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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CONTENTS.

I.

AN OLD-FASHIONED THANKSGIVING.

SIXTY years ago, up among the New Hampshire hills, lived Farmer Bassett, with a house full of sturdy sons and daughters growing up about him. They were poor in money, but rich in land and love, for the wide acres of wood, corn, and pasture land fed, warmed, and clothed the flock, while mutual patience, affection, and courage made the old farm-house a very happy home.

November had come; the crops were in, and barn, buttery, and bin were overflowing with the harvest that rewarded the summer's hard work. The big kitchen was a jolly place just now, for in the great fireplace roared a cheerful fire; on the walls hung garlands of dried apples, onions, and corn; up aloft from the beams shone crook-necked squashes, juicy hams, and dried venison—for in those days deer still haunted the deep forests, and hunters flourished. Savory smells were in the air; on the crane hung steaming kettles, and down among the red embers copper sauce-pans simmered, all suggestive of some approaching feast.

A white-headed baby lay in the old blue cradle that had rocked seven other babies, now and then lifting his head to look out, like a round, full moon, then subsided to kick and crow contentedly, and suck the rosy apple he had no teeth to bite. Two small boys sat on the wooden settle shelling corn for popping, and picking out the biggest nuts from the goodly store their own hands had gathered in October. Four young girls stood at the long dresser, busily chopping meat, pounding spice, and slicing apples; and the tongues of Tilly, Prue, Roxy, and Rhody went as fast as their hands. Farmer Bassett, and Eph, the oldest boy, were "chorin' 'round" outside, for Thanksgiving was at hand, and all must be in order for that time-honored day.

To and fro, from table to hearth, bustled buxom Mrs. Bassett, flushed and floury, but busy and blithe as the queen bee of this busy little hive should be.

"I do like to begin seasonable and have things to my mind. Thanksgivin' dinners can't be drove, and it does take a sight of victuals to fill all these hungry stomicks," said the good woman, as she gave a vigorous stir to the great kettle of cider apple-sauce, and cast a glance of housewifely pride at the fine array of pies set forth on the buttery shelves.

"Only one more day and then it will be time to eat. I didn't take but one bowl of hasty pudding this morning, so I shall have plenty of room when the nice things come," confided Seth to Sol, as he cracked a large hazel-nut as easily as a squirrel.

"No need of my starvin' beforehand. *I always* have room enough, and I'd like to have Thanksgiving every day," answered Solomon, gloating like a young ogre over the little pig that lay near by, ready for roasting.

"Sakes alive, I don't, boys! It's a marcy it don't come but once a year. I should be worn to a thread-paper with all this extra work atop of my winter weavin' and spinnin'," laughed their mother, as she plunged her plump arms into the long bread-trough and began to knead the dough as if a famine was at hand.

Tilly, the oldest girl, a red-cheeked, black-eyed lass of fourteen, was grinding briskly at the mortar, for spices were costly, and not a grain must be wasted. Prue kept time with the chopper, and the twins sliced away at the apples till their little brown arms ached, for all knew how to work, and did so now with a will.

"I think it's real fun to have Thanksgiving at home. I'm sorry Gran'ma is sick, so we can't go there as usual, but I like to mess 'round here, don't you, girls?" asked Tilly, pausing to take a sniff at the spicy pestle.

"It will be kind of lonesome with only our own folks." "I like to see all the cousins and aunts, and have games, and sing," cried the twins, who were regular little romps, and could run, swim, coast and shout as well as their brothers.

"I don't care a mite for all that. It will be so nice to eat dinner together, warm and comfortable at home," said quiet Prue, who loved her own cozy nooks like a cat.

"Come, girls, fly 'round and get your chores done, so we can clear away for dinner jest as soon as I clap my bread into the oven," called Mrs. Bassett presently, as she rounded off the last loaf of brown bread which was to feed the hungry mouths that seldom tasted any other.

"Here's a man comin' up the hill, lively!" "Guess it's Gad Hopkins. Pa told him to bring a dezzen oranges, if they warn't too high!" shouted Sol and Seth, running to the door, while the girls smacked their lips at the thought of this rare treat, and Baby threw his apple overboard, as if getting ready for a new cargo.

But all were doomed to disappointment, for it was not Gad, with the much-desired fruit. It was a stranger, who threw himself off his horse and hurried up to Mr. Bassett in the yard, with some brief message that made the farmer drop his ax and look so sober that his wife guessed at once some bad news had come; and crying, "Mother's wuss! I know she is!" out ran the good woman, forgetful of the flour on her arms and the oven waiting for its most important batch.

The man said old Mr. Chadwick, down to Keene, stopped him as he passed, and told him to tell Mrs. Bassett her mother was failin' fast, and she'd better come to-day. He knew no more, and having delivered his errand he rode away, saying it looked like snow and he must be jogging, or he wouldn't get home till night.

"We must go right off, Eldad. Hitch up, and I'll be ready in less'n no time," said Mrs. Bassett, wasting not a minute in tears and lamentations, but pulling off her apron as she went in, with her mind in a sad jumble of bread, anxiety, turkey, sorrow, haste, and cider apple-sauce.

A few words told the story, and the children left their work to help her get ready, mingling their grief for "Gran'ma" with regrets for the lost dinner.

"I'm dreadful sorry, dears, but it can't be helped. I couldn't cook nor eat no way, now, and if that blessed woman gets better sudden, as she has before, we'll have cause for thanksgivin', and I'll give you a dinner you won't

forget in a hurry," said Mrs. Bassett, as she tied on her brown silk pumpkin-hood, with a sob for the good old mother who had made it for her.

Not a child complained after that, but ran about helpfully, bringing moccasins, heating the footstone, and getting ready for a long drive, because Gran'ma lived twenty miles away, and there were no railroads in those parts to whisk people to and fro like magic. By the time the old yellow sleigh was at the door, the bread was in the oven, and Mrs. Bassett was waiting, with her camlet cloak on, and the baby done up like a small bale of blankets.

"Now, Eph, you must look after the cattle like a man, and keep up the fires, for there's a storm brewin', and neither the children nor dumb critters must suffer," said Mr. Bassett, as he turned up the collar of his rough coat and put on his blue mittens, while the old mare shook her bells as if she preferred a trip to Keene to hauling wood all day.

"Tilly, put extry comfortables on the beds to-night, the wind is so searchin' up chamber. Have the baked beans and Injun-puddin' for dinner, and whatever you do, don't let the boys git at the mince-pies, or you'll have them down sick. I shall come back the minute I can leave Mother. Pa will come to-morrer, anyway, so keep snug and be good. I depend on you, my darter; use your jedgment, and don't let nothin' happen while Mother's away."

"Yes'm, yes'm—good-bye, good-bye!" called the children, as Mrs. Bassett was packed into the sleigh and driven away, leaving a stream of directions behind her.

Eph, the sixteen-year-old boy, immediately put on his biggest boots, assumed a sober, responsible manner, and surveyed his little responsibilities with a paternal air, drolly like his father's. Tilly tied on her mother's bunch of keys, rolled up the sleeves of her homespun gown, and began to order about the younger girls. They soon forgot poor Granny, and found it great fun to keep house all alone, for Mother seldom left home, but ruled her family in the good old-fashioned way. There were no servants, for the little daughters were Mrs. Bassett's only maids, and the stout boys helped their father, all working happily together with no wages

but love; learning in the best manner the use of the heads and hands with which they were to make their own way in the world.

The few flakes that caused the farmer to predict bad weather soon increased to a regular snow-storm, with gusts of wind, for up among the hills winter came early and lingered long. But the children were busy, gay, and warm in-doors, and never minded the rising gale nor the whirling white storm outside.

Tilly got them a good dinner, and when it was over the two elder girls went to their spinning, for in the kitchen stood the big and little wheels, and baskets of wool-rolls, ready to be twisted into yarn for the winter's knitting, and each day brought its stint of work to the daughters, who hoped to be as thrifty as their mother.

Eph kept up a glorious fire, and superintended the small boys, who popped corn and whittled boats on the hearth; while Roxy and Rhody dressed corn-cob dolls in the settle corner, and Bose, the brindled mastiff, lay on the braided mat, luxuriously warming his old legs. Thus employed, they made a pretty picture, these rosy boys and girls, in their homespun suits, with the rustic toys or tasks which most children nowadays would find very poor or tiresome.

Tilly and Prue sang, as they stepped to and fro, drawing out the smoothly twisted threads to the musical hum of the great spinning-wheels. The little girls chattered like magpies over their dolls and the new bed-spread they were planning to make, all white dimity stars on a blue calico ground, as a Christmas present to Ma. The boys roared at Eph's jokes, and had rough and tumble games over Bose, who didn't mind them in the least; and so the afternoon wore pleasantly away.

At sunset the boys went out to feed the cattle, bring in heaps of wood, and lock up for the night, as the lonely farm-house seldom had visitors after dark. The girls got the simple supper of brown bread and milk, baked apples, and a doughnut all 'round as a treat. Then they sat before the fire, the sisters knitting, the brothers with books or games, for Eph loved reading, and Sol and Seth never failed to play a few games of Morris with barley corns, on the little board they had made themselves at one corner of the dresser.

"Read out a piece," said Tilly, from Mother's chair, where she sat in state, finishing off the sixth woolen sock she had knit that month.

"It's the old history book, but here's a bit you may like, since it's about our folks," answered Eph, turning the yellow page to look at a picture of two quaintly dressed children in some ancient castle.

"Yes, read that. I always like to hear about the Lady Matildy I was named for, and Lord Bassett, Pa's great-great-great-grandpa. He's only a farmer now, but it's nice to know that we were somebody two or three hundred years ago," said Tilly, bridling and tossing her curly head as she fancied the Lady Matilda might have done.

"Don't read the queer words, 'cause we don't understand 'em. Tell it," commanded Roxy, from the cradle, where she was drowsily cuddled with Rhody.

"Well, a long time ago, when Charles the First was in prison, Lord Bassett was a true friend to him," began Eph, plunging into his story without delay. "The lord had some papers that would have hung a lot of people if the king's enemies got hold of 'em, so when he heard one day, all of a sudden, that soldiers were at the castle-gate to carry him off, he had just time to call his girl to him, and say: 'I may be going to my death, but I won't betray my master. There is no time to burn the papers, and I can not take them with me; they are hidden in the old leathern chair where I sit. No one knows this but you, and you must guard them till I come or send you a safe messenger to take them away. Promise me to be brave and silent, and I can go without fear.' You see, he wasn't afraid to die, but he *was* to seem a traitor. Lady Matildy promised solemnly, and the words were hardly out of her mouth when the men came in, and her father was carried away a prisoner and sent off to the Tower.

"But she didn't cry; she just called her brother, and sat down in that chair, with her head leaning back on those papers, like a queen, and waited while the soldiers hunted the house over for 'em: wasn't that a smart girl?" cried Tilly, beaming with pride, for she was named for this ancestress, and knew the story by heart.

"I reckon she was scared, though, when the men came swearin' in and asked her if she knew anything about it. The boy did his part then, for *he* didn't know, and fired up and stood before his sister; and he says, says he, as bold as a lion: 'If my lord had told us where the papers be, we would die before we would betray him. But we are children and know nothing, and it is cowardly of you to try to fright us with oaths and drawn swords!'"

As Eph quoted from the book, Seth planted himself before Tilly, with the long poker in his hand, saying, as he flourished it valiantly:

"Why didn't the boy take his father's sword and lay about him? I would, if any one was ha'sh to Tilly."

"You bantam! He was only a bit of a boy, and couldn't do anything. Sit down and hear the rest of it," commanded Tilly, with a pat on the yellow head, and a private resolve that Seth should have the largest piece of pie at dinner next day, as reward for his chivalry.

"Well, the men went off after turning the castle out of window, but they said they should come again; so faithful Matildy was full of trouble, and hardly dared to leave the room where the chair stood. All day she sat there, and at night her sleep was so full of fear about it, that she often got up and went to see that all was safe. The servants thought the fright had hurt her wits, and let her be, but Rupert, the boy, stood by her and never was afraid of her queer ways. She was 'a pious maid,' the book says, and often spent the long evenings reading the Bible, with her brother by her, all alone in the great room, with no one to help her bear her secret, and no good news of her father. At last, word came that the king was dead and his friends banished out of England. Then the poor children were in a sad plight, for they had no mother, and the servants all ran away, leaving only one faithful old man to help them."

"But the father did come?" cried Roxy, eagerly.

"You'll see," continued Eph, half telling, half reading.

"Matilda was sure he would, so she sat on in the big chair, guarding the papers, and no one could get her away, till one day a man came with her father's ring and told her to give up the secret. She knew the ring, but would not tell until she had asked many questions, so as to be very sure,

and while the man answered all about her father and the king, she looked at him sharply. Then she stood up and said, in a tremble, for there was something strange about the man: 'Sir, I doubt you in spite of the ring, and I will not answer till you pull off the false beard you wear, that I may see your face and know if you are my father's friend or foe.' Off came the disguise, and Matilda found it was my lord himself, come to take them with him out of England. He was very proud of that faithful girl, I guess, for the old chair still stands in the castle, and the name keeps in the family, Pa says, even over here, where some of the Bassetts came along with the Pilgrims."

"Our Tilly would have been as brave, I know, and she looks like the old picter down to Grandma's, don't she, Eph?" cried Prue, who admired her bold, bright sister very much.

"Well, I think you'd do the settin' part best, Prue, you are so patient. Till would fight like a wild cat, but she can't hold her tongue worth a cent," answered Eph; whereat Tilly pulled his hair, and the story ended with a general frolic.

When the moon-faced clock behind the door struck nine, Tilly tucked up the children under the "extry comfortables," and having kissed them all around, as Mother did, crept into her own nest, never minding the little drifts of snow that sifted in upon her coverlet between the shingles of the roof, nor the storm that raged without.

As if he felt the need of unusual vigilance, old Bose lay down on the mat before the door, and pussy had the warm hearth all to herself. If any late wanderer had looked in at midnight, he would have seen the fire blazing up again, and in the cheerful glow the old cat blinking her yellow eyes, as she sat bolt upright beside the spinning-wheel, like some sort of household goblin, guarding the children while they slept.

When they woke, like early birds, it still snowed, but up the little Bassetts jumped, broke the ice in their pitchers, and went down with cheeks glowing like winter apples, after a brisk scrub and scramble into their clothes. Eph was off to the barn, and Tilly soon had a great kettle of mush ready, which, with milk warm from the cows, made a wholesome breakfast for the seven hearty children.

"Now about dinner," said the young housekeeper, as the pewter spoons stopped clattering, and the earthen bowls stood empty.

"Ma said, have what we liked, but she didn't expect us to have a real Thanksgiving dinner, because she won't be here to cook it, and we don't know how," began Prue, doubtfully.

"I can roast a turkey and make a pudding as well as anybody, I guess. The pies are all ready, and if we can't boil vegetables and so on, we don't deserve any dinner," cried Tilly, burning to distinguish herself, and bound to enjoy to the utmost her brief authority.

"Yes, yes!" cried all the boys, "let's have a dinner anyway; Ma won't care, and the good victuals will spoil if they ain't eaten right up."

"Pa is coming to-night, so we won't have dinner till late; that will be real genteel and give us plenty of time," added Tilly, suddenly realizing the novelty of the task she had undertaken.

"Did you ever roast a turkey?" asked Roxy, with an air of deep interest.

"Should you darst to try?" said Rhody, in an awe-stricken tone.

"You will see what I can do. Ma said I was to use my jedgment about things, and I'm going to. All you children have got to do is to keep out of the way, and let Prue and me work. Eph, I wish you'd put a fire in the best room, so the little ones can play in there. We shall want the settin'-room for the table, and I won't have 'em pickin' 'round when we get things fixed," commanded Tilly, bound to make her short reign a brilliant one.

"I don't know about that. Ma didn't tell us to," began cautious Eph, who felt that this invasion of the sacred best parlor was a daring step.

"Don't we always do it Sundays and Thanksgivings? Wouldn't Ma wish the children kept safe and warm anyhow? Can I get up a nice dinner with four rascals under my feet all the time? Come, now, if you want roast turkey and onions, plum-puddin' and mince-pie, you'll have to do as I tell you, and be lively about it."

Tilly spoke with such spirit, and her last suggestion was so irresistible, that Eph gave in, and, laughing good-naturedly, tramped away to heat up

the best room, devoutly hoping that nothing serious would happen to punish such audacity.

The young folks delightedly trooped in to destroy the order of that prim apartment with housekeeping under the black horse-hair sofa, "horseback riders" on the arms of the best rocking-chair, and an Indian war-dance all over the well-waxed furniture. Eph, finding the society of the peaceful sheep and cows more to his mind than that of two excited sisters, lingered over his chores in the barn as long as possible, and left the girls in peace.

Now Tilly and Prue were in their glory, and as soon as the breakfast things were out of the way, they prepared for a grand cooking-time. They were handy girls, though they had never heard of a cooking-school, never touched a piano, and knew nothing of embroidery beyond the samplers which hung framed in the parlor; one ornamented with a pink mourner under a blue weeping-willow, the other with this pleasing verse, each word being done in a different color, which gave the effect of a distracted rainbow:

"This sampler neat was worked by me,
In my twelfth year, Prudence B."

Both rolled up their sleeves, put on their largest aprons, and got out all the spoons, dishes, pots, and pans they could find, "so as to have everything handy," as Prue said.

"Now, sister, we'll have dinner at five; Pa will be here by that time if he is coming to-night, and be so surprised to find us all ready, for he won't have had any very nice victuals if Gran'ma is so sick," said Tilly importantly. "I shall give the children a piece at noon" (Tilly meant luncheon); "doughnuts and cheese, with apple-pie and cider will please 'em. There's beans for Eph; he likes cold pork, so we won't stop to warm it up, for there's lots to do, and I don't mind saying to you I'm dreadful dubersome about the turkey."

"It's all ready but the stuffing, and roasting is as easy as can be. I can baste first rate. Ma always likes to have me, I'm so patient and stiddy, she says," answered Prue, for the responsibility of this great undertaking did not rest upon her, so she took a cheerful view of things.

"I know, but it's the stuffin' that troubles me," said Tilly, rubbing her round elbows as she eyed the immense fowl laid out on a platter before her. "I don't know how much I want, nor what sort of yarbs to put in, and he's so awful big, I'm kind of afraid of him."

"I ain't! I fed him all summer, and he never gobbled at *me*. I feel real mean to be thinking of gobbling him, poor old chap," laughed Prue, patting her departed pet with an air of mingled affection and appetite.

"Well, I'll get the puddin' off my mind fust, for it ought to bile all day. Put the big kettle on, and see that the spit is clean, while I get ready."

Prue obediently tugged away at the crane, with its black hooks, from which hung the iron tea-kettle and three-legged pot; then she settled the long spit in the grooves made for it in the tall andirons, and put the dripping-pan underneath, for in those days meat was roasted as it should be, not baked in ovens.

Meantime Tilly attacked the plum-pudding. She felt pretty sure of coming out right, here, for she had seen her mother do it so many times, it looked very easy. So in went suet and fruit; all sorts of spice, to be sure she got the right ones, and brandy instead of wine. But she forgot both sugar and salt, and tied it in the cloth so tightly that it had no room to swell, so it would come out as heavy as lead and as hard as a cannon-ball, if the bag did not burst and spoil it all. Happily unconscious of these mistakes, Tilly popped it into the pot, and proudly watched it bobbing about before she put the cover on and left it to its fate.

"I can't remember what flavorin' Ma puts in," she said, when she had got her bread well soaked for the stuffing. "Sage and onions and apple-sauce go with goose, but I can't feel sure of anything but pepper and salt for a turkey."

"Ma puts in some kind of mint, I know, but I forget whether it is spearmint, peppermint, or penny-royal," answered Prue, in a tone of doubt, but trying to show her knowledge of "yarbs," or, at least, of their names.

"Seems to me it's sweet marjoram or summer savory. I guess we'll put both in, and then we are sure to be right. The best is up garret; you run and get some, while I mash the bread," commanded Tilly, diving into the mess.

Away trotted Prue, but in her haste she got catnip and wormwood, for the garret was darkish, and Prue's little nose was so full of the smell of the onions she had been peeling, that everything smelt of them. Eager to be of use, she pounded up the herbs and scattered the mixture with a liberal hand into the bowl.

"It doesn't smell just right, but I suppose it will when it is cooked," said Tilly, as she filled the empty stomach, that seemed aching for food, and sewed it up with the blue yarn, which happened to be handy. She forgot to tie down his legs and wings, but she set him by till his hour came, well satisfied with her work.

"Shall we roast the little pig, too? I think he'd look nice with a necklace of sausages, as Ma fixed one last Christmas," asked Prue, elated with their success.

"I couldn't do it. I loved that little pig, and cried when he was killed. I should feel as if I was roasting the baby," answered Tilly, glancing toward the buttery where piggy hung, looking so pink and pretty it certainly did seem cruel to eat him.

It took a long time to get all the vegetables ready, for, as the cellar was full, the girls thought they would have every sort. Eph helped, and by noon all was ready for cooking, and the cranberry-sauce, a good deal scorched, was cooling in the lean-to.

Luncheon was a lively meal, and doughnuts and cheese vanished in such quantities that Tilly feared no one would have an appetite for her sumptuous dinner. The boys assured her they would be starving by five o'clock, and Sol mourned bitterly over the little pig that was not to be served up.

"Now you all go and coast, while Prue and I set the table and get out the best chiny," said Tilly, bent on having her dinner look well, no matter what its other failings might be.

Out came the rough sleds, on went the round hoods, old hats, red cloaks, and moccasins, and away trudged the four younger Bassetts, to disport themselves in the snow, and try the ice down by the old mill, where the great wheel turned and splashed so merrily in the summer-time.

Eph took his fiddle and scraped away to his heart's content in the parlor, while the girls, after a short rest, set the table and made all ready to dish up the dinner when that exciting moment came. It was not at all the sort of table we see now, but would look very plain and countrified to us, with its green-handled knives and two-pronged steel forks; its red-and-white china, and pewter platters, scoured till they shone, with mugs and spoons to match, and a brown jug for the cider. The cloth was coarse, but white as snow, and the little maids had seen the blue-eyed flax grow, out of which their mother wove the linen they had watched and watered while it bleached in the green meadow. They had no napkins and little silver; but the best tankard and Ma's few wedding spoons were set forth in state. Nuts and apples at the corners gave an air, and the place of honor was left in the middle for the oranges yet to come.

"Don't it look beautiful?" said Prue, when they paused to admire the general effect.

"Pretty nice, I think. I wish Ma could see how well we can do it," began Tilly, when a loud howling startled both girls, and sent them flying to the window. The short afternoon had passed so quickly that twilight had come before they knew it, and now, as they looked out through the gathering dusk, they saw four small black figures tearing up the road, to come bursting in, all screaming at once: "The bear, the bear! Eph, get the gun! He's coming, he's coming!"

Eph had dropped his fiddle, and got down his gun before the girls could calm the children enough to tell their story, which they did in a somewhat incoherent manner. "Down in the holler, coastin', we heard a growl," began Sol, with his eyes as big as saucers. "I see him fust lookin' over the wall," roared Seth, eager to get his share of honor.

"Awful big and shaggy," quavered Roxy, clinging to Tilly, while Rhody hid in Prue's skirts, and piped out: "His great paws kept clawing at us, and I was so scared my legs would hardly go."

"We ran away as fast as we could go, and he come growling after us. He's awful hungry, and he'll eat every one of us if he gets in," continued Sol, looking about him for a safe retreat.

"Oh, Eph, don't let him eat us," cried both little girls, flying up stairs to hide under their mother's bed, as their surest shelter.

"No danger of that, you little geese. I'll shoot him as soon as he comes. Get out of the way, boys," and Eph raised the window to get good aim.

"There he is! Fire away, and don't miss!" cried Seth, hastily following Sol, who had climbed to the top of the dresser as a good perch from which to view the approaching fray.

Prue retired to the hearth as if bent on dying at her post rather than desert the turkey, now "browning beautiful," as she expressed it. But Tilly boldly stood at the open window, ready to lend a hand if the enemy proved too much for Eph.

All had seen bears, but none had ever come so near before, and even brave Eph felt that the big brown beast slowly trotting up the door-yard was an unusually formidable specimen. He was growling horribly, and stopped now and then as if to rest and shake himself.

"Get the ax, Tilly, and if I should miss, stand ready to keep him off while I load again," said Eph, anxious to kill his first bear in style and alone; a girl's help didn't count.

Tilly flew for the ax, and was at her brother's side by the time the bear was near enough to be dangerous. He stood on his hind legs, and seemed to sniff with relish the savory odors that poured out of the window.

"Fire, Eph!" cried Tilly, firmly.

"Wait till he rears again. I'll get a better shot, then," answered the boy, while Prue covered her ears to shut out the bang, and the small boys cheered from their dusty refuge up among the pumpkins.

But a very singular thing happened next, and all who saw it stood amazed, for suddenly Tilly threw down the ax, flung open the door, and ran straight into the arms of the bear, who stood erect to receive her, while his growlings changed to a loud "Haw, haw!" that startled the children more than the report of a gun.

"It's Gad Hopkins, tryin' to fool us!" cried Eph, much disgusted at the loss of his prey, for these hardy boys loved to hunt, and prided themselves on the number of wild animals and birds they could shoot in a year.

"Oh, Gad, how could you scare us so?" laughed Tilly, still held fast in one shaggy arm of the bear, while the other drew a dozen oranges from some deep pocket in the buffalo-skin coat, and fired them into the kitchen with such good aim that Eph ducked, Prue screamed, and Sol and Seth came down much quicker than they went up.

"Wal, you see I got upsot over yonder, and the old horse went home while I was floundering in a drift, so I tied on the buffalers to tote 'em easy, and come along till I see the children playin' in the holler. I jest meant to give 'em a little scare, but they run like partridges, and I kep' up the joke to see how Eph would like this sort of company," and Gad haw-hawed again.

"You'd have had a warm welcome if we hadn't found you out. I'd have put a bullet through you in a jiffy, old chap," said Eph, coming out to shake hands with the young giant, who was only a year or two older than himself.

"Come in and set up to dinner with us. Prue and I have done it all ourselves, and Pa will be along soon, I reckon," cried Tilly, trying to escape.

"Couldn't, no ways. My folks will think I'm dead ef I don't get along home, sence the horse and sleigh have gone ahead empty. I've done my arrant and had my joke; now I want my pay, Tilly," and Gad took a hearty kiss from the rosy cheeks of his "little sweetheart," as he called her. His own cheeks tingled with the smart slap she gave him as she ran away, calling out that she hated bears and would bring her ax next time.

"I ain't afeared; your sharp eyes found me out; and ef you run into a bear's arms you must expect a hug," answered Gad, as he pushed back the robe and settled his fur cap more becomingly.

"I should have known you in a minute if I hadn't been asleep when the girls squalled. You did it well, though, and I advise you not to try it again in a hurry, or you'll get shot," said Eph, as they parted, he rather crestfallen and Gad in high glee.

"My sakes alive—the turkey is burnt one side, and the kettles have biled over so the pies I put to warm are all ashes!" scolded Tilly, as the flurry subsided and she remembered her dinner.

"Well, I can't help it. I couldn't think of victuals when I expected to be eaten alive myself, could I?" pleaded poor Prue, who had tumbled into the cradle when the rain of oranges began.

Tilly laughed, and all the rest joined in, so good humor was restored, and the spirits of the younger ones were revived by sucks from the one orange which passed from hand to hand with great rapidity, while the older girls dished up the dinner. They were just struggling to get the pudding out of the cloth when Roxy called out, "Here's Pa!"

"There's folks with him," added Rhody.

"Lots of 'em! I see two big sleighs chock full," shouted Seth, peering through the dusk.

"It looks like a semintary. Guess Gramma's dead and come up to be buried here," said Sol in a solemn tone. This startling suggestion made Tilly, Prue, and Eph hasten to look out, full of dismay at such an ending of their festival.

"If that is a funeral, the mourners are uncommon jolly," said Eph, drily, as merry voices and loud laughter broke the white silence without.

"I see Aunt Cinthy, and Cousin Hetty—and there's Mose and Amos. I do declare, Pa's bringin' 'em all home to have some fun here," cried Prue, as she recognized one familiar face after another.

"Oh, my patience! Ain't I glad I got dinner, and don't I hope it will turn out good!" exclaimed Tilly, while the twins pranced with delight, and the small boys roared:

"Hooray for Pa! Hooray for Thanksgivin'!"

The cheer was answered heartily, and in came Father, Mother, Baby, aunts and cousins, all in great spirits, and all much surprised to find such a festive welcome awaiting them.

"Ain't Gran'ma dead at all?" asked Sol, in the midst of the kissing and hand-shaking.

"Bless your heart, no! It was all a mistake of old Mr. Chadwick's. He's as deaf as an adder, and when Mrs. Brooks told him Mother was mendin' fast, and she wanted me to come down to-day, certain sure, he got the message all wrong, and give it to the fust person passin' in such a way as to scare me 'most to death, and send us down in a hurry. Mother was sittin' up as chirk as you please, and dreadful sorry you didn't all come."

"So, to keep the house quiet for her, and give you a taste of the fun, your Pa fetched us all up to spend the evenin', and we are goin' to have a jolly time on't, to jedge by the looks of things," said Aunt Cinthy, briskly finishing the tale when Mrs. Bassett paused for want of breath.

"What in the world put it into your head we was comin', and set you to gettin' up such a supper?" asked Mr. Bassett, looking about him, well pleased and much surprised at the plentiful table.

