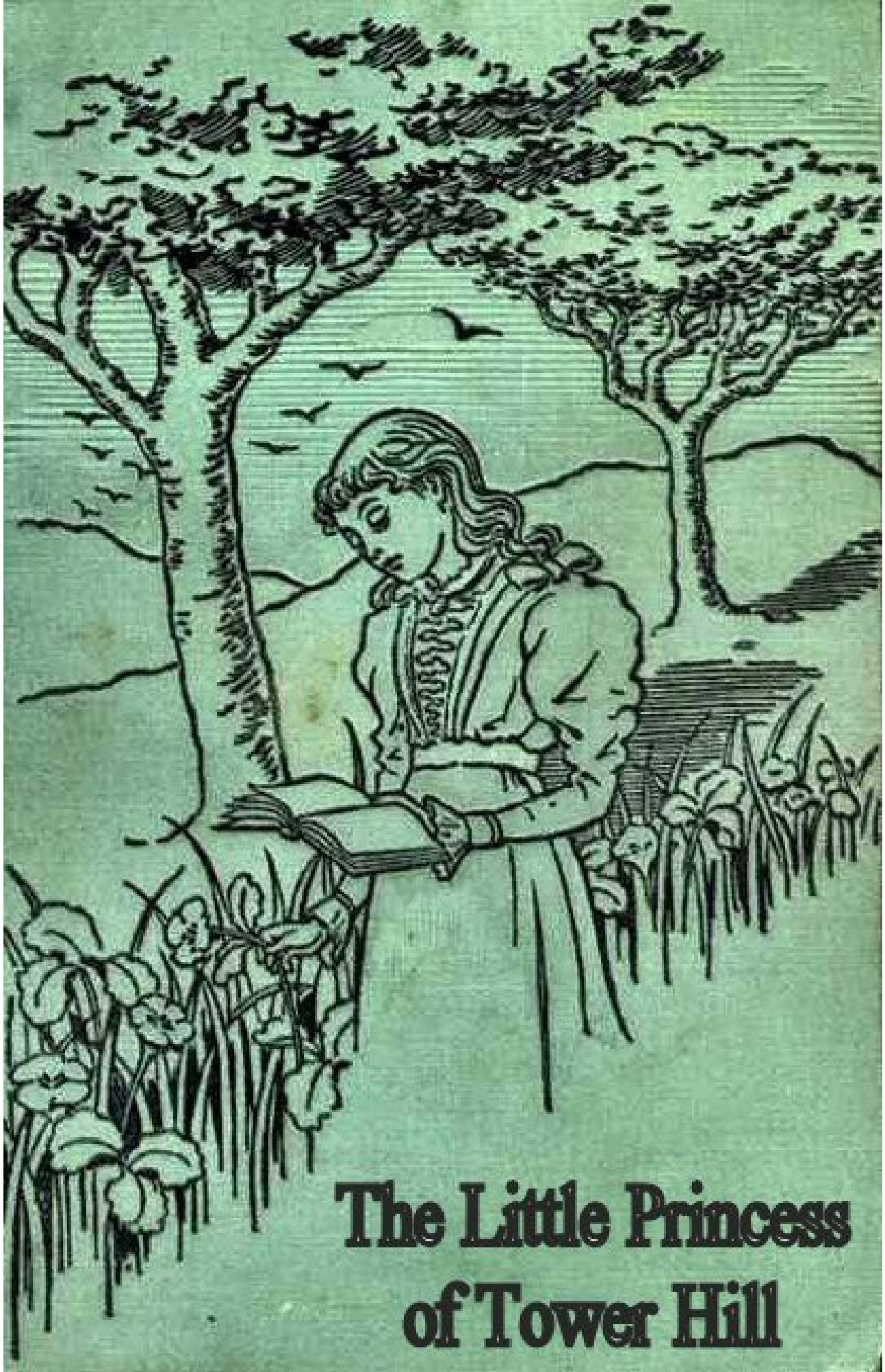

The Little Princess of Tower Hill

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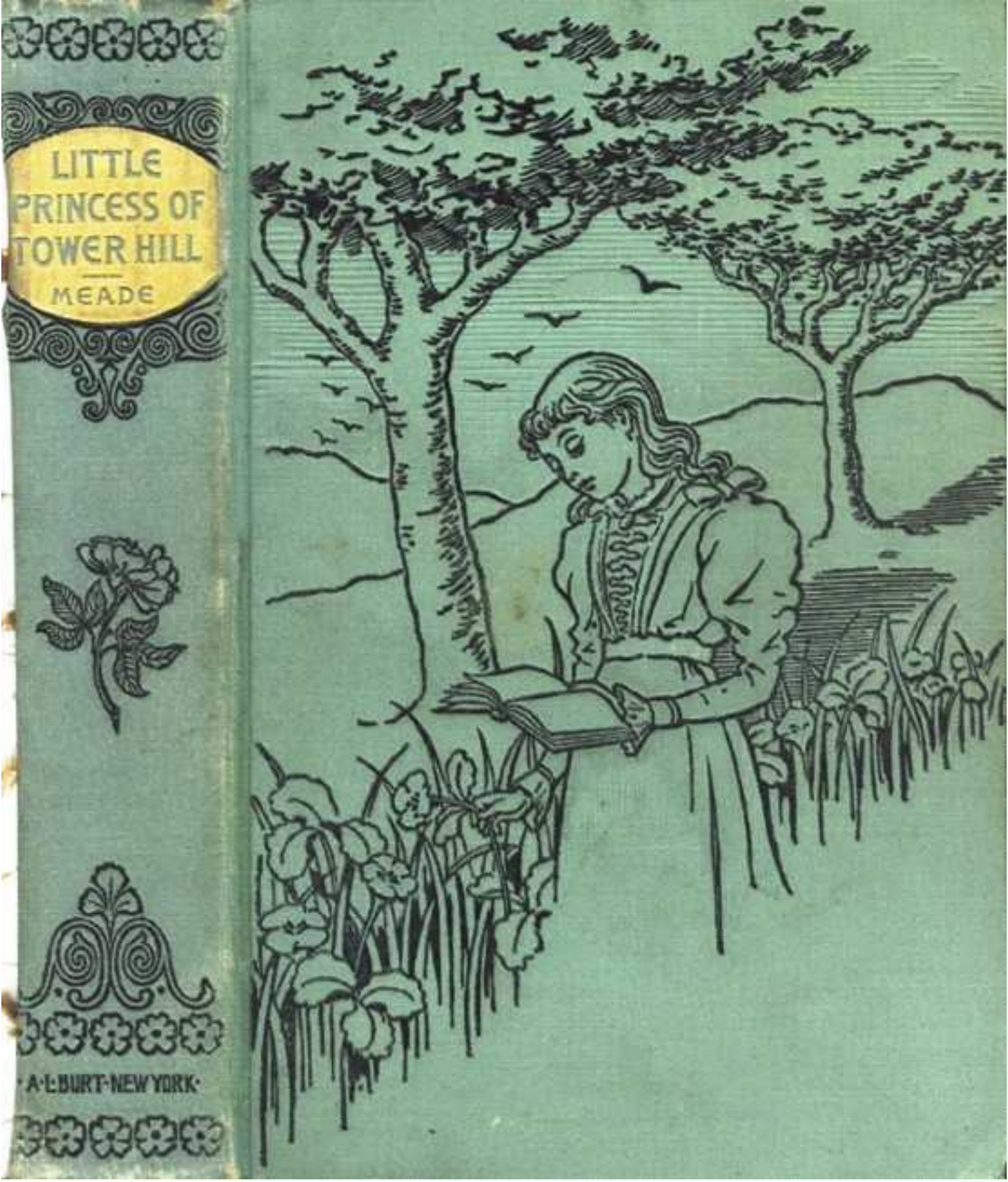
LITTLE
PRINCESS OF
TOWER HILL
MEADE
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"I WILL KNOCK. YOU ARE TO SAY, 'PLEASE IS MRS. ROBBINS IN?'"—Page 171.

THE LITTLE PRINCESS OF TOWER HILL.

By L. T. MEADE,

Author of "A Sweet Girl Graduate," "The Lady of the Forest," "A World of Girls," "Polly", "The Palace Beautiful," etc.

SIX PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK
A. L. BURT, PUBLISHER.

[Transcriber's note: This book contains the following stories as well: "Tom, Pepper, and Trusty", "Billy Anderson and his Troubles", "The Old Organ-Man". The table of contents in the book was only for The Little Princess of Tower Hill. I have created the table of contents for the other stories.]

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THE LITTLE PRINCESS OF TOWER HILL

CHAPTER I.

HER VERY YOUNG DAYS.

All the other children who knew her thought Maggie a wonderfully fortunate little girl. She was sometimes spoken about as the "Little Princess of Tower Hill," for Tower Hill was the name of her father's place, and Maggie was his only child. The children in the village close by spoke of her with great respect, and looked at her with a good deal of longing and also no slight degree of envy, for while they had to run about in darned and shabby frocks, Maggie could wear the gayest and daintiest little dresses, and while they had to trudge sometimes even on little bare feet, Maggie could sit by her mother's side and be carried rapidly over the ground in a most delicious and luxurious carriage, or, better still, she might ride on her white pony Snowball, followed by a groom. The poor children envied Maggie, and admired her vastly, and the children of those people who, compared to Sir John Ascot, Maggie's father, might be considered neither rich nor poor, also thought her one of the most fortunate little girls in existence. Maggie was nearly eight years old, and from her very earliest days there had been a great fuss made about her. At the time of her birth bonfires had been lit, and oxen killed and roasted whole to be given away to the poor people, and Sir John and Lady Ascot did not seem at all disappointed at their baby being a girl instead of a son and heir to the old title and the fine old place. There was a most extraordinary fuss made over Maggie while she was a baby; her mother was never tired of visiting her grand nurseries and watching her as she lay asleep, or smiling at her and kissing her when she opened her big, bright blue eyes. The eyes in question were very pretty, so also was the little face, and the father and mother quite thought that there never was such a baby as their little Maggie. They had christened her Margarita Henrietta Villiers; these were all old family names, and very suitable to the child of proud old county folk. At least so Sir John thought, and his pretty young wife agreed with him, and she gave the servants strict directions that the baby

was to be called Miss Margarita, and that the name was on no account whatever to be abridged or altered. This was very fine as long as the baby could only coo or make little inarticulate sounds, but that will of her own, which from the earliest minutes of her existence Maggie had manifested, came fully into play as soon as she found the full use of her tongue. She would call herself Mag-Mag, and would not answer to Margarita, or pay the smallest heed to any summons which came to her in this guise, and so, simply because they could not help themselves, Sir John and Lady Ascot had almost virtually to rechristen their little daughter, and before she was two years old Maggie was the only name by which she was known.

Years passed, and no other baby came to Tower Hill, and every year Maggie became of a little more importance, and was made a little more fuss about, and as a natural consequence was a little more spoiled. She was a very pretty child; her hair was wavy and curly, and exquisitely fine; in its darkest parts it was nut-brown, but round her temples, and wherever the light fell on it, it was shaded off to the brightest gold; her eyes were large, and blue, and well open; her cheeks were pink, her lips rosy, and she had a saucy, never-me-care look, which her father and mother and the visitors who saw her thought wonderfully charming, but which now and then her nurse and her patient governess, Miss Grey, objected to. All things that money could buy, and all things that love could devise, were lavished at Maggie's feet. Her smallest wishes were instantly granted; the most expensive toys were purchased for her; the most valuable presents were given to her day by day. "Surely," said the village children, "there can be no happier little girl in all the wide, wide world than our little princess. If there is a child who lives always, every day, in a fairy-land, it is Miss Maggie Ascot."

Maggie had two large nurseries to play in, and two nurses to wait upon her, and when she was seven years old a certain gentle-faced, kind-hearted Miss Grey arrived at Tower Hill to superintend the little girl's education. Then a schoolroom was added to her suit of apartments, and then also the troubles of her small life began. Hitherto everything had gone for Maggie Ascot with such smoothness and regularity, with such an eager desire on the part of every one around her not only to grant her wishes, but almost to anticipate them,

that although nurse, and especially Grace, the under-nurse, strongly suspected that Miss Maggie had a temper of her own, yet certainly Sir John and Lady Ascot only considered her a somewhat daring, slightly self-willed, but altogether charming little girl.

With the advent, however, of Miss Grey things were different. Maggie had taken the greatest delight in the furnishing and arranging of her schoolroom; she had laughed and clapped her hands with glee when she saw the pretty book-shelves being put up, and the gayly bound books arranged on them; and when Miss Grey herself arrived, Maggie had fallen quite in love with her, and had sat on her knee, and listened to her charming stories, and in fact for the first day or two would scarcely leave her new friend's side; but when lessons commenced, Maggie began to alter her mind about Miss Grey. That young lady was as firm as she was gentle, and she insisted not only on her little pupil obeying her, but also on her staying still and applying herself to her new duties for at least two hours out of every day. Long before a quarter of the first two hours had expired, Maggie had expressed herself tired of learning to read, and had announced, with her usual charming frankness, that she now intended to run into the garden and pick some roses.

"I WANT TO PICK THOSE WHITE ROSES."—Page 6.

"I want to pick a great quantity of those nice white roses, and some of the prettiest of the buds, and when they are picked, I'll give them all to

you, Miss Grey, darling," she continued, raising her fearless and saucy eyes to her governess' face. "Here you go, you tiresome old book," and the new reading-book was flung to the other side of the room, and Maggie had almost reached the door before Miss Grey had time to say:

"Pick up your book and return to your seat, Maggie dear. You forget that these are lesson hours."

"But I'm tired of lessons," said Maggie, "and I don't wish to do any more. I don't mean to learn to read—I don't like reading—I like being read to. I shan't ever read, I have quite made up my mind. How many roses would you like, Miss Grey?"

"Not any, Maggie; you forget, dear, that Thompson, the gardener, told you last night you were not to pick any more roses at present, for they are very scarce just now."

"Well, what are they there for except for me to pick?" answered the spoiled child, and from that moment Miss Grey's difficulties began. Maggie's hitherto sunshiny little life became to her full of troubles—she could not take pleasure in her lessons, and she failed to see any reason for her small crosses. Miss Grey was kind, and conscientious, and painstaking, but she certainly did not understand the spoiled but warm-hearted little girl she was engaged to teach, and the two did not pull well together. Nurse petted her darling and sympathized with her, and remarked in a somewhat injudicious way to Grace that Miss Maggie's cheeks were getting quite pale, and that she was certain, positive sure, that her brain was being forced into over-ripeness.

"What's over-ripeness?" inquired Maggie as she submitted to her hair being brushed and curled for dinner, and to nurse turning her about with many jerks as she tied her pink sash into the most becoming bow—"what's over-ripeness, nursey, and what has it to say to my brain? That's the part of me what thinks, isn't it?"

"Yes, Miss Maggie dear, and when it's forced unnatural it gets what I call over-ripe. I had a nephew once whose brain went like that—he died eventual of the same cause, for it filled with water."

Maggie's round blue eyes regarded her nurse with a certain gleam of

horror and satisfaction. Miss Grey had now been in the house for three months, and certainly the progress Maggie had made in her studies was not sufficiently remarkable to induce any one to dread evil consequences to her little brain. She trotted down to dinner, and took her usual place opposite her governess. In one of the pauses of the meal, her clear voice was heard addressing Sir John Ascot.

"Father dear, did you ever hear nurse talk of her nephew?"

"No, Mag-Mag, I can't say I have. Nurse does not favor me with much news about her domestic concerns, and she has doubtless many nephews."

"Oh, but this is the one who was over-ripe," answered Maggie, "so you'd be sure to remember about him father."

"What an unpleasant description, little woman!" answered Sir John; "an over-ripe nephew! Don't let's think of him. Have a peach, little one. Here is one which I can promise you is not in that state of incipient decay."

Maggie received her peach with a little nod of thanks, but she was presently heard to murmur to herself:

"I'm over-ripe, too. I quite 'spect I'll soon fill with water."

"What is the child muttering?" asked Sir John of his wife; but Lady Ascot nodded to her husband to take no notice of Maggie, and presently she and her governess left the room.

"My dear," said Lady Ascot to Sir John, when they were alone, "Miss Grey says that our little girl is determined to grow up a dunce—she simply won't learn, and she won't obey her; and I often see Maggie crying now, and nurse is not at all happy about her."

"Miss Grey can't manage her; send her away," pronounced the baronet shortly.

"But, my dear, she seems a very nice, good girl. I have really no reason for giving her notice to leave us—and—and—John, even though Maggie is our only little darling, I don't think we ought to spoil her."

"Spoil her! Bless me, I never saw a better child."

"Yes, my dear, she is all that is good and sweet to us, but she ought to be taught to obey her governess; indeed, I think we must not allow her to have the victory in this matter. If we sent Miss Grey away, Maggie would feel she had won the victory, and she would behave still more badly with the next governess."

"Tut! tut!" said Sir John. "What a worry the world is, to be sure! Of course the little maid must be taught discipline; we'd none of us be anywhere without it; eh, wife? I'll tell you what, Maggie is all alone; she needs a companion. I'll send for Ralph."

"That is a good idea," replied Lady Ascot.

"Well, say nothing about it until I see if my sister can spare him. I'll go up to town to-morrow, and call and see her. Ralph will mold Maggie into shape better than twenty Miss Greys."

CHAPTER II.

FATHER'S SHORT VISITOR.

Ralph's mother was a widow. She had traveled on the Continent for a long time, but had at last taken a small house in London. Sir John intended week after week to go and see his sister, and week after week put off doing so, until it suddenly dawned upon him that Ralph's society might do his own little princess good. Sir John told his wife to say nothing to Maggie about her cousin's visit, as it was quite uncertain whether his mother would spare him, and he did not wish the little maid to be disappointed. Maggie, however, was a very sharp child, and she was much interested in sundry mysterious preparations which were taking place in a certain very pretty bedroom not far from her own nurseries. A little brass bedstead, quite new and bright, was being covered with snowy draperies; and sundry articles which girls were not supposed to care about, but which, nevertheless, Maggie looked at with eyes of the deepest veneration and curiosity, were being placed in the room; among these articles might have been seen some cricket-bats, a pair of boxing-gloves, a couple of racket-balls, and even a little miniature gun. The little gun was harmless enough in its way; it had belonged to Sir John when a lad, but why was it placed in this room, and what did all these preparations mean? Maggie eagerly questioned Rosalie, the under-housemaid, but Rosalie could tell her nothing, beyond the fact that she was bid to make certain preparations in the room, and she supposed one of master's visitors was expected.

"He must be a very short man," said Maggie, laying herself down at full length on the little white bed, and measuring the distance between her feet and the bright brass bars at the bottom; "he'll be about half a foot bigger than me," and then she scampered off to Miss Grey.

"Father's visitor's room is all ready," she said. "How tall should you think he'd be, Miss Grey?"

"Dear me, Maggie, how can I tell? If the visitor is a man, he'll be sure to be somewhere between five feet and six feet; I can't tell you the exact number of inches."

"No, you're as wrong as possible," answered Maggie, clapping her hands. "There's a visitor coming to father, and of course he's a man, or he wouldn't be father's visitor, and he's only about one head bigger than me. He's very manly, too; he likes cricket, and racket, and boxing, and firing guns. His room is full of all those 'licious things. Oh, I wish I was a man too. Miss Grey, darling, how soon shall I be growed up?"

"Not for a long, long time yet. Now do sit straight, dear, and don't cross your legs. Sit upright on your chair, Maggie, like a little lady. Here is your hemming, love; I have turned down a nice piece for you. Now be sure you put in small stitches, and don't prick your finger."

These remarks and these little injunctions always drew a deep frown between Maggie's arched brows.

"Sewing isn't meant for rich little girls like me," she said. "I'm not going to sew when I grow up; I know what I'll do then. I know quite well; when I'm tired I'll sit in an easy-chair and eat lollipops, and when I'm not tired I'll ride on all the wildest horses I can find, and I'll play cricket, and fire guns, and fish, and—and—oh, I wish I was grown up."

Miss Grey, who was by this time quite accustomed to Maggie's erratic speeches, thought it best to take no notice whatever of her present remarks. Maggie would have liked her to argue with her and remonstrate; she would have preferred anything to the calm and perfect stillness of the governess. She was allowed to talk a little while she was at her hemming, and she now turned her conversation into a different channel.

"Miss Grey," she said, "which do you think are the best off, very rich little only children girls, or very poor little many children girls?"

"Maggie dear," replied her governess, "you are asking me, as usual, a silly question. The fact of a little girl being rich and an only child, or the fact of a little girl being poor and having a great many brothers and sisters, has really much less to do with happiness than people

think. Happiness is a very precious possession, and sometimes it is given to people who look very pale and suffering, and sometimes it is denied to those who look as if they wanted for nothing."

"That's me," said Maggie, uttering a profound sigh. "I'm rich and I want for nothing, and I'm the mis'rable one, and Jim, the cripple in our village, is poor, and he hasn't got no nice things, and he's the happy one. Oh, how I wish I was Jim the cripple."

"Why, Maggie, you would not surely like to give up your dear father and mother to be somebody else's child."

"No, of course not. They'd have to be poor too. Mother would have to take in washing and father—I'm afraid father would have to put on ragged clothes, and go about begging from place to place. I don't think Jim, the cripple, has any father, but I couldn't do without mine, so he'd have to be a beggar and go about from place to place to get pennies for mother and me. We'd be darling and poor, and we couldn't afford to keep you, Miss Grey, and I wouldn't mind that at all, 'cause then I need never do reading and hemming, and I'd be as ignoram as possible all my days."

Just at this moment somebody called Maggie, and she was told to put on her out-door things, and to go for a drive with her mother in the carriage.

Maggie was a very sharp little girl, and she could not help noticing a certain air of expectancy on Lady Ascot's face, and a certain brightening of her eyes, particularly when Maggie, in her usual impetuous fashion, asked eager questions about the very short gentleman visitor who was coming to stay with father.

"He's not four feet high," said Maggie. "I am sure I shall like him greatly; he'll be a sort of companion to me, and I know he must be very brave."

"Why do you know that, little woman?" asked Lady Ascot in an amused voice "Oh, 'cause, 'cause—his gun, and his fishing-tackle, and his boxing-gloves have been sent on already. Of course he must be brave and manly, or father would have nothing to say to him. But as he's only three inches taller than me, I'm thinking perhaps he'll be

tired keeping up with father's long steps, when they go out shooting together; and so perhaps he will really like to make a companion of me."

"I should not be surprised, Maggie—I should not be the least surprised, and now I'm going to tell you a secret. We are going at this very moment to drive to Ashburnham station to meet father and his gentleman visitor."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Maggie, "and do you know the visitor? Have you seen him before? What is his name?"

"His name is Ralph, and though I have heard a great deal about him, it so happens I have never seen him."

"Mr. Ralph," repeated Maggie, softly; "it's a nice short name, and easy to remember. I think Mr. Ralph is a very good name indeed for father's little tiny gentleman visitor."

All during their drive to Ashburnham Maggie chattered, and laughed, and wondered. Her bright little face looked its brightest, and her merry blue eyes quite danced with fun and happiness. No wonder her mother thought her a most charming little girl, and no wonder the village children looked at the pretty and beautifully dressed child with eyes of envy and admiration!

When they reached Ashburnham station, Lady Ascot got out of the carriage, and taking Maggie's hand in hers, went on the platform. They had scarcely arrived there before the train from London puffed into the station, and Sir John Ascot was seen to jump out of a first-class smoking carriage, accompanied by a brown-faced, slender-looking boy, whose hands were full of parcels, and who began to help Sir John vigorously, and to indignantly disdain the services of the porter, and of Sir John's own groom, who came up at that moment.

"No, thank you; I wish to hold these rabbits myself," he exclaimed, "and my pigeons. Uncle John, will you please hand me down that cage? Oh, aren't my fantails beauties!"

"Mother," exclaimed Maggie in a low, breathless voice, "is that the gentleman visitor?"

"Yes, darling, your cousin Ralph Grenville. Ralph is your visitor, Maggie, not your father's. Come up and let me introduce you. Ralph, my dear boy, how do you do? I am your aunt. I am very glad to see you. Welcome to Tower Hill!"

"Are you Aunt Beatrice?" answered the brown-faced boy. "How do you do, Aunt Beatrice? Oh, I do hope my fishing-tackle is safe."

"And this is your Cousin Maggie," proceeded Lady Ascot. "You and Maggie must be great friends."

"Do you like fantails?" asked Ralph, looking full at his little cousin.

"Do you mean those darling white birds in the cage?" answered Maggie, her cheeks crimsoning.

"I CAUGHT HIM MY OWN SELF."—Page 21.

"Yes; I've got some pouters at home, but I only brought the fantails here. I hope you've got a nice pigeon-cote at Tower Hill. Oh, my

rabbits, my bunnies! Help me, Maggie; one of them has got loose; help me, Maggie, to catch him."

Before either Sir John or Lady Ascot could interfere, the two children had disappeared into a crowd of porters, passengers, and luggage. Lady Ascot uttered a scream of dismay, but Sir John said coolly:

"Let them be. The little lad has got his head screwed on the right way; and if I don't mistake, my pretty maid can hold her own with anybody. Don't agitate yourself, Bee; they'll be back all right in a moment."

So they were, Maggie holding a huge white rabbit clasped against her beautiful embroidered frock. The rabbit scratched and struggled, but Maggie held him without flinching, although her face was very red.

"I caught him my own self," she screamed. "Ralph couldn't, 'cause his hands were too full."

"Pop him into this cage now," exclaimed the boy. "Uncle John, has a separate trap come for all the luggage? and if so, may I go home in it? I must watch my bunnies, and I should like to keep the fantails on my lap."

"Well, yes, Ralph," replied Sir John Ascot in an amused voice. "I have no doubt the dog-cart has turned up by now. Do you think you can manage to stick on, my boy? The mare is very fresh."

"I stick on? Rather!" answered Ralph. "You may hold the cage with the bunnies, if you like, while I step up, Jo—Maggie, I mean."

"I'd like to go up there, too, father," whispered little Miss Ascot's full round tones.

"No, no, bairnie," answered the baronet. "I don't want your pretty little neck to be broken. There, hop into the carriage beside mother, and I'll get in the dog-cart to keep this young scamp out of mischief. Now then, off we go. We'll all be at home in a twinkling."

CHAPTER III.

SNUBBED.

When the children met next it was at tea-time. There was a very nice and tempting tea prepared in Maggie's schoolroom, and Miss Grey presided, and took good care to attend to the wants of the hungry little traveler. Ralph looked a very different boy sitting at the tea-table munching bread-and-butter, and disposing of large plates of strawberries and cream, from what he did when Maggie met him at Ashburnham station. He was no longer in the least excited; he was neatly dressed, with his hair well brushed, and his hands extremely clean and gentlemanly. He was polite and attentive to Miss Grey, and thanked her in quite a sweet voice for the little attentions which she lavished upon him. Maggie was far too excited to feel hungry. She could scarcely take her round blue eyes off Ralph, who, for his part, did not pay her the smallest attention. He was conversing in quite a proper and grown-up tone with the governess.

"Do you really like flat countries best?" he said. "Ah! I suppose, then, you must suffer from palpitation. Mother does very much—she finds sal volatile does her good; did you ever try that? When I next write to mother, I'll ask her to send me a little bottle, and when you feel an attack coming on, I'll measure some drops for you. If you take ten drops in a little water, and then lie down, you don't know how much better you'll get. Thank you, yes, I'll have another cup of tea. I like a good deal of cream, please, and four or five lumps of sugar; if the lumps are small, I don't mind having six. Well, what were we talking about? Oh, scenery! I like hilly scenery. I like to get on the top of a hill, and race down as fast as ever I can to the bottom. Sometimes I shout as I go—it's awfully nice shouting out loud as you're racing through the air. Did you ever try that? Oh, I forgot; you couldn't if you suffer from palpitation."

"I like steep mountains, and flying over big precipices," here burst from Maggie. "I hate flat countries, and I don't think much of running

down little hills. Give me the mountains and the precipices, and you'll see how I'll scamper."

Ralph raised his eyebrows a tiny bit, smiled at Maggie with a gentle pity in his face, and then, without vouchsafing any comment to her audacious observations, resumed his placid conversation with the governess.

"Mother and I have been a good deal in Switzerland, you know," he continued, "so of course we can really judge what scenery is like. I got tired of those great mountains after a bit. I'm very fond indeed of England, particularly since I have spent so much of my time with Jo. Do you know my little friend Jo, Miss Grey?"

"No, Mr. Ralph, I cannot say I do. Is he a nice little boy? Is he about your age?"

Ralph laughed, but in a very moderate "I beg your pardon," he exclaimed. "I hope you were not hurt when I laughed. Mother says it's very rude to laugh at a grown-up lady, but it seemed so funny to hear you speak of Jo as a boy. She's a girl, quite the very nicest girl in the world; her real name is Joanna, but I call her Jo."

Here Maggie, who, after Ralph's ignoring of her last audacious observation, had been getting through her tea in a subdued manner, brightened up considerably, shook back her shining curls, and said in a much more gentle voice than she had hitherto used:

"I should like to see her."

"You!" said Ralph. "She's not the least in your style. Well, I've done my tea. Have you done your tea, Miss Grey? And may I leave the table, please? I should like to have a run around the place before it gets dark."

"And may I come with you?" asked Maggie.

"Oh, yes, Mag! Come along."

Ralph held out his hand, which Maggie took with a great deal of gratitude in her heart, and the two children went out together into the sweet summer air.

Ralph first of all inspected his pigeons, and then his rabbits. He grumbled a good deal over the arrangements made for the reception of his pets, and informed Maggie that the hutch for the rabbits was but small and close, and that the dove-cote must be altered immediately, and that he would take care to speak to his Uncle John about it in the morning.

Maggie agreed with every word Ralph said. She, too, pronounced the hutch small and dirty, and said the dove-cote must be altered, and while she echoed her cousin's sentiments, she felt herself quite big and important, and turned away from the rather smiling eyes of Jim, the stable-boy, who was in attendance on the pair.

The children then proceeded to the stable, where Maggie's pretty snow-white pony was kept.

"Ah!" said Ralph, "I wish you could see my horse. My horse is black, and rather bigger than this, and he has an eye of fire and such a beautiful glossy, arched neck. I can tell you it is worth something to see Raven. Yes, Maggie, Snowball is rather a nice little pony, and very well suited for you, I should imagine."

"I don't like him much," said Maggie, who until this moment had adored her pet. "I like flashy, frisky horses. I like them fresh, don't you, Ralph?"

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Ralph rather pertly. "Now where shall we go?"

"Oh, Ralph, I should like to show you my garden. I dare say father will give you a little garden near mine if we ask him. I'm building a rockery. I don't work in my garden very often, 'cause it's rather tiresome, but I like building my rockery, and when we go to the seaside, I shall gather lots of shells for it. Come, Ralph, this is the way."

"Never mind to-night," said Ralph. "Here is a nice seat on this little mossy bank. If you like to sit by me, Maggie, we can talk."

Maggie was only too pleased. Ralph stretched himself on the soft velvety grass, put his hands under his head, and gazed up at the sky;

Maggie took care to imitate his position in all particulars. She also put her hands under her head, and gazed through her shady hat up at the tall trees where the rooks were going to sleep.

