerset and came down clean, and all was ready for breakfast.

Then the children played for an hour in the lovely play-room, often stopping to wonder if they wouldn't presently wake up and find it all a dream. Lest they should get quite wild with excitement, the god-mother soon led them to the great bedroom, and ordered on the caps and gowns, which was done before the children could wink. Then she taught them the little prayer all children love, and laid them in their cosey beds, with a good-night kiss for each. The lullaby-flute began to play, weary eyelids to close, and soon a hundred happy little souls lay fast asleep in the Children's Home.

For a long time the old lady let her family do nothing but enjoy themselves. Every morning they were led out into the meadow like a flock of lambs, there to frisk all day with their healthful playmates, sun and air, green grass, and exercise, for, being a wise woman, she left them to the magic of a better nurse than herself, and Nature, the dear god-mother of

the world, did her work so well that soon no one would have known the rosy, happy troop for the forlorn little creatures who had come there.

Then the old lady was satisfied, and said to herself,—

"Now they may work a little, else they will learn to love idleness. What shall I give them to do that will employ their hands, make them happy, and be of use to others?"

Now, like many other excellent old ladies, the god-mother had a pet idea, and it was *pinafores*. In her day all children wore them, were simply dressed, healthy, gay, and good. At the present time foolish mothers dressed their little ones like dolls, and the poor things were half-smothered with finery. At home there was a constant curling and brushing, tying of sashes and fussing with frills, abroad there was no fun, for hats, top-heavy with feathers, burdened their heads, fine cloaks and coats were to be taken care of, smart boots, in which they couldn't run, were on their feet, and dainty little gloves prevented their ever making dear dirt-pies. Very cross and fretful were the poor little people made by all this, though they hardly knew what the matter was, and the foolish mammas wondered and sighed, sent for Dr. Camomile, and declared there were never seen such naughty children before.

"Put on pinafores, and let them romp at their ease, and you will mend all this," said the god-mother, who knew everybody.

But the fine ladies were shocked, and cried out: "My dear madam, it is impossible, for pinafores are entirely out of fashion," and there it ended.

But the old lady never gave up her idea, and when she had successfully tried it with her large family, she felt sure that much of the health and happiness of children lay in big, sensible pinafores and plenty of freedom.

"I'll show them the worth of my idea," she said, as she sat thinking, with her eyes on the blue flax-fields shining in the sun. "These poor children shall help the rich ones, who never helped them, and we will astonish the city by the miracles we'll work."

With that she clapped her hands, and in a minute the room was filled with little looms and spinning-wheels, thimbles and needles, reels for winding thread, and all necessary tools for the manufacture of fairy pinafores. She could have wished for them already made, but she thought it better to teach the children some useful lessons, and keep them busy as well as happy.

Soon they were all at work, and no one was awkward or grew tired, for the wheels and looms were enchanted; so, though the boys and girls knew nothing of the matter when they began, they obeyed the old lady, who said, —

"A good will
Giveth skill,"

and presently were spinning and weaving, reeling and sewing, as if they had done nothing else all their lives.

Many days they worked, with long play spells between, and at last there lay a hundred wonderful pinafores before their eyes. Each was white as snow, smooth as satin, and all along the hem there shone a child-name curiously woven in gold or silver thread. But the charm of these "pinnies," as the children called them, was that they would never tear, get soiled, or wear out, but always remain as white and smooth and new as when first made, for they were woven of fairy flax. Another fine thing was that whoever wore one would grow gentle and good, for the friendly little weavers and spinners had put so much love and good-will into their work that it got into the pinafores and would never come out, but shone in the golden border, and acted like a charm on the childish hearts the aprons covered.

Very happy were the little people as they saw the pile grow higher and higher, for they knew what they were doing, and wondered who would wear each one.

"Now," said the god-mother, "which of my good children shall go to the city and sell our pinnies?"

"Send Babie, she is the best and has worked harder than all the rest," answered the children, and little Barbara quite blushed to be so praised.

"Yes, she shall go," said the god-mother, as she began to lay the aprons in a little old-fashioned basket.

As soon as the children saw it, they gathered about it like a swarm of bees, exclaiming,—

"See! see! it is Red Riding-Hood's little basket in which she carried the pot of butter. Dear grandma, where did you get it?"

"The excellent old lady whom the wolf ate up was a friend of mine, and after that sad affair I kept it to remember her by, my dears. It is an immortal basket, and all children love it, long to peep into it, and would give much to own it."

"What am I to do?" asked Babie, as the god-mother hung the basket on her arm.

"Go to the Royal Park, my dear, where all the young lords and ladies walk; stand by the great fountain, and when any children ask about the basket, tell them they may put in their hands and take what they find for a silver penny. They will gladly pay it, but each must kiss the penny and give it with a kind word, a friendly wish, before they take the pinnies. When all are sold, lay the silver pennies in the sunshine, and whatever happens, be sure that it is what I wish. Go, now, and tell no one where you come from nor why you sell your wares."

Then Babie put on her little red cloak, took the basket on her arm, and went away toward the city, while her playmates called after her,—

"Good luck! good-by! Come home soon and tell us all about it!"

When she came to the great gate, she began to fear she could not get in, for, though she had often peeped between the bars and longed to play with the pretty children, the guard had always driven her away, saying it was no place for her. Now, however, when she came up, the tall sentinel was so

busy looking at her basket that he only stood smiling to himself, as if some pleasant recollection was coming back to him, and said slowly,—

"Upon my word, I think I must be asleep and dreaming, for there's little Red Riding-Hood come again. The wolf is round the corner, I dare say, Run in, my dear, run in before he comes; and I'll give the cowardly fellow the beating I've owed him ever since I was a boy."

Babie laughed, and slipped through the gate so quickly that the guard rubbed his eyes, looked about him, and said,—

"Yes, yes, I thought I was asleep. Very odd that I should dream of the old fairy-tale I haven't read this twenty years."

In a green nook near the great fountain, Babie placed herself, looking like a pretty picture with her smiling face, bright eyes, and curly hair blowing in the wind. Presently little Princess Bess came running by to hide from her maid, of whom she was sadly tired. When she saw Babie, she forgot every thing else, and cried out,—

"O the pretty basket! I must have it. Will you sell it, little girl?"

"No, my lady, for it isn't mine; but if you like to pay a silver penny, you may put in your hand and take what you find."

"Will it be the little pot of butter?" said the Princess, as she pulled out her purse.

"A much more useful and wonderful thing than that, my lady. Something that will never spoil nor wear out, but keep you always good and happy while you wear it," answered Babie.

"That's splendid! Take the penny, lift the lid, and let me see," cried Bess.

"First kiss it, with a kind word, a friendly wish, please, my lady; for these are fairy wares, and can be had in no other way," said Babie.

Princess Bess tossed her head at this, but she wanted the fairy gift, so she kissed the silver penny said the word, and wished the wish; then in went her hand and out came the white pinafore, with a golden Bess shining all along the hem, and little crowns embroidered on the sleeves.

"O the pretty thing! Put it on, put it on before Primmins comes, else she won't let me wear it," cried the princess, throwing her hat and cloak on the grass, and hurrying on the pinafore.

She clapped her hands and danced about as if bewitched, for on each corner of the apron hung a tiny silver bell, which rang such a merry peal it made one dance and sing to hear it. Suddenly she stood quite still, while a soft look came into her face, as all the pride and wilfulness faded away. She touched the smooth, white pinafore, looked down at the golden name, listened to the fairy bells, and in that little pause seemed to become another child; for presently she put her arms round Babie's neck and kissed her, quite forgetting that one was a king's daughter and the other a beggar child.

"Dear little girl, thank you very much for my lovely pinny. Wait here till I call my playmates, that they too may buy your fairy wares."

Away she ran, and was soon back again with a troop of children so gayly dressed they looked like a flock of butterflies. The maids came with them, and all crowded about the wonderful basket, pushing and screaming, for these fine children had not fine manners. Babie was rather frightened, but Bess stood by her and rang her little bells, so that all stopped to listen. One by one each paid the penny, with the friendly word and wish, and then drew out the magic pinafore, which always showed the right name. The maids were so much interested when they learned that these aprons made their wearers good, that they gladly put them on; for, having gold and silver woven in them, the fine linen was not thought too plain for such noble little people to wear.

How they all changed as the pinnies went on! No more screaming, pushing, or fretting; only smiling faces, gentle voices, and the blithe ringing of the fairy bells. The poor maids almost cried for joy, they were

so tired of running after naughty children; and every thing looked so gay that people stopped to peep at the pretty group in the Royal Park.

When the last apron was sold, Babie told them that something strange was going to happen, and they might see it if they liked. So they made a wide ring round a sunny spot where she had laid the hundred silver pennies. Presently from each coin sprang a little pair of wings; on one the kind word, on the other the friendly wish that had been uttered over them, and, lifted by their magic, the pennies rose into the air like a flock of birds, and flew away over the tree-tops, shining as they went.

All the children were so eager to see where they would alight that they ran after. No one stumbled, no one fell, though they followed through crowded streets and down among strange places where they had never been before. All the maids ran after the children, and the stately papas and mammas followed the maids, quite distracted by the strange behavior of their children and servants. A curious sight it was, and the city was amazed, but the pennies flew on till they came to a bleak and barren spot, where many poor children tried to play in the few pale rays of sunshine that crept between the tall roofs that stood so thickly crowded on every side. Here the pennies folded their wings and fell like a silver shower, to be welcomed by cries of joy and wonder by the ragged children.

The poor mothers and fathers left their work to go and see the sight, and were as much amazed to find a crowd of fine people as the fine people were to see them; for, though they had heard of each other, they had never met, and did not know how sad was the contrast between them.

No one knew what to do at first, it was all so strange and new. But the magic that had got into the pinafores began to work, and soon Princess Bess was seen emptying her little purse among the poor children. The other boys and girls began at once to do the same, then the fine ladies felt their hearts grow pitiful, and they looked kindly at the poor, sad-faced women as they spoke friendly words and promised help. At sight of this, the lords and gentlemen were ashamed to be outdone by their wives children, and the heavy purses came out when the little ones failed, till all about the dreary place there was played a beautiful new game called "give away."

No one ever knew who did it, but, as the city clock struck noon, all the bells in all the steeples began to ring, and the tune they played was the same blithe one the little bells had chimed. Other wonders happened, for as the clear peal went sounding through the air the sun came glancing through all manner of chinks never seen before, and shone warm and bright upon the rich and poor standing together like one family. The third wonder was that when the fine folk came to put their purses back into their pockets, they were fuller than before, because for every bit of money given away there were two in its place, shining brighter than any gold, and marked with a little cross.

This was the beginning, but it would take a long time to tell all the good done by the fairy pinafores. Nobody guessed they were at the bottom of the changes which came about, but people thought some blessing had befallen the children, so blooming, good, and gay did they become. Busied with their own affairs, the older people would have forgotten the poor folk and the promises made them, if the children had not reminded them. Some little girl who wore a fairy pinny would climb into her mother's lap and say,—

"Mamma, I'm tired of my dolls; I want to make some clothes for the ragged children we saw the day I bought my pretty pinafore. Will you show me how?"

Then the mother would kiss the little face she loved so well, and give the child her wish, finding much happiness in seeing the comfortable suits go on, and receiving the thanks of less fortunate women; for motherly hearts are the same under rags and silk. The boys, though small fellows, were never tired of playing the new game with silver pennies, and made their fathers play with them, till many men who began it to please the little lads went on for the love of charity.

Princess Bess ordered the Park gates to stand open for the poor as well as the rich, and soon one could hardly tell the difference; for the poor children were comfortably clothed, and the foolish mammas, finding their little sons and daughters grew rosy strong, and happy in the plain pinafores, grew wiser, and left off fretting them with useless finery, finding that their own innocent gayety and beauty were their sweetest

ornaments, and learning that the good old fashion of simplicity was the best for all.

Things were prospering in this way when news of the fairy pinafores reached the old king. He seldom troubled himself about matters, but when he read accounts of the kind things his people were doing, he was so much interested that he forgot his nap, and the queen counted her stitches all amiss while listening. Cinderella and the Prince heard of it also, and felt quite reproached that they had forgotten every one but themselves. It was talked of at court, and everybody wished pinafores for their children; but the unknown child with the famous basket had vanished no one knew whither.

At last, after searching through the city, a sentinel was found who remembered seeing Babie come in from the country. When the king heard this, he ordered his carriage, the old queen put by her work to go with him, and the Prince with Cinderella got into the famous pumpkin coach, for they too wished to see the wonderful child.

