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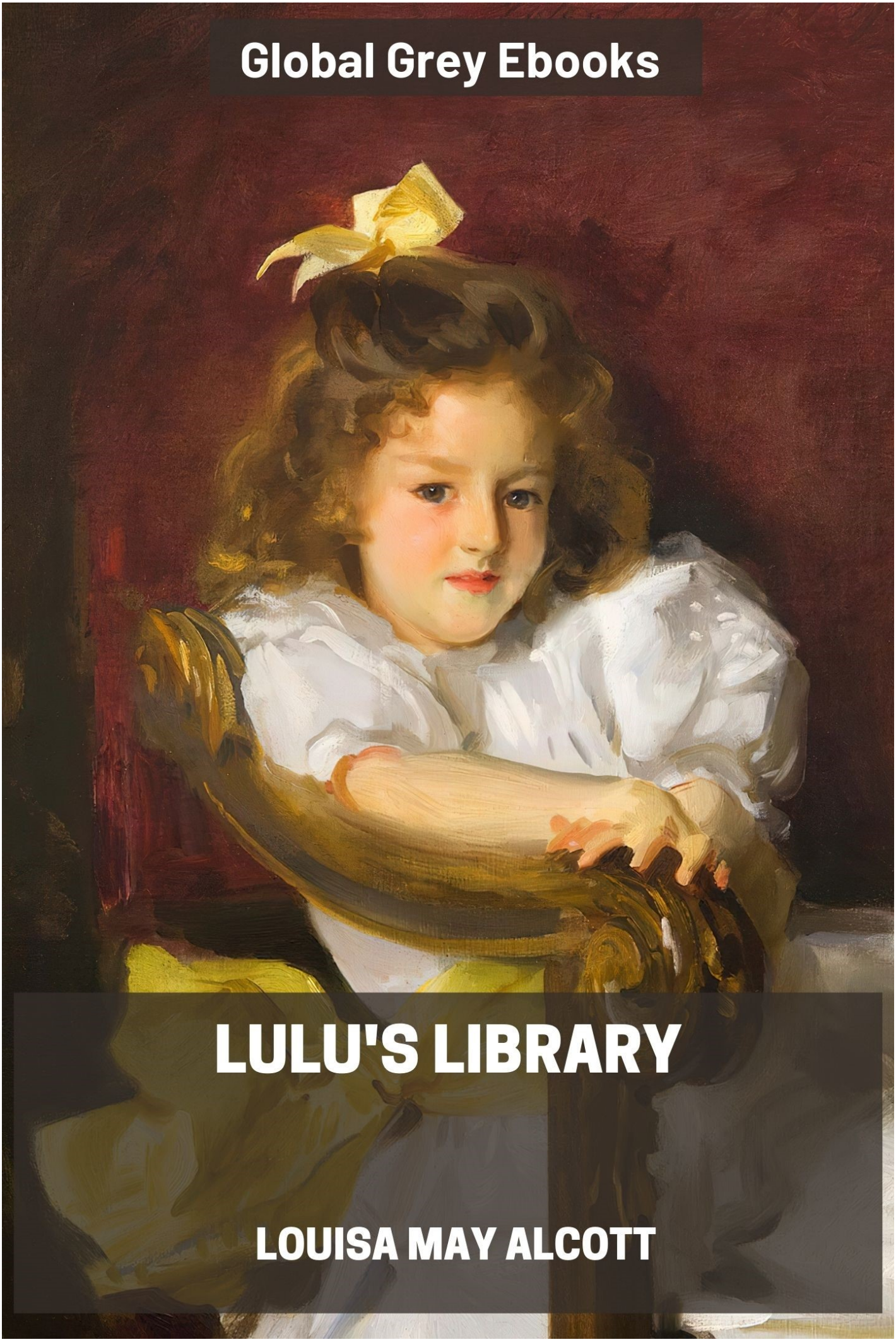

LULU'S LIBRARY

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

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Lulu's Library by Louisa May Alcott.

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Trudel's Siege

A Christmas Dream, And How It Came True

"I'm so tired of Christmas I wish there never would be another one!" exclaimed a discontented-looking little girl, as she sat idly watching her mother arrange a pile of gifts two days before they were to be given.

"Why, Effie, what a dreadful thing to say! You are as bad as old Scrooge; and I 'm afraid something will happen to you, as it did to him, if you don't care for dear Christmas," answered mamma, almost dropping the silver horn she was filling with delicious candies.

"Who was Scrooge? What happened to him?" asked Effie, with a glimmer of interest in her listless face, as she picked out the sourest lemon-drop she could find; for nothing sweet suited her just then.

"He was one of Dickens's best people, and you can read the charming story some day. He hated Christmas until a strange dream showed him how dear and beautiful it was, and made a better man of him."

"I shall read it; for I like dreams, and have a great many curious ones myself. But they don't keep me from being tired of Christmas," said Effie, poking discontentedly among the sweeties for something worth eating.

"Why are you tired of what should be the happiest time of all the year?" asked mamma, anxiously.

"Perhaps I should n't be if I had something new. But it is always the same, and there is n't any more surprise about it. I always find heaps of goodies in my stocking. Don't like some of them, and soon get tired of those I do like. We always have a great dinner, and I eat too much, and feel ill next day. Then there is a Christmas tree somewhere, with a doll on top, or a stupid old Santa Claus, and children dancing and screaming over bonbons and toys that break, and shiny things that are of no use. Really, mamma, I 've had so many Christmases all alike that I don't think I *can* bear another one." And Effie laid herself flat on the sofa, as if the mere idea was too much for her.

Her mother laughed at her despair, but was sorry to see her little girl so discontented, when she had everything to make her happy, and had known but ten Christmas days.

"Suppose we don't give you *any* presents at all,--how would that suit you?" asked mamma, anxious to please her spoiled child.

"I should like one large and splendid one, and one dear little one, to remember some very nice person by," said Effie, who was a fanciful little body, full of odd whims and notions, which her friends loved to gratify, regardless of time, trouble, or money; for she was the last of three little girls, and very dear to all the family.

"Well, my darling, I will see what I can do to please you, and not say a word until all is ready. If I could only get a new idea to start with!" And mamma went on tying up her pretty bundles with a thoughtful face, while Effie strolled to the window to watch the rain that kept her in-doors and made her dismal.

"Seems to me poor children have better times than rich ones. I can't go out, and there is a girl about my age splashing along, without any maid to fuss about rubbers and cloaks and umbrellas and colds. I wish I was a beggar-girl."

"Would you like to be hungry, cold, and ragged, to beg all day, and sleep on an ash-heap at night?" asked mamma, wondering what would come next.

"Cinderella did, and had a nice time in the end. This girl out here has a basket of scraps on her arm, and a big old shawl all round her, and does n't seem to care a bit, though the water runs out of the toes of her boots. She goes paddling along, laughing at the rain, and eating a cold potato as if it tasted nicer than the chicken and ice-cream I had for dinner. Yes, I do think poor children are happier than rich ones."

"So do I, sometimes. At the Orphan Asylum to-day I saw two dozen merry little souls who have no parents, no home, and no hope of Christmas beyond a stick of candy or a cake. I wish you had been there to see how happy they were, playing with the old toys some richer children had sent them."

"You may give them all mine; I 'm so tired of them I never want to see them again," said Effie, turning from the window to the pretty baby-house full of everything a child's heart could desire.

"I will, and let you begin again with something you will not tire of, if I can only find it." And mamma knit her brows trying to discover some grand surprise for this child who did n't care for Christmas.

Nothing more was said then; and wandering off to the library, Effie found "A Christmas Carol," and curling herself up in the sofa corner, it all before tea. Some of it she did not understand; but she laughed and cried over many parts of the charming story, and felt better without knowing why.

All the evening she thought of poor Tiny Tim, Mrs. Cratchit with the pudding, and the stout old gentleman who danced so gayly that "his legs twinkled in the air." Presently bed-time arrived.

"Come, now, and toast your feet," said Effie's nurse, "while I do your pretty hair and tell stories."

"I 'll have a fairy tale to-night, a very interesting one," commanded Effie, as she put on her blue silk wrapper and little fur-lined slippers to sit before the fire and have her long curls brushed.

So Nursey told her best tales; and when at last the child lay down under her lace curtains, her head was full of a curious jumble of Christmas elves, poor children, snow-storms, sugar-plums, and surprises. So it is no wonder that she dreamed all night; and this was the dream, which she never quite forgot.

She found herself sitting on a stone, in the middle of a great field, all alone. The snow was falling fast, a bitter wind whistled by, and night was coming on. She felt hungry, cold, and tired, and did not know where to go nor what to do.

"I wanted to be a beggar-girl, and now I am one; but I don't like it, and wish somebody would come and take care of me. I don't know who I am, and I think I must be lost," thought Effie, with the curious interest one takes in one's self in dreams.

But the more she thought about it, the more bewildered she felt. Faster fell the snow, colder blew the wind, darker grew the night; and poor Effie made up her mind that she

was quite forgotten and left to freeze alone. The tears were chilled on her cheeks, her feet felt like icicles, and her heart died within her, so hungry, frightened, and forlorn was she. Laying her head on her knees, she gave herself up for lost, and sat there with the great flakes fast turning her to a little white mound, when suddenly the sound of music reached her, and starting up, she looked and listened with all her eyes and ears.

Far away a dim light shone, and a voice was heard singing. She tried to run toward the welcome glimmer, but could not stir, and stood like a small statue of expectation while the light drew nearer, and the sweet words of the song grew clearer.

From our happy home
Through the world we roam
One week in all the year,
Making winter spring
With the joy we bring,
For Christmas-tide is here.

Now the eastern star
Shines from afar
To light the poorest home;
Hearts warmer grow,
Gifts freely flow,
For Christmas-tide has come.

Now gay trees rise
Before young eyes,
Abloom with tempting cheer;
Blithe voices sing,
And blithe bells ring,
For Christmas-tide is here.

Oh, happy chime,
Oh, blessed time,
That draws us all so near!
"Welcome, dear day,"
All creatures say,
For Christmas-tide is here.

A child's voice sang, a child's hand carried the little candle; and in the circle of soft light it shed, Effie saw a pretty child coming to her through the night and snow. A rosy, smiling creature, wrapped in white fur, with a wreath of green and scarlet holly on its shining hair, the magic candle in one hand, and the other outstretched as if to shower gifts and warmly press all other hands.

Effie forgot to speak as this bright vision came nearer, leaving no trace of footsteps in the snow, only lighting the way with its little candle, and filling the air with the music of its song.

"Dear child, you are lost, and I have come to find you," said the stranger, taking Effie's cold hands in his, with a smile like sunshine, while every holly berry glowed like a little fire.

"Do you know me?" asked Effie, feeling no fear, but a great gladness, at his coming.

"I know all children, and go to find them; for this is my holiday, and I gather them from all parts of the world to be merry with me once a year."

"Are you an angel?" asked Effie, looking for the wings.

"No; I am a Christmas spirit, and live with my mates in a pleasant place, getting ready for our holiday, when we are let out to roam about the world, helping make this a happy time for all who will let us in. Will you come and see how we work?"

"I will go anywhere with you. Don't leave me again," cried Effie, gladly.

"First I will make you comfortable. That is what we love to do. You are cold, and you shall be warm; hungry, and I will feed you; sorrowful, and I will make you gay."

With a wave of his candle all three miracles were wrought,--for the snow-flakes turned to a white fur cloak and hood on Effie's head and shoulders; a bowl of hot soup came sailing to her lips, and vanished when she had eagerly drunk the last drop; and suddenly the dismal field changed to a new world so full of wonders that all her troubles were forgotten in a minute.

Bells were ringing so merrily that it was hard to keep from dancing. Green garlands hung on the walls, and every tree was a Christmas tree full of toys, and blazing with candles that never went out.

In one place many little spirits sewed like mad on warm clothes, turning off work faster than any sewing-machine ever invented, and great piles were made ready to be sent to poor people. Other busy creatures packed money into purses, and wrote checks which they sent flying away on the wind,--a lovely kind of snow-storm to fall into a world below full of poverty.

Older and graver spirits were looking over piles of little books, in which the records of the past year were kept, telling how different people had spent it, and what sort of gifts they deserved. Some got peace, some disappointment, some remorse and sorrow, some great joy and hope. The rich had generous thoughts sent them; the poor, gratitude and contentment. Children had more love and duty to parents; and parents renewed patience, wisdom, and satisfaction for and in their children. No one was forgotten.

"Please tell me what splendid place this is?" asked Effie, as soon as she could collect her wits after the first look at all these astonishing things.

"This is the Christmas world; and here we work all the year round, never tired of getting ready for the happy day. See, these are the saints just setting off; for some have far to go, and the children must not be disappointed."

As he spoke the spirit pointed to four gates, out of which four great sleighs were just driving, laden with toys, while a jolly old Santa Claus sat in the middle of each, drawing on his mittens and tucking up his wraps for a long cold drive.

"Why, I thought there was only one Santa Claus, and even he was a humbug," cried Effie, astonished at the sight.

"Never give up your faith in the sweet old stories, even after you come to see that they are only the pleasant shadow of a lovely truth."

Just then the sleighs went off with a great jingling of bells and pattering of reindeer hoofs, while all the spirits gave a cheer that was heard in the lower world, where people said, "Hear the stars sing."

"I never will say there isn't any Santa Claus again. Now, show me more."

"You will like to see this place, I think, and may learn something here perhaps."

The spirit smiled as he led the way to a little door, through which Effie peeped into a world of dolls. Baby-houses were in full blast, with dolls of all sorts going on like live people. Waxen ladies sat in their parlors elegantly dressed; black dolls cooked in the kitchens; nurses walked out with the bits of dollies; and the streets were full of tin soldiers marching, wooden horses prancing, express wagons rumbling, and little men hurrying to and fro. Shops were there, and tiny people buying legs of mutton, pounds of tea, mites of clothes, and everything dolls use or wear or want.

But presently she saw that in some ways the dolls improved upon the manners and customs of human beings, and she watched eagerly to learn why they did these things. A fine Paris doll driving in her carriage took up a black worsted Dinah who was hobbling along with a basket of clean clothes, and carried her to her journey's end, as if it were the proper thing to do. Another interesting china lady took off her comfortable red cloak and put it round a poor wooden creature done up in a paper shift, and so badly painted that its face would have sent some babies into fits.

"Seems to me I once knew a rich girl who didn't give her things to poor girls. I wish I could remember who she was, and tell her to be as kind as that china doll," said Effie, much touched at the sweet way the pretty creature wrapped up the poor fright, and then ran off in her little gray gown to buy a shiny fowl stuck on a wooden platter for her invalid mother's dinner.

"We recall these things to people's minds by dreams. I think the girl you speak of won't forget this one." And the spirit smiled, as if he enjoyed some joke which she did not see.

A little bell rang as she looked, and away scampered the children into the red-and-green school-house with the roof that lifted up, so one could see how nicely they sat at their desks with mites of books, or drew on the inch-square blackboards with crumbs of chalk.

"They know their lessons very well, and are as still as mice. We make a great racket at our school, and get bad marks every day. I shall tell the girls they had better mind what they do, or their dolls will be better scholars than they are," said Effie, much impressed, as she peeped in and saw no rod in the hand of the little mistress, who looked up and

shook her head at the intruder, as if begging her to go away before the order of the school was disturbed.

Effie retired at once, but could not resist one look in at the window of a fine mansion, where the family were at dinner, the children behaved so well at table, and never grumbled a bit when their mamma said they could not have any more fruit.

"Now, show me something else," she said, as they came again to the low door that led out of Doll-land.

"You have seen how we prepare for Christmas; let me show you where we love best to send our good and happy gifts," answered the spirit, giving her his hand again.

"I know. I've seen ever so many," began Effie, thinking of her own Christmases.

"No, you have never seen what I will show you. Come away, and remember what you see to-night."

Like a flash that bright world vanished, and Effie found herself in a part of the city she had never seen before. It was far away from the gayer places, where every store was brilliant with lights and full of pretty things, and every house wore a festival air, while people hurried to and fro with merry greetings. It was down among the dingy streets where the poor lived, and where there was no making ready for Christmas.

Hungry women looked in at the shabby shops, longing to buy meat and bread, but empty pockets forbade. Tipsy men drank up their wages in the bar-rooms; and in many cold dark chambers little children huddled under the thin blankets, trying to forget their misery in sleep.

No nice dinners filled the air with savory smells, no gay trees dropped toys and bonbons into eager hands, no little stockings hung in rows beside the chimney-piece ready to be filled, no happy sounds of music, gay voices, and dancing feet were heard; and there were no signs of Christmas anywhere.

"Don't they have any in this place?" asked Effie, shivering, as she held fast the spirit's hand, following where he led her.

"We come to bring it. Let me show you our best workers." And the spirit pointed to some sweet-faced men and women who came stealing into the poor houses, working such beautiful miracles that Effie could only stand and watch.

Some slipped money into the empty pockets, and sent the happy mothers to buy all the comforts they needed; others led the drunken men out of temptation, and took them home to find safer pleasures there. Fires were kindled on cold hearths, tables spread as if by magic, and warm clothes wrapped round shivering limbs. Flowers suddenly bloomed in the chambers of the sick; old people found themselves remembered; sad hearts were consoled by a tender word, and wicked ones softened by the story of Him who forgave all sin.

But the sweetest work was for the children; and Effie held her breath to watch these human fairies hang up and fill the little stockings without which a child's Christmas is not perfect, putting in things that once she would have thought very humble presents, but which now seemed beautiful and precious because these poor babies had nothing.

"That is so beautiful! I wish I could make merry Christmases as these good people do, and be loved and thanked as they are," said Effie, softly, as she watched the busy men

and women do their work and steal away without thinking of any reward but their own satisfaction.

"You can if you will. I have shown you the way. Try it, and see how happy your own holiday will be hereafter."

As he spoke, the spirit seemed to put his arms about her, and vanished with a kiss.

"Oh, stay and show me more!" cried Effie, trying to hold him fast.

"Darling, wake up, and tell me why you are smiling in your sleep," said a voice in her ear; and opening her eyes, there was mamma bending over her, and morning sunshine streaming into the room.

"Are they all gone? Did you hear the bells? Was n't it splendid?" she asked, rubbing her eyes, and looking about her for the pretty child who was so real and sweet.

"You have been dreaming at a great rate,--talking in your sleep, laughing, and clapping your hands as if you were cheering some one. Tell me what was so splendid," said mamma, smoothing the tumbled hair and lifting up the sleepy head.

Then, while she was being dressed, Effie told her dream, and Nursey thought it very wonderful; but mamma smiled to see how curiously things the child had thought, read, heard, and seen through the day were mixed up in her sleep.

"The spirit said I could work lovely miracles if I tried; but I don't know how to begin, for I have no magic candle to make feasts appear, and light up groves of Christmas trees, as he did," said Effie, sorrowfully.

"Yes, you have. We will do it! we will do it!" And clapping her hands, mamma suddenly began to dance all over the room as if she had lost her wits.

"How? how? You must tell me, mamma," cried Effie, dancing after her, and ready to believe anything possible when she remembered the adventures of the past night.

"I 've got it! I 've got it!--the new idea. A splendid one, if I can only carry it out!" And mamma waltzed the little girl round till her curls flew wildly in the air, while Nursey laughed as if she would die.

"Tell me! tell me!" shrieked Effie.

"No, no; it is a surprise,--a grand surprise for Christmas day!" sung mamma, evidently charmed with her happy thought. "Now, come to breakfast; for we must work like bees if we want to play spirits to-morrow. You and Nursey will go out shopping, and get heaps of things, while I arrange matters behind the scenes."

They were running downstairs as mamma spoke, and Effie called out breathlessly,--

"It won't be a surprise; for I know you are going to ask some poor children here, and have a tree or something. It won't be like my dream; for they had ever so many trees, and more children than we can find anywhere."

"There will be no tree, no party, no dinner, in this house at all, and no presents for you. Won't that be a surprise?" And mamma laughed at Effie's bewildered face.

"Do it. I shall like it, I think; and I won't ask any questions, so it will all burst upon me when the time comes," she said; and she ate her breakfast thoughtfully, for this really would be a new sort of Christmas.

All that morning Effie trotted after Nursey in and out of shops, buying dozens of barking dogs, woolly lambs, and squeaking birds; tiny tea-sets, gay picture-books, mittens and hoods, dolls and candy. Parcel after parcel was sent home; but when Effie returned she saw no trace of them, though she peeped everywhere. Nursey chuckled, but would n't give a hint, and went out again in the afternoon with a long list of more things to buy; while Effie wandered forlornly about the house, missing the usual merry stir that went before the Christmas dinner and the evening fun.

As for mamma, she was quite invisible all day, and came in at night so tired that she could only lie on the sofa to rest, smiling as if some very pleasant thought made her happy in spite of weariness.

"Is the surprise going on all right?" asked Effie, anxiously; for it seemed an immense time to wait till another evening came.

"Beautifully! better than I expected; for several of my good friends are helping, or I could n't have done it as I wish. I know you will like it, dear, and long remember this new way of making Christmas merry."

Mamma gave her a very tender kiss, and Effie went to bed.

The next day was a very strange one; for when she woke there was no stocking to examine, no pile of gifts under her napkin, no one said "Merry Christmas!" to her, and the dinner was just as usual to her. Mamma vanished again, and Nursey kept wiping her eyes and saying: "The dear things! It's the prettiest idea I ever heard of. No one but your blessed ma could have done it."

"Do stop, Nursey, or I shall go crazy because I don't know the secret!" cried Effie, more than once; and she kept her eye on the clock, for at seven in the evening the surprise was to come off.

The longed-for hour arrived at last, and the child was too excited to ask questions when Nurse put on her cloak and hood, led her to the carriage, and they drove away, leaving their house the one dark and silent one in the row.

"I feel like the girls in the fairy tales who are led off to strange places and see fine things," said Effie, in a whisper, as they jingled through the gay streets.

"Ah, my deary, it *is* like a fairy tale, I do assure you, and you *will* see finer things than most children will to-night. Steady, now, and do just as I tell you, and don't say one word whatever you see," answered Nursey, quite quivering with excitement as she patted a large box in her lap, and nodded and laughed with twinkling eyes.

They drove into a dark yard, and Effie was led through a back door to a little room, where Nurse coolly proceeded to take off not only her cloak and hood, but her dress and shoes also. Effie stared and bit her lips, but kept still until out of the box came a little white fur coat and boots, a wreath of holly leaves and berries, and a candle with a frill of gold paper round it. A long "Oh!" escaped her then; and when she was dressed and saw herself in the glass, she started back, exclaiming, "Why, Nursey, I look like the spirit in my dream!"

"So you do; and that's the part you are to play, my pretty! Now whist, while I blind your eyes and put you in your place."

"Shall I be afraid?" whispered Effie, full of wonder; for as they went out she heard the sound of many voices, the tramp of many feet, and, in spite of the bandage, was sure a great light shone upon her when she stopped.

"You need n't be; I shall stand close by, and your ma will be there."

After the handkerchief was tied about her eyes, Nurse led Effie up some steps, and placed her on a high platform, where something like leaves touched her head, and the soft snap of lamps seemed to fill the air.

Music began as soon as Nurse clapped her hands, the voices outside sounded nearer, and the tramp was evidently coming up the stairs.

"Now, my precious, look and see how you and your dear ma have made a merry Christmas for them that needed it!"

Off went the bandage; and for a minute Effie really did think she was asleep again, for she actually stood in "a grove of Christmas trees," all gay and shining as in her vision. Twelve on a side, in two rows down the room, stood the little pines, each on its low table; and behind Effie a taller one rose to the roof, hung with wreaths of popcorn, apples, oranges, horns of candy, and cakes of all sorts, from sugary hearts to gingerbread Jumbos. On the smaller trees she saw many of her own discarded toys and those Nursey bought, as well as heaps that seemed to have rained down straight from that delightful Christmas country where she felt as if she was again.

"How splendid! Who is it for? What is that noise? Where is mamma?" cried Effie, pale with pleasure and surprise, as she stood looking down the brilliant little street from her high place.

Before Nurse could answer, the doors at the lower end flew open, and in marched twenty-four little blue-gowned orphan girls, singing sweetly, until amazement changed the song to cries of joy and wonder as the shining spectacle appeared. While they stood staring with round eyes at the wilderness of pretty things about them, mamma stepped up beside Effie, and holding her hand fast to give her courage, told the story of the dream in a few simple words, ending in this way:--

"So my little girl wanted to be a Christmas spirit too, and make this a happy day for those who had not as many pleasures and comforts as she has. She likes surprises, and we planned this for you all. She shall play the good fairy, and give each of you something from this tree, after which every one will find her own name on a small tree, and can go to enjoy it in her own way. March by, my dears, and let us fill your hands."

Nobody told them to do it, but all the hands were clapped heartily before a single child stirred; then one by one they came to look up wonderingly at the pretty giver of the feast as she leaned down to offer them great yellow oranges, red apples, bunches of grapes, bonbons, and cakes, till all were gone, and a double row of smiling faces turned toward her as the children filed back to their places in the orderly way they had been taught.

Then each was led to her own tree by the good ladies who had helped mamma with all their hearts; and the happy hubbub that arose would have satisfied even Santa Claus himself,--shrieks of joy, dances of delight, laughter and tears (for some tender little things could not bear so much pleasure at once, and sobbed with mouths full of candy and hands full of toys). How they ran to show one another the new treasures! how they

peeped and tasted, pulled and pinched, until the air was full of queer noises, the floor covered with papers, and the little trees left bare of all but candles!

"I don't think heaven can be any gooder than this," sighed one small girl, as she looked about her in a blissful maze, holding her full apron with one hand, while she luxuriously carried sugar-plums to her mouth with the other.

"Is that a truly angel up there?" asked another, fascinated by the little white figure with the wreath on its shining hair, who in some mysterious way had been the cause of all this merry-making.

"I wish I dared to go and kiss her for this splendid party," said a lame child, leaning on her crutch, as she stood near the steps, wondering how it seemed to sit in a mother's lap, as Effie was doing, while she watched the happy scene before her.

Effie heard her, and remembering Tiny Tim, ran down and put her arms about the pale child, kissing the wistful face, as she said sweetly, "You may; but mamma deserves the thanks. She did it all; I only dreamed about it."

Lame Katy felt as if "a truly angel" was embracing her, and could only stammer out her thanks, while the other children ran to see the pretty spirit, and touch her soft dress, until she stood in a crowd of blue gowns laughing as they held up their gifts for her to see and admire.

Mamma leaned down and whispered one word to the older girls; and suddenly they all took hands to dance round Effie, singing as they skipped.

It was a pretty sight, and the ladies found it hard to break up the happy revel; but it was late for small people, and too much fun is a mistake. So the girls fell into line, and marched before Effie and mamma again, to say good-night with such grateful little faces that the eyes of those who looked grew dim with tears. Mamma kissed every one; and many a hungry childish heart felt as if the touch of those tender lips was their best gift. Effie shook so many small hands that her own tingled; and when Katy came she pressed a small doll into Effie's hand, whispering, "You did n't have a single present, and we had lots. Do keep that; it's the prettiest thing I got."

"I will," answered Effie, and held it fast until the last smiling face was gone, the surprise all over, and she safe in her own bed, too tired and happy for anything but sleep.

"Mamma, it *was* a beautiful surprise, and I thank you so much! I don't see how you did it; but I like it best of all the Christmases I ever had, and mean to make one every year. I had my splendid big present, and here is the dear little one to keep for love of poor Katy; so even that part of my wish came true."

And Effie fell asleep with a happy smile on her lips, her one humble gift still in her hand, and a new love for Christmas in her heart that never changed through a long life spent in doing good.

The Candy Country

"I shall take mamma's red sun-umbrella, it is so warm, and none of the children at school will have one like it," said Lily, one day, as she went through the hall.

"The wind is very high; I 'm afraid you 'll be blown away if you carry that big thing," called Nurse from the window, as the red umbrella went bobbing down the garden walk with a small girl under it.

"I wish it would; I always wanted to go up in a balloon," answered Lily, as she struggled out of the gate.

She got on very well till she came to the bridge and stopped to look over the railing at the water running by so fast, and the turtles sunning themselves on the rocks. Lily was fond of throwing stones at them; it was so funny to watch them tumble, heels over head, splash into the water. Now, when she saw three big fellows close by, she stooped for a stone, and just at that minute a gale of wind nearly took the umbrella out of her hand. She clutched it fast; and away she went like a thistle-down, right up in the air, over river and hill, houses and trees, faster and faster, till her head spun round, her breath was all gone, and she had to let go. The dear red umbrella flew away like a leaf; and Lily fell down, down, till she went crash into a tree which grew in such a curious place that she forgot her fright as she sat looking about her, wondering what part of the world it could be.

The tree looked as if made of glass or colored sugar; for she could see through the red cherries, the green leaves, and the brown branches. An agreeable smell met her nose; and she said at once, as any child would, "I smell candy!" She picked a cherry and ate it. Oh, how good it was!--all sugar and no stone. The next discovery was such a delightful one that she nearly fell off her perch; for by touching her tongue here and there, she found that the whole tree was made of candy. Think what fun to sit and break off twigs of barley sugar, candied cherries, and leaves that tasted like peppermint and sassafras!

Lily rocked and ate till she finished the top of the little tree; then she climbed down and strolled along, making more surprising and agreeable discoveries as she went.

What looked like snow under her feet was white sugar; the rocks were lumps of chocolate, the flowers of all colors and tastes; and every sort of fruit grew on these delightful trees. Little white houses soon appeared; and here lived the dainty candy-people, all made of the best sugar, and painted to look like real people. Dear little men and women, looking as if they had stepped off of wedding cakes and bonbons, went about in their gay sugar clothes, laughing and talking in the sweetest voices. Bits of babies rocked in open-work cradles, and sugar boys and girls played with sugar toys in the most natural way. Carriages rolled along the jujube streets, drawn by the red and yellow barley horses we all love so well; cows fed in the green fields, and sugar birds sang in the trees.

Lily listened, and in a moment she understood what the song said,--

"Sweet! Sweet!

Come, come and eat.

Dear little girls
With yellow curls;
For here you 'll find
Sweets to your mind.
On every tree
Sugar-plums you 'll see;
In every dell
Grows the caramel.
Over every wall
Gum-drops fall;
Molasses flows
Where our river goes.
Under your feet
Lies sugar sweet;
Over your head
Grow almonds red.
Our lily and rose
Are not for the nose;
Our flowers we pluck
To eat or suck.
And, oh! what bliss
When two friends kiss,
For they honey sip
From lip to lip!
And all you meet,
In house or street,
At work or play,
Sweethearts are they.
So, little dear,
Pray feel no fear:
Go where you will;
Eat, eat your fill.
Here is a feast
From west to east;
And you can say,

Ere you go away,

'At last I stand

In dear Candy-land,

And no more can stuff;

For once I 've enough.'

Sweet! Sweet!

Tweet! Tweet!

Tweedle-dee!

Tweedle-dee!"

"That is the most interesting song I ever heard," said Lily, clapping her sticky hands and dancing along toward a fine palace of white cream candy, with pillars of striped peppermint stick, and a roof of frosting that made it look like the Milan Cathedral.

"I 'll live here, and eat candy all day long, with no tiresome school or patchwork to spoil my fun," said Lily.

So she ran up the chocolate steps into the pretty rooms, where all the chairs and tables were of different colored candies, and the beds of spun sugar. A fountain of lemonade supplied drink; and floors of ice-cream that never melted kept people and things from sticking together, as they would have done had it been warm.

For a long while Lily was quite happy, going about tasting so many different kinds of sweeties, talking to the little people, who were very amiable, and finding out curious things about them and their country.

The babies were made of plain sugar, but the grown people had different flavors. The young ladies were flavored with violet, rose, and orange; the gentlemen were apt to have cordials of some sort inside of them, as she found when she ate one now and then slyly, and got her tongue bitten by the hot, strong taste as a punishment. The old people tasted of peppermint, clove, and such comfortable things, good for pain; but the old maids had lemon, hoarhound, flag-root, and all sorts of sour, bitter things in them, and did not get eaten much. Lily soon learned to know the characters of her new friends by a single taste, and some she never touched but once. The dear babies melted in her mouth, and the delicately flavored young ladies she was very fond of. Dr. Ginger was called to her more than once when so much candy made her teeth ache, and she found him a very hot-tempered little man; but he stopped the pain, so she was glad to see him.

A lime-drop boy and a little pink checker-berry girl were her favorite playmates; and they had fine times making mud-pies by scraping the chocolate rocks and mixing this dust with honey from the wells near by. These they could eat; and Lily thought this much better than throwing away the pies, as she had to do at home. They had candy-pulls very often, and made swings of long loops of molasses candy, and bird's-nests with almond eggs, out of which came birds who sang sweetly. They played football with big bull's-eyes, sailed in sugar boats on lakes of syrup, fished in rivers of molasses, and rode the barley horses all over the country.

Lily discovered that it never rained, but snowed white sugar. There was no sun, as it would have been too hot; but a large yellow lozenge made a nice moon, and red and white comfits were the stars.

The people all lived on sugar, and never quarrelled. No one was ill; and if any got broken, as sometimes happened with such brittle creatures, they just stuck the parts together and were all right again. The way they grew old was to get thinner and thinner till there was danger of their vanishing. Then the friends of the old person put him in a neat coffin, and carried him to the great golden urn which stood in their largest temple, always full of a certain fine syrup; and here he was dipped and dipped till he was stout and strong again, and went home to enjoy himself for a long time as good as new.

This was very interesting to Lily, and she went to many funerals. But the weddings were better still; for the lovely white brides were so sweet Lily longed to eat them. The feasts were delicious; and everybody went in their best clothes, and danced at the ball till they got so warm half-a-dozen would stick together and have to be taken to the ice-cream room to cool off. Then the little pair would drive away in a fine carriage with white horses to a new palace in some other part of the country, and Lily would have another pleasant place to visit.

But by and by, when she had seen everything, and eaten so much sweet stuff that at last she longed for plain bread and butter, she began to get cross, as children always do when they live on candy; and the little people wished she would go away, for they were afraid of her. No wonder, when she would catch up a dear sugar baby and eat him, or break some respectable old grandmamma all into bits because she reproved her for naughty ways. Lily calmly sat down on the biggest church, crushing it flat, and even tried to poke the moon out of the sky in a pet one day. The king ordered her to go home; but she said, "I won't!" and bit his head off, crown and all.

Such a wail went up at this awful deed that she ran away out of the city, fearing some one would put poison in her candy, since she had no other food.

"I suppose I shall get somewhere if I keep walking; and I can't starve, though I hate the sight of this horrid stuff," she said to herself, as she hurried over the mountains of Gibraltar Rock that divided the city of Saccharissa from the great desert of brown sugar that lay beyond.

Lily marched bravely on for a long time, and saw at last a great smoke in the sky, smelt a spicy smell, and felt a hot wind blowing toward her.

"I wonder if there are sugar savages here, roasting and eating some poor traveller like me," she said, thinking of Robinson Crusoe and other wanderers in strange lands.

She crept carefully along till she saw a settlement of little huts very like mushrooms, for they were made of cookies set on lumps of the brown sugar; and queer people, looking as if made of gingerbread, were working very busily round several stoves which seemed to bake at a great rate.

"I'll creep nearer and see what sort of people they are before I show myself," said Lily, going into a grove of spice-trees, and sitting down on a stone which proved to be the plummy sort of cake we used to call Brighton Rock.

Presently one of the tallest men came striding toward the trees with a pan, evidently after spice; and before she could run, he saw Lily.

"Hollo, what do you want?" he asked, staring at her with his black currant eyes, while he briskly picked the bark off a cinnamon-tree.

"I'm travelling, and would like to know what place this is, if you please," answered Lily, very politely, being a little frightened.

"Cake-land. Where do you come from?" asked the gingerbread man, in a crisp tone of voice.

"I was blown into the Candy country, and have been there a long time; but I got tired of it, and ran away to find something better."

"Sensible child!" and the man smiled till Lily thought his cheeks would crumble. "You'll get on better here with us Brownies than with the lazy Bonbons, who never work and are all for show. They won't own us, though we are all related through our grandparents Sugar and Molasses. We are busy folks; so they turn up their noses and don't speak when we meet at parties. Poor creatures, silly and sweet and unsubstantial! I pity 'em."

"Could I make you a visit? I'd like to see how you live, and what you do. I 'm sure it must be interesting," said Lily, picking herself up after a tumble, having eaten nearly all the stone, she was so hungry.

"I know you will. Come on! I can talk while I work." And the funny gingerbread man trotted off toward his kitchen, full of pans, rolling-pins, and molasses jugs.

"Sit down. I shall be at leisure as soon as this batch is baked. There are still some wise people down below who like gingerbread, and I have my hands full," he said, dashing about, stirring, rolling out, and slapping the brown dough into pans, which he whisked into the oven and out again so fast that Lily knew there must be magic about it somewhere.

Every now and then he threw her a delicious cooky warm from the oven. She liked the queer fellow, and presently began to talk, being very curious about this country.

"What is your name, sir?"

"Ginger Snap."

Lily thought it a good one; for he was very quick, and she fancied he could be short and sharp if he liked.

"Where does all this cake go to?" she asked, after watching the other kitchens full of workers, who were all of different kinds of cake, and each set of cooks made its own sort.

"I 'll show you by and by," answered Snap, beginning to pile up the heaps of gingerbread on a little car that ran along a track leading to some unknown storeroom, Lily thought.

"Don't you get tired of doing this all the time?"

"Yes; but I want to be promoted, and I never shall be till I 've done my best, and won the prize here."

"Oh, tell me about it! What is the prize, and how are you promoted? Is this a cooking-school?"

"Yes; the prize for best gingerbread is a cake of condensed yeast. That puts a soul into me, and I begin to rise till I am able to go over the hills yonder into the blessed land of bread, and be one of the happy creatures who are always wholesome, always needed, and without which the world below would be in a bad way."

"Bless me! that is the queerest thing I Ve heard yet. But I don't wonder you want to go; I 'm tired of sweets myself, and long for a good piece of bread, though I used to want cake and candy at home."

"Ah, my dear, you 'll learn a good deal here; and you are lucky not to have got into the clutches of Giant Dyspepsia, who always gets people if they eat too much of such rubbish and scorn wholesome bread. I leave my ginger behind when I go, and get white and round and beautiful, as you will see. The Gingerbread family have never been as foolish as some of the other cakes. Wedding is the worst; such extravagance in the way of wine and spice and fruit I never saw, and such a mess to eat when it's done! I don't wonder people get sick; serves 'em right." And Snap flung down a pan with such a bang that it made Lily jump.

"Sponge cake is n't bad, is it? Mamma lets me eat it, but I like frosted pound better," she said, looking over to the next kitchen, where piles of that sort of cake were being iced.

"Poor stuff. No substance. Ladies' fingers will do for babies, but pound has too much butter ever to be healthy. Let it alone, and eat cookies or seed-cakes, my dear. Now, come along; I'm ready." And Snap trundled away his car-load at a great pace.

Lily ran behind to pick up whatever fell, and looked about her as she went, for this was certainly a very queer country. Lakes of eggs all beaten up, and hot springs of saleratus foamed here and there ready for use. The earth was brown sugar or ground spice; and the only fruits were raisins, dried currants, citron, and lemon peel. It was a very busy place; for every one cooked all the time, and never failed and never seemed tired, though they got so hot that they only wore sheets of paper for clothes. There were piles of it to put over the cake, so that it shouldn't burn; and they made cook's white caps and aprons of it, and looked very nice. A large clock made of a flat pancake, with cloves to mark the hours and two toothpicks for hands, showed them how long to bake things; and in one place an ice wall was built round a lake of butter, which they cut in lumps as they wanted it.

"Here we are. Now, stand away while I pitch 'em down," said Snap, stopping at last before a hole in the ground where a dumbwaiter hung ready, with a name over it.

There were many holes all round, and many waiters, each with its name; and Lily was amazed when she read "Weber," "Copeland," "Dooling," and others, which she knew very well.

Over Snap's place was the name "Newmarch;" and Lily said, "Why, that's where mamma gets her hard gingerbread, and Weber's is where we go for ice-cream. Do *you* make cake for them?"

"Yes, but no one knows it. It's one of the secrets of the trade. We cook for all the confectioners, and people think the good things come out of the cellars under their saloons. Good joke, is n't it?" And Snap laughed till a crack came in his neck and made him cough.

Lily was so surprised she sat down on a warm queen's cake that happened to be near, and watched Snap send down load after load of gingerbread to be eaten by children, who would have liked it much better if they had only known where it came from, as she did.

As she sat, the clatter of many spoons, the smell of many dinners, and the sound of many voices calling, "One vanilla, two strawberries, and a Charlotte Russe," "Three stews, cup

coffee, dry toast," "Roast chicken and apple without," came up the next hole, which was marked "Copeland."

"Dear me! it seems as if I was there," said Lily, longing to hop down, but afraid of the bump at the other end.

"I 'm done. Come along, I 'll ride you back," called Snap, tossing the last cooky after the dumb-waiter as it went slowly out of sight with its spicy load.

"I wish you 'd teach me to cook. It looks great fun, and mamma wants me to learn; only our cook hates to have me mess round, and is so cross that I don't like to try at home," said Lily, as she went trundling back.

"Better wait till you get to Bread-land, and learn to make that. It's a great art, and worth knowing. Don't waste your time on cake, though plain gingerbread is n't bad to have in the house. I 'll teach you that in a jiffy, if the clock does n't strike my hour too soon," answered Snap, helping her down.

"What hour?"

"Why, of my freedom. I never know when I 've done my task till I 'm called by the chimes and go to get my soul," said Snap, turning his currant eyes anxiously to the clock.

"I hope you *will* have time." And Lily fell to work with all her might, after Snap had put on her a paper apron and a cap like his.

It was not hard; for when she was going to make a mistake a spark flew out of the fire and burnt her in time to remind her to look at the receipt, which was a sheet of gingerbread in a frame of pie-crust hung up before her, with the directions written while it was soft and baked in. The third sheet she made came out of the oven spicy, light, and brown; and Snap, giving it one poke, said, "That's all right. Now you know. Here's your reward."

He handed her a receipt-book made of thin sheets of sugar-gingerbread held together by a gelatine binding, with her name stamped on the back, and each leaf crimped with a cake-cutter in the most elegant manner.

Lily was charmed with it, but had no time to read all it contained; for just then the clock began to strike, and a chime of bells to ring,--

"Gingerbread,

Go to the head.

Your task is done;

A soul is won.

Take it and go

Where muffins grow,

Where sweet loaves rise

To the very skies,

And biscuits fair

Perfume the air.

Away, away!

Make no delay;

In the sea of flour

Plunge this hour.

Safe in your breast

Let the yeast-cake rest,

Till you rise in joy,

A white bread boy!"

"Ha, ha! I 'm free! I 'm free!" cried Snap, catching up the silver-covered square that seemed to fall from heaven; and running to a great white sea of flour, he went in head first, holding the yeast-cake clasped to his breast as if his life depended on it.

Lily watched breathlessly, while a curious working and bubbling went on, as if Snap was tumbling about down there like a small earthquake. The other cake-folk stood round the shore with her; for it was a great event, and all were glad that the dear fellow was promoted so soon. Suddenly a cry was heard, and up rose a beautiful white figure on the farther side of the sea. It moved its hand, as if saying "Good-by," and ran over the hills so fast they had only time to see how plump and fair he was, with a little knob on the top of his head like a crown.

"He 's gone to the happy land, and we shall miss him; but we 'll follow his example and soon find him again," said a gentle Sponge cake, with a sigh, as all went back to their work; while Lily hurried after Snap, eager to see the new country, which was the best of all.

A delicious odor of fresh bread blew up from the valley as she stood on the hill-top and looked down on the peaceful scene below. Fields of yellow grain waved in the breeze; hop-vines grew from tree to tree; and many windmills whirled their white sails as they ground the different grains into fresh, sweet meal, for the loaves of bread that built the houses like bricks and paved the streets, or in many shapes formed the people, furniture, and animals. A river of milk flowed through the peaceful land, and fountains of yeast rose and fell with a pleasant foam and fizz. The ground was a mixture of many meals, and the paths were golden Indian, which gave a very gay look to the scene. Buckwheat flowers bloomed on their rosy stems, and tall corn-stalks rustled their leaves in the warm air that came from the ovens hidden in the hillsides; for bread needs a slow fire, and an obliging volcano did the baking here.

"What a lovely place!" cried Lily, feeling the charm of the homelike landscape, in spite of the funny plump people moving about.

Two of these figures came running to meet her as she slowly walked down the yellow path from the hill. One was a golden boy, with a beaming face; the other a little girl in a shiny brown cloak, who looked as if she would taste very nice. They each put a warm hand into Lily's, and the boy said,--

"We are glad to see you. Muffin told us you were coming."

"Thank you. Who is Muffin?" asked Lily, feeling as if she had seen both these little people before, and liked them.

"He was Ginger Snap once, but he's a Muffin now. We begin in that way, and work up to the perfect loaf by degrees. My name is Johnny Cake, and she's Sally Lunn. You know us; so come on and have a race."

Lily burst out laughing at the idea of playing with these old friends of hers; and all three ran away as fast as they could tear, down the hill, over a bridge, into the middle of the village, where they stopped, panting, and sat down on some very soft rolls to rest.

"What do you all do *here*?" asked Lily, when she got her breath again.

"We farm, we study, we bake, we brew, and are as merry as grigs all day long. It's school-time now, and we must go; will you come?" said Sally, jumping up as if she liked it.

"Our schools are not like yours; we only study two things,--grain and yeast. I think you 'll like it. We have yeast to-day, and the experiments are very jolly," added Johnny, trotting off to a tall brown tower of rye and Indian bread, where the school was kept.

Lily never liked to go to school, but she was ashamed to own it; so she went along with Sally, and was so amused with all she saw that she was glad she came. The brown loaf was hollow, and had no roof; and when she asked why they used a ruin, Sally told her to wait and see why they chose strong walls and plenty of room overhead. All round was a circle of very small biscuits like cushions, and on these the Bread-children sat. A square loaf in the middle was the teacher's desk, and on it lay an ear of wheat, with several bottles of yeast well corked up. The teacher was a pleasant, plump lady from Vienna, very wise, and so famous for her good bread that she was a Professor of Grainology.

When all were seated, she began with the wheat ear, and told them all about it in such an interesting way that Lily felt as if she had never known anything about the bread she ate before. The experiments with the yeast were quite exciting,--for Fraulein Pretzel showed them how it would work till it blew the cork out, and go fizzing up to the sky if it was kept too long; how it would turn sour or flat, and spoil the bread if care was not taken to use it just at the right moment; and how too much would cause the loaf to rise till there was no substance to it.

The children were very bright; for they were fed on the best kinds of oatmeal and Graham bread, with very little white bread or hot cakes to spoil their young stomachs. Hearty, happy boys and girls they were, and their yeasty souls were very lively in them for they danced and sung, and seemed as bright and gay as if acidity, heaviness, and mould were quite unknown.

Lily was very happy with them, and when school was done went home with Sally and ate the best bread and milk for dinner that she ever tasted. In the afternoon Johnny took her to the cornfield, and showed her how they kept the growing ears free from mildew and worms. Then she went to the bakehouse; and here she found her old friend Muffin hard at work making Parker House rolls, for he was such a good cook he was set to work at once on the lighter kinds of bread.

"Well, is n't this better than Candy-land or Saccharissa?" he asked, as he rolled and folded his bits of dough with a dab of butter tucked inside.

"Ever so much!" cried Lily. "I feel better already, and mean to learn all I can. Mamma will be so pleased if I can make good bread when I go home. She is rather old-fashioned, and likes me to be a nice housekeeper. I did n't think bread interesting then, but I do now; and Johnny's mother is going to teach me to make Indian cakes to-morrow."

"Glad to hear it. Learn all you can, and tell other people how to make healthy bodies and happy souls by eating good plain food. Not like this, though these rolls are better than cake. I have to work my way up to the perfect loaf, you know; and then, oh, then, I 'm a happy thing."

"What happens then? Do you go on to some other wonderful place?" asked Lily, as Muffin paused with a smile on his face.

"Yes; I am eaten by some wise, good human being, and become a part of him or her. That is immortality and heaven; for I may nourish a poet and help him sing, or feed a good woman who makes the world better for being in it, or be crumbed into the golden porringer of a baby prince who is to rule a kingdom. Is n't that a noble way to live, and an end worth working for?" asked Muffin, in a tone that made Lily feel as if some sort of fine yeast had got into her, and was setting her brain to work with new thoughts.

"Yes, it is. I suppose all common things are made for that purpose, if we only knew it; and people should be glad to do anything to help the world along, even making good bread in a kitchen," answered Lily, in a sober way that showed that her little mind was already digesting the new food it had got.

She stayed in Bread-land a long time, and enjoyed and learned a great deal that she never forgot. But at last, when she had made the perfect loaf, she wanted to go home, that her mother might see and taste it.

"I 've put a good deal of myself into it, and I 'd love to think I had given her strength or pleasure by my work," she said, as she and Sally stood looking at the handsome loaf.

"You can go whenever you like; just take the bread in your hands and wish three times, and you 'll be wherever you say. I 'm sorry to have you go, but I don't wonder you want to see your mother. Don't forget what you have learned, and you will always be glad you came to us," said Sally, kissing her good-by.

"Where is Muffin? I can't go without seeing him, my dear old friend," answered Lily, looking round for him.

"He is here," said Sally, touching the loaf. "He was ready to go, and chose to pass into your bread rather than any other; for he said he loved you and would be glad to help feed so good a little girl."

"How kind of him! I must be careful to grow wise and excellent, else he will be disappointed and have died in vain," said Lily, touched by his devotion.

Then, bidding them all farewell, she hugged her loaf close, wished three times to be in her own home, and like a flash she was there.

Whether her friends believed the wonderful tale of her adventures I cannot tell; but I know that she was a nice little housekeeper from that day, and made such good bread that other girls came to learn of her. She also grew from a sickly, fretful child into a fine, strong woman, because she ate very little cake and candy, except at Christmas time, when the oldest and the wisest love to make a short visit to Candyland.

Naughty Jocko

"A music-man! a music-man! Run quick, and see if he has got a monkey on his organ," cried little Neddy, running to the window in a great hurry one day.

Yes; there was the monkey in his blue and red suit, with a funny little cap, and the long tail trailing behind. But he did n't seem to be a lively monkey; for he sat in a bunch, with his sad face turned anxiously to his master, who kept pulling the chain to make him dance. The stiff collar had made his neck sore; and when the man twitched, the poor thing moaned and put up his little hand to hold the chain. He tried to dance, but was so weak he could only hop a few steps, and stop panting for breath. The cruel man would n't let him rest till Neddy called out,--

"Don't hurt him; let him come up here and get this cake, and rest while you play. I 've got some pennies for you."

So poor Jocko climbed slowly up the trellis, and sat on the window-ledge trying to eat; but he was so tired he went to sleep, and when the man pulled to wake him up, he slipped and fell, and lay as if he were dead. Neddy and his aunt ran down to see if he was killed. The cross man scolded and shook him; but he never moved, and the man said,--

"He is dead. I don't want him. I will sell him to some one to stuff."

"No; his heart beats a little. Leave him here a few days, and we will take care of him; and if he gets well, perhaps we will buy him," said Aunt Jane, who liked to nurse even a sick monkey.

The man said he was going on for a week through the towns near by, and would call and see about it when he came back. Then he went away; and Neddy and aunty put Jocko in a nice basket, and carried him in. The minute the door was shut and he felt safe, the sly fellow peeped out with one eye, and seeing only the kind little boy began to chatter and kick off the shawl; for he was not much hurt, only tired and hungry, and dreadfully afraid of the cruel man who beat and starved him.

Neddy was delighted, and thought it very funny, and helped his aunt take off the stiff collar and put some salve on the sore neck. Then they got milk and cake; and when he had eaten a good dinner, Jocko curled himself up and slept till the next day. He was quite lively in the morning; for when Aunt Jane went to call Neddy, Jocko was not in his basket, and looking round the room for him, she saw the little black thing lying on the boy's pillow, with his arm round Neddy's neck like a queer baby.

"My patience! I can't allow that," said the old lady, and went to pull Jocko out. But he slipped away like an eel, and crept chattering and burrowing down to the bottom of the bed, holding on to Neddy's toes, till he waked up, howling that crabs were nipping him.

Then they had a great frolic; and Jocko climbed all over the bed, up on the tall wardrobe, and the shelf over the door, where the image of an angel stood. He patted it, and hugged it, and looked so very funny with his ugly black face by the pretty white one, that Neddy rolled on the floor, and Aunt Jane laughed till her glasses flew off. By and by he came down, and had a nice breakfast, and let them tie a red ribbon over the bandage on his neck. He liked the gay color, and kept going to look in the glass, and grin and chatter at his own image, which he evidently admired.

"Now, he shall go to walk with me, and all the children shall see my new pet," said Neddy, as he marched off with Jock on his shoulder.

Every one laughed at the funny little fellow with his twinkling eyes, brown hands, and long tail, and Neddy felt very grand till they got to the store; then troubles began. He put Jocko on a table near the door, and told him to stay there while he did his errands. Now, close by was the place where the candy was kept, and Jocko loved sweeties like any girl; so he hopped along, and began to eat whatever he liked. Some boys tried to stop him; and then he got angry at them for pulling his tail, and threw handfuls of sugarplums at them. That was great fun; and the more they laughed and scrambled and poked at him, the faster he showered chocolates, caramels, and peppermints over them, till it looked as if it had rained candy. The man was busy with Neddy at the other end of the store; but when he heard the noise, both ran to see what was the matter. Neither of them could stop naughty Jocko, who liked this game, and ran up on the high shelves among the toys. Then down came little tubs and dolls' stoves, tin trumpets and cradles, while boxes of leaden soldiers and whole villages flew through the air, smash, bang, rattle, bump, all over the floor. The man scolded, Neddy cried, the boys shouted, and there was a lively time in that shop till a good slapping with a long stick made Jock tumble into a tub of water where some curious fishes lived; and then they caught him.

Neddy was much ashamed, and told the man his aunt would pay for all the broken things. Then he took his naughty pet, and started to go home and tie him up, for it was plain this monkey was not to be trusted. But as soon as they got out, Jocko ran up a tree and dropped on to a load of hay passing underneath. Here he danced and pranced, and had a fine time, throwing off the man's coat and rake, and eating some of the dinner tied up in a cloth. The crusts of bread and the bones he threw at the horse; this new kind of whip frightened the horse, and he ran away down a steep hill, and upset the hay and broke the cart. Oh, such a time! It was worse than the candy scrape; for the man swore, and the horse was hurt, and people said the monkey ought to be shot, he did so much mischief. Jocko did n't care a bit; he sat high up in a tree, and chattered and scolded, and swung by his tail, and was so droll that people could n't help laughing at him. Poor Neddy cried again, and went home to tell his troubles to Aunt Jane, fearing that it would take all the money in his bank to pay for the damage the bad monkey had done in one hour.

As soon as he was alone Jocko came skipping along, and jumped on his back, and peeped at him, and patted his cheeks, and was so cunning and good Neddy could n't whip him; but he shut him up in a closet to punish him.

Jocko was tired; so he went to sleep, and all was quiet till dinner-time. They were ready for the pudding, and Neddy had saved a place for a good plateful, as he liked snow-pudding, when shrieks were heard in the kitchen, and Mary the maid rushed in to say,--

"Oh, ma'am, that horrid beast has spoilt the pudding, and is scaring Katy out of her life!"

They all ran; and there sat that naughty monkey on the table, throwing the nice white snow all over poor cook, till her face looked as if she was ready to be shaved. His own face looked the same, for he had eaten all he wanted while the pudding stood cooling in the pantry. He had crept out of a window in the closet, and had a fine rummage among the sugar-buckets, butter-boxes, and milk-pans.

Kate wailed, and Mary scolded; but Aunt Jane and grandpa laughed, and Neddy chased Jock into the garden with the broom. They had to eat bread and jelly for dessert, and it took the girls a long time to clear up the mess the rascal made.

"We will put his collar and chain on again, and keep him tied up all the time till the man comes," said Aunt Jane.

"But I can't catch him," sighed Neddy, watching the little imp whisk about in the garden among the currant-bushes, chasing hens and tossing green apples round in high glee.

"Sit quietly down somewhere and wait till he is tired; then he will come to you, and you can hold him fast," said Aunt Jane.

So Neddy waited; and though he was much worried at his new pet's naughtiness, he enjoyed his pranks like a boy.

Grandpa took naps in the afternoon on the piazza, and he was dozing comfortably when Jocko swung down from the grape-vine by his long tail, and tickled the old gentleman on the nose with a straw. Grandpa sneezed, and opened one eye to brush away the fly as he supposed. Then he went to sleep again, and Jocko dropped a caterpillar on his bald head; this made him open the other eye to see what that soft, creepy thing could be. Neddy could n't help laughing, for he often wanted to do just such things, but never dared, because grandpa was a very stern old gentleman, and no one took liberties with him. Jocko was n't afraid, however; and presently he crept to the table, stele the glasses lying there, put them on, and taking up the paper held it before him, chattering as if he were reading it, as he had seen people do. Neddy laughed out loud at this, and clapped his hands, Jocko looked so like a little old man, in spite of the tail curled up behind. This time grandpa opened both eyes at once, and stared as if he saw a hobgoblin before him; then he snatched off the spectacles, and caught up his cane, crying angrily,--

"You rascal, how dare you!"

But Jocko tossed the paper in his face, and with one jump lighted on the back of old Tom, the big yellow cat, who lay asleep close by. Scared half out of his wits, Tom spit and bounced; but Jocko held fast to his collar, and had a fine race round the garden, while the girls laughed at the funny sight, and Neddy shouted, "It's a circus; and there's the monkey and the pony." Even grandpa smiled, especially when puss dashed up a tree, and Jock tumbled off. He chased him, and they had a great battle; but Tom's claws were sharp, and the monkey got a scratch on the nose, and ran crying to Neddy for comfort.

"Now, you naughty fellow, I 'll chain you up, and stop these dreadful tricks. But you are great fun, and I can't whip you," said the boy; for he knew what it was to enjoy a holiday, and poor Jocko had not had one for a long time.

Jocko ate some lunch, took a nap in the grass, and then was ready for more frolics. Neddy had fastened him to a tree in the garden, so that he could enjoy the sun and air, and catch grasshoppers if he liked. But Jocko wanted something more; and presently Neddy, who was reading in his hammock on the piazza, heard a great cackling among the hens, and looked up to see the monkey swinging by his tail from a bough, holding the great cock-a-doodle by his splendid tail, while all the twenty hens clucked and cackled with wrath and fear at such a dreadful prank.

"Now, that's too bad; I *will* slap him this time," said Neddy, running to save his handsome bird from destruction. But before he got there poor cocky had pulled his fine

tail-feathers all out in his struggles, and when set free was so frightened and mortified that he ran away and hid in the bushes, and the hens went to comfort him.

Neddy gave Jocko a good whipping, and left him looking as meek as a baby, all cuddled up in a little bunch, with his head in his hands as if crying for his naughtiness. But he was n't sorry. Oh, dear, no! for in half an hour he had picked every one of the sweet peas Aunt Jane was so fond of, thrown all the tomatoes over the fence, and let the parrot out of his cage. The sight of Polly walking into the parlor with a polite "How are you, ma'am?" sent Aunt Jane to see what was going on. Neddy was fast asleep in the hammock, worn out with his cares; and Jocko, having unhooked his chain, was sitting on the chimney-top of a neighbor's house, eating corn.

"We shall not live to the end of the week if this sort of thing goes on. I don't know what to do with the little beast; he 's as bad as an elephant to take care of," said the poor lady, in despair, as she saw Jocko throw his corncob down on the minister's hat as that stately gentleman went by.

As none of them could catch him, Miss Jane let him alone till Neddy waked up and could go and find some of the big boys to help him.

Jocko soon left the roof, and skipped in at a window that stood open. It was little Nelly Brown's play-room, and she had left her pet doll Maud Mabel Rose Matilda very ill in the best bed, while she went down to get a poppy leaf to rub the darling's cheeks with, because she had a high fever. Jocko took a fancy to the pretty bed, and after turning the play-house topsy-turvy, he pulled poor Maud Mabel Rose Matilda out by her flaxen hair, and stuffing her into the water-pitcher upside down, got into the bed, drew the lace curtains, and prepared to doze deliciously under the pink silk bed-cover.

Up came Nelly, and went at once to the dear invalid, saying in her motherly little voice,--

"Now, my darling child, lie quite still, and I won't hurt you one bit."

But when she drew the curtain, instead of the lovely yellow-haired doll in her ruffled nightcap, she saw an ugly little black face staring at her, and a tiny hand holding the sheet fast. Nelly gave one scream, and flew downstairs into the parlor where the Sewing-circle was at work, frightening twenty-five excellent ladies by her cries, as she clung to her mother, wailing,--

"A bogie! a bogie! I saw him, all black; and he snarled at me, and my dolly is gone! What shall I do? oh, what shall I do?"

There was great confusion, for all the ladies talked at once; and it so happened that none of them knew anything about the monkey, therefore they all agreed that Nelly was a foolish child, and had made a fuss about nothing. She cried dismally, and kept saying to her mother,--

"Go and see; it's in my dolly's bed,--I found it there, and darling Maudie is gone."

"We *will* go and see," said Mrs. Moses Merryweather,--a stout old lady, who kept her six girls in such good order that *they* would never have dared to cry if ten monkeys had popped out at them.

Miss Hetty Bumpus, a tall thin maiden lady, with a sharp eye and pointed nose, went with her; but at the door that led to the dining-room both stopped short, and after one look came flying back, calling out together,--

"Mrs. Brown, your supper is spoilt! a dreadful beast has ruined it all!"

Then twenty-five excited ladies flew across the hall to behold Jocko sitting on the great cake in the middle of the table, his feet bathed in cream from the overturned pitcher, while all around lay the ruins of custards, tarts, biscuits, and sauce, not to mention nice napkins made into hay-cocks, spoons, knives, and forks, on the floor, and the best silver teapot in the fireplace.

While Nelly told her tale and the ladies questioned and comforted her, this bad monkey had skipped downstairs and had a delightful party all by himself. He was just scraping the jelly out of a tart when they disturbed him; and knowing that more slaps were in store for him if he stayed, he at once walked calmly down the ravaged table, and vanished out of the window carrying the silver tea-strainer with him to play with.

The ladies had no supper that night; and poor Mrs. Brown sent a note to Aunt Jane, telling her the sad story, and adding that Nelly was quite ill with the fright and the loss of dear Maud Mabel Rose Matilda, drowned in the water-pitcher and forever spoilt.

"John shall go after that man to-morrow, and bring him back to carry this terrible monkey away. I can't live with him a week; he will cost me a fortune, and wear us all out," said Aunt Jane, when Jocko was safely shut up in the cellar, after six boys had chased him all over the neighborhood before they caught him.

Neddy was quite willing to let him go; but John was saved his journey, for in the morning poor Jocko was found dead in a trap, where his inquisitive head had been poked to see what the cheese tasted like.

So he was buried by the river, and every one felt much relieved; for the man never came back, thinking Jocko dead when he left him. But he had not lived in vain; for after this day of trial, mischievous Neddy behaved much better, and Aunt Jane could always calm his prankish spirit by saying, as her finger pointed to a little collar and chain hanging on the wall,--

"If you want to act like naughty Jocko, say so, and I 'll tie you up. One monkey is enough for this family."

The Skipping Shoes

Once there was a little girl, named Kitty, who never wanted to do what people asked her. She said "I won't" and "I can't," and did not run at once pleasantly, as obliging children do.

One day her mother gave her a pair of new shoes; and after a fuss about putting them on, Kitty said, as she lay kicking on the floor,--

"I wish these were seven-leagued boots, like Jack the Giant Killer's; then it would be easy to run errands all the time. Now, I hate to keep trotting, and I don't like new shoes, and I won't stir a step."

Just as she said that, the shoes gave a skip, and set her on her feet so suddenly that it scared all the naughtiness out of her. She stood looking at these curious shoes; and the bright buttons on them seemed to wink at her like eyes, while the heels tapped on the floor a sort of tune. Before she dared to stir, her mother called from the next room,--

"Kitty, run and tell the cook to make a pie for dinner; I forgot it."

"I don't want to," began Kitty, with a whine as usual.

But the words were hardly out of her mouth when the shoes gave one jump, and took her downstairs, through the hall, and landed her at the kitchen door. Her breath was nearly gone; but she gave the message, and turned round, trying to see if the shoes would let her walk at all. They went nicely till she wanted to turn into the china-closet where the cake was. She was forbidden to touch it, but loved to take a bit when she could. Now she found that her feet were fixed fast to the floor, and could not be moved till her father said, as he passed the window close by,--

"You will have time to go to the post-office before school and get my letters."

"I can't," began Kitty; but she found she could, for away went the shoes, out of the house at one bound, and trotted down the street so fast that the maid who ran after her with her hat could not catch her.

"I can't stop!" cried Kitty; and she did not till the shoes took her straight into the office.

"What's the hurry to-day?" asked the man, as he saw her without any hat, all rosy and breathless, and her face puckered up as if she did not know whether to laugh or to cry.

"I won't tell any one about these dreadful shoes, and I 'll take them off as soon as I get home. I hope they will go back slowly, or people will think I 'm crazy," said Kitty to herself, as she took the letters and went away.

The shoes walked nicely along till she came to the bridge; and there she wanted to stop and watch some boys in a boat, forgetting school and her father's letters. But the shoes would n't stop, though she tried to make them, and held on to the railing as hard as she could. Her feet went on; and when she sat down they still dragged her along so steadily that she had to go, and she got up feeling that there was something very strange about these shoes. The minute she gave up, all went smoothly, and she got home in good time.

"I won't wear these horrid things another minute," said Kitty, sitting on the doorstep and trying to unbutton the shoes.

But not a button could she stir, though she got red and angry struggling to do it.

"Time for school; run away, little girl," called mamma from upstairs, as the clock struck nine.

"I won't!" said Kitty, crossly.

But she did; for those' magic shoes danced her off, and landed her at her desk in five minutes.

"Well, I 'm not late; that's one comfort," she thought, wishing she had come pleasantly, and not been whisked away without any luncheon.

Her legs were so tired with the long skips that she was glad to sit still; and that pleased the teacher, for generally she was fussing about all lesson time. But at recess she got into trouble again; for one of the children knocked down the house of corn-cobs she had built, and made her angry.

"Now, I 'll kick yours down, and see how you like it, Dolly."

Up went her foot, but it did n't come down; it stayed in the air, and there she stood looking as if she were going to dance. The children laughed to see her, and she could do nothing till she said to Dolly in a great hurry,--

"Never mind; if you didn't mean to, I'll forgive you."

Then the foot went down, and Kitty felt so glad about it that she tried to be pleasant, fearing some new caper of those dreadful shoes. She began to see how they worked, and thought she would try if she had any power over them. So, when one of the children wanted his ball, which had bounced over the hedge, she said kindly,--

"Perhaps I can get it for you, Willy."

And over she jumped as lightly as if she too were an india-rubber ball.

"How could you do it?" cried the boys, much surprised; for not one of them dared try such a high leap.

Kitty laughed, and began to dance, feeling pleased and proud to find there was a good side to the shoes after all. Such twirlings and skippings as she made, such pretty steps and airy little bounds it was pretty to see; for it seemed as if her feet were bewitched, and went of themselves. The little girls were charmed, and tried to imitate her; but no one could, and they stood in a circle watching her dance till the bell rang, then all rushed in to tell about it.

Kitty said it was her new shoes, and never told how queerly they acted, hoping to have good times now. But she was mistaken.

On the way home she wanted to stop and see her friend Bell's new doll; but at the gate her feet stuck fast, and she had to give up her wishes and go straight on, as mamma had told her always to do.

"Run and pick a nice little dish of strawberries for dinner," said her sister, as she went in.

"I 'm too ti--" There was no time to finish, for the shoes landed her in the middle of the strawberry bed at one jump.

"I might as well be a grasshopper if I 'm to skip round like this," she said, forgetting to feel tired out there in the pleasant garden, with the robins picking berries close by, and a cool wind lifting the leaves to show where the reddest and ripest ones hid.

The little dish was soon filled, and she wanted to stay and eat a few, warm and sweet from the vines; but the bell rang, and away she went, over the wood-pile, across the piazza, and into the dining-room before the berry in her mouth was half eaten.

"How this child does rush about to-day!" said her mother. "It is so delightful to have such a quick little errand-girl that I shall get her to carry some bundles to my poor people this afternoon.

"Oh, dear me! I do hate to lug those old clothes and bottles and baskets of cold victuals round. Must I do it?" sighed Kitty, dismally, while the shoes tapped on the floor under the table, as if to remind her that she must, whether she liked it or not.

"It would be right and kind, and would please me very much. But you may do as you choose about it. I am very tired, and some one must go; for the little Bryan baby is sick and needs what I send," said mamma, looking disappointed.

Kitty sat very still and sober for some time, and no one spoke to her. She was making up her mind whether she would go pleasantly or be whisked about like a grasshopper against her will. When dinner was over, she said in a cheerful voice,--

"I 'll go, mamma; and when all the errands are done, may I come back through Fairyland, as we call the little grove where the tall ferns grow?"

"Yes, dear; when you oblige me, I am happy to please you."

"I 'm glad I decided to be good; now I shall have a lovely time," said Kitty to herself, as she trotted away with a basket in one hand, a bundle in the other, and some money in her pocket for a poor old woman who needed help.

The shoes went quietly along, and seemed to know just where to stop. The sick baby's mother thanked her for the soft little nightgowns; the lame girl smiled when she saw the books; the hungry children gathered round the basket of food, like young birds eager to be fed; and the old woman gave her a beautiful pink shell that her sailor son brought home from sea.

When all the errands were done Kitty skipped away to Fairyland, feeling very happy, as people always do when they have done kind things. It was a lovely place; for the ferns made green arches tall enough for little girls to sit under, and the ground was covered with pretty green moss and wood-flowers. Birds flew about in the pines, squirrels chattered in the oaks, butterflies floated here and there, and from the pond near by came the croak of frogs sunning their green backs on the mossy stones.

"I wonder if the shoes will let me stop and rest; it is so cool here, and I 'm so tired," said Kitty, as she came to a cosey nook at the foot of a tree.

The words were hardly out of her mouth when her feet folded under her, and there she sat on a cushion of moss, like the queen of the wood on her throne. Something lighted with a bump close by her; and looking down she saw a large black cricket with a stiff tail, staring at her curiously.

"Bless my heart! I thought you were some relation of my cousin Grasshopper's. You came down the hill with long leaps just like him; so I stopped to say, How d' ye do," said the cricket, in its creaky voice.

"I 'm not a grasshopper; but I have on fairy shoes to-day, and so do many things that I never did before," answered Kitty, much surprised to be able to understand what the cricket said.

"It is midsummer day, and fairies can play whatever pranks they like. If you did n't have those shoes on, you could n't understand what I say. Hark, and hear those squirrels talk, and the birds, and the ants down here. Make the most of this chance; for at sunset your shoes will stop skipping, and the fun all be over."

While the cricket talked Kitty did hear all sorts of little voices, singing, laughing, chatting in the gayest way, and understood every word they said. The squirrels called to one another as they raced about,--

"Here's a nut, there's a nut;

Hide it quick away,

In a hole, under leaves,

To eat some winter day.

Acorns sweet are plenty,

We will have them all:

Skip and scamper lively

Till the last ones fall."

The birds were singing softly,--

"Rock a bye, babies,

Your cradle hangs high;

Soft down your pillow,

Your curtain the sky.

Father will feed you,

While mother will sing,

And shelter our darlings

With her warm wing."

And the ants were saying to one another as they hurried in and out of their little houses,--

"Work, neighbor, work!

Do not stop to play;

Wander far and wide,

Gather all you may.

We are never like

Idle butterflies,

But like the busy bees,

Industrious and wise."

"Ants always were dreadfully good, but butterflies are ever so much prettier," said Kitty, listening to the little voices with wonder and pleasure.

"Hollo! hollo!

Come down below,--

It's lovely and cool

Out here in the pool;

On a lily-pad float

For a nice green boat.

Here we sit and sing

In a pleasant ring;

Or leap-frog play,

In the jolliest way.

Our games have begun,

Come join in the fun."

"Dear me! what could I do over there in the mud with the queer green frogs?" laughed Kitty, as this song was croaked at her.

"No, no, come and fly

Through the sunny sky,

Or honey sip

From the rose's lip,

Or dance in the air,

Like spirits fair.

Come away, come away;

'T is our holiday."

A cloud of lovely yellow butterflies flew up from a wild-rose bush, and went dancing away higher and higher, till they vanished in the light beyond the wood.

"That is better than leap-frog. I wish my skipping shoes would let me fly up somewhere, instead of carrying me on errands and where I ought to go all the time," said Kitty, watching the pretty things glitter as they flew.

Just at that minute a clock struck, and away went the shoes over the pool, the hill, the road, till they pranced in at the gate as the tea-bell rang. Kitty amused the family by

telling what she had done and seen; but no one believed the Fairyland part, and her father said, laughing,--

"Go on, my dear, making up little stories, and by and by you may be as famous as Hans Christian Andersen, whose books you like so well."

"The sun will soon set, and then my fun will be over; so I must skip while I can," thought Kitty, and went waltzing round the lawn so prettily that all the family came to see her.

"She dances so well that she shall go to dancing-school," said her mother, pleased with the pretty antics of her little girl.

Kitty was delighted to hear that; for she had longed to go, and went on skipping as hard as she could, that she might learn some of the graceful steps the shoes took before the day was done.

"Come, dear, stop now, and run up to your bath and bed. It has been a long hot day, and you are tired; so get to sleep early, for Nursey wants to go out," said her mother, as the sun went down behind the hills with a last bright glimmer, like the wink of a great sleepy eye.

"Oh, please, a few minutes more," began Kitty, but was off like a flash; for the shoes trotted her upstairs so fast that she ran against old Nursey, and down she went, splashing the water all over the floor, and scolding in such a funny way that it made Kitty laugh so that she could hardly pick her up again.

By the time she was ready to undress the sun was quite gone, and the shoes she took off were common ones again, for midsummer day was over. But Kitty never forgot the little lessons she had learned: she tried to run willingly when spoken to; she remembered the pretty steps and danced like a fairy; and best of all, she always loved the innocent and interesting little creatures in the woods and fields, and whenever she was told she might go to play with them, she hurried away almost as quickly as if she still wore the skipping shoes.

Cockyloo

In the barnyard a gray hen sat on her nest, feeling very happy because it was time for her eggs to hatch, and she hoped to have a fine brood of chickens. Presently crack, crack, went the shells; "Peep, peep!" cried the chicks; "Cluck, cluck!" called the hen; and out came ten downy little things one after the other, all ready to run and eat and scratch,--for chickens are not like babies, and don't have to be tended at all.

There were eight little hens and two little cockerels, one black and one as white as snow, with yellow legs, bright eyes, and a tiny red comb on his head. This was Cockyloo, the good chick; but the black one was named Peck, and was a quarrelsome bad fowl, as we shall see.

Mrs. Partlet, the mamma, was very proud of her fine family; for the eight little daughters were all white and very pretty. She led them out into the farmyard, clucking and scratching busily; for all were hungry, and ran chirping round her to pick up the worms and seeds she found for them. Cocky soon began to help take care of his sisters; and when a nice corn or a fat bug was found, he would step back and let little Downy or Snowball have it. But Peck would run and push them away, and gobble up the food greedily. He chased them away from the pan where the meal was, and picked the down off their necks if they tried to get their share. His mother scolded him when the little ones ran to hide under her wings; but he did n't care, and was very naughty. Cocky began to crow when he was very young, and had such a fine voice that people liked to hear his loud, clear "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" early in the morning; for he woke before the sun was up, and began his song. Peck used to grumble at being roused at dawn, for he was lazy; but the hens bustled up, and were glad to get out of the hen-house.

The father cock had been killed by a dog; so they made Cocky king of the farmyard, and Peck was very jealous of him.

"I came out of the shell first, and I am the oldest; so I ought to be king," he said.

"But we don't like you, because you are selfish, cross, and lazy. We want Cocky; he is so lively, kind, and brave. He will make a splendid bird, and he must be our king," answered the hens; and Peck had to mind, or they would have pulled every feather out of his little tail.

He resolved to do some harm to his good brother, and plagued him all he could. One day, when Cocky was swinging with three of his sisters on a bush that hung over the brook, Peck asked a stupid donkey feeding near to come and put his heavy foot on the bush. He did it, and crack went the branch, splash went the poor chicks into the water, and all were drowned but Cocky, who flew across and was saved. Poor little Hop, Chirp, and Downy went floating down the brook like balls of white foam, and were never seen again. All the hens mourned for them, and put a black feather in their heads to show how sorry they were. Mamma Partlet was heart-broken to lose three darlings at once; but Cocky comforted her, and never told how it happened, because he was ashamed to have people know what a bad bird Peck was.

A butterfly saw it all, and he told Granny Cockletop about it; and the hens were so angry that they turned Peck out of the barnyard, and he had to go and live in the woods alone. He said he did n't care; but he did, and was very unhappy, and used to go and peep into

the pleasant field where the fowls scratched and talked together. He dared not show himself, for they would have driven him out. But kind Cocky saw him, and would run with some nice bit and creep through the fence into the wood, saying,--

"Poor brother, I'm sorry for you, and I'll come and play with you, and tell you the news."

Now in this wood lived a fox, and he had been planning to eat Peck as soon as he was fat; for he missed the good corn and meal he used to have, and grew very thin living on grasshoppers and berries. While he waited the sly fellow made friends with Peck, though the bird knew that foxes ate hens.

"I 'm not afraid, and I don't believe old Granny Cockletop's tales. I can take care of myself, I guess," he said, and went on playing with the fox, who got him to tell all about the hen-house,--how the door was fastened, and where the plump chickens roosted, and what time they went to bed,--so that he could creep in and steal a good supper by and by. Silly Peck never guessed what harm he was doing, and only laughed when Cocky said,--

"You will be sorry if you play with the fox. He is a bad fellow; so be careful and sleep on a high branch, and keep out of his way, as I do."

Cocky was fat and large, and the fox longed to eat him, but never could, because he wisely ran home whenever he saw the rogue hiding in the wood. This made Peck angry, for he wanted his brother to stay and play; and so one day, when Cocky ran off in the midst of a nice game, Peck said to the fox,--

"See here, if you want to catch that fellow, I 'll tell you how to do it. He has promised to bring me some food to-night, when all the rest are at roost. He will hide and not get shut up; then, when those cross old biddies are asleep, he will cluck softly, and I am to go in and eat all I want out of the pan. You hide on the top of the hen-house; and while he talks to me, you can pounce on him. Then I shall be the only cock here, and they will have to make me king."

"All right," said the fox, much pleased with the plan, and very glad that Peck had a chance to get fatter.

So when it was night, Peck crept through the broken paling and waited till he heard the signal. Now, good Cocky had saved up nice bits from his own dinner, and put them in a paper hidden under a bush. He spread them all out in the barnyard and called; and Peck came in a great hurry to eat them, never stopping to say, "Thank you."

Cocky stood by talking pleasantly till a little shower came up.

"Peck, dear, put this nice thick paper over you; then you will be dry, and can go on eating. I'll step under that burdock leaf and wait till you are done," said Cocky; and Peck was too busy gobbling up the food to remember anything else.

Now the fox had just crept up on the hen-house roof; and when he peeped down, there was just light enough to see a white thing bobbing about.

"Ah, ha! that's Cockyloo; now for a good supper!" And with a jump he seized Peck by the head before he could explain the mistake.