That night the rather spoiled little princess of Tower Hill lay awake for some time. It was very unusual for Maggie to remain for an instant out of the land of dreams. The moment she laid her curly head on the pillow she entered that pleasant country, and, as a rule, she stayed there and enjoyed delightful times with other dream-children until the morning. On the present occasion, however, sleep did not visit her so quickly; she was disturbed by the events of the day. Ralph was a very new experience in her little life; she thought of all he had said to her, of how he had looked, of his extreme manliness, his fearlessness, and his great politeness to Miss Grey. Maggie owned with a half-sigh that there was nothing at all particularly gracious in Ralph's manners to her.

"But I like him all the better for that," she thought. "He treats me as an equal; most likely half the time he forgets that I'm a girl, and believes that I'm a boy like himself. I wish I were a boy! Wouldn't it be jolly to climb trees, and fish, and go out shooting with father! I'd be a great comfort to Ralph if I were a boy, but I'm not; that's the worst of it. How I do wish my pony was black, and was called Raven! I think I'll ask father to sell Snowball; he's rather a fat, stupid little horse. Ralph's horse has an eye of fire. How splendid he must be! I wonder if Jo has got a horse too, and if it is black, and if its eyes flash. Jo must be a splendid girl. How Ralph did look when he spoke of her! I wish I knew her! Ralph talks of her as if she were as good as a boy. I dare say she climbs trees, and fishes, and shoots. I should like Ralph to talk of me as he talks of Jo."

At this stage of Maggie's meditations her bright eyes closed very gently, and she remembered nothing more until the morning.

The sun shone brightly into her room when she awoke; she had been dreaming about Jo. She sprang up instantly, and began to dress herself. This feat she had never accomplished before in her life. Two servants, as a rule, waited on the little princess when she made her toilet, but now, with a vivid dream of the manly Jo in her mind, and with some vague ideas that she would please Ralph if she were up

very bright and early, she proceeded to tumble into her cold bath, and then, after an untidy fashion, to scramble into her clothes. At last her dressing was completed, she knelt down for a moment by her bedside to utter a very hasty little childish prayer, and then ran softly out of her bedroom. She certainly did not know how early it was, but as there was no one stirring in the house, and as she did not wish nurse to find her and to call her back, and perhaps pop her once more into bed, she went on tiptoe along the passages until she reached her Cousin Ralph's bedroom door. She opened the door and went in. The large window of Ralph's bedroom exactly faced his little white bed; the blind of the window was up to the top, and the full light of the morning sun shone directly on the little sleeper's face. Oh, how delightful! thought Maggie. Ralph was still sound, sound asleep; she was the good one now, for Ralph was decidedly lazy. She went softly to the bedside and gazed at her cousin. His arms were thrown up over his head; he was lying on his back, and breathing softly and easily. Ralph had a handsome little face, and it looked gentle and sweet in his slumbers. The dauntless expression of his dark eyes, and the somewhat scornful and hard way in which he looked when he addressed himself to Maggie, were no longer perceptible. Maggie had a loving little heart, and it went out to her stranger cousin now.

"I hope some day he'll like me as well as he does Jo," she murmured, and then she bent down and printed the lightest of light kisses on his forehead.

"Bother those flies," muttered Ralph, raising his hand to brush the offending kiss away. This remark caused Maggie to burst into a peal of laughter, and of course her laugh aroused the young sleeper.

"Yes, I'm up," said Maggie, dancing softly up and down. "I'm up, and I'm dressed, and I'm ready to go into the garden. Don't you think it's very good of me to get up so early? Don't you think I'm about as good as that Jo of yours?"

Ralph had recovered from his first surprise, and now he gazed tranquilly at his little cousin.

"What's the hour?" he asked.

Maggie said, "I don't know."

"Well, you'd better find out," responded Ralph; "it feels very early. My watch is on the dressing-table. Do you know the time by a watch yet? If you can read it, you may, and tell me the hour. How untidily you have dressed yourself!"

Maggie felt herself growing very red when Ralph asked her if she could tell the hour by a watch. The fact was, she could not; she had always been too lazy to learn. She went in a faltering way to the dressing-table, feeling quite sure in her little heart that Jo knew all about watches, and that if she revealed her ignorance to Ralph, he would despise her for the rest of her life. Just at this moment, however, relief came, for the stable clock was heard to strike very distinctly. It struck four times.

"It's four o'clock," said Maggie.

"Yes, and what a muff you are!" answered Ralph. "Four o'clock! Why, it's the middle of the night. Good-night, Maggie. Please go away, and shut the door after you."

"Then you're not getting up?" questioned the little cousin wistfully.

"Getting up? No, thank you, not for many an hour to come. Good-night, Maggie. I don't want to be rude, but you really are a little worry coming in and waking me in this fashion."

CHAPTER IV.

THE STABLE CLOCK.

It was rather desolate standing at the other side of Ralph's door in the passage. There was plenty of light in the passage, but no sunshine, and Maggie felt her excitement cooling down and her heart beating tranquilly again. All that delightful energy and zest which she had shown when dressing herself, which she had felt when she had danced into her cousin's room, had forsaken her. She walked slowly back to her own little chamber, wondering what she had better do now, and thinking how very disagreeable it was to be spoken of as "a muff." Was it really only the middle of the night, and had she better just ignominiously undress herself and go back to bed?

No; she would not do that. It was horrid to think of Ralph sound and happily asleep, and of nurse asleep, and father and mother also in the land of dreams. Maggie felt quite forlorn, and as if she were alone in the world. But at this moment a thrush perched itself on a bough of clematis just outside the window, and sang a delicious morning song. The little princess clapped her hands.

"The birdies are up!" she exclaimed. "I expect lots of delightful creatures are up in the garden. I'll go into the garden. Perhaps, after all, Ralph is more of a muff than me."

She swung her garden hat on her head, and ran softly and quickly downstairs. All the doors were barred and locked; the place felt intensely still and strange; but Maggie found egress through a small side window, which she easily opened; and, once in the garden, her loneliness and sadness vanished like magic. She laughed aloud, and ran gayly hither and thither. The butterflies were out, the birds were having a splendid morning concert, and the flowers were opening their petals and taking their morning breakfast from the sunshine.

"Oh, dear! Ralph is the muff, and I am the good one, after all!" exclaimed Maggie aloud. She ran until she was tired, then went into

an arbor at one end of a long grass walk, and sat down to rest herself. In a moment the most likely thing happened—she fell asleep. She slept in the arbor, with her head resting on the rustic table, until the stable clock struck six; that sound awoke her. She rubbed her drowsy eyes and looked around. Jim, the boy who had smiled the night before when he saw Maggie and Ralph talking together, passed the entrance to the little arbor at this moment with a bag of tools slung over his shoulder. Maggie called to him:

"Jim, come here; aren't you surprised? I'm up, you see."

"Why, Miss Maggie!" exclaimed the astonished stable-boy, "you a sitting in the arbor at this hour, miss! Oh, dear! oh, dear! ain't you very cold, missie? And was you overtook with sleep, and did you spend the night here? Why, I 'spect your poor pa and ma were in a fine fright about you, Miss Maggie."

"Oh, do, they are not," answered Maggie, shaking herself, and running up to Jim, and taking hold of one of his hands. "They know nothing at all about it, Jim. They are all in their beds, every one of them, sound, fast asleep. Even my new Cousin Ralph is asleep. He said I was a muff, but I 'spect he is. Isn't it 'licious being up so bright and early, Jim?"

"Well, no, missie, I don't think it is. I likes to lie in bed uncommon myself, so I do. I 'ates getting up of a morning, Miss Maggie; and whenever I gets a holiday, don't I take it out in my bed, that's all!"

"Oh, you poor Jim!" said Maggie in a very compassionate tone. "I didn't know bed was thought such a treat; I don't find it so. Well, Jim, I'm glad, anyhow, you're obliged to be up this morning, 'cause you and me, we can be company to one another. I'm going with you into the stable-yard now."

"Oh! but, missie, I has to clean out Snowball's stable, and get another stable ready for Master Ralph's pony Raven, and that's all work that a little lady could have no call to mix with. I think, missie, if I was you, I'd go straight back to my bed, and have another hour or two before Sir John and her ladyship are up."

But Maggie shook her head very decidedly over this proposition.

"No," she said, "I'm going to the stable-yard; I'm going to look at Snowball. I don't think very much of Snowball; I think he'll have to be sold."

Jim opened his eyes and raised his eyebrows a trifle at this proof of inconstancy on Maggie's part, but he thought fit to offer no verbal objection, and the two walked together in the direction of the stables. Here the large stable clock attracted the erratic little maid's attention; she suddenly remembered the dreadful feeling of shame which had swept over her when Ralph had asked her to tell him the hour. She had earnestly wished at that moment that she had been a good child, and had learned how to tell the time when Miss Grey offered to teach her. It would never do for Ralph to discover her deficiency in this matter. Perhaps Jim could teach her. She turned to him eagerly.

"Jim, do you know what o'clock it is?"

"Yes, missie, of course; it's a quarter-past six."

"Oh! how clever of you, Jim, to know that. Did you find it out by looking up at the stable clock?"

"Why, of course, Miss Maggie; there it is in front of us. You can see for yourself."

Maggie's face became very grave, and her eyes assumed quite a sad expression.

"I want to whisper something to you, Jim," she said. "Stoop down; I want to say it very, very low. I don't know the clock time."

Jim received this solemn secret in a grave manner. He was silent for a moment; then he said slowly:

"You can learn it, I suppose, Miss Maggie?"

"Oh, yes, dear Jim; and you can teach me."

Jim began to rumple up his hair and to look perplexed.

"I—oh! that's another thing," he said.

"Yes, you can, Jim; and you must begin right away. There's a big,

round white thing, and there are little figures marked on it; and there are two hands that move, 'cause I've watched them; and there's a funny thing at the bottom that goes tick-tick all the time."

"That's the pend'lum, Miss Maggie."

"Yes, the pend'lum," repeated Maggie glibly. "I'll remember that word; I won't forget. Now, go on, Jim. What's the next thing?"

"Well, there's the two 'ands, miss; the little 'and points to the hours, and the big 'un to the minutes."

"It sounds very puzzling," said Maggie.

"So it is, miss; so it is. You couldn't learn the clock not for a score of days. I took a week of Sundays over it myself, and I'm not to say dull. The clock's a puzzler, Miss Maggie, and can't be learned off in a jiffy, anyhow."

"Well, but, Jim, Ralph mustn't find out; he mustn't ever find out that I don't know it. It would be quite dreadful what Ralph would think of me then; he wouldn't ever, ever believe that I could turn out as well as Jo. You don't think Jo such a wonderful girl, do you, Jim?"

"Oh, no, Miss Maggie; I don't think nothing at all about her. I'd better get to my work now, miss."

"Yes, but you must teach me something about the old clock, just to make Ralph s'pose I know about the hour."

"Well, miss, you can talk a little bit about the pend'lum, and the big 'and and the little 'un, and you can say that you think the stable clock is fast; it is that same, miss, and that will sound very 'cute. Now I must go to my sweeping. William will be round almost immediately, and he'll be ever so angry if I have nothing done, so you'll please to excuse me, miss."

Maggie left the stable-yard rather discontentedly.

It was not yet half-past six, and breakfast would not be on the table for two long hours. What should she do? After all, perhaps she was a muff to get up in the middle of the night; perhaps she was the silly

one, and Ralph, so snug and rosy and comfortable in his little bed, was the wise and good one. Some things very like tears came to Maggie's bright blue eyes as she turned back again to the garden, for she was beginning to feel a little tired, and oh! very, very hungry. She wondered if Jo ever got up at four o'clock in the morning, and if Ralph had ever called Jo a muff; but of course he had not. Jo was doubtless one of those unpleasant model little girls about whom nurse sometimes spoke to her on Sunday: little girls who always did at once what their old nurses told them, who never rumpled their pinafores, nor made their hair untidy, nor soiled their clean hands, but walked instead of running, and smiled instead of laughing. Nurse had spoken over and over of these dear little lady-like misses. These little girls delighted in doing plain needlework, and were intensely happy when they conquered a fresh word in their reading, and they always adored their governesses, and were rather sorry when holiday time came. When nurse spoke about these children, Maggie usually interrupted her vehemently with the exclamation. "I hate that proper good little girl!" and then nurse's small twinkling brown eyes would grow full of suppressed fun, and she would passionately kiss her spoiled darling.

Maggie, as she walked through the garden, where the dew was still sparkling, quite made up her mind that Jo belonged to this unpleasant order of little maids, and she determined to dislike her very much. As she was sauntering slowly along she passed a small narrow path which led into a shrubbery; directly through the shrubbery was another path, which branched out in the direction of Maggie's neglected garden; suppose she went and did a little weeding in her garden; or no, suppose she did what would be much more enchanting, suppose she paid a visit to Ralph's rabbits! Ralph had complained the night before of the hutch where his pets had been put; he had grumbled at its not being bright enough, and large enough, and clean enough. Suppose Maggie went and furbished it up a little, and looked at Ralph's pets, and gave them some lettuce leaves to eat.

In a moment she had flown through the shrubbery, had passed the little neglected garden and the half-finished rockery, and was kneeling down by the hutch where Ralph's rabbits had made for

themselves a new home.

There they were, two beautiful snow-white creatures, with long silky hair, and funny bright red eyes, and pink noses. They had not a black hair on either of their glossy coats. Ralph had said they were very valuable rabbits, and because of the extreme purity of their coats he had called them Lily and Bianco. Maggie, too, thought them lovely; she bent close to the bars of the hutch and called them to her, and tried to stroke their noses through the little round holes. Bianco was very tame, but Lily was a little shy, and kept in the background, and did not allow her nose to be rubbed. Maggie showered endearing names on her; no pet she had ever possessed herself seemed equal to Ralph's snow-white rabbits. After playing with them for a little she ran into the kitchen garden to fetch some lettuce leaves, and with a good bundle in her arms returned to the rabbit-hutch. At so tempting a sight even Lily lost her shyness, and pressed her nose against the bars of her cage, and struggled to get at the tempting green food.

"They shall come out and eat their breakfasts in peace and comfort, the darlings!" exclaimed Maggie. "Here, I'll make a nice pile of it just by this tree, and I'll open the door, and out they'll both come. While they are eating I can be cleaning the hutch. What a nice useful girl I am, after all! I expect Ralph will think I'm quite as good as that stupid old Jo of his. Come along, Bianco pet; here's your dear little breakfast ready for you. Oh, you darling, precious Lily! you need not be afraid of me. I would not hurt a hair of your lovely coat."

Open went the door of the hutch, and out scampered the two white rabbits. They bounded in rabbit fashion toward the green lettuces, and when Maggie saw them happily feeding, she turned her attention to the hutch.

"No, this is not a proper hutch," she said to herself. "It's not large enough, nor roomy enough, nor handsome enough. I don't wonder at poor Ralph being put out—he felt he was treated shabby. I must speak to father about it. There must be a new hutch made as quick as possible. Well, I had better clean this one while the dear bunnies are at their breakfast. I'll see if I can get some fresh straw. I'll run round to the yard and try if I can pull some straw out of one of the ricks. I really am most useful. Good-by, Bianco and Lily; I'll be back

with you in a moment, dear little pets."

The rabbits did not pay the slightest heed to Maggie's loving words. It is to be feared that, beautiful as they were in person, they possessed but small and selfish natures; they liked fresh lettuces very much, and when they had eaten enough they looked around somewhat shyly, after the manner of timid little creatures. The whole place represented a strange world to them, but as there was not a soul in sight, they thought they might explore this new land a little. Bianco bounded on in front, and looked back at Lily; Lily scampered after her companion. In a short time they found themselves on the boundary of a green and shady and pleasant-looking wood. In this wood doubtless abounded those many good and tempting things to which rabbits as a race are partial. They went a little further, and lost themselves in the soft green herbage. When Maggie returned to the rabbit-hutch, with her arms full of straw and her rosy cheeks much flushed, Bianco and Lily were nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER V.

THE EMPTY HUTCH.

At breakfast that morning Lady Ascot noticed how tired Maggie looked—her blue eyes were swollen as if she had been crying, her pretty cheeks were very red, and she did not come to table with at all her usual appetite. Maggie always breakfasted with her father and mother. She also had her early dinner at their lunch, but her own lunch and tea she took in the schoolroom with Miss Grey. Miss Grey was now present at the breakfast-table, and so also was Ralph. Ralph was a very slight and thin boy, with a dark face and bright eyes. He looked uncommonly well this morning, remarkably neat in his person, and altogether a striking contrast to poor disheveled little Maggie. Maggie felt afraid to raise her eyes from her plate. When her mother noticed her fatigue and languor, she knew that Ralph's quizzical and laughing gaze was upon her, and that his lips were softly moving to the inaudible words:

"Little muff, she got up in the middle of the night! She got up in the middle of the night!"

Maggie would have been quite saucy enough, and independent enough, to be indifferent to these remarks of Ralph's, and perhaps even to pay him back in his own coin, but for the loss of the rabbits. Bianco and Lily were gone, however; the hutch was empty; it was all the little princess' fault, and, in consequence, her versatile spirits had gone down to zero. With all her faults—and she had plenty—Maggie was far too honest a child to think of concealing what she had done from her cousin. She meant to tell him, but she had dreaded very much going through her revelation, and she felt that his contempt and anger would be very bitter and hard to bear. Maggie always sat next her father at breakfast, and he now patted her on her hot cheeks, looked tenderly at her, and piled the choicest morsels on her plate.

"The little maid does not look quite the thing," Sir John called across

the table to his wife. "I think we must give her a holiday. Miss Grey, you won't object to a holiday, I am sure, and Ralph and Maggie will have plenty to do with one another."

"If you please, sir," here burst from Ralph, "do you mind coming round with me after breakfast and seeing to the accommodation of the rabbits and pigeons? I think my rabbits want a larger and better hutch, if you please, Uncle John."

"All right, my boy, we'll see about them," replied the good-natured uncle. "Hullo, little maid, what is up with you—where are you off to?"

"I—I don't want any breakfast. I'm tired," said Maggie, and before her father could again interrupt her she ran out of the room.

Her heart was full, there was a limit to her endurance; she could not go with Sir John and her Cousin Ralph to look at the empty hutch. She wondered what she should do; she wished with all her heart at this moment that Ralph had never come, that he had never brought those tiresome and beautiful rabbits to tempt her to open the door of their prison, and so unwittingly set them free. She ran once more into the garden, and went in a forlorn manner into the shrubbery; she had a kind of wild vain hope that Bianco and Lily might be tired of having run away, and might have returned to their new home. She approached the rabbit-hutch; alas! the truants were nowhere in sight; she stooped down and looked into the empty home; and just at this moment voices were heard approaching, the clear high voice of her boy cousin, accompanied by Sir John's deeper tones. Maggie had nothing for it but to hide, and the nearest and safest way for her to accomplish this feat was to climb into a large tree which partly over-shaded the rabbit-hutch. Maggie could climb like any little squirrel, and Sir John and Ralph took no notice of a rustling in the boughs as they approached. Her heart beat fast; she crouched down in the green leafy foliage, and hoped and trusted they would not look up. There was certainly no chance of their doing that. When Ralph discovered that his pets were gone, he gave vent to something between a howl and a cry of agony, and then, dragging his uncle by the arm, they both set off in a vain search for the missing pets—Bianco and Lily. No one knew better than poor Maggie did how slight was their chance of finding them. She wondered if she might leave

her leafy prison, if she would have time to rush in to nurse or mother before Ralph came back. She thought she might try. It would be such a comfort to put her head on mother's breast and tell the story to this sympathizing friend. She had just made the first rustling in the old tree, preparatory to her descent, when Sir John's portly form was seen returning. He was coming back alone, and, after a fashion he had, was saying aloud:

"Very strange occurrence. 'Pon my word, quite mysterious. Whoever did open the door of the hutch? Surely Jim would not be so mischievous! I must question him, and if I think the young rascal is telling me a lie, he shall go—yes, he shall go. I won't be humbugged. And Ralph, poor lad! It's a disgrace to have my sister's son annoyed in this way on the very first morning of his visit. Why, hullo, Maggie, little woman! What are you doing up there?"

"I'm coming down if you'll just wait a minute, father," called down Maggie. "Oh, please, father, stand close under the tree, and don't let Ralph see us. I'm coming down as hard as ever I can. There, please stretch up your hand, father; when I catch it I'll jump."

"Into my arms," said Sir John, folding her tight in a loving embrace. "My darling, you are not well. You are all trembling. What is the matter, little woman?"

"Nothing, father; only I wanted to speak to you so badly, and I didn't want Ralph to hear. I heard you say that perhaps Jim did it, and you'd send him away. 'Twasn't Jim, 'twas me. I'm miserable about it—'twas all me, father."

"All you? Mag-Mag, what do you mean?"

"I let them out, father. I gave poor Bianco and Lily some nice lettuce leaves just here under the tree. See, they have not quite finished what I gave them. While they were feeding I thought I'd clean the hutch to please Ralph, and I ran round to the hay-rick for some fresh hay, and when I came back Bianco and Lily were gone. I spent all the time before breakfast looking for them, but I couldn't see them anywhere. Poor Jim had nothing to do with it, father. I did see Jim this morning. I think he's an awfully good boy. Father, Jim had nothing to do with opening the door of the hutch—it was all me."

"Yes, Maggie, so it seems. Ah! here comes Ralph himself. Now, my dear little maid, you really need not be frightened. I'll undertake to break the tidings to Master Ralph. You were a good child to tell me the truth, Maggie."

"I can't find them anywhere, uncle," called back Ralph, in his high voice. "Who could have been the mischievous person? Don't you think it was very wicked, Uncle John, for any one to open my hutch door? I expect some thief came and stole them. I suppose you are a magistrate, Uncle John; I hope you are, and that you'll have a warrant issued immediately, so that the person who stole my Bianco and Lily may find themselves locked up in prison. Why, if that is not Maggie standing behind you. How very, very queer you look, Maggie!"

Sir John laid his hand on Ralph's shoulder.

"The fact is, my lad," he said, "this poor dear little maid of mine has come to me with a sad confession. It seems that she is the guilty person. She gave your rabbits something to eat, and let them out in order that they might enjoy their meal the better. Then it occurred to her to get some fresh hay for the hutch, and while she was away Bianco and Lily took it into their heads to play truants. You must forgive Maggie, Ralph; she meant no harm. If the rabbits are not found I can only promise to get you another pair as handsome as money can buy."

While his uncle was speaking Ralph's face had grown very white.

"I don't want any other rabbits, thank you, Uncle John," he said. "It was poor little Jo gave me Bianco and Lily, and I was fond of them; other rabbits would not be the same."

"I only hope, Ralph, your pets will be found. I shall send a couple of men to search for them directly. In the mean time, you must promise me not to be angry with my poor little girl; she meant no harm."

"Oh, I'm not angry," said Ralph; "most girls are muffs; Jo isn't, but then she's not like other people." He turned on his heel and sauntered slowly away.

It is difficult to say how the affair of the rabbits would have terminated,

and how soon Maggie would have been taken back into Ralph's favor, but just then, on the afternoon of that very day in fact, an event occurred which turned every one's thoughts into a fresh channel.

Lady Ascot received a telegram announcing the dangerous illness of her favorite and only sister—it was necessary that she and Sir John should start that very night for the North to see her. The question then arose. What was to become of the two children?

"Send us to mother, of course," promptly said Ralph.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Sir John; "why, I declare if it isn't a good thought. Violet wouldn't mind having you both on a visit for a fortnight or so, and Miss Grey could go with you, so that your mother need have no extra trouble. Remember, Ralph, you are bound to us for the summer, my boy, and we only lend you to your mother for a few days. You quite understand?"

"Lend me to mother; no, I'm sure I don't understand that," said Ralph. "Oh! Maggie," he exclaimed suddenly, in all his old brightest manner, "if we go to London, you'll see Jo!"

"I'll go off this very moment and telegraph to my sister," said Sir John; "the children and Miss Grey can start to-morrow morning. It's all arranged. It is a splendid plan."

In five minutes the plan was made which was to exercise so large an influence over little Maggie, which was, in short, completely to alter her life. Sir John sent off his telegram, and in the course of the afternoon his sister, Mrs. Grenville, replied to it. She would be ready to receive Ralph and Maggie the next day, and would be pleased also to have Miss Grey, Maggie's governess, accompany the children. Maggie had never seen London; and Ralph became eloquent with regard to its charms.

"It will be delightful for you," he said; "of course I am rather tired of it, for I have been everywhere and seen all the sights, but it will really be very nice for you. You are young, you know, Maggie, and you'll have to go to the places where quite the little children are seen; Madame Tussaud's is one, and the Zoological Gardens is another. Oh, won't it be fun to see you jumping when the lions roar!"

At these words of Ralph's Maggie turned rather pale, and perceiving that he had made an impression, he proceeded still further to work on her feelings, describing graphically the scene at the Zoo when the lions are fed, the cruel glitter in the eyes of the hungry beasts, and the awful sound which they make when they crush the great bones of meat provided for them.

"You mustn't go too near their cages," said Ralph; "nobody knows how strong a lion is; and though the cages are made with very large bars of iron, yet still——" Here Ralph made an expressive pause.

Maggie opened her blue eyes, remained quite silent for a moment, for she did not wish Ralph to suppose that she was really afraid of the lions, and then she said softly:

"I'm not going to the Zoo—at least not at first. I'm going to do my lessons with Miss Grey in the hours when the lions are fed. I know it's very good of me, but I'm going to be good, 'cause I am so sorry about your rabbits, Ralph."

"So you ought to be," said Ralph, turning red; "but weeks and weeks of being sorry won't bring them back. When people do very careless and thoughtless things, being sorry doesn't mend matters. You ask mother, and she'll explain to you. But please don't say anything more about Bianco and Lily. I want to know what you mean by saying that you'll do your lessons at the hour the lions are fed. You do your lessons at the hour that most suits Miss Grey, don't you?"

Maggie nodded.

"Yes," she said, "I'm going to please poor Miss Grey too; I'm going to be very good."

"Well, Miss Grey won't like to be kept at home in the afternoons teaching you your lessons—she'll like to be out amusing herself in the afternoon. I call that more thoughtlessness. You'll have to do your lessons in the morning, and the lions are fed at three o'clock, so that excuse won't serve."

"I'm not going to the Zoo," continued Maggie, who began to feel decidedly worried. "If Miss Grey wants to be out in the afternoon, I'll

go to Madame Tussaud's then. I don't like that Zoo, and I'm not fond of lions; but I expect Madame Tussaud's must be a nice sort of place."

"Oh—oh—oh," said Ralph, beginning to jump about on one leg; "you see the chamber of horrors before you make up your mind whether it's a nice sort of place or not. Why, at Madame Tussaud's you always have your heart in your mouth because you don't know whether the wax figures are alive or not; and you are always saying, 'I beg your pardon;' and you are always knocking up against people whom you think are alive and want to speak to you, when they are only big wax dolls; and whenever you give a little start and show by your face that you have made a mistake, the real live people laugh. I can tell you, Maggie, you have to mind your p's and q's at Madame Tussaud's."

"I won't go," said Maggie; "I need not go unless I like;" and then she walked out of the room, beginning seriously to debate in her poor little mind on the joys of having a playmate, for Ralph contrived at every turn to make her feel so very small.

CHAPTER VI.

JO'S ROOM.

It was well for Maggie that Ralph was a very different boy when with his mother and when without her. When the children arrived in London and found themselves in Mrs. Grenville's pretty bright house in Bayswater, Ralph flew to the sweet-looking young mother who came up to meet them, clasped his arms round her neck, laid his head on her shoulder, and instantly a softened and sweet expression came over his dark and somewhat hard little face. Mrs. Grenville was very much like her brother, so that prevented Maggie being shy with her. She also petted the little girl a great deal, and, as a matter of course, took more notice of her than of Ralph. Mrs. Grenville also spoke about the Zoo and Madame Tussaud's, but she contrived to make these two places of entertainment sound quite delightful to her little visitor. Instead of dwelling on their horrors she spoke of their manifold and varied charms, until Maggie's eyes sparkled, and she said in her quick, excitable way:

"I'll go there with you, Aunt Violet; I'd like to go to both of those places with you."

Aunt Violet read between the lines here, and gave Ralph a quick little glance which he pretended not to see.

The next morning Mrs. Grenville asked Miss Grey to allow Maggie to have a holiday.

"To-morrow she will begin her lessons regularly," continued the lady. "Of course by this time such a tall girl can read and write nicely, and I

shall like to inclose a little letter from her to her mother; but to-day the children and I mean to be very busy together. Ralph, as you are older, and as you know most about London, you shall choose what our amusement shall be."

Maggie felt herself turning first red and then white when Mrs. Grenville spoke of her reading and writing accomplishments, but Miss Grey was merciful and made no comment, and as Ralph had not yet been made acquainted with the poor little princess' profound ignorance, she trusted that her secret was safe.

"Mother," here eagerly burst in Ralph, "of course the very first thing we must do is to go and see Jo. Shall I go round to see Jo this morning, mother, and may I take Maggie with me? I think it would do Maggie lots of good to see a girl like Jo."

"Jo would do any one good," responded Mrs. Grenville. "It is a kind thought, Ralph, and you may carry it out. If you and Maggie like to run upstairs and get ready now, I will send Waters round with you, and I will call for you myself at Philmer's Buildings at twelve o'clock. After all, I should like to take Maggie myself to the Zoo—I want her to see the monkeys and the birds, and she shall have a ride on one of the elephants if she likes. As to the lions, dear," continued Mrs. Grenville, looking kindly at the little girl, "you shall not see them feed unless you like."

"I don't mind seeing them feed if you are with me," whispered back Maggie; but just then Ralph called to her imperiously, and she had to hurry out of the room.

"Aren't you glad that you are going at last to see my dear little Jo?" exclaimed the boy. "Now do hurry, Mag; get yourself up nice and smart, for Jo does so admire pretty things."

Maggie made no response, but went slowly into her little bedroom.

In her heart of hearts she was becoming intensely jealous of this wonderful Jo. She was putting her in the same category with those unpleasant little girls who liked needlework, and were exceedingly proper and good, and belonged to that tiresome class of little models of whom nurse was so fond of speaking. Maggie had borne patiently all Ralph's rhapsodies over this perfect little Jo, but quite a pang went through her heart when she heard Mrs. Grenville also praise her.

"I don't want to go," she said as Miss Grey helped her to put on her boots, and took out her neat little jacket and pretty shady hat from their drawers.

"Not want to go?" said the governess. "Oh, surely you will like the walk with Ralph this lovely morning, Maggie?"

"No, I won't," said Maggie. "I don't want to see Jo; I'm sure she's a horrid good little girl; she's like nurse's Sunday go-to-meeting girls, and I never could bear them."

Miss Grey could not help smiling slightly at Maggie's eager words.

"I remember," she said after a pause as she helped to put the little girl's sash straight, "when I was a child about your age, Maggie, I often amused myself making up pictures of people before I had seen them. I generally found that the pictures were wrong, and that the people were not at all like what I had fancied them to be."

Maggie pondered over this statement; then she said solemnly:

"But I know about Jo—I'm quite sure that my picture of Jo isn't wrong. She wears a white pinafore, and there are no spots on it, and her hair is so shiny—I 'spect there is vaseline on her hair—and her nails are neat, and her shoes are always buttoned, and—and—and—she's a horrid good little girl—and I don't like her—and I never will like her."