Away they drove, followed by their lords and ladies, through the wood, and there beyond they saw the Children's Home. Full of curiosity, yet fearing to alarm the dwellers in that quiet place, every one alighted and went softly toward the house.

Every thing was so still and pleasant, all were charmed, and felt as if a spell were falling on them. When the court gentlemen heard the song of the birds overhead, they felt ashamed of the foolish speeches they were making; when the fine ladies saw the flowers blooming in the little gardens, their gay dresses seemed less beautiful; the old king and queen felt quite young and lively all at once, and Cinderella and her Prince longed for another race, such as they had when the glass slipper was lost.

Presently they found a little lad reading in the sun, and of him the king asked many questions. The child, forgetting that the god-mother wished to remain unknown, told all she had done, and bade them look in at the window, and see if what he said was not true. Every one peeped, and there they saw the children sitting at the looms and wheels motionless; for the dear old lady had fallen fast asleep, and no one stirred lest they should

wake her Like a room full of breathing, smiling images they sat, and, as the heads came at the windows, all looked up and whispered, "Hush!" like a soft wind sighing through the place.

Cinderella, who dearly loved her god-mother, felt reproached that she had done so little while the good old lady had done so much, and, stepping in, she began to stitch away on one of the new set of pinafores which they were making. At that, the lively young Prince skipped in after her, and, whisking a small boy out of his seat before a loom, began to weave with all his might; for, as the old lady said,—

"A good will
Giveth skill."

"I'll not be outdone by those children!" cried the king, and began briskly winding the thread which hung on blind Nanny's outstretched hands.

"Neither will I, my dear!" returned the queen, and whipping on her spectacles she cut out a pinafore on the spot.

After that, of course, every one else came rushing in, and soon all the wheels buzzed, looms jangled, needles flew, and scissors snipped, while the children stood by smiling at the sight of the fine folks working as if for their lives.

The noise woke the god-mother, who understood the matter at once, and was glad to see things in such good train. As she wished to say a word, she gave a smart tap with her staff, and every one stopped but the king, who was so busy winding his thread that he kept on till the skein was done, when he patted Nanny on the head, saying, in such a brisk tone his people hardly knew him for the lazy old king,—

"There, I feel better for that. We'll do another presently, my fine little girl." Then he nodded to the god-mother with twinkling eyes, for being a

fairy he respected her very much. She nodded back at him, and said gravely,—

"Your majesty is very welcome, and I am glad you have waked up at last. Don't fall asleep again, but go and make homes for all your poor, so that when you do fall asleep for the last time you will leave your son as happy a kingdom as you have found here. And you, my dear Cinderella, remember this: let your children be children while they may, and be sure they all wear pinafores."

VI.

MAMMA'S PLOT.

"It's the meanest thing I ever heard of, and I won't bear it!" cried Kitty, sitting down on her half-packed trunk, with a most rebellious expression.

"You must, my dear: it is the rule of the school, and you must submit. I'm very sorry, for I expected great comfort and pleasure from your little letters; but if madam has to read and correct them all, of course they will be compositions, and not particularly interesting," said mamma, with a sigh, as she folded up the small garments as tenderly as if her little girl had been inside of them.

"I didn't mind much about it when I read the rules, but now that I'm really going it seems like a prison; and I shall be just wild to tell you every thing. How can I, if that old lady has got to see what I write? I know I shan't like the food, and I can't ask you to send me any goodies without her knowing it. If I'm homesick, I shall want to tell you, and of course there will be lots of funny things you'd enjoy, but for this disgusting rule. I do declare I won't go!" and Kitty cast her new boots sternly on the floor.

"Yes, you will, Puss, because papa and I want you to. This is an excellent school; old-fashioned in some things, and I like it for that, though this rule is not a wise one, I fancy. You must do the best you can, and perhaps madam won't be very particular about what you write to me, if you are a good child."

"I know she will. I saw fussiness in her face. She's sure to be strict and prim, and I shall be so miserable." Here Kitty began to cry over her woes.

It was a habit of hers to have a great many troubles, and to be very much afflicted about trifles, for she had not a real trial in the world except her own fidgety little self. As she sat on her trunk, with all her possessions scattered about her, and one great tear on the end of her nose (she couldn't squeeze out another to save her life), she was a very pathetic object; and mamma felt so tender about losing her that she could not make light of this grief, as she often did when Kitty wept over some trifle.

All of a sudden a bright idea came into her head, for mothers' wits are usually sharper than other people's where their children are concerned. Up she got, and hurrying to her desk pulled out a box of many-colored note-paper, with envelopes to match, saying, as she showed them, with a smile, —

"I've thought of a nice plan, a sort of joke between us. Come here, and I'll tell you about it."

So Kitty wiped away her one tear, and ran to hear the new plan, full of curiosity and interest; for pretty papers are always attractive, and mamma looked as if the joke was going to be a funny one.

"I will fill your little portfolio with these, and for each color we will have a different meaning, which I shall understand. Let me see. When you are well and happy, use this pink paper; when you are home-sick, take the blue; if you want goodies, use the green; and if you don't feel well, take the violet. How do you like the idea, Puss?"

"It's regularly splendid! I do love to have secrets, and this will be such a nice one, all private between our two selves. Mamma, you are a perfect

dear, and I'll send you a letter every week. It will be such fun to write it all prim and proper, and let madam see it, and then have it tell you all about me by the color."

And Kitty danced about the room till the little blue bow on the top of her head stood straight up as if with excitement.

So the portfolio was fitted out in great style, and Kitty felt as proud as you please; for other girls didn't have colored note-papers, much less private jokes with their mammas. The new arrangement made her quite willing to go; and all that day she kept looking at her mother with twinkling eyes, and the last thing she said, as the carriage drove away, was,—

"Don't forget what pink, blue, green, and violet means, mamma."

The first week was a hard one, for every thing was new, and the rules were rather strict. Kitty did her best for the honor of her family, but sometimes her woes did seem heavier than she could bear, especially French verbs, and getting up very early.

So when Saturday came, and the home letters were to be written, she longed to pour out her full heart to dear mamma, but did not dare to do it, for madam went about among the girls, suggesting, correcting, and overseeing their productions as if they were nothing but compositions.

"Remember, my dears, these three rules when you are writing letters. Always put in something about your heavenly Father, the progress of your studies, and your duty to parents and teachers. None of these important points have been touched upon in your epistle, Miss Catherine; therefore, as it is much blotted, and badly spelled, I desire you to rewrite it, making these additions. Here is an excellent sample of the proper style;" and madam laid a model letter before poor Kitty, who muttered to herself, as she read it,—

"I might as well write a sermon, and done with it. Papa will laugh, and mamma won't get one bit of news from it. I'll let her know how unhappy I am any way."

So Kitty took out her bluest paper (the homesick color, you know), and produced the following letter, which madam approved and sent:—

> MY DEAR MAMMA,—With every sentiment which affection can suggest, I hasten to inform you that I am well, and trust you also and my honored father are enjoying that best of blessings, robust health.
>
> I am endeavoring to prove by diligence and good conduct my gratitude for the advantages now offered me, and trust that my progress may be a source of satisfaction to my parents and teachers, as well as profitable to myself in years to come.
>
> Madam is most kind to me, and my schoolmates are agreeable and friendly young ladies. That I may merit their affection and respect is the sincere wish of my heart, for friendship adds a charm to life, and strengthens the most amiable sentiments of the youthful mind.
>
> As Monday is your birthday, please accept this little picture as a token of my love, with best wishes for many happy returns of the day. May our heavenly Father, in his infinite goodness, long preserve you to us, and, when this earthly pilgrimage is over, may your landing be on that happy shore where naught but bliss can meet you, and where your virtues will receive the recompense which they deserve.
>
> I desire much to see you, but do not repine, since you deem it best to send me from you for a time. Our meeting will be the more delightful for this separation, and time soon flies when profitably employed.
>
> Please give my love to all, especially my papa, and believe me, dear mamma,
>
> Your ever dutiful and affectionate daughter,
>
> CATHERINE AUGUSTA MURRY.

"It's perfectly awful," said Kitty to herself, as she read it over; and so it was, but madam was an old fashioned lady, and had been brought up to honor her parents in the old-fashioned way. Letters like that were written in her youth, and she saw no occasion to change the style for what she called the modern slipshod mixture of gossip and slang.

The good lady never thought there might be a middle course, and that it was a better way to teach composition to let the children write their own natural little letters, with hints as to spelling, grammar, and other necessary matters, than to make them copy the Grandisonian style of her own youth.

Poor Kitty rebelled sadly, but submitted, and found her only comfort in the thought that mamma would find something in the letter besides what this disrespectful little person called "madam's old rubbish."

Mamma did find it, and sent back such a tender reply that Kitty's heart reproached her for causing so much anxiety, when things were not very bad after one got used to them.

So the next letter was a cheerful pink one, and though the contents were not a bit more interesting than the first one it gave great satisfaction.

A green one went next, for as Kitty's spirits improved she felt the need of a few home goodies to sweeten her studies and enliven her play hours. As only sensible dainties came, and madam was propitiated by a particularly delicate cake, presented with all due respect, she made no objection to an occasional box from home.

Kitty therefore found herself a great favorite, and all the girls were very fond of her, especially when the "sweeties" arrived.

"I think your mother is perfectly splendid to send such nice things without your saying a word. I have to tease mine when I go home on a visit, and she always forgets, and I can't remind her because the griffin sees my letters, and cuts out all requests for food, 'as if you were not properly supplied with the best in the market.'"

Fanny said that,—the wag and romp of the school,—and as she imitated the "griffin," as she had naughtily named madam, there was a general giggle, in which Kitty was glad to join, for she did get goodies without "saying a word," and the idea tickled her immensely.

But she told her secret to no one, and, finding that the pink notes made mamma very happy, she tried not to think of her "woes" when she sat down to write. This little bit of self-denial was its own reward; for, as the woes only existed in her own imagination, when she resolutely stopped thinking of them they vanished.

Plenty of work and play, young society, and the affectionate desire to please her mother did for Kitty just what mamma had hoped. At home she was too much petted and pitied, as the youngest is apt to be; and so she had the "fidgets," which are to little people what "nerves" are to the elders. Now she had no time to dawdle and bemoan herself: if she did, other girls went to the head of the class, led the games, and got the best marks.

So Kitty bestirred herself, and in three months was quite another child. Madam praised her, the girls loved her, mamma was both pleased and proud, and papa quite decided that Puss should have a little gold watch on her next birthday.

The pink paper was soon used up, since there was no call for any of the other colors, except an occasional green sheet; and a new stock was gladly sent by mamma, who was quite satisfied with the success of her little plot.

But mamma had been rather troubled about one thing, and that was the breaking of the rule. It had seemed a foolish one to her, and she had taught Kitty how to escape it. That was a bad example, and so she wrote to madam and "'fessed," like an honest mamma as she was.

She did it so prettily and penitently that old madam was not angry; indeed, when the matter was sensibly and respectfully put before her, she saw the justice of it, forgave the little plot, and amazed her pupils by gradually omitting to watch over them as they wrote.

When saucy Fanny spoke of it, she answered that she trusted them to write only what was true and modest, and, finding that the times had changed a little since her young days, she meant to relax some of her rules.

That pleased the girls, and they proved their gratitude by honorably forbearing to put into their letters any thing disrespectful toward the dear

old griffin. Some of the most affectionate freely took their letters to her for correction; and when she had read a few, and laughed over them till her spectacles were dim, she quite depended on seeing them, and found what used to be a dull task now changed to a very pleasant amusement.

As a contrast to the model letter already inserted (and which I beg leave to state was really written from school by a little girl of twelve), I will only add one which Kitty wrote after the old rule was set aside:—

> MY DEAR LITTLE MAMMA,—Now that I can tell you every thing, I will answer the questions you asked in your last, and please, please don't think I am a vain thing because I seem to praise myself. It is truly what people say and do, and I never should have told if you had not asked me.
>
> You want to know if I am liked. Why, mamma, I'm a leading girl. Others fight to walk with me, and bribe me with their nice things to sit by them. I'm at the head most of the time, and try not to be grand about it; so I help the others, and am as kind and generous as I know how to be.
>
> Madam is just as dear and clever as she can be, and I'm actually fond of her. Don't tell, but I fancy I'm her favorite, for she lets me do ever so many things that she once forbid, and isn't half so strict as she was.
>
> I'm truly glad I came, for I do get on, and haven't had a woe this ever so long. Isn't that nice? I'm homesick sometimes, and look at my blue paper, but I won't use it; so I go and have a good run, or chatter French with madam, and get cheered up before I write.
>
> I miss you most at night, mamma dear, for then I have no one to tell my goods and bads to, and so get right. But not having you, I remember what you told me, that I always have God, and to him I open my heart as I never did before Prayers mean something to me now, and I say them so earnestly that sometimes I cry, and that makes me feel so fresh and strong and ready to go on again.
>
> I do try to be good, and don't ask for any reward but to see you look proud and pleased when I come home. I'd give any thing if I could hug you now and then, because you don't mind if I tumble your collar: madam does, and that spoils the fun of it. Kissing is a kind of inspiration, you know; and one doesn't stop to think of clothes when one is so full of love, it must spill over in kisses.
>
> That sounds sentimental, but I'm not going to take it out, because you'll understand what I mean, and won't laugh. That's the comfort of private letters,

isn't it?