Tilly modestly began to tell, but the others broke in and sang her praises in a sort of chorus, in which bears, pigs, pies, and oranges were oddly mixed. Great satisfaction was expressed by all, and Tilly and Prue were so elated by the commendation of Ma and the aunts, that they set forth their dinner, sure everything was perfect.

But when the eating began, which it did the moment wraps were off, then their pride got a fall; for the first person who tasted the stuffing (it was big Cousin Mose, and that made it harder to bear) nearly choked over the bitter morsel.

"Tilly Bassett, whatever made you put wormwood and catnip in your stuffin'?" demanded Ma, trying not to be severe, for all the rest were laughing, and Tilly looked ready to cry.

"I did it," said Prue, nobly taking all the blame, which caused Pa to kiss her on the spot, and declare that it didn't do a might of harm, for the turkey was all right.

"I never see onions cooked better. All the vegetables is well done, and the dinner a credit to you, my dears," declared Aunt Cinthy, with her mouth

full of the fragrant vegetable she praised.

The pudding was an utter failure, in spite of the blazing brandy in which it lay—as hard and heavy as one of the stone balls on Squire Dunkin's great gate. It was speedily whisked out of sight, and all fell upon the pies, which were perfect. But Tilly and Prue were much depressed, and didn't recover their spirits till the dinner was over and the evening fun well under way.

"Blind-man's buff," "Hunt the slipper," "Come, Philander," and other lively games soon set every one bubbling over with jollity, and when Eph struck up "Money Musk" on his fiddle, old and young fell into their places for a dance. All down the long kitchen they stood, Mr. and Mrs. Bassett at the top, the twins at the bottom, and then away they went, heeling and toeing, cutting pigeon-wings, and taking their steps in a way that would convulse modern children with their new-fangled romps called dancing. Mose and Tilly covered themselves with glory by the vigor with which they kept it up, till fat Aunt Cinthy fell into a chair, breathlessly declaring that a very little of such exercise was enough for a woman of her "heft."

Apples and cider, chat and singing, finished the evening, and after a grand kissing all round, the guests drove away in the clear moonlight which came just in time to cheer their long drive.

When the jingle of the last bell had died away, Mr. Bassett said soberly, as they stood together on the hearth: "Children, we have special cause to be thankful that the sorrow we expected was changed into joy, so we'll read a chapter 'fore we go to bed, and give thanks where thanks is due."

Then Tilly set out the light-stand with the big Bible on it, and a candle on each side, and all sat quietly in the fire-light, smiling as they listened with happy hearts to the sweet old words that fit all times and seasons so beautifully.

When the good-nights were over, and the children in bed, Prue put her arm around Tilly and whispered tenderly, for she felt her shake, and was sure she was crying:

"Don't mind about the old stuffin' and puddin', deary—nobody cared, and Ma said we really did do surprisin' well for such young girls."

The laughter Tilly was trying to smother broke out then, and was so infectious, Prue could not help joining her, even before she knew the cause of the merriment.

"I was mad about the mistakes, but don't care enough to cry. I'm laughing to think how Gad fooled Eph and I found him out. I thought Mose and Amos would have died over it when I told them, it was so funny," explained Tilly, when she got her breath.

"I was so scared that when the first orange hit me, I thought it was a bullet, and scrabbled into the cradle as fast as I could. It was real mean to frighten the little ones so," laughed Prue, as Tilly gave a growl.

Here a smart rap on the wall of the next room caused a sudden lull in the fun, and Mrs. Bassett's voice was heard, saying warningly, "Girls, go to sleep immediate, or you'll wake the baby."

"Yes'm," answered two meek voices, and after a few irrepressible giggles, silence reigned, broken only by an occasional snore from the boys, or the soft scurry of mice in the buttery, taking their part in this old-fashioned Thanksgiving.

II.

HOW IT ALL HAPPENED.

IT was a small room, with nothing in it but a bed, two chairs, and a big chest. A few little gowns hung on the wall, and the only picture was the wintry sky, sparkling with stars, framed by the uncurtained window. But the moon, pausing to peep, saw something pretty and heard something pleasant. Two heads in little round nightcaps lay on one pillow, two pairs of wide-awake blue eyes stared up at the light, and two tongues were going like mill clappers.

"I'm so glad we got our shirts done in time! It seemed as if we never should, and I don't think six cents is half enough for a great red flannel thing with four button-holes—do you?" said one little voice, rather wearily.

"No; but then we each made four, and fifty cents is a good deal of money. Are you sorry we didn't keep our quarters for ourselves?" asked the other voice, with an under-tone of regret in it.

"Yes, I am, till I think how pleased the children will be with our tree, for they don't expect anything, and will be so surprised. I wish we had more toys to put on it, for it looks so small and mean with only three or four things."

"It won't hold any more, so I wouldn't worry about it. The toys are very red and yellow, and I guess the babies won't know how cheap they are, but like them as much as if they cost heaps of money."

This was a cheery voice, and as it spoke the four blue eyes turned toward the chest under the window, and the kind moon did her best to light up the tiny tree standing there. A very pitiful little tree it was—only a branch of hemlock in an old flower-pot, propped up with bits of coal, and hung with a few penny toys earned by the patient fingers of the elder sisters, that the little ones should not be disappointed.

But in spite of the magical moonlight the broken branch, with its scanty supply of fruit, looked pathetically poor, and one pair of eyes filled slowly with tears, while the other pair lost their happy look, as if a cloud had come over the sunshine.

"Are you crying, Dolly?"

"Not much, Polly."

"What makes you, dear?"

"I didn't know how poor we were till I saw the tree, and then I couldn't help it," sobbed the elder sister, for at twelve she already knew something of the cares of poverty, and missed the happiness that seemed to vanish out of all their lives when father died.

"It's dreadful! I never thought we'd have to earn our tree, and only be able to get a broken branch, after all, with nothing on it but three sticks of candy, two squeaking dogs, a red cow, and an ugly bird with one feather in its tail;" and overcome by a sudden sense of destitution, Polly sobbed even more despairingly than Dolly.

"Hush, dear; we must cry softly, or mother will hear, and come up, and then we shall have to tell. You know we said we wouldn't seem to mind not having any Christmas, she felt so sorry about it."

"I *must* cry, but I'll be quiet."

So the two heads went under the pillow for a few minutes, and not a sound betrayed them as the little sisters cried softly in one another's arms, lest mother should discover that they were no longer careless children, but brave young creatures trying to bear their share of the burden cheerfully.

When the shower was over, the faces came out shining like roses after rain, and the voices went on again as before.

"Don't you wish there really was a Santa Claus, who knew what we wanted, and would come and put two silver half-dollars in our stockings, so we could go and see *Puss in Boots* at the Museum to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes, indeed; but we didn't hang up any stockings, you know, because mother had nothing to put in them. It does seem as if rich people might think of poor people now and then. Such little bits of things would make us happy, and it couldn't be much trouble to take two small girls to the play, and give them candy now and then."

"*I* shall when I'm rich, like Mr. Chrome and Miss Kent. I shall go round every Christmas with a big basket of goodies, and give *all* the poor children some."

"P'r'aps if we sew ever so many flannel shirts we may be rich by-and-by. I should give mother a new bonnet first of all, for I heard Miss Kent say no lady would wear such a shabby one. Mrs. Smith said fine bonnets didn't make real ladies. I like her best, but I do want a locket like Miss Kent's."

"I should give mother some new rubbers, and then I should buy a white apron, with frills like Miss Kent's, and bring home nice bunches of grapes and good things to eat, as Mr. Chrome does. I often smell them, but he never gives *me* any; he only says, 'Hullo, chick!' and I'd rather have oranges any time."

"It will take us a long while to get rich, I'm afraid. It makes me tired to think of it. I guess we'd better go to sleep now, dear."

"Good-night, Dolly."

"Good-night, Polly."

Two soft kisses were heard, a nestling sound followed, and presently the little sisters lay fast asleep cheek against cheek, on the pillow wet with their tears, never dreaming what was going to happen to them to-morrow.

Now Miss Kent's room was next to theirs, and as she sat sewing she could hear the children's talk, for they soon forgot to whisper. At first she smiled, then she looked sober, and when the prattle ceased she said to herself, as she glanced about her pleasant chamber:

"Poor little things! they think I'm rich, and envy me, when I'm only a milliner earning my living. I ought to have taken more notice of them, for their mother has a hard time, I fancy, but never complains. I'm sorry they heard what I said, and if I knew how to do it without offending her, I'd trim a nice bonnet for a Christmas gift, for she *is* a lady, in spite of her old clothes. I can give the children some of the things they want anyhow, and I will. The idea of those mites making a fortune out of shirts at six cents apiece!"

Miss Kent laughed at the innocent delusion, but sympathized with her little neighbors, for she knew all about hard times. She had good wages now, but spent them on herself, and liked to be fine rather than neat. Still, she was a good-hearted girl, and what she had overheard set her to thinking soberly, then to acting kindly, as we shall see.

"If I hadn't spent all my money on my dress for the party to-morrow night, I'd give each of them a half-dollar. As I can not, I'll hunt up the other

things they wanted, for it's a shame they shouldn't have a bit of Christmas, when they tried so hard to please the little ones."

As she spoke she stirred about her room, and soon had a white apron, an old carnelian heart on a fresh blue ribbon, and two papers of bonbons ready. As no stockings were hung up, she laid a clean towel on the floor before the door, and spread forth the small gifts to look their best.

Miss Kent was so busy that she did not hear a step come quietly up stairs, and Mr. Chrome, the artist, peeped at her through the balusters, wondering what she was about. He soon saw, and watched her with pleasure, thinking that she never looked prettier than now.

Presently she caught him at it, and hastened to explain, telling what she had heard, and how she was trying to atone for her past neglect of these young neighbors. Then she said good-night, and both went into their rooms, she to sleep happily, and he to smoke as usual.

But his eye kept turning to some of the "nice little bundles" that lay on his table, as if the story he had heard suggested how he might follow Miss Kent's example. I rather think he would not have disturbed himself if he had not heard the story told in such a soft voice, with a pair of bright eyes full of pity looking into his, for little girls were not particularly interesting to him, and he was usually too tired to notice the industrious creatures toiling up and down stairs on various errands, or sewing at the long red seams.

Now that he knew something of their small troubles, he felt as if it would please Miss Kent, and be a good joke, to do his share of the pretty work she had begun.

So presently he jumped up, and, opening his parcels, took out two oranges and two bunches of grapes, then he looked up two silver half-dollars, and stealing into the hall, laid the fruit upon the towel, and the money atop of the oranges. This addition improved the display very much, and Mr. Chrome was stealing back, well pleased, when his eye fell on Miss Kent's door, and he said to himself, "She too shall have a little surprise, for she is a dear, kind-hearted soul."

In his room was a prettily painted plate, and this he filled with green and purple grapes, tucked a sentimental note underneath, and leaving it on her threshold, crept away as stealthily as a burglar.

The house was very quiet when Mrs. Smith, the landlady, came up to turn off the gas. "Well, upon my word, here's fine doings, to be sure!" she said, when she saw the state of the upper hall. "Now I wouldn't have thought it of Miss Kent, she is such a giddy girl, nor of Mr. Chrome, he is so busy with his own affairs. I meant to give those children each a cake to-morrow, they are such good little things. I'll run down and get them now, as my contribution to this fine set out."

Away trotted Mrs. Smith to her pantry, and picked out a couple of tempting cakes, shaped like hearts and full of plums. There was a goodly array of pies on the shelves, and she took two of them, saying, as she climbed the stairs again, "They remembered the children, so I'll remember them, and have my share of the fun."

So up went the pies, for Mrs. Smith had not much to give, and her spirit was generous, though her pastry was not of the best. It looked very droll to see pies sitting about on the thresholds of closed doors, but the cakes were quite elegant, and filled up the corners of the towel handsomely, for the apron lay in the middle, with the oranges right and left, like two sentinels in yellow uniforms.

It was very late when the flicker of a candle came up stairs, and a pale lady, with a sweet sad face, appeared, bringing a pair of red and a pair of blue mittens for her Dolly and Polly. Poor Mrs. Blake did have a hard time, for she stood all day in a great store that she might earn bread for the poor children who staid at home and took care of one another. Her heart was very heavy that night, because it was the first Christmas she had ever known without gifts and festivity of some sort. But Petkin, the youngest child, had been ill, times were very hard, the little mouths gaped for food like the bills of hungry birds, and there was no tender mate to help fill them.

If any elves had been hovering about the dingy hall just then, they would have seen the mother's tired face brighten beautifully when she discovered the gifts, and found that her little girls had been so kindly remembered.

Something more brilliant than the mock diamonds in Miss Kent's best earrings fell and glittered on the dusty floor as Mrs. Blake added the mittens to the other things, and went to her lonely room again, smiling as she thought how she could thank them all in a sweet and simple way.

Her windows were full of flowers, for the delicate tastes of the poor lady found great comfort in their beauty. "I have nothing else to give, and these will show how grateful I am," she said, as she rejoiced that the scarlet geraniums were so full of gay clusters, the white chrysanthemum stars were all out, and the pink roses at their loveliest.

They slept now, dreaming of a sunny morrow as they sat safely sheltered from the bitter cold. But that night was their last, for a gentle hand cut them all, and soon three pretty nosegays stood in a glass, waiting for dawn, to be laid at three doors, with a few grateful words which would surprise and delight the receivers, for flowers were rare in those hard-working lives, and kind deeds often come back to the givers in fairer shapes than they go.

Now one would think that there had been gifts enough, and no more could possibly arrive, since all had added his or her mite except Betsey, the maid, who was off on a holiday, and the babies fast asleep in their trundle-bed, with nothing to give but love and kisses. Nobody dreamed that the old cat would take it into her head that her kittens were in danger, because Mrs. Smith had said she thought they were nearly old enough to be given away. But she must have understood, for when all was dark and still, the anxious mother went patting up stairs to the children's door, meaning to hide her babies under their bed, sure they would save them from destruction. Mrs. Blake had shut the door, however, so poor Puss was disappointed; but finding a soft, clean spot among a variety of curious articles, she laid her kits there, and kept them warm all night, with her head pillowed on the blue mittens.

In the cold morning Dolly and Polly got up and scrambled into their clothes, not with joyful haste to see what their stockings held, for they had none, but because they had the little ones to dress while mother got the breakfast.

Dolly opened the door, and started back with a cry of astonishment at the lovely spectacle before her. The other people had taken in their gifts, so nothing destroyed the magnificent effect of the treasures so curiously collected in the night. Puss had left her kits asleep, and gone down to get her own breakfast, and there, in the middle of the ruffled apron, as if in a dainty cradle, lay the two Maltese darlings, with white bibs and boots on, and white tips to the tiny tails curled round their little noses in the sweetest way.

Polly and Dolly could only clasp their hands and look in rapturous silence for a minute; then they went down on their knees and revelled in the unexpected richness before them.

"I do believe there *is* a Santa Claus, and that he heard us, for here is everything we wanted," said Dolly, holding the carnelian heart in one hand and the plummy one in the other.

"It must have been some kind of a fairy, for we didn't mention kittens, but we wanted one, and here are two darlings," cried Polly, almost purring with delight as the downy bunches unrolled and gaped till their bits of pink tongues were visible.

"Mrs. Smith was one fairy, I guess, and Miss Kent was another, for that is her apron. I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Chrome gave us the oranges and the money: men always have lots, and his name is on this bit of paper," said Dolly.

"Oh, I'm *so* glad! Now we shall have a Christmas like other people, and I'll never say again that rich folks don't remember poor folks. Come and show all our treasures to mother and the babies; they must have some," answered Polly, feeling that the world was all right, and life not half as hard as she thought it last night.

Shrieks of delight greeted the sisters, and all that morning there was joy and feasting in Mrs. Blake's room, and in the afternoon Dolly and Polly went to the Museum, and actually saw *Puss in Boots*; for their mother insisted on their going, having discovered how the hard-earned quarters had been spent. This was such unhoped-for bliss that they could hardly believe it, and kept smiling at one another so brightly that people

wondered who the happy little girls in shabby cloaks could be who clapped their new mittens so heartily, and laughed till it was better than music to hear them.

This was a very remarkable Christmas-day, and they long remembered it; for while they were absorbed in the fortunes of the Marquis of Carabas and the funny cat, who tucked his tail in his belt, washed his face so awkwardly, and didn't know how to purr, strange things were happening at home, and more surprises were in store for our little friends. You see, when people once begin to do kindnesses, it is so easy and pleasant they find it hard to leave off; and sometimes it beautifies them so that they find they love one another very much—as Mr. Chrome and Miss Kent did, though we have nothing to do with that except to tell how they made the poor little tree grow and blossom.

They were very jolly at dinner, and talked a good deal about the Blakes, who ate in their own rooms. Miss Kent told what the children said, and it touched the soft spot in all their hearts to hear about the red shirts, though they laughed at Polly's lament over the bird with only one feather in its tail.

"I'd give them a better tree if I had any place to put it, and knew how to trim it up," said Mr. Chrome, with a sudden burst of generosity, which so pleased Miss Kent that her eyes shone like Christmas candles.

"Put it in the back parlor. All the Browns are away for a week, and we'll help you trim it—won't we, my dear?" cried Mrs. Smith, warmly; for she saw that he was in a sociable mood, and thought it a pity that the Blakes should not profit by it.

"Yes, indeed; I should like it of all things, and it needn't cost much, for I have some skill in trimmings, as you know." And Miss Kent looked so gay and pretty as she spoke that Mr. Chrome made up his mind that millinery must be a delightful occupation.

"Come on then, ladies, and we'll have a little frolic. I'm a lonely old bachelor, with nowhere to go to-day, and I'd like some fun."

They had it, I assure you; for they all fell to work as busy as bees, flying and buzzing about with much laughter as they worked their pleasant

miracle. Mr. Chrome acted more like the father of a large family than a crusty bachelor, Miss Kent's skillful fingers flew as they never did before, and Mrs. Smith trotted up and down as briskly as if she were sixteen instead of being a stout old woman of sixty.

The children were so full of the play, and telling all about it, that they forgot their tree till after supper; but when they went to look for it they found it gone, and in its place a great paper hand with one finger pointing down stairs, and on it these mysterious words in red ink:

"Look in the Browns' back parlor!"

At the door of that interesting apartment they found their mother with Will and Petkin, for another hand had suddenly appeared to them pointing up. The door flew open quite as if it were a fairy play, and they went in to find a pretty tree planted in a red box on the centre table, lighted with candles, hung with gilded nuts, red apples, gay bonbons, and a gift for each.

Mr. Chrome was hidden behind one folding-door, and fat Mrs. Smith squeezed behind the other, and they both thought it a great improvement upon the old-fashioned Santa Claus to have Miss Kent, in the white dress she made for the party, with Mrs. Blake's roses in her hair, step forward as the children gazed in silent rapture, and with a few sweet words welcome them to the little surprise their friends had made.

There were many Christmas trees in the city that night, but none which gave such hearty pleasure as the one which so magically took the place of the broken branch and its few poor toys. They were all there, however, and Dolly and Polly were immensely pleased to see that of all her gifts Petkin chose the forlorn bird to carry to bed with her, the one yellow feather being just to her taste.

Mrs. Blake put on her neat bonnet, and was so gratified that Miss Kent thought it the most successful one she ever trimmed. She was well paid for it by the thanks of one neighbor and the admiration of another; for when she went to her party Mr. Chrome went with her, and said something on the way which made her heart dance more lightly than her feet that night.

Good Mrs. Smith felt that her house had covered itself with glory by this event, and Dolly and Polly declared that it was the most perfect and

delightful surprise party ever seen.

It was all over by nine o'clock, and with good-night kisses for every one the little girls climbed up to bed laden with treasures and too happy for many words. But as they tied their round caps Dolly said, thoughtfully:

"On the whole, I think it's rather nice to be poor when people are kind to you."

"Well, I'd *rather* be rich; but if I can't be, it is very good fun to have Christmas trees like this one," answered truthful Polly, never guessing that they had planted the seed from which the little pine-tree grew so quickly and beautifully.

When the moon came to look in at the window on her nightly round, two smiling faces lay on the pillow, which was no longer wet with tears, but rather knobby with the mine of riches hidden underneath,—first fruits of the neighborly friendship which flourished in that house until another and a merrier Christmas came.

III.

THE DOLLS' JOURNEY FROM MINNESOTA TO MAINE.

Mr. Plum lived in St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A.

There were six little Plums, all girls, varying in ages from fourteen to seven, and named Kate, Lucy, Susy, Lizzy, Marjory and Maggie. There was no mamma, but Mrs. Gibbs, the housekeeper, was a kind old soul, and papa did everything he could to make the small daughters good and happy.

One stormy Saturday afternoon the children were all together in the school-room, and papa busy at his desk in the library, with the door open because he liked to hear the pleasant voices and catch glimpses of the droll plays that went on there.

Kate lay on the sofa reading "The Daisy Chain" for the fourth time. Susy, Lucy and Lizzie were having a select tea party in their own recess, the entrance to which was barricaded with chairs to keep out the "babies," as they called the little ones, who were much offended at being excluded and sat up in the cushioned window-seat pensively watching the rain.

"If it had only waited till to-morrow we should have had time for our journey; now we can't go till next Saturday. Flora is so disappointed she would cry if I had not taught her to behave," said Maggie with a sigh, as she surveyed the doll on her knee in its new summer suit.

"So is Dora. Just see how sweet she looks with her hat and cape on and her travelling-bag all ready. Couldn't we play travel in the house? It is such a pity to wait when the children are in such a hurry to go," answered Marjory, settling the tiny bag that held Dora's nightcap and gown as well as the morsels of cake that were to serve for her lunch.

"No," said Maggie decidedly, "we can't do it, because there is no room for carriages, and boats, and railroads, and hotels, and accidents. It is a long

journey from Minnesota to Maine, and we couldn't get it all into one room I'm sure."

"I don't think papa would mind our coming into the library, if we didn't ring the car bells very loud or scream much when the accidents happen," said Marjory, who hated to give up the plan they had been cherishing all the week.

"What is it, little ones? Come and tell me what is the matter," called Mr. Plum, hearing his name and the magic word "railroad," for he was the president of one and had his hands full just then.

Down jumped the little girls and ran to perch on either arm of his chair, pouring out their small tribulations as freely as if he had been the most sympathizing of mothers.

"We planned to take a long, long journey round the garden with our dolls to-day, and play go to Maine and see Aunt Maria. You know she asked us, and we looked out the way on the map and got all ready, and now it rains and we are dreadfully disappointed," said Maggie, while Marjory sighed as she looked at the red D. worked on the inch square travelling-bag.

"As you can't go, why not send the dolls to make aunty a visit, and she will send them back when they get homesick," proposed Mr. Plum, smiling, as if a sudden idea had popped into his head.

"Really?" cried Maggie.

"How could we?" asked Marjory.

"They could go and come by mail, and tell you all about their adventures when they got back," said papa.

Both children were speechless for a moment, then as the full splendor of this proposition dawned upon them they clapped their hands, crying eagerly:

"We will! we will! Let's do it at once."

"What? where? who?" asked Susy, Lucy and Lizzie, forgetting their tea party to run and see what was going on.

They were told, and in their turn exclaimed so loudly that Kate came to join in the fun.

After a great deal of talking and laughing, the dolls were prepared for the long journey. They were common wooden-headed dollies, a hand long, with stuffed bodies and stout legs ornamented with very small feet in red and blue boots. Dora was a blonde and Flora a brunette, otherwise they were just alike and nearly new. Usually when people go travelling they put on their hats and cloaks, but these pilgrims, by papa's advice, left all encumbrances behind them, for they were to travel in a peculiar way, and blue gingham dresses were chosen for the expedition.

"It is possible that they may never come back. Accidents will happen you know. Are you prepared for that?" asked Mr. Plum, pausing with the brown paper spread out before him.

"I am," answered Maggie firmly, as she laid Flora on the table, her black eyes staring as if rather alarmed at this sudden start.

Marjory hesitated a moment, clasping Dora to her bosom with a face full of maternal anxiety. But Susy, Lucy and Lizzie cried: "Let her go, do let her go, and if she is lost papa will give you a new doll."

"Good-by, my darling dear. Have a splendid time, and be sure you come back to me," whispered Marjory, with a tender farewell kiss as she gave up her child.

All stood watching silently while papa tied the dolls back to back with the ribbon Kate pulled from her neck, then folded them carefully in strong brown paper, leaving their heads out that they might see the world as they went along. Being carefully fastened up with several turns of cord, Mr. Plum directed the precious parcel to "Miss Maria Plum, Portland, Maine. With care." Then it was weighed, stamped, and pronounced ready for the post.

"I shall write and tell aunty they are coming, because she will want to be prepared for such distinguished visitors," said papa, taking up his pen with a glance at the six excited little faces round him.

Silence reigned while the letter was written, and as he sealed it up Mr. Plum said solemnly, with his hand on the parcel:

"For the last time, shall they go?"

"Yes!" answered the Spartan mothers with one voice, while the other sisters danced round them, and Kate patted the curly heads approvingly.

"Going, going, gone!" answered papa as he whisked on his coat and hat, and slammed the door behind him.

The children clustered at the window to see him set out on this momentous errand, and he often looked back waving his umbrella at them, till he vanished round the corner, with a reassuring pat on the pocket out of which dear Do and Flo popped their heads for a last look at their sweet home.

"Now let us take out poor old Lucinda and Rose Augusta to play with. I know their feelings were hurt at our leaving them for the new dolls," said Maggie, rummaging in the baby-house, whither Margery soon followed her to reinstate the old darlings in the place of the departed new ones.

"Safely off," reported Mr. Plum, when he came into tea, "and we may expect to hear from them in a week or two. Parcels go more slowly than letters, and this is Aunty's busy season, so wait patiently and see what will happen."

"We will," said the little girls; and they did, but week after week went by and nothing was heard of the wanderers.

We, however, can follow them and learn much that their anxious mothers never knew.

As soon as Flora and Dora recovered from the bewilderment occasioned by the confusion of the post office, they found themselves in one of the many leathern mail bags rumbling Eastward. As it was perfectly dark they could not see their companions, so listened to the whispering and rustling that went on about them. The newspapers all talked politics, and some of them used such bad language that the dolls would have covered their ears, if their hands had not been tied down. The letters were better behaved and

more interesting, for they told one another the news they carried, because nothing is private in America, and even gummed envelopes cannot keep gossip from leaking out.

"It is very interesting, but I should enjoy it more if I was not grinding my nose against the rough side of this leather bag," whispered Dora, who lay undermost just then.

"So should I, if a heavy book was not pinching my toes. I've tried to kick it away, but it won't stir, and keeps droning on about reports and tariffs and such dull things," answered Flora, with a groan.

"Do you like travelling?" asked Dora, presently, when the letters and papers fell asleep, lulled by the motion of the cars.

"Not yet, but I shall when I can look about me. This bundle near by says the mails are often sorted in the cars, and in that way we shall see something of the world, I hope," answered Flora, cheering up, for, like her mamma, she was of an enquiring turn.

The dolls took a nap of some hours, and were roused by a general tumbling out on a long shelf, where many other parcels lay, and lively men sent letters and papers flying here and there as if a whirlwind was blowing. A long box lay beside the dolls who stood nearly erect leaning against a pile of papers. Several holes were cut in the lid, and out of one of them was thrust a little black nose, as if trying to get air.

"Dear me! what can be in it?" said Flora, who was nearest.

"I'm a poor little alligator, going to a boy in Chicago, if you please, and I want my mother," sobbed a voice from the box, and there was a rap on the lid as of an agitated tail.

"Mercy on us! I hope we shall not have to travel with the monster," whispered Dora, trying to see over her shoulder.

"I'm not afraid. He can't be very dreadful, for the box is not any longer than we are. Natural history is very useful; I've heard mamma say so, and I shall talk with him while we rest here," answered Flo, nodding toward the eye which now took the place of the nose.

So the little alligator told her something of his home on the banks of a great river, where he was just learning to play happily with his brothers and sisters, when he was caught and sent away to pine in captivity.

The dolls comforted him as well as they could, and a pair of baby's shoes travelling in an envelope sympathized with him, while a shabby bundle directed to "Michael Dolan, at Mrs. Judy Quin's, next door to Mr. Pat Murphy, Boston, North street," told them to "Whisht and slape quite till they came forninst the place."

"Such low people!" whispered Do to Flo, and both stood primly silent till they were tumbled into another mail bag, and went rattling on again with a new set of companions.

"I hope that poor baby will go safely and the boy be good to him," said Flora, for the little alligator went with the live stock in some other way.

"Thank goodness he didn't go with us! I shall dream about that black nose and winking eye, I'm sure. The dangers of travelling are great, but we are safe and comfortable now, I think," and Dora settled down in a cozy corner of the bag, wondering when they should reach Chicago.

"I like adventures and hope we shall have some," answered Flora, briskly, little dreaming how soon her wish was to be granted.

A few hours later there come a bump, a crash, a cry, and then all the mail bags rolled one over the other with the car down an embankment into a river.

"Now we are dead!" shrieked the poor dolls, clinging together as they heard the splash of water, the shouting of men, the splintering of wood, and the hiss of steam.

"Don't be frightened, ladies, mail bags are always looked after," said a large envelope with an official seal and the name of a Senator on it.

"Any bones broken, dear madam?" asked a jaunty pink letter, with a scent of musk about it, evidently a love-letter.

"I think one foot is hurt, and my clothes are dripping," sighed Dora, faintly.

"Water won't hurt calico," called out a magazine full of fashion plates, adding dolefully, as its gay colors began to run, "I shall be in a nice mess if I ever get out of this. People will wear odd fashions if they follow me this time."