"Maggie! Maggie!" shouted Ralph from below, and Maggie, with a

nod at Miss Grey, and the parting words, "I know all about her," rushed out of the room, danced down the stairs, and holding her cousin's hand, and accompanied by the sedate Waters, set out on their morning walk.

It was Maggie's first walk in London, and the children and maid soon found themselves crossing Hyde Park, coming out at one of the gates at the opposite side from Mrs. Grenville's pretty house, and then entering a crowded thoroughfare. Here Waters stepped resolutely between the little pair, took a hand of each, and hurried them along. Ralph carried a small closed basket in his hand, and Maggie wondered what it contained, and why Ralph looked so grave and thoughtful, and why he so often questioned Waters as to the contents of a square box which she also carried.

"You took great care of that box while I was away, Waters?"

"Well, yes, Master Ralph; it always stood on the mantelpiece in my mistress' room, and I dusted it myself most regularly."

"And do you really think it's getting heavy, Waters?"

"Well, sir, you were away exactly two nights and two days, and that means, by the allowance of one penny a day given to you, two pennies more in the money-box. It's two pennies heavier than it was, sir, when you left us, and that's all."

Ralph sighed profoundly.

"Time goes very slowly," he said. "How I wish I had more money, and that when I had it I didn't spend it so fast. Well, perhaps Jo has managed about the tambourine after all. If there is a good manager, Jo is one. Oh, here we are at last!"

The children and Waters had turned into a shabby-looking street, and were now standing before a block of buildings which looked new and

tolerably clean. Unlike any ordinary house Maggie had ever seen, this one appeared to possess no hall door, but was entered at once by a flight of stone stairs. The children and the servant began to ascend the stairs, and Maggie wondered how many they would have to go up before they reached the rooms where the little girl in the spotless pinafore with the white hands and the smoothly vaselined hair resided. Maggie was rather puzzled and disconcerted by the bare look of the stone stairs, and also by the somewhat anxious and grave expression on Ralph's face. She was unacquainted with that kind of look, and it puzzled her, and she began dimly to wonder if Miss Grey was right, and her picture of Jo was untrue.

At last they stopped at a door, which was shut, and which contained some writing in large black letters on its yellow paint. Maggie could not read, but Ralph pointed to the letters, and said joyfully:

"Here we are at last!"

The words on the door where these: "Mrs. Aylmer, Laundress and Charwoman," but Maggie, of course, was not enlightened by what she could not understand.

Waters knocked at the door; a quick, eager little voice said, "Come in." There was the pattering of some small feet, the door was flung wide open, and Maggie, Ralph, and Waters found themselves inside Jo's room.

That was the first impression the room gave; it seemed to belong to Jo; Jo's spirit seemed to pervade it all over. Mrs. Aylmer, laundress and charwoman, might own the room and pay the rent for it, but that made no difference—it was Jo's.

Who was Jo? Maggie asked herself this question; then she turned red; then she felt her lips trembling; then she became silent, absorbed, fascinated. The picture she had conjured up faded never

to return, and the real Jo took its place.

Jo was the most beautiful little girl Maggie had ever seen—she had fluffy, shining, tangled hair; her pale face was not thin, but round and smooth; each little feature was delicate and chiseled; the lips were little rosebuds; the eyes had that serene light which you never see except in the faces of those children who have been taught patience through suffering. Jo was a sadly crippled little girl lying on a low bed. Maggie, of course, had seen poor children in the village at home; but those children had not been ill; they were rosy and hearty and strong. This child looked fragile, and yet there was nothing absolutely weak about her. At the moment when Ralph and Maggie entered Jo was keeping school; two twin boys were standing by her bedside, and listening eagerly to her instructions.

"No, no, Bob," she was saying, "you mustn't do it that way; you must do it more carefully, Bob, and slower. Now, shall we begin again?"

Bob tried to drone something in a monotonous sing-song, but just then the visitors' faces appeared, and all semblance of school vanished on the spot. Ralph poured out a whole string of remarks. The contents of the money-box were emptied on Jo's bed, and the exciting question of Susy's tambourine came under earnest discussion. If Susy had a proper tambourine she could use her rather sweet voice to advantage, and earn money by singing and dancing in the streets. Susy was ten years old—a thick-set little girl with none of Jo's transparent beauty. Sixpence had been already collected for the coveted musical instrument; Ralph's box contained eightpence, but, alas! the tambourine on which Susy had set her heart could not be obtained for a smaller sum than half a crown.

"They are not worth nothing for less than that," she exclaimed; "they makes no sound, and when you sings or dances with them, your voice don't seem to carry nohow. No, I'd a sight rayther wait and have

a good one. Them cheap 'uns cracks, too, when they gets wet. Here's sixpence and here's eightpence; that makes one shilling and two pennies. Oh! but it do seem as if it were a long way off afore we see our way to 'arf a crown."

Here Susy, whose face had been radiant, became suddenly depressed, and Maggie felt a lump in her throat, and an earnest, almost passionate, wish to get hold of her father's purse-strings.

"Now come and talk to Jo," said Ralph, drawing his little cousin forward. "We need not say any more about the tambourine to-day; I'm saving up all my money; I earn a penny every day that I'm good, and I'll give my penny to Susy for the present, so she'll really have the half-crown by and by. Now, Jo, this is my Cousin Maggie; I've told her about you. She lives down in the country; she doesn't know much, but then that's not to be wondered at. She was very naughty and careless too about my rabbits; she has asked me to forgive her, and of course I haven't said much; it wouldn't be at all manly to scold a girl; but you are really the one to forgive her, Jo, for the rabbits were yours before they were mine."

"What, Bianco and Lily?" answered Jo, the pink color coming into her little face. "Oh, missie, wasn't they beautiful and white?"

"NOW, JO, THIS IS MY COUSIN MAGGIE."—Page 74.

"Yes, and they're lost," said Maggie; "'twas I did it. I opened the door of their little house, and they ran out, and went into a wood, and none of us could find them since. Ralph said it was you gave them to him, and he doesn't really and truly forgive me, though he pretends he does. I was sorry, but I won't go on being sorry if he doesn't really and truly forgive me."

To this rather defiant little speech of Maggie's Jo made a very eager

reply. She looked into the pretty little country lady's face, right straight up into her eyes, and then she said ecstatically:

"Oh, ain't I happy to think as my beautiful darling white Bianco and Lily has got safe away into a real country wood! Oh, missie, are there real trees there, and grass? and I hopes, oh, I hopes there's a little stream."

"Yes, there is," said Maggie, "a sweet little stream, and it tinkles away all day and all night, and of course there are trees, and there's grass. It's just like any other country wood."

"I'm so glad," said Jo; "I can picter it. In course I has never seen it, but I can picter it. Trees, grass, and the little stream a-tinkling, and the white bunnies ever and ever so happy. Yes, missie, thank you, missie; it's real beautiful, and when I shuts my eyes I can see it all."

Jo had said nothing about forgiving Maggie; on the contrary, she seemed to think her careless deed something rather heroic, Ralph raised his dark brows, fidgeted a little, and began to look at his cousin with a new respect. At this moment Mrs. Grenville's footman came up to say that the carriage was waiting for the children; so Maggie's first visit to Jo was over.

CHAPTER VII.

IN VIOLET.

Maggie and Ralph spent a very happy afternoon at the Zoo. The best of Ralph always came to the surface when he was with his mother, and he was also impressed by Jo's remarks about her rabbits. Was it really true that Maggie had done a beautiful deed by giving his white and pretty darlings their liberty in a country wood? How Jo's eyes shone when she spoke, and how ecstatically she looked at the little princess! Ralph was a great deal too much of a boy, and a great deal too proud to make any set speech of forgiveness to Maggie, but he determined on the spot to restore her to his favor. He ceased to be condescending, and greeted her more as a little hail-fellow-well-met. Maggie rejoiced in the change. Mrs. Grenville was her brightest and most agreeable self; the lions on near acquaintance proved more fascinating than dreadful, and on their way home Maggie pronounced in favor of the Zoo, said she would certainly like to go there again, and thought that on the whole it must be a nicer place than Madame Tussaud's, where, according to Ralph's account, unless you visited the chamber of horrors there were only large and overgrown dolls to be seen.

"I wonder," said Maggie to her cousin as they sat in the most amiable manner side by side at their tea that evening, "I wonder why Susy cares to go out into the streets and sing and play a funny little tambourine. She can't be at all shy to sing before a lot of people; can she, Ralph?"

Ralph stared hard at Maggie.

"Don't you really know what she does it for?" he asked.

"I suppose for a kind of play," said Maggie, opening her eyes a little.

Ralph stamped his foot impatiently. "A kind of play!" he repeated. "I was beginning to respect you. I forgot how ignorant you are, Poor Susy goes out and plays the tambourine and dances and sings because she wants pennies—pennies to buy bread for Jo and for herself, and for Ben and Bob. No, of course you can't know! Susy wants the tambourine not to play with, but because she's hungry."

Ralph spoke with great energy; Maggie's little round sweet face became quite pale; she dropped the delicious bread-and-butter and marmalade which she was putting to her lips, and remained absolutely silent.

"Must the tambourine cost half a crown?" she asked presently.

"Yes," replied Ralph; "didn't you hear her say so? She knows best what it ought to cost."

Maggie wished she were not such a dunce, that she could read a little and write a little, and that she had some slight knowledge of figures. Hitherto she had been shy of revealing any of her great ignorance to Ralph, but now her intense longing to know how many pennies were in half a crown made her ask her cousin the question.

Ralph assured her carelessly that there were thirty pennies in that very substantial piece of money.

"It will take a long time to collect," he said, sighing deeply. "Poor Susy will have to have plenty of patience, for I know Jo can't help her, and she'll have to depend on me. I earn a penny a day when I'm good. I generally am good when I'm with mother. It was quite different at Tower Hill, for you annoyed me a good deal, Maggie, but I've made up my mind to say nothing more on that subject. I dare say you, too,

will try to be a good girl when you're with mother. Well, what was I saying? Oh! about Susy's pennies. With what I gave her and what Jo collected she has got fourteen. Take fourteen from thirty, how much is left, Maggie? Of course you know, so I need not tell you. All that number of days poor Susy will have to wait, however hungry she is. There, we have finished our tea, let's go up to the drawing-room to mother now. Isn't mother sweet? Did you ever see any one—any one so nice?"

"Yes, I saw my own mother, and she's a lot nicer," said Maggie.

Ralph's eyes flashed.

"I like that," he said; "why, every one says the same thing about my mother, that she's the very, very nicest lady in the world. Oh, I say, Maggie, where are you——" But his little cousin had disappeared.

The facts were these. The events of her first day in London had worked up poor little Maggie's feelings to a crisis. She had been excited, she had been pleased, she had been greatly surprised. All the old tranquil life in the midst of which she had moved, knowing all the time that she was its center, that she, the little princess, was the beloved object for whom most things were done, for whom treats were prepared and delights got ready—all this old life had vanished, and Maggie was nothing more than little Maggie Ascot, an ignorant child, a dunce who could not even reckon figures or read a word of the queen's English, or have any pennies in her purse. Maggie was only the little cousin whom Ralph rather despised, who was nobody at all in his estimation compared to Jo—Jo, who was so humble, and so very poor. Maggie's feelings had been greatly moved about Jo and Susy; she had longed beyond words to put the necessary number of pennies into Susy's hand, and to tell her to go out and buy that tambourine, on which her heart was set, without a moment's delay. She had wished this when she only supposed that Susy wanted the

tambourine to amuse herself. How much more now did she long to get it for her, when Ralph had assured her that Susy's need was so great that she wished for the tambourine in order that she might earn money to buy bread! When Ralph said this Maggie felt a lump rising in her throat, and her own healthy childish appetite failing her—even then she felt inclined to rush away and cry; but when Ralph added to this his somewhat slighting remarks about the mother whose arms Maggie did so long to feel round her, the little princess could bear her feelings no longer, and rushed upstairs to sob out her over-full heart.

It was not Miss Grey who found Maggie in the dark in her little room, but the good-natured Waters, who after all knew far more about children than the somewhat inexperienced governess. Waters wasted no time in asking the little girl what was the matter, but she lifted her into a very motherly embrace, and soothed and petted her with many loving words. Maggie thought Waters a most delicious person, and soon wiped away her tears, and began to smile once again. Waters was judicious enough to ask no questions about the tears, and, when they were over, to forget that they ever existed. She took Maggie into her mistress' room, and made her sit on the bed, and showed her some of Ralph's childish toys. It occurred to Maggie as she sat there that Waters would not be nearly such a dreadful person as most others to confide in. She was intensely anxious to gain some information, and she resolved to trust Waters.

"May I tell you something as a great, tremendous secret?" she asked.

"Well, Miss Maggie, that's as you please," replied the servant. "I can only tell you one thing—that what's confided to me is a secret from that day forward, and no mistake. What's the color to keep a secret in, Miss Maggie? In violet. That's where I keeps it, and so it's sure to be safe."

Maggie laughed and clapped her hands.

"Waters, I think you're a darling!" she said, "and I will trust you. I don't suppose you ever heard of any one so ignorant as me. I'll be eight years old before very long, and I can't read, and I can't write, and I can't put figures together. I can't even tell the time, Waters—I can't, really."

While Maggie was speaking, Waters kept gazing at her with a most perfectly unmoved countenance.

"Bless the child!" she said presently. "Well, Miss Maggie dear, where's the secret I'm to keep inviolate?"

"Why, that's it, Waters; the secret is that I don't know nothing—nothing at all."

"Well, you'll learn, dearie," said Waters; "you'll learn all in good time. You're nothing but a young child, and you has lots and lots of years before you."

Maggie did not at all consider herself very young. There were one or two babies in the village at home, just beginning to toddle, who were really juvenile; but she, Maggie Ascot, who could run and jump and skip, and even ride!—it was really rather silly to speak of her as a very young child. However, now she was so soothed by "Waters' gentle words and Waters' petting that she could find no fault with any remark made to her by that worthy person. On the contrary, she cuddled up to her and stroked her cheek, and felt relieved at the unburdening of her secret.

"I didn't learn to read till I was a good bit older than you," said Waters. "I don't mean that I'm an example for any dear little lady to follow, for I never could abide a bookworm. I don't take to it now. I only learned because my mother said it was a shame to have a great big girl who could neither spell nor write. My tastes always lay in the needlework line. Since I was a little tot I was forever with a bit of sewing in my

hand; I'd hem, and I'd back-stitch, and I'd top-sew whenever I had the chance. Why, I mind me of the time when I unpicked one of my father's old shirts just for the pleasure of putting it together again, and didn't mother laugh when she saw what I was after! Plain needlework was my line, Miss Maggie, and maybe it's yours too, dearie."

"Oh, no, it isn't!" said Maggie, opening her blue eyes with quite a gleam of horror in them. "I hate plain sewing worser even than I do reading; I hate it even worser than my figures. Plain sewing pricks, and it worries me. I hate it more than anything."

"Well, well, dearie, you're in the pricking stages yet; I went through that, same as another. You'll come to learn the comfort of it, for of all the soothers for poor worrited women, there's nothing at all in my opinion like needle and thread."

Maggie was beginning to find this turn in the conversation rather unintelligible, so she brought Waters back to the subject which most interested her by asking if she had also found the study of figures very good for the worries, and if she would let her know how many pennies Susy must have to make up the half-crown.

"Oh, is that little Susy Aylmer?" said Waters. "I don't approve of no child going out to sing in the streets. However, it isn't for me to interfere, and Mrs. Aylmer is as honest and hard-working a body as ever walked, and that little Jo is a real angel, and as the poor things must live somehow, why, I suppose Susy had better sing. Master Ralph is saving up his pennies, and he'll give them all to her as sure as sure, so you has no call to put yourself out about it, Miss Maggie."

"Yes, but I don't want her to wait," said Maggie. "She has nothing to eat, and she'll be so dreadfully, dreadfully hungry. She has got fourteen pennies, and she can't get anything to eat until she has thirty. Oh, Waters! if you do know figures, please tell me how many days poor Susy must live without any food until she has got the thirty

pennies."

Waters laughed.

"Things won't be as bad as that for Susy Aylmer," she said. "She is a sturdy little piece, and I don't believe she denies herself much; don't you fret about her, Miss Maggie darling."

"Yes, but what is the difference between fourteen and thirty?" insisted Maggie. "Ralph only gets a penny a day; how many days will have to pass before Susy gets the thirty pennies?"

"She has fourteen now," said Waters; "well—well, it is something of a poser; I never had much aptitude in the figure line, Miss Maggie. Fourteen in hand, thirty to make up; well—well, let's try it by our fingers. Ten fingers first, five on each hand. Bear that in your mind, Miss Maggie. Add ten to fourteen, makes twenty-four; come now, I'm getting on, but that isn't thirty, is it, darling? Try the fingers again; five more fingers makes twenty-nine, and one—why, there we are—thirty. Ten, five, and one make sixteen. There, Miss Maggie, sixteen pennies more she'll have to get."

Just at this moment Mrs. Grenville entered the room, and Maggie's conversation with the good-natured lady's maid was brought to an abrupt conclusion.

The next morning Maggie awoke out of a profound sleep, in which she had been dreaming of Jo as turned into a real angel with wings, and of Susy as playing on the most perfect tambourine that was ever invented. The little girl awoke out of this slumber to hear the unfamiliar London sounds, and to sit up in bed and rub her sleepy eyes. The hours kept at Mrs. Grenville's were not so early as those enjoyed at Tower Hill. Maggie was tired of lying in bed; she was occupying a tiny room which led out of Miss Grey's, and she now jumped up and went to the window. What was her amazement to see just under the

window, walking leisurely across the road, one of the objects of her last vivid dream, Susy Aylmer herself! Susy's very stout little form was seen crossing the street and coming right up to the Grenvilles' house. Maggie was charmed to see her, and took not an instant in making up her mind to improve the occasion. She knocked violently on the pane, but her room was too high up for even Susy's quick ears to discern this signal, and she then, in her little blue dressing-gown, rushed through Miss Grey's room, and ran as fast as her small feet would carry her down the stairs, down and down until she reached the front hall. There were no servants in the hall, but the chain had already been taken off the hall door, and Maggie had no difficulty in slipping back the bolt. She opened the door and stood on the steps.

"Susy! Susy! Susy!" she screamed.

Susy at this moment was receiving what indeed she came for every morning—a good supply of broken bread and meat from Mrs. Grenville's cook. Mrs. Grenville allowed the cook to give these things to Mrs. Aylmer, and Susy was generally sent to fetch them. She was much amazed to see the pretty little country lady calling to her so vehemently; she was also delighted, and came to the foot of the hall-door steps, and looked up at Maggie with a very eager face. For a girl who was so dreadfully starved, Maggie could not help thinking the said face rather round and full; however, she would not allow this passing reflection to spoil her interest. She beckoned to Susy, and said in a whisper:

Maggie Stood in a Contemplative Attitude.—Page 91.

"I'm most terrible sorry for you. If I had any money I'd give it to you—really and truly I would, but I haven't got nothing at all. Father has—father's ever so rich, but he's not with me, he's far away, and I can't—oh! Susy, can you write?"

Maggie stood in a contemplative attitude. Susy posed herself on one leg, held her basket of broken meat in a careless manner, as though it did not account for anything at all, and kept her quick and intelligent eyes fixed on the little princess.

"I do want to help you, very much," said Maggie, at last. "I want to help you my own self, without any one knowing anything about it. I think I want to do this as much for Jo as for you. Once I didn't like Jo at all, but now I do love her; she looks so beautiful and so sweet. I don't think you do; you have rather a cross face, and you are very red, and you've such fat cheeks; but maybe being hungry makes people look cross and red."

"And—and—fat," continued Susy eagerly. "I'm puffed out with being so holler inside. I am now, missie, really. It's an awfully empty feel, and it won't go, not a bit of it, till I gets that 'ere tambourine."

"I wish I could help you!" continued Maggie again.

Just then there were sounds inside the house, sounds of dustpans and brushes, and of industrious maids approaching, and Susy knew that her opportunity was short.

"I believe you, missie," she said, "I believe in your kind 'eart, missie. It do seem a shame as you shouldn't have no money, for you would know how to pervide for the poor and needy, missie; but—but it might be managed in other ways, Miss Maggie."

"In other ways?" repeated Maggie. "How, Susy—how, dear, nice Susy?"

"Why, now, you hasn't nothing as you could sell, I suppose?"

"That I could sell?" repeated little Miss Ascot. "Oh, dear, no, I haven't nothing at all to make a shop with, if that's what you mean."

"I wasn't thinking of that, missie; I was wondering now if you had any little bit of dress as you didn't want. Your clothes is very 'andsome, and something as you didn't greatly care for would fetch a few pence if it was sold, and so help on the tambourine."

Maggie's blue eyes began to sparkle.

"Why, there's my new hat," she said; "mother got it from London only a week ago, and I know it cost pounds—it has two long white feathers; I like it very much, but I could do without it, 'cause I've got my little common garden-hat to wear. Do you think I'd get two or three pennies for my new best hat with the feathers and the lace, Susy?"

"Oh, yes, missie—oh, yes, missie; I seed the hat yesterday, and I never clapped my two eyes on such a beauty. But it seems a pity to take it away from you, missie dear, and maybe the little common garden-hat would fetch enough to buy the tambourine."

"Oh, I wouldn't sell that at all," said Maggie; "I am very fond of my garden-hat, 'cause father likes me in it; and 'sides, I've gathered strawberries in it, and I've had wild birds' eggs in it. I'd much, much rather sell the stupid new hat."

Susy was quite agreeable to the transfer, and it was finally arranged that the two little girls were to meet each other at the same hour on the following morning, and Susy was to accompany Maggie to the pawnbroker's, where the new hat might be disposed of.

If there was a commonplace, ordinary, every-day London child, it was Susy Aylmer. She was the sister of two little brothers, who also belonged to a very easily found class of human beings; she was the daughter of an industrious, hard-working, every-day mother; and yet she was also sister to Jo!

How Jo got into that home was a puzzle to all who knew her; she had innate refinement; she had heaven-born beauty. Her ideas were

above her class; her little flower-like face looked like some rare exotic among its ruder companions.

Mrs. Aylmer alone knew why Jo was different from her other children. Jo represented a short, bright episode in the hard-working woman's life. She had been born in good days, in sweet, happy, country days. Her father had been like her, refined in feature and poetic in temperament. Shortly after Jo's birth the Aylmers had come to London, poverty and all its attendant ills had over-taken them, and after a few years Aylmer had fallen a victim to consumption, and had left his wife with four young children on her hands, the three younger of whom altogether resembled her.

Mrs. Aylmer had no time to grieve—she was a brave woman; there are many brave women in the world, thank God; among the working poor they are perhaps more the rule than the exception. She turned round, faced her position, and managed after a fashion to provide for her children. Many visitors came to see her, for she was eminently respectable, and had an honest way about her which impressed people, and all these visitors pitied her when they saw Jo.

Poor little Jo was a cripple, a lovely cripple, but still unable to walk or move from her little sofa. The visitors congratulated Mrs. Aylmer on her strong boys and stalwart-looking little daughter, but they invariably pitied her about Jo. Nothing made that worthy woman so angry. "For Jo is my brightest blessing," she would exclaim; "she's always like a bit of sunshine in the room. Trouble, bless her! she a trouble! Why, don't she take the trouble off my shoulders more than any one else ever did or ever will do? Ask me who never yet spoke a cross word, and I'll tell you it's that little pale girl who can never lift herself off the sofa. Ask me who keeps the peace with the others, and I'll tell you again it's little Jo. And she don't preach, not she, for she don't know how, and she never looks reproachful for all the roughness and the wildness of the others; but her life's one sarmin, and, in short, we

none of us could get on without her. Jo my trouble indeed! I only wish them visitors wouldn't talk about what they knows nothing on."

What Mrs. Aylmer felt for her little lame daughter was also, although perhaps in a slightly minor degree, acknowledged by the boys and Susy. They clung to Jo, and looked up to her. The boys, who were the two youngest of the family, had a habit of giving her their absolute confidence. They not only told her of their good deeds, but of their naughty ones. They had a habit of pouring out their little scrapes and misdemeanors with one of Jo's thin hands clasped to their tearful faces, and when she forgave, and when she encouraged, the sunshine came out again on them.

But Susy was different from the boys, and of late she had kept the knowledge of more than one naughty little action from Jo. The history of the tambourine, the history of the purchase of that redoubtable instrument which was to make Susy's fortune and fill the Aylmers' home with not only the necessaries, but also some of the dainties of life, was, of course, known by Jo. No one had ever been more interested in the purchase of a musical instrument than she was in the collecting of that hoard which was to result in the buying of Susy's tambourine. Jo was a delightful and sympathizing listener, and Susy liked nothing better than to kneel by her sofa and pour out her longings and dreams into so good a listener's ears; but Susy had kept more than one secret to herself, and she said nothing to Jo about her interview with little Miss Ascot, nor about the arrangement she had made with that little lady to purchase the tambourine out of the proceeds of the sale of her best hat.

Susy knew perfectly that Jo would not approve of anything so underhanded, and she resolved to keep her own counsel. She returned home, however, in the wildest spirits, and indulged all day long in fantastic day-dreams. Jo was having a bad day of much pain and suffering, but Susy's brightness was infectious, and Mrs. Aylmer

thought as she tidied up her place and made it straight, that surely there never were happier children than hers.

"But we won't have the tambourine for many and many a day yet," said Ben. "Don't be too sure, Susy; how can you tell but that Master Ralph'll get tired of saving up all his pennies for you? Hanyhow," continued Ben, with a profound sigh, "we has a sight of days to wait afore we gets 'arf a crown."

"I knows what I knows," answered Susan oracularly. "Look here, Jo, you're the one for making up real 'ticing pictures. I wants to make a day-dream, and you tell me what to do with it when we get it. S'pose now—oh, do be quiet, Ben and Bob—s'pose now I 'ad the tambourine, and it wor a beauty; well, s'pose as the day is fine, and the hair balmy, and every-body goes out, so to speak, with their pockets open, and they sees me—I'm dressed up smart and tidy—"

"Oh, my, and ain't you red about the face, just?" here interrupts Bob.

"Well, don't interrupt; I can't help my 'plexion; I'm tidy enough—and I'm dancing round, and I'm playing the tambourine like anything, and I'm singing. Well, maybe it's 'Nelly Bly,' or maybe it's the 'Ten Little Nigger Boys;' hanyhow I takes; I'm nothing but little Susy Aylmer, but I takes. The crowd collects, and they laugh, and they likes it, and then, the ladies and the gents, they go by, so they give me their pennies—lots of 'em; and one old gent, he have no change, and he throws me a shilling. Well, now, that's my day-dream. I comes home, I gives the pennies to mother, but I keeps the shilling; I keeps the shilling for a treat for us four young 'uns. Now, Jo, speak up. What shall we do with our day-dream?"

The boys were here wildly excited. To all intents and purposes the shilling was already in Susy's possession. Bob, to relieve his over-charged feelings, instantly stood on his head, and Ben set to work to punch him; Jo's eyes began to shine.

"'Tis a real beautiful day-dream, Susy darlint," she said.

"Yes, ain't it, Jo? a whole shilling; you mind that, Jo. Now make up what we'll do with it. Let's all sit quiet, and shut our heyes, and listen to Jo. You'll be sure to make up something oncommon, Joey dear."

Jo, when she spoke, or at least when she made up what her brothers and sisters called day-dreams, always clasped her hands and gazed straight before her; her large violet-tinted eyes began to see visions, nowhere to be perceived within that commonplace, whitewashed room; the children who listened to her instinctively perceived this, and they usually closed their own eyes in order to follow her glowing words the better.

On this occasion she spoke slowly, and after a pause.

"A whole shilling," she began; "it's a sight of money, and it ought to do a deal. What I'm thinking is this: suppose we had a wan, a wan as would hold us all, mother, and Susy, and Ben, and Bob, and there was lots of green grass in the bottom of the wan, so we all of us sat easy, and had no pain even when it moved. Suppose there was two horses to the wan, and a kind driver, and we went werry quick; we went away from the houses, and the streets, and we left the noise ahind us, and the dust and the dirt ahind us, and we got out into fields. Fields, with trees a-growing, and real yellow buttercups looking up at you saucy and perky like, and dear little white daisies, like bits of snow with yellow eyes. S'pose we all got out there, right in the fields, and we seed a little brook running and rushing past us, and we see the fishes leaping for joy out of the water; and if the sun was werry hot we got under a big tree, where it was shady, and we sat there; mother and I sat side by side, and you, Susy, and you, Ben and Bob, just rolled about on the green, and picked the buttercups and the daisies. Why, I can think of nothing better than that, unless, maybe, angels came and talked to us while we were there."

Here Jo paused abruptly, and the three children who had sat absolutely motionless opened their eyes; the two boys sighed deeply, but Susy after a time began to cut up the day-dream; while Jo thought of angels as the only possible culmination to such intense joy, it occurred to practical Susy to suggest a good substantial dinner to be eaten under the shade of the green trees.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHOOSING HER COLORS.

Maggie had found it very delightful to talk to Susy on the doorstep of her aunt's house. The little mystery of the whole proceeding fascinated her, and as she was in reality a very romantic and imaginative child, she thought nothing could be finer than going off privately with Susy, and sacrificing her best hat for the benefit of this young person. She had also a decidedly mixed and perhaps somewhat naughty desire to out-do Ralph in this matter, and to be herself the person who was to rescue poor Susy and her family from the depths of starvation. When Susy went away, she crept upstairs and went softly into her little room, no one having heard her either leave it or return to it.

There was one part, however, of the programme marked out by Susy which was not quite so agreeable to little Miss Ascot. Susy had adjured her, with absolute tears starting to her black eyes, to keep the whole thing a secret. Maggie had not the smallest difficulty in promising this at the moment, but she had no sooner reached her little bedroom than she became possessed with a frantic desire to tell her little adventure to some one. She was not yet eight years old; she had never kept a secret in her life, and the moment she possessed this one it began to worry her. Little Maggie, however, was not without a certain code of morals; she knew that it would be very wrong indeed to tell a lie. She had given her word to Susy; she must keep her poor little secret at any cost.

Miss Grey, who of course knew nothing of all that had transpired, came in at her accustomed hour to assist her little pupil at her toilet.

Maggie capered about and seemed in excellent spirits while she was being dressed. She had no idea of betraying her secret, but she liked, so to speak, to play with it, to show little peeps of it, and certainly fully to acquaint those she was with, with the fact that she was the happy possessor of such a treasure. She remembered Waters' remarks of the night before. Waters had said how very faithfully she preserved anything told to her in confidence. Waters kept her secrets in violet. Maggie did not quite understand the double meaning of this expression; but, as she was being dressed, she became violently enamored of what she called the "secret" color.

"No, no, I won't have my pink sash this morning, please, Miss Grey; I don't like pink; I mean it isn't the fit color for me to wear to-day. You don't know why; you'll never of course guess why, but pink isn't my color to-day anyhow."

"Well, Maggie, you need not wear it," replied the patient governess; "here is a very pretty blue sash, dear; it will go quite nicely with your white frock; let me tie it on in a hurry, dear, for the breakfast gong has sounded."

But Maggie would not be satisfied with the blue sash, nor yet with the tartan, nor even with the pale gold.

"I want a violet sash," she said; "I'll have nothing but a violet sash; I'm keeping something in violet; you'll never, never guess what."