One squawk, and the naughty bird was dead; but though the paper fell off, and the fox saw what he had done, it was too late, and he began to eat Peck up, while Cocky flew into a tree and crowed so loud that the farmer ran with his gun and shot the fox before he could squeeze through the hole in the fence with the fowl in his mouth.

After that the hens felt safe, for there were no more foxes; and when they heard about Peck they did not mourn at all, but liked Cocky better than ever, and lived happily together, with nothing to trouble them.

King Cockyloo grew to be a splendid bird,--pure white, with a tall red comb on his head, long spurs on his yellow legs, many fine feathers in his tail, and eyes that shone like diamonds. His crow was so loud that it could be heard all over the neighborhood, and people used to say, "Hark! hear Farmer Hunt's cock crow. Is n't it a sweet sound to wake us in the dawn?" All the other cocks used to answer him, and there was a fine matinée concert every day.

He was a good brother, and led his five little sisters all about the field, feeding, guarding, and amusing them; for mamma was lame now, and could not stir far from the yard. It was a pretty sight to see Cocky run home with a worm in his bill or a nice berry, and give it to his mother, who was very proud of her handsome son. Even old Granny Cockletop, who scolded about everything, liked him; and often said, as the hens sat scuffling in the dust,--

"A fine bird, my dears, a very fine bird, and I know he will do something remarkable before he dies."

She was right for once; and this is what he did.

One day the farmer had to go away and stay all night, leaving the old lady alone with two boys. They were not afraid; for they had a gun, and quite longed for a chance to fire it. Now it happened that the farmer had a good deal of money in the house, and some bad men knew it; so they waited for him to go away that they might steal it. Cocky was picking about in the field when he heard voices behind the wall, and peeping through a hole saw two shabby men hiding there.

"At twelve, to-night, when all are asleep, we will creep in at the kitchen window and steal the money. You shall watch on the outside and whistle if any one comes along while I 'm looking for the box where the farmer keeps it," said one man.

"You need n't be afraid; there is no dog, and no one to wake the family, so we are quite safe," said the other man; and then they both went to sleep till night came.

Cocky was much troubled, and did n't know what to do. He could not tell the old lady about it; for he could only cackle and crow, and she would not understand that language. So he went about all day looking very sober, and would not chase grasshoppers, play hide-and-seek under the big burdock leaves, or hunt the cricket with his sisters. At sunset he did not go into the hen-house with the rest, but flew up to the shed roof over the kitchen, and sat there in the cold ready to scare the robbers with a loud crow, as he could do nothing else.

At midnight the men came creeping along; one stopped outside, and the other went in. Presently he handed a basket of silver out, and went back for the money. Just as he came creeping along with the box, Cocky gave a loud, long crow, that frightened the robbers and woke the boys. The man with the basket ran away in such a hurry that he tumbled into a well; the other was going to get out of the window, when Cocky flew down and picked at his eyes and flapped his wings in his face, so that he turned to run some other way, and met the boys, who fired at him and shot him in the legs. The old lady popped her head out of the upper window and rang the dinner-bell, and called "Fire! fire!" so loud that it roused the neighbors, who came running to see what the trouble could be.

They fished one man out of the well and picked up the wounded one, and carried them both off to prison.

"Who caught them?" asked the people.

"We did," cried the boys, very proud of what they had done; "but we should n't have waked if our good Cocky had not crowed, and scared the rascals. He deserves half the praise, for this is the second time he has caught a thief."

So Cocky was brought in, and petted, and called a fine fellow; and his family were so proud of him they clucked about it for weeks afterward.

When the robbers were tried, it was found that they were the men who had robbed the bank, and taken a great deal of money; so every one was glad to have them shut up for twenty years. It made a great stir, and people would go to see Cocky and tell how he helped catch the men; and he was so brave and handsome, they said at last,--

"We want a new weather-cock on our courthouse, and instead of an arrow let us have a cock; and he shall look like this fine fellow."

"Yes, yes," cried the young folks, much pleased; for they thought Cocky ought to be remembered in some way.

So a picture was taken, and Cocky stood very still, with his bright eye on the man; then one like it was made of brass, and put high up on the court-house, where all could see the splendid bird shining like gold, and twirling about to tell which way the wind was. The children were never tired of admiring him; and all the hens and chickens went in a procession one moonlight night to see it,--yes, even Mamma Partlet and Granny Cockletop, though one was lame and the other very old, so full of pride were they in the great honor done King Cockyloo.

This was not the end of his good deeds; and the last was the best of all, though it cost him his life. He ruled for some years, and kept his kingdom in good order; for no one would kill him, when many of the other fowls were taken for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. But he did die at last; and even then he was good and brave, as you shall hear.

One of the boys wanted to smoke a pipe, and went behind the hen-house, so nobody should see him do such a silly thing. He thought he heard his father coming, and hid the pipe under the house. Some straw and dry leaves lay about, and took fire, setting the place in a blaze; for the boy ran away when he saw the mischief he had done, and the fire got to burning nicely before the cries of the poor hens called people to help. The door was locked, and could not be opened, because the key was in the pocket of the naughty boy; so the farmer got an axe and chopped down the wall, letting the poor biddies fly out, squawking and smoking.

"Where is Cocky?" cried the other boy, as he counted the hens and missed the king of the farmyard.

"Burnt up, I 'm afraid," said the farmer, who was throwing water on the flames.

Alas! yes, he was; for when the fire was out they found good old Cocky sitting on a nest, with his wide wings spread over some little chicks whose mother had left them. They were too small to run away, and sat chirping sadly till Cocky covered and kept them safe, though the smoke choked *him* to death.

Every one was very sorry; and the children gave the good bird a fine funeral, and buried him in the middle of the field, with a green mound over him, and a white stone, on which was written,--

Here lies the bravest cock that ever crew:

We mourn for him with sorrow true.

Now nevermore at dawn his music shall we hear,

Waking the world like trumpet shrill and clear.

The hens all hang their heads, the chickens sadly peep;

The boys look sober, and the girls all weep.

Good-by, dear Cocky: sleep and rest.

With grass and daisies on your faithful breast;

And when you wake, brave bird, so good and true,

Clap your white wings and crow, "Cock-a-doodle-doo."

Rosy's Journey

Rosy was a nice little girl who lived with her mother in a small house in the woods. They were very poor, for the father had gone away to dig gold, and did not come back; so they had to work hard to get food to eat and clothes to wear. The mother spun yarn when she was able, for she was often sick, and Rosy did all she could to help. She milked the red cow and fed the hens; dug the garden, and went to town to sell the yarn and the eggs.

She was very good and sweet, and every one loved her; but the neighbors were all poor, and could do little to help the child. So, when at last the mother died, the cow and hens and house had to be sold to pay the doctor and the debts. Then Rosy was left all alone, with no mother, no home, and no money to buy clothes and dinners with.

"What will you do?" said the people, who were very sorry for her.

"I will go and find my father," answered Rosy, bravely.

"But he is far away, and you don't know just where he is, up among the mountains. Stay with us and spin on your little wheel, and we will buy the yarn, and take care of you, dear little girl," said the kind people.

"No, I must go; for mother told me to, and my father will be glad to have me. I 'm not afraid, for every one is good to me," said Rosy, gratefully.

Then the people gave her a warm red cloak, and a basket with a little loaf and bottle of milk in it, and some pennies to buy more to eat when the bread was gone. They all kissed her, and wished her good luck; and she trotted away through the wood to find her father.

For some days she got on very well; for the wood-cutters were kind, and let her sleep in their huts, and gave her things to eat. But by and by she came to lonely places, where there were no houses; and then she was afraid, and used to climb up in the trees to sleep, and had to eat berries and leaves, like the Children in the Wood.

She made a fire at night, so wild beasts would not come near her; and if she met other travellers, she was so young and innocent no one had the heart to hurt her. She was kind to everything she met; so all little creatures were friends to her, as we shall see.

One day, as she was resting by a river, she saw a tiny fish on the bank, nearly dead for want of water.

"Poor thing! go and be happy again," she said, softly taking him up, and dropping him into the nice cool river.

"Thank you, dear child; I '11 not forget, but will help you some day," said the fish, when he had taken a good drink, and felt better.

"Why, how can a tiny fish help such a great girl as I am?" laughed Rosy.

"Wait and see," answered the fish, as he swam away with a flap of his little tail.

Rosy went on her way, and forgot all about it. But she never forgot to be kind; and soon after, as she was looking in the grass for strawberries, she found a field-mouse with a broken leg.

"Help me to my nest, or my babies will starve," cried the poor thing.

"Yes, I will; and bring these berries so that you can keep still till your leg is better, and have something to eat."

Rosy took the mouse carefully in her little hand, and tied up the broken leg with a leaf of spearmint and a blade of grass. Then she carried her to the nest under the roots of an old tree, where four baby mice were squeaking sadly for their mother. She made a bed of thistledown for the sick mouse, and put close within reach all the berries and seeds she could find, and brought an acorn-cup of water from the spring, so they could be comfortable.

"Good little Rosy, I shall pay you for all this kindness some day," said the mouse, when she was done.

"I 'm afraid you are not big enough to do much," answered Rosy, as she ran off to go on her journey.

"Wait and see," called the mouse; and all the little ones squeaked, as if they said the same.

Some time after, as Rosy lay up in a tree, waiting for the sun to rise, she heard a great buzzing close by, and saw a fly caught in a cobweb that went from one twig to another. The big spider was trying to spin him all up, and the poor fly was struggling to get away before his legs and wings were helpless.

Rosy put up her finger and pulled down the web, and the spider ran away at once to hide under the leaves. But the happy fly sat on Rosy's hand, cleaning his wings, and buzzing so loud for joy that it sounded like a little trumpet.

"You 've saved my life, and I 'll save yours, if I can," said the fly, twinkling his bright eye at Rosy.

"You silly thing, you can't help me," answered Rosy, climbing down, while the fly buzzed away, saying, like the mouse and fish,--

"Wait and see; wait and see."

Rosy trudged on and on, till at last she came to the sea. The mountains were on the other side; but how should she get over the wide water? No ships were there, and she had no money to hire one if there had been any; so she sat on the shore, very tired and sad, and cried a few big tears as salt as the sea.

"Hullo!" called a bubbly sort of voice close by; and the fish popped up his head.

Rosy ran to see what he wanted.

"I 've come to help you over the water," said the fish.

"How can you, when I want a ship, and some one to show me the way?" answered Rosy.

"I shall just call my friend the whale, and he will take you over better than a ship, because he won't get wrecked. Don't mind if he spouts and flounces about a good deal, he is only playing; so you need n't be frightened."

Down dived the little fish, and Rosy waited to see what would happen; for she did n't believe such a tiny thing could really bring a whale to help her.

Presently what looked like a small island came floating through the sea; and turning round, so that its tail touched the shore, the whale said, in a roaring voice that made her jump,--

"Come aboard, little girl, and hold on tight. I 'll carry you wherever you like."

It was rather a slippery bridge, and Rosy was rather scared at this big, strange boat; but she got safely over, and held on fast; then, with a roll and a plunge, off went the whale, spouting two fountains, while his tail steered him like the rudder of a ship.

Rosy liked it, and looked down into the deep sea, where all sorts of queer and lovely things were to be seen. Great fishes came and looked at her; dolphins played near to amuse her; the pretty nautilus sailed by in its transparent boat; and porpoises made her laugh with their rough play. Mermaids brought her pearls and red coral to wear, sea-apples to eat, and at night sung her to sleep with their sweet lullabies.

So she had a very pleasant voyage, and ran on shore with many thanks to the good whale, who gave a splendid spout, and swam away.

Then Rosy travelled along till she came to a desert. Hundreds of miles of hot sand, with no trees or brooks or houses.

"I never can go that way," she said; "I should starve, and soon be worn out walking in that hot sand. What *shall* I do?"

"Quee, quee!

Wait and see:

You were good to me;

So here I come,

From my little home,

To help you willingly,"

said a friendly voice; and there was the mouse, looking at her with its bright eyes full of gratitude.

"Why, you dear little thing, I 'm very glad to see you; but I 'm sure you can't help me across this desert," said Rosy, stroking its soft back.

"That's easy enough," answered the mouse, rubbing its paws briskly. "I 'll just call my friend the lion; he lives here, and he 'll take you across with pleasure."

"Oh, I 'm afraid he 'd rather eat me. How dare you call that fierce beast?" cried Rosy, much surprised.

"I gnawed him out of a net once, and he promised to help me. He is a noble animal, and he will keep his word."

Then the mouse sang, in its shrill little voice,--

"O lion, grand,

Come over the sand,

And help me now, I pray!

Here 's a little lass,

Who wants to pass;

Please carry her on her way."

In a moment a loud roar was heard, and a splendid yellow lion, with fiery eyes and a long mane, came bounding over the sand to meet them.

"What can I do for you, tiny friend?" he said, looking at the mouse, who was not a bit frightened, though Rosy hid behind a rock, expecting every moment to be eaten.

Mousie told him, and the good lion said pleasantly,--

"I 'll take the child along. Come on, my dear; sit on my back and hold fast to my mane, for I 'm a swift horse, and you might fall off."

Then he crouched down like a great cat, and Rosy climbed up, for he was so kind she could not fear him; and away they went, racing over the sand till her hair whistled in the wind. As soon as she got her breath, she thought it great fun to go flying along, while other lions and tigers rolled their fierce eyes at her, but dared not touch her; for this lion was king of all, and she was quite safe. They met a train of camels with loads on their backs; and the people travelling with them wondered what queer thing was riding that fine lion. It looked like a very large monkey in a red cloak, but went so fast they never saw that it was a little girl.

"How glad I am that I was kind to the mouse; for if the good little creature had not helped me, I never could have crossed this desert," said Rosy, as the lion walked awhile to rest himself.

"And if the mouse had not gnawed me out of the net I never should have come at her call. You see, little people can conquer big ones, and make them gentle and friendly by kindness," answered the lion.

Then away they went again, faster than ever, till they came to the green country. Rosy thanked the good beast, and he ran back; for if any one saw him, they would try to catch him.

"Now I have only to climb up these mountains and find father," thought Rosy, as she saw the great hills before her, with many steep roads winding up to the top; and far, far away rose the smoke from the huts where the men lived and dug for gold. She started off bravely, but took the wrong road, and after climbing a long while found the path ended in rocks over which she could not go. She was very tired and hungry; for her food was gone, and there were no houses in this wild place. Night was coming on, and it was so cold she was afraid she would freeze before morning, but dared not go on lest she should fall down some steep hole and be killed. Much discouraged, she lay down on the moss and cried a little; then she tried to sleep, but something kept buzzing in her ear, and looking carefully she saw a fly prancing about on the moss, as if anxious to make her listen to his song,--

"Rosy, my dear,

Don't cry,--I 'm here

To help you all I can.

I 'm only a fly,

But you 'll see that I

Will keep my word like a man."

Rosy could n't help laughing to hear the brisk little fellow talk as if he could do great things; but she was very glad to see him and hear his cheerful song, so she held out her finger, and while he sat there told him all her troubles.

"Bless your heart! my friend the eagle will carry you right up the mountains and leave you at your father's door," cried the fly; and he was off with a flirt of his gauzy wings, for he meant what he said.

Rosy was ready for her new horse, and not at all afraid after the whale and the lion; so when a great eagle swooped down and alighted near her, she just looked at his sharp claws, big eyes, and crooked beak as coolly as if he had been a cock-robin.

He liked her courage, and said kindly in his rough voice,--

"Hop up, little girl, and sit among my feathers. Hold me fast round the neck, or you may grow dizzy and get a fall."

Rosy nestled down among the thick gray feathers, and put both arms round his neck; and whiz they went, up, up, up, higher and higher, till the trees looked like grass, they were so far below. At first it was very cold, and Rosy cuddled deeper into her feather bed; then, as they came nearer to the sun, it grew warm, and she peeped out to see the huts standing in a green spot on the top of the mountain.

"Here we are. You'll find all the men are down in the mine at this time. They won't come up till morning; so you will have to wait for your father. Good-by; good luck, my dear." And the eagle soared away, higher still, to his nest among the clouds.

It was night now, but fires were burning in all the houses; so Rosy went from hut to hut trying to find her father's, that she might rest while she waited: at last in one the picture of a pretty little girl hung on the wall, and under it was written, "My Rosy." Then she knew that this was the right place; and she ate some supper, put on more wood, and went to bed, for she wanted to be fresh when her father came in the morning.

While she slept a storm came on,--thunder rolled and lightning flashed, the wind blew a gale, and rain poured,--but Rosy never waked till dawn, when she heard men shouting outside,--

"Run, run! The river is rising! We shall all be drowned!"

Rosy ran out to see what was the matter, though the wind nearly blew her away; she found that so much rain had made the river overflow till it began to wash the banks away.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" cried Rosy, watching the men rush about like ants, getting their bags of gold ready to carry off before the water swept them away, if it became a flood.

As if in answer to her cry, Rosy heard a voice say close by,--

"Splash, dash!

Rumble and crash!

Here come the beavers gay;

See what they do,

Rosy, for you,

Because you helped me one day."

And there in the water was the little fish swimming about, while an army of beavers began to pile up earth and stones in a high bank to keep the river back. How they worked, digging and heaping with teeth and claws, and beating the earth hard with their queer tails like shovels!

Rosy and the men watched them work, glad to be safe, while the storm cleared up; and by the time the dam was made, all danger was over. Rosy looked into the faces of the rough men, hoping her father was there, and was just going to ask about him, when a great shouting rose again, and all began to run to the pit hole, saying,--

"The sand has fallen in! The poor fellows will be smothered! How can we get them out? how can we get them out?"

Rosy ran too, feeling as if her heart would break; for her father was down in the mine, and would die soon if air did not come to him. The men dug as hard as they could; but it was a long job, and they feared they would not be in time.

Suddenly hundreds of moles came scampering along, and began to burrow down through the earth, making many holes for air to go in; for they know how to build galleries through the ground better than men can. Every one was so surprised they stopped to look on; for the dirt flew like rain as the busy little fellows scratched and bored as if making an underground railway.

"What does it mean?" said the men. "They work faster than we can, and better; but who sent them? Is this strange little girl a fairy?"

Before Rosy could speak, all heard a shrill, small voice singing,--

"They come at my call;

And though they are small,

They 'll dig the passage clear:

I never forget;

We 'll save them yet,

For love of Rosy dear."

Then all saw a little gray mouse sitting on a stone, waving her tail about, and pointing with her tiny paw to show the moles where to dig.

The men laughed; and Rosy was telling them who she was, when a cry came from the pit, and they saw that the way was clear so they could pull the buried men up. In a minute they got ropes, and soon had ten poor fellows safe on the ground; pale and dirty, but all alive, and all shouting as if they were crazy,--

"Tom's got it! Tom's got it! Hooray for Tom!"

"What is it?" cried the others; and then they saw Tom come up with the biggest lump of gold ever found in the mountains.

Every one was glad of Tom's luck; for he was a good man, and had worked a long time, and been sick, and could n't go back to his wife and child. When he saw Rosy, he dropped the lump, and caught her up, saying,--

"My little girl! she 's better than a million pounds of gold."

Then Rosy was very happy, and went back to the hut, and had a lovely time telling her father all about her troubles and her travels. He cried when he heard that the poor mother was dead before she could have any of the good things the gold would buy them.

"We will go away and be happy together in the pleasantest home I can find, and never part any more, my darling," said the father, kissing Rosy as she sat on his knee with her arms round his neck.

She was just going to say something very sweet to comfort him, when a fly lit on her arm and buzzed very loud,--

"Don't drive me away,

But hear what I say:

Bad men want the gold;

They will steal it to-night,

And you must take flight;

So be quiet and busy and bold."

"I was afraid some one would take my lump away. I 'll pack up at once, and we will creep off while the men are busy at work; though I 'm afraid we can't go fast enough to be safe, if they miss us and come after," said Tom, bundling his gold into a bag and looking very sober; for some of the miners were wild fellows, and might kill him for the sake of that great lump.

But the fly sang again,--

"Slip away with me,

And you will see

What a wise little thing am I;

For the road I show

No man can know,

Since it's up in the pathless sky."

Then they followed Buzz to a quiet nook in the wood; and there were the eagle and his mate waiting to fly away with them so fast and so far that no one could follow. Rosy and the bag of gold were put on the mother eagle; Tom sat astride the king bird; and away they flew to a great city, where the little girl and her father lived happily together all their lives.

How They Ran Away

Two little boys sat on the fence whittling arrows one fine day. Said one little boy to the other little boy,--

"Let's do something jolly."

"All right. What will we do?"

"Run off to the woods and be hunters."

"What can we hunt?"

"Bears and foxes."

"Mullin says there ain't any round here."

"Well, we can shoot squirrels and snare woodchucks."

"Have n't got any guns and trap."

"We 've got our bows, and I found an old trap behind the barn."

"What will we eat?"

"Here 's our lunch; and when that's gone we can roast the squirrels and cook the fish on a stick. I know how."

"Where will you get the fire?"

"Got matches in my pocket."

"I 've got a lot of things we could use. Let's see."

And as if satisfied at last, cautious Billy displayed his treasures, while bold Tommy did the same.

Besides the two knives there were strings, nails, matches, a piece of putty, fish-hooks, and two very dirty handkerchiefs.

"There, sir, that 's a first-rate fit-out for hunters; and with the jolly basket of lunch Mrs. Mullin gave us, we can get on tip-top for two or three days," said Tommy, eager to be off.

"Where shall we sleep?" asked Billy, who liked to be comfortable both night and day.

"Oh, up in trees or on beds of leaves, like the fellows in our books. If you are afraid, stay at home; I 'm going to have no end of a good time." And Tommy crammed the things back into his pockets as if there were no time to lose.

"Pooh! I ain't afraid. Come on!" And jumping down Billy caught up his rod, rather ashamed of his many questions.

No one was looking at them, and they might have walked quietly off; but that the "running away" might be all right, both raced down the road, tumbled over a wall, and dashed into the woods as if a whole tribe of wild Indians were after them.

"Do you know the way?" panted Billy, when at last they stopped for breath.

"Yes, it winds right up the mountain; but we 'd better not keep to it, or some one will see us and take us back. We are going to be *real* hunters and have adventures; so we must

get lost, and find our way by the sun and the stars," answered Tommy, who had read so many Boys' Books his little head was a jumble of Texan Rangers, African Explorers, and Buffalo Bills; and he burned to outdo them all.

"What will our mothers say if we really get lost?" asked Billy, always ready with a question.

"Mine won't fuss. She lets me do what I like."

That was true; for Tommy's poor mamma was tired of trying to keep the lively little fellow in order, and had got used to seeing him come out of all his scrapes without much harm.

"Mine will be scared; she 's always afraid I 'm going to get hurt, so I 'm careful. But I guess I 'll risk it, and have some fun to tell about when we go home," said Billy, trudging after Captain Tommy, who always took the lead.

These eleven-year-old boys were staying with their mothers at a farm-house up among the mountains; and having got tired of the tame bears, the big barn, the trout brook, the thirty colts at pasture, and the society of the few little girls and younger boys at the hotel near by, these fine fellows longed to break loose and "rough it in the bush," as the hunters did in their favorite stories.

Away they went, deeper and deeper into the great forest that covered the side of the mountain. A pleasant place that August day; for it was cool and green, with many brooks splashing over the rocks, or lying in brown pools under the ferns. Squirrels chattered and raced in the tall pines; now and then a gray rabbit skipped out of sight among the brakes, or a strange bird flew by. Here and there blackberries grew in the open places, sassafras bushes were plentiful, and black-birch bark was ready for chewing.

"Don't you call this nice?" asked Tommy, pausing at last in a little dell where a noisy brook came tumbling down the mountain side, and the pines sung overhead.

"Yes; but I 'm awful hungry. Let's rest and eat our lunch," said Billy, sitting down on a cushion of moss.

"You always want to be stuffing and resting," answered sturdy Tommy, who liked to be moving all the time.

He took the fishing-basket, which hung over his shoulder by a strap, and opened it carefully; for good Mrs. Mullin had packed a nice lunch of bread and butter, cake and peaches, with a bottle of milk, and two large pickles slipped in on the sly to please the boys.

Tommy's face grew very sober as he looked in, for all he saw was a box of worms for bait and an old jacket.

"By George! we 've got the wrong basket. This is Mullin's, and he 's gone off with our prog. Won't he be mad?"

"Not as mad as I am. Why did n't you look? You are always in such a hurry to start. What *shall* we do now without anything to eat?" whined Billy; for losing his lunch was a dreadful blow to him.

"We shall have to catch some fish and eat blackberries. Which will you do, old cry-baby?" said Tommy, laughing at the other boy's dismal face.

"I 'll fish; I 'm so tired I can't go scratching round after berries. I don't love 'em, either." And Billy began to fix his line and bait his hook.

"Lucky we got the worms; you can eat 'em if you can't wait for fish," said Tommy, bustling about to empty the basket and pile up their few possessions in a heap. "There's a quiet pool below here, you go and fish there. I 'll pick the berries, and then show you how to get dinner in the woods. This is our camp; so fly round and do your best."

Then Tommy ran off to a place near by where he had seen the berries, while Billy found a comfortable nook by the pool, and sat scowling at the water so crossly, it was a wonder any trout came to his hook. But the fat worms tempted several small ones, and he cheered up at the prospect of food. Tommy whistled while he picked, and in half an hour came back with two quarts of nice berries and an armful of dry sticks for the fire.

"We 'll have a jolly dinner, after all," he said, as the flames went crackling up, and the dry leaves made a pleasant smell.

"Got four, but don't see how we 'll ever cook 'em; no frying-pan," grumbled Billy, throwing down the four little trout, which he had half cleaned.

"Don't want any. Broil 'em on the coals, or toast 'em on a forked stick. I 'll show you how," said cheerful Tommy, whittling away, and feeding his fire as much like a real hunter as a small boy could be.

While he worked, Billy ate berries and sighed for bread and butter. At last, after much trouble, two of the trout were half cooked and eagerly eaten by the hungry boys. But they were very different from the nice brown ones Mrs. Mullin gave them; for in spite of Tommy's struggles they would fall in the ashes, and there was no salt to eat with them. By the time the last were toasted, the young hunters were so hungry they could have eaten anything, and not a berry was left.

"I set the trap down there, for I saw a hole among the vines, and I should n't wonder if we got a rabbit or something," said Tommy, when the last bone was polished. "You go and catch some more fish, and I 'll see if I have caught any old chap as he went home to dinner."

Off ran Tommy; and the other boy went slowly back to the brook, wishing with all his might he was at home eating sweet corn and berry pie.

The trout had evidently gone to their dinners, for not one bite did poor Billy get; and he was just falling asleep when a loud shout gave him such a fright that he tumbled into the brook up to his knees.

"I 've got him! Come and see! He's a bouncer," roared Tommy, from the berry bushes some way off.

Billy scrambled out, and went as fast as his wet boots would let him, to see what the prize was. He found Tommy dancing wildly round a fat gray animal, who was fighting to get his paws out of the trap, and making a queer noise as he struggled about.

"What is it?" asked Billy, getting behind a tree as fast as possible; for the thing looked fierce, and he was very timid.

"A raccoon, I guess, or a big woodchuck. Won't his fur make a fine cap? I guess the other fellows will wish they 'd come with us," said Tommy, prancing to and fro, without the least idea what to do with the creature.

"He 'll bite. We 'd better run away and wait till he 's dead," said Billy.

"Wish he 'd got his head in, then I could carry him off; but he does look savage, so we'll have to leave him awhile, and get him when we come back. But he's a real beauty." And Tommy looked proudly at the bunch of gray fur scuffling in the sand.

"Can we ever eat him?" asked hungry Billy, ready for a fried crocodile if he could get it.

"If he 's a raccoon, we can; but I don't know about woodchucks. The fellows in my books don't seem to have caught any. He 's nice and fat; we might try him when he 's dead," said Tommy, who cared more for the skin to show than the best meal ever cooked.

The sound of a gun echoing through the wood gave Tommy a good idea,--

"Let's find the man and get him to shoot this chap; then we need n't wait, but skin him right away, and eat him too."

Off they went to the camp; and catching up their things, the two hunters hurried away in the direction of the sound, feeling glad to know that some one was near them, for two or three hours of wood life made them a little homesick.

They ran and scrambled, and listened and called; but not until they had gone a long way up the mountain did they find the man, resting in an old hut left by the lumbermen. The remains of his dinner were spread on the floor, and he lay smoking, and reading a newspaper, while his dog dozed at his feet, close to a well-filled game-bag.

He looked surprised when two dirty, wet little boys suddenly appeared before him,--one grinning cheerfully, the other looking very dismal and scared as the dog growled and glared at them as if they were two rabbits.

"Hollo!" said the man.

"Hollo!" answered Tommy.

"Who are you?" asked the man.

"Hunters," said Tommy.

"Had good luck?" And the man laughed.

"First-rate. Got a raccoon in our trap, and we want you to come and shoot him," answered Tommy, proudly.

"Sure?" said the man, looking interested as well as amused.

"No; but I think so."

"What's he like?"

Tommy described him, and was much disappointed when the man lay down again, saying, with another laugh,--

"It's a woodchuck; he's no good."

"But I want the skin."

"Then don't shoot him, let him die; that's better for the skin," said the man, who was tired and did n't want to stop for such poor game.

All this time Billy had been staring hard at the sandwiches and bread and cheese on the floor, and sniffing at them, as the dog sniffed at him.

"Want some grub?" asked the man, seeing the hungry look.

"I just do! We left our lunch, and I 've only had two little trout and some old berries since breakfast," answered Billy, with tears in his eyes and a hand on his stomach.

"Eat away then; I 'm done, and don't want the stuff." And the man took up his paper as if glad to be let alone.

It was lucky that the dog had been fed, for in ten minutes nothing was left but the napkin; and the boys sat picking up the crumbs, much refreshed, but ready for more.

"Better be going home, my lads; it's pretty cold on the mountain after sunset, and you are a long way from town," said the man, who had peeped at them over his paper now and then, and saw, in spite of the dirt and rips, that they were not farmer boys.

"We don't live in town; we are at Mullin's, in the valley. No hurry; we know the way, and we want to have some sport first. You seem to have done well," answered Tommy, looking enviously from the gun to the game-bag, out of which hung a rabbit's head and a squirrel's tail.

"Pretty fair; but I want a shot at the bear. People tell me there is one up here, and I 'm after him; for he kills the sheep, and might hurt some of the young folks round here," said the man, loading his gun with a very sober air; for he wanted to get rid of the boys and send them home.

Billy looked alarmed; but Tommy's brown face beamed with joy as he said eagerly,--

"I hope you 'll get him. I 'd rather shoot a bear than any other animal but a lion. We don't have those here, and bears are scarce. Mullin said he had n't heard of one for a long time; so this must be a young one, for they killed the big one two years ago."

That was true, and the man knew it. He did not really expect or want to meet a bear, but thought the idea of one would send the little fellows home at once. Finding one of them was unscared, he laughed, and said with a nod to Tommy,--

"If I had time I 'd take you along, and show you how to hunt; but this fat friend of yours could n't rough it with us, and we can't leave him alone; so go ahead your own way. Only I wouldn't climb any higher, for among the rocks you are sure to get hurt or lost."

"Oh, I say, let's go! Such fun, Billy! I know you'll like it. A real gun and dog and hunter! Come on, and don't be a molly-coddle," cried Tommy, wild to go.

"I won't! I'm tired, and I'm going home; you can go after your old bears if you want to. I don't think much of hunting anyway, and wish I had n't come," growled Billy, very cross at being left out, yet with no desire to scramble any more.

"Can't stop. Good-by. Get along home, and some day I 'll come and take you out with me, little Leatherstocking," said the man, striding off with the dear gun and dog and bag, leaving Billy to wonder what he meant by that queer name, and Tommy to console himself with the promise made him.

"Let's go and see how old Chucky gets on," he said good-naturedly, when the man vanished.

"Not till I 'm rested. I can get a good nap on this pile of hay; then we'll go home before it's late," answered lazy Billy, settling himself on the rough bed the lumbermen had used.

"I just wish I had a boy with some go in him; you ain't much better than a girl," sighed Tommy, walking off to a pine-tree where some squirrels seemed to be having a party, they chattered and raced up and down at such a rate.

He tried his bow and shot all his arrows many times in vain, for the lively creatures gave him no chance. He had better luck with a brown bird who sat in a bush and was hit full in the breast with the sharpest arrow. The poor thing fluttered and fell, and its blood wet the green leaves as it lay dying on the grass. Tommy was much pleased at first; but as he stood watching its bright eye grow dim and its pretty brown wings stop fluttering, he felt sorry that its happy little life was so cruelly ended, and ashamed that his thoughtless fun had given so much pain.

"I 'll never shoot another bird except hawks after chickens, and I won't brag about this one. It was so tame, and trusted me, I was very mean to kill it."

As he thought this, Tommy smoothed the ruffled feathers of the dead thrush, and, making a little grave under the pine, buried it wrapped in green leaves, and left it there where its mate could sing over it, and no rude hands disturb its rest.

"I 'll tell mamma and she will understand; but I *won't* tell Billy. He is such a greedy old chap he'll say I ought to have kept the poor bird to eat," thought Tommy, as he went back to the hut, and sat there, restringing his bow, till Billy woke up, much more amiable for his sleep.

They tried to find the woodchuck, but lost their way, and wandered deeper into the great forest till they came to a rocky place and could go no farther. They climbed up and tumbled down, turned back and went round, looked at the sun and knew it was late, chewed sassafras bark and checkerberry leaves for supper, and grew more and more worried and tired as hour after hour went by and they saw no end to woods and rocks. Once or twice they heard the hunter's gun far away, and called and tried to find him.

Tommy scolded Billy for not going with the man, who knew his way and was probably safe in the valley when the last faint shot came up to them. Billy cried, and reproached Tommy for proposing to run away; and both felt very homesick for their mothers and their good safe beds at Farmer Mullin's.

The sun set, and found them in a dreary place full of rocks and blasted trees half-way up the mountain. They were so tired they could hardly walk, and longed to lie down anywhere to sleep; but, remembering the hunter's story of the bear, they were afraid to do it, till Tommy suggested climbing a tree, after making a fire at the foot of it to scare away the bear, lest he climb too and get them.

But, alas! the matches were left in their first camp; so they decided to take turns to sleep and watch, since it was plain that they must spend the night there. Billy went up first, and creeping into a good notch of the bare tree tried to sleep, while brave Tommy, armed with a big stick, marched to and fro below. Every few minutes a trembling voice would call from above, "Is anything coming?" and an anxious voice would answer from below, "Not yet. Hurry up and go to sleep! I want my turn."

At last Billy began to snore, and then Tommy felt so lonely he could n't bear it; so he climbed to a lower branch, and sat nodding and trying to keep watch, till he too fell fast asleep, and the early moon saw the poor boys roosting there like two little owls.

A loud cry, a scrambling overhead, and then a great shaking and howling waked Tommy so suddenly that he lost his wits for a moment and did not know where he was.

"The bear! the bear! don't let him get me! Tommy, Tommy, come and make him let go," cried Billy, filling the quiet night with dismal howls.

Tommy looked up, expecting to behold a large bear eating his unhappy friend; but the moonlight showed him nothing but poor Billy dangling from a bough, high above the ground, caught by his belt when he fell. He had been dreaming of bears, and rolled off his perch; so there he hung, kicking and wailing, half awake, and so scared it was long before Tommy could make him believe that he was quite safe.

How to get him down was the next question. The branch was not strong enough to bear Tommy, though he climbed up and tried to unhook poor Billy. The belt was firmly twisted at the back, and Billy could not reach to undo it, nor could he get his legs round the branch to pull himself up. There seemed no way but to unbuckle the belt and drop. That he was afraid to try; for the ground was hard, and the fall a high one. Fortunately both belt and buckle were strong; so he hung safely, though very uncomfortably, while Tommy racked his boyish brain to find a way to help him.

Billy had just declared that he should be cut in two very soon if something was not done for him, and Tommy was in despair, when they thought they heard a far-off shout, and both answered it till their throats were nearly split with screaming.

"I seem to see a light moving round down that way," cried Billy from his hook, pointing toward the valley.

"They are looking for us, but they won't hear us. I 'll run and holler louder, and bring 'em up here," answered Tommy, glad to do anything that would put an end to this dreadful state of things.

"Don't leave me! I may fall and be killed! The bear might come! Don't go! don't go!" wailed Billy, longing to drop, but afraid.

"I won't go far, and I 'll come back as quick as I can. You are safe up there. Hold on, and we 'll soon get you down," answered Tommy, rushing away helter-skelter, never minding where he went, and too much excited to care for any damage.

The moon was bright on the blasted trees; but when he came down among the green pines, it grew dark, and he often stumbled and fell. Never minding bumps and bruises, he scrambled over rocks, leaped fallen trunks, floundered through brooks, and climbed down steep places, till, with a reckless jump, he went heels over head into a deep hole, and lay there for a moment stunned by the fall. It was an old bear-trap, long unused, and fortunately well carpeted with dead leaves, or poor Tommy would have broken his bones.

When he came to himself he was so used up that he lay still for some time in a sort of daze, too tired to know or care about anything, only dimly conscious that somebody was lost in a tree or a well, and that, on the whole, running away was not all fun.

By and by the sound of a gun roused him; and remembering poor Billy, he tried to get out of the pit,--for the moon showed him where he was. But it was too deep, and he was too stiff with weariness and the fall to be very nimble. So he shouted, and whistled, and raged about very like a little bear caught in the pit.

It is very difficult to find a lost person on these great mountains, and many wander for hours not far from help, bewildered by the thick woods, the deep ravines, and precipices which shut them in. Some have lost their lives; and as Tommy lay on the leaves used up

by his various struggles, he thought of all the stories he had lately heard at the farm, and began to wonder how it would feel to starve to death down there, and to wish poor Billy could come to share his prison, that they might die together, like the Babes in the Wood, or better still the Boy Scouts lost on the prairies in that thrilling story, "Bill Boomerang, the Wild Hunter of the West."

"I guess mother is worried this time, because I never stayed out all night before, and I never will again without leave. It's rather good fun, though, if they only find me. I ain't afraid, and it is n't very cold. I always wanted to sleep out, and now I 'm doing it. Wish poor Billy was safely down and in this good bed with me. Won't he be scared all alone there? Maybe the belt will break and he get hurt bumping down. Sorry now I left him, he's such a 'fraid-cat. There's the gun again! Guess it's that man after us. Hi! hollo! Here I am! Whoop! Hurrah! Hi! hi! hi!"

Tommy's meditations ended in a series of yells as loud as his shrill little voice could make them, and he thought some one answered. But it must have been an echo, for no one came; and after another rampage round his prison, the poor boy nestled down among the leaves, and went fast asleep because there was nothing else to do.

So there they were, the two young hunters, lost at midnight on the mountain,--one hanging like an apple on the old tree, and the other sound asleep in a bear-pit. Their distracted mothers meantime were weeping and wringing their hands at the farm, while all the men in the neighborhood were out looking for the lost boys. The hunter on his return to the hotel had reported meeting the runaways and his effort to send them home in good season; so people knew where to look, and, led by the man and dog, up the mountain went Mr. Mullin with his troop. It was a mild night, and the moon shone high and clear; so the hunt was, on the whole, rather easy and pleasant at first, and lanterns flashed through the dark forest like fireflies, the lonely cliffs seemed alive with men, and voices echoed in places where usually only the brooks babbled and the hawks screamed. But as time went on, and no sign of the boys appeared, the men grew anxious, and began to fear some serious harm had come to the runaways.

"I can't go home without them little shavers no way, 'specially Tommy," said Mr. Mullin, as they stopped to rest after a hard climb through the blasted grove. "He's a boy after my own heart, spry as a chipmunk, smart as a young cockerel, and as full of mischief as a monkey. He ain't afraid of anything, and I should n't be a mite surprised to find him enjoyin' himself first-rate, and as cool as a coocumber."

"The fat boy won't take it so easily, I fancy. If it had n't been for him I 'd have kept the lively fellow with me, and shown him how to hunt. Sorry now I did n't take them both home," said the man with the gun, seeing his mistake too late, as people often do.

"Maybe they 've fell down a precipice and got killed, like Moses Warner, when he was lost," suggested a tall fellow, who had shouted himself hoarse.

"Hush up, and come on! The dog is barkin' yonder, and he may have found 'em," said the farmer, hurrying toward the place where the hound was baying at something in a tree.

It was poor Billy, hanging there still, half unconscious with weariness and fear. The belt had slipped up under his arms, so he could breathe easily; and there he was, looking like a queer sort of cone on the blasted pine.

"Wal, I never!" exclaimed the farmer, as the tall lad climbed up, and, unhooking Billy, handed him down like a young bird, into the arms held up to catch him.

"He 's all right, only scared out of his wits. Come along and look for the other one. I 'll warrant he went for help, and may be half-way home by this time," said the hunter, who did n't take much interest in the fat boy.

Tommy's hat lay on the ground; and showing it to the dog, his master told him to find the boy. The good hound sniffed about, and then set off with his nose to the ground, following the zigzag track Tommy had taken in his hurry. The hunter and several of the men went after him, leaving the farmer with the others to take care of Billy.

Presently the dog came to the bear-pit, and began to bark again.

"He 's got him!" cried the men, much relieved; and rushing on soon saw the good beast looking down at a little white object in one corner of the dark hole.

It was Tommy's face in the moonlight, for the rest of him was covered up with leaves. The little round face seemed very quiet; and for a moment the men stood quite still, fearing that the fall might have done the boy some harm. Then the hunter leaped down, and gently touched the brown cheek. It was warm, and a soft snore from the pug nose made the man call out, much relieved,--

"He 's all right. Wake up here, little chap; you are wanted at home. Had hunting enough for this time?"

As he spoke, Tommy opened his eyes, gave a stretch, and said, "Hollo, Billy," as calmly as if in his own bed at home. Then the rustle of the leaves, the moonlight in his face, and the sight of several men staring down at him startled him wide awake.

"Did you shoot the big bear?" he asked, looking up at the hunter with a grin.

"No; but I caught a little one, and here he is," answered the man, giving Tommy a roll in the leaves, much pleased because he did not whine or make a fuss.

"Got lost, didn't we? Oh, I say, where's Billy? I left him up a tree like a coon, and he would n't come down," laughed Tommy, kicking off his brown bed-clothes, and quite ready to get up now.

They all laughed with him; and presently, when the story was told, they pulled the boy out of the pit, and went back to join the other wanderer, who was now sitting up eating the bread and butter Mrs. Mullin sent for their very late supper.

The men roared again, as the two boys told their various tribulations; and when they had been refreshed, the party started for home, blowing the tin horns, and firing shot after shot to let the scattered searchers know that the lost children were found. Billy was very quiet, and gladly rode on the various broad backs offered for his use; but Tommy stoutly refused to be carried, and with an occasional "boost" over a very rough place, walked all the way down on his own sturdy legs. He was the hero of the adventure, and was never tired of relating how he caught the woodchuck, cooked the fish, slid down the big rock, and went to bed in the old bear-pit. But in his own little mind he resolved to wait till he was older before he tried to be a hunter; and though he caught several woodchucks that summer, he never shot another harmless little bird.

The Fairy Box

"T wish I had a magic bracelet like Rosamond's, that would prick me when I was going to do wrong," said little May, as she put down the story she had been reading.

There was no one else in the room, but she heard a sweet voice sing these words close to her ear:--

"Now hark, little May,

If you want to do right,

Under your pillow

Just look every night.

If you have been good

All through the day,

A gift you will find,

Useful or gay;

But if you have been

Cross, selfish, or wild,

A bad thing will come

For the naughty child.

So try, little dear,

And soon you will see

How easy and sweet

To grow good it will be."

May was very much surprised at this, and looked everywhere to see who spoke, but could find no one.

"I guess I dreamed it; but my eyes are wide open, and I can't make up poetry, asleep or awake."

As she said that, some one laughed; and the same voice sang again,--

"Ha, ha! you can't see,

Although I am here;

But listen to what

I say in your ear.

Tell no one of this,

Because, if you do,

My fun will be spoilt,

And so will yours too.

But if you are good,

And patient, and gay,

A real fairy will come

To see little May."

"Oh, how splendid that will be! I 'll try hard, and be as good as an angel if I can only get one peep at a live fairy. I always said, there were such people, and now I shall know how they look," cried the little girl, so pleased that she danced all about the room, clapping her hands.

Something bright darted out of the window from among the flowers that stood there, and no more songs were heard; so May knew that the elf had gone.

"I 've got a fine secret all to myself, and I 'll keep it carefully. I wonder what present will come to-night," she said, thinking this a very interesting play.

She was very good all day, and made no fuss about going to bed, though usually she fretted, and wanted to play, and called for water, and plagued poor Nursey in many ways. She got safely into her little nest, and then was in such a hurry to see what was under her pillow that she forgot, and called out crossly,--

"Do hurry and go away. Don't wait to hang up my clothes, you slow old thing! Go, go!"

That hurt Nurse's feelings, and she went away without her good-night kiss. But May did n't care, and felt under her pillow the minute the door was shut. A lamp was always left burning; so she could see the little gold box she drew out.

"How pretty! I hope there is some candy in it," she said, opening it very carefully.

Oh, dear! what *do* you think happened? A wasp flew out and stung her lips; then both wasp and box vanished, and May was left to cry alone, with a sharp pain in the lips that said the unkind words.

"What a dreadful present! I don't like that spiteful fairy who sends such horrid things," she sobbed.

Then she lay still and thought about it; for she dared not call any one, because nobody must guess the secret. She knew in her own little heart that the cross words hurt Nursey as the sting did her lips, and she felt sorry. At once the smart got better, and by the time she had resolved to ask the good old woman to forgive her, it was all gone.

Next morning she kissed Nursey and begged pardon, and tried hard to be good till tea-time; then she ran to see what nice things they were going to have to eat, though she had often been told not to go into the dining-room. No one was there; and on the table stood a dish of delicious little cakes, all white like snowballs.

"I must have just a taste, and I 'll tell mamma afterward," she said; and before she knew it one little cake was eaten all up.

"Nobody will miss it, and I can have another at tea. Now, a lump of sugar and a sip of cream before mamma comes, I so like to pick round."

Having done one wrong thing, May felt like going on; so she nibbled and meddled with all sorts of forbidden things till she heard a step, then she ran away; and by and by, when the bell rang, came in with the rest as prim and proper as if she did not know how to play pranks. No one missed the cake, and her mother gave her another, saying,--

"There, dear, is a nice plummy one for my good child."

May turned red, and wanted to tell what she had done, but was ashamed because there was company; and people thought she blushed like a modest little girl at being praised.

But when she went to bed she was almost afraid to look under the pillow, knowing that she had done wrong. At last she slowly drew out the box, and slowly opened it, expecting something to fly at her. All she saw was a tiny black bag, that began at once to grow larger, till it was big enough to hold her two hands. Then it tied itself tight round her wrists, as if to keep these meddlesome hands out of mischief.

"Well, this is very queer, but not so dreadful as the wasp. I hope no one will see it when I 'm asleep. I do wish I 'd let those cakes and things alone," sighed May, looking at the black bag, and vainly trying to get her hands free.

She cried herself to sleep, and when she woke the bag was gone. No one had seen it; but she told her mamma about the cake, and promised not to do so any more.

"Now this shall be a truly good day, every bit of it," she said, as she skipped away, feeling as light as a feather after she had confessed her little sins.

But, alas! it is so easy to forget and do wrong, that May spoilt her day before dinner by going to the river and playing with the boats, in spite of many orders not to do it. She did not tell of it, and went to a party in the afternoon, where she was so merry she never remembered the naughty thing till she was in bed and opened the fairy box. A little chain appeared, which in a flash grew long and large, and fastened round her ankles as if she were a prisoner. May liked to tumble about, and was much disgusted to be chained in this way; but there was no help for it, so she lay very still and had plenty of time to be sorry.

"It is a good punishment for me, and I deserve it. I won't cry, but I will--
I *will* remember." And May said her prayers very soberly, really meaning to keep her word this time.

All the next day she was very careful to keep her lips from cross words, her hands from forbidden things, and her feet from going wrong. Nothing spoilt this day, she watched so well; and when mamma gave the good-night kiss, she said,--

"What shall I give my good little daughter, who has been gentle, obedient, and busy all day?"

"I want a white kitty, with blue eyes, and a pink ribbon on its neck," answered May.

"I'll try and find one. Now go to bed, deary, and happy dreams!" said mamma, with many kisses on the rosy cheeks, and the smile that was a reward.

May was so busy thinking about the kitty and the good day that she forgot the box till she heard a little "Mew, mew!" under her pillow.

"Mercy me! what's that?" And she popped up her head to see.

Out came the box; off flew the lid, and there, on a red cushion, lay a white kit about two inches long. May could n't believe that it was alive till it jumped out of its nest, stretched itself, and grew all at once just the right size to play with and be pretty. Its eyes were blue, its tail like a white plume, and a sweet pink bow was on its neck. It danced all over the bed, ran up the curtains, hid under the clothes, nipped May's toes, licked her face, patted her nose with its soft paw, and winked at her in such a funny way that she

laughed for joy at having such a dear kitty. Presently, as if it knew that bed was the place to lie quiet in, puss cuddled down in a little bunch and purred May to sleep.

"I suppose that darling kit will be gone like all the other things," said May, as she waked up and looked round for her first pretty gift.

No; there was the lovely thing sitting in the sun among the flower-pots, washing her face and getting ready for play. What a fine frolic they had; and how surprised every one was to see just the pussy May wanted! They supposed it came as kitties often come; and May never told them it was a fairy present, because she had promised not to. She was so happy with little puss that she was good all day; and when she went to bed she thought,--

"I wish I had a dog to play with darling Snowdrop, and run with me when I go to walk."

"Bow, wow, wow!" came from under the pillow; and out of the box trotted a curly black dog, with long ears, a silver collar, and such bright, kind eyes May was not a bit afraid of him, but loved him at once, and named him Floss, he was so soft and silky. Pussy liked him too; and when May was sleepy they both snuggled down in the same basket like two good babies, and went to by-low.

"Well, I never! What shall we find next?" said Nurse, when she saw the dog in the morning.

"Perhaps it will be an elephant, to fill the whole house, and scare you out of your wits," laughed May, dancing about with Snowdrop chasing her bare toes, while Floss shook and growled over her shoes as if they were rats.

"If your cousin John wants to give you any more animals, I wish he 'd send a pony to take you to school, and save my old legs the pain of trotting after you," said Nurse; for May did have a rich cousin who was very fond of her, and often gave her nice things.

"Perhaps he will," laughed May, much tickled with the idea that it was a fairy, and not Cousin John, who sent the cunning little creatures to her.

But she did n't get the pony that night; for in the afternoon her mother told her not to sit on the lawn, because it was damp, and May did not mind, being busy with a nice story. So when she took up her box, a loud sneeze seemed to blow the lid off, and all she saw was a bit of red flannel.

"What is this for?" she asked, much disappointed; and as if to answer, the strip of flannel wrapped itself round her neck.

"There! my throat *is* sore, and I *am* hoarse. I wonder how that fairy knew I sat on the damp grass. I 'm so sorry; for I did want a pony, and might have had it if I 'd only minded," said May, angry with herself for spoiling all her fun.

It *was* spoilt; for she had such a cold next day she could n't go out at all, but had to take medicine and keep by the fire, while the other children had a lovely picnic.

"I won't wish for anything to-night; I don't deserve a present, I was so disobedient. But I *have* tried to be patient," said May, feeling for the box.

The fairy had not forgotten her, and there was a beautiful picture-book, full of new, nice stories printed in colored ink.

"How splendid to read to-morrow while I 'm shut up!" she said, and went to sleep very happily.

All the next day she enjoyed the pretty pictures and funny tales, and never complained or fretted at all, but was so much better the doctor said she could go out to-morrow, if it was fine.

"Now I will wish for the pony," said May, in her bed. But there was nothing in the box except a little red-silk rope, like a halter. She did not know what to do with it that night, but she did the next morning; for just as she was dressed her brother called from the garden,--

"May, look out and see what we found in the stable. None of us can catch him, so do come and see if you can; your name is on the card tied to his mane."

May looked, and there was a snow-white pony racing about the yard as if he was having a fine frolic. Then she knew the halter was for him, and ran down to catch him. The minute she appeared, the pony went to her and put his nose in her hand, neighing, as if he said,--

"This is my little mistress; I will mind her and serve her well."

May was delighted, and very proud when the pony let her put on the saddle and bridle that lay in the barn all ready to use. She jumped up and rode gayly down the road; and Will and mamma and all the maids and Floss and Snowdrop ran to see the pretty sight. The children at school were much excited when she came trotting up, and all wanted to ride Prince. He was very gentle, and every one had a ride; but May had the best fun, for she could go every day for long trots by the carriage when mamma and Will drove out. A blue habit and a hat with a long feather were bought that afternoon; and May was so happy and contented at night that she said to herself as she lay in bed,--

"I 'll wish for something for Will now, and see if I get it. I don't want any more presents yet; I've had my share, and I'd love to give away to other people who have no fairy box."

So she wished for a nice boat, and in the box lay a key with the name "Water Lily" on it. She guessed what it meant, and in the morning told her brother to come to the river and see what she had for him. There lay a pretty green and white boat, with cushioned seats, a sail all spread, and at the mast-head a little flag flying in the wind, with the words "Water Lily" on it in gold letters.

Will was so surprised and pleased to find that it was his, he turned heels over head on the grass, kissed May, and skipped into his boat, crying, "All aboard!" as if eager to try it at once.

May followed, and they sailed away down the lovely river, white with real lilies, while the blackbirds sang in the green meadows on either side, and boys and girls stopped on the bridges to see them pass.

After that May kept on trying to be good, and wishing for things for herself and other people, till she forgot how to be naughty, and was the sweetest little girl in the world. Then there was no need of fairies to help her; and one night the box was not under the pillow.

"Well, I 've had my share of pretty things, and must learn to do without. I 'm glad I tried; for now it is easy to be good, and I don't need to be rewarded," said May, as she fell asleep, quite happy and contented, though she did wish, she could have seen the fairy just once.

Next morning the first thing she saw was a beautiful bracelet, shining on the table; and while she stood admiring it, she heard the little voice sing,--

"Here is the bracelet
For good little May
To wear on her arm
By night and by day.
When it shines like the sun,
All's going well;
But when you are bad,
A sharp prick will tell.
Farewell, little girl,
For now we must part.
Make a fairy-box, dear,
Of your own happy heart;
And take out for all
Sweet gifts every day,
Till all the year round
Is like beautiful May."

As the last words were sung, right before her eyes she saw a tiny creature swinging on the rose that stood there in a vase,--a lovely elf, with wings like a butterfly, a gauzy dress, and a star on her forehead. She smiled, and waved her hand as she slowly rose and fluttered away into the sunshine, till she vanished from sight, leaving May with the magic bracelet on her arm, and the happy thought that at last she had *really* seen a fairy.

A Hole In The Wall

PART I.

If any one had asked Johnny Morris who were his best friends, he would have answered,--

"The sun and the wind, next to mother."

Johnny lived in a little court that led off from one of the busiest streets in the city,--a noisy street, where horse-car bells tinkled and omnibuses rumbled all day long, going and coming from several great depots near by. The court was a dull place, with only two or three shabby houses in it, and a high blank wall at the end.

The people who hurried by were too busy to do more than to glance at the lame boy who sat in the sunshine against the wall, or to guess that there was a picture-gallery and a circulating-library in the court. But Johnny had both, and took such comfort in them that he never could be grateful enough to the wind that brought him his books and pictures, nor to the sun that made it possible for him to enjoy them in the open air, far more than richer folk enjoy their fine galleries and libraries.

A bad fall, some months before the time this story begins, did something to Johnny's back which made his poor legs nearly useless, and changed the lively, rosy boy into a pale cripple. His mother took in fine washing, and worked hard to pay doctors' bills and feed and clothe her boy, who could no longer run errands, help with the heavy tubs, or go to school. He could only pick out laces for her to iron, lie on his bed in pain for hours, and, each fair day, hobble out to sit in a little old chair between the water-butt and the leaky tin boiler in which he kept his library.

But he was a happy boy, in spite of poverty and pain; and the day a great gust came blowing fragments of a gay placard and a dusty newspaper down the court to his feet, was the beginning of good fortune for patient Johnny. There was a theatre in the street beyond, and other pictured bits found their way to him; for the frolicsome wind liked to whisk the papers around the corner, and chase them here and there till they settled under the chair or flew wildly over the wall.

Faces, animals, people, and big letters, all came to cheer the boy, who was never tired of collecting these waifs and strays; cutting out the big pictures to paste on the wall with the leavings of mother's starch, and the smaller in the scrap-book he made out of stout brown wrappers or newspapers, when he had read the latter carefully. Soon it was a very gay wall; for mother helped, standing on a chair, to put the large pictures up, when Johnny had covered all the space he could reach. The books were laid carefully away in the boiler, after being smoothly ironed out and named to suit Johnny's fancy by pasting letters on the back. This was the circulating library; for not only did the papers whisk about the court to begin with, but the books they afterward made went the rounds among the neighbors till they were worn out.

The old cobbler next door enjoyed reading the anecdotes on Sunday when he could not work; the pale seamstress upstairs liked to look over advertisements of the fine things which she longed for; and Patsey Flynn, the newsboy, who went by each day to sell his papers at the station, often paused to look at the play-bills,--for he adored the theatre,

and entertained Johnny with descriptions of the splendors there to be beheld, till he felt as if he had really been, and had known all the famous actors, from Humpty Dumpty to the great Salvini.

Now and then a flock of dirty children would stray into the court and ask to see the "pretty picters." Then Johnny was a proud and happy boy; for, armed with a clothes-pole, he pointed out and explained the beauties of his gallery, feeling that he was a public benefactor when the poor babies thanked him warmly, and promised to come again and bring all the nice papers they could pick up.

These were Johnny's pleasures: but he had two sorrows,--one, a very real one, his aching back; and the other, a boyish longing to climb the wall and see what was on the other side, for it seemed a most wonderful and delightful place to the poor child, shut up in that dismal court, with no playmates and few comforts.

He amused himself with imagining how it looked over there, and nearly every night added some new charm to this unseen country, when his mother told him fairy tales to get him to sleep. He peopled it with the dear old characters all children know and love. The white cat that sat on the wall was Puss in Boots to him, or Whittington's good friend. Blue-beard's wives were hidden in the house of whose upper windows the boy could just catch glimpses. Red Riding-hood met the wolf in the grove of chestnuts that rustled over there; and Jack's Beanstalk grew up just such a wall as that, he was sure.

But the story he liked best was the "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood;" for he was sure some lovely creature lived in that garden, and he longed to get in to find and play with her. He actually planted a bean in a bit of damp earth behind the water-barrel, and watched it grow, hoping for as strong a ladder as Jack's. But the vine grew very slowly, and Johnny was so impatient that he promised Patsey his best book "for his ownty-donty," if he would climb up and report what was to be seen in that enchanted garden.

"Faix, and I will, thin." And up went good-natured Pat, after laying an old board over the hogshead to stand on; for there were spikes all along the top of the wall, and only cats and sparrows could walk there.

Alas for Johnny's eager hopes, and alas for Pat's Sunday best! The board broke, and splash went the climber, with a wild Irish howl that startled Johnny half out of his wits and brought both Mrs. Morris and the cobbler to the rescue.

After this sad event Pat kept away for a time in high dudgeon, and Johnny was more lonely than ever. But he was a cheery little soul; so he was grateful for what joys he had, and worked away at his wall,--for the March winds had brought him many treasures, and after April rains were over, May sunshine made the court warm enough for him to be out nearly all day.

"I 'm so sorry Pat is mad, 'cause he saw this piece and told me about it, and he 'd like to help me put up these pictures," said Johnny to himself, one breezy morning, as he sat examining a big poster which the wind had sent flying into his lap a few minutes before.

The play was "Monte Cristo," and the pictures represented the hero getting out of prison by making holes in the wall, among other remarkable performances.

"This is a jolly red one! Now, where will I put it to show best and not spoil the other beauties?"

As he spoke, Johnny turned his chair around and surveyed his gallery with as much pride and satisfaction as if it held all the wonders of art.

It really was quite splendid; for every sort of picture shone in the sun,--simpering ladies, tragic scenes, circus parades, labels from tin cans, rosy tomatoes, yellow peaches, and purple plums, funny advertisements, and gay bills of all kinds. None were perfect, but they were arranged with care; and the effect was very fine, Johnny thought.

Presently his eyes wandered from these treasures to the budding bushes that nodded so tantalizingly over the wall. A grape-vine ran along the top, trying to hide the sharp spikes; lilacs tossed their purple plumes above it, and several tall chestnuts rose over all, making green tents with their broad leaves, where spires of blossom began to show like candles on a mammoth Christmas tree. Sparrows were chirping gayly everywhere; the white cat, with a fresh blue bow, basked on the coping of the wall, and from the depths of the enchanted garden came a sweet voice singing,--

"And she bids you to come in,

With a dimple in your chin,

Billy boy, Billy boy."

Johnny smiled as he listened, and put his finger to the little dent in his own chin, wishing the singer would finish this pleasing song. But she never did, though he often heard that, as well as other childish ditties, sung in the same gay voice, with bursts of laughter and the sound of lively feet tripping up and down the boarded walks. Johnny longed intensely to know who the singer was; for her music cheered his solitude, and the mysterious sounds he heard in the garden increased his wonder and his longing day by day.

Sometimes a man's voice called, "Fay, where are you?" and Johnny was sure "Fay" was short for Fairy. Another voice was often heard talking in a strange, soft language, full of exclamations and pretty sounds. A little dog barked, and answered to the name Pippo. Canaries carolled, and some elfish bird scolded, screamed, and laughed so like a human being, that Johnny felt sure that magic of some sort was at work next door.

A delicious fragrance was now wafted over the wall as of flowers, and the poor boy imagined untold loveliness behind that cruel wall, as he tended the dandelions his mother brought him from the Common, when she had time to stop and gather them; for he loved flowers dearly, and tried to make them out of colored paper, since he could have no sweeter sort.

Now and then a soft, rushing sound excited his curiosity to such a pitch that once he hobbled painfully up the court till he could see into the trees; and once his eager eyes caught glimpses of a little creature, all blue and white and gold, who peeped out from the green fans, and nodded, and tried to toss him a cluster of the chestnut flowers. He stretched his hands to her with speechless delight, forgetting his crutches, and would have fallen if he had not caught by the shutter of a window so quickly that he gave the poor back a sad wrench; and when he could look up again, the fairy had vanished, and nothing was to be seen but the leaves dancing in the wind.

Johnny dared not try this again for fear of a fall, and every step cost him a pang; but he never forgot it, and was thinking of it as he sat staring at the wall on that memorable May day.

"How I should like to peek in and see just how it all really looks! It sounds and smells so summery and nice in there. I know it must be splendid. I say, Pussy, can't you tell a feller what you see?"

Johnny laughed as he spoke, and the white cat purred politely; for she liked the boy who never threw stones at her, nor disturbed her naps. But Puss could not describe the beauties of the happy hunting-ground below; and, to console himself for the disappointment, Johnny went back to his new picture.

"Now, if this man in the play dug his way out. through a wall ten feet thick with a rusty nail and a broken knife, I don't see why I could n't pick away one brick and get a peek. It's all quiet in there now; here's a good place, and nobody will know, if I stick a picture over the hole. And I 'll try it, I declare I will!"

Fired with the idea of acting Monte Cristo on a small scale, Johnny caught up the old scissors in his lap, and began to dig out the mortar around a brick already loose, and crumbling at the corners. His mother smiled at his energy, then sighed and said, as she clapped her laces with a heavy heart,--

"Ah, poor dear, if he only had his health he 'd make his way in the world. But now he 's like to find a blank wall before him while he lives, and none to help him over."

Puss, in her white boots, sat aloft and looked on, wise as the cat in the story, but offered no advice. The toad who lived behind the water-barrel hopped under the few leaves of the struggling bean, like Jack waiting to climb; and just then the noon bells began to ring as if they sang clear and loud,--

"Turn again, Whittington, Lord Mayor of London."

So, cheered by his friends, Johnny scraped and dug vigorously till the old brick fell out, showing another behind it. Only pausing to take breath, he caught up his crutch and gave two or three hearty pokes, which soon cleared the way and let the sunshine stream through, while the wind tossed the lilacs like triumphal banners, and the jolly sparrows chirped,--

"Hail, the conquering hero comes!"

Rather scared by his unexpected success, the boy sat silent for a moment to see what would happen. But all was still; and presently, with a beating heart, Johnny leaned forward to enjoy the long-desired "peek." He could not see much; but that little increased his curiosity and delight, for it seemed like looking into fairy-land, after the dust and noise and dingy houses of the court.

A bed of splendid tulips tossed their gay garments in the middle of a grass-plot; a strange and brilliant bird sat dressing its feathers on a golden cage; a little white dog dozed in the sun; and on a red carpet under the trees lay the Princess, fast asleep.

"It's all right," said Johnny, with a long sigh of pleasure; "that's the Sleeping Beauty, sure enough. There 's the blue gown, the white fur-cloak sweeping round, the pretty hair, and--yes--there's the old nurse, spinning and nodding, just as she did in the picture-book mother got me when I cried because I could n't go to see the play."

This last discovery really did bewilder Johnny, and make him believe that fairy tales *might* be true, after all; for how could he know that the strange woman was an Italian servant, in her native dress, with a distaff in her hand? After pausing a moment, to rub his eyes, he took another look, and made fresh discoveries by twisting his head

about. A basket of oranges stood near the Princess, a striped curtain hung from a limb of the tree to keep the wind off, and several books fluttered their pictured leaves temptingly before Johnny's longing eyes.

"Oh, if I could only go in and eat 'em and read 'em and speak to 'em and see all the splendid things!" thought the poor boy, as he looked from one delight to another, and felt shut out from all. "I can't go and wake her like the Prince did, but I do wish she 'd get up and do something, now I *can* see. I dare n't throw a stone, it might hit some one, or holler, it might scare her. Pussy won't help, and the sparrows are too busy scolding one another. I know! I 'll fly a kite over, and that will please her any way. Don't believe she has kites; girls never do."

Eager to carry out his plan, Johnny tied a long string to his gayest poster, and then fastening it to the pole with which he sometimes fished in the water-cask, held it up to catch the fresh breezes blowing down the court. His good friend, the wind, soon caught the idea, and with a strong breath sent the red paper whisking over the wall, to hang a moment on the trees and then drop among the tulips, where its frantic struggles to escape waked the dog, and set him to racing and barking, as Johnny hurriedly let the string go, and put his eye to his peep-hole.

The eyes of the Princess were wide open now, and she clapped her hands when Pippo brought the gay picture for her to see; while the old woman, with a long yawn, went away, carrying her distaff, like a gun, over her shoulder.

"She likes it! I'm so glad. Wish I had some more to send over. This will come off; I 'll poke it through, and maybe she will see it."

Very much excited, Johnny recklessly tore from the wall his most cherished picture, a gay flower-piece, just put up; and folding it, he thrust it through the hole and waited to see what followed.

Nothing but a rustle, a bark, and a queer croak from the splendid bird, which set the canaries to trilling sweetly.

"She don't see; maybe she will hear," said Johnny. And he began to whistle like a mocking-bird; for this was his one accomplishment, and he was proud of it.

Presently he heard a funny burst of laughter from the parrot, and then the voice said,--

"No, Polly, you can't sing like that bird. I wonder where he is? Among the bushes over there, I think. Come, Pippo, let us go and find him."

"Now she 's coming!" And Johnny grew red in the face trying to give his best trills and chirrups.

Nearer and nearer came the steps, the lilacs rustled as if shaken, and presently the roll of paper vanished. A pause, and then the little voice exclaimed, in a tone of great surprise,--

"Why, there 's a hole! I never saw it before. Oh! I can see the street. How nice! how nice!"

"She likes the hole! I wonder if she will like me?" And, emboldened by these various successes, Johnny took another peep. This was the most delicious one of all; for he looked right into a great blue eye, with glimpses of golden hair above, a little round nose in the middle, and red lips below. It was like a flash of sunshine, and Johnny winked, as if dazzled; for the eye sparkled, the nose sniffed daintily, and the pretty mouth broke into a laugh as the voice cried out delightedly,--

"I see some one! Who are you? Come and tell me!"

"I 'm Johnny Morris," answered the boy, quite trembling with pleasure.

"Did you make this nice hole?"

"I just poked a brick, and it fell out."

"Papa won't mind. Is that your bird?"

"No; it's me. I whistled."

"It's very pretty. Do it again," commanded the voice, as if used to give orders.

Johnny obeyed; and when he paused, out of breath, a small hand came through the hole, grasping as many lilies of the valley as it could hold, and the Princess graciously expressed her pleasure by saying,--

"I like it; you shall do it again, by and by. Here are some flowers for you. Now we will talk. Are you a nice boy?"

This was a poser; and Johnny answered meekly, with his nose luxuriously buried in the lovely flowers,--

"Not very,--I 'm lame; I can't play like other fellers."

"Porverino!" sighed the little voice, full of pity; and, in a moment, three red-and-yellow tulips fell at Johnny's feet, making him feel as if he really had slipped into fairy-land through that delightful hole.

"Oh, thank you! Are n't they just elegant? I never see such beauties," stammered the poor boy, grasping his treasures as if he feared they might vanish away.

"You shall have as many as you like. Nanna will scold, but papa won't mind. Tell me more. What do you do over there?" asked the child, eagerly.

"Nothing but paste pictures and make books, when I don't ache too bad. I used to help mother; but I got hurt, and I can't do much now," answered the boy, ashamed to mention how many laces he patiently picked or clapped, since it was all he could do to help.

"If you like pictures, you shall come and see mine some day. I do a great many. Papa shows me how. His are splendid. Do you draw or paint yours?"

"I only cut 'em out of papers, and stick 'em on this wall or put 'em in scrap-books. I can't draw, and I have n't got no paints," answered Johnny.

"You should say 'have n't any paints.' I will come and see you some day; and if I like you, I will let you have my old paint-box. Do you want it?"

"Guess I do!"

"I think I *shall* like you; so I 'll bring it when I come. Do you ache much?"

"Awfully, sometimes. Have to lay down all day, and can't do a thing."

"Do you cry?"

"No! I 'm too big for that. I whistle."

"I *know* I shall like you, because you are brave!" cried the impetuous voice, with its pretty accent; and then an orange came tumbling through the hole, as if the new acquaintance longed to do something to help the "ache."

"Is n't that a rouser! I do love 'em, but mother can't afford 'em often." And Johnny took one delicious taste on the spot.

"Then I shall give you many. We have loads at home, much finer than these. Ah, you should see our garden there!"

"Where do you live?" Johnny ventured to ask; for there was a homesick sound to the voice as it said those last words.

"In Rome. Here we only stay a year, while papa arranges his affairs; then we go back, and I am happy."

"I should think you 'd be happy in there. It looks real splendid to me, and I 've been longing to see it ever since I could come out."

"It's a dull place to me. I like better to be where it's always warm, and people are more beautiful than here. Are *you* beautiful?"

"What queer questions she does ask!" And poor Johnny was so perplexed he could only stammer, with a laugh,--

"I guess not. Boys don't care for looks."

"Peep, and let me see. I like pretty persons," commanded the voice.

"Don't she order round?" thought Johnny, as he obeyed. But he liked it, and showed such a smiling face at the peep-hole, that Princess Fay was pleased to say, after a long look at him,--

"No, you are not beautiful; but your eyes are bright, and you look pleasant, so I don't mind the freckles on your nose and the whiteness of your face. I think you are good. I am sorry for you, and I shall lend you a book to read when the pain comes."

"I could n't wait for that if I had a book. I do love so to read!" And Johnny laughed out from sheer delight at the thought of a new book; for he seldom got one, being too poor to buy them, and too helpless to enjoy the free libraries of the city.

"Then you shall have it *now*." And there was another quick rush in the garden, followed by the appearance of a fat little book, slowly pushed through the hole in the wall.

"This is the only one that will pass. You will like Hans Andersen's fairy tales, I know. Keep it as long as you please. I have many more."

"You're so good! I wish I had something for you," said the boy, quite overcome by this sweet friendliness.

"Let me see one of *your* books. They will be new to me. I 'm tired of all mine."

Quick as a flash, off went the cover of the old boiler, and out came half-a-dozen of Johnny's best works, to be crammed through the wall, with the earnest request,--

"Keep 'em all; they're not good for much, but they 're the best I 've got. I 'll do some prettier ones as soon as I can find more nice pictures and pieces."

"They look very interesting. I thank you. I shall go and read them now, and then come and talk again. Addio, Giovanni."

"Good-by, Miss."

Thus ended the first interview of little Pyramus and Thisbe through the hole in the wall, while puss sat up above and played moonshine with her yellow eyes.

PART II.

After that day a new life began for Johnny, and he flourished like a poor little plant that has struggled out of some dark corner into the sunshine. All sorts of delightful things happened, and good times really seemed to have come. The mysterious papa made no objection to the liberties taken with his wall, being busy with his own affairs, and glad to have his little girl happy. Old Nanna, being more careful, came to see the new neighbors, and was disarmed at once by the affliction of the boy and the gentle manners of the mother. She brought all the curtains of the house for Mrs. Morris to do up, and in her pretty broken English praised Johnny's gallery and library, promising to bring Fay to see him some day.

Meantime the little people prattled daily together, and all manner of things came and went between them. Flowers, fruit, books, and bon-bons kept Johnny in a state of bliss, and inspired him with such brilliant inventions that the Princess never knew what agreeable surprise would come next. Astonishing kites flew over the wall, and tissue balloons exploded in the flower-beds. All the birds of the air seemed to live in that court; for the boy whistled and piped till he was hoarse, because she liked it. The last of the long-hoarded cents came out of his tin bank to buy paper and pictures for the gay little books he made for her. His side of the wall was ravaged that hers might be adorned; and, as the last offering his grateful heart could give, he poked the toad through the hole, to live among the lilies and eat the flies that began to buzz about her Highness when she came to give her orders to her devoted subjects.

She always called the lad Giovanni, because she thought it a prettier name than John; and she was never tired of telling stories, asking questions, and making plans. The favorite one was what they would do when Johnny came to see her, as she had been promised he should when papa was not too busy to let them enjoy the charms of the studio; for Fay was a true artist's child, and thought nothing so lovely as pictures. Johnny thought so, too, and dreamed of the happy day when he should go and see the wonders his little friend described so well.

"I think it will be to-morrow; for papa has a lazy fit coming on, and then he always plays with me and lets me rummage where I like, while he goes out or smokes in the garden. So be ready; and if he says you can come, I will have the flag up early and you can hurry."

These agreeable remarks were breathed into Johnny's willing ear about a fortnight after the acquaintance began; and he hastened to promise, adding soberly, a minute after,--

"Mother says she's afraid it will be too much for me to go around and up steps, and see new things; for I get tired so easy, and then the pain comes on. But I don't care how I ache if I can only see the pictures--and you."

"Won't you ever be any better? Nanna thinks you might."

"So does mother, if we had money to go away in the country, and eat nice things, and have doctors. But we can't; so it's no use worrying." And Johnny gave a great sigh.

"I wish papa was rich, then he would give you money. He works hard to make enough to go back to Italy, so I cannot ask him; but perhaps I can sell *my* pictures also, and get a little. Papa's friends often offer me sweets for kisses; I will have money instead, and that will help. Yes, I shall do it." And Fay clapped her hands decidedly.

"Don't you mind about it. I 'm going to learn to mend shoes. Mr. Pegget says he 'll teach me. That does n't need legs, and he gets enough to live on very well."

"It is n't pretty work. Nanna can teach you to braid straw as she did at home; that is easy and nice, and the baskets sell very well, she says. I shall speak to her about it, and you can try to-morrow when you come."

"I will. Do you really think I *can* come, then?" And Johnny stood up to try his legs; for he dreaded the long walk, as it seemed to him.

"I will go at once and ask papa."

Away flew Fay, and soon came back with a glad "Yes!" that sent Johnny hobbling in to tell his mother, and beg her to mend the elbows of his only jacket; for, suddenly, his old clothes looked so shabby he feared to show himself to the neighbors he so longed to see.

"Hurrah! I 'm really going to-morrow. And you, too, mammy dear," cried the boy, waving his crutch so vigorously that he slipped and fell.

"Never mind; I 'm used to it. Pull me up, and I 'll rest while we talk about it," he said cheerily, as his mother helped him to the bed, where he forgot his pain in thinking of the delights in store for him.

Next day, the flag was flying from the wall, and Fay early at the hole, but no Johnny came; and when Nanna went to see what kept him, she returned with the sad news that the poor boy was suffering much, and would not be able to stir for some days.

"Let me go and see him," begged Fay, imploringly.

"Cara mia, it is no place for you. So dark, so damp, so poor, it is enough to break the heart," said Nanna, decidedly.

"If papa was here, he would let me go. I shall not play; I shall sit here and make some plans for my poor boy."

Nanna left her indignant little mistress, and went to cook a nice bowl of soup for Johnny; while Fay concocted a fine plan, and, what was more remarkable, carried it out.

For a week it rained, for a week Johnny lay in pain, and for a week Fay worked quietly at her little easel in the corner of the studio, while her father put the last touches to his fine picture, too busy to take much notice of the child. On Saturday the sun shone, Johnny was better, and the great picture was done. So were the small ones; for as her father sat resting after his work, Fay went to him, with a tired but happy face, and, putting several drawings into his hand, told her cherished plan.

"Papa, you said you would pay me a dollar for every good copy I made of the cast you gave me. I tried very hard, and here are three. I want some money very, very much. Could you pay for these?"

"They are excellent," said the artist, after carefully looking at them. "You *have* tried, my good child, and here are your well-earned dollars. What do you want them for?"

"To help my boy. I want him to come in here and see the pictures, and let Nanna teach him to plait baskets; and he can rest, and you will like him, and he might get well if he had some money, and I have three quarters the friends gave me instead of bonbons. Would that be enough to send poor Giovanni into the country and have doctors?"

No wonder Fay's papa was bewildered by this queer jumble, because, being absorbed in his work, he had never heard half the child had told him, and had forgotten all about Johnny. Now he listened with half an ear, studying the effect of sunshine upon his picture meantime, while Fay told him the little story, and begged to know how much money it would take to make Johnny's back well.

"Bless your sweet soul, my darling, it would need more than I can spare or you earn in a year. By and by, when I am at leisure, we will see what can be done," answered papa, smoking comfortably, as he lay on the sofa in the large studio at the top of the house.

"You say that about a great many things, papa. 'By and by' won't be long enough to do all you promise then. I like *now* much better, and poor Giovanni needs the country more than you need cigars or I new frocks," said Fay, stroking her father's tired forehead and looking at him with an imploring face.

"My dear, I cannot give up my cigar, for in this soothing smoke I find inspiration, and though you are a little angel, you must be clothed; so wait a bit, and we will attend to the boy--later." He was going to say "by and by" again, but paused just in time, with a laugh.

"Then *I* shall take him to the country all myself. I cannot wait for this hateful 'by and by.' I know how I shall do it, and at once. Now, now!" cried Fay, losing patience; and with an indignant glance at the lazy papa, who seemed going to sleep, she dashed out of the room, down many stairs, through the kitchen, startling Nanna and scattering the salad as if a whirlwind had gone by, and never paused for breath till she stood before the garden wall with a little hatchet in her hand.

"This shall be the country for him till I get enough money to send him away. I will show what *I* can do. He pulled out two bricks. *I* will beat down the wall, and he *shall* come in at once," panted Fay; and she gave a great blow at the bricks, bent on having her will without delay,--for she was an impetuous little creature, full of love and pity for the poor boy pining for the fresh air and sunshine, of which she had so much.

Bang, bang, went the little hatchet, and down came one brick after another, till the hole was large enough for Fay to thrust her head through; and being breathless by that time, she paused to rest and take a look at Johnny's court.