"Hope they will telegraph news of this accident in time for the evening papers," said a dingy sheet called the "Barahoo Thunderbolt," as it lay atop of the heap in its yellow wrapper.

"Be calm, my friends, and wait with fortitude for death or deliverance, as I do." With which philosophic remark "The St. Louis Cosmos" folded the pages which for the first time since the paper was started, were not dry.

Here the water rose over the topmost letter and a moist silence prevailed till a sudden jerk fished up the bag, and before the dolls could recover their wits they were spread out on the floor of a mail car to dry, while several busy men sorted and saved such papers and letters as still held together.

"Now we shall see something," said Flora, feeling the warm air blow over her as they spun along, for a slight accident like this did not delay the energetic Westerners a moment longer than absolutely necessary.

"I can't see you, dear, but I hope you look better than I do, for the yellow of my hair has washed into my eyes and the red of my cheeks is quite gone, I'm sure," answered Dora, as her wet dress flopped in the breeze and the broken foot sticking up showed her that her blue boots were ruined.

"I don't care a bit how I look. It's great fun now we are safe. Pop up your head and see the wide prairie flying past. I do hope that poor baby got away and swam home to his mother. The upset into the river was quite to his taste, I fancy," said Flora, who was much excited by her adventure and eager for more.

Presently one of the men set the dolls up in the corner of a window to dry, and there they stood viewing the fine landscape with one eye while the other watched the scene of devastation within. Everything was in great confusion after the accident, so it is not strange that the dolls were not missed when they slowly slid lower and lower till a sudden lurch of the car

sent them out of the window to roll into a green field where cows were feeding and children picking strawberries.

"This is the end of us! Here we shall lie and mould forgotten by everybody," said Dora, who always took a tragical view of things.

"Not a bit of it! I see cows eating toward us and they may give us a lift. I've heard of their tossing people up, though I don't know just how it's done. If they don't, we are in the path and some of those children are sure to find us," answered Flora cheerfully, though she stood on her head with a bunch of burrs pricking her nose.

She was right. A bright-eyed little German girl presently came trotting along the path with a great basket full of berries on her head arranged in pretty pottles ready for the market. Seeing the red cow sniffing at a brown paper parcel she drove her away, picked it up and peeped in at the open end.

The sight of two dolls in such a place made her feel as if fairies had dropped them there for her. She could not read the direction and hurried home to show her treasure to her brothers and sisters of whom there were eight.

"What will become of us now!" exclaimed Dora, as eager hands slipped them out of the wrapper and smoothed their damp skirts in a room that seemed swarming with boys and girls of all sizes.

"Don't worry, we shall get on nicely, I'm sure, and learn German of these young persons. It is a great relief to be able to stretch one's limbs and stand up, isn't it?" answered Flora, undismayed by anything that had happened as yet.

"Yes, dear, I love you but I *am* tired of being tied to you all day. I hope we shall live through this noise and get a little rest, but I give up the idea of ever seeing Portland," answered Dora, staring with all her blue eyes at the display of musical instruments about the room, and longing to stop her ears, for several of the children were playing on the violin, flute, horn or harp. They were street musicians, and even the baby seemed to be getting ready to take part in the concert, for he sat on the floor beside an immense bass horn taller than himself, with his rosy lips at the mouth piece and his

cheeks puffed out in vain attempts to make a "boom! boom!" as brother Fritz did.

Flora was delighted, and gave skips on her red boots in time to the lively tooting of the boys, while the girls gazed at the lovely dolls and jabbered away with their yellow braids quivering with excitement.

The wrapper was laid aside till a neighbor who read English came in to translate it. Meantime they enjoyed the new toys immensely, and even despondent Dora was cheered up by the admiration she received; while they in their turn were deeply interested in the pretty dolls' furniture some of the children made.

Beds, tables and chairs covered the long bench, and round it sat the neat-handed little maidens gluing, tacking and trimming, while they sang and chatted at their work as busy and happy as a hive of bees.

All day the boys went about the streets playing, and in the evening trooped off to the beer gardens to play again, for they lived in Chicago, and the dolls had got so far on their way to Aunt Maria, as they soon discovered.

For nearly two months they lived happily with Minna, Gretchen and Nanerl, then they set out on their travels again, and this was the way it happened. A little girl came to order a set of furniture for her new baby-house, and seeing two shabby dolls reposing in a fine bed she asked about them. Her mamma spoke German so Minna told how they were found, and showed the old wrapper, saying that they always meant to send the dolls on their way but grew so fond of them they kept putting it off.

"I am going as far as New York very soon and will take them along if you like, for I think little Miss Maria Plum must have been expecting her dolls all this time. Shall I?" asked the mamma, as she read the address and saw the dash under "With care," as if the dollies were of great importance to some one.

"Ja, ja," answered Minna, glad to oblige a lady who bought two whole sets of their best furniture and paid for it at once.

So again the dolls were put in their brown paper cover and sent away with farewell kisses.

"This now is genteel and just suits me," said Dora, as they drove along with little Clara to the handsome house where she was staying.

"I have a feeling that she is a spoilt child, and we shall not be as happy with her as with the dear Poppleheimers. We shall see," answered Flora, wisely, for Clara had soon tossed the dolls into a corner and was fretting because mamma would not buy her the big horn to blow on.

The party started for New York in a day or two, and to the delight of Flo and Do they were left out of the trunks for Clara to play with on the way, her own waxen Blanche Marie Annabel being too delicate to be used.

"Oh my patience, this is worse than tumbling about in a mail-bag," groaned Dora, after hours of great suffering, for Clara treated the poor dolls as if they had no feeling.

She amused herself with knocking their heads together, shutting them in the window with their poor legs hanging out, swinging them by one arm, and drawing lines with a pencil all over their faces till they looked as if tattooed by savages. Even brave Flora was worn out and longed for rest, finding her only comfort in saying, "I told you so," when Clara banged them about, or dropped them on the dusty floor to be trampled on by passing feet.

There they were left, and would have been swept away if a little dog had not found them as the passengers were leaving the car and carried them after his master, trotting soberly along with the bundle in his mouth, for fortunately Clara had put them into the paper before she left them, so they were still together in the trials of the journey.

"Hullo, Jip, what have you got?" asked the young man as the little dog jumped up on the carriage seat and laid his load on his master's knee, panting and wagging his tail as if he had done something to be praised for.

"Dolls, I declare! What can a bachelor do with the poor things? Wonder who Maria Plum is? Midge will like a look at them before we send them along;" and into the young man's pocket they went, trembling with fear of the dog, but very grateful for being rescued from destruction.

Jip kept his eye on them, and gave an occasional poke with his cold nose to be sure they were there as they drove through the bustling streets of New York to a great house with an inscription over the door.

"I do hope Midge will be a nicer girl than Clara. Children ought to be taught to be kind to dumb dolls as well as dumb animals," said Dora, as the young man ran up the steps and hurried along a wide hall.

"I almost wish we were at home with our own kind little mothers," began Flo, for even her spirits were depressed by bad treatment, but just then a door opened and she cried out in amazement, "Bless my heart, this man has more children than even Mr. Poppleheimer!"

She might well think so, for all down both sides of the long room stood little white beds with a small pale face on every pillow. All the eyes that were open brightened when Jip and his master came in, and several thin hands were outstretched to meet them.

"I've been good, Doctor, let me pat him first," cried one childish voice.

"Did you bring me a flower, please?" asked another feeble one.

"I know he's got something nice for us, I see a bundle in his pocket," and a little fellow who sat up among his pillows gave a joyful cough as he could not shout.

"Two dollies for Midge to play with. Jip found them, but I think the little girl they are going to will lend them for a few days. We shall not need them longer I'm afraid," added the young man to a rosy faced nurse who came along with a bottle in her hand.

"Dear no, the poor child is very low to-day. But she will love to look at the babies if she isn't strong enough to hold 'em," said the woman, leading the way to a corner where the palest of all the pale faces lay smiling on the pillow, and the thinnest of the thin hands were feebly put up to greet the Doctor.

"So nice!" she whispered when the dolls were laid beside her, while Jip proudly beat his tail on the floor to let her know that she owed the welcome gift to him.

For an hour Flo and Do lay on the arm of poor Midge who never moved except to touch them now and then with a tender little finger, or to kiss them softly, saying, "Dear babies, it is very nice not to be all alone. Are you comfy, darlings?" till she fell asleep still smiling.

"Sister, do you think this can be the Heaven we hear people talk about? It is so still and white, and may be these children are angels," whispered Dora, looking at the sweet face turned toward her with the long lashes lying on the colorless cheek, and the arms outstretched like wings.

"No, dear, it is a hospital, I heard that man say so, and those are sick children come to be cured. It is a sweet place, I think, and this child much nicer than that horrid Clara," answered Flo, who was quicker to hear, see and understand what went on than Dora.

"I love to lie here safe and warm, but there doesn't seem to be much breath to rock me," said Do, who lay nearest the little bosom that very slowly rose and fell with the feeble flutter of the heart below.

"Hush, we may disturb her," and lively Flo controlled her curiosity, contenting herself with looking at the other children and listening to their quiet voices, for pain seemed to have hushed them all.

For a week the dolls lay in Midge's bed, and though their breasts were full of saw-dust and their heads were only wood, the sweet patience of the little creature seemed to waken something like a heart in them, and set them thinking, for dolls don't live in vain, I am firmly persuaded.

All day she tended them till the small hands could no longer hold them, and through the weary nights she tried to murmur bits of lullabies lest the dollies would not be able to sleep because of the crying or the moans some of the poor babies could not repress. She often sent one or the other to cheer up some little neighbor, and in this way Do and Flo became small sisters of charity, welcomed eagerly, reluctantly returned, and loved by all, although they never uttered a word and their dingy faces could not express the emotion that stirred their saw-dust bosoms.

When Saturday night came they were laid in their usual place on Midge's arm. She was too weak to kiss them now, and nurse laid their battered cheeks against the lips that whispered faintly, "Be sure you send 'em to the

little girl, and tell her—tell her—all about it." Then she turned her cheek to the pillow with a little sigh and lay so still the dolls thought she had gone to sleep.

She had, but the sweet eyes did not open in the morning, and there was no breath in the little breast to rock the dolls any more.

"I knew she was an angel, and now she has flown away," said Dora softly, as they watched the white image carried out in the weeping nurse's arms, with the early sunshine turning all the pretty hair to gold.

"I think that is what they call dying, sister. It is a much lovelier way to end than as we do in the dust bin or rag-bag. I wonder if there is a little Heaven anywhere for good dolls?" answered Flora, with what looked like a tear on her cheek; but it was only a drop from the violets sent by the kind Doctor last night.

"I hope so, for I think the souls of little children might miss us if they loved us as dear Midge did," whispered Dora, trying to kiss the blue flower in her hand, for the child had shared her last gift with these friends.

"Why didn't you let her take them along, poor motherless baby?" asked the doctor when he saw the dolls lying as she had left them.

"I promised her they should go to the girl they were sent to, and please, I'd like to keep my word to the little darling," answered Nurse with a sob.

"You shall," said the Doctor, and put them in his breast pocket with the faded violets, for everybody loved the pauper child sent to die in a hospital, because Christian charity makes every man and woman father and mother to these little ones.

All day the dolls went about in the busy Doctor's pocket, and I think the violets did them good, for the soft perfume clung to them long afterward like the memory of a lovely life, as short and sweet as that of the flowers.

In the evening they were folded up in a fresh paper and re-directed carefully. The Doctor wrote a little note telling why he had kept them, and was just about to put on some stamps when a friend came in who was going to Boston in the morning.

"Anything to take along, Fred?" asked the newcomer.

"This parcel, if you will. I have a feeling that I'd rather not have it knock about in a mail-bag," and the Doctor told him why.

It was pleasant to see how carefully the traveller put away the parcel after that, and to hear him say that he was going through Boston to the mountains for his holiday, and would deliver it in Portland to Miss Plum herself.

"Now there is some chance of our getting there," said Flora, as they set off next day in a new Russia leather bag.

On the way they overheard a long chat between some New York and Boston ladies which impressed them very much. Flora liked to hear the fashionable gossip about clothes and people and art and theatres, but Dora preferred the learned conversation of the young Boston ladies, who seemed to know a little of everything, or think they did.

"I hope Mamma will give me an entirely new wardrobe when I get home; and we will have dolls' weddings and balls, and a play, and be as fine and fashionable as those ladies down there," said Flora, after listening a while.

"You have got your head full of dressy ideas and high life, sister. I don't care for such things, but mean to cultivate my mind as fast as I can. That girl says she is in college, and named over more studies than I can count. I do wish we were to stop and see a little of the refined society of Boston," answered Dora, primly.

"Pooh!" said Flo, "don't you try to be intellectual, for you are only a wooden-headed doll. I mean to be a real Westerner, and just enjoy myself as I please, without caring what other folks do or think. Boston is no better than the rest of the world, I guess."

Groans from every article in the bag greeted this disrespectful speech, and an avalanche of Boston papers fell upon the audacious doll. But Flo was undaunted, and shouted from underneath the pile: "I don't care! Minnesota forever!" till her breath gave out.

Dora was so mortified that she never said a word till they were let out in a room at the Parker House. Here she admired everything, and read all the evening in a volume of Emerson's Poems from the bag, for Mr. Mt. Vernon Beacon was a Boston man, and never went anywhere without a wise book or two in his pocket.

Flo turned up her nose at all she saw, and devoted herself to a long chat with the smart bag which came from New York and was full of gossip.

The next afternoon they really got to Portland, and as soon as Mr. Beacon had made his toilet he set out to find little Miss Plum. When the parlor door opened to admit her he was much embarrassed, for, advancing with a paternal smile and the dolls extended to the expected child, he found himself face to face with a pretty young lady, who looked as if she thought him a little mad.

A few words explained the errand, however, and when she read the note Aunt Maria's bright eyes were full of tears as she said, hugging the dilapidated dolls:

"I'll write the story of their travels, and send the dear old things back to the children as soon as possible."

And so she did with Mr. Beacon's help, for he decided to try the air of Portland, and spent his vacation there. The dolls were re-painted and re-dressed till they were more beautiful than ever, and their clothes fine enough to suit even Flo.

They were a good while doing this, and when all was ready, Aunt Maria took it into her head to run out to St. Paul and surprise the children. By a singular coincidence Mr. Beacon had railroad business in that direction, so they set off together, with two splendid dolls done up in a gay box.

All that was ever known about that journey was that these travellers stopped at the hospital in New York, and went on better friends than before after hearing from the good Doctor all the pathetic story of little Midge.

The young Plums had long ago given up the hope of ever seeing Do and Flo again, for they started in June and it was early in September when

Aunt Maria appeared before them without the least warning, accompanied by a pleasant gentleman from Boston.

Six kisses had hardly resounded from Aunty's blooming cheeks when a most attractive box was produced from the Russia leather bag, and the wandering dolls restored to the arms of their enraptured mammas.

A small volume neatly written and adorned with a few pictures of the most exciting incidents of the trip also appeared.

"Every one writes or prints a book in Boston, you know, so we did both," said Aunt Maria, laughing, as she handed over the remarkable history which she had composed and Mr. Beacon illustrated.

It was read with intense interest, and was as true as most stories are nowadays.

"Nothing more delightful can happen now!" exclaimed the children, as they laid by the precious work and enthroned the travelled dolls in the place of honor on the roof of the baby-house.

But something much more delightful did happen; for at Thanksgiving time there was a wedding at the Plums'. Not a doll's wedding, as Flo had planned, but a real one, for the gentleman from Boston actually married Aunt Maria.

There were six bridesmaids, all in blue, and Flora and Dora, in the loveliest of new pink gowns, were set aloft among the roses on the wedding-cake, their proper place as everyone said, for there never would have been any marriage at all but for this Doll's Journey From Minnesota to Maine.

IV.

MORNING-GLORIES.

"What's that?"—and Daisy sat up in her little bed to listen; for she had never heard a sound like it before.

It was very early, and the house was still. The sun was just rising, and the morning-glories at the window were turning their blue and purple cups to catch the welcome light. The sky was full of rosy clouds; dew shone like diamonds on the waving grass, and the birds were singing as they only sing at dawn. But softer, sweeter than any bird-voice was the delicate music which Daisy heard. So airy and gay was the sound, it seemed impossible to lie still with that fairy dancing-tune echoing through the room. Out of bed scrambled Daisy, her sleepy eyes opening wider and wider with surprise and pleasure as she listened and wondered.

"Where is it?" she said, popping her head out of the window. The morning-glories only danced lightly on their stems, the robins chirped shrilly in the garden below, and the wind gave Daisy a kiss; but none of them answered her, and still the lovely music sounded close beside her.

"It's a new kind of bird, perhaps; or maybe it's a fairy hidden somewhere. Oh, if it *is* how splendid it will be!" cried Daisy; and she began to look carefully in all the colored cups, under the leaves of the woodbine, and in the wren's nest close by. There was neither fairy nor bird to be seen; and Daisy stood wondering, when a voice cried out from below:

"Why, little nightcap, what brings you out of your bed so early?"

"O Aunt Wee! do you hear it—that pretty music playing somewhere near! I can't find it; but I think it's a fairy, don't you?" said Daisy, looking down at the young lady standing in the garden with her hands full of roses.

Aunt Wee listened, smiled, and shook her head.

"Don't you remember you said last night that you thought the world a very stupid, grown-up place, because there were no giants and fairies in it now? Well, perhaps there *are* fairies, and they are going to show themselves to you, if you watch well."

Daisy clapped her hands, and danced about on her little bare feet; for, of all things in the world, she most wanted to see a fairy.

"What must I do to find them, Aunt Wee?" she cried, popping out her head again with her cap half off, and her curly hair blowing in the wind.

"Why, you see, they frolic all night, and go to sleep at dawn; so we must get up very early, if we want to catch the elves awake. They are such delicate, fly-away little things, and we are so big and clumsy, we shall have to look carefully, and perhaps hunt a long time before we find even one," replied Aunt Wee, very gravely.

"Mamma says I'm quick at finding things; and you know all about fairies, so I guess we'll catch one. Can't we begin now? It's very early, and this music has waked me up; so I don't want to sleep any more. Will you begin to hunt now?"

"But you don't like to get up early, or to walk in the fields; and, if we mean to catch a fairy, we must be up and out by sunrise every fair morning till we get one. Can you do this, lazy Daisy?" And Aunt Wee smiled to herself as if something pleased her very much.

"Oh! I will, truly, get up, and not fret a bit, if you'll only help me look. Please come now to dress me, and see if you can find what makes the music."

Daisy was very much in earnest, and in such a hurry to be off that she could hardly stand still to have her hair brushed, and thought there were a great many unnecessary buttons and strings on her clothes that day. Usually she lay late, got up slowly and fretted at every thing as little girls are apt to do when they have had too much sleep. She wasn't a rosy, stout Daisy; but had been ill, and had fallen into a way of thinking she couldn't do anything but lie about, reading fairy-tales, and being petted by every one. Mamma and papa had tried all sorts of things to amuse and do her good; for she was their only little daughter, and they loved her very dearly. But nothing pleased her long; and she lounged about, pale and fretful, till Aunt Laura came. Daisy called her "Wee" when she was a baby, and couldn't talk plainly; and she still used the name because it suited the cheery little aunt so well.

"I don't see anything, and the music has stopped. I think some elf just came to wake you up, and then flew away; so we won't waste any more

time in looking here," said Wee, as she finished dressing Daisy, who flew about like a Will-o'-the-wisp all the while.

"Do you think it will come again to-morrow?" asked Daisy anxiously.

"I dare say you'll hear it, if you wake in time. Now get your hat, and we will see what we can find down by the brook. I saw a great many fireflies there last night, and fancy there was a ball; so we may find some drowsy elf among the buttercups and clover."

Away rushed Daisy for her hat, and soon was walking gayly down the green lane, looking about her as if she had never been there before; for every thing seemed wonderfully fresh and lovely.

"How pink the clouds are, and how the dew twinkles in the grass! I never saw it so before," she said.

"Because by the time you are up the pretty pink clouds are gone, and the thirsty grass has drank the dew, or the sun has drawn it up to fall again at night for the flowers' evening bath," replied Wee, watching the soft color that began to touch Daisy's pale cheeks.

"I think we'd better look under that cobweb spread like a tent over the white clovers. A fairy would be very likely to creep in there and sleep."

Daisy knelt down and peeped carefully; but all she saw was a little brown spider, who looked very much surprised to see visitors so early.

"I don't like spiders," said Daisy, much disappointed.

"There are things about spiders as interesting to hear as fairy tales," said Wee. "This is Mrs. Epeira Diadema; and she is a respectable, industrious little neighbor. She spreads her tent, but sits under a leaf near by, waiting for her breakfast. She wraps her eggs in a soft silken bag, and hides them in some safe chink, where they lie till spring. The eggs are prettily carved and ornamented, and so hard that the baby spiders have to force their way out by biting the shell open and poking their little heads through. The mother dies as soon as her eggs are safely placed, and the spiderlings have to take care of themselves."

"How do you know about it, Aunt Wee? You talk as if Mrs. Eppyra—or whatever her name is—had told you herself. Did she?" asked Daisy, feeling more interested in the brown spider.

"No; I read it in a book, and saw pictures of the eggs, web, and family. I had a live one in a bottle; and she spun silken ladders all up and down, and a little room to sleep in. She ate worms and bugs, and was very amiable and interesting till she fell ill and died."

"I should like to see the book; and have a spider-bottle, so I could take care of the poor little orphans when they are born. Good-by, ma'am. I shall call again; for you are 'most as good as a fairy there in your pretty tent, with a white clover for your bed."

Daisy walked on a few steps, and then stopped to say:

"What does that bird mean by calling 'Hurry up, hurry up?' He keeps flying before us, and looking back as if he wanted to show me something."

"Let me hear what he says. I may be able to understand him, or the bob-o-link that swings on the alder by the brook."

Wee listened a moment, while the birds twittered and chirped with all their hearts. Presently Wee sang in a tone very like the bob-o-link's:

"Daisy and Wee,
Come here, and see
What a dainty feast is spread:
Down in the grass
Where fairies pass,
Here are berries ripe and red.

"All wet with dew,
They wait for you:
Come hither, and eat your fill,
While I gayly sing,
In my airy swing,
And the sun climbs up the hill."

"Did he really say that?" cried Daisy, watching the bob-o-link, who sat swaying up and down on the green bough, and nodding his white-capped head at her in the most friendly manner.

"Perhaps I didn't translate it rightly; for it is very hard to put bird-notes into our language, because we haven't words soft and sweet enough. But I really think there are berries over there, and we will see if what he says is true," said Wee.

Over the wall they went, and there, on a sunny bank, found a bed of the reddest, ripest berries ever seen.

"Thank you, thank you, for telling me to hurry up, and showing me such a splendid feast," said Daisy, with her mouth full, as she nodded back at the birds. "These are so much sweeter than those we buy. I'd carry some home to mamma, if I only had a basket."

"You can pick this great leaf full, while I make you a basket," said Wee.

Daisy soon filled the leaf, and then sat watching her aunt plait a pretty basket of rushes. While she waited she looked about, and kept finding something curious or pleasant to interest and amuse her. First she saw a tiny rainbow in a dewdrop that hung on a blade of grass; then she watched a frisky calf come down to drink on the other side of the brook, and laughed to see him scamper away with his tail in the air. Close by grew a pitcher-plant; and a yellow butterfly sat on the edge, bathing its feet, Daisy said. Presently she discovered a little ground bird sitting on her nest, and peeping anxiously, as if undecided whether to fly away or trust her.

"I won't hurt you, little mother. Don't be afraid," whispered the child; and, as if it understood, the bird settled down on her nest with a comfortable chirp, while its mate hopped up to give her a nice plump worm for breakfast.

"I love birds. Tell me something about them, Aunt Wee. You must know many things; for they like you, and come when you call."

"Once upon a time," began Wee, while her fingers flew and the pretty basket grew, "there was a great snow-storm, and all the country was covered with a thick white quilt. It froze a little, so one could walk over it, and I went out for a run. Oh, so cold it was, with a sharp wind, and no sun or any thing green to make it pleasant! I went far away over the fields, and sat down to rest. While I sat there, a little bird came by, and stopped to rest also.

"'How do you do?' said I.

"'Chick-a-dee-dee,' said he.

"'A cold day,' said I.

"'Chick-a-dee-dee,' said he.

"'Aren't you afraid of starving, now the ground is covered and the trees are bare?'

"'Chick-a-dee-dee, ma'am, chick-a-dee-dee!'" answered the bird in the same cheerful tone. And it sounded as if he said, 'I shall be cared for. I'm not afraid.'

"'What will you eat? There's nothing here or for miles round. I really think you'll starve, birdie,' said I.

"Then he laughed, and gave me a merry look as he lit on a tall, dry weed near by. He shook it hard with his little bill; when down fell a shower of seeds, and there was dinner all ready on a snow-white cloth. All the while he ate he kept looking up at me with his quick, bright eyes; and, when he had done, he said, as plainly as a bird could say it:

"'Cold winds may blow,
And snows may fall,
But well we know
God cares for all.'"

"I like that little story, and shall always think of it when I hear the chick-a-dee-dee." Daisy sat a moment with a thoughtful look in her eyes; then she said slowly, as if sorry for the words:

"It isn't a stupid, grown-up world. It's a very pleasant, young world; and I like it a great deal better this morning than I did last night."

"I'm glad of that; and, even if we don't find our fairy to-day, you will have found some sunshine, Daisy, and that is almost as good. Now put in the berries, and we'll go on."

How they hunted! They climbed trees to peep into squirrel-holes and birds'-nests; they chased bees and butterflies to ask for news of the elves; they waded in the brook, hoping to catch a water-sprite; they ran after thistle-down, fancying a fairy might be astride; they searched the flowers and ferns, questioned sun and wind, listened to robin and thrush; but no one could tell them any thing of the little people, though all had gay and charming bits of news about themselves. And Daisy thought the world got younger and happier every minute.

When they came in to breakfast, papa and mamma looked at Daisy, and then nodded with a smile at Aunt Wee; for, though Daisy's frock was soiled, her boots wet, and her hair tumbled, her cheeks were rosy, eyes bright, and voice so cheerful that they thought it better music than any in the summer world without.

"Hunting fairies is a pleasant play, isn't it, Daisy?" said papa, as he tasted the berries, and admired the green basket.

"Oh, yes! and we are going again to-morrow. Aunt Wee says we must try seven days at least. I like it, and mean to keep on till I really find my fairy."

"I think you will find something better than 'little vanishers,' dear," said mamma, filling up the bowl of bread and milk which Daisy was fast

emptying; for she certainly *had* found an appetite.

"There it is again!" cried Daisy, flying out of bed the next morning still earlier than the day before. Yes, there it was, the fairy music, as blithe and sweet as ever; and the morning-glories rung their delicate bells as if keeping time. Daisy felt rather sleepy, but remembered her promise to Aunt Wee, and splashed into her tub, singing the bob-o-link's song as she bathed.

"Where shall we go to-day?" she asked, as they went out into the garden.

"I think we'd better try a new place; so we'll go to the farmyard; and, while we feed the hens, I'll listen to their chat, and perhaps can learn something from it," replied Wee soberly.

"Do hens know about fairies? I thought they were very dull things, and didn't care for any thing but eating corn and laying eggs," said Daisy, surprised.

"Oh, dear, no! they are very sensible creatures, and see a deal of the world in their daily walks. Hunting for insects gives them an excellent chance to see fairies, if there are any. Here is some corn for the biddies; and, after we have fed them, we will look for eggs, and so may find a brownie or two."

Such a clatter as there was when they came to the barnyard; for every thing was just awake, and in the best spirits. Ducks were paddling off to the pond; geese to the meadow; and meek gray guinea-hens tripping away to hunt bugs in the garden. A splendid cock stood on the wall, and crowed so loud and clear that all the neighboring chanticleers replied. The motherly hens clucked and scratched with their busy broods about them, or sat and scolded in the coops because the chicks would gad abroad. Doves cooed on the sunny roof, and smoothed their gleaming feathers. Daisy's donkey nibbled a thistle by the wall, and a stately peacock marched before the door with all his plumage spread. It made Daisy laugh to see the airs the fowls put on as she scattered corn, and threw meal and water to the chicks. Some pushed and gobbled; some stood meekly outside the crowd, and got what they could; others seized a mouthful, and ran away to eat it in a corner. The chicks got into the pan entirely, and tumbled one over the other in their hurry to eat; but the mammas saw that none went hungry.

And the polite cock waited upon them in the most gentlemanly manner, making queer little clucks and gurgles as if he said:

"Allow me, madam, to offer you this kernel;" or, "Here, my dear, try that bit." And sometimes he pecked a little, with a loud quaver, evidently saying, "Come, come, children, behave yourselves, and don't eat like pigs."

"What is she saying?" asked Daisy, pointing to an old gray hen in a black turban, who was walking about alone, muttering to herself, as hens often do in their promenades.

"She says a cat has made a nest, and hatched three kits up on the loft, near her own nest; and she doesn't like it, because their mewing annoys her," said Wee, after listening a minute.

"How nice! let's go and find them. But do you learn anything about the fairies from the hen's chat?"

"No: they have been so busy setting, they have had no time for picnics yet. But they will let us know, if they discover any."

In the barn, the cows were being milked; and Daisy had a mugful of it, warm and sweet, out of the foaming pail.

"We'll take some to Mrs. Purr; for, I dare say, she doesn't like to leave the kits long, and will enjoy a sip of something comfortable," said Wee, as Daisy climbed the ladder, and went rustling over the hay to a corner, whence came a joyful "Mew!" What a charming sight it was, to be sure! a snow-white cat lying in a cosy nest, and, by her, three snow-white kits, wagging three very small gray tails.