The breakfast gong here sounded a second time, and of course Miss Grey could not find any violet ribbons in Maggie's box; fortunately she had a piece of the desired color among her own stores; so when the little princess was decked in it, she went downstairs, feeling very happy and proud.

Miss Grey's violet sash did not happen to be of a pretty shade; it was an old ribbon, of a dark tint of color, and was a great deal too short

for its present purpose.

"What a hideous thing you have round your waist," whispered Ralph to his little cousin; but here he caught his mother's eye; she did not allow him to make personal remarks, and although she herself was considerably surprised at Lady Ascot's allowing such a ribbon into Maggie's wardrobe, nothing further was said on the subject. Even the wearing of the violet sash, however, could scarcely keep the secret from bubbling to Maggie's lips. Mrs. Grenville began to form her plans for the day. Maggie and Ralph were to employ themselves over their lessons until twelve o'clock and then Mrs. Grenville would take them both out with her, first to Madame Tussaud's, and later on for a drive in the park.

"To-morrow," she continued, "you are both going with me to a children's garden party. Mrs. Somerville—you know Mrs. Somerville, Ralph, and what nice children hers are—happened to hear that you and Maggie were coming to me for a short time, and she sent an invitation for you both last night. We shall not return until quite late, as it will be Hugh Somerville's birthday; and they are going to have fireworks in the evening, and even a little dance."

Ralph rubbed his hands together with delight.

"Won't Maggie jump when she hears the fireworks?" he said. "You never saw fireworks, did you, Mag? Oh, I say, what a jolly time we are going to have!"

Maggie felt her cheeks flushing, more particularly as she had seen a few rockets, and even some Catharine wheels, and in consequence she had hitherto believed herself rather knowing on the subject of fireworks; but when Ralph proceeded to enlighten her with regard to the style of fireworks likely to be exhibited at Mrs. Somerville's garden party; when he spoke about the fairy fountains, and the electric lights, and the golden showers of fire-drops, and last, but not

least, the bouquet which was to end the entertainment, she felt she had better keep silent with regard to the rockets and Catharine wheels which her father had once displayed for the amusement of the villagers.

Mrs. Grenville here began to speak earnestly to Miss Grey.

"I want Maggie's dress to be quite suitable. Is there anything we ought to get for her, Miss Grey?"

"I think not," replied Miss Grey. "She has just had a beautifully worked Indian muslin frock from Perrett's, in Bond Street, which she has not yet worn; and I don't think anything could be more dressy than her new hat with the ostrich feathers."

"Oh, yes, it is a charming hat," replied Mrs. Grenville. "Of course she must wear it to-day when she drives with me in the carriage, but that won't injure it for to-morrow. Then I need not trouble about your wardrobe, my darling; you will accompany me to-morrow, quite the little princess your father is so fond of calling you."

During this brief conversation, Maggie's little face had been changing color.

"I think," she said suddenly, "that perhaps I'd better have a new hat."

"Why so, my love? your hat is quite new and charming. It came from Perrett's, too, did it not, Miss Grey?"

"Yes, Mrs. Grenville; it was sent in the same box as the muslin costume."

"Oh, it will answer admirably, Maggie, dear. Why, what is the matter, my child?"

Maggie's lips were quivering, and her eyes were fixed on her violet sash.

"Only perhaps—perhaps the new hat might get lost or something," she muttered incoherently.

Mrs. Grenville looked at her for a moment, but as her remark was not very intelligible, she dismissed it from her mind.

The rest of the day passed happily enough. In half an hour Maggie ceased to fret about her hat. She comforted herself with the thought that her plain brown straw garden-hat, trimmed with a neat band of brown velvet, and a few daisies, would be after all just the thing for a garden party, and that in any case it did not greatly matter what she wore. What was of much more consequence was, that to-morrow Susy would be capering about with her tambourine, and that pennies would be pouring in for the Aylmer children, and for Jo in particular. She was obliged to wear her best hat when she went out that afternoon, and she certainly was remarkably careful as to how she put it on, and she quite astonished Miss Grey, when she came home in the evening, by the extreme care with which she herself placed it back in its box.

"Waters," she said that night, when she suddenly met Mrs. Grenville's maid, "I am quite happy again; I have done just as you do, and I have kept it in violet all day long."

"What, my darling?" asked the surprised servant.

"Oh, my secret; I have got such a darling secret. It would be very wrong of me to tell it, wouldn't it, Waters?"

Waters looked dubious.

"I don't approve of secrets for a little lady."

"But, Waters, how queer you are! You always keep your own secrets in violet, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, dear; yes. But I haven't many. They're sort of burdensome things; at least, I find them so. And in no case do I approve of secrets for little ladies, Miss Maggie; in no single case."

Maggie knit her brows, looked exceedingly perplexed, felt a great longing to pour the whole affair into Waters' sympathizing ears, then remembered Susy and refrained.

"But I promised not to tell," she said; "I promised most solemn not to tell."

"Well, well; I s'pose it's something between you and Master Ralph," remarked the servant, who felt worried she scarcely knew why.

Maggie jumped softly up and down.

"It isn't Ralph's secret, but it's about Ralph. He needn't save up his pennies no more. It's about Ralph's pennies and the half-crown. I know what it is; I'll tell you exactly what it is, Waters, and yet I know you won't never guess. It's add sixteen to fourteen makes thirty. My secret's the sixteen. You'll never, never, never guess, will you, Waters?"

Here Waters had to confess herself bamboozled, and Maggie skipped off to bed with a very light heart. She had kept her secret all day long, and now all she had to do was to wake up quite early in the morning, and go off with Susy to the pawnbroker's.

CHAPTER IX.

A JOLLY PLAN.

Maggie, on the whole, was inclined to wake early; she was not a particularly sound sleeper, and on the summer mornings she always had an intense longing to be up and about. It occurred to her, however, as Miss Grey was helping her to undress that night, how very, very dreadful it would be if Susy were to wait down in the street on the following morning, and she were all unconsciously to oversleep herself. She thought that such a thing ought not to be left to chance, and she cast about in her active little brain for some means of rousing herself. The little room she slept in used to be occupied by Ralph; and among the rest of its furniture, it held a nice little book-shelf, full of gayly covered boy's books. Maggie could not read, but Ralph during the day had come up with her and told her the names of some of his favorite volumes. Maggie now thought that these books might help her to wake; and accordingly, after Miss Grey had left her tucked up comfortably in her little white bed, she slipped on to the floor, and going to the book-case, selected a green and gayly bound volume, which Ralph had called "Robinson Crusoe;" another, which he had entitled "Swiss Family Robinson," and a book bound in brown, which he assured her was as heavy in its contents as in its exterior, and which bore the name of "Sandford and Merton."

Maggie carried these three books into her bed, and then arranged them with system.

"I am sure to wake now," she said to herself. "And poor little Susy shall not be disappointed of her tambourine. The green book is 'Robinson Crusoe,' he'll do to begin with; he's rather thick, and he'll

make a good clatter. Now I do call this a lovely plan."

Maggie now arranged herself in bed, and placed "Robinson Crusoe" on her feet.

"I'll go sound asleep, and though he's rather weighty I don't mind him, and then when I turn, he'll go bang on the floor, and that'll wake me the first time," she said. "The other two books can stay handy until they're wanted under my pillow."

Then the little princess shut up her curly fringed eyes and went happily off into the land of dreams.

It so happened that Miss Grey was getting into bed when the bump occasioned by "Robinson Crusoe's" fall occurred. She rushed into her little pupil's room to inquire what was wrong. Maggie was sitting up in bed and rubbing her sleepy eyes.

"He did come down with a bang," she said; "it's a jolly plan. Please, Miss Grey, it's only 'Robinson Crusoe;' do you mind putting him on the shelf?"

Miss Grey picked up the volume in great wonder, but concluding that Maggie, who could not read a word, must have been amusing herself looking at the pictures, laid the book down and retired to rest.

In the course of the night she had again to fly into the little princess' bedroom. This time Maggie was very sleepy, and only murmured drowsily:

"I think it's his 'Family' that has got on the floor now."

Miss Grey picked up the "Swiss Family Robinson," and with a not unnatural reflection that there seldom was a more troublesome little girl than her pupil, once more sought her couch.

The third bang was the loudest of all, and it came with daylight, and

strange and unfortunate to say, awoke the pupil, and not the governess. Maggie was out of bed in a moment, and approached the window, and was gazing out to see some sign of Susy in the street. It was not yet five o'clock, and certainly Susy was not likely to put in an appearance so early; but Maggie determined not to risk going to sleep again, and she accordingly dressed herself, and then getting on the window-sill, which happened to be rather deep, curled herself up, and pressed her little face against the glass. The band-box containing the precious hat was by her side. The moment Susy appeared, therefore, she was ready to start.

Six o'clock struck from a church tower hard by, but another hour had very nearly passed before a somewhat stout little figure was seen eagerly turning the corner and gazing right up to the window where Maggie, cold and tired with waiting, sat. At the sight of Susy, however, her spirits revived and her enthusiasm was once more kindled. With the band-box containing the new hat in her hand she rushed out of the room—she was too excited to be very prudent this morning—and dashed downstairs in a way which certainly would have aroused any one in the dead of the night, but was only mistaken now for a frantic housemaid's extra cleaning.

Once more she reached the hall without any one seeing her, and opening the street door, found Susy Aylmer waiting on the steps.

"Oh! here you are, miss—my heart was in my mouth for fear as you'd fail me. Oh, not that band-box please, Miss Maggie, anybody would notice us with the band-box! I have brought round the little broken-victual basket, and we'll stuff the hat into that."

Maggie on this occasion was certainly not going to be particular, but she did feel a pang of some annoyance when she saw her lovely hat crushed and squeezed into a by no means clean basket. She concluded, however, that as the hat was now absolutely Susy's, she

need not trouble any further about it.

"That's all right now," she said; "you'll be able to buy the tambourine now, won't you?"

"Well, I 'ope so, miss; that's if the 'at ain't a sham, and it don't look like a sham—it looks like a real good 'at. Now, then, Miss Maggie, hadn't we better come along?—it's a good step from here to the pawnshop—we'll get there a little before eight, and they opens at eight. It's a good plan to be at the pawn bright and early, and then you get served first; come along, miss."

"But I didn't know you wanted me to go with you to the shop," said Maggie; "I thought you might do that by yourself; I have gived you the hat, and I thought you'd sell it by yourself. Why, what is the matter Susy?"

Susy Aylmer's face had grown crimson, redder, indeed, than any face Maggie had ever seen; she began opening the basket and pulling out the hat.

"Oh! oh!" she said, "and is that your kind? Is it me that 'ud take this hat and sell it by myself? Why, I'd be took for a thief, that's what I'd be took for, and I'd be put in the lock-up, that's where I'd be found. There, Miss Maggie, take back your hat, miss; it's better to be ever so hungry and holler, and have your bit of liberty. I must do without the tambourine, and Jo's day dream won't come, that's all. Good-morning to yer, miss."

Susy began to walk very slowly away, but Maggie flew after her.

"Why, Susy," she said, "I don't mind going with you; I think perhaps I'd rather like going, only I didn't know you wanted me. You shan't be put in the lock-up, Susy, though I'm sure I don't know what the lock-up is, and you shall have your tambourine. But oh, Susy, I hope they won't take me for a thief and put me into that funny place!"

"Oh, dear, no, missy darling—any one might see at a glance that you was the rightful owner of that 'ere pretty hat, and might well sell what was your own. Come, missy dear, it's all right now, and I never thought as you'd be that real mean as to desert me."

"We must be very quick, then, Susy," said Maggie; "for my Aunt Violet is going to have breakfast at half-past eight this morning and I have been up a long time—a very long time, and I never was so hungry in all my life. I had a very disturbed night, Susy, for 'Robinson Crusoe' did bump so when he fell on the floor, and so did the 'Family,' but none of them bumped quite so hard as 'Sandford and Merton.'"

All the time the two little girls were talking they were going further and further away from Mrs. Grenville's door, and by the time Maggie had quite made up her mind to accompany her little companion they had turned into a side street, and if she had wished it she could not now have found her way home.

Maggie, however, no longer wished to go back; it was great fun going with Susy to the pawnbroker's, and she felt very important at having something of her own to sell. She was a strong, healthy little girl, and did not feel particularly tired when they at last reached the special pawnbroker's which Susy had fixed upon as the best place for making their bargain. The doors of this shop were not yet open, but they were presently pushed back, the shutters were taken down, and a dirty-looking girl and a slovenly red-faced man entered the establishment. Maggie had never seen such an unpleasant-looking pair, and she was very glad to shelter herself behind Susy, and felt much inclined to refuse to enter the shop at all.

Susy, however, marched in boldly, and very soon the white hat was laid upon the counter, and a fierce haggling ensued between this young person and the red-faced man. The dirty girl also came and stared very hard at Maggie, for certainly such a refined little face and

such a lovely hat had not been seen in that pawnshop for many a day. The hat was new, and had cost several guineas, but Maggie's eyes quite glistened when the red man presented her with seven shillings in exchange for it. She thought this a magnificent lot of money—her cheeks became deeply flushed, and she poured the silver into Susy's hand with the delighted remark:

"Oh, now you can get a tambourine! This will more than make up the sixteen added to fourteen, won't it?"

Susy, too, thought seven shillings a splendid lot of money, and the two were leaving the pawnbroker's in a state of ecstasy, when Susy suddenly felt even her florid complexion turning pale, and Maggie exclaimed joyfully:

"Oh, it's dear Waters! Waters, where have you come from, and how did you learn my secret?"

For answer to Maggie's eager inquiries Waters stooped down and lifted the little girl into her arms; she held her close, and even kissed her in a quite tremulous and agitated manner.

"Thank God, Miss Maggie!" she exclaimed; "thank God, my pretty innocent lamb, I'm in time. Oh, what a bad, bad girl that Susy must be! How could she tempt you to do anything so wicked? Why, Miss Maggie, you might have been stolen yourself—you might have been —you might have been! Oh, poor dear Sir John! What a near escape he has had of having his heart broke!"

Here Waters shed some tears and leaned up against the counter in her agitation.

"Susy was not to blame," said Maggie, when she could speak in her utter astonishment. "Poor Susy wanted the tambourine, and I wanted to give it her, and I couldn't think of no other way, 'cause I'm a dunce

and can't write, and so I couldn't send no letter to father to ask him to give me the money. Don't you be frightened, Susy; come here; poor Susy you shall have your tambourine."

But here the untidy-looking girl who served behind the counter raised her shrill voice.

"Ef you're looking for the red-faced young person what came with you into the shop, miss, she runned away some minutes since."

"And I'm grieved to say taking the money with her," added the pawnbroker. "It seems provoking," he continued, "as of course if the money had been returned I might have given up the hat. As things now stands this here hat is mine."

"Not quite so," interposed Waters; "you know quite well, sir, you had no right to buy a hat from a little lady like Miss Ascot. Here's seven shillings from my purse, sir, and I'd be thankful to you to restore me the hat."

Of course the pawnbroker and Waters had a rather sharp quarrel upon the spot, but in the end the pawnbroker was the better of that morning's transaction to the tune of several shillings, and Waters rescued the pretty white hat, which, much bent out of shape, and with some black marks on its pure white trimmings, was carried home.

"Not that you shall wear it, my dear—not that you shall attempt to put it on your head again, for nobody knows what the hat may have contracted, so to speak, in so horrid and dirty a shop, but that I didn't wish that man to have more of a victory than I could help. Oh, Miss Maggie, darling, you did give me a fright and no mistake!"

"But how did you know where I was, Waters? I kept my secret so well."

"Yes, my dearie; but somehow I got fidgety last night, and I kept

thinking and thinking of your words, and the idea got hold of me that maybe the secret wasn't just between you and Master Ralph. This morning I woke earlier than my wont, and as I couldn't sleep, I got up. I had to put one or two little matters right with regard to my mistress' wardrobe, and then I thought I'd see, just when I had a quiet hour, whether you had everything right to go to the garden party. Your new dress was hung up in my mistress' room, and I took it out and saw that the tucker was fastened round the neck, and that your gloves were neat, and your little white French boots wanted no buttons, and then it occurred to me that I'd just curl up the feathers of the hat. The hat was not with the dress, so I ran up to your room to fetch it, thinking of course to see you, dearie, like a little bird asleep in your nest. Well, my dear, the poor little bird was flown, and the beautiful hat was nowhere, and, I must say, I was in a taking, and it flashed across me that was the secret. I put on my bonnet and flew into the street, only just in time to see you and Susy talking very earnestly together, and turning the corner. The street, as you know, is a long one, and I couldn't get up with you, run as I might, but thank God, I kept you in sight, and at last overtook you at the pawnshop. Oh, what a wicked girl Susy Aylmer is!"

"She isn't," said Maggie, "Oh, poor Susy isn't wicked. Waters, I'm sorry you found us. I did want to do something for Susy and for Jo!"

Here Maggie burst into such bitter weeping that Waters found it absolutely impossible to comfort her.

CHAPTER X.

A GREAT FEAR.

Nothing could exceed the fuss which was made over Maggie and her adventure. Mrs. Grenville turned quite pale when she heard of it—even Ralph, who was tranquilly eating his breakfast, and who, as a rule, did not disturb himself about anything, threw down his spoon, ceased to devour his porridge, and gazed at Maggie in some astonishment mingled with a tiny degree of envy and even a little shadow of respect. Mrs. Grenville took the little girl in her arms, and while she kissed and petted her, she also thought it necessary to chide her very gently. It was at this juncture that Ralph did an astonishing thing; he upset his mug of milk, he tossed his spoon with a great clatter on the floor, and dashing in the most headlong style round the table, caught Maggie's two hands and said impulsively:

"She oughtn't to be scolded, really, mother. She didn't know anything about its being wrong, and I call it a downright plucky thing of her to do. She couldn't have done more even if she had been a boy—no, not even if she had been a boy," continued Ralph, nodding his head with intense earnestness. "I can say nothing better than that, can I, mother?"

"According to your code you certainly cannot, Ralph," answered his mother. "Now go back to your seat, my boy, and pick up the spoon you have thrown on the floor. See what a mess you have made on the breakfast-table. Maggie, dear, you did not mean to do wrong, still you did wrong. But we will say nothing more on that subject for the present. Now, my darling, you shall have some breakfast, and then I have a surprise for you."

Maggie could not help owning to her own little heart that Ralph's words had cheered her considerably; she thought a great deal more of Ralph's opinion than of any one else's, and it was an immense consolation to be compared to a boy, and to a plucky one. She accordingly ate her breakfast with considerable appetite, and was ready to receive the surprise which her aunt said awaited her at its close.

This was no less joyful a piece of news than the fact that Lady Ascot's sister was much better, and that Sir John intended to come up to London for a few days.

"After all, Maggie," said her aunt, "if you had shown a little patience, you could have asked your father for the money, instead of trying to sell your best hat. Now, dear, you can go up to the schoolroom with Ralph, and I hope that no bad consequences will arise from this morning's adventure."

"I think, mother," here interrupted Ralph, "it would be a good plan for Maggie and me to go round and see how Jo is. Susy didn't act right, and I know Jo will be very unhappy, and Jo oughtn't to be blamed; ought she, mother?"

"Certainly not, Ralph; Jo has done nothing wrong. Well, if Waters can spare the time, I don't mind you two little people going to see Jo, but remember, you must not stay long; for now I really must buy Maggie a new hat for the garden party."

"Oh, auntie, but I brought my own hat back," exclaimed the little princess.

"Yes, my love, but it is much injured, and there are other reasons why I should not care to see you wear it again. Now run away, children, and get your visit over, for we have plenty to do this afternoon."

When Maggie, with her heart beating high, and one of her hands held tightly in Ralph's, entered Mrs. Aylmer's room, she was startled to find herself in a scene of much confusion. Mrs. Aylmer prided herself on keeping a very neat and orderly home, but there was certainly nothing orderly about that home to-day. Mrs. Aylmer herself was seated on a low, broken chair, her hands thrown down at her sides, her cap on crooked, and her face bearing signs of violent weeping. The two little boys stood one at each side of their mother: Ben had his finger in his mouth, and Bob's red hair seemed almost to stand on end. They kept gazing with solemn eyes at their mother, for tears on her face were a rare occurrence. Susy was nowhere to be seen; and most startling fact of all, Jo's little sofa was empty.

It was Jo's absence from the room which Ralph first remarked. He rushed up to Mrs. Aylmer and clutched one of her hands.

"What is the matter? Where's Jo? Where's our darling little Jo?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Master Ralph Grenville," exclaimed the poor woman, "you had better not come near me; you had better not, sir, it mightn't be safe. I'm just distraught with misery and terror. My little Jo, my little treasure, is tuk away from me; she's tuk bad with the fever, sir, and they've carried her off to the hospital. She's there now; I 'as just come from seeing her there."

By this time Waters, panting and puffing hard, had reached the room, and had heard, with a sinking heart, the last of Mrs. Aylmer's words. She eagerly questioned the poor woman, who said that Jo had not been well for days, and yesterday the doctor had pronounced her case one of fever and had ordered her, for the sake of the other children, to be moved at once to the nearest fever hospital.

"She was werry willing to go herself," continued the mother; "she wouldn't harm no one, not in life, nor in death, would my little Jo."

"And Susy knew of this!" exclaimed Waters. "Oh, was there ever such a bad girl? Mrs. Aylmer, you'll forgive me if I hurries these dear children out of this infected air! I'll come back later in the day, ma'am, and do what I can for you; and if Susy comes home, you might do well to keep her in, for I can't help saying she is no credit to you. It sounds hard at such a moment, but I must out with my mind."

"Susy!" here exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer, "I ain't seen nothing of Susy to-day."

"No, ma'am, very like; but it's my duty to tell you she has been after no good. Now come away, darlings. I'll look in again presently, Mrs. Aylmer."

Maggie could never make out why her aunt turned so pale and looked so anxiously at her when the news of Jo's dangerous illness was told to her. The pity which should have been expended on the sick and suffering little girl seemed, in some inexplicable way, to be showered upon her. A doctor even was sent for, who asked Maggie a lot of questions, and was particularly anxious to know if she held Susy's hand when she walked with her, and how long she and Ralph had been in the infected room. In conclusion, he said some words which seemed to Maggie to have no sense at all.

"There is nothing whatever for us to do, Mrs. Grenville. If the children have imbibed the poison it is too late to stop matters. We must only hope for the best, and watch them. Nothing, of course, can be certainly known for several days."

Maggie could not understand the doctor, and both she and Ralph thought Mrs. Grenville rather wanting in feeling not to let them go and inquire for Jo at the hospital. Under these circumstances the garden-party was a rather cheerless affair, and Maggie was glad to return home and to lay a very tired little head on her pillow.

She was awakened from her first sleep by her father bending over her and kissing her passionately. Never had she seen Sir John's face so red, and his eyes quite looked—only of course that was impossible—as if he had been crying.

"Oh, father, I am glad to see you," exclaimed Maggie, "only I wish you had come last night, for then I wouldn't have tried to sell my hat, and you'd have given me the money for the tambourine. I wish you had come last night, father, dear."

"So do I, Mag-Mag," answered poor Sir John. "God knows it might have saved me from a broken heart."

Maggie could not understand either her father or aunt.

She began, perhaps, to have a certain glimmering as to the meaning of it all when, a few days later, she felt very hot, and languid, and heavy, when her throat ached, and her head ached, and although it was a warm summer's day, she was glad to lie with a shawl over her on the sofa. Then certain words of the doctor's, as he bent over her, penetrated her dull ears, and crept somehow down into her heart.

"There is no doubt whatever that she has taken the fever from Susy Aylmer. Well, all we have to do now is to pull her through as quickly as possible, and of course, Mrs. Grenville, as Ralph is still quite well, and as he was not exposed to anything like the same amount of infection as Maggie, you will send him away."

Mrs. Grenville responded in rather a choking voice, and she and the doctor left the room together.

A few moments later Mrs. Grenville came back and bent over the sick child.

"Is that you, Auntie Violet?" asked Maggie.

"Yes, my darling," responded her aunt.

"What's fever, auntie?"

"An illness, dear."

"And am I going to be very, very ill?"

"I hope not very ill, Maggie. We are going to nurse you so well that we trust that will not be the case; but I am afraid my poor little girl will not feel comfortable for some time."

"And did I take the fever that's to make me so sick from Susy—only Susy wasn't sick, auntie?"

"No, dearest; but she carried the infection on her clothes, and there is no doubt you took it from her."

"Then I'm 'fraid," continued Maggie, "you're very angry with her still."

"I cannot say that I'm pleased with her, darling."

"Oh, but, auntie, I want you to forgive her, and I want father to forgive her, 'cause she didn't know nothing about 'fection or fevers—and—and—do forgive her, Auntie Violet."

Here poor sick little Maggie began to cry and Mrs. Grenville was glad to comfort her with any assurances, even of promises of forgiveness for the naughty Susy.

After this there came very dark and anxious days for the people who loved the little princess. Ralph was sent back to Tower Hill, where he wandered about and was miserable, and thought a great deal about Maggie, and found out that after all he was very fond of her. He did not take the fever himself, but he was full of anxieties about Jo and Maggie; for both the little girls, one in the fever hospital and the other in his mother's luxurious home, were having a hard fight for their little

lives.

Lady Ascot and Sir John were always, day and night, one or another of them, to be found by Maggie's sick-bed, and of course there were professional nurses, and more than one doctor; but with all this care the sick child in the home seemed to have as hard a time of it as the other sick child who was away from those she loved and who was handed over to the tender mercies of strangers. It was very curious how, through all her ravings and through all the delirium of her fever, Maggie talked about Jo. She had only seen Jo once in her life, but although she mentioned her mother and her father, and her old nurse and Ralph, there was no one at all about whom she spoke so frequently, or with so keen an interest, as the lame child of the poor laundress. From the moment she heard that Susy was to be forgiven, that very mischievous little person seemed to have passed from her thoughts; but with Jo it was different, until at last Waters began to think that there was some mysterious link between the two sick children.

This idea was confirmed, when one evening little Maggie awoke, cool and quiet, but with a weakness over her which was beyond any weakness she could ever have dreamed of undergoing. Her feeble voice could scarcely be heard, but her thoughts still ran on Jo.

"Mother," she whispered, very, very low indeed in Lady Ascot's ear, "I thought Jo had got her day-dream."

"Try not to talk, my precious one," whispered the mother back in reply.

"But why not?" asked Maggie. "Jo often had day-dreams, Susy told me, and so did Ralph. She wanted to be in a cool place, where beautiful things are, in the country, or in—in heaven. And I want to be with Jo in the country—or in—heaven."

Maggie looked very sweet as she spoke, and when the last words passed her pale little lips, she closed her eyes with their pretty curly lashes. The father and mother both felt, as they looked at her, that a very, very little more would take their darling away.

"I wonder how the sick child in the hospital is," said Sir John Ascot to his wife. "I must own I have had no time to think about her, and she and hers have done mischief enough to us; but the little one's heart seems set on her—has been all through. It might be a good thing for our little Maggie if I could bring her word that the other child is better."

"It would be the best thing in all the world for Maggie," answered Lady Ascot.

"Then I will go round to the fever hospital now, and make inquiries," said Sir John.

On his way downstairs he met Mrs. Grenville, and told her what he was doing. She said:

"Wait one moment, John, and I will put on my bonnet and go with you."

It was a lovely evening toward the end of July. The day had been intensely hot, but now a soft breeze began to stir the heated atmosphere, a breeze with a little touch of health and healing about it.

"This night will be cooler than the last," said Mrs. Grenville, "and that will be another chance in our little one's favor."

At this moment the lady's dress was plucked rather sharply from behind, and looking round Mrs. Grenville saw, for the first time since all their trouble, the excited and rough little figure of Susy Aylmer. Her first impulse was to shake herself free from the touch of so naughty a child, but then she remembered her promise to Maggie, and looked again at the little intruder.

A great change had come over poor Susy; the confidence and assurance had all left her round face. It was round still, and was to a certain extent red still, but the eyes were so swollen with crying, and the poor face itself so disfigured by tear-channels, that only one who had seen her several times would have recognized her.

"Oh, ma'am," she exclaimed, "I has been waiting here for hours and hours, and nobody will speak to me nor tell me nothing. Mrs. Cook won't speak, nor the housemaid, nor Mrs. Waters, nor nobody, and I feel as if my heart would burst, ma'am. Oh, Mrs. Grenville, how is Miss Maggie, and is she going away same as our little Jo is going away?"

"Who is that child, Violet?" inquired Sir John. "Does she, too, know some one of the name of Jo, and what is she keeping you for? Do let us hurry on."

"She is little Jo Aylmer's sister," whispered back Mrs. Grenville. "Susy, it is very hard to forgive you, for through your deceit we have all got into this terrible trouble; but I promised Maggie I would try, and I can not go back from my word to the dear little one. Maggie is a shade, just a shade better to-night, Susy, but she is still very, very ill. Pray for her, child, pray for that most precious little life. And now, what about Jo? It is not really true what you said about Jo, Susy?"

"Yes, but it is, ma'am; they has just sent round a message to mother, and they say that our little Jo won't live through the night. It's quite true as she's going away to God, ma'am."

CHAPTER XI.

GOING HOME.

Sir John and Mrs. Grenville left poor Susy standing with her apron to her eyes at the corner of the street, and went on in the direction of the fever hospital. Their hearts had sunk very low at Susy's words, and they began to share in Waters' belief that there was a mysterious sympathy between the two sick children, and that if one went away perhaps the other would follow quickly.

The fever hospital was some little distance off, but they both preferred walking to calling a cab. It was not the visiting hour when they got there, but Mrs. Grenville scribbled some words on a little card, and begged of the porter who admitted them into the cool stone hall to send a note with her card and Sir John's at once to the lady superintendent. This little note had the desired effect, and in a few moments they were both admitted to the good lady's private sanctum.

Mrs. Grenville in a few low words explained the nature of their errand. The good lady nurse was all sympathy and interest, but when they mentioned the name of the child they had come to see her face became very grave and sad.

"That little one!" she remarked; "I fear that God is going to take that sweet child away to himself. She is the sweetest and prettiest child in the hospital—she has gone through a terrible illness, and I don't think I have once heard her murmur. Poor little lamb! her sufferings are over at last, thank God; she is just quietly moment by moment passing away. It is a case of dying from exhaustion."

"But, good madam, can nothing be done to rouse her?" asked Sir John, his face turning purple with agitation. "Has she the best and most expensive nourishment—can't her strength be supported? Perhaps, ma'am, you are not aware that a good deal depends on the life of that little girl. It is not an ordinary case—no, no, by no means an ordinary case. My purse is at your command, ma'am; get the best doctors, the best nurses, the best care—save the child's life at any cost."

While Sir John was speaking the lady nurse looked sadder than ever.

"We give of the best in this hospital," she said; "and there has been from the first no question of expense or money. Perhaps the worst symptom in the case of little Joanna Aylmer is in the fact that the child herself does not wish to recover. I confess I have no hope whatever, but it is a well-known saying that, in fever, as long as there is life there is hope. Would you like to see the child, Mrs. Grenville? It might comfort your own little darling afterward to know that you had gone to see her just at the end."

Mrs. Grenville nodded in reply, but poor Sir John, overcome by an undefined terror, sank down by the table, and covered his face with his hands.