Meanwhile Nanna, having collected her lettuce leaves and her wits, went to see what the child was about; and finding her at work like a little fury, the old woman hurried up to tell "the Signor," Fay's papa, that his little daughter was about to destroy the garden and bury herself under the ruins of the wall. This report, delivered with groans and wringing of the hands, roused the artist and sent him to the rescue, as he well knew that his angel was a very energetic one, and capable of great destruction.

When he arrived, he beheld a cloud of dust, a pile of bricks among the lilies, and the feet of his child sticking out of a large hole in the wall, while her head and shoulders were on the other side. Much amused, yet fearful that the stone coping might come down on her, he pulled her back with the assurance that he would listen and help her now immediately, if there was such need of haste.

But he grew sober when he saw Fay's face; for it was bathed in tears, her hands were bleeding, and dust covered her from head to foot.

"My darling, what afflicts you? Tell papa, and he will do anything you wish."

"No, you will forget, you will say 'Wait;' and now that I have seen it all, I cannot stop till I get him out of that dreadful place. Look, look, and see if it is not sad to live there all in pain and darkness, and so poor."

As she spoke, Fay urged her father toward the hole; and to please her he looked, seeing the dull court, the noisy street beyond, and close by the low room, where Johnny's mother worked all day, while the poor boy's pale face was dimly seen as he lay on his bed waiting for deliverance.

"Well, well, it *is* a pitiful case; and easily mended, since Fay is so eager about it. Hope the lad is all she says, and nothing catching about his illness. Nanna can tell me."

Then he drew back his head, and leading Fay to the seat, took her on his knee, all flushed, dirty, and tearful as she was, soothing her by saying tenderly,--

"Now let me hear all about it, and be sure I 'll not forget. What shall I do to please you, dear, before you pull down the house about my ears?"

Then Fay told her tale all over again; and being no longer busy, her father found it very touching, with the dear, grimy little face looking into his, and the wounded hands clasped beseechingly as she pleaded for poor Johnny.

"God bless your tender heart, child; you shall have him in here to-morrow, and we will see what can be done for those pathetic legs of his. But listen, Fay, I have an easier way to do it than yours, and a grand surprise for the boy. Time is short, but it can be done; and to show you that I am in earnest, I will go this instant and begin the work. Come and wash your face while I get on my boots, and then we will go together."

At these words Fay threw her arms about papa's neck and gave him many grateful kisses, stopping in the midst to ask,--

"Truly, *now*?"

"See if it is not so." And putting her down, papa went off with great strides, while she ran laughing after him, all her doubts set at rest by this agreeable energy on his part.

If Johnny had not been asleep in the back room, he would have seen strange and pleasant sights that afternoon and evening; for something went on in the court that delighted his mother, amused the artist, and made Fay the happiest child in Boston. No one was to tell till the next day, that Johnny's surprise might be quite perfect, and Mrs. Morris sat up till eleven to get his old clothes in order; for Fay's papa had been to see her, and became interested in the boy, as no one could help being when they saw his patient little face.

So hammers rang, trowels scraped, shovels dug, and wonderful changes were made, while Fay danced about in the moonlight, like Puck intent upon some pretty prank, and papa quoted *Snout,*[1] the tinker's parting words, as appropriate to the hour,--

"Thus have I, wall, my part discharged so;

[1] A character in Shakspeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream."

And, being done, thus wall away doth go."

PART III.

A lovely Sunday morning dawned without a cloud; and even in the dingy court the May sunshine shone warmly, and the spring breezes blew freshly from green fields far away. Johnny begged to go out; and being much better, his mother consented, helping him to dress with such a bright face and eager hands that the boy said innocently,--

"How glad you are when I get over a bad turn! I don't know what you 'd do if I ever got well."

"My poor dear, I begin to think you *will* pick up, now the good weather has come and you have got a little friend to play with. God bless her!"

Why his mother should suddenly hug him tight, and then brush his hair so carefully, with tears in her eyes, he did not understand; but was in such a hurry to get out, he could only give her a good kiss, and hobble away to see how his gallery fared after the rain, and to take a joyful "peek" at the enchanted garden.

Mrs. Morris kept close behind him, and it was well she did; for he nearly tumbled down, so great was his surprise when he beheld the old familiar wall after the good fairies Love and Pity had worked their pretty miracle in the moonlight.

The ragged hole had changed to a little arched door, painted red. On either side stood a green tub, with a tall oleander in full bloom; from the arch above hung a great bunch of gay flowers; and before the threshold lay a letter directed to "Signor Giovanni Morris," in a childish hand.

As soon as he recovered from the agreeable shock of this splendid transformation scene, Johnny sank into his chair, where a soft cushion had been placed, and read his note, with little sighs of rapture at the charming prospect opening before him.

DEAR GIOVANNI,--Papa has made this nice gate, so you can come in when you like and not be tired. We are to have two keys, and no one else can open it. A little bell is to ring when we pull the cord, and we can run and see what we want. The paint is wet. Papa did it, and the men put up the door last night. I helped them, and did not go in my bed till ten. It was very nice to do it so. I hope you will like it. Come in as soon as you can; I am all ready.

Your friend,

FAY.

"Mother, she must be a real fairy to do all that, mustn't she?" said Johnny, leaning back to look at the dear door behind which lay such happiness for him.

"Yes, my sonny, she is the right sort of good fairy, and I just wish I could do her washing for love the rest of her blessed little life," answered Mrs. Morris, in a burst of grateful ardor.

"You shall! you shall! Do come in! I cannot wait another minute!" cried an eager little voice as the red door flew open; and there stood Fay, looking very like a happy elf in her fresh white frock, a wreath of spring flowers on her pretty hair, and a tall green wand in her hand, while the brilliant bird sat on her shoulder, and the little white dog danced about her feet.

"So she bids you to come in,

With a dimple in your chin,

Billy boy, Billy boy,"

sung the child, remembering how Johnny liked that song; and waving her wand, she went slowly backward as the boy, with a shining face, passed under the blooming arch into a new world, full of sunshine, liberty, and sweet companionship.

Neither Johnny nor his mother ever forgot that happy day, for it was the beginning of help and hope to both just when life seemed hardest and the future looked darkest.

Papa kept out of sight, but enjoyed peeps at the little party as they sat under the chestnuts, Nanna and Fay doing the honors of the garden to their guests with Italian grace and skill, while the poor mother folded her tired hands with unutterable content, and the boy looked like a happy soul in heaven.

Sabbath silence, broken only by the chime of bells and the feet of church-goers, brooded over the city; sunshine made golden shadows on the grass; the sweet wind brought spring odors from the woods; and every flower seemed to nod and beckon, as if welcoming the new playmate to their lovely home.

While the women talked together, Fay led Johnny up and down her little world, showing all her favorite nooks, making him rest often on the seats that stood all about, and amusing him immensely by relating the various fanciful plays with which she beguiled her loneliness.

"Now we can have much nicer ones; for you will tell me yours, and we can do great things," she said, when she had displayed her big rocking-horse, her grotto full of ferns, her mimic sea, where a fleet of toy boats lay at anchor in the basin of an old fountain, her fairy-land under the lilacs, with paper elves sitting among the leaves, her swing, that tossed one high up among the green boughs, and the basket of white kittens, where Topaz, the yellow-eyed cat, now purred with maternal pride. Books were piled on the rustic table, and all the pictures Fay thought worthy to be seen.

Here also appeared a nice lunch, before the visitors could remember it was noon and tear themselves away. Such enchanted grapes and oranges Johnny never ate before; such delightful little tarts and Italian messes of various sorts; even the bread and butter seemed glorified because served in a plate trimmed with leaves and cut in dainty bits. Coffee that perfumed the air put heart into poor Mrs. Morris, who half starved herself that the boy might be fed; and he drank milk till Nanna said, laughing, as she refilled the pitcher,--

"He takes more than both the blessed lambs we used to feed for Saint Agnes in the convent at home. And he is truly welcome, the dear child, to the best we have; for he is as innocent and helpless as they."

"What does she mean?" whispered Johnny to Fay, rather abashed at having forgotten his manners in the satisfaction which three mugfuls of good milk had given him.

So, sitting in the big rustic chair beside him, Fay told the pretty story of the lambs who are dedicated to Saint Agnes, with ribbons tied to their snowy wool, and then raised with care till their fleeces are shorn to make garments for the Pope. A fit tale for the day, the child thought, and went on to tell about the wonders of Rome till Johnny's head was filled with a splendid confusion of new ideas, in which Saint Peter's and apple-tarts, holy lambs and red doors, ancient images and dear little girls, were delightfully mixed. It all

seemed like a fairy tale, and nothing was too wonderful or lovely to happen on that memorable day.

So when Fay's papa at last appeared, finding it impossible to keep away from the happy little party any longer, Johnny decided at once that the handsome man in the velvet coat was the king of the enchanted land, and gazed at him with reverence and awe. A most gracious king he proved to be; for after talking pleasantly to Mrs. Morris, and joking Fay on storming the walls, he proposed to carry Johnny off, and catching him up, strode away with the astonished boy on his shoulder, while the little girl danced before to open doors and clear the way.

Johnny thought he could n't be surprised any more; but when he had mounted many stairs and found himself in a great room with a glass roof, full of rich curtains, strange armor, pretty things, and pictures everywhere, he just sat in the big chair where he was placed, and stared in silent delight.

"This is papa's studio, and that the famous picture, and here is where I work; and is n't it pleasant? and aren't you glad to see it?" said Fay, skipping about to do the honors of the place.

"I don't believe heaven is beautifuller," answered Johnny, in a low tone, as his eyes went from the green tree-tops peeping in at the windows to the great sunny picture of a Roman garden, with pretty children at play among the crumbling statues and fountains.

"I 'm glad you like it, for we mean to have you come here a great deal. I sit to papa very often, and get *so* tired; and you can talk to me, and then you can see me draw and model in clay, and then we 'll go in the garden, and Nanna will show you how to make baskets, and *then* we 'll play."

Johnny nodded and beamed at this charming prospect, and for an hour explored the mysteries of the studio, with Fay for a guide and papa for an amused spectator. He liked the boy more and more, and was glad Fay had so harmless a playmate to expend her energies and compassion upon. He assented to every plan proposed, and really hoped to be able to help these poor neighbors; for he had a kind heart, and loved his little daughter even more than his art.

When at last Mrs. Morris found courage to call Johnny away, he went without a word, and lay down in the dingy room, his face still shining with the happy thoughts that filled his mind, hungry for just such pleasures, and never fed before.

After that day everything went smoothly, and both children blossomed like the flowers in that pleasant garden, where the magic of love and pity, fresh air and sunshine, soon worked miracles. Fay learned patience and gentleness from Johnny; he grew daily stronger on the better food Nanna gave him, and the exercise he was tempted to take; and both spent very happy days working and playing, sometimes under the trees, where the pretty baskets were made, or in the studio, where both pairs of small hands modelled graceful things in clay, or daubed amazing pictures with the artist's old brushes and discarded canvases.

Mrs. Morris washed everything washable in the house, and did up Fay's frocks so daintily that she looked more like an elf than ever when her head shone out from the fluted frills, like the yellow middle of a daisy with its white petals all spread.

As he watched the children playing together, the artist, having no great work in hand, made several pretty sketches of them, and then had a fine idea of painting the garden

scene where Fay first talked to Johnny. It pleased his fancy, and the little people sat for him nicely; so he made a charming thing of it, putting in the cat, dog, bird, and toad as the various characters in Shakspeare's lovely play, while the flowers were the elves, peeping and listening in all manner of merry, pretty ways.

He called it "Little Pyramus and Thisbe," and it so pleased a certain rich lady that she paid a large price for it; and then, discovering that it told a true story, she generously added enough to send Johnny and his mother to the country, when Fay and her father were ready to go.

But it was to a lovelier land than the boy had ever read of in his fairy books, and to a happier life than mending shoes in the dingy court. In the autumn they all sailed gayly away together, to live for years in sunny Italy, where Johnny grew tall and strong, and learned to paint with a kind master and a faithful young friend, who always rejoiced that she found and delivered him, thanks to the wonderful hole in the wall.

The Piggy Girl

"I won't be washed! I won't be washed!" screamed little Betty, kicking and slapping the maid who undressed her one night.

"You 'd better go and live with the pigs, dirty child," said Maria, scrubbing away at two very grubby hands.

"I wish I could! I love to be dirty,--I will be dirty!" roared Betty, throwing the sponge out of the window and the soap under the table.

Maria could do nothing with her; so she bundled her into bed half wiped, telling her to go to sleep right away.

"I won't! I 'll go and live with Mrs. Gleason's pigs, and have nothing to do but eat and sleep, and roll in the dirt, and never, never be washed any more," said Betty to herself.

She lay thinking about it and blinking at the moon for a while; then she got up very softly, and crept down the back stairs, through the garden, to the sty where two nice little pigs were fast asleep among the straw in their small house. They only grunted when Betty crept into a corner, laughing at the fun it would be to play piggy and live here with no Maria to wash her and no careful mamma to keep saying,--

"Put on a clean apron, dear!"

Next morning she was waked up by hearing Mrs. Gleason pour milk into the trough. She lay very still till the woman was gone; then she crept out and drank all she wanted, and took the best bits of cold potato and bread for her breakfast, and the lazy pigs did not get up till she was done. While they ate and rooted in the dirt, Betty slept as long as she liked, with no school, no errands, no patchwork to do. She liked it, and kept hidden till night; then she went home, and opened the little window in the store closet, and got in and took as many good things to eat and carry away as she liked. She had a fine walk in her nightgown, and saw the flowers asleep, heard the little birds chirp in the nest, and watched the fireflies and moths at their pretty play. No one saw her but the cats; and they played with her, and hopped at her toes, in the moonlight, and had great fun.

When she was tired she went to sleep with the pigs, and dozed all the next day, only coming out to eat and drink when the milk was brought and the cold bits; for Mrs. Gleason took good care of her pigs, and gave them clean straw often, and kept them as nice as she could.

Betty lived in this queer way a long time, and soon looked more like a pig than a little girl; for her nightgown got dirty, her hair was never combed, her face was never washed, and she loved to dig in the mud till her hands looked like paws. She never talked, but began to grunt as the pigs did, and burrowed into the straw to sleep, and squealed when they crowded her, and quarrelled over the food, eating with her nose in the trough like a real pig. At first she used to play about at night, and steal things to eat; and people set traps to catch the thief in their gardens, and the cook in her own house scolded about the rats that carried off the cake and pies out of her pantry. But by and by she got too lazy and fat to care for anything but sleeping and eating, and never left the sty. She went on her hands and knees now, and began to wonder if a little tail would n't grow and her nose change to a snout.

All summer she played be a pig, and thought it good fun; but when the autumn came it was cold, and she longed for her nice warm flannel nightgown, and got tired of cold victuals, and began to wish she had a fire to sit by and good buckwheat cakes to eat. She was ashamed to go home, and wondered what she should do after this silly frolic. She asked the pigs how they managed in winter; but they only grunted, and she could not remember what became of them, for the sty was always empty in cold weather.

One dreadful night she found out. She was smuggled down between the great fat piggies to keep warm; but her toes were cold, and she was trying to pull the straw over them when she heard Mr. Gleason say to his boy,--

"We must kill those pigs to-morrow. They are fat enough; so come and help me sharpen the big knife."

"Oh, dear, what will become of *me*?" thought Betty, as she heard the grindstone go round and round as the knife got sharper and sharper. "I look so like a pig they will kill me too, and make me into sausages if I don't run away. I 'm tired of playing piggy, and I 'd rather be washed a hundred times a day than be put in a pork barrel."

So she lay trembling till morning; then she ran through the garden and found the back door open. It was very early, and no one saw her, for the cook was in the shed getting wood to make her fire; so Betty slipped upstairs to the nursery and was going to whisk into bed, when she saw in the glass an ugly black creature, all rags and dirt, with rumpled hair, and a little round nose covered with mud.

"Can it be me?" she said. "How horrid I am!" And she could not spoil her nice white bed, but hopped into the bathtub and had a good scrubbing. Next she got a clean nightgown, and brushed her hair, and cut her long nails, and looked like a tidy little girl again.

Then she lay down in her cosey crib with the pink cover and the lace curtains, and fell fast asleep, glad to have clean sheets, soft blankets, and her own little pillow once more.

"Come, darling, wake up and see the new frock I have got for you, and the nice ruffled apron. It's Thanksgiving day, and all the cousins are coming to dinner," said her mamma, with a soft kiss on the rosy cheek.

Betty started up, screaming,--

"Don't kill me! Oh, please don't! I 'm not a truly pig, I 'm a little girl; and if you'll let me run home, I 'll never fret when I 'm washed again."

"What is the dear child afraid of?" said mamma, cuddling her close, and laughing to see Betty stare wildly about for the fat pigs and the stuffy sty.

She told her mother all about the queer time she had had, and was much surprised to hear mamma say,--

"It was all a dream, dear; you have been safely asleep in your little bed ever since you slapped poor Maria last night."

"Well, I 'm glad I dreamed it, for it has made me love to be clean. Come, Maria, soap and scrub as much as you like, I won't kick and scream ever any more," cried Betty, skipping about, glad to be safe in her pleasant home and no longer a dirty, lazy piggy girl.

The Three Frogs

Hop, Croak, and Splash were three little frogs who lived in a pleasant river, and had merry times swimming about or hopping on the green grass. At night they sat on the bank and sung together, very sweetly they thought; and if boats came by they skipped into the water, heels over head, with a great splashing and noise.

Hop was not contented with this quiet life; he wanted to see the world, and kept asking his brother Croak to go and travel with him.

"I 'm tired of poking about in this stupid river, with no fun but leap-frog and singing. I want to know what is over that hill, and I 'm going to find out. You can stay and doze in the mud if you please. I 've got more spirit than that, and I 'm off."

So away went Hop, singing gayly,--

"A frog he would a-wooing go,

Whether his mammy would let him or no,

With a roly-poly, gammon and spinach,

Heigh-ho, said Anthony Rowley."

His good little sister Splash begged him to stay, for the world was full of danger and he was too young to go alone. But Hop told her not to worry. Girls ought to keep at home, for they could n't take care of themselves; but fine young fellows should see something of life before they settled down. His friend Turtle had invited him to go; and if such a slow chap as Creeper could start on a journey, of course the best jumper in the river would get on all right.

While he was saying good-by, the turtle had crept up the bank and was well on his way to the road beyond. Hop skipped after him; and when they had got to the hill-top they stopped to rest,--Creeper in the road on the warm sand, and Hop among some daisies close by.

"How big the world is!" he said, staring with his great eyes; for he had never seen houses before, and the village looked as grand to him as London would to us. "I like it, and I know I shall have a splendid time. Come on, slow coach! I see fountains over there, and want a good drink."

Just as he spoke a cart came by; and before poor Creeper could get out of the way, a wheel crushed him to death.

"Mercy on us! what horrid monsters those are!" cried Hop, leaping as fast as his legs could take him into a garden near by, where he lay trembling and scared half out of his wits. He thought the cart was a creature; and every time he heard the rumble of wheels his heart beat and he clasped his hands in fear as he sat under the burdock leaves. At last it seemed so quiet he ventured out, and had a lovely time in the nasturtium-bed, catching flies and playing bo-peep with a little bird. Then he hopped to the grass-plot, where the sprinkler was whizzing round, and took a refreshing bath. He was just puffing his skin out and winking with pleasure when a fat toad, who lived under the piazza, told him very crossly to "clear out."

"You are a very rude old person, and I shall do as I like. This is not your garden; so you need n't goggle at me," answered saucy Hop, opening his wide mouth to laugh at the toad, who was so fat he could n't take long leaps like the lively frog.

"Very well, dandiprat, I shall call the cat; and she will make you skip, unless you want that fine green jacket torn off your back by her sharp claws," said the toad, hopping slowly away to the sunny corner where a gray cat lay dozing.

"Pooh'! I 'm not afraid," said Hop; for he had never seen a cat, and thought the toad made it all up.

So he took a leisurely stroll down the walk, looking about him as if he owned the whole garden. Presently he saw a pretty little creature playing with leaves, and hurried on to speak to it, being eager to find friends in this pleasant place. You see, when the toad told the cat about the stranger, pussy only gaped and went to sleep again, not caring to play with any one. But the kitten who lay beside her was curious to see a frog, and ran off at once to find him. Hop did not know that this was the cat's daughter, till kitty pounced on him as if he had been a mouse, and instead of playing some nice game and telling all about the new world, as Hop expected, she clawed and bit him, tossed him up, and let him bump down again on the hard ground. He tried to get away, but she let him hop a little and then pounced again, cuffing him with her paws, and dragging him about till he was half dead.

He believed the old toad now, and thought the end of the world had come. It would have been the end of the world for him, if a dog had not bounced into the garden and made kitty fly up a tree, spitting and glaring like a little dragon. Poor Hop crept under a gooseberry bush, and lay there longing for gentle Splash to tie up his wounds and comfort his pain with spearmint from the river side and a cool lily-pad for a wet sheet to pack him in.

"It is an awful world, and I wish I was safe at home," he sighed, as the sun grew hot, the water was turned off, and the wind stopped blowing.

But he was too feeble to hop away, and lay there panting till night, when a shower saved his life; and early in the morning he started to find the river before he got into any more troubles.

He went very slowly, being lame and sore; but got out of the garden and was just planning to give one tremendous leap over the road, for fear he should get crushed as Creeper did, when he heard a soft rustling behind him, and saw a long, slender gray thing, with very bright eyes and a little tongue that darted out and in like a flash.

"I see no cruel claws; so it can't be a cat," thought Hop, feeling timid now about making new friends.

"Pretty fellow, come here and talk to me," hissed the snake, longing to eat the nice little froggie.

Hop felt rather nervous, but wished to be polite; so he let the stranger coil lovingly round him and look right into his face while listening to the tale of woe he gladly told. Presently he found he could not stir at all, nor move his eyes from the fiery eyes before him, and the darting tongue seemed ready to sting. Then he was frightened, and tried to escape; but he only gave one leap, for the snake caught him by the hind legs and held him fast, while swallowing him slowly down.

"Help, help!" cried Hop, in despair. "Croak! Splash! oh, come and save me, save me!"

But there was no help; and in a few moments there was no frog, for the last leg had vanished down the snake's throat. Poor little Hop!

Croak was a noisy fellow, and kept up a great racket trying to sing louder than any of the other frogs; for he was very proud of his voice, and sat on a log at night saying, "Ker honk! ker honk!" till every one was tired of hearing him.

The old ones told him not to wear his throat out till his voice was stronger; but he thought they envied him its power and sweetness, and croaked away louder than ever.

The boys who came to the river to bathe used to mock him, and try to see which frog sung so loud. This pleased him; and instead of keeping still and staying among his friends, silly Croak went and sat on a rock alone, that all might see and hear the great singer.

"Now," said the boys, "we can catch him and keep him in a tub; and when we are tired of his noise we can rap him on the head and make him be still."

So while the vain frog sat croaking at the top of his voice, two of the boys swam up to the rock and threw a net over him. He kicked and struggled; but they had him fast, and tied him up in a bundle till they got to the tub, and there they left him with a little grass, saying,--

"Now sing away, old fellow, and make yourself comfortable."

But Croak could not sing, he was so frightened and unhappy; for he was hungry and tired, and they did n't give him the right things to eat, nor any mossy log to rest on. They poked him with sticks, took him up to look at his funny toes, opened his big mouth, and held him by one leg to see him kick. He tried to climb out; but the sides of the tub were slippery, and he had to give it up. He kept swimming and floating till he was tired out, and ate bread-crumbs and grass to keep from starving; but he was very miserable, though children came to hear him sing, and he had nothing else to do.

"This is n't what I meant," sighed Croak, "and if ever I get out of this old tub, I 'll keep very still and never try to make a noise in the world again."

Among the children was one kind little girl who pitied the poor frog, and one day when she was alone took him up carefully and put him on the grass, saying,--

"Run away, froggie, home to your mamma, and don't tell the boys I set you free."

"Thank you, my dear; those bad boys will never see or hear me again," answered Croak, hopping off as fast as he could go, never minding in his hurry that he was not taking the road to the river.

After he had gone a long way he came to a tank where a great many frogs seemed to be having a very nice time; for there was plenty of food, stones to sit on, and fresh water flowing in all the time.

"Ah! these must be very elegant people to live in this luxurious way. They sing pretty well, but not one has a splendid deep voice like mine. I 'll jump in and astonish them with my best song," said Croak, after he had watched and listened for a while.

If he had only known that these frogs were kept there to be fattened for an old French gentleman to eat, he would have skipped away and saved his life; but he was so anxious to show off his voice, that he gave a jump and went splash into the tank, startling the

others and making a great commotion. He liked that; and getting up on the highest stone, gave them his favorite "Ker honk" song, till the air rang with the sound.

The other frogs were much impressed, for they thought it fine music; so they gathered round, and shook hands and welcomed the stranger, sure that he must be a distinguished musician, he put on such airs. Now Croak was in his glory, and puffed himself out, and goggled at the lady-frogs till they put up their fans of green flag to hide their smiles. The young fellows tried to imitate him, till the tank was such a noisy place the old gentleman said to his cook,--

"Kill off a dozen of the fattest for dinner, and stop that din out there."

The frogs had told Croak that every now and then some of them were chosen to go and live in the great house; and all were eager to find out what good fortune had happened to their friends, for none ever came back to tell the sad truth. So when they saw the man in the white cap and apron come to the tank and look down at them, they all began to skip and prance, hoping to be chosen.

With a long-handled net the cook picked out the fattest and put them in a covered pail till he had his dozen. Croak had not been there long enough to get very plump, so he would have escaped that time if he had held his tongue. But he could n't keep still, and made such a terrible noise the cook said,--

"I must catch and quiet that rascal, or my master will go distracted." So he held the net open; and that silly frog hopped in, little dreaming that he had sung his last song.

"Now we shall see fine things. Good-by, you poor dears! Be patient till your turn comes," he cried, as the bucket was carried away to the kitchen.

Croak was disappointed when he saw nothing but pots and pans and a great fire; for the vain fellow really thought he was chosen to sing before some fine people. But his disappointment turned to horror when he saw his friends taken out one by one and their poor little legs cut off to fry for dinner. That was the only part the cook used, and the rest he threw away. Croak was left to the last, as he was not to be eaten; and while he waited his turn, he dashed distractedly round and round the pail, trying to get away, and croaking so dismally it was a wonder the cook did not take pity on him. But he did not, and was just going toward the pail with the big knife in his hand, when the old gentleman came down to see if his orders were obeyed, for he thought a great deal of his dinner. All the poor little legs lay in the pan ready to cook; and he was so pleased that he said, looking at the thin frog swimming about in that lively way,--

"Ah! this is a very brisk fellow. I will put him in my aquarium; the gold-fish and the crab will like a little society, I think."

Then, catching Croak by one leg, he carried him upstairs and threw him into the great glass box where several pretty gold-fish and one cross crab lived together. Croak was so glad to escape frying that he was very quiet, humble, and good; and though his new home was a prison, he tried to be contented, and never complained when the lovely fish called him ugly and the cross crab nipped his toes. He was homesick, and longed sadly for the pleasant river, the jolly games he used to have, and his dear little sister. He never sang now, fearing to be killed if he did; but when the windows stood open through the summer night and he heard the music of his friends, he put his hands before his face and cried such bitter tears that the water grew quite salt. He bore it as long as he could; but

his heart broke at last, and one day poor Croak was found floating on the top of the tank quite dead. So that was the end of him.

Good little Splash lived at home all safe and happy, and was so kind to every one that her neighbors loved her dearly and sung her praises at their evening concerts.

Now, the Frog Prince wished to marry, and was looking about for a wife, as he was very particular. So he wrapped himself up in a dead-leaf cloak, put an empty nut-shell on his head for a hood, and leaning on a bulrush staff, went hobbling along by the river like a poor old woman, begging at the different houses, that he might see how the lady-frogs behaved at home.

When he rode out as the Prince on a field-mouse, with flags flying, and all his court about him, the young lady-frogs stood modestly by their mammas, all in their best, and curtsied sweetly as he went by. But now he came to the back doors, a poor beggar, and it was very different. Some were lazy and lay late in their beds of river weeds, while the mothers did the work; some were greedy and ate all the best flies themselves; others slapped and scolded their little brothers and sisters instead of taking care of them; and nearly all were vain. The Prince caught many looking at their bright eyes in still pools, or putting on crowns of water flowers, or bathing in dew to keep the freckles from their faces. They were always ready to dance at balls, to go boating, or sing at the concerts where all could hear them; but few were busy, sweet, and dutiful at home, and the Prince nowhere found the bride he wanted. He was very fond of music; so he listened to the concerts, and soon began to wonder why they all sang a song with this chorus,--

"Who is the fairest that swims in our river?

Who is the dearest frog under the sun?

Whose life is full of the sweetest endeavor?

Who is our busiest, happiest one?

Splash, Splash, darling thing!

All delight her praise to sing."

"I must find this lovely creature and see if she is all they say, because if she is I 'll make a Princess of her in the twinkling of an eye," said the Prince; and he set off to look for Splash, for he was a very energetic frog.

He soon found her, for she was always busy doing something for her neighbors; and he watched her teaching the little tadpoles to swim, helping the old frogs out to sit in the sun when damp weather gave them rheumatism, or taking care of the sick ones, or feeding the poor, or running errands for busy mammas with large families and lazy daughters.

In her own little home all was as neat as wax, but so lonely she did not like to stay there much. All day she helped others, and at evening sat at her door and thought sadly of her lost brothers. She was very pretty in her neat, gray gown and white apron, with her bright eyes, gentle face, and sweet voice; though she seldom sung, except lullabies to the little frogs and the sick folks.

She was rocking a small tadpole to sleep in this way one day, when the disguised Prince came hobbling along, and asked for a bit to eat. Putting little Wiggle in his cobweb hammock, Splash said kindly,--

"Yes, old mother, come in and rest while I get you some dinner. Here 's a soft cushion of moss, and a leaf of water fresh from the spring."

The Prince sat a long time talking with her, and hearing about her brothers, and seeing how sweet she was. He made up his mind to marry at once; for frogs don't spend a long time and much money getting ready,--they just wash up their green and gray suits, and invite their friends to the wedding. The bride can always find a delicate cobweb on the grass for a veil, and that is all she needs.

The Prince thought he would try one thing more; so he said to her,--

"I 'm very lame; will you take me to the palace? I want to see the Prince. Do you know him?"

"No; I 'm only a humble creature, and he would n't care to know me," said Splash, modestly. "But I admire him very much, he is so brave and just and good. I love to see him go by, and always peep behind my curtain, he is such a splendid sight."

The Prince blushed under the nut-shell cap at such praise, and was sure, from the way Splash spoke, that she loved him a little bit. So he was very happy and wanted to dance, but kept quiet and leaned on her arm as she led him down the bank, put him nicely on a lily-pad, and rowed away, smiling at him and talking so sweetly he got fonder and fonder of her every moment.

At last they came to the palace, all made of white water-lilies, with red cardinal-flowers for flags, floors of green moss, and pink toadstool tables spread with acorn cups of honey, berries, and all the dainties frogs love; for the Prince had sent a telegram by the wind to have a feast ready.

"Come in. I have something for you in return for your kindness to me. I 'm not what I seem, and in a moment you shall see who your new friend is," said the Prince, leading her into the great hall where the throne was.

Then he left her, wondering what was to happen, while he hurried to throw off his old things and to put on his green velvet suit, his crown of cowslip, and the tall rush that was his sceptre. He looked very splendid, with white silk stockings on his long legs, his fine eyes shining, and his speckled waistcoat puffed out with the joy of his heart.

The trumpets sounded; all the frogs of the court came marching in, with the Prince at the head; and when they were seated at the tables, he took astonished Splash by the hand, and said in a loud voice,--

"This is your Queen,--the best, the loveliest in the land! Bring the wedding veil; let the bells ring, and shout with me, 'Hurrah! hurrah for Queen Splash!'"

Baa! Baa!

BAA THE FIRST.

They did n't look at all like heroines, those two shabby little girls, as they trotted down the hill, leaving a cloud of dust behind them. Their bare feet were scratched and brown, their hands were red with berry stains, and their freckled faces shone with heat under the flapping sun-bonnets. But Patty and Tilda were going to do a fine piece of work, although they did not know it then, and were very full of their own small affairs as they went briskly toward the station to sell berries.

The tongues went as fast as the feet; for this was a great expedition, and both were much excited about it

"Don't they look lovely?" said Tilda, proudly surveying her sister's load as she paused to change a heavy pail from one arm to the other.

"Perfectly de-licious! I know folks will buy 'em, if we ain't too scared to offer 'em," answered Patty, stopping also to settle the two dozen little birch baskets full of red raspberries which she carried, prettily set forth, on an old waiter, trimmed with scarlet bunch-berries, white everlasting, and green leaves.

"I sha'n't be. I 'll go right along and holler real loud,--see if I don't. I'm bound to have our books and boots for next winter; so just keep thinking how nice they'll be, and push ahead," said stout-hearted Tilda, the leader of the expedition.

"Hurry up. I want to have time to sprinkle the posies, so they'll look fresh when the train comes. I hope there'll be lots of children in it; they always want to eat, ma says."

"It was real mean of Elviry Morris to go and offer to sell cheaper up to the hotel than we did, and spoil our market. Guess she'll wish she'd thought of this when we tell what we 've done down here." And both children laughed with satisfaction as they trudged along, never minding the two hot, dusty miles they had to go.

The station was out of the village, and the long trains carrying summer travellers to the mountains stopped there once a day to meet the stages for different places. It was a pleasant spot, with a great pond on one side, deep forests on the other, and in the distance glimpses of gray peaks or green slopes inviting the weary city people to come and rest.

Every one seemed glad to get out during the ten minutes' pause, even if their journey was not yet ended; and while they stood about, enjoying the fresh air from the pond, or watching the stages load up, Tilda and Patty planned to offer their tempting little baskets of fresh fruit and flowers. It was a great effort, and their hearts beat with childish hope and fear as they came in sight of the station, with no one about but the jolly stage-drivers lounging in the shade.

"Plenty of time. Let's go to the pond and wash off the dust and get a drink. Folks won't see us behind those cars," said Tilda, glad to slip out of sight till the train arrived; for even her courage seemed to ooze away as the important moment approached.

A long cattle-train stood on a side track waiting for the other one to pass; and while the little girls splashed their feet in the cool water, or drank from their hands, a pitiful

sound filled the air. Hundreds of sheep, closely packed in the cars and suffering agonies from dust and heat and thirst, thrust their poor noses through the bars, bleating frantically; for the sight of all that water, so near yet so impossible to reach, drove them wild. Those farther down the track, who could not see the blue lake, could smell it, and took up the cry till the woods echoed with it, and even the careless drivers said, with a glance of pity,--

"Hard on the poor critters this hot day, ain't it?"

"Oh, Tilda, hear 'em baa, and see 'em crowd this side to get at the water! Let's take 'em some in our pickin' dishes. It's so dreadful to be dry," said tender-hearted Patty, filling her pint cup, and running to offer it to the nearest pathetic nose outstretched to meet it. A dozen thirsty tongues tried to lap it, and in the struggle the little cup was soon emptied; but Patty ran for more, and Tilda did the same, both getting so excited over the distress of the poor creatures that they never heard the far-off whistle of their train, and continued running to and fro on their errand of mercy, careless of their own weary feet, hot faces, and the precious flowers withering in the sun.

They did not see a party of people sitting near by under the trees, who watched them and listened to their eager talk with smiling interest.

"Run, Patty; this poor little one is half dead. Throw some water in his face while I make this big one stop walking on him. Oh, dear! There are so many! We can't help half, and our mugs are so small!"

"I know what I 'll do, Tilda,--tip out the berries into my apron, and bring up a nice lot at once," cried Patty, half beside herself with pity.

"It will spoil your apron and mash the berries, but never mind. I don't care if we don't sell one if we can help these poor dear lammies," answered energetic Tilda, dashing into the pond up to her ankles to fill the pail, while Patty piled up the fruit in her plaid apron.

"Oh, my patience me! the train is coming!" cried Patty, as a shrill shriek woke the echoes, and an approaching rumble was heard.

"Let it come. I won't leave this sheep till it's better. You go and sell the first lot; I 'll come as quick as I can," commanded Tilda, so busy reviving the exhausted animal that she could not stop even to begin the cherished new plan.

"I don't dare go alone; you come and call out, and I 'll hold the waiter," quavered poor Patty, looking sadly scared as the long train rolled by with a head at every window.

"Don't be a goose. Stay here and work, then; I 'll go and sell every basket. I 'm so mad about these poor things, I ain't afraid of anybody," cried Tilda, with a last refreshing splash among the few favored sheep, as she caught up the tray and marched off to the platform,--a very hot, wet, shabby little girl, but with a breast full of the just indignation and tender pity that go to redress half the wrongs of this great world.

"Oh, mamma, see the pretty baskets! do buy some, I 'm so thirsty and tired," exclaimed more than one eager little traveller, as Tilda held up her tray, crying bravely,--

"Fresh berries! fresh berries! ten cents! only ten cents!"

They were all gone in ten minutes; and if Patty had been with her, the pail might have been emptied before the train left. But the other little Samaritan was hard at work; and when her sister joined her, proudly displaying a handful of silver, she was prouder still to show her woolly invalid feebly nibbling grass from her hand.

"We might have sold everyone,--folks liked 'em ever so much; and next time we 'll have two dozen baskets apiece. But we 'll have to be spry, for some of the children fuss about picking out the one they like. It's real fun, Patty," said Tilda, tying up the precious dimes in a corner of her dingy little handkerchief.

"So's this," answered the other, with a last loving pat of her patient's nose, as the train began to move, and car after car of suffering sheep passed them with plaintive cries and vain efforts to reach the blessed water of which they were in such dreadful need.

Poor Patty could n't bear it. She was hot, tired, and unhappy because she could do so little; and when her pitying eyes lost sight of that load of misery, she just sat down and cried.

But Tilda scolded as she carefully put the unsold berries back into the pail, still unconscious of the people behind the elder-bushes by the pond.

"That's the wickedest thing that ever was; and I just wish I was a man, so I could see about it. I 'd put all the railroad folks in those cars, and keep 'em there hours and hours and hours, going by ponds all the time; and I 'd have ice-cream, too, where they could n't get a bit, and lots of fans, and other folks all cool and comfortable, never caring how hot and tired and thirsty they were. Yes, I would! and then we'd see how *they* like it."

Here indignant Tilda had to stop for breath, and refreshed herself by sucking berry-juice off her fingers.

"We *must* do something about it. I can't be happy to think of those poor lammies going so far without any water. It's awful to be dry," sobbed Patty, drinking her own tears as they fell.

"If I had a hose, I 'd come every day and hose all over the cars; that would do some good. Anyway, we 'll bring the other big pail, and water all we can," said Tilda, whose active brain was always ready with a plan.

"Then we sha'n't sell our berries," began Patty, despondently; for all the world was saddened to her just then by the sight she had seen.

"We 'll come earlier, and both work real hard till our train is in. Then I 'll sell, and you go on watering with both pails. It's hard work, but we can take turns. What ever shall we do with all these berries? The under ones are smashed, so we 'll eat 'em; but these are nice, only who will buy 'em?" And Tilda looked soberly at the spoiled apron and the four quarts of raspberries picked with so much care in the hot sun.

"I will," said a pleasant voice; and a young lady came out from the bushes just as the good fairy appears to the maidens in old tales.

Both little girls started and stared, and were covered with confusion when other heads popped up, and a stout gentleman came toward them, smiling so good-naturedly that they were not afraid.

"We are having a picnic in the woods, and would like these nice berries for our supper, if you want to sell them," said the lady, holding out a pretty basket.

"Yes, ma'am, we do. You can have 'em all. They 're a little mashed; so we won't ask but ten cents a quart, though we expected to get twelve," said Tilda, who was a real Yankee, and had an eye to business.

"What do you charge for watering the sheep?" asked the stout gentleman, looking kindly at Patty, who at once retired into the depths of her sun-bonnet, like a snail into its shell.

"Nothing, sir. Was n't it horrid to see those poor things? That's what made her cry. She's real tender-hearted, and she could n't bear it; so we let the berries go, and did what we could," answered Tilda, with such an earnest little face that it looked pretty in spite of tan and freckles and dust.

"Yes, it was very sad, and we must see about it. Here's something to pay for the berries, also for the water." And the gentleman threw a bright half-dollar into Tilda's lap and another into Patty's, just as if he was used to tossing money about in that delightful manner.

The little girls did n't know what to say to him; but they beamed at every one, and surveyed the pretty silver pieces as if they were very precious in their sight.

"What will you do with them?" asked the lady, in the friendly sort of voice that always gets a ready answer.

"Oh, we are saving up to buy books and rubber boots, so we can go to school next winter. We live two miles from school, and wear out lots of boots, and get colds when it's wet. We had *Pewmonia* last spring, and ma said we *must* have rubber boots, and we might earn 'em in berry-time," said Tilda, eagerly.

"Yes, and *she's* real smart, and *she's* going to be promoted, and *must* have new books, and they cost so much, and ma ain't rich, so we get 'em ourselves," added sister Patty, forgetting bashfulness in sisterly pride.

"That's brave. How much will it take for the boots and the books?" asked the lady, with a glance at the old gentleman, who was eating berries out of her basket.

"As much as five dollars, I guess. We want to get a shawl for ma, so she can go to meetin'. It's a secret, and we pick every day real hard, 'cause berries don't last long," said Tilda, wisely.

"*She* thought of coming down here. We felt so bad about losing our place at the hotel, and did n't know what to do, till Tilda made this plan. I think it's a splendid one." And Patty eyed her half-dollar with immense satisfaction.

"Don't spoil the plan, Alice. I 'm passing every week while you are up here, and I 'll see to the success of the affair," said the old gentleman, with a nod; adding, in a louder tone, "These are very fine berries, and I want you to take four quarts every other day to Miller's farm over there. You know the place?"

"Yes, sir! yes, sir!" cried two eager voices; for the children felt as if a rain of half-dollars was about to set in.

"I come up every Saturday and go down Monday; and I shall look out for you here, and you can water the sheep as much as you like. They need it, poor beasts!" added the old gentleman.

"We will, sir! we will!" cried the children, with faces so full of innocent gratitude and good will that the young lady stooped and kissed them both.

"Now, my dear, we must be off, and not keep our friends waiting any longer," said the old gentleman, turning toward the heads still bobbing about behind the bushes.

"Good-by, good-by. We won't forget the berries and the sheep," called the children, waving the stained apron like a banner, and showing every white tooth in the beaming smiles they sent after these new friends.

"Nor I my lambs," said Alice to herself, as she followed her father to the boat.

"What will ma say when we tell her and show her this heap of money?" exclaimed Tilda, pouring the dimes into her lap, and rapturously chinking the big half-dollars before she tied them all up again.

"I hope we sha'n't be robbed going home. You 'd better hide it in your breast, else some one might see it," said prudent Patty, oppressed by the responsibility of so much wealth.

"There goes the boat!" cried Tilda. "Don't it look lovely? Those are the nicest folks I ever saw."

"She's perfectly elegant. I 'd like a white dress and a hat just like that. When she kissed me, the long feather was as soft as a bird's wing on my cheeks, and her hair was all curling round like the picture we cut out of the paper." And Patty gazed after the boat as if this little touch of romance in her hard-working life was delightful to her.

"They must be awful rich, to want so many berries. We shall have to fly round to get enough for them and the car folks too. Let's go right off now to that thick place we left this morning, else Elviry may get ahead of us," said practical Tilda, jumping up, ready to make hay while the sun shone. But neither of them dreamed what a fine crop they were to get in that summer, all owing to their readiness in answering that pitiful "Baa! baa!"

BAA THE SECOND.

A very warm and a very busy week followed, for the berries were punctually delivered at the farm, and successfully sold at the station; and, best of all, the sheep were as faithfully watered as two little pails and two little girls could do it. Every one else forgot them. Mr. Benson was a busy old gentleman far away in the city; Miss Alice was driving, boating, and picnicking all day long; and the men at the depot had no orders to care for the poor beasts. But Tilda and Patty never forgot; and, rain or shine, they were there when the long train came in, waiting to do what they could, with dripping pails, handfuls of grass, or green branches, to refresh these suffering travellers for whom no thought was taken.

The rough stage-drivers laughed at them, the brakemen ordered them away, and the station-master said they were "little fools;" but nothing daunted the small sisters of charity, and in a few days they were let alone. Their arms were very tired lifting the pails, their backs ached with lugging so much water, and mother would not let them wear any but their oldest clothes for such wet work; so they had their trials, but bore them bravely, and never expected to be thanked.

When Saturday came round, and Miss Alice drove to meet her father, she remembered the little girls, and looked for them. Up at the farm she enjoyed her berries, and ordered them to be promptly paid for, but was either asleep or away when they arrived, and so had not seen the children. The sight of Patty, hastily scrambling a clean apron over her old frock, as she waited for the train with her tray of fruit, made the young lady leave the phaeton and go to meet the child, asking, with a smile,--

"Where is the black-eyed sister? Not ill, I hope.

"No, ma'am; she's watering the sheep. She's so strong she does it better 'n I do, and I sell the baskets," answered Patty, rejoicing secretly in the clean faded apron that hid her shabbiness.

"Ah, I forgot *my* lambs; but you were faithful to yours, you good little things! Have you done it every day?"

"Yes, 'm. Ma said, if we promised, we *must* do it; and we like it. Only there 's such a lot of 'em, and we get pretty tired." And Patty rubbed her arms as if they ached.

"I 'll speak to papa about it this very day. It will be a good time; for Mr. Jacobs, the president of the road, is coming up to spend Sunday, and they must do something for the poor beasts," said Miss Alice, ashamed to be outdone by two little girls.

"That will be so nice. We read a piece in a paper our teacher lends us, and I brought it down to show Mr. Weed, the depot man. He said it was a shame, but nobody could help it; so we thought we 'd tell him about the law we found." And Patty eagerly drew a worn copy of "Our Dumb Animals" from her pocket to show the little paragraph to this all-powerful friend who knew the railroad king.

Miss Alice read:--

"An act of Congress provides that at the end of every twenty-eight hours' journey animals shall be given five hours' rest, and duly fed and watered, unless shipped in cars having accommodations for the care of live-stock on board."

"There!" cried Patty, "that's the law; and ma says these sheep come ever so far, and ought to be watered. Do tell the president, and ask him to see to it. There was another piece about some poor pigs and cows being ninety-two hours without water and food. It was awful."

"I *will* tell him. Here 's our train. Run to your berries. I 'll find papa, and show him this."

As Miss Alice spoke, the cars thundered into the little station, and a brief bustle ensued, during which Patty was too busy to see what happened.

Mr. Benson and another stout old gentleman got out; and the minute Miss Alice had been kissed, she said very earnestly,--

"Wait a little, please; I want to settle a very important piece of business before we go home."

Then, while the gentlemen listened indulgently, she told the story, showed the bit in the paper, and pointing out Patty, added warmly,--

"That's one good child. Come and see the other, and you will agree with me that something ought to be done to relieve their kind little hearts and arms, if not out of mercy to the animals, who can't be called dumb in this case, though we have been deaf too long."

"My wilful girl must have her way. Come and get a whiff of fresh air, Jacobs." And Mr. Benson followed his daughter across the track, glad to get out of the bustle.

Yes, Tilda was there, and at work so energetically that they dared not approach, but stood looking and laughing for a moment. Two pails of water stood near her, and with a long-handled dipper she was serving all she could reach; those which were packed on the upper tier she could only refresh by a well-aimed splash, which was eagerly

welcomed, and much enjoyed by all parties,--for Tilda got well showered herself, but did not care a bit, for it was a melting July day.

"That is a very little thing to do, but it is the cup of cold water which *we* have forgotten," said Miss Alice, softly, while the air was full of cries of longing as the blue lake shone before the thirsty beasts.

"Jacobs, we must attend to this."

"Benson, we will. I 'll look into the matter, and report at the next meeting."

That was all they said; but Alice clapped her hands, for she knew the thing would be done, and smiled like sunshine on the two old gentlemen, who presently watched the long train rumble away, with shakes and nods of the gray heads, which expressed both pity and determination.

The other train soon followed, and Patty came running over with her empty tray and a handful of silver to join Tilda, who sat down upon her upturned pail, tired out.

"Papa will see to it, children; and, thanks to you, the sheep will soon be more comfortable," said Miss Alice, joining them.

"Oh, goody! I hope they'll be quick; it's so hot, there 's ever so many dead ones to-day, and I can't help 'em," answered Tilda, fanning herself with her bonnet, and wiping the drops off her red face.

Miss Alice took a pretty straw fan out of her pocket and handed it to her, with a look of respect for the faithful little soul who did her duty so well.

"Ask for me when you come to the farm to-night. I shall have some hats and aprons for you, and I want to know you better," she said, remembering the broad-brimmed hats and ready-made aprons in the village store.

"Thank you, ma'am. We 'll come. Now we won't have to do this wet work we 'd like to be neat and nice," said Patty, gratefully.

"Do you always sell all your berries down here?" asked Miss Alice, watching Tilda tie up the dimes.

"Yes, indeed; and we could sell more if both of us went. But ma said we were making lots of money, and it was n't best to get rich too fast," answered Tilda, wisely.

"That's a good thing for us to remember, Benson, especially just now, and not count the cost of this little improvement in our cattle cars too closely," said Mr. Jacobs, as the old gentlemen came up in time to hear Tilda's speech.

"Your mother is a remarkable woman; I must come and see her," added Mr. Benson.

"Yes, sir; she is. She'd be pleased to see you any day." And Tilda stood up respectfully as her elders addressed her.

"Getting too rich, are you? Then I suppose it would n't do to ask you to invest this in your business for me?" asked Mr. Jacobs, holding up two silver dollars, as if he felt bashful about offering them.

Two pairs of eyes sparkled; and Patty's hand went out involuntarily, as she thought how many things she could get with all that money.

"Would they buy a lamb? and would you like to use it that way?" asked Tilda, in a business-like tone.

"I guess Miller would let you have one for that sum if Miss Alice makes the bargain, and I *should* very much like to start a flock if you would attend to it for me," answered Mr. Jacobs, with a laughing nod at the young lady, who seemed to understand that way of making bargains.

"We 'd like it ever so much! We 've wanted a lamb all summer; and we've got a nice rocky pasture, with lots of pennyroyal and berry bushes and a brook, for it to live in. We could get one ourselves now we are so rich; but we 'd rather buy more things for ma, and mend the roof 'fore the snow comes: it's so old, rain runs down on our bed sometimes."

"That's bad; but you seem fond of water, and look as if it agreed with you," said Mr. Jacobs, playfully poking Tilda's soaked apron with his cane.

They all laughed; and Mr. Benson said, looking at his watch,--

"Come, Alice, we must go. I want my dinner, and so does Jacobs. Good-by, little water-witches. I 'll see you again."

"Do you s'pose they 'll remember the lambs and hats, and all they promised?" asked Patty, as the others turned away.

"I don't believe they will. Rich folks are so busy having good times they are apt to forget poor folks, seems to me," answered Tilda, shaking her head like a little Solomon.

"Bless my heart, what a sharp child that is! We must not disappoint her; so remind me, Alice, to make a memorandum of all this business," whispered Mr. Benson, who heard every word.

"The President is a *very* nice man, and I know *he* 'll keep his word. See! he dropped the money in my tray, and I never saw him do it," cried Patty, pouncing on the dollars like a robin on a worm.

"There's a compliment for you, and well worth the money. Such confidence is beautiful," said Mr. Jacobs, laughing.

"Well, I 've learned a little lesson, and I 'll lay it to heart so well I won't let either of you forget," added Alice, as they drove away; while Tilda and Patty trudged home, quite unconscious that they had set an example which their elders were not ashamed to follow.

So many delightful things happened after this that the children felt as if they had got into a fairy tale. First of all, two nice rough straw hats and four useful aprons were given them that very night. Next day Miss Alice went to see their mother, and found an excellent woman, trying to bring up her girls, with no one to help her.

Then somehow the roof got mended, and the fence, so that passing cattle could not devastate the little beds where the children carefully cultivated wild flowers from the woods and hills. There seemed to be a sudden call for berries in the neighborhood,--for the story of the small Samaritans went about, and even while they laughed, people felt an interest in the children, and were glad to help them; so the dimes in the spoutless teapot rose like a silver tide, and visions of new gowns, and maybe sleds, danced through the busy little brains.

But, best and most wonderful of all, the old gentlemen did *not* forget the sheep. It was astonishing how quickly and easily it was all done, when once those who had the power found both the will and the way. Every one was interested now: the stage-drivers joked no more; the brakemen lent a hand with the buckets while waiting for better means of relief; and cross Mr. Weed patted Tilda and Patty on the head, and pointed them out to strangers as the "nice little girls who stirred up the railroad folks." Children from the hotel came to look at them, and Elviry Morris was filled with regret that she had no share in this interesting affair.

Thus the little pail of water they offered for pity's sake kept the memory of this much-needed mercy green till the lake poured its full tide along the channel made for it, and there was no more suffering on that road.

The first day the new pumps were tried every one went to see them work; and earliest of all were Tilda and Patty, in pink aprons and wreaths of evergreens round their new hats, in honor of the day. It was sweet to see their intense satisfaction as the water streamed into the troughs, and the thirsty sheep drank so gratefully. The innocent little souls did not know how many approving glances were cast upon them as they sat on a log, with the tired arms folded, two trays of berries at their feet now, and two faces beaming with the joy of a great hope beautifully fulfilled.

Presently a party from the hotel appeared; and something was evidently going to happen, for the boys and girls kept dodging behind the cars to see if they were coming. Tilda and Patty wondered who or what, but kept modestly apart upon their log, glad to see that the fine folks enjoyed the sight about as much as they did.

A rattle was heard along the road, a wagon stopped behind the station, and an excited boy came flying over the track to make the mysterious announcement to the other children,--

"They 've got 'em, and they are regular beauties."

"More pumps or troughs, I guess. Well, we can't have too many," said Tilda, with an eye to the business under way.

"I wish those folks would n't stare so. I s'pose it's the new aprons with pockets," whispered bashful Patty, longing for the old cape-bonnet to retire into.

But both forgot pumps and pockets in a moment, as a striking procession appeared round the corner. Mr. Benson, trying not to laugh, but shining with heat and fun, led a very white lamb with a red bow on its neck; and behind him came Miss Alice, leading another lamb with a blue bow. She looked very much in earnest, and more like a good fairy than ever, as she carried out her little surprise. People looked and laughed; but every one seemed to understand the joke at once, and were very quiet when Mr. Benson held up his hand, and said, in a voice which was earnest as well as merry,--

"Here, my little girls, are two friends of those poor fellows yonder come to thank you for your pity, and to prove, I hope, that rich people are not always too busy with their own good times to remember their poorer neighbors. Take them, my dears, and God bless you!"

"I did n't forget my lambs this time, but have been taming these for you; and Mr. Jacobs begs you will accept them, with his love," added Miss Alice, as the two pretty creatures were led up to their new owners, wagging their tails and working their noses in the most amiable manner, though evidently much amazed at the scene.

Tilda and Patty were so surprised that they were dumb with delight, and could only blush and pat the woolly heads, feeling more like story-book girls than ever. The other children, charmed with this pleasant ending to the pretty story, set up a cheer; the men joined in it with a will; while the ladies waved their parasols, and all the sheep seemed to add to the chorus their grateful "Baa! baa!"

The Frost King And How The Fairies Conquered Him

The Queen sat upon her throne, and all the fairies from the four kingdoms were gathered for a grand council. A very important question was to be decided, and the bravest, wisest elves were met to see what could be done. The Frost King made war upon the flowers; and it was a great grief to Queen Blossom and her subjects to see their darlings die year after year, instead of enjoying one long summer, as they might have done but for him. She had sent messengers with splendid gifts, and had begged him to stop this dreadful war, which made autumn so sad and left the fields strewn with dead flowers. But he sent back the gifts, sternly refused her prayers, and went on with his cruel work; because he was a tyrant, and loved to destroy innocent things.

"My subjects, we will try once more," said the Queen, "if any one can propose a plan that will touch his hard heart and make him kind to the dear flowers."

Then there was a great rustling of wings and murmuring of voices; for all the elves were much excited, and each wanted to propose something. The Queen listened, but none of the plans seemed wise, and she was sadly perplexed, when her favorite maid of honor, the lovely Star, came and knelt before her, saying, while her face shone and her voice trembled with the earnestness of her words, "Dear Queen, let me go alone to the Frost King and try what love will do. We have sent presents and prayers by messengers who feared and hated him, and he would not receive them; but we have not tried to make him love us, nor shown him how beautiful his land might be, by patiently changing that dreary place, and teaching his people to plant flowers, not to kill them. I am not afraid; let me go and try my plan, for love is very powerful, and I know he has a heart if we can only find it."

"You may go, dear Star," answered the Queen, "and see if you can conquer him. But if any harm happens to you, we will come with our whole army and fight this cruel King till he is conquered."

At these brave words all the elves cheered, and General Sun, the great warrior, waved his sword as if longing to go to battle at once. They gathered about Star,—some to praise and caress her, some to warn her of the dangers of her task, others to tell her the way, and every one to wish her success; for fairies are gentle little creatures, and believe heartily in the power of love.

Star wished to go at once; so they wrapped her in a warm cloak of down from a swan's breast, gave her a bag of the seeds of all their sweetest flowers, and with kisses and tears went to the gates of Fairyland to say good-by.

Smiling bravely she flew away toward the North, where the frost spirits lived. Soon the wind grew cold, the sunshine faded, and snow began to fall, making Star shiver under her soft cloak. Presently she saw the King's palace. Pillars of ice held up the roof fringed with icicles, which would have sparkled splendidly if there had been any sun. But all was dark and cold, and not a green leaf rustled, or bird sang in the wide plains, white with snow, that stretched as far as the eye could see. Before the doors stood the guard,

frozen to their places, who lifted their sharp spears and let Star go in when she said she was a messenger from the Queen.

Walls of ice carved with strange figures were round her, long icicles hung from the roof, and carpets of snow covered the floor. On a throne hung with gray mist sat the King; a crown of crystals was on his white hair, and his mantle was covered with silver frost-work. His eyes were cold, his face stern, and a smile never moved his hard lips. He frowned as he saw the fairy, and drew his cloak closer, as if afraid the light of her bright face might soften his heart.

Then Star told her errand, and in her gentle voice begged him to be kind. She described the sorrow of both elves and children when his frost killed all the flowers; she painted a bright picture of a world where it was always summer, and asked him to let her show how lovely flowers made any spot, by planting some in his bleak fields.

But he only scowled and ordered her away, saying harshly, "I will do as I please; and if your Queen does not leave me in peace, I will go to war and freeze every fairy to death."

Star tried to say more, but he was so angry that he called his people and bid them shut her up till she would own that he was right and promise to let him kill all the flowers he liked.

"I never will do that," said Star, as the Frost people led her away to a dark little cell, and left her alone.

She was cold and tired and very sad because the King would not listen to her, but her heart was brave, and instead of crying she began to sing. Soon the light of her own eyes, that shone like stars, made a little glimmer in the dark, and she saw that the floor of her cell was of earth; and presently she heard the tinkle of water as it dripped drop by drop down from the snow above. Then she smiled, so that it seemed as if a ray of light had crept in.

"Here is earth and water, I will make the sunshine, and soon by my fairy power I will have a garden even in Frostland." As she spoke she pulled out the seeds and fell to work, still singing, still smiling, still sure that in time she would do the hard task she had set herself. First she gathered the drops in her warm hands and moistened the hard earth; then she loosened it and planted her seeds along the walls; and then, sitting in the middle of the narrow room, she waved her wand and chanted the fairy spell that works the pretty miracle of turning seeds to flowers.

"Sleep, little seed,

Deep in your bed,

While winter snow

Lies overhead.

Wake, little sprout,

And drink the rain,

Till sunshine calls

You to rise again.

Strike deep, young root,

In the earth below;

Unfold, pale leaves,

Begin to grow.

Baby bud, dance

In the warm sun;

Bloom, sweet rose,

Life has begun."

As she sung, the light grew stronger, the air warmer, and the drops fell like dew, till up came rows of little green vines and plants, growing like the magic beanstalk all over the walls and all round the room, making the once dark place look like a bower. Moss spread like a carpet underfoot, and a silvery white mushroom sprung up under Star, as if she were the queen of this pretty place.

Soon the Frost spirits heard the music and went to see who dared sing in that gloomy prison. They were much surprised when they peeped, to see that instead of dying in her cell, the fairy had made it beautiful, and sat there singing while her flowers bloomed in spite of all their power.

They hurried to the King and bade him come and see. He went, and when he saw the lovely place he could not spoil it till he had watched Star at her work, and tried to see what magic did such wonders. For now the dark walls were hung with morning-glories, ringing their many-colored bells, the floor was green with soft moss, the water-drops made music as they fell, and rows of flowers nodded from their beds as if talking together in a sweet language of their own. Star sat on her throne still singing and smiling, till the once dark place was as bright as if a little sun shone there.

"I am strong, but I cannot do that," said the King. "I love power, and perhaps if I watch I shall learn some of her magic skill to use as I please. I will let her live, but keep her a prisoner, and do as I please about killing other flowers."

So he left her there, and often stole down to peep, and wonder at her cheerfulness and courage; for she never complained or cried, though she longed for home, and found it very hard to be brave and patient.

Meantime the Queen waited and waited for Star to come, and when a long time passed she sent a messenger to learn where she was. He brought back the sad tidings that she was a prisoner, and the King would not let her go. Then there was great weeping and wailing in Fairyland, for every one loved gentle Star. They feared she would be frozen to death if they left her in the cruel King's power, and resolved to go to war as he would not set her free.

General Sun ordered out the army, and there was a great blowing of trumpets, beating of drums, and flying of flags as the little soldiers came marching from the four quarters of the kingdom. The earth elves were on foot, in green suits, with acorn cups for helmets and spear grass for lances. The water sprites were in blue armor made of dragon-fly scales, and they drew shells full of tiny bubbles that were shot like cannon-balls, upsetting their small enemies by the dozen. The fire imps wore red, and carried torches to burn, and little guns to shoot bullets of brimstone from, which killed by their dreadful smell. The air spirits were the finest of all; for they were in golden armor, and carried arrows of light, which they shot from tiny rainbows. These came first, and General Sun was splendid to behold as he led them shining and flashing before the Queen, whose

great banner of purple and gold streamed over their heads, while the trumpets blew, the people cheered, and the elfin soldiers marched bravely away to fight the Frost King and bring Star home.

The Queen followed in her chariot drawn by white butterflies, with her maids, and her body guard of the tallest elves in Fairyland. They lived in the pine-trees, and were fine strong fellows, with little cones on their heads, pine needles for swords, and the handsome russet scales for chain armor. Their shields were of sweet-smelling gum, like amber; but no one could approach the Queen when they made a wall about her, for whoever touched these shields stuck fast, and were killed with the sharp swords.

Away streamed the army like a wandering rainbow, and by and by reached the land of frost and snow. The King had been warned that they were coming, and made ready by building a fort of ice, laying in piles of snow-balls, and arming his subjects with sharp icicles. All the cold winds that blow wailed like bagpipes, hailstones drummed on the frozen ground, and banners of mist floated over the towers of the palace. General Fog, in a suit of silver, stood ready to meet the enemy, with an army of snow men behind him, and the Frost King looked down from the walls to direct the fight.

On came the fairy folk, making the icy world sparkle so brilliantly with their light that the King was half-blinded and hid his eyes. The elves shivered as the cold wind touched them, but courage kept them warm, and the Queen, well wrapped in down, stood up in her chariot, boldly demanding Star at the hands of the King.

"I will not give her up," he answered, scowling like a thunder-cloud, though in his heart he wondered more and more how the brave fairy had lived so long away from such lovely friends as these.

"Then I proclaim war upon your country; and if Star is dead we will show no mercy. Sound the trumpets and set on!" cried the Queen, waving her hand to the General, while every sword flashed out, and an elfin cheer rung like music in the air.

Ordering the rest to halt, General Sun led the air spirits to battle first, well knowing that nothing could stand long before a charge of that brilliant troop. General Fog did his best, but was driven back against his will; for his snow men melted away as the arrows of light struck them, and he could not stand before the other general, whose shield was a golden sun, without feeling himself dissolve like mist at noon.

They were forced to take refuge in the fort, where the King himself was ordering showers of snow-balls to be shot among the fairy troops. Many were wounded, and carried from the field to the tent where the Queen and her maids tended them, and by their soft magic soon made them fit to fight again.

"Now, a grand attack. Bring up the sappers and miners, Captain Rock. Major Flash, surround the walls and melt them as fast as possible, while the archers shall go on shooting," commanded General Sun.

Then a company of moles began to dig under the fort; the fire imps banged away at the walls with their cannon, and held their flaming torches close till the blocks of ice began to melt; the air spirits flew high above and shot their golden arrows down at the Frost people, who fled away to hide in the darkest corners, dazzled and daunted by these brave and brilliant enemies.

It was a hard battle, and the fairies were obliged to rest, after killing General Fog, destroying the fort, and forcing the King to take refuge in the palace. Among the

prisoners taken was one who told them where Star was, and all she had done in her little cell. Then they rejoiced, and the Queen said, "Let us follow her example, for these prisoners say the King is changed since she came; that he goes to peep at her lovely bower, and does not spoil it, but talks kindly to her, and seems as if his hard heart might be melting a little. We will not fight any more, but try Star's gentle way, and besiege the King till he surrenders; so we shall win a friend, not kill an enemy."

"We will; we will!" cried all the elves; for they did not love to fight, though brave as little lions to defend their country and their Queen. They all took counsel together, and the Frost people were surprised next day to see the army busily at work making a great garden round the palace instead of trying to destroy it. Creeping to the holes in the walls they watched what went on, and wondered more and more; for the elves worked hard, and their magic helped them to do in a day what it would have taken years for mortals to do.

First the moles dug up the ground, then the Queen's guard sowed pine seeds, and in an hour a green wall fenced in the garden where the earth fairies planted seeds of all the flowers that grow. The fire imps warmed the air, and drove away every chilly wind, every gray cloud or flake of snow that dared come near this enchanted spot. The water sprites gathered drops from the melting ice palace and watered the budding beds, after the imps had taken the chill off, while the air spirits made sunshine overhead by flying to and fro with tireless wings, till a golden curtain was woven that shut out the cold sky and made summer for the flowers.

The Queen and her maids helped, for they fashioned birds, bees, and butterflies with magic skill, and gave them life to sing, buzz, and flutter in the new world, growing so fast where once all was bare and cold and dark.

Slowly the ice palace melted; for warm airs stole through the pines, and soon the walls were thin as glass, the towers vanished like frost-work in the sun, and block after block flowed away in little rills as if glad to escape from prison. The King and his subjects felt that they were conquered; for the ice seemed to melt from them also, and their hearts began to beat, their cold faces to soften as if they wanted to smile if they knew how, and they loved to watch and wonder at the sweet miracles the elves were working all about them.

The King tried not to give up, for he was very proud, and had ruled so long it was hard to submit; but his power was gone, his palace crumbling about him, his people longing to join the enemy, and there was nothing for him to do but lay down his crown or fly away to the far North and live with the bears and icebergs in that frozen world. He would have done this but for Star. All the while the battle and the siege were going on, she lived in her little cell, knowing nothing about it, but hoping and waiting, sure that help would come. Every time the King visited her he seemed kinder, and liked more and more to listen to her songs or the stories she told him of life in Fairyland, and the joy of being merciful. So she knew that the seeds she sowed in his heart were beginning to grow like those planted in the cell, and she watched over them as carefully.

One day her loveliest roses bloomed, and she was singing for joy as the pink flowers filled the cell with their sweet breath, when the King came hurrying down to her and falling at her feet begged her to save his life. She wondered what he meant, and he told her of the battle, and how the elves were conquering him by love; for the palace was nearly gone, a great garden lay blossoming all about it, and he had nowhere to go unless she would be his friend and ask her people to forgive and pity him.

Then Star felt that she had done her task, and laying her hands on his white head, she melted the last frost from his old heart by saying in her tender voice, "Do not fear my people; they will welcome you and give you a home if you will promise to hurt no more flowers, but always be as gentle as you are now. Come with me, and let us teach you how beautiful sunshine and love and happy work can make you."

The King promised, and Star led him up to the light again, where his people waited to know what was to become of them.

"Follow me, follow me, and do not be afraid," called Star, dancing before them,—so glad to be free that she longed to fly away. Everything was changed; for as they came up from the cell the ruins of the palace melted into a quiet lake, and under the archway of the pines they passed into a new and lovely world of sunshine, flowers, and happy elves. A great cry went up when Star was seen leading the King, with his few subjects behind him, and every one flew to welcome the dear fairy and the captives she brought.

"I am your prisoner, and I submit, for I have no kingdom now," said the King, as he bowed before the Queen.

"These are the only chains you shall wear, and *this* is your new kingdom," answered the Queen, as her maids hung wreaths of flowers on the King's arms and put a green crown on his head, while all the fairies gathered round to welcome him to the lovely garden where he was to reign beloved and happy, with no frost to spoil the long summer he had learned to love.

There was a great feast that day, and then the elfin army marched home again, well pleased with the battle they had fought, though all said that it was Star who had conquered the Frost-King.

Lilybell And Thistledown, Or The Fairy Sleeping Beauty

Once upon a time two little fairies went out into the world to seek their fortune. Thistledown wore a green suit, a purple cloak, a gay feather in his cap, and was as handsome an elf as one could wish to see. But he was not loved in Fairyland; for, like the flower whose name and colors he wore, many faults like sharp prickles were hidden under his fine clothes. He was idle, selfish, and cruel, and cared for nothing but his own pleasure and comfort, as we shall see.

His little friend Lilybell was very different, for she was so kind and good every one loved her. She spent her time trying to undo the mischief naughty Thistle did, and that was why she followed him now, because she was afraid he would get into trouble and need some one to help him.

Side by side they flew over hill and dale till they came to a pleasant garden.

"I am tired and hungry," said Thistle; "let us rest here and see what fun is going on."

"Now, dear Thistle, be kind and gentle, and make friends among these flowers. See how they spread their leaves for our beds, and offer us their honey to eat, and their dew to bathe in. It would be very wrong to treat them badly after such a welcome as this," answered Lilybell, as she lay down to sleep in the deep cup of one of her own flowers, as if in a little bed hung with white curtains.

Thistle laughed and flew off to find the tulips, for he liked splendid flowers and lived like a king. First he robbed the violets of their honey, and shook the blue-bells roughly to get all their dew for his bath. Then he ruffled many leaves before his bed suited him, and after a short nap was up and away having what he called fun. He chased the butterflies and hurt them with the sharp thorn he carried for a sword; he broke the cobwebs laid to bleach on the grass for fairy cloth; he pushed the little birds out of the nest and killed them; he stole pollen from the busy bees, and laughed to see them patiently begin to fill their little bags again. At last he came to a lovely rose-tree with one open flower and a little bud.

"Why are you so slow about blooming, baby rose? You are too old to be rocked in your green cradle any longer. Come out and play with me," said Thistle, as he perched on the tree ready for more mischief.

"No, my little bud is not strong enough to meet the sun and air yet," answered the rose-mother, bending over her baby, while all her red leaves trembled with fear, for the wind had told her the harm this cruel fairy had been doing in the garden.

"You silly flower, to wait so long. See how quickly I will make the ugly green bud a pretty pink rose," cried Thistle, as he pulled open the folded bud so rudely that the little leaves fell all broken on the ground.

"It was my first and only one, and I was so fond and proud of it! Now you have killed it, cruel fairy, and I am all alone," sobbed the mother, while her tears fell like rain on the poor bud fading in the hot sun.

Thistle was ashamed of himself, but he would not say he was sorry, and flew away to hunt a white moth, till clouds began to gather and a shower came on. Then he hurried back to the tulips for shelter, sure they would take him in because he had praised their gay colors, and they were vain flowers. But when he came all wet and cold begging to be covered, they laughed and shook their broad leaves till the drops fell on him faster than the rain and beat him down.

"Go away, naughty fairy! we know you now, and won't let you in, for you bring trouble wherever you go. You needn't come to us for a new cloak when the shower has spoilt that one," they cried.

"I don't care, the daisies will be glad to take pity on so splendid an elf as I am," said Thistle, as he flew down to the humble flowers in the grass.

But all the rosy leaves were tightly closed and he knocked in vain, for the daisies had heard of his pranks, and would not risk spoiling their seeds by opening to such a naughty fellow.

He tried the buttercups and dandelions, the violets and mignonette, the lilies and the honeysuckles, but all shut their doors against him and told him to go away.

"Now I have no friends and must die of cold. If I had only minded Lilybell I might be safe and warm as she is somewhere," sighed Thistle, as he stood shivering in the rain.

"I have no little bud to shelter now, and you can come in here," said a soft voice above him; and looking up, Thistle saw that he was under the rose-tree where the dead bud hung broken on its stem.

Grieved and ashamed, the fairy gladly crept in among the warm red leaves, and the rose-mother held him close to her gentle bosom where no rain or chilly wind could reach him. But when she thought he was asleep she sighed so sadly over her lost baby that Thistle found no rest, and dreamed only sad dreams.

Soon the sun shone again and Lilybell came to find her friend; but he was ashamed to meet her and stole away. When the flowers told Lily all the harm Thistle had done she was very sorrowful, and tried to comfort them. She cured the hurt birds and butterflies, helped the bees he had robbed, and watered the poor rose till more buds came to bloom on her stem. Then when all were well and happy again she went to find Thistle, leaving the garden full of grateful friends.

Meantime, Thistle had been playing more pranks, and got into trouble. A kind bee invited him to dinner one day, and the fairy liked the pretty home in the hive; for the floors were of white wax, the walls of golden honey-comb, and the air sweet with the breath of flowers. It was a busy place; some got the food and stored it up in the little cells; some were the house-maids, and kept all exquisitely neat; some took care of the eggs and fed the young bees like good nurses; and others waited on the Queen.

"Will you stay and work with us? No one is idle here, and it is a happier life than playing all day," said Buzz, the friendly bee.

"I hate to work," answered lazy Thistle, and would not do anything at all.

Then they told him he must go; that made him angry, and he went to some of the bees whom he had made discontented by his fine tales of an idle life, and said to them,—

"Let us feast and be jolly; winter is far off and there is no need to work in the summer time. Come and make merry, while those busy fellows are away, and the nurses watching the babies in the cells."

Then he led the drones to the hive, like a band of robbers; first they fastened the Queen into her royal room, so she could do nothing but buzz angrily; next they drove the poor house-keepers away, and frightened the little bees into fits as they went rioting through the waxen halls, pulling down the honey-comb, and stealing the bee-bread carefully put away in the neat cells for winter time. They stayed as long as they dared, and flew off before the workers came home to find their pretty hive in ruins.

"That was fine fun," said Thistle, as he went to hide in a great forest where he thought the angry bees could not find him.

Here he soon made friends with a gay dragon-fly, and they had splendid games skimming over the lake or swinging on the ferns that grew about it. For a while Thistle was good, and might have had a happy time if he had not quarrelled with his friend about a little fish that the cruel elf pricked with his sword till it nearly died. Gauzy-wing thought that very cruel, and said he would tell the Brownies who ruled over everything in the wood.

"I'm not afraid," answered Thistle; "they can't hurt me."

But he *was* afraid, and as soon as the dragon-fly was asleep that night, he got an ugly spider to come and spin webs all round the poor thing till it could stir neither leg nor wing.

Then leaving it to starve, Thistle flew out of the wood, sure that the Brownies would not catch him.

But they did, for they knew all that happened in their kingdom; and when he stopped to rest in a wild morning-glory-bell, they sent word by the wind that he was to be kept a prisoner till they came. So the purple leaves closed round the sleeping fairy, and he woke to find himself held fast. Then he knew how poor Gauzy-wing felt, and wished he had not been so unkind. But it was too late, for soon the Brownies came, and tying his wings with a strong blade of grass said as they led him away,—

"You do so much harm we are going to keep you a prisoner till you repent, for no one can live in this beautiful world unless he is kind and good. Here you will have time to think over your naughtiness, and learn to be a better elf."

So they shut him up in a great rock where there was no light but one little ray through a crack that let air into his narrow cell, and there poor Thistle sat alone longing to be free, and sobbing over all the pleasant things he had lost. By and by he stopped crying, and said to himself,—

"Perhaps if I am patient and cheerful, even in this dark place, the Brownies will let me out." So he began to sing, and the more he sang the better he felt, for the ray of sunshine seemed to grow brighter, the days shorter, and his sorrow easier to bear, because he was trying to take his punishment bravely and be good.

Lilybell was looking for him all this time, tracing him by the harm he did, and stopping to comfort those whom he hurt; so she never found him till she had helped the bees put the hive in order, set free poor Gauzy-wing, and nursed the hurt fish till it was well again. Then she went on looking for him, and wondering where he was. She never would

have guessed if he had not sung so much, for the birds loved to hear him, and often perched on the rocks to listen and learn the fairy songs. Columbines sprung up there in the sunshine and danced on their slender stems as they peeped in at him with rosy faces, while green moss went creeping up the sides of the rock as if eager to join in the music.

As Lilybell came to this pleasant place, she wondered if there was a fairy party going on, for the birds were singing, the flowers dancing, and the old rock looked very gay. When they saw her, the birds stopped, and the columbines stood so still that she heard a voice singing sadly,—

"Bright shines the summer sun,

Soft is the summer air,

Gayly the wood-birds sing,

Flowers are blooming fair.

But deep in the dark, cold rock

All alone must I dwell,

Longing for you, dear friend,

Lilybell, Lilybell!"

"Where are you?" cried the other fairy, flying up among the columbines; for she could see no opening in the rock, and wondered where the voice came from. No one replied, for Thistle did not hear her, so she sang her answer to his call,—

"Through sunshine and shower

I have looked for you long,

Guided by bird and flower,

And now by your song,

Thistledown! Thistledown!

O'er wood, hill, and dell

Hither to comfort you

Comes Lilybell."

Then through the narrow opening two arms were stretched out to her, and all the columbines danced for joy that Thistle was found.

Lilybell made her home there, and did all she could to cheer the poor prisoner, glad to see that he was sorry for his naughtiness, and really trying to be good. But he pined so to come out that she could not bear it, and said she would go and ask the Brownies what he could do to be free.

Thistle waited and waited, but she did not come back, and he cried and called so pitifully that the Brownies came at last and took him out, saying,—

"Lilybell is safe, but she is in a magic sleep, and will not wake till you bring us a golden wand from the earth elves, a cloak of sunshine from the air spirits, and a crown of diamonds from the water fairies. It is a hard task, for you have no friends to help you

along. But if you love Lilybell enough to be patient, brave, and kind, you may succeed, and she will wake to reward you when you bring the fairy gifts."

As they said this, the Brownies led him to a green tent made of tall ferns, and inside on a bed of moss lay Lilybell fast asleep, like the Beauty in the dear old story.

"I will do it," said Thistle, and spreading the wings that had been idle so long, he was off like a humming-bird.

"Flowers know most about the earth elves, so I will ask them," he thought, and began to ask every clover and buttercup, wood-violet, and wayside dandelion that he met. But no one would answer him; all shrunk away and drew their curtains close, remembering his rough treatment before.

"I will go to the rose; I think she is a friend, for she forgave me, and took me in when the rest left me in the cold," said Thistle, much discouraged, and half afraid to ask anything of the flower he had hurt so much.

But when he came to the garden the rose-mother welcomed him kindly, and proudly showed the family of little buds that now grew on her stem.