"There never was any thing so lovely!" cried Daisy, as she sat with the three downy balls in her lap, while the mamma gratefully lapped the new milk from Aunt Wee's cup.

"Are they better than fairies?"

"Almost: for I know about pussies, and can cuddle them; but I couldn't a fairy, you know, and they might be afraid of me. These dears are not afraid, and I shall have such fun with them as they grow up. What *shall* we name them, auntie?"

"Snowball, Patpaw, and Wagtail would do, I think," said Wee, stroking the cat, who rubbed against her, purring very loud.

"Yes: I like those names for my pets. But what is Mrs. Purr saying, with her mouth up to your ear?" asked Daisy, who firmly believed that Aunt Wee knew every thing.

"She tells me that when she went on a grasshopper hunt the other day, as she ran through the meadow, she saw some lovely creatures all in blue, with gauze wings, flying about over the river, and sitting in the water-lilies. She thinks they may be fairies, and advises us to go and look."

"So we will to-morrow," said Daisy. "Ask her, please, if I may take the kits into the house, if I'll be very careful and give them a nice big bed to sleep in."

"She says you may; but she must go too, else the kits will cry," said Wee, after listening to Pussy's purr a minute.

Much pleased with her new pets, Daisy took them in her apron, and, followed by their confiding mamma, marched to the house, and established them in the old cradle which used to be hers. Pussy got in also; and, when they were settled on a soft cushion, Daisy rocked them gently to and fro. At first Mrs. Purr opened her yellow eyes, and looked rather anxious: but, as nothing uncomfortable happened, she composed herself, and soon quite liked the motion; for she fell asleep, and made a pretty picture as she lay with her downy white babies on her downy white breast.

When the sun rose next morning, he saw Daisy and Wee floating down the river in their boat. "Bless me! here's company," said the sun, and began at once to make them welcome in his most charming manner. He set the waves to sparkling with a sudden shimmer; he shot long rays of light through the dark hemlocks, till they looked like fairy trees; he touched Daisy's hair and it turned to gold; he chased away the shadows that lurked among the hills; he drew up the misty curtain that hovered over the river; and, with the warmth of his kisses, waked the sleeping lilies.

"Look, look, Aunt Wee! how they open, one by one, as the light shines on them! We shan't have to wait any longer; for they get up with the sun, as

you do." As she spoke, Daisy caught a half-open lily, and drew it up, fragrant and dripping, fresh from its sleep.

"They look like a fleet of fairy ships, anchored in this quiet harbor, with sails half furled, and crews asleep. See the little sailors, in their yellow jackets, lifting up their heads as the wind blows its whistle, like a boatswain, to 'pipe all hands.'"

Daisy laughed at Aunt Wee's fancy, and stirred up the crew of the Water-sprite, as she called her flower, till the white sails were all set, and it was ready for a summer voyage.

"It is time we saw the fairies in blue, unless old Madam Purr deceived us. I hope we *shall* find one; for, though I enjoy every thing we see, I do want my elf too."

"What is that?" cried Wee; and Daisy flew up so quickly that the boat rocked like a cradle. A slender creature, in a blue dress, with gauzy wings, darted by, and vanished among the rushes that nodded by the bank.

"Go nearer,—softly! softly!—and maybe it will fly out again. I really think it was a fairy; for I never saw any thing like it before," whispered Daisy, much excited.

Wee rowed in among the green rushes and purple water-weeds, and out flew half-a-dozen of the blue-bodied creatures. They didn't seem afraid, but skimmed about the boat, as if curious to see what it was; and Daisy sat, and stared with all her might. Presently one of the lovely things lit on the lily in her hand, and she held her breath to watch it. A little shadow of disappointment passed over her face as she looked; but it was gone at once, and her voice was full of delight as she said softly:

"It's not a fairy, Aunt Wee; but it is very beautiful, with its slender blue body, its lacy wings, and bright eyes. What name does it have?"

"We call it a dragon-fly; and it could tell you a pretty little story about itself, could you understand it. In May the tiny eggs are dropped on the water, and sink to the bottom, where little creatures are born,—ugly, brown things, with six legs and no wings. They feed on water-insects, and for a long time swim about in this state. When ready, they climb up the

stem of some plant, and sit in the sun till the ugly brown shells drop away, and the lovely winged creatures appear. They grow in an hour to be perfect dragon-flies, and float away to lead happy lives in the sunshine by the river."

As if only waiting till the story was done, the dragon-fly flew off with a whirr, and darted to and fro, hunting for its breakfast, glittering splendidly as it flashed among the leaves or darted close above the water. Daisy forgot her disappointment in a minute, and went fishing for lilies; while the turtles came up to sun themselves on the rocks, the merry little tadpoles wiggled in the shallow places, and a wild duck paddled by with a brood of ducklings following in her wake.

"Oh, dear! it rains; and we can't go fairy-hunting at all," said Daisy next morning, as the patter on the window-pane woke her up, and Aunt Wee came in to dress her.

"Yes, we can, dear; jump up, and see what a funny place I'll take you to."

Daisy thought the rain would be a capital excuse for lying in bed; for she still liked to cuddle and drowse in her cosey, warm nest. But she was curious to know where the curious place was; so she got up and followed.

"Why, Aunt Wee, this is the garret; and there isn't any thing nice or funny here," she said, as they climbed the stairs, and came into the big attic, filled with all manner of old things.

"Isn't there? We'll soon see." And so they did: for Aunt Wee began to play; and presently Daisy was shouting with fun as she sat on an old saddle, with a hair-covered trunk for a horse, a big old-fashioned bonnet on her head, and a red silk petticoat for a habit. Then they went to sea in a great chest, and got wrecked on a desert island, where they built a fort with boxes and bags, hunted bears with rusty guns, and had to eat dried berries, herbs and nuts; for no other food could be found. Aunt Wee got an old fiddle, and had a dancing-school, where Daisy capered till she was tired. So they rummaged out some dusty books, and looked at pictures so quietly that a little mouse came out of a drawer and peeped about, thinking no one was there.

"Let's find the nest, since we don't find any fairy," said Wee; and, opening the drawer, she turned over the things till she came to a pair of old velvet shoes; and there in the toe of one, nicely cuddled under a bit of flannel, lay four pink mites, which woke up, and stretched their tiny legs, and squeaked such small squeaks one could hardly hear them.

"How cunning they are! I wish they would let me put them with the kits, and have a nursery full of babies. Wouldn't it be nice to see them all grow up?" said Daisy.

"I'm afraid they wouldn't grow up, if Mrs. Purr lived with them," began Wee, but got no further; for just then the cat bounced into the drawer, and ate up the mouselings in four mouthfuls. Daisy screamed; the mother-mouse gave a doleful squeak, and ran into a hole; and Aunt Wee tried to save the little ones. But it was too late: Purr had got her breakfast, and sat washing her face after it, as if she had enjoyed it.

"Never mind, Daisy: she would have caught them by and by, and it's as well to have them taken care of before they do any harm. There is the bell: don't cry, but come and tell papa what a fine romp we've had."

"It doesn't rain, but it's dreadfully wet; so we'll go to the dairy, and see if any sprites are hiding there," said Wee next day; and to the dairy they went.

A pleasant place it was,—so clean and cool, and as full of sweet odors as if the ghosts of buttercups and clover still haunted the milk which they had helped to make. Dolly was churning, and Polly was making up butter in nice little pats. Both were very kind, and let Daisy peep everywhere. All round on white shelves stood the shining pans, full of milk; the stone floor was wet; and a stream of water ran along a narrow bed through the room, and in it stood jars of butter, pots of cream, and cans of milk. The window was open, and hop-vines shook their green bells before it. The birds sang outside, and maids sang inside, as the churn and the wooden spatters kept time:

"Brindle and Bess,
White-star and Jess—
    Come, butter, come!
Eat cowslips fine,

Red columbine—
    Come, butter, come!
Grasses green and tall,
Clover, best of all,—
    Come, butter, come!
And give every night
Milk sweet and white—
    Come, butter, come!
Make the churn go,
See the lumps grow!—
    Come, butter, come!"

Daisy sang also, and turned the handle till she was tired; then she helped Polly with the butter, and made four little pats,—one stamped with a star for papa, one with a rose for mamma, a strawberry for Aunt Wee, and a cow for herself. She skimmed a pitcher of cream with a shallow shell, and liked the work so much she asked to have a little pan of milk put by for her to take care of every day. Dolly promised, and gave her a small shell and a low shelf all to herself. When she went in, she carried her pretty pats in one hand, the cream-pot in the other, and entered the breakfast room looking as brisk and rosy as a little milkmaid.

It was a lovely morning when Daisy was next roused by the fairy music, and the ponies were standing at the door. "Are we going far?" she asked, as Wee put on her riding-skirt, and tied back her hair.

"Up to the mountain-top: it's only a mile; and we shall have time, if we ride fast," answered Wee.

Away they went, through the green lane, over the bridge, and up the steep hillside where the sheep fed and colts frisked as they passed by. Higher and higher climbed Dandy and Prance, the ponies; and gayer and gayer grew Daisy and Wee, as the fresh air blew over them, and the morning-red glowed on their faces. When they reached the top, they sat on a tall stone, and looked down into the valley on either side.

"This seems like a place to find giants, not fairies, it is so high and big and splendid up here," said Daisy, as her eye roamed over river, forest, town, and hill.

"There are giants here; and I brought you up to see them," answered Wee.

"Mercy, me! where are they?" cried Daisy, looking very curious and rather frightened.

"There is one of them." And Wee pointed to the waterfall that went dashing and foaming down into the valley. "That giant turns the wheels of all the mills you see. Some of them grind grain for our bread, some help to spin cloth for our clothes, some make paper, and others saw trees into boards. That is a beautiful and busy giant, Daisy."

"So it is, and some day we'll go and see it work. Show me the others: I like your giants 'most as well as those in the fairy-books."

"On this side you'll see another, called Steam. He is a very strong fellow; for, with the help of gunpowder, he will break the granite mountain in pieces, and carry it away. He works in the other mills, and takes heavy loads of stone, cloth, paper, and wood all over the country. Then, on the right of us is a third giant, called Electricity. He runs along those wires, and carries messages from one end of the world to the other. He goes under the sea and through the air; he brings news to every one; runs day and night, yet never tires; and often helps sick people with his lively magic."

"I like him best, I think; for he is more like a real, wonderful giant. Is there any on that side of us?" asked Daisy, turning round to look behind her.

"Yes: the best and most powerful of all lives in that big house with the bell on the roof," said Wee, smiling.

"Why, that's only the schoolhouse."

"Education is a long word, dear; but you know what it means, and, as you grow older, you will see what wonders it can work. It is a noble giant; for in this country rich and poor are helped by it, and no one need suffer for it unless they choose. It works more wonders than any other: it changes little children into wise, good men and women, who rule the world, and make happy homes everywhere; it helps write books, sing songs, paint pictures, do good deeds, and beautify the world. Love and respect it, my little Daisy, and be glad that you live now when such giants lend a hand to dwarfs like us."

Daisy sat still a long time, looking all about her on the mountain-top; and, when she rode away, she carried a new thought in her mind, which she never forgot.

"This is the last day of the seven, and no fairies have been found. Do you think I *ever* shall see one?" said Daisy, on the Sunday morning that ended her week's hunt.

"Not the kind you think of, for there are none such, Daisy; but you have found two better and more beautiful ones than any fanciful sprites," said Wee.

"Have I? Where are they? What are their names?"

Aunt Wee drew her to the glass, and said, as she pointed to Daisy's face:

"Here they are, and their names are Health and Happiness. There are many ways of losing them, and they are hard to catch when once lost. I wanted you to keep both, and tried to show you how. A happy, healthful hour in the morning sweetens and brightens the whole day; and there is no fairy-book half so wonderful as the lovely world all about us, if we only know how to read it."

"Then all these mornings we were hunting after health and happiness, instead of fairies, were we?"

"Yes: haven't you enjoyed it, and don't you think you have caught my fairies?"

Daisy looked from a little picture of herself, which Wee had drawn some time ago, to her image in the glass. One was dull and sad, pale and cross; the other, rosy, gay, and smiling,—the likeness of a happy, hearty little girl, wide-awake and in good tune. She understood the kind joke; and, turning, kissed Aunt Wee, as she said, gratefully:

"I think I have caught your elves, and I'll try to keep them all my life. But tell me one thing: was the music that woke me all a joke too?"

"No, dear: here it is, and now it is your own; for you have learned to wake and listen to it."

Daisy looked, and saw Aunt Wee lean from the window, and take out of a hollow nook, in the old tree close by, a little box. She set it on the table, touched a spring, and the airy music sounded more beautiful than ever.

"Is it mine, all mine?" cried Daisy.

"Yes: I hid it while I tried my little plan, and now you shall have it for your own. See, here is the best elf I can give you, and she will dance whenever you call her."

Wee pushed a golden pin, and up sprang a tiny figure, all crimson and gold, with shining wings, and a garland on its dainty head. Softly played the hidden music, and airily danced the little sylph till the silvery chime died away; then, folding her delicate arms, she sank from sight, leaving Daisy breathless with delight.

V.

SHADOW-CHILDREN.

Ned, Polly, and Will sat on the steps one sun-shiny morning, doing nothing, except wish they had something pleasant to do.

"Something new, something never heard of before,—wouldn't that be jolly?" said Ned, with a great yawn.

"It must be an amusing play, and one that we don't get tired of very soon," added Polly gravely.

"And something that didn't be wrong, else mamma wouldn't like it," said little Will, who was very good for a small boy.

As no one could suggest any thing to suit, they all sat silent a few minutes. Suddenly Ned said, rather crossly, "I wish my shadow wouldn't mock me. Every time I stretch or gape it does the same, and I don't like it."

"Poor thing, it can't help that: it has to do just what you do, and be your slave all day. I'm glad I ain't a shadow," said Polly.

"I try to run away from mine sometimes, but I can't ever. It will come after me; and in the night it scares me, if it gets big and black," said Will, looking behind him.

"Wouldn't it be fun to see shadows going about alone, and doing things like people?" asked Polly.

"I just wish they would. I'd like to see ours cut capers; that would be a jolly new game, wouldn't it?" said Ned.

No one had time to speak; for suddenly the three little shadows on the sunny wall behind them stood up straight, and began to bow.

"Mercy, me!" cried Polly, staring at them.

"By Jove, that's odd!" said Ned, looking queer.

"Are they alive?" asked Will, a little frightened.

"Don't be alarmed: they won't hurt you," said a soft voice. "To-day is midsummer-day, and whoever wishes a wish can have it till midnight. You want to see your shadows by themselves; and you can, if you promise to follow them as they have followed you so long. They will not get you into harm; so you may safely try it, if you like. Do you agree for the day to do as they do, and so have your wish?"

"Yes, we promise," answered the children.

"Tell no one till night, and be faithful shadows to the shadows."

The voice was silent, but with more funny little bows the shadows began to move off in different directions. The children knew their own: for Ned's was the tallest, and had its hands in its pockets; Polly's had a frock on, and two bows where its hair was tied up; while Will's was a plump little shadow in a blouse, with a curly head and a pug nose. Each child went after its shadow, laughing, and enjoying the fun.

Ned's master went straight to the shed, took down a basket, and marched away to the garden, where it began to move its hands as if busily picking peas. Ned stopped laughing when he saw that, and looked rather ashamed; for he remembered that his mother had asked him to do that little job for her, and he had answered,—

"Oh, bother the old peas! I'm busy, and I can't."

"Who told you about this?" he asked, beginning to work.

The shadow shook its head, and pointed first to Ned's new jacket, then to a set of nice garden tools near by, and then seemed to blow a kiss from its shadowy fingers towards mamma, who was just passing the open gate.

"Oh! you mean that she does lots for me; so I ought to do what I can for her, and love her dearly," said Ned, getting a pleasanter face every minute.

The shadow nodded, and worked away as busily as the bees, tumbling heels over head in the great yellow squash blossoms, and getting as dusty as little millers. Somehow Ned rather liked the work, with such an odd comrade near by; for, though the shadow didn't really help a bit, it seemed to try, and set an excellent example. When the basket was full, the shadow took one handle, and Ned the other; and they carried it in.

"Thank you, dear. I was afraid we should have to give up our peas to-day: I'm so busy, I can't stop," said mamma, looking surprised and pleased.

Ned couldn't stop to talk; for the shadow ran away to the woodpile, and began to chop with all its might.

"Well, I suppose I must; but I never saw such a fellow for work as this shadow is. He isn't a bit like me, though he's been with me so long," said Ned, swinging the real hatchet in time with the shadowy one.

Polly's new mistress went to the dining-room, and fell to washing up the breakfast cups. Polly hated that work, and sulkily began to rattle the spoons and knock the things about. But the shadow wouldn't allow that; and Polly had to do just what it did, though she grumbled all the while.

"She doesn't splash a bit, or make any clatter; so I guess she's a tidy creature," said Polly. "How long she does rub each spoon and glass. We

never shall get done. What a fuss she makes with the napkins, laying them all even in the drawer. And now she's at the salt-cellars, doing them just as mamma likes. I wish she'd live here, and do my work for me. Why, what's that?" And Polly stopped fretting to listen; for she seemed to hear the sound of singing,—so sweet, and yet so very faint she could catch no words, and only make out a cheerful little tune.

"Do you hear any one singing, mamma?" she asked.

"No: I wish I did." And mamma sighed; for baby was poorly, piles of sewing lay waiting for her, Biddy was turning things topsy-turvy in the kitchen for want of a word from the mistress, and Polly was looking sullen.

The little girl didn't say any more, but worked quietly and watched the shadow, feeling sure the faint song came from it. Presently she began to hum the tune she caught by snatches; and, before she knew it, she was singing away like a blackbird. Baby stopped crying, and mamma said, smiling:

"Now I hear somebody singing, and it's the music I like best in the world."

That pleased Polly; but, a minute after, she stopped smiling, for the shadow went and took baby, or seemed to, and Polly really did. Now, baby was heavy, and cross with its teeth; and Polly didn't feel like tending it one bit. Mamma hurried away to the kitchen; and Polly walked up and down the room with poor baby hanging over her arm, crying dismally, with a pin in its back, a wet bib under its chin, and nothing cold and hard to bite with its hot, aching gums, where the little teeth were trying to come through.

"Do stop, you naughty, fretty baby. I'm tired of your screaming, and it's high time you went to sleep. Bless me! what's Miss Shadow doing with *her* baby?" said Polly.

Miss Shadow took out the big pin and laid it away, put on a dry bib, and gave *her* baby a nice ivory ring to bite; then began to dance up and down the room, till the shadowy baby clapped its hands and kicked delightedly. Polly laughed, and did the same, feeling sorry she had been so pettish. Presently both babies grew quiet, went to sleep, and were laid in the cradle.

"Now, I hope we shall rest a little," said Polly, stretching her arms.

But, no: down sat the shadow, and began to sew, making her needle fly like a real little seamstress.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Polly. "I promised to hem those handkerchiefs for Ned, and so I must; but I do think handkerchiefs are the most pokey things in the world to sew. I dare say you think you can sew faster than I can. Just wait a bit, and see what I can do, miss," she said to the shadow.

It took some time to find her thimble and needles and spools, for Polly wasn't a very neat little girl; but she got settled at last, and stitched away as if bent on beating her dumb friend.

Little Will's shadow went up to the nursery, and stopped before a basin of water. "Oh! ah! ain't this drefful?" cried Will, with a shiver; for he knew he'd got to have his face washed, because he wouldn't have it done properly when he got up, but ran away. Now, Will was a good child; but this one thing was his great trouble, and sometimes he couldn't bear it. Jane was so rough. She let soap get in his eyes, and water run down his neck, and she pinched his nose when she wiped him, and brushed his hair so hard that really it *was* dreadful; and even a bigger boy would have found it hard to bear. He shivered and sighed: but Jane came in; and, when he saw that the shadow stood still and took the scrubbing like a little hero, he tried to do the same, and succeeded so well that Jane actually patted his head and called him "a deary;" which was something new, for old Nurse Jane was always very busy and rather cross.

Feeling that nothing worse could possibly happen to him, Will ran after his shadow, as it flitted away into the barn, and began to feed the chickens.

"There, now! I forgetted all about my chickeys, and the shadow 'membered 'em; and I'm glad of it," said Will, scattering dabs of meal and water to the chirping, downy little creatures who pecked and fluttered at his feet. Little shadow hunted for eggs, drove the turkeys out of the garden, and picked a basket of chips: then it went to play with Sammy, a neighbor's child; for, being a small shadow, it hadn't many jobs to do, and plenty of active play was good for it.

Sammy was a rough little boy and rather selfish: so, when they played ball, he wanted to throw all the time; and, when Will objected, he grew angry and struck him. The blow didn't hurt Will's cheek much, but it did his little feelings; and he lifted his hand to strike back, when he saw his shadow go and kiss Sammy's shadow. All his anger was gone in a minute, and he just put his arm round Sammy's neck and kissed him. This kiss for a blow made him so ashamed that he began to cry, and couldn't be comforted till he had given Will his best marble and a ride on his pony.

About an hour before dinner, the three shadows and the children met in the garden, and had a grand game of play, after they had told each other what they had been doing since they parted. Now, the shadows didn't forget baby even then, but got out the wagon, and Miss Baby, all fresh from her nap, sat among her pillows like a queen, while Ned was horse, Polly footman, and Will driver; and in this way she travelled all round the garden and barn, up the lane and down to the brook, where she was much delighted with the water sparkling along and the fine splash of the stones they threw in.

When the dinner-bell rang, mamma saw four clean, rosy faces and four smooth heads at the table; for the shadow-children made themselves neat, without being told. Every one was merry and hungry and good-natured. Even poor baby forgot her teeth, and played a regular rub-a-dub with her spoon on her mug, and tried to tell about the fine things she saw on her drive. The children said nothing about the new play, and no one observed the queer actions of their shadows but themselves. They saw that there was no gobbling, or stretching over, or spilling of things, among the shadows; but that they waited to be helped, served others first, and ate tidily, which was a great improvement upon the usual state of things.

It was Saturday afternoon: the day was fine, and mamma told them they could go for a holiday frolic in the woods. "Don't go to the pond, and be home early," she said.

"Yes, mamma; we'll remember," they answered, as they scampered away to get ready.

"We shall go through the village, and Mary King will be looking out; so I shall wear my best hat. Mamma won't see me, if I slip down the back way;

and I do so want Mary to know that my hat is prettier than hers," said Polly, up in her little room.

Now Polly was rather vain, and liked to prink; so she got out the new hat, and spent some time in smoothing her braids and putting on her blue ribbons. But when all was ready, and the boys getting impatient, she found her shadow, with a sun-bonnet on, standing by the door, as if to prevent her going out.

"You tiresome thing! do you mean that I mustn't wear my hat, but that old bonnet?" asked Polly.

The shadow nodded and beckoned, and patted its head, as if it was all right.

"I wish I hadn't promised to do as you do; then I could do as I like, and not make a fright of myself," said Polly, rather sulkily, as she put away the hat, and tied on the old bonnet with a jerk.

Once out in the lovely sunshine, she soon forgot the little disappointment; and, as they didn't go through the village, but by a green lane, where she found some big blackberries, she was quite contented. Polly had a basket to hold fruit or flowers, Ned his jackknife, and Will a long stick on which he rode, fancying that this sort of horse would help his short legs along; so they picked, whittled, and trotted their way to the wood, finding all manner of interesting things on the road.

The wood was full of pleasant sights and sounds; for wild roses bloomed all along the path, ferns and scarlet berries filled the little dells, squirrels chattered, birds sang, and pines whispered musically overhead.

"I'm going to stop here and rest, and make a wreath of these pretty wild roses for baby: it's her birthday, and it will please mamma," said Polly, sitting down on a mound of moss, with a lapful of flowers.

"I'm going to cut a fishing-pole, and will be back in a minute." And Ned went crashing into the thickest part of the wood.

"I shall see where that rabbit went to, and maybe I'll find some berries," said Will, trotting down the path the wild rabbit had gone.

The sound of the boys' steps died away, and Polly was wondering how it would seem to live all alone in the wood, when a little girl came trudging by, with a great pail of berries on her arm. She was a poor child: her feet were bare, her gown was ragged, she wore an old shawl over her head, and walked as if lame. Polly sat behind the ferns, and the child did not see her till Polly called out. The sudden sound startled her; and she dropped her pail, spilling the berries all over the path. The little girl began to cry, and Polly to laugh, saying, in a scornful tone:

"How silly to cry for a few berries!"

"I've been all day picking 'em," said the girl; "and I'm so tired and hungry; 'cause I didn't dare to go home till my pail was full,—mother scolds if I do,—and now they're all spoilt. Oh, dear! dear me!" And she cried so hard that great tears fell on the moss.

Polly was sorry now, and sat looking at her till she saw her shadow down on its knees, picking up the berries; then it seemed to fold its little handkerchief round the girl's bruised foot, and give her something from its pocket. Polly jumped up and imitated the kind shadow, even to giving the great piece of gingerbread she had brought for fear she should be hungry.

"Take this," she said gently. "I'm sorry I frightened you. Here are the berries all picked up, and none the worse for falling in the grass. If you'll take them to the white house on the hill, my mamma will buy them, and then your mother won't scold you."

"Oh, thank you, miss! It's ever so good. I'll take the berries to your mother, and bring her more whenever she likes," said the child gratefully, as she walked away munching the gingerbread, and smiling till there were little rainbows in her tears.

Meanwhile Ned had poked about in the bushes, looking for a good pole. Presently he saw a willow down by the pond, and thought that would give him a nice, smooth pole. He forgot his promise, and down he went to the pond; where he cut his stick, and was whittling the end, when he saw a boat by the shore. It was untied, and oars lay in it, as if waiting for some one to come and row out.

"I'll just take a little pull across, and get those cardinal-flowers for Polly," he said; and went to the boat.

He got in, and was about to push off, when he saw his shadow standing on the shore.

"Don't be a fool; get in, and come along," he said to it, remembering his promise now, but deciding to break it, and ask pardon afterwards.

But the shadow shook its head; pointed to the swift stream that ran between the banks, the rocks and mud on the opposite side, and the leaky boat itself.

"I ain't afraid: mamma won't mind, if I tell her I'm sorry; and it will be such fun to row alone. Be a good fellow, and let me go," said Ned, beckoning.

But the shadow would not stir, and Ned was obliged to mind. He did so very reluctantly, and scolded the shadow well as he went back to Polly; though all the time he felt he was doing right, and knew he should be glad afterwards.

Will trotted after the rabbit, but didn't find it; he found a bird's-nest instead with four little birds in it. He had an empty cage at home, and longed for something to put in it; for kittens didn't like it, and caterpillars and beetlebugs got away. He chose the biggest bird, and, holding him carefully, walked away to find Polly. The poor mother-bird chirped and fluttered in great distress; but Will kept on till his little shadow came before him, and tried to make him turn back.

"No, no, I want him," said Will. "I won't hurt him, and his mother has three left: she won't mind if I take one."

Here the mother-bird chirped so loud it was impossible to help seeing that she *did* care very much; and the shadow stamped its foot and waved its hand, as if ordering the young robber to carry back the baby-bird. Will stood still, and thought a minute; but his little heart was a very kind one, and he soon turned about, saying pleasantly:

"Yes, it *is* naughty, and I won't do it. I'll ask mamma to get me a canary, and will let this birdie stay with his brothers."

The shadow patted him on the shoulder, and seemed to be delighted as Will put the bird in the nest and walked on, feeling much happier than if he had kept it. A bush of purple berries grew by the path, and Will stopped to pick some. He didn't know what they were, and mamma had often told him never to eat strange things. But they smelt so good, and looked so nice, he couldn't resist, and lifted one to his mouth, when little shadow motioned for him to stop.

"Oh, dear! you don't let me do any thing I want to," sighed Will. "I shall ask Polly if I tarn't eat these; and, if she says I may, I shall, so now."

He ran off to ask Polly; but she said they were poisonous, and begged him to throw them away.

"Good little shadow, to keep me safe!" cried Will. "I like you; and I'll mind better next time, 'cause you are always right."

The shadow seemed to like this, and bobbed about so comically it made Will laugh till his eyes were full of tears. Ned came back, and they went on, having grand times in the wood. They found plenty of berries to fill the basket; they swung down on slender birches, and got rolls of white bark for canoes; they saw all sorts of wild-wood insects and birds; and frolicked till they were tired. As they crossed a field, a cow suddenly put down her head and ran at them, as if she was afraid they meant to hurt her calf. All turned, and ran as fast as they could toward the wall; but poor Will in his fright tumbled down, and lay screaming. Ned and Polly had reached the wall, and, looking back, saw that their shadows had not followed. Ned's stood before Will, brandishing his pole; and Polly's was flapping a shadowy sun-bonnet with all its might. As soon as they saw that, back they went,—Ned to threaten till he broke his pole, and Polly to flap till the strings came off. As if anxious to do its part, the bonnet flew up in the air, and coming down lit on the cross cow's head; which so astonished her that she ran away as hard as she could pelt.

"Wasn't that funny?" said Will, when they had tumbled over the wall, and lay laughing in the grass on the safe side.

"I'm glad I wore the old bonnet; for I suppose my best hat would have gone just the same," said Polly thankfully.

"The calf doesn't know its own mother with that thing on," laughed Ned.

"How brave and kind you were to come back and save me! I'd have been deaded if you hadn't," said Will, looking at his brother and sister with his little face full of grateful admiration.

They turned towards home after this flurry, feeling quite like heroes. When they came to the corner where two roads met, Ned proposed they should take the river-road; for, though the longest, it was much the pleasantest.