Now, good-by, my dearest mother. Lots of love to papa, and do both write soon to your own little PUSS.

Just as Kitty was folding it up, madam came by, and quite mechanically held out her hand for it, as she used to do.

Kitty caught it back, and then blushed and looked distressed; for madam said gravely, as she remembered the new rule,—

"I beg your pardon, I forgot. Seal it up, my dear; I won't ask to read your secrets any more."

Kitty saw that she was hurt, and with an impulsive gesture thrust the letter into madam's hand, saying bravely, though she quaked a little at some of the things she had written,—

"Please read it. There are no secrets in it, only foolish things that mamma likes to know because they are about me. You'll think I'm a vain goose, but I'd rather you did that than think I told tales, or did any thing sly."

Thus urged, madam read the letter; and Kitty stood by, with cheeks much pinker than the paper, expecting a lecture when the last word came. But, to her great amazement, the old lady kissed her as she gave it back, and said, in a voice as gentle as if speaking to one of her own little daughters, lost long ago,—

"It is a good letter, my dear, and a true one. Give my regards to your mamma, and tell her that your suspicion about my favorite is quite correct."

VII.

KATE'S CHOICE.

"Well, what do you think of her?"

"I think she's a perfect dear, and not a bit stuck up with all her money."

"A real little lady, and ever so pretty."

"She kissed me lots, and don't tell me to run away, so I love her."

The group of brothers and sisters standing round the fire laughed as little May finished the chorus of praise with these crowning virtues.

Tall Alf asked the question, and seemed satisfied with the general approval of the new cousin just come from England to live with them. They had often heard of Kate, and rather prided themselves on the fact that she lived in a fine house, was very rich, and sent them charming presents. Now pity was added to the pride, for Kate was an orphan, and all her money could not buy back the parents she had lost. They had watched impatiently for her arrival, had welcomed her cordially, and after a day

spent in trying to make her feel at home they were comparing notes in the twilight, while Kate was having a quiet talk with mamma.

"I hope she will choose to live with us. You know she can go to any of the uncles she likes best," said Alf.

"We are nearer her age than any of the other cousins, and papa is the oldest uncle, so I guess she will," added Milly, the fourteen-year-old daughter of the house.

"She said she liked America," said quiet Frank.

"Wonder if she will give us a lot of her money?" put in practical Fred, who was always in debt.

"Stop that!" commanded Alf. "Mind now, if you ever ask her for a penny I'll shake you out of your jacket."

"Hush! she's coming," cried Milly, and a dead silence followed the lively chatter.

A fresh-faced bright-eyed girl of fifteen came quietly in, glanced at the group on the rug, and paused as if doubtful whether she was wanted.

"Come on!" said Fred, encouragingly.

"Shall I be in the way?"

"Oh! dear, no, we were only talking," answered Milly, drawing her cousin nearer with an arm about her waist.

"It sounded like something pleasant," said Kate, not exactly knowing what to say.

"We were talking about you," began little May, when a poke from Frank made her stop to ask, "What's that for? We were talking about Kate, and we all said we liked her, so it's no matter if I do tell."

"You are very kind," and Kate looked so pleased that the children forgave May's awkward frankness.

"Yes, and we hoped you'd like us and stay with us," said Alf, in the lofty and polite manner which he thought became the young lord of the house.

"I am going to try all the uncles in turn, and then decide; papa wished it," answered Kate, with a sudden tremble of the lips, for her father was the only parent she could remember, and had been unusually dear for that reason.

"Can you play billiards?" asked Fred, who had a horror of seeing girls cry.

"Yes, and I'll teach you."

"You had a pony-carriage at your house, didn't you?" added Frank, eager to help on the good work.

"At grandma's,—I had no other home, you know," answered Kate.

"What shall you buy first with your money?" asked May, who *would* ask improper questions.

"I'd buy a grandma if I could," and Kate both smiled and sighed.

"How funny! We've got one somewhere, but we don't care much about her," continued May, with the inconvenient candor of a child.

"Have you? Where is she?" and Kate turned quickly, looking full of interest.

"Papa's mother is very old, and lives ever so far away in the country, so of course we don't see much of her," explained Alf.

"But papa writes sometimes, and mamma sends her things every Christmas. We don't remember her much, because we never saw her but once, ever so long ago; but we do care for her, and May mustn't say such rude things," said Milly.

"I shall go and see her. I can't get on without a grandmother," and Kate smiled so brightly that the lads thought her prettier than ever. "Tell me more about her. Is she a dear old lady?"

"Don't know. She is lame, and lives in the old house, and has a maid named Dolly, and—that's all I can tell you about her," and Milly looked a little vexed that she could say no more on the subject that seemed to interest her cousin so much.

Kate looked surprised, but said nothing, and stood looking at the fire as if turning the matter over in her mind, and trying to answer the question she was too polite to ask,—how could they live without a grandmother? Here the tea-bell rang, and the flock ran laughing downstairs; but, though she said no more, Kate remembered that conversation, and laid a plan in her resolute little mind which she carried out when the time came.

According to her father's wish she lived for a while in the family of each of the four uncles before she decided with which she would make her home. All were anxious to have her, one because of her money, another because her great-grandfather had been a lord, a third hoped to secure her for his son, while the fourth and best family loved her for herself alone. They were worthy people, as the world goes,—busy, ambitious, and prosperous; and every one, old and young, was fond of bright, pretty, generous Kate. Each family was anxious to keep her, a little jealous of the rest, and very eager to know which she would choose.

But Kate surprised them all by saying decidedly when the time came,—

"I must see grandma before I choose. Perhaps I ought to have visited her first, as she is the oldest. I think papa would wish me to do it. At any rate, I want to pay my duty to her before I settle anywhere, so please let me go."

Some of the young cousins laughed at the idea, and her old-fashioned, respectful way of putting it, which contrasted strongly with their free-and-easy American speech. The uncles were surprised, but agreed to humor her whim, and Uncle George, the eldest, said softly,—

"I ought to have remembered that poor Anna was mother's only daughter, and the old lady would naturally love to see the girl. But, my dear, it will be desperately dull. Only two old women and a quiet country town. No fun, no company, you won't stay long."

"I shall not mind the dulness if grandma likes to have me there. I lived very quietly in England, and was never tired of it. Nursey can take care of me, and I think the sight of me will do the dear old lady good, because they tell me I am like mamma."

Something in the earnest young face reminded Uncle George of the sister he had almost forgotten, and recalled his own youth so pleasantly that he said, with a caress of the curly head beside him,—

"So it would, I'm sure of it, and I've a great mind to go with you and 'pay my duty' to mother, as you prettily express it."

"Oh, no, please don't, sir; I want to surprise her, and have her all to myself for a little while. Would you mind if I went quite alone with Nursey? You can come later."

"Not a bit; you shall do as you like, and make sunshine for the old lady as you have for us. I haven't seen her for a year, but I know she is well and comfortable, and Dolly guards her like a dragon. Give her my love, Kitty, and tell her I send her something she will value a hundred times more than the very best tea, the finest cap, or the handsomest tabby that ever purred."

So, in spite of the lamentations of her cousins, Kate went gayly away to find the grandma whom no one else seemed to value as she did.

You see, grandpa had been a farmer, and lived contentedly on the old place until he died; but his four sons wanted to be something better, so they went away one after the other to make their way in the world. All worked hard, got rich, lived splendidly, and forgot as far as possible the old life and the dull old place they came from. They were good sons in their way, and had each offered his mother a home with him if she cared to come. But grandma clung to the old home, the simple ways, and quiet life, and, thanking them gratefully, she had remained in the big farm-house,

empty, lonely, and plain though it was, compared to the fine homes of her sons.

Little by little the busy men forgot the quiet, uncomplaining old mother, who spent her years thinking of them, longing to see and know their children, hoping they would one day remember how she loved them all, and how solitary her life must be.

Now and then they wrote or paid her a hasty visit, and all sent gifts of far less value to her than one loving look, one hour of dutiful, affectionate companionship.

"If you ever want me, send and I'll come. Or, if you ever need a home, remember the old place is here always open, and you are always welcome," the good old lady said. But they never seemed to need her, and so seldom came that the old place evidently had no charm for them.

It was hard, but the sweet old woman bore it patiently, and lived her lonely life quietly and usefully, with her faithful maid Dolly to serve and love and support her.

Kate's mother, her one daughter, had married young, gone to England, and, dying early, had left the child to its father and his family. Among them little Kate had grown up, knowing scarcely any thing of her American relations until she was left an orphan and went back to her mother's people. She had been the pet of her English grandmother, and, finding all the aunts busy, fashionable women, had longed for the tender fostering she had known, and now felt as if only grandmothers could give.

With a flutter of hope and expectation, she approached the old house after the long journey was over. Leaving the luggage at the inn, and accompanied by faithful Nurse, Kate went up the village street, and, pausing at the gate, looked at the home where her mother had been born.

A large, old-fashioned farm-house, with a hospitable porch and tall trees in front, an orchard behind, and a capital hill for blackberries in summer, and coasting in winter, close by. All the upper windows were curtained, and made the house look as if it was half-asleep. At one of the

lower windows sat a portly puss, blinking in the sun, and at the other appeared a cap, a regular grandmotherly old cap, with a little black bow perked up behind. Something in the lonely look of the house and the pensive droop of that cap made Katy hurry up the walk and tap eagerly at the antique knocker. A brisk little old woman peered out, as if startled at the sound, and Kate asked, smiling, "Does Madam Coverley live here?"

"She does, dear. Walk right in," and throwing wide the door, the maid trotted down a long, wide hall, and announced in a low tone to her mistress,—

"A nice, pretty little girl wants to see you, mum."

"I shall love to see a young face. Who is it, Dolly?" asked a pleasant voice.

"Don't know, mum."

"Grandma must guess," and Kate went straight up to the old lady with both hands out, for the first sight of that sweet old face won her heart.

Lifting her spectacles, grandma looked silently a minute, then opened her arms without a word, and in the long embrace that followed Kate felt assured that she was welcome to the home she wanted.

"So like my Anna! And this is her little girl? God bless you, my darling! So good to come and see me!" said the old lady when she could speak.

"Why, grandma, I couldn't get on without you, and as soon as I knew where to find you I was in a fidget to be off; but had to do my other visits first, because the uncles had planned it so. This is Dolly, I am sure, and that is my good nurse. Go and get my things, please, Nursey. I shall stay here until grandma sends me away."

"That will never be, deary. Now tell me every thing. It is like an angel coming to see me all of a sudden. Sit close, and let me feel sure it isn't one of the dreams I make to cheer myself when I'm lonesome."

Kate sat on a little stool at grandma's feet, and, leaning on her knee, told all her little story, while the old lady fed her hungry eyes with the sight of the fresh young face, listened to the music of a loving voice, and felt the happy certainty that some one had remembered her, as she longed to be remembered.

Such a happy day as Kate spent talking and listening, looking at her new home, which she found delightful, and being petted by the two old women, who would hardly let Nursey do any thing for her. Kate's quick eyes read the truth of grandma's lonely life very soon; her warm heart was full of tender pity, and she resolved to devote herself to making the happiness of the dear old lady's few remaining years, for at eighty one should have the prop of loving children, if ever.

To Dolly and madam it really did seem as if an angel had come, a singing, smiling, chattering sprite, who danced all over the old house, making blithe echoes in the silent room, and brightening every corner she entered.

Kate opened all the shutters and let in the sun, saying she must see which room she liked best before she settled. She played on the old piano, that wheezed and jangled, all out of tune; but no one minded, for the girlish voice was as sweet as a lark's. She invaded Dolly's sacred kitchen, and messed to her heart's content, delighting the old soul by praises of her skill, and petitions to be taught all she knew. She pranced to and fro in the long hall, and got acquainted with the lives of painted ancestors hanging there in big wigs or short-waisted gowns. She took possession of grandma's little parlor, and made it so cosey the old lady felt as if she was bewitched, for cushioned arm-chairs, fur foot-stools, soft rugs, and delicate warm shawls appeared like magic. Flowers bloomed in the deep, sunny window-seats, pictures of lovely places seemed to break out on the oaken walls, a dainty work-basket took its place near grandma's quaint one, and, best of all, the little chair beside her own was seldom empty now.