"I will trust and help you for Lilybell's sake," she said. "Look up, my darlings, and show the friend how rosy your little faces are growing; you need not be afraid now."

But the buds leaned closer to their mother, and would only peep at Thistle, for they remembered the little sister whom he had killed, and they feared him.

"Ah," he sadly thought, "if I had only been kind like Lily, they would all love and trust me, and be glad to help me. How beautiful goodness is! I must try to prove to them that I *am* sorry; then they will believe me, and show me how to find the crown."

So, at night when the flowers were asleep, he watered them; sung lullabies to the restless young birds, and tucked the butterflies up under the leaves where no dew could spoil their lovely wings. He rocked the baby-buds to sleep when they grew impatient before it was time to blossom; he kept grubs from harming the delicate leaves of the flowers, and brought cool winds to refresh them when the sun was hot.

The rose was always good to him, and when the other plants wondered who did so many kind things, she said to them,—

"It is Thistle, and he is so changed I am sure we may trust him. He hides by day for no one is friendly, but by night he works or sits alone, and sobs and sighs so sadly I cannot sleep for pity."

Then they all answered, "We will love and help him for Lilybell's sake."

So they called him to come and be friends, and he was very happy to be forgiven. But he did not forget his task, and when he told them what it was, they called Downy-back, the mole, and bid him show Thistle where the earth elves lived. Thanking the kind flowers, Thistle followed the mole deep into the ground, along the road he knew so well, till they saw a light before them.

"There they are; now you can go on alone, and good luck to you," said Downy-back, as he scampered away,—for he liked the dark best.

Thistle came to a great hall made of jewels that shone like the sun, and here many spirits were dancing like fireflies to the music of silver bells.

One of these came and asked why he was there, and when he told her, Sparkle said, "You must work for us if you want to earn the golden wand."

"What must I do?" asked Thistle.

"Many things," answered Sparkle; "some of us watch over the roots of the flowers and keep them warm and safe; others gather drops and make springs that gush up among the rocks, where people drink the fresh water and are glad; others dig for jewels, make good-luck pennies, and help miners find gold and silver hidden in dark places. Can you be happy here, and do all these things faithfully?"

"Yes, for love of Lily I can do anything," said Thistle bravely, and fell to work at once with all his heart.

It was hard and dull for the gay fairy, who loved light and air, to live in the earth like a mole; and often he was very sad and tired, and longed to fly away to rest. But he never did, and at last Sparkle said, "You have done enough. Here is the golden wand, and as many jewels as you like."

But Thistle cared only for the wand, and hurried up to the sunshine as fast as he could climb, eager to show the Brownies how well he had kept his word.

They were very glad to see him back and told him to rest a little. But he could not wait, and with a look at Lily, still fast asleep, he flew away to find the air spirits.

No one seemed to know where they lived, and Thistle was in despair till he remembered hearing Buzz speak of them when he first met him.

"I dare not go to the hive, for the bees might kill me, I did so much harm. Perhaps if I first show them I am sorry, they will forgive me as the flowers did," he said.

So he went into a field of clover and worked busily till he had filled two blue-bells full of the sweetest honey. These he left at the door of the hive when no one saw him, and then hid in the apple-tree close by.

The bees were much pleased and surprised; for every day two little blue jars stood at the door, full of honey so fresh and sweet that it was kept for the Queen and the royal babies.

"It is some good elf, who knows how much trouble we have had this summer, and wants to help us fill our cells before the frost comes. If we catch the kind fellow we will thank him well," said the bees gratefully.

"Ah, ha! we shall be friends again, I think, if I keep on," laughed Thistle, much cheered as he sat among the leaves.

After this he not only left the pretty honey-pots, but flew far and wide for all the flowering herbs bees love to suck, and nearly broke his back lugging berries from the wood, or great bags of pollen for their bread, till he was as dusty as a little miller. He helped the ants with their heavy loads, the field-mice with their small harvesting, and chased flies from the patient cows feeding in the fields. No one saw him, but all loved "Nimble Nobody" as they called the invisible friend who did so many kindly things.

At last they caught him, as he was wrapping a lizard who had chills in a warm mullein-leaf blanket.

"Why, it is naughty Thistle!" cried the bees, ready to sting him to death.

"No, no," chirped an old cricket, who had kept the secret. "It is the good fellow who has done so much to make us all happy and comfortable. Put up your stings and shake hands, before he flies away to hide from you again."

The bees could hardly believe this at first, but finding it true were glad to make up the quarrel and be friends. When they heard what Thistle wanted, they consented at once, and sent Buzz to show him the way to Cloudland, where the air spirits lived.

It seemed a lovely place, for the sky was gold and purple overhead, silver mist hung like curtains from the rainbow arches, and white clouds were piled up like downy cushions for the spirits to sleep on. But they were very busy flying to and fro like motes in a sunbeam, some polishing the stars that they might shine well at night, some drawing up water from rivers and lakes, to shower it down again in rain or dew; others sent messages by the winds that kept coming and going like telegraph-boys, with news from all parts of the world; and others were weaving light into a shining stuff to hang on dark walls, wrap about budding plants, and clothe all spirits of the airy world.

"These are the ones I want," said Thistle, and asked for the mantle of sunshine.

"You must earn it first, and help us work," answered the weavers.

Thistle willingly went with them and shared their lovely tasks; but most of all he liked to shake sweet dreams from the dreamland tree down upon little people in their beds, to send strong, bright rays suddenly into dark rooms, dancing on the walls and cheering sick or sad eyes. Sometimes he went riding to the earth on a raindrop, like a little water-cart man, and sprinkled the dusty road or gave some thirsty plant a good drink. He helped the winds carry messages, and blow flower-seeds into lonely places to spring and blossom there, a pleasant surprise for all who might find them.

It was a busy and a happy life, and he liked it; for fairies love light, air, and motion, and he was learning to live for good and helpful things. Sooner than he expected the golden cloak was won, and he shot like a falling star to the forest with his prize.

"One more trial and she will wake," said the Brownies, well pleased.

"This I shall not like, for I am not a water elf, but I'll do my best," answered Thistle, and roamed away into the wood, following a brook till he came to the lake where he used to play with Gauzy-wing. As he stood wondering how to find the nixies, he heard a faint cry for help, and presently found a little frog with a broken leg, lying on the moss.

"I tried to jump too far, when a cruel child was going to tread on me, and fell among the stones; I long for the water, but can drag myself no farther," sighed the frog, his bright eyes dim with pain.

Thistle did not like to touch the cold thing, but remembering his own unkindness to the dragon-fly, he helped the poor froggie to a fallen oak-leaf, and then tugged it by its stout stem to the waterside where he could bathe the hurt leg and bring cool draughts in an acorn cup.

"Alas! I cannot swim, and I am very tired of this bed," cried poor Hop after a day or two, during which Thistle fed and nursed him tenderly.

"I'll pull a lily-pad to the shore, and when you are on it we can sail about wherever we please, without tiring you," and away went the elf to find the green boat.

After that they floated all day, and anchored at night, and Hop got well so fast that soon he could dive off and paddle a bit with his hands, or float, using his well leg to steer with.

Thistle had talked about the water sprites, but Hop was rather a dull fellow, and lived in the mud, so he could tell him nothing. One day, however, a little fish popped up his head and said,—

"I know, and for kind Lilybell's sake I'll show you where they live."

Then Thistle left grateful Hop to his family, and folding his wings plunged into the lake after the silvery fish, who darted deeper and deeper till they stood in a curious palace made of rosy coral at the bottom of the sea. Gay shells made the floors and ornamented the walls. Lovely sea-weeds grew from the white sand, and heaps of pearls lay everywhere. The water sprites in their blue robes floated here and there, or slept in beds of foam, rocked by the motion of the waves.

They gathered round the stranger, bringing all sorts of treasures for him. But he did not care for these, and told them what he wanted. Then little Pearl, the gentlest of the sprites, said:

"You must help the coral-workers till the branches of their tree reach the air; because we want a new island, and that is the way we begin them. It is very dull work, but we cannot give you the crown till that is done."

Thistle was ready to begin at once, and hastened away to the coral-tree, where hundreds of little creatures were building cell upon cell, till the white tree rose tall and wide, spreading through the blue water. It *was* very dull, and the poor fairy never could lose his fear of the strange monsters that swam to and fro, staring at him with big eyes, or opening their great mouths as if to swallow him. There was no sun,—only a dim light, and the sky seemed full of storm, when the waves rolled overhead, and wrecks came floating down. The sea-flowers had no sweetness; the only birds were flying-fish and Mother Carey's chickens, as the stormy petrels are called. Thistle pined for light and air, but kept patiently at work, and his only pleasure was now and then to float with Pearl on the waves that rippled to the shore, and get a breath of warm air from the lovely earth he longed to see again.

At last the great tree rose above the sea, and the long task was done; for now the waves would wash weeds over the branches, gulls would bring earth and sticks to make their nests, and by and by an island would be formed where men might land or wild birds live in peace.

"Now you can go. Here is the crown of water-drops, changed to diamonds, that will always lie cool and bright on your Lily's head. Good-by, good-by," said Pearl, as she gave the reward and waved her hand to Thistle, who shook the foam off his wings and flew away in the sunshine, like a happy butterfly just out of its cell.

When he came to the wood the Brownies hastened to meet him, and he saw that they had made the place beautiful with wreaths from tree to tree; birds were singing their sweetest on every bough; the brook was laughing as it hurried by to tell the good news wherever it went; and the flowers, all in their best, were dancing with impatience to welcome him home.

Lilybell lay with the cloak of sunshine folded round her, and the golden wand in her hand, waiting for the crown and the kiss that should wake her from this long sleep. Thistle gave them both; and when her eyes opened and she stretched out her arms to him, he was the happiest fairy in the world. The Brownies told all he had done, and how at last he had learned to be gentle, true, and brave, after many trials and troubles.

"You shall have the crown, for you have worked so hard you deserve it, and I will have a wreath of flowers," said Lily, so glad and proud she cared for nothing else.

"Keep your crown, for here are friends coming to bring Thistle his rewards," said the Brownies, as they pointed to a troop of earth spirits rising from among the mossy roots of an old tree. Sparkle brought a golden wand like the one he had earned for Lily, and while she was giving it, down through the air came the sky spirits, with the mantle of sunshine as their gift. Hardly had they folded it round happy Thistle, when the sound of music, like drops falling in time and tune, was heard, and along the brook in their boats of rosy shells came the water sprites with the crown.

As they put it on his head all took hands and danced about the two elves, shouting in their soft voices, "Thistledown and Lilybell! Long live our King and Queen!"

Ripple, The Water Sprite

Down in the deep sea lived Ripple, a happy little water sprite. She lived in a palace of red coral, with gardens of sea-flowers all round it, the waves like a blue sky above it, and white sand full of jewels for its floor. Ripple and her mates had gay times playing with the sea-urchins, chasing flying-fish, rocking in the shells, and weaving many-colored sea-weed into delicate clothes to wear.

But the pastime Ripple loved best was to rise to the light and air, and float on the waves that rocked her softly in the sunshine, while the gulls stooped to tell her news of the great world they saw in their long flights. She liked to watch little children playing on the shore, and when they ran into the sea she caught them in her arms and held them up and kissed them, though they saw and felt only the cool water and the white foam.

Ripple had one sorrow; for when tempests came and the waves rolled overhead like black clouds, ships were often wrecked, and those whom the angry sea drowned came floating down, pale and cold, to the home of the water sprites, who mourned over them, and laid them in graves of white sea-sand, where jewels shone like flowers.

One day a little child sank down from the storm above to the quiet that was never broken, far below. Its pretty eyes were closed as if asleep, its long hair hung about the pale face like wet weeds, and the little hands still held the shells they had been gathering when the cruel waves swept it away. The tender-hearted sprites cried salt tears over it, and wrapped it in their softest sheets, finding it so lovely and so sad they could not bury it out of sight. While they sung their lullabies Ripple heard through the roar of wind and water a bitter cry that seemed to call her. Floating up through foam and spray she saw a woman standing on the beach with her arms outstretched, imploring the cruel sea to give her back her little child.

Ripple longed so much to comfort the poor mother that power was given her to show herself, and to make her soft language understood. A slender creature, in a robe as white as foam, with eyes as blue as the sea, and a murmuring voice that made music like falling drops of water, bent over the weeping woman and told her that the child was cared for far below all storms, and promised to keep the little grave beautiful with sea-flowers, and safe from any harm. But the mother could not be comforted, and still cried bitterly,—

"Give him back to me alive and laughing, or I cannot live. Dear sprite, have you no charm to make the little darling breathe again? Oh, find one, find one, or let me lie beside him in the hungry sea."

"I will look far and wide and see if I can help you. Watch by the shore, and I will come again with the little child if there is any power in land or sea to make him live," cried Ripple, so eager to do this happy thing that she sprang into the ocean and vanished like a bubble.

She hurried to the Queen in her palace of pearls and told her all the sad story.

"Dear Ripple, you cannot keep your promise, for there is no power in my kingdom to work this spell. The only thing that could do it would be a flame from the sun to warm the little body into life, and you could never reach the fire spirits' home far, far away."

"But I *will*!" cried Ripple, bravely. "If you had seen the poor mother's tears and heard her cries you would feel as I do, and never let her watch in vain. Tell me where I must go; and I will not be afraid of anything if I can only make the little child live again."

"Far away beside the sun live the fire spirits; but I cannot tell the road, for it is through the air and no water sprite could live to reach it. Dear Ripple, do not go, for if any harm comes to you I shall lose my sweetest subject," said the Queen,—and all the others begged her to stay safely at home.

But Ripple would not break her promise, and they had to let her go. So the sprites built a tomb of delicate, bright shells, where the child might lie till she came to make him live again; and with a brave good-by Ripple floated away on her long journey to the sky.

"I will go round the world till I find a road to the sun. Some kind friend will help me, for I have no wings and cannot float through the blue air as through the sea," she said, as she came to the other side of the ocean and saw a lovely land before her. Grass was green on all the hills, flowers were budding, young leaves danced upon the trees, and birds were singing everywhere.

"Why are you all so gay?" asked Ripple, wondering.

"Spring is coming! Spring is coming! and all the earth is glad," sang the lark, as the music poured from its little throat.

"Shall I see her?" asked Ripple, eagerly.

"You will meet her soon. The sunshine told us she was near, and we are hurrying to be up and dressed to welcome her back," answered a blue-eyed violet, dancing on her stem for joy.

"I will ask her how to reach the fire spirits. She travels over the earth every year, and perhaps can show me the way," said Ripple, as she went on.

Soon a beautiful child came dancing over the hills, rosy as dawn, with hair like sunshine, a voice like the balmy wind, and her robe full of seeds, little leaves, dewdrops, and budding flowers, which she scattered far and wide, till the earth smiled back at the smiling sky.

"Dear Spring, will you help a poor little sprite, who is looking for the fire spirits' home?" cried Ripple,—and told her tale so eagerly that the child stopped to hear.

"Alas, I cannot tell you," answered Spring, "but my elder sister Summer is coming behind me, and she may know. I long to help, so I will give you this breeze, that will carry you over land and sea and never tire. I wish I could do more, but the world is calling me, and I must go."

"Many thanks, kind Spring," cried Ripple, as she floated away on the breeze. "Say a kind word to the poor mother waiting on the shore, and tell her I do not forget."

Then the lovely season flew on with her sunshine and song, and Ripple went swiftly over hill and dale till she came to the place where Summer lived. Here the sun shone warmly on early fruit and ripening grain; the wind blew freshly over sweet hay-fields and rustled the thick branches of the trees. Heavy dews and soft showers refreshed the growing things, and long bright days brought beauty to the world.

"Now I must look for Summer," said Ripple, as she sailed along.

"I am here," said a voice, and she saw a beautiful woman floating by, in green robes, with a golden crown on her hair, and her arms full of splendid flowers.

Ripple told her story again, but Summer said with a sigh of pity,—

"I cannot show you the way, but my brother Autumn may know. I, too, will give you a gift to help you along, good little creature. This sunbeam will be a lamp to light your way, for you may have a gloomy journey yet."

Then Summer went on, leaving all green and golden behind her, and Ripple flew away to look for Autumn. Soon the fields were yellow with corn and grain; purple grapes hung on the vines; nuts rattled down among the dead leaves, and frost made the trees gay with lovely colors. A handsome hunter, in a russet suit, came striding over the hills, with his hounds about him, while he made music on his silver horn, and all the echoes answered him.

This was Autumn, but he was no wiser than his sisters, and seeing the little sprite's disappointment he kindly said,—

"Ask Winter; he knows the fire spirits well, for when he comes they fly down to kindle fires on the hearths where people gather to keep warm. Take this red leaf, and when you meet his chilly winds wrap it round you, else you will be frozen to death. A safe journey and a happy end;" and with a shrill blast on his horn Autumn hurried away, with his hounds leaping after him.

"Shall I ever get there?" sighed poor Ripple, as the never-tiring breeze flew on, till the sky grew dark and cold winds began to blow. Then she folded the warm red leaf about her like a cloak, and looked sadly down at the dead flowers and frozen fields, not knowing that Winter spread a soft blanket of snow over them, so they could lie safely asleep till Spring woke them again.

Presently, riding on the north wind, Winter came rushing by, with a sparkling crown of ice on his white hair, and a cloak of frost-work, from which he scattered snow-flakes far and wide.

"What do you want with me, pretty thing? Do not be afraid; I am warm at heart, though rude and cold outside," said Winter, with a smile that made his pleasant face glow in the frosty air.

When Ripple told what she was looking for, he nodded and pointed to the gloomy sky.

"Far away up there is the palace, and the only road is through cloud and mist and strange places full of danger. It is too hard a task for you, and the fire spirits are wild, hot-tempered things who may kill you. Come back with me, and do not try."

"I cannot go back, now that I have found the way. Surely the spirits will not hurt me when I tell why I have come; and if they do give me the spark I shall be the happiest sprite in all the big sea. Tell the poor mother I will keep my word; and be kind to her, she is so sad."

"You brave little creature! I think you will succeed. Take this snowflake, that will never melt, and good luck to you," cried Winter, as the north wind carried him away, leaving the air full of snow.

"Now, dear Breeze, fly straight up till we reach our journey's end. Sunbeam shall light the way; Redleaf shall keep me warm, and Snowflake lie here beside me till I need it. Good-by to land and sea; now away, up to the sun!"

When Ripple first began her airy journey, heavy clouds lay piled like hills about her, and a cold mist filled the air. Higher and higher they went, and darker grew the air, while a stormy wind tossed the little traveller to and fro as if on the angry sea.

"Shall I ever see the beautiful world again?" sighed Ripple. "It is indeed a dreadful road, and but for the seasons' gifts I should have died. Fly fast, dear wind, and bring me to the sunshine again."

Soon the clouds were left behind, the mist rolled away, and she came up among the stars. With wondering eyes she looked at the bright worlds that once seemed dim and distant when she saw them from the sea. Now they moved around her, some shining with a soft light, some with many-colored rings, some pale and cold, while others burned with a red glare.

Ripple would gladly have stayed to watch them, for she fancied voices called; faces smiled at her, and each star made music as it shone in the wide sky. But higher up, still nearer to the sun, she saw a far-off light that glittered like a crimson flame, and made a fiery glow. "The spirits must be there," she said, and hurried on, eager to reach her journey's end.

Up she flew till straight before her lay a broad path that led to a golden arch, behind which she could see lovely creatures moving to and fro. As she drew nearer, the air grew so hot that the red leaf shrivelled up, and Ripple would have died if she had not quickly unfolded the snowflake and wrapped herself in that cool cloak. Then she could safely pass under the tall arch into a strange place, where the walls were of orange, blue, and purple flames, that made beautiful figures as they flickered to and fro. Here the fire spirits lived, and Ripple saw with wonder their crowns of flame, their flashing eyes, the sparks that popped from their lips as they spoke, and how in each one's bosom burned a little flame that never wavered or went out.

She had time to see no more, for the wild things came dancing round her; and their hot breath would have burned her if she had not pulled the snow-cloak over her head and begged them not to touch her, but to take her to the Queen.

Through halls of many-colored fire they led her to a spirit more brilliant than the rest; for a crown of yellow flames waved on her head, and under the transparent violet of her robe the light in her breast shone like a star.

Then Ripple told how she had been round the world to find them, and, thanks to the seasons, had come at last to ask the magic spark that would make the little child live again.

"We cannot give it," said the Queen; "for each of us must take something from our bosom-fires to make up this flame, and this we do not like to do; because the brighter these souls of ours burn, the lovelier we are."

"Dear, warm-hearted spirits, do not send me away without it after this long, hard journey," cried Ripple, clasping her hands. "I am sure if you do this kind thing your souls will shine the brighter; for every good act makes us beautiful. Give me the spark and I will do anything I can for you."

As she spoke, the cloak fell back a little, and the Queen saw the chain of jewels Ripple wore.

"If you will give me those lovely blue stones that shine like water I will give a little of my bosom-fire for the child; because you are a brave sprite, and it is hard to be cruel to you."

Gladly Ripple gave her the necklace; but, alas! as soon as the Queen's hand touched it the jewels melted like snow, and fell in bright drops to the ground. Then the Queen's eyes flashed, and the spirits gathered angrily about Ripple, while sparks showered from their lips as they spoke angrily to her.

"I have many finer ones at home, and if you will give me the flame I will bring all I can gather in the sea, and each shall have a necklace to remember the kind deed you have done," she said gently, as they hovered about her, looking ready to burn her up in their wrath.

"We will do it," said the Queen; "but if the jewels you bring melt like these, we shall keep you a prisoner here. Promise to come back, or we shall send lightning to find and kill you, even at the bottom of the sea."

Ripple promised, and each spirit gave a spark, till the golden flame was made, and put into a crystal vase, where it shone like a splendid star.

"Remember! remember!" cried the fierce imps as they led her to the arch and left her to travel back through mist and cloud till far below she saw the beautiful blue sea.

Gladly she plunged into the cool waves and sunk to her home, where her friends hastened joyfully to welcome her.

"Now come," they said, "dear, brave Ripple, and finish the good work you have begun." They gathered round the tomb, where like a marble image lay the little child. Ripple placed the flame on his breast and watched it sparkle there while the color came slowly back to the pale face, light to the dim eyes, and breath through the cold lips, till the child woke from his long sleep and looked up smiling as he called his mother.

Then the spirits sang for joy, and dressed him in pretty clothes of woven sea-weed, put chains of shells on his neck and a wreath of water-flowers on his head.

"Now you shall see your mother who has waited so long, dear child," said Ripple, taking him in her arms and feeling that all her weariness was not in vain.

On the shore the poor woman still sat, watching and waiting patiently, as she had done all that weary year. Suddenly a great wave came rolling in, and on it, lifted high by arms as white as foam, sat the child waving his hands as he cried to her, "I am coming, mother, and I have such lovely things to show you from the bottom of the sea!"

Then the wave broke gently on the shore and left the child safe in his happy mother's arms.

"O faithful Ripple, what can I do to thank you? I wish I had some splendid thing, but I have only this little chain of pearls. They are the tears I shed, and the sea changed them so that I might offer them to you," said the woman, when she could speak for joy.

Ripple took the pretty chain and floated away, ready for her new task, while the child danced gayly on the sand, and the mother smiled like sunshine on the happy sprite who had done so much for her.

Far and wide in all the caves of the sea did Ripple look for jewels, and when she had long necklaces of all the brightest, she flew away again on the tireless breeze to the fire palace in the sky.

The spirits welcomed her warmly as she poured out her treasures at the feet of the Queen. But when the hot hands touched the jewels, they melted and fell like drops of colored dew. Ripple was filled with fear, for she could not live in that fiery place, and begged for some other task to save her life.

"No, no," cried the spirits fiercely. "You have not kept your promise and you must stay. Fling off this cold cloak and swim in the fire-fountains till you get a soul like ours, and can help us brighten our bosom sparks again."

Ripple sank down in despair and felt that she must die; but even then was glad to give her life for the little child's. The spirits gathered about her, but as they began to pull the cloak away, underneath they saw the chain of pearls shining with a soft light, that only brightened as they put their hands upon it.

"Oh, give us this!" they cried; "it is finer than the others, and does not melt. Give us this and you may go free."

Ripple gladly gave it, and, safe under the cloak, told them how the pearls they so proudly divided to wear were tears which, but for them, would still be flowing. This pleased the spirits, for they had warm hearts as well as hot tempers, and they said, smiling,—"Since we may not kiss you, and you cannot live with us, we will show our love for you by giving you a pleasant journey home. Come out and see the bright path we have made."

They led her to the gate and there she saw a splendid rainbow arching from the sky to the sea, its lovely colors shining in the sun.

Then with thanks and good-by, happy little Ripple flew back along that lovely road, and every wave in the great ocean danced for joy to welcome her home.

Eva's Visit To Fairyland

A little girl lay on the grass down by the brook wondering what the brown water said as it went babbling over the stones. As she listened she heard another kind of music that seemed to come nearer and nearer, till round the corner floated a beautiful boat filled with elves, who danced on the broad green leaves of the lily of the valley, while the white bells of the tall stem that was the mast rung loud and sweet.

A flat rock, covered with moss, stood in the middle of the brook, and here the boat was anchored for the elves to rest a little. Eva watched them at their pretty play, as they flew about or lay fanning themselves and drinking from the red-brimmed cups on the rocks. Wild strawberries grew in the grass close by, and Eva threw some of the ripest to the fairy folk; for honey and dew seemed a poor sort of lunch to the child. Then the elves saw her, and nodded and smiled and called, but their soft voices could not reach her. So, after whispering among themselves, two of them flew to the brookside, and perching on a buttercup said close to Eva's ear,—

"We have come to thank you for your berries, and to ask if we can do anything for you, because this is our holiday and we can become visible to you."

"Oh, let me go to fairyland! I have longed so to see and know all about you dear little people; and never would believe it is true that there are no fairies left," cried Eva, so glad to find that she was right.

"We should not dare to take some children, they would do so much harm; but you believe in us, you love all the sweet things in the world, and never hurt innocent creatures, or tread on flowers, or let ugly passions come into your happy little heart. You shall go with us and see how we live."

But as the elves spoke, Eva looked very sad and said,—

"How can I go? I am so big I should sink that pretty ship with one finger, and I have no wings."

The elves laughed and touched her with their soft hands, saying,—

"You cannot hurt us now. Look in the water and see what we have done."

Eva looked and saw a tiny child standing under a tall blue violet. It was herself, but so small she seemed an elf in a white pinafore and little pink sun-bonnet. She clapped her hands and skipped for joy, and laughed at the cunning picture; but suddenly she grew sober again, as she looked from the shore to the rock.

"But now I am so wee I cannot step over, and you cannot lift me, I am sure."

"Give us each a hand and do not be afraid," said the elves, and whisked her across like dandelion down.

The elves were very glad to see her, and touched and peeped and asked questions as if they had never had a mortal child to play with before. Eva was so small she could dance with them now, and eat what they ate, and sing their pretty songs. She found that flower-honey and dewdrops were very nice, and that it was fine fun to tilt on a blade of grass, to slide down a smooth bulrush-stem, or rock in the cup of a flower. She learned

new and merry games, found out what the brook said, saw a cowslip blossom, and had a lovely time till the captain of the ship blew a long sweet blast on a honeysuckle horn, and all the elves went aboard and set sail for home.

"Now I shall find the way to Fairyland and can go again whenever I like," thought Eva, as she floated away.

But the sly little people did not mean that she should know, for only now and then can a child go to that lovely place. So they set the bells to chiming softly, and all sung lullabies till Eva fell fast asleep, and knew nothing of the journey till she woke in Fairyland.

It seemed to be sunset; for the sky was red, the flowers all dreaming behind their green curtains, the birds tucked up in their nests, and there was no sound but the whisper of the wind that softly sang, "Good-night, good-night."

"We all go early to bed unless the moon shines. We are tired, so come and let us make you cosey till to-morrow," said the elves, showing her a dainty bed with white rose-leaves for sheets, a red rose-leaf for coverlet, and two plump little mushrooms for pillows. Cobweb curtains hung over it, a glow-worm was the candle, and a lily-of-the-valley cup made a nice night-cap, while a tiny gown of woven thistle-down lay ready to be put on.

Eva quickly undressed and slipped into the pretty bed, where she lay looking at the red light till sleep kissed her eyelids, and a lovely dream floated through her mind till morning came.

As soon as the sun peeped over the hills the elves were up and away to the lake, where they all dipped and splashed and floated and frolicked till the air was full of sparkling drops and the water white with foam. Then they wiped on soft cobweb towels, which they spread on the grass to dry, while they combed their pretty hair and put on fresh gowns of flower-leaves. After that came breakfast, all sitting about in parties to eat fruit and cakes of pollen, while their drink was fresh dew.

"Now, Eva, you see that we are not idle, foolish creatures, but have many things to do, many lessons to learn, and a heaven of our own to hope for," said the elves when they had all sung together; while the wind, who was the house-maid there, cleared the tables by blowing everything away at one breath. "First of all come to our hospital,—for here we bring all the sick and hurt things cruel or careless people have harmed. In your world children often torment and kill poor birds and worms and flies, and pick flowers to throw away, and chase butterflies till their poor wings are broken. All these we care for, and our magic makes them live again. Come and see."

Eva followed to a cool, quiet place, where on soft beds lay many wounded things. Rose, the fairy nurse, was binding up the leg of a fly as he lay in a cobweb hammock and feebly buzzed his thanks. In another place an ugly worm was being put together after a cruel boy had cut him in two. Eva thought the elves were good to do such work, and went on to a humming-bird which lay in a bed of honeysuckles, with the quick colors very dim on its little breast and bright wings very still.

"I was shot with an air-gun, and my poor head still aches with the dreadful blow," sighed the poor bird, trying to sip a little honey with his long beak.

"I'm nearly well," chirped a cricket, whose stiff tail had been pulled off by a naughty child and nicely put on again by a very skilful elf.

He looked so cheerful and lively as he hopped about on his bed of dried grass, with his black eyes twinkling, and a bandage of bindweed holding his tail firmly in place till it was well, that Eva laughed aloud, and at the pleasant sound all the sick things smiled and seemed better.

Rows of pale flowers stood in one place, and elves watered them, or tied up broken leaves, or let in the sunshine to cure their pains,—for these delicate invalids needed much care; and Mignonette was the name of the nurse who watched over them, like a little Sister of Charity, with her gray gown and sweet face.

"You have seen enough. Come to school now, and see where we are taught all that fairies must know," said Trip, the elf who was guiding her about.

In a pleasant place they found the child elves sitting on pink daisies with their books of leaves in their hands, while the teacher was a Jack-in-the-pulpit, who asked questions, and was very wise. Eva nodded to the little ones, and they smiled at the stranger as they rustled their books and pretended to study busily.

A class in arithmetic was going on, and Eva listened to questions that none but elves would care to know.

"Twinkle, if there were fifteen seeds on a dandelion, and the wind blew ten away, how many would be left?"

"Five."

"Bud, if a rose opens three leaves one day, two the next, and seven the next, how many in all?"

"Eleven."

"Daisy, if a silk-worm spins one yard of fairy cloth in an hour, how many can he spin in a day?"

"Twelve, if he isn't lazy," answered the little elf, fluttering her wings, as if anxious to be done.

"Now we will read," said Jack, and a new class flew to the long leaf, where they stood in a row, with open books, ready to begin.

"You may read 'The Flower's Lesson' to-day, and be careful not to sing-song, Poppy," said the teacher, passing a dainty book to Eva that she might follow the story.

"Once there was a rose who had two little buds. One was happy and contented, but the other always wanted something.

"'I wish the elves would bring me a star instead of dew every night. The drop is soon gone, but a star would shine splendidly, and I should be finer than all the other flowers,' said the naughty bud one night.

"'But you need the dew to live, and the moon needs the stars up there to light the world. Don't fret, sister, but be sure it is best to take what is sent, and be glad,' answered the good bud.

"'I won't have the dew, and if I cannot get a star I will take a firefly to shine on my breast,' said the other, shaking off a fresh drop that had just fallen on her, and folding her leaves round the bright fly.

"'Foolish child!' cried the rose-mother; 'let the fly go, before he harms you. It is better to be sweet and fair than to shine with a beauty not your own. Be wise, dear, before it is too late.'

"But the silly bud only held the firefly closer, till in its struggles it tore her leaves and flew away. When the hot sun came up the poor bud hung all faded on her stem, longing for a cool drop to drink. Her sister was strong and fresh, and danced gayly in the wind, opening her red petals to the sun.

"'Now I must die. Oh, why was I vain and silly?' sobbed the poor bud, fainting in the heat.

"Then the mother leaned over her, and from her bosom, where she had hidden it, the dew-drop fell on the thirsty bud, and while she drank it eagerly the rose drew her closer, whispering, 'Little darling, learn to be contented with what heaven sends, and make yourself lovely by being good.'"

"I shall remember that story," said Eva when the elves shut their books and flew back to the daisy seats.

"Would you like to hear them sing?" asked Trip.

"Very much," said Eva, and in the little song they gave her she got another lesson to carry home.

"I shine," says the sun,

"To give the world light,"

"I glimmer," adds the moon,

"To beautify the night."

"I ripple," says the brook,

"I whisper," sighs the breeze,

"I patter," laughs the rain,

"We rustle," call the trees

"We dance," nod the daisies,

"I twinkle," shines the star,

"We sing," chant the birds,

"How happy we all are!"

"I smile," cries the child,

Gentle, good, and gay;

The sweetest thing of all,

The sunshine of each day.

"I shall sing that to myself and try to do my part," said Eva, as the elves got out their paints and brushes of butterfly-down, and using large white leaves for paper, learned to imitate the colors of every flower.

"Why do they do this?" asked Eva, for she saw no pictures anywhere.

"We keep the flowers fresh, for in the world below they have trials with the hot sun that fades, the mould that spots, grubs that gnaw, and frost that kills. We melt bits of rainbow in our paint-pots, and when it is needed we brighten the soft color on Anemone's cheeks, deepen the blue of Violet's eyes, or polish up the cowslips till they shine like cups of gold. We redden the autumn leaves, and put the purple bloom on the grapes. We made the budding birches a soft green, color maple keys, and hang brown tassels on the alder twigs. We repair the dim spots on butterflies' wings, paint the blue-bird like the sky, give Robin his red vest, and turn the yellow bird to a flash of sunshine. Oh, we are artists, and hereafter you will see our pictures everywhere."

"How lovely!" said Eva. "I often wondered who kept all these delicate things so beautiful and gay. But where are we going now?" she added, as the elves led her away from the school.

"Come and see where we learn to ride," they answered, smiling as if they enjoyed this part of their education.

In a little dell where the ground was covered with the softest moss Eva found the fairy riding-school and gymnasium. The horses were all kinds of winged and swift-footed things, and the race-ground was a smooth path round the highest moss mound. Groups of elves lay on the ground, swung on the grass-blades, or sat in the wood flowers, that stood all about.

In one place the mothers and fathers were teaching their little ones to fly. The baby elves sat in a row on the branch of a birch-tree, fluttering their small wings and nestling close together, timid yet longing to launch boldly out into the air and float as the others did. The parents were very patient, and one by one the babies took little flights, getting braver and braver each time.

One very timid elf would not stir, so the sly papa and mamma put it on a leaf, and each taking a side, they rode the dear about for a few minutes, till she was used to the motion; then they dropped the leaf, and the little elf finding herself falling spread her wings and flew away to a tall bush, to the great delight of all who saw it.

But the riding was very funny, and Eva soon forgot everything else in watching the gay creatures mount their various horses and fly or gallop round the ring while the teacher—a small fellow in a gay cap and green suit—stood on the moss-mound, cracking a long whip and telling them how to ride in the best fairy fashion.

Several lady elves learned to mount butterflies gracefully and float where they liked, sitting firmly when the winged horses alighted on the flowers. The boy elves preferred field-mice, who went very swiftly round and round, with saddles of woven grass and reins of yellow bindweed, which looked well on the little gray creatures, who twinkled their bright eyes and whisked their long tails as if they liked it.

But the best fun of all was when the leaping began; and Eva quite trembled lest some sad accident should happen; for grasshoppers were led out, and the gallant elves leaped over the highest flower-tops without falling off.

It was very funny to see the queer hoppers skip with their long legs, and when Puck, the riding-master, mounted, and led a dozen of his pupils a race round the track, all the rest of the elves laughed aloud and clapped their hands in great glee; for Puck was a famous fairy, and his pranks were endless.

Eva was shouting with the rest as the green horses came hopping by, when Puck caught her up before him, and away they raced so swiftly that her hair whistled in the wind and her breath was nearly gone. A tremendous leap took them high over the little hill and landed Eva in a tall dandelion, where she lay laughing and panting as if on a little yellow sofa, while Trip and her mates fanned her and smoothed her pretty hair.

"That was splendid!" she cried. "I wish I was a real fairy, and always lived in this lovely place. Everything will seem so ugly and big and coarse when I go home I shall never be happy again."

"Oh, yes, you will," answered Trip, "for after this visit you will be able to hear and see and know what others never do, and that will make you happy and good. You believed in us, and we reward all who love what we love, and enjoy the beautiful world they live in as we do."

"Thank you," said Eva. "If I can know what the birds sing and the brook, and talk with the flowers, and see faces in the sky, and hear music in the wind, I won't mind being a child, even if people call me queer."

"You shall understand many lovely things and be able to put them into tales and songs that all will read and sing and thank you for," said Moonbeam, a sweet, thoughtful elf, who stole quietly about, and was always singing like a soft wind.

"Oh, that is what I always wanted to do," cried Eva, "for I love my song-books best, and never find new ones enough. Show me more, dear elves, so that I can have many fine tales to tell when I am old enough to write."

"Come, then, and see our sweetest sight. We cannot show it to every one, but your eyes will be able to see through the veil, and you will understand the meaning of our flower-heaven."

So Moonlight led her away from all the rest, along a little winding path that went higher and higher till they stood on a hilltop.

"Look up and follow me," said the elf, and touching Eva's shoulders with her wand, a pair of wings shot out, and away she floated after her guide toward what looked like a white cloud sailing in the blue sky.

When they alighted a soft mist was round them, and through it Eva saw a golden glimmer like sunshine.

"Look, but do not speak," said Moonlight, beckoning her along.

Soon the mist passed away and nothing but a thin veil of gossamer like a silken cobweb hung between them and the world beyond. "Can you see through it?" whispered the elf anxiously.

Eva nodded, and then forgot everything to look with all her eyes into a lovely land of flowers; for the walls were of white lilies, the trees were rose-trees, the ground blue violets, and the birds the little yellow canary-plant, whose blossoms are like birds on the wing. Columbines sounded their red horns, and the air was filled with delicate voices, unlike any ever heard before, because it was the sweet breath of flowers set to music.

But what surprised Eva most was the sight of a common dandelion, a tuft of clover, a faded mignonette-plant, with several other humble flowers, set in a little plot by themselves as if newly come, and about them gathered a crowd of beautiful spirits, so

bright, so small, so perfect that Eva could hardly see them, and winked as if dazzled by the sunshine of this garden among the clouds.

"Who are they? and why do they care for those poor flowers?" whispered Eva, forgetting that she must not speak.

Before Moonlight could answer, all grew dim for a moment, as if a cold breath had passed beyond the curtain and chilled the delicate world within.

"Hush! mortal voices must not be heard here," answered the elf with a warning look.

"These lovely creatures are the spirits of flowers who did some good deed when they bloomed on earth, and their reward is to live here forever where there is no frost, no rain, no stormy wind to hurt them. Those poor plants have just come, for their work is done, and their souls will soon be set free from the shapes that hold them. You will see how beautiful they have made themselves when out of the common flowers come souls like the perfect ones who are welcoming them.

"That dandelion lived in the room of a poor little sick girl who had no other toy, no other playmate. She watched and loved it as she lay on her bed, for she was never well, and the good flower, instead of fading without sunshine in that dreary room, bloomed its best, till it shone like a little sun. The child died with it in her hand, and when she no longer needed it, we saved it from being thrown away and brought it here to live forever.

"The clover grew in a prison-yard, and a bad boy shut up there watched it as the only green thing that made him think of the fields at home where his mother was waiting and hoping he would come back to her. Clover did her best to keep good thoughts in his mind and he loved her, and tried to repent, and when he was told he might go, he meant to take his flower with him but forgot it in his hurry to get home. We did not forget, for the wind that goes everywhere had told us the little story, and we brought brave Clover out of prison to this flower-heaven.

"Mignonette lived in a splendid garden, but no one minded her, for she is only a little brown thing and hid in a corner, happy with her share of sunshine and rain, and her daily task of blossoming green and strong. People admired the other fine flowers and praised their perfume, never knowing that the sweetest breath of all came from the nook where Mignonette modestly hid behind the roses. No one ever praised her, or came to watch her, and the gardener took no care of her. But the bees found her out and came every day to sip her sweet honey, the butterflies loved her better than the proud roses, and the wind always stopped for a kiss as it flew by. When autumn came and all the other plants were done blossoming, and stood bare and faded, there was modest Mignonette still green and fresh, still with a blossom or two, and still smiling contentedly with a bosom full of ripened seeds,—her summer work well done, her happy heart ready for the winter sleep.

"But we said, 'No frost shall touch our brave flower; she shall not be neglected another year, but come to live loved and honored in the eternal summer that shines here.' Now look."

Eva brushed away the tears that had filled her eyes as she listened to these little histories, and looking eagerly, saw how from the dandelion, set free by the spells the spirits sang, there rose, light as down, a little golden soul, in the delicate shape the others wore. One in pale rose came from the clover, and a third in soft green with dusky

wings; but a bright face flew out of the mignonette. Then the others took hands and floated round the new-comers in an airy dance, singing so joyfully that Eva clapped her hands crying, "Happy souls! I will go home and try to be as good as they were; then I may be as happy when I go away to my heaven."

The sound of her voice made all dark, and she would have been frightened if the elf had not taken her hand and led her back to the edge of the cloud, saying as they flew down to Fairyland—"See, the sun is setting; we must take you home before this midsummer day ends, and with it our power to make ourselves known."

Eva had so much to tell that she was ready to go; but a new surprise waited for her, and she saw a fairy spectacle as she came again before the palace.

Banners of gay tulip-leaves were blowing in the wind from the lances of reeds held by a troop of elves mounted on mice; a car made of a curled green leaf with checkerberry wheels and cushions of pink mushrooms stood ready for her, and Trip as maid of honor helped her in. Lady elves on butterflies flew behind, and the Queen's trumpeters marched before making music on their horns. All the people of Elfland lined the way, throwing flowers, waving their hands, and calling, "Farewell, little Eva! Come again! Do not forget us!" till she was out of sight.

"How sweet and kind you are to me. What can I do to thank you?" said Eva to Trip, who sat beside her as they rolled along,—a gay and lovely sight, if any but fairy eyes could have seen it.

"Remember all you have seen and heard. Love the good and beautiful things you will find everywhere, and be always a happy child at heart," answered Trip with a kiss.

Before Eva could speak the sun set and in a moment every elf was invisible, all the pretty show was gone, and the child stood alone by the brook. But she never forgot her visit to Fairyland, and as she grew up she seemed to be a sort of elf herself, happy, gay, and good, with the power of making every one love her as she went singing and smiling through the world. She wrote songs that people loved to sing, told tales children delighted to read, and found so much wisdom, beauty, and music everywhere, that it was very plain she understood the sweet language of bird and flower, wind and water, and remembered all the lessons the elves taught her.

Sunshine, And Her Brothers And Sisters

Once upon a time there was a very wise old spirit called Mother Nature, who lived in a beautiful place, and had a large family of children, whom she found it rather hard to manage. When they obeyed her, all went well; but when they played pranks or quarrelled, everything was in confusion, and all sorts of trouble came.

Sunshine, the eldest girl, was a sweet creature, always good, and a great comfort to her mother at all seasons. So were South and West Winds nice little girls; but Lightning, Thunder's twin sister, was very naughty, and liked to do mischief. Snow, the fourth daughter, was a cold, quiet spirit, fond of covering up the world with the nice white sheets she kept folded away in the sky. Rain was always crying, East Wind sulking, Thunder and Hail scolding and growling, and North Wind, the biggest of the boys, went roaring and blustering about so fiercely that every one ran before him, though his wholesome breath freshened the world, and blew away much rubbish, which his gentle sisters could not manage as they kept house.

"Now, my dears, I'm very tired and going to take a nap, so be good children; do your tasks nicely, and wake me in March," said Mother Nature, one November day, when her summer work was over, and her time for rest had come.

"Yes, mamma," said Sunshine, as she tucked her up with a kiss. "I will do my best to keep the girls busy and the boys in order. Have a good sleep, and I'll call you in time for the spring work."

Then the old lady tied her night-cap over her ears, and dozed off quite comfortably, while her good daughter, after a last smile at the frosty world, went to her spinning, that there might be plenty of sunshine for the next summer.

"It's my turn now, and I'll cry as much as I like, for mother isn't here to stop me, and Sunny can't," said Rain; and down came floods of tears, while his brother, East Wind, began to blow till every one shivered, and coughs and colds and fog and mud made the world a dismal place. Sunny begged them to stop and give her a chance now and then, but they would not; and everybody said what a dreadful month November was that year.

Fortunately it was soon time for North Wind and his favorite sister Snow to come back from Iceland; and the moment the older brother's loud voice was heard, Rain and East ran and hid, for they were rather afraid of him.

"Ha, what a mess those rascals have made! Never mind, we'll soon have it all nice and tidy for Christmas," said North, as he dried up the mud, blew away the fog, and got the world ready for Snow to cover with her beautiful down quilt. In a day or two it looked like a fairy world, and Sunshine peeped out to do her part, making the ice on the trees glitter like diamonds, the snowy drifts shine like silver, and fill the blue sky full of light.

Then every one rejoiced, bells jingled merrily, children coasted and snow-balled; Christmas trees began to grow, and all faces to glow as they never do at any other time.

"The holydays shall be pleasant if I can only keep those bad boys in a good humor," said Sunny; and to make sure of them she fed Rain and East Wind on plum-cake with poppy-seeds in it, so they slept like dormice till the New Year was born.

Snow had her frolics, and no one minded, because she was so pretty; and North was so amiable just then that the white storms only made fine sleighing, and the fresh air kept cheeks rosy, eyes sparkling, lips laughing, and hearts happy as they should be at that blessed season.

Sunshine was so pleased that she came out to see the fun, and smiled so warmly that a January thaw set in.

"Dear me, I forgot that I must not be too generous at this season, or it makes trouble; for, though people enjoy my pleasant days, they leave off their furs and get cold. I'll go back to my spinning and only smile through the window; then no harm will be done."

Thunder and Lightning had been in Italy all this time, and they too got into mischief. Their mother had shut the twins up in a volcano to keep them out of the way till summer, when they were useful. Down there they found playmates to suit them, and had fine times rumbling and boiling, and sending out hot lava and showers of ashes to scare the people who lived near by. Growing tired of this, they at last planned to get up an earthquake and escape. So they kicked and shook the world like children tumbling about under the bed-clothes; and the fire roared, and Thunder growled, and Lightning flew about trying to get the lid of the volcano off. At last she did, and out they all burst with such a dreadful noise that the poor people thought the end of the world had come. Towns fell down, hills moved, the sea came up on the shore, ashes and stones covered up a whole city, and destruction and despair were everywhere.

"There! wasn't that a fine frolic? Mother won't dare to shut us up again, I fancy, when she sees what a piece of work we make for her," said naughty Lightning, dashing about to peep through the smoke at the sad scene below.

"Grand fun! but if Sunshine wakes mother we shall wish we had not done it. Let's run away to Africa and hide till this is all forgotten," answered Thunder, rather ashamed of such a dreadful prank.

So they flew off, leaving great sorrow behind them; but Sunshine did not wake mamma, though West Wind came home from Italy to tell her all about it. There was trouble here also, for Rain and East Wind had waked up, and were very angry to find they had been dosed with poppy-seeds.

"Now we'll pay Sunny for that, and turn everything topsy-turvy," they said; and calling Hail, they went to work.

Rain emptied all his water-buckets till the rivers rose and flooded the towns; the snow on the hills melted and covered the fields, washed away the railroads, carried off houses, and drowned many poor animals; Hail pelted with his stones, and East Wind blew cold and shrill till there was no comfort anywhere.

Poor Sunny was at her wits' end with all these troubles; but she would not wake her mother, and tried to manage her unruly brothers alone. West helped her, for while Sunny shone, and shone so sweetly that Rain had to stop crying, West tugged at the weather-cocks till she made East give way, and let her blow for a while. He was out of breath and had to yield; so the "bad spell of weather" was over, and the poor, half-drowned people could get dry and fish their furniture out of the flood, and moor their

floating houses at last. Sunny kept on smiling till she dried up the ground. West sent fresh gales to help her, and by March things looked much better.

"Now do be good children, and let us get ready for the spring-cleaning before mother wakes. I don't know what she *will* say to the boys, but I've done my best, and I hope she will be pleased with me," said Sunshine, when at last she sat down to rest a moment, tired out.

All the brothers and sisters except the naughty twins, gathered about her, and promised to be very good, for they loved her and were sorry for their pranks. Each tried to help her, and March was a very busy month, for all the winds blew in turn; even gentle South from far away came home to do her part. Snow folded up her down quilts and packed them away; Rain dropped a few quiet showers to swell the buds and green the grass, and Sunny began to shake out the golden webs of light she had been spinning all winter. Every one worked so well that April found that part of the world in fine order; and when South Wind blew open the first hyacinths, Mother Nature smelt them, began to rub her eyes and wake up.

"Bless me, how I've slept. Why didn't you rouse me sooner, dear? Ah, my good child, I see you've tried to do my work and get all ready for me," said the old lady, throwing away her night-cap, and peeping out of window at the spring world budding everywhere.

Then sitting in her mother's lap, Sunny told her trials and tribulations. At some Mamma Nature laughed, at others she frowned; and when it came to the earthquake and the flood, she looked very sober, saying, as she stroked her daughter's bright hair,—

"My darling, I can't explain these things to you, and I don't always understand why they happen; but you know we have only to obey the King's orders and leave the rest to him. He will punish my naughty children if he sees fit, and reward my good ones; so I shall leave them to him, and go cheerfully on with my own work. That is the only way to keep our lovely world in order and be happy. Now, call your brothers and sisters and we will have our spring frolic together."

They all came, and had a merry time; for as every one knows, April has every kind of weather; so each had a turn to show what he or she could do, and by May-day things were in fine trim, though East would nip the May queen's little nose, and all Sunny's efforts could only coax out a few hardy dandelions for the eager hands to pick.

But the children were happy, for spring had come; Mother Nature was awake again, and now all would be well with the world.

The Fairy Spring

One summer morning a party of little wood-people were talking together about something which interested them very much. The fruit-fairy was eating her breakfast as she swung on a long spray of the raspberry-vines that waved in the wind; a blue-bird was taking his bath in the pool below, looking as if a bit of the sky had fallen into the water as he splashed and shook the drops from his wings; Skip, the squirrel, was resting on the mossy wall, after clearing out his hole of last year's nuts, to be ready for a new supply; Spin, the spider, was busily spreading her webs to bleach, and Brownie, the little bear, was warming his fuzzy back in the sunshine, for his den was rather dark and cold.

"It is such a pity that no one understands what the brook is trying to tell them. If they only knew about the fairy spring as we do, this is just the day to set out and find it," said Iris, the elf, as she took the last sip of raspberry shrub from the pretty red cup, and wiped her lips on a napkin Spin had made for her.

"Ah, if they only did! how glad I should be to show them the way," answered the blue-bird, as he dried his feathers on a mossy stone, while the caddis-worms all popped their heads out of sight in their little stone houses for fear he might eat them up.

"I have called every child I see, and done my best to lead them up the mountain; but they won't come, and I cannot make them understand the sweet words the brook keeps singing. How dull human creatures are! Even Brownie knows this song, though he is a dear, clumsy thing, always going to sleep when he is not eating," said Skip, with a twinkle in his bright eye; for he and the little bear were good friends, though one was so brisk and the other so big and awkward.

"Of course I do; I've heard it ever since I was born, and the first long walk I took was up the mountain to find the wonderful spring. I drank of it, and have been the happiest creature alive ever since," answered Brownie, with a comfortable roll on the green grass.

"I am too busy to go, but my cousin Velvetback often comes down and tells me about the splendid life he leads up there, where no foot ever treads on him, no hand ever breaks his webs, and everything is so still and bright that he always is in a hurry to get home again. When my weaving and bleaching are all done I am going up to see for myself;" and Spin shook off the tiny drops of dew which shone like diamonds on her largest web.

"There is one child who comes every day to look at the brook and listen to its babble as it runs under the little bridge over there. I think *she* will soon hear what it says, and then we will lead her along higher and higher till she finds the spring, and is able to tell every one the happy secret," said Iris, shaking out her many-colored robe before she skimmed away to float over the pool, so like a glittering dragon-fly few guessed that she was a fairy.

"Yes, she is a sweet child," said the blue-bird, hopping to the wall to look along the lane to see if she was coming. "She never throws pebbles in the water to disturb the minnows, nor breaks the ferns only to let them die, nor troubles us as we work and play as most children do. She leans there and watches us as if she loved us, and sings to herself as if she were half a bird. I like her, and I hope she will be the first to find the spring."

"So do I," said Skip, going to sit by his friend and watch for the child, while Brownie peeped through a chink in the wall that she might not be frightened at sight of him, small as he was.

"She is coming! she is coming!" called Iris, who had flown to the railing of the rustic bridge, and danced for joy as a little figure came slowly down the winding lane.

A pretty child, with hair like sunshine, eyes blue as the sky, cheeks like the wild roses nodding to her on either side of the way, and a voice as sweet as the babbling brook she loved to sing with. May was never happier than when alone in the woods; and every morning, with her cup, and a little roll of bread in her basket, she wandered away to some of her favorite nooks, to feast on berries, play with the flowers, talk to the birds, and make friends with all the harmless wood-creatures who soon knew and welcomed her.

She had often wondered what the brook sang, and tried to catch the words it seemed to be calling to her. But she never quite understood till this day, for when she came to the bridge and saw her friends—blue-bird, squirrel, and dragon-fly—waiting for her, she smiled, and waved her hand to them, and just at that moment she heard the song of the brook quite plainly,—

"I am calling, I am calling,

As I ripple, run, and sing,

Come up higher, come up higher,

Come and find the fairy spring.

Who will listen, who will listen

To the wonders I can tell,

Of a palace built of sunshine,

Where the sweetest spirits dwell?—

Singing winds, and magic waters,

Golden shadows, silver rain,

Spells that make the sad heart happy,

Sleep that cures the deepest pain.

Cheeks that bloom like summer roses,

Smiling lips and eyes that shine,

Come to those who climb the mountain,

Find and taste the fairy wine.

I am calling, I am calling,

As I ripple, run, and sing;

Who will listen, who will listen,

To the story of the spring?"

"Where is it; oh, where is it?" cried May, when the song ended; for she longed to see this lovely place and enjoy these beautiful things.

"Go up higher, go up higher,

Far beyond the waterfall.

Follow Echo up the mountain,

She will answer to your call.

Bird and butterfly and blossom,

All will help to show the way;

Lose no time, the day is going,

Find the spring, dear little May,"

sung the brook; and the child was enchanted to hear the sweet voice talking to her of this pleasant journey.

"Yes, I will go at once. I am ready, and have no fear, for the woods are full of friends, and I long to see the mountain top; it must be so lovely up there," she said, looking through the green arches where the brook came dancing down over the rocks, far away to the gray peak, hidden in clouds.

There lay the fairy spring, and she was going to find it. No one would miss her, for she often played all day in the forest and went home with the lambs at night. The brook said, "Make haste!" so away she went over the wall, with Skip leaping before her, as if to show the safest stones to set her little feet on. Iris waved the raspberry-sprays, to attract her with the ripe fruit, and when the basket was nearly full, Blue-bird flew from tree to tree to lead her on further into the wood. Brownie dodged behind the rocks and fallen logs, waiting for his turn to come, as he had a fine surprise for the little traveller by and by.

It was a lovely road, and May went happily on, with thick moss underneath, shady boughs overhead, flowers to nod and smile at her, and friends to guard, guide, and amuse her. Every ant stopped work to see her pass; every mosquito piped his little song in her ear; birds leaned out of their nests to bid her good-day, and the bright-eyed snakes, fearing to alarm her, hid under the leaves. But lovely butterflies flew round her in clouds; and she looked like a pretty one herself, with her blue gown and sunny hair blowing in the wind.

So she came at last to the waterfall. Here the brook took a long leap over some high rocks, to fall foaming into a basin fringed with ferns; out of which it flowed again, to run faster than ever down to join the river rolling through the valley, to flow at last into the mighty ocean and learn a grander song.

"I never can get up there without wings," said May, as she looked at the high rocks with a tangle of vines all over them. Then she remembered what the brook told her, and called out,—

"Echo, are you here?"

"Here!" answered an airy voice.

"How can I climb up?"

"Climb up."

"Yes; but can I get through the vines?"

"Through the vines."

"It is very high, but I can try it."

"Try it, try it," answered the voice so clearly that May could not doubt what to do.

"Well, if I'm brave I shall be helped."

"Be helped," answered Echo.

"Now I'm coming, and I hope I shall find you, sweet Echo."

"Find sweet Echo," sung the voice; and when May laughed, a softer laugh answered her so gayly that she forgot her fear in eagerness to see this new friend, hiding above the waterfall.

Up she went, and as if fairy hands cleared the way for her, the tangled vines made a green ladder for her feet, while every time she stopped for breath and called, as she peeped into the shadowy nooks or looked at the dashing water, "Are you here?" the mocking voice always answered from above,—

"Here!"

So she climbed safely up and sat to rest at the top, looking down the valley where the brook danced and sparkled as if glad to see her on her way. The air blew freshly, and the sun shone more warmly here, for the trees were not so thick, and lovely glimpses of far-off hills and plains, like pictures set in green frames, made one eager to go on and see more.

Skip and Blue-bird kept her company, so she did not feel lonely, and followed these sure guides higher and higher, till she came out among the great bare cliffs, where rocks lay piled as if giants had been throwing them about in their rough play.

"Oh, how large the world is! and what a little thing I am!" said May, as she looked out over miles of country so far below that the towns looked like toy villages, and people like ants at work. A strong wind blew, all was very still, for no bird sang, and no flowers bloomed; only green moss grew on the rocks, and tiny pines no longer than her finger carpeted the narrow bits of ground here and there. An eagle flew high overhead, and great white clouds sailed by, so near that May could feel their damp breath as they passed.

The child felt a little fear, all was so vast and strange and wonderful; and she seemed so weak and small that for a moment she half wished she had not come. She was hungry and tired, but her basket was empty, and no water appeared. She sighed, and looked from the mountain top, hidden in mist, to the sunny valley where mother was, and a tear was about to fall, when Iris came floating to her like a blue and silver butterfly, and alighting on her hand let May see her lovely little face, and hear her small voice as she smiled and sung,—

"Have no fear,

Friends are here,

To help you on your way.

The mountain's breast

Will give you rest,

And we a feast, dear May.

Here at your feet

Is honey sweet,

And water fresh to sip.

Fruit I bring

On Blue-bird's wing,

And nuts sends merry Skip.

Rough and wild,

To you, dear child,

Seems the lonely mountain way;

But have no fear,

For friends are near,

To guard and guide, sweet May."

Then at the tap of the fairy's wand up gushed fresh water from the rock; Blue-bird dropped a long stalk of grass strung with raspberries like red beads; Skip scattered his best nuts; and Brownie came lumbering up with a great piece of honey-comb, folded in vine-leaves. He had found a wild-bees' nest, and this was his surprise. He was so small and gentle, and his little eyes twinkled so kindly, that May could not be afraid, and gladly sat down on the crisp moss to eat and drink with her friends about her.

It was a merry lunch, for all told tales, and each amused the little pilgrim in his or her pretty way. The bird let her hold him on her hand and admire his lovely blue plumes. Skip chattered and pranced till there seemed to be a dozen squirrels there instead of one. Brownie stood on his head, tried to dance, and was so funny in his clumsy attempts to outdo the others that May laughed till many echoes joined in her merriment. Iris told her splendid stories of the fairy spring, and begged her to go on, for no one ever had so good a chance as she to find out the secret and see the spirit who lived on the mountain top.

"I am strong and brave now, and will not turn back. Come with me, dear creatures, and help me over these great rocks, for I have no wings," said May, trudging on again, much refreshed by her rest.

"I'll carry you like a feather, my dear; step up and hold fast, and see me climb," cried Brownie, glad to be of use.

So May sat on his fuzzy back as on a soft cushion, and his strong legs and sharp claws carried him finely over the rough, steep places, while Blue-bird and Skip went beside her, and Iris flew in front to show the way. It was a very hard journey, and poor fat Brownie panted and puffed, and often stopped to rest. But May was so surprised and charmed with the lovely clouds all about her that she never thought of being tired. She forgot the world below, and soon the mist hid it from her, and she was in a world of sunshine, sky, and white clouds floating about like ships in a sea of blue air. She seemed to be riding on them when one wrapped her in its soft arms; and more than once a tiny cloud came and sat in her lap, like a downy lamb, which melted when she tried to hold it.

"Now we are nearly there, and Velvet comes to meet us. These fine fellows are the only creatures who live up here, and these tiny star-flowers the only green things that grow," said Iris, at last, when all the clouds were underneath, and the sky overhead was purple and gold, as the sun was going down.

Velvet ran nimbly to give May a silver thread which would lead her straight to the spring; and the path before her was carpeted with the pretty white stars, that seemed to smile at her as if glad to welcome her. She was so eager that she forgot her weariness, and hurried on till she came at last to the mountain top, and there like a beautiful blue eye looking up to heaven lay the fairy spring.

May ran to look into it, thinking she would see only the rock below and the clouds above; but to her wonder there was a lovely palace reflected in the clear water, and shining as if made of silver, with crystal bells chiming with a sound like water-drops set to music.

"Oh, how beautiful! Is it real? Who lives there? Can I go to it?" cried May, longing to sink down and find herself in that charming palace, and know to whom it belonged.

"You cannot go till you have drunk of the water and slept by the spring; then the spirit will appear, and you will know the secret," answered Iris, filling a pearly shell that lay on the brim of the spring.

"Must I stay here all alone? I shall be cold and afraid so far from my own little bed and my dear mother," said May, looking anxiously about her, for the sky was growing dim and night coming on.

"We will stay with you, and no harm can come to you, for the spirit will be here while you sleep. Drink and dream, and in the morning you will be in a new world."

While Iris spoke Brownie had piled up a bed of star-flowers in a little crevice of the rock; Velvet had spun a silken curtain over it to keep the dew off; Blue-bird perched on the tallest stone to keep watch; and when May had drunk a cup of the fairy water, and lay down, with Skip rolled up for a pillow, and Brownie at her feet for a warm rug, Iris waved her wand and sung a lullaby so sweet that the child was in dreamland at once.

When she woke it was day, but she had no time to see the rosy sky, the mist rolling away, or the sunshine dazzling down upon the world, for there before her rising from the spring, was the spirit, so beautiful and smiling, May could only clasp her hands and look. As softly as a cloud the spirit floated toward her, and with a kiss as cool as a dew-drop, she said in a voice like a fresh wind,—

"Dear child, you are the first to come and find me. Welcome to the mountain and the secret of the spring. It is this: whoever climbs up and drinks this water will leave all pain and weariness behind, and grow healthy in body, happy in heart, and learn to see and love all the simple wholesome things that help to keep us good and gay. Do you feel tired now, or lonely, or afraid? Has the charm begun to work?"

"Yes," cried May, "I think it has, for I feel so happy, light, and well, I could fly like a bird. It is so lovely here I could stay all my life if I only had mamma to enjoy it with me."

"She will come, and many others. Little children often are wiser than grown people, and lead them up without knowing it. Look and see what you have done by this longing of yours for the mountain top, and the brave journey that brought you here."

Then the spirit touched May's eyes, and looking down she saw the little path by which she had come grow wider and smoother, till it wound round and round the mountain like a broad white ribbon, and up this pleasant path came many people. Some were pale and sad; some lame, some ill; some were children in their mothers' arms; some old and bent, but were climbing eagerly up toward the fairy spring,—sure of help and health when they arrived.

"Can you cure them all?" asked May, delighted to see what hope and comfort her journey had given others.

"Not all; but every one will be the better for coming, even the oldest, the saddest, and the sickest; for my four servants, Sunshine, Fresh-air, Water, and Rest, can work miracles, as you will see. Souls and bodies need their help, and they never fail to do good if people will only come to them and believe in their power."

"I am so glad, for mamma is often ill, and loves to come to the hills and rest. Shall I see her soon? Can I go and tell her all I have learned, or must I stay till she comes?" asked May, longing to run and skip, she felt so well with the fairy water bubbling in her veins.

"Go and tell the news, and lead the others up. You will not see me, but I am here; and my servants will do their work faithfully, for all who are patient and brave. Farewell, dear child, no harm will come to you, and your friends are waiting to help you down. But do not forget when you are in the valley, or you will never find the fairy spring again."

Then the spirit vanished like mist, and May ran away, singing like a bird, and skipping like a little goat, so proud and happy she felt as if she could fly like a thistle-down. The path seemed very easy now, and her feet were never tired. Her good friends joined her by the way, and they had a merry journey back to the valley. There May thanked them and hastened to tell all she had seen and heard and done. Few believed her; most people said, "The child fell asleep and dreamed it." A few invalids looked up and sighed to be there, but had no courage to climb so far. A poet said he would go at once, and set off; so did a man who had lost his wife and little children, and was very sad. May's mother believed every word, and went hand in hand with the happy child along the path that grew wider and smoother with every pair of feet that passed.

The wood-creatures nodded at May, and rejoiced to see the party go; but there was no need of them now, so they kept out of sight, and only the child and the poet saw them. Every one enjoyed the journey, for each hour they felt better; and when at last they reached the spring, and May filled her little cup for them to drink the sweet water, every one tasted and believed, for health and happiness came to them with a single draught.

The sad man smiled, and said he felt so near to heaven and his lost children up there that he should stay. The poet began to sing the loveliest songs he ever made, and pale mamma looked like a rose, as she lay on the star-flowers, breathing the pure air, and basking in the sunshine. May was the spirit of the spring for them, and washed away the tears, the wrinkles, and the lines of pain with the blessed water, while the old mountain did its best to welcome them with mild air, cloud pictures, and the peace that lies above the world.

That was the beginning of the great cure; for when this party came down all so beautifully changed, every one began to hurry away to try their fortune also. Soon the wide road wound round and round, and up it journeyed pilgrims from all parts of the world, till the spirit and her servants had hundreds of visitors each day. People tried to build a great house up there, and make money out of the spring; but every building put

up blew away, the water vanished, and no one was cured till the mountain top was free again to all.

Then the spring gushed up more freshly than before; the little star-flowers bloomed again, and all who came felt the beauty of the quiet place, and were healed of all their troubles by the magic of the hills where the spirit of health still lives to welcome and bless whoever go to find her.

Queen Aster

For many seasons the Golden-rods had reigned over the meadow, and no one thought of choosing a king from any other family, for they were strong and handsome, and loved to rule.

But one autumn something happened which caused great excitement among the flowers. It was proposed to have a queen, and such a thing had never been heard of before. It began among the Asters; for some of them grew outside the wall beside the road, and saw and heard what went on in the great world. These sturdy plants told the news to their relations inside; and so the Asters were unusually wise and energetic flowers, from the little white stars in the grass to the tall sprays tossing their purple plumes above the mossy wall.

"Things are moving in the great world, and it is time we made a change in our little one," said one of the roadside Asters, after a long talk with a wandering wind. "Matters are not going well in the meadow; for the Golden-rods rule, and they care only for money and power, as their name shows. Now, *we* are descended from the stars, and are both wise and good, and our tribe is even larger than the Golden-rod tribe; so it is but fair that we should take our turn at governing. It will soon be time to choose, and I propose our stately cousin, Violet Aster, for queen this year. Whoever agrees with me, say Aye."

Quite a shout went up from all the Asters; and the late Clovers and Buttercups joined in it, for they were honest, sensible flowers, and liked fair play. To their great delight the Pitcher-plant, or Forefathers' Cup, said "Aye" most decidedly, and that impressed all the other plants; for this fine family came over in the "Mayflower," and was much honored everywhere.

But the proud Cardinals by the brook blushed with shame at the idea of a queen; the Fringed Gentians shut their blue eyes that they might not see the bold Asters; and Clematis fainted away in the grass, she was so shocked. The Golden-rods laughed scornfully, and were much amused at the suggestion to put them off the throne where they had ruled so long.

"Let those discontented Asters try it," they said. "No one will vote for that foolish Violet, and things will go on as they always have done; so, dear friends, don't be troubled, but help us elect our handsome cousin who was born in the palace this year."

In the middle of the meadow stood a beautiful maple, and at its foot lay a large rock overgrown by a wild grape-vine. All kinds of flowers sprung up here; and this autumn a tall spray of Golden-rod and a lovely violet Aster grew almost side by side, with only a screen of ferns between them. This was called the palace; and seeing their cousin there made the Asters feel that their turn had come, and many of the other flowers agreed with them that a change of rulers ought to be made for the good of the kingdom.

So when the day came to choose, there was great excitement as the wind went about collecting the votes. The Golden-rods, Cardinals, Gentians, Clematis, and Bitter-sweet voted for the Prince, as they called the handsome fellow by the rock. All the Asters, Buttercups, Clovers, and Pitcher-plants voted for Violet; and to the surprise of the meadow the Maple dropped a leaf, and the Rock gave a bit of lichen for her also. They

seldom took part in the affairs of the flower people,—the tree living so high above them, busy with its own music, and the rock being so old that it seemed lost in meditation most of the time; but they liked the idea of a queen (for one was a poet, the other a philosopher), and both believed in gentle Violet.

Their votes won the day, and with loud rejoicing by her friends she was proclaimed queen of the meadow and welcomed to her throne.

"We will never go to Court or notice her in any way," cried the haughty Cardinals, red with anger.

"Nor we! Dreadful, unfeminine creature! Let us turn our backs and be grateful that the brook flows between us," added the Gentians, shaking their fringes as if the mere idea soiled them.

Clematis hid her face among the vine leaves, feeling that the palace was no longer a fit home for a delicate, high-born flower like herself. All the Golden-rods raged at this dreadful disappointment, and said many untrue and disrespectful things of Violet. The Prince tossed his yellow head behind the screen, and laughed as if he did not mind, saying carelessly,—

"Let her try; she never can do it, and will soon be glad to give up and let me take my proper place."

So the meadow was divided: one half turned its back on the new queen; the other half loved, admired, and believed in her; and all waited to see how the experiment would succeed. The wise Asters helped her with advice; the Pitcher-plant refreshed her with the history of the brave Puritans who loved liberty and justice and suffered to win them; the honest Clovers sweetened life with their sincere friendship, and the cheerful Buttercups brightened her days with kindly words and deeds. But her best help came from the rock and the tree,—for when she needed strength she leaned her delicate head against the rough breast of the rock, and courage seemed to come to her from the wise old stone that had borne the storms of a hundred years; when her heart was heavy with care or wounded by unkindness, she looked up to the beautiful tree, always full of soft music, always pointing heavenward, and was comforted by these glimpses of a world above her.

The first thing she did was to banish the evil snakes from her kingdom; for they lured the innocent birds to death, and filled many a happy nest with grief. Then she stopped the bees from getting tipsy on the wild grapes and going about stupid, lazy, and cross, a disgrace to their family and a terror to the flowers. She ordered the field-mice to nibble all the stems of the clusters before they were ripe; so they fell and withered, and did no harm. The vine was very angry, and the bees and wasps scolded and stung; but the Queen was not afraid, and all her good subjects thanked her. The Pitcher-plant offered pure water from its green and russet cups to the busy workers, and the wise bees were heartily glad to see the Grape-vine saloon shut up.

The next task was to stop the red and black ants from constantly fighting; for they were always at war, to the great dismay of more peaceful insects. She bade each tribe keep in its own country, and if any dispute came up, to bring it to her, and she would decide it fairly. This was a hard task; for the ants loved to fight, and would go on struggling after their bodies were separated from their heads, so fierce were they. But she made them friends at last, and every one was glad.

Another reform was to purify the news that came to the meadow. The wind was telegraph-messenger; but the birds were reporters, and some of them very bad ones. The larks brought tidings from the clouds, and were always welcome; the thrushes from the wood, and all loved to hear their pretty romances; the robins had domestic news, and the lively wrens bits of gossip and witty jokes to relate. But the magpies made much mischief with their ill-natured tattle and evil tales, and the crows criticised and condemned every one who did not believe and do just as they did; so the magpies were forbidden to go gossiping about the meadow, and the gloomy black crows were ordered off the fence where they liked to sit cawing dismally for hours at a time.

Every one felt safe and comfortable when this was done, except the Cardinals, who liked to hear their splendid dresses and fine feasts talked about, and the Golden-rods, who were so used to living in public that they missed the excitement, as well as the scandal of the magpies and the political and religious arguments and quarrels of the crows.

A hospital for sick and homeless creatures was opened under the big burdock leaves; and there several belated butterflies were tucked up in their silken hammocks to sleep till spring, a sad lady-bug who had lost all her children found comfort in her loneliness, and many crippled ants sat talking over their battles, like old soldiers, in the sunshine.

It took a long time to do all this, and it was a hard task, for the rich and powerful flowers gave no help. But the Asters worked bravely, so did the Clovers and Buttercups; and the Pitcher-plant kept open house with the old-fashioned hospitality one so seldom sees now-a-days. Everything seemed to prosper, and the meadow grew more beautiful day by day. Safe from their enemies the snakes, birds came to build in all the trees and bushes, singing their gratitude so sweetly that there was always music in the air. Sunshine and shower seemed to love to freshen the thirsty flowers and keep the grass green, till every plant grew strong and fair, and passers-by stopped to look, saying with a smile,—

"What a pretty little spot this is!"

The wind carried tidings of these things to other colonies, and brought back messages of praise and good-will from other rulers, glad to know that the experiment worked so well.

This made a deep impression on the Golden-rods and their friends, for they could not deny that Violet had succeeded better than any one dared to hope; and the proud flowers began to see that they would have to give in, own they were wrong, and become loyal subjects of this wise and gentle queen.

"We shall have to go to Court if ambassadors keep coming with such gifts and honors to her Majesty; for they wonder not to see us there, and will tell that we are sulking at home instead of shining as *we* only can," said the Cardinals, longing to display their red velvet robes at the feasts which Violet was obliged to give in the palace when kings came to visit her.

"Our time will soon be over, and I'm afraid we must humble ourselves or lose all the gayety of the season. It is hard to see the good old ways changed; but if they must be, we can only gracefully submit," answered the Gentians, smoothing their delicate blue fringes, eager to be again the belles of the ball.

Clematis astonished every one by suddenly beginning to climb the maple-tree and shake her silvery tassels like a canopy over the Queen's head.

"I cannot live so near her and not begin to grow. Since I must cling to something, I choose the noblest I can find, and look up, not down, forevermore," she said; for like many weak and timid creatures, she was easily guided, and it was well for her that Violet's example had been a brave one.

Prince Golden-rod had found it impossible to turn his back entirely upon her Majesty, for he was a gentleman with a really noble heart under his yellow cloak; so he was among the first to see, admire, and love the modest faithful flower who grew so near him. He could not help hearing her words of comfort or reproof to those who came to her for advice. He saw the daily acts of charity which no one else discovered; he knew how many trials came to her, and how bravely she bore them; how humbly she asked help, and how sweetly she confessed her shortcomings to the wise rock and the stately tree.

"She has done more than ever we did to make the kingdom beautiful and safe and happy, and I'll be the first to own it, to thank her and offer my allegiance," he said to himself, and waited for a chance.

One night when the September moon was shining over the meadow, and the air was balmy with the last breath of summer, the Prince ventured to serenade the Queen on his wind-harp. He knew she was awake; for he had peeped through the ferns and seen her looking at the stars with her violet eyes full of dew, as if something troubled her. So he sung his sweetest song, and her Majesty leaned nearer to hear it; for she much longed to be friends with the gallant Prince, and only waited for him to speak to own how dear he was to her, because both were born in the palace and grew up together very happily till coronation time came.

As he ended she sighed, wondering how long it would be before he told her what she knew was in his heart.

Golden-rod heard the soft sigh, and being in a tender mood, forgot his pride, pushed away the screen, and whispered, while his face shone and his voice showed how much he felt,—

"What troubles you, sweet neighbor? Forget and forgive my unkindness, and let me help you if I can,—I dare not say as Prince Consort, though I love you dearly; but as a friend and faithful subject, for I confess that you are fitter to rule than I."

As he spoke the leaves that hid Violet's golden heart opened wide and let him see how glad she was, as she bent her stately head and answered softly,—

"There is room upon the throne for two: share it with me as King, and let us rule together; for it is lonely without love, and each needs the other."

What the Prince answered only the moon knows; but when morning came all the meadow was surprised and rejoiced to see the gold and purple flowers standing side by side, while the maple showered its rosy leaves over them, and the old rock waved his crown of vine-leaves as he said,—

"This is as it should be; love and strength going hand in hand, and justice making the earth glad."

The Brownie And The Princess

She was not a real Brownie, but a little girl named Betty, who lived with her father in a cottage near a great forest. They were poor; so Betty always wore a brown frock, a big brown hat, and, being out in the sun a great deal, her face was as brown as a berry, though very pretty with its rosy cheeks, dark eyes, and curly hair blowing in the wind. She was a lively little creature, and having no neighbors she made friends with the birds and flowers, rabbits and squirrels, and had fine frolics with them, for they knew and loved her dearly. Many people drove through the beautiful wood, which was not far from the King's palace; and when they saw the little girl dancing with the daisies in the meadow, chasing squirrels up the trees, splashing in the brook, or sitting under her big hat like an elf under a mushroom, they would say, "There is the Brownie."

Betty was wild and shy, and always tried to hide if any one called to her; and it was funny to see her vanish in a hollow tree, drop down in the tall grass, or skip away into the ferns like a timid rabbit. She was afraid of the fine lords and ladies, who laughed at her and called her names, but never thought to bring a book or a toy or say a kind word to the lonely little girl.

Her father took care of the deer in the King's park and was away all day, leaving Betty to sweep the little house, bake the brown bread, and milk Daisy the white cow, who lived in the shed behind the cottage and was Betty's dearest friend. They had no pasture for her to feed in; so, when the work was done, Betty would take her knitting and drive Daisy along the road where she could eat the grass on either side till she had had enough and lay down to rest under some shady tree. While the cow chewed her cud and took naps, the little girl would have fine games among her playmates, the wood creatures, or lie watching the clouds, or swing on the branches of the trees, or sail leaf boats in the brook. She was happy; but she longed for some one to talk to, and tried vainly to learn what the birds sang all day long. There were a great many about the cottage, for no one troubled them, and they were so tame they would eat out of her hand and sit on her head. A stork family lived on the roof, swallows built their clay nests under the eaves, and wrens chirped in their little homes among the red and white roses that climbed up to peep in at Betty's window. Wood-pigeons came to pick up the grain she scattered for them, larks went singing up from the grass close by, and nightingales sang her to sleep.

"If I only knew what they said, we could have such happy times together. How can I ever learn?" sighed Betty, as she was driving Daisy home one day at sunset.

She was in the wood, and as she spoke she saw a great gray owl fluttering on the ground as if he was hurt. She ran at once to see what ailed the bird, and was not afraid, though his round eyes stared at her, and he snapped his hooked beak as if very angry.

"Poor thing! its leg is broken," she said, wondering how she could help it.

"No, it isn't; it's my wing. I leaned out of my nest up there to watch a field mouse, and a ray of sunshine dazzled me so I tumbled down. Pick me up, child, and put me back, and I shall be all right."