Mrs. Grenville followed the nurse into the long cool ward, passing on her way many sick and suffering children. The child by whose little narrow white bed they at last stopped was certainly now not suffering. Her eyes were closed; through her parted lips only came the gentlest breathing; on her serene brow there rested a look of absolute peace. Little Jo Aylmer was alive, but she neither spoke nor moved. Mrs. Grenville stooped down and kissed her, leaving what she thought was a tear of farewell on her sweet little face.

As she was walking home by Sir John's side, she said abruptly, after an interval of silence:

"It is quite true, John—we must do what we can to keep Maggie, but little Jo is going home."

"She must not die. We must keep her somehow," replied Sir John.

That night it seemed to several people that two little children were about to be taken away to their heavenly home, for Maggie's feeble strength fluttered and failed, and, as the hours went by, the doctors shook their heads and looked very grave. She still talked in a half-delirious way about Jo, and still seemed to fancy that she and Jo were soon going somewhere away together.

All through her illness no one had been more devoted in her attentions to the sick child than the faithful servant Waters. When the day began to break, Waters made up her mind to a certain line of action. Her mistress had told her how very ill little Jo Aylmer was—she had described fully her visit to the hospital—had told Waters that she herself had no hope whatever of Jo, and had further added that the child herself did not wish to live.

"That's not to be wondered at," commented Waters. "What have she special to live for, pretty lamb? and there's much to delight one like her where she's going; but all the same, ma'am, it will be the death-knell of our little Miss Maggie if the other child is taken."

When the morning broke, Waters felt that she could bear her present state of inaction no longer, and accordingly she tied on her bonnet and went out.

First of all she wended her steps in the direction of the Aylmers' humble dwelling. She mounted the stairs to Mrs. Aylmer's door and knocked. The poor woman had not been in bed all night, and flew to the door now, fearing that Waters' knock was the dreaded message which she had been expecting from the hospital.

"'Tis only me, ma'am," said Waters, "and you has no call to be frightened. I want you just to put on your bonnet and shawl, and come right away with me to the hospital. We has got to be let in somehow, for I must see Jo directly."

"For aught I know," said Mrs. Aylmer, "little Jo may be singing with the angels now."

"We must hope not, ma'am, for I want that little Jo of yours to live. She has got to live for our Miss Maggie's sake, and there is not a moment to lose; so come away, ma'am, at once."

Mrs. Aylmer stared at Waters; then, because she felt very weak, and feeble, and wretched herself, she allowed the stronger woman to guide her, and the two went out without another word being said on either side.

It was, of course, against all rules for visitors to be admitted at five o'clock in the morning; but in the case of mothers and dying children such rules are apt to become lax, and the two women presently found themselves behind the screen which sheltered little Jo from her companions.

"She won't hear you now," said the nurse; "she has not noticed any one for many hours." Waters looked round her almost despairingly—the poor mother had sunk down by the bedside, and had covered her face with her hands. Waters, too, covered her face, and as she did so she prayed to her Father in heaven with great fervor and strong faith and hope. After this brief prayer she knelt by the little white cot, and took the cold little hand of the child who was every moment going further away from the shore of life.

"Little Jo," she said, "you have got to live. I don't believe God wishes you to die, and you mustn't wish it either. You have got your work to do, Jo; do you hear me? Look at me, pretty one—you have got to

live."

Waters spoke clearly, and in a very decided voice. The little one's violet eyes opened for a brief instant and fixed themselves on the anxious, pleading woman; both the nurse and the mother came close to the bed in breathless astonishment.

"Have you got a cordial?" said Waters, turning to the nurse. "Give it to me, and let me put it between her lips."

The nurse gave her a few drops out of a bottle, and Waters wetted the parched lips of the child.

"There's another little one, my pretty, and she's waiting for you. If you go I fear she'll go, but if you stay I think she'll stay. There are them who would break their hearts without her, and she ought to do a good work down on the earth. Will you stay for her sake, little Jo?" Here the sick child moved restlessly, and Waters continued.

"Send her a message, Jo Aylmer," she said. "Tell her where you two are next to meet—in the country, where the grass is green, or in—heaven. Oh, Jo! do say you will meet Miss Maggie in the cool, shady, lovely country, and wait until by and by for heaven, my pretty lamb."

Whether God really heard Waters' very earnest prayer, or whether little Jo was at that moment about to take a turn for the better, she certainly opened her eyes again full and bright and wide, and quite intelligible words came from her pretty lips.

"My day-dream," said little Jo Aylmer; "tell her—tell her to meet me where the grass is green."

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE WOOD.

The little princess of Tower Hill and the child of the poor laundress were both pronounced out of danger. Death no longer with his terrible sickle hovered over these pretty flowers; they were to make beautiful the garden of earth for the present.

Waters felt quite sure in her own heart that she, under God, had been the means of saving Maggie's life, for Maggie had smiled so sweetly and contentedly when Waters had brought her back the other child's message, and after that she had ceased to speak about meeting Jo in heaven.

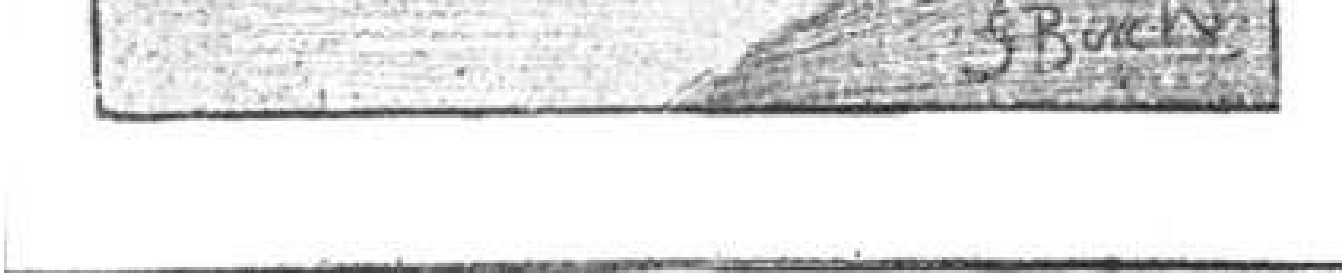
When the scales were turned and the children were pronounced out of danger, they both grew rapidly better, and at the end of a fortnight Maggie was able to sit up for a few moments at a time, and almost to fatigue those about her with her numerous inquiries about Jo.

Every day Waters went to the hospital, and came back with reports of the sick child, whose progress toward recovery was satisfactory, only not quite so rapid as Maggie's.

At last the doctor gave Sir John and Lady Ascot permission to take their little darling back to Tower Hill. Mrs. Grenville accompanied her brother and sister and little niece; and of course in the country Maggie would have the great happiness of meeting Ralph again.

Ralph by this time had taken the hearts of Miss Grey and the numerous servants at Tower Hill by storm. He was thoroughly at home and thoroughly happy, assumed a good deal the airs of a little

autocrat, and had more or less his own way in everything. He was delighted to see Maggie, and immediately drew her away from the rest to talk to her and consult her on various subjects.



He Put His Arm Around His Little Cousin.—Page 158.

"You look rather white and peaky, Mag, but you'll soon brown up now you've got into the real country. You must run about a great deal, and forget that you were ever ill. You mustn't even mind being a little tottery upon your legs at first. I know you must be tottery, because I've been consulting Miss Grey about it, and she once had rheumatic fever, and she used to totter about after it awfully; but the great thing is not to be sentimental over it, but to determine that you will get back your muscle. Now what do you think I have found? Come round with me into the shrubbery and you shall see."

Ralph's words were decidedly a little rough and tonicky, but his actions were more considerate, for he put his arm round his little cousin and led her quite gently away. Maggie found the sweet country air delicious; she was also very happy to feel Ralph's arm round her waist, and she could not help giving his little brown hand a squeeze.

"I wish you'd kiss me, Ralph," she said. "I have thought of you so often when I was getting better; I know you must think me not much of a playfellow, and I am so sorry that I began by vexing you about the rabbits."

"I'll kiss you, of course, Mag," said Ralph. "I don't think kisses are at all interesting things myself, but I'd do a great deal more than that to make you happy, for I was really, really sorry when you were ill. I don't think you're at all a bad sort of playfellow, Mag—I mean for a girl. And as to the rabbits, why, that was the best deed you ever did. You are coming to see my dear bunnies now."

"Oh, Ralph, you don't mean Bianco and Lily?"

"Yes, I mean my darling white beauties that Jo gave me. I found them again in the wood, and they have grown as friendly as possible. I don't shut them up in any hutch; they live in the wood and they come to me when I call them. Yesterday I found that they had made a nest, and the nest was full of little bunnies, all snow white, and with long hair like the father and mother. I'm going to show you the nest now."

At the thought of this delightful sight Maggie's cheeks became very pink, her blue eyes danced, and she forgot that her legs were without muscle, and even tried to run in her excitement and pleasure.

"Don't be silly, Mag!" laughed her cousin; "the bunnies aren't going to hide themselves, and we'll find them all in good time. You may walk with those tottery legs of yours, but you certainly cannot run. Here, now we're at the entrance to the wood; now I'll help you over the stile."

The children found the nest of lovely white rabbits, and spent a very happy half-hour sitting on the ground gazing at them.

Then Maggie began to confide a little care, which rested on her heart about Jo, to her cousin.

"She has got well again, you know, Ralph, and I promised she should meet me in the country somewhere where the grass is green, and yet I don't know how she's to come. I have got no money, and Jo has got no money, and father and mother don't say any thing about it. It would be a dreadful thing for Jo to stay away from heaven—for she was very, very near going to heaven, Ralph—and then to find that I had broken my word to her, and that after all we were never to see each other where the grass is green."

"It would be worse than dreadful," answered Ralph, "it would be downright cruel and wicked. Dear little Jo! she'd like to come here and look at the bunnies, wouldn't she? Well, I've got no money either,

and she can't be got into the country without money; that I do know. Perhaps I'd better speak to mother about it."

But Ralph, when he did question Mrs. Grenville on the subject, found her wonderfully silent, and in his opinion unsympathetic. She said that she could not possibly interfere with Sir John and Lady Ascot in their own place, and that if she were Ralph she would let things alone, and trust to the Ascots doing what was right in the matter.

But Ralph was not inclined to take this advice.

"I like Maggie for being good about Jo," he said, "and Jo shan't be disappointed. I'll go myself to Uncle John; he probably only needs to have the thing put plainly to him."

Sir John listened to the little boy's somewhat excited remarks with an amused twinkle in his eyes.

"So the princess has sent you to me, my lad?" he said. "You tell her to keep her little mind tranquil, and to try to trust her old father."

Little Jo Aylmer came very slowly back to health and strength, but at last there arrived a day when the hospital nurse pronounced her cured, and when her mother arrived in a cab to take her away.

The hospital nurse had tears in her eyes when she kissed Jo, and the other sick children in the ward were extremely sorry to say good-by to her, for little Jo, without making any extraordinary efforts, indeed without making any efforts at all, had a wonderful faculty for inspiring love. No doubt she was sympathetic, and no doubt also she was self-forgetful, and her ready tact prevented her saying the words which might hurt or doing the deeds which might annoy, and these apparently trivial traits in her character may have helped to make her popular. On that particular sunshiny afternoon the preparations made by certain excited little people in Philmer's Buildings were great.

From the day Jo was pronounced out of danger Susy had begun to recover her spirits, and at any rate to forgive herself for her conduct in the matter of the tambourine. She had not spent any of the seven shillings which the pawnbroker had given for poor Maggie's best hat; it had all been securely tucked away in her best white cotton pocket-handkerchief, and neither her mother nor the boys knew of its existence, for to purchase a tambourine while Jo was so ill, and Maggie supposed to be dying was beyond even thoughtless Susy's desires.

After her own fashion, this rather heedless little girl had suffered a good deal during the past weeks, and suffering did her good, as it does all other creatures.

Now, while the boys were very busy getting the room into a festive condition for Jo, Susy quietly and softly withdrew one shilling from her mysterious hoard, and went out to make purchases. A shilling means almost nothing to some people; they spend it on utter rubbish—they virtually throw it away. This was, however, by no means the case with Susy Aylmer; she knew a shilling's worth to the uttermost farthing, and it was surprising with what a number of parcels she returned home.

"Now, Ben and Bob, we'll lay the tea-table," she said, addressing her excited little brothers. "Yere, put the cloth straight, do—you know as Jo can't abide nothing crooked. Now then, out comes the fresh loaf as mother bought; pop it on the cracked plate, and put it here, a little to one side—it looks more genteel—not right away in the very middle. Here goes the teapot—oh, my! ain't it a pity as the spout is cracked off?—and here's the little yaller jug for the milk! Here's butter, too—Dosset, but not bad. Now then, we begins on my purchases. A slice of 'am on this tiny plate for Jo; red herrings, which we'll toast up and make piping hot presently; a nice little bundle of radishes, creases ditto. Oh, my heyes! I do like creases, they're so nice and biting. Now then, what 'ave we 'ere?—why, a big packet of lollipops; I

got the second quality of lollipops, so I 'as quite a big parcel; and the man threw in two over, 'cause I said they was for a gal just out of 'ospital. Shrimps is in this 'ere bag. Now, boys, there ain't none of these 'ere for you, they're just for mother and Jo, and no one else—don't you be greedy, Ben and Bob, for ef you are, I'll give you something to remember. Yere's a real fresh egg, which must be boiled werry light—that's for Jo, of course—and 'ere's a penn'orth of dandy-o-lions to stick in the middle of the table. Yere they goes into this old brown cracked jug, and don't they look fine? Well, I'm sure I never see'd a more genteel board."

The boys thoroughly agreed with Susy on this point, and while they were skipping and dancing about, and making many dives at the tempting eatables, and Susy was chasing them with loud whoops, half of anger, half of mirth, about the room, Mrs. Aylmer and the little pale, spiritual-looking sister arrived.

At the sight of Jo the children felt their undue excitement subsiding—their happiness became peace, as it always did in her blessed little presence.

There was no wrangling or quarreling over the tea-table—the look of pretty Jo lying on her sofa once again kept the boys from being over-greedy, and reduced Susy's excitement to due bounds.

Mrs. Aylmer said several times, "I'm the werry happiest woman in London," and her children seemed to think that they were the happiest children.

The pleasant tea-hour came, however, to an end at last, and Susy was just washing up the cups and saucers and putting the remainder of the feast into the cupboard, when the whole family were roused into a condition of most alert attention by a sharp and somewhat imperative knock on the room door.

"Dear heart alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer. "Whoever can that be? It sounds like the landlord, only I paid my bit of rent yesterday."

"It's more likely to be some one after you as laundress, mother," remarked practical Susy; and then Ben flew across the room and, opening the door wide, admitted no less a person than Sir John Ascot himself.

Mrs. Aylmer had never seen him, and of course did not know what an important visitor was now coming into her humble little room. Susy, however, knew Maggie's father, and felt herself turning very white, and took instant refuge behind Jo's sofa.

"Now, which is little Jo?" said Sir John, coming forward and peering round him. "I've come here specially to-day to see a child whom my own little girl loves very much. I've something to say to that child, and also to her mother. My name is Ascot, and I dare say you all, good folks, have heard of my dear little girl Maggie."

"Miss Maggie!" exclaimed Jo, a delicate pink coming into her face, and her sweet violet eyes becoming, not tearful, but misty. "Are you Miss Maggie's father, sir? I seems to be near to Miss Maggie somehow."

"So you are, little lassie," said the baronet; and then he glanced from pretty Jo to the other children, and from her again to her mother, as though he could not quite account for such a fragile and pure little flower among these plants of sturdy and common growth.

"My little Jo favors her father, Sir John," said Mrs. Aylmer, dropping a profound courtesy and dusting a chair with her apron for the baronet. "Will you be pleased to be seated, sir?" she went on. "We're all pleased to see you here—pleased and proud, and that's not saying a word too much. And how is the dear, beautiful little lady, Sir John, and Master Ralph, bless him?"

"My little girl is well again, thank God, Mrs. Aylmer, and Ralph is as sturdy a little chap as any heart could desire. Yes, I will take a seat near Jo, if you please. I've a little plan to propose, which I hope she will like, and which you, Mrs. Aylmer, will also approve of. This is it."

Then Sir John unfolded a deep-laid plot, which threw the Aylmer family into a state of unspeakable rapture. To describe their feelings would be beyond any ordinary pen.

CHAPTER XIII.

THANK GOD FOR ALL.

On a certain lovely evening in the beginning of September, when the air was no longer too warm, and the whole world seemed bathed in absolute peace and rest, little Maggie Ascot and her Cousin Ralph might have been seen walking, with their arms round each other, in very deep consultation. Maggie was quite strong again, had got her roses back, and the bright light of health in her blue eyes. She and Ralph were pacing slowly up and down a shady path not far from the large entrance gates.

"I can't think what it means," exclaimed Maggie; "it is the fourth time Aunt Violet has gone up there to-day, and Susan the scullery-maid has gone with her now, carrying an enormous basket. Susan let me peep into it, and it was full of all kinds of goodies. She said it was for the new laundress. I never knew such a fuss to make about a laundress."

Here Ralph thought it well to administer a little reproof.

"That's because you haven't been taught to consider the poor," he said. "Why shouldn't a laundress have nice things done for her? and if this is a poor lonely stranger coming from a long way off, it's quite right for mother to welcome her. Mother always thinks you can't do too much for lonely people, and she'll wash your dresses all the whiter if she thinks you're going to be kind and attentive. Why, Maggie, our little Jo's mother is a laundress, you forget that. Laundresses are most respectable people."

At the mention of Jo's name Maggie sighed.

"There's nothing at all been done about her, Ralph," she said. "Nobody seems to take any notice when I speak about her. She must be tired of waiting and watching by this time. She must be dreadfully sorry that she did not go away to heaven and God; for she must know now that I never meant anything when I wanted to meet her in the country—and yet I did, Ralph, I did!"

Here Maggie's blue eyes grew full of tears.

"Never mind, Mag," replied her little cousin soothingly; "it is very odd, and I don't understand it a bit, but mother says things are sure to come right, and you know Uncle John wished us to trust him."

"But the time is going on," said Maggie; "the summer days will go, and Jo won't have seen the lovely country where the grass is green. Oh! Ralph, we must do something."

"If only Mrs. Aylmer were the new laundress!" began Ralph. "You can't think what a nice cottage that is, Mag—four lovely rooms, and such a nice, nice kitchen, with those dear little lattice panes of glass in the window, and lots of jasmine and Virginia creeper peeping in from outside, and a green field for the laundress to dry her clothes in, just beyond. Poor laundress! she will like that field awfully, and it would be very unkind of us to wish to take it away from her and give it to Mrs. Aylmer, for of course Mrs. Aylmer knows nothing about it, and the new laundress has probably arrived, and set her heart on it by this time; and she may be a widow, too, with lots and lots of little children."

"But none of the children could be like Jo," said Maggie.

"Well, perhaps not," answered Ralph. "Oh, here comes mother; let's run to meet her. Mother darling, has the new laundress come?"

"Yes, Ralph, she and her family arrived about an hour ago; they are settling down nicely into the cottage, and seem to be respectable people. They all think the cottage very comfortable."

"And are you going to see them again to-night, Auntie Violet?" asked Maggie with rather a sorrowful look on her little face.

"Why, yes, Maggie; they are all strangers here, you know, and I fancy they rather feel that, so it might be nice to walk up presently and take a cup of tea with them. There are some children, so you and Ralph might come too."

"Didn't I tell you how mother considered the poor?" here whispered Ralph, poking the little princess rather violently in the side. "Oh, yes, mother, we'd like to go to tea with the little laundresses. Is there anything we could take them—anything they would like, to show that we sympathize with them for having come so far, and having left their old home?"

"They don't seem at all melancholy, Ralph," said Mrs. Grenville, smiling, "and when they have seen you and Maggie, I fancy they will none of them have anything further to desire to-night. Why, Maggie dear, you look quite sad; what is the matter?"

"I am thinking of little Jo," whispered Maggie. "Her mother is a laundress, too, and she's poor. Why couldn't you have considered the poor in the shape of Jo's mother, Aunt Violet?"

Mrs. Grenville stooped down and kissed Maggie.

"Here come your father and mother," she said, "and I know they too want to see the new people who have come to the pretty cottage. Now let us all set off. I told the laundress and her family that you were coming to have tea with them, Maggie and Ralph. Suppose you two run on in front; you know the cottage and you know the way."

"Tell the good folks we'll look in on them presently," shouted Sir John Ascot, and then the children took each other's hands and ran across some fields to the laundress' cottage. They heard some sounds of mirth as they drew near, and saw two rather wild little boys tumbling about, turning somersaults and standing on their heads; they also heard a high-pitched voice, and caught a glimpse of a remarkably round and red face, and it seemed to Maggie that the voice and the face were both familiar, although she could not quite recall where she had seen them before.

"We must introduce ourselves quite politely," said Ralph as they walked up the narrow garden path. "Now here we are; I'll knock with my knuckles. I wish I knew the laundress' name. It seems rude to say, 'Is the laundress in?' for of course she has got a name, and her name is just as valuable to her as ours are to us. How stupid not to have found out what she is really called. Perhaps we had better inquire for Mrs. Robbins; that's rather a common name, and yet not too common. It would never do to call her Mrs. Smith or Jones, for if she wasn't Smith or Jones, she wouldn't like it. Now, Maggie, I'll knock rather sharp, and when the new laundress opens the door you are to say, 'Please is Mrs. Robbins the laundress in?'"

All this time the girl with the red face was making little darts to the lattice window and looking out, and there were some stifled sounds of mirth from the boys with the high-pitched voices.

"The laundress' family are in good spirits," remarked Ralph, and then he gave a sharp little knock, and Maggie prepared her speech.

"Please is the new—is Mrs. Rob—is, is—oh! Ralph, why, it's Mrs. Aylmer herself!"

Nothing very coherent after this discovery was uttered by any one for several minutes. Maggie found herself kneeling by Jo, with her arms round Jo's neck, and two little cheeks, both wet with tears, were

pressed together, and two pair of lips kissed each other. That kiss was a solemn one, for the two little hearts were full.

In different ranks, belonging almost to two extremes, the child of riches and the child of poverty knew that they possessed kindred spirits, and that their friendship was such that circumstances were not likely again to divide them. Waters was right when she said there was a strong link between Maggie and Jo.

That is the story, an episode, after all, in the life of the little princess, but an episode which was to influence all her future days.

THE END.

TOM, PEPPER, AND TRUSTY.

"Therefore, to this dog will I,
Tenderly, not scornfully,
Render praise and favor:
With my hand upon his head
Is my benediction said,
Therefore, and forever."

—E. B. Browning.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE FRIENDS.

A child and a dog sat very close to the fast-expiring embers of a small fire in a shabby London attic.

The dog was very old, with palsied, shaking limbs, eyes half-blind, and an appearance about his whole person of almost disreputable ugliness and decrepitude, He was a large white-and-liver-colored dog, of no particular breed, and certainly of no particular beauty. Never, even in his best days, could this dog have been at all good-looking. The child who crouched close to him was small and thin. He was a pale child, with big, sorrowful eyes, and that shrunken appearance of the whole little frame which proclaims but too clearly that bread-and-milk have not sufficiently nourished it.

He sat very close to the old dog, half-supporting himself against him; his head was bent forward on his little chest—he was half-asleep.

A little apart from the dog and the sleepy child stood a very bright boy, a boy with rosy cheeks and sparkling eye. He poised himself for a moment on one leg, kicked off the snow from his ragged trousers with the other, then flinging his cap and an old broom into a corner of the attic, he sang out in a clear, ringing tone:

"Hillow! Pepper and Trusty, is that h'all the welcome yer 'ave to give to a feller?"

At the first sound of his voice the dog feebly wagged his tail and the little child started to his feet.

"Hillow!" he answered with a pitiful attempt at the elder boy's cheerfulness; "I 'opes as yer 'ave brought h'in some supper, Tom."

"See yere," said Tom, just turning back a morsel of his ragged jacket to show what really was still a pocket. This pocket bunched out now in a most suggestive manner, and Pepper, thrusting in his tiny hand, pulled from it the following heterogeneous mixture: an old bone—very bare of even the pretense of meat; an orange; some nuts; a piece of moldy bread, and a nice little crisp loaf; also twopence and a halfpenny.

"Ain't it prime, Pepper?" said the elder boy. "Yere's the bone for old Trusty, and the broken bread, and the pretty little loaf, and the nuts, and th' orange, for you and me."

"Oh, Tom! where did you get the nuts?"

"They were throwing 'em to a dancing monkey, and an old 'oman gave me a handful h'all to myself. I say, didn't I clutch 'em!"

"Well, let's crunch 'em up now," said Pepper, whose face had grown quite bright with anticipation.

"And give Trusty his bone," said Tom. "I picked it h'out o' the gutter, and washed it at the pump. 'Tis a real juicy bone—full o' marrow. Yere, old feller! Don't he move his lazy h'old sides quickly now, Pepper?"

"Yes," said Pepper, clapping his tiny hands.

CHAPTER II.

WHY HE WAS CALLED TRUSTY.

The two little boys and the dog ate their supper in perfect silence, the only noise to be heard during the meal being the crunching of three sets of busy teeth. Then, the fire being quite out, the children lay down on a dirty mattress in a corner of the room, and Trusty curled himself up at their feet.

However lazy Trusty might be in the daytime while the fire was alight, at night he always assumed the character of a protector. Let the slightest sound arise, above, around, or beneath him, and he raised a bay, cracked it is true, but still full of unspeakable consolation to the timid heart of little Pepper.

In the daytime Pepper was often guilty of very wicked and treacherous thoughts about Trusty. When he was so often hungry, and could seldom enjoy more than half a meal, why must Tom, however little money or food he brought in after his day's sweeping, always insist on Trusty having his full share? Why must Tom—on those rare occasions when he was a little cross and discontented—too cross and discontented to take much notice of him (Pepper), yet still put his arms so lovingly round the old dog's neck? and why, why above all things must Trusty be so very selfish about their tiny fire, sitting so close to it, and taking all its warmth into his own person, while poor little Pepper shivered by his side?

Pepper was younger than Trusty, and he never remembered the day when the dog was not a great person in his home; he never remembered the day when his mother, however poor and pinched,

had not managed, with all the good-will in the world, to pay the dog-tax for him.

And when that mother—six months ago—died, she had enjoined on Tom, almost with her last breath, the necessity of continuing this, and whatever straits they were placed in, begged of them never to forsake the old dog in his need.

Of course Pepper knew the reason of all this love and care for old Trusty; and the reason, notwithstanding those treacherous and discontented thoughts in which he now and then found himself indulging, filled him with not a little pride and pleasure. It was because of him—of him, poor little insignificant Pepper—that his mother and Tom loved Trusty so well. For when he was a baby Trusty had saved his life.

How Pepper did love to hear that story! How he used to climb on his mother's knee, and curl in her arms, and get her to tell it to him over and over again; and then, as he listened, his big, dark eyes used to get bright and wondering, while he pictured to himself the country home with the roses growing about the porch; and the pretty room inside, and the cradle where he lay warm and sheltered. Then, how his heart did beat when his mother spoke of that dreadful day when she went out and left him in charge of a neighbor's daughter, paying no heed to his real caretaker, the large strong dog—young then, who lay under the table.

How often his cheek had turned pale, as his mother went on to tell him how the neighbor's daughter first built up the fire, and then, growing tired of her dull occupation, went away and left him alone with no companion but the dog. And then, how his father, returning from his day's work, had rushed in with a cry of horror, to find the cradle burned and some of the other furniture on fire; but the baby himself lying, smiling and uninjured, in a corner of the room; for the

brave dog had dragged him from his dangerous resting-place, and had himself put out the flames as they began to catch his little night-shirt. Trusty was severely burned, and for the rest of his days was blind of one eye and walked with a limp; but he earned the undying love and gratitude of the father and mother for his heroic conduct.

After this adventure his name was changed from Jack to Trusty, and any member of the family would rather have starved than allow Trusty to want. Pepper never listened to this exciting tale without his chest beginning to heave, and a moisture of love and compunction filling his brown eyes.

To-night, as he lay curled up as close as possible to Tom, with Trusty keeping his feet warm by lying on them, he thought of it all over again. As he thought, he felt even more than his usual sorrow, for he had certainly been very cross to Trusty to-day. These feelings and recollections so occupied him that he forgot to chatter away as usual, until, looking up suddenly, he felt that his brother's eyes were closing —in short, that Tom was going to sleep.

Now, of all the twenty-four hours that comprised Pepper's day and night, there was none that compared with the hour when he lay in his brother's arms, and talked to him, and listened to his adventures. This hour made the remaining twenty-three endurable; in short, it was his golden hour—his hour marked with a red letter.

"Oh, Tom!" he said now, rousing himself and speaking in a voice almost tearful, so keen was his disappointment, "yer never agoin' to get drowsy?"

"Not I," answered Tom, awakened at once by the sorrowful tones, and half-sitting up. "Wot is it, Pepper? I'm as lively as a lark, I am."

"Yer h'eyes were shut," said Pepper.

"Well, and your mouth wor shut, Pepper, that wor wy I fastened h'up

my h'eyes, to save time."

"Tom," said Pepper, creeping very close to his big brother, "does yer really think as yer'll 'ave the money saved h'up for dear old Trusty's tax, wen the man comes fur it?"

"Oh, yes! I 'opes so; there's three months yet."

"'E's a dear old dog," said Pepper, in an emphatic voice, "and I won't mind wot Pat Finnahan says 'bout 'im."

"Wot's that?" asked Tom.

"Oh, Tom! 'e comes h'in, some days, wen 'tis bitter cold, and Trusty 'ave got hisself drawed in front o' the fire (Trusty do take h'up h'all the fire, Tom) and 'e says as Trusty is h'eatin' us h'out o' 'ouse and 'ome, and ef you pays the tax fur 'im, wy, yer'll be the biggest fool h'out."

"Dear me," said Tom, "'e must be a nice 'un, 'e must! Why, Trusty's a sight better'n him, and a sight better worth lookin' arter."

This remark of Tom's, uttered with great vehemence, startled Pepper so much that he lay perfectly silent, staring up at his big brother. The moonlight, which quite filled the attic, enabled him to see Tom's face very distinctly.

A strongly marked face, and full of character at all times; it was now also so full of disgust that Pepper quite trembled.

"Well, he is a mean 'un," continued Tom. "See if I don't lay it on him the next time I catches of him coming spyin' in yere; and, Pepper," he added, "I'm real consarned as yer should 'ave listened to such words."

"'Ow could I 'elp it?" answered Pepper. "'E comed h'in, and 'e kicked at Trusty. I didn't want fur h'old Trusty not to be paid fur, Tom."

"I should 'ope not, indeed," replied Tom; "that 'ud be a nice pass for us two boys to fursake Trusty. But look yere, Pepper. Yer never goin' to be untrue to yer name, be yer?"

"Oh, Tom! 'ow so?"

"Does yer know wy Trusty was called Trusty?"

Now, of course, Pepper knew no story in the world half so well, but at this question of Tom's he nestled close so him, raised beseeching eyes, and said:

"Tell us."

"'E wor called Trusty," continued Tom, "'cause wen yer were a little 'un he wor faithful. Trusty means faithful; it means a kind of a body wot won't fursake another body what-h'ever 'appens. That wor wy father and mother changed 'is name from Jack to Trusty, 'cause 'e wor faithful to you, Pepper."