"We shan't be home at supper-time," said Polly. "You won't be able to do your jobs, Ned, nor I mine, and Will's chickens will have to go to bed hungry."

"Never mind: it's a holiday, so let's enjoy it, and not bother," answered Ned.

"We promised mamma we'd come home early," said Will.

They stood looking at the two roads,—one sandy, hot, and hilly; the other green and cool and level, along the river-side. They all chose the pleasant path, and walked on till Ned cried out, "Why, where are our shadows?"

They looked behind, before, and on either side; but nowhere could they see them.

"They were with us at the corner," said Will.

"Let's run back, and try to find them," said Polly.

"No, let 'em go: I'm tired of minding mine, and don't care if I never see it again," said Ned.

"Don't say so; for I remember hearing about a man who sold his shadow, and then got into lots of trouble because he had none. We promised to follow them, and we must," said Polly.

"I wish," began Ned in a pet; but Polly clapped her hand over his mouth, saying:

"Pray, don't wish now; for it may come to pass as the man's wish in the fairy tale did, and the black pudding flew up and stuck tight to his wife's nose."

This made Ned laugh, and they all turned back to the corner. Looking up the hilly road, they saw the three shadows trudging along, as if bent on getting home in good time. Without saying a word, the children followed; and, when they got to the garden gate, they all said at once:

"Aren't you glad you came?"

Under the elm-tree stood a pretty tea-table, covered with bread and butter, custards, and berries, and in the middle a fine cake with sugar-roses on the top; and mamma and baby, all nicely dressed, were waiting to welcome them to the birthday feast. Polly crowned the little queen, Ned gave her a willow whistle he had made, and Will some pretty, bright pebbles he had found; and Miss Baby was as happy as a bird, with her treasures.

A pleasant supper-time; then the small duties for each one; and then the go-to-bed frolic. The nursery was a big room, and in the evening a bright wood fire always burned there for baby. Mamma sat before it, softly rubbing baby's little rosy limbs before she went to bed, singing and telling stories meanwhile to the three children who pranced about in their long nightgowns. This evening they had a gay time; for the shadows amused them by all sorts of antics, and kept them laughing till they were tired. As they sat resting on the big sofa, they heard a soft, sweet voice singing. It wasn't mamma; for she was only talking to baby, and this voice sang a real song. Presently they saw mamma's shadow on the wall, and found it was the shadow-mother singing to the shadow-children. They listened intently, and this is what they heard:

"Little shadows, little shadows,
    Dancing on the chamber wall,
While I sit beside the hearthstone
    Where the red flames rise and fall.
Caps and nightgowns, caps and nightgowns,
    My three antic shadows wear;
And no sound they make in playing,
    For the six small feet are bare.

"Dancing gayly, dancing gayly,
    To and fro all together,
Like a family of daisies
    Blown about in windy weather;
Nimble fairies, nimble fairies,
    Playing pranks in the warm glow,
While I sing the nursery ditties
    Childish phantoms love and know.

"Now what happens, now what happens?
    One small shadow's tumbled down:
I can see it on the carpet,
    Softly rubbing its hurt crown.
No one whimpers, no one whimpers;
    A brave-hearted sprite is this:
See! the others offer comfort
    In a silent, shadowy kiss.

"Hush! they're creeping; hush! they're creeping,
    Up about my rocking-chair:
I can feel their loving fingers
    Clasp my neck and touch my hair.
Little shadows, little shadows,
    Take me captive, hold me tight,
As they climb and cling and whisper,
    'Mother dear, good night! good night!'"

As the song ended, the real children, as well as the shadows, lovingly kissed mamma, and said "Good-night;" then went away into their rooms, said their prayers, and nestled down into their beds. Ned slept alone in the room next that which Polly and Will had; and, after lying quiet a little while, he called out softly:

"I say, Polly, are you asleep?"

"No: I'm thinking what a queer day we've had," answered Polly.

"It's been a good day, and I'm glad we tried our wish; for the shadows showed us, as well as they could, what we ought to do and be. I shan't forget it, shall you?" said Ned.

"No: I'm much obliged for the lesson."

"So is I," called out Will, in a very earnest, but rather a sleepy, little voice.

"I wonder what mamma will say, when we tell her about it," said Ned.

"And I wonder if our shadows will come back to us at midnight, and follow us as they used to do," added Polly.

"I shall be very careful where I lead my shadow; 'cause he's a good little one, and set me a righter zarmple than ever I did him," said Will, and then dropped asleep.

The others agreed with him, and resolved that their shadows should not be ashamed of them. All were fast asleep; and no one but the moon saw the shadows come stealing back at midnight, and, having danced about the little beds, vanish as the clock struck twelve.

VI.

POPPY'S PRANKS.

SHE wasn't a wilfully naughty child, this harum-scarum Poppy, but very thoughtless and very curious. She wanted to see every thing, do every thing, and go every where: she feared nothing, and so was continually getting into scrapes.

Her pranks began early; for, when she was about four, her mamma one day gave her a pair of green shoes with bright buttons. Poppy thought there never was any thing so splendid, and immediately wanted to go to walk.

But mamma was busy, and Poppy couldn't go alone any farther than the garden. She showed her shoes to the servants, the cat, the doves, and the flowers; and then opened the gate that the people in the street might see the trim little feet she was so proud of. Now Poppy had been forbidden to go out; but, when she saw Kitty Allen, her neighbor, playing ball down the street, she forgot every thing but the desire to show her new shoes; and away she went marching primly along as vain as a little peacock, as she watched the bright buttons twinkle, and heard the charming creak. Kitty saw her coming; and, being an ill-natured little girl, took no notice, but called out to her brother Jack:

"Ain't some folks grand? If I couldn't have red shoes for my best, I wouldn't have any, would you?"

They both laughed, and this hurt Poppy's feelings dreadfully. She tossed her head, and tried to turn up her nose; but, it was so very small, it couldn't be very scornful. She said nothing, but walked gravely by, as if she was going on an errand, and hadn't heard a word. Round the corner she went, thinking she would wait till Kitty was gone; as she didn't like to pass again, fearing Jack might say something equally trying. An organ-man with a monkey was playing near by; and Poppy was soon so busy listening to the music, and watching the sad-looking monkey, that she forgot home, shoes, and Kitty altogether.

She followed the man a long way; and, when she turned to go back, she took the wrong street, and found herself by the park. Being fond of dandelions, Poppy went in, and gathered her hands full, enjoying herself immensely; for Betsy, the maid, never let her play in the pond, or roll down the hill, or make dirt-pies, and now she did all these things, besides playing with strange children and talking with any one she pleased. If she had not had her luncheon just before she started, she would have been very hungry; for dinner-time came, without her knowing it.

By three o'clock, she began to think it was time to go home, and boldly started off to find it. But poor little Poppy didn't know the way, and went all wrong. She was very tired now, and hot and hungry, and wanted to see mamma, and wondered why she didn't come to the brown house with the white garden-gate. On and on she went, up streets and down, amusing

herself with looking in the shop-windows, and sitting to rest on doorsteps. Once she asked a pleasant-faced little girl to show her the way home; but, as she didn't know in what street it was, and said her father's name was "papa," the girl couldn't help her: so she gave her a bun and went away. Poppy ate her bun, and began to wonder what would become of her; for night was coming on, and there didn't seem to be any prospect of finding mamma or home or bed. Her courage was all gone now; and, coming to a quiet place, she sat down on some high steps, and cried till her little "hankchif," as she called it, was all wet.

Nobody minded her: and she felt very forlorn till a big black dog came by, and seemed to understand the matter entirely; for he smelt of her face, licked her hands, and then lay down by her with such a friendly look in his brown eyes that Poppy was quite comforted. She told him her story, patted his big head; and then, being fairly tired out, laid her wet cheek on his soft back, and fell fast asleep.

It was quite dark when she woke; but a lamp was lighted near by, and standing under it was a man ringing a great bell. Poppy sat up, and wondered if anybody's supper was ready. The man had a paper; and, when people stopped at the sound of the bell, he read in a loud voice:

"Lost! a little girl, four years old; curly brown hair, blue eyes; had on a white frock and green shoes; calls herself Poppy."

He got no farther; for a little voice cried out of the dark, in a tone of surprise:

"Why, dats me!"

The people all turned to look; and the big man put his bell in his pocket, took her up very kindly, and said he'd carry her home.

"Is it far away?" asked Poppy, with a little sob.

"Yes, my dear; but I am going to give you some supper fust, along of my little girl. I live close by; and, when we've had a bite, we'll go find your ma."

Poppy was so tired and hungry, she was glad to find herself taken care of, and let the man do as he liked. He took her to a funny little house, and his wife gave her bread and molasses on a new tin plate with letters all round the edge. Poppy thought it very fine, and enjoyed her supper, though the man's little girl stared at her all the time with eyes as blue as her mug.

While she ate, the man sent word to her father that she was found; and, when both papa and mamma came hurrying in all out of breath with joy, there sat Miss Poppy talking merrily, with her face well daubed with molasses, her gown torn, her hands very dirty, and her shoes—ah, the pretty new shoes!—all spoiled with mud and dust, scratched, and half worn out, the buttons dull, and the color quite gone. No one cared for it that night; for little runaway was kissed and petted, and taken home to her own cosey bed as tenderly as if she had done nothing naughty, and never frightened her parents out of their wits in her life.

But the next day,—dear me! what a sad time it was, to be sure! When Poppy woke up, there hung the spoilt shoes over the mantle-piece; and, as soon as she was dressed, papa came in with a long cord, one end of which he tied round Poppy's waist, and the other to the arm of the sofa.

"I'm very sorry to have to tie you up, like a little dog; but I must, or you will forget, and run away again, and make mamma ill."

Then he went away without his morning kiss, and Poppy was so very unhappy she could hardly eat her breakfast. She felt better by and by, and tried to play; but the cord kept pulling her back. She couldn't get to the window; and, when she heard mamma passing the door, she tried to run and meet her, but had to stop halfway, for the cord jerked her over. Cousin Fanny came up, but Poppy was so ashamed to be tied that she crept under the sofa and hid. All day she was a prisoner, and was a very miserable little girl; but at night she was untied, and, when mamma took her in her lap for the first time that day, Poppy held her fast, and sobbed very penitently—

"O mamma! I drefful sorry I runned away. Fordive me one time more, and I never will adain;" and she never did.

Two or three years after this, Poppy went to live in the country, and tried some new pranks. One day she went with her sister Nelly to see a man plough, for that sort of thing was new to her. While the man worked, she saw him take out a piece of something brown, and bite off a bit.

"What's that?" asked Poppy.

"Tobaccer," said the man.

"Is it nice?" asked Poppy.

"Prime," said the man.

"Could you let me taste it?" asked curious Poppy.

"It will make you sick," said the man, laughing.

"It doesn't make *you* sick. I'd like to try," said Poppy, nothing daunted.

He gave her a piece; and Poppy ate it, though it didn't taste good at all. She did it because Cy, her favorite playfellow, told her she'd die if she did, and tried to frighten her.

"You darsn't eat any more," he said.

"Yes, I dare. See if I don't." And Poppy took another piece, just to show how brave she was. Silly little Poppy!

"I ain't sick, and I shan't die, so now."

And Poppy pranced about as briskly as ever. But the man shook his head, Nelly watched her anxiously, and Cy kept saying:

"Ain't you sick yet, say?"

For a little while Poppy felt all right; but presently she grew rather pale, and began to look rather pensive. She stopped running, and walked slower and slower, while her eyes got dizzy, and her hands and feet very cold.

"Ain't you sick now, say?" repeated Cy; and Poppy tried to answer, "Oh, dear! no;" but a dreadful feeling came over her, and she could only shake her head, and hold on to Nelly.

"Better lay down a spell," said the man, looking a little troubled.

"I don't wish to dirty my clean frock," said Poppy faintly, as she glanced over the wide-ploughed field, and longed for a bit of grass to drop on. She kept on bravely for another turn; but suddenly stopped, and, quite regardless of the clean pink gown, dropped down in a furrow, looking so white and queer that Nelly began to cry. Poppy lay a minute, then turned to Cy, and said very solemnly:

"Cy, run home, and tell my mother I'm dying."

Away rushed Cy in a great fright, and burst upon Poppy's mamma, exclaiming breathlessly:

"O ma'am! Poppy's been and ate a lot of tobacco; and she's sick, layin' in the field; and she says 'Come quick, 'cause she's dyin.'"

"Mercy on us! what will happen to that child next?" cried poor mamma, who was used to Poppy's mishaps. Papa was away, and there was no carriage to bring Poppy home in; so mamma took the little wheelbarrow, and trundled away to get the suffering Poppy.

She couldn't speak when they got to her; and, only stopping to give the man a lecture, mamma picked up her silly little girl, and the procession moved off. First came Cy, as grave as a sexton; then the wheelbarrow with Poppy, white and limp and speechless, all in a bunch; then mamma, looking amused, anxious and angry; then Nelly, weeping as if her tender heart was entirely broken; while the man watched them, with a grin, saying to himself:

"Twarn't my fault. The child was a reg'lar fool to swaller it."

Poppy was dreadfully sick all night, but next day was ready for more adventures and experiments. She swung on the garret stairs, and tumbled down, nearly breaking her neck. She rubbed her eyes with red peppers, to see if it *really* would make them smart, as Cy said; and was led home quite blind and roaring with pain. She got into the pigsty to catch a young piggy, and was taken out in a sad state of dirt. She slipped into the brook, and was half drowned; broke a window and her own head, swinging a little flat-iron on a string; dropped baby in the coal-hod; buried her doll, and spoilt her;

cut off a bit of her finger, chopping wood; and broke a tooth, trying to turn heels over head on a haycock. These are only a few of her pranks, but one was nearly her last.

She wanted to go bare-footed, as the little country boys and girls did; but mamma wasn't willing, and Poppy was much afflicted.

"It doesn't hurt Cy, and it won't hurt me, just for a little while," she said.

"Say no more, Poppy. I never wish to see you barefooted," replied mamma.

"Well, you needn't: I'll go and do it in the barn," muttered Poppy, as she walked away.

Into the barn she went, and played country girl to her heart's content, in spite of Nelly's warnings. Nelly never got into scrapes, being a highly virtuous young lady; but she enjoyed Poppy's pranks, and wept over her misfortunes with sisterly fidelity.

"Now I'll be a bear, and jump at you as you go by," said Poppy, when they were tired of playing steam-engine with the old winnowing machine. So she got up on a beam; and Nelly, with a peck measure on her head for a hat, and a stick for a gun, went bear-hunting, and banged away at the swallows, the barrels, and the hencoops, till the bear was ready to eat her. Presently, with a loud roar, the bear leaped; but Nelly wasn't eaten that time, for Poppy cried out with pain:

"Oh! I jumped on a pitchfork, and it's in my foot! Take it out! take it out!"

Poor little foot! There was a deep purple hole in the sole, and the blood came, and Poppy fainted away, and Nelly screamed, and mamma ran, and the neighbors rushed in, and there was *such* a flurry. Poppy was soon herself again, and lay on the sofa, with Nelly and Cy to amuse her.

"What did the doctor say to mamma in the other room about me?" whispered Poppy, feeling very important at having such a bustle made on her account. Nelly sniffed, but said nothing; Cy, however, spoke up briskly:

"He says you might have lockjaw."

"Is that bad?" asked Poppy gravely.

"Oh, ain't it, though! Your mouth shuts up, and you can't open it; and you have fits and die."

"Always?" said Poppy, looking scared, and feeling of her mouth.

"'Most always, I guess. That's why your ma cried, and Nelly keeps kissin' you."

Cy felt sorry, but rather enjoyed the excitement, and was sure, that, if any one ever *could* escape dying, it would be Poppy, for she always "came alive" again after her worst mishaps. She looked very solemn for a few minutes, and kept opening and shutting her mouth to see if it wasn't stiff. Presently she said, in a serious tone and with a pensive air:

"Nelly, I'll give you my bead-ring: I shan't want it any more. And Cy may have the little horse: he lost his tail; but I put on the lamb's tail, and he is as good as ever. I wish to give away my things 'fore I die; and, Nelly, won't you bring me the scissors?"

"What for?" said Nelly, sniffing more than ever.

"To cut off my hair for mamma. She'll want it, and I like to cut things."

Nelly got the scissors; and Poppy cut away all she could reach, giving directions about her property while she snipped.

"I wish papa to have my pictures and my piece of poetry I made. Give baby my dolly and the quacking duck. Tell Billy, if he wants my collection of bright buttons, he can have 'em; and give Hattie the yellow plaster dog, with my love."

Here mamma came in with a poultice, and couldn't help laughing, though tears stood in her eyes, as she saw Poppy's cropped head and heard her last wishes.

"I don't think I shall lose my little girl yet, so we won't talk of it. But Poppy must keep quiet, and let Nelly wait on her for a few days."

"Are fits bad, mamma? and does it hurt much to die?" asked Poppy thoughtfully.

"If people are good while they live, it is not hard to die, dear," said mamma, with a kiss; and Poppy hugged her, saying softly:

"Then I'll be very good; so I won't mind, if the jawlock does come."

And Poppy *was* good,—oh, dreadfully good! for a week. Quite an angel was Poppy; so meek and gentle, so generous and obedient, you really wouldn't have known her. She loved everybody, forgave her playmates all their sins against her, let Nelly take such of her precious treasures as she liked, and pensively hoped baby would remember her when she was gone. She hopped about with a crutch, and felt as if she was an object of public interest; for all the old ladies sent to know how she was, the children looked at her with respectful awe as one set apart and doomed to fits, and Cy continually begged to know if her mouth was stiff.

Poppy didn't die, though she got all ready for it; and felt rather disappointed when the foot healed, the jaws remained as active as ever, and the fits didn't come. I think it did her good; for she never forgot that week, and, though she was near dying several times after, she never was so fit to go as she was then.

"Burney's making jelly: let's go and get our scrapings," said Poppy to Nellie once, when mamma was away.

But Burney was busy and cross, and cooks are not as patient as mothers; so when the children appeared, each armed with a spoon, and demanded their usual feast, she wouldn't hear of it, and ordered them off.

"But we only want the scrapings of the pan, Burney: mamma always lets us have them, when we help her make jelly; don't she, Nelly?" said Poppy, trying to explain the case.

"Yes; and makes us our little potful too," added Nelly, persuasively.

"I don't want your help; so be off. Your ma can fuss with your pot, if she chooses. I've no time."

"*I* think Burney's the crossest woman in the world. It's mean to eat all the scrapings herself; isn't it Nelly?" said Poppy, very loud, as the cook shut the door in their faces. "Never mind: I know how to pay her," she added, in a whisper, as they sat on the stairs bewailing their wrongs. "She'll put her old jelly in the big closet, and lock the door; but we can climb the plum tree, and get in at the window, when she takes her nap."

"Should we dare to eat any?" asked Nelly, timid, but longing for the forbidden fruit.

"*I* should; just as much as ever I like. It's mamma's jelly, and she won't mind. I don't care for old cross Burney," said Poppy, sliding down the banisters by way of soothing her ruffled spirit.

So when Burney went to her room after dinner, the two rogues climbed in at the window; and, each taking a jar, sat on the shelf, dipping in their fingers and revelling rapturously. But Burney wasn't asleep, and, hearing a noise below, crept down to see what mischief was going on. Pausing in the entry to listen, she heard whispering, clattering of glasses, and smacking of lips in the big closet; and in a moment knew that her jelly was lost. She tried the door with her key; but sly Poppy had bolted it on the inside, and, feeling quite safe, defied Burney from among the jelly-pots, entirely reckless of consequences. Short-sighted Poppy! she forgot Cy; but Burney didn't, and sent him to climb in at the window, and undo the door. Feeling hurt that the young ladies hadn't asked him to the feast, Cy hardened his heart against them, and delivered them up to the enemy, regardless of Poppy's threats and Nelly's prayers.

"Poppy proposed it, she broke the jar, and I didn't eat *much*. O Burney! don't hurt her, please, but let me 'splain it to mamma when she comes," sobbed Nelly, as Burney seized Poppy, and gave her a good shaking.

"You go wash your face, Miss Nelly, and leave this naughty, naughty child to me," said Burney; and took Poppy, kicking and screaming, into the little library, where she—oh, dreadful to relate!—gave her a good spanking, and locked her up.

Mamma never whipped, and Poppy was in a great rage at such an indignity. The minute she was left alone, she looked about to see how she

could be revenged. A solar lamp stood on the table; and Poppy coolly tipped it over, with a fine smash, calling out to Burney that she'd have to pay for it, that mamma would be very angry, and that she, Poppy, was going to spoil every thing in the room. But Burney was gone, and no one came near her. She kicked the paint off the door, rattled the latch, called Burney a "pig," and Cy "a badder boy than the man who smothered the little princes in the Tower." Poppy was very fond of that story, and often played it with Nelly and the dolls. Having relieved her feelings in this way, Poppy rested, and then set about amusing herself. Observing that the spilt oil made the table shine, she took her handkerchief and polished up the furniture, as she had seen the maids do.

"Now, that looks nice; and I know mamma will be pleased 'cause I'm so tidy," she said, surveying her work with pride, when she had thoroughly greased every table, chair, picture-frame, book-back, and ornament in the room. Plenty of oil still remained; and Poppy finished off by oiling her hair, till it shone finely, and smelt—dear me, how it did smell! If she had been a young whale, it couldn't have been worse. Poppy wasn't particular about smells; but she got some in her mouth, and didn't like the taste. There was no water to wash in; and her hands, face, and pinafore were in a high state of grease. She was rather lonely too; for, though mamma had got home, she didn't come to let Poppy out: so the young rebel thought it was about time to surrender. She could write pretty well, and was fond of sending penitent notes to mamma, after being naughty: for mamma always answered them so kindly, and was so forgiving, that Poppy's naughtiest mood was conquered by them sooner than by any punishment; and Poppy kept the notes carefully in a little cover, even after she was grown up. There was pen, ink, and paper in the room; so, after various trials, Poppy wrote her note:—

"dear Mamma.

"i am sorry i Took bernys gelli. i have braked The lamP. The oyl maks A bad smel. i tHink i wil Bee sik iF i stay HeRe anny More. i LoVe yoU—your Trying To Bee GooD

popy."

When she had finished, she lowered her note by a string, and bobbed it up and down before the parlor window till Nelly saw and took it in. Every one laughed over it; for, besides the bad spelling and the funny periods, it was

covered with oil-spots, blots, and tear marks; for Poppy got tender-hearted toward the end, and cried a few very repentant tears when she said, "I love you; your trying-to-be-good Poppy."

Mamma went up at once, and ordered no further punishment, but a thorough scrubbing; which Poppy underwent very meekly, though Betsey put soap in her eyes, pulled her hair, and scolded all the time. They were not allowed any jelly for a long while; and Cy teased Poppy about her hair-oil till the joke was quite worn out, and even cross Burney was satisfied with the atonement.

When Poppy was eight, she got so very wild that no one could manage her but mamma, and she was ill; so Poppy was sent away to grandpa's for a visit. Now, grandpa was a very stately old gentleman, and every one treated him with great respect; but Poppy wasn't at all afraid, and asked all manner of impolite questions.

"Grandpa, why don't you have any hair on the top of your head?"—"O grandpa! you *do* snore *so* loud when you take naps!"—"What makes you turn out your feet so, when you walk?" and such things.

If grandpa hadn't been the best-natured old gentleman in the world, he wouldn't have liked this: but he only laughed at Poppy, especially when she spoke of his legs; for he was rather proud of them, and always wore long black silk stockings, and told every one that the legs were so handsome an artist put them in a picture of General Washington; which was quite true, as any one may see when they look at the famous picture in Boston.

Well, Poppy behaved herself respectably for a day or two; but the house was rather dull, she missed Nelly, wanted to run in the street, and longed to see mamma. She amused herself as well as she could with picture-books, patchwork, and the old cat; but, not being a quiet, proper, little Rosamond sort of a child, she got tired of hemming neat pocket-handkerchiefs, and putting her needle carefully away when she had done. She wanted to romp and shout, and slide down the banisters, and riot about; so, when she couldn't be quiet another minute, she went up into a great empty room at the top of the house, and cut up all sorts of capers. Her great delight was to lean out of the window as far as she could, and look at the people in the

street, with her head upside down. It was very dangerous, for a fall would have killed her; but the danger was the fun, and Poppy hung out till her hands touched the ledge below, and her face was as red as any real poppy's.

She was enjoying herself in this way one day, when an old gentleman, who lived near, came home to dinner, and saw her.

"What in the world is that hanging out of the colonel's upper window?" said he, putting on his spectacles. "Bless my soul! that child will kill herself. Hallo, there! little girl; get in this minute!" he called to Poppy, flourishing his hat to make her see him.

"What for?" answered Poppy, staring at him without moving an inch.

"You'll fall, and break your neck!" screamed the old gentleman.

"Oh, no, I shan't!" returned Poppy, much flattered by his interest, and hanging out still further.

"Stop that, instantly, or I'll go in and inform the colonel!" roared the old gentleman, getting angry.

"I don't care," shouted Poppy; and she didn't, for she knew grandpa wasn't at home.

"Little gipsy! I'll settle her," muttered the old man, bustling up to the steps, and ringing the bell, as if the house was on fire.

No one was in but the servants; and, when he'd told old Emily what the matter was, she went up to "settle" Poppy. But Poppy was already settled, demurely playing with her doll, and looking quite innocent. Emily scolded; and Poppy promised never to do it again, if she might stay and play in the big room. Being busy about dinner, Emily was glad to be rid of her, and left her, to go and tell the old gentleman it was all right.

"Ain't they crosspatches?" said Poppy to her doll. "Never mind, dear: *you* shall hang out, if I can't. I guess the old man won't order you in, any way."

Full of this idea, Poppy took her long-suffering dolly, and, tying a string to her neck, danced her out of the window. Now this dolly had been through a great deal. Her head had been cut off (and put on again); she had been

washed, buried, burnt, torn, soiled, and banged about till she was a mournful object. Poppy loved her very much; for she was two feet tall, and had once been very handsome: so her trials only endeared her to her little mamma. Away she went, skipping and prancing like mad,—a funny sight, for Poppy had taken off her clothes, and she hadn't a hair on her head.

Poppy went to another window of the room for this performance, because in the opposite house lived five or six children, and she thought they would enjoy the fun.

So they did, and so did the other people; for it was a boarding-house, and all the people were at home for dinner. They came to the windows, and looked and laughed at dolly's capers, and Poppy was in high feather at the success of her entertainment.

All of a sudden she saw grandpa coming down the street, hands behind his back, feet turned out, gold-headed cane under his arm, and the handsome legs in the black silk stockings marching along in the most stately manner. Poppy whisked dolly in before grandpa saw her, and dodged down as he went by. This made the people laugh again, and grandpa wondered what the joke was. The minute he went in out flew dolly, dancing more frantically than ever; and the children shouted so loud that grandpa went to see what the matter was. The street was empty; yet there stood the people, staring out and laughing. Yes; they were actually looking and laughing at *his* house; and he didn't see what there was to laugh at in that highly respectable mansion.

He didn't like it; and, clapping on his hat, he went out to learn what the matter was. He looked over at the house, up at the sky, down at the ground, and through the street; but nothing funny appeared, for Poppy and dolly were hidden again, and the old gentleman was puzzled. He went in and sat down to watch, feeling rather disturbed. Presently the fun began again: the children clapped their hands, the people laughed, and every one looked over at the house, in what he thought a very impertinent way. This made him angry; and out he rushed a second time, saying, as he marched across the street:

"If those saucy young fellows are making game of me, I'll soon stop it."

Up to the door he went, gave a great pull at the bell, and, when the servant came, he demanded why every one was laughing at his house. One of the young men came and told him, and asked him to come in and see the fun. Poppy didn't see grandpa go in, for she hid, and when she looked out he was gone: so she boldly began the dancing; but, in the midst of a lively caper, dolly went bounce into the garden below, for the string fell from Poppy's hand when she suddenly saw grandpa at the window opposite, laughing as heartily as any one at her prank.

She stared at him in a great fright, and looked so amazed that every one enjoyed that joke better than the other; and poor Poppy didn't hear the last of it for a long time.

Her next performance was to fall into the pond on the Common. She was driving hoop down the hill, and went so fast she couldn't stop herself; so splashed into the water, hoop and all. How dreadful it was to feel the cold waves go over her head, shutting out the sun and air! The ground was gone, and she could find no place for her feet, and could only struggle and choke, and go down, down, with a loud roaring sound in her ears. That would have been the end of Poppy, if a little black boy hadn't jumped in and pulled her out. She was sick and dizzy, and looked like a drowned kitten; but a kind lady took her home in a carriage. After that mishap grandpa thought he wouldn't keep her any longer, for fear she should come to some worse harm. So Miss Poppy was sent home, much to her delight and much to mamma's also; for no matter where she went, or how naughty she was, mamma was always glad to see the little wanderer back, and to forgive and forget all Poppy's pranks.

VII.

WHAT THE SWALLOWS DID.

A MAN lay on a pile of new-made hay, in a great barn, looking up at the swallows who darted and twittered above him. He envied the cheerful little creatures; for he wasn't a happy man, though he had many friends, much money, and the beautiful gift of writing songs that everybody loved to sing. He had lost his wife and little child, and would not be comforted; but lived alone, and went about with such a gloomy face that no one liked to speak to him. He took no notice of friends and neighbors; neither used his money for himself nor others; found no beauty in the world, no happiness anywhere; and wrote such sad songs it made one's heart ache to sing them.