The first thing in the morning a kiss waked her, and the beloved voice gave her a gay "Good-morning, grandma dear!" All day Anna's child hovered about her with willing hands and feet to serve her, loving heart to return her love, and the tender reverence which is the beautiful tribute the

young should pay the old. In the twilight, the bright head always was at her knees; and, in either listening to the stories of the past or making lively plans for the future, Kate whiled away the time that used to be so sad.

Kate never found it lonely, seldom wished for other society, and grew every day more certain that here she could find the cherishing she needed, and do the good she hoped.

Dolly and Nurse got on capitally; each tried which could sing "Little Missy's" praises loudest, and spoil her quickest by unquestioning obedience to every whim or wish. A happy family, and the dull November days went by so fast that Christmas was at hand before they knew it.

All the uncles had written to ask Kate to pass the holidays with them, feeling sure she must be longing for a change. But she had refused them all, saying she should stay with grandma, who could not go anywhere to join other people's merry-makings, and must have one of her own at home. The uncles urged, the aunts advised, and the cousins teased; but Kate denied them all, yet offended no one, for she was inspired by a grand idea, and carried it out with help from Dolly and Nurse, unsuspected by grandma.

"We are going to have a little Christmas fun up here among ourselves, and you mustn't know about it until we are ready. So just sit all cosey in your corner, and let me riot about as I like. I know you won't mind, and I think you'll say it is splendid when I've carried out my plan," said Kate, when the old lady wondered what she was thinking about so deeply, with her brows knit and her lips smiling.

"Very well, dear, do any thing you like, and I shall enjoy it, only don't get tired, or try to do too much," and with that grandma became deaf and blind to the mysteries that went on about her.

She was lame, and seldom left her own rooms; so Kate, with her devoted helpers, turned the house topsy-turvy, trimmed up hall and parlors and great dining-room with shining holly and evergreen, laid fires ready for kindling on the hearths that had been cold for years, and had beds made up all over the house.

What went on in the kitchen, only Dolly could tell; but such delicious odors as stole out made grandma sniff the air, and think of merry Christmas revels long ago. Up in her own room Kate wrote lots of letters, and sent orders to the city that made Nursey hold up her hands. More letters came in reply, and Kate had a rapture over every one. Big bundles were left by the express, who came so often that the gates were opened and the lawn soon full of sleigh-tracks. The shops in the village were ravaged by Mistress Kate, who laid in stores of gay ribbon, toys, nuts, and all manner of queer things.

"I really think she's lost her mind," said the post-master as she flew out of the office one day with a handful of letters.

"Pretty creter! I wouldn't say a word against her, not for a mint of money. She's so good to old Mrs. Coverley," answered his fat wife, smiling as she watched Kate ride up the village street on an ox-sled.

If grandma had thought the girl out of her wits, no one could have blamed her, for on Christmas day she really did behave in the most singular manner.

"You are going to church with me this morning, grandma. It's all arranged. A close carriage is coming for us, the sleighing is lovely, the church all trimmed up, and I must have you see it. I shall wrap you in fur, and we will go and say our prayers together, like good girls, won't we?" said Kate, who was in a queer flutter, while her eyes shone, her lips were all smiles, and her feet kept dancing in spite of her.

"Anywhere you like, my darling. I'd start for Australia to-morrow, if you wanted me to go with you," answered grandma, who obeyed Kate in all things, and seemed to think she could do no wrong.

So they went to church, and grandma did enjoy it; for she had many blessings to thank God for, chief among them the treasure of a dutiful, loving child. Kate tried to keep herself quiet, but the odd little flutter would not subside, and seemed to get worse and worse as time went on. It increased rapidly as they drove home, and, when grandma was safe in her

little parlor again, Kate's hands trembled go she could hardly tie the strings of the old lady's state and festival cap.

"We must take a look at the big parlor. It is all trimmed up, and I've got my presents in there. Is it ready, Doll?" asked Kate, as the old servant appeared, looking so excited that grandma said, laughing,—

"We have been quiet so long, poor Dolly don't know what to make of a little gayety."

"Lord bless us, my dear mum! It's all so beautiful and kinder surprisin', I feel as ef merrycles had come to pass agin," answered Dolly, actually wiping away tears with her best white apron.

"Come, grandma," and Kate offered her arm. "Don't she look sweet and dear?" she added, smoothing the soft, silken shawl about the old lady's shoulders, and kissing the placid old face that beamed at her from under the new cap.

"I always said madam was the finest old lady a-goin', ef folks only knew it. Now, Missy, ef you don't make haste, that parlor-door will bust open, and spoil the surprise; for they are just bilin' over in there," with which mysterious remark Dolly vanished, giggling.

Across the hall they went, but at the door Kate paused, and said with a look grandma never forgot,—

"I hope I have done right. I hope you'll like my present, and not find it too much for you. At any rate, remember I meant to please you and give you the thing you need and long for most, my dear old grandma."

"My good child, don't be afraid. I shall like any thing you do, and thank you for your thought of me. What a curious noise! I hope the fire hasn't fallen down."

Without another word, Kate threw open the door and led grandma in. Only a step or two—for the old lady stopped short and stared about her, as if she didn't know her own best parlor. No wonder she didn't, for it was full

of people, and such people! All her sons, their wives and children, rose as she came in, and turned to greet her with smiling faces. Uncle George went up and kissed her, saying, with a choke in his voice, "A merry Christmas, mother!" and everybody echoed the words in a chorus of good-will that went straight to the heart.

Poor grandma could not bear it, and sat down in her big chair, trembling, and sobbing like a little child. Kate hung over her, fearing the surprise had been too much; but joy seldom kills, and presently the old lady was calm enough to look up and welcome them all by stretching out her feeble hands and saying, brokenly yet heartily,—

"God bless you, my children! This *is* a merry Christmas, indeed! Now tell me all about it, and who everybody is; for I don't know half the little ones."

Then Uncle George explained that it was Kate's plan, and told how she had made every one agree to it, pleading so eloquently for grandma that all other plans were given up. They had arrived while she was at church, and had been with difficulty kept from bursting out before the time.

"Do you like your present?" whispered Kate, quite calm and happy now that the grand surprise was safely over.

Grandma answered with a silent kiss that said more than the warmest words, and then Kate put every one at ease by leading up the children, one by one, and introducing each with some lively speech. Everybody enjoyed this and got acquainted quickly; for grandma thought the children the most remarkable she had ever seen, and the little people soon made up their minds that an old lady who had such a very nice, big house, and such a dinner waiting for them (of course they had peeped everywhere), was a most desirable and charming grandma.

By the time the first raptures were over Dolly and Nurse and Betsey Jane (a girl hired for the occasion) had got dinner on the table; and the procession, headed by Madam proudly escorted by her eldest son, filed into the dining-room where such a party had not met for years.

It would be quite impossible to do justice to that dinner: pen and ink are not equal to it. I can only say that every one partook copiously of every thing; that they laughed and talked, told stories, and sang songs; and when no one could do any more, Uncle George proposed grandma's health, which was drunk standing, and followed by three cheers. Then up got the old lady, quite rosy and young, excited and gay, and said in a clear strong voice,—

"I give you in return the best of grandchildren, little Kate."

I give you my word the cheer they gave grandma was nothing to the shout that followed these words; for the old lady led off with amazing vigor, and the boys roared so tremendously that the sedate tabby in the kitchen flew off her cushion, nearly frightened into a fit.

After that, the elders sat with grandma in the parlor, while the younger part of the flock trooped after Kate all over the house. Fires burned every where, and the long unused toys of their fathers were brought out for their amusement. The big nursery was full of games, and here Nursey collected the little ones when the larger boys and girls were invited by Kate to go out and coast. Sleds had been provided, and until dusk they kept it up, the city girls getting as gay and rosy as Kate herself in this healthy sport, while the lads frolicked to their hearts' content, building snow forts, pelting one another, and carousing generally without any policeman to interfere or any stupid old ladies to get upset, as at home in the park.

A cosey tea and a dance in the long hall followed, and they were just thinking what they would do next when Kate's second surprise came.

There were two great fireplaces in the hall: up the chimney of one roared a jolly fire, but the other was closed by a tall fire-board. As they sat about, lasting after a brisk contra dance, a queer rustling and tapping was heard behind this fire-board.

"Rats!" suggested the girls, jumping up into the chairs.

"Let's have 'em out!" added the boys, making straight for the spot, intent on fun.

But before they got there, a muffled voice cried, "Stand from under!" and down went the board with a crash, out bounced Santa Claus, startling the lads as much as the rumor of rats had the girls.

A jolly old saint he was, all in fur, with sleigh-bells jingling from his waist and the point of his high cap, big boots, a white beard, and a nose as red as if Jack Frost had had a good tweak at it. Giving himself a shake that set all the bells ringing, he stepped out upon the hearth, saying in a half-gruff, half-merry tone,—

"I call this a most inhospitable way to receive me! What do you mean by stopping up my favorite chimney? Never mind, I'll forgive you, for this is an unusual occasion. Here, some of you fellows, lend a hand and help me out with my sack."

A dozen pair of hands had the great bag out in a minute, and, lugging it to the middle of the hall, left it beside St. Nick, while the boys fell back into the eager, laughing crowd that surrounded the new-comer.

"Where's my girl? I want my Kate," said the saint, and when she went to him he took a base advantage of his years, and kissed her in spite of the beard.

"That's not fair," whispered Kate, as rosy as the holly-berries in her hair.

"Can't help it,—must have some reward for sticking in that horrid chimney so long," answered Santa Claus, looking as roguish as any boy. Then he added aloud, "I've got something for everybody, so make a big ring, and the good fairy will hand round the gifts."

With that he dived into his bag and brought out treasure after treasure, some fine, some funny, many useful, and all appropriate, for the good fairy seemed to have guessed what each one wanted. Shouts of laughter greeted the droll remarks of the jolly saint, for he had a joke about every thing, and people were quite exhausted by the time the bottom of the sack was reached.

"Now, then, a rousing good game of blind man's buff, and then this little family must go to bed, for it's past eleven."

As he spoke, the saint cast off his cap and beard, fur coat, and big boots, and proceeded to dance a double shuffle with great vigor and skill; while the little ones, who had been thoroughly mystified, shouted, "Why, it's Alf!" and fell upon him *en masse* as the best way of expressing their delight at his successful performance of that immortal part.

The game of blind man's buff that followed was a "rouser" in every sense of the word, for the gentlemen joined, and the children flew about like a flock of chickens when hawks are abroad. Such peals of laughter, such shouts of fun, and such racing and scrambling that old hall had never seen before. Kate was so hunted that she finally took refuge behind grandma's chair, and stood there looking at the lively scene, her face full of happiness at she remembered that it was her work.

The going to bed that night was the best joke of all; for, though Kate's arrangements were peculiar, every one voted that they were capital. There were many rooms, but not enough for all to have one apiece. So the uncles and aunts had the four big chambers, all the boys were ordered into the great play-room, where beds were made on the floor, and a great fire blazing that the camping out might be as comfortable as possible. The nursery was devoted to the girls, and the little ones were sprinkled round wherever a snug corner was found.

How the riotous flock were ever got into their beds no one knows. The lads caroused until long past midnight, and no knocking on the walls of paternal boots, or whispered entreaties of maternal voices through key-holes, had any effect, for it was impossible to resist the present advantages for a grand Christmas rampage.

The girls giggled and gossiped, told secrets, and laid plans more quietly; while the small things tumbled into bed, and went to sleep at once, quite used up with the festivities of this remarkable day.

Grandma, down in her own cosey room, sat listening to the blithe noises with a smile on her face, for the past seemed to have come back

again, and her own boys and girls to be frolicking above there, as they used to do forty years ago.

"It's all so beautiful I can't go to bed, Dolly, and lose any of it. They'll go away to-morrow, and I may never see them any more," she said, as Dolly tied on her night-cap and brought her slippers.

"Yes, you will, mum. That dear child has made it so pleasant they can't keep away. You'll see plenty of 'em, if they carry out half the plans they have made. Mrs. George wants to come up and pass the summer here; Mr. Tom says he shall send his boys to school here, and every girl among them has promised Kate to make her a long visit. The thing is done, mum, and you'll never be lonely any more."