Betty was so surprised to hear the owl speak that she did not stir; and thinking she was frightened at his cross tone, the gray bird said more gently, with a blink of its yellow eyes and a wise nod,—

"I shouldn't speak to every one, nor trust any other child; but I know you never hurt anything. I've watched you a long time, and I like you; so I'm going to reward you by giving you the last wish you made, whatever it is. I can: I'm a wizard, and I know all sorts of magic charms. Put me in my nest, tell me your wish, and you shall have it."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Betty, joyfully. "I wished to understand what birds say."

"Dear me, that's a wish that may make trouble; but I'll grant it if you won't tell any one how you learned the secret. I can't have people coming to me, and my neighbors won't want their gossip heard by many ears. They won't mind you, and it will amuse you, poor thing!" said the owl, after a pause.

Betty promised, and, holding the fat bird carefully in her arm, she climbed up the old oak and put him safely in his hole, where he settled himself with a great ruffling of feathers and a hoot of pleasure at being home again.

"Now, pull the tallest bit of down off my right ear and put it in your own; then you will hear what the birds say. Good-night; I'm used up and want to rest," said the owl, with a gape.

"Thank you," said Betty, and ran after Daisy, who was slowly eating her way home.

The bit of down lay snugly in Betty's ear, and in a moment she heard many sweet voices called to one another,—"Good-night!" "Happy dreams!" "A bright to-morrow;" "Lie still, my darlings;" "Hush, my birdie, sleep till day,"—and all sorts of pretty things, as the wood-birds were going to bed with the sun. When she came to the cottage the papa stork was standing on one leg, while the mamma tucked the little ones under her wings, scolding now and then as a red bill or a long leg popped out. The doves were cooing tenderly in the pine that rustled near by, the swallows skimming over the ground to catch and bring their babies a few more gnats for supper, and the wrens were twittering among the roses like the little gossips they were.

"Now I shall know what they all are saying," cried Betty, trying to hear the different voices; for there were so many going at once it was difficult to understand the sweet new language.

So she milked Daisy, set the table, and made ready for her father, who was often late, then took her bowl of bread and milk and sat on the door-step listening with all her might. She always strewed crumbs for the wrens, and they flew down to eat without fear. To-night they came, and as they pecked they talked, and Betty understood every word.

"Here's a fine soft bit, my love," said the papa, as he hopped briskly about, with his bright eye on the little girl. "Have a good supper while I feed the children. The child never forgets us, and saves me many a long journey by giving us these nice crumbs. I wish we could do something for her."

"So do I, and quite tire my wits trying to make some plan to give her pleasure. I often wonder why the little Princess up at the palace has so much and our dear Betty so little. A few of the books and toys that lie about up there would make this child so happy. It is

a pity no one thinks of it;" and the kind Mamma Wren sighed as she ate a nice bit close to Betty's bare foot.

"If she was not so shy and would let people speak to her, I think she would soon make friends, she is so pretty and gay," answered the papa, coming back for another load for the hungry babies in the nest.

"The Princess has heard of her and wants to see her. I heard the maids talking about it to-day when I went to call on Cousin Tomtit in the palace garden. They said her Highness was to drive through the pine wood early to-morrow morning to breathe the fresh air, and hoped to see the Brownie and the pretty white cow. Now, if Betty only knew it, she might gather a posy of cowslips, and when the little lady comes give them to her. That would please her very much and bring Betty some pretty gift; for her Highness is generous, though sadly spoilt, I'm afraid."

This fine plan of Mamma Wren's pleased Betty so much that she clapped her hands and startled the birds away.

"I'll do it! I'll do it!" she cried. "I always wanted to see the little Princess father has told me about. She is ill, and cannot run and play as I do, so I should love to please her, and the cowslips are all out. I'll go early and get a hat full, and not run away if she comes."

Betty was so full of this delightful plan that she went early to bed, but did not forget to lean out of her window and peep through the roses into the nest where Mamma Wren brooded over her babies while the papa roosted near by with his head under his wing.

"Good-night, dear birds; thank you very much," whispered Betty; but they did not mind her, and only twittered sleepily as if a dream disturbed them.

"Up, up, little maid;

Day has begun.

Welcome with us

Our father, the sun!"

sang the larks, as they rose from the grass and waked Betty with their sweet voices.

"Tweet, tweet, it is morning;

Please get up, mamma.

Do bring us some breakfast,

Our dearest papa,"

twittered the young wrens, with their mouths wide open.

"Click, clack, here's another day;

Stretch our wings and fly away

Over the wood and over the hills,

Seeking food for our babies' bills;"

and away went the storks with their long legs trailing out behind, while the little ones popped up their heads and stared at the sun.

"Cluck! cluck!

Here's good luck:

Old yellow-legs

Has laid two eggs,

All fresh and sweet,

For our girl to eat,"

cackled the gray hens, picking about the shed where the cock stood crowing loudly.

"Coo! coo! coo!

Come, bathe in the dew;

For the rosy dawn shines

Through our beautiful pines.

So kiss, every one,

For a new day's begun,"

called the doves softly to one another as they billed and cooed and tripped about on their little pink feet.

Betty looked and listened at her window, and was so happy she kissed the roses nodding at her, then ran down to make the porridge, singing like a bird herself. When her father had gone away to work she made haste to milk Daisy, sweep the floor, and make all tidy for the day before she went to wait for the Princess.

"Now, you eat your breakfast here while I get the cowslips; for this is a pretty place to be in, and I want you to look very nice when the fine people come," said Betty, as she left the cow to feed in a little shady nook by the road where the grass was green and an old oak made pleasant shade.

The cowslips were all open and as yellow as gold, so Betty made a great nosegay of some and a splendid cowslip-ball of the rest; then she put them in her hat, well sprinkled with water, and sat on a fallen log knitting busily, while Daisy lay down to chew her cud, with a green wreath of oak leaves round her neck for full dress.

They did not have to wait long. Soon the tramp of horses was heard, and along the wood-road came the white ponies tossing their heads, the pretty carriage with coachman and footman in blue and silver coats, and inside the little Princess, with white plumes waving from her hat as she sat by her nurse, wrapt in a soft silken cloak, for the summer air seemed cold to her.

"Oh, there's the Brownie and her pretty white cow! Tell her not to run away, I want to see her and hear her sing," cried the little Princess, eagerly, as they came nearer.

Betty was rather scared, but did not run away; for the nurse was a kind-looking old woman in a high peasant cap, who smiled and nodded at her with a motherly look, and seemed much pleased when she held up the cowslips, saying,—

"Will the little lady have them?"

"Oh yes, I wanted some; I never had a cowslip ball before. How pretty it is! Thank you, Brownie," cried the Princess, with both hands full of flowers as she laughed with pleasure.

"I picked them all for you. I have so many, and I heard you cried for some," said Betty, very glad that she had not run away and spoiled the little lady's drive.

"How did you know?" asked the Princess, staring at her.

"The birds told me," said Betty.

"Oh yes! brownies are fairies, and understand bird-talk; I forgot that. I know what parrots say, but not my other birds. Could you tell me?" asked the Princess, leaning down very earnestly, for any new thing pleased her.

"I think so, if tame ones sing like the wild ones," answered Betty, proud to know more than the fine child did.

"Come to the palace and tell me; come now, I can't wait! My canary sings all day, but I never understand a word, and I must. Tell her to come, Nurse," commanded the Princess, who always had her own way.

"Can you?" asked the old woman. "We will bring you back at night. Her Highness has a fancy to see you, and she will pay you for coming."

"I can't leave Daisy; we have no field to put her in, and if I shut her up in the shed all day she will be hungry and call for me," answered Betty, longing to go, but not liking to leave her dear cow to suffer.

"Put her in that field till you come back; I give you leave. All this land is mine, so no one will blame you. Do it!" said the Princess, waving her hand to the footman, who jumped down and had Daisy in the great clover-field before Betty could say a word.

"She will like that; and now I can go if you don't mind my old gown and hat,—I have no other clothes," she said, as the cow began to eat, and the footman opened the carriage door for her.

"I like it. Come in.—Now, go home at once," said the Princess; and there was poor little Betty rolling away in the grand carriage, feeling as if it was all a fairy tale.

The Princess asked a great many questions, and liked her new friend more and more; for she had never spoken to a poor child before, or known how they live. Betty was excited by this fine adventure, and was so gay and charming in her little ways that the old nurse soon forgot to watch lest she should do or say something amiss.

When they drove up to the great marble palace shining in the sun, with green lawns and terraces and blooming gardens all about it, Betty could only hold her breath and look with all her eyes as she was led through splendid halls and up wide stairs into a room full of pretty things, where six gayly dressed maids sewed and chattered together.

The Princess went away to rest, but Betty was told to stay there and be dressed before she went to play with her Highness. The room was full of closets and chests and boxes and baskets, and as the doors opened and the covers flew off, Betty saw piles of pretty frocks, hats, cloaks, and all manner of dainty things for little girls to wear. Never had she dreamed of such splendid clothes, all lace and ribbons, silk and velvet. Hats with flowers and feathers, pretty pink and blue shoes with gold and silver buckles, silk stockings like cobwebs, and muslin and linen petticoats and nightgowns and little caps all embroidered as if by fairy fingers.

She could only stand and look like one in a dream while the maids very kindly took away her poor brown dress and hat, and after much gossip over what looked best, at

last put on a rosy muslin frock, a straw hat with roses in it, and some neat shoes and stockings. Then when her hair was smoothed in thick brown curls, they told her to look in the tall mirror and tell what she saw there.

"Oh, what a pretty little girl!" cried Betty, smiling and nodding at the other child, who smiled and nodded back at her. She did not know herself, never having had any glass but a quiet pool in the wood or the brook in the meadow.

The maids laughed, and then she saw who it was, and laughed with them, and danced and courtesied and was very merry till a bell rang and she was ordered to go to her Highness.

It was a lovely room, all hung with blue silk and lace, with a silver bed, and chairs and couches of blue damask, pictures on the walls, flowers in all the windows, and golden cages full of birds. A white cat slept on its cushion, a tiny dog ran about with a golden collar hung with bells, and books and toys were heaped on the tables. The Princess was scolding her nurse because she wanted her to rest longer after the drive; but when Betty came in looking so pretty and gay, the frown changed to a smile, and she cried,—

"How nice you look! Not like a Brownie now; but I hope you have not forgotten about the birds."

"No," said Betty; "let me listen a minute and I'll tell you what they say."

So both were silent, and the maid and nurse kept as still as mice while the canary sang his shrill, sweet song, and Betty's face grew sad as she heard it.

"He says he is tired of his cage and longs to be free among the other birds; for a tree is a better home than a golden palace, and a crumb in the wood sweeter than all the sugar in his silver cup. 'Let me go! let me go! or my heart will break!' That is what he says, and the bulfinch sings the same song; so do the love birds and the beautiful gay one whom I don't know."

"What does Polly say? I understand him when he talks, but not when he scolds and chatters to himself as he is doing now," said the Princess, looking much surprised at what she heard; for she thought her birds must be happy in such fine cages.

Betty listened to the great red and green and blue parrot, who sat on a perch wagging his head and chuckling to himself as if he were enjoying some good joke. Presently Betty blushed and laughed, and looked both troubled and amused at what she heard; for the bird was gabbling away and nodding his head at her in a very funny manner.

"What does he say?" asked the Princess, impatiently.

"Please don't ask. You will not like it. I couldn't tell," said Betty, still laughing and blushing.

"You *must* tell, or I'll have Polly's neck wrung. I *will* know every word, and I won't be angry with *you*, no matter what that saucy bird says," commanded the Princess.

"He says this," began Betty, not liking to obey, but afraid poor Polly would be hurt if she did not: "'Now here's a new pet for her Highness to torment. Nice, pretty little girl! Pity she came, to be made much of for a day or two and then thrown away or knocked about like an old doll. She thinks it all very fine here, poor thing! But if she knew all I know she would run away and never come back; for a crosser, more spoilt child than her Highness never lived.'"

Betty dared not go on, for the Princess looked angry; and the maid went to slap the parrot, who gave a queer laugh and snapped at her fingers, squalling out,—

"She is! she is! and you all say it behind her back. *I* know your sly ways. You praise and pet her, and pretend that she is the sweetest darling in the world, when you know that this nice, rosy, good little girl out of the wood is worth a dozen silly, tyrannical princesses. Ha! ha! I'm not afraid to speak the truth, am I, Betty?"

Betty was frightened, but could not help laughing when the naughty bird winked at her as he hung upside down, with his hooked beak wide open and his splendid wings flapping.

"Tell me! tell me!" cried the Princess, forgetting her anger in curiosity.

Betty had to tell, and was very glad when Bonnibelle laughed also, and seemed to enjoy the truth told in this funny way.

"Tell him you know what he says, and ask him, since he is so wise, what I shall do to be as good as you are," said the Princess, who really had a kind little heart and knew that she was petted far too much.

Betty told the parrot she understood his language, and he was so surprised that he got on his perch at once and stared at her, as he said eagerly,—

"Don't let me be punished for telling truth, there's a dear child. I can't take it back, and since you ask my advice, I think the best thing you can do for her Highness is to let her change places with you and learn to be contented and useful and happy. Tell her so, with my compliments."

Betty found this a hard message to give; but it pleased Bonnibelle, for she clapped her hands and cried,—

"I'll ask mamma. Would you like to do it, Brownie, and be a princess?"

"No, thank you," said Betty; "I couldn't leave my father and Daisy, and I'm not fit to live in a palace. It's very splendid, but I think I love the little house and the wood and my birds better."

The nurse and the maid held up their hands, amazed at such a fancy; but Bonnibelle seemed to understand, and said kindly,—

"Yes; I think it is very dull here, and much pleasanter in the fields to do as one likes. May I come and play with you, and learn to be like you, dear Betty?"

She looked a little sad as she spoke, and Betty pitied her; so she smiled and answered gladly,—

"Yes, that will be lovely. Come and stay with me, and I will show you all my playmates, and you shall milk Daisy, and feed the hens, and see the rabbits and the tame fawn, and run in the daisy field, and pull cowslips, and eat bread and milk out of my best blue bowl."

"Yes, and have a little brown gown and a big hat like yours, and wooden shoes that clatter, and learn how to knit, and climb trees, and what the birds say!" added Bonnibelle, so charmed at the plan that she jumped off the couch and began to skip about as she had not done for days before.

"Now come and see my toys, and choose any you like; for I'm fond of you, dear, because you tell me new things and are not like the silly little lords and ladies who come to see me, and only quarrel and strut about like peacocks till I'm tired of them."

Bonnibelle put her arm round Betty, and led her away to a long hall so full of playthings that it looked like a splendid toy-shop. Dolls by the dozen were there,—dolls that talked and sang and walked and went to sleep, fine dolls, funny dolls, big and little doll queens and babies, dolls of all nations. Never was there such a glorious party of these dear creatures seen before; and Betty had no eyes for anything else, being a real little girl, full of love for dollies, and never yet had she owned one.

"Take as many as you like," said Bonnibelle. "I'm tired of them."

It nearly took Betty's breath away to think that she might have a dozen dolls if she chose. But she wisely decided that one was enough, and picked out a darling baby-doll in its pretty cradle, with blue eyes shut, and flaxen curls under the dainty cap. It would fill her motherly little soul with joy to have this lovely thing to lie in her arms by day, sleep by her side at night, and live with her in the lonely cottage; for baby could say "Mamma" quite naturally, and Betty felt that she would never be tired of hearing the voice call her by that sweet name.

It was hard to tear herself from the cradle to see the other treasures; but she went to and fro with Bonnibelle, admiring all she saw, till Nurse came to tell them that lunch was ready and her Highness must play no more.

Betty hardly knew how to behave when she found herself sitting at a fine table with a footman behind her chair and all sorts of curious glass and china and silver things before her. But she watched what Bonnibelle did, and so got on pretty well, and ate peaches and cream and cake and dainty white rolls and bonbons with a good appetite. She would not touch the little birds in the silver dish, though they smelt very nice, but said sadly,—

"No, thank you, sir; I couldn't eat my friends."

The footman tried not to laugh; but the Princess pushed away her own plate with a frown, saying,—

"Neither will I. Give me some apricot jelly and a bit of angel cake. Now that I know more about birds and what they think of me, I shall be careful how I treat them. Don't bring any more to my table."

After lunch the children went to the library, where all the best picture-books ever printed were ranged on the shelves, and cosey little chairs stood about where one could sit and read delicious fairy tales all day long. Betty skipped for joy when her new friend picked out a pile of the gayest and best for her to take home; and then they went to the music-room, where a band played beautifully and the Princess danced with her master in a stately way that Betty thought very stupid.

"Now you must dance. I've heard how finely you do it; for some lords and ladies saw you dancing with the daisies, and said it was the prettiest ballet they ever looked at. You *must*! No, please do, dear Betty," said Bonnibelle, commanding at first; then, remembering what the parrot said, she spoke more gently.

"I cannot here before these people. I don't know any steps, and need flowers to dance with me," said Betty.

"Then come on the terrace; there are plenty of flowers in the garden, and I am tired of this," answered Bonnibelle, going through one of the long windows to the wide marble walk where Betty had been longing to go.

Several peacocks were sitting on the steps, and they at once spread their splendid tails and began to strut before the children, making a harsh noise as they tossed the crowns of shining feathers on their heads.

"What do they say?" asked the Princess.

"'Here comes the vain little creature who thinks her fine clothes handsomer than ours, and likes to show them off to poorer people and put on proud airs. We don't admire her; for we know how silly she is, for all her fine feathers.'"

"I won't listen to any more rude words from these bad birds, and I won't praise their splendid tails as I meant to. Go along, you vain things! no one wants you here," cried Betty, chasing the peacocks off the terrace, while the Princess laughed to see them drop their gorgeous trains and go scurrying away with loud squawks of fear.

"It was true. I *am* vain and silly; but no one ever dared to tell me so, and I shall try to do better now I see how foolish those birds look and how sweet you are," she said, when Betty came skipping back to her.

"I'll make a peacock dance for you. See how well I do it!" and Betty began to prance, with her full pink skirt held up, and her head tossed, and her toes turned out, so like the birds that old Nurse and the maid, who had followed, began to laugh as well as Bonnibelle.

It was very funny; and when she had imitated the vain strutting and fluttering of the peacocks, Betty suddenly dropped her skirt, and went hurrying away, flapping her arms like wings and squawking dismally.

She wanted to please the Princess and make her forget the rude things she had been forced to tell; so when she came running back she was glad to find her very merry, and anxious for more fun.

"Now I'll do the tulip dance," said Betty, and began to bow and courtesy to a bed full of splendid flowers, all gold and scarlet, white and purple; and the tulips seemed to bow and courtesy back again like stately lords and ladies at a ball. Such dainty steps, such graceful sweeps and elegant wavings of the arms one never saw before; for Betty imitated the tall blossoms waving in the wind, and danced a prettier minuet with them than any ever seen at court.

"It is wonderful!" said the maid.

"Bless the dear! she must be a real fairy to do all that," said the old nurse.

"Dance again! oh, please dance again, it is so pretty!" cried the Princess, clapping her hands as Betty rose from her farewell courtesy and came smiling toward her.

"I'll give you the wind dance; that is very gay, and this fine floor is so smooth I feel as if my feet had wings."

With that Betty began to flutter to and fro like a leaf blown by the wind; now she went down the terrace as if swept by a strong gust, now she stood still, swaying a little in the soft breath of air, then off she spun as if caught in a storm, eddying round and round till she looked like a stray rose-leaf whisked over the ground. Sometimes she whirled close to the Princess, then blew up against the stout old nurse, but was gone before she could

be caught. Once she went down the marble steps at a bound and came flying over the railing as if in truth she did have wings on her nimble feet. Then the gale seemed to die away, and slowly the leaf floated to the ground at Bonnibelle's feet, to lie there rosy, breathless, and tired.

Bonnibelle clapped her hands again; but before she could tell half her delight, a beautiful lady came from the window, where she had seen the pretty ballet. Two little pages carried her long train of silvery silk; two ladies walked beside her, one holding a rose-colored parasol over her head, the other with a fan and cushion; jewels shone on her white hands and neck and in her hair, and she was very splendid, for this was the Queen. But her face was sweet and lovely, her voice very soft, and her smile so kind that Betty was not afraid, and made her best courtesy prettily.

When the red damask cushion was laid on one of the carved stone seats, and the pages had dropped the train, and the maids had shut the parasol and handed the golden fan, they stepped back, and only the Queen and nurse and little girls were left together.

"Does the new toy please you, darling?" asked the shining lady, as Bonnibelle ran to climb into her lap and pour out a long story of the pleasant time she had been having with the Brownie. "Indeed I think she is a fairy, to make you so rosy, gay, and satisfied."

"Who taught you to dance so wonderfully, child?" asked the Queen, when she had kissed her little daughter, glad to see her look so unlike the sad, cross, or listless creature she usually found.

"The wind, Lady Queen," answered Betty, smiling.

"And where did you get the fine tales you tell?"

"From the birds, Lady Queen."

"And what do you do to have such rosy cheeks?"

"Eat brown bread and milk, Lady Queen."

"And how is it that a lonely child like you is so happy and good?"

"My father takes care of me, and my mother in heaven keeps me good, Lady Queen."

When Betty said that, the Queen put out her hand and drew the little girl closer, as if her tender heart pitied the motherless child and longed to help if she only knew how.

Just then the sound of horses' feet was heard in the great courtyard below, trumpets sounded, and every one knew that the king had come home from hunting. Presently, with a jingling of spurs and trampling of boots, he came along the terrace with some of his lords behind him.

Every one began to bow except the Queen, who sat still with the Princess on her knee, for Bonnibelle did not run to meet her father as Betty always did when he came home. Betty thought she would be afraid of the King, and so she would perhaps, if he had worn his crown and ermine cloak and jewels everywhere; but now he was dressed very like her father, in hunter's green, with a silver horn over his shoulder, and no sign of splendor about him but the feather in his hat and the great ring that glittered when he pulled off his glove to kiss the Queen's hand; so Betty smiled and bobbed her little courtesy, looking boldly up in his face.

He liked that, and knew her, for he had often seen her when he rode through the wood.

"Come hither, Brownie, I have a story you will like to hear," he said, sitting down beside the Queen and beckoning to Betty with a friendly nod.

She went and stood at his knee, eager to hear, while all the lords and ladies bent forward to listen, for it was plain that something had happened beside the killing of a stag that day.

"I was hunting in the great oak wood two hours ago, and had knelt down to aim at a splendid stag," began the King, stroking Betty's brown head, "when a wild boar, very fierce and large, burst out of the ferns behind me just as I fired at the deer. I had only my dagger left to use, but I sprang up to face him, when a root tripped my foot, and there I lay quite helpless, as the furious old fellow rushed at me. I think this little maid here would have been Queen Bonnibelle to-morrow if a brave woodman had not darted from behind a tree and with one blow of his axe killed the beast as he bent his head to gore me. It was your father, Brownie, and I owe my life to him."

As the King ended, a murmur rose, and all the lords and ladies looked as if they would like to give a cheer; but the Queen turned pale and old Nurse ran to fan her, while Bonnibelle put out her arms to her father, crying,—

"No, I will never be a queen if you die, dear papa!"

The King took her on one knee and set Betty on the other, saying gayly,—

"Now what shall we do for this brave man who saved me?"

"Give him a palace to live in, and millions of money," said the Princess, who could think of nothing better.

"I offered him a house and money, but he wanted neither, for he loved his little cottage and had no need of gold, he said. Think again, little maids, and find something he *will* like," said the King, looking at Betty.

"A nice field for Daisy is all he wants, Lord King," she answered boldly; for the handsome brown face with the kind eyes was very like her father's, she thought.

"He shall have it. Now wish three wishes for yourself, my child, and I will grant them if I can."

Betty showed all her little white teeth as she laughed for joy at this splendid offer. Then she said slowly,—

"I have but one wish now, for the Princess has given me a dear doll and many books; so I am the happiest creature in all the kingdom, and have no wants."

"Contented little lass! Who of us can say the same?" said the King, looking at the people round him, who dropped their eyes and looked foolish, for they were always asking favors of the good King. "Well, now let us know the one thing I can do to please brave woodman John's little daughter."

"Please let the Princess come and play with me," said Betty, eagerly.

The lords looked horrified, and the ladies as if they would faint away at the mere idea of such a dreadful thing. But the Queen nodded, Bonnibelle cried, "Oh, do!" and the King laughed as he asked in a surprised tone,—

"But why not come and play with her here? What is there at the cottage that we have not at the palace?"

"Many things, Lord King," answered Betty. "She is tired of the palace and everything in it, she says, and longs to run about in the wood, and be well and gay and busy all day long, as I am. She wants to bake and milk and sweep and knit, and hear the wind blow, and dance with the daisies, and talk with my birds, and dream happy dreams, and love to be alive, as I do."

"Upon my word, here's a bold Brownie! But she is right, I think; and if my Princess can get a pair of cheeks like these down at the cottage, she shall go as often as she likes," said the King, amused at Betty's free words, and struck by the contrast between the two faces before him, one like a pale garden lily and the other like a fresh wild rose.

Then Bonnibelle burst out and told all the story of the day, talking as she had never talked before; and every one listened, amazed to see how lively and sweet her Highness could be, and wondered what had made such a sudden change. But the old nurse went about, saying in a whisper,—

"She is a real Brownie, I know it; for no mortal child would be so bold and bright, and do what she has done,—bewitched both King and Queen, and made her Highness a new child."

So all looked at Betty with great respect; and when at last the talk was over and the King rose to go, with a kiss for each little girl, every one bowed and made way for the Brownie, as if she too were a Princess.

But Betty was not proud; for she remembered the peacocks as she walked hand in hand with Bonnibelle after the royal papa and mamma over the terrace to the great hall, where the feast was spread and music sounding splendidly.

"You shall sit by me and have my golden cup," said Bonnibelle, when the silver horns were still, and all waited for the King to hand the Queen to her place.

"No, I must go home. It is sunset; Daisy must be milked, and father's supper ready when he comes. Let me run away and get my old clothes; these are too fine to wear in the cottage," answered Betty, longing to stay, but so faithful to her duty that even the King's command could not keep her.

"Tell her to stay, papa; I want her," cried Bonnibelle, going to the great gilded chair where her father sat.

"Stay, child," said the King, with a wave of the hand where the great jewel shone like a star.

But Betty shook her head and answered sweetly,—

"Please do not make me, dear Lord King. Daisy needs me, and father will miss me sadly if I do not run to meet him when he comes home."

Then the King smiled, and said heartily,—

"Good child! we will not keep you. Woodman John gave me my life, and I will not take away the comfort of his. Run home, little Brownie, and God bless you!"

Betty tripped upstairs, and put on her old frock and hat, took one of the finest books and the dear doll, leaving the rest to be sent next day, and then tried to slip away by some back door; but there were so many halls and steps she got lost, and came at last into the great hall again. All were eating now; and the meat and wine and spicy pies and piles of fruit smelt very nice, and Betty would have only brown bread and milk for supper; but

she did not stay, and no one but the pages saw her as she ran down the steps to the courtyard, like Cinderella hurrying from the hall when the clock struck twelve and all her fine clothes vanished.

She had a very happy walk through the cool green wood, however, and a happy hour telling her father all about this wonderful day; but the happiest time of all was when she went to bed in her little room, with the darling baby fast asleep on her arm, and the wrens talking together among the roses of how much good their wise Brownie would do the Princess in the days to come.

Then Betty fell asleep and dreamed such lovely dreams of the moon with a sweet face like the Queen's smiling at her, of her father looking as proud and handsome as the King, with his axe on his shoulder and the great boar dead at his feet; and Bonnibelle, rosy, gay, and strong, working and playing with her like a little sister in the cottage, while all the birds sang gayly:—

"Bonnibelle! Bonnibelle!

Listen, listen, while we tell

A sweet secret all may know,

How a little child may grow

Like a happy wayside flower,

Warmed by sun, fed by shower,

Rocked by wind, loved by elf,

Quite forgetful of itself;

Full of honey for the bee,

Beautiful for all to see,

Nodding to the passers-by,

Smiling at the summer sky,

Sweetening all the balmy air,

Happy, innocent, and fair.

Flowers like these blossom may

In a palace garden gay;

Lilies tall or roses red,

For a royal hand or head.

But be they low, or be they high,

Under the soft leaves must lie

A true little heart of gold,

Never proud or hard or cold,

But brave and tender, just and free,

Whether it queen or beggar be;

Else its beauty is in vain,

And never will it bloom again.
This the secret we would tell,
Bonnibelle! Bonnibelle!"

Mermaids

"I wish I were a sea-gull or a fish or a mermaid; then I could swim as much as I like, and not have to stay on this stupid dry land all day," said Nelly, as she sat frowning and punching holes in the sand one summer morning, while the waves came murmuring up on the beach, and a fresh wind sang its pleasant song.

The little girl loved to bathe so well that she wanted to be in the water all the time, and had been forbidden to go into the sea for a day or two because she had a cold. So she was in a pet, and ran away from her playmates to sit and sulk in a lonely spot among the rocks. She had been watching the gulls fly and float, with their white wings shining as they dipped down or soared away in the sunshine. As she wished her wish a very large one swept down upon the sand before her, and startled her by saying in a hoarse tone, as she stared at its bright eyes, the red ring round its neck, and the little tuft on its head,—

"I am the King of the gulls, and I can grant any one of your wishes. Which will you be,—a fish, a bird, or a mermaid?"

"People say there are no mermaids," stammered Nelly.

"There are; only mortals cannot see them unless I give the power. Be quick! I don't like the sand. Choose, and let me be off!" commanded the Great Gull, with an impatient flutter of its wide wings.

"Then I'll be a mermaid, please. I always wanted to see one, and it must be very nice to live always in the water."

"Done!" said the gull, and was gone like a flash.

Nelly rubbed her eyes, and looked about her rather scared; but nothing had happened to her yet, and she was just going to complain that the bird had cheated her, when the sound of soft voices made her climb the rock behind her to see who was singing down there.

She nearly fell off again when she spied two pretty little creatures floating to and fro on the rocking waves. Both had long brown hair, green eyes as clear as crystal, pale faces, and the sweetest voices Nelly had ever heard. But the strange thing was that each little body ended in a shining tail,—one all golden, the other all silver scales. Their little breasts and arms were white as foam, and they wore bracelets of pearls, strings of rosy shells about their necks, and garlands of gay sea-weed in their hair. They were singing as they rocked, and throwing bubbles to and fro as if playing ball. They saw Nelly in a moment, and tossing a great rainbow-colored bubble toward her, cried gayly,—

"Come and play, little friend. We know you, and have often tried to make you see us when you float and dive so bravely in our sea."

"I long to come; but it is so deep there and the waves are so rough that I should be dashed on the rocks," answered Nelly, charmed to see real mermaids at last, and eager to go to them.

"We came for you. The King-gull told us to call you. Slip off your clothes and spring down to us; then we will change you, and you can have your wish," said the mermaids, holding up their arms to her.

"My mother said I must not go into the sea," began Nelly, sadly.

"What is a mother?" asked one little sea-maid, while the other laughed as if the word amused her.

"Why, don't you know? Don't you have fathers and mothers down there?" cried Nelly, so surprised that she forgot her wish for a moment.

"No; we are born of the moon and the sea, and we have no other parents," said Goldfin, the shining one.

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Nelly. "Who takes care of you, and where do you live? Without fathers and mothers you cannot have any home."

"We take care of ourselves. All the sea is our home, and we do as we please. Come, come, and see how gay it is!" called Silver-tail, the other mermaid, tossing bubbles like a juggler till the air was full of them as they sailed away on the wind.

Now, if Nelly had not been angry with her good mamma just then, and ready for any disobedience, she would never have been so naughty, or have gone to play with such strange friends. She was very curious to see how they lived, and be able to relate her adventures when she came back, as she was sure she would, all safe and sound. So she dropped her clothes on the rock and splashed into the green pool below, glad to show off her fine swimming. But Goldfin and Silver-tail caught her and bade her drink the spray they held in their hands.

"Sea water is salt and bitter; I don't like it," said Nelly, holding back.

"Then you cannot be like us. Drink, and in a moment see what will happen!" cried Goldfin.

Nelly swallowed the cold drops and caught her breath, for a dreadful pain shot through her from her head to her feet, while the mermaids chanted some strange words and waved their hands over her. It was gone in an instant, and she felt like a cork floating on the water. She wondered, till glancing down she saw that her little white legs were changed to a fish's tail of many colors, which gently steered her along as the waves rippled against her breast.

"Now I am a mermaid," she cried, and looked into the pool to see if her eyes were green, her face pale, and her hair like curly brown sea-weed.

No; she had her child's face still, with rosy cheeks, blue eyes, and yellow curls. She was not disappointed, however, for she thought it a prettier face than the moony ones of her new playmates; so she laughed and said gayly,—

"Now you will play with me and love me, won't you?"

"What is love?" asked Silver-tail, staring at her.

"Why, when people love they put their arms round one another and kiss, and feel happy in their hearts," answered Nelly, trying to explain the beautiful word.

"How do you kiss?" asked Goldfin, curiously.

Nelly put an arm round the neck of each, and softly kissed them on their cold wet lips.

"Don't you like it? Is it sweet?" she asked.

"I feel that you are warmer than I, but I think oysters taste better," said one; and the other added,—

"Mermaids have no hearts, so that does not make us happier."

"No hearts?" cried Nelly, in dismay. "Can't you love? Don't you know about souls and being good, and all that?"

"No," laughed the mermaids, shaking their heads till the drops flew about like pearls. "We have no souls, and don't trouble about being good. We sing and swim and eat and sleep; is not that enough to make us happy?"

"Dear me, how queer they are!" thought Nelly, half afraid, yet very anxious to go with them and see more of this curious sea-life of which they had spoken. "Don't you care about me at all, and don't you want me to stay with you a little while?" she asked, wondering how she should get on with creatures who could not love her.

"Oh yes, we like you as a new playmate, and are glad you came to see us. You shall have our bracelets to wear, and we will show you all kinds of pretty things down below, if you are not afraid to come," answered the mermaids, dressing her in their garlands and necklaces, and smiling at her so sweetly that she was ready to follow as they swam away with her far out on the great billows that tossed them to and fro but could not drown or harm them now.

Nelly enjoyed it very much, and wondered why the fishermen in their boats did not try to catch them, till she learned that mermaids were invisible and were never caught. This made her feel very safe, and after a fine game of play she let her friends take her by the hand and sink down to the new world below. She expected to find it very gay and splendid, with sea-coral trees growing everywhere, palaces of pearl, and the ground covered with jewels; but it was dim and quiet. Great weeds fanned to and fro as the water stirred them; shells lay about on the sand, and queer creatures crawled or swam everywhere.

The green sea-water was the sky, and ships cast their shadows like clouds over the twilight world below. Several gray-bearded old mermen sat meditating in nooks among the rocks, and a few mermaids lay asleep in the great oyster-shells that opened to receive them and their beds of sea-weed. A soft murmur was in the air like the sound one hears in shells, and nowhere did Nelly see any toys or food or fun of any sort.

"Is this the way you live?" she asked, trying not to show how disappointed she was.

"Isn't it lovely?" answered Goldfin. "This is my bed, and you shall have the shell between Silver-tail and me. See! it is lined with mother-of-pearl, and has a soft cushion of our best sea-weeds to lie on."

"Are you hungry?" asked Silver-tail. "Come and have some shrimps for dinner,—I know a fine place for them,—or oysters if you like them better."

Nelly was ready to eat anything, the sea air had given her such a fine appetite; so they swam away to gather the pretty pink shrimps in scallop shells, as little girls gather strawberries in baskets; then they sat down to eat them, and Nelly longed for bread and butter, but dared not say so. She was so surprised at all she saw, that this queer, cold lunch was soon forgotten in the wonderful tales the mermaids told her, as they cracked

snails and ate them like nuts, or pulled the green sea-apples tasting like pickled limes from the vines that climbed up the rocks.

"You don't seem to have a very large family, or have the others gone to a party somewhere?" asked Nelly, rather tired of the quiet.

"No; there never are many of us. A new brood will be out soon, and then there will be some little mer-babies to play with. We will show you the Wonder-tree, if you are done eating, and tell you all about it," answered Silver-tail, floating away with a wave of the hand.

Nelly and Goldfin followed to a lonely place, where a tall plant grew up from the sand till its branches reached the air above and spread out like floating weeds covered with little pods like those we often snap under our feet as they lie dry upon the beach.

"Only a few of these will bloom; for there never are many mermaids in the sea, you know. It takes long for the tree to reach the light, and it cannot blossom unless the full moon shines on it at midnight; then these buds open, and the water-babies swim away to grow up like us," said Silver-tail.

"Without any nurses to take care of them, or mothers to pet them?" asked Nelly, thinking of the pretty baby at home with whom she was so fond of playing.

"They take care of themselves, and when there are too many in one place the old mermen send away some to another ocean; so we get on quietly, and there is room for all," said Goldfin, contentedly.

"And when you die, what happens?" asked Nelly, much interested in these queer creatures.

"Oh, we grow older and grayer and sit still in a corner till we turn to stone and help make these rocks. I've been told by Barnacle, the old one yonder, that people sometimes find marks of our hands or heads or fins in the stone, and are very much puzzled to know what kind of fish or animal made the prints; that is one of our jokes;" and both the mermaids laughed as if they enjoyed bewildering the wits of the people who were so much wiser than they.

"Well, I think it is much nicer to be buried under grass and flowers when our souls have flown away to heaven," said Nelly, beginning to be glad she was not a "truly" mermaid.

"What is heaven?" asked Silver-tail, stupidly.

"You would not understand if I tried to tell you. I can only say it is a lovely place where we go when we die, and the angels don't puzzle over us at all, but love us and are glad to see us come," said Nelly, soberly.

Both little maids stared at her with their green eyes as if they wanted to understand, but gave it up, and with a whisk of their shining tails darted away, calling to her,—

"Come and play with the crabs; it's great fun."

Nelly was rather afraid of crabs, they nipped her toes so when she went among them; but having no feet now, she felt braver, and was soon having a gay time chasing them over the rocks, and laughing to see them go scrambling sidewise into their holes. The green lobsters amused her very much by the queer way they hitched along, with their great claws ready to grasp and hold whatever they wanted. It was funny to see them wipe their bulging eyes with their feelers and roll them about on all sides. The hermit

crabs in their shells were curious, and the great snails popping out their horns; the sea-spiders were very ugly, and she shook with fear when the horrible Octopus went by, with his eight long arms waving about like snakes and his hooked beak snapping.

"Show me something pretty," she begged; "I don't like these ugly things. Haven't you any flowers or birds or animals here to play with?"

"Oh yes, here are our sea anemones, yellow, red, and white, all blooming in their beds; and these lovely plants of every color which you call weeds. Then there are the coral trees, far away, which we will show you some day, and the sponges on the rocks, and many other curious things," answered Goldfin, leading Nelly up and down to see the only flowers they had. Then Silver-tail said,—

"She will like the nautilus boats and the flying fish, and a ride on the dolphins and whales. Come and let her see that we have birds and animals as well as she."

Up they went; and when Nelly saw the lovely red and blue creatures like a fleet of fairy boats floating over the waves, she clapped her hands and cried,—

"We have nothing so beautiful on the land! How delicate and fair they are! Won't the wind tear them to pieces and the storms wreck them?"

"Watch and see!" answered the mermaids, well pleased at her delight; and as a gust blew by every silken sail was furled, the lovely colors vanished, and the fairy boats sank out of sight safely to the bottom of the sea.

"Our sailors can't do that," said Nelly; "and when our ships go down they never come up again."

Just then some fish flew over their heads and splashed down again, while the gulls snapped at them in vain.

"Those are our birds, and here are our horses. People call them porpoises, but we call them dolphins, and have many a fine gallop on their backs," said Goldfin, as a school of great creatures came gambolling by.

Up sprang the mermaids, and went swiftly dashing through the water with high leaps now and then, as their sea-horses reared and plunged, tossing their tails and waving their fins as if they enjoyed the frolic. Nelly did, and wished to ride longer; but a whale appeared, and her playmates went to climb on his back and hear the news from the North Sea. It was like a moving island, and they sat under the fountain as he spouted water and rolled about lazily basking in the sun after his cold voyage.

"Don't we have good times?" asked Silver-tail, when they slid down the slippery sides of the monster and climbed up again as if coasting.

"Splendid! I like to be a mermaid and have no lessons to study, no work to sew, no nurse to scold me, and no mamma to forbid my swimming as much as I choose," said naughty Nelly; but as she spoke and looked toward the land now far away, a little pain went through her heart to remind her that she was not a real mermaid, and still had a conscience, though she would not listen to it.

They played all the afternoon, had an oyster supper, and went early to bed to get a good nap before midnight, because the moon was full and they hoped the Wonder-tree would bloom before morning.

Nelly liked the quiet now; and the soft song of the sea lulled her to sleep, to dream of sailing in a nautilus boat till a dreadful cuttle-fish came after her and she woke in a fright, wondering to find herself lying on a bed of wet weeds in a great shell.

"Come away; it is time, and a lovely night," called the mermaids, and with several new friends they all hurried up to watch the buds open when the moon kissed them.

The sea shone like silver; the stars seemed to float there as well as in the sky, and the wind blew off the shore bringing the sweet smell of hay-fields and gardens. All the sea people sang as they lay rocking on the quiet waves, and Nelly felt as if this were the strangest, loveliest dream she had ever dreamed.

By and by the moon shone full upon the Wonder-tree, and one by one out popped the water-babies, looking like polliwogs, only they had little faces and arms instead of fins. Lively mites they were, swimming away at once in a shoal like minnows, while the older mermaids welcomed them and gave them pretty names as the tiny things came to peep at them and dart between the hands that tried to grasp them. Till dawn they kept in the moonlight, growing fast as they learned to use their little tails and talk in small, sweet voices; but when day came they all sank down to the bottom of the sea, and went to sleep in the shell cradles made ready for them. That was all the care they needed, and after that they had no nursing, but did what they liked, and let the older ones play with them like dolls.

Nelly had several pets, and tried to make them love and mind her; but the queer little creatures laughed in her face when she talked to them, darted away when she wanted to kiss them, and stood on their heads and waggled their bits of tails when she told them to be good. So she let them alone, and amused herself as well as she could with other things; but soon she grew very tired of this strange, idle life, and began to long for some of the dear old plays and people and places she used to like so much.

Every one was kind to her; but nobody seemed to love her, to care when she was good, or wish to make her better when she was selfish or angry. She felt hungry for something all the time, and often sad, though she hardly knew why. She dreamed about her mother, and sometimes woke up feeling for baby, who used to creep into her bed and kiss her eyes open in the morning. But now it was only a water-baby, who would squirm away like a little eel and leave her to think about home and wonder if they missed her there.

"I can't go back, so I must forget," she said, and tried to do it; but it was very hard, and she half wished she was a real mermaid with no heart at all.

"Show me something new; I'm tired of all these plays and sights and toys," she said one day, as she and her two playmates sat stringing little silver and rosy shells for necklaces.

"We are never tired," said Goldfin.

"You haven't any minds, and don't think much or care to know things. I do, and I want to learn a little or make some one happy if I can," said Nelly, soberly, as she looked about the curious world she lived in and saw what a dim, cold, quiet place it was, with the old mermen turning to stone in their nooks, the lazy mermaids rocking in their shells or combing their hair, and the young ones playing like so many stupid little fishes in the sun.

"We can't go to the South Sea yet, and we have nothing more to show you unless a great storm comes up," said Silver-tail.

"Perhaps she would like a wreck; there is a new one not far off," proposed Goldfin. "A big ship went over a small one, and it sank very soon. One of Mother Carey's chickens told me about it this morning, and I thought we might go and see it before it is all spoiled. Things that men make never last very long in our sea."

"Yes, let us go; I long to see and touch something my people made. Your world is wonderful, but I begin to think my own is the best, for me at least," said Nelly, as they left their pearls and swam away to the wreck, which lay down among the rocks, fast going to pieces. "Where are the people?" she asked, as they were about to float in at the broken windows and doors. She was very much afraid that she might see some poor drowned creature, and it would trouble *her*, though the mermaids might not care.

"Little Chick said they were all saved. It was a fruit-ship, and there were only a few passengers. One lady and child and some men went away in the boats to the shore, but left everything else behind."

"I'm so glad!" cried Nelly, feeling her heart warm in her breast at the good news about the mother and little child.

The ship had been loaded with oranges, and the sand was covered with boxes of them broken open, and letting the fruit float to the top of the water. Much was spoiled, but some was still good, and Nelly told the mermaids to taste and see if oranges were not better than salt sea-apples. They did not like them, but played ball with the golden things till Nelly proposed that they should toss some on the shore for the fishermen's children. That suited them; and soon the beach was covered with oranges, and the poor little people were running and screaming with delight to pick up this splendid feast.

"I wish there were some pretty things to give them; but there are only the sailors' bags of clothes all wet, and those are not nice," said Nelly, enjoying this game very much; for she was homesick and longed to hear human voices and see faces like her own. She wanted to do something for some one, and be loved a little. So she peeped all about the ship, and at last, in one cabin better than the others, she found the toys and clothes of the little child and its mother. She was very glad of that, and, knowing how children love their own things and cry when they are lost, she gathered up all that were not spoiled, and made Goldfin and Silver-tail help her carry them to the shore, where people had gathered to save whatever came from the wreck.

There was great rejoicing when these small treasures came ashore, and they were carried to the house where the lady and the child were. This pleased Nelly very much, and even the lazy mermaids found the new game pleasant; so they went on floating things to the beach, even the heavy bags with the poor sailors' clothes, wet books, and boxes, which otherwise would have been lost. No one could see Goldfin and Silver-tail, but now and then some child would cry out, when Nelly lingered to look and listen through the foam and spray,—

"Oh, I saw a face over there,—a dear little face, very pretty but sad, and a hand waved at me! Could it be a mermaid?"

Then some older person would say,—

"Nonsense, child! there are no mermaids. It is only the reflection of your own face in the water. Come away, or the tide will catch you."

If Nelly had not been partly human this could not have happened; and though no one believed in her, she took comfort in the thought that she was not all a fish, and loved to

linger where she could see the children at play long after Goldfin and Silver-tail had grown tired of them and gone back to their own affairs.

The longer she stayed the more sad she grew; for the land seemed pleasanter now than the sea,—the green, dry, warm land, with the flowers and trees, birds and lambs, and dear people to love and care for her. Even school looked like a happy place; and when she thought of her own home, where mother and Baby were, her heart was so full of longing for them that her tears dropped into the sea, and she held out her arms, crying sadly,—

"Oh, mamma, dear mamma, forgive me, love me, and help me to come back to you!"

No one answered, no one came; and poor Nelly sank sobbing down to cry herself to sleep in her pearl-lined bed, with no good-night kiss to comfort her.

Every day she longed more and more to go home, and grew more and more tired of the sea and all in it. The mermaids could not amuse her nor understand her sorrow; so she went to wise old Barnacle and asked him what she should do to be a child again.

"No one but the King of the gulls can change you, my Periwinkle," said the merman, kindly. "You must wait and watch for him patiently. He is not seen very often; so it may be years before he comes again. Meantime be happy with us, and don't fret for that very dry land in which we see no beauty."

This comforted Nelly a good deal, and she spent half her time floating on the waves, calling the gulls, feeding them, and making them her friends, so that they might be sure to tell her when the King came. Other kind things she did, trying to be good; for *she* knew, though even the wise old merman did not, that naughty people *cannot* be happy. She gathered all the curious shells she could find, and strewed them on the beach for the children playing there. She popped the cross crabs and lobsters into the nets let down for them, and helped the fishermen to many a good load for market. She sat and sang among the rocks where lonely people could hear the faint sweet music and enjoy it. She watched over the little people when they went bathing, and loved to catch and kiss the rosy babies as they splashed about, and send quiet ripples to refresh the sick ones when their nurses dipped them in the wholesome sea.

She was good to all the wounded fishes who got hurt by the many enemies that haunt the great ocean, and tried to teach the cruel sharks, the ugly octopus, and the lazy snails to be kinder and more industrious. They did not mind her; but it kept her busy, and made her heart tender to try to help all who came near her, and every night when she went to her lonely bed she said hopefully,—

"Perhaps to-morrow the King will come and let me go home. When I do, mamma must find a better Nelly than the naughty, wilful one who ran away."

She supposed her mother would think her drowned when the clothes were found on the rock, and often mourned over the sorrow she had given those at home. But she cheered herself with imagining the joy her wonderful return would bring, and could hardly wait for that happy time.

The mermaids were soon going far away to the South Sea for the winter, and begged her to come with them, telling how lovely everything was there,—all about the pearl-divers, the Spice Islands, the coral trees, and the many wonders of that summer world. But Nelly no longer cared for any place but the pretty cottage on the cliff that overlooked the sea, and she was not tempted by any of the fine tales they told.

"No; I'd rather live here all alone where I can see my own people and home, even if I wait years and years before the King comes. I know now what a silly child I was to leave everything that I was made to use and enjoy, and try to be a creature without any soul. I don't care if my heart does ache; I'd rather be as I am than like you, without any love in you or any wish to be good and wise and happy as we are."

Goldfin and Silver-tail thought her very ungrateful after she said that, and left her alone. But she did not care; for Father Barnacle was to stay and "stone up," as they called their queer way of dying. So when all had gone she was very kind to the old merman, who never stirred out of his nook, but sat meditating on the hundred years of his life and wondering what would become of the rock he was slowly to grow a part of.

Nelly did not want him to die yet; so she brought him nice things to eat, sang to him, and asked so many questions that he was forced to keep awake and answer them. Oh, such wonderful stories as he told her! Such interesting histories of sea flowers, fishes, and monsters, such wise lessons in tides and stars, and the mysteries of the great ocean! Nelly would sit on a conch shell and listen for hours, never tired of these new fairy tales.

But she did not forget to watch for the Great Gull, and every day floated near the shore, beckoning every white-winged bird that flew by and asking for tidings of the King. At last he came! Nelly was lying on the waves idly singing to herself, with one hand held up for her pet sandpiper to light upon, when, instead of little Peep, a great silvery bird perched there, and looking up she saw the fiery eye, the red ring about the neck, the crest on the head, and with a joyful splash she cried out,—

"He's come! he's come! Oh, dear King, give me another wish, a better wish, and let me be a little girl again."

"Done!" said the Great Gull, waving his wings over her. "Will you be contented now?"

"I will! I will!" answered Nelly, eagerly.

"Never wilful and disobedient?"

"Never, never!"

"Sure you won't want to be a bird, a fish, or a mermaid again?"

"Yes, yes; for nothing is so lovely as to be a child."

"Good!" and suddenly clutching her in his strong claws the gull flew high up in the air as if he were going to take her to his nest and eat her like a fish.

Poor Nelly was sadly frightened; but before she could catch her breath to ask what was to happen, the King said, in a loud voice, "Remember!" and let her drop.

She expected to be dashed on the rocks below, and thought that was to be her punishment, perhaps; but to her great surprise she floated down like a feather, and found herself lying on the sand in her own shape and the very clothes she wore when she went away. She lay a moment enjoying the comfort of being warm and dry, and feeling the dear earth under her.

"Why, darling, how long you have been asleep!" said a voice close by; and starting up Nelly saw her mother stooping over her, while Baby was creeping nearer to laugh and crow as he peeped into her face to see if she was awake.

"Oh, mamma, dear mamma, I am so glad to have you again! I was very naughty, but I've learned a lesson, and I'm going to be your good child now," cried Nelly, holding her mother tight with many kisses.

"Bless the dear! she has been dreaming, and wakes up in a lovely mood," said mamma, laughing.

"Didn't you think I was drowned? How long have I been away?" asked Nelly, looking about her as if bewildered.

"About an hour. I was not troubled, for I knew you would not break your promise, dear."

"Then it *was* a dream, and I haven't been a mermaid?" said Nelly.

"I hope not; for I like my little girl just as she is. Tell me the dream while I smooth away these tangles before we go home."

So, sitting on her mother's knee, while Baby dug holes in the sand, Nelly told her adventures as well as she could; for now it all seemed dim and far away, and nothing remained clear in her mind but the thought that it was indeed a lovely and a happy thing to be a little child with a heart to feel, a mother to love, and a home to live in till we go to find that other one, fairer than any on the earth or in the sea.

Little Bud

"The naughty cuckoo has been here while we were gone, and left this great blue egg among our little white ones," said the linnet to her mate as they came back from their breakfast one day and found the nest full.

"It is not a cuckoo's egg, my dear," answered the father bird, shaking his head, "some fairy must have put it here, and we must take care of it or they may be angry and do harm to our little ones by and by. Sit carefully on it, and see what will follow."

So Mamma Linnet sat patiently on the five eggs for many days more, and then out came her four small children and began to chirp for food. But the big blue egg still lay there, and no sound of a little bill pecking inside was heard.

"Shall we throw it out of the nest and make room for our babies?" asked the mother, finding her nursery very crowded.

"Not yet," said the careful papa, standing on one leg to rest, being very tired of bringing worms for his family. "Wait two more days, and then if the egg does not break, we will push it out."

He was a wise bird, and they were always glad that they waited; for on the seventh day the blue egg suddenly flew open, and there lay the smallest, prettiest little girl ever seen,—three inches long, but rosy, gay, and lively as she popped up her curly head and looked about her as if much surprised to find herself in a nest swinging on the branch of a tree.

"Who are you?" asked the father linnet, while all the young ones stared at her with their big eyes, and opened their beaks as if to eat her up.

"I'm little Bud," answered the tiny creature, smiling at them so sweetly it was impossible to help loving her at once.

"Where do you come from?" said the mother.

"I don't know."

"Are you a fairy?"

"No; for I have no wand."

"A new kind of bird?"

"I have no feathers or wings."

"A human child?"

"I think not; for I have no parents."

"Bless the dear! what can she be? and what shall we do with her?" cried both the birds, much amazed at this new child of theirs.

Bud did not seem to be troubled at all, but lay rocking in her blue cradle and laughing at the young linnets who peeped curiously over the edge of it.

"She must have something to eat," said the papa, flying off.

"And some clothes," added the mamma, bustling about.

But when a nice, fat worm was brought, Bud covered her face and cried with a shiver,—

"No, no! I cannot eat that ugly thing."

"Get a strawberry," said the mamma; and she tried to wrap the largest, softest feather that lined her nest round the naked little maid.

But Bud kicked her small legs out of it at once, and stood up, saying with a laugh,—

"I'm not a bird; I cannot wear feathers. Give me a pretty green leaf for a gown, and let me look about this big world where I find myself all at once."

So the linnet pulled a leaf and pecked two holes for Bud's arms, and put it on like a pinafore; for she never had dressed a baby and did not know how, her own children being born with down coats which soon changed to gray feathers. Bud looked very pretty in her green dress as she sat on the edge of the nest staring about with her blue eyes and clapping her hands when the papa came flying home with a sweet wild berry in his bill for her breakfast. She ate it like an apple, and drank a drop of dew that had fallen in the night; then she began to sing so sweetly that all the neighbors came to see what sort of bird Dame Linnet had hatched.

Such a twittering and fluttering as went on while they talked the matter over, asked many questions, and admired the pretty little creature who only knew her name and nothing more!

"Shall you keep her?" asked the robin, as he puffed out his red waistcoat and looked very wise.

"We dare not send her away," said the linnets.

"She will be a great deal of care," said the wren.

"You never can teach her to fly, and what will you do when your own children are gone?" asked the wood dove, who was very tender-hearted.

"You will have to make a new frock every day, and that will be so much work," said the yellow-bird, who was very proud of her own gay gown and black velvet hood.

"I think some bad elf put her here to bring you trouble. I'd push her out of the nest and let her take care of herself," advised the woodpecker, wondering if the plump child would be as good to eat as the worms he hammered out of the trees.

"No, no!" cried the brown thrush; "she is too pretty to bring harm. Keep her till you see what she can do, and perhaps she may be a good sprite after all."

"She sings almost as well as I do, and I shall like to add her songs to the many I already know," said the blackbird, who had lovely concerts in the meadow all by himself.

"Yes, we will wait a little; and if we cannot decide, by and by we will ask your advice, neighbors," said the linnets, beginning to feel rather proud of the curious stranger, since her coming made such a stir in the wood.

The birds flew away; and Bud settled down as one of the family, making herself so pleasant that all loved her and willingly crowded together to make room for her in the nest. The mother brooded over her at night, and made her fresh gowns every day when the old ones withered up; the father brought her dew to wash in and to drink, and flew far and wide to find ripe berries for her to eat; while the young birds were never tired of hearing her sing, watching her dance on the edge of the nest, or learning the pretty plays

she taught them. Every one was very kind and waited patiently to see what would come. But when at last the little birds flew away, the parents wanted to go with them, and did not like to leave Bud all alone.

"I'm not afraid," she said, "for now I am strong enough to take care of myself. All the birds know me, and I shall not be lonely. Carry me down to the grass below, and let me run about and find my own food and clothes as your children do. I won't forget you, but you need not trouble about me any more."

So Papa Linnet took her on his back, as often before, and flew down to the softest place below, and there they left her with a tender good-by; for they had to watch over their young ones, who were trying their wings and wandering far and wide.

"I shall be taken care of as the flowers are," said Bud, when she found herself sitting on a pebble beside the path that went through the pleasant wood, full of happy little creatures busy with their work or play.

"I wish I were a bird, then I could fly about and see the world; or a fairy, then I could do splendid things; or even a flower for some one to love and carry away. I wonder what I was made for, and what I can do,—such a little thing in this great world! I'm sure I don't know; but I can be happy and kind, and try to help all I see, then I shall make friends and not feel lonely very long."

As she said this, brave Bud looked about her to see whom she could help first, and spied an ant tugging a large white bundle along. It looked as if he were taking clothes to some fairy washerwoman; but the bundle was an egg, and the ant-nurse was bringing it up from the nest to lie awhile in the warm sun to grow.

He told Bud all about it when she offered to help, and very gladly let her watch this egg while he and the other nurses went down for many more. Soon they lay all about in the quiet corner where the sun shone on them, and Bud went to and fro, turning them, and keeping guard over them lest some hungry bird should snap them up.

"Now I'm useful," she said, quite happy in her new work, though she was only a nursery-maid, and had no wages but the thanks of the busy ants. By and by the eggs were carried down, and she was free to go on her travels again. The grass was like a forest to her, the mounds of moss were high hills, a little brook a great river, and a patch of sand a desert to be crossed.

"First, I will dress myself nicely," said Bud; and coming to a wild rosebush she gathered up several of the fallen leaves, and tried to fasten them together with the thorns. But her little hands could not manage the pretty pink skirt, and the thorns pricked her tender flesh as she folded the leaves over her bosom; so she was about to give up in despair and put on the faded green one again, when a wood-spider, who sat in his hole near by, said kindly,—

"Come here, little lady! I can spin and weave, and I'll sew your dress for you with pleasure. I saw you helping my neighbors the ants; so I will help you."

Bud was very glad of this kind offer, and watched the spider at his work as he sewed the pink leaves together with his silver thread as neatly as a seamstress, put a line of embroidery all round the hem, and twisted a silken cord to tie it at the waist.

"Oh, how pretty you are!" cried the spider when the dress was on. "You must have a veil to keep the sun out of your eyes. Here is my last web;" and he threw the shining gauze over her head, making her look like a little bride under the silvery veil.

Bud thanked him very much, and went happily on till she came to a party of columbines dancing in the wind. They thought she was the spirit of a rose come to visit them, and lowered their scarlet horns to offer her the honey in the tower ends.

She was just wondering where she should find some dinner, and here was a delicious feast all ready for her, thanks to the pretty dress which made the columbines think her a flower. She threw up her veil and told them her story, which they thought very interesting and rather sad.

"Stay and live with us, little darling!" they cried. "You are too delicate to go about all alone. The wind will blow you away, some foot will crush you, or some cruel wasp kill you with its sting. Live here, and we will be your friends, and feed and care for you."

"You are very kind, and your home is very pleasant; but I must go on. I feel sure that I have something to do, that somewhere I shall find my place, and sometime have a pair of wings, and be either a bird or a fairy," answered Bud, as she rested by the rock round which the flowers grew.

"Here comes our good friend Honey-bag, the bee. He is very wise; perhaps he can tell you where you should go and what you are," said the columbines, nodding joyfully as the brown velvet bee came buzzing along, for he was their postman and brought the daily news.

Eagerly they told him all about their little guest, and asked him if he had heard anything of a featherless bird, a strayed elf, or a human changeling hidden in a blue egg.

The bee said he once heard a humming-bird tell about some little creatures who were neither children nor fairies, because they were made out of the fancies in people's heads. These poor mites never could be real boys and girls; but if they tried very hard, and were very good, wings would grow and they would be elves at last.

"I will, I will!" cried Bud. "I know I am one of those creatures, and I want to be a fairy and find my home by and by. How shall I do it?"

"I think you have begun very well; for I've heard of you from several friends as I came through the wood, and all say good words of you. Go on, and I am sure you will find your wings at last. See! I will do my part, and give you something to eat as you travel along."

As the kind bee spoke he began to mix the yellow pollen and honey he had gathered, and soon handed Bud a nice little loaf of bee-bread to carry with her. She folded it up in white violet leaves, like a sweet-scented napkin, and with a horn of honey from the columbines set out again with many thanks and full of hope and courage.

Presently a cloud of gay butterflies came flocking round her, crying out,—

"Here's a rose! I smell honey! Come and taste! No, it is an elf! Dance with us, little dear!"

Bud admired them very much, and felt very glad and proud when they lighted all over her, till she looked like one great butterfly with wings of every color.

"I cannot play with you because I am not an elf; but if you will carry me on my way toward Fairyland I will give you my honey and my bread, for I go very slowly and want

to get along as quickly as I can," said Bud, thinking that these pretty insects might help her.

The butterflies were idle things and hated to work, but they wanted the dainty loaf and the flower sweets; so they said they would try to carry Bud and save her tired little feet. They held tightly to her belt, her hair, her frock, and all flew up at once, lifting her a little way above the ground and carrying her along in a cloud of blue and yellow, red and brown wings fluttering as they went. It was hard work, and soon the smaller ones let go; so Bud began to fall, and they were forced to lay her down on the grass while they rested and ate the bee-bread every crumb.

"Take me a little farther, and then you shall have the honey," said wise Bud, who was anxious to get on, and saw that the lazy flies would leave her as soon as her provisions were gone.

"Up again!" cried the great black and golden one; and away they went, all tugging stoutly. But though the tiny maid was as light as a feather, they had little strength in either legs or wings, and soon dropped her bump in the dusty path below.

"Thanks! Here's the horn; now let me rest and get over my fall," said Bud, making up her mind that her own feet were safest, after all.

The butterflies flew away, and the small traveller sat up to see where she was. A dismal groaning caught her ear; and close by she saw a rusty old beetle feebly trying to dig a hole in the sand.

"What is the matter?" asked Bud.

"It is time to die, and I want to bury myself; but I'm so weak I'm afraid I shall not get my grave ready in time, and then I shall be eaten up by some bird, or crushed by some giant's foot," answered the beetle, kicking and shovelling away as hard as he could.

"But if you were dead you would not know it," said Bud.

"Stupid child! if I'm killed in that way I cannot live again; but if I bury myself and lie asleep till spring, I come up a grub or a young beetle, I don't know which, but I am sure of some change. So I want a good grave to rest in; for dying is only a sleep before we wake up in another shape."

"I'm glad of that!" cried Bud. "I'll help you dig, and I'll cover you nicely, and hope you will be some pretty insect by and by."

So she threw off her veil, and worked busily with a little wooden shovel till a deep grave was made. The old beetle tumbled in with a gruff "Thank you, child," and died quite comfortably, with the warm sand over him. Bud piled little stones above the place, and left him to his long sleep, happy to be able to help, and full of wonder as to whether she too would have to die before her change came.

The sun was going down now; for the butterfly party and the beetle's funeral had taken a long time, and twilight was coming on.

"I must find a place to sleep," said Bud, rather anxiously; for this was her first night alone, and she began to miss Mother Linnet's warm wings brooding over her.

But she kept up her courage and trudged on till she was so tired she was forced to stop and rest on a bank where a glow-worm had just lighted its little lamp.

"Can I stay here under this big leaf?" she asked, glad to see the friendly light and bathe her tired feet in the dewy grass.

"You cannot go much farther, for the marsh is close by, and I see you have no wings, so you never could get on," answered the worm, turning his green lamp full upon the weary little wanderer.

Bud told her story, and was just going to ask if there was anything to eat, for she was sadly hungry, when some very sweet voices called down to her from a tall bush over her head,—

"Come to us, dear! We are the marsh-honeysuckles, cousins of the columbines you met to-day. Here is supper, with a bed, and a warm welcome for the good little creature Honey-bag the bee told us about."

Bud put up her arms to a great cluster of white flowers bending down to her, and in a moment lay in a delicious place, full of sweetest fragrance, while the honeysuckles fed and petted and rocked her to sleep before she could half thank them for their kindness.

There was time for a good nap and a lovely dream before a harsh voice waked her up, and she heard a bat talking as it hung near by, with its leathery wings over its eyes to shut out the light of the glow-worm still strolling about on the bank.

"Yes, the poor little boy wandered into the bog and was nearly drowned," said the bat. "It was that naughty Willy Wisp playing tricks again, and leading people out of the right path to splash into the mud. I've scolded him many a time, but he *will* do it; for he loves to make the woodmen and the children think he is the light in their cottage windows till they fall into the marsh, and then he hides and leaves them to get out as they can."

"What a wicked fellow!" cried Bud, rubbing her eyes and sitting up to listen.

"Of course he wouldn't mind you, for he knows you hate light, and he likes to teaze you by flashing his lantern in your eyes," said the glow-worm.

"Yes, I do hate light of all kinds, and wish it were always night," scolded the bat.

"I don't! I love sunshine and stars and fireflies and glow-worms and all the bright things; so perhaps if *I* went and talked to Willy Wisp he would stop playing these naughty pranks," said Bud, much interested, and feeling that this would be a very good work to do for the dear children.

"You couldn't keep him out of mischief unless you told stories all night. He loves tales dearly, but won't stay still and listen unless they are always new and *very* charming," said the bat, peeping out with one eye to see who the stranger might be.

"I know hundreds! for I was born of a fancy, and my head is full of lovely ones, and I sing such merry songs all the birds used to listen to me for hours. If I could only reach this Willy Wisp I think I could amuse him till the people got safely home," said Bud.

"Come and try; I'll carry you," said the bat, shutting his wings and looking like a black mouse as he crept nearer for Bud to mount.

"No, no; stay with us, and don't go to that dismal marsh full of ugly things and bad air," cried the honeysuckles, trying to hold her fast with soft, sticky hands.

But Bud was eager to do all the good she might, and bravely mounted her new horse, singing as she flew away,—

"On the bat's back I do fly

After summer, merrily."

"She won't do it," said the glow-worm, putting out his lamp as he went to bed.

"Alas, no! Poor little thing! she will die over there, and never be a fairy," sighed the flowers, looking like sad white ghosts in the dim light.

A cloud of fireflies danced over the marsh, where frogs croaked, mosquitoes hummed, and tall yellow lilies rang their freckled bells. The air was damp and hot; a white mist rose from the water that glimmered between the forests of reeds and the islands of bog moss, and sleek muskrats and bright-eyed snakes glided about, while wild ducks slept with their heads under their wings in quiet corners.

A strange, shadowy place, and Bud's heart died within her as she thought of staying here alone. But she did want to see if she could make the bad Willy behave better and not lead poor people into danger; so she held fast while the bat skimmed to and fro looking for the naughty fellow. Soon he came dancing toward them,—a dark little body with a big head like a round lantern, all shining with the light inside.

"What have you brought me, old Leather-wing?—a pretty bride to cheer up the marsh, or an elf to dance at my ball to-night?" he said, looking at Bud with delight as she sat on the dusky bat, with her pink dress and silvery veil glimmering in the brightness, that now shone over her like moonlight.

"No; it is a famous story-teller, come to amuse you when you are tired of whisking about and doing mischief. Be very polite or I will take her away again," answered the bat, setting Bud down on a small green island among the bulrushes and tall marsh moss.

"Let us hear one. Stop croaking, Speckle-back, and do you ladies quit dancing while I listen. Go along, Leather-wing; she shall stay till to-morrow and see what she can do," said Willy Wisp, seating himself near Bud, while the frogs grew still and the fireflies settled on the leaves like little lamps, making the island as light as day.

"It is late now; so when you hear the clock strike twelve you can stop and go to sleep, for the people will all be safe at home and Willy can do no harm. I'll come again soon. Good-night."

And away skimmed the bat, glad to find the darkest part of the marsh and hunt gnats for supper.

Bud immediately began to tell the story of "The Merry Cockchafer," and it proved so very interesting that soon a circle of frogs surrounded the island, laughing with their great mouths and winking their bright eyes as they listened. The wild ducks woke up and came to hear also; a water-snake glided nearer, with his neighbor the muskrat; while the fireflies grew so thick on the reeds and moss that everything sparkled, and Willy Wisp nodded his bright head joyfully as he sat like a king with his court about him.

Just in the most exciting place, when the Cockchafer and the Stag-beetle were going to fight a duel about the lovely white Moth, the clock struck twelve, and Bud, who was very tired, stopped short, saying,—

"I will finish to-morrow at twilight. The last part is the best, for the Lady-bug and the wicked Grasshopper do terrible things in it."

They all begged eagerly for the end, but Bud was hoarse and must go to sleep; so every one went away to talk about this new and charming creature who had come to make the long nights pleasant. Willy Wisp went zigzagging to and fro, trying to imagine what would come next, and Bud laid her head on a bulrush pillow to dream of stars till morning.

She was rather troubled, when daylight came, to find herself a prisoner; for deep water was all round her island, and there was no way of escaping. She asked a pretty white duck to take her to a larger place, for here there was nothing to eat but the soft green buds of the sweet flag and the little sour balls of the wild-cranberry vines.

"I'm not a steamer, and I don't carry passengers," answered the duck, paddling away; for he wanted Bud to stay and tell more tales.

So there she had to live for many days, watching the long-legged herons as they stalked about fishing in the pools, seeing how the rats built their curious houses, the frogs leaped and dived, the snakes glided to and fro, and the ducklings ate flies all day long. She talked with the yellow lilies, learned the song of the whispering reeds, and climbed up the tall stems of the bulrushes to look out over the marsh and long to be on the firm ground again. The bat forgot to come and see her, and Willy grew so fond of her stories that he would sit for hours while she told them; so no one came to harm, and Bud felt that she was really doing a good thing all alone there in the dreary bog. Every one loved her and wanted her to stay; but by and by the summer was over, the fireflies died, and Willy Wisp grew pale and lazy and fell asleep easier each night, as if he too were ready to fade away till hot weather should make him lively and bright again.

"Now I might go if I could find any friend to help me," said Bud, when the wild ducks said good-by and the herons stalked away.

"I will help you," said a water-snake, popping his head up with a kinder look than one would fancy such fiery eyes could wear.

"You!" said Bud, much surprised; for she had never liked the snake very well, though she had always been kind to him.

"I am your friend if you will have me. No one cares for me, I am so ugly and have had a bad name ever since the world began; but I hope when I shed my skin I may be handsomer or change to something better, so I try to be a good snake and do what I can to make my neighbors happy."

"Poor thing! I hope you will be a pretty green adder, and live among the flowers like one I once knew. It must be hard to be contented here, and you are very kind to want to help me," said Bud, laying her little warm hand on the ugly head of the snake, who had crept up to bask in the sun.

That pleased Forked-tongue very much; for no one ever petted him, and his eyes shone like jewels as he coiled his slender body nearer Bud's feet, and lifted up his head to answer her.

"You want to go away and you shall. We shall all miss you sadly, but it will soon be cold and you need stay no longer; so I will ask my friend Sleek to gnaw these strong rushes till they fall and make bridges across the pools. You can go safely over them and find some warm, pretty place to live in till the summer comes again."

"That is a fine plan! Thank you, dear friend; let us do it at once while Willy is asleep and no one sees us," cried Bud.

So Sleek the muskrat came and made a road for her from one tuft of grass to another till she was safely on the land. Then she bade these ugly but kind friends good-by, and gladly ran about the pleasant field where autumn flowers were going to seed and dead leaves falling fast. She feasted on wild grapes, dried berries, and apples fallen from the trees since the harvest was carried in. Everything was getting ready for winter, and Bud was glad to make herself a warm suit of mullein clothes, with a little hood of thistle-down. She was fitting beechnut shells on her tiny feet for shoes when a withered plant near by called out to her,—

"Are you going far, that you put on new clothes and stout boots, little stranger?"

"I must travel till I find my own country, no matter how far away it is. Can I do any errand for you?" asked Bud, kindly.

"Yes; will you carry these seeds of mine to the great meadow over there? All my friends are there, and I long to be at home again. Some one picked me last spring and dropped me here. But I did not die; I took root and bloomed here, and must always stay unless some one will take my seeds back. Then I shall come up in my own place next spring and be a happy flower again."

"I will do it," said Bud; "but I thought the wind took your seeds about for you."

"Some are too heavy. Pine seeds, maple keys, thistle and dandelion down, and many others blow about; but some of us grow from our roots, and some, like me, come from seeds kept in little bags. I'm called Shepherd's-purse, and I'm a humble weed; but I love my own people and long to see them again."

"You shall!" cried Bud; and gathering the three-cornered bags she took them carefully away to the meadow where other plants like this one were glad to hear of their lost friend and to watch over the gift she sent them.

Remembering how pleasant and comfortable it was to find various flowers blooming along the roadside like hospitable inns for tiny travellers like herself, good Bud spent several days in planting roots and seeds beside the path that led through the meadow.

"Now children, birds, butterflies, and fairies will be glad to find these pretty things blooming here, though they will never know who planted them," she said, when the last task was done.

The frost had come, and nuts were rattling down, leaves turning brown, and cold winds beginning to blow; so poor Bud looked about as she went through a wood to find some safe, warm place to sleep in, for a time at least, because she felt sure that when the snow came she would die, so small and delicate and friendless was the dear little thing. When she came to a great oak she sat down on an acorn cup, and tried to break the hard shell of an acorn that she might nibble a bit for her dinner. She could not do it, and sat thinking sadly what would become of her, when a sweet acorn without its shell dropped into her lap, and, looking up, she saw a gray squirrel peeping at her from a branch above her head. She smiled, and thanked him, and he came down with a whisk to sit opposite and look at her with his fine tail over his head like an umbrella.

"I know you, little maid, and I'm glad you came here, for I can show you a charming house for the winter. I heard you tell a field-mouse how lonely you were, and I saw tears

dropping just now as you sat here thinking you had not a friend in the world," said Dart, as he nodded at her and kindly cracked a chestnut to follow the acorn if she needed more.

"Every one is very kind to me, but every one seems to go to sleep when autumn comes; so I felt alone and sad, and expected to die in the snow. But if I can find a cosey place to live in till spring I shall be very glad, and will do anything I can to pay for it," answered Bud, much comforted by her good dinner and a kind word.

"If you will help me get in my nuts and acorns and moss and leaves for winter food and bedding, I will let you use the Kobolds' house till they come. They are jolly little fellows, and they will allow you to stay, and teach you to spin; for they spin all winter, and make lovely cloth for the elves out of silkweed and thistle-down. Here is their house. I hide it and take care of it while they are gone, and get it ready for them in the autumn, as they come with the first snow."

While Dart spoke he had been clearing away a pile of dead leaves at the foot of the old oak, and soon Bud saw an arched doorway leading into the hollow trunk, where the roots made different chambers, and all was dry and warm and cosey as a little house. She went in and looked about, well pleased at what she saw, and very glad of such a comfortable home. She hoped the Kobolds would let her stay, and set to work at once to help Dart get ready for them; for the sky looked dark with snow, and a cold wind rustled through the wood.

In one room they stored nuts and acorns, rose and holly berries, a dried apple or two, and many pine cones to burn; for Dart showed her a little fireplace, and told her the Kobolds kept themselves very warm and jolly at their work. In another room they spread moss and dry grass for beds, and there the seven little men would sleep like dormice. The empty cocoon of a caterpillar still hung in one corner, and Bud said that should be her hammock with a curtain made of woven yellow bindweed hung before the nook. They swept the floor with fir-needle brooms, and spread a carpet of red oak leaves, which gave a very gay air to the place. Then Dart left Bud to fill a row of acorn cups with water from a spring near by, while he ran off to nibble splinters from the pitch pines to make torches for the Kobolds, who worked in the evening and needed light.

Bud was as happy as a little girl with a new baby-house, and looked like a tiny doll herself as she bustled to and fro, filling her tubs, dusting her pretty rooms, and getting ready for the seven strangers, like Snowdrop and the dwarfs in the dear old fairy tale. All was ready in two days, and Dart had time to lay up his own stores before the snow came. Bud watched over the heaps of nuts he piled lest his sly neighbors should steal them while he ran up and down tucking them away in holes about the oak-tree. This helped him much, and he was very fond of her; and together they got up a nice surprise for the Kobolds by putting in new beds for them made of chestnut burrs, which rocked on their outside prickles like cradles, and were lined with down as soft as silk.

"That will tickle them," said Dart; "and when they know that you thought of it, they will like you as much as I do. Now rest a bit, and be ready to welcome them, for I'm sure they will come to-day. I'll run to the tree-top and look out for them, so you can light the fire when I give the word."

Dart whisked away, and Bud stood in the doorway, with a warm mat of hemlock sprigs under her feet, and a garland of evergreen overhead; for she had trimmed up the arch,

and stuck bits of gay holly all about to welcome the little men. Soon snow-flakes began to flutter down, and Bud rejoiced that she had a nice, warm home to stay in, instead of freezing to death like a lost bird. Suddenly Dart called from the tree-top, "They are coming!" and hurried down to rub two sticks together till a spark flew out and set the pine cone on the hearth ablaze. "Run to the door and courtesy when you see them," he said, fanning the fire with his bushy tail, in a great state of excitement.

Bud peeped out and was just going to say, "I see nothing but snow," when she saw that what looked like a party of flakes blowing up to the door was really the seven Kobolds loaded with great piles of white silkweed for their spinning. She dropped her best courtesy, smiled her sweetest smile, and called out, "Welcome home, my masters!" like a little maidservant, as she led the way to the large room, now bright and warm with the fire roaring up the chimney made by a hole in the old roots.

"Ha, ha! Neighbor Dart, you have done well this time, and we are satisfied with you. Now just store away our packs while we go for our wheels, and then we will have supper. But first, tell us who this pretty person is, if you please?" said the oldest of the Kobolds, while the others stood nodding and looking at Bud as if she pleased them well.

"Your new housekeeper, gentlemen," answered Dart, and in a few words told them all about his friend,—how she had helped get ready for them, what fine tales and songs she knew, and how much good she had done and still hoped to do while waiting for her wings to grow.

"Good, very good! She shall stay with us, and we will take care of her till spring. Then we will see what happens;" and they all smiled and nodded harder than ever, as if they knew something charming but would not tell it yet.

Then they clapped on their funny pointed hats, and trotted away before Bud could thank them half enough. While they were gone Dart showed her how to put a row of chestnuts on the hearth to roast, and how to set the table, which was a dry mushroom propped up on four legs in the middle of the room, with little toadstools to sit on. Acorn cups full of berries and water, and grains of wheat and barley were arranged on it, with a place for the chestnuts when they were done, and some preserved apple on an oak-leaf platter. Several torches were lighted and stuck in holes at the four corners of the table, and then all was ready, and Bud put on a little white apron made of her torn veil, and waited like a neat cook to dish up supper when her masters arrived.