As he lay alone on the sweet-smelling hay, with the afternoon sunshine streaming in, and the busy birds chirping overhead, he said sadly to himself:

"Happy swallows, I wish I were one of you; for you have no pains nor sorrows, and your cares are very light. All summer you live gayly together; and, when winter comes, you fly away to the lovely South, unseparated still."

"Neighbors, do you hear what that lazy creature down there is saying?" cried a swallow, peeping over the edge of her nest, and addressing several others who sat on a beam near by.

"We hear, Mrs. Skim; and quite agree with you that he knows very little about us and our affairs," answered one of the swallows with a shrill chirp, like a scornful laugh. "We work harder than he does any day. Did he build his own house, I should like to know? Does he get his daily bread for himself? How many of his neighbors does he help? How much of the world does he see, and who is the happier for his being alive?"

"Cares indeed!" cried another; "I wish he'd undertake to feed and teach my brood. Much he knows about the anxieties of a parent." And the little mother bustled away to get supper for the young ones, whose bills were always gaping wide.

"Sorrows we have, too," softly said the fourth swallow. "He would not envy *me*, if he knew how my nest fell, and all my children were killed;

how my dear husband was shot, and my old mother died of fatigue on our spring journey from the South."

"Dear neighbor Dart, he *would* envy you, if he knew how patiently you bear your troubles; how tenderly you help us with our little ones; how cheerfully you serve your friends; how faithfully you love your lost mate; and how trustfully you wait to meet him again in a lovelier country than the South."

As Skim spoke, she leaned down from her nest to kiss her neighbor; and, as the little beaks met, the other birds gave a grateful and approving murmur, for Neighbor Dart was much beloved by all the inhabitants of Twittertown.

"I, for my part, don't envy *him*," said Gossip Wing, who was fond of speaking her mind. "Men and women call themselves superior beings; but, upon my word, I think they are vastly inferior to us. Now, look at that man, and see how he wastes his life. There never was any one with a better chance for doing good, and being happy; and yet he mopes and dawdles his time away most shamefully."

"Ah! he has had a great sorrow, and it is hard to be gay with a heavy heart, an empty home; so don't be too severe, Sister Wing." And the white tie of the little widow's cap was stirred by a long sigh as Mrs. Dart glanced up at the nook where her nest once stood.

"No, my dear, I won't; but really I do get out of patience when I see so much real misery which that man might help, if he'd only forget himself a little. It's my opinion he'd be much happier than he now is, wandering about with a dismal face and a sour temper."

"I quite agree with you; and I dare say he'd thank any one for telling him how he may find comfort. Poor soul! I wish he could understand me; for I sympathize with him, and would gladly help him if I could."

And, as she spoke, kind-hearted Widow Dart skimmed by him with a friendly chirp, which did comfort him; for, being a poet, he *could* understand them, and lay listening, well pleased while the little gossips chattered on together.

"I am so tied at home just now, that I know nothing of what is going on, except the bits of news Skim brings me; so I enjoy your chat immensely. I'm interested in your views on this subject, and beg you'll tell me what you'd have that man do to better himself," said Mrs. Skim, settling herself on her eggs with an attentive air.

"Well, my dear, I'll tell you; for I've seen a deal of the world, and any one is welcome to my experience," replied Mrs. Wing, in an important manner; for she was proud of her "views," and very fond of talking. "In my daily flights about the place, I see a great deal of poverty and trouble, and often wish I could lend a hand. Now, this man has plenty of money and time; and he might do more good than I can tell, if he'd only set about it. Because he is what they call a poet is no reason he should go moaning up and down, as if he had nothing to do but make songs. We sing, but we work also; and are wise enough to see the necessity of both, thank goodness!"

"Yes, indeed, we do," cried all the birds in a chorus; for several more had stopped to hear what was going on.

"Now, what I say is this," continued Mrs. Wing impressively. "If I were that man, I'd make myself useful at once. There is poor little Will getting more and more lame every day, because his mother can't send him where he can be cured. A trifle of that man's money would do it, and he ought to give it. Old Father Winter is half starved, alone there in his miserable hovel; and no one thinks of the good old man. Why don't that lazy creature take him home, and care for him, the little while he has to live? Pretty Nell is working day and night, to support her father, and is too proud to ask help, though her health and courage are going fast. The man might make hers the gayest heart alive, by a little help. There in a lonely garret lives a young man studying his life away, longing for books and a teacher. The man has a library full, and might keep the poor boy from despair by a little help and a friendly word. He mourns for his own lost baby: I advise him to adopt the orphan whom nobody will own, and who lies wailing all day untended on the poor-house floor. Yes: if he wants to forget sorrow and find peace, let him fill his empty heart and home with such as these, and life won't seem dark to him any more."

"Dear me! how well you express yourself, Mrs. Wing; it's quite a pleasure to hear you; and I heartily wish some persons could hear you, it would do 'em a deal of good," said Mrs. Skim; while her husband gave an approving nod as he dived off the beam, and vanished through the open doors.

"I know it would comfort that man to do these things; for I have tried the same cure in my small way, and found great satisfaction in it," began little Madame Dart, in her soft voice; but Mrs. Wing broke in, saying with a pious expression of countenance:

"I flew into church one day, and sat on the organ enjoying the music; for every one was singing, and I joined in, though I didn't know the air. Opposite me were two great tablets with golden letters on them. I can read a little, thanks to my friend, the learned raven; and so I spelt out some of the words. One was, 'Love thy neighbor;' and as I sat there, looking down on the people, I wondered how they could see those words week after week, and yet pay so little heed to them. Goodness knows, *I* don't consider myself a perfect bird; far from it; for I know I am a poor, erring fowl; but I believe I may say I *do* love my neighbor, though I *am* 'an inferior creature.'" And Mrs. Wing bridled up, as if she resented the phrase immensely.

"Indeed you do, gossip," cried Dart and Skim; for Wing was an excellent bird, in spite of the good opinion she had of herself.

"Thank you: well, then, such being the known fact, I may give advice on the subject as one having authority; and, if it were possible, I'd give that man a bit of my mind."

"You have, madam, you have; and I shall not forget it. Thank you, neighbors, and good night," said the man, as he left the barn, with the first smile on his face which it had worn for many days.

"Mercy on us! I do believe the creature heard every thing we said," cried Mrs. Wing, nearly tumbling off the beam, in her surprise.

"He certainly did; so I'm glad I was guarded in my remarks," replied Mrs. Skim, laughing at her neighbor's dismay.

"Dear me! dear me! what did I say?" cried Mrs. Wing, in a great twitter.

"You spoke with more than your usual bluntness, and some of your expressions were rather strong, I must confess; but I don't think any harm will come of it. We are of too little consequence for our criticisms or opinions to annoy him," said Mrs. Dart consolingly.

"I don't know that, ma'am," returned Mrs. Wing, sharply: for she was much ruffled and out of temper. "A cat may look at a king; and a bird may teach a man, if the bird is the wisest. He may destroy my nest, and take my life; but I feel that I have done my duty, and shall meet affliction with a firmness which will be an example to that indolent, ungrateful man."

In spite of her boasted firmness, Mrs. Wing dropped her voice, and peeped over the beam, to be sure the man was gone before she called him names; and then flew away, to discover what he meant to do about it.

For several days, there was much excitement in Twittertown; for news of what had happened flew from nest to nest, and every bird was anxious to know what revenge the man would take for the impertinent remarks which had been made about him.

Mrs. Wing was in a dreadful state of mind, expecting an assault, and the destruction of her entire family. Every one blamed her. Her husband lectured; the young birds chirped, "Chatterbox, chatterbox," as she passed; and her best friends were a little cool. All this made her very meek for a time; and she scarcely opened her bill, except to eat.

A guard was set day and night, to see if any danger approached; and a row of swallows might be seen on the ridgepole at all hours. If any one entered the barn, dozens of little black heads peeped cautiously over the edges of the nests, and there was much flying to and fro with reports and rumors; for all the birds in the town soon knew that something had happened.

The day after the imprudent conversation, a chimney-swallow came to call on Mrs. Wing; and, the moment she was seated on the beam, she began:

"My dear creature, I feel for you in your trying position,—indeed I do, and came over at once to warn you of your danger."

"Mercy on us! what is coming?" cried Mrs. Wing, covering her brood with trembling wings, and looking quite wild with alarm.

"Be calm, my friend, and bear with firmness the consequences of your folly," replied Mrs. Sooty-back, who didn't like Mrs. Wing, because she prided herself on her family, and rather looked down on chimney-swallows. "You know, ma'am, I live at the great house, and am in the way of seeing and hearing all that goes on there. No fire is lighted in the study now; but my landlord still sits on the hearth, and I can overhear every word he says. Last evening, after my darlings were asleep, and my husband gone out, I went down and sat on the andiron, as I often do; for the fireplace is full of oak boughs, and I can peep out unseen. My landlord sat there, looking a trifle more cheerful than usual, and I heard him say, in a very decided tone:

"'I'll catch them, one and all, and keep them here; that is better than pulling the place down, as I planned at first. Those swallows little know what they have done; but I'll show them I don't forget.'"

On hearing this a general wail arose, and Mrs. Wing fainted entirely away. Madam Sooty-back was quite satisfied with the effect she had produced, and departed, saying loftily:

"I'm sorry for you, Mrs. Wing, and forgive your rude speech about my being related to chimney-sweeps. One can't expect good manners from persons brought up in mud houses, and entirely shut out from good society. If I hear any thing more, I'll let you know."

Away she flew; and poor Mrs. Wing would have had another fit, if they hadn't tickled her with a feather, and fanned her so violently that she was nearly blown off her nest by the breeze they raised.

"What shall we do?" she cried.

"Nothing, but wait. I dare say, Mrs. Sooty-back is mistaken; at any rate, we can't get away without leaving our children, for they can't fly yet. Let us wait, and see what happens. If the worst comes, we shall have done our duty, and will all die together."

As no one could suggest any thing better, Mrs. Dart's advice was taken, and they waited. On the afternoon of the same day, Dr. Banks, a sand-swallow, who lived in a subterranean village over by the great sand-bank, looked in to see Mrs. Wing, and cheered her by the following bit of news:

"The man was down at the poor-house to-day, and took away little Nan, the orphan baby. I saw him carry her to Will's mother, and heard him ask her to take care of it for a time. He paid her well, and she seemed glad to do it; for Will needs help, and now he can have it. An excellent arrangement, I think. Bless me, ma'am! what's the matter? Your pulse is altogether too fast, and you look feverish."

No wonder the doctor looked surprised; for Mrs. Wing suddenly gave a skip, and flapped her wings, with a shrill chirp, exclaiming, as she looked about her triumphantly:

"Now, who was right? Who has done good, not harm, by what you call 'gossip'? Who has been a martyr, and patiently borne all kinds of blame, injustice, and disrespect? Yes, indeed! the man saw the sense of my words; he took my advice; he will show his gratitude by some good turn yet; and, if half a dozen poor souls are helped, it will be my doing, and mine alone."

Here she had to stop for breath; and her neighbors all looked at one another, feeling undecided whether to own they were wrong, or to put Mrs. Wing down. Every one twittered and chirped, and made a great noise; but no one would give up, and all went to roost in a great state of uncertainty. But, the next day, it became evident that Mrs. Wing was right; for Major Bumble-bee came buzzing in to tell them that old Daddy Winter's hut was empty, and his white head had been seen in the sunny porch of the great house.

After this the swallows gave in; and, as no harm came to them, they had a jubilee in honor of the occasion. Mrs. Wing was president, and received a vote of thanks for the good she had done, and the credit she had bestowed upon the town by her wisdom and courage. She was much elated by all this; but her fright had been of service, and she bore her honors more meekly than one would have supposed. To be sure, she cut Mrs. Sooty-back when they met; assumed an injured air, when some of her neighbors passed her; and said, "I told you so," a dozen times a day to her husband, who got so many curtain lectures that he took to sleeping on the highest rafter, pretending that the children's noise disturbed him.

All sorts of charming things happened after that, and such a fine summer never was known before; for not only did the birds rejoice, but people also.

A good spirit seemed to haunt the town, leaving help and happiness wherever it passed. Some unseen hand scattered crumbs over the barn floor, and left food at many doors. No dog or boy or gun marred the tranquillity of the birds, insects, and flowers who lived on the great estate. No want, care, or suffering, that love or money could prevent, befell the poor folk whose cottages stood near the old house. Sunshine and peace seemed to reign there; for its gloomy master was a changed man now, and the happiness he earned for himself, by giving it to others, flowed out in beautiful, blithe songs, and went singing away into the world, making him friends, and bringing him honor in high places as well as low.

He did not forget the wife and little child whom he had loved so well; but he mourned no longer, for cheerful daisies grew above their graves, and he knew that he should meet them in the lovely land where death can never come. So, while he waited for that happy time to come, he made his life a cheery song,—as every one may do, if they will; and went about dropping kind words and deeds as silently and sweetly as the sky drops sunshine and dew. Every one was his friend, but his favorites were the swallows. Every day he went to see them, carrying grain and crumbs, hearing their chat, sharing their joys and sorrows, and never tiring of their small friendship; for to them, he thought, he owed all the content now his.

When autumn leaves were red, and autumn winds blew cold, the inhabitants of Twittertown prepared for their journey to the South. They lingered longer than usual this year, feeling sorry to leave their friend. But the fields were bare, the frosts began to pinch, and the young ones longed to see the world; so they must go. The day they started, the whole flock flew to the great house, to say good-by. Some dived and darted round and round it, some hopped to and fro on the sere lawn, some perched on the chimney-tops, and some clung to the window ledges; all twittering a loving farewell.

Chirp, Dart, and Wing peeped everywhere, and everywhere found something to rejoice over. In a cosey room, by a bright fire, sat Daddy Winter and Nell's old father, telling stories of their youth, and basking in the comfortable warmth. In the study, surrounded by the books he loved, was the poor young man, happy as a king now, and learning many things which no book could teach him; for he had found a friend. Then, down

below was Will's mother, working like a bee; for she was housekeeper, and enjoyed her tasks as much as any mother-bird enjoys filling the little mouths of her brood. Close by was pretty Nell, prettier than ever now; for her heavy care was gone, and she sung as she sewed, thinking of the old father, whom nothing could trouble any more.

But the pleasantest sight the three gossips saw was the man with Baby Nan on his arm and Will at his side, playing in the once dreary nursery. How they laughed and danced! for Will was up from his bed at last, and hopped nimbly on his crutches, knowing that soon even they would be unneeded. Little Nan was as plump and rosy as a baby should be, and babbled like a brook, as the man went to and fro, cradling her in his strong arms, feeling as if his own little daughter had come back when he heard the baby voice call him father.

"Ah, how sweet it is!" cried Mrs. Dart, glad to see that he had found comfort for his grief.

"Yes; indeed: it does one's heart good to see such a happy family," added Mrs. Skim, who was a very motherly bird.

"I don't wish to boast; but I *will* say that I am satisfied with my summer's work, and go South feeling that I leave an enviable reputation behind me." And Mrs. Wing plumed herself with an air of immense importance, as she nodded and bridled from her perch on the window-sill.

The man saw the three, and hastened to feed them for the last time, knowing that they were about to go. Gratefully they ate, and chirped their thanks; and then, as they flew away, the little gossips heard their friend singing his good-by:

"Swallow, swallow, neighbor swallow,
    Starting on your autumn flight,
Pause a moment at my window,
    Twitter softly your good-night;
For the summer days are over,
    All your duties are well done,
And the happy homes you builded
    Have grown empty, one by one.

"Swallow, swallow, neighbor swallow,
    Are you ready for your flight?
Are all the feather cloaks completed?
    Are the little caps all right?
Are the young wings strong and steady
    For the journey through the sky?
Come again in early spring-time;
    And till then, good-by, good-by!"

VIII.

LITTLE GULLIVER.

UP in the light-house tower lived Davy, with Old Dan the keeper. Most little boys would have found it very lonely; but Davy had three friends, and was as happy as the day was long. One of Davy's friends was the great lamp, which was lighted at sunset, and burnt all night, to guide the ships into the harbor. To Dan it was only a lamp; but to the boy it seemed a living thing, and he loved and tended it faithfully. Every day he helped Dan clear the big wick, polish the brass work, and wash the glass lantern which protected the flame. Every evening he went up to see it lighted, and always fell asleep, thinking, "No matter how dark or wild the night, my good Shine will save the ships that pass, and burn till morning."

Davy's second friend was Nep, the Newfoundland, who was washed ashore from a wreck, and had never left the island since. Nep was rough and big,

but had such a loyal and loving heart that no one could look in his soft brown eyes and not trust him. He followed Davy's steps all day, slept at his feet all night, and more than once had saved his life when Davy fell among the rocks, or got caught by the rising tide.

But the dearest friend of all was a sea-gull. Davy found him, with a broken wing, and nursed him carefully till he was well; then let him go, though he was very fond of "Little Gulliver," as he called him in fun. But the bird never forgot the boy, and came daily to talk with him, telling all manner of wild stories about his wanderings by land and sea, and whiling away many an hour that otherwise would have been very lonely.

Old Dan was Davy's uncle,—a grim, gray man, who said little, did his work faithfully, and was both father and mother to Davy, who had no parents, and no friends beyond the island. That was his world; and he led a quiet life among his playfellows,—the winds and waves. He seldom went to the main land, three miles away; for he was happier at home. He watched the sea-anemones open below the water, looking like fairy-plants, brilliant and strange. He found curious and pretty shells, and sometimes more valuable treasures, washed up from some wreck. He saw little yellow crabs, ugly lobsters, and queer horse-shoes with their stiff tails. Sometimes a whale or a shark swam by, and often sleek black seals came up to bask on the warm rocks. He gathered lovely sea-weeds of all kinds, from tiny red cobwebs to great scalloped leaves of kelp, longer than himself. He heard the waves dash and roar unceasingly; the winds howl or sigh over the island; and the gulls scream shrilly as they dipped and dived, or sailed away to follow the ships that came and went from all parts of the world.

With Nep and Gulliver he roamed about his small kingdom, never tired of its wonders; or, if storms raged, he sat up in the tower, safe and dry, watching the tumult of sea and sky. Often in long winter nights he lay awake, listening to the wind and rain, that made the tower rock with their violence; but he never was afraid, for Nep nestled at his feet, Dan sat close by, and overhead the great lamp shone far out into the night, to cheer and guide all wanderers on the sea.

Close by the tower hung the fog-bell, which, being wound up, would ring all night, warningly. One day Dan found that something among the chains was broken; and, having vainly tried to mend it, he decided to go to the town, and get what was needed. He went once a week, usually, and left Davy behind; for in the daytime there was nothing to do, and the boy was not afraid to stay.

"A heavy fog is blowing up: we shall want the bell to-night, and I must be off at once. I shall be back before dark, of course; so take care of yourself, boy," said Dan.

Away went the little boat; and the fog shut down over it, as if a misty wall had parted Davy from his uncle. As it was dull weather, he sat and read for an hour or two; then fell asleep, and forgot everything till Nep's cold nose on his hand waked him up. It was nearly dark; and, hoping to find Dan had come, he ran down to the landing-place. But no boat was there, and the fog was thicker than ever.

Dan never had been gone so long before, and Davy was afraid something had happened to him. For a few minutes he was in great trouble; then he cheered up, and took courage.

"It is sunset by the clock; so I'll light the lamp, and, if Dan is lost in the fog, it will guide him home," said Davy.

Up he went, and soon the great star shone out above the black-topped light-house, glimmering through the fog, as if eager to be seen. Davy had his supper, but no Dan came. He waited hour after hour, and waited all in vain. The fog thickened, till the lamp was hardly seen; and no bell rung to warn the ships of the dangerous rocks. Poor Davy could not sleep, but all night long wandered from the tower to the door, watching, calling, and wondering; but Dan did not come.

At sunrise he put out the light, and, having trimmed it for the next night, ate a little breakfast, and roved about the island hoping to see some sign of Dan. The sun drew up the fog at last; and he could see the blue bay, the distant town, and a few fishing-boats going out to sea. But nowhere was the island-boat with gray Old Dan in it; and Davy's heart grew heavier and heavier, as the day passed, and still no one came. In the afternoon Gulliver

appeared: to him Davy told his trouble, and the three friends took counsel together.

"There is no other boat; and I couldn't row so far, if there was: so I can't go to find Dan," said David sorrowfully.

"I'd gladly swim to town, if I could; but it's impossible to do it, with wind and tide against me. I've howled all day, hoping some one would hear me; but no one does, and I'm discouraged," said Nep, with an anxious expression.

"I can do something for you; and I will, with all my heart. I'll fly to town, if I don't see him in the bay, and try to learn what has become of Dan. Then I'll come and tell you, and we will see what is to be done next. Cheer up, Davy dear: I'll bring you tidings, if any can be had." With these cheerful words, away sailed Gulliver, leaving Nep and his master to watch and wait again.

The wind blew hard, and the broken wing was not quite well yet, else Gulliver would have been able to steer clear of a boat that came swiftly by. A sudden gust drove the gull so violently against the sail that he dropped breathless into the boat; and a little girl caught him, before he could recover himself.

"Oh, what a lovely bird! See his black cap, his white breast, dove-colored wings, red legs and bill, and soft, bright eyes. I wanted a gull; and I'll keep this one, for I don't think he is much hurt."

Poor Gulliver struggled, pecked and screamed; but little Dora held him fast, and shut him in a basket till they reached the shore. Then she put him in a lobster pot,—a large wooden thing, something like a cage,—and left him on the lawn, where he could catch glimpses of the sea, and watch the light-house tower, as he sat alone in this dreadful prison. If Dora had known the truth, she would have let him go, and done her best to help him; but she could not understand his speech, as Davy did, for very few people have the power of talking with birds, beasts, insects, and plants. To her, his prayers and cries were only harsh screams; and, when he sat silent, with drooping head and ruffled feathers, she thought he was sleepy: but he was mourning for Davy, and wondering what his little friend would do.

For three long days and nights he was a prisoner, and suffered much. The house was full of happy people, but no one took pity upon him. Ladies and gentlemen talked learnedly about him; boys poked and pulled him; little girls admired him, and begged his wings for their hats, if he died. Cats prowled about his cage; dogs barked at him; hens cackled over him; and a shrill canary jeered at him from the pretty pagoda in which it hung, high above danger. In the evening there was music; and the poor bird's heart ached as the sweet sounds came to him, reminding him of the airier melodies he loved. Through the stillness of the night, he heard the waves break on the shore; the wind came singing up from the sea; the moon shone kindly on him, and he saw the water-fairies dancing on the sand. But for three days no one spoke a friendly word to him, and he pined away with a broken heart.

On the fourth night, when all was quiet, little Gulliver saw a black shadow steal across the lawn, and heard a soft voice say to him:

"Poor bird, you'll die, if yer stays here; so I'se gwine to let yer go. Specs little missy'll scold dreffle; but Moppet'll take de scoldin for yer. Hi, dere! you is peart nuff now, kase you's in a hurry to go; but jes wait till I gits de knots out of de string dat ties de door, and den away you flies."

"But, dear, kind Moppet, won't you be hurt for doing this? Why do you care so much for me? I can only thank you, and fly away."

As Gulliver spoke, he looked up at the little black face bent over him, and saw tears in the child's sad eyes; but she smiled at him, and shook her fuzzy head, as she whispered kindly:

"I don't want no tanks, birdie: I loves to let you go, kase you's a slave, like I was once; and it's a dreffle hard ting, I knows. I got away, and I means you shall. I'se watched you, deary, all dese days; and I tried to come 'fore, but dey didn't give me no chance."

"Do you live here? I never see you playing with the other children," said the gull, as Moppet's nimble fingers picked away at the knots.

"Yes: I lives here, and helps de cook. You didn't see me, kase I never plays; de chilen don't like me."

"Why not?" asked Gulliver, wondering.

"I'se black," said Moppet, with a sob.

"But that's silly in them," cried the bird, who had never heard of such a thing. "Color makes no difference; the peeps are gray, the seals black, and the crabs yellow; but we don't care, and are all friends. It is very unkind to treat you so. Haven't you any friends to love you, dear?"

"Nobody in de world keres fer me. Dey sold me way from my mammy when I was a baby, and I'se knocked roun eber since. De oder chilen has folks to lub an kere fer em, but Moppet's got no friends;" and here the black eyes grew so dim with tears that the poor child couldn't see that the last knot was out.

Gulliver saw it, and, pushing up the door, flew from his prison with a glad cry; and, hopping into Moppet's hand, looked into the little dark face with such grateful confidence that it cleared at once, and the brightest smile it had worn for months broke over it as the bird nestled its soft head against her cheek, saying gently:

"I'm your friend, dear; I love you, and I never shall forget what you have done for me to-night. How can I thank you before I go?"

For a minute, Moppet could only hug the bird, and cry; for these were the first kind words she had heard for a long time, and they went straight to her lonely little heart.

"O my deary! I'se paid by dem words, and I don't want no tanks. Jes lub me, and come sometimes to see me ef you can, it's so hard livin' in dis yere place. I don't tink I'll bar it long. I wish I was a bird to fly away, or a oyster safe in de mud, and free to do as I's a mind."

"I wish you could go and live with Davy on the island; he is so kind, so happy, and as free as the wind. Can't you get away, Moppet?" whispered Gulliver, longing to help this poor, friendless little soul. He told her all his story; and they agreed that he should fly at once to the island, and see if Dan was there; if not, he was to come back, and Moppet would try to get some one to help find him. When this was done, Davy and Dan were to take Moppet, if they could, and make her happy on the island. Full of hope

and joy, Gulliver said good-by, and spread his wings; but, alas for the poor bird! he was too weak to fly. For three days he had hardly eaten any thing, had found no salt water to bathe in, and had sat moping in the cage till his strength was all gone.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" he cried, fluttering his feeble wings, and running to and fro in despair.

"Hush, birdie, I'll take kere ob you till you's fit to fly. I knows a nice, quiet little cove down yonder, where no one goes; and dare you kin stay till you's better. I'll come and feed you, and you kin paddle, and rest, and try your wings, safe and free, honey."

As Moppet spoke, she took Gulliver in her arms, and stole away in the dim light, over the hill, down to the lonely spot where nothing went but the winds and waves, the gulls, and little Moppet, when hard words and blows made heart and body ache. Here she left the bird, and, with a loving "Good-night," crept home to her bed in the garret, feeling as rich as a queen, and much happier; for she had done a kind thing, and made a friend.

Next day, a great storm came: the wind blew a hurricane, the rain poured, and the sea thundered on the coast. If he had been well, Gulliver wouldn't have minded at all; but, being sick and sad, he spent an anxious day, sitting in a cranny of the rock, thinking of Davy and Moppet. It was so rough, even in the cove, that he could neither swim nor fly, so feeble was he; and could find no food but such trifles as he could pick up among the rocks. At nightfall the storm raged fiercer than ever, and he gave up seeing Moppet; for he was sure she wouldn't come through the pelting rain just to feed him. So he put his head under his wing, and tried to sleep; but he was so wet and weak, so hungry and anxious, no sleep came.

"What has happened to Davy alone on the island all this while? He will fall ill with loneliness and trouble; the lamp won't be lighted, the ships will be wrecked, and many people will suffer. O Dan, Dan, if we could only find you, how happy we should be!"

As Gulliver spoke, a voice cried through the darkness:

"Is you dere, honey?" and Moppet came climbing over the rocks, with a basket full of such bits as she could get. "Poor birdie, is you starvin'? Here, jes go at dis, and joy yourself. Dere's fish and tings I tink you'd like. How is you now, dear?"

"Better, Moppet; but, it's so stormy, I can't get to Davy; and I worry about him," began Gulliver, pecking away at his supper: but he stopped suddenly, for a faint sound came up from below, as if some one called, "Help, help!"

"Hi! what's dat?" said Moppet, listening.

"Davy, Davy!" called the voice.

"It's Dan. Hurrah, we've found him!" and Gulliver dived off the rock so reckless that he went splash into the water. But that didn't matter to him; and he paddled away, like a little steamer with all the engines in full blast. Down by the sea-side, between two stones, lay Dan, so bruised and hurt he couldn't move, and so faint with hunger and pain he could hardly speak. As soon as Gulliver called, Moppet scrambled down, and fed the poor man with her scraps, brought him rain-water from a crevice near by, and bound up his wounded head with her little apron. Then Dan told them how his boat had been run down by a ship in the fog; how he was hurt, and cast ashore in the lonely cove; how he had lain there half dead, for no one heard his shouts, and he couldn't move; how the storm brought him back to life, when he was almost gone, and the sound of Moppet's voice told him help was near.

How glad they all were then! Moppet danced for joy; Gulliver screamed and flapped his wings; and Dan smiled, in spite of pain, to think he should see Davy again. He couldn't understand Gulliver; but Moppet told him all the story, and, when he heard it, he was more troubled for the boy than for himself.

"What will he do? He may get killed or scared, or try to come ashore. Is the lamp alight?" he cried, trying to move, and falling back with a moan of pain.

Gulliver flew up to the highest rock, and looked out across the dark sea. Yes, there it was,—the steady star shining through the storm, and saying plainly, "All is well."

"Thank heaven! if the lamp is burning, Davy is alive. Now, how shall I get to him?" said Dan.

"Never you fret, massa: Moppet'll see to dat. You jes lay still till I comes. Dere's folks in de house as'll tend to you, ef I tells em who and where you is."

Off she ran, and soon came back with help. Dan was taken to the house, and carefully tended; Moppet wasn't scolded for being out so late; and, in the flurry, no one thought of the gull. Next morning, the cage was found blown over, and every one fancied the bird had flown away. Dora was already tired of him; so he was soon forgotten by all but Moppet.