"Thank God for that!" and grandma bent her head as if she had received a great blessing. "Dolly, I want to go and look at those children. It seems so like a dream to have them here, I must be sure of it," said grandma, folding her wrapper about her, and getting up with great decision.

"Massy on us, mum, you haven't been up them stairs for months. The dears are all right, warm as toasts, and sleepin' like dormice, I'll warrant," answered Dolly, taken aback at this new whim of old madam's.

But grandma would go, so Dolly gave her an arm, and together the two old friends hobbled up the wide stairs, and peeped in at the precious children. The lads looked like a camp of weary warriors reposing after a victory, and grandma went laughing away when she had taken a proud survey of this promising portion of the rising generation. The nursery was like a little convent full of rosy nuns sleeping peacefully; while a pictured Saint Agnes, with her lamb, smiled on them from the wall, and the firelight flickered over the white figures and sweet faces, as if the sight were too fair to be lost in darkness. The little ones lay about promiscuously, looking like dissipated Cupids with sugar hearts and faded roses still clutched in their chubby hands.

"My darlings!" whispered grandma, lingering fondly over them to cover a pair of rosy feet, put back a pile of tumbled curls, or kiss a little mouth still smiling in its sleep.

But when she came to the coldest corner of the room, where Kate lay on the hardest mattress, under the thinnest quilt, the old lady's eyes were full of tender tears; and, forgetting the stiff joints that bent so painfully, she knelt slowly down, and, putting her arms about the girl, blessed her in silence for the happiness she had given one old heart.

Kate woke at once, and started up, exclaiming with a smile,—

"Why, grandma, I was dreaming about an angel, and you look like one with your white gown and silvery hair!"

"No, dear, you are the angel in this house. How can I ever give you up?" answered madam, holding fast the treasure that came to her so late.

"You never need to, grandma, for I have made my choice."

VIII.

THE MOSS PEOPLE.

"Rain, rain, go away,
Come again another day,"

Sang little Marnie, as she stood at the window watching the drops patter on the pane, the elm-boughs toss in the wind, and the clover-blossoms lift up their rosy faces to be washed. But the rain did not go away, and, finding that mamma had fallen asleep over her book, Marnie said to herself,—-

"I will go and play quietly with my fairy-land till mamma wakes up and cuts me some paper fairies to put in it."

Marnie's fairy-land was as pretty a plaything as any child could wish for, and, as every child can make one in the summer-time, let us tell what it was. The little girl firmly believed in elves and was always wishing she

could go to fairy-land. That rainy day, when she had longed for something to do, her mother said,—

"As you can't go to fairy-land, why don't you make one for yourself?"

Such a happy thought, and such a busy little girl as Marnie was, working away, forgetful of rain or loneliness! Mamma was so kind and helpful in suggesting ways and supplying means, that the new fairy-land really did seem to rise as if by enchantment.

A long, shallow box, filled with earth, which was covered with moss of all kinds, gathered by Marnie the day before; some green as grass, some soft as velvet, some full of red-brimmed cups, some feathery and tall, some pale and dry: marsh, rock, tree, and field had given their share, and out of this the little hands fashioned a dainty pleasure-ground for the elves. Ferns and spires of evergreen were the trees fencing in the garden, standing in groups or making shady avenues. Silver-white mushrooms with rosy lining stood here and there, like little tables, and mossy mounds or colored pebbles served for seats. Marnie's china bowl was sunk deep in the moss, filled with water, on which floated pea-pod boats with rose-leaf sails. Acorn-cups, with blue and white comfits for eggs, were fastened in the trees, and toy-birds brooded over their nests in the most natural manner. Dead butterflies, lady-bugs, and golden-green beetles from Marnie's museum, hung here and there, as if alive. On a small mound stood a pretty Swiss châlet, with some droll wooden men and women near it. One girl was churning, another rocking a mite of a baby, a man and his donkey were just going up the hill, and a family of wooden bears from Berne sat round a table eating dinner. A little marble hound with a golden chain about its neck guarded this child's paradise, and nothing was wanted to make it quite perfect but some of the winged paper dolls with prettily painted faces that mamma made so nicely.

"I must wait till she wakes up," said Marnie, with a patient sigh, as she drew her little chair before the table where the box stood, and, leaning her chin on her chubby hand, sat looking admiringly at her work.

The ruddy glow of the fire shone warmly over the green hills and dales of fairy-land, the soft patter of the rain sounded like tiny feet tripping to

and fro, and all the motionless inhabitants of the garden seemed waiting for some spell to break their sleep. Marnie never knew how it happened, but, as she sat looking at the Swiss cottage, she suddenly heard a rustling inside, and saw something pass before the open windows. She thought the chrysalis she had put in there had come to life, and waited, hoping to see a pretty butterfly pop its head out. But what a start she gave when suddenly the little door opened and a wee man came marching out. Yes, actually a living tiny man, dressed like a hunter, in green from top to toe, with a silver horn slung over his shoulder and a bow in his hand.

Marnie held her breath lest she should blow him away, and peeped with all her eyes from behind the hemlock-boughs, wondering what would happen next. Up the steps ran the little man to the balcony that always hangs outside a Swiss châlet, and lifting his horn to his lips blew a blast so soft and clear it sounded like the faint, far-off carol of a bird. Three times the fairy bugle sounded, and at the third blast, swarming up from the moss below, dropping from the ferns above, floating on the ripples of the mimic lake, and turning somersaults over the mushrooms, came hundreds of lovely little creatures, all gay, all graceful, all in green. How they danced to and fro, airy as motes in a sunbeam! how they sung and shouted as they peeped everywhere! and how their tiny faces shone as they rejoiced over the pleasant land they had found! For the same peal that brought the moss people from their beds woke up every inanimate thing in fairy-land.

The toy-birds began to sing, the butterflies and lady-bugs fluttered gayly about, the white hound broke his chain and frisked away, the wooden maid began to churn, the mother set the cradle rocking, while the mite of a baby kicked up its wooden legs, and the man whipped the donkey, which gave such a natural bray Marnie couldn't help laughing, it was so droll. Smoke rose from the Swiss cottage, as if fairy feasts were being cooked within; and the merry moss people, charmed with the pretty house, crowded it so full that every window showed half-a-dozen bright faces, the balcony quite creaked with the weight of them, and green caps came bobbing out at the chimney-top.

Dear me, what fun they did have! Marnie never saw such capital games before; and the best of it was, every one joined in them,—moss men and

women, wee moss children, even moss grandfathers and mothers, as gray as the lichens from which they came. Delightful little folk they were, so lovely in face, so quaint in dress, so blithe and brisk in spirit, so wonderful and bewitching altogether that Marnie longed to call her mother, but did not, lest a word should frighten them away.

Presently she caught the sound of delicate noises, and, listening intently, she discovered that they were talking of her.

"Ha! ha! isn't this a fine pleasure-ground for us this rainy day!" cried one merry moss boy, as he paused to settle his pointed cap, after turning somersaults till he looked like a leaf blown about by the wind.

"Hush, Prance," whispered a pretty little moss girl, with a wreath of coral in her hair, "you will wake the child if you shout so loud, and then she will no longer see and hear us, which would be a pity; for we amuse her, as one may guess by the smile on her face."

Now that surprised Marnie very much, for she was sure she was wide awake, and would have said so, if she had not remembered that it was not polite to contradict.

"What shall we do to thank this child for making as a pretty garden?" said Prance, skipping because he couldn't keep still.

"Let us put her baby-house in order," answered little Trip, who was a tidy body.

"So we will, and play in it afterward," cried all the moss children, whisking away to the corner of the nursery where Marnie's toys were tumbling about. Such busy, helpful little people as they were! and such wonders as they worked with their fairy fingers! Marnie forgot to be ashamed of the disorderly baby-house in her delight at the change they soon wrought.

The boys mended broken chairs and tables, pots and pans, trundled the small furniture to its proper place, and attended to the wooden cows and horses in the topsy-turvy barn. The little maids swept and dusted, put the

doll's clothes in order, ran about the kitchen, washing cups and dishes, or rubbed up the mirrors in the drawing-room, which was a very fine apartment. Yes, indeed! for the curtains were of red damask, the sofa had real pillows, a tiny piano tinkled its six notes, and the centre-table held a vase of elegant wax-flowers, not to mention that there was a grate, gilt clock, two fine candlesticks, and portraits of all the dolls painted by mamma.

"There!" said Prance, when not a speck of dust remained: "now things look as they should, and I hope Miss Marnie will take the hint and keep her house tidy. Now what shall we play?"

"I've been thinking this would be a nice chance to try living like real people, as we have often wanted to. Let some be servants, some fine ladies and gentlemen, and all do as much like these persons in the house as we can."

As Trip spoke, all the moss children clapped their hands, and skipped about, crying,—

"We will! we will!"

The dear little sprites had no idea that servants were not as nice parts to play as master and mistress; so one was Byelow the nurse, and put on a cap and shawl, and took some very young moss folk into the doll's nursery to play be the fine people's children. Another was cook, and clattered the pans about in the kitchen with a big apron on, and her little dress pinned up. A third was Dimity the maid, very smart indeed, and full of airs. A stoutish moss boy was coachman, and began to rub down the painted horses, and furbish up the little carriages in the stable; while another with plump legs put powder on his head and played footman.

Prance and Trip took the hardest parts of all, for they said they would be master and mistress. There was no trouble about clothes, for some fashion-books lay on the table, and these queer little things only had to choose what costume they would have, when, lo and behold! there it was all made and on. Marnie didn't think them half so pretty in the fashionable finery as in their own simple green suits, and she laughed heartily at the

funny mistakes they made in getting their furbelows and feathers properly arranged. Poor Prance quite gasped in his little broadcloath suit as he put on a tiny beaver, smoothed his gloves, and shouldered a doll's umbrella, saying so like Marnie's papa that she quite started,—

"Mrs. Prance, I wish to dine at three: don't be behind hand."

"Yes, dear," meekly answered Trip, who had whisked into an elegant morning-dress and cap, and nodded from the window as Mr. Prance went by to his office.

"What will you have for dinner, ma'am?" asked Skillet the cook, popping her head into the parlor where madam was playing read a novel on the sofa.

"Mercy on us! I'm sure I don't know;" and little Mrs. Prance ran down to see what there was in the pantry.

Mr. Prance was evidently not a good provider; for all she could find was a pea which came out of one of the boats, some jelly, sugar, milk, and cake which Marnie had been playing with, and a whole dinner in wood, painted brilliantly and stuck on to the dishes.

"It's a rainy day, and no one is likely to come to dinner, so we will have a pease pudding with jelly, and warm up these dishes, for every thing is very high,—we must economize," said Mrs. Prance, shaking her head, just as mamma often did when she visited the kitchen.

"Very well, ma'am," returned Skillet, retiring into the closet to eat cake and jelly, and drink the milk as soon as her mistress left the room.

"It's time to dress, I suppose, for some one may call. Get out my blue silk and lace head-dress, Dimity," said Mrs. Prance, going up to her chamber, too busy about her toilet to mind the baby, who was crying in the nursery.

"Lace me tightly. I'm growing stout, I do believe, and my figure will be ruined if I allow it," said madam; and Dimity squeezed her into such a

light dress that Trip got a pain in her side directly. "I can bear it a little while, but I don't see how ladies can do it all the time,—it's dreadful!" she sighed, as Dimity piled her pretty hair in a fuzzy bunch on the top of her head, and hung jewels in her little ears, after putting costly bits of lace here and there, and poking her tiny feet into high-heeled boots that made her totter when she tried to walk. These and her train nearly tripped her up, for, if Dimity had not caught her, Mrs. Prance would have tumbled downstairs.

Hardly was she safe in the parlor when the bell rang, and Buttons showed in several very fashionable ladies, who sat down and began to talk about dress, servants, gentlemen, and the opera, so exactly like some of mamma's callers that Marnie wondered where the sly little moss people could have been hidden to know how to imitate them so well. As soon as one lady left, all the rest said sharp things about her; and when they got out, after saying good-by most tenderly, they all abused Mrs. Prance, who said to herself when alone,—

"Tiresome, ill-natured creatures, I can't bear any of them; but I must return their calls as soon as my new bonnet comes from Paris."

By the time the last gossip was gone, it was past two, and Mrs. Prance was dying for her dinner, being quite exhausted. Imagine her dismay when her husband arrived with two gentlemen to dine. She clasped her hands and flew into the kitchen, where she found Skillet fuming over the little stove, and scolding because it wasn't a range like the one she used in her last place. Every thing was in confusion, and the prospect of dinner a gloomy one.