Presently they came, each lugging a tiny spinning-wheel on his back; for they hid them in a cave among the rocks all summer, and got them out when the time for their winter work was come again. Dart helped them settle down a bit, and then left them to eat and rest; while Bud waited on them so nicely they wondered how they ever got on without a maid before. She was not at all afraid of them now; for they were jolly little fellows, with fat bodies, thin legs, rosy faces, and sharp eyes. All were dressed in white down suits, and wore droll pointed hats made of some seed pod, and boots of magic stuff which carried them great distances as if blown by the wind.

They liked their supper very much, and ate and drank and chatted pleasantly till all were done; then they sat round the fire and smoked sweet fern in Indian pipes till Bud had cleared away.

"Now come and sing to us," they said; and the youngest Kobold politely set a stool in the warmest corner for her.

So Bud sang all her gayest songs to their great delight, and told her adventures; and all were very cosey till it was time to sleep. The little men were charmed with their new beds, and pulling poppy-pod nightcaps over their heads tumbled in with drowsy good-nights, leaving Bud to cover up the fire, shut the front door, and put out the lights. Soon she was in her own soft hammock; and nothing broke the silence but the sigh of the wind, the tap of falling snow-flakes on dry leaves outside, and seven little snores inside, as the tired Kobolds dreamed cosily in their new beds.

Bud was up early next day, and had everything ready when the little men came out to breakfast. After it they set their wheels whirling, and all day long they spun busily till many skeins of shining silk were ready to be woven into elfin cloth. Bud soon learned, and they made her a wheel; so she could work with them. They seldom spoke, and never ate nor stopped till night; then the wheels stood still, and the spinners went out for a run while Bud got supper.

In the evening they went coasting if it was moonlight, or owl-hunting, and had gay times in the wood, whisking Bud with them, or sliding down hillocks of snow on their sleds of bark, while Dart looked on, well wrapped up in his gray fur coat.

But stormy nights they sat at home, and told stories and played games, and were very merry, and Bud learned many wise and interesting things; for the Kobolds knew all kinds of fairies, nixies, goblins, and spirits, and had been in many lands.

It was very pleasant; but when the last month of winter came Bud began to be so sleepy she could not keep her eyes open, and sat nodding as she spun, gaping instead of singing, and was often found dreaming in her bed when she should have been up and at work. She was much troubled about it, but could not help it; and the Kobolds only laughed, slyly felt of her shoulders, and told her to sleep away, for their work was nearly done and they did not need her.

One morning Bud did not wake up at all, and when the little men peeped at her there she lay rolled up in her hammock very like a chrysalis in its shell.

"All right," laughed the imps, nodding at one another; "let her sleep while the wings grow, and in May she will wake up to a prettier surprise than the one she gave us."

So they finished their work, packed up the silk, and as soon as the snow was gone they hid their wheels, had a farewell feast with Dart, and departed, begging him to watch over Bud, and have their house ready for them next year.

Day after day the grass grew greener, the buds larger, the air warmer, and the world more beautiful as spring flew over it; but Bud still lay asleep in her little bed, and the faithful squirrel went every morning to see that she was safe. May came at last, and the pink flowers under the leaves pushed out their rosy faces; birds sang among the green bushes, and the sun shone brightly as the little wood creatures ventured out one by one for another happy summer.

Then Bud woke from her long sleep, stretched her small arms and legs like a baby after its nap, looked about her to see where she was, and sprang up, fearing it was too late to get the Kobolds' breakfast. But the house was empty, the fire was out, the wheels gone, and nothing to be seen but a lovely white silk dress lying on the table with her name woven in tiny buds all over it. While she was looking at it with delight, Dart came in, and skipped for joy to see her awake again and prettier than ever; for while she slept she

had grown very beautiful. Her winter gown was withered up, and fell off as she got out of bed, leaving her all ready for the new silver-white gown, which she gladly put on.

"Pull away my old hood that lies there on my shoulders, and let me tie my pretty dress with this fine belt," said Bud, feeling something on her back.

Dart's black eyes sparkled as he answered with a gay whisk,—

"Shake yourself and see what happens. But don't go till I have time to admire the splendid princess ready for Fairyland."

Bud shook; and, lo! a pair of blue and silver wings unfolded from her little shoulders, and there she stood, a shining creature, gay as a butterfly, delicate as an elf, lovely as a happy child; while Dart waved his tail like a banner as he cried joyfully,—

"The Kobolds said it would be so because you tried so hard to be and do good! Now you can go home and lead a happy life in Fairyland."

Bud could only clap her hands and laugh for joy, and try to see the beautiful wings she had worked and waited for so long.

"Thank you very much for all your kindness to me, dear Dart; I will come again and see you and the little men if I can. Now I must go and try to fly before I set out for home," she said, and hastened to the door, where wood violets were watching for her with eager blue eyes, while the robins, wrens, and linnets sang to welcome her.

There was no need to learn how to fly; the lovely wings lifted her lightly up, and away she went like a new-born butterfly glittering in the sunshine. It was so delightful that she could hardly bear to come down to the earth again; so she perched on a high branch of the old oak and took a peep at Dart's home before she said good-by to him.

"How shall I find my way to Fairyland?" she asked, eager to be off, for the longing was stronger than ever in her heart.

"I have come to show you the road," answered a shrill small voice, as a splendid humming-bird lit on the branch beside her, its breast sparkling like a jewel, and its long bill full of honey, while its quivering wings made the softest music.

"I am ready! Good-by, dear friends! good-by, great world! I love you, but I must go to my own people," cried Bud, and with a flash of the blue and silver wings she was gone.

But for many a winter's night her story was told by the Kobolds as they spun around their fire; and for many a long day did bird and bee, beetle, ant, and flower, love and remember little Bud.

The Flower's Story

Marion had been ill, and was still so weak that she had to lie on her bed many hours each day trying to sleep and rest. One winter afternoon when the snow fell quietly outside and the room was very still, with Nurse dozing in her chair, the kitten purring on the rug, and nothing new or pretty to look at but a bunch of pansies in a glass beside the bed, Marion said to herself with a sigh,—

"If I only had some one to tell me a story I should be able to get through this long day without fretting. But Mamma is away, Nurse is tired, and I know all my books by heart; so what can I do, since I'm too tired to play with my dolls?"

No one answered this important question; and Marion sighed again as she turned to look at the other side of the room, hoping to discover some help or amusement in that direction. The queer ladies on the great Japanese fan over the glass stared at her with their small eyes, but seemed too busy drinking tea out of red and yellow teapots to take any interest in the pale little girl on the bed. The pins sat primly in the blue satin cushion as usual; but neither the pearl fly, the golden rose-headed one, nor the funny mourning brooch Nurse was so fond of,—with hair in it, and a picture of a fat baby at the back,—could amuse Marion now. The dolls lay piled up in the cradle, with their poor arms and legs sticking out in all directions, sadly neglected by their little mamma; while the dear books upon the shelves had been read so often lately that they had nothing new and pleasant to offer now.

"Oh dear! I wish the birds on the wall-paper or the children in the pictures hanging round my room could sing and talk to me. I've been so good and patient I really think some one *ought* to take pity on a poor little sick girl and do something to please her," said Marion, with a third sigh, heavier than the others.

It made such a breeze that it blew one of the flowers out of the glass. Marion took it up and looked at it, ready for any playmate, even a ladies'-delight.

It was a very pretty one, and showed such a smiling face among its dark and bright petals that the child felt as if she had found a friend, and kissed it softly, being rather tender-hearted just then as well as lonely.

To her great surprise the flower nodded at her, and then a faint, sweet voice said, as she still held it close to her face,—

"Now I can speak, and am very glad to come and amuse you; for we have been pitying you very much, because we also are lonely and homesick so far from our own people."

"Why, you dear little thing, how lovely it is to hear you talk and see you smile at me! Please tell me all about yourself. I'm fond of flowers, and was so pleased when one of my schoolmates sent me this pretty nosegay of pansies," said Marion, charmed with this surprise.

"I have no story; for I was born in a green-house, and have lived in a little flower-pot all my life, with many sisters, who are carried away when they bloom, and never come back again. We only sat for a few hours in a shop before we were pinned in paper, and brought here by a dreadful boy, who left us at your door. We were much pleased to find ourselves in this pretty vase of fresh water in a quiet, warm room, with a gentle mistress

to look at us. Now, if you want a story about our people, I will tell you an old one that all our family know and like very much."

"Do!" cried Marion; and then, with kitty asleep on her arm, she lay and listened with the deepest interest to this little history of—

THE PRINCES AND THE PANSIES: A FAIRY TALE

Once upon a time there was a King who had two little sons, named Purple and Plush because they always wore mourning for their mother, who died when they were born. The King would not wear purple, which is the proper color for royal sorrow. He was a very selfish man, and cared only for his own comfort; so he lived in his splendid rooms, and amused himself among his books, quite lazy and contented in his green velvet dressing-gown and red cap, sleeping a great deal, reading, and drinking wine so that he might forget the loss of his beautiful queen.

He did not care about his little sons, and left them to the nurses and then the tutors, as they grew up from babies to pretty boys, so sweet and wise and good that people said the spirit of their dead mother must watch over them; and perhaps it did. They were always together, always busy, always kind and gentle, but rather sad, because their father did not love them; and all the affection of the many friends they made could not make up for the loss of father and mother love.

His subjects wanted the King to marry again, so that the court might be gay with feasts and balls and splendid games as it used to be; but he was too selfish and lazy to disturb himself, till a certain beautiful lady came to see him. She was a widow, with two little daughters, named Primrose and Daffodil because they always wore yellow gowns. Their mother was the Princess Jonquil, and dressed in cloth of gold. She was very proud, and wished to be queen; so she put on a purple velvet cloak, and made the little girls wear purple hats to look as if they mourned like the rest of the kingdom, and went to court to marry the King. They were all so pretty and charming that every one admired and welcomed them; and while the Princess played chess and read poetry to amuse his Majesty, the children played together and tried to be friends.

But Primrose and Daffodil were vain and selfish and wilful; and the little Princes soon found that they expected to have their own way about everything, and flew into sad passions if any one dared to reprove them. So the little boys were more unhappy than ever when they were told that their father was to marry the Princess, and these disagreeable girls were to be their half-sisters.

There was a splendid wedding, and the bells rang, and the trumpets sounded, and every one feasted and danced; for the fountains were filled with wine, and tables were spread in the market-place, so that all the poor people could have a good time as well as the rich. The new Queen was very anxious to please her subjects, and made things so gay that at first every one praised her; and the King gladly let her rule, as it left him quiet with his books and bottles. Now the little girls were prouder than ever, and shone like the sun in their fine new gowns. But the Princes would not change their purple velvet suits, though they put on gold belts and set jonquils in their caps in honor of the Queen. They tried to enjoy the gayety, but soon found that they were neglected by every one; for people saw who was to have the power, and hastened to pet and flatter the young Princesses in order to please their mother. She showed how she meant to rule the first time she took the throne; for the King was not there, and she sat alone in her cloth-of-gold robes very splendid to see. She put her daughters one at each side on the green

satin chairs set for the Princes, and ordered the poor boys to share her footstool between them.

Some people were very angry at this, and told the King. But he only said: "Don't trouble me. Her Majesty will do as she thinks best; and my sons will obey her as if they were her own." So nothing could be done; and the gentle boys sat at the Queen's feet, while the vain little girls rustled and smiled and tossed their heads on the high seats where they did not belong.

This was the beginning of sad times for the Princes; for the new mother wanted them out of the way that she might reign when the King died. She dared not send them away so soon; but she ordered them to live quietly with their tutors and servants in a lonely part of the palace, and never allowed them to come to the feasts, the hunting-parties, or any of the splendid shows with which she amused the people. Since their father did not object, the boys obeyed, and amused themselves by working among the flowers with old Adam, the gardener, who taught them many curious, useful, and beautiful things about trees and plants. They also learned to play and sing, and often sat in the summer evenings making music with their little lutes sweeter than that of the nightingales in the rose-bushes, or the court concerts, where the bad Queen and the proud Princesses sat in all their splendor. The boys studied and grew wise with the teachers, who loved them; but as time went by they began to long for more freedom and pleasure, when the horns blew and all the great people rode away to hunt the deer or fly their falcons. They begged the Queen to let them see their father; but when she saw what handsome, tall lads they were growing she was more anxious than ever to get rid of them, and in the night she sent her soldiers to take them to the tower, where they were shut up in a high room, with only bread and water to live on,—no books, no friends, no freedom; for no one knew where they were, because the Queen told the father that they had run away, and when he had sent some people to look for them he troubled himself no more about the matter.

So they lived for a year all alone in the tower; but they were not very unhappy, for the sun smiled in at them, birds built nests in the ivy that covered the gray walls, and the wind sang them to sleep as it roared or whispered round their high room. They loved and cheered each other, and kept up their courage till one day no bread and water was put in at the little wicket of the door. For three days no food came, and then they knew that the wicked Queen meant to starve them to death. People thought them lost; and all but the few who were faithful forgot the Princes and obeyed the Queen, who now ruled over them like a tyrant, while her daughters grew more proud and selfish every day, and the old King slept most of the time, careless of everything but his ease.

"Now, brother, we must escape, for it is plain that no one will help us; so we will help ourselves," said Purple bravely, resolving not to starve to death to please a cruel stepmother.

"We will," cried Plush; "but how can we get out of this high tower with no ladder?"

"We will make one. I've often planned it all, but thought it our duty to obey. Now it is right to take care of ourselves, and try to reach our father if we can. Let us braid ropes of the straw of our beds, the blankets and sheets, and as many of our clothes as we can spare. All these will not make a ladder long enough to reach the ground; but it will carry us down to where the ivy branches are strong, and from there we can climb safely to the bottom. We will go by night and find good old Adam. He will feed and help us and tell us what to do."

"A splendid plan! Let us set to work while our strength holds out or it will be too late," answered Plush, who was very white and weak with hunger.

Busily flew the fingers, and soon long coils of cord were made; while the poor lads chewed leaves and drank the rain to keep themselves alive. At last they had enough to reach a long way down; and when night came Purple made his brother go first,—for he was an hour younger, and rather lighter, and he wanted to be sure he was safe before he escaped himself. Down climbed Plush, while the other lad leaned out, with his hands on the frail ladder, holding his breath till the dark figure was out of sight in the gloom, and a soft whistle told him that all was safe with the dear boy. Then he followed, and Plush caught him in his arms as he came climbing down; while all the little birds sat silent in their nests among the ivy, and not a stout branch broke under the clinging hands and feet,—for birds and plants loved them, and were faithful friends, as we shall see.

In the darkness the Princes found their way to Adam's house in the great garden, and were welcomed joyfully; for the old man thought them dead. When he heard their story he told them that they could never reach their father, and that they were in danger of their lives if they tried to do so; for the Queen was very cruel and powerful, and would not let them live if she could help it.

"Go away till you are grown, my dear little masters; then come back as men and take the kingdom that belongs to you."

"But how can we live? What can we do, since we have no money or friends to help us?" asked the boys, as they rested after a good supper.

"Here are your lutes," said old Adam; "I took care of them for you; and you can go singing through the world, and so earn money for your bread. I will give you some magic seeds which my father left me, saying that they would not grow unless royal hands planted them, when they would bring fortune to the happy owner for whom they bloomed. I taught you how to garden; so when you are safely out of the kingdom sow the seed in some wild spot, and see if the story is true. I have nothing else to give you but bread and wine and all good wishes, my dear wronged Princes. God be with you, and bring you safely home again to reign over us long and happily."

The brothers thanked him heartily, and at dawn stole out of the city with their lutes at their backs, wallets of food at their sides, and each wrapped in a russet mantle made out of Adam's old cloak. Freedom and fresh air soon gave them back their strength and courage, and when they were at a safe distance from home they began to sing and play in the villages as they travelled along. With their faded suits, bonny faces, and gentle manners, they were a charming pair of young troubadours, and every one was glad to listen to the sweet music they made. Rich people threw silver into the caps they held up when the songs were done, and poor people gladly gave them food and beds since they had no money to give. In this way they got on very pleasantly through the winter, for in that country there was no snow; and the lads grew strong and brave trudging over hill and dale, with no enemies but wind and rain to fear, and leaving many friends behind them. They liked the free life, though it was hard; but they never forgot that they were princes, even when their purple suits were in rags and the russet cloaks worn out. Nothing mean or selfish, cruel or unjust, ever disturbed the peace of their honest hearts and clean consciences; and many generous acts, gentle words, and brave thoughts made the beggar lads kings of themselves at least, and very rich in the blessings of those whom they so kindly helped and comforted.

When spring came they were far from home, and felt that it was time to try the fairy flowers. So they chose a sunny spot on a lonely moor, where the earth was rich, and a brook kept it moist, and no one cared what they did, and there they planted the seeds and tended them carefully. While waiting for the blossoms they built a hut of green branches, and lived on wild berries, the rabbits they snared, the fish they caught, and the black bread they bought of an old woman who came to look for herbs. They had saved a little money, and when that was gone one of them would wander off for a few days singing some more into the bag, while the other watched over the bed of tender plants fast growing green and strong.

They wondered what the magic flowers would be, and often feared that they would never bloom, it was so long before any buds appeared.

"If no flowers come we shall know that we are not the right gardeners, though we *are* royal," said Purple, as he watered the bed one day.

"Then we will go on singing till we get round the world, brother. By that time we shall be men and can fight for our kingdom," answered Plush, weeding busily in among the low plants that spread far and wide with large tightly folded buds on all of them.

"Our old neighbor, the herb-woman, is very curious about this plot of ours, and wants to know what we are going to raise here. I told her we did not know, but when the flowers came she might see them, because she is very wise and this may be some new herb which will cure the sick. That would be a pleasant thing to do, even if we never made a fortune."

"Indeed it would! I'd rather make people happy than be a king, and so would you, brother."

As the boys spoke a very sweet perfume filled the air, and all the leaves rustled softly as if the south wind stirred them. Then everything was still again, and the larks twittered high above their heads as if they were telling some good news to the beautiful blue world far above the clouds.

Next morning, when the Princes went to their garden, lo! it was all in bloom, and lay there like a gold and purple carpet fit for a king. The flowers were pansies, but such as were never seen before; for these were very large and all alike, looking like little faces, half sad, half cheerful, as the yellow and the dark leaves framed them in. They were very sweet, and as they nodded in the wind seemed to be whispering something to one another so interesting that the lads longed to know the pretty story they were telling.

"What can we do with them, and how can they bring us good luck?" said the elder brother, looking seriously down at the lovely things.

"Enjoy them first, then sell them in little posies, and so make money; for they are the finest ever seen, and people will be glad to buy them," answered the younger, as he began to gather the great beauties at his feet.

"So we can, and keep the seed, and go on planting and selling till we are rich. It is slow work, but we learned to be patient in the tower, and will wait to see what fortune heart's-ease is to bring us," said Prince Purple, going down on his knees before a group of lovely flowers, who bent as if glad to be gathered by such gentle hands.

"Heyday! what have we here? Surely you are fairy gardeners, my sons, to bring such splendid blossoms out of this wild moor," said a cracked voice behind them, as the old

herb-woman came hobbling up with her apron full of mushrooms and her basket of sweet-smelling roots and leaves.

"Only pansies, mother, for the market," answered Plush, looking up with a smile.

"See how sweet they are! You shall have the first because you are so kind to us," added Purple, offering her a bunch of them as gallantly as if he were kneeling to a queen instead of an old woman as brown and wrinkled as a withered leaf.

"Good lads! I'll be still kinder and read the story these fine flowers are trying to tell," she said, as her eyes shone and her skinny hands turned the pansies to and fro. "I can read all plants, and so I learn many strange things. See if you understand this sad tale, for this is what is written on these flowers, and it must be true, for they cannot lie."

The Princes drew nearer and watched curiously as a trembling finger pointed out the different parts while the old woman spoke, glancing into their tell-tale faces now and then.

"There are five leaves. This great golden one sits alone on her green seat at the top. These two smaller yellow ones, with a touch of purple in them, sit on either side; but these two purple ones have only one seat between them, though they are the handsomest of all. Now look here in the middle, and see this little image like a man in a green gown and a red cap hiding away in the warmest, safest place with a bag of seeds which will ripen by-and-by if he will let the sun in. Come now, do you see any meaning to that, my sons?" asked the old soul, with a sharp look at the boys, who blushed and smiled and sighed, but could not speak, for here was their own sad story truly told in the magic flower.

The herb-woman nodded wisely, but only said in a kind tone, as she put the posy in her bosom,—

"Heart's-ease won't grow for every one, but all the world wants it and will pay well for it; so sell your pansies, lads, and earn a fortune worth having. I'll be in the market-place when you come, and say a good word for you, though you don't need it with such bonny faces and gentle ways of your own."

Then she went away, and the wondering Princes made haste to pick all the flowers that were in bloom, tying the bunches up with sweet-scented grass, and laying them in baskets of green rushes which they had made. A pretty sight it was; for the little pansy faces seemed to smile up at whoever looked, the sweet breath called out, "Come and buy us!" and the dew sparkled on the leaves like diamonds on the gold and purple robes of some queen.

When the Princes came to the town they stood in the market-place and cried their wares like the other people with fruit and vegetables; but their faces were so noble, their voices so clear, their flowers so large and beautiful, that in spite of their poor clothes and humble work every one who saw and heard them felt that there was something strange and interesting about the fine boys who called so sweetly,—

"Heart's-ease! here's fresh heart's-ease! Who'll buy? Who'll buy?"

All who passed were charmed with the great pansies, for the like had never been seen in that country; so the baskets were soon empty, and more than one bit of gold shone among the copper and silver coins in their pockets, because the rich as well as the poor hastened to buy heart's-ease. Much pleased with their day's work, the lads went gayly

home to water the bed and rejoice over the buds that were thicker than ever. After that they sold flowers all summer long; for the magic pansies kept on blooming till the frost came, and every one who bought them discovered that they really did bring comfort and happy thoughts, and this made high and low eager to get them. Doctors sent for them for the sick; sad people ordered many to cheer them up; even bad people loved them because the bright faces, half grave, half gay, never reproached them, but smiled so pleasantly, that they woke better feelings in the evil minds. Far and wide flew the fame of this new herb, as they called it; and kings and queens begged for the seed, since they especially needed heart's-ease. Several plants even reached the lazy King as he sat in his luxurious room drinking his wine, studying, and sleeping; and the sight of the flowers woke him up, for his beautiful dead wife's name was Pansy, and he began to wonder where his sons could be and to ask about them.

The Queen also needed the wonderful herb, for she was troubled by the disorder of her kingdom. Her subjects did not love her, and grew tired of being taxed to pay for her splendor. They began to rebel, especially the poor, of whom she took no care, but left them to starve and suffer while she enjoyed herself. Even the rich and noble people became discontented and wanted to be still richer and nobler, and quarrelled among themselves, and hinted that she had killed or banished the Princes, who ought to be ruling, and would now do it better than she did.

Primrose and Daffodil had sent for the magic flowers because they wanted everything new and pretty that they heard of, no matter what it cost. When the lovely things arrived in beautiful china urns, the young Princesses were charmed with them and forbade any one else to have them.

"These are our colors, and these flowers shall be our royal badge, and no one must wear them under pain of death," they said; and they put their servants as well as themselves into new suits of purple velvet and gold, very splendid to see, with pansies everywhere,—on carriages and clothes, banners and furniture,—very proud of the graceful coat-of-arms.

But they, like their mother, soon found that the name meant something more than a pretty flower; for *pensée* is the French for "a thought," and into their careless minds came thoughts of all the harm they had done, as if the breath of the new-fashioned violet reproached them, while the sweet little faces recalled the sad ones of the banished boys whose places they had unjustly taken.

So all were ill at ease, and the spell of the flower began to work at home as well as abroad, helping to make things ready for the wanderers when they should return.

Meantime the Princes were travelling round the world, learning much and growing wise and good as well as tall and brave, and handsomer than ever. In the winter time they sang and played, and no Christmas feast was merry without the lute-players, no peasant's wedding quite perfect till they came, and often in palaces they made music for lords and ladies to dance by, and were generously paid. But what they liked better was to sing in prisons, hospitals, or poor places, where they not only gave pleasure but money, and then stole away without stopping to be thanked, so happy to be able to help the sad and sick and suffering.

In summer they rested in some pleasant spot, and planted the magic seed which would grow in any soil and was admired everywhere. So they went on their way busily and happily, leaving music and flowers behind them, and making the world brighter and

better by sweet sounds and happy thoughts, till they were called "The Blessed Boys," and were waited for and welcomed and loved east and west and north and south.

Summers and winters passed, and they were tall youths when they came again to their father's kingdom in their journey round the world. But though old and wise enough now to rule, and sure to be gladly received by the discontented people, they found that they no longer felt bitter and angry with those who had wronged them. Time had taught them to forgive and forget; their peaceful, happy life made war distasteful, and they loved freedom so well that they had no heart to force others to obey.

"We reign over a larger and lovelier kingdom than this, our subjects love us dearly, and we are not tied to a throne, but are as free as the wind; let us be content with this, and ask for nothing more," said Prince Purple to his brother, as they looked down on the familiar city while resting on a hill outside the gates.

"I don't care to be shut up in a palace and obliged to live by rule any more. But if what we heard is true, there is plenty of work to do for the poor here, and we have saved so much we can at least begin to help those who suffer most. No one need know us, and we can be at work while waiting for our father to remember and recall us," answered Plush, who was as princely yet as delicate as the soft silken stuff he loved to wear.

So they disguised themselves as young Brothers of Mercy in black hoods and gowns, and went into the city looking about them for a home. Old Adam was still alive, but very poor now; for the Queen had sent him away when the Princes escaped, and the King had forgotten him. The boys found him out and told him who they were, and lived with him, making the old man very happy, proud, and comfortable. All day they went about among the poor, helping them in many ways; for the money they had earned never seemed to give out, no matter how generous they were. Heart's-ease sprang up where they walked, as if the magic seeds fell out of their pockets unseen; and soon they could be traced all over the city by happy faces, and the pots of pansies in humble windows where no flowers would ever grow before. No one knew them by any name but that of "The Brothers;" and many sick, sad souls blessed them for the good they did so quietly.

Before long, tidings of these wonderful young men reached the palace, where the old King now lay ill, and the Queen lived in fear of her life, for the people hated her and might break out at any moment. She sent for the Brothers; and they came at once, hoping to do some good. Nobody recognized the pretty Princes in the tall young monks, half hidden in their hoods and gowns; but comfort and courage seemed to come with them, for the sick King grew stronger when they prayed or sang beside him, and the sad Queen took heart, and confessed her sins to them, begging them to tell her what to do, since selfish splendor brought neither happiness, love, nor honor.

"Repent, and undo the wrong you have done," answered one Brother, boldly.

"But the Princes are lost or dead, and my people hate me," sighed the poor Queen.

"God has taken better care of the motherless boys than you did, and they will come back when it is time. Do you pity and help your people. Make them love and trust you; then you will be safe and happy, and your kingdom glorious," said the other Brother in his gentle voice.

"I will, I will!" cried the Queen, while repentant tears fell on her cloth-of-gold mantle, which was not dimmed by the salt drops, but seemed to shine the brighter for them.

Then she took counsel with the Brothers; and while Plush nursed and cheered the old father, Purple helped his stepmother to win the confidence of her people by giving bread and money generously, building better houses for them, making wiser laws, and ruling with mercy and justice, till peace came back and the danger of rebellion was over,—for kindness conquers all things.

The Princesses at first objected to these changes, and were angry with the new-comers for preaching self-denial, humility, and simplicity; but the monks made them so beautiful by their persuasive words and lovely lives that soon these royal girls, as well as all their ladies, began to see how selfish and frivolous their days had been and to long for better things.

It took time to teach them to freely put away their fine clothes, forget their luxurious habits, and heartily enjoy good books, wise society, real charity, and all the sweet, simple duties, pleasures, and lessons which make life happy and death peaceful when it comes to kings as well as beggars.

Slowly the beautiful work went on. The old father seemed to wake up and wonder why he had been wasting time in dreams. It was too late now for him to rule; he had not strength enough, and he vainly longed for his brave boys. The Queen sat alone on the throne, forgiven and loved, and might have been happy if the thought of the lost Princes had not haunted her till she was so full of remorse and sorrow she resolved to go into a convent and do penance for her sins. But who should reign in her place? The King was too old and feeble, the Princesses too young, and the rightful heirs were lost or dead.

"Now is the time!" said Purple. "We are needed, and must enter into our kingdom before some usurper comes to take it."

"I am ready, brother; and we both are fitter to rule as princes for having learned to work, wait, and be happy as beggars," answered Plush.

There was to be a grand council of all the wise men, great lords, and good people to decide about a new king; for the Queen wanted to abdicate, being tired of her splendor. When all were gathered together, and the beautiful ladies looked down from the gallery at the knights in armor, the gray-headed ministers, and the sturdy citizens, every one was glad to see the beloved Brothers come in and stand humbly at the lower end of the council board. They were welcome everywhere; for though so young, they seemed to understand the hearts of people better than the old men who studied books all their long lives. After much debate the Queen said, as she left the great golden chair empty,—

"Let us leave it to our good friends who have helped us so much, and taught us to see what is needed on a throne. Dear Brothers, come up hither, and tell us who shall sit here, for I am not worthy."

Without a word the two young monks went to the high place, and, standing on either side of the Queen, dropped off their disguises. There, brave in purple velvet suits, with the golden heads and handsome faces of the royal boys, older and graver, but still the same,—there were the lost Princes, come to their own at last!

People were so startled that for a moment no one spoke or stirred; all stood up and stared silently while Purple said, with a smile and gesture that won their hearts,—

"We are ready to take our rightful places, if you need us, glad to forget the past, forgive our wrongs, and try to make the future happier for all. We have been prisoners, beggars, gardeners, minstrels, and monks in our long wanderings. Now we are princes again,

more fit to rule because of the hard lessons we have learned; while time and poverty and pain have taught us the value of patience, justice, courage, and mercy."

As he ended a great shout greeted them, and the Queen fell at their feet praying for pardon; while Primrose and Daffodil hid their faces, remembering the cruel things they had said and done. There could be no doubt that the Princes were welcome home and well beloved, for soon all over the city flew the glad news. Bells rang, bonfires blazed, people danced and sang, and feasts were spread in palaces and cottages in honor of the Blessed Boys.

The old King was startled wide awake, and so delighted that he got straight out of his bed, cured of all his ills but age, as if by magic. The Queen smiled again, and felt that she was forgiven; penitent Primrose and Daffodil grew as sweet and gay as the flowers they were named for, and the Princes fell in love with them in the good old fairy-tale fashion. Everything was all right now, and the kingdom soon looked like a great garden of pansies; for the chosen flower blossomed everywhere, and rich and poor loved it.

Before long two splendid weddings were seen at court, and a new throne was made,—a double one, for on it sat the twin kings with their young wives beside them. The old King abdicated at once; and the Queen was so tired of reigning that she gladly devoted herself to her husband, both enjoying the happiness of their children, who ruled long and well over Pansyland,—for they gave that name to their country out of gratitude to the flower that brought them friends and fortune, wisdom and heart's-ease.

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"That is a pleasant story, and I shall remember it," said Marion, as the teller leaned down to refresh itself with a sip of water after the long tale.

"Remember also what it means, my dear," said the flower in its sweet voice. "Learn to rule yourself; make your own little kingdom a peaceful, happy one, and find nothing too humble to teach you a lesson,—not even a Ladies'-Delight."

Recollections Of My Childhood

One of my earliest memories is of playing with books in my father's study,--building towers and bridges of the big dictionaries, looking at pictures, pretending to read, and scribbling on blank pages whenever pen or pencil could be found. Many of these first attempts at authorship still exist; and I often wonder if these childish plays did not influence my after-life, since books have been my greatest comfort, castle-building a never-failing delight, and scribbling a very profitable amusement.

Another very vivid recollection is of the day when running after my hoop I fell into the Frog Pond and was rescued by a black boy, becoming a friend to the colored race then and there, though my mother always declared that I was an abolitionist at the age of three.

During the Garrison riot in Boston the portrait of George Thompson was hidden under a bed in our house for safekeeping; and I am told that I used to go and comfort "the good man who helped poor slaves" in his captivity. However that may be, the conversion was genuine; and my greatest pride is in the fact that I have lived to know the brave men and women who did so much for the cause, and that I had a very small share in the war which put an end to a great wrong.

Being born on the birthday of Columbus, I seem to have something of my patron saint's spirit of adventure, and running away was one of the delights of my childhood. Many a social lunch have I shared with hospitable Irish beggar children, as we ate our crusts, cold potatoes, and salt fish on voyages of discovery among the ash heaps of the waste land that then lay where the Albany station now stands.

Many an impromptu picnic have I had on the dear old Common, with strange boys, pretty babies, and friendly dogs, who always seemed to feel that this reckless young person needed looking after.

On one occasion the town-crier found me fast asleep at nine o'clock at night, on a doorstep in Bedford Street, with my head pillowed on the curly breast of a big Newfoundland, who was with difficulty persuaded to release the weary little wanderer who had sobbed herself to sleep there.

I often smile as I pass that door, and never forget to give a grateful pat to every big dog I meet, for never have I slept more soundly than on that dusty step, nor found a better friend than the noble animal who watched over the lost baby so faithfully.

My father's school was the only one I ever went to; and when this was broken up because he introduced methods now all the fashion, our lessons went on at home, for he was always sure of four little pupils who firmly believed in their teacher, though they have not done him all the credit he deserved.

I never liked arithmetic or grammar, and dodged these branches on all occasions; but reading, composition, history, and geography I enjoyed, as well as the stories read to us with a skill which made the dullest charming and useful.

"Pilgrim's Progress," Krummacher's "Parables," Miss Edgeworth, and the best of the dear old fairy tales made that hour the pleasantest of our day. On Sundays we had a

simple service of Bible stories, hymns, and conversation about the state of our little consciences and the conduct of our childish lives which never will be forgotten.

Walks each morning round the Common while in the city, and long tramps over hill and dale when our home was in the country, were a part of our education, as well as every sort of housework, for which I have always been very grateful, since such knowledge makes one independent in these days of domestic tribulation with the help who are too often only hindrances.

Needle-work began early; and at ten my skilful sister made a linen shirt beautifully, while at twelve I set up as a dolls' dressmaker, with my sign out, and wonderful models in my window. All the children employed me; and my turbans were the rage at one time, to the great dismay of the neighbor's hens, who were hotly hunted down that I might tweak out their downiest feathers to adorn the dolls' head-gear.

Active exercise was my delight from the time when a child of six I drove my hoop round the Common without stopping, to the days when I did my twenty miles in five hours and went to a party in the evening.

I always thought I must have been a deer or a horse in some former state, because it was such a joy to run. No boy could be my friend till I had beaten him in a race, and no girl if she refused to climb trees, leap fences, and be a tomboy.

My wise mother, anxious to give me a strong body to support a lively brain, turned me loose in the country and let me run wild, learning of Nature what no books can teach, and being led, as those who truly love her seldom fail to be,

"Through Nature up to Nature's God."

I remember running over the hills just at dawn one summer morning, and pausing to rest in the silent woods, saw, through an arch of trees, the sun rise over river, hill, and wide green meadows as I never saw it before.

Something born of the lovely hour, a happy mood, and the unfolding aspirations of a child's soul seemed to bring me very near to God; and in the hush of that morning hour I always felt that I "got religion," as the phrase goes. A new and vital sense of His presence, tender and sustaining as a father's arms, came to me then, never to change through forty years of life's vicissitudes, but to grow stronger for the sharp discipline of poverty and pain, sorrow and success.

Those Concord days were the happiest of my life, for we had charming playmates in the little Emersons, Channings, Hawthornes, and Goodwins, with the illustrious parents and their friends to enjoy our pranks and share our excursions.

Plays in the barn were a favorite amusement, and we dramatized the fairy tales in great style. Our giant came tumbling off a loft when Jack cut down the squash-vine running up a ladder to represent the immortal bean. Cinderella rolled away in a vast pumpkin; and a long black pudding was lowered by invisible hands to fasten itself on the nose of the woman who wasted her three wishes.

Little pilgrims journeyed over the hills with scrip and staff, and cockle-shells in their hats; elves held their pretty revels among the pines, and "Peter Wilkins'" flying ladies came swinging down on the birch tree-tops. Lords and ladies haunted the garden, and mermaids splashed in the bath-house of woven willows over the brook.

People wondered at our frolics, but enjoyed them; and droll stories are still told of the adventures of those days. Mr. Emerson and Margaret Fuller were visiting my parents one afternoon; and the conversation having turned to the ever-interesting subject of education, Miss Fuller said,--

"Well, Mr. Alcott, you have been able to carry out your methods in your own family, and I should like to see your model children."

She did in a few moments,--for as the guests stood on the doorsteps a wild uproar approached, and round the corner of the house came a wheelbarrow holding baby May arrayed as a queen; I was the horse, bitted and bridled, and driven by my elder sister Anna, while Lizzie played dog and barked as loud as her gentle voice permitted.

All were shouting, and wild with fun, which, however, came to a sudden end as we espied the stately group before us, for my foot tripped, and down we all went in a laughing heap, while my mother put a climax to the joke by saying with a dramatic wave of the hand,--

"Here are the model children, Miss Fuller!"

My sentimental period began at fifteen, when I fell to writing romances, poems, a "heart journal," and dreaming dreams of a splendid future.

Browsing over Mr. Emerson's library, I found "Goethe's Correspondence with a Child," and was at once fired with the desire to be a second Bettine, making my father's friend my Goethe. So I wrote letters to him, but was wise enough never to send them, left wild flowers on the doorsteps of my "Master," sung Mignon's song in very bad German under his window, and was fond of wandering by moonlight, or sitting in a cherry-tree at midnight till the owls scared me to bed.

The girlish folly did not last long, and the letters were burned years ago; but Goethe is still my favorite author, and Emerson remained my beloved "Master" while he lived, doing more for me, as for many another young soul, than he ever knew, by the simple beauty of his life, the truth and wisdom of his books, the example of a good great man untempted and unspoiled by the world which he made nobler while in it, and left the richer when he went.

The trials of life began about this time, and my happy childhood ended. Money is never plentiful in a philosopher's house; and even the maternal pelican could not supply all our wants on the small income which was freely shared with every needy soul who asked for help.

Fugitive slaves were sheltered under our roof; and my first pupil was a very black George Washington whom I taught to write on the hearth with charcoal, his big fingers finding pen and pencil unmanageable.

Motherless girls seeking protection were guarded among us; hungry travellers sent on to our door to be fed and warmed; and if the philosopher happened to own two coats, the best went to a needy brother, for these were practical Christians who had the most perfect faith in Providence, and never found it betrayed.

In those days the prophets were not honored in their own land, and Concord had not yet discovered her great men. It was a sort of refuge for reformers of all sorts, whom the good natives regarded as lunatics, harmless but amusing.

My father went away to hold his classes and conversations, and we women folk began to feel that we also might do something. So one gloomy November day we decided to move to Boston and try our fate again after some years in the wilderness.

My father's prospect was as promising as a philosopher's ever is in a money-making world; my mother's friends offered her a good salary as their missionary to the poor; and my sister and I hoped to teach. It was an anxious council; and always preferring action to discussion, I took a brisk run over the hill and then settled down for "a good think" in my favorite retreat.

It was an old cart-wheel, half hidden in grass under the locusts where I used to sit to wrestle with my sums, and usually forget them scribbling verses or fairy tales on my slate instead. Perched on the hub, I surveyed the prospect and found it rather gloomy, with leafless trees, sere grass, leaden sky, and frosty air; but the hopeful heart of fifteen beat warmly under the old red shawl, visions of success gave the gray clouds a silver lining, and I said defiantly, as I shook my fist at fate embodied in a crow cawing dismally on a fence near by,--

"I *will* do something by-and-by. Don't care what, teach, sew, act, write, anything to help the family; and I'll be rich and famous and happy before I die, see if I won't!"

Startled by this audacious outburst, the crow flew away; but the old wheel creaked as if it began to turn at that moment, stirred by the intense desire of an ambitious girl to work for those she loved and find some reward when the duty was done.

I did not mind the omen then, and returned to the house cold but resolute. I think I began to shoulder my burden then and there, for when the free country life ended, the wild colt soon learned to tug in harness, only breaking loose now and then for a taste of beloved liberty.

My sisters and I had cherished fine dreams of a home in the city; but when we found ourselves in a small house at the South End with not a tree in sight, only a back yard to play in, and no money to buy any of the splendors before us, we all rebelled and longed for the country again.

Anna soon found little pupils, and trudged away each morning to her daily task, pausing at the corner to wave her hand to me in answer to my salute with the duster. My father went to his classes at his room down town, mother to her all-absorbing poor, the little girls to school, and I was left to keep house, feeling like a caged sea-gull as I washed dishes and cooked in the basement kitchen, where my prospect was limited to a procession of muddy boots.

Good drill, but very hard; and my only consolation was the evening reunion when all met with such varied reports of the day's adventures, we could not fail to find both amusement and instruction.

Father brought news from the upper world, and the wise, good people who adorned it; mother, usually much dilapidated because she *would* give away her clothes, with sad tales of suffering and sin from the darker side of life; gentle Anna a modest account of her success as teacher, for even at seventeen her sweet nature won all who knew her, and her patience quelled the most rebellious pupil.

My reports were usually a mixture of the tragic and the comic; and the children poured their small joys and woes into the family bosom, where comfort and sympathy were always to be found.

Then we youngsters adjourned to the kitchen for our fun, which usually consisted of writing, dressing, and acting a series of remarkable plays. In one I remember I took five parts and Anna four, with lightning changes of costume, and characters varying from a Greek prince in silver armor to a murderer in chains.

It was good training for memory and fingers, for we recited pages without a fault, and made every sort of property from a harp to a fairy's spangled wings. Later we acted Shakespeare; and Hamlet was my favorite hero, played with a gloomy glare and a tragic stalk which I have never seen surpassed.

But we were now beginning to play our parts on a real stage, and to know something of the pathetic side of life, with its hard facts, irksome duties, many temptations, and the daily sacrifice of self. Fortunately we had the truest, tenderest of guides and guards, and so learned the sweet uses of adversity, the value of honest work, the beautiful law of compensation which gives more than it takes, and the real significance of life.

At sixteen I began to teach twenty pupils, and for ten years learned to know and love children. The story-writing went on all the while with the usual trials of beginners. Fairy tales told the Emersons made the first printed book, and "Hospital Sketches" the first successful one.

Every experience went into the caldron to come out as froth, or evaporate in smoke, till time and suffering strengthened and clarified the mixture of truth and fancy, and a wholesome draught for children began to flow pleasantly and profitably.

So the omen proved a true one, and the wheel of fortune turned slowly, till the girl of fifteen found herself a woman of fifty, with her prophetic dream beautifully realized, her duty done, her reward far greater than she deserved.

A Christmas Turkey, And How It Came

"I know we could n't do it."

"I say we could, if we all helped."

"How can we?"

"I've planned lots of ways; only you mustn't laugh at them, and you must n't say a word to mother. I want it to be all a surprise."

"She 'll find us out."

"No, she won't, if we tell her we won't get into mischief."

"Fire away, then, and let's hear your fine plans."

"We must talk softly, or we shall wake father. He's got a headache."

A curious change came over the faces of the two boys as their sister lowered her voice, with a nod toward a half-opened door. They looked sad and ashamed, and Kitty sighed as she spoke, for all knew that father's headaches always began by his coming home stupid or cross, with only a part of his wages; and mother always cried when she thought they did not see her, and after the long sleep father looked as if he did n't like to meet their eyes, but went off early.

They knew what it meant, but never spoke of it,--only pondered over it, and mourned with mother at the change which was slowly altering their kind industrious father into a moody man, and mother into an anxious over-worked woman.

Kitty was thirteen, and a very capable girl, who helped with the housekeeping, took care of the two little ones, and went to school. Tommy and Sammy looked up to her and thought her a remarkably good sister. Now, as they sat round the stove having "a go-to-bed warm," the three heads were close together; and the boys listened eagerly to Kitty's plans, while the rattle of the sewing-machine in another room went on as tirelessly as it had done all day, for mother's work was more and more needed every month.

"Well!" began Kitty, in an impressive tone, "we all know that there won't be a bit of Christmas in this family if we don't make it. Mother's too busy, and father don't care, so we must see what we can do; for I should be mortified to death to go to school and say I had n't had any turkey or plum-pudding. Don't expect presents; but we *must* have some kind of a decent dinner."

"So I say; I'm tired of fish and potatoes," said Sammy, the younger.

"But where's the dinner coming from?" asked Tommy, who had already taken some of the cares of life on his young shoulders, and knew that Christmas dinners did not walk into people's houses without money.

"We 'll earn it;" and Kitty looked like a small Napoleon planning the passage of the Alps. "You, Tom, must go early to-morrow to Mr. Brisket and offer to carry baskets. He will be dreadfully busy, and want you, I know; and you are so strong you can lug as much as

some of the big fellows. He pays well, and if he won't give much money, you can take your wages in things to eat. We want everything."

"What shall I do?" cried Sammy, while Tom sat turning this plan over in his mind.

"Take the old shovel and clear sidewalks. The snow came on purpose to help you."

"It's awful hard work, and the shovel's half gone," began Sammy, who preferred to spend his holiday coasting on an old tea-tray.

"Don't growl, or you won't get any dinner," said Tom, making up his mind to lug baskets for the good of the family, like a manly lad as he was.

"I," continued Kitty, "have taken the hardest part of all; for after my work is done, and the babies safely settled, I 'm going to beg for the leavings of the holly and pine swept out of the church down below, and make some wreaths and sell them."

"If you can," put in Tommy, who had tried pencils, and failed to make a fortune.

"Not in the street?" cried Sam, looking alarmed.

"Yes, at the corner of the Park. I 'm bound to make some money, and don't see any other way. I shall put on an old hood and shawl, and no one will know me. Don't care if they do." And Kitty tried to mean what she said, but in her heart she felt that it would be a trial to her pride if any of her schoolmates should happen to recognize her.

"Don't believe you 'll do it."

"See if I don't; for I *will* have a good dinner one day in the year."

"Well, it does n't seem right for us to do it. Father ought to take care of us, and we only buy some presents with the little bit we earn. He never gives us anything now." And Tommy scowled at the bedroom door, with a strong sense of injury struggling with affection in his boyish heart.

"Hush!" cried Kitty. "Don't blame him. Mother says we never must forget he's our father. I try not to; but when she cries, it's hard to feel as I ought." And a sob made the little girl stop short as she poked the fire to hide the trouble in the face that should have been all smiles.

For a moment the room was very still, as the snow beat on the window, and the fire-light flickered over the six shabby little boots put up on the stove hearth to dry.

Tommy's cheerful voice broke the silence, saying stoutly, "Well, if I 've got to work all day, I guess I 'll go to bed early. Don't fret, Kit. We 'll help all we can, and have a good time; see if we don't."

"I 'll go out real early, and shovel like fury. Maybe I 'll get a dollar. Would that buy a turkey?" asked Sammy, with the air of a millionnaire.

"No, dear; one big enough for us would cost two, I 'm afraid. Perhaps we 'll have one sent us. We belong to the church, though folks don't know how poor we are now, and we can't beg." And Kitty bustled about, clearing up, rather exercised in her mind about going and asking for the much-desired fowl.

Soon all three were fast asleep, and nothing but the whir of the machine broke the quiet that fell upon the house. Then from the inner room a man came and sat over the fire with his head in his hands and his eyes fixed on the ragged little boots left to dry. He had heard the children's talk; and his heart was very heavy as he looked about the shabby

room that used to be so neat and pleasant. What he thought no one knows, what he did we shall see by-and-by; but the sorrow and shame and tender silence of his children worked a miracle that night more lasting and lovely than the white beauty which the snow wrought upon the sleeping city.

Bright and early the boys were away to their work; while Kitty sang as she dressed the little sisters, put the house in order, and made her mother smile at the mysterious hints she gave of something splendid which was going to happen. Father was gone, and though all rather dreaded evening, nothing was said; but each worked with a will, feeling that Christmas should be merry in spite of poverty and care.

All day Tommy lugged fat turkeys, roasts of beef, and every sort of vegetable for other people's good dinners on the morrow, wondering meanwhile where his own was coming from. Mr. Brisket had an army of boys trudging here and there, and was too busy to notice any particular lad till the hurry was over, and only a few belated buyers remained to be served. It was late; but the stores kept open, and though so tired he could hardly stand, brave Tommy held on when the other boys left, hoping to earn a trifle more by extra work. He sat down on a barrel to rest during a leisure moment, and presently his weary head nodded sideways into a basket of cranberries, where he slept quietly till the sound of gruff voices roused him.

It was Mr. Brisket scolding because one dinner had been forgotten.

"I told that rascal Beals to be sure and carry it, for the old gentleman will be in a rage if it does n't come, and take away his custom. Every boy gone, and I can't leave the store, nor you either, Pat, with all the clearing up to do."

"Here's a by, sir, slapin illigant forninst the cranberries, bad luck to him!" answered Pat, with a shake that set poor Tom on his legs, wide awake at once.

"*Good* luck to him, you mean. Here, What's-your-name, you take this basket to that number, and I 'll make it worth your while," said Mr. Brisket, much relieved by this unexpected help.

"All right, sir;" and Tommy trudged off as briskly as his tired legs would let him, cheering the long cold walk with visions of the turkey with which his employer might reward him, for there were piles of them, and Pat was to have one for his family.

His brilliant dreams were disappointed, however, for Mr. Brisket naturally supposed Tom's father would attend to that part of the dinner, and generously heaped a basket with vegetables, rosy apples, and a quart of cranberries.

"There, if you ain't too tired, you can take one more load to that number, and a merry Christmas to you!" said the stout man, handing over his gift with the promised dollar.

"Thank you, sir; good-night," answered Tom, shouldering his last load with a grateful smile, and trying not to look longingly at the poultry; for he had set his heart on at least a skinny bird as a surprise to Kit.

Sammy's adventures that day had been more varied and his efforts more successful, as we shall see, in the end, for Sammy was a most engaging little fellow, and no one could look into his blue eyes without wanting to pat his curly yellow head with one hand while the other gave him something. The cares of life had not lessened his confidence in people; and only the most abandoned ruffians had the heart to deceive or disappoint

him. His very tribulations usually led to something pleasant, and whatever happened, sunshiny Sam came right side up, lucky and laughing.

Undaunted by the drifts or the cold wind, he marched off with the remains of the old shovel to seek his fortune, and found it at the third house where he called. The first two sidewalks were easy jobs; and he pocketed his ninepences with a growing conviction that this was his chosen work. The third sidewalk was a fine long one, for the house stood on the corner, and two pavements must be cleared.

"It ought to be fifty cents; but perhaps they won't give me so much, I'm such a young one. I'll show 'em I can work, though, like a man;" and Sammy rang the bell with the energy of a telegraph boy.

Before the bell could be answered, a big boy rushed up, exclaiming roughly, "Get out of this! I'm going to have the job. You can't do it. Start, now, or I'll chuck you into a snow-bank."

"I won't!" answered Sammy, indignant at the brutal tone and unjust claim. "I got here first, and it's my job. You let me alone. I ain't afraid of you or your snow-banks either."

The big boy wasted no time in words, for steps were heard inside, but after a brief scuffle hauled Sammy, fighting bravely all the way, down the steps, and tumbled him into a deep drift. Then he ran up the steps, and respectfully asked for the job when a neat maid opened the door. He would have got it if Sam had not roared out, as he floundered in the drift, "I came first. He knocked me down 'cause I 'm the smallest. Please let me do it; please!"

Before another word could be said, a little old lady appeared in the hall, trying to look stern, and failing entirely, because she was the picture of a dear fat, cosey grandma.

"Send that *bad* big boy away, Maria, and call in the poor little fellow. I saw the whole thing, and *he* shall have the job if he can do it."

The bully slunk away, and Sammy came panting up the steps, white with snow, a great bruise on his forehead, and a beaming smile on his face, looking so like a jolly little Santa Claus who had taken a "header" out of his sleigh that the maid laughed, and the old lady exclaimed, "Bless the boy! he's dreadfully hurt, and does n't know it. Come in and be brushed and get your breath, child, and tell me how that scamp came to treat you so."

Nothing loath to be comforted, Sammy told his little tale while Maria dusted him off on the mat, and the old lady hovered in the doorway of the dining-room, where a nice breakfast smoked and smelled so deliciously that the boy sniffed the odor of coffee and buckwheats like a hungry hound.

"He 'll get his death if he goes to work till he's dried a bit. Put him over the register, Maria, and I 'll give him a hot drink, for it's bitter cold, poor dear!"

Away trotted the kind old lady, and in a minute came back with coffee and cakes, on which Sammy feasted as he warmed his toes and told Kitty's plans for Christmas, led on by the old lady's questions, and quite unconscious that he was letting all sorts of cats out of the bag.

Mrs. Bryant understood the little story, and made her plans also, for the rosy-faced boy was very like a little grandson who died last year, and her sad old heart was very tender to all other small boys. So she found out where Sammy lived, and nodded and smiled at

him most cheerily as he tugged stoutly away at the snow on the long pavements till all was done, and the little workman came for his wages.

A bright silver dollar and a pocketful of gingerbread sent him off a rich and happy boy to shovel and sweep till noon, when he proudly showed his earnings at home, and feasted the babies on the carefully hoarded cake, for Dilly and Dot were the idols of the household.

"Now, Sammy dear, I want you to take my place here this afternoon, for mother will have to take her work home by-and-by, and I must sell my wreaths. I only got enough green for six, and two bunches of holly; but if I can sell them for ten or twelve cents apiece, I shall be glad. Girls never *can* earn as much money as boys somehow," sighed Kitty, surveying the thin wreaths tied up with carpet ravellings, and vainly puzzling her young wits over a sad problem.

"I 'll give you some of my money if you don't get a dollar; then we'll be even. Men always take care of women, you know, and ought to," cried Sammy, setting a fine example to his father, if he had only been there to profit by it.

With thanks Kitty left him to rest on the old sofa, while the happy babies swarmed over him; and putting on the shabby hood and shawl, she slipped away to stand at the Park gate, modestly offering her little wares to the passers-by. A nice old gentleman bought two, and his wife scolded him for getting such bad ones; but the money gave more happiness than any other he spent that day. A child took a ten-cent bunch of holly with its red berries, and there Kitty's market ended. It was very cold, people were in a hurry, bolder hucksters pressed before the timid little girl, and the balloon man told her to "clear out."

Hoping for better luck, she tried several other places; but the short afternoon was soon over, the streets began to thin, the keen wind chilled her to the bone, and her heart was very heavy to think that in all the rich, merry city, where Christmas gifts passed her in every hand, there were none for the dear babies and boys at home, and the Christmas dinner was a failure.

"I must go and get supper anyway; and I 'll hang these up in our own rooms, as I can't sell them," said Kitty, wiping a very big tear from her cold cheek, and turning to go away.

A smaller, shabbier girl than herself stood near, looking at the bunch of holly with wistful eyes; and glad to do to others as she wished some one would do to her, Kitty offered the only thing she had to give, saying kindly, "You may have it; merry Christmas!" and ran away before the delighted child could thank her.

I am very sure that one of the spirits who fly about at this season of the year saw the little act, made a note of it, and in about fifteen minutes rewarded Kitty for her sweet remembrance of the golden rule.

As she went sadly homeward she looked up at some of the big houses where every window shone with the festivities of Christmas Eve, and more than one tear fell, for the little girl found life pretty hard just then.

"There don't seem to be any wreaths at these windows; perhaps they 'd buy mine. I can't bear to go home with so little for my share," she said, stopping before one of the biggest and brightest of these fairy palaces, where the sound of music was heard, and many little heads peeped from behind the curtains as if watching for some one.

Kitty was just going up the steps to make another trial, when two small boys came racing round the corner, slipped on the icy pavement, and both went down with a crash that would have broken older bones. One was up in a minute, laughing; the other lay squirming and howling, "Oh, my knee! my knee!" till Kitty ran and picked him up with the motherly consolations she had learned to give.

"It's broken; I know it is," wailed the small sufferer as Kitty carried him up the steps, while his friend wildly rang the doorbell.

It was like going into fairy-land, for the house was all astir with a children's Christmas party. Servants flew about with smiling faces; open doors gave ravishing glimpses of a feast in one room and a splendid tree in another; while a crowd of little faces peered over the balusters in the hall above, eager to come down and enjoy the glories prepared for them.

A pretty young girl came to meet Kitty, and listened to her story of the accident, which proved to be less severe than it at first appeared; for Bertie, the injured party, forgot his anguish at sight of the tree, and hopped upstairs so nimbly that every one laughed.

"He said his leg was broken, but I guess he's all right," said Kitty, reluctantly turning from this happy scene to go out into the night again.

"Would you like to see our tree before the children come down?" asked the pretty girl, seeing the wistful look in the child's eyes, and the shine of half-dried tears on her cheek.

"Oh, yes; I never saw anything so lovely. I 'd like to tell the babies all about it;" and Kitty's face beamed at the prospect, as if the kind words had melted all the frost away.

"How many babies are there?" asked the pretty girl, as she led the way into the brilliant room. Kitty told her, adding several other facts, for the friendly atmosphere seemed to make them friends at once.

"I will buy the wreaths, for we have n't any," said the girl in silk, as Kitty told how she was just coming to offer them when the boys fell.

It was pretty to see how carefully the little hostess laid away the shabby garlands and slipped a half-dollar into Kitty's hand; prettier still, to watch the sly way in which she tucked some bonbons, a red ball, a blue whip, two china dolls, two pairs of little mittens, and some gilded nuts into an empty box for "the babies;" and prettiest of all, to see the smiles and tears make April in Kitty's face as she tried to tell her thanks for this beautiful surprise.

The world was all right when she got into the street again and ran home with the precious box hugged close, feeling that at last she had something to make a merry Christmas of.

Shrieks of joy greeted her, for Sammy's nice old lady had sent a basket full of pies, nuts and raisins, oranges and cake, and--oh, happy Sammy!--a sled, all for love of the blue eyes that twinkled so merrily when he told her about the tea-tray. Piled upon this red car of triumph, Dilly and Dot were being dragged about, while the other treasures were set forth on the table.

"I must show mine," cried Kitty; "we 'll look at them to-night, and have them to-morrow;" and amid more cries of rapture *her* box was unpacked, *her* money added to the pile in the middle of the table, where Sammy had laid his handsome contribution toward the turkey.

Before the story of the splendid tree was over, in came Tommy with his substantial offering and his hard-earned dollar.

"I 'm afraid I ought to keep my money for shoes. I 've walked the soles off these to-day, and can't go to school barefooted," he said, bravely trying to put the temptation of skates behind him.

"We 've got a good dinner without a turkey, and perhaps we 'd better not get it," added Kitty, with a sigh, as she surveyed the table, and remembered the blue knit hood marked seventy-five cents that she saw in a shop-window.

"Oh, we *must* have a turkey! we worked so hard for it, and it's so Christmasy," cried Sam, who always felt that pleasant things ought to happen.

"Must have turty," echoed the babies, as they eyed the dolls tenderly.

"You *shall* have a turkey, and there he is," said an unexpected voice, as a noble bird fell upon the table, and lay there kicking up his legs as if enjoying the surprise immensely.

It was father's voice, and there stood father, neither cross nor stupid, but looking as he used to look, kind and happy, and beside him was mother, smiling as they had not seen her smile for months. It was not because the work was well paid for, and more promised, but because she had received a gift that made the world bright, a home happy again,--father's promise to drink no more.

"I 've been working to-day as well as you, and you may keep your money for yourselves. There are shoes for all; and never again, please God, shall my children be ashamed of me, or want a dinner Christmas Day."

As father said this with a choke in his voice, and mother's head went down on his shoulder to hide the happy tears that wet her cheeks, the children did n't know whether to laugh or cry, till Kitty, with the instinct of a loving heart, settled the question by saying, as she held out her hands, "We have n't any tree, so let's dance around our goodies and be merry."

Then the tired feet in the old shoes forgot their weariness, and five happy little souls skipped gayly round the table, where, in the midst of all the treasures earned and given, father's Christmas turkey proudly lay in state.

The Silver Party

"Such a long morning! Seems as if dinner-time would never come!" sighed Tony, as he wandered into the dining-room for a third pick at the nuts and raisins to beguile his weariness with a little mischief.

It was Thanksgiving Day. All the family were at church, all the servants busy preparing for the great dinner; and so poor Tony, who had a cold, had not only to stay at home, but to amuse himself while the rest said their prayers, made calls, or took a brisk walk to get an appetite. If he had been allowed in the kitchen, he would have been quite happy; but cook was busy and cross, and rapped him on the head with a poker when he ventured near the door. Peeping through the slide was also forbidden, and John, the man, bribed him with an orange to keep out of the way till the table was set.

That was now done. The dining-room was empty and quiet, and poor Tony lay down on the sofa to eat his nuts and admire the fine sight before him. All the best damask, china, glass, and silver was set forth with great care. A basket of flowers hung from the chandelier, and the sideboard was beautiful to behold with piled-up fruit, dishes of cake, and many-colored finger-bowls and glasses.

"That's all very nice, but the eating part is what *I* care for. Don't believe I 'll get my share to-day, because mamma found out about this horrid cold. A fellow can't help sneezing, though he can hide a sore throat. Oh, hum! nearly two more hours to wait;" and with a long sigh Tony closed his eyes for a luxurious yawn.

When he opened them, the strange sight he beheld kept him staring without a thought of sleep. The big soup-ladle stood straight up at the head of the table with a face plainly to be seen in the bright bowl. It was a very heavy, handsome old ladle, so the face was old, but round and jolly; and the long handle stood very erect, like a tall thin gentleman with a big head.

"Well, upon my word that's queer!" said Tony, sitting up also, and wondering what would happen next.

To his great amazement the ladle began to address the assembled forks and spoons in a silvery tone very pleasant to hear:--

"Ladies and gentlemen, at this festive season it is proper that we should enjoy ourselves. As we shall be tired after dinner, we will at once begin our sports by a grand promenade. Take partners and fall in!"

At these words a general uprising took place; and before Tony could get his breath a long procession of forks and spoons stood ready. The finger-bowls struck up an airy tune as if invisible wet fingers were making music on their rims, and led by the stately ladle like a drum-major, the grand march began. The forks were the gentlemen, tall, slender, and with a fine curve to their backs; the spoons were the ladies, with full skirts, and the scallops on the handles stood up like silver combs; the large ones were the mammas, the teaspoons were the young ladies, and the little salts the children. It was sweet to see the small things walk at the end of the procession, with the two silver rests for the carving knife and fork trotting behind like pet dogs. The mustard-spoon and pickle-fork went together, and quarrelled all the way, both being hot-tempered and

sharp-tongued. The steel knives looked on, for this was a very aristocratic party, and only the silver people could join in it.

"Here 's fun!" thought Tony, staring with all his might, and so much interested in this remarkable state of things that he forgot hunger and time altogether.

Round and round went the glittering train, to the soft music of the many-toned finger-bowls, till three turns about the long oval table had been made; then all fell into line for a contradance, as in the good old times before every one took to spinning like tops. Grandpa Ladle led off with his oldest daughter, Madam Gravy Ladle, and the little salts stood at the bottom prancing like real children impatient for their turn. When it came, they went down the middle in fine style, with a cling! clang! that made Tony's legs quiver with a longing to join in.

It was beautiful to see the older ones twirl round in a stately way, with bows and courtesies at the end, while the teaspoons and small forks romped a good deal, and Mr. Pickle and Miss Mustard kept every one laughing at their smart speeches. The silver butter-knife, who was an invalid, having broken her back and been mended, lay in the rack and smiled sweetly down upon her friends, while the little Cupid on the lid of the butter-dish pirouetted on one toe in the most delightful manner.

When every one had gone through the dance, the napkins were arranged as sofas and the spoons rested, while the polite forks brought sprigs of celery to fan them with. The little salts got into grandpa's lap; and the silver dogs lay down panting, for they had frisked with the children. They all talked; and Tony could not help wondering if real ladies said such things when they put *their* heads together and nodded and whispered, for some of the remarks were so personal that he was much confused. Fortunately they took no notice of him, so he listened and learned something in this queer way.

"I have been in this family a hundred years," began the soup-ladle; "and it seems to me that each generation is worst than the last. My first master was punctual to a minute, and madam was always down beforehand to see that all was ready. Now master comes at all hours; mistress lets the servants do as they like; and the manners of the children are very bad. Sad state of things, very sad!"

"Dear me, yes!" sighed one of the large spoons; "we don't see such nice housekeeping now as we did when we were young. Girls were taught all about it then; but now it is all books or parties, and few of them know a skimmer from a gridiron."

"Well, I 'm sure the poor things are much happier than if they were messing about in kitchens as girls used to do in your day. It is much better for them to be dancing, skating, and studying than wasting their young lives darning and preserving, and sitting by their mammas as prim as dishes. *I* prefer the present way of doing things, though the girls in this family *do* sit up too late, and wear too high heels to their boots."

The mustard-spoon spoke in a pert tone, and the pickle-fork answered sharply,--

"I agree with you, cousin. The boys also sit up too late. I 'm tired of being waked to fish out olives or pickles for those fellows when they come in from the theatre or some dance; and as for that Tony, he is a real pig,--eats everything he can lay hands on, and is the torment of the maid's life."

"Yes," cried one little salt-spoon, "we saw him steal cake out of the sideboard, and he never told when his mother scolded Norah."

"So mean!" added the other; and both the round faces were so full of disgust that Tony fell flat and shut his eyes as if asleep to hide his confusion. Some one laughed; but he dared not look, and lay blushing and listening to remarks which plainly proved how careful we should be of our acts and words even when alone, for who knows what apparently dumb thing may be watching us.

"I have observed that Mr. Murry reads the paper at table instead of talking to his family; that Mrs. Murry worries about the servants; the girls gossip and giggle; the boys eat, and plague one another; and that small child Nelly teases for all she sees, and is never quiet till she gets the sugar-bowl," said Grandpa Ladle, in a tone of regret. "Now, useful and pleasant chat at table would make meals delightful, instead of being scenes of confusion and discomfort."

"I bite their tongues when I get a chance, hoping to make them witty or to check unkind words; but they only sputter, and get a lecture from Aunt Maria, who is a sour old spinster, always criticising her neighbors."'

As the mustard-spoon spoke, the teaspoons laughed as if they thought *her* rather like Aunt Maria in that respect.

"I gave the baby a fit of colic to teach her to let pickles alone, but no one thanked me," said the pickle-fork.

"Perhaps if we keep ourselves so bright that those who use us can see their faces in us, we shall be able to help them a little; for no one likes to see an ugly face or a dull spoon. The art of changing frowns to smiles is never old-fashioned; and lovely manners smooth away the little worries of life beautifully." A silvery voice spoke, and all looked respectfully at Madam Gravy Ladle, who was a very fine old spoon, with a coat of arms on it, and a polish that all envied.

"People can't always be remembering how old and valuable and bright they are. Here in America we just go ahead and make manners and money for ourselves. *I* don't stop to ask what dish I 'm going to help to; I just pitch in and take all I can hold, and don't care a bit whether I shine or not. My grandfather was a kitchen spoon; but I'm smarter than he was, thanks to my plating, and look and feel as good as any one, though I have n't got stags' heads and big letters on my handle."

No one answered these impertinent remarks of the sauce-spoon, for all knew that she was not pure silver, and was only used on occasions when many spoons were needed. Tony was ashamed to hear her talk in that rude way to the fine old silver he was so proud of, and resolved he 'd give the saucy spoon a good rap when he helped himself to the cranberry.

An impressive silence lasted till a lively fork exclaimed, as the clock struck, "Every one is coasting out-of-doors. Why not have our share of the fun inside? It is very fashionable this winter, and ladies and gentlemen of the best families do it, I assure you."

"We will!" cried the other forks; and as the dowagers did not object, all fell to work to arrange the table for this agreeable sport. Tony sat up to see how they would manage, and was astonished at the ingenuity of the silver people. With a great clinking and rattling they ran to and fro, dragging the stiff white mats about; the largest they leaned up against the tall caster, and laid the rest in a long slope to the edge of the table, where a pile of napkins made a nice snowdrift to tumble into.

"What *will* they do for sleds?" thought Tony; and the next minute chuckled when he saw them take the slices of bread laid at each place, pile on, and spin away, with a great scattering of crumbs like snowflakes, and much laughter as they landed in the white pile at the end of the coast.

"Won't John give it to 'em if he comes in and catches 'em turning his nice table topsy-turvy!" said the boy to himself, hoping nothing would happen to end this jolly frolic. So he kept very still, and watched the gay forks and spoons climb up and whiz down till they were tired. The little salts got Baby Nell's own small slice, and had lovely times on a short coast of their own made of one mat held up by grandpa, who smiled benevolently at the fun, being too old and heavy to join in it.

They kept it up until the slices were worn thin, and one or two upsets alarmed the ladies; then they rested and conversed again. The mammas talked about their children, how sadly the silver basket needed a new lining, and what there was to be for dinner. The teaspoons whispered sweetly together, as young ladies do,--one declaring that rouge powder was not as good as it used to be, another lamenting the sad effect of eggs upon her complexion, and all smiled amiably upon the forks, who stood about discussing wines and cigars, for both lived in the sideboard, and were brought out after dinner, so the forks knew a great deal about such matters, and found them very interesting, as all gentlemen seem to do.

Presently some one mentioned bicycles, and what fine rides the boys of the family told about. The other fellows proposed a race; and before Tony could grasp the possibility of such a thing, it was done. Nothing easier, for there stood a pile of plates, and just turning them on their edges, the forks got astride, and the big wheels spun away as if a whole bicycle club had suddenly arrived.

Old Pickle took the baby's plate, as better suited to his size. The little salts made a tricycle of napkin-rings, and rode gayly off, with the dogs barking after them. Even the carving-fork, though not invited, could not resist the exciting sport, and tipping up the wooden bread-platter, went whizzing off at a great pace, for his two prongs were better than four, and his wheel was lighter than the china ones. Grand-papa Ladle cheered them on, like a fine old gentleman as he was, for though the new craze rather astonished him, he liked manly sports, and would have taken a turn if his dignity and age had allowed. The ladies chimed their applause, for it really was immensely exciting to see fourteen plates with forks astride racing round the large table with cries of, "Go it, Pickle! Now, then, Prongs! Steady, Silver-top! Hurrah for the twins!"

The fun was at its height when young Prongs ran against Pickle, who did not steer well, and both went off the table with a crash. All stopped at once, and crowded to the edge to see who was killed. The plates lay in pieces, old Pickle had a bend in his back that made him groan dismally, and Prongs had fallen down the register.

Wails of despair arose at that awful sight, for he was a favorite with every one, and such a tragic death was too much for some of the tender-hearted spoons, who fainted at the idea of that gallant fork's destruction in what to them was a fiery volcano.

"Serves Pickle right! He ought to know he was too old for such wild games," scolded Miss Mustard, peering anxiously over at her friend, for they were fond of one another in spite of their tiffs.

"Now let us see what these fine folks will do when they get off the damask and come to grief. A helpless lot, I fancy, and those fellows deserve what they 've got," said the sauce-

spoon, nearly upsetting the twins as she elbowed her way to the front to jeer over the fallen.

"I think you will see that gentle people are as brave as those who make a noise," answered Madam Gravy, and leaning over the edge of the table she added in her sweet voice, "Dear Mr. Pickle, we will let down a napkin and pull you up if you have strength to take hold."

"Pull away, ma'am," groaned Pickle, who well deserved his name just then, and soon, thanks to Madam's presence of mind, he was safely laid on a pile of mats, while Miss Mustard put a plaster on his injured back.

Meanwhile brave Grandpapa Ladle had slipped from the table to a chair, and so to the floor without too great a jar to his aged frame; then sliding along the carpet, he reached the register. Peering down that dark, hot abyss he cried, while all listened breathlessly for a reply, "Prongs, my boy, are you there?"

"Ay, ay, sir; I 'm caught in the wire screen. Ask some of the fellows to lend a hand and get me out before I 'm melted," answered the fork, with a gasp of agony.

Instantly the long handle of the patriarchal Ladle was put down to his rescue, and after a moment of suspense, while Prongs caught firmly hold, up he came, hot and dusty, but otherwise unharmed by that dreadful fall. Cheers greeted them, and every one lent a hand at the napkin as they were hoisted to the table to be embraced by their joyful relatives and friends.

"What did you think about down in that horrid place?" asked one of the twins.

"I thought of a story I once heard master tell, about a child who was found one cold day sitting with his feet on a newspaper, and when asked what he was doing, answered, 'Warming my feet on the "Christian Register."' I hoped my register would be Christian enough not to melt me before help came. Ha! ha! See the joke, my dears?" and Prongs laughed as gayly as if he never had taken a header into a volcano.

"What did you see down there?" asked the other twin, curious, as all small people are.

"Lots of dust and pins, a doll's head baby put there, Norah's thimble, and the big red marble that boy Tony was raging about the other day. It's a regular catch-all, and shows how the work is shirked in this house," answered Prongs, stretching his legs, which were a little damaged by the fall.

"What shall we do about the plates?" asked Pickle, from his bed.

"Let them lie, for we can't mend them. John will think the boy broke them, and he'll get punished, as he deserves, for he broke a tumbler yesterday, and put it slyly in the ash-barrel," said Miss Mustard, spitefully.

"Oh! I say, that's mean," began Tony; but no one listened, and in a minute Prongs answered bravely,--

"I 'm a gentleman, and I don't let other people take the blame of my scrapes. Tony has enough of his own to answer for."

"I'll have that bent fork for mine, and make John keep it as bright as a new dollar to pay for this. Prongs is a trump, and I wish I could tell him so," thought Tony, much gratified at this handsome behavior.

"Right, grandson. I am pleased with you; but allow me to suggest that the Chinese Mandarin on the chimney-piece be politely requested to mend the plates. He can do that sort of thing nicely, and will be charmed to oblige us, I am sure."

Grandpapa's suggestion was a good one; and Yam Ki Lo consented at once, skipped to the floor, tapped the bits of china with his fan, and in the twinkling of an eye was back on his perch, leaving two whole plates behind him, for he was a wizard, and knew all about blue china.

Just as the silver people were rejoicing over this fine escape from discovery, the clock struck, a bell rang, voices were heard upstairs, and it was very evident that the family had arrived. At these sounds a great flurry arose in the dining-room, as every spoon, fork, plate, and napkin flew back to its place. Pickle rushed to the jar, and plunged in head first, regardless of his back; Miss Mustard retired to the caster; the twins scrambled into the salt-cellar; and the silver dogs lay down by the carving knife and fork as quietly as if they had never stirred a leg; Grandpapa slowly reposed in his usual place; Madam followed his example with dignity; the teaspoons climbed into the holder, uttering little cries of alarm; and Prongs stayed to help them till he had barely time to drop down at Tony's place, and lie there with his bent leg in the air, the only sign of the great fall, about which he talked for a long time afterward. All was in order but the sauce-spoon, who had stopped to laugh at the Mandarin till it was too late to get to her corner; and before she could find any place of concealment, John came in and caught her lying in the middle of the table, looking very common and shabby among all the bright silver.

"What in the world is that old plated thing here for? Missis told Norah to put it in the kitchen, as she had a new one for a present to-day--real silver--so out you go;" and as he spoke, John threw the spoon through the slide,--an exile forevermore from the good society which she did not value as she should.

Tony saw the glimmer of a smile in Grand-papa Ladle's face, but it was gone like a flash, and by the time the boy reached the table nothing was to be seen in the silver bowl but his own round rosy countenance, full of wonder.

"I don't think any one will believe what I 've seen, but I mean to tell, it was so *very* curious," he said, as he surveyed the scene of the late frolic, now so neat and quiet that not a wrinkle or a crumb betrayed what larks had been going on.

Hastily fishing up his long-lost marble, the doll's head, and Norah's thimble, he went thoughtfully upstairs to welcome his cousins, still much absorbed by this very singular affair.

Dinner was soon announced; and while it lasted every one was too busy eating the good things before them to observe how quiet the usually riotous Tony was. His appetite for turkey and cranberries seemed to have lost its sharp edge, and the mince-pie must have felt itself sadly slighted by his lack of appreciation of its substance and flavor. He seemed in a brown-study, and kept staring about as if he saw more than other people did. He examined Nelly's plate as if looking for a crack, smiled at the little spoon when he took salt, refused pickles and mustard with a frown, kept a certain bent fork by him as long as possible, and tried to make music with a wet finger on the rim of his bowl at dessert.

But in the evening, when the young people sat around the fire, he amused them by telling the queer story of the silver party; but he very wisely left out the remarks made

upon himself and family, remembering how disagreeable the sauce-spoon had seemed, and he privately resolved to follow Madam Gravy Ladle's advice to keep his own face bright, manners polite, and speech kindly, that he might prove himself to be pure silver, and be stamped a gentleman.

The Blind Lark

High up in an old house, full of poor people, lived Lizzie, with her mother and Baby Billy. The street was a narrow, noisy place, where carts rumbled and dirty children played; where the sun seldom shone, the fresh wind seldom blew, and the white snow of winter was turned at once to black mud. One bare room was Lizzie's home, and out of it she seldom went, for she was a prisoner. We all pity the poor princesses who were shut up in towers by bad fairies, the men and women in jails, and the little birds in cages, but Lizzie was a sadder prisoner than any of these.

The prince always comes to the captive princess, the jail doors open in time, and the birds find some kind hand to set them free; but there seemed no hope of escape for this poor child. Only nine years old, and condemned to life-long helplessness, loneliness, and darkness,--for she was blind.

She could dimly remember the blue sky, green earth, and beautiful sun; for the light went out when she was six, and the cruel fever left her a pale little shadow to haunt that room ever since. The father was dead; the mother worked hard for daily bread; they had no friends; and the good fairies seemed to have forgotten them. Still, like the larks one sees in Brittany, whose eyes cruel boys put out that they may sing the sweeter, Lizzie made music in her cage, singing to baby; and when he slept, she sat by the window listening to the noise below for company, crooning to herself till she too fell asleep and forgot the long, long days that had no play, no school, no change for her such as other children know.

Every morning mother gave them their porridge, locked the door, and went away to work, leaving something for the children's dinner, and Lizzie to take care of herself and Billy till night. There was no other way, for both were too helpless to be trusted elsewhere, and there was no one to look after them. But Lizzie knew her way about the room, and could find the bed, the window, and the table where the bread and milk stood. There was seldom any fire in the stove, and the window was barred, so the little prisoners were safe; and day after day they lived together a sad, solitary, unchildlike life that makes one's heart ache to think of.

Lizzie watched over Billy like a faithful little mother, and Billy did his best to bear his trials and comfort sister like a man. He was not a rosy, rollicking fellow, like most year-old boys, but pale and thin and quiet, with a pathetic look in his big blue eyes, as if he said, "Something is wrong; will some one kindly put it right for us?" But he seldom complained unless in pain, and would lie for hours on the old bed, watching the flies, which were his only other playmates, stretching out his little hands to the few rays of sunshine that crept in now and then, as if longing for them, like a flower in a cellar. When Lizzie sang, he hummed softly; and when he was hungry, cold, or tired, he called, "Lib! Lib!" meaning "Lizzie," and nestled up to her, forgetting all his baby woes in her tender arms.

Seeing her so fond and faithful, the poor neighbors loved as well as pitied her, and did what they could for the afflicted child. The busy women would pause at the locked door to ask if all was right; the dirty children brought her dandelions from the park; and the rough workmen of the factory opposite, with a kind word, would toss an apple or a cake

through the open window. They had learned to look for the little wistful face behind the bars, and loved to listen to the childish voice which caught and imitated the songs they sang and whistled, like a sweet echo. They called her "the blind lark;" and though she never knew it, many were the better for the pity they gave her.