In the morning it was clear; and Gulliver flew gladly to the tower where Davy still watched and waited, with a pale face and heavy heart, for the three days had been very hard to bear, and, but for Nep and Shine, he would have lost his courage entirely. Gulliver flew straight into his bosom, and, sitting there, told his adventures; while Davy laughed and cried, and Nep stood by, wagging his tail for joy, while his eyes were full of sympathy. The three had a very happy hour together, and then came a boat to carry Davy ashore, while another keeper took charge of the light till Dan was well.

Nobody ever knew the best part of the story but Moppet, Davy, and Gulliver. Other people didn't dream that the boy's pet gull had any thing to do with the finding of the man, or the good fortune that came to Moppet. While Dan lay sick, she tended him, like a loving little daughter; and, when he was well, he took her for his own. He did not mind the black skin: he only saw the loneliness of the child, the tender heart, the innocent, white soul; and he was as glad to be a friend to her as if she had been as blithe and pretty as Dora.

It was a happy day when Dan and Davy, Moppet, Gulliver, and Nep sailed away to the island; for that was still to be their home, with stout young Ben to help.

The sun was setting; and they floated through waves as rosy as the rosy sky. A fresh wind filled the sail, and ruffled Gulliver's white breast as he sat on the mast-head crooning a cheery song to himself. Dan held the

tiller, and Davy lay at his feet, with Nep bolt upright beside him; but the happiest face of all was Moppet's. Kneeling at the bow, she leaned forward, with her lips apart, her fuzzy hair blown back, and her eyes fixed on the island which was to be her home. Like a little black figure-head of Hope, she leaned and looked, as the boat flew on, bearing her away from the old life into the new.

As the sun sunk, out shone the lamp with sudden brightness, as if the island bade them welcome. Dan furled the sail; and, drifting with the tide, they floated in, till the waves broke softly on the shore, and left them safe at home.

IX.

THE WHALE'S STORY.

FREDDY sat thinking on the seat under the trees. It was a wide, white seat, about four feet long, sloping from the sides to the middle, something like a swing; and was not only comfortable but curious, for it was made of a whale's bone. Freddy often sat there, and thought about it for he was very much interested in it, and nobody could tell him any thing of it, except that it had been there a long time.

"Poor old whale, I wonder how you got here, where you came from, and if you were a good and happy creature while you lived," said Freddy, patting the old bone with his little hand.

It gave a great creak; and a sudden gust of air stirred the trees, as if some monster groaned and sighed. Then Freddy heard a strange voice, very loud, yet cracked and queer, as if some one tried to talk with a broken jaw.

"Freddy ahoy!" called the big voice. "I'll tell you all about it; for you are the only person who ever pitied me, or cared to know any thing about me."

"Why, can you talk?" asked Freddy, very much astonished and a little frightened.

"Of course I can, for this is a part of my jaw-bone. I should talk better if my whole mouth was here; but I'm afraid my voice would then be so loud you wouldn't be able to hear it. I don't think any one but you would understand me, any way. It isn't every one that can, you know; but you are a thoughtful little chap, with a lively fancy as well as a kind heart, so you shall hear my story."

"Thank you, I should like it very much, if you would please to speak a little lower, and not sigh; for your voice almost stuns me, and your breath nearly blows me away," said Freddy.

"I'll try: but it's hard to suit my tone to such a mite, or to help groaning when I think of my sad fate; though I deserve it, perhaps," said the bone, more gently.

"Were you a naughty whale?" asked Freddy.

"I was proud, very proud, and foolish; and so I suffered for it. I dare say you know a good deal about us. I see you reading often, and you seem a sensible child."

"No: I haven't read about you yet, and I only know that you are the biggest fish there is," replied Freddy.

The bone creaked and shook, as if it was laughing, and said in a tone that showed it hadn't got over its pride yet:

"You're wrong there, my dear; we are not fishes at all, though stupid mortals have called us so for a long time. We can't live without air; we have warm, red blood; and we don't lay eggs,—so we are *not* fishes. We certainly *are* the biggest creatures in the sea and out of it. Why, bless you! some of us are nearly a hundred feet long; our tails alone are fifteen or twenty feet wide; the biggest of us weigh five hundred thousand pounds, and have in them the fat, bone, and muscle of a thousand cattle. The lower jaw of one of my family made an arch large enough for a man on horseback to ride under easily, and my cousins of the sperm-family usually yield eighty barrels of oil."

"Gracious me, what monsters you are!" cried Freddy, taking a long breath, while his eyes got bigger and bigger as he listened.

"Ah! you may well say so; we are a very wonderful and interesting family. All our branches are famous in one way or another. Fin-backs, sperms, and rights are the largest; then come the norwhals, the dolphins, and porpoises, —which last, I dare say, you've seen."

"Yes: but tell me about the big ones, please. Which were you?" cried Freddy.

"I was a Right whale, from Greenland. The Sperms live in warm places; but to us the torrid zone is like a sea of fire, and we don't pass it. Our cousins do; and go to the East Indies by way of the North Pole, which is more than your famous Parrys and Franklins could do."

"I don't know about that; but I'd like to hear what you eat, and how you live, and why you came here," said Freddy, who thought the whale rather inclined to boast.

"Well, we haven't got any teeth,—our branch of the family; and we live on creatures so small, that you could only see them with a microscope. Yes, you may stare; but it's true, my dear. The roofs of our mouths are made of whalebone, in broad pieces from six to eight feet long, arranged one against the other; so they make an immense sieve. The tongue, which makes about five barrels of oil, lies below, like a cushion of white satin. When we want to feed, we rush through the water, which is full of the little things we eat, and catch them in our sieve, spurting the water through two holes in our heads. Then we collect the food with our tongue, and swallow it; for, though we are so big, our throats are small. We roam about in the ocean, leaping and floating, feeding and spouting, flying from our enemies, or fighting bravely to defend our young ones."

"Have you got any enemies? I shouldn't think you could have, you are so large," said Freddy.

"But we have, and many too,—three who attack us in the water, and several more that men use against us. The killer, the sword-fish, and the thrasher trouble us at home. The killer fastens to us, and won't be shaken off till he has worried us to death; the sword-fish stabs us with his sword;

and the thrasher whips us to death with his own slender, but strong and heavy body. Then, men harpoon us, shoot or entrap us; and make us into oil and candles and seats, and stiffening for gowns and umbrellas," said the bone, in a tone of scorn.

Freddy laughed at the idea, and asked, "How about candles? I know about oil and seats and umbrellas; but I thought candles were made of wax."

"I can't say much on that point: I only know that, when a sperm whale is killed, they make oil out of the fat part as they do of ours; but the Sperms have a sort of cistern in their heads, full of stuff like cream, and rose-colored. They cut a hole in the skull, and dip it out; and sometimes get sixteen or twenty barrels. This is made into what you call spermaceti candles. *We* don't have any such nonsense about us; but the Sperms always were a light-headed set."

Here the bone laughed, in a cracked sort of roar, which sent Freddy flying off the seat on to the grass, where he stayed, laughing also, though he didn't see any joke.

"I beg your pardon, child. It isn't often that I laugh; for I've a heavy heart somewhere, and have known trouble enough to make me as sad as the sea is sometimes."

"Tell me about your troubles; I pity you very much, and like to hear you talk," said Freddy, kindly.

"Unfortunately we are very easily killed, in spite of our size; and have various afflictions besides death. We grow blind; our jaws are deformed sometimes; our tails, with which we swim, get hurt; and we have dyspepsia."

Freddy shouted at that; for he knew what dyspepsia was, because at the sea-side there were many sickly people who were always groaning about that disease.

"It's no laughing matter, I assure you," said the whale's bone. "We suffer a great deal, and get thin and weak and miserable. I've sometimes thought that's the reason we are blue."

"Perhaps, as you have no teeth, you don't chew your food enough, and so have dyspepsia, like an old gentleman I know," said Freddy.

"That's not the reason; my cousins, the Sperms, have teeth, and dyspepsia also."

"Are they blue?"

"No, black and white. But I was going to tell you my troubles. My father was harpooned when I was very young, and I remember how bravely he died. The Rights usually run away when they see a whaler coming; not from cowardice,—oh, dear, no!—but discretion. The Sperms stay and fight, and are killed off very fast; for they are a very headstrong family. We fight when we can't help it; and my father died like a hero. They chased him five hours before they stuck him; he tried to get away, and dragged three or four boats and sixteen hundred fathoms of line from eight in the morning till four at night. Then they got out another line, and he towed the ship itself for more than an hour. There were fifteen harpoons in him: he chewed up a boat, pitched several men overboard, and damaged the vessel, before they killed him. Ah! he was a father to be proud of."

Freddy sat respectfully silent for a few minutes, as the old bone seemed to feel a great deal on the subject. Presently he went on again:

"The Sperms live in herds; but the Rights go in pairs, and are very fond of one another. My wife was a charming creature, and we were very happy, till one sad day, when she was playing with our child,—a sweet little whaleling only twelve feet long, and weighing but a ton,—my son was harpooned. His mamma, instead of flying, wrapped her fins round him, and dived as far as the line allowed. Then she came up, and dashed at the boats in great rage and anguish, entirely regardless of the danger she was in. The men struck my son, in order to get her, and they soon succeeded; but even then, in spite of her suffering, she did not try to escape, but clung to little Spouter till both were killed. Alas! alas!"

Here the poor bone creaked so dismally, Freddy feared it would tumble to pieces, and bring the story to an end too soon.

"Don't think of those sorrowful things," he said; "tell me how you came to be here. Were you harpooned?"

"Not I; for I've been very careful all my life to keep out of the way of danger: I'm not like one of my relations, who attacked a ship, gave it such a dreadful blow that he made a great hole, the water rushed in, and the vessel was wrecked. But he paid dearly for that prank; for a few months afterward another ship harpooned him very easily, finding two spears still in him, and a wound in his head. I forgot to mention, that the Sperms have fine ivory teeth, and make ambergris,—a sort of stuff that smells very nice, and costs a great deal. I give you these little facts about my family, as you seem interested, and it's always well to improve the minds of young people."

"You are very kind; but will you be good enough to tell about yourself?" said Freddy again; for the bone seemed to avoid that part of the story, as if he didn't want to tell it.

"Well, if I must, I must; but I'm sorry to confess what a fool I've been. You know what coral is, don't you?"

"No," said Freddy, wondering why it asked.

"Then I must tell you, I suppose. There is a bit in the house there,—that rough, white, stony stuff on the table in the parlor. It's full of little holes, you know. Well, those holes are the front doors of hundreds of little polypes, or coral worms, who build the great branches of coral, and live there. They are of various shapes and colors,—some like stars; some fine as a thread, and blue or yellow; others like snails and tiny lobsters. Some people say the real coral-makers are shaped like little oblong bags of jelly, closed at one end, the other open, with six or eight little feelers, like a star, all around it. The other creatures are boarders or visitors: these are the real workers, and, when they sit in their cells and put out their feelers, they make all manner of lovely colors under the water,—crimson, green, orange, and violet. But if they are taken up or touched, the coral people go in doors, and the beautiful hues disappear. They say there are many coral reefs and islands built by these industrious people, in the South Seas; but I can't go there to see, and I am contented with those I find in the northern latitudes. I knew such a community of coral builders, and used to watch them long ago, when they began to work. It was a charming spot, down under the sea; for all manner of lovely plants grew there; splendid fishes

sailed to and fro; wonderful shells lay about; crimson and yellow prawns, long, gliding green worms, and purple sea-urchins, were there. When I asked the polypes what they were doing, and they answered, 'Building an island,' I laughed at them; for the idea that these tiny, soft atoms could make any thing was ridiculous. 'You may roar; but you'll see that we are right, if you live long enough,' said they. 'Our family have built thousands of islands and long reefs, that the sea can't get over, strong as it is.' That amused me immensely; but I wouldn't believe it, and laughed more than ever."

"It does seem very strange," said Freddy, looking at the branch of coral which he had brought out to examine.

"Doesn't it? and isn't it hard to believe? I used to go, now and then, to see how the little fellows got on, and always found them hard at it. For a long while there was only a little plant without leaves, growing slowly taller and taller; for they always build upward toward the light. By and by, the small shrub was a tree: flying-fish roosted in its branches; sea-cows lay under its shadow; and thousands of jolly little polypes lived and worked in its white chambers. I was glad to see them getting on so well; but still I didn't believe in the island story, and used to joke them about their ambition. They were very good-natured, and only answered me, 'Wait a little longer, Friend Right.' I had my own affairs to attend to; so, for years at a time, I forgot the coral-workers, and spent most of my life up Greenland way, for warm climates don't agree with my constitution. When I came back, after a long absence, I was astonished to see the tree grown into a large umbrella-shaped thing, rising above the water. Sea-weed had washed up and clung there; sea-birds had made nests there; land-birds and the winds had carried seeds there, which had sprung up; trunks of trees had been cast there by the sea; lizards, insects, and little animals came with the trees, and were the first inhabitants; and, behold! it *was* an island."

"What did you say then?" asked Freddy.

"I was angry, and didn't want to own that I was wrong; so I insisted that it wasn't a real island, without people on it. 'Wait a little longer,' answered the polypes; and went on, building broader and broader foundations. I flounced away in a rage, and didn't go back for a great while. I hoped

something would happen to the coral builders and their island; but I was so curious that I couldn't keep away, and, on going back there, I found a settlement of fishermen, and the beginning of a thriving town. Now I should have been in a towering passion at this, if in my travels I hadn't discovered a race of little creatures as much smaller than polypes as a mouse is smaller than an elephant. I heard two learned men talking about diatoms, as they sailed to Labrador; and I listened. They said these people lived in both salt and fresh water, and were found in all parts of the world. They were a glassy shell, holding a soft, golden-yellow substance, and that they were so countless that banks were made of them, and that a town here in these United States was founded on them. They were the food of many little sea-animals, who, in turn, fed us big creatures, and were very interesting and wonderful. I saved up this story; and, when the polypes asked if they hadn't done what they intended, I told them I didn't think it so very remarkable, for the tiny diatoms made cities, and were far more astonishing animals than they. I thought that would silence them; but they just turned round, and informed me that my diatoms were plants, not animals,—so my story was all humbug. Then I *was* mad; and couldn't get over the fact that these little rascals had done what we, the kings of the sea, couldn't do. I wasn't content with being the biggest creature there: I wanted to be the most skilful also. I didn't remember that every thing has its own place and use, and should be happy in doing the work for which it was made. I fretted over the matter a long while, and at last decided to make an island myself."

"How could you?" asked Freddy.

"I had my plans; and thought them very wise ones. I was so bent on outdoing the polypes that I didn't much care what happened; and so I went to work in my clumsy way. I couldn't pile up stones, or build millions of cells; so I just made an island of myself. I swam up into the harbor yonder one night; covered my back with sea-weed; and lay still on the top of the water. In the morning the gulls came to see what it was, and pecked away at the weeds, telling me very soon that they knew what I was after, and that I couldn't gull them. All the people on shore turned out to see the wonder also; for a fisherman had carried the tidings, and every one was wild to behold the new island. After staring and chattering a long while, boats came off to examine the mystery. Loads of scientific gentlemen

worked away at me with microscopes, hammers, acids, and all sorts of tests, to decide what I was; and kept up such a fire of long words that I was 'most dead. They couldn't make up their minds; and meanwhile news of the strange thing spread, and every sort of person came to see me. The gulls kept telling them the joke; but they didn't understand, and I got on capitally. Every night I dined and fed and frolicked till dawn; then put on my sea-weeds, and lay still to be stared at. I wanted some one to come and live on me; then I should be equal to the island of the polypes. But no one came, and I was beginning to be tired of fooling people, when I was fooled myself. An old sailor came to visit me: he had been a whaler, and he soon guessed the secret. But he said nothing till he was safely out of danger; then he got all ready, and one day, as I lay placidly in the sun, a horrible harpoon came flying through the air, and sunk deep into my back. I forgot every thing but the pain, and dived for my life. Alas! the tide was low; the harbor-bar couldn't be passed; and I found hundreds of boats chasing me, till I was driven ashore down there on the flats. Big and strong as we are, once out of water, and we are perfectly helpless. I was soon despatched; and my bones left to whiten on the sand. This was long ago; and, one by one, all my relics have been carried off or washed away. My jaw-bone has been used as a seat here, till it's worn out; but I couldn't crumble away till I'd told some one my story. Remember, child, pride goeth before a fall."

Then, with a great creak, the bone tumbled to pieces; and found a peaceful grave in the long green grass.

X.

A STRANGE ISLAND.

ONE day I lay rocking in my boat, reading a very famous book, which all children know and love; and the name of which I'll tell you by and by. So busily was I reading, that I never minded the tide; and presently

discovered that I was floating out to sea, with neither sail nor oar. At first I was very much frightened; for there was no one in sight on land or sea, and I didn't know where I might drift to. But the water was calm, the sky clear, and the wind blew balmily; so I waited for what should happen.

Presently I saw a speck on the sea, and eagerly watched it; for it drew rapidly near, and seemed to be going my way. When it came closer, I was much amazed; for, of all the queer boats I ever saw, this was the queerest. It was a great wooden bowl, very cracked and old; and in it sat three gray-headed little gentlemen with spectacles, all reading busily, and letting the boat go where it pleased. Now, right in their way was a rock; and I called out, "Sir, sir, take care."

But my call came too late: crash went the bowl, out came the bottom, and down plumped all the little gentlemen into the sea. I tried not to laugh, as the books, wigs, and spectacles flew about; and, urging my boat nearer, I managed to fish them up, dripping and sneezing, and looking like drowned kittens. When the flurry was over, and they had got their breath, I asked who they were, and where they were going.

"We are from Gotham, ma'am," said the fattest one, wiping a very wet face on a very wet handkerchief. "We were going to that island yonder. We have often tried, but never got there: it's always so, and I begin to think the thing can't be done."

I looked where he pointed; and, sure enough, there was an island where I had never seen one before. I rubbed my eyes, and looked again. Yes: there it was,—a little island, with trees and people on it; for I saw smoke coming out of the chimney of a queerly-shaped house on the shore.

"What is the name of it?" I asked.

The little old gentleman put his finger on his lips, and said, with a mysterious nod:

"I couldn't tell you, ma'am. It's a secret; but, if you manage to land there, you will soon know."

The other old men nodded at the same time; and then all went to reading again, with the water still dropping off the ends of their noses. This made

me very curious; and, as the tide drifted us nearer and nearer, I looked well about me, and saw several things that filled me with a strong desire to land on the island. The odd house, I found, was built like a high-heeled shoe; and at every window I saw children's heads. Some were eating broth; some were crying; and some had nightcaps on. I caught sight of a distracted old lady flying about, with a ladle in one hand, and a rod in the other; but the house was so full of children (even up to the skylight,—out of which they popped their heads, and nodded at me) that I couldn't see much of the mamma of this large family: one seldom can, you know.

I had hardly got over my surprise at this queer sight, when I saw a cow fly up through the air, over the new moon that hung there, and come down and disappear in the woods. I really didn't know what to make of this, but had no time to ask the old men what it meant; for a cat, playing a fiddle, was seen on the shore. A little dog stood by, listening and laughing; while a dish and a spoon ran away over the beach with all their might. If the boat had not floated up to the land, I think I should have swam there,—I was so anxious to see what was going on; for there was a great racket on the island, and such a remarkable collection of creatures, it was impossible to help staring.

As soon as we landed, three other gentlemen came to welcome the ones I had saved, and seemed very glad to see them. They appeared to have just landed from a tub in which was a drum, rub-a-dub-dubbing all by itself. One of the new men had a white frock on, and carried a large knife; the second had dough on his hands, flour on his coat, and a hot-looking face; the third was very greasy, had a bundle of candles under his arm, and a ball of wicking half out of his pocket. The six shook hands, and walked away together, talking about a fair; and left me to take care of myself.

I walked on through a pleasant meadow, where a pretty little girl was looking sadly up at a row of sheep's tails hung on a tree. I also saw a little boy in blue, asleep by a haycock; and another boy taking aim at a cock-sparrow, who clapped his wings and flew away. Presently I saw two more little girls: one sat by a fire warming her toes; and, when I asked what her name was, she said pleasantly:

"Polly Flinders, ma'am."

The other one sat on a tuft of grass, eating something that looked very nice; but, all of a sudden, she dropped her bowl, and ran away, looking very much frightened.

"What's the matter with her?" I asked of a gay young frog who came tripping along with his hat under his arm.

"Miss Muffit is a fashionable lady, and afraid of spiders, madam; also of frogs." And he puffed himself angrily up, till his eyes quite goggled in his head.

"And, pray, who are you, sir?" I asked, staring at his white vest, green coat, and fine cravat.

"Excuse me, if I don't give my name, ma'am. My false friend, the rat, got me into a sad scrape once; and Rowley insists upon it that a duck destroyed me, which is all gammon, ma'am,—all gammon."

With that, the frog skipped away; and I turned into a narrow lane, which seemed to lead toward some music. I had not gone far, when I heard the rumbling of a wheelbarrow, and saw a little man wheeling a little woman along. The little man looked very hot and tired; but the little woman looked very nice, in a smart bonnet and shawl, and kept looking at a new gold ring on her finger, as she rode along under her little umbrella. I was wondering who they were, when down went the wheelbarrow; and the little lady screamed so dismally that I ran away, lest I should get into trouble,—being a stranger.

Turning a corner, I came upon a very charming scene, and slipped into a quiet nook to see what was going on. It was evidently a wedding; and I was just in time to see it, for the procession was passing at that moment. First came a splendid cock-a-doodle, all in black and gold, like a herald, blowing his trumpet, and marching with a very dignified step. Then came a rook, in black, like a minister, with spectacles and white cravat. A lark and bullfinch followed,—friends, I suppose; and then the bride and bridegroom. Miss Wren was evidently a Quakeress; for she wore a sober dress, and a little white veil, through which her bright eyes shone. The bridegroom was a military man, in his scarlet uniform,—a plump, bold-looking bird, very happy and proud just then. A goldfinch gave away the

bride, and a linnet was bridesmaid. The ceremony was very fine; and, as soon as it was over, the blackbird, thrush and nightingale burst out in a lovely song.

A splendid dinner followed, at which was nearly every bird that flies; so you may imagine the music there was. They had currant-pie in abundance; and cherry-wine, which excited a cuckoo so much, that he became quite rude, and so far forgot himself as to pull the bride about. This made the groom so angry that he begged his friend, the sparrow, to bring his bow and arrow, and punish the ruffian. But, alas! Sparrow had also taken a drop too much: he aimed wrong, and, with a dreadful cry, Mr. Robin sank dying into the arms of his wife, little Jane.

It was too much for me; and, taking advantage of the confusion that followed, I left the tragical scene as fast as possible.

A little farther on, I was shocked to see a goose dragging an old man down some steps that led to a little house.

"Dear me! what's the matter here?" I cried.

"He won't say his prayers," screamed the goose.

"But perhaps he was never taught," said I.

"It's never too late to learn: he's had his chance; he won't be pious and good, so away with him. Don't interfere, whatever you do: hold your tongue, and go about your business," scolded the goose, who certainly had a dreadful temper.

I dared say no more; and, when the poor old man had been driven away by this foul proceeding, I went up the steps and peeped in; for I heard some one crying, and thought the cross bird, perhaps, had hurt some one else. A little old woman stood there, wringing her hands in great distress; while a small dog was barking at her with all his might.

"Bless me! the fashions have got even here," thought I; for the old woman was dressed in the latest style,—or, rather, she had overdone it sadly; for her gown was nearly up to her knees, and she was nearly as ridiculous an object as some of the young ladies I had seen at home. She had a

respectable bonnet on, however, instead of a straw saucer; and her hair was neatly put under a cap,—not made into a knob on the top of her head.

"My dear soul, what's the trouble?" said I, quite touched by her tears.

"Lud a mercy, ma'am! I've been to market with my butter and eggs,—for the price of both is so high, one can soon get rich nowadays,—and, being tired, I stopped to rest a bit, but fell asleep by the road. Somebody—I think it's a rogue of a peddler who sold me wooden nutmegs, and a clock that wouldn't go, and some pans that came to bits the first time I used them—somebody cut my new gown and petticoat off all round, in the shameful way you see. I thought I never should get home; for I was such a fright, I actually didn't know myself. But, thinks I, my doggy will know me; and then I shall be sure I'm I, and not some boldfaced creature in short skirts. But, oh, ma'am! doggy *don't* know me; and I ain't myself, and I don't know what to do."

"He's a foolish little beast; so don't mind him, but have a cup of tea, and go to bed. You can make your gown decent to-morrow; and, if I see the tricksy peddler, I'll give him a scolding."

This seemed to comfort the old woman; though doggy still barked.

"My next neighbor has a dog who never behaves in this way," she said, as she put her teapot on the coals. "He's a remarkable beast; and you'd better stop to see him as you pass, ma'am. He's always up to some funny prank or other."

I said I would; and, as I went by the next house, I took a look in at the window. The closet was empty, I observed; but the dog sat smoking a pipe, looking as grave as a judge.

"Where is your mistress?" asked I.

"Gone for some tripe," answered the dog, politely taking the pipe out of his mouth, and adding, "I hope the smoke doesn't annoy you."

"I don't approve of smoking," said I.

"Sorry to hear it," said the dog, coolly.

I was going to lecture him on this bad habit; but I saw his mistress coming with a dish in her hand, and, fearing she might think me rude to peep in at her windows, I walked on, wondering what we were coming to when even four-legged puppies smoked.

At the door of the next little house, I saw a market-wagon loaded with vegetables, and a smart young pig just driving it away. I had heard of this interesting family, and took a look as I passed by. A second tidy pig sat blowing the fire; and a third was eating roast-beef, as if he had just come in from his work. The fourth, I was grieved to see, looked very sulky; for it was evident he had been naughty, and so lost his dinner. The little pig was at the door, crying to get in; and it was sweet to see how kindly the others let him in, wiped his tears, tied on his bib, and brought him his bread and milk. I was very glad to see these young orphans doing so well, and I knew my friends at home would enjoy hearing from them.

A loud scream made me jump; and the sudden splash of water made me run along, without stopping to pick up a boy and girl who came tumbling down the hill, with an empty pail, bumping their heads as they rolled. Smelling something nice, and feeling hungry, I stepped into a large room near by,—a sort of eating-house, I fancy; for various parties seemed to be enjoying themselves in their different ways. A small boy sat near the door, eating a large pie; and he gave me a fine plum which he had just pulled out. At one table was a fat gentleman cutting another pie, which had a dark crust, through which appeared the heads of a flock of birds, all singing gayly.

"There's no end to the improvements in cooking, and no accounting for tastes," I added, looking at a handsomely-dressed lady, who sat near, eating bread and honey.

As I passed this party, I saw behind the lady's chair a maid, with a clothes-pin in her hand, and no nose. She sobbingly told me a bird had nipped it off; and I gave her a bit of court-plaster, which I fortunately had in my pocket.

Another couple were dividing their meat in a queer way; for one took all the fat, and the other all the lean. The next people were odder still; for the man looked rather guilty, and seemed to be hiding a three-peck measure

under his chair, while he waited for his wife to bring on some cold barley-pudding, which, to my surprise, she was frying herself. I also saw a queer moonstruck-looking man inquiring the way to Norridge; and another man making wry faces over some plum-pudding, with which he had burnt his mouth, because his friend came down too soon.

I ordered pease-porridge hot, and they brought it cold; but I didn't wait for any thing else, being in a hurry to see all there was to be seen on this strange island. Feeling refreshed, I strolled on, passing a jolly old gentleman smoking and drinking, while three fiddlers played before him. As I turned into a road that led toward a hill, a little boy, riding a dapple-gray pony, and an old lady on a white horse, with bells ringing somewhere, trotted by me, followed by a little girl, who wished to know where she could buy a penny bun. I told her the best were at Newmarch's, in Bedford Street, and she ran on, much pleased; but I'm afraid she never found that best of bake-shops. I was going quietly along, when the sound of another horse coming made me look round; and there I saw a dreadful sight,—a wild horse, tearing over the ground, with fiery eyes and streaming tail. On his back sat a crazy man, beating him with a broom; a crazy woman was behind him, with her bonnet on wrong side before, holding one crazy child in her lap, while another stood on the horse; a third was hanging on by one foot, and all were howling at the top of their voices as they rushed by. I scrambled over the wall to get out of the way, and there I saw more curious sights. Two blind men were sitting on the grass, trying to see two lame men who were hobbling along as hard as they could; and, near by, a bull was fighting a bee in the most violent manner. This rather alarmed me; and I scrambled back into the road again, just as a very fine lady jumped over a barberry-bush near by, and a gentleman went flying after, with a ring in one hand and a stick in the other.

"What very odd people they have here!" I thought. Close by was a tidy little house under the hill, and in it a tidy little woman who sold things to eat. Being rather hungry, in spite of my porridge, I bought a baked apple and a cranberry-pie; for she said they were good, and I found she told the truth. As I sat eating my pie, some dogs began to bark; and by came a troop of beggars, some in rags, and some in old velvet gowns. A drunken grenadier was with them, who wanted a pot of beer; but as he had no money, the old woman sent him about his business.

On my way up the hill, I saw a little boy crying over a dead pig, and his sister, who seemed to be dead also. I asked his name, and he sobbed out, "Johnny Pringle, ma'am;" and went on crying so hard I could do nothing to comfort him. While I stood talking to him, a sudden gust of wind blew up the road, and down came the bough of a tree; and, to my surprise, a cradle with a baby in it also. The baby screamed dreadfully, and I didn't know how to quiet it; so I ran back to the old woman, and left it with her, asking if that was the way babies were taken care of there.