"Yes," answered Pepper, half-sobbing, and feeling very gently with his toes the motion of Trusty's tail; for Trusty, hearing his name mentioned so often, was beating it softly up and down.

"And does yer know wy you was called Pepper?" continued Tom, by no means intending to abate the point and the object of his lecture by the break in Pepper's voice.

"Tell us," said the little child again.

"You was christened Hen-e-ry [Henry]; but, lor! Pepper, that wor no name fur yer. That name meant some 'un soft and h'easy. But, bless yer, young 'un! there wor nothink soft nor h'easy about yer. What a firebrand yer were—flying h'out at h'everybody—so touchy and sparky-like, that mother wor sure you 'ad got a taste o' the fire as poor Trusty saved yer from, until, at last, there wor no name 'ud suit

yer but Pepper. Lor, lad, wot a spirrit yer 'ad then!"

With these words Tom turned himself round on his pillow, and, having spoken his mind, and being in consequence quite comfortable, dropped quickly to sleep. But to poor little Pepper, listening breathlessly for another word, that first snore of Tom's was a very dreadful one. He knew then that there was no hope that night of any further words with Tom. He must lie all night under the heavy weight of Tom's displeasure; for, of course, Tom was angry, or he would never have turned away with such despairing and contemptuous words on his lips. As Pepper thought of this he could not quite keep down a rising sob, for the Tom who he felt was angry with him meant father, mother, conscience—everything—to the poor little fellow.

And Tom had cause for his anger; this was what gave it its sting. There was no doubt that Pepper was not at all the spirited little boy he had been during his mother's lifetime—the brave little plucky fellow, who was afraid of no one, and who never would stoop to a mean act. How well he remembered that scene a few months ago, when a rough boy had flung a stone at Trusty—yes! and hit him, and made him howl with the cruel pain he had inflicted; and then how Pepper had fought for him, and given his cowardly assailant a black eye, and afterward how his mother and Tom had praised him. Oh, how different he was now from then! His tears flowed copiously as he thought of it all.

But the times were also different. Since his mother's death he had spent his days so much alone, and those long days, spent in the old attic with no companion but Trusty, had depressed his spirit and undermined his nerves. The unselfish, affectionate little boy found new and strange thoughts filling his poor little heart—thoughts to which, during his mother's lifetime, he was altogether a stranger. He wished he was strong and big like Tom, and could go out and sweep a crossing. It was dreadful to stay at home all day doing nothing but

thinking, and thinking, as he now knew, bad thoughts. For the idea suggested by that wild, queer Irish boy downstairs would not go away again.

That boy had said with contempt, with even cutting sarcasm, how silly, how absurd it was of two poor little beggars like himself and Tom to have to support a great, large dog like Trusty; how hard it was to have to pay Trusty's tax; how worse than ridiculous to have to share their morsel of food with Trusty; and Pepper had pondered over these words so often that his heart had grown sour and bitter against the old dog who had once saved his life.

But not to-night. To-night, as he lay in his bed and sobbed, that heart was rising up and saying hard things against itself. Tom, with rough kindness, had torn the veil from his eyes, and he saw that he had gone down several pegs in the moral scale since his mother's death. Could his mother come back to him now, would she recognize her own bright-spirited little Pepper in this poor, weak, selfish boy? He could bear his own thoughts no longer; he must not wake Tom, but he could at least make it up with Trusty. He crept softly down in the bed until he reached the place where the old dog lay, and then he put his arms round him and half-strangled him with hugs and kisses.

"Oh, Trusty!" he said, "I does love yer, and I 'opes as God 'ull always let me be a real sperrited little 'un. I means h'always to stand up fur yer, Trusty; and I'll be as fiery as red pepper to any 'un as says a word agen yer, Trusty."

To this fervent speech Trusty replied by raising a sleepy head and licking Pepper's face.

CHAPTER III

TOM AT WORK.

Early the next morning, long before Pepper was awake, Tom got up, washed his face and hands in the old cracked hand-basin in one corner of the room, laid a small fire in the grate, and put some matches near it, ready for Pepper to strike when he chose to rise. These preparations concluded, he thrust his hands into his ragged trousers pocket and pulled from thence twopence and a halfpenny. The pence he laid on the three-legged stool, by the side of the matches, the halfpenny he put for safety into his mouth. Then, with a nod of farewell at the sleeping Pepper, and a pat of Trusty's head, he shouldered his broom and ran downstairs. The month was January, and at this early hour, for it was not yet eight o'clock, the outside world gave to the little sweeper no warm welcome. There was a fog and thaw, and Tom, though he ran and whistled and blew his hot breath against his cold fingers, could not get himself warm. With his halfpenny he bought himself a cup of steaming coffee at the first coffee-stall he came to, then he ran to his crossing, and began to sweep away with all the good-will in the world.

The day, dismal as it was, promised to be a good one for his trade, and Tom hoped to have a fine harvest to carry home to Pepper and Trusty to-night. This thought made his bright face look still brighter. Perhaps, in all London, there was not to be found a braver boy than this little crossing-sweeper. He was only twelve years old, but he had family cares on his young shoulders. For six months now—ever since his mother's death—he had managed, he scarcely himself knew how, to keep a home for his little brother, the old dog, and himself. He had

proudly resolved that Pepper—poor little tender Pepper—should never see the inside of a workhouse. As long as he had hands, and wit, and strength, Pepper should live with him. Not for worlds would he allow himself to be parted from his little brother. In some wonderful way he kept his resolve. Pepper certainly grew very white, and weak, and thin; old Trusty's ribs stuck out more and more, his one remaining eye looked more longingly every day at the morsel of food with which he was provided; and Tom himself knew but too well what hunger was. Still they, none of them, quite died of starvation; and the rent of the attic in which they lived was paid week by week. This state of things had gone on for months, Tom just managing, by the most intense industry, to keep all their heads above water. As he swept away now at his crossing, his thoughts were busy, and his thoughts, poor brave little boy! were anxious ones.

How very ill Pepper was beginning to look, and how strangely he had spoken the night before about Trusty! Was it possible that his poor life of semi-starvation was beginning to tell not only on Pepper's weak body, but on his kind heart? Was Tom, while working almost beyond his strength, in reality only doing harm by keeping Pepper out of the workhouse? Would that dreadful workhouse after all be the best place for Pepper? and would his fine brave spirit revive again if he had enough food and warmth? These questions passed often through Tom's mind as he swept his crossing, but he had another thought which engrossed him even more. He had spoken confidently to Pepper about his ability to pay the tax for Trusty when the time came round, but in reality he had great anxiety on that point. The time when Trusty's tax would be due was still three months away—but three months would not be long going by, and Tom had not a penny—not a farthing toward the large sum which must then be demanded of him. It was beginning to rest like a nightmare on his bright spirit, the fact that he might have to break his word to his dying mother, that in three months' time the dear old dog might have to go. After all, he, not

Pepper, might be the one faithless to their dear old Trusty.

As he swept and cleaned the road so thoroughly that the finest lady might pass by without a speck on her dainty boots, he resolved, suffer what hunger he might, to put by one halfpenny a day toward the necessary money which much be paid to save Trusty's life. With this resolve bright in his eyes and firm on his rosy lips, he touched his cap to many a passer-by. But what ailed the men and women, the boys and girls, who walked quickly over Tom's clean crossing? They were all either too busy, or too happy, or too careless, to throw a coin, even the smallest coin, to the hungry, industrious little fellow. His luck was all against him; not a halfpenny did he earn. No one read his story in his eyes, no one saw the invisible arms of Pepper round his neck, nor felt the melting gaze of Trusty fixed on his face. No one knew that he was working for them as well as for himself. By noon the wind again changed and fresh snow began to fall.

Tom knew that now his chance was worse than ever, for surely now no one would stop to pull out a penny or a halfpenny—the cold was much too intense. Tom knew by instinct that nothing makes people so selfish as intense cold.

When he left home that morning he had only a halfpenny in his pocket, consequently he could get himself no better breakfast than a small cup of coffee. The cold, and the exercise he had been going through since early morning, had raised his healthy appetite to a ravenous pitch, and this, joined to his anxiety, induced him at last to depart from his invariable custom of simply touching his cap, and made him raise an imploring voice, to beseech for the coins which he had honestly earned.

"Please, sir, I'm h'awful cold and 'ungry—give us a penny—do, for pity's sake," he said, addressing an elderly gentleman who was hurrying quickly to his home in a square close by.

Would the gentleman stop, pause, look at him? Would he slacken his pace the least morsel in the world, or would he pass quickly on like those cross old ladies whom he had last addressed? His heart, began to beat a trifle more hopefully, for the old gentleman certainly did pause, pushed back his hat, and gave him—not a penny, but a quick, sharp glance from under two shaggy brows.

"I hate giving to beggars," he muttered, preparing to hurry off again. But Tom was not to be so easily repressed.

"Please, sir, I ain't a beggar. I works real 'ard, and I'm h'awful 'ungry, please, sir."

He was now following the old gentleman, who was walking on, but slowly, and as though meditating with himself.

"That's a likely story!" he said, throwing his words contemptuously at poor Tom: "you, hungry! go and feed. You have your pocket full of pennies this moment, which folks threw to you for doing nothing. I hate that idle work."

"Oh! h'indeed, sir, I ain't nothink in 'em—look, please, sir."

A very soiled pocket, attached to a ragged trouser, was turned out for the old gentleman's benefit.

"You have 'em in your mouth," replied the man. "I'm up to some of your dodges."

At this remark Tom grinned from ear to ear. His teeth were white and regular. They gleamed in his pretty mouth like little pearls; thus the heart-whole smile he threw up at the old gentleman did more for him than all the tears in the world.

"Well, little fellow," he said, smiling back, for he could not help himself, "'tis much too cold now to pull out my purse—for I know you

have pence about you—but if you like to call at my house to-morrow morning,—Russell Square, you shall have a penny."

"Please, sir, mayn't I call to-day?"

"No, I shan't be home until ten o'clock this evening."

"Give us a penny, please, now, sir, for I'm real, real 'ungry." This time poor Tom very nearly cried.

"Well, well! what a troublesome, pertinacious boy! I suppose I'd better get rid of him—see, here goes——"

He pulled his purse out of his pocket—how Tom hoped he would give him twopence!

"There, boy. Oh, I can't, I say. I have no smaller change than a shilling. I can't help you, boy; I have not got a penny."

"Please, please, sir, let me run and fetch the the change."

"Well, I like that! How do I know that you won't keep the whole shilling?"

"Indeed, yer may trust me, sir. Indeed, I'll bring the eleven-pence to—Russell Square to-morrer mornin'."

The old gentleman half-smiled, and again Tom showed his white teeth. If there was any honesty left in the world it surely dwelt in that anxious, pleading face. The old gentleman, looking down at it, suddenly felt his heart beginning to thaw and his interest to be aroused.

"Oh, yes; I'm the greatest, biggest fool in the world. Still—No, I won't; I hate being taken in; and yet he's a pleasant little chap. Well, I'll try it, just as an experiment. See here, young 'un; if I trust you with my shilling, when am I to see the change?"

"At eight o'clock to-morrer mornin', sir."

"Well, I'm going to trust you. I never trusted a crossing-sweeper before."

"H'all right, sir," answered Tom, taking off his cap and throwing back his head.

"There, then, you may spend twopence; bring me back tenpence. God bless me, what a fool I am!" as he hurried away.

This was not the only favor Tom got that day; but soon the lamps were lighted, sleet and rain began to fall, and no more business could be expected.

CHAPTER IV.

IN TROUBLE.

When Tom returned home that night, he had not only the old gentleman's shilling unbroken in his pocket, but three pennies which had been given to him since then, and which jingled and made a very nice sound against the shilling. But though this was a pleasant state of affairs, there was nothing pleasant in poor little Tom's face; its bright look had left it, it was white and drawn, and he limped along in evident pain and difficulty. The fact was, Tom had fallen in the snow, and had sprained his ankle very badly. When he entered the house his pain was so great that he could scarcely hobble upstairs.

On the first landing he was greeted by the rough, rude tones of Pat Finnahan, who stopped him with a loud exclamation, then shouted to his mother that Tom had arrived.

Mrs. Finnahan was Tom's Irish landlady, but as he did not owe her any rent he was not afraid of her.

She called to him now, however, and he stood still to listen to what she had to say.

"Ah, then, wisha, Tom, and when am I to see me own agen?" she demanded, with a very strong Irish brogue.

"Wot does yer mean?" asked Tom, staring at her. "I pays my rent reg'lar. I owes yer nothink."

"Oh, glory!" said Mrs. Finnahan, throwing up her hands, "the boy have the imperence to ax me to my face what I manes. I manes the shilling

as I lent to yer mother, young man, and that I wants back agen; that's what I manes."

At these words Tom felt himself turning very pale. He remembered perfectly how, in a moment of generosity, Mrs. Finnahan had once lent his mother a shilling, but he was quite under the impression that it had been paid back some time ago.

"I thought as my mother give it back to yer afore she died," he said, but a great fear took possession of his heart while he spoke.

Mrs. Finnahan pushed him from her, her red face growing purple.

"Listen to the likes of him," she said; "he tells me to me face as 'tis lies I'm afther telling. Oh, musha! but he's a black-hearted schoundrel. I must have me shilling to-morrow, young man, or out you goes."

With these words Mrs. Finnahan retired into her private apartment, slamming the door behind her.

"Tom," whispered Pat, who during this colloquy had stood by his side, "can yer give mother that 'ere shilling to-morrer?"

"Yer knows I can't," answered Tom.

"Well, she'll turn yer h'out, as sure as I'm Pat Finnahan."

"I can't help her," answered Tom, preparing once more, as well as his painful ankle would allow him, to mount the stairs.

"Yes; but I say?" continued Pat, "maybe I can do somethink."

With these words the Irish boy began fumbling violently in his pocket, and in a moment or two produced from a heterogeneous group a dull, battered shilling. This shilling he exhibited in the palm of his hand, looking up at Tom as he showed it, with an expression of pride and cunning in his small, deep-set eyes.

"Look yere, Tom. I really feels fur yer, fur mother's h'awful when she says a thing. There's no hope of mother letting of yer off, Tom. No, not the ghost of a hope. But see yere—this is my h'own. I got it—no matter 'ow I got it, and I'll give it to yer fur yer h'old dog. The dog ain't nothink but a burden on yer, Tom, and I'd like him. I'd give yer the shilling for h'old Trusty, Tom."

But at these words all the color rushed back to Tom's face.

"Take that instead of Trusty," he said, aiming a blow with all his might and main at Pat, and sending him and his shilling rolling downstairs. The false strength with which his sudden indignation had inspired him enabled him to get up the remaining stairs to his attic; but when once there, the poor little sweeper nearly fainted.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEMPTATION.

Perhaps on this dark evening there could scarcely be found in all London three more unhappy creatures than those who crouched round the empty grate in Tom's attic. In truth, over this poor attic rested a cloud too heavy for man to lift, and good and bad angels were drawing near to witness the issues of victory or defeat.

"We'll get into bed," said Tom, looking drearily round the supperless, fireless room. "Pepper," he continued as he pressed his arms round his little brother, "should yer mind werry much going to the work'us arter h'all?"

"Oh, yes, yes, Tom! Oh, Tom! ef they took me from yer, I'd die."

"But ef we both went, Pepper?"

"What 'ud come o' Trusty?" asked Pepper.

"I doesn't know the ways of work'uses," said Tom, speaking half to himself. "Maybe they'll take h'in the h'old dog. Ef you and I were to beg of 'em a little 'ard, they might take h'in old Trusty, Pepper."

"But I doesn't want to go to no work'us," whispered Pepper.

"I only says perhaps, Pepper," answered poor Tom. "I'd 'ate to go."

"Well, don't let's think of it," said Pepper, putting up his lips to kiss Tom. "Yer'll be better in the morning, Tom; and, Tom," he added, half-timidly, half-exultantly, "I've been real sperrited h'all day. Pat came in and began to talk 'bout dear Trusty, but I flew at him, I boxed im right

up h'in the ear, Tom."

"Did yer really?" answered Tom, laughing, and forgetting the pain in his ankle for the moment.

"Yes, and 'e's nothink but a coward, Tom, fur 'e just runned away. I'll never be a Hen-e-ry to him no more," added the little boy with strong emphasis.

"No; yer a real nice, peppery young 'un," said Tom, "and I'm proud o' yer; but now go to sleep, young 'un, for I 'as a deal to think about."

"'Ow's the pain, Tom?"

"Werry 'ot and fiery like; but maybe 'twill be better in the morning."

"Good-night, Tom," said Pepper, creeping closer into his arms.

Under the sweet influence of Tom's praise, resting in peace in the delicious words that Tom was proud of him, poor hungry little Pepper was soon enjoying dreamless slumber. But not so Tom himself.

Tom had gone through a hard day's work. He was tired, aching in every limb, but no kind sleep would visit that weary little body or troubled mind. His sprained ankle hurt him sadly, but his mental anxiety made him almost forget his bodily suffering. Dark indeed was the cloud that rested on Tom.

His sprained ankle was bad enough—for how, with that swollen and aching foot, could he go out to sweep his crossing to-morrow? And if the little breadwinner was not at his crossing, where would the food come from for Pepper and Trusty? This was a dark cloud, but, dark as it was, it might be got over. Tom knew nothing of the tedious and lingering pain which a sprain may cause; he quite believed that a day's rest in bed would make his foot all right, and for that one day while he was in bed, they three—he, Pepper, and Trusty—might

manage not quite to starve, on the pence which were over from that day's earnings. Yes, through this cloud could be seen a possible glimmer of light. But the cloud that rested behind it! Oh, was there any possible loophole of escape out of that difficulty?

Tom had told nothing of this greater anxiety to Pepper. Nay, while Pepper was awake he tried to push it away even from his own mental vision. But now, in the night watches, he pulled it forward and looked at it steadily. In truth, as the poor little boy looked, he felt almost in despair. Since his mother's death he had managed to support his little household, and not only to support them, but to keep them out of debt. No honorable man of the world could keep more faithfully the maxim, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another," than did this little crossing sweeper. But now, suddenly, a debt, a debt the existence of which he had never suspected, stared him in the face.

His mother had borrowed a shilling from Mrs. Finnahan. Mrs. Finnahan required that shilling back again.

If that enormous sum—twelve whole pennies—was not forthcoming by to-morrow, he and Pepper and Trusty would find themselves homeless—homeless in mid-winter in the London streets. Tom knew well that Mrs. Finnahan would keep her word; that nothing, no pleading language, no entreating eyes, would induce Mrs. Finnahan to alter her cruel resolve. No; into the streets they three must go. Tom did not mind the streets so very much for himself, he was accustomed to them, at least all day long. But poor little, tender, delicate Pepper, and old broken-down Trusty! Very, very soon, those friendless, cold, desolate streets would kill Pepper and Trusty.

As Tom thought of it scalding drops filled his brave, bright eyes and rolled down his cheeks. It was a moonlight night, and its full radiance had filled the little attic for an hour or more; but now the moon was hidden behind a bank of cloud, and in the dark came to little Tom the

darker temptation. No way out of his difficulty? Yes, there were two ways. He might sell Trusty to Pat Finnahan for a shilling—it was far, far better to part with Trusty than to let Pepper die in the London streets; or he might keep the old gentleman's shilling and never bring him back the tenpence he had promised to return to-morrow morning.

By one or other of these plans he might save Pepper from either dying or going to the workhouse. As he thought over them both, the latter plan presented itself as decidedly the most feasible. Both his pride and his love revolted against the first. Part with Trusty? How he had blamed Pepper when he had even hinted at Trusty being in the way! How very, very much his mother had loved Trusty! how, even when she was dying, she had begged of them both never to forsake the faithful old dog! Oh, he could not part with the dog! if for no other reason, he loved him too much himself.

At this moment, as though to strengthen him in his resolve, Trusty, who from hunger and cold was by no means sleeping well, left his place at the little boy's feet and came up close to Tom; lying down by Tom's side, he put his paws on his shoulders and licked his face with his rough tongue; and also, just then, as though further to help Trusty in his unconscious pleading for his own safety, the moon came out from behind the cloud, shedding its white light full on the boy and the dog; and oh! how pleading, how melting, how full of tenderness did that one remaining eye of Trusty's look to Tom as he gazed at him. Clasping his arms tightly round the old dog's neck, Tom firmly determined that happen what would, he must never part from Trusty.

He turned his mind now resolutely to the other plan, the one remaining loophole out of his despair. Need he give back that change to the old man?

That was the question.

The money he had pleaded so earnestly for still lay unbroken in his

pocket; for immediately after it had been given to him, fortune seemed to turn in his favor, and other people had become not quite so stony-hearted, and a few pence had fallen to his share. With two or three pence he had bought himself some dinner, and he had brought threepence back, for Pepper's use and his own.

Yes, the shilling was still unbroken—and that shilling, just that one shilling, would save them all.

But—the old gentleman had trusted him—the old gentleman had said:

"I never trusted a crossing-sweeper before. I am going to trust you."

And Tom had promised him. Tom had pledged his word to bring him back tenpence to-morrow morning.

Strange as it may seem—incomprehensible to many who judge them by no high standard—here was a little crossing-sweeper who had never told a lie in his life. Here, lying on this trundle-bed, in this poor room, rested as honorable a little heart as ever beat in human breast; he could not do a mean act; he could not betray his trust and break his word.

What would his mother say could she look down from heaven and find out that her Tom had told a lie? No, not even to save Trusty and Pepper would he do this mean, mean thing. But he was very miserable, and in his misery and despair he longed so much for sympathy that he was fain at last to wake Pepper.

"Pepper," he said, "we never said no prayers to-night; fold yer 'ands, Pepper, and say 'Our Father' right away."

"Our Father chart heaven," began Pepper, folding his hands as he was bidden, and gazing up with his great dark eyes at the moon, "hallowed be thy name ... thy kingdom come ... thy will be done in

earth h'as 'tis in heaven ... give us this day h'our daily bread ... and furgive us h'our trespasses h'as we furgive ... h'and lead us not into temptation——"

"Yer may shut up there, Pepper," interrupted Tom; "go to sleep now, young 'un. I doesn't want no more."

"Yes," added Tom, a few moments later, "that was wot I needed. I won't do neither o' them things. Our Father, lead us not inter temptation. Our Father, please take care on me, and Pepper, and Trusty."

CHAPTER VI.

TRUE TO HIS NAME.

It was apparently the merest chance in the world that brought the old gentleman, who lived in—Russell Square, to his hall-door the next morning, to answer, in his own person, a very small and insignificant-sounding ring. When he opened the door he saw standing outside a very tiny boy, and by the boy's side a most disreputable-looking dog.

"Well," said the old gentleman, for he hated beggars, "what do you want? Some mischief, I warrant."

"Please, sir," piped Pepper's small treble, "Tom 'ud come hisself, but 'e 'ave hurt 'is foot h'awful bad, so 'e 'ave sent me and Trusty wid the tenpence, please, sir.'

"What tenpence?" asked the old man, who had really forgotten the circumstance of yesterday.

"Please, sir," continued Pepper, holding out sixpence and four dirty pennies, "'tis the change from the shilling as yer lent to Tom."

At these words the old gentleman got very red in the face, and stared with all his might at Pepper. "Bless me!" he said suddenly; then he took hold of Pepper's ragged coat-sleeve and drew him into the hall. "Wife," he called out, "I say, wife, come here. Bless me! I never heard of anything so strange. I have actually found an honest crossing-sweeper at last."

But that is the story—for the old gentleman was as kind as he was eccentric—and he failed not quickly to inquire into all particulars with

regard to Tom, Pepper, and Trusty; and then as promptly to help and raise the three. Yes, that is the story.

But in the lives of two prosperous men—for Tom and Pepper are men now—there is never forgotten that dark night, when the little crossing-sweeper risked everything rather than tell a lie or break a trust. And Trusty was true to his name to the last.

BILLY ANDERSEN AND HIS TROUBLES.

CHAPTER I.

BILLY'S BABY.

Billy was a small boy of ten; he was thin and wiry, had a freckled face, and a good deal of short, rather stumpy red hair.

He was by no means young-looking for his ten years; and only that his figure was small, his shoulders narrow, and his little legs sadly like spindles, he might have passed for a boy of twelve or thirteen.

Billy had a weight of care upon his shoulders—he had the entire charge of a baby.

The baby was a year old, fairly heavy, fairly well grown; she was cutting her teeth badly, and in consequence was often cross and unmanageable.

Billy had to do with her night and day, and no one who saw the two together could for a moment wonder at the premature lines of care about his small thin face.

A year ago, on a certain January morning, Billy had been called away from a delightful game of hop-scotch. A red-faced woman had come to the door of a tall house, which over-looked the alley where Billy was playing so contentedly, and beckoned him mysteriously to follow her.

"Yer'd better make no noise, and take off those heavy clumps of shoes," she remarked.

Billy looked down at his small feet, on which some very large and much-battered specimens of the shoemaker's craft were hanging

loosely.

"I can shuffle of 'em off right there, under the stairs," he remarked, raising his blue eyes in a confident manner to the red-faced woman.

She nodded, but did not trouble to speak further, and barefooted Billy crept up the stairs; up and up, until he came to an attic room, which he knew well, for it represented his home.

He was still fresh from his hop-scotch, and eager to go back to his game; and when a thin, rather rasping woman's voice called him, he ran up eagerly to a bedside.

"Wot is it, mother? I want to go back to punch Tom Jones."

Alas! for poor Billy—his fate was fixed from that moment, and the wild bird was caged.

"Another time, Billy," said his mother; "you 'as got other work to see to now. Pull down the bedclothes, and look wot's under 'em."

Billy eagerly drew aside the dirty counterpane and sheet, and saw a very small and pink morsel of humanity—a morsel of humanity which greeted his rough intrusion on her privacy with several contortions of the tiny features, and some piercing screams.

"Why, sakes alive, ef it ain't a baby," said Billy, falling back a step or two in astonishment.

"Yes, Billy," replied his mother, "and she's to be your baby, for I can't do no charring and mind her as well, so set down by the fire, this minute and mind her right away."

Billy did not dream of objecting; he seated himself patiently and instantly, and thought with a very faint sigh of Tom Jones, whose head he so ached to punch.

Tom Jones would be victorious at hop-scotch, and he would not be present to abate his pride.

Well, well, perhaps he could go to-morrow.

CHAPTER II.

MORE TROUBLE.

Day after day passed, and month after month, and Tom Jones, the bully of Aylmer's Court, quite ceased to fear any assaults from a certain plucky and wiry little fellow, who used to fly at him when he knocked down the girls, and who made himself generally unpleasant to Tom, when Tom too violently transgressed the principle of right and justice.

Not that Billy Andersen knew anything of right and justice himself; he was mostly guided by an instinct which taught him to dislike everything that Tom did, and perhaps he was also a wee bit influenced by a sentiment which made him dislike to see any thing weaker or smaller than himself bullied. Since that January morning, however, Billy's head and heart and hands were all too full for him to have any time to waste upon Tom Jones.

The girls and the very little ones of the court crowded round Billy the first time he went out with his charge. One of the biggest of them, indeed, carried the little thing right up into her own home, followed by a noisy crowd eager to make friends with the little arrival. Billy was flattered by their attentions, but he preferred to keep his charge entirely to himself.

At first, it was his head and hands alone which were occupied over the baby, but as she progressed under his small brotherly care, and wrinkled up her tiny features with an ugly attempt at a smile, and stretched out her limbs and cooed at him, he began gradually to discover that the baby was getting into his heart. From the moment

he became certain on this point, all the irksomeness of his duties faded out of sight, and he did not mind what care or trouble he expended over Sarah Ann.

Mrs. Andersen, true to her word, had given Billy the entire charge of this last addition to her family. Her husband had deserted her some months before the birth of the baby, and the poor woman had about as much as she could do, in earning bread to put into her own mouth and those of her two children.

Now, it is grievous to relate that notwithstanding all Billy's devotion and good nature, Sarah Ann was by no means a nice baby. In the first place, she was very ugly—not even Billy could see any beauty in her rather old and yellow face; in the next place, she had a temper, which the neighbors were fond of describing as "vicious." Sarah Ann seemed already to have studied human nature for the purpose of annoying it. She cried at the wrong moments, she cut her teeth at the most inopportune times, she slept by day and stayed awake at night, in a manner enough to try the patience of an angel; she tyrannized over any one who had anything to do with her, and in particular she tyrannized over Billy.

Night after night had Billy to pace up and down the attic, with Sarah Ann in his arms, for nothing would induce the infant to spend her waking moments except in a state of perpetual motion.

In vain Billy tried darkness, and his mother tried scolding. Sarah Ann, when placed in her cot, screamed so loud that all the neighbors were aroused.

When once, however, this strange and wayward little child had got into Billy's heart, he was wonderfully patient with all her caprices, and treasured the rare and far-between smiles she gave him, as worth going through a great deal to obtain.

On fine days Billy took Sarah Ann for a walk; and even once or twice he went with her as far as Kensington Gardens, where they both enjoyed themselves vastly, under the shadow of a huge elm tree.

It was on the last of these occasions, just before the second winter of Sarah Ann's existence, that that small adventure occurred which was to land poor Billy in such hot water and such perplexity.

Sarah Ann was quite nice that afternoon; she cooed and smiled, and allowed her brother to stroke her face, and even to play tenderly with the tiny rings of soft flaxen hair which were beginning to show round her forehead.

Billy's heart and head were quite absorbed with her, when a harsh, mocking laugh and a loud "Hulloa, you youngster," caused him to raise his head, and see, to his unutterable aversion, the well-remembered form of Tom Jones.

"Well, I never; and so that's the reason you've bin a-shunnin' of me lately; and so you've been obliged to go and turn nursemaid; well—well—and you call yourself a manly boy."

"So I be manly," retorted Billy, glaring angrily and defiantly at his adversary. "I don't want none of your cheek, Tom Jones, and I'd a sight raythe be taking care of a cute little baby like this than idling and loafing about and getting into trouble all day long—like yourself."

"Oh! we has turned nice and good," said Tom Jones, trying to affect a fine lady's accent; "ain't it edifying—ain't it delicious—to hear us speaking so well of ourselves? Now then, Billy, where's that punched head you promised me a year ago now? I ain't forgot it, and I'd like to see you at it; you're afeard, that's wot you are; you're a coward, arter all, Billy Andersen."

"No, I ain't," said Billy, "and I'll give it yer this 'ere blessed minute, if you like. Yere, Sarah Ann darling, you set easy with yer back up agin'

the tree, and I'll soon settle Tom Jones for him."

Sarah Ann strongly objected to being removed from Billy's lap to the ground; all her sunshiny good temper deserted her on the spot; she screamed, she wriggled, she made such violent contortions, and altogether behaved in such an excited and extraordinary manner, that Tom, who by no means in his heart wished to test Billy's powers, found a ready excuse for postponing the moment when his head must be punched, in her remarkable behavior.

"Well, I never did see such a baby," he began; "now, I likes that sort of a baby; why, she have a sperrit. No, no, Billy, I ain't going to punch you; now, I'd like to catch hold of that 'ere little one"—but here Billy frustrated his intention.

"You shan't touch my baby; you shan't lay a hand on her," he exclaimed, snatching Sarah Ann up again in his arms, and covering her with kisses.

"Well, see if I don't some day," said Tom; "you dare me, do you? Well, all right, we'll see."