Baby slept a great deal, for life offered him few pleasures, and like a small philosopher, he wisely tried to forget the troubles which he could not cure; so Lizzie had nothing to do but sing, and try to imagine how the world looked. She had no one to tell her, and the few memories grew dimmer and dimmer each year. She did not know how to work or to play, never having been taught, and mother was too tired at night to do anything but get supper and go to bed.

"The child will be an idiot soon, if she does not die," people said; and it seemed as if this would be the fate of the poor little girl, since no one came to save her during those three weary years. She often said, "I'm of *some* use. I take care of Billy, and I could n't live without him."

But even this duty and delight was taken from her, for that cold spring nipped the poor little flower, and one day Billy shut his blue eyes with a patient sigh and left her all alone.

Then Lizzie's heart seemed broken; and people thought she would soon follow him, now that her one care and comfort was gone. All day she lay with her cheek on Billy's pillow, holding the battered tin cup and a little worn-out shoe, and it was pitiful to hear her sing the old lullabies as if baby still could hear them.

"It will be a mercy if the poor thing does n't live; blind folks are no use and a sight of trouble," said one woman to another as they gossiped in the hall after calling on the child during her mother's absence, for the door was left unlocked since she was ill.

"Yes, Mrs. Davis would get on nicely if she had n't such a burden. Thank Heaven, my children are n't blind," answered the other, hugging her baby closer as she went away.

Lizzie heard them, and hoped with all her sad little soul that death would set her free, since she was of no use in the world. To go and be with Billy was all her desire now, and she was on her way to him, growing daily weaker and more content to be dreaming of dear baby well and happy, waiting for her somewhere in a lovely place called heaven.

The summer vacation came; and hundreds of eager children were hurrying away to the mountains and seashore for two months of healthful pleasure. Even the dirty children in the lane felt the approach of berry-time, and rejoiced in their freedom from cold as they swarmed like flies about the corner grocery where over-ripe fruit was thrown out for them to scramble over.

Lizzie heard about good times when some of these young neighbors were chosen to go on the poor children's picnics, and came back with big sandwiches buttoned up in their jackets, pickles, peanuts, and buns in their pockets, hands full of faded flowers, and hearts brimming over with childish delight at a day in the woods. She listened with a faint smile, enjoyed the "woodsy" smell of the green things, and wondered if they had nice picnics in heaven, being sorry that Billy had missed them here. But she did not seem to care much, or hope for any pleasure for herself except to see baby again.

I think there were few sadder sights in that great city than this innocent prisoner waiting so patiently to be set free. Would it be by the gentle angel of death, or one of the human angels who keep these little sparrows from falling to the ground?

One hot August day, when not a breath came into the room, and the dust and noise and evil smells were almost unendurable, poor Lizzie lay on her bed singing feebly to herself about "the beautiful blue sea." She was trying to get to sleep that she might dream of a cool place, and her voice was growing fainter and fainter, when suddenly it seemed as if the dream had come, for a sweet odor was near, something damp and fresh touched her feverish cheek, and a kind voice said in her ear,--

"Here is the little bird I 've been following. Will you have some flowers, dear?"

"Is it heaven? Where's Billy?" murmured Lizzie, groping about her, half awake.

"Not yet. I'm not Billy, but a friend who carries flowers to little children who cannot go and get them. Don't be afraid, but let me sit and tell you about it," answered the voice, as a gentle hand took hers.

"I thought maybe I 'd died, and I was glad, for I do want to see Billy so much. He's baby, you know." And the clinging hands held the kind one fast till it filled them with a great bunch of roses that seemed to bring all summer into the close, hot room with their sweetness.

"Oh, how nice! how nice! I never had such a lot. They 're bigger 'n' better 'n dandelions, are n't they? What a good lady you must be to go 'round giving folks posies like these!" cried Lizzie, trying to realize the astonishing fact.

Then, while the new friend fanned her, she lay luxuriating in her roses, and listening to the sweet story of the Flower Mission which, like many other pleasant things, she knew nothing of in her prison. Presently she told her own little tale, never guessing how pathetic it was, till lifting her hand to touch the new face, she found it wet with tears.

"Are you sorry for me?" she asked. "Folks are very kind, but I 'm a burden, you know, and I 'd better die and go to Billy; I was some use to him, but I never can be to any one else. I heard 'em say so, and poor mother would do better if I was n't here."

"My child, I know a little blind girl who is no burden but a great help to her mother, and a happy, useful creature, as you might be if you were taught and helped as she was," went on the voice, sounding more than ever like a good fairy's as it told fresh wonders till Lizzie was sure it *must* be all a dream.

"Who taught her? Could I do it? Where's the place?" she asked, sitting erect in her eagerness, like a bird that hears a hand at the door of its cage.

Then, with the comfortable arm around her, the roses stirring with the flutter of her heart, and the sightless eyes looking up as if they could see the face of the deliverer, Lizzie heard the wonderful story of the House Beautiful standing white and spacious on the hill, with the blue sea before it, the fresh wind always blowing, the green gardens and parks all about, and inside, music, happy voices, shining faces, busy hands, and year after year the patient teaching by those who dedicate themselves to this noble and tender task.

"It must be better'n heaven!" cried Lizzie, as she heard of work and play, health and happiness, love and companionship, usefulness and independence,--all the dear rights and simple joys young creatures hunger for, and perish, soul and body, without.

It was too much for her little mind to grasp at once, and she lay as if in a blissful dream long after the kind visitor had gone, promising to come again and to find some way for Lizzie to enter into that lovely place where darkness is changed to light.

That visit was like magic medicine, and the child grew better at once, for hope was born in her heart. The heavy gloom seemed to lift; discomforts were easier to bear; and solitude was peopled now with troops of happy children living in that wonderful place where blindness was not a burden. She told it all to her mother, and the poor woman tried to believe it, but said sadly,--

"Don't set your heart on it, child. It's easy to promise and to forget. Rich folks don't trouble themselves about poor folks if they can help it."

But Lizzie's faith never wavered, though the roses faded as day after day went by and no one came. The mere thought that it was possible to teach blind people to work and study and play seemed to give her strength and courage. She got up and sat at the window again, singing to herself as she watched and waited, with the dead flowers carefully arranged in Billy's mug, and a hopeful smile on the little white face behind the bars.

Every one was glad she was better, and nodded to one another as they heard the soft crooning, like a dove's coo, in the pauses of the harsher noises that filled the street. The workmen tossed her sweeties and whistled their gayest airs; the children brought their dilapidated toys to amuse her; and one woman came every day to put her baby in Lizzie's lap, it was such a pleasure to her to feel the soft little body in the loving arms that longed for Billy.

Poor mother went to her work in better spirits, and the long hot days were less oppressive as she thought, while she scrubbed, of Lizzie up again; for she loved her helpless burden, heavy though she found it.

When Saturday came around, it rained hard, and no one expected "the flower lady." Even Lizzie said with a patient sigh and a hopeful smile,--

"I don't believe she 'll come; but maybe it will clear up, and then I guess she will."

It did not clear up, but the flower lady came; and as the child sat listening to the welcome sound of her steps, her quick ear caught the tread of two pairs of feet, the whisper of two voices, and presently two persons came in to fill her hands with midsummer flowers.

"This is Minna, the little girl I told you of. She wanted to see you very much, so we paddled away like a pair of ducks, and here we are," said Miss Grace, gayly; and as she spoke, Lizzie felt soft fingers glide over her face, and a pair of childish lips find and kiss her own. The groping touch, the hearty kiss, made the blind children friends at once, and dropping her flowers, Lizzie hugged the new-comer, trembling with excitement and delight. Then they talked; and how the tongues went as one asked questions and the other answered them, while Miss Grace sat by enjoying the happiness of those who do *not* forget the poor, but seek them out to save and bless.

Minna had been for a year a pupil in the happy school, where she was taught to see with her hands, as one might say; and the tales she told of the good times there made Lizzie cry eagerly,--

"Can I go? Oh, *can* go?"

"Alas, no, not yet," answered Miss Grace, sadly. "I find that children under ten cannot be taken, and there is no place for the little ones unless kind people care for them."

Lizzie gave a wail, and hid her face in the pillow, feeling as if she could not bear the dreadful disappointment.

Minna comforted her, and Miss Grace went on to say that generous people were trying to get another school for the small children; that all the blind children were working hard to help on the plan; that money was coming in; and soon they hoped to have a pleasant place for every child who needed help.

Lizzie's tears stopped falling as she listened, for hope was not quite gone.

"I 'll not be ten till next June, and I don't see how I *can* wait 'most a year. Will the little school be ready 'fore then?" she asked.

"I fear not, dear, but I will see that the long waiting is made as easy as possible, and perhaps you can help us in some way," answered Miss Grace, anxious to atone for her mistake in speaking about the school before she had made sure that Lizzie could go.

"Oh, I 'd love to help; only I can't do anything," sighed the child.

"You can sing, and that is a lovely way to help. I heard of 'the blind lark,' as they call you, and when I came to find her, your little voice led me straight to the door of the cage. That door I mean to open, and let you hop out into the sunshine; then, when you are well and strong, I hope you will help us get the home for other little children who else must wait years before *they* find the light. Will you?"

As Miss Grace spoke, it was beautiful to see the clouds lift from Lizzie's wondering face, till it shone with the sweetest beauty any face can wear,--the happiness of helping others. She forgot her own disappointment in the new hope that came, and held on to the bedpost as if the splendid plan were almost too much for her.

"Could I help that way?" she cried. "Would anybody care to hear me sing? Oh, how I 'd love to do anything for the poor little ones who will have to wait."

"You shall. I 'm sure the hardest heart would be touched by your singing, if you look as you do now. We need something new for our fair and concert, and by that time you will be ready," said Miss Grace, almost afraid she had said too much; for the child looked so frail, it seemed as if even joy would hurt her.

Fortunately her mother came in just then; and while the lady talked to her, Minna's childish chatter soothed Lizzie so well that when they left she stood at the window smiling down at them and singing like the happiest bobolink that ever tilted on a willow branch in spring-time.

All the promises were kept, and soon a new life began for Lizzie. A better room and well-paid work were found for Mrs. Davis. Minna came as often as she could to cheer up her little friend, and best of all, Miss Grace taught her to sing, that by and by the little voice might plead with its pathetic music for others less blest than she. So the winter months went by, and Lizzie grew like mayflowers underneath the snow, getting ready to look up, sweet and rosy, when spring set her free and called her to be glad. She counted the months and weeks, and when the time dwindled to days, she could hardly sleep or eat for thinking of the happy hour when she could go to be a pupil in the school where miracles were worked.

Her birthday was in June, and thanks to Miss Grace, her coming was celebrated by one of the pretty festivals of the school, called Daisy Day. Lizzie knew nothing of this

surprise, and when her friends led her up the long flight of steps she looked like a happy little soul climbing to the gates of heaven.

Mr. Constantine, the ruler of this small kingdom, was a man whose fatherly heart had room for every suffering child in the world, and it rejoiced over every one who came, though the great house was overflowing, and many waited as Lizzie had done.

He welcomed her so kindly that the strange place seemed like home at once, and Minna led her away to the little mates who proudly showed her their small possessions and filled her hands with the treasures children love, while pouring into her ears delightful tales of the study, work, and play that made their lives so happy.

Lizzie was bewildered, and held fast to Minna, whose motherly care of her was sweet to see. Kind teachers explained rules and duties with the patience that soothes fear and wins love; and soon Lizzie began to feel that she was a "truly pupil" in this wonderful school where the blind could read, sew, study, sing, run, and play. Boys raced along the galleries and up and down the stairs as boldly as if all had eyes; girls swept and dusted like tidy housewives; little fellows hammered and sawed in the workshop and never hurt themselves; small girls sewed on pretty work as busy as bees; and in the schoolroom lessons went on as if both teachers and pupils were blessed with eyes.

Lizzie could not understand it, and was content to sit and listen wherever she was placed, while her little fingers fumbled at the new objects near her, and her hungry mind opened like a flower to the sun. She had no tasks that day, and in the afternoon was led away with a flock of children, all chattering like magpies, on the grand expedition. Every year, when the fields were white with daisies, these poor little souls were let loose among them to enjoy the holy day of this child's flower. Ah, but was n't it a pretty sight to see the meeting between them, when the meadows were reached, and the children scattered far and wide with cries of joy as they ran and rolled in the white sea, or filled their eager hands, or softly felt for the dear daisies and kissed them like old friends? The flowers seemed to enjoy it too, as they danced and nodded, while the wind rippled the long grass like waves of a green sea, and the sun smiled as if he said,--

"Here's the sort of thing I like to see. Why don't I find more of it?"

Lizzie's face looked like a daisy, it was so full of light as she stood looking up, with the wide brim of her new hat like the white petals all round it. She did not run nor shout, but went slowly wading through the grass, feeling the flowers touch her hands, yet picking none, for it was happiness enough to know that they were there. Presently she sat down and let them tap her cheeks and rustle about her ears as though telling secrets that made her smile. Then, as if weary with so much happiness, she lay back and let the daisies hide her with their pretty coverlet.

Miss Grace was watching over her, but left her alone, and by and by, like a lark from its nest in the grass, the blind girl sent up her little voice, singing so sweetly that the children gathered around to hear, while they made chains and tied up their nosegays.

This was Lizzie's first concert, and no little prima donna was ever more pelted with flowers than she; for when she had sung all her songs, new and old, a daisy crown was put upon her head, a tall flower for a sceptre in her hand, and all the boys and girls danced around her as if she had been Queen of the May.

A little feast came out of the baskets, that they might be empty for the harvest to be carried home, and while they ate, stories were told and shouts of laughter filled the air,

for all were as merry as if there was no darkness, pain, or want in the world. Then they had games; and Lizzie was taught to play,--for till now she never knew what a good romp meant. Her cheeks grew rosy, her sad little face waked up, she ran and tumbled with the rest, and actually screamed, to Minna's great delight.

Two or three of the children could see a little, and these were very helpful in taking care of the little ones. Miss Grace found them playing some game with Lizzie, and observed that all but she were blindfolded. When she asked why, one whispered, "We thought we should play fairer if we were all alike." And another added, "It seems somehow as if we were proud if we see better than the rest."

Lizzie was much touched by this sweet spirit, and a little later showed that she had already learned one lesson in the school, when she gathered about her some who had never seen, and told them what she could remember of green fields and daisy-balls before the light went out forever.

"Surely my little lark was worth saving, if only for this one happy day," thought Miss Grace, as she watched the awakened look in the blind faces, all leaning toward the speaker, whose childish story pleased them well.

In all her long and useful life, Lizzie never forgot that Daisy Day, for it seemed as if she were born anew, and like a butterfly had left the dark chrysalis all behind her then. It was the first page of the beautiful book just opening before the eyes of her little mind,--a lovely page, illustrated with flowers, kind faces, sunshine, and happy hopes. The new life was so full, so free, she soon fell into her place and enjoyed it all. People worked there so heartily, so helpfully, it was no wonder things went as if by magic, and the poor little creatures who came in so afflicted went out in some years independent people, ready to help themselves and often to benefit others.

There is no need to tell all Lizzie learned and enjoyed that summer, nor how proud her mother was when she heard her read in the curious books, making eyes of the little fingers that felt their way along so fast; when she saw the neat stitches she set, the pretty clay things she modelled, the tidy way she washed dishes, swept, and dusted, and helped keep her room in order. But the poor woman's heart was too full for words when she heard the child sing,--not as before, in the dreary room, sad, soft lullabies to Billy, but beautiful, gay songs, with flutes and violins to lift and carry the little voice along on waves of music.

Lizzie really had a great gift; but she was never happier than when they all sang together, or when she sat quietly listening to the band as they practised for the autumn concert. She was to have a part in it; and the thought that she could help to earn money for the Kindergarten made the shy child bold and glad to do her part. Many people knew her now, for she was very pretty, with the healthful roses in her cheeks, curly yellow hair, and great blue eyes that seemed to see. Her mates and teachers were proud of her, for though she was not as quick as some of the pupils, her sweet temper, grateful heart, and friendly little ways made her very dear to all, aside from the musical talent she possessed.

Every one was busy over the fair and the concert; and fingers flew, tongues chattered, feet trotted, and hearts beat fast with hope and fear as the time drew near, for all were eager to secure a home for the poor children still waiting in darkness. It was a charity which appealed to all hearts when it was known; but in this busy world of ours, people have so many cares of their own that they are apt to forget the wants of others unless

something brings these needs very clearly before their eyes. Much money was needed, and many ways had been tried to add to the growing fund, that all might be well done.

"We wish to interest children in this charity for children, so that they may gladly give a part of their abundance to these poor little souls who have nothing. I think Lizzie will sing some of the pennies out of their pockets, which would otherwise go for bonbons. Let us try; so make her neat and pretty, and we 'll have a special song for her."

Mr. Constantine said this; and Miss Grace carried out his wish so well that when the time came, the little prima donna did her part better even than they had hoped.

The sun shone splendidly on the opening day of the fair, and cars and carriages came rolling out from the city, full of friendly people with plump purses and the sympathetic interest we all take in such things when we take time to see, admire, and reproach ourselves that we do so little for them.

There were many children; and when they had bought the pretty handiwork of the blind needle-women, eaten cake and ices, wondered at the strange maps and books, twirled the big globe in the hall, and tried to understand how so many blind people could be so busy and so happy, they all were seated at last to hear the music, full of expectation, for "the pretty little girl was going to sing."

It was a charming concert, and every one enjoyed it, though many eyes grew dim as they wandered from the tall youths blowing the horns so sweetly to the small ones chirping away like so many sparrows, for the blind faces made the sight pathetic, and such music touched the hearts as no other music can.

"Now she's coming!" whispered the eager children, as a little girl climbed up the steps and stood before them, waiting to begin.

A slender little creature in a blue gown, with sunshine falling on her pretty hair, a pleading look in the soft eyes that had no sign of blindness but their steadfastness, and a smile on the lips that trembled at first, for Lizzie's heart beat fast, and only the thought, "I 'm helping the poor little ones," gave her courage for her task.

But when the flutes and violins began to play like a whispering wind, she forgot the crowd before her, and lifting up her face, sang in clear sweet tones.

THE BLIND LARK'S SONG.

We are sitting in the shadow

Of a long and lonely night,

Waiting till some gentle angel

Comes to lead us to the light;

For we know there is a magic

That can give eyes to the blind.

Oh, well-filled hands, be generous!

Oh, pitying hearts, be kind!

Help stumbling feet that wander

To find the upward way;

Teach hands that now lie idle
The joys of work and play.
Let pity, love, and patience
Our tender teachers be,
That though the eyes be blinded,
The little souls may see.

Your world is large and beautiful,
Our prison dim and small;
We stand and wait, imploring,
"Is there not room for all?
Give us our children's garden,
Where we may safely bloom,
Forgetting in God's sunshine
Our lot of grief and gloom."

A little voice comes singing;
Oh, listen to its song!
A little child is pleading
For those who suffer wrong.
Grant them the patient magic
That gives eyes to the blind!
Oh, well-filled hands, be generous!
Oh, pitying hearts, be kind!

It was a very simple little song, but it proved wonderfully effective, for Lizzie was so carried away by her own feeling that as she sang the last lines she stretched out her hands imploringly, and two great tears rolled down her cheeks. For a minute many hands were too busy fumbling for handkerchiefs to clap, but the children were quick to answer that gesture and those tears; and one impetuous little lad tossed a small purse containing his last ten cents at Lizzie's feet, the first contribution won by her innocent appeal. Then there was great applause, and many of the flowers just bought were thrown to the little lark, who was obliged to come back and sing again and again, smiling brightly as she dropped pretty courtesies, and sang song after song with all the added sweetness of a grateful heart.

Hidden behind the organ, Miss Grace and Mr. Constantine shook hands joyfully, for this was the sort of interest they wanted, and they knew that while the children clapped and threw flowers, the wet-eyed mothers were thinking self-reproachfully, "I must help this

lovely charity," and the stout old gentlemen who pounded with their canes were resolving to go home and write some generous checks, which would be money invested in God's savings-bank.

It was a very happy time for all, and made strangers friends in the sweet way which teaches heart to speak to heart. When the concert was over, Lizzie felt many hands press hers and leave something there, many childish lips kiss her own, with promises to "help about the Kindergarten," and her ears were full of kind voices thanking and praising her for doing her part so well. Still later, when all were gone, she proudly put the rolls of bills into Mr. Constantine's hand, and throwing her arms about Miss Grace's neck, said, trembling with earnestness, "I 'm not a burden any more, and I can truly help! How can I ever thank you both for making me so happy?"

One can fancy what their answer was and how Lizzie helped; for long after the Kindergarten was filled with pale little flowers blooming slowly as she had done, the Blind Lark went on singing pennies out of pockets, and sweetly reminding people not to forget this noble charity.

Music And Macaroni

Among the pretty villages that lie along the wonderful Cornice road which runs from Nice to Genoa, none was more beautiful than Valrose. It deserved its name, for it was indeed a "valley of roses." The little town with its old church nestled among the olive and orange trees that clothed the hillside, sloping up to purple mountains towering behind. Lower down stretched the vineyards; and the valley was a bed of flowers all the year round. There were acres of violets, verbenas, mignonette, and every sweet-scented blossom that grows, while hedges of roses, and alleys of lemon-trees with their white stars made the air heavy with perfume. Across the plain, one saw the blue sea rolling to meet the bluer sky, sending fresh airs and soft rains to keep Valrose green and beautiful even through the summer heat. Only one ugly thing marred the lovely landscape, and that was the factory, with its tall chimneys, its red walls, and ceaseless bustle. But old ilex-trees tried to conceal its ugliness; the smoke curled gracefully from its chimney-tops; and the brown men talked in their musical language as they ran about the busy courtyard, or did strange things below in the still-room. Handsome black-eyed girls sang at the open windows at their pretty work, and delicious odors filled the place; for here the flowers that bloomed outside were changed to all kinds of delicate perfumes to scent the hair of great ladies and the handkerchiefs of dainty gentlemen all the world over.

The poor roses, violets, mignonette, orange-flowers, and their sisters, were brought here in great baskets to yield up their sweet souls in hot rooms where, fires burned and great vats boiled; then they were sent up to be imprisoned in pretty flasks of all imaginable shapes and colors by the girls, who put gilded labels on them, packed them in delicate boxes, and sent them away to comfort the sick, please the rich, and put money in the pockets of the merchants.

Many children were employed in the light work of weeding beds, gathering flowers, and running errands; among these none were busier, happier, or more beloved than Florentino and his sister Stella. They were orphans, but they lived with old Mariuccia in her little stone house near the church, contented with the small wages they earned, though their clothes were poor, their food salad, macaroni, rye bread, and thin wine, with now and then a taste of meat when Stella's lover or some richer friend gave them a treat on gala days.

They worked hard, and had their dreams of what they would do when they had saved up a little store; Stella would marry her Beppo and settle in a home of her own; but Tino was more ambitious, for he possessed a sweet boyish voice and sang so well in the choir, at the merrymakings, and about his work, that he was called the "little nightingale," and much praised and petted, not only by his mates, but by the good priest who taught him music, and the travellers who often came to the factory and were not allowed to go till Tino had sung to them.

All this made the lad vain; and he hoped one day to go away as Baptista had gone, who now sang in a fine church at Genoa and sent home gold napoleons to his old parents. How this was to come about Tino had not the least idea, but he cheered his work with all manner of wild plans, and sang his best at Mass, hoping some stranger would hear, and take him away as Signor Pulci had taken big Tista, whose voice was not half so

wonderful as his own, all had said. No one came, however, and Tino at thirteen was still at work in the valley,--a happy little lad, singing all day long as he carried his fragrant loads to and fro, ate his dinner of bread and beans fried in oil, with a crust, under the ilex-trees, and slept like a dormouse at night on his clean straw in the loft at Mariuccia's, with the moon for his candle and the summer warmth for his coverlet.

One day in September, as he stood winnowing mignonette seed in a quiet corner of the vast garden, he was thinking deeply over his hopes and plans, and practising the last chant Father Angelo had taught him, while he shook and held the sieve high, to let the wind blow away the dead husks, leaving the brown seeds behind.

Suddenly, as he ended his lesson with a clear high note that seemed to rise and die softly away like the voice of an angel in the air, the sound of applause startled him; and turning, he saw a gentleman sitting on the rude bench behind him,--a well-dressed, handsome, smiling gentleman, who clapped his white hands and nodded and said gayly, "Bravo, my boy, that was well done! You have a wonderful voice; sing again."

But Tino was too abashed for the moment, and could only stand and stare at the stranger, a pretty picture of boyish confusion, pleasure, and shyness.

"Come, tell me all about it, my friend. Who taught you so well? Why are you here, and not where you should be, learning to use this fine pipe of yours, and make fame and money by it?" said the gentleman, still smiling as he leaned easily in his seat and swung his gloves.

Tino's heart began to beat fast as he thought, "Perhaps my chance has come at last! I must make the most of it." So taking courage, he told his little story; and when he ended, the stranger gave a nod, saying,--

"Yes, you are the 'little nightingale' they spoke of up at the inn. I came to find you. Now sing me something gay, some of your folk-songs. That sort will suit you best."

Anxious to make the most of his chance, Tino took courage and sang away as easily as a bird on a bough, pouring out one after another the barcaroles, serenades, ballads, and drinking-songs he had learned from the people about him.

The gentleman listened, laughed, and applauded as if well pleased, and when Tino stopped to take breath, he gave another nod more decided than the first, and said with his engaging smile,--

"You are indeed a wonder, and quite wasted here. If *I* had you I should make a man of you, and put money in your pocket as fast as you opened your mouth."

Tino's eyes sparkled at the word "money," for sweet as was the praise, the idea of having full pockets bewitched him, and he asked eagerly, "How, signor?"

"Well," answered the gentleman, idly tapping his nose with a rose-bud which he had pulled as he came along, "I should take you to my hotel at Nice; wash, brush, and trim you up a little; put you into a velvet suit with a lace collar, silk stockings, and buckled shoes; teach you music, feed you well, and when I thought you fit carry you with me to the *salons* of the great people, where I give concerts. There you would sing these gay songs of yours, and be petted, praised, and pelted with bonbons, francs, and kisses perhaps,--for you are a pretty lad and these fine ladies and idle gentlemen are always ready to welcome a new favorite. Would you fancy that sort of life better than this? You can have it if you like."

Tino's black eyes shone; the color deepened in his brown cheeks; and he showed all his white teeth as he laughed and exclaimed with a gesture of delight,--

"Mio Dio! but I *would*, signor! I 'm tired of this work; I long to sing, to see the world, to be my own master, and let Stella and the old woman know that I am big enough to have my own way. Do you really mean it? When can I go? I'm ready now, only I had better run and put on my holiday suit and get my guitar."

"Good! there 's a lad of spirit. I like that well. A guitar too? Bravo, my little troubadour, we shall make a sensation in the drawing-rooms, and fill our pockets shortly. But there is no haste, and it would be well to ask these friends of yours, or there might be trouble. I don't *steal* nightingales, I buy them; and I will give the old woman, whoever she may be, more than you would earn in a month. See, I too am a singer, and this I made at Genoa in a week." As he spoke, Signor Mario pulled a well-filled purse from one pocket, a handful of gold and silver coin from the other, and chinked them before the boy's admiring eyes.

"Let us go!" cried Tino, flinging down the sieve as if done with work forever. "Stella is at home to-day; come at once to Mariuccia,--it is not far; and when they hear these fine plans, they will be glad to let me go, I am sure."

Away he went across the field of flowers, through the courtyard, up the steep street, straight into the kitchen where his pretty sister sat eating artichokes and bread while the old woman twirled her distaff in the sun. Both were used to strangers, for the cottage was a picturesque place, half hidden like a bird's nest in vines and fig-trees, with a gay little plot of flowers before it; travellers often came to taste Mariuccia's honey, for her bees fared well, and their combs were running over with the sweetness of violets and roses, put up in dainty little waxen boxes made by better workmen than any found at the factory.

The two women listened respectfully while Signor Mario told his plan in his delightfully gracious way; and Stella was much impressed by the splendor of the prospect before her brother. But the wise old woman shook her head, and declared decidedly that the boy was too young to leave home yet. Father Angelo was teaching him well; he was safe and happy where he was; and there he should remain, for she had sworn by all the saints to his dying mother that she would guard him as the apple of her eye till he was old enough to take care of himself.

In vain Mario shook his purse before her eyes, Stella pleaded, and Tino stormed; the faithful old soul would not give up, much as she needed money, loved Stella, and hated to cross the boy who was in truth "the apple of her eye" and the darling of her heart. There was a lively scene in the little room, for every one talked at once, gesticulated wildly, and grew much excited in the discussion; but nothing came of it, and Signor Mario departed wrathfully, leaving Mariuccia looking as stern as fate with her distaff, Stella in tears, and Tino in such a rage he could only dash up to the loft and throw himself on his rude bed, there to kick and sob and tear his hair, and wish there might be ten thousand earthquakes to swallow that cruel old woman up in the twinkling of an eye.

Stella came to beg him to be comforted and eat his supper, but he drew the wooden bolt and would not let her in, saying sternly,--

"I *never* will come down till Mariuccia says I may go; I will starve first. I am not a child to be so treated. Go away, and let me alone; I hate you both!"

Poor Stella retired, heart-broken, and when all her entreaties failed to change their guardian's decision, she went to consult Father Angelo. He agreed with the old woman that it was best to keep the boy safe at home, as they knew nothing of the strange gentleman nor what might befall Tino if he left the shelter of his own humble home and friends.

Much disappointed, Stella went to pray devoutly in the church, and then, meeting her Beppo, soon forgot all about the poor little lad who had sobbed himself to sleep upon his straw.

The house was quiet when he awoke; no lights shone from any neighbor's windows; and all was still except the nightingales singing in the valley. The moon was up; and her friendly face looked in at the little window so brightly that the boy felt comforted, and lay staring at the soft light while his mind worked busily. Some evil spirit, some naughty Puck bent on mischief must have been abroad that night, for into Tino's head there suddenly popped a splendid idea; at least *he* thought it so, and in his rebellious state found it all the more tempting because danger and disobedience and defiance all had a part in it.

Why not run away? Signor Mario was not to leave till next morning. Tino could easily slip out early and join the kind gentleman beyond the town. This would show the women that he, Tino, had a will of his own and was not to be treated like a child any more. It would give them a good fright, make a fine stir in the place, and add to his glory when he returned with plenty of money to display himself in the velvet suit and silk stockings,--a famous fellow who knew what he was about and did not mean to be insulted, or tied to an old woman's apron-string forever.

The longer he thought the more delightful the idea became, and he resolved to carry it out, for the fine tales he had heard made him more discontented than ever with his present simple, care-free life. Up he got, and by the light of the moon took from the old chest his best suit. Moving very softly, he put on the breeches and jacket of rough blue cloth, the coarse linen shirt, the red sash, and the sandals of russet leather that laced about his legs to the knee. A few clothes, with his rosary, he tied up in a handkerchief, and laid the little bundle ready with his Sunday hat, a broad-brimmed, pointed-crowned affair with a red band and cock's feather to adorn it.

Then he sat at the window waiting for dawn to come, fearing to sleep lest he be too late. It seemed an almost endless night, the first he had ever spent awake, but red streaks came in the east at last, and he stole to the door, meaning to creep noiselessly downstairs, take a good hunch of bread and a gourd full of wine and slip off while the women slept.

To his dismay he found the door barred on the outside. His courage had ebbed a little as the time for action came; but at this new insult he got angry again, and every dutiful impulse flew away in a minute.

"Ah, they think to keep me, do they? Behold, then, how I cheat the silly things! They have never seen me climb down the fig-tree, and thought me safe. Now I will vanish, and leave them to tear their hair and weep for me in vain."

Flinging out his bundle, and carefully lowering his old guitar, Tino leaned from the little window, caught the nearest branch of the tree that bent toward the wall, and swung himself down as nimbly as a squirrel. Pausing only to pick several bunches of ripe

grapes from the vine about the door, he went softly through the garden and ran away along the road toward Nice as fast as his legs could carry him.

Not till he reached the top of the long hill a mile away, did he slacken his lively pace; then climbing a bank, he lay down to rest under some olive-trees, and ate his grapes as he watched the sun rise. Travellers always left the Falcone Inn early to enjoy the morning freshness, so Tino knew that Signor Mario would soon appear; and when the horses paused to rest on the hill-top, the "little nightingale" would present himself as unexpectedly as if he had fallen from heaven.

But Signor Mario was a lazy man; and Tino had time to work himself into a fever of expectation, doubt, and fear before the roll of wheels greeted his longing ears. Yes, it was the delightful stranger!--reading papers and smoking as he rode, quite blind to the beauty all around him, blind also to the sudden appearance of a picturesque little figure by the roadside, as the carriage stopped. Even when he looked, he did not recognize shabby Tino in the well-dressed beggar, as he thought him, who stood bare-headed and smiling, with hat in one hand, bundle in the other, and guitar slung on his back. He waved his hand as if to say, "I have nothing for you," and was about to bid the man drive on, but Tino cried out boldly,--

"Behold me, signor! I am Tino, the singing boy of Valrose. I have run away to join you if you will have me. Ah, please do! I wish so much to go with you."

"Bravo!" cried Mario, well pleased. "That is a lad of spirit; and I am glad to have you. I don't steal nightingales, as I told you down yonder; but if they get out of their cages and perch on my finger, I keep them. In with you, boy! there is no time to lose."

In scrambled happy Tino, and settling himself and his property on the seat opposite, amused his new master with a lively account of his escape. Mario laughed and praised him; Luigi, the servant, grinned as he listened from the coach-box; and the driver resolved to tell the tale at the Falcone, when he stopped there on his return to Genoa, so the lad's friends might know what had become of him.

After a little chat Signor Mario returned to his newspapers, and Tino, tired with his long vigil and brisk run, curled himself up on the seat, pillowed his head on his bundle and fell fast asleep, rocked by the motion of the carriage as it rolled along the smooth road.

When he waked, the sun was high, the carriage stood before a wayside inn, the man and horses were gone to their dinners, and the signor lay under some mulberry-trees in the garden while Luigi set forth upon the grass the contents of a well-filled hamper which they had brought with them, his master being one who looked well after his own comfort. The sight of food drew Tino toward it as straight as a honey-jar draws flies, and he presented himself with his most engaging air. Being in a good humor, the new master bade the hungry lad sit down and eat, which he did so heartily that larded fowl, melon, wine, and bread vanished as if by magic. Never had food tasted so good to Tino; and rejoicing with true boyish delight in the prospect of plenty to eat, he went off to play Morso with the driver, while the horses rested and Mario took a siesta on the grass.

When they set forth again, Tino received his first music lesson from the new teacher, who was well pleased to find how quickly the boy caught the air of a Venetian boat-song, and how sweetly he sang it. Then Tino strummed on his guitar and amused his hearers with all the melodies he knew, from church chants to drinking-songs. Mario taught him how to handle his instrument gracefully, speak a few polite phrases, and sit properly instead of sprawling awkwardly or lounging idly.

So the afternoon wore away; and at dusk they reached Nice. To Tino it looked like an enchanted city as they drove down to it from the soft gloom and stillness of the country. The sea broke gently on the curving shore, sparkling with the lights of the Promenade des Anglais which overlooks it. A half circle of brilliant hotels came next; behind these the glimmer of villas scattered along the hillside shone like fireflies among gardens and orange groves; and higher still the stars burned in a violet sky. Soon the moon would be up, to hang like a great lamp from that splendid dome, turning sea and shore to a magic world by her light. Tino clapped his hands and looked about him with all the pleasure of his beauty-loving race as they rattled through the gay streets and stopped at one of the fine hotels.

Here Mario put on his grand air, and was shown to the apartment he had ordered from Genoa. Tino meekly followed; and Luigi brought up the rear with the luggage. Tino felt as if he had got into a fairy tale when he found himself in a fine parlor where he could only sit and stare about him, while his master refreshed in the chamber beyond, and the man ordered dinner. A large closet was given the boy to sleep in, with a mattress and blanket, a basin and pitcher, and a few pegs to hang his clothes on. But it seemed very nice after the loft; and when he had washed his face, shaken the dust off, and smoothed his curly head as well as he could, he returned to the parlor to gloat over such a dinner as he had never eaten before.

Mario was in a good humor and anxious to keep the lad so, therefore he plied him with good things to eat, fine promises, and the praise in which that vain little soul delighted. Tino went to bed early, feeling that his fortune was made, and his master went off to amuse himself at a gaming-table, for that was his favorite pastime.

Next day the new life began. After a late breakfast, a music lesson was given which both interested and dismayed Tino, for his master was far less patient than good old Father Angelo, and swore at him when he failed to catch a new air as quickly as he expected. Both were tired and rather cross when it ended, but Tino soon forgot the tweaking of his ear and the scolding, when he was sent away with Luigi to buy the velvet suit and sundry necessary articles for the young troubadour.

It was a lovely day; and the gay city was all alive with the picturesque bustle which always fills it when the season begins. Red-capped fishermen were launching their boats from the beach, flower-girls hastening from the gardens with their fragrant loads to sell on the Promenade, where invalids sunned themselves, nurses led their rosy troops to play, fine ladies strolled, and men of all nations paced to and fro at certain hours. In the older part of the city, work of all sorts went on,--coral-carvers filled their windows with pretty ornaments; pastry-cooks tempted with dainty dishes; milliners showed hats fresh from Paris; and Turkish merchants hung out rich rugs and carpets at their doors. Church-bells chimed; priests with incense and banners went through the streets on holy errands; the Pifferoni piped gayly; orange-women and chestnut-sellers called their wares in musical voices; even the little scullions who go about scouring saucepans at back doors made a song of their cry, "Casserola!"

Tino had a charming time, and could hardly believe his senses when one fine thing after another was bought for him and ordered home. Not only the suit, but two ruffled shirts, a crimson tie for the lace collar, a broad new ribbon for the guitar, handkerchiefs, hose, and delicate shoes, as if he was a gentleman's son. When Luigi added a little mantle and a hat such as other well-dressed lads of his age wore, Tino exclaimed, "This also! Dio

mio, never have I known so kind a man as Signor Mario. I shall serve him well and love him even better than you do."

Luigi shrugged his shoulders and answered with a disagreeable laugh, "Long may you think so, poverino; I serve for money, not love, and look to it that I get my wages, else it would go ill with both of us. Keep all you can get, boy; our master is apt to forget his servants."

Tino did not like the look, half scornful, half pitiful, which Luigi gave him, and wondered why he did not love the good signor. Later he found out; but all was pleasant now, and lunch at a café completed the delights of that long morning.

The rooms were empty when they returned; and bidding him keep out of mischief, Luigi left Tino alone for several hours. But he found plenty of amusement in examining all the wonders the apartment contained, receiving the precious parcels as they arrived, practising his new bow before the long mirror, and eating the nuts that he had bought of a jolly old woman at a street corner.

Then he went to lounge on the balcony that ran along the front of the hotel, and watched the lively scene below, till sunset sent the promenaders home to dress for dinner. Feeling a sudden pang of homesickness as he thought of Stella, Tino got his guitar and sang the old songs to comfort his loneliness.

The first was hardly ended before one after the other five little heads popped out of a window farther down the balcony; and presently a group of pretty children were listening and smiling as the nice boy played and sang to them. A gentleman looked out; and a lady evidently listened, for the end of a lace flounce lay on the threshold of the long window, and a pair of white hands clapped when he finished a gay air in his best style.

This was his first taste of applause, and he liked it, and twanged away merrily till his master's voice called him in just as he was beginning to answer the questions the eager children asked him.

"Go and dress! I shall take you down to dinner with me presently. But mind this, *I* will answer questions; do *you* keep quiet, and leave me to tell what I think best. Remember, or I pack you home at once."

Tino promised, and was soon absorbed in getting into his new clothes; Luigi came to help him, and when he was finished off, a very handsome lad emerged from the closet to make his best bow to his master, who, also in fine array, surveyed him with entire approval.

"Very good! I thought you would make a passable butterfly when you shed your grub's skin. Stand up and keep your hands out of your pockets. Mind what I told you about supping soup noisily, and don't handle your fork like a shovel. See what others do, smile, and hold your tongue. There is the gong. Let us go."

Tino's heart beat as he followed Mario down the long hall to the great *salle à manger* with its glittering *table d'hôte* and many guests. But the consciousness of new clothes sustained him, so he held up his head, turned out his toes, and took his place, trying to look as if everything was not very new and dazzling to him.

Two elderly ladies sat opposite, and he heard one say to the other in bad Italian, "Behold the lovely boy, Maria; I should like to paint him."

And the other answered, "We will be amiable to him, and perhaps we may get him for a model. Just what I want for a little Saint John."

Tino smiled at them till his black eyes sparkled and his white teeth shone, for he understood and enjoyed their praise. The artistic ladies smiled back, and watched him with interest long after he had forgotten them, for that dinner was a serious affair to the boy, with a heavy silver spoon and fork to manage, a napkin to unfold, and three glasses to steer clear of for fear of a general upset, so awkward did he feel.

Every one else was too busy to mind his mistakes; and the ladies set them down to bashfulness, as he got red in the face, and dared not look up after spilling his soup and dropping a roll.

Presently, while waiting for dessert, he forgot himself in something Mario was saying to his neighbor on the other side:--

"A poor little fellow whom I found starving in the streets at Genoa. He has a voice; I have a heart, and I adore music. I took him to myself, and shall do my best for him. Ah, yes! in this selfish world one must not forget the helpless and the poor."

Tino stared, wondering what other boy the good signor had befriended, and was still more bewildered when Mario turned to him with a paternal air, to add in that pious tone so new to the boy,--

"This is my little friend, and he will gladly come and sing to your young ladies after dinner. Many thanks for the honor; I shall bring him out at my parlor concerts, and so fit him for his place by and by. Bow and smile, quick!"

The last words were in a sharp whisper; and Tino obeyed with a sudden bob of the head that sent his curls over his eyes, and then laughed such a boyish laugh as he shook them back that the gentleman leaning forward to look at him joined in it, and the ladies smiled sympathetically as they pushed a dish of bonbons nearer to him. Mario gave him an indulgent look, and went on in the same benevolent tone telling all he meant to do, till the kindly gentleman from Rome was much interested, having lads of his own and being fond of music.

Tino listened to the fine tales told of him and hoped no one would ask him about Genoa, for he would surely betray that he had never been there and could not lie as glibly as Mario did. He felt rather like the little old woman who did not know whether she was herself or not, but consoled himself by smiling at the ladies and eating a whole plateful of little cakes standing near him.

When they rose, Tino made his bow, and Mario walked down the long hall with his hand on the boy's shoulder and a friendly air very impressive to the spectators, who began at once to gossip about the pretty lad and his kind protector, just as the cunning gentleman planned to have them.

As soon as they were out of sight, Mario's manner changed; and telling Tino to sit down and digest his dinner or he would n't be able to sing a note, he went to the balcony to smoke till the servant came to conduct them to Conte Alborghetti's salon.

"Now mind, boy; do exactly as I tell you, or I 'll drop you like a hot chestnut and leave you to get home as you can," said Mario, in a sharp whisper, as they paused on the threshold of the door.

"I will, signor, indeed I will!" murmured Tino, scared by the flash of his master's black eye and the grip of his hand, as he pulled the bashful boy forward.

In they went, and for a moment Tino only perceived a large light room full of people, who all looked at him as he stood beside Mario with his guitar slung over his shoulder, red cheeks, and such a flutter at his heart that he felt sure he could never sing there. The amiable host came to meet and present them to a group of ladies, while a flock of children drew near to look at and listen to the "nice singing boy from Genoa."

Mario, having paid his thanks and compliments in his best manner, opened the little concert by a grand piece upon the piano, proving that he was a fine musician, though Tino already began to fancy he was not quite so good a man as he wished to appear. Then he sang several airs from operas; and Tino forgot himself in listening delightedly to the mellow voice of his master, for the lad loved music and had never heard any like this before.

When Tino's turn came, he had lost his first shyness, and though his lips were dry and breath short, and he gave the guitar an awkward bang against the piano as he pulled it round ready to play upon, the curiosity in the faces of the children and the kindly interest of the ladies gave him courage to start bravely off with "Bella Monica,"--the easiest as well as gayest of his songs. It went well; and with each verse his voice grew clearer, his hand firmer, and his eyes fuller of boyish pleasure in his own power to please.

For please he did, and when he ended with a loud twang and kissed his hand to the audience as he always used to do to the girls at home, every one clapped heartily, and the gentlemen cried, "Bravo, piccolo! He sings in truth like a little nightingale; encore, encore!"

These were sweet sounds to Tino; and he needed no urging to sing "Lucia" in his softest tones, "looking like one of Murillo's angels!" as a young lady said, while he sang away with his eyes piously lifted in the manner Mario had taught him.

Then followed a grand march from the master while the boy rested; after which Tino gave more folk-songs, and ended with a national air in which all joined like patriotic and enthusiastic Italians, shouting the musical chorus, "Viva Italia!" till the room rang.

Tino quite lost his head at that, and began to prance as if the music had got into his heels. Before Mario could stop him, he was showing one of the little girls how to dance the Salterello as the peasants dance it during Carnival; and all the children were capering gayly about the wide polished floor with Tino strumming and skipping like a young fawn from the woods.

The elder people laughed and enjoyed the pretty sight till trays of ices and bonbons came in; and the little party ended in a general enjoyment of the good things children most delight in. Tino heard his master receiving the compliments of the company, and saw the host slip a paper into his hand; but, boylike, he contented himself with a pocket full of sweetmeats, and the entreaties of his little patrons to come again soon, and so backed out of the room, after bowing till he was dizzy, and bumping against a marble table in a very painful manner.

"Well, how do you like the life I promised you? Is it all I said? Do we begin to fill our pockets, and enjoy ourselves even sooner than I expected?" asked Mario, with a good-natured slap of the shoulder, as they reached his apartment again.

"It is splendid! I like it much, very much! and I thank you with all my heart," cried Tino, gratefully kissing the hand that could tweak sharply, as well as caress when things suited its owner.

"You did well, even better than I hoped; but in some things we must improve. Those legs must be taught to keep still; and you must not forget that you are a peasant when among your betters. It passed very well to-night with those little persons, but in some places it would have put me in a fine scrape. Capers! but I feared at one moment you would have embraced the young contessa, when she danced with you."

Mario laughed as poor Tino blushed and stammered, "But, signor, she was so little, only ten years old, and I thought no harm to hold her up on that slippery floor. See, she gave me all these, and bade me come again. I would gladly have kissed her, she was so like little Annina at home."

"Well, well, no harm is done; but I see the pretty brown girls down yonder have spoiled you, and I shall have to keep an eye on my gallant young troubadour. Now to bed, and don't make yourself ill with all those confections. Felice notte, Don Giovanni!" and away went Mario to lose at play every franc of the money the generous count had given him "for the poor lad."

That was the beginning of a new and charming life for Tino, and for two months he was a busy and a happy boy, with only a homesick fit now and then when Mario was out of temper, or Luigi put more than his fair share of work upon his shoulders. The parlor concerts went well, and the little nightingale was soon a favorite toy in many salons. Night after night Tino sang and played, was petted and praised, and then trotted home to dream feverishly of new delights; for this exciting life was fast spoiling the simple lad who used to be so merry and busy at Valrose. The more he had, the more he wanted, and soon grew discontented, jealous, and peevish. He had cause to complain of some things; for none of the money earned ever came to him, and when he plucked up courage to ask for his promised share, Mario told him he only earned his food and clothes as yet. Then Tino rebelled, and got a beating, which made him outwardly as meek as a lamb, but inwardly a very resentful, unhappy boy, and spoiled all his pleasure in music and success.

He was neglected all day and left to do what he liked till needed at night, so he amused himself by lounging about the hotel or wandering on the beach to watch the fishermen cast their nets. Lazy Luigi kept him doing errands when he could; but for hours the boy saw neither master nor man, and wondered where they were. At last he found out, and his dream of fame and fortune ended in smoke.

Christmas week was a gay one for everybody, and Tino thought good times had come again; for he sang at several childrens' fêtes, received some pretty gifts from the kind Alborghettis, and even Mario was amiable enough to give him a golden napoleon after a run of good luck at the cards. Eager to show his people that he was getting on, Tino begged Antoine, the friendly waiter who had already written one letter to Stella for him, to write another, and send by a friend going that way a little parcel containing the money for Mariuccia, a fine Roman sash for Stella, and many affectionate messages to all his old friends.

It was well he had that little satisfaction, for it was his last chance to send good news or exult over his grand success. Troubles came with the new year; and in one week our

poor little jay found himself stripped of all his borrowed plumes, and left a very forlorn bird indeed.

Trotting about late at night in silk stockings, and getting wet more than once in the winter rains, gave Tino a bad cold. No one cared for it; and he was soon as hoarse as a crow. His master forced him to sing several times in spite of the pain he suffered, and when at the last concert he broke down completely, Mario swore at him for "a useless brat," and began to talk of going to Milan to find a new set of singers and patrons. Had Tino been older, he would have discovered some time sooner that Signor Mario was losing favor in Nice, as he seldom paid a bill, and led a very gay, extravagant life. But, boylike, Tino saw only his own small troubles, and suspected nothing when Luigi one day packed up the velvet suit and took it away "to be repaired," he said. It *was* shabby, and Tino, lying on the sofa with a headache and sharp cough, was glad no one ordered him to go with it, for the Tramontana was blowing, and he longed for old Mariuccia's herb tea and Stella's cosseting, being quite ill by this time.

That night as he lay awake in his closet coughing, feverish and restless, he heard his master and Luigi moving about till very late, evidently packing for Paris or Milan, and Tino wondered if he would like either place better than Nice, and wished they were not so far from Valrose. In the midst of his meditations he fell asleep, and when he woke, it was morning. He hurried up and went out to see what the order of the day was to be, rather pleased at the idea of travelling about the world.

To his surprise no breakfast appeared; the room was in confusion, every sign of Mario had vanished but empty bottles and a long hotel bill lying unpaid upon the table. Before Tino could collect his wits, Antoine came flying in to say with wild gesticulations and much French wrath that "the rascal Mario had gone in the night, leaving immense debts behind him, and the landlord in an apoplexy of rage."

Poor Tino was so dismayed he could only sit and let the storm pelt about his ears; for not only did the waiter appear, but the chambermaid, the coachman, and at last the indignant host himself, all scolding at once as they rummaged the rooms, questioned the bewildered boy, and wrung their hands over the escape of these dishonest wretches.

"You also, little beast, have grown fat upon my good fare! and who is to pay me for all you have eaten, not to mention the fine bed, the washing, the candles, and the coaches you have had? Ah, great heavens! what is to become of us when such things occur?" and the poor landlord tore his hair with one hand while he shook his other fist at Tino.

"Dear sir, take all I have; it is only an old guitar, and a few clothes. Not a centime do I own; but I will work for you. I can clean saucepans and run errands. Speak for me, Antoine; you are my only friend now."

The lad looked so honest and ill and pathetic, as he spoke with his poor hoarse voice, and looked beseechingly about him, that Antoine's kind heart was melted, and he advised the boy to slip away home as soon as possible, and so escape all further violence and trouble. He slipped two francs into Tino's empty pocket, and as soon as the room was cleared, helped him tie up the few old clothes that remained. The host carried off the guitar as the only thing he could seize, so Tino had less to take away than he brought, when Antoine led him out by the back way, with a good sandwich of bread and meat for his breakfast, and bade him go to the square and try to beg a ride to Valrose on some of the carriages often going thither on the way to Genoa.

With many thanks Tino left the great hotel, feeling too miserable to care much what became of him, for all his fine dreams were spoiled like the basket of china the man kicked over in the "Arabian Nights," while dreaming he was a king. How could he go home, sick, poor, and forsaken, after all the grand tales he had lately told in his letter? How they would laugh at him, the men and girls at the factory! How Mariuccia would wag her old head and say, "Ecco! is it not as I foretold?" Even Stella would weep over him and be sorry to see her dear boy in such a sad plight, yet what could he do? His voice was gone and his guitar, or he might sing about the streets, as Mario described his doing at Genoa, and so earn his daily bread till something turned up. Now he was quite helpless, and much against his will, he went to see if any chance of getting home appeared.

The day was showery, and no party was setting off for the famous drive along the Cornice road. Tino was glad of it, and went to lie on a bench at the café where he had often been with Luigi. His head ached, and his cough left him no peace, so he spent some of his money in syrup and water to quell the trouble, and with the rest paid for a good dinner and supper.

He told his sad tale to the cook, and was allowed to sleep in the kitchen after scrubbing saucepans to pay for it. But no one wanted him; and in the morning, after a cup of coffee and a roll he found himself cast upon the world again. He would not beg, and as dinner time approached, hunger reminded him of a humble friend whom he had forgotten in his own days of plenty.

He loved to stroll along the beach, and read the names on the boats drawn up there, for all were the names of saints; and it was almost as good as going to church to read the long list of Saint Brunos, Saint Francises, and Saint Ursulas. Among the fishermen was one who had always a kind word for the lad, who enjoyed a sail or a chat with Marco whenever nothing better turned up to amuse his leisure hours. Now in his trouble he remembered him, and went to the beach to ask help, for he felt ill as well as sad and hungry.

Yes, there sat the good fellow eating the bread and macaroni his little daughter had brought for his dinner, and a smile welcomed poor Tino as he sat down beside this only friend to tell his story.

Marco growled in his black beard and shook his knife with an awful frown when he heard how the lad had been deserted. Then he smiled, patted Tino's back, thrust the copper basin of food into one hand and a big lump of the brown-bread into the other, inviting him to eat in such a cordial way that the poor meal tasted better than the dainty fare at the hotel.

A draught of red wine from the gourd cheered Tino up, as did the good and kind words, and when Marco bade him go home with little Manuela to the good wife, he gladly went, feeling that he must lie down somewhere, his head was so giddy and the pain in the breast so sharp.

Buxom Teresa received him kindly, put him straight to bed in her own boy's little room, laid a cool cloth on his hot head, a warm one on his aching chest, and left him to sleep, much comforted by her motherly care. It was well the good soul befriended him, for he needed help sorely, and would have fared ill if those humble folk had not taken him in.

For a week or two he lay in Beppo's bed burning with fever, and when he could sit up again was too feeble to do anything but smile gratefully and try to help Manuela mend

nets. Marco would hear of no thanks, saying, "Good deeds bring good luck. Behold my haul of fish each day thou hast been here, poverino! I am well paid, and Saint Peter will bless my boat for thy sake."

Tino was very happy in the little dark, shabby house that smelt of onions, fish, and tar, was full of brown children, and the constant clack of Teresa's lively tongue as she gossiped with her neighbors, or fried polenta for the hungry mouths that never seemed filled.

But the time came when Tino could go about, and then he begged for work, anxious to be independent and earn a little so that in the spring he could go home without empty pockets.

"I have taken thought for thee, my son, and work warm and easy is ready if thou wilt do it. My friend Tommaso Neri, makes the good macaroni near by. He needs a boy to mind the fire and see to the donkey who grinds below there. Food, shelter, and such wages as thou art able to earn, he will give thee. Shall it be?"

Tino gratefully accepted, and with hearty embraces all round went off one day to see his new place. It was in the old part of Nice, a narrow, dirty street, a little shop with one window full of the cheaper sorts of this favorite food of all Italians, and behind the shop a room where an old woman sat spinning while two little boys played with pine cones and pretty bits of marble at her feet.

A fat jolly man, with a shining face and loud voice, greeted Marco and the lad, saying he "was worn to a thread with much work, since that bad imp of a donkey-boy had run away leaving the blessed macaroni to spoil, and poor Carmelita to perish for want of care. Come below at once, and behold the desolation of the place."

With that he led the way to the cellar, where a small furnace-fire burned, and an old gray donkey went round and round, turning a wheel which set some unseen machinery in motion with a dismal creaking sound. Down through many holes in one part of the wooden floor overhead came long pipes of macaroni, hardening as they hung quivering in the hot air till stiff enough to be cut off in handfuls and laid to dry on wire trays over the furnace.

Tino had never seen the good macaroni made before, and was much interested in the process, though it was of the rudest kind. In a room upstairs a great vat of flour and water was kept stirring round and round and forced down to the place below by the creaking wheel which patient Carmelita turned all day. The cellar was dark but warm; and Tino felt that it would be comfortable there with the old donkey for a comrade, jolly Tommaso for a master, and enough to eat,--for it was evident the family lived well, so plump and shining were all the faces, so cheery the tempers of the old women and little lads.

There Marco left him, well satisfied that he had done his best for the poor boy; and there Tino lived for three months, busy, well fed, and contented, till spring sunshine made him long for the sweet air, the green fields, and dear faces at Valrose. Tommaso was lazy but kind, and if the day's work was done in time, let Tino out to see Marco's children or to run on the beach with little Jacopo and Seppi. The grandmother gave him plenty of rye bread, thin wine, and macaroni fried in oil; old Carmelita learned to love him and to lean her gray head on his shoulder with joyful waggings of her long ears as he caressed her, and each week increased the little hoard in an old shoe hidden behind a beam.

But it was a dull life for a boy who loved music, flowers, light, and freedom; and he soon grew tired of seeing only a procession of legs go by the low windows level with the street; the creak of the wheel was not half so welcome as the brisk rattle of the mill at home, and the fat little lads always climbing over him could not be so dear as sister Stella and pretty Annina, the wine-maker's daughter, at Valrose. Even the kind old woman who often saved an orange for him, and gave him a gay red cotton handkerchief on his birthday, was less to his taste than Mariuccia, who adored him in spite of her scolding and stern ways.

So he looked about for travellers going to Genoa; and one happy day as he returned from church, he saw, sitting under two red umbrellas before two easels beside the road, the two elderly ladies of the hotel. Both wore brown hats like mushrooms; both had gray curls bobbing in the wind; and both were painting away for dear life, trying to get a good sketch of the ruined gateway, where passion-flowers climbed, and roses nodded through the bars.

Tino stopped to look, as many another passer-by had done; and glancing up to see if he admired their work, the good ladies recognized their "Saint John," as they called the pretty boy who had vanished before they could finish the pictures they had begun of him.

They were so glad to see him that he opened his heart to them, and found to his great joy that in a week they were to drive to Genoa, and would gladly take him along if he would sit to them meantime. Of course he agreed, and ran home to tell his master that he must go. Tommaso bewailed his loss, but would not keep him; and as Marco's son Beppo was willing to take his place till another lad could be found, Tino was free to sit in a sheepskin for the Misses Blair as often as they liked.

It was a very happy week; and when the long-desired day came at last, Tino was so gay he danced and sang till the dingy cellar seemed to be full of birds in high spirits. Poor Carmelita gratefully ate the cabbage he gave her as a farewell offering; the old woman found her box full of her favorite snuff; and each small boy grew more shiny than ever over a new toy presented by Tino. Tommaso wept as he held him in his fat arms, and gave him a bundle of half-baked macaroni as a reward for his faithful service, while Marco and all his family stood at the hotel door to see the carriage depart.

"Really quite like a wedding, with all those orange-flowers and roses," said Miss Priscilla, as Teresa and Manuela threw great bunches of flowers into their laps, and kissed their hands to the departing travellers.

Sitting proudly aloft, Tino waved his old hat to these good friends till he could see them no more, then having, with some difficulty, bestowed his long bundle from Tommaso, his basket of fish from Marco, his small parcel of clothes, and the immense bouquet the children had made for him, he gave himself up to the rapture of that lovely April day.

The kind ladies had given him a new suit of clothes like the old ones, and paid him well besides; so he felt quite content with the picturesque peasant garments he wore, having had enough of fine feathers, and gayly jingled the money in his pocket, though it was not the fortune he had foolishly hoped to make so easily. He was a wiser boy than the one who went over that road six months before, and decided that even if his voice did come back in time, he would be in no hurry to leave home till he was sure it was the wisest thing to do. He had some very serious thoughts and sensible plans in his young head, and for a time was silent and sober. But soon the delicious air, the lovely scenery, and

the many questions of the ladies raised his spirits, and he chattered away till they stopped for dinner.

All that long bright day they drove along the wonderful road, and as night fell, saw Valrose lying green and peaceful in the valley as they paused on the hill-top to enjoy its beauty. Then they went slowly down to the Falcone, and the moment the luggage was taken in, rooms secured, and dinner ordered, Tino, who had been quivering with impatience, said eagerly,--

"Dear signoras, now I go to my own people to embrace them; but in the morning we come to thank you for your great kindness to me."

Miss Priscilla opened her mouth to send some message; but Tino was off like an arrow, and never stopped till he burst into the little kitchen where Mariuccia sat shelling dry beans, and Stella was packing mandarinas in dainty baskets for market. Like an affectionate little bear did the boy fall upon and embrace the two astonished women; while Stella laughed and cried, and Mariuccia called on all the saints to behold how tall and fat and beautiful her angel had become, and to thank them for restoring him to their arms. The neighbors rushed in; and till late that night there was the sound of many voices in the stone cottage under the old fig-tree.

Tino's adventures were listened to with the deepest interest, and a very hearty welcome given him. All were impressed with the splendors he had seen, afflicted by his trials, and grateful for his return. No one laughed or reproached, but regarded him as a very remarkable fellow, and predicted that whether his voice came back or not, he was born for good luck and would prosper. So at last he got to bed in the old loft, and fell asleep with the same friendly moon looking in at him as it did before, only now it saw a quiet face, a very happy heart, and a contented boy, glad to be safe again under the humble roof that was his home.

Early next morning a little procession of three went to the Falcone bearing grateful offerings to the dear signoras who sat on the portico enjoying the balmy air that blew up from the acres of flowers below. First came Tino, bearing a great basket of the delicious little oranges which one never tastes in their perfection unless one eats them fresh from the tree; then Stella with two pretty boxes of perfume; and bringing up the rear, old Mariuccia with a blue jar of her best honey, which like all that of Valrose was famous.

The ladies were much delighted with these gifts, and promised to stop and see the givers of them on their return from Genoa, if they came that way. Tino took a grateful farewell of the good souls; Stella kissed their hands, with her dark eyes full of tender thanks, and Mariuccia begged the saints to have them in their special keeping by land and by sea, for their kindness to her boy.

An hour later, as the travellers drove down the steep road from the village, they were startled by a sudden shower of violets and roses which rained upon them from a high bank beside the path. Looking up, they saw Tino and his sister laughing, waving their hands, and tossing flowers as they called in their musical language,--

"A rivederla, signoras! Grazia, grazia!" till the carriage rolled round the corner looking as if it were Carnival-time, so full was it of fragrant violets and lovely roses.

"Nice creatures! how prettily they do things! I hope we *shall* see them again; and I wonder if the boy will ever be famous. Such a pity to lose that sweet voice of his!" said

Miss Maria, the younger of the sisters, as they drove along in a nest of sweet and pretty gifts.

"I hope not, for he will be much safer and happier in this charming place than wandering about the world and getting into trouble as these singers always do. *I* hope he will be wise enough to be contented with the place in which his lot is cast," answered Miss Priscilla, who knew the world and had a good old-fashioned love for home and all it gives us.

She was right; Tino *was* wise, and though his voice did come back in time, it was no longer wonderful; and he was contented to live on at Valrose, a busy, happy, humble gardener all his life, saying with a laugh when asked about his runaway adventures,--

"Ah, I have had enough of music and macaroni; I prefer my flowers and my freedom."

The Little Red Purse

Among the presents which Lu found on her tenth birthday was a pretty red plush purse with a steel clasp and chain, just like mamma's, only much smaller. In it were ten bright new cents, that being the sum Lu received each week to spend as she liked. She enjoyed all her gifts very much; but this one seemed to please her even more than the French doll in blue silk, the pearl ring, or "Alice in Wonderland,"--three things which she had wanted for a long time.

"It is *so* cunning, and the snap makes such a loud noise, and the chain is so nice on my arm, and the plush so red and soft, I can't help loving my dear little purse. I shall spend all the money for candy, and eat it every bit myself, because it is my birthday, and I must celebrate it," said Lu, as she hovered like a bee round a honey-pot about the table where the gifts were spread.

Now she was in a great hurry to go out shopping, with the new purse proudly carried in her small fat hand. Aunty was soon ready, and away they went across the pleasant Park, where the pretty babies were enjoying the last warm days of autumn as they played among the fallen leaves.

"You will be ill if you eat ten cents' worth of candy to-day," said aunty.

"I 'll sprinkle it along through the day, and eat each kind seppyrut; then they won't intersturb me, I am sure," answered Lu, who still used funny words, and always got *interrupt* and *disturb* rather mixed.

Just then a poor man who had lost his legs came creeping along with a tray of little flower-pots to sell.

"Only five cents, miss. Help an unfortnit man, please, mum."

"Let me buy one for my baby-house. It would be sweet. Cora Pinky May would love to have that darling little rose in her best parlor," cried Lu, thinking of the fine new doll.

Aunty much preferred to help the poor man than to buy candy, so the flower-pot was soon bought, though the "red, red rose" was unlike any ever seen in a garden.

"Now I 'll have five cents for my treat, and no danger of being ill," said Lu, as they went on again.

But in a few moments a new beggar appeared, and Lu's tender heart would not let her pass the old woman without dropping two of her bright cents in the tin cup.

"Do come to the candy-place at once, or I never shall get any," begged Lu, as the red purse grew lighter and lighter every minute.

Three sticks of candy were all she could buy, but she felt that she could celebrate the birthday on that, and was ready to go home and begin at once.

As they went on to get some flowers to dress the cake at tea-time, Lu suddenly stopped short, lifted both hands, and cried out in a tone of despair,--

"My purse! my purse! I 've lost it. Oh, I 've lost it!"

"Left it in the store probably. Come and look for it," said aunty; and back they turned, just in time to meet a shabby little girl running after them with the precious thing in her hand.

"Ain't this yours? I thought you dropped it, and would hate to lose it," she said, smiling pleasantly.

"Oh, I should. It's spandy new, and I love it dearly. I 've got no more money to pay you, only this candy; do take a stick," and Lu presented the red barley sugar.

The little girl took it gladly, and ran off.

"Well, two sticks will do. I 'd rather lose every bit of it than my darling purse," said Lu, putting it carefully in her pocket.

"I love to give things away and make people happy," began Lu, but stopped to watch a dog who came up to her, wagging his tail as if he knew what a kind little girl she was, and wanted to be made happy. She put out her hand to pat him, quite forgetting the small parcel in it; but the dog snapped it up before she could save it.

"Oh, my last stick! I did n't mean to give it to him. You naughty dog, drop it this minute!" cried poor Lu.

But the beautiful pink cream candy was forever lost, and the ungrateful thief ran off, after a vain attempt to eat the flower-pot also. It was so funny that aunty laughed, and Lu joined her, after shaking her finger at the dog, who barked and frisked as if he felt that he had done a clever thing.

"Now *I* am quite satisfied, and you will have a pleasanter birthday for having made four people and a dog happy, instead of yourself sick with too many goodies. Charity is a nice sort of sweetie; and I hope you will buy that kind with your pocket-money now and then, my dear," said aunty, as they walked on again.

"Could I do much with ten cents a week?" asked Lu.

"Yes, indeed; you could buy a little book for lame Sammy, who loves to read, or a few flowers for my sick girl at the hospital, or a loaf of bread for some hungry person, or milk for a poor baby, or you could save up your money till Christmas, and get presents for children who otherwise would have none."

"Could I do all those things? I'd like to get presents best, and I will--I will!" cried Lu, charmed with the idea of playing Santa Claus. "I did n't think ten cents would be so useful. How long to Christmas, aunty?"

"About ten weeks. If you save all your pocket-money till then, you will have a dollar to spend."

"A truly dollar! How fine! But all that time I should n't have any candy. I don't think I could get along without *some*. Perhaps if I was *very* good some one would give me a bit now and then;" and Lu looked up with her most engaging smile and a twinkle in her eye.

"We will see about that. Perhaps 'some one' will give extra cents for work you may do, and leave you to decide which kind of sweeties you would buy."

"What can I do to earn money?" asked Lu.

"Well, you can dry and fold the paper every morning for grandpa. I will pay you a cent for that, because nurse is apt to forget it, and he likes to have it nicely ready for him

after breakfast. Then you might run up and down for mamma, and hem some towels for me, and take care of Jip and the parrot. You will earn a good deal if you do your work regularly and well."

"I shall have dreadful trials going by the candy-shops and never buying any. I do long so to go in that I have to look away when you say No. I want to be good and help poor people, but I 'm afraid it will be too hard for me," sighed Lu, foreseeing the temptations before her.

"We might begin to-day, and try the new plan for a while. If it is too hard, you can give it up; but I think you will soon like my way best, and have the merriest Christmas you ever knew with the money you save."

Lu walked thoughtfully home, and put the empty purse away, resolved to see how long she could hold out, and how much she could earn. Mamma smiled when she heard the plan, but at once engaged the little girl to do errands about the house at a cent a job, privately quite sure that her pretty express would soon stop running. Grandpapa was pleased to find his paper ready, and nodded and patted Lu's curly head when she told him about her Christmas plans. Mary, the maid, was glad to get rid of combing Jip and feeding Polly, and aunty made towel hemming pleasant by telling stories as the little needle-woman did two hems a day.

Every cent went into the red purse, which Lu hung on one of the gilt pegs of the easel in the parlor, for she thought it very ornamental, and hoped contributions might drop in occasionally. None did; but as every one paid her in bright cents, there was soon a fine display, and the little bag grew heavy with delightful rapidity.

Only once did Lu yield to temptation, and that was when two weeks of self-denial made her trials so great that she felt as if she really must reward herself, as no one else seemed to remember how much little girls loved candy.

One day she looked pale, and did not want any dinner, saying she felt sick. Mamma was away, so aunty put her on the bed and sat by her, feeling very anxious, as scarlet-fever was about. By and by Lu took her handkerchief out, and there, sticking to it, was a large brown cough-drop. Lu turned red, and hid her face, saying with a penitent sob, "I don't deserve to be cuddled. I 've been selfish and silly, and spent some of my money for candy. I had a little cold, and I thought cough-drops would do me good. I ate a good many, and they were bitter and made me sick, and I 'm glad of it."

Aunty wanted to laugh at the dear little sinner and her funny idea of choosing bitter candy as a sort of self-denial; but she comforted her kindly, and soon the invalid was skipping about again, declaring that she never would do so any more.

Next day something happened which helped her very much, and made it easier to like the new kind of sweeties better than the old. She was in the dining-room getting an apple for her lunch, when she saw a little girl come to the lower door to ask for cold food. The cook was busy, and sent her away, telling her begging was forbidden. Lu, peeping out, saw the little girl sit down on the steps to eat a cold potato as if she was very hungry, and while she ate she was trying to tie on a pair of very old boots some one had given her. It was a rainy day, and she had only a shawl over her head; her hands were red with cold; her gown was a faded cotton one; and her big basket seemed to have very few scraps in it. So poor, so sad, and tired did she look, that Lu could not bear to see it, and she called out in her pitiful child's voice,--

"Come in and get warm, little girl. Don't mind old Sarah. I 'll give you something to eat, and lend you my rubber boots and waterproof to go home in."

The poor child gladly went to sit by the comfortable fire, while Lu with hospitable haste got crackers and cheese and cake and apples, and her own silver mug of milk, for her guest, forgetting, in her zeal, to ask leave. Fortunately aunty came down for her own lunch in time to see what was going on, and found Lu busily buttoning the waterproof, while the little girl surveyed her rubber boots and small umbrella with pride.

"I 'm only *lending* my things, and she will return them to-morrow, aunty. They are too small for me, and the umbrella is broken; and I 'd love to *give* them all to Lucy if I could. *She* has to go out in the rain to get food for her family, like a bird, and I don't."

"Birds don't need waterproofs and umbrellas," began aunty; and both children laughed at the idea of sparrows with such things, but looked a little anxious till aunty went on to say that Lucy could have these comforts, and to fill the basket with something better than cold potatoes, while she asked questions and heard the sad little story: how father was dead, and the baby sick, so mother could not work, and the boys had to pick up chips and cinders to burn, and Lucy begged food to eat. Lu listened with tears in her blue eyes, and a great deal of pity as well as admiration for poor little Lucy, who was only nine, yet had so many cares and troubles in her life. While aunty went to get some flannel for baby, Lu flew to her red purse and counted out ten cents from her store, feeling so rich, so glad to have it instead of an empty bonbon box, and a headache after a candy feast.

"Buy some nice fresh milk for little Totty, and tell her I sent it--all myself--with my love. Come again to-morrow, and I will tell mamma all about you, and you shall be my poor people, and I 'll help you if I can," she said, full of interest and good-will, for the sight of this child made her feel what poverty really was, and long to lighten it if she could.

Lucy was smiling when she went away, snug and dry in her comfortable clothes, with the full basket on her arm; and all that day Lu talked and thought about her "own poor people," and what she hoped to do for them. Mamma inquired, and finding them worthy of help, let her little girl send many comforts to the children, and learn how to be wisely charitable.

"I shall give *all* my money to my 'Lucy children' on Christmas," announced Lu, as that pleasant time drew near. "I know what they want, and though I can't save money enough to give them half the things they need, maybe I can help a good deal, and really have a nice bundle to s'prise them with."

This idea took possession of little Lu, and she worked like a beaver in all sorts of funny ways to fill her purse by Christmas-time. One thing she did which amused her family very much, though they were obliged to stop it. Lu danced very prettily, and often had what she called ballets before she went to bed, when she tripped about the parlor like a fairy in the gay costumes aunty made for her. As the purse did not fill as fast as she hoped, Lu took it into her head one fine day to go round the square where she lived, with her tambourine, and dance as some of the girls with the hand-organ men did. So she dressed herself in her red skirt and black velvet jacket, and with a fur cap on her head and a blue cloak over her shoulders, slipped out into the quiet square, and going to the farther corner, began to dance and beat her tambourine on the sidewalk before a house where some little children lived.

As she expected, they soon came running to the window, and were charmed to see the pretty dancer whirling to and fro, with her ribbons flying and her tambourine bells ringing, till her breath was gone. Then she held up the instrument and nodded smilingly at them; and they threw down cents wrapped in paper, thinking her music much better than any the organ men made. Much encouraged, Lu went on from house to house, and was doing finely, when one of the ladies who looked out recognized the child, and asked her if her mother knew where she was. Lu had to say "No;" and the lady sent a maid to take her home at once.

That spoiled all the fun; and poor Lu did not hear the last of her prank for a long time. But she had made forty-two cents, and felt comforted when she added that handsome sum to her store. As if to console her for this disappointment, after that day several bright ten-cent pieces got into the red purse in a most mysterious manner. Lu asked every one in the house, and all declared that they did not do it. Grandpa could not get out of his chair without help, and nurse said she never took the purse to him; so of course it could not be he who slipped in those welcome bits of silver. Lu asked him; but he was very deaf that day, and did not seem to understand her at all.

"It must be fairies," she said, pondering over the puzzle, as she counted her treasure and packed it away, for now the little red purse was full. "Aunty says there are no fairies; but I like to think so. Perhaps angels fly around at Christmas-time as they did long ago, and love to help poor people, and put those beautiful bright things here to show that they are pleased with me." She liked that fancy, and aunty agreed that some good spirit must have done it, and was sure they would find out the secret some time.

Lucy came regularly; and Lu always tried to see her, and so learned what she and Totty and Joe and Jimmy wanted, but never dreamed of receiving Christmas morning. It did both little girls much good, for poor Lucy was comforted by the kindness of these friends, and Lu learned about far harder trials than the want of sugarplums. The day before Christmas she went on a grand shopping expedition with aunty, for the purse now held three dollars and seven cents. She had spent some of it for trifles for her "Lucy children," and had not earned as much as she once hoped, various fits of idleness and other more amusing but less profitable work having lessened her wages. But she had enough, thanks to the good spirit, to get toys and books and candy for her family, and went joyfully away Christmas Eve to carry her little basket of gifts, accompanied by aunty with a larger store of comforts for the grateful mother.

When they got back, Lu entertained her mother with an account of the delight of the children, who never had such a Christmas before.

"They could n't wait till morning, and I could n't either, and we opened the bundles right away; and they *screamed*, mamma, and jumped for joy and ate everything and hugged me. And the mother cried, she was so pleased; and the boys can go to school all neat now, and so could Lucy, only she has to take care of Totty while her mother goes to work. Oh, it was lovely! I felt just like Santa Claus, only he does n't stay to see people enjoy their things, and I did."

Here Lu stopped for breath, and when she got it, had a fine ballet as the only way to work off her excitement at the success of her "s'prise." It was a trial to go to bed, but she went at last, and dreamed that her "Lucy children" all had wings, and were flying round her bed with tambourines full of heavenly bonbons, which they showered down upon her; while aunty in an immense nightcap stood by clapping her hands and saying, "Eat all you like, dear; this sort won't hurt you."

Morning came very soon; and she popped up her head to see a long knobby stocking hanging from the mantel-piece. Out of bed skipped the little white figure, and back again, while cries of joy were heard as the treasures appeared one by one. There was a tableful beside the stocking, and Lu was so busy looking at them that she was late to breakfast. But aunty waited for her, and they went down together some time after the bell rang.

"Let me peep and see if grandpa has found the silk handkerchief and spectacle-case I made for him," whispered Lu, as they passed the parlor door, which stood half open, leaving a wide crack for the blue eyes to spy through.

The old gentleman sat in his easy-chair as usual, waiting while nurse got his breakfast; but what was he doing with his long staff? Lu watched eagerly, and to her great surprise saw him lean forward, and with the hook at the end take the little red purse off the easel, open it, and slip in a small white parcel, then hang it on the gilt peg again, put away the cane, and sit rubbing his hands and laughing to himself at the success of his little trick, quite sure that this was a safe time to play it. Lu was about to cry out, and rush in, but aunty whispered, "Don't spoil his fun yet. Go and see what is in the purse, then thank him in the way he likes best."

So Lu skipped into the parlor, trying to look very innocent, and ran to open the dear red purse, as she often did, eager to see if the good fairy had added to the charity fund.

"Why, here 's a great gold medal, and some queer, shaky writing on the paper. Please see what it is," said Lu, very loud, hoping grandpa would hear her this time, for his face was hidden behind the newspaper he pretended to read.

"For Lu's poor's purse, from Santa Claus," read aunty, glad that at last the kind old fairy was discovered and ready for his reward.

Lu had never seen a twenty-dollar gold-piece before; but she could not stop to find out whether the shining medal was money or a locket, and ran to grandpa, crying as she pulled away the paper and threw her arms about his neck,--

"I 've found you out, I 've found you out, my dear old Santa Claus! Merry Christmas, grandpa, and lots of thanks and kisses!"

It was pretty to see the rosy cheek against the wrinkled one, the golden and the silver heads close together, as the old man and the little girl kissed and laughed, and both talked at once for a few minutes.

"Tell me all about it, you sly grandpa. What made you think of doing it that way, and not let any one know?" cried Lu, as the old gentleman stopped to rest after a kindly "cuddle," as Lu called these caresses.

"Well, dear, I liked to see you trying to do good with your little pennies, and I wanted to help. I 'm a feeble old man, tied to my chair and of no use now; but I like a bit of fun, and love to feel that it is not quite too late to make some one happy."

"Why, grandpa, you do heaps of good, and make many, many people happy," said Lu, with another hug. "Mamma told me all about the hospital for little children you built, and the money you gave to the poor soldiers in the war, and ever so many more good things you 've done. I won't have you say you are of no use now. We want you to love and take care of; and we could n't do without you, could we, aunty?"