"We must have soup," cried distracted Mrs. Prance.

"No meat to make it of, ma'am," said Skillet, crossly.

"Boil two or three of these caraway-seeds in a pot of hot water, pepper it well, and add the leg of that fly to give it a relish, then call it by some French name, and it will be all right," returned Mrs. Prance, who was suddenly inspired by this bright thought. "Dissolve some of the jelly for

wine, and send up those nuts and raisins for dessert. Do your best, Skillet, and don't keep us waiting."

"I'd like to give you a week's warning, ma'am, the place don't suit me," said the red-faced cook, with her arms akimbo.

"Don't be impertinent, Skillet! You can go tomorrow, if you wish, but till then behave yourself," and Mrs. Prance retired with dignity.

Dressing her tired countenance in smiles, she went to welcome her undesired guests, and thank them for "this unexpected pleasure." Mr. William Wisp and Mr. Robin Goodfellow were two very elegant little gentlemen, with ruffled shirt-fronts, eye-glasses, and curled-up mustaches, quite splendid to behold. They chatted with their host and hostess in the most affable manner, affecting not to see that Mr. Prance's face grew more and more stern every minute, and that poor Mrs. Prance cast despairing glances at the clock, which plainly said "half-past three."

It really was becoming awkward, when Buttons announced, "Dinner, ma'am," and the cloud lifted suddenly from the faces of all. Skillet had done her best, fearing she wouldn't get her wages if she didn't; and the first course did very well.

Greasy warm water, flavored with pepper, was so like a French soup no one knew the difference, and everybody took a few sips and pretended to like it; but to airy creatures, fed on sun and dew, it wasn't nice, of course. There was no fish, for the tin ones melted in the frying-pan; and there was no time to get any more. The wooden leg of mutton got burnt in the oven, and the painted vegetables were not very satisfactory, though they looked quite fine. Mr. Prance frowned as he chipped away at the meat, and Mrs. Prance wanted to sob behind her napkin as he gave her a black look, saying sternly,—

"Mrs. P., your cook is unbearable. I desire that you will dismiss her at once."

"I have, my dear," meekly answered his wife; and then good-natured Mr. Wisp struck in with a droll anecdote, while every one pecked at the

painted feast, and was glad when the pudding came.

Here was another blow; for instead of leaving the pea in its skin, and sending it up a nice, round little pudding, Skillet had taken the skin off as if it was the cloth it was boiled in, and nothing remained but a mealy ruin. Mrs. Prance groaned, and then coughed to hide the sound of woe, and served out her dish with the calmness of despair. The jelly didn't go round, the cook had eaten so much on the sly; and when the wine came, Mr. Prance looked disgusted, it was so weak. However, the nuts and raisins were all right; and after one sip of currant-water, in answer to the gentlemen when they drank her health, unhappy Mrs. Prance left the table, wishing that she never had been born.

Trip was a clever little sprite, and entered into the spirit of her part so heartily that she really dropped a tear or two as she sat alone in her fine drawing-room. Presently the gentlemen came to say good-by, for they were going to try Prance's horses. Tired Mrs. Prance wished her husband would ask her to join them,—a drive would be so refreshing; but he only nodded grimly, and went away without a word. Mrs. Prance immediately took to her bed, for she was to have a party in the evening, and feared she never would live through it if she didn't rest.

But very little repose did the poor lady get that afternoon, for the children acted as if possessed. Flibberty-Gibbet fell off his rocking-horse and broke the bridge of his nose. Midget set her little dress a-fire, and frightened every one out of their wits. Poppet ran out of the back gate, and was lost for a whole hour; while Weewee, the baby, had a fit, owing to Mrs. Byelow's giving him a pickle when he cried for it. If poor, dear Mrs. Prance was hustled off her bed once that afternoon, she was a dozen times, and at last gave it up entirely, whipped the children all round, scolded every servant in the house, had a good cry and a strong cup of tea, and felt better.

The gentlemen, meantime, had each lighted a tiny cigarette, made from one stolen from papa's box, and had driven off in great style. Mr. Prance had the tin gig, with Silver-gray for a horse; Mr. Wisp took the straw chaise and yellow Bill harnessed with red; Mr. Goodfellow chose the smart dog-cart with the creaking wheels, and black Jerry, who had lost his tail,

but was a fine beast nevertheless. With their hats on one side, and puffing their cigars, the little gentlemen drove gayly round the squares in the carpet, till Prance proposed a race from one end of a long seam to the other.

Away they went, with much cracking of whips, and crying out "Hi, yar!" looking like three distracted bugs skimming along at a great rate. Prance would have certainly won, if, just as he passed Mr. Wisp, the wheel of the gig had not ran against a big knot in the seam, which upset Mr. Prance right in the way of Mr. Wisp, whose straw chaise turned over them all like an extinguisher. leaving nothing to be seen but yellow Bill's legs sticking straight up in the air.

Mr. Goodfellow passed the wreck, but soon returned in alarm to pull the wounded from the ruins. Prance was only shaken, but poor Mr. Wisp was so much bruised he could not rise, and when they looked about for a carriage in which to get him home, not one of the three could be had, for two were smashed, and Jerry had galloped off with the dog-cart, never pausing till he had reached the barn. With much difficulty they lifted the groaning Wisp on to a visiting-card, which fortunately lay on the floor, and bore him away to the residence of Mr. Prance.

The house had just subsided after the baby's fit, when this arrival set it all in confusion again. Wisp was put into the best bed, where, after a drop of arnica had been applied to his bruises, and a doll's smelling-bottle of hot water to his feet, he groaned himself to sleep.

Leaving his friend Robin to take care of him, Mr. and Mrs. Prance snatched a hasty cup of tea, and hurried to dress for their party.

Mr. Prance, I regret to say, was in a bad humor, for his dinner distressed him, his broken carriages annoyed him, and he didn't feel at all like seeing company. He pulled the bell down ringing for hot water, told the footman he was a "blockhead" because his boots were not blacked to his mind, and asked his wife "why the dickens the buttons were always off his shirts?"

Mrs. Prance was likewise out of sorts, and nothing went well. The new pink lace dress was not becoming. Dimity didn't dress her hair well, and

she looked so pale and nervous that she was quite discouraged.

When master and mistress met at last in the lighted drawing-room, two crosser little faces seldom seen. Trip threw herself into an arm-chair with a sigh, and put on her gloves in silence. Prance, who was a waggish moss boy, marched solemnly up and down the room with his hands in his pockets, and an air of offended dignity, that made Marnie shake with laughter.

"Mrs. Prance, you gave us a very bad dinner to-day, and I was much mortified. If you can't manage better, madam, I shall give up housekeeping."

"I sincerely wish you would, my dear, for what with servants, and children, and company, I am nearly worn out," and Mrs. Prance sobbed behind her lace handkerchief.

"I thought when I married you that you were able to look after things properly," said Mr. Prance, still marching up and down with a frown on his face.

"I never was taught to do any thing but look pretty," sighed Mrs. Prance.

"Don't be a goose, my dear."

"You used to call me an angel."

Here the bell rang. Mr. Prance took his hands out of his pockets, Mrs. Prance dried her tears, and both looked quite gay and beaming when the guests appeared.

Such dashing little beaux and belles as did arrive, dressed in the most astonishing style,—the ladies with bits of bouquets and fans, satin slippers, and trailing skirts. The gentlemen had stiff collars, gay ties, wee boots and gloves, and twirled their eyeglasses as if they had been going to parties all their lives. Every one simpered and chatted, laughed and flirted, looked at each other's clothes, and whispered gossip round the room. Then a band of moss people, led by the green huntsman's horn, struck up the

blithest dancing tune ever heard, and the little company began to spin round in couples like a party of teetotums. It was not the airy, graceful gambols Marnie had admired in her fairy-land, but it was the fashionable step, and therefore must be elegant. There seemed to be a good deal of romping, and the gentlemen twisted the ladies about till they looked quite flushed.

They kept up the dancing as hard as they could till supper-time, when every one ate as if exhausted. Where the supper came from, Marnie didn't know, but there it was,—ice, salad, cake, coffee, oysters, and wine, all complete, and the company made themselves uncomfortable eating all sorts of stuff at that late hour. After supper, several of the young ladies sang, opening their mouths very wide, and screaming small screams without any music in them, while the little piano tottered under the banging it received. Then Misses Moth, Cobweb, and Pease-blossom gave an air from the famous opera of *Oberon*, and every one said, "How sweet!" as they patted their gloves together and tried to look as if they knew all about it.

After a good deal of noise, there was dancing again, and Marnie observed that the company got more and more excited. Some of the gentlemen were very silly, but the ladies did not seem to mind it. Poor Mr. and Mrs. Prance were so tired they could hardly keep their eyes open, and when at last their guests began to go they could scarcely hide their joy.

"Such a charming party!" "Had a most delightful time!" said the people, bidding them good-night; and then added as soon as the door was shut: "Wasn't it a miserable affair?" "Those Prances are very ordinary people, and I shall not go again,"—quite in the regular way.

I'm sorry to say that Mr. Prance was one of those who had taken too much wine; and when Mrs. Prance fell into a chair exhausted, he sat down upon the fender and began to sing,—

> "Where the bee sucks, there suck I,"

in a sleepy voice, nodding like an owl.

This was very trying to Mrs. Prance's feelings: she lost her temper, and scolded him as well as she knew how. Marnie was quite frightened to hear the lecture she gave her naughty husband, who sat smiling and blinking till his little coat-tails took fire. The instant a bright blaze shot up behind him as he skipped off the fender, Mrs. Prance stopped scolding, and ran to put the fire out like a devoted little wife. But, oh! sad to tell, her dress caught, and in a minute two blazes flew about the room like a pair of lively Will-o'-the-wisps. Every one screamed and ran, men and maids, Mr. Goodfellow and his patient, the children tumbled out of bed, and came scampering downstairs, and Weewee roared in his cradle as loud as if he tried to call "Fire! Fire!"

Marnie was so frightened at the idea of those cunning, tricksy imps being burnt up, that she screamed also with all her might, and in a minute every sign of the moss people vanished. She rubbed her eyes, but all was quiet,—nothing stirred in fairy-land; the doll's house was topsy-turvy as before, and all she saw were hundreds of motes dancing in the sunshine that now shone brightly on her face. Marnie was so sorry to lose her new playmates, that she would have cried about it if mamma had not waked up just then and asked what was the matter. When Marnie had told her all about it, she laughed at the funny dream, and then looked sober, as she said, with a kiss,—

"If these sly rogues are going to come and imitate us to amuse our little children, we must be careful what we do that we may set them a good example."

"You and papa are not so bad as Mr. and Mrs. Prance, though you do some of the things they did. But the droll little moss boys and girls set *me* a good example in one way, and I'm going to show them that I don't forget it," said Marnie, beginning to put her playthings in order.

"So am I," added mamma, laughing again as she put away her novel and took up her sewing, thinking to herself that she really would attend more to the comfort of home, and not care so much for fashionable society.

So you see some good was done after all by the merry little phantoms of a dream, for Marnie mamma did not forget the moss people.

IX.

WHAT FANNY HEARD.

She was lying on the rug, in the twilight, all alone, seeing pictures in the fire, and talking to herself.

It hadn't been a happy day, and Fanny felt a little sad, though she wouldn't own that the reason was because she had been idle, disobedient, and wilful.

"Nobody cares for me or takes any pains to make me happy," grumbled Fanny. "Since mamma died, and papa went to England, I've been just as miserable as I could be. Cousin Mary is so sober and strict and fussy, I don't have a bit of fun, but study, sew, walk, go to bed and get up, like the hateful little story-book girls, who never do wrong or get tired of going on as regularly as a clock. Oh, dear! if I had some friends and playmates, this big, quiet house wouldn't seem so dismal."

Fanny laid her face on her arm and tried to cry but not having any thing to cry for, she couldn't squeeze out a single tear. Suddenly she heard a chime of delicate bells ringing sweetly in the room, and filling the air with perfume.

"Bless me, what's that?" and Fanny popped up her head to see. But every thing was still and in its place, and when she spoke the bells ceased.

So she lay down again, and presently heard a sweet little voice say sorrowfully,—

"What an ungrateful child Fanny is to say she has no friends, when the house is full of them, if she would only learn to see them! Her good cousin took her home, and tries to be a mother to her, though she is feeble and

fond of quiet. It was very kind of her to have a noisy, spoilt child always about; for, though it worries her, she never complains, but tries to make Fanny a gentle, helpful, happy child."