As Billy walked home that afternoon, he was a little troubled by Tom's words; he knew how vindictive Tom could be, and there was an ugly light in his green eyes when he, Billy, had refused to give him the baby.

Tom was capable of mischief, of playing such a practical joke as might cause sad trouble and even danger to poor little Sarah Ann. Hitherto Billy had kept all knowledge of the baby's existence from Tom Jones. What evil chance had brought him to Kensington Gardens that day? Troubles, however, were not to fall singly on poor Billy Andersen that day. He was greeted on his return to his attic by eager words and excited ejaculations. It was some time before his poor little dazed head could take in the fact that his mother had

broken her leg, and was taken to the hospital. He must then for the time being turn the baby's breadwinner as well as her caretaker.

CHAPTER III.

TOM JONES' TRICK.

The neighbors were full of suggestions to Billy at this crisis of his fate.

It was ascertained beyond all doubt that Mrs. Andersen would be six weeks, if not two months, away; and this being the case, the neighbors one and all declared roundly that there was nothing whatever for Sarah Ann but to become a workhouse baby. One of them would carry her to the house the very next morning, and of course she would be admitted without a moment's difficulty, and there would be an end of her.

Billy might manage to earn a precarious living by running messages, by opening cab-doors, and by the thousand-and-one things an active boy could undertake, and so he might eke out a livelihood till his mother came back; but there was no hope whatever for Sarah Ann—there was no loophole for her but the workhouse.

To these admonitions on the part of his friendly neighbors, Billy responded in a manner peculiar to himself. First of all, he raised two blue and very innocent eyes, and let them rest slowly and thoughtfully on each loquacious speaker's face; then he suddenly and without the slightest warning winked one of the said eyes in a manner that was so knowing as to be almost wicked, and then without the slightest word or comment he dashed into his attic and locked the door on himself and Sarah Ann.

"Sarah Ann, darling," he said, placing the baby on the floor and kneeling down a few paces from her, "will yer go to the workhouse, or

will yer stay with yer h'own Billy?"

Sarah Ann's response to this was to wriggle as fast as possible up to her affectionate nurse, and rub her little dirty face against his equally dirty trousers.

"That's settled, then," said Billy; "yer has chosen, Sarah Ann, and yer ain't one as could ever abear contradictions, so we 'as got to see how we two can live."

This was a problem not so easily managed, for the neighbors took offense with Billy not following their advice, and it was almost impossible for him to leave Sarah Ann long at home by herself. True to this terrible infant's character, she now refused to sleep by day, as she had hitherto done, thus cutting off poor Billy's last loophole of earning his bread and her own with any comfort.

Billy had two reasons which made it almost impossible for him to leave the baby in the attic; the first was his fear that Tom Jones, who still hovered dangerously about, might find her and carry her off; the second was the undoubted fact that if Sarah Ann was left to enjoy her own solitary company, she would undoubtedly scream herself into fits and the neighbors into distraction.

There was nothing whatever for it but for Billy to carry the baby with him when he went in search of their daily bread.

Poor little brave man, he had certainly a hard time during those next two months, and except for the undoubted fact that he and the baby were two of the sparrows whom our Father feeds, they both must have starved; but perhaps owing to a certain look in Billy's eyes, which were as blue as blue could be, in the midst of his freckled face, and also, perhaps, to a certain pathetic turn which the baby's ugliness had now assumed, the two always managed to secure attention.

With attention, came invariably a few pence—fourpence one day—

sixpence and even eightpence another. The greater portion of the food thus obtained was given to Sarah Ann, but neither of the two quite starved. Billy counted and counted and counted the days until his mother would be home again; and as, fortunately for him, Mrs. Andersen had paid the rent of their attic some weeks in advance, the children still had a shelter at night.

All went tolerably well with the little pair until a certain bitter day in the beginning of November. Billy was very hopeful on the morning of that day, for his mother's time of captivity in the hospital had nearly expired, and soon now she would be back to take the burden of responsibility off his young shoulders.

Sarah Ann had hitherto escaped cold; indeed, her life in the open air seemed to agree with her, and she slept better at nights, and was really becoming quite a nice tempered baby.

Billy used to look at her with the most old fatherly admiration, and assured her that she was such a darling duck of a cherub that he could almost eat her up.

No, Sarah Ann had never taken cold, but Billy felt a certain amount of uneasiness on this particular morning, which was as sleety, as gusty, as altogether melancholy a day as ever dawned on the great London world.

There was no help for it, however, the daily bread must be found; and he and the baby must face the elements. He wrapped an old woolen comforter several times round Sarah Ann's throat, and beneath the comforter secured a very thin and worn Paisley shawl of his mother's, and then buttoning up his own ragged jacket, and shuffling along in his large and untidy boots, he set forth. Whether it was the insufficient food he had lately partaken of or that the baby was really growing very heavy, poor Billy almost staggered to-day under Sarah Ann's weight. He found himself obliged to lean for support against a pillar

box, and then he discovered to his distress that the baby began to sneeze, that her tiny face was blue, and that her solemn black eyes had quite a weary and tearful look.

"She's a-catchin' cold, the blessed, blessed babby," exclaimed poor Billy; "oh, Sairey Ann, darlin', don't you go and take the brownchitis, and break the heart of your h'own Billy. Oh! lady, lady, give us a 'ap'enny, or a penny. Give us a copper, please, kind lady."

The lady so aprostrophized was good-natured enough to bestow a few pence on the starved-looking children, and after a certain miserable fashion the morning passed away.

This was, however, Billy's only money success, and he was just making up his mind to go home, and to prefer starvation in his attic to running the feeble chance of securing any more charities.

Sarah Ann still continued to sneeze and her eyes still looked watery, and Billy was sorrowfully giving up his hope of receiving any more coppers, when he came face to face with his old adversary and tormentor, Tom Jones.

In the anxiety of these latter few weeks, Billy had lost his old fear of Tom, and he was now so spent and exhausted that he greeted him with almost pleasure.

"Oh! Tom, do hold the babby just for one minute, just for me to get a wee bit of breath. I'm all blown like, and I'm afeard as Sarah Ann 'as taken cold; jest hold her for one minute—will yer?"

Tom, who was looking rather white and shaken himself, just glanced into Billy's face, and some gibing words, which were on the tip of his tongue, were restrained.

"Why, yer does look bad, Billy Andersen," he said, and then, without another word, he lifted the baby out of the little lad's trembling arms,

and held her in an awkward but not altogether untender fashion.

"Look you here, Billy," he said, "ef yer likes to round quick this 'ere corner, there are two cabs coming up to a house as I passed, and they are sure to want a boy to help in with the boxes, and you maybe earn sixpence or a bob; run round this yere minute—quick, Billy, quick."

"I'd like to, awful well," said Billy, "and the run will warm me, and wouldn't the bob be fine—but, oh! Tom, will yer hold Sairey Ann? and will yer promise not to run away with her? will yer promise sure and faithful, Tom?"

"What in the world should I do that for?" said Tom. "What good would yer Sairey Ann be to me? My h'eyes—I has work enough to get my h'own victuals. There, Billy, I'll not deprive you of the babby; you jest run round the corner, or yer'll lose the chance. There, Billy, be quick; you'll find Sairey Ann safe enough when yer comes back."

The poor thin and cold baby gave a little cry as Billy ran off, but the chance was too good for him to lose; and, after all, what earthly use could Tom have with Sairey Ann?

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT IT MEANT.

Poor Billy! After all, Tom had told him a story, for there was no cab whatever waiting in the long and dreary street, into which he ran so eagerly. He ran up and down its entire length, and even stopped at the very number Tom had indicated. A little girl was coming slowly down the steps, and Billy could not help saying to her, "Oh, missy, am I too late, and have all the boxes been stowed away afore I come?"

"There have been no boxes stowed away," said the little girl, stopping and staring in astonishment at the ragged boy.

"Oh, but, missy, out of the two cabs, yer knows."

"There have been no cabs here for many a day," replied the child in a sorrowful, dull kind of tone, which seemed to say that she only wished anything half so nice and interesting would arrive.

Billy saw then that the whole thing had been a hoax, and he flew back down the long street, with a great terror in his heart. Oh! what did Tom mean, and was the baby safe?

There was no Tom anywhere in sight when the poor little boy returned to the more crowded thoroughfare; but a policeman was stooping down and looking curiously at something on the pavement, and one or two people were beginning to collect round him.

Billy arrived just in time to see the policeman pick up a little shivering, crying, half-naked baby. Yes, this baby was his own Sarah Ann, but her woolen comforter, and mother's old Paisley shawl, and even a

little brown winsey frock had all disappeared.

"Oh! give her to me, give her to me," sobbed poor Billy; "oh, Sairey Ann, Sairey Ann, yer'll have brownchitis and hinflammation now, sure and certain; oh, wot a wicked boy Tom Jones is."

The policeman asked a few leading questions, and then finding that the baby was Billy's undoubted property, he was only too glad to deliver her into his arms. The poor baby was quiet at once, and laid her little head caressingly against Billy's cheek. Billy tore off his own ragged jacket and wrapped it round her, and then flew home, with the energy and terror of despair. A pitiless sleet shower overtook him, however, and the two were wet to the skin when they arrived at their attic.

CHAPTER V.

BILLY'S ILLNESS.

All that day Billy anxiously watched the baby; he tore off her wet clothes, and wrapped the blanket and the sheet tightly round her, and then he coaxed a neighbor to expend one of his pennies on milk, which he warmed and gave with some broken bread to the little hungry creature. He forgot all about himself in his anxiety for Sarah Ann, and as the day passed on, and she did not sneeze any more, but sat quite warm and bright and chirrupy in his arms, he became more and more light-hearted, and more and more thankful. In his thankfulness he would have offered a little prayer to God, had he known how, for his mother was just sufficiently not a heathen to say to him, now and then, "Don't go out without saying your prayers, Billy, be sure you say your prayers," and once or twice she had even tried to teach him a clause out of Our Father. He only remembered the first two words now, and, looking at the baby, he repeated them solemnly several times. At last it was time to go to bed, and as Sarah Ann was quite nice and sleepy, Billy hoped they would have a comfortable night. So they might have had, as far as the baby was concerned, for she nestled off so peacefully, and laid her soft head on Billy's breast.

But what ailed the poor little boy himself? His head ached, his pulse throbbed as he lay with the scanty blankets covering him; he shivered so violently that he almost feared he should wake Sarah Ann. Yes, he, not the baby, had taken cold. He, not the baby, was going to have brownchitis or that hinflammation which he dreaded.

The mischief had been done when he tore off his jacket and ran home, through the pitiless sleet, in his ragged shirt-sleeves. Well, he

was glad it was not Sairey Ann, and mother would soon be home now, and find her baby well, and not starved, and perhaps she would praise him a little bit, and tell him he was a good boy. He had certainly tried to be a good boy.

All through the night—while his chest ached and ached, and his breath became more and more difficult, and the baby slumbered on, with her little downy head against his breast—he kept wondering, in a confused sort of way, what his mother would say to him, and if the Our Father, in the only prayer he ever knew, was anything like the father who had been cruel, and who had run away from him and his mother a year ago.

All his thoughts, however, were very vague, and as the morning broke, and his suffering grew worse, he was too ill to think at all.

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF HIS TROUBLES.

Tom Jones, having secured the baby's comforter, the thin Paisley shawl, and the little winsey frock, ran as fast as he could to a pawnbroker's hard by.

There he received a shilling on the articles, and with this shilling jingling pleasantly in his pocket he entered an eating-house which he knew, and prepared to enjoy some pea pudding and pork.

Tom expended exactly the half of the shilling on his dinner; he ate it greedily, for he was very hungry indeed, and then he went back into the street, with sixpence still to the good in his trouser pocket.

With sixpence in his pocket, and a comfortable dinner inside of him, Tom felt that his present circumstances were delightfully easy. He might walk about the streets with quite fine gentlemanly airs for an hour or two, if he so willed. Or he might flatten his nose against the shop windows, or he might play halfpenny pitch and toss. His circumstances were really affluent, and of course he ought to have been correspondingly happy. The odd thing was that he was not very happy; he could not get Billy's white face out of his head, and he could not altogether forget the icy cold feel of the baby's little arms, when he slipped off that brown winsey frock.

Tom was as hard a boy as ever lived, and a year ago his conscience might not have troubled him, even for playing so wicked a prank as he had done that day. But since then he had met with a softening influence. Tom Jones had been very ill with a bad fever, and during

that time had been taken care of in the London fever hospital.

In that hospital, the wild, rough street boy had listened to many kind and gentle words and had witnessed many noble and self-denying actions.

Two or three children had died while Tom was in the hospital, and the nurses had told the other children that this death only meant going home for the little ones, and that they were now safely housed, and free from any more sin and any more temptation.

Tom had listened to the gentle words of the kind Sister nurse, without heeding them much.

But the memory of the whole scene came back to him to-day, all mingled strangely with Billy's pale face and the baby's cold little form, until he became quite compunctious and unhappy, and finally felt that he could not spend that remaining sixpence, but must let it burn a hole in his pocket, and do anything, in short, rather than provide him with food and shelter. Tom was accustomed to spending his nights under archways and huddled up in any sheltered corner he could discover.

This particular night he was lucky enough to find a cart half-full of hay, and here he would doubtless have had a delicious sleep, had not the baby and Billy come into his dreams. The baby and Billy between them managed to give poor Tom a horrible time of it, and at last he felt that he could bear it no longer: he must go and give Billy the sixpence which remained out of his shilling.

He started tolerably early the next morning, and carefully turning his face away from the bakers' shops and coffee-stalls as he passed them, he found himself presently in Aylmer's Court.

He had conquered himself in the matter of the bakers' shops and the coffee stalls, and in consequence he felt a good deal elated, his

conscience became easier, and he began to say to himself that very few boys would restore even a stolen sixpence when they were starving. He ran up the stairs, calling out to a neighbor to know if Billy Andersen was within.

"I believe yer," she replied; "jest listen to That 'ere blessed babby, a-screamin' of itself into fits; oh! bother her for as ill-mannered a child as ever I came across."

Tom ran up the remainder of the stairs, and entered Billy's attic without knocking.

There he saw a sight which made him draw in his breath with a little start of surprise and terror; the baby was sitting up in bed and crying lustily, and Billy was lying with his back to her, quite motionless, and apparently deaf to her most piteous wails.

Billy's usual white face was flushed a fiery red, and his breathing, loud and labored, fell with solemn distinctness on Tom's ears.

Tom knew these signs at a glance; he had seen them so often in the fever hospital.

Shutting the door softly behind him, and first of all taking the baby in his arms and thrusting a sticky lollipop, which he happened to have in his waistcoat pocket, into her mouth:

"Be yer werry bad, Billy Andersen?" he said, stooping down over the sick boy.

"Our Father," replied Billy, raising his blue eyes and fixing them in a pathetic manner on Tom. "'Tis our Father I wants."

"Why, he were a bad'un," said Tom; "he runned away from yer, he did; I wouldn't be fretting about him, if I was you, Billy lad."

"'Tis the other one—'tis t'other one I means," said Billy in a weak gasping voice. "I has 'ad the words afore me all night long—our Father; tell us what it means, Tom, do."

"I know all about it," said Tom in a tone of wisdom; "I larned about it in hospital. There, shut up, Sairey Ann, do; what a young 'un yer are for squallin'. Our Father lives in heaven, Billy, and he'll—he'll—oh! I am sure I forgets—look yere, wouldn't yer like some breakfast, old chap?"

"Water," gasped Billy, "and some milk for the babby."

Tom found himself, whether he wished it or not, installed as Billy's nurse.

He had to run out and purchase a penny-worth of milk, and he had also the forethought to provide himself with a farthing's worth of bull's eyes, one of which he popped into Sarah Ann's mouth whenever she began to howl.

Never had Tom Jones passed so strange a day. It did not occur to him that Billy was in any danger, but neither did it come into his wild, untutored, hard little heart to desert his sick comrade.

By means of the lollipops, he managed to keep Sarah Ann quiet, and then he kindled a tiny fire in the grate, and sat down by Billy, and gave him plentiful drinks of cold water whenever he asked for them.

Billy shivered and flushed alternately, and his blue eyes had a glassy look, and his breath came harder and faster as the slow sad day wore away.

Tom, however, never deserted his post, satisfying his own hunger with a hunk of dry bread, and managing to keep Sarah Ann quiet.

Toward evening, Billy seemed easier; the dreadful oppression of his

breathing was not quite so intense, and the flush on his face had given way to pallor.

Tom lit a morsel of candle and placed it in a tin sconce, and then he once more sat down by his little comrade. For the first time then Tom noticed that solemn and peculiar look which Billy's well-known features wore. He puzzled his brain to recall where he had last seen such an expression; then it came back to him—it was in the fever hospital, and the little ones who had worn it had soon gone home.

Was Billy going home? The baby lay asleep in Tom's arms, and he looked from her to the sick child whose eyes were now closed, and whose breath was faint and light.

"Shall I fetch a doctor, old chap?" he whispered.

Billy shook his head.

"Tell us wot yer knows about our Father," he said in a very low and feeble voice.

"Our Father," began Tom. "He lives in heaven, he do. He's kind and he gives lots of good things to the young 'uns as lives with him in heaven. It sounds real fine," continued Tom, "the way as our Father treats them young 'uns, only the worst of it is," he added with the air of a philosopher, "we 'as to die first."

"To die," said Billy, "yes, and wot then?"

"I 'spect," continued Tom, "as our Father fetches us up 'ome somehow, but I'm very ignorant; I don't know nothing, but jest that there's a home and a Father somewheres. Look yere, Billy, old chap, you ain't going to die, be yer?"

"I 'spect I be," said Billy; "a home somewheres, and our Father there, it sounds werry nice."

Then he closed his eyes again, and his breath came a little quicker and a little weaker, and the solemn look grew and deepened on his white face.

"Give me my babby," he said an hour later; "lay her alongside o' me; oh! my darling, darling Sairey Ann; and I'll tell mother when she comes in."

But mother never got her message, for when next Billy spoke, it was in the safe home of our Father.

Billy's baby grew up by and by, but no one ever loved her better than Billy did.

THE OLD ORGAN-MAN.

"The world goes up and the world goes down,
And the sunshine follows the rain."

Charles Kingsley.

CHAPTER I.

PLAYING FOR LOVE.

He was always called old Antonio, and though he doubtless possessed a surname of some sort, no one seemed to know anything about it. He had white hair, and a bronzed face, and kindly soft brown eyes, and he got his living by pacing up and down the streets and turning a hurdy-gurdy.

This instrument was a rather good one of its class—it could play six different airs, and all the airs were Italian, and even played by the hurdy-gurdy had a little of the sweet cadence and soft pathetic melody of that land of music.

Antonio lived in an attic all by himself, and the grown people wondered at him and asked each other what his history could be, but the children loved him and his music, and were to be seen about him wherever he went.

He looked like a man with a story, but no one had ever troubled themselves to find it out or to ask him any questions. He did, however, receive stray pennies enough to keep him alive, and the street children loved him, and whenever they had a chance danced merrily to his music.

One cold and snowy afternoon, about a week before Christmas Day, old Antonio sat up in his attic and looked gloomily out at the snow-laden clouds.

Nothing but the fact that there was no oil for his stove, and no pennies in his pockets, would have induced the old Italian to brave such

inclement weather. But no fire and no food will make a man do harder things than Antonio was now thinking about. He must get something to eat and some fire to warm himself by. He shouldered his hurdy-gurdy and went out.

"Poor Marcia," he said to himself as he trudged along. "Well, well, we of the south are mistaken in the generous land of England. The milk and honey-bah, they are nowhere. The inhabitants—they freeze like their frozen skies. Poor Marcia, no doubt she has long ceased to look for the footfall of her Antonio."

The old man, feeling very melancholy and depressed, walked down several streets without once pausing or attempting to commence his music. At last he stopped at the entrance of a very dull square. He had never yet received a penny in this square, and had often said to himself that its inhabitants had not a note of music among them. He took the square now as a short cut, meaning to strike out toward Holborn and the neighborhood of the shops.

Half-way through the square he stopped. A house which used to be all over placards and notices to let presented a different appearance. It was no longer dead and lifeless. From its windows lights gleamed, and lie could see people flitting to and fro.

He stopped for a moment to look at the house and comment on its changed appearance, then with a slight little start, and a look of pleased expectation, he put down his hurdy-gurdy and began softly to turn the handle and to bring out one by one his beloved Italian melodies.

The first, a well-known air from "Il Trovatore," was scarcely finished before a little dark head was popped up from behind a window-blind, and two soft eyes gazed eagerly across the street at the old organ-grinder.

"Bless her! what a depth of color, what eyes, what hair! she comes from the south, the pretty one."

Antonio nodded his head to her as he made these remarks, and the child, with her face pressed against the pane, gazed steadily back at him, now and then smiling in an appreciative manner.

The six airs were all played out and repeated a second time, and then Antonio, looking up at the sky, from which the snow was still steadily falling, began to think of moving on. In his pleasure at playing for the child he had forgotten all about the money part of his profession. He was indeed indulging in a happy dream, in which Marcia, and a certain little Marcia, who had long ago gone back to God, were again by his side.

He threw a cloth over his hurdy-gurdy and prepared to mount it on his shoulder.

The moment he did so the child disappeared from the window. There was a quick, eager patter of little feet in the hall, the front door was opened, and the next moment the little dark child was standing by his side.

"Here's sixpence of my very own, and you shall have it, poor man, and thank you for your lovely, lovely music."

"You liked it, dearie?" said Antonio, not touching the sixpence, but looking down at the pretty child with reverence.

"Oh! didn't I just? I used to hear those airs in Italy, and they remind me of my dear mamma."

"Little missy has got eyes dark and long like almonds; perhaps she comes from our sunny south?" said Antonio eagerly.

"No, I am a little English girl; but my mamma was ill, and they took her

to Italy, and Marcia nursed her. God has taken my mamma away, and now I am in England, and I don't like it; but I shall only stay here until my father comes home."

"Missy, you make my heart beat when you talk of Italy and of Marcia —but your Marcia, was she young?—the name is a common one, and mine, if the good Lord has not removed her, must be very old now."

"My Marcia was young and good," said the little girl. "I loved her, and I cry for her still. I am so sorry your Marcia is old, poor man. Thank you for the music. I must run in now, or Janet will scold. Good-by. Here's your sixpence."

"No, no, missy. I'll get some pence in the other streets. Let me feel that I played the old airs for you only for love."

CHAPTER II.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

Antonio did not stay out much longer in the snow. This enterprise of his had not turned out a profitable one; no one on such a miserable day felt inclined to listen to his Italian airs, the snow seemed to be locking up people's hearts, and he went back to his attic hungry and cold, and quite as penniless as when he started on his expedition. Still there was a glow in his heart, and he was not at all sorry that he had played for the pretty child for love.

He sat down in an old broken arm-chair and wrapped a tattered cloak about him, and indulged in what he called a reverie of Italy and old times. This reverie, as he said afterward, quite warmed him and took away his desire for food.

"The child has brought all back to me like a golden dream," he murmured. "Poor, poor Marcia! why do I think of her so much to-night? and there's no money in the little box, and no hope of going back to her, and it's fifteen years ago now."

The next day Antonio went back to the quiet square off Bloomsbury, and played all his Italian airs opposite the house where he had played them yesterday; but though he looked longingly from one window to another, he could not get any glimpse of the child who reminded him of Italy. As he walked through the square on his way home he could see the people passing to the week-night service at the church, which stood in the center. But no trace of the little one could he catch. As far as money was concerned, he had had a much better day than yesterday, but he went home, nevertheless,

disappointed and with quite a blank at his old heart. The next day he hoped he would see the child, and he again went slowly through the square, but he could not catch a glimpse of her, and after doing this every day in vain he soon came to the conclusion that she had gone.

"Her father has come for the pretty one, and she has gone back to the fair south," he murmured. "Ah, well! I never saw such eyes as hers on an English maiden before."

On Christmas Day Antonio shouldered his organ, as usual, and went out.

On this morning he made quite a little harvest; people were so merry and so bright and so happy that even those who did not want his Italian airs gave him a penny to get rid of him.

Quite early in the afternoon he turned his steps homeward. On his way he bought half a pound of sausages and a small bottle of thin and sour claret.

"Now," he said to himself, "I shall have a feast worthy of my Italy," and he trudged cheerfully back, feeling all the better for his walk through the pleasant frosty air.

Antonio never indulged in fires, but he had a small paraffin stove in his attic, and this he now lit, and spread out his thin hands before the poor little attempt at a fire. Then he drank his claret and ate his sausages and bread, and tried to believe that he was having quite a bright little Christmas feast.

There were many voices in the room below, and cheerful sounds coming up now and then from the court, and altogether there was a festive air about everything, and Antonio tried to believe himself one with a merry multitude. But, poor old man, he failed to do so. He was a lonely and very old man—he was an exile from his native country. No one in all this great world of London cared anything at all about

him, and he was parted from his good wife Marcia.

Fifteen years ago now they had agreed to part; they both supposed that this parting would be a matter of months, or a year at most.

"The good land of England is paved with gold," said Antonio. "I will go there and collect some of the treasure and then come back for you and little Marcia."

"And in the mean time the good God will give me money enough to keep on the little fruit stall and to support our little sweet one," said Marcia, bravely keeping back her tears.

Antonio came to England, and quickly discovered that the streets paved with gold and the abundant wealth lived only in his dreams. The little money he had brought with him was quickly spent, and he had no means to enable him to return to Italy. Neither he nor his wife could write, and under these circumstances it was only too easy for the couple to lose sight of each other.

Once, a few years back, an Italian had brought him word that little Marcia was dead, and that his wife was having a very poor time of it. When Antonio heard this he came home in a fit of desperation, and finding a small box, bored a hole in the lid, and into this hole he religiously dropped half of all he earned, hoping by this means to secure a little fund to enable him to return to Naples and to Marcia.

The winter, however, set in with unusual severity, and the contents of the little box had to be spent, and poor Antonio seemed no nearer to the only longing he now had in his old heart.

On this particular Christmas Day, after his vain attempt at being merry and Christmas-like, he dropped his head into his hands and gave way to some very gloomy thoughts.

There was no hope now of his ever seeing his old wife again. How

tired she must be of standing by that fruit stall and watching in vain for him to turn the corner of the gay and picturesque street!

There she would stand day after day, with her crimson petticoat, and her tidy bodice, and the bright yellow handkerchief twisted round her head. Her dark eyes would look out softly and longingly for the old man who was never coming back. Yes, since the child had gone back to God, Marcia must be a very lonely woman.

After thinking thus for some time, until all the short daylight had faded and the lamps were lit one by one in the street below, Antonio began to pace up and down his little attic.

He was feeling almost fierce in his longing and despair; the patient submission to what he believed an inevitable fate, which at most times characterized him, gave place to passionate utterances, the natural outcome of his warm southern nature.

"Oh, God! give me back Marcia—let me see my old wife Marcia once again before I die," he pleaded several times.

After a little he thought he would change the current of his sad musings, and go out into the street with his hurdy-gurdy. As I have said before, he was always a favorite with the children, and they now crowded round him and begged for that merry Italian air to which they could dance. Antonio was feeling too unhappy to care about money, and it afforded him a passing pleasure to gratify the children, so he set down his barrel-organ in the dirty crowded street, and began to turn the handle.

The children, waiting for their own favorite air, collected closely round the old man; now it was coming, and they could dance, oh! so merrily, to the strains they loved.

But—what was the matter? Antonio was looking straight before him, and turning the handle slowly and mechanically. Suddenly his whole

face lit up with an expression of wonder, of pleasure, of astonishment. He let go the handle of the barrel organ, and the music went out with a little crash, and the next instant he was pushing his way through the crowd of dirty children, and was bending over a little girl, with dark hair and dark, sweet, troubled eyes, who was standing without either bonnet or jacket spell-bound by the notes of the old hurdy-gurdy.

"Why, my little one—my little sweet one from the south, however did you come to a dreadful place like this?" said old Antonio.

At the sound of his voice, the child seemed to be roused out of a spell of terror; she trembled violently, she clasped her arms round his knees, and burst into sobs and cries.

"You are my organ-man—you are my own darling organ-man. Oh! I knew it must be you, and now you will take me home to my father."

"But however did you come here, my dear little missy?"

"My name is Mona. I am Mona Sinclair, and Janet my maid—oh! how cruel she is; she was jealous of the dear Marcia I used to have in Italy, and she said she would punish me, and she would do it on Christmas Day. Father has not come home yet, and I have been so unhappy waiting for him, and Janet said she was tired of my always crying and missing my mamma, and she took me for a walk this afternoon, and she met some grandly dressed people, and they wanted her to go with them, and she said she would for a little, and she told me to stand at the street corner, and she would be back in ten minutes, but it seemed like hours and hours," continued the child excitedly, "and I was so cold, and so miserable, and I could not wait any longer, and I thought I would find my own way home, and I have been looking for it ever since, and I cannot find it. I asked one woman to tell me, but all she did was to hurry me into a corner and take off my fur cap and my warm jacket, and she looked so wicked, and I've been afraid to ask

any one since; but now you will take me home, you won't be unkind to me, my dear organ-man."

"Yes, I will take you home, my darling," said Antonio, and he lifted the little child tenderly into his arms.

CHAPTER III.

GLAD TIDINGS.

"I must not leave my barrel-organ in the street," said Antonio to the child; "will you let me take it home first, missy? and then I can take you back to your father."

Little Mona, holding Antonio's hand, and walking by his side in the midst of the rabble, was a totally different child from Mona, standing by herself under the street lamp.

"I shall like to see your home, organ-man," she said in her sweet voice. "Do you really live in an attic? Marcia and her mother live in an attic in Italy, too, and Marcia likes it."

Then they walked through the streets together, and Mona went upstairs with Antonio. She seemed quite contented in the funny little place, and sat down on a low seat with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I am so glad I met you, organ-man, and I like your home. I would much rather live here with you than go back to Janet. I am dreadfully afraid of Janet, and I sometimes think my father will never come. I wish I could live with you, organ-man," continued little Mona in a piteous voice, "for you could talk to me about Italy, where my dear mamma died, and oh! organ-man, you do remind me of Marcia."

"I once had two Marcias," said old Antonio in a grave and troubled voice; "the little one is with God, and the wife whom I love, I don't know what shelter she is finding for her gray hairs. It troubles me to hear you speak of Marcia, missy. It brings back painful memories."

The child had a thoughtful and serious face; she now fixed her eyes on old Antonio, and did not speak.

"And I must take you home," continued the old man. "I should like to keep you with me, my little bright missy, but suppose your good father has returned, fancy his agony."

"If I could think my father had come, how glad I should be!" said little Mona, and she went over to Antonio and took his hand. It was not a very long way from Antonio's attic to the house in B—— Square.

Antonio was too old and too feeble to carry the little girl all the way. He would have liked to do so, for the feel of her little arms round his neck, and her soft brown cheek pressed to his, brought the strangest peace and comfort to his heart.

Antonio had not had such a good time since he left Italy, and he could not help feeling, in some inexplicable way, that he was going back to Marcia.

At last they reached the house, and the old organ-man's ring was speedily answered. Immediately there was a shout of delight and a great bustle, and little Mona was almost torn from her companion and carried into a dining-room, which was very bright with firelight and gaslight.