"Bless you, my dear! its ma is making patty-cakes; and put it up there to be out of the way of Tom Tinker's dog. I'll soon hush it up," said the old woman; and, trotting it on her knee, she began to sing:

"Hey! my kitten, my kitten,
Hey! my kitten, my deary."

Feeling that the child was in good hands, I hurried away, for I saw something was going on upon the hill-top. When I got to the hill-top, I was shocked to find some people tossing an old woman in a blanket. I begged them to stop; but one of the men, who, I found, was a Welchman, by the name of Taffy, told me the old lady liked it.

"But why does she like it?" I asked in great surprise.

"Tom, the piper's son, will tell you: it's my turn to toss now," said the man.

"Why, you see, ma'am," said Tom, "she is one of those dreadfully nice old women, who are always fussing and scrubbing, and worrying people to death, with everlastingly cleaning house. Now and then we get so tired out with her that we propose to her to clean the sky itself. She likes that; and, as this is the only way we can get her up, we toss till she sticks somewhere, and then leave her to sweep cobwebs till she is ready to come back and behave herself."

"Well, that is the oddest thing I ever heard. I know just such an old lady, and when I go home I'll try your plan. It seems to me that you have a great many queer old ladies on this island," I said to another man, whom they called Peter, and who stood eating pumpkin all the time.

"Well, we do have rather a nice collection; but you haven't seen the best of all. We expect her every minute; and Margery Daw is to let us know the minute she lights on the island," replied Peter, with his mouth full.

"Lights?" said I, "you speak as if she flew."

"She rides on a bird. Hurrah! the old sweeper has lit. Now the cobwebs will fly. Don't hurry back," shouted the man; and a faint, far-off voice answered, "I shall be back again by and by."

The people folded up the blanket, looking much relieved; and I was examining a very odd house which was built by an ancient king called Boggen, when Margery Daw, a dirty little girl, came up the hill, screaming, at the top of her voice:

"She's come! she's come!"

Every one looked up; and I saw a large white bird slowly flying over the island. On its back sat the nicest old woman that ever was seen: all the others were nothing compared to her. She had a pointed hat on over her cap, a red cloak, high-heeled shoes, and a crutch in her hand. She smiled and nodded as the bird approached; and every one ran and nodded, and screamed, "Welcome! welcome, mother!"

As soon as she touched the ground, she was so surrounded that I could only see the top of her hat; for hundreds and hundreds of little children suddenly appeared, like a great flock of birds,—rosy, happy, pretty children; but all looked unreal, and among them I saw some who looked like little people I had known long ago.

"Who are they?" I asked of a bonny lass, who was sitting on a cushion, eating strawberries and cream.

"They are the phantoms of all the little people who ever read and loved our mother's songs," said the maid.

"What did she write?" I asked, feeling very queer, and as if I was going to remember something.

"Songs that are immortal; and you have them in your hand," replied the bonny maid, smiling at my stupidity.

I looked; and there, on the cover of the book I had been reading so busily when the tide carried me away, I saw the words "Mother Goose's Melodies." I was so delighted that I had seen her I gave a shout, and tried to get near enough to hug and kiss the dear old soul, as the swarm of children were doing; but my cry woke me, and I was *so* sorry to find it all a dream!

XI.

FANCY'S FRIEND.

IT was a wagon, shaped like a great square basket, on low wheels, and drawn by a stout donkey. There was one seat, on which Miss Fairbairn the governess sat; and all round her, leaning over the edge of the basket, were children, with little wooden shovels and baskets in their hands, going down to play on the beach. Away they went, over the common, through the stony lane, out upon the wide, smooth sands. All the children but one immediately fell to digging holes, and making ponds, castles, or forts. They did this every day, and were never tired of it; but little Fancy made new games for herself, and seldom dug in the sand. She had a garden of sea-weed, which the waves watered every day: she had a palace of pretty shells, where she kept all sorts of little water-creatures as fairy tenants; she had friends and playmates among the gulls and peeps, and learned curious things by watching crabs, horse-shoes, and jelly-fishes; and every day she looked for a mermaid.

It was of no use to tell her that there were no mermaids: Fancy firmly believed in them, and was sure she would see one some day. The other children called the seals mermaids; and were contented with the queer, shiny creatures who played in the water, lay on the rocks, and peeped at them with soft, bright eyes as they sailed by. Fancy was not satisfied with seals,—they were not pretty and graceful enough for her,—and she waited and watched for a real mermaid. On this day she took a breezy run with the beach-birds along the shore; she planted a pretty red weed in her garden; and let out the water-beetles and snails who had passed the night in her palace. Then she went to a rock that stood near the quiet nook where she played alone, and sat there looking for a mermaid as the tide came in; for it brought her many curious things, and it might perhaps bring a mermaid.

As she looked across the waves that came tumbling one over the other, she saw something that was neither boat nor buoy nor seal. It was a queer-looking thing, with a wild head, a long waving tail, and something like arms that seemed to paddle it along. The waves tumbled it about, so Fancy could not see very well: but, the longer she looked, the surer she was that this curious thing was a mermaid; and she waited eagerly for it to reach

the shore. Nearer and nearer it came, till a great wave threw it upon the sand; and Fancy saw that it was only a long piece of kelp, torn up by the roots. She was very much disappointed; but, all of a sudden, her face cleared up, she clapped her hands, and began to dance round the kelp, saying:

"I'll make a mermaid myself, since none will come to me."

Away she ran, higher up the beach, and, after thinking a minute, began her work. Choosing a smooth, hard place, she drew with a stick the outline of her mermaid; then she made the hair of the brown marsh-grass growing near by, arranging it in long locks on either side the face, which was made of her prettiest pink and white shells,—for she pulled down her palace to get them. The eyes were two gray pebbles; the neck and arms of larger, white shells; and the dress of sea-weed,—red, green, purple, and yellow; very splendid, for Fancy emptied her garden to dress her mermaid.

"People say that mermaids always have tails; and I might make one out of this great leaf of kelp. But it isn't pretty, and I don't like it; for I want mine to be beautiful: so I won't have any tail," said Fancy, and put two slender white shells for feet, at the lower edge of the fringed skirt. She laid a wreath of little star-fish across the brown hair, a belt of small orange-crabs round the waist, buttoned the dress with violet snail-shells, and hung a tiny white pebble, like a pearl, in either ear.

"Now she must have a glass and a comb in her hand, as the song says, and then she will be done," said Fancy, looking about her, well pleased.

Presently she found the skeleton of a little fish, and his backbone made an excellent comb; while a transparent jelly-fish served for a glass, with a frame of cockle-shells round it. Placing these in the hands of her mermaid, and some red coral bracelets on her wrists, Fancy pronounced her done; and danced about her, singing:

"My pretty little mermaid,
    Oh! come, and play with me:
I'll love you, I'll welcome you;
    And happy we shall be."

Now, while she had been working, the tide had crept higher and higher; and, as she sung, one wave ran up and wet her feet.

"Oh, what a pity I didn't put her farther up!" cried Fancy; "the tide will wash her all away; and I meant to keep her fresh, and show her to Aunt Fiction. My poor mermaid!—I shall lose her; but perhaps she will be happier in the sea: so I will let her go."

Mounting her rock, Fancy waited to see her work destroyed. But the sea seemed to pity her; and wave after wave came up, without doing any harm. At last one broke quite over the mermaid, and Fancy thought that would be the end of her. But, no: instead of scattering shells, stones, and weeds, the waves lifted the whole figure, without displacing any thing, and gently bore it back into the sea.

"Good by! good by!" cried Fancy, as the little figure floated away; then, as it disappeared, she put her hands before her face,—for she loved her mermaid, and had given all her treasures to adorn her; and now to lose her so soon seemed hard,—and Fancy's eyes were full of tears. Another great wave came rolling in; but she did not look up to see it break, and, a minute after, she heard steps tripping toward her over the sand. Still she did not stir; for, just then, none of her playmates could take the place of her new friend, and she didn't want to see them.

"Fancy! Fancy!" called a breezy voice, sweeter than any she had ever heard. But she did not raise her head, nor care to know who called. The steps came quite close; and the touch of a cold, wet hand fell on her own. Then she looked up, and saw a strange little girl standing by her, who smiled, showing teeth like little pearls, and said, in the breezy voice:

"You wanted me to play with you, so I came."

"Who are you?" asked Fancy, wondering where she had seen the child before.

"I'm your mermaid," said the child.

"But the water carried her away," cried Fancy.

"The waves only carried me out for the sea to give me life, and then brought me back to you," answered the newcomer.

"But are you really a mermaid?" asked Fancy, beginning to smile and believe.

"I am really the one you made: look, and see if I'm not;" and the little creature turned slowly round, that Fancy might be sure it was her own work.

She certainly was very like the figure that once lay on the sand,—only she was not now made of stones and shells. There was the long brown hair blowing about her face, with a wreath of starry shells in it. Her eyes were gray, her cheeks and lips rosy, her neck and arms white; and from under her striped dress peeped little bare feet. She had pearls in her ears, coral bracelets, a golden belt, and a glass and comb in her hands.

"Yes," said Fancy, drawing near, "you *are* my little mermaid; but how does it happen that you come to me at last?"

"Dear friend," answered the water-child, "you believed in me, watched and waited long for me, shaped the image of the thing you wanted out of your dearest treasures, and promised to love and welcome me. I could not help coming; and the sea, that is as fond of you as you are of it, helped me to grant your wish."

"Oh, I'm glad, I'm glad! Dear little mermaid, what is your name?" cried Fancy, kissing the cool cheek of her new friend, and putting her arms about her neck.

"Call me by my German cousin's pretty name,—Lorelei," answered the mermaid, kissing back as warmly as she could.

"Will you come home and live with me, dear Lorelei?" asked Fancy, still holding her fast.

"If you will promise to tell no one who and what I am, I will stay with you as long as you love and believe in me. As soon as you betray me, or lose your faith and fondness, I shall vanish, never to come back again," answered Lorelei.

"I promise: but won't people wonder who you are? and, if they ask me, what shall I say?" said Fancy.

"Tell them you found me on the shore; and leave the rest to me. But you must not expect other people to like and believe in me as you do. They will say hard things of me; will blame you for loving me; and try to part us. Can you bear this, and keep your promise faithfully?"

"I think I can. But why won't they like you?" said Fancy, looking troubled.

"Because they are not like you, dear," answered the mermaid, with salt tears in her soft eyes. "They have not your power of seeing beauty in all things, of enjoying invisible delights, and living in a world of your own. Your Aunt Fiction will like me; but your Uncle Fact won't. He will want to know all about me; will think I'm a little vagabond; and want me to be sent away somewhere, to be made like other children. I shall keep out of his way as much as I can; for I'm afraid of him."

"I'll take care of you, Lorelei dear; and no one shall trouble you. I hear Miss Fairbairn calling; so I must go. Give me your hand, and don't be afraid."

Hand in hand the two went toward the other children, who stopped digging, and stared at the new child. Miss Fairbairn, who was very wise and good, but rather prim, stared too, and said, with surprise:

"Why, my dear, where did you find that queer child?"

"Down on the beach. Isn't she pretty?" answered Fancy, feeling very proud of her new friend.

"She hasn't got any shoes on; so she's a beggar, and we mustn't play with her," said one boy, who had been taught that to be poor was a very dreadful thing.

"What pretty earrings and bracelets she's got!" said a little girl, who thought a great deal of her dress.

"She doesn't look as if she knew much," said another child, who was kept studying so hard that she never had time to dig and run, and make dirt-pies, till she fell ill, and had to be sent to the sea-side.

"What's your name? and who are your parents?" asked Miss Fairbairn.

"I've got no parents; and my name is Lorelei," answered the mermaiden.

"You mean Luly; mind your pronunciation, child," said Miss Fairbairn, who corrected every one she met in something or other. "Where do you live?"

"I haven't got any home now," said Lorelei, smiling at the lady's tone.

"Yes, you have: my home is yours; and you are going to stay with me always," cried Fancy, heartily. "She is my little sister, Miss Fairbairn: I found her; and I'm going to keep her, and make her happy."

"Your uncle won't like it, my dear." And Miss Fairbairn shook her head gravely.

"Aunt will; and Uncle won't mind, if I learn my lessons well, and remember the multiplication table all right. He was going to give me some money, so I might learn to keep accounts; but I'll tell him to keep the money, and let me have Lorelei instead."

"Oh, how silly!" cried the boy who didn't like bare feet.

"No, she isn't; for, if she's kind to the girl, maybe she'll get some of her pretty things," said the vain little girl.

"Keeping accounts is a very useful and important thing. I keep mine; and mamma says I have great arth-met-i-cal talent," added the pale child, who studied too much.

"Come, children; it's time for dinner. Fancy, you can take the girl to the house; and your uncle will do what he thinks best about letting you keep her," said Miss Fairbairn, piling them into the basket-wagon.

Fancy kept Lorelei close beside her; and as soon as they reached the great hotel, where they all were staying with mothers and fathers, uncles or aunts, she took her to kind Aunt Fiction, who was interested at once in the friendless child so mysteriously found. She was satisfied with the little she could discover, and promised to keep her,—for a time, at least.

"We can imagine all kinds of romantic things about her; and, by and by, some interesting story may be found out concerning her. I can make her useful in many ways; and she shall stay."

As Aunt Fiction laid her hand on the mermaid's head, as if claiming her for her own, Uncle Fact came stalking in, with his note-book in his hand, and his spectacles on his nose. Now, though they were married, these two persons were very unlike. Aunt Fiction was a graceful, picturesque woman; who told stories charmingly, wrote poetry and novels, was very much beloved by young folks, and was the friend of some of the most famous people in the world. Uncle Fact was a grim, grave, decided man; whom it was impossible to bend or change. He was very useful to every one; knew an immense deal; and was always taking notes of things he saw and heard, to be put in a great encyclopædia he was making. He didn't like romance, loved the truth, and wanted to get to the bottom of every thing. He was always trying to make little Fancy more sober, well-behaved, and learned; for she was a freakish, dreamy, yet very lovable and charming child. Aunt Fiction petted her to her heart's content, and might have done her harm, if Uncle Fact had not had a hand in her education; for the lessons of both were necessary to her, as to all of us.

"Well, well, well! who is this?" he said briskly, as he turned his keen eyes and powerful glasses on the newcomer.

Aunt Fiction told him all the children had said; but he answered impatiently:

"Tut, tut! my dear: I want the facts of the case. You are apt to exaggerate; and Fancy is not to be relied on. If the child isn't a fool, she must know more about herself than she pretends. Now, answer truly, Luly, where did you come from?"

But the little mermaid only shook her head, and answered as before, "Fancy found me on the beach, and wants me to stay with her. I'll do her no harm: please, let me stay."

"She has evidently been washed ashore from some wreck, and has forgotten all about herself. Her wonderful beauty, her accent, and these

ornaments show that she is some foreign child," said Aunt Fiction, pointing to the earrings.

"Nonsense! my dear: those are white pebbles, not pearls; and, if you examine them, you will find that those bracelets are the ones you gave Fancy as a reward for so well remembering the facts I told her about coral," said the uncle, who had turned Lorelei round and round, pinched her cheek, felt her hair, and examined her frock through the glasses which nothing escaped.

"She may stay, and be my little playmate, mayn't she? I'll take care of her; and we shall be very happy together," cried Fancy eagerly.

"One can't be sure of that till one has tried. You say you will take care of her: have you got any money to pay her board, and buy her clothes?" asked her uncle.

"No; but I thought you'd help me," answered Fancy wistfully.

"Never say you'll do a thing till you are sure you can," said Uncle Fact, as he took notes of the affair, thinking they might be useful by and by. "I've no objection to your keeping the girl, if, after making inquiries about her, she proves to be a clever child. She can stay awhile; and, when we go back to town, I'll put her in one of our charity schools, where she can be taught to earn her living. Can you read, Luly?"

"No," said the mermaid, opening her eyes.

"Can you write and cipher?"

"What is that?" asked Lorelei innocently.

"Dear me! what ignorance!" cried Uncle Fact.

"Can you sew, or tend babies?" asked Aunt Fiction gently.

"I can do nothing but play and sing, and comb my hair."

"I see! I see!—some hand-organ man's girl. Well, I'm glad you keep your hair smooth,—that's more than Fancy does," said Uncle Fact.

"Let us hear you sing," whispered his little niece; and, in a voice as musical as the sound of ripples breaking on the shore, Lorelei sung a little song that made Fancy dance with delight, charmed Aunt Fiction, and softened Uncle Fact's hard face in spite of himself.

"Very well, very well, indeed: you have a good voice. I'll see that you have proper teaching; and, by and by, you can get your living by giving singing-lessons," he said, turning over the leaves of his book, to look for the name of a skilful teacher; for he had lists of every useful person, place, and thing under the sun.

Lorelei laughed at the idea; and Fancy thought singing for gold, not love, a hard way to get one's living.

Inquiries were made; but nothing more was discovered, and neither of the children would speak: so the strange child lived with Fancy, and made her very happy. The other children didn't care much about her; for with them she was shy and cold, because she knew, if the truth was told, they would not believe in her. Fancy had always played a good deal by herself, because she never found a mate to suit her; now she had one, and they enjoyed each other very much. Lorelei taught her many things besides new games; and Aunt Fiction was charmed with the pretty stories Fancy repeated to her, while Uncle Fact was astonished at the knowledge of marine plants and animals which she gained without any books. Lorelei taught her to swim, like a fish; and the two played such wonderful pranks in the water that people used to come down to the beach when they bathed. In return, Fancy tried to teach her friend to read and write and sew; but Lorelei couldn't learn much, though she loved her little teacher dearly, and every evening sung her to sleep with beautiful lullabies.

There was a great deal of talk about the curious stranger; for her ways were odd, and no one knew what to make of her. She would eat nothing but fruit and shell-fish, and drink nothing but salt water. She didn't like tight clothes; but would have run about in a loose, green robe, with bare feet and flying hair, if Uncle Fact would have allowed it. Morning, noon, and night, she plunged into the sea,—no matter what the weather might be; and she would sleep on no bed but one stuffed with dried sea-weed. She made lovely chains of shells; found splendid bits of coral; and dived where no

one else dared, to bring up wonderful plants and mosses. People offered money for these things; but she gave them all to Fancy and Aunt Fiction, of whom she was very fond. It was curious to see the sort of people who liked both Fancy and her friend,—poets, artists; delicate, thoughtful children; and a few old people, who had kept their hearts young in spite of care and time and trouble. Dashing young gentlemen, fine young ladies, worldly-minded and money-loving men and women, and artificial, unchildlike children, the two friends avoided carefully; and these persons either made fun of them, neglected them entirely, or seemed to be unconscious that they were alive. The others they knew at a glance; for their faces warmed and brightened when the children came, they listened to their songs and stories, joined in their plays, and found rest and refreshment in their sweet society.

"This will do for a time; as Fancy is getting strong, and not entirely wasting her days, thanks to me! But our holiday is nearly over; and, as soon as I get back to town, I'll take that child to the Ragged Refuge, and see what they can make of her," said Uncle Fact, who was never quite satisfied about Lorelei; because he could find out so little concerning her. He was walking over the beach as he said this, after a hard day's work on his encyclopædia. He sat down on a rock in a quiet place; and, instead of enjoying the lovely sunset, he fell to studying the course of the clouds, the state of the tide, and the temperature of the air, till the sound of voices made him peep over the rock. Fancy and her friend were playing there, and the old gentleman waited to see what they were about. Both were sitting with their little bare feet in the water; Lorelei was stringing pearls, and Fancy plaiting a crown of pretty green rushes.

"I wish I could go home, and get you a string of finer pearls than these," said Lorelei; "but it is too far away, and I cannot swim now as I used to do."

"I must look into this. The girl evidently knows all about herself, and can tell, if she chooses," muttered Uncle Fact, getting rather excited over this discovery.

"Never mind the pearls: I'd rather have you, dear," said Fancy lovingly. "Tell me a story while we work, or sing me a song; and I'll give you my

crown."

"I'll sing you a little song that has got what your uncle calls a moral to it," said Lorelei, laughing mischievously. Then, in her breezy little voice, she sang the story of—

THE ROCK AND THE BUBBLE.

Oh! a bare, brown rock
    Stood up in the sea,
The waves at its feet
    Dancing merrily.

A little bubble
    Came sailing by,
And thus to the rock
    Did it gayly cry,—

"Ho! clumsy brown stone,
    Quick, make way for me:
I'm the fairest thing
    That floats on the sea.

"See my rainbow-robe,
    See my crown of light,
My glittering form,
    So airy and bright.

"O'er the waters blue,
    I'm floating away,
To dance by the shore
    With the foam and spray.

"Now, make way, make way;
    For the waves are strong,
And their rippling feet
    Bear me fast along."

But the great rock stood
    Straight up in the sea:
It looked gravely down,
    And said pleasantly,—

"Little friend, you must
    Go some other way;
For I have not stirred
    This many a long day.

"Great billows have dashed,
And angry winds blown;
But my sturdy form
Is not overthrown.

"Nothing can stir me
In the air or sea;
Then, how can I move,
Little friend, for thee?"

Then the waves all laughed,
In their voices sweet;
And the sea-birds looked,
From their rocky seat,

At the bubble gay,
Who angrily cried,
While its round cheek glowed
With a foolish pride,—

"You *shall* move for me;
And you shall not mock
At the words I say,
You ugly, rough rock!

"Be silent, wild birds!
Why stare you so?
Stop laughing, rude waves,
And help me to go!

"For I am the queen
Of the ocean here,
And this cruel stone
Cannot make me fear."

Dashing fiercely up,
With a scornful word,
Foolish bubble broke;
But rock never stirred.

Then said the sea-birds,
Sitting in their nests,
To the little ones
Leaning on their breasts,—

"Be not like Bubble,
Headstrong, rude, and vain,
Seeking by violence
Your object to gain;

"But be like the rock,
    Steadfast, true, and strong,
Yet cheerful and kind,
    And firm against wrong.

"Heed, little birdlings,
    And wiser you'll be
For the lesson learned
    To-day by the sea."

"Well, to be sure the song *has* got a moral, if that silly Fancy only sees it," said Uncle Fact, popping up his bald head again as the song ended.

"I thank you: that's a good little song for me. But, Lorelei, are you sorry you came to be my friend?" cried Fancy; for, as she bent to lay the crown on the other's head, she saw that she was looking wistfully down into the water that kissed her feet.

"Not yet: while you love me, I am happy, and never regret that I ceased to be a mermaid for your sake," answered Lorelei, laying her soft cheek against her friend's.

"How happy I was the day my play-mermaid changed to a real one!" said Fancy. "I often want to tell people all about that wonderful thing, and let them know who you really are: then they'd love you as I do, instead of calling you a little vagabond."

"Few would believe our story; and those that did would wonder at me,—not love me as you do. They would put me in a cage, and make a show of me; and I should be so miserable I should die. So don't tell who I am, will you?" said Lorelei earnestly.

"Never," cried Fancy, clinging to her. "But, my deary, what will you do when uncle sends you away from me, as he means to do as soon as we go home? I can see you sometimes; but we cannot be always together, and there is no ocean for you to enjoy in the city."

"I shall bear it, if I can, for your sake; if I cannot, I shall come back here, and wait till you come again next year."

"No, no! I will not be parted from you; and, if uncle takes you away, I'll come here, and be a mermaid with you," cried Fancy.

The little friends threw their arms about each other, and were so full of their own feelings that they never saw Uncle Fact's tall shadow flit across them, as he stole away over the soft sand. Poor old gentleman! he was in a sad state of mind, and didn't know what to do; for in all his long life he had never been so puzzled before.

"A mermaid indeed!" he muttered. "I always thought that child was a fool, and now I'm sure of it. She thinks she is a mermaid, and has made Fancy believe it. I've told my wife a dozen times that she let Fancy read too many fairy tales and wonder-books. Her head is full of nonsense, and she is just ready to believe any ridiculous story that is told her. Now, what on earth shall I do? If I put Luly in an asylum, Fancy will break her heart, and very likely they will both run away. If I leave them together, Luly will soon make Fancy as crazy as she is herself, and I shall be mortified by having a niece who insists that her playmate is a mermaid. Bless my soul! how absurd it all is!"

Aunt Fiction had gone to town to see her publishers about a novel she had written, and he didn't like to tell the queer story to any one else; so Uncle Fact thought it over, and decided to settle the matter at once. When the children came in, he sent Fancy to wait for him in the library, while he talked alone with Lorelei. He did his best; but he could do nothing with her,—she danced and laughed, and told the same tale as before, till the old gentleman confessed that he had heard their talk on the rocks: then she grew very sad, and owned that she *was* a mermaid. This made him angry, and he wouldn't believe it for an instant; but told her it was impossible, and she must say something else.

Lorelei could say nothing else, and wept bitterly when he would not listen; so he locked her up and went to Fancy, who felt as if something dreadful was going to happen when she saw his face. He told her all he knew, and insisted that Lorelei was foolish or naughty to persist in such a ridiculous story.

"But, uncle, I really did make a mermaid; and she really did come alive, for I saw the figure float away, and then Lorelei appeared," said Fancy, very earnestly.

"It's very likely you made a figure, and called it a mermaid: it would be just the sort of thing you'd do," said her uncle. "But it is impossible that any coming alive took place, and I won't hear any such nonsense. You didn't see this girl come out of the water; for she says you never looked up, till she touched you. She was a real child, who came over the beach from somewhere; and you fancied she looked like your figure, and believed the silly tale she told you. It is my belief that she is a sly, bad child; and the sooner she is sent away the better for you."

Uncle Fact was so angry and talked so loud, that Fancy felt frightened and bewildered; and began to think he might be right about the mermaid part, though she hated to give up the little romance.

"If I agree that she *is* a real child, won't you let her stay, uncle?" she said, forgetting that, if she lost her faith, her friend was lost also.

"Ah! then you have begun to come to your senses, have you? and are ready to own that you don't believe in mermaids and such rubbish?" cried Uncle Fact, stopping in his tramp up and down the room.

"Why, if you say there never were and never can be any, I suppose I *must* give up my fancy; but I'm sorry," sighed the child.

"That's my sensible girl! Now, think a minute, my dear, and you will also own that it is best to give up the child as well as the mermaid," said her uncle briskly.

"Oh! no: we love one another; and she is good, and I can't give her up," cried Fancy.

"Answer me a few questions; and I'll prove that she isn't good, that you don't love her, and that you *can* give her up," said Uncle Fact, and numbered off the questions on his fingers as he spoke.

"Didn't Luly want you to deceive us, and every one else, about who she was?"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't you like to be with her better than with your aunt or myself?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hadn't you rather hear her songs and stories than learn your lessons?"

"Yes, sir."

"Isn't it wrong to deceive people, to love strangers more than those who are a father and mother to you, and to like silly tales better than useful lessons?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Then, don't you see, that, if Luly makes you do these wrong and ungrateful things, she is not a good child, nor a fit playmate for you?"

Fancy didn't answer; for she couldn't feel that it was so, though he made it seem so. When Uncle Fact talked in that way, she always got confused and gave up; for she didn't know how to argue. He was right in a certain way; but she felt as if she was right also in another way, though she could not prove it: so she hung her head, and let her tears drop on the carpet one by one.

Uncle Fact didn't mean to be unkind, but he did mean to have his own way; and, when he saw the little girl's sad face, he took her on his knee, and said, more mildly:

"Do you remember the story about the German Lorelei, who sung so sweetly, and lured people to death in the Rhine?"

"Yes, uncle; and I like it," answered Fancy, looking up.

"Well, my dear, your Lorelei will lead you into trouble, if you follow her. Suppose she is what you think her,—a mermaid: it is her delight to draw people into the water, where, of course, they drown. If she is what I think her,—a sly, bad child, who sees that you are very simple, and who means to get taken care of without doing any thing useful,—she will spoil you in a worse way than if you followed her into the sea. I've got no little daughter of my own, and I want to keep you as safe and happy as if you were mine. I don't like this girl, and I want you to give her up for my sake. Will you, Fancy?"

While her uncle said these things, all the beauty seemed to fall away from her friend, all the sweetness from their love, and all her faith in the little dream which had made her so happy. Mermaids became treacherous, unlovely, unreal creatures; and Lorelei seemed like a naughty, selfish child, who deceived her, and made her do wrong things. Her uncle had been very kind to her all her life; and she loved him, was grateful, and wanted to show that she was, by pleasing him. But her heart clung to the friend she had made, trusted, and loved; and it seemed impossible to give up the shadow, even though the substance was gone. She put her hands before her face for a moment; then laid her arms about the old man's neck, and whispered, with a little sob:

"I'll give her up; but you'll be kind to her, because I was fond of her once."

As the last word left Fancy's lips, a long, sad cry sounded through the room; Lorelei sprung in, gave her one kiss, and was seen to run swiftly toward the beach, wringing her hands. Fancy flew after; but, when she reached the shore, there was nothing to be seen but the scattered pebbles, shells, and weeds that made the mock mermaid, floating away on a receding wave.

"Do you believe now?" cried Fancy, weeping bitterly, as she pointed to the wreck of her friend, and turned reproachfully toward Uncle Fact, who had followed in great astonishment.

The old gentleman looked well about him; then shook his head, and answered decidedly:

"No, my dear, I *don't*. It's an odd affair; but, I've no doubt, it will be cleared up in a natural way sometime or other."

But there he was mistaken; for this mystery never *was* cleared up. Other people soon forgot it, and Fancy never spoke of it; yet she made very few friends, and, though she learned to love and value Uncle Fact as well as Aunt Fiction, she could not forget her dearest playmate. Year after year she came back to the sea-side; and the first thing she always did was to visit the place where she used to play, and stretch her arms toward the sea, crying tenderly:

"O my little friend! come back to me!"

But Lorelei never came again.

THE END.

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