Aunty sat on the arm of the chair with her arm round the old man's shoulder, and her only answer was a kiss. But it was enough, and grandpa went on quite cheerfully, as he held two plump hands in his own, and watched the blooming face that looked up at him so eagerly:

"When I was younger, I loved money, and wanted a great deal. I cared for nothing else, and worked hard to get it, and did get it after years of worry. But it cost me my health, and then I saw how foolish I had been, for all my money could not buy me any strength or pleasure and very little comfort. I could not take it with me when I died, and did not know what to do with it, because there was so much. So I tried to see if giving it away would not amuse me, and make me feel better about having wasted my life instead of using it wisely. The more I gave away the better I felt; and now I'm quite jolly, though I'm only a helpless old baby just fit to play jokes and love little girls. You have begun early at this pretty game of give-away, my dear, and aunty will see that you keep it up; so that when you are old you will have much treasure in the other world where the blessings of the poor are more precious than gold and silver."

Nobody spoke for a minute as the feeble old voice stopped; and the sunshine fell on the white head like a blessing. Then Lu said very soberly, as she turned the great coin in her hand, and saw the letters that told its worth,--

"What shall I do with all this money? I never had so much, and I 'd like to spend it in some very good and pleasant way. Can you think of something, aunty, so I can begin at once to be like grandpa?"

"How would you like to pay two dollars a month, so that Totty can go to the Sunnyside Nursery, and be taken care of every day while Lucy goes to school? Then she will be safe and happy, and Lucy be learning, as she longs to do, and the mother free to work," said aunty, glad to have this dear child early learn to help those less blessed than herself.

"Could I? How splendid it would be to pay for a real live baby all myself! How long would my money do it?" said Lu, charmed with the idea of a living dolly to care for.

"All winter, and provide clothes besides. You can make them yourself, and go and see Totty, and call her your baby. This will be a sweet charity for you; and to-day is a good day to begin it, for this is the birthday of the Divine Child, who was born in a poorer place even than Lucy's sister. In His name pity and help this baby, and be sure He will bless you for it."

Lu looked up at the fine picture of the Good Shepherd hanging over the sofa with holly-leaves glistening round it, and felt as if she too in her humble way was about to take a helpless little lamb in her arms and comfort it. Her childish face was very sweet and sober as she said softly,--

"Yes, I will spend my Christmas money so; for, aunty, I do think your sort of sweetie is better than mine, and making people happy a much wiser way to spend my pennies than in buying the nicest candy in the world."

Little Lu remembered that morning long after the dear old grandfather was gone, and kept her Christmas promise so well that very soon a larger purse was needed for charity money, which she used so wisely and so happily. But all her life in one corner of her desk lay carefully folded up, with the bit of paper inside, the little red purse.

Sophie's Secret

I.

A party of young girls, in their gay bathing-dresses, were sitting on the beach waiting for the tide to rise a little higher before they enjoyed the daily frolic which they called "mermaiding."

"I wish we could have a clam-bake; but we have n't any clams, and don't know how to cook them if we had. It's such a pity all the boys have gone off on that stupid fishing excursion," said one girl, in a yellow-and-black striped suit which made her look like a wasp.

"What is a clam-bake? I do not know that kind of fête," asked a pretty brown-eyed girl, with an accent that betrayed the foreigner.

The girls laughed at such sad ignorance, and Sophie colored, wishing she had not spoken.

"Poor thing! she has never tasted a clam. What *should* we do if we went to Switzerland?" said the wasp, who loved to tease.

"We should give you the best we had, and not laugh at your ignorance, if you did not know all our dishes. In *my* country, we have politeness, though not the clam-bake," answered Sophie, with a flash of the brown eyes which warned naughty Di to desist.

"We might row to the light-house, and have a picnic supper. Our mammas will let us do that alone," suggested Dora from the roof of the bath-house, where she perched like a flamingo.

"That's a good idea," cried Fanny, a slender brown girl who sat dabbling her feet in the water, with her hair streaming in the wind. "Sophie should see that, and get some of the shells she likes so much."

"You are kind to think of me. I shall be glad to have a necklace of the pretty things, as a souvenir of this so charming place and my good friend," answered Sophie, with a grateful look at Fanny, whose many attentions had won the stranger's heart.

"Those boys have n't left us a single boat, so we must dive off the rocks, and that is n't half so nice," said Di, to change the subject, being ashamed of her rudeness.

"A boat is just coming round the Point; perhaps we can hire that, and have some fun," cried Dora, from her perch. "There is only a girl in it; I 'll hail her when she is near enough."

Sophie looked about her to see where the *hail* was coming from; but the sky was clear, and she waited to see what new meaning this word might have, not daring to ask for fear of another laugh.

While the girls watched the boat float around the farther horn of the crescent-shaped beach, we shall have time to say a few words about our little heroine.

She was a sixteen-year-old Swiss girl, on a visit to some American friends, and had come to the seaside for a month with one of them who was an invalid. This left Sophie to the tender mercies of the young people; and they gladly welcomed the pretty creature, with

her fine manners, foreign ways, and many accomplishments. But she had a quick temper, a funny little accent, and dressed so very plainly that the girls could not resist criticising and teasing her in a way that seemed very ill-bred and unkind to the new-comer.

Their free and easy ways astonished her, their curious language bewildered her; and their ignorance of many things she had been taught made her wonder at the American education she had heard so much praised. All had studied French and German; yet few read or spoke either tongue correctly, or understood her easily when she tried to talk to them. Their music did not amount to much, and in the games they played, their want of useful information amazed Sophie. One did not know the signs of the zodiac; another could only say of cotton that "it was stuff that grew down South;" and a third was not sure whether a frog was an animal or a reptile, while the handwriting and spelling displayed on these occasions left much to be desired. Yet all were fifteen or sixteen, and would soon leave school "finished," as they expressed it, but not *furnished*, as they should have been, with a solid, sensible education. Dress was an all-absorbing topic, sweetmeats their delight; and in confidential moments sweethearts were discussed with great freedom. Fathers were conveniences, mothers comforters, brothers plagues, and sisters ornaments or playthings according to their ages. They were not hard-hearted girls, only frivolous, idle, and fond of fun; and poor little Sophie amused them immensely till they learned to admire, love, and respect her.

Coming straight from Paris, they expected to find that her trunks contained the latest fashions for demoiselles, and begged to see her dresses with girlish interest. But when Sophie obligingly showed a few simple, but pretty and appropriate gowns and hats, they exclaimed with one voice,--

"Why, you dress like a little girl! Don't you have ruffles and lace on your dresses; and silks and high-heeled boots and long gloves and bustles and corsets, and things like ours?"

"I *am* a little girl," laughed Sophie, hardly understanding their dismay. "What should I do with fine toilets at school? My sisters go to balls in silk and lace; but I--not yet."

"How queer! Is your father poor?" asked Di, with Yankee bluntness.

"We have enough," answered Sophie, slightly knitting her dark brows.

"How many servants do you keep?"

"But five, now that the little ones are grown up."

"Have you a piano?" continued undaunted Di, while the others affected to be looking at the books and pictures strewn about by the hasty unpacking.

"We have two pianos, four violins, three flutes, and an organ. We love music, and all play, from papa to little Franz."

"My gracious, how swell! You must live in a big house to hold all that and eight brothers and sisters."

"We are not peasants; we do not live in a hut. *Voilà*, this is my home." And Sophie laid before them a fine photograph of a large and elegant house on lovely Lake Geneva.

It was droll to see the change in the faces of the girls as they looked, admired, and slyly nudged one another, enjoying saucy Di's astonishment, for she had stoutly insisted that the Swiss girl was a poor relation.

Sophie meanwhile was folding up her plain piqué and muslin frocks, with a glimmer of mirthful satisfaction in her eyes, and a tender pride in the work of loving hands now far away.

Kind Fanny saw a little quiver of the lips as she smoothed the blue corn-flowers in the best hat, and put her arm around Sophie, whispering,--

"Never mind, dear, they don't mean to be rude; it's only our Yankee way of asking questions. I like *all* your things, and that hat is perfectly lovely."

"Indeed, yes! Dear mamma arranged it for me. I was thinking of her and longing for my morning kiss."

"Do you do that every day?" asked Fanny, forgetting herself in her sympathetic interest.

"Surely, yes. Papa and mamma sit always on the sofa, and we all have the hand-shake and the embrace each day before our morning coffee. I do not see that here," answered Sophie, who sorely missed the affectionate respect foreign children give their parents.

"Have n't time," said Fanny, smiling too, at the idea of American parents sitting still for five minutes in the busiest part of the busy day to kiss their sons and daughters.

"It is what you call old-fashioned, but a sweet fashion to me; and since I have not the dear warm cheeks to kiss, I embrace my pictures often. See, I have them all." And Sophie unfolded a Russia-leather case, displaying with pride a long row of handsome brothers and sisters with the parents in the midst.

More exclamations from the girls, and increased interest in "Wilhelmina Tell," as they christened the loyal Swiss maiden, who was now accepted as a companion, and soon became a favorite with old and young.

They could not resist teasing her, however,--her mistakes were so amusing, her little flashes of temper so dramatic, and her tongue so quick to give a sharp or witty answer when the new language did not perplex her. But Fanny always took her part, and helped her in many ways. Now they sat together on the rock, a pretty pair of mermaids with wind-tossed hair, wave-washed feet, and eyes fixed on the approaching boat.

The girl who sat in it was a great contrast to the gay creatures grouped so picturesquely on the shore, for the old straw hat shaded a very anxious face, the brown calico gown covered a heart full of hopes and fears, and the boat that drifted so slowly with the incoming tide carried Tilly Reed like a young Columbus toward the new world she longed for, believed in, and was resolved to discover.

It was a weather-beaten little boat, yet very pretty; for a pile of nets lay at one end, a creel of red lobsters at the other, and all between stood baskets of berries and water-lilies, purple marsh rosemary and orange butterfly-weed, shells and great smooth stones such as artists like to paint little sea-views on. A tame gull perched on the prow; and the morning sunshine glittered from the blue water to the bluer sky.

"Oh, how pretty! Come on, please, and sell us some lilies," cried Dora, and roused Tilly from her waking dream.

Pushing back her hat, she saw the girls beckoning, felt that the critical moment had come, and catching up her oars, rowed bravely on, though her cheeks reddened and her heart beat, for this venture was her last hope, and on its success depended the desire of her life. As the boat approached, the watchers forgot its cargo to look with surprise and pleasure at its rower, for she was not the rough country lass they expected to see, but a

really splendid girl of fifteen, tall, broad-shouldered, bright-eyed, and blooming, with a certain shy dignity of her own and a very sweet smile, as she nodded and pulled in with strong, steady strokes. Before they could offer help, she had risen, planted an oar in the water, and leaping to the shore, pulled her boat high up on the beach, offering her wares with wistful eyes and a very expressive wave of both brown hands.

"Everything is for sale, if you 'll buy," said she.

Charmed with the novelty of this little adventure, the girls, after scampering to the bathing-houses for purses and portemonnaies, crowded around the boat like butterflies about a thistle, all eager to buy, and to discover who this bonny fisher-maiden might be.

"Oh, see these beauties!" "A dozen lilies for me!" "All the yellow flowers for me, they'll be so becoming at the dance to-night!" "Ow! that lob bites awfully!" "Where do you come from?" "Why have we never seen you before?"

These were some of the exclamations and questions showered upon Tilly, as she filled little birch-bark panniers with berries, dealt out flowers, or dispensed handfuls of shells. Her eyes shone, her cheeks glowed, and her heart danced in her bosom; for this was a better beginning than she had dared to hope for, and as the dimes tinkled into the tin pail she used for her till, it was the sweetest music she had ever heard. This hearty welcome banished her shyness; and in these eager, girlish customers she found it easy to confide.

"I 'm from the light-house. You have never seen me because I never came before, except with fish for the hotel. But I mean to come every day, if folks will buy my things, for I want to make some money, and this is the only way in which I can do it."

Sophie glanced at the old hat and worn shoes of the speaker, and dropping a bright half-dollar into the pail, said in her pretty way:

"For me all these lovely shells. I will make necklaces of them for my people at home as souvenirs of this charming place. If you will bring me more, I shall be much grateful to you."

"Oh, thank you! I 'll bring heaps; I know where to find beauties in places where other folks can't go. Please take these; you paid too much for the shells;" and quick to feel the kindness of the stranger, Tilly put into her hands a little bark canoe heaped with red raspberries.

Not to be outdone by the foreigner, the other girls emptied their purses and Tilly's boat also of all but the lobsters, which were ordered for the hotel.

"Is that jolly bird for sale?" asked Di, as the last berry vanished, pointing to the gull who was swimming near them while the chatter went on.

"If you can catch him," laughed Tilly, whose spirits were now the gayest of the party.

The girls dashed into the water, and with shrieks of merriment swam away to capture the gull, who paddled off as if he enjoyed the fun as much as they.

Leaving them to splash vainly to and fro, Tilly swung the creel to her shoulder and went off to leave her lobsters, longing to dance and sing to the music of the silver clinking in her pocket.

When she came back, the bird was far out of reach and the girls diving from her boat, which they had launched without leave. Too happy to care what happened now, Tilly threw herself down on the warm sand to plan a new and still finer cargo for next day.

Sophie came and sat beside her while she dried her curly hair, and in five minutes her sympathetic face and sweet ways had won Tilly to tell all her hopes and cares and dreams.

"I want schooling, and I mean to have it. I 've got no folks of my own; and uncle has married again, so he does n't need me now. If I only had a little money, I could go to school somewhere, and take care of myself. Last summer I worked at the hotel, but I did n't make much, and had to have good clothes, and that took my wages pretty much. Sewing is slow work, and baby-tending leaves me no time to study; so I 've kept on at home picking berries and doing what I could to pick up enough to buy books. Aunt thinks I 'm a fool; but uncle, he says, 'Go ahead, girl, and see what you can do.' And I mean to show him!"

Tilly's brown hand came down on the sand with a resolute thump; and her clear young eyes looked bravely out across the wide sea, as if far away in the blue distance she saw her hope happily fulfilled.

Sophie's eyes shone approval, for she understood this love of independence, and had come to America because she longed for new scenes and greater freedom than her native land could give her. Education is a large word, and both girls felt that desire for self-improvement that comes to all energetic natures. Sophie had laid a good foundation, but still desired more; while Tilly was just climbing up the first steep slope which rises to the heights few attain, yet all may strive for.

"That is beautiful! You will do it! I am glad to help you if I may. See, I have many books; will you take some of them? Come to my room to-morrow and take what will best please you. We will say nothing of it, and it will make me a truly great pleasure."

As Sophie spoke, her little white hand touched the strong, sunburned one that turned to meet and grasp hers with grateful warmth, while Tilly's face betrayed the hunger that possessed her, for it looked as a starving girl's would look when offered a generous meal.

"I *will* come. Thank you so much! I don't know anything, but just blunder along and do the best I can. I got so discouraged I was real desperate, and thought I 'd have one try, and see if I could n't earn enough to get books to study this winter. Folks buy berries at the cottages; so I just added flowers and shells, and I 'm going to bring my boxes of butterflies, birds' eggs, and seaweeds. I 've got lots of such things; and people seem to like spending money down here. I often wish I had a little of what they throw away."

Tilly paused with a sigh, then laughed as an impatient movement caused a silver clink; and slapping her pocket, she added gayly,--

"I won't blame 'em if they 'll only throw their money in here."

Sophie's hand went involuntarily toward her own pocket, where lay a plump purse, for papa was generous, and simple Sophie had few wants. But something in the intelligent face opposite made her hesitate to offer as a gift what she felt sure Tilly would refuse, preferring to earn her education if she could.

"Come often, then, and let me exchange these stupid bills for the lovely things you bring. We will come this afternoon to see you if we may, and I shall like the butterflies. I try to catch them; but people tell me I am too old to run, so I have not many."

Proposed in this way, Tilly fell into the little trap, and presently rowed away with all her might to set her possessions in order, and put her precious earnings in a safe place. The mermaids clung about the boat as long as they dared, making a pretty tableau for the artists on the rocks, then swam to shore, more than ever eager for the picnic on Light-house Island.

They went, and had a merry time; while Tilly did the honors and showed them a room full of treasures gathered from earth, air, and water, for she led a lonely life, and found friends among the fishes, made playmates of the birds, and studied rocks and flowers, clouds and waves, when books were wanting.

The girls bought gulls' wings for their hats, queer and lovely shells, eggs and insects, seaweeds and carved wood, and for their small brothers, birch baskets and toy ships, made by Uncle Hiram, who had been a sailor.

When Tilly had sold nearly everything she possessed (for Fanny and Sophie bought whatever the others declined), she made a fire of drift-wood on the rocks, cooked fish for supper, and kept them till moonrise, telling sea stories or singing old songs, as if she could not do enough for these good fairies who had come to her when life looked hardest and the future very dark. Then she rowed them home, and promising to bring loads of fruit and flowers every day, went back along a shining road, to find a great bundle of books in her dismantled room, and to fall asleep with wet eyelashes and a happy heart.

II.

For a month Tilly went daily to the Point with a cargo of pretty merchandise, for her patrons increased; and soon the ladies engaged her berries, the boys ordered boats enough to supply a navy, the children clamored for shells, and the girls depended on her for bouquets and garlands for the dances that ended every summer day. Uncle Hiram's fish was in demand when such a comely saleswoman offered it; so he let Tilly have her way, glad to see the old tobacco-pouch in which she kept her cash fill fast with well-earned money.

She really began to feel that her dream was coming true, and she would be able to go to the town and study in some great school, eking out her little fund with light work. The other girls soon lost their interest in her, but Sophie never did; and many a book went to the island in the empty baskets, many a helpful word was said over the lilies or wild honeysuckle Sophie loved to wear, and many a lesson was given in the bare room in the light-house tower which no one knew about but the gulls and the sea-winds sweeping by the little window where the two heads leaned together over one page.

"You will do it, Tilly, I am very sure. Such a will and such a memory will make a way for you; and one day I shall see you teaching as you wish. Keep the brave heart, and all will be well with you," said Sophie, when the grand breaking-up came in September, and the girls were parting down behind the deserted bathhouses.

"Oh, Miss Sophie, what should I have done without you? Don't think I have n't seen and known all the kind things you have said and done for me. I 'll never forget 'em; and I do

hope I 'll be able to thank you some day," cried grateful Tilly, with tears in her clear eyes that seldom wept over her own troubles.

"I am thanked if you do well. Adieu; write to me, and remember always that I am your friend."

Then they kissed with girlish warmth, and Tilly rowed away to the lonely island; while Sophie lingered on the shore, her handkerchief fluttering in the wind, till the boat vanished and the waves had washed away their footprints on the sand.

III.

December snow was falling fast, and the wintry wind whistled through the streets; but it was warm and cosey in the luxurious parlor where Di and Do were sitting making Christmas presents, and planning what they would wear at the party Fanny was to give on Christmas Eve.

"If I can get mamma to buy me a new dress, I shall have something yellow. It is always becoming to brunettes, and I 'm so tired of red," said Di, giving a last touch to the lace that trimmed a blue satin *sachet* for Fanny.

"That will be lovely. I shall have pink, with roses of the same color. Under muslin it is perfectly sweet." And Dora eyed the sunflower she was embroidering as if she already saw the new toilet before her.

"Fan always wears blue, so we shall make a nice contrast. She is coming over to show me about finishing off my banner-screen; and I asked Sophie to come with her. I want to know what *she* is going to wear," said Di, taking a little sniff at the violet-scented bag.

"That old white cashmere. Just think! I asked her why she did n't get a new one, and she laughed and said she could n't afford it. Fan told me Sophie's father sent her a hundred dollars not long ago, yet she has n't got a thing that we know of. I do think she 's mean."

"She bought a great bundle of books. I was there when the parcel came, and I peeped while she was out of the room, because she put it away in a great hurry. I 'm afraid she *is* mean, for she never buys a bit of candy, and she wears shabby boots and gloves, and she has made over her old hat instead of having that lovely one with the pheasant's breast in it."

"She's very queer; but I can't help liking her, she's so pretty and bright and obliging. I 'd give anything if I could speak three languages and play as she does."

"So would I. It seems so elegant to be able to talk to foreigners. Papa had some Frenchmen to dinner the other day, and they were so pleased to find they need n't speak English to Sophie. I could n't get on at all; and I was so mortified when papa said all the money he had spent on my languages was thrown away."

"I would n't mind. It's so much easier to learn those things abroad, she would be a goose if she did n't speak French better than we do. There's Fan! she looks as if something had happened. I hope no one is ill and the party spoiled."

As Dora spoke, both girls looked out to see Fanny shaking the snow from her seal-skin sack on the doorstep; then Do hastened to meet her, while Di hid the *sachet*, and was hard at work on an old-gold sofa cushion when the new-comer entered.

"What's the matter? Where's Sophie?" exclaimed the girls together, as Fan threw off her wraps and sat down with a tragic sigh.

"She will be along in a few minutes. I 'm disappointed in her! I would n't have believed it if I had n't seen them. Promise not to breathe a word to a living soul, and I 'll tell you something dreadful," began Fanny, in a tone that caused her friends to drop their work and draw their chairs nearer, as they solemnly vowed eternal silence.

"I 've seen Sophie's Christmas presents,--all but mine; and they are just nothing at all! She has n't bought a thing, not even ribbons, lace, or silk, to make up prettily as we do. Only a painted shell for one, an acorn emery for another, her ivory fan with a new tassel for a third, and I suspect one of those nice handkerchiefs embroidered by the nuns for me, or her silver filigree necklace. I saw the box in the drawer with the other things. She's knit woollen cuffs and tippets for the children, and got some eight-cent calico gowns for the servants. I don't know how people do things in Switzerland, but I do know that if *I* had a hundred dollars in my pocket, I would be more generous than that!"

As Fanny paused, out of breath, Di and Do groaned in sympathy, for this was indeed a sad state of things; because the girls had a code that Christmas being the season for gifts, extravagance would be forgiven then as at no other time.

"I have a lovely smelling-bottle for her; but I 've a great mind not to give it now," cried Di, feeling defrauded of the bracelet she had plainly hinted she would like.

"I shall heap coals of fire on her head by giving her *that*;" and Dora displayed a very useless but very pretty apron of muslin, lace, and carnation ribbon.

"It is n't the worth of the things. I don't care for that so much as I do for being disappointed in her; and I have been lately in more ways than one," said Fanny, listlessly taking up the screen she was to finish. "She used to tell me everything, and now she does n't. I 'm sure she has some sort of a secret; and I do think *I* ought to know it. I found her smiling over a letter one day; and she whisked it into her pocket and never said a word about it. I always stood by her, and I do feel hurt."

"I should think you might! It's real naughty of her, and I shall tell her so! Perhaps she 'll confide in you then, and you can just give *me* a hint; I always liked Sophie, and never thought of not giving *my* present," said Dora, persuasively, for both girls were now dying with curiosity to know the secret.

"I 'll have it out of her, without any dodging or bribing. I 'm not afraid of any one, and I shall ask her straight out, no matter how much she scowls at me," said dauntless Di, with a threatening nod.

"There she is! Let us see you do it now!" cried Fanny, as the bell rang, and a clear voice was heard a moment later asking if Mademoiselle was in.

"You shall!" and Di looked ready for any audacity.

"I 'll wager a box of candy that you don't find out a thing," whispered Do.

"Done!" answered Di, and then turned to meet Sophie, who came in looking as fresh as an Alpine rose with the wintry wind.

"You dear thing! we were just talking of you. Sit here and get warm, and let us show you our gifts. We are almost done, but it seems as if it got to be a harder job each Christmas. Don't you find it so?"

"But no; I think it the most charming work of all the year," answered Sophie, greeting her friend, and putting her well-worn boots toward the fire to dry.

"Perhaps you don't make as much of Christmas as we do, or give such expensive presents. That would make a great difference, you know," said Di, as she lifted a cloth from the table where her own generous store of gifts was set forth.

"I had a piano last year, a set of jewels, and many pretty trifles from all at home. Here is one;" and pulling the fine gold chain hidden under her frills, Sophie showed a locket set thick with pearls, containing a picture of her mother.

"It must be so nice to be rich, and able to make such fine presents. I 've got something for you; but I shall be ashamed of it after I see your gift to me, I 'm afraid."

Fan and Dora were working as if their bread depended on it, while Di, with a naughty twinkle in her eye, affected to be rearranging her pretty table as she talked.

"Do not fear that; my gifts this year are very simple ones. I did not know your custom, and now it is too late. My comfort is that you need nothing, and having so much, you will not care for my--what you call--coming short."

Was it the fire that made Sophie's face look so hot, and a cold that gave a husky sort of tone to her usually clear voice? A curious expression came into her face as her eyes roved from the table to the gay trifles in her friend's hands; and she opened her lips as if to add something impulsively. But nothing came, and for a moment she looked straight out at the storm as if she had forgotten where she was.

"'Shortcoming' is the proper way to speak it But never mind that, and tell me why you say 'too late'?" asked Di, bent on winning her wager.

"Christmas comes in three days, and I have no time," began Sophie.

"But with money one can buy plenty of lovely things in one day," said Di.

"No, it is better to put a little love and hard work into what we give to friends, I have done that with my trifles, and another year I shall be more ready."

There was an uncomfortable pause, for Sophie did not speak with her usual frankness, but looked both proud and ashamed, and seemed anxious to change the subject, as she began to admire Dora's work, which had made very little progress during the last fifteen minutes.

Fanny glanced at Di with a smile that made the other toss her head and return to the charge with renewed vigor.

"Sophie, will you do me a favor?"

"With much pleasure."

"Do has promised me a whole box of French bonbons, and if you will answer three questions, you shall have it."

"*Allons*," said Sophie, smiling.

"Haven't you a secret?" asked Di, gravely.

"Yes."

"Will you tell us?"

"No."

Di paused before she asked her last question, and Fan and Dora waited breathlessly, while Sophie knit her brows and looked uneasy.

"Why not?"

"Because I do not wish to tell it."

"Will you tell if we guess?"

"Try."

"You are engaged."

At this absurd suggestion Sophie laughed gayly, and shook her curly head.

"Do you think we are betrothed at sixteen in my country?"

"I *know* that is an engagement ring,--you made such a time about it when you lost it in the water, and cried for joy when Tilly dived and found it."

"Ah, yes, I was truly glad. Dear Tilly, never do I forget that kindness!" and Sophie kissed the little pearl ring in her impulsive way, while her eyes sparkled and the frown vanished.

"I *know* a sweetheart gave it," insisted Di, sure now she had found a clew to the secret.

"He did," and Sophie hung her head in a sentimental way that made the three girls crowd nearer with faces full of interest.

"Do tell us all about it, dear. It's so interesting to hear love-stories. What is his name?" cried Dora.

"Hermann," simpered Sophie, drooping still more, while her lips trembled with suppressed emotion of some sort.

"How lovely!" sighed Fanny, who was very romantic.

"Tell on, do! Is he handsome?"

"To me the finest man in all the world," confessed Sophie, as she hid her face.

"And you love him?"

"I adore him!" and Sophie clasped her hands so dramatically that the girls were a little startled, yet charmed at this discovery.

"Have you his picture?" asked Di, feeling that she had won her wager now.

"Yes," and pulling out the locket again, Sophie showed in the other side the face of a fine old gentleman who looked very like herself.

"It's your father!" exclaimed Fanny, rolling her blue eyes excitedly. "You are a humbug!" cried Dora. "Then you fibbed about the ring," said Di, crossly.

"Never! It is mamma's betrothal ring; but her finger grew too plump, and when I left home she gave the ring to me as a charm to keep me safe. Ah, ha! I have my little joke as well as you, and the laugh is for me this time." And falling back among the sofa cushions, Sophie enjoyed it as only a gay girl could. Do and Fanny joined her; but Di was much disgusted, and vowed she *would* discover the secret and keep all the bonbons to herself.

"You are most welcome; but I will not tell until I like, and then to Fanny first. She will not have ridicule for what I do, but say it is well, and be glad with me. Come now and work. I will plait these ribbons, or paint a wild rose on this pretty fan. It is too plain now. Will you that I do it, dear Di?"

The kind tone and the prospect of such an ornament to her gift appeased Di somewhat; but the mirthful malice in Sophie's eyes made the other more than ever determined to be even with her by and by.

Christmas Eve came, and found Di still in the dark, which fact nettled her sadly, for Sophie tormented her and amused the other girls by pretended confidences and dark hints at the mystery which might never, never be disclosed.

Fan had determined to have an unusually jolly party; so she invited only her chosen friends, and opened the festivities with a Christmas tree, as the prettiest way of exchanging gifts and providing jokes for the evening in the shape of delusive bottles, animals full of candy, and every sort of musical instrument to be used in an impromptu concert afterward. The presents to one another were done up in secure parcels, so that they might burst upon the public eye in all their freshness. Di was very curious to know what Fan was going to give her,--for Fanny was a generous creature and loved to give. Di was a little jealous of her love for Sophie, and could n't rest till she discovered which was to get the finer gift.

So she went early and slipped into the room where the tree stood, to peep and pick a bit, as well as to hang up a few trifles of her own. She guessed several things by feeling the parcels; but one excited her curiosity intensely, and she could not resist turning it about and pulling up one corner of the lid. It was a flat box, prettily ornamented with sea-weeds like red lace, and tied with scarlet ribbons. A tantalizing glimpse of jeweller's cotton, gold clasps, and something rose-colored conquered Di's last scruples; and she was just about to untie the ribbons when she heard Fanny's voice, and had only time to replace the box, pick up a paper that had fallen out of it, and fly up the back stairs to the dressing-room, where she found Sophie and Dora surveying each other as girls always do before they go down.

"You look like a daisy," cried Di, admiring Dora with great interest, because she felt ashamed of her prying, and the stolen note in her pocket.

"And you like a dandelion," returned Do, falling back a step to get a good view of Di's gold-colored dress and black velvet bows.

"Sophie is a lily of the valley, all in green and white," added Fanny, coming in with her own blue skirts waving in the breeze.

"It does me very well. Little girls do not need grand toilets, and I am fine enough for a 'peasant,'" laughed Sophie, as she settled the fresh ribbons on her simple white cashmere and the holly wreath in her brown hair, but secretly longing for the fine dress she might have had.

"Why didn't you wear your silver necklace? It would be lovely on your pretty neck," said Di, longing to know if she had given the trinket away.

But Sophie was not to be caught, and said with a contented smile, "I do not care for ornaments unless some one I love gives me them. I had red roses for my *bouquet de corsage*; but the poor Madame Page was so *triste*, I left them on her table to remember her of me. It seemed so heartless to go and dance while she had only pain; but she wished it."

"Dear little Sophie, how good you are!" and warm-hearted Fan kissed the blooming face that needed no roses to make it sweet and gay.

Half an hour later, twenty girls and boys were dancing round the brilliant tree. Then its boughs were stripped. Every one seemed contented; even Sophie's little gifts gave pleasure, because with each went a merry or affectionate verse, which made great fun on being read aloud. She was quite loaded with pretty things, and had no words to express her gratitude and pleasure.

"Ah, you are all so good to me! and I have nothing beautiful for you. I receive much and give little, but I cannot help it! Wait a little and I will redeem myself," she said to Fanny, with eyes full of tears, and a lap heaped with gay and useful things.

"Never mind that now; but look at this, for here's still another offering of friendship, and a very charming one, to judge by the outside," answered Fan, bringing the white box with the sea-weed ornaments.

Sophie opened it, and cries of admiration followed, for lying on the soft cotton was a lovely set of coral. Rosy pink branches, highly polished and fastened with gold clasps, formed necklace, bracelets, and a spray for the bosom. No note or card appeared, and the girls crowded round to admire and wonder who could have sent so valuable a gift.

"Can't you guess, Sophie?" cried Dora, longing to own the pretty things.

"I should believe I knew, but it is too costly. How came the parcel, Fan? I think you must know all," and Sophie turned the box about, searching vainly for a name.

"An expressman left it, and Jane took off the wet paper and put it on my table with the other things. Here's the wrapper; do you know that writing?" and Fan offered the brown paper which she had kept.

"No; and the label is all mud, so I cannot see the place. Ah, well, I shall discover some day, but I should like to thank this generous friend at once. See now, how fine I am! I do myself the honor to wear them at once."

Smiling with girlish delight at her pretty ornaments, Sophie clasped the bracelets on her round arms, the necklace about her white throat, and set the rosy spray in the lace on her bosom. Then she took a little dance down the room and found herself before Di, who was looking at her with an expression of naughty satisfaction on her face.

"Don't you wish you knew who sent them?"

"Indeed, yes;" and Sophie paused abruptly.

"Well, *I* know, and *I* won't tell till I like. It's my turn to have a secret; and I mean to keep it."

"But it is not right," began Sophie, with indignation.

"Tell me yours, and I 'll tell mine," said Di, teasingly.

"I will not! You have no right to touch my gifts, and I am sure you have done it, else how know you who sends this fine *cadeau*?" cried Sophie, with the flash Di liked to see.

Here Fanny interposed, "If you have any note or card belonging to Sophie, give it up at once. She shall not be tormented. Out with it, Di. I see your hand in your pocket, and I 'm sure you have been in mischief."

"Take your old letter, then. I know what's in it; and if I can't keep my secret for fun, Sophie shall not have hers. That Tilly sent the coral, and Sophie spent her hundred dollars in books and clothes for that queer girl, who'd better stay among her lobsters

than try to be a lady," cried Di, bent on telling all she knew, while Sophie was reading her letter eagerly.

"Is it true?" asked Dora, for the four girls were in a corner together, and the rest of the company busy pulling crackers.

"Just like her! I thought it was that; but she would n't tell. Tell us now, Sophie, for *I* think it was truly sweet and beautiful to help that poor girl, and let us say hard things of you," cried Fanny, as her friend looked up with a face and a heart too full of happiness to help overflowing into words.

"Yes; I will tell you now. It was foolish, perhaps; but I did not want to be praised, and I loved to help that good Tilly. You know she worked all summer and made a little sum. So glad, so proud she was, and planned to study that she might go to school this winter. Well, in October the uncle fell very ill, and Tilly gave all her money for the doctors. The uncle had been kind to her, she did not forget; she was glad to help, and told no one but me. Then I said, 'What better can I do with my father's gift than give it to the dear creature, and let her lose no time?' I do it; she will not at first, but I write and say, 'It must be,' and she submits. She is made neat with some little dresses, and she goes at last, to be so happy and do so well that I am proud of her. Is not that better than fine toilets and rich gifts to those who need nothing? Truly, yes! yet I confess it cost me pain to give up my plans for Christmas, and to seem selfish or ungrateful. Forgive me that."

"Yes, indeed, you dear generous thing!" cried Fan and Dora, touched by the truth.

"But how came Tilly to send you such a splendid present?" asked Di. "Should n't think you 'd like her to spend your money in such things."

"She did not. A sea-captain, a friend of the uncle, gave her these lovely ornaments, and she sends them to me with a letter that is more precious than all the coral in the sea. I cannot read it; but of all my gifts *this* is the dearest and the best!"

Sophie had spoken eagerly, and her face, her voice, her gestures, made the little story eloquent; but with the last words she clasped the letter to her bosom as if it well repaid her for all the sacrifices she had made. They might seem small to others, but she was sensitive and proud, anxious to be loved in the strange country, and fond of giving, so it cost her many tears to seem mean and thoughtless, to go poorly dressed, and be thought hardly of by those she wished to please. She did not like to tell of her own generosity, because it seemed like boasting; and she was not sure that it had been wise to give so much. Therefore, she waited to see if Tilly was worthy of the trust reposed in her; and she now found a balm for many wounds in the loving letter that came with the beautiful and unexpected gift.

Di listened with hot cheeks, and when Sophie paused, she whispered regretfully,--

"Forgive me, I was wrong! I 'll keep your gift all my life to remember you by, for you are the best and dearest girl I know."

Then with a hasty kiss she ran away, carrying with great care the white shell on which Sophie had painted a dainty little picture of the mermaids waiting for the pretty boat that brought good fortune to poor Tilly, and this lesson to those who were hereafter her faithful friends.

Dolly's Bedstead

"Aunt Pen, where is Ariadne to sleep, please? I wanted to bring her cradle, but mamma said it would take up so much room I could not."

And Alice looked about her for a resting-place for her dolly as anxiously as if Ariadne had been a live baby.

"Can't she lie on the sofa?" asked Aunt Pen, with that sad want of interest in such important matters which grown-up people so often show.

"No, indeed! Some one would sit down on her, of course; and I won't have my darling smashed. You would n't like it yourself, aunty, and I 'm surprised at your proposing such a thing!" cried Alice, clasping her babe with a face full of maternal indignation.

"I beg your pardon! I really forgot that danger. I 'm not so used to infants as you are, and that accounts for it. Now I think of it, there's a little bedstead up garret, and you can have that. You will find it done up in a paper in the great blue chest where all our old toys are kept."

Appeased by Aunt Pen's apology, Alice trotted to the attic, found the bedstead, and came trotting back with a disappointed look on her face.

"It is such a funny, old-fashioned thing I don't know that Ariadne will consent to lie in it. Anyway, I must air the feather-bed and pillows first, or she will get cold. I wish I could wash the sheets too, they are so yellow; but there is no time now," said the little girl, bustling round as she spoke, and laying the little bed-furniture out on the rug.

"Everything is quite clean, my dear; I am sure of that, for I washed the sheets and coverlet myself not long ago, because I found a nest of little mice there the last time I looked," answered Aunt Pen, with her eyes fixed thoughtfully on the small bedstead.

"I guess you used to be fond of it when you were a little girl; and that's why you keep it so nicely now, isn't it?" asked Alice, as she dusted the carved posts and patted the canvas sacking.

"Yes, there's quite a little romance about that bed; and I love it so that I never can give it away, but keep it mended up and in order for the sake of old times and poor Val," said Aunt Pen, smiling and sighing in the same breath.

"Oh, tell about it! I do like to hear stories, and so does Ariadne!" cried Alice, hastily opening dolly's eyes, that she might express her interest in the only way permitted her.

"Well, dear, I 'll tell you this true tale of long ago; and while you listen you can be making a new blanket for the bed. Mrs. Mouse nibbled holes in the other one, and her babies made a mess of it, so I burned it up. Here is a nice little square of flannel, and there are blue, red, and green worsteds for you to work round the edges with."

"Now that is just splendid! I love to work with crewels, and I 'll put little quirls and things in the corners. I can do it all myself, so tell away, please, aunty." And Alice settled herself with great satisfaction, while Ariadne sat bolt upright in her own armchair and stared at Aunt Pen in a way that would have been very embarrassing if her round blue eyes had had a particle of expression in them.

"When I was about ten years old, it was the joy of my heart to go every Saturday afternoon to see my nurse, Betsey Brown. She no longer lived out, but was married to a pilot, and had a home of her own down in what we used to call 'the watery part' of the city. A funny little house, so close to the wharves that when one looked out there were masts going to and fro over the house-tops, and from the upper windows I could see the blue ocean.

"Betsey had a boy with club feet, and a brother who was deformed; but Bobby was my pet playmate, and Valentine my best friend. My chief pleasure was in seeing him work at his turning-lathe, for he was very ingenious, and made all sorts of useful and pretty things.

"But the best thing he did was to cure the lame feet of his little nephew. In those days there were few doctors who attended to such troubles, and they were very expensive; so poor Bobby had gone hobbling about ever since he was born with his little feet turned in.

"Uncle Val could sympathize with him; and though he knew there was no cure for his own crooked back, he did his best to help the boy. He made a very simple apparatus for straightening the crippled feet (just two wooden splints, with wooden screws to loosen or tighten the pressure), and with patience, hope, and faith, he worked over the child till the feet were right, and Bobby could run and play like other children."

"Oh, Aunt Pen, was n't that lovely? And did he really do it all himself? How clever he must have been!" cried Alice, puckering the new blanket in the pleasant interest of the moment.

"He was very clever for a lad of eighteen. But that was not all he did. Bobby's cure was a long one, and I only saw the happy end of it; yet I remember how we all rejoiced, and how proud Betsey was of her brother. My father wrote an account of it for some medical journal, and it was much talked about in our little circle; so much, indeed, that an aunt of ours who had a lame boy came to see Val and talked it all over with him.

"Val was much pleased, and offered to try and cure her son if she would let the boy come and live with him; for it needed great skill and constant care to work the screws just right, and tend the poor little feet gently.

"Aunt Dolly said no at once to that plan; for how could she let her precious boy go and live in that little house down in the poor part of the city?

"There was no other way, however, for Val would not leave his sister and his beloved lathe, and was wise enough to see how impossible it would be to have his own way with the child in a house where every one obeyed his whims and petted him, as such afflicted children usually are petted.

"So Val stood firm, and for a time nothing was done.

"I was much interested in the affair, and every time I saw my cousin Gus I told him what nice times I had down there; how strong and lively Bobby was, and declared my firm belief that Val could cure every disease under the sun.

"These glowing accounts made Gus want to go, and when he set his heart on anything he always got it; so in the end Aunt Dolly consented, and Gus went to board in the little house, much to the wonder of some folks.

"The plan succeeded capitally, however, and Gus thrived like a dandelion in springtime; for simple food, plenty of air, no foolish indulgence, and the most faithful care, built up the little lad in a way that astonished and delighted us all.

"The feet improved slowly; and Val was sure that in time they would be all right, for everything helped on the good work.

"Dear me, what happy days I used to spend at Betsey's! Sometimes Isaac, the jolly, bluff pilot, would take us out in his boat; and then what rosy cheeks and good appetites we got! Sometimes we played in Val's shop, and watched him make pretty things or helped him in some easy job, for he liked to have us near him. And, oh, my heart, what delicious suppers Betsey used to get us in the front room, where all sorts of queer sea treasures were collected,--shells, coral, and seaweed; odd pictures of ships and fish, and old books full of sailor songs and thrilling tales of wrecks."

"I wish I had been there!" interrupted Alice. "Is the house all gone, aunty?"

"All gone, dear, and every one of that merry party but myself," answered Aunt Pen, with a sigh.

"Don't think about the sad part of it, but go on and tell about the bed, please," said Alice, feeling that it was about time this interesting piece of furniture appeared in the story.

"Well, that was made to comfort me when Gus went home, as he did after staying two years. Yes, he went home with straight feet, the heartiest, happiest little lad I ever saw.

"I was heart-broken at losing my playmate, and mourned for him as bitterly as a child could, till Val comforted me, not only by the cunning bedstead for my doll, but by a hundred kindly words and acts, for which I never thanked him half enough.

"Aunt Dolly and my father were so grateful and pleased at Val's success with Gus that they helped him in a plan he had some years later, when he took a larger house in a better place, and with Betsey as nurse, opened a small hospital for the cure of deformed feet. It was an excellent plan; and all was going well, when poor Val wasted rapidly away, and died just as his work began to bring him money and some honor."

"That was very bad! But what became of Bobby and Gus?" asked Alice, who was not of an age to care much about the "sad part" of any story.

"Bob became a sea-captain, and was an excellent fellow till he went down with his ship in a storm after rescuing all his crew, even to the cabin-boy. I'm proud of Bob, and keep those two great pearly shells in memory of him, for he brought them to me after his first voyage."

Aunt Pen's eyes lit up, and her voice rose as she spoke with real pride and affection of honest Captain Brown, who to her was always little Bob.

"I like that, it was so brave and good; but I do wish he had been saved, for then I could have seen him. And maybe he would have brought me a big green parrot that could say funny things. What became of Gus?" asked Alice, after a moment spent in the delightful thought of owning a green parrot with a red tail.

"Ah, my dear, I wish I knew!" exclaimed Aunt Pen, so earnestly that Alice dropped her work, astonished at the change in that usually quiet face.

"Don't tell any more if you 'd rather not," said the little girl, feeling instinctively that she had touched some tender string.

But Aunt Pen only stroked her curly head and went on in a softer tone, with her eyes fixed upon a faded picture that had hung over her work-table ever since Alice could remember.

"I like to tell you, dear, because I want you to love the memory of this old friend of mine. Gus went to sea also, much against his mother's will, for the years spent in the little house near the wharf had given the boy a taste for salt water, and he could not overcome it, though he tried.

"He sailed with Captain Bob all round the world, and would have been with him on that last voyage if a sudden whim had not kept him ashore. More than this we don't know; and for seven years have had no tidings of him. The others give him up, feeling sure that he was lost in the wild hill-country of India, whither he went in search of adventures. I suppose they are right; but *I* cannot make it true, and still hope to see the dear boy back, or at least to hear some news of him."

"Would n't he be rather an old boy now, Aunt Pen?" asked Alice, softly; for she wanted to chase away the load of pain with a smile if she could.

"Bless my heart, so he would! Forty, at least. Well, well, he never will seem old to me, though his hair should be gray when he comes home." And Aunt Pen did smile as her eyes went back to the faded picture with a tender look that made Alice say timidly, while she laid her blooming cheek against her aunt's hand,--

"Would you mind if I asked if it was Gus who gave you this pretty ring, and was your sweetheart once? Mamma told me you had one, and he was dead; so I must never ask why you did n't marry as she did."

"Yes, he gave me this, and was to come back in a year or two; but I have never seen him since, and never shall, I fear, till we all meet over the great sea at last."

There Aunt Pen broke down, and spreading her hands before her face, sat so still that Alice feared to stir.

Even her careless child's heart was full of pity now; and two great tears rolled down upon the little blanket, to lie sparkling like drops of dew in the heart of the very remarkable red rose she was working in the middle.

Then it was that Ariadne distinguished herself, and proved beyond a doubt that her blue china eyes were worth something. A large, brown, breezy-looking man had been peeping in from the door for several moments, and listening in the most improper manner. No one saw him but Ariadne, and how could she warn the others, poor thing, when she had n't a tongue in her head? Don't tell me that dolls have n't hearts somewhere in their sawdust bosoms! I know better; and I am firmly convinced that Ariadne's was full of sympathy for Aunt Pen; else why should she, a well-bred doll, suddenly and without the least apparent cause, slip out of her chair and fall upon her china nose with a loud whack?

Alice jumped up to catch her darling, and Aunt Pen lifted her head to see what was the matter, and the big brown man, giving his hat a toss, came into the room like a whirlwind!

Alice, Ariadne, bedstead, and blanket, were suddenly swept into a corner by some mysterious means, and lay there in a heap, while the two grown people fell into each other's arms, exclaiming,--

"Pen!"

"Gus!"

I don't know which stared the hardest at this dreadful proceeding, Alice or Ariadne, but I do know that every one was very happy afterward, and that the precious little bedstead was not smashed, for I have seen it with my own eyes.

Trudel's Siege

"Grandmother, what is this curious picture about?" said little Gertrude, or "Trudel," as they called her, looking up from the red book that lay on her knee, one Sunday morning, when she and the grandmother sat sadly together in the neat kitchen; for the father was very ill, and the poor mother seldom left him.

The old woman put on her round spectacles, which made her look as wise as an owl, and turned to answer the child, who had been as quiet as a mouse for a long time, looking at the strange pictures in the ancient book.

"Ah, my dear, that tells about a very famous and glorious thing that happened long ago at the siege of Leyden. You can read it for yourself some day."

"Please tell me now. Why are the houses half under water, and ships sailing among them, and people leaning over the walls of the city? And why is that boy waving his hands on the tower, where the men are running away in a great smoke?" asked Trudel, too curious to wait till she could read the long hard words on the yellow pages.

"Well, dear, this is the story: and you shall hear how brave men and women, and children too, were in those days. The cruel Spaniards came and besieged the city for many months; but the faithful people would not give up, though nearly starved to death. When all the bread and meat were gone and the gardens empty, they ate grass and herbs and horses, and even dogs and cats, trying to hold out till help came to them."

"Did little girls really eat their pussies? Oh, I 'd die before I would kill my dear Jan," cried Trudel, hugging the pretty kitten that purred in her lap.

"Yes, the children ate their pets. And so would you if it would save your father or mother from starving. *We* know what hunger is; but we won't eat Jan yet."

The old woman sighed as she glanced from the empty table to the hearth where no fire burned.

"*Did* help come in the ships?" asked the child, bending her face over the book to hide the tears that filled her eyes, for she was very hungry, and had had only a crust for breakfast.

"Our good Prince of Orange was trying to help them; but the Spaniards were all around the city and he had not men enough to fight them by land, so he sent carrier-doves with letters to tell the people that he was going to cut through the great dikes that kept the sea out, and let the water flow over the country so as to drive the enemy from his camp, for the city stood upon high ground, and would be safe. Then the ships, with food, could sail over the drowned land and save the brave people."

"Oh, I 'm glad! I 'm glad! These are the bad Spaniards running away, and these are poor people stretching out their hands for the bread. But what is the boy doing, in the funny tower where the wall has tumbled down?" cried Trudel, much excited.

"The smoke of burning houses rose between the city and the port so the people could not see that the Spaniards had run away; and they were afraid the ships could not get safely by. But a boy who was scrambling about as boys always are wherever there is danger, fire, and fighting, saw the enemy go, and ran to the deserted tower to shout and

beckon to the ships to come on at once,--for the wind had changed and soon the tide would flow back and leave them stranded."

"Nice boy! I wish I had been there to see him and help the poor people," said Trudel, patting the funny little figure sticking out of the pepper-pot tower like a jack-in-the-box.

"If children keep their wits about them and are brave, they can always help in some way, my dear. We don't have such dreadful wars now; but the dear God knows we have troubles enough, and need all our courage and faith to be patient in times like these;" and the grandmother folded her thin hands with another sigh, as she thought of her poor son dying for want of a few comforts, after working long and faithfully for a hard master who never came to offer any help, though a very rich man.

"Did they eat the carrier-doves?" asked Trudel, still intent on the story.

"No, child; they fed and cared for them while they lived, and when they died, stuffed and set them up in the Staat Haus, so grateful were the brave burghers for the good news the dear birds brought."

"That is the best part of all. I like that story very much!" And Trudel turned the pages to find another, little dreaming what a carrier-dove she herself was soon to become.

Poor Hans Dort and his family were nearly as distressed as the besieged people of Leyden, for poverty stood at the door, hunger and sickness were within, and no ship was anywhere seen coming to bring help. The father, who was a linen-weaver, could no longer work in the great factory; the mother, who was a lace-maker, had to leave her work to nurse him; and the old woman could earn only a trifle by her knitting, being lame and feeble. Little Trudel did what she could,--sold the stockings to get bread and medicine, picked up wood for the fire, gathered herbs for the poor soup, and ran errands for the market-women, who paid her with unsalable fruit, withered vegetables, and now and then a bit of meat.

But market-day came but once a week; and it was very hard to find food for the hungry mouths meantime. The Dorts were too proud to beg, so they suffered in silence, praying that help would come before it was too late to save the sick and old.

No other picture in the quaint book interested Trudel so much as that of the siege of Leyden; and she went back to it, thinking over the story till hunger made her look about for something to eat as eagerly as the poor starving burghers.

"Here, child, is a good crust. It is too hard for me. I kept it for you; it's the last except that bit for your mother," said the old woman, pulling a dry crust from her jacket with a smile; for though starving herself, the brave old soul thought only of her darling.

Trudel's little white teeth gnawed savagely at the hard bread, and Jan ate the crumbs as if he too needed food. As she saw him purring about her feet, there came into the child's head a sudden idea, born of the brave story and of the cares that made her old before her time.

"Poor Jan gets thinner and thinner every day. If we are to eat him, we must do it soon, or he will not be worth cooking," she said with a curious look on the face that used to be so round and rosy, and now was white, thin, and anxious.

"Bless the child! we won't eat the poor beast! but it would be kind to give him away to some one who could feed him well. Go now, dear, and get a jug of fresh water. The father will need it, and so will you, for that crust is a dry dinner for my darling."

As she spoke, the old woman held the little girl close for a minute; and Trudel clung to her silently, finding the help she needed for her sacrifice in the love and the example grandma gave her.

Then she ran away, with the brown jug in one hand, the pretty kitten on her arm, and courage in her little heart. It was a poor neighborhood where the weavers and lace-makers lived; but nearly every one had a good dinner on Sunday, and on her way to the fountain Trudel saw many well-spread tables, smelled the good soup in many kettles, and looked enviously at the plump children sitting quietly on the doorsteps in round caps and wooden shoes, waiting to be called in to eat of the big loaves, the brown sausages, and the cabbage-soup smoking on the hearth.

When she came to the baker's house, her heart began to beat; and she hugged Jan so close it was well he was thin, or he would have mewed under the tender farewell squeezes his little mistress gave him. With a timid hand Trudel knocked, and then went in to find Vrow Hertz and her five boys and girls at table, with good roast meat and bread and cheese and beer before them.

"Oh, the dear cat! the pretty cat! Let me pat him! Hear him mew, and see his soft white coat," cried the children, before Trudel could speak, for they admired the snow-white kitten very much, and had often begged for it.

Trudel had made up her mind to give up to them at last her one treasure; but she wished to be paid for it, and was bound to tell her plan. Jan helped her, for smelling the meat, he leaped from her arms to the table and began to gnaw a bone on Dirck's plate, which so amused the young people that they did not hear Trudel say to their mother in a low voice, with red cheeks and beseeching eyes,--

"Dear Vrow Hertz, the father is very ill; the mother cannot work at her lace in the dark room; and grandma makes but little by knitting, though I help all I can. We have no food; can you give me a loaf of bread in exchange for Jan? I have nothing else to sell, and the children want him much."

Trudel's eyes were full and her lips trembled, as she ended with a look that went straight to stout Mother Hertz's kind heart, and told the whole sad story.

"Bless the dear child! Indeed, yes; a loaf and welcome; and see here, a good sausage also. Brenda, go fill the jug with milk. It is excellent for the sick man. As for the cat, let it stay a while and get fat, then we will see. It is a pretty beast and worth many loaves of bread; so come again, Trudel, and do not suffer hunger while I have much bread."

As the kind woman spoke, she had bustled about, and before Trudel could get her breath, a big loaf, a long sausage, and a jug of fresh milk were in her apron and hands, and a motherly kiss made the gifts all the easier to take. Returning it heartily, and telling the children to be kind to Jan, she hastened home to burst into the quiet room, crying joyfully,--

"See, grandmother, here is food,--all mine. I bought it! Come, come, and eat!"

"Now, dear Heaven, what do I see? Where did the blessed bread come from?" asked the old woman, hugging the big loaf, and eying the sausage with such hunger in her face that Trudel ran for the knife and cup, and held a draught of fresh milk to her grandmother's lips before she could answer a single question.

"Stay, child, let us give thanks before we eat. Never was food more welcome or hearts more grateful;" and folding her hands, the pious old woman blessed the meal that seemed to fall from heaven on that bare table. Then Trudel cut the crusty slice for herself, a large soft one for grandmother, with a good bit of sausage, and refilled the cup. Another portion and cup went upstairs to mother, whom she found asleep, with the father's hot hand in hers. So leaving the surprise for her waking, Trudel crept down to eat her own dinner, as hungry as a little wolf, amusing herself with making the old woman guess where and how she got this fine feast.

"This is our siege, grandmother; and we are eating Jan," she said at last, with the merriest laugh she had given for weeks.

"Eating Jan?" cried the old woman, staring at the sausage, as if for a moment she feared the kitten had been turned into that welcome shape by some miracle. Still laughing, Trudel told her story, and was well rewarded for her childish sacrifice by the look in grandmother's face as she said with a tender kiss,--

"Thou art a carrier-dove, my darling, coming home with good news and comfort under thy wing. God bless thee, my brave little heart, and grant that our siege be not a long one before help comes to us!"

Such a happy feast! and for dessert more kisses and praises for Trudel when the mother came down to hear the story and to tell how eagerly father had drank the fresh milk and gone to sleep again. Trudel was very well pleased with her bargain; but at night she missed Jan's soft purr for her lullaby, and cried herself to sleep, grieving for her lost pet, being only a child, after all, though trying to be a brave little woman for the sake of those she loved.

The big loaf and sausage took them nicely through the next day; but by Tuesday only crusts remained, and sorrel-soup, slightly flavored with the last scrap of sausage, was all they had to eat.

On Wednesday morning, Trudel had plaited her long yellow braids with care, smoothed down her one blue skirt, and put on her little black silk cap, making ready for the day's work. She was weak and hungry, but showed a bright face as she took her old basket and said,--

"Now I am off to market, grandmother, to sell the hose and get medicine and milk for father. I shall try to pick up something for dinner. The good neighbors often let me run errands for them, and give me a kuchen, a bit of cheese, or a taste of their nice coffee. I will bring you something, and come as soon as I can."

The old woman nodded and smiled, as she scoured the empty kettle till it shone, and watched the little figure trudge away with the big empty basket, and, she knew, with a still emptier little stomach. "Coffee!" sighed the grandmother; "one sip of the blessed drink would put life into me. When shall I ever taste it again?" and the poor soul sat down to her knitting with hands that trembled from weakness.

The Platz was a busy and a noisy scene when Trudel arrived,--for the thrifty Dutchwomen were early afoot; and stalls, carts, baskets, and cans were already arranged to make the most attractive display of fruit, vegetables, fish, cheese, butter, eggs, milk, and poultry, and the small wares country people came to buy.

Nodding and smiling, Trudel made her way through the bustle to the booth where old Vrow Schmidt bought and sold the blue woollen hose that adorn the stout legs of young and old.

"Good-morning, child! I am glad to see thee and thy well-knit stockings, for I have orders for three pairs, and promised thy grandmother's, they are always so excellent," said the rosy-faced woman, as Trudel approached.

"I have but one pair. We had no money to buy more yarn. Father is so ill mother cannot work; and medicines cost a deal," said the child, with her large hungry eyes fixed on the breakfast the old woman was about to eat, first having made ready for the business of the day.

"See, then, I shall give thee the yarn and wait for the hose; I can trust thee, and shall ask a good price for the good work. Thou too wilt have the fever, I 'm afraid!--so pale and thin, poor child! Here, drink from my cup, and take a bite of bread and cheese. The morning air makes one hungry."

Trudel eagerly accepted the "sup" and the "bite," and felt new strength flow into her as the warm draught and good brown bread went down her throat.

"So many thanks! I had no breakfast. I came to see if I could get any errands here to-day, for I want to earn a bit if I can," she said with a sigh of satisfaction, as she slipped half of her generous slice and a good bit of cheese into her basket, regretting that the coffee could not be shared also.

As if to answer her wish, a loud cry from fat Mother Kinkle, the fish-wife, rose at that moment, for a thievish cur had run off with a fish from her stall, while she gossiped with a neighbor.

Down went Trudel's basket, and away went Trudel's wooden shoes clattering over the stones while she raced after the dog, dodging in and out among the stalls till she cornered the thief under Gretchen Horn's milk-cart; for at sight of the big dog who drew the four copper-cans, the cur lost heart and dropped the fish and ran away.

"Well done!" said buxom Gretchen, when Trudel caught up the rescued treasure a good deal the worse for the dog's teeth and the dust it had been dragged through.

All the market-women laughed as the little girl came back proudly bearing the fish, for the race had amused them. But Mother Kinkle said with a sigh, when she saw the damage done her property,--

"It is spoiled; no one will buy that torn, dirty thing. Throw it on the muck-pile, child; your trouble was in vain, though I thank you for it."

"Give it to me, please, if you don't want it. We can eat it, and would be glad of it at home," cried Trudel, hugging the slippery fish with joy, for she saw a dinner in it, and felt that her run was well paid.

"Take it, then, and be off; I see Vrow von Decken's cook coming, and you are in the way," answered the old woman, who was not a very amiable person, as every one knew.

"That's a fine reward to make a child for running the breath out of her body for you," said Dame Troost, the handsome farm-wife who sat close by among her fruit and vegetables, as fresh as her cabbages, and as rosy as her cherries.

"Better it, then, and give her a feast fit for a burgomaster. *You* can afford it," growled Mother Kinkle, turning her back on the other woman in a huff.

"That I will, for very shame at such meanness! Here, child, take these for thy fish-stew, and these for thy little self," said the kind soul, throwing half a dozen potatoes and onions into the basket, and handing Trudel a cabbage-leaf full of cherries.

A happy girl was our little house-wife on her way home, when the milk and medicine and loaf of bread were bought; and a comfortable dinner was quickly cooked and gratefully eaten in Dort's poor house that day.

"Surely the saints must help you, child, and open people's hearts to our need; for you come back each day with food for us,--like the ravens to the people in the wilderness," said the grandmother when they sat at table.

"If they do, it is because you pray to them so heartily, mother. But I think the sweet ways and thin face of my Trudel do much to win kindness, and the good God makes her our little house-mother, while I must sit idle," answered Vrow Dort; and she filled the child's platter again that she, at least, might have enough.

"I like it!" cried Trudel, munching an onion with her bread, while her eyes shone and a pretty color came into her cheeks. "I feel so old and brave now, so glad to help; and things happen, and I keep thinking what I will do next to get food. It's like the birds out yonder in the hedge, trying to feed their little ones. I fly up and down, pick and scratch, get a bit here and a bit there, and then my dear *old* birds have food to eat."

It really was very much as Trudel said, for her small wits were getting very sharp with these new cares; she lay awake that night trying to plan how she should provide the next day's food for her family.

"Where now, thou dear little mother-bird?" asked the "Grossmutter" next morning, when the child had washed the last dish, and was setting away the remains of the loaf.

"To Gretti Jansen's, to see if she wants me to water her linen, as I used to do for play. She is lame, and it tires her to go to the spring so often. She will like me to help her, I hope; and I shall ask her for some food to pay me. Oh, I am very bold now! Soon will I beg if no other way offers." And Trudel shook her yellow head resolutely, and went to settle the stool at grandmother's feet, and to draw the curtain so that it would shield the old eyes from the summer sun.

"Heaven grant it never comes to that! It would be very hard to bear, yet perhaps we must if no help arrives. The doctor's bill, the rent, the good food thy father will soon need, will take far more than we can earn; and what will become of us, the saints only know!" answered the old woman, knitting briskly in spite of her sad forebodings.

"*I* will do it all! I don't know how, but I shall try; and, as you often say, 'Have faith and hold up thy hands; God will fill them.'"

Then Trudel went away to her work, with a stout heart under her little blue bodice; and all that summer day she trudged to and fro along the webs of linen spread in the green meadow, watering them as fast as they dried, knitting busily under a tree during the intervals.

Old Gretti was glad to have her, and at noon called her in to share the milk-soup, with cherries and herrings in it, and a pot of coffee,--as well as Dutch cheese, and bread full of coriander-seed. Though this was a feast to Trudel, one bowl of soup and a bit of bread

was all she ate; then, with a face that was not half as "bold" as she tried to make it, she asked if she might run home and take the coffee to grandmother, who longed for and needed it so much.

"Yes, indeed; there, let me fill that pewter jug with a good hot mess for the old lady, and take this also. I have little to give, but I remember how good she was to me in the winter, when my poor legs were so bad, and no one else thought of me," said grateful Gretti, mixing more coffee, and tucking a bit of fresh butter into half a loaf of bread with a crusty end to cover the hole.

Away ran Trudel; and when grandmother saw the "blessed coffee," as she called it, she could only sip and sigh for comfort and content, so glad was the poor old soul to taste her favorite drink again. The mother smelled it, and came down to take her share, while Trudel skipped away to go on watering the linen till sunset with a happy heart, saying to herself while she trotted and splashed,--

"This day is well over, and I have kept my word. Now what *can* I do to-morrow? Gretti does n't want me; there is no market; I must not beg yet, and I cannot finish the hose so soon.

"I know! I 'll get water-cresses, and sell them from door to door. They are fresh now, and people like them. Ah, thou dear duck, thank thee for reminding me of them," she cried, as she watched a mother-duck lead her brood along the brook's edge, picking and dabbling among the weeds to show them where to feed.

Early next morning Trudel took her basket and went away to the meadows that lay just out of the town, where the rich folk had their summer houses, and fish-ponds, and gardens. These gardens were gay now with tulips, the delight of Dutch people; for they know best how to cultivate them, and often make fortunes out of the splendid and costly flowers.

When Trudel had looked long and carefully for cresses, and found very few, she sat down to rest, weary and disappointed, on a green bank from which she could overlook a fine garden all ablaze with tulips. She admired them heartily, longed to have a bed of them her own, and feasted her childish eyes on the brilliant colors till they were dazzled, for the long beds of purple and yellow, red and white blossoms were splendid to see, and in the midst of all a mound of dragon-tulips rose like a queen's throne, scarlet, green, and gold all mingled on the ruffled leaves that waved in the wind.

Suddenly it seemed as if one of the great flowers had blown over the wall and was hopping along the path in a very curious way! In a minute, however, she saw that it was a gay parrot that had escaped, and would have flown away if its clipped wings and a broken chain on one leg had not kept it down.

Trudel laughed to see the bird scuttle along, jabbering to itself, and looking very mischievous and naughty as it ran away. She was just thinking she ought to stop it, when the garden-gate opened, and a pretty little boy came out, calling anxiously,--

"Prince! Prince! Come back, you bad bird! I never will let you off your perch again, sly rascal!"

"I will get him;" and Trudel ran down the bank after the runaway, for the lad was small and leaned upon a little crutch.

"Be careful! He will bite!" called the boy.

"I 'm not afraid," answered Trudel; and she stepped on the chain, which brought the "Prince of Orange" to a very undignified and sudden halt. But when she tried to catch him up by his legs, the sharp black beak gave a nip and held tightly to her arm. It hurt her much, but she did not let go, and carried her captive back to its master, who thanked her, and begged her to come in and chain up the bad bird, for he was evidently rather afraid of it.

Glad to see more of the splendid garden, Trudel did what he asked, and with a good deal of fluttering, scolding, and pecking, the Prince was again settled on his perch.

"Your arm is bleeding! Let me tie it up for you; and here is my cake to pay you for helping me. Mamma would have been very angry if Prince had been lost," said the boy, as he wet his little handkerchief in a tank of water near by, and tied up Trudel's arm.

The tank was surrounded by pots of tulips; and on a rustic seat lay the lad's hat and a delicious large kuchen, covered with comfits and sugar. The hungry girl accepted it gladly, but only nibbled at it, remembering those at home. The boy thought she did not like it, and being a generous little fellow and very grateful for her help, he looked about for something else to give her. Seeing her eyes fixed admiringly on a pretty red jar that held a dragon-tulip just ready to bloom, he said pleasantly,--

"Would you like this also? All these are mine, and I can do as I like with them. Will you have it?"

"Oh, yes, with thanks! It is *so* beautiful! I longed for one, but never thought to get it," cried Trudel, receiving the pot with delight.

Then she hastened toward home to show her prize, only stopping to sell her little bunches of cresses for a few groschen, with which she bought a loaf and three herrings to eat with it. The cake and the flower gave quite the air of a feast to the poor meal, but Trudel and the two women enjoyed it all, for the doctor said that the father was better, and now needed only good meat and wine to grow strong and well again.

How to get these costly things no one knew, but trusted they would come, and all fell to work with lighter hearts. The mother sat again at her lace-work, for now a ray of light could be allowed to fall on her pillow and bobbins by the window of the sick-room. The old woman's fingers flew as she knit at one long blue stocking; and Trudel's little hands tugged away at the other, while she cheered her dull task by looking fondly at her dear tulip unfolding in the sun.

She began to knit next day as soon as the breakfast of dry bread and water was done; but she took her work to the doorstep and thought busily as the needles clicked, for where *could* she get money enough for meat and wine? The pretty pot stood beside her, and the tulip showed its gay leaves now, just ready to bloom. She was very proud of it, and smiled and nodded gayly when a neighbor said in passing, "A fine flower you have there."

Soon she forgot it, however, so hard was her little brain at work, and for a long time she sat with her eyes fixed on her busy hands so intently that she neither heard steps approaching, nor saw a maid and a little girl looking over the low fence at her. Suddenly some words in a strange language made her look up. The child was pointing at the tulip and talking fast in English to the maid, who shook her head and tried to lead her on.

She was a pretty little creature, all in white with a gay hat, curly locks, and a great doll in one arm, while the other held a box of bonbons. Trudel smiled when she saw the doll;

and as if the friendly look decided her, the little girl ran up to the door, pointed to the flower, and asked a question in the queer tongue which Trudel could not understand. The maid followed, and said in Dutch, "Fräulein Maud wishes the flower. Will you give it to her, child?"

"Oh, no, no! I love it. I will keep it, for now Jan is gone, it is all I have!" answered Trudel, taking the pot in her lap to guard her one treasure.

The child frowned, chattered eagerly, and offered the box of sweets, as if used to having her wishes gratified at once. But Trudel shook her head, for much as she loved "sugar-drops," she loved the splendid flower better, like a true little Dutchwoman.

Then Miss Maud offered the doll, bent on having her own way. Trudel hesitated a moment, for the fine lady doll in pink silk, with a feather in her hat, and tiny shoes on her feet, was very tempting to her childish soul. But she felt that so dainty a thing was not for her, and her old wooden darling, with the staring eyes and broken nose, was dearer to her than the delicate stranger could ever be. So she smiled to soothe the disappointed child, but shook her head again.

At that, the English lassie lost her temper, stamped her foot, scolded, and began to cry, ordering the maid to take the flower and come away at once.

"She *will* have it; and she must not cry. Here, child, will you sell it for this?" said the maid, pulling a handful of groschen out of her deep pocket, sure that Trudel would yield now.

But the little house-mother's quick eye saw that the whole handful would not buy the meat and wine, much as it looked, and for the third time she shook her yellow head. There was a longing look in her face, however; and the shrewd maid saw it, guessed that money would win the day, and diving again into her apron-pocket, brought out a silver gulden and held it up.

"For this, then, little miser? It is more than the silly flower is worth; but the young fräulein must have all she wants, so take it and let us be done with the crying."

A struggle went on in Trudel's mind; and for a moment she did not speak. She longed to keep her dear tulip, her one joy, and it seemed so hard to let it go before she had even seen it blossom once; but then the money would do much, and her loving little heart yearned to give poor father all he needed. Just then her mother's voice came down from the open window, softly singing an old hymn to lull the sick man to sleep. That settled the matter for the dutiful daughter; tears rose to her eyes, and she found it very hard to say with a farewell caress of the blue and yellow pot as she gave it up,--

"You may have it; but it *is* worth more than a gulden, for it is a dragon-tulip, the finest we have. Could you give a little more? my father is very sick, and we are very poor."

The stout maid had a kind heart under her white muslin neckerchief; and while Miss Maud seized the flower, good Marta put another gulden into Trudel's hand before she hastened after her charge, who made off with her booty, as if fearing to lose it.

Trudel watched the child with the half-opened tulip nodding over her shoulder, as though it sadly said "good-by" to its former mistress, till her dim eyes could see no longer. Then she covered her face with her apron and sobbed very quietly, lest grandmother should hear and be troubled. But Trudel was a brave child, and soon the tears stopped, the blue eyes looked gladly at the money in her hand, and presently,

when the fresh wind had cooled her cheeks, she went in to show her treasure and cheer up the anxious hearts with her good news.

She made light of the loss of her flower, and still knitting, went briskly off to get the meat and wine for father, and if the money held out, some coffee for grandmother, some eggs and white rolls for mother, who was weak and worn with her long nursing.

"Surely, the dear God does help me," thought the pious little maid, while she trudged back with her parcels, quite cheery again, though no pretty kitten ran to meet her, and no gay tulip stood full-blown in the noonday sun.

Still more happy was she over her small sacrifices when she saw her father sip a little of the good broth grandmother made with such care, and saw the color come into the pale cheeks of the dear mother after she had taken the eggs and fine bread, with a cup of coffee to strengthen and refresh her.

"We have enough for to-day, and for father to-morrow; but on Sunday we must fast as well as pray, unless the hose be done and paid for in time," said the old woman next morning, surveying their small store of food with an anxious eye.

"I will work hard, and go to Vrow Schmidt's the minute we are done. But now I must run and get wood, else the broth will not be ready," answered Trudel, clattering on her wooden shoes in a great hurry.

"If all else fails, I too shall make my sacrifice as well as you, my heart's darling. I cannot knit as I once did, and if we are not done, or Vrow Schmidt be away, I will sell my ring and so feed the flock till Monday," said the grandmother, lifting up one thin old hand, where shone the wedding-ring she had worn so many years.

"Ah, no,--not that! It was so sad to see your gold beads go, and mother's ear-rings and father's coat and Jan and my lovely flower! We will not sell the dear old ring. I will find a way. Something will happen, as before; so wait a little, and trust to me," cried Trudel, with her arms about the grandmother, and such a resolute nod that the rusty little black cap fell over her nose and extinguished her.

She laughed as she righted it, and went singing away, as if not a care lay heavy on her young heart. But when she came to the long dike which kept the waters of the lake from overflowing the fields below, she walked slowly to rest her tired legs, and to refresh her eyes with the blue sheet of water on one side and the still bluer flax-fields on the other,--for they were in full bloom, and the delicate flowers danced like fairies in the wind.

It was a lonely place, but Trudel liked it, and went on toward the wood, turning the heel of her stocking while she walked,--pausing now and then to look over at the sluice-gates which stood here and there ready to let off the water when autumn rains made the lake rise, or in the spring when the flax-fields were overflowed before the seed was sown. At the last of these she paused to gather a bunch of yellow stone-crop growing from a niche in the strong wall which, with earth and beams, made the dike. As she stooped, the sound of voices in the arch below came up to her distinctly. Few people came that way except little girls, like herself, to gather fagots in the wood, or truant lads to fish in the pond. Thinking the hidden speakers must be some of these boys, she knelt down behind the shrubs that grew along the banks, and listened with a smile on her lips to hear what mischief the naughty fellows were planning. But the smile soon changed to a look of terror; and she crouched low behind the bushes to catch all that was said in the echoing arch below.

"How did I think of the thing? Why, that is the best part of the joke! Mein Herr von Vost put it into my head himself," said a man's gruff voice, in answer to some question. "This is the way it was: I sat at the window of the beer-house, and Von Vost met the burgomaster close by and said, 'My friend, I hear that the lower sluice-gate needs looking to. Please see to it speedily, for an overflow now would ruin my flax-fields, and cause many of my looms to stand still next winter.' 'So! It shall be looked to next week. Such a misfortune shall not befall you, my good neighbor,' said the burgomaster; and they parted. 'Ah, ha!' thinks I to myself, 'here we have a fine way to revenge ourselves on Master von Vost, who turned us off and leaves us to starve. We have but to see that the old gate gives way *between* now and *Monday*, and that hard man will suffer in the only place where he *can* feel,--his pocket.'"

Here the gruff voice broke into a low laugh, and another man said slowly,--

"A good plan; but is there no danger of being found out, Peit Stensen?"

"Not a chance of it! See here, Deitrich, a quiet blow or two, at night when none can hear it, will break away these rotten boards and let the water in. The rest--it will do itself; and by morning those great fields will be many feet under water, and Von Vost's crop ruined. Yes, we *will* stop his looms for him, and other men besides you and I and Niklas Haas will stand idle with starving children round them. Come, will you lend a hand? Niklas is away looking for work, and Hans Dort is sick, or they might be glad to help us."

"Hans would never do it. He is sober, and so good a weaver he will never want work when he is well. I *will* be with you, Peit; but swear not to tell it, whatever happens, for you and I have bad names now, and it would go hard with us."

"I 'll swear anything; but have no fear. We will not only be revenged on the master, but get the job of repairing; since men are scarce and the need will be great when the flood is discovered. See, then, how fine a plan it is! and meet me here at twelve to-night with a shovel and pick. Mine are already hidden in the wood yonder. Now, come and see where we must strike, and then slip home the other way; we must not be seen here by any one."

There the voices stopped, and steps were heard going deeper into the arch. Trudel, pale with fear, rose to her feet, slipped off her sabots, and ran away along the dike like a startled rabbit, never pausing till she was safely round the corner and out of sight. Then she took breath, and tried to think what to do first. It was of no use to go home and tell the story there. Father was too ill to hear it or to help; and if she told the neighbors, the secret would soon be known everywhere and might bring danger on them all. No, she must go at once to Mein Herr von Vost and tell him alone, begging him to let no one know what she had heard, but to prevent the mischief the men threatened, as if by accident. Then all would be safe, and the pretty flax-fields kept from drowning. It was a long way to the "master's," as he was called, because he owned the linen factories, where all day many looms jangled, and many men and women worked busily to fill his warehouses and ships with piles of the fine white cloth, famous all the world over.

But forgetting the wood, father's broth, granny's coffee, and even the knitting which she still held, Trudel went as fast as she could toward the country-house, where Mein Herr von Vost would probably be at his breakfast.

She was faint now with hunger and heat, for the day grew hot, and the anxiety she felt made her heart flutter while she hurried along the dusty road till she came to the pretty house in its gay garden, where some children were playing. Anxious not to be seen,

Trudel slipped up the steps, and in at the open window of a room where she saw the master and his wife sitting at table. Both looked surprised to see a shabby, breathless little girl enter in that curious fashion; but something in her face told them that she came on an important errand, and putting down his cup, the gentleman said quickly,--

"Well, girl, what is it?"

In a few words Trudel told her story, adding with a beseeching gesture, "Dear sir, please do not tell that I betrayed bad Peit and Deitrich. They know father, and may do him some harm if they discover that I told you this. We are so poor, so unhappy now, we cannot bear any more;" and quite overcome with the troubles that filled her little heart, and the fatigue and the hunger that weakened her little body, Trudel dropped down at Von Vost's feet as if she were dead.

When she came to herself, she was lying on a velvet sofa and the sweet-faced lady was holding wine to her lips, while Mein Herr von Vost marched up and down the room with his flowered dressing-gown waving behind him, and a frown on his brow. Trudel sat up and said she was quite well; but the little white face and the hungry eyes that wandered to the breakfast-table, told the truth, and the good frau had a plate of food and a cup of warm milk before her in a moment.

"Eat, my poor child, and rest a little, while the master considers what is best to be done, and how to reward the brave little messenger who came so far to save his property," said the motherly lady, fanning Trudel, who ate heartily, hardly knowing what she ate, except that it was very delicious after so much bread and water.

In a few moments Herr von Vost paused before the sofa and said kindly, though his eyes were stern and his face looked hard,--

"See, then, thus shall I arrange the affair, and all will be well. I will myself go to see the old gate, as if made anxious lest the burgomaster should forget his promise. I find it in a dangerous state, and at once set my men at work. The rascals are disappointed of both revenge and wages, and I can soon take care of them in other ways, for they are drunken fellows, and are easily clapped into prison and kept safely there till ready to work and to stop plotting mischief. No one shall know your part in it, my girl; but I do not forget it. Tell your father his loom waits for him. Meanwhile, here is something to help while he must be idle."

Trudel's plate nearly fell out of her hands as a great gold-piece dropped into her lap; and she could only stammer her thanks with tears of joy, and a mouth full of bread and butter.

"He is a kind man, but a busy one, and people call him 'hard.' You will not find him so hereafter, for he never forgets a favor, nor do I. Eat well, dear child, and wait till you are rested. I will get a basket of comforts for the sick man. Who else needs help at home?"

So kindly did Frau von Vost look and speak that Trudel told all her sad tale freely, for the master had gone at once to see to the dike, after a nod and a pat on the child's head, which made her quite sure that he was not as hard as people said.

When she had opened her heart to the friendly lady, Trudel was left to rest a few moments, and lay luxuriously on the yellow sofa staring at the handsome things about her, and eating pretzels till Frau von Vost returned with the promised basket, out of which peeped the neck of a wine-bottle, the legs of a chicken, glimpses of grapes, and many neat parcels of good things.

"My servant goes to market and will carry this for you till you are near home. Go, little Trudel; and God bless you for saving us from a great misfortune!" said the lady; and she kissed the happy child and led her to the back door, where stood the little cart with an old man to drive the fat horse, and many baskets to be filled in town.

Such a lovely drive our Trudel had that day! no queen in a splendid chariot ever felt prouder, for all her cares were gone, gold was in her pocket, food at her feet, and friends secured to make times easier for all. No need to tell how joyfully she was welcomed at home, nor what praises she received when her secret was confided to mother and grandmother, nor what a feast was spread in the poor house that day,--for patience, courage, and trust in God had won the battle, the enemy had fled, and Trudel's hard siege was over.