The blue hyacinth standing in the window said this, and the lovely pink one answered warmly,—

"Yes, indeed! and I often wonder that Fanny doesn't see this, and try to return some of the patient care by affectionate little acts, and grateful words, and cheerful looks. Why, she might make this house perfectly charming, if she chose: it was too lonely and still before, but now a bright-faced, gentle little girl, with her merry ways, would delight us all.

"I bloom my best to please her, and send out my perfume to attract her, for I love her much, and want her to feel that I am her friend. But she takes no notice of me, she doesn't care for my love, she is blind to my beauty, and gives no answer to my sweet invitation, though she longs for playmates all the time."

With a soft sigh the flowers shook their delicate heads, and said no more. But before Fanny could speak, Goldy, the canary, gave a little skip on his perch, and cried out, in a shrill chirp,—

"I quite agree with you, ladies: that child doesn't know how to enjoy her blessings, or recognize her friends when she sees them. Here I sit day after day, telling her in all sorts of ways how glad I am she is come; how fond I am of her, and how much I want to talk with her. I get quite excited sometimes, and sing till my throat aches, trying to make her understand all this; but she won't, and all I get for my pains is a pettish, 'Do stop screaming, you noisy bird,' and a cloth over the cage to keep me quiet. It's very hard;" and Goldy shook a little tear out of his round black eye. "I love the sun, and air, and blithe company so dearly, and she won't let me have any of them.

"She promised to take care of me, but she doesn't, and I go hungry, thirsty, and untidy, while she mopes and wishes she had something pleasant to do.

"To-day, now, I've had neither seed nor water; no sniff of fresh air, no fly about the room, not a bit of apple, not a kind word or look, but have sat in the dark, with the cover over my cage, because I tried to tell how glad I was to see the sun, in spite of my hunger and thirst, loneliness and homesickness. Ah, well! some day she may be kinder to me, and then I'll show her what a loving friend I can be."

And with a last peck at the husks that lay in the cage, a last sad look about his gloomy house, Goldy put his head under his wing and tried to forget his troubles in sleep.

Fanny was going to start up and feed and pet him, with remorseful tenderness, when a new voice sounded behind her, and she waited to listen.

It was the piano, and every thing it said went to a sort of tune, because it couldn't help being musical at all times.

"When first she came to stay, little Fanny used to play and sing like any lark, between the daylight and the dark, and our mistress loved it well. But now, I grieve to tell, she scarcely sings a note; no more the sweet songs float like spirits through the gloom, making gay the quiet room.

"I cannot tell how much her little fingers' touch ever thrills me with delight; how my keys, black and white, love to dance as she plays; how my pedal quick obeys, and bass and treble blend, to please our little friend.

"But now she sits apart, with discord in her heart, forgetting I am here with power to soothe and cheer; that she'd better sing than sigh, better laugh than cry, for hearts get out of tune, and should be mended soon.

"Little Fanny, sing again, like a bird in spite of rain. Fill the house with music gay, make a concert of each day; and when others play on you, answer sweetly, as I do."

"Why, it's talking poetry, I do believe!" cried Fanny, as the last words went echoing through the room and died away.

"How any one can be lonely with us for friends is hard to understand," said another voice from the bookcase. "Here we are, lots of us, rows of us, regiments of us; every sort of story book; here's fairy tales new and old; here's Robinson Crusoe and dear old Mother Goose, Mrs. Barbauld and Miss Edgeworth; here's German picture books and French fables, English games and American notions, of every kind. Come and read us, come and read us, and never say again you have no friends, and nothing to do."

There was such a noise that no one heard Fanny laugh out, for each book was shouting its own title and making such a stir it sounded like a wind blowing dry leaves about.

"I don't wish to intrude myself, for I'm not literary, nor musical, nor botanical; but I am domestic, and have an eye for all useful things," said a needle, in a sharp tone, as it sat bolt upright in Fanny's topsy-turvy basket, on the table.

"I am woman's friend, and with my help she does a deal of good, whiles away many long hours, and finds a good deal of quiet happiness in my society. Little girls don't care much for me until they have doll children to sew for; even then some of them neglect and abuse me, and don't learn to use me nicely. I know a young lady who hasn't a rag to her back; and yet her mamma takes no pains to clothe her, though a charming blue dress, and white apron, and nice little underclothes lie all ready cut out and basted.

"I pity that poor doll so much that I'd gladly sew for her alone, if I could. I'm afraid I should be thought rude, if I suggested to the mamma to sew instead of fretting, so I wouldn't say a word on any account; but I see more than people would believe, and judge accordingly."

After which pointed remarks, the needle actually winked at the thimble, and then sat stiffer than ever in the unfinished blue gown.

Fanny was so ashamed that she turned her face toward the fire, just in time to see a brilliant spark-spirit standing in a cave of glowing coals. Waving its tiny hand, the spirit said,—

"Years ago a little girl lived here, who made this the happiest home ever seen, by her gentle ways, her loving heart, her cheerful voice, and willing hands.

"Every one loved her, and she was always happy, for duty was pleasant. The world was bright, and she was never out of tune.

"She tended flowers in the window yonder, and grew as beautiful as they; she touched the old piano, and filled the house with music; she fed her little bird, and was as cheerful as he; she read and studied those books, growing wise and good and gay on the food they gave her; she sewed busily, clothing naked children as well as dolls, and many blessed her. She often lay where you lie now, not discontented and sad, but with a happy heart, a busy fancy, and the love of many friends to keep her always blithe.

"We loved her well, and we love you for her dear sake. If you would see her image, look up and try to imitate her."

Rather startled at the serious manner of the sprite, Fanny lifted her eyes, and there hung the picture of her mother, when a little girl. She had often seen it before, but it never had seemed so beautiful and dear as now, when, looking at it with full eyes, little Fanny said softly to herself,—

"O dear mamma, I will be like you, if I can: I'll find friends where you found them; I'll make home happy as you did. I'll try to be loved for your sake, and grow a useful, cheerful, good woman, like you."

X.

A MARINE MERRY-MAKING.

"Are you going to Mrs. Turtle's this evening?" asked a gay young Periwinkle of his friend Cockle, as they met on the sands.

"Well, I don't know: what is to be done, and who will be there?" replied Cockle, rather languidly, for it had been a very gay season, and he was decidedly "used up."

"There will be no dancing, for the alderman doesn't approve of it; but there is to be singing, tableaux, and a supper of course. It's the last night of the season; and, as they are having a farewell hop up at the hotel, we thought we would get up some sort of fun among ourselves. Lovely Lily Crab will be there; the Lobsters, Barnacles, Horse-shoes, and Sea-snails, besides the Mosquitoes, Fire-flies, and Water-beetles. I hear there are also to be strangers of distinction, a Flying-fish, a Water-shrew, and Mother Carey's Chickens."

"Hum, ha, well; maybe I'll look in for an hour. I rather fancy Lily Crab; and the alderman gives capital suppers. I'm going to enjoy a weed; so ta-ta, till this evening."

Young Cockle didn't mean a cigar, but a nap under the sea-weed. Periwinkle took a weed also; and both were so much refreshed that they were among the first at the party.

The Turtles were a very aristocratic family, for they were both ancient and honorable. Their coat-of-arms was a globe resting on a turtle's back; and so many of their ancestors had been aldermen, it was vain to try to count them. Even their diseases were aristocratic, for they always died of apoplexy or gout. Some people said it was because they were such high livers; but the turtles insisted that it was hereditary, and couldn't be helped. They were very slow, and rather heavy, but intensely dignified and well-bred. They lived elegantly, gave fine parties, and had one son, who was

considered a very eligible young Turtle. It was thought that he would marry the beautiful Lily Crab, the belle of the bay; but she flirted sadly with Oceanicus Lobster, and no one could tell which she would take.

The Turtles had chosen a fine, smooth place on the beach, with a pretty pool near by, for such of the guests as could not remain long out of water. A flat rock at one end was set apart as a stage for the tableaux; and at the other end the supper was spread. The alderman waddled importantly about before the company arrived, looking very portly and imposing; while his wife, in black velvet and gold ornaments, sat tranquilly by, and took a little rest before the labors of the evening began. Columbus, the son, was elegantly got up in a new suit of black, with a white tie, and a flower in his button-hole. The moon served for a chandelier; and a party of fireflies had promised to act as footlights when they were needed. The tide was coming in; and, instead of carriages, wave after wave rolled up and left its load at the Turtles' door.

The Barnacles and Mussels came first, for they seldom left home, and always got back again at an early hour. Miss Mosquito arrived, full of scandal and gossip, and kept up a perpetual hum in some one's ear, though everybody disliked, and tried to get rid of her. She was a vixenish spinster, thin, satirical, sharp-tongued, and so bad-tempered that people said her name, which was Xantippe, suited her excellently. A modest little Water-shrew, in Quaker drab, came with the Beetles, who took their places near the pool, being unused to crowds. The Lobsters, always a peculiar family, came straggling in, one by one, in their usual awkward way, and were soon followed by the Periwinkles and Cockles. A party of Petrels came marching in with the Flying-fish, who looked, and doubtless felt, entirely out of his element. The bustle caused by the arrival of the distinguished strangers had just subsided, when Columbus Turtle and Oceanicus Lobster were seen to rush toward the door; young Cockle put his glass in his eye, and Periwinkle sighed. There was a stir among the ladies, and Miss Mosquito spitefully remarked to her Cousin Firefly, "Dear me! what a fuss they do make about those vulgar people!"

"Commodore Crab, Mrs. Crab, and Miss Crab!" announced the servant, and in they came. The commodore had taken part in many sea-fights, and

was famous for never letting go when once he had grappled with a foe. But he was rather shy in company, and so was madame; and often, when any one approached to speak to them, they both precipitately retreated backward, so retiring were the dispositions of this excellent couple. The commodore wore his orange uniform, and limped, having lost a leg in battle. Mrs. C. was elegantly attired in green, with red ornaments. But Miss Crab,—how shall I paint that lovely creature? She was in snowy white from head to foot, a perfect blonde, and carried in her hand an exquisite bouquet of rosy seaweed, the sight of which caused young Turtle to glare at young Lobster, for both had sent bouquets, and Lily had chosen his rival's. Now her parents wished the young lady to accept Columbus, for he was rich; but she loved him not, for she had given her heart to Oceanicus, who was poor. Still, having been fashionably brought up, she felt it was her duty to secure a fine establishment; and so she tried to like dull Columbus, while she flirted with sprightly Oceanicus. Matters had reached a crisis, and it was evident that something would be decided that very night, for both gentlemen haunted the fair Lily's steps, and scowled at one another tragically.

"I always thought there would be mischief there, for that girl's behavior is scandalous. There was a case very much like this at the hotel last year, and it ended in an elopement and a suicide," buzzed Miss Mosquito in the ear of Madam Turtle, who drew herself up, as she replied, in her most dignified tone, glancing at her son,—

"I have no fears in that quarter: such affairs are conducted with propriety in our first families. Excuse me: I have a word for Mrs. Crab."

"If that is a sample of the manners of 'our first families,' I'm glad I don't belong to 'em," scolded Miss Mosquito to herself. "Ah, if I had my way, I'd soon spoil your beauty, miss," she muttered, looking at Lily Crab. And so she would; for this spiteful creature used to delight in stinging the pretty girls up at the hotel, especially their poor dear noses, till they weren't fit to be seen.

The Snails came late, as they always did; and one of them, on being introduced to the Shrew-mouse, began to complain of her servants, as fashionable ladies are apt to do when they get together.

"There never was such a perfect slave to a house as I am to mine," she said. "We see a great deal of company, and things must be in order; but they never are, though we keep ten servants. How do you manage, ma'am? You look quite plump and serene; and here am I worn to the bone, with my worries and cares."

"I come from the brook over the hill, and we country people live much more simply than you city folks. I keep no servants at all, but do every thing myself, and bring up my eight children without help," answered the Shrew-mouse, settling the folds of her white shawl with a tranquil air.

"Dear me! how remarkable! But, you see, an active life doesn't suit me. You have always been used to that sort of thing, I dare say, and so get on very well. *I* was brought up differently." And, with a cool stare, the handsome violet Snail moved slowly away, while the Shrew-mouse and the Beetles laughed among themselves.

"Pray, how came a person who does her own work to get into our set?" asked Madam Snail of a testy old Horse-shoe whom she much respected.

"Because she is a very charming person, and I advised Turtle to invite her," replied the Horse-shoe, in a tone as sharp as his tail.

"Dear me! what are we coming to?" sighed the Snail, who, being very conservative, disliked progress of all kinds.

"My dear sir, I assure you, it's a splendid investment,—perfectly safe, and very desirable," said old Lobster to the alderman, whom he held by the button-hole in a corner.