Antonio, standing on the hall-door steps, heard some very tender and loving words addressed in a manly voice to the little girl.

Then he said to himself, "The dear little one's father has come and her heart will be at rest." And he began slowly to go down the steps, and to turn back to a world which was once more quite sunless and cold.

But this was not to be, for little Mona's voice arrested him, and both she and her father brought him into the house and into the warm

dining-room. There Mr. Sinclair shook his hand, and thanked him many times, and tried to explain to him something of the agony he had undergone when he had listened to the terrified Janet's confession, and had discovered that his only child was gone.

"I too have lost a child," said old Antonio. "I can sympathize with your feelings, sir."

"But you have got to tell my father all that story of the Marcia with gray hair," said little Mona. She was a totally different child now, her timidity and fear were gone, she danced about, and put Antonio into a snug chair, and insisted once more on his telling his story.

When he had finished, Mr. Sinclair said a few words: "I believe God's providence sent you here to-night in a double sense, and I begin to see my way to pay you back in some measure for what you have done for me. The young girl who so devotedly nursed my wife during her long illness was called Marcia. We wished to bring her to England, for my child loved her much, but we could not induce her to go away from an old mother of the same name. She often told us what hard times this mother had undergone, and how her heart was almost broken for her husband, who had gone away to England to seek his fortune, but had never come back. Now, can it be possible that these two Marcias are yours, and that the man who said your child was dead was mistaken?"

"It may be so," said old Antonio, whose face had grown very white. "Oh! sir, if ever you go back to Naples could you find out from that Marcia with gray hairs if the husband she laments was one Antonio, an old man, who played Italian airs?"

"My child and I are going back to Naples next week," said Mr. Sinclair, "and suppose you come with us and find out for yourself, Antonio."

CHAPTER IV.

AT LAST.

There came a warm day, full of light, and life, and color; a day over which the blue sky of Italy smiled. Beside an artistically arranged fruit stall a slender and handsome Italian girl stood. Behind the stall, on a low seat, sat an old woman; she was knitting, but her restless eyes took eager count of every passer-by.

"Did you observe that old man, Marcia?" she said in her rapid Italian to the young girl.

The girl turned her beautiful and pitying eyes full on the old woman. "He was not my father, mother. Ah! dear mother, can you not rest content that the good God has taken my father to himself?"

"Fifteen years," muttered the old Italian woman. "Fifteen years, with the love growing stronger, and the heart emptier, and the longing sorer. No, I have not given him up. Oh! my merciful Father in heaven, what—who is that?" A little group was coming up to the fruit stall, a child who danced merrily, an old man with a bent white head, and a gentleman on whose arm he leaned.

They came up close. The child flew to the younger Marcia, the old couple gazed at each other with that sudden trembling which great and wonderful heart-joy gives, they came a little nearer, and then their arms were round each other's necks.

"At last, Marcia," said old Antonio—"at last!"

THE END.

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The Lion of the North: A Tale of Gustavus Adolphus and the Wars of Religion. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by John Schönberg. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story Mr. Henty gives the history of the first part of the Thirty Years' War. The issue had its importance, which has extended to the present day, as it established religious freedom in Germany. The army of the chivalrous king of Sweden was largely composed of Scotchmen, and among these was the hero of the story.

> "The tale is a clever and instructive piece of history, and as boys may be trusted to read it conscientiously, they can hardly fail to be profited."—*Times.*

The Dragon and the Raven; or, The Days of King Alfred. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by C. J. Staniland, R.I. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story the author gives an account of the fierce struggle between Saxon and Dane for supremacy in England, and presents a vivid

picture of the misery and ruin to which the country was reduced by the ravages of the sea-wolves. The hero, a young Saxon thane, takes part in all the battles fought by King Alfred. He is driven from his home, takes to the sea and resists the Danes on their own element, and being pursued by them up the Seine, is present at the long and desperate siege of Paris.

> "Treated in a manner most attractive to the boyish reader."—*Athenæum.*

The Young Carthaginian: A Story of the Times of Hannibal. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by C. J. Staniland, R.I. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Boys reading the history of the Punic Wars have seldom a keen appreciation of the merits of the contest. That it was at first a struggle for empire, and afterward for existence on the part of Carthage, that Hannibal was a great and skillful general, that he defeated the Romans at Trebia, Lake Trasimenus, and Cannæ, and all but took Rome, represents pretty nearly the sum total of their knowledge. To let them know more about this momentous struggle for the empire of the world Mr. Henty has written this story, which not only gives in graphic style a brilliant description of a most interesting period of history, but is a tale of exciting adventure sure to secure the interest of the reader.

> "Well constructed and vividly told. From first to last nothing stays the interest of the narrative. It bears us along as on a stream whose current varies in direction, but never loses its force."—*Saturday Review.*

In Freedom's Cause: A Story of Wallace and Bruce. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story the author relates the stirring tale of the Scottish War of Independence. The extraordinary valor and personal prowess of Wallace and Bruce rival the deeds of the mythical heroes of chivalry, and indeed at one time Wallace was ranked with these legendary personages. The researches of modern historians have shown, however, that he was a living, breathing man—and a valiant champion. The hero of the tale fought under both Wallace and Bruce, and while the strictest historical accuracy has been maintained with respect to public events, the work is full of "hairbreadth 'scapes" and wild adventure.

> "It is written in the author's best style. Full of the wildest and most remarkable achievements, it is a tale of great interest, which a boy, once he has begun it, will not willingly put on one side."—**The Schoolmaster**.

With Lee in Virginia: A Story of the American Civil War. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The story of a young Virginian planter, who, after bravely proving his sympathy with the slaves of brutal masters, serves with no less courage and enthusiasm under Lee and Jackson through the most exciting events of the struggle. He has many hairbreadth escapes, is several times wounded and twice taken prisoner; but his courage and readiness and, in two cases, the devotion of a black servant and of a runaway slave whom he had assisted, bring him safely through all difficulties.

"One of the best stories for lads which Mr. Henty has yet written. The picture is full of life and color, and the stirring and romantic incidents are skillfully blended with the personal interest and charm of the story."—*Standard.*

By England's Aid; or, The Freeing of the Netherlands (1585-1604) By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Alfred Pearse, and Maps. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The story of two English lads who go to Holland as pages in the service of one of "the fighting Veres." After many adventures by sea and land, one of the lads finds himself on board a Spanish ship at the time of the defeat of the Armada, and escapes only to fall into the hands of the Corsairs. He is successful in getting back to Spain under the protection of a wealthy merchant, and regains his native country after the capture of Cadiz.

"It is an admirable book for youngsters. It overflows with stirring incident and exciting adventure, and the color of the era and of the scene are finely reproduced. The illustrations add to its attractiveness."—*Boston Gazette.*

By Right of Conquest; or, With Cortez in Mexico. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by W. S. Stacey, and Two Maps. 12mo, cloth, price $1.50.

The conquest of Mexico by a small band of resolute men under the magnificent leadership of Cortez is always rightly ranked among the most romantic and daring exploits in history. With this as the groundwork of his story Mr. Henty has interwoven the adventures of an English youth, Roger Hawkshaw, the sole survivor of the good ship Swan, which had sailed from a Devon port to challenge the mercantile supremacy of the Spaniards in the New World. He is beset by many perils among the natives, but is saved by his own

judgment and strength, and by the devotion of an Aztec princess. At last by a ruse he obtains the protection of the Spaniards, and after the fall of Mexico he succeeds in regaining his native shore, with a fortune and a charming Aztec bride.

> "'By Right of Conquest' is the nearest approach to a perfectly successful historical tale that Mr. Henty has yet published."—*Academy.*

In the Reign of Terror: The Adventures of a Westminster Boy. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by J. Schönberg. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Harry Sandwith, a Westminster boy, becomes a resident at the chateau of a French marquis, and after various adventures accompanies the family to Paris at the crisis of the Revolution. Imprisonment and death reduce their number, and the hero finds himself beset by perils with the three young daughters of the house in his charge. After hairbreadth escapes they reach Nantes. There the girls are condemned to death in the coffin-ships, but are saved by the unfailing courage of their boy protector.

> "Harry Sandwith, the Westminster boy, may fairly be said to beat Mr. Henty's record. His adventures will delight boys by the audacity and peril they depict.... The story is one of Mr. Henty's best."—*Saturday Review.*

With Wolfe in Canada; or, The Winning of a Continent. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In the present volume Mr. Henty gives an account of the struggle between Britain and France for supremacy in the North American continent. On the issue of this war depended not only the destinies of North America, but to a large extent those of the mother countries

themselves. The fall of Quebec decided that the Anglo-Saxon race should predominate in the New World; that Britain, and not France, should take the lead among the nations of Europe; and that English and American commerce, the English language, and English literature, should spread right round the globe.

> "It is not only a lesson in history as instructively as it is graphically told, but also a deeply interesting and often thrilling tale of adventure and peril by flood and field."—*Illustrated London News.*

True to the Old Flag: A Tale of the American War of Independence. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story the author has gone to the accounts of officers who took part in the conflict, and lads will find that in no war in which American and British soldiers have been engaged did they behave with greater courage and good conduct. The historical portion of the book being accompanied with numerous thrilling adventures with the redskins on the shores of Lake Huron, a story of exciting interest is interwoven with the general narrative and carried through the book.

> "Does justice to the pluck and determination of the British soldiers during the unfortunate struggle against American emancipation. The son of an American loyalist, who remains true to our flag, falls among the hostile redskins in that very Huron country which has been endeared to us by the exploits of Hawkeye and Chingachgook."—*The Times.*

The Lion of St. Mark: A Tale of Venice in the Fourteenth Century. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A story of Venice at a period when her strength and splendor were

put to the severest tests. The hero displays a fine sense and manliness which carry him safely through an atmosphere of intrigue, crime, and bloodshed. He contributes largely to the victories of the Venetians at Porto d'Anzo and Chioggia, and finally wins the hand of the daughter of one of the chief men of Venice.

> "Every boy should read 'The Lion of St. Mark.' Mr. Henty has never produced a story more delightful, more wholesome, or more vivacious."—*Saturday Review.*

A Final Reckoning: A Tale of Bush Life in Australia. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by W. B. Wollen. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The hero, a young English lad, after rather a stormy boyhood emigrates to Australia, and gets employment as an officer in the mounted police. A few years of active work on the frontier, where he has many a brush with both natives and bushrangers, gain him promotion to a captaincy, and he eventually settles down to the peaceful life of a squatter.

> "Mr. Henty has never published a more readable, a more carefully constructed, or a better written story than this."—*Spectator.*

Under Drake's Flag: A Tale of the Spanish Main. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A story of the days when England and Spain struggled for the supremacy of the sea. The heroes sail as lads with Drake in the Pacific expedition, and in his great voyage of circumnavigation. The historical portion of the story is absolutely to be relied upon, but this will perhaps be less attractive than the great variety of exciting adventure through which the young heroes pass in the course of their voyages.

"A book of adventure, where the hero meets with experience enough, one would think, to turn his hair gray."—*Harper's Monthly Magazine.*

By Sheer Pluck: A Tale of the Ashanti War. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The author has woven, in a tale of thrilling interest, all the details of the Ashanti campaign, of which he was himself a witness. His hero, after many exciting adventures in the interior, is detained a prisoner by the king just before the outbreak of the war, but escapes, and accompanies the English expedition on their march to Coomassie.

"Mr. Henty keeps up his reputation as a writer of boys' stories. 'By Sheer Pluck' will be eagerly read."—*Athenæum.*

By Pike and Dyke: A Tale of the Rise of the Dutch Republic By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Maynard Brown, and 4 Maps. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story Mr. Henty traces the adventures and brave deeds of an English boy in the household of the ablest man of his age—William the Silent. Edward Martin, the son of an English sea-captain, enters the service of the Prince as a volunteer, and is employed by him in many dangerous and responsible missions, in the discharge of which he passes through the great sieges of the time. He ultimately settles down as Sir Edward Martin.

"Boys with a turn for historical research will be enchanted with the book, while the rest who only care for adventure will be students in spite of themselves."—*St. James' Gazette.*

St. George for England: A Tale of Cressy and Poitiers. By G. A.

Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

No portion of English history is more crowded with great events than that of the reign of Edward III. Cressy and Poitiers; the destruction of the Spanish fleet; the plague of the Black Death; the Jacquerie rising; these are treated by the author in "St. George for England." The hero of the story, although of good family, begins life as a London apprentice, but after countless adventures and perils becomes by valor and good conduct the squire, and at last the trusted friend of the Black Prince.

> "Mr. Henty has developed for himself a type of historical novel for boys which bids fair to supplement, on their behalf, the historical labors of Sir Walter Scott in the land of fiction."—*The Standard.*

Captain's Kidd's Gold: The True Story of an Adventurous Sailor Boy. By James Franklin Fitts. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

There is something fascinating to the average youth in the very idea of buried treasure. A vision arises before his eyes of swarthy Portuguese and Spanish rascals, with black beards and gleaming eyes—sinister-looking fellows who once on a time haunted the Spanish Main, sneaking out from some hidden creek in their long, low schooner, of picaroonish rake and sheer, to attack an unsuspecting trading craft. There were many famous sea rovers in their day, but none more celebrated than Capt. Kidd. Perhaps the most fascinating tale of all is Mr. Fitts' true story of an adventurous American boy, who receives from his dying father an ancient bit of vellum, which the latter obtained in a curious way. The document bears obscure directions purporting to locate a certain island in the Bahama group, and a considerable treasure buried there by two of Kidd's crew. The hero of this book, Paul Jones Garry, is an

ambitious, persevering lad, of salt-water New England ancestry, and his efforts to reach the island and secure the money form one of the most absorbing tales for our youth that has come from the press.

Captain Bayley's Heir: A Tale of the Gold Fields of California By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by H. M. Paget. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A frank, manly lad and his cousin are rivals in the heirship of a considerable property. The former falls into a trap laid by the latter, and while under a false accusation of theft foolishly leaves England for America. He works his passage before the mast, joins a small band of hunters, crosses a tract of country infested with Indians to the Californian gold diggings, and is successful both as digger and trader.

> "Mr. Henty is careful to mingle instruction with entertainment; and the humorous touches, especially in the sketch of John Holl, the Westminster dustman, Dickens himself could hardly have excelled."—*Christian Leader.*

For Name and Fame; or, Through Afghan Passes. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

An interesting story of the last war in Afghanistan. The hero, after being wrecked and going through many stirring adventures among the Malays, finds his way to Calcutta and enlists in a regiment proceeding to join the army at the Afghan passes. He accompanies the force under General Roberts to the Peiwar Kotal, is wounded, taken prisoner, carried to Cabul, whence he is transferred to Candahar, and takes part in the final defeat of the army of Ayoub Khan.

> "The best feature of the book—apart from the interest of its

scenes of adventure—is its honest effort to do justice to the patriotism of the Afghan people."—*Daily News.*

Captured by Apes: The Wonderful Adventures of a Young Animal Trainer. By Harry Prentice. 12mo, cloth, $1.00.

The scene of this tale is laid on an island in the Malay Archipelago. Philip Garland, a young animal collector and trainer, of New York, sets sail for Eastern seas in quest of a new stock of living curiosities. The vessel is wrecked off the coast of Borneo and young Garland, the sole survivor of the disaster, is cast ashore on a small island, and captured by the apes that overrun the place. The lad discovers that the ruling spirit of the monkey tribe is a gigantic and vicious baboon, whom he identifies as Goliah, an animal at one time in his possession and with whose instruction he had been especially diligent. The brute recognizes him, and with a kind of malignant satisfaction puts his former master through the same course of training he had himself experienced with a faithfulness of detail which shows how astonishing is monkey recollection. Very novel indeed is the way by which the young man escapes death. Mr. Prentice has certainly worked a new vein on juvenile fiction, and the ability with which he handles a difficult subject stamps him as a writer of undoubted skill.

The Bravest of the Brave; or, With Peterborough in Spain. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by H. M. Paget. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

There are few great leaders whose lives and actions have so completely fallen into oblivion as those of the Earl of Peterborough. This is largely due to the fact that they were over-shadowed by the glory and successes of Marlborough. His career as general extended over little more than a year, and yet, in that time, he showed a genius for warfare which has never been surpassed.

"Mr. Henty never loses sight of the moral purpose of his work—to enforce the doctrine of courage and truth. Lads will read 'The Bravest of the Brave' with pleasure and profit; of that we are quite sure."—*Daily Telegraph.*

The Cat of Bubastes: A Story of Ancient Egypt. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A story which will give young readers an unsurpassed insight into the customs of the Egyptian people. Amuba, a prince of the Rebu nation, is carried with his charioteer Jethro into slavery. They become inmates of the house of Ameres, the Egyptian high-priest, and are happy in his service until the priest's son accidentally kills the sacred cat of Bubastes. In an outburst of popular fury Ameres is killed, and it rests with Jethro and Amuba to secure the escape of the high-priest's son and daughter.

"The story, from the critical moment of the killing of the sacred cat to the perilous exodus into Asia with which it closes, is very skillfully constructed and full of exciting adventures. It is admirably illustrated."—*Saturday Review.*

With Washington at Monmouth: A Story of Three Philadelphia Boys. By James Otis. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Three Philadelphia boys, Seth Graydon "whose mother conducted a boarding-house which was patronized by the British officers;" Enoch Ball, "son of that Mrs. Ball whose dancing school was situated on Letitia Street," and little Jacob, son of "Chris, the Baker," serve as the principal characters. The story is laid during the winter when Lord Howe held possession of the city, and the lads aid the cause by assisting the American spies who make regular and frequent visits from Valley Forge. One reads here of home life in the captive city when bread was scarce among the people of the lower classes, and a reckless prodigality shown by the British officers, who passed the

winter in feasting and merry-making while the members of the patriot army but a few miles away were suffering from both cold and hunger. The story abounds with pictures of Colonial life skillfully drawn, and the glimpses of Washington's soldiers which are given show that the work has not been hastily done, or without considerable study.

For the Temple: A Tale of the Fall of Jerusalem. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by S. J. Solomon. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Mr. Henty here weaves into the record of Josephus an admirable and attractive story. The troubles in the district of Tiberias, the march of the legions, the sieges of Jotapata, of Gamala, and of Jerusalem, form the impressive and carefully studied historic setting to the figure of the lad who passes from the vineyard to the service of Josephus, becomes the leader of a guerrilla band of patriots, fights bravely for the Temple, and after a brief term of slavery at Alexandria, returns to his Galilean home with the favor of Titus.

> "Mr. Henty's graphic prose pictures of the hopeless Jewish resistance to Roman sway add another leaf to his record of the famous wars of the world."—*Graphic.*

Facing Death; or, The Hero of the Vaughan Pit. A Tale of the Coal Mines. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Gordon Browne. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"Facing Death" is a story with a purpose. It is intended to show that a lad who makes up his mind firmly and resolutely that he will rise in life, and who is prepared to face toil and ridicule and hardship to carry out his determination, is sure to succeed. The hero of the story is a typical British boy, dogged, earnest, generous, and though "shamefaced" to a degree, is ready to face death in the discharge of duty.

> "The tale is well written and well illustrated, and there is

much reality in the characters. If any father, clergyman, or schoolmaster is on the lookout for a good book to give as a present to a boy who is worth his salt, this is the book we would recommend."—*Standard.*

Tom Temple's Career. By Horatio Alger. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Tom Temple, a bright, self-reliant lad, by the death of his father becomes a boarder at the home of Nathan Middleton, a penurious insurance agent. Though well paid for keeping the boy, Nathan and his wife endeavor to bring Master Tom in line with their parsimonious habits. The lad ingeniously evades their efforts and revolutionizes the household. As Tom is heir to $40,000, he is regarded as a person of some importance until by an unfortunate combination of circumstances his fortune shrinks to a few hundreds. He leaves Plympton village to seek work in New York, whence he undertakes an important mission to California, around which center the most exciting incidents of his young career. Some of his adventures in the far west are so startling that the reader will scarcely close the book until the last page shall have been reached. The tale is written in Mr. Alger's most fascinating style, and is bound to please the very large class of boys who regard this popular author as a prime favorite.

Maori and Settler: A Story of the New Zealand War. By G. A. Henty. With full-page Illustrations by Alfred Pearse. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The Renshaws emigrate to New Zealand during the period of the war with the natives. Wilfrid, a strong, self-reliant, courageous lad, is the mainstay of the household. He has for his friend Mr. Atherton, a botanist and naturalist of herculean strength and unfailing nerve and humor. In the adventures among the Maoris, there are many breathless moments in which the odds seem hopelessly against the party, but they succeed in establishing themselves happily in one of the pleasant New Zealand valleys.

"Brimful of adventure, of humorous and interesting conversation, and vivid pictures of colonial life."—*Schoolmaster.*

Julian Mortimer: A Brave Boy's Struggle for Home and Fortune. By Harry Castlemon. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Here is a story that will warm every boy's heart. There is mystery enough to keep any lad's imagination wound up to the highest pitch. The scene of the story lies west of the Mississippi River, in the days when emigrants made their perilous way across the great plains to the land of gold. One of the startling features of the book is the attack upon the wagon train by a large party of Indians. Our hero is a lad of uncommon nerve and pluck, a brave young American in every sense of the word. He enlists and holds the reader's sympathy from the outset. Surrounded by an unknown and constant peril, and assisted by the unswerving fidelity of a stalwart trapper, a real rough diamond, our hero achieves the most happy results. Harry Castlemon has written many entertaining stories for boys, and it would seem almost superfluous to say anything in his praise, for the youth of America regard him as a favorite author.

"**Carrots**:" Just a Little Boy. By Mrs. Molesworth. With Illustrations by Walter Crane. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"One of the cleverest and most pleasing stories it has been our good fortune to meet with for some time. Carrots and his sister are delightful little beings, whom to read about is at once to become very fond of."—*Examiner.*

"A genuine children's book; we've seen 'em seize it, and read it greedily. Children are first-rate critics, and thoroughly appreciate Walter Crane's illustrations."—*Punch.*

Mopsa the Fairy. By Jean Ingelow. With Eight page Illustrations. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

> "Mrs. Ingelow is, to our mind, the most charming of all living writers for children, and 'Mopsa' alone ought to give her a kind of pre-emptive right to the love and gratitude of our young folks. It requires genius to conceive a purely imaginary work which must of necessity deal with the supernatural, without running into a mere riot of fantastic absurdity; but genius Miss Ingelow has and the story of 'Jack' is as careless and joyous, but as delicate, as a picture of childhood."—*Eclectic.*

A Jaunt Through Java: The Story of a Journey to the Sacred Mountain. By Edward S. Ellis. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The central interest of this story is found in the thrilling adventures of two cousins, Hermon and Eustace Hadley, on their trip across the island of Java, from Samarang to the Sacred Mountain. In a land where the Royal Bengal tiger runs at large; where the rhinoceros and other fierce beasts are to be met with at unexpected moments; it is but natural that the heroes of this book should have a lively experience. Hermon not only distinguishes himself by killing a full-grown tiger at short range, but meets with the most startling adventure of the journey. There is much in this narrative to instruct as well as entertain the reader, and so deftly has Mr. Ellis used his material that there is not a dull page in the book. The two heroes are brave, manly young fellows, bubbling over with boyish independence. They cope with the many difficulties that arise during the trip in a fearless way that is bound to win the admiration of every lad who is so fortunate as to read their adventures.

Wrecked on Spider Island; or, How Ned Rogers Found the Treasure. By James Otis. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A "down-east" plucky lad who ships as cabin boy, not from love of adventure, but because it is the only course remaining by which he can gain a livelihood. While in his bunk, seasick, Ned Rogers hears the captain and mate discussing their plans for the willful wreck of the brig in order to gain the insurance. Once it is known he is in possession of the secret the captain maroons him on Spider Island, explaining to the crew that the boy is afflicted with leprosy. While thus involuntarily playing the part of a Crusoe, Ned discovers a wreck submerged in the sand, and overhauling the timbers for the purpose of gathering material with which to build a hut, finds a considerable amount of treasure. Raising the wreck; a voyage to Havana under sail; shipping there a crew and running for Savannah; the attempt of the crew to seize the little craft after learning of the treasure on board, and, as a matter of course, the successful ending of the journey, all serve to make as entertaining a story of sea-life as the most captious boy could desire.

Geoff and Jim: A Story of School Life. By Ismay Thorn. Illustrated by A. G. Walker. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

> "This is a prettily told story of the life spent by two motherless bairns at a small preparatory school. Both Geoff and Jim are very lovable characters, only Jim is the more so; and the scrapes he gets into and the trials he endures will, no doubt, interest a large circle of young readers."—*Church Times.*
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> "This is a capital children's story, the characters well portrayed, and the book tastefully bound and well illustrated."—*Schoolmaster.*
>
> "The story can be heartily recommended as a present for boys."—*Standard.*

The Castaways; or, On the Florida Reefs. By James Otis. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

This tale smacks of the salt sea. It is just the kind of story that the majority of boys yearn for. From the moment that the Sea Queen dispenses with the services of the tug in lower New York bay till the breeze leaves her becalmed off the coast of Florida, one can almost hear the whistle of the wind through her rigging, the creak of her straining cordage as she heels to the leeward, and feel her rise to the snow-capped waves which her sharp bow cuts into twin streaks of foam. Off Marquesas Keys she floats in a dead calm. Ben Clark, the hero of the story, and Jake, the cook, spy a turtle asleep upon the glassy surface of the water. They determine to capture him, and take a boat for that purpose, and just as they succeed in catching him a thick fog cuts them off from the vessel, and then their troubles begin. They take refuge on board a drifting hulk, a storm arises and they are cast ashore upon a low sandy key. Their adventures from this point cannot fail to charm the reader. As a writer for young people Mr. Otis is a prime favorite. His style is captivating, and never for a moment does he allow the interest to flag. In "The Castaways" he is at his best.

Tom Thatcher's Fortune. By Horatio Alger, Jr. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Like all of Mr. Alger's heroes, Tom Thatcher is a brave, ambitious, unselfish boy. He supports his mother and sister on meager wages earned as a shoe-pegger in John Simpson's factory. The story begins with Tom's discharge from the factory, because Mr. Simpson felt annoyed with the lad for interrogating him too closely about his missing father. A few days afterward Tom learns that which induces him to start overland for California with the view of probing the family mystery. He meets with many adventures. Ultimately he returns to his native village, bringing consternation to the soul of John Simpson,

who only escapes the consequences of his villainy by making full restitution to the man whose friendship he had betrayed. The story is told in that entertaining way which has made Mr. Alger's name a household word in so many homes.

Birdie: A Tale of Child Life. By H. L. Childe-Pemberton. Illustrated by H. W. Rainey. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

> "The story is quaint and simple, but there is a freshness about it that makes one hear again the ringing laugh and the cheery shout of children at play which charmed his earlier years."—*New York Express.*

Popular Fairy Tales. By the Brothers Grimm. Profusely Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

> "From first to last, almost without exception, these stories are delightful."—*Athenæum.*

With Lafayette at Yorktown: A Story of How Two Boys Joined the Continental Army. By James Otis. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The two boys are from Portsmouth, N. H., and are introduced in August, 1781, when on the point of leaving home to enlist in Col. Scammell's regiment, then stationed near New York City. Their method of traveling is on horseback, and the author has given an interesting account of what was expected from boys in the Colonial days. The lads, after no slight amount of adventure, are sent as messengers—not soldiers—into the south to find the troops under Lafayette. Once with that youthful general they are given employment as spies, and enter the British camp, bringing away valuable information. The pictures of camp-life are carefully drawn, and the portrayal of Lafayette's character is thoroughly well done. The story is wholesome in tone, as are all of Mr. Otis' works. There is no lack of exciting incident which the youthful reader craves, but it is healthful

excitement brimming with facts which every boy should be familiar with, and while the reader is following the adventures of Ben Jaffreys and Ned Allen he is acquiring a fund of historical lore which will remain in his memory long after that which he has memorized from text-books has been forgotten.

Lost in the Canon: Sam Willett's Adventures on the Great Colorado. By Alfred R. Calhoun. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

This story hinges on a fortune left to Sam Willett, the hero, and the fact that it will pass to a disreputable relative if the lad dies before he shall have reached his majority. The Vigilance Committee of Hurley's Gulch arrest Sam's father and an associate for the crime of murder. Their lives depend on the production of the receipt given for money paid. This is in Sam's possession at the camp on the other side of the cañon. A messenger is dispatched to get it. He reaches the lad in the midst of a fearful storm which floods the cañon. His father's peril urges Sam to action. A raft is built on which the boy and his friends essay to cross the torrent. They fail to do so, and a desperate trip down the stream ensues. How the party finally escape from the horrors of their situation and Sam reaches Hurley's Gulch in the very nick of time, is described in a graphic style that stamps Mr. Calhoun as a master of his art.

Jack: A Topsy Turvy Story. By C. M. Crawley-Boevey. With upward of Thirty Illustrations by H. J. A. Miles. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

> "The illustrations deserve particular mention, as they add largely to the interest of this amusing volume for children. Jack falls asleep with his mind full of the subject of the fishpond, and is very much surprised presently to find himself an inhabitant of Waterworld, where he goes through wonderful and edifying adventures. A handsome and pleasant book."—*Literary World.*

Search for the Silver City: A Tale of Adventure in Yucatan. By James Otis. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Two American lads, Teddy Wright and Neal Emery, embark on the steam yacht Day Dream for a short summer cruise to the tropics. Homeward bound the yacht is destroyed by fire. All hands take to the boats, but during the night the boat is cast upon the coast of Yucatan. They come across a young American named Cummings, who entertains them with the story of the wonderful Silver City, of the Chan Santa Cruz Indians. Cummings proposes with the aid of a faithful Indian ally to brave the perils of the swamp and carry off a number of the golden images from the temples. Pursued with relentless vigor for days their situation is desperate. At last their escape is effected in an astonishing manner. Mr. Otis has built his story on an historical foundation. It is so full of exciting incidents that the reader is quite carried away with the novelty and realism of the narrative.

Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy. By Horatio Alger, Jr. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Thrown upon his own resources Frank Fowler, a poor boy, bravely determines to make a living for himself and his foster-sister Grace. Going to New York he obtains a situation as cash boy in a dry goods store. He renders a service to a wealthy old gentleman named Wharton, who takes a fancy to the lad. Frank, after losing his place as cash boy, is enticed by an enemy to a lonesome part of New Jersey and held a prisoner. This move recoils upon the plotter, for it leads to a clue that enables the lad to establish his real identity. Mr. Alger's stories are not only unusually interesting, but they convey a useful lesson of pluck and manly independence.

Budd Boyd's Triumph; or, the Boy Firm of Fox Island. By William P. Chipman. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The scene of this story is laid on the upper part of Narragansett Bay,

and the leading incidents have a strong salt-water flavor. Owing to the conviction of his father for forgery and theft, Budd Boyd is compelled to leave his home and strike out for himself. Chance brings Budd in contact with Judd Floyd. The two boys, being ambitious and clear sighted, form a partnership to catch and sell fish. The scheme is successfully launched, but the unexpected appearance on the scene of Thomas Bagsley, the man whom Budd believes guilty of the crimes attributed to his father, leads to several disagreeable complications that nearly caused the lad's ruin. His pluck and good sense, however, carry him through his troubles. In following the career of the boy firm of Boyd & Floyd, the youthful reader will find a useful lesson—that industry and perseverance are bound to lead to ultimate success.

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