"Are you the president of the bank?" asked old Turtle, with a sly twinkle of the eye.

"No, sir, not even a director; but I take an interest in it, and, if I had your means, I'd invest there, for the safest bank I know is that of my friends Oyster, Mussel, and Company," replied Lobster, who was as deep an old party as ever swam.

"I'll think of it, and make inquiries, and, if it's all satisfactory, I'll take your advice, for I value your opinion, and have confidence in your judgment," said Turtle, who considered Lobster an unprincipled speculator.

"Praise from you, sir, may well make me proud. You will certainly be re-elected, and remain an alderman to the day of your death, if the influence and vote of A. Lobster can keep you in place," answered the other, who looked upon Turtle as a thick-headed, easy-going old gentleman, whom it would not be difficult to defraud of his money in some strictly business-like way.

"It's all right: he'll nibble, and we shall float in spite of fate," whispered Lobster to his friend Hercules Mussel, in a tone of exultation, for the fact was the bank of Oyster, Mussel, and Company was in a very desperate state, though few suspected it.

Meantime Miss Lily was driving her lovers to despair, by being extremely amiable to both. She sat on a sea-green sofa, fanning herself with a tiny coral fan, while the two gentlemen stood before her, trying to annoy each other and amuse her.

"Sad affair, that of Bessie Barnacle and young Cockle, wasn't it?" said Columbus, in his slow way, thinking it would please Lily to pity or condemn her former rival.

"What was it? I've been shut up for a week with a sad cold, and have heard nothing," replied the young lady, fixing her large eyes on Columbus in a way that confused him dreadfully in his story.

"Why, you know, she was all but engaged to Phillip Periwinkle, cousin to Tom who is here to-night; but just as the thing was considered settled, Charley Cockle cut in, and they eloped. Her family insist that she was torn away; but I doubt it."

"So do I. Any girl of sense would prefer a fine fellow like Charley, without a cent, to a noodle worth half a million, like Phil Periwinkle," said Oceanicus, in a tone that made the blood of Columbus boil.

"It was a most improper and ungentlemanly thing to do, and no one but a low-born puppy would have done it," he answered grimly.

"Well, I should say Phil was the puppy, to take a beating so quietly. I consider it a spirited thing on Charley's part, and I fancy Miss Lily agrees with me," returned Oceanicus, with an insinuating smile and bow.

"You oughtn't to ask me such naughty questions," simpered Lily behind her fan. "It was dreadfully improper, and all that sort of thing, I know; but then it was so romantic, and I adore romance,—don't you, Mr. Turtle?"

"Decidedly not that style of it. In good families such things are not allowed; but it is no more than I should expect of a Cockle," remarked Columbus, with scorn.

"Now, really, my dear fellow, you ought not to be so severe, when your Cousin Theresa did the same thing, you know."

As Oceanicus said this, he looked straight at young Turtle in the most impertinent manner. But for once Columbus was his match, for he said coolly, "Old Barnacle vows he will have Cockle imprisoned, if he can find a fit place for such a young rascal, and I advised him to try a lobster-pot."

Now that was a direct insult, for Oceanicus had been caught in one not long ago, on his way home from a frolic, and would have been boiled if his friends had not gone to the rescue. It was considered a sad disgrace to die by boiling, or to be caught in any way; so the Lobster family hushed it up as carefully as the Turtles did Theresa's runaway match. Oceanicus gave Columbus a look which he long remembered, but said nothing to him; and turning to Miss Crab, as if they were alone, he murmured regretfully, "My dear Lily, it must be dreadfully dull for you with no dancing. Won't you let me bring you something to eat? I see they have begun supper at last."

"I was about to take Miss Crab down myself," said young Turtle, haughtily.

"Now don't quarrel and be absurd about me. I am going to stay here, and you may each bring me something. I could fancy a shrimp, and a glass

of briny," said Miss Lily, hoping to soothe the angry gentlemen.

Both rushed away; but Oceanicus, who was always brisk, got back first, and whispered, as he handed the glass, "Remember after the tableaux."

"Oh, dear, no! I couldn't think of it!" cried Miss Lily, with a little scream. "Now you may hold my things, while I eat. Be careful not to break that, for I value it very much," she added, as she handed Turtle the fan he had given her. "How sweet they are! I do so love flowers," she went on taking a long sniff at her bouquet before she gave it to Lobster to hold. Then, taking off her gloves, she coquettishly sipped her wine; and, holding the shrimp in one delicate claw, she daintily picked off its legs, putting them bit by bit into her mouth, till nothing but the tail remained, which Turtle kept as a love-token.

"My dear creature, how miserably you are looking: I'm afraid this gay season has been too much for you. People at your time of life should be careful of themselves," said Miss Mosquito to Fanny Firefly, who was a universal favorite, being a bright, merry little lady.

"I'm very well, thank you, dear, and none the worse for my gayeties. If you can stand a dissipated season, I guess I can, for you are older than me, you know," returned Miss Fanny, sweetly, as she walked away with Tom Periwinkle, who shunned "Miss Skeet," as he called her, as if she had been a walking pest,—a flying one she certainly was.

"Poor girl! I'm sorry she is losing her good looks so fast, and getting so sharp and sour. She used to be rather pretty and amiable, but she is quite spoilt, and having neither money nor accomplishments she will soon be quite forgotten," said Xantippe, with a sigh that said plainly, "If she was like me, now, she'd be every thing that was good and charming."

"How are the Horse-shoes getting on, Miss Mosquito?" asked Mrs. Turtle.

"I don't see much of them, they are not in my set, you know. People who rose from mud, and still have relations living there, are not the sort of

persons with whom I care to associate," replied Xantippe, with a scornful perk of her long nose.

Now both the Turtles and Lobsters had connections in Mudville, and so of course were offended by that speech. Old Mrs. Lobster turned as red as if she had been boiled; but Mrs. Turtle never forgot herself, and changed the subject by saying politely, "We are going to have supper early on account of the tableaux: as you are going to act, won't you step down with me and have some refreshment before the rush begins?"

"Thank you, I'm going to supper at the hotel by and by. I'm rather delicate, you know, and I find the things I get there agree with me better than common suppers. I see Mrs. Barnacle is expecting me to come and amuse her, so I must fly. Pray take care and not excite yourself, my dear lady, for you know apoplexy is sadly fatal to your family. You, Mrs. Lobster, are happy in being free from that aristocratic complaint." And with these farewell stings, Miss Mosquito buzzed away, leaving the two old ladies to exclaim angrily, as they settled their cap-ribbons, "Xantippe gets quite unbearable. She is regularly blood-thirsty, and stabs right and left with her cruel tongue. Let us go and have a comfortable dish of tea, my dear; I'm sure we need it."

It was very amusing to see the company at supper; the alderman trying to think of his guests before himself; the young ladies delicately picking at their food, and pretending to have no appetite after taking a hearty tea at home; the young men eating every thing they could lay their hands on, and drinking more than was good for them. The old ladies were rather neglected, but made the best of it, and slipped a few trifles into their pockets for the dears at home; while their stout husbands stuffed till they were speechless.

After supper, there was singing; and the Petrels came out splendidly, for they were a glee club, and sung all sorts of sea-songs in fine style, particularly "A Life on the Ocean Wave," and "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep." Miss Mosquito, in a shrill small voice, sang Tennyson's "Blow, Bugle, blow;" and Mrs. Shrew-mouse gave a lullaby very sweetly. Old Lobster, who was a gay fellow still, warbled "I know a bank," which made Old Turtle laugh till they thought he would certainly go off in a fit; and, to

Lily's delight, young Lobster's serenade entirely eclipsed young Turtle's *barcarolle*. After this, the Flying-Fish performed some wonderful feats in the pool; and the Beetles were allowed as a special favor to show the young people the new Grasshopper-step which was all the rage.

Then came the tableaux. A row of fireflies made capital foot-lights; a thick cobweb was the curtain, and two spiders were engaged to work it. Monsieur Hyla, a tree-frog, piped sweetly between the pictures, and every thing went smoothly. The first was a scene from "The Tempest." A venerable Horse-shoe was Prospero, and his stiff tail was very effective as the magic wand. Lily Crab was Miranda, and looked lovely as she gazed admiringly at Oceanicus, who played Ferdinand. A Hedgehog did Caliban; a Firefly was Ariel; and the picture was a great success everybody said but Columbus Turtle.

The alderman himself consented to appear in the next as the Ancient Mariner telling his story to the wedding guest. His face was wanting in expression, and he was rather stout for the haunted man; but as several members of his family had led seafaring lives, and died at fabulously great ages, he felt it was an appropriate part for him. Young Lobster was the detained guest, and was really fine in the longing look he gave at the bridal train just passing by. Columbus was the bridegroom, and Lily the bride, and very sweet she looked under her veil; while Turtle was absolutely brilliant with momentary excitement.

The "Three Fishers" followed, and was the gem of the whole, for one of the Petrels chanted the words as the scenes were shown. First, the fishers were seen "sailing out into the west" on the pool in large shells. A Jelly-fish, young Cockle, and Tom Periwinkle were the fishers, and the ladies applauded violently, as they rowed gallantly away. Then the three wives appeared up in the light-house tower, which was made by collecting the fireflies on the top of the rock, while the Shrew-mouse, Miss Beetle, and Miss Snail, as the wives, looked anxiously out for the boats "that would never come back to the land." The gentlemen quite brought down the house at this, but the ladies thought it "just a trifle flat." The last scene was really thrilling, for the "three corpses lay out on the shining sands," and "the women were weeping and wringing their hands" most tragically.

Young Jelly-fish was very ghostly, and the anguish of Mrs. Shrew-mouse so capitally acted it was evident she had known sorrow. "The Lily Maid of Astolat" followed, for that and the "Fishers" are always favorites at the seaside. Of course Lily Crab was the maid, laid on a bed of splendid sea-weeds in the great rosy-lipped shell which was the boat. In the prow sat a toad, as the faithful old dwarf who steered her down to Camelot, and his ugliness made her beauty more dazzling. On the shore of the pool stood the handsomest Petrel, as King Arthur; another was Lancelot; and a pretty Miss Periwinkle was Guinevere. A good many of the company had not read "Idyls of the King," and hadn't the least idea what it all meant; but they took care to look as if they did, and patted their hands with an approving, "Very sweet," "Quite exquisite;" "Really, it does the young people a vast deal of credit;" "Altogether *commy la faut*," as old Mrs. Lobster said, trying to be elegant, though she was a very ordinary woman, who could do nothing but make salads, for her father kept a restaurant years ago.

The last one was the "Corsair's Bride." Columbus was the stern papa, and Lily the lovely daughter, both in the Greek costume, and it is easy for one to imagine how becoming it must have been.

This was an acted tableau; for, as Haidee lay listlessly on her divan, thinking of the gallant being who had sung under her window one moonlight night, the same gallant being magnificently got up as a corsair burst into the room, followed by his band. Oceanicus looked as dark, fierce, and melodramatic as half-a-dozen Byrons, and quite electrified the audience by knocking down the stately papa, exclaiming, "Tyrant, I defy thee! Ha! ha! she is mine!" and rushing from the stage with Lily on his arm.

This thrilling display of tragic power produced round after round of tumultuous applause, and cries of "Lob! Lob!" from all parts of the house. The curtain rose, but no one appeared except Columbus, still on the ground, having been half-stunned and wholly bewildered by the attack, that not having been planned beforehand. He lay staring blankly, and looking so forlorn that the wags who had pulled up the curtain dropped it, and raised him instead. Everybody laughed at him, and praised Oceanicus.

The Lobsters quite glowed with pride; the young ladies declared it was "perfectly thrilling;" and the young gentlemen vowed that "Lob outdid himself, by Jove!"

By the time the excitement subsided, people began to wonder why the "stars" didn't appear to receive their honors. But nowhere could they be found, and Mrs. Crab began to look anxious. Some one suggested that they might be strolling on the beach to cool and compose themselves. A careful search was made, but no trace of them was discovered, till an old Jelly-fish who was lying on the sand informed them that a young couple had sailed away not long before, and that he heard them say there would be just time to stop at the Rev. Dr. Cod's before they caught the outward-bound steamer.

When this dreadful intelligence was carried back to the party, Mrs. Crab fainted dead away, and the Commodore stamped about, using very strong language. Miss Mosquito triumphantly exclaimed, "I told you so;" and every one was much excited.

The party broke up at once, and as the last wave left the door Mrs. Turtle said with a long sigh, "For my part, I'm glad the season's over, that we are done with fashion and frivolity, and can go back to our simple, sensible ways, and live like respectable creatures."